

**CHAMBERS**

**ROBERT**

**WILLIAM**

THE RECKONING

Robert Chambers

**The Reckoning**

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# Robert W. Chambers

## The Reckoning

### PREFACE

The author's intention is to treat, in a series of four or five romances, that part of the war for independence which particularly affected the great landed families of northern New York: the Johnsons, represented by Sir William, Sir John, Guy Johnson, and Colonel Claus; the notorious Butlers, father and son; the Schuylers, Van Rensselaers, and others.

The first romance of the series, *Cardigan*, was followed by the second, *The Maid-at-Arms*. The third in order is not completed. The fourth is the present volume.

As *Cardigan* pretended to portray life on the baronial estate of Sir William Johnson, the first uneasiness concerning the coming trouble, the first discordant note struck in the harmonious councils of the Long House, so, in *The Maid-at-Arms*, which followed in order, the author attempted to paint a patron family disturbed by the approaching rumble of battle. That romance dealt with the first serious split in the Iroquois Confederacy; it showed the Long House shattered though not fallen; the demoralization and final flight of the great landed families who remained loyal to the British Crown; and it struck the key-note to the future attitude of the Iroquois toward the patriots of the frontier—revenge for their losses at the battle of Oriskany—and ended with the march of the militia and Continental troops on Saratoga.

The third romance, as yet incomplete and unpublished, deals with the war-path and those who followed it, led by the landed gentry of Tryon County, and ends with the first solid blow delivered at the Long House, and the terrible punishment of the Great Confederacy.

The present romance, the fourth in chronological order, picks up the thread at that point.

The author is not conscious of having taken any liberties with history in preparing a framework of facts for a mantle of romance.

*Robert W. Chambers.*

New York, *May 26, 1904.*

**TO MY FRIEND**

**J. HAMBLÉN SEARS**

**WHOSE UNSELFISH FRIENDSHIP AND SOUND ADVICE**

**I ACKNOWLEDGE IN THIS**

**DEDICATION**

**I**

His muscle to the ax and plow,  
His calm eye to the rifle sight,  
Or at his country's beck and bow,  
Setting the fiery cross alight,  
Or, in the city's pageantry,  
Serving the Cause in secrecy,—  
Behold him now, haranguing kings  
While through the shallow court there rings  
The light laugh of the courtesan;  
This the New Yorker, this the Man!

**II**

Standing upon his blackened land,  
He saw the flames mount up to God,  
He saw the death tracks in the sand,  
And the dead children on the sod,  
He saw the half-charred door, unbarred,  
The dying hound he left on guard,  
And that still thing he once had wed  
Sprawled on the threshold dripping red:  
Dry-eyed he primed his rifle pan;  
This the New Yorker, this the Man!

### III

He plowed the graveyard of his dead  
And sowed the grain to feed a host;  
In silent lands untenanted  
Save by the Sachems' painted ghost  
He set the ensign of the sun;  
A thousand axes rang as one  
In the black forest's falling roar,  
And through the glade the plowshare tore  
Like God's own blade in Freedom's van;  
This the New Yorker, and the Man!

*R. W. C.*

## PROLOGUE

### ECHOES OF YESTERDAY

His Excellency's system of intelligence in the City of New York I never pretended to comprehend. That I was one of many agents I could have no doubt; yet as long as I remained there I never knew but three or four established spies with residence in town. Although I had no illusions concerning Mr. Gaine and his "Gazette," at intervals I violently suspected Mr. Rivington of friendliness to us, and this in spite of his Tory newspaper and the fierce broadsides he fired at rebels and rebellion. But I must confess that in my long and amiable acquaintance with the gentleman he never, by word or hint or inference, so much as by the quiver of an eyelash, corroborated my suspicion, and to this day I do not know whether or not Mr. Rivington furnished secret information to his Excellency while publicly in print he raged and sneered.

Itinerant spies were always in the city in spite of the deadly watch kept up by regular and partizan, and sometimes they bore messages for me, the words "Pro Gloria" establishing their credentials as well as mine. They entered the city in all guises and under all pretexts, some as refugees, some as traitors, some wearing the uniform of Tory partizan corps, others attired as tradesmen, farmers, fishermen, and often bearing passes, too, though where they contrived to find passes I never understood.

It was a time of sullenness and quick suspicion; few were free from doubt, but of those few I made one—until that day when my enemy arrived—but of that in its place, for now I mean to say a word about this city that I love—that we all love, understanding how alone she stood in seven years' chains, yet dauntless, dangerous, and defiant.

For upon New York fell the brunt of British wrath, and the judgment of God fell, too, passing twice in fire that laid one-quarter of the town in cinders. Nor was that enough, for His lightning smote the powder-ship, the *Morning Star*, where she swung at her moorings off from Burling Slip, and the very sky seemed falling in the thunder that shook the shoreward houses into ruins.

I think that, take it all in all, New York met and withstood every separate horror that war can bring, save actual assault and sack. Greater hardships fell to the lot of no other city in America, for we lost more than a half of our population, more than a fourth of the city by the two great fires. Want, with the rich, meant famine for the poor and sad privation for the well-to-do; smallpox and typhus swept us; commerce by water died, and slowly our loneliness became a maddening isolation, when his Excellency flung out his blue dragoons to the very edges of the river there at Harlem Bridge.

I often think it strange that New York town remained so loyal to the cause, for loyalty to the king was inherent among the better classes. Many had vast estates, farms, acres on acres of game parks, and lived like the landed gentry of old England. Yet, save for the DeLanceys, the Crugers, their kinsmen, the Fannings, kin to the Tryons, Frederick Rhinelander, the Waltons, and others too tedious to mention, the gentlemen who had the most to lose through friendliness to the cause of liberty, chose to espouse that cause.

As for the British residents there, they remained in blameless loyalty to their King, and I, for one, have never said one word to cast a doubt upon the purity of their sentiments.

But with all this, knowing what must come, no other city in America so gaily set forth upon the road to ruin as did patriotic New York. And from that dreadful hour when, through the cannon smoke on Brooklyn Heights, she beheld the ghastly face of ruin leering at her across the foggy water—from that heart-breaking hour when the British drums rolled from the east, and the tall war-ships covered themselves with smoke, and the last flag flying was hacked from the halyards, and the tramp of the grenadiers awoke the silence of Broadway, she never faltered in her allegiance, never doubted,

never failed throughout those seven years the while she lay beneath the British heel, a rattlesnake, stunned only, but deadly still while the last spark of life remained.

Were I to tell a tithe of all I know of what took place during the great siege, the incidents might shame the wildest fancies of romance—how intrigue swayed with intrigue there, struggling hilt to hilt; how plot and plot were thwarted by the counterplot; how all trust in man was destroyed in that dark year that Arnold died, and a fiend took his fair shape to scandalize two hemispheres!

Yet I am living witness of those years. I heard and saw much that I shall not now revive, as where the victims of a pest lie buried it is not wise to dig, lest the unseen be loosened once again. Yet something it may be well to record of that time—the curtain lifted for a glimpse, then dropped in silence—to teach our children that the men who stood against their King stood with hope of no reward save liberty, but faced the tempest that they had unchained with souls self-shriven and each heart washed free of selfishness.

So if I speak of prisons where our thousands died—hind and gentleman piled thick as shad in the fly market—sick and well and wounded all together—it shall not be at length, only a scene or two that sticks in memory.

Once, in the suffocating heat of mid-July, I saw a prison where every narrow window was filled with human heads, face above face, seeking a portion of the external air. And from that day, for many, many weeks the dead-carts took the corpses to the outer ditches, passing steadily from dawn to midnight.

All day, all night, they died around us in ship and prison, some from suffocation, some from starvation, others delivered by prison fevers which rotted them so slowly that I think even death shrank back reluctant to touch them with his icy finger.

So piteous their plight, these crowded thousands, crushed in putrid masses, clinging to the filthy prison bars, that they aroused compassion in that strange and ancient guild that once had claimed the Magdalen in its sad sisterhood, and these aided them with food, year after year, until deliverance.

They had no other food, no water except from polluted drains, no fire in winter, no barriers to the blackest cold that ever seared the city from the times that man remembers. I say they had no other food and no fire to cook the offal flung to them. That is not all true, because we did our best, being permitted to furnish what we had—we and the strange sisterhood—yet they were thousands upon thousands, and we were few.

It is best that I say no more, for that proud England's sake from whose loins we sprang—it is best that I speak not of Captain Cunningham the Provost, nor of his deputy, O'Keefe, nor of Sproat and Loring. There was butchers' work in my own North, and I shall not shrink from the telling; there was massacre, and scalps taken from children too small to lisp their prayers for mercy; that was devils' work, and may be told. But Cunningham and those who served him were alone in their awful trade; cruelty unspeakable and frenzied vice are terms which fall impotent to measure the ghastly depths of an infamy in which they crawled and squirmed, battenning like maggots on hell's own pollution.

Long since, I think, we have clasped hands with England over Cherry Valley and Wyoming, forgiving her the loosened fury of her red allies and her Butlers and McDonalds. The scar remains, but is remembered only as a glory.

How shall we take old England's wrinkled hand, stretched out above the spots that mark the prisons of New York?—above the twelve thousand unnamed graves of those who died for lack of air and water aboard the *Jersey*? God knows; and yet all things are possible with Him—even this miracle which I shall never live to see.

Without malice, without prejudice, judging only as one whose judgment errs, I leave this darkened path for a free road in the open, and so shall strive to tell as simply and sincerely as I may what only befell myself and those with whom I had been long associated. And if the pleasures that I now recall seem tinged with bitter, and if the gaiety was but a phase of that greater prison fever that

burnt us all in the beleaguered city, still there was much to live for in those times through which I, among many, passed; and by God's mercy, not my own endeavor, passed safely, soul and body.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SPY

Having finished my duties in connection with Sir Peter's private estate and his voluminous correspondence—and the door of my chamber being doubly locked and bolted—I made free to attend to certain secret correspondence of my own, which for four years now had continued, without discovery, between the Military Intelligence Department of the Continental army and myself through the medium of one John Ennis, the tobacconist at the Sign of the Silver Box in Hanover Square.

Made confident by long immunity from the slightest shadow of suspicion, apprehension of danger seldom troubled my sense of security. It did sometimes, as when the awful treason at West Point became known to me; and for weeks as I lay abed I thought to hear in every footfall on Broadway the measured tread of a patrol come to take me. Yet the traitor continued in New York without sinister consequence to me; and, though my nights were none the pleasanter during that sad week which ended in the execution of the British adjutant-general, no harm came to me. Habit is the great sedative; at times, penning my spy's journal, I smiled to remember how it was with me when first I came to New York in 1777, four years since, a country lad of nineteen, fresh from the frontier, where all my life had been spent among the Oneidas and the few neighbors nearest Broadalbin Bush—a raw youth, frightened but resolved; and how I lived through those first months of mental terror, now appalled by the fate of our Captain Nathan Hale, now burning with a high purpose and buoyed up by pride that his Excellency should have found in me a fit instrument for his designs.

I have never known whether or not I am what men call brave, for I understand fear and I turn cold at thought of death. Often I have sat alone in the house watching the sober folk along Broadway and Wall Street, knowing all the while that these same good people might to-morrow all go flocking to Catiemuts Hill near the Fresh Water, or to that open space in the "Fields" between the jail and the Almshouse, to see me on the gallows. If such thoughts do not assail the brave—if restless nights, wakeful dawns, dull days are not their portion—I must own that all these were mine, not often, perhaps, but too frequent to flatter self-esteem. And, fight them as I might, it was useless; for such moments came without warning—often when I had been merry with friends, at times when, lulled by long-continued security, I had nigh forgotten through eventless months that there was a war and that I had become a New Yorker only because of war.

It was harder now, in one sense; four years as secretary to my kinsman, Sir Peter Coleville, had admitted me to those social intimacies so necessary to my secret office; and, alas! friendships had been made and ties formed not only in the line of duty, but from impulse and out of pure affection.

I had never found it was required of me to pose as a rabid loyalist, and so did not, being known as disinterested and indifferent, and perhaps for that reason not suspected. My friends were from necessity among the best among the loyalists—from choice, too, for I liked them for their own sakes, and it was against their cause I worked, not against them.

It went hard with me to use them as I did—I so loathing perfidy in others; yet if it be perfidy to continue in duty as I understood duty, then I practised it, and at times could scarce tolerate myself, which was a weakness, because in my own heart I knew that his Excellency could set no man a task unworthy of his manhood. Yet it were pleasanter had my duties thrown me with the army, or with Colonel Willett in my native north, whence, at his request, I had come to live a life of physical sloth and mental intrigue under the British cannon of New York—here in the household of Sir Peter Coleville, his secretary, his friend, his welcomed guest, the intimate of his family, his friends!—*that* was the hardest of all; and though for months at a time I managed to forget it, the recurring thought of what I *was*, and what they believed me to be, stabbed me at intervals so I could scarce endure it.

Nothing, not even the belief that God was with us, I fear, could have held me there when the stress of such emotion left me staring at the darkness in my restless bed—only blind faith in his Excellency that he would do no man this shame, if shame it was—that he knew as well as I that the land's salvation was not to be secured through the barter of men's honor and the death of souls.

The door being secured, as I say, and the heat of that July day abating nothing, though the sun hung low over Staten Island, I opened my windows, removed coat and waistcoat, and, drawing a table to the window, prepared to write up that portion of my daily journal neglected lately, and which, when convenient opportunity offered, was to find its way into the hands of Colonel Marinus Willett in Albany. Before I wrote I turned back a leaf or two so that I might correct my report in the light of later events; and I read rapidly:

*July 12, 1781.*—Nothing remarkable. Very warm weather, and a bad odor from the markets. There is some talk in the city of rebuilding the burned district. Two new cannon have been mounted in the southwest bastion of the fort (George). I shall report caliber and particulars later.

*July 13th.*—This day Sir Peter left to look over the lands in Westchester which he is, I believe, prepared to purchase from Mr. Rutgers. The soldiers are very idle; a dozen of 'em caught drawing a seine in the Collect, and sent to the guard-house—a dirty trick for anybody but Hessians, who are accustomed to fish in that manner. The cannon in the southwest bastion are twelve-pounders and old—trunnions rusted, carriages rotten. It seems they are trophies taken from the Carolina militia.

*July 14th.*—A ship arrived in the lower bay. Details later. In Nassau Street, about noon, a tall fellow, clothed like a drover, muttered a word or two as I passed, and I had gone on ere it struck me that he had meant his words for my ear. To find him I turned leisurely, retracing my steps as though I had forgotten something, and as I brushed him again, he muttered, "Thendara; tell me where it is."

At that moment Captain Enderley of the Fifty-fourth Foot greeted me, linking his arm in mine, and I had no excuse to avoid him. More of this to-night, when, if the message was truly for me, I shall doubtless be watched and followed when I leave the house for a stroll.

*July 15th.*—Last night there was no chance, Enderley and Captain O'Neil coming to take me to the theater, where the Thirty-eighth Regiment gave a frolic and a play—the latter most indifferent, save for Mrs. Barry's acting. I saw my drover in John Street, too, but could not speak to him.

This morning, however, I met the drover, and he was drunk, or made most marvelous pretense—a great six-foot, blue-eyed lout in smock and boots, reeking of Bull's Head gin, his drover's whip a-trail in the dust, and he a-swaggering down Nassau Street, gawking at the shop-windows and whistling Roslyn Castle with prodigious gusto.

I made it convenient to pause before Berry and Roger's show of jewels, and he stopped, too, swaying there gravely, balanced now on hobnail heel, now on toe. Presently he ceased his whistling of Roslyn Castle, and in a low but perfectly distinct voice he said, "Where is the town of Thendara, Mr. Renault?" Without looking at him or even turning my head, I answered, "Why do you ask me?"

He stared stupidly at the show-window. "Pro patria et gloria," he replied under his breath; "why do you serve the land?"

"Pro gloria," I muttered. "Give your message; hasten."

He scratched his curly head, staring at the gewgaws. "It is this," he said coolly; "find out if there be a lost town in the north called Thendara, or if the name be used

to mask the name of Fort Niagara. When you have learned all that is possible, walk some evening up Broadway and out along Great George Street. We will follow."

"Who else besides yourself?"

"A brother drover—of men," he said slyly; "a little wrinkled fellow, withered to the bone, wide-eared, mild-eyed. He is my running mate, sir, and we run sometimes, now this way, now that, but always at your service, Mr. Renault."

"Are you drunk, or is it a pretense?" I demanded.

"Not *too* drunk," he replied, with elaborate emphasis. "But once this matter of Thendara is settled I hope to be so drunk that no friend of mine need be ashamed of me. Good day, sir. God save our country!"

"Have a care," I motioned, turning away. And so I left him to enter the shop and purchase a trinket, thinking it prudent in case any passer-by had observed how long I lingered.

*July 16th.*—Sir Peter not yet returned from Mr. Rutgers. The name "Thendara" ringing in my ears like a dull bell all night, and I awake, lying there a-thinking. Somewhere, in some long-forgotten year, I had heard a whispering echo of that name—or so it seemed to me—and, musing, I thought to savor a breeze from the pines, and hear water flowing, unseen, far in the forest silence.

Thendara! Thendara!

The name is not Iroquois—yet it may be, too—a soft, gracious trisyllable stolen from the Lenape. Lord! how the name intrigues me, sweetly sonorous, throbbing in my ears—Thendara, Thendara—and always I hear the pine breeze high blowing and the flowing undertone of waters.

*July 17th.*—Nothing extraordinary. The Hon. Elsin Grey arrived from Halifax by the Swan packet to visit Sir Peter's family, she being cousin twice removed to Lady Coleville. I have not seen her; she keeps her chamber with the migraine. As she comes from her kinsman, General Sir Frederick Haldimand, Governor of Canada, she may be useful, being lately untethered from the convent and no more than seventeen or eighteen, and vain, no doubt, of her beauty, and so, I conclude, prone to babble if flattered.

Here my journal ended; I dipped my quill into the inkhorn and wrote slowly:

*July 18th.*—Nothing remarkable. The Hon. Elsin Grey still keeps her chamber. The heat in New York is very great. I am, without suspicion, sending money through Ennis to our prisoners aboard the ships in the Wallabout, and next week shall have more for the unfortunates in the Provost, the prisons, jails, and the sugar-house—my salary being due on the 20th inst. I have ever in mind a plan for a general jail delivery the instant his Excellency assaults by land and sea, but at present it is utterly hopeless, Mr. Cunningham executing the laws with terrible rigor, and double guards patrolling the common. As for those wretched patriots aboard the "*Hell*" and on those hulks—the *Falconer*, *Good Hope*, and *Scorpion*—which lie southeast of the *Jersey*, there can be no delivery save through compassion of that Dark Jailer who one day shall free us all.

I dropped my pen, listening intently. Close to my door the garret stairs creaked, ever so lightly; and I bent forward across the table, gathering my papers, on which the ink lay still wet.

Listening, I heard nothing more. Perhaps the great heat was warping the new stairway, which led past my door, up through the attic, and out to the railed cupola upon the roof.

I glanced at my journal; there was nothing more to add, and so, sanding the sheets, I laid them back behind the swinging panel which I myself had fashioned so cunningly that none might suspect

a cupboard in the simple wainscot. Then to wash hands and face in fresh water, and put on my coat without the waistcoat, prepared to take the air on the cupola, where it should soon blow cool from the bay.

Slipping lock and bolt, I paused, hand on the knob, to glance back around the room—a habit formed of caution. Then, satisfied, I opened the door and left it standing wide so that the room might air. As I ascended the attic stairs a little fresh puff of wind cooled me. Doubtless a servant had opened the flaps to the cupola, for they were laid back; and as I mounted, I could see a square of blue sky overhead.

I had taken my pipe, and paused on the stairs to light it; then, pouching flint and tinder-box, I emerged upon the roof, to find myself face to face with a young girl I had never before seen—the Hon. Miss Grey, no doubt—and very dainty in her powder and one coquette patch that emphasized the slow color tinting a skin of snow.

My bow, I think, covered my vexation—I being all unpowdered and wearing no waistcoat over an unfrilled shirt, for I do love fine clothes when circumstances require; but the lady was none the less punctilious, and as I made to toss my pipe into the street below, she forbade me with perfect courtesy and a smile that only accented her youthful self-possession.

"Mr. Renault need neither retire nor sacrifice his pleasure," she said. "I have missed Sir Frederick's pipe-smoke dreadfully—so much, indeed, that I had even thought to try Sir Peter's snuff to soothe me."

"Shall I fetch it, madam?" I asked instantly; but she raised a small hand in laughing horror.

"Snuff and picquet I am preparing for—a youth of folly—an old age of snuff and cards, you know. At present folly suffices, thank you."

And as I stood smiling before her, she said: "Pray you be seated, sir, if you so desire. There should be sufficient air for two in this half-charred furnace which you call New York. Tell me, Mr. Renault, are the winters here also extreme in cold?"

"Sometimes," I said. "Last winter the bay was frozen to Staten Island so that the artillery crossed on the ice from the city."

She turned her head, looking out over the water, which was now all a golden sparkle under the westerling sun. Then her eyes dropped to the burned district—that waste of blackened ruins stretching south along Broadway to Beaver Street and west to Greenwich Street.

"Is that the work of rebels?" she asked, frowning.

"No, madam; it was an accident."

"Why do the New Yorkers not rebuild?"

"I think it is because General Washington interrupts local improvements," I said, laughing.

She looked around at me, pretty brows raised in quaint displeasure.

"Does the insolence of a rebel really amuse you, Mr. Renault?"

I was taken aback. Even among the British officers here in the city it had become the fashion to speak respectfully of the enemy, and above all of his Excellency.

"Why should it not amuse me?" I asked lightly.

She had moved her head again, and appeared to be absorbed in the view. Presently she said, still looking out over the city: "That was a noble church once, that blackened arch across the way."

"That is Trinity—all that is left of it," I said. "St. Paul's is still standing—you may see it there to the north, just west of Ann Street and below Vesey."

She turned, leaning on the railing, following with curious eyes the direction of my outstretched arm.

"Please tell me more about this furnace you call a city, Mr. Renault," she said, with a pretty inflection of voice that flattered; and so I went over beside her, and, leaning there on the cupola rail together, we explored the damaged city from our bird's perch above it—the city that I had come to care for strangely, nay, to love almost as I loved my Mohawk hills. For it is that way with New York,

the one city that we may love without disloyalty to our birthplace, a city which is home in a larger sense, and, in a sense, almost as dear to men as the birth-spot which all cherish. I know not why, but this is so; no American is long strange here; for it is the great hearth of the mother-land where the nation gathers as a family, each conscious of a share in the heritage established for all by all.

And so, together, this fair young English girl and I traced out the wards numbered from the cardinal points of the compass, and I bounded for her the Out-Ward, too, and the Dock-Ward. There was no haze, only a living golden light, clear as topaz, and we could see plainly the sentinels pacing before the Bridewell—that long two-storied prison, built of gloomy stone; and next to it the Almshouse of gray stone, and next to that the massive rough stone prison, three stories high, where in a cupola an iron bell hung, black against the sky.

"You will hear it, some day, tolling for an execution," I said.

"Do they hang rebels there?" she asked, looking up at me so wonderingly, so innocently that I stood silent instead of answering, surprised at such beauty in a young girl's eyes.

"Where is King's College?" she asked. I showed her the building bounded by Murray, Chapel, Barckley and Church streets, and then I pointed out the upper barracks behind the jail, and the little lake beyond divided by a neck of land on which stood the powder-house.

Far across the West Ward I could see the windows of Mr. Lispenard's mansion shining in the setting sun, and the road to Greenwich winding along the river.

She tired of my instruction after a while, and her eyes wandered to the bay. A few ships lay off Paulus Hook; the Jersey shore seemed very near, although full two miles distant, and the islands, too, seemed close in-shore where the white wings of gulls flashed distantly.

A jack flew from the Battery, another above the fort, standing out straight in the freshening breeze from the bay. Far away across the East River I saw the accursed *Jersey* swinging, her black, filthy bulwarks gilded by the sun; and below, her devil's brood of hulks at anchor, all with the wash hung out on deck a-drying in the wind.

"What are they?" she asked, surprising something else than the fixed smile of deference in my face.

"Prison ships, madam. Yonder the rebels die all night, all day, week after week, year after year. That black hulk you see yonder—the one to the east—stripped clean, with nothing save a derrick for bow-sprit and a signal-pole for mast, is the *Jersey*, called by another name, sometimes—"

"What name?"

"Some call her '*The Hell*,'" I answered. And, after a pause: "It must be hot aboard, with every porthole nailed."

"What can rebels expect?" she asked calmly.

"Exactly! There are some thousand and more aboard the *Jersey*. When the wind sets from the south, on still mornings, I have heard a strange moaning—a low, steady, monotonous plaint, borne inland over the city. But, as you say, what can rebels expect, madam?"

"What is that moaning sound you say that one may hear?" she demanded.

"Oh, the rebels, dying from suffocation—clamoring for food, perhaps—perhaps for water! It is hard on the guards who have to go down every morning into that reeking, stifling hold and drag out the dead rebels festering there—"

"But that is horrible!" she broke out, blue eyes wide with astonishment—then, suddenly silent, she gazed at me full in the face. "It is incredible," she said quietly; "it is another rebel tale. Tell me, am I not right?"

I did not answer; I was thinking how I might use her, and the thought was not agreeable. She was so lovely in her fresh young womanhood, so impulsive and yet so self-possessed, so utterly ignorant of what was passing in this war-racked land of mine, that I hesitated to go gleaning here for straws of information.

"In the north," she said, resting her cheek on one slender wrist, "we hear much of rebel complaint, but make nothing of it, knowing well that if cruelty exists its home is not among those sturdy men who are fighting for their King."

"You speak warmly," I said, smiling.

"Yes—warmly. We have heard Sir John Johnson slandered because he uses the Iroquois. But do not the rebels use them, too? My kinsman, General Haldimand, says that not only do the rebels employ the Oneidas, but that their motley congress enlists any Indian who will take their paper dollars."

"That is true," I said.

"Then why should we not employ Brant and his Indians?" she asked innocently. "And why do the rebels cry out every time Butler's Rangers take the field? We in Canada know Captain Walter Butler and his father, Colonel John Butler. Why, Mr. Renault, there is no more perfectly accomplished officer and gentleman than Walter Butler. I know him; I have danced with him at Quebec and at Niagara. How can even a rebel so slander him with these monstrous tales of massacre and torture and scalps taken from women and children at Cherry Valley?" She raised her flushed face to mine and looked at me earnestly.

"Why even our own British officers have been disturbed by these slanders," she said, "and I think Sir Henry Clinton half believes that our Royal Greens and Rangers are merciless marauders, and that Walter Butler is a demon incarnate."

"I admit," said I, "that we here in New York have doubted the mercy of the Butlers and Sir John Johnson."

"Then let me paint these gentlemen for you," she said quickly.

"But they say these gentlemen are capable of painting themselves," I observed, tempted to excite her by the hint that the Rangers smeared their faces like painted Iroquois at their hellish work.

"Oh, how shameful!" she cried, with a little gesture of horror. "What do you think us, there in Canada? Because our officers must needs hold a wilderness for the King, do you of New York believe us savages?"

The generous animation, the quick color, charmed me. She was no longer English, she was Canadienne—jealous of Canadian reputation, quick to resent, sensitive, proud—heart and soul believing in the honor of her own people of the north.

"Let me picture for you these gentlemen whom the rebels cry out upon," she said. "Sir John Johnson is a mild, slow man, somewhat sluggish and overheavy, moderate in speech, almost cold, perhaps, yet a perfectly gallant officer."

"His father was a wise and honest gentleman before him," I said sincerely. "Is his son, Sir John, like him?"

She nodded, and went on to deal with old John Butler—nor did I stay her to confess that these Johnsons and Butlers were no strangers to me, whose blackened Broadalbin home lay a charred ruin to attest the love that old John Butler bore my family name.

And so I stood, smiling and silent, while she spoke of Walter Butler, describing him vividly, even to his amber black eyes and his pale face, and the poetic melancholy with which he clothed the hidden blood-lust that smoldered under his smooth pale skin. But there you have it—young, proud, and melancholy—and he had danced with her at Niagara, too, and—if I knew him—he had not spared her hints of that impetuous flame that burned for all pure women deep in the blackened pit of his own damned soul.

"Did you know his wife?" I asked, smiling.

"Walter Butler's—wife!" she gasped, turning on me, white as death.

There was a silence; she drew a long, deep breath; suddenly, the gayest, sweetest little laugh followed, but it was slowly that the color returned to lip and cheek.

"Is he not wedded?" I asked carelessly—the damned villain—at his Mohawk Valley tricks again!—and again she laughed, which was, no doubt, my wordless answer.

"Does he dance well, this melancholy Ranger?" I asked, smiling to see her laugh.

"Divinely, sir. I think no gentleman in New York can move a minuet with Walter Butler's grace. Oh, you New Yorkers! You think we are nothing—fit, perhaps, for a May-pole frolic with the rustic gentry! Do not deny it, Mr. Renault. Have we not heard you on the subject? Do not your officers from Philadelphia and New York come mincing and tiptoeing through Halifax and Quebec, all smiling and staring about, quizzing glasses raised? And—'Very pretty! monstrous charming! spike me, but the ladies powder here!' And, 'Is this green grass? Damme, where's the snow—and the polar bears, you know?'"

I laughed as she paused, breathlessly scornful, flushed with charming indignation.

"And is not Canada all snow?" I asked, to tease her.

"Snow! It is sweet and green and buried in flowers!" she cried.

"In winter, madam?"

"Oh! You mean to plague me, which is impertinent, because I do not know you well enough—I have not known you above half an hour. I shall tell Lady Coleville."

"So shall I—how you abuse us all here in New York—"

"I did not. You are teasing me again, Mr. Renault."

Defiant, smiling, her resentment was, after all, only partly real.

"We are becoming friends much too quickly to suit me," she said deliberately.

"But not half quickly enough to suit me," I said.

"Do you fancy that I take that silly speech as compliment, Mr. Renault?"

"Ah, no, madam! On such brief acquaintance I dare not presume to offer you the compliments that burn for utterance!"

"But you *do* presume to plague me—on such brief acquaintance!" she observed.

"I am punished," I said contritely.

"No, you are not! You are not punished at all, because I don't know how to, and—I am not sure I wish to punish you, Mr. Renault."

"Madam?"

"If you look at me so meekly I shall laugh. Besides, it is hypocritical. There is nothing meek about you!" I bowed more meekly than ever.

"Mr. Renault?"

"Madam?"

She picked up her plumed fan impatiently and snapped it open.

"If you don't stop being meek and answering 'Madam' I shall presently go distracted. Call me something else—anything—just to see how we like it. Tell me, do you know my first name?"

"Elsin," I said softly, and to my astonishment a faint, burning sensation stung my cheeks, growing warmer and warmer. I think she was astonished, too, for few men at twenty-three could color up in those days; and there was I, a hardened New Yorker of four years' adoption, turning pink like a great gaby at a country fair when his sweetheart meets him at the ginger bower!

To cover my chagrin I nodded coolly, repeating her name with a critical air—"Elsin," I mused, outwardly foppish, inwardly amazed and mad—"Elsin—um! ah!—very pretty—very unusual," I added, with a patronizing nod.

She did not resent it; when at last I made bold to meet her gaze it was pensive and serene, yet I felt somehow that her innocent blue eyes had taken my measure as a man—and not to my advantage.

"Your name is not a usual one," she said. "When I first heard it from Sir Peter I laughed."

"Why?" I said coldly.

"Why? Oh, I don't know, Mr. Renault! It sounded so very young—Carus Renault—it sounds so young and guileless—"

Speechless with indignation, I caught a glimmer under the lowered lids that mocked me, and I saw her mouth quiver with the laugh fluttering for freedom.

She looked up, all malice, and the pent laughter rippled.

"Very well," I said, giving in, "I shall take no pity on you in future."

"My dear Mr. Renault, do you think I require your pity?"

"Not now," I said, chagrined. "But one day you may cry out for mercy—"

"Which you will doubtless accord, being a gallant gentleman and no Mohawk."

"Oh, I can be a barbarian, too, for I am, by adoption, an Oneida of the Wolf Clan, and entitled to a seat in Council."

"I see," she said, "you wear your hair à l'Iroquois."

I reddened again; I could not help it, knowing my hair was guiltless of powder and all awry.

"If I had supposed you were here, do you imagine I should have presented myself unpowdered and without a waistcoat?" I said, exasperated.

Her laughter made it no easier, though I strove to retrieve myself and return to the light badinage she had routed me from. Lord, what a tease was in this child, with her deep blue eyes and her Dresden porcelain skin of snow and roses!

"Now," she said, recovering her gravity, "you may return to your letter-writing, Mr. Renault. I have done with you for the moment."

At that I was sobered in a trice.

"What letter-writing?" I made out to answer calmly.

"Were you not hard at work penning a missive to some happy soul who enjoys your confidence?"

"Why do you believe I was?" I asked.

She tossed her head airily. "Oh! for that matter, I could even tell you what you wrote: 'Nothing remarkable; the Hon. Elsin Grey still keeps her chamber'—did you not write that?"

She paused, the smile fading from her face. Perhaps she thought she had gone too far, perhaps something in my expression startled her.

"I beg your pardon," she said quickly; "have I hurt you, Mr. Renault?"

"How did you know I wrote that?" I asked in a voice I hoped was steady.

"Why, it is there on your shirt, Mr. Renault, imprinted backward from the wet ink. I have amused myself by studying it out letter by letter. Please forgive me—it was dreadfully indiscreet—but I only meant to torment you."

I looked down, taking my fine lawn shirt in both hands. There was the impression—my own writing, backward, but distinct. I remembered when I had done it, when I had gathered my ink-wet papers under my arms and leaned forward to listen to the creaking of the attic stairway. Suppose it had been Sir Peter! Suppose the imprint had been something that could have admitted of but one interpretation? I turned cold at the thought.

She was watching me all the while, a trifle uneasy at my silence, but my smile and manner reassured her, and my gaiety she met instantly.

"I am overwhelmed," I said, "and can offer no excuse for this frowsy dress. If you had any idea how mortified I am you would have mercy on me."

"My hair not being dressed à l'Iroquois, I consent to show you mercy," she said. "But you came monstrous near frightening me, too. Do you know you turned white, Mr. Renault? Lud! the vanity of men, to pale at a jest touching their status in fopdom as proper macaroni!"

"I do love to appear well," I said resentfully.

"Now do you expect me to assure you that you *do* appear well? that even the dress of a ragged forest-runner would detract nothing from your person? Ah, I shall say nothing of the sort, Mr. Renault! Doubtless there are women a-plenty in New York to flatter you."

"No," I said; "they prefer scarlet coats and spurs, as you will, too."

"No doubt," she said, turning her head to the sunset.

There was enough wind to flutter the ribbons on her shoulders and bare neck, and to stir the tendrils of her powdered hair, a light breeze blowing steadily from the bay as the sun went down into

the crimson flood. Bang! A cloud of white smoke hung over Pearl Street where the evening gun had spoken; the flag on the fort fluttered down, the flag on the battery followed. Out on the darkening river a lantern glimmered from the deck of the *Jersey*; a light sparkled on Paulus Hook.

"Hark! hear the drums!" she murmured. Far down Broadway the British drums sounded, nearer, nearer, now loud along Dock Street, now lost in Queen, then swinging west by north they came up Broad, into Wall; and I could hear the fifes shrilling out, "The World turned Upside-down," and the measured tread of the patrol, marching to the Upper Barracks and the Prison.

The drummers wheeled into Broadway beneath our windows; leaning over I saw them pass, and I was aware of something else, too—a great strapping figure in a drover's smock, watching the British drums from the side path across the way—my friend of Nassau Street—and clinging to his arm, a little withered man, wrinkled, mild-eyed, clad also like a drover, and snapping his bull-whip to accent the rhythm of the rolling drums.

"I think I shall go down," said a soft voice beside me; "pray do not move, Mr. Renault, you are so picturesque in silhouette against the sunset—and I hear that silhouettes are so fashionable in New York fopdom."

I bowed; she held out her hand—just a trifle, as she passed me, the gesture of a coquette or of perfect innocence—and I touched it lightly with finger-tip and lip.

"Until supper," she said—"and, Mr. Renault, do you suppose we shall have bread for supper?"

"Why not?" I asked, all unsuspecting.

"Because I fancied flour might be scarce in New York"—she glanced at my unpowdered head, then fled, her blue eyes full of laughter.

It is true that all hair powder is made of flour, but I did not use it like a Hessian. And I looked after her with an uncertain smile and with a respect born of experience and grave uncertainty.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HOUSEHOLD

About dusk Sir Peter arrived from lower Westchester while I was dressing. Warned by the rattle of wheels from the coach-house at the foot of the garden, and peering through the curtains, I saw the lamps shining and heard the trample of our horses on the stable floor; and presently, as I expected, Sir Peter came a-knocking at my door, and my servant left the dressing of my hair to admit the master of the house. He came in, his handsome face radiant—a tall, graceful man of forty, clothed with that elegant carelessness which we call perfection, so strikingly unobtrusive was his dress, so faultless and unstudied his bearing.

There was no dust upon him, though he had driven miles; his clean skin was cool and pleasantly tinted with the sun of summer, spotless his lace at cuff and throat, and the buckles flashed at stock and knee and shoe as he passed through the candle-light to lay a familiar hand upon my shoulder.

"What's new, Carus?" he asked, and his voice had ever that pleasant undertone of laughter which endears. "You villain, have you been making love to Elsin Grey, that she should come babbling of Mr. Renault, Mr. Renault, Mr. Renault ere I had set foot in my own hallway? It was indecent, I tell you—not a word for me, civil or otherwise, not a question how I had 'scaped the Skinners at Kingsbridge—only a flutter of ribbons and a pair of pretty hands to kiss, and 'Oh, Cousin Coleville! Is Mr. Renault kin to me, too?—for I so take it, having freely bantered him to advantage at first acquaintance. Was I bold, cousin?—but if you only knew how he tempted me—and he *is* kin to you, is he not?—and you are Cousin Betty's husband.' 'God-a-mercy!' said I, 'what's all this about Mr. Renault?—a rogue and a villain I shame to claim as kin, a swaggering, diceing, cock-fighting ruffler, a-raking it from the Out-Ward to Jew Street! Madam, do you dare admit to me that you have found aught to attract you in the company of this monument of foppery known as Carus Renault?'"

"Did you truly say that, Sir Peter?" I asked, wincing while my ears grew hot.

"Say it? I did not say it, I bellowed it!" He shrugged his shoulders and took snuff with an air. "The minx finds you agreeable," he observed; "why?—God knows!"

"I had not thought so," I said, in modest deprecation, yet warming at his words.

"Oh—had not thought so!" he mimicked, mincing over to the dressing-table and surveying the array of perfumes and pomades and curling irons. "Carus, you shameless rake, you've robbed all Queen Street! Essence, pomade-de-grasse, almond paste, bergamot, orange, French powder! By Heaven, man, do you mean to take the lady by storm or set up a rival shop to Smith's 'Sign of the Rose'? Here, have your man leave those two puffs above the ears; curl them loosely—that's it! Now tie that queue-ribbon soberly; leave the flamboyant papillon style to those damned Lafayettes and Rochambeaux! Now dust your master, Dennis, and fetch a muslinet waistcoat—the silver tambour one. Gad, Carus, I'd make a monstrous fine success at decorating fops for a guinea a head—eh?"

He inspected me through his quizzing glass, nodded, backed away in feigned rapture, and presently sat down by the window, stretching his well-shaped legs.

"Damme," he said, "I meant to ask what's new, but you chatter on so that I have no chance for a word edgeways. Now, what the devil is new with you?"

"Nothing remarkable," I said, laughing. "Did you come to terms with Mr. Rutgers for his meadows?"

"No," he replied irritably, "and I care nothing for his damned swamps full of briers and mud and woodcock."

"It is just as well," I said. "You can not afford more land at present."

"That's true," he admitted cheerfully; "I'm spending too much. Gad, Carus, the Fifty-fourth took it out of us at that thousand-guinea main! Which reminds me to say that our birds at Flatbush are in prime condition and I've matched them."

I looked up at him doubtfully. Our birds had brought him nothing but trouble so far.

"Let it pass," he said, noticing my silent disapproval; "we'll talk to Horrock in the morning. Which reminds me that I have no money." He laughed, drew a paper from his coat, and unfolding it, read aloud:

"1 pipe Madeira	@ £90 per pipe—£90
1 pipe Port	@ £46 per pipe—£46
20 gallons Fayal	@ 5s. per gal.—
20 gallons Lisbon	@ 5s. per gal.—
10 gallons Windward I. rum	@ 4s. per gal."

He yawned and tossed the paper on my dresser, saying, "Pay it, Carus. If our birds win the main we'll put the Forty-fifth under the table, and I'll pay a few debts."

Standing there he stretched to his full graceful height, yawning once or twice. "I'll go bathe, and dress for supper," he said; "that should freshen me. Shall we rake it to-night?"

"I'm for cards," I said carelessly.

"*With* Elsin Grey or *without* Elsin Grey?" he inquired in affected earnestness.

"If you had witnessed her treatment of me," I retorted, "you'd never mistake it for friendly interest. We'll rake it, if you like. There's another frolic at the John Street Theater. The Engineers play 'The Conscious Lovers,' and Rosamund Barry sings 'Vain is Beauty's Gaudy Flower.'"

But he said he had no mind for the Theater Royal that night, and presently left me to Dennis and the mirror.

In the mirror I saw a boyish youth of twenty-three, dark-eyed, somewhat lean of feature, and tinted with that olive smoothness of skin inherited from the Renaults through my great-grandfather—a face which in repose was a trifle worn, not handsome, but clearly cut, though not otherwise remarkable. It was, I believed, neither an evil nor a sullen brooding face, nor yet a face in which virtue molds each pleasing feature so that its goodness is patent to the world.

Dennis having ended his ministrations, I pinned a brilliant at my throat—a gift from Lady Coleville—and shook over it the cobweb lace so it should sparkle like a star through a thin cloud. Then passing my small sword through the embroidered slashing of my coat, and choosing a handkerchief discreetly perfumed, I regarded myself at ease, thinking of Elsin Grey.

In the light of later customs and fashions I fear that I was something of a fop, though I carried neither spy-glass nor the two watches sacred to all fops. But if I loved dress, so did his Excellency, and John Hancock, not to name a thousand better men than I; and while I confess that I did and do dearly love to cut a respectable figure, frippery for its own sake was not among my vices; but I hold him a hind who, if he can afford it, dresses not to please others and do justice to the figure that a generous Creator has so patiently fashioned. "To please others!" sang my French blood within me; "to please myself!" echoed my English blood—and so, betwixt the sanguine tides, I was minded to please in one way or another, nor thought it a desire unworthy. One thing did distress me: what with sending all my salary to the prisons, I had no money left to bet as gentlemen bet, nor to back a well-heeled bird, nor to color my fancy for a horse. As for a mistress, or for those fugitive affairs of the heart which English fashion countenanced—nay, on which fashion insisted—I had no part in them, and

brookd much banter from the gay world in consequence. It was not merely lack of money, nor yet a certain fastidiousness implanted, nor yet the inherent shrinking of my English blood from pleasure forbidden, for my Renault blood was hot enough, God wot! It was, I think, all of these reasons that kept me untainted, and another, the vague idea of a woman, somewhere in the world, who should be worth an unsullied love—worth far more than the best I might bring to her one day. And so my pride refused to place me in debt to a woman whom I had never known.

As for money, I had my salary when it was convenient for Sir Peter; I had a small income of my own, long pledged to Colonel Willett's secret uses. It was understood that Sir Peter should find me in apparel; I had credit at Sir Peter's tailor, and at his hatter's and bootmaker's, too. Twice a year my father sent me from Paris a sum which was engaged to maintain a bed or two in the Albany hospital for our soldiers. I make no merit of it, for others gave more. So, it is plain to see I had no money for those fashionable vices in the midst of which I lived, and if I lost five shillings at whist I felt that I had robbed some wretched creature on the *Jersey*, or dashed the cup from some poor devil's lips who lay a-gasping in the city prison.

My finery, then, was part and parcel of my salary—my salary in guineas already allotted; so it came about that I moved in a loose and cynical society, untainted only through force of circumstance and a pride that accepts nothing which it may not return at interest.

When I descended to the dining-room I found all seated, and so asked pardon of Lady Coleville, who was gay and amiable as usual, and, "for a penance," as she said, made me sit beside her. That was no penance, for she was a beauty and a wit, her dainty head swimming with harmless mischief; and besides knowing me as she did, she was monstrous amusing in a daring yet delicate fashion, which she might not use with any other save her husband.

That, as I say, was therefore no penance, but my punishment was to see Elsin Grey far across the table on Sir Peter's right, and to find in my other neighbor a lady whose sole delight in me was to alternately shock me with broad pleasantries and torment me with my innocence.

Rosamund Barry was her name, Captain Barry's widow—he who fell at Breeds Hill in '76—the face of a Madonna, and the wicked wit of a lady whose name she bore, *sans La du*.

"Carus," she said, leaning too near me and waving her satin painted fan, "is it true you have deserted me for a fairer conquest?"

"The rumor nails itself to the pillory," I said; "who is fairer than you, Rosamund?"

"You beg the question," she said severely, the while her dark eyes danced a devil's shadow dance; "if you dare go tiptoeing around the skirts of the Hon. Miss Grey, I'll tell her all—*all*, mind you!"

"Don't do that," I said, "unless you mean to leave New York."

"All about *you*, silly!" she said, flushing in spite of her placid smile.

"Oh," I said, with an air of great relief, "I was sure you could not contemplate confession!"

She laid her pretty head on one side. "I wonder," she mused, eying me deliberately—"I wonder what this new insolence of yours might indicate. Is it rebellion? Has the worm turned?"

"The worm has turned—into a frivolous butterfly," I said gaily.

"I don't believe it," she said. "Let me see if I can make you blush, Carus!" And she leaned nearer, whispering behind her fan.

"Let me match that!" I said coolly. "Lend me your fan, Rosamund—"

"Carus!" exclaimed Lady Coleville, "stop it! Mercy on us, such shameless billing and cooing! Captain O'Neil, call him out!"

"Faith," said O'Neil, "to call is wan thing, and the chune Mrs. Barry sings is another. Take shame, Carus Renault, ye blatherin', bould inthriguer! L'ave innocence to yer betthers!"

"To me, for example," observed Captain Harkness complacently. "Mrs. Barry knows that raking fellow, Carus, and she knows you, too, you wild Irishman—"

"If you only keep this up long enough, gentlemen," I said, striving to smile, "you'll end by doing what I've so far avoided."

"Ruining his reputation in Miss Grey's eyes," explained Lady Coleville pleasantly.

Elsin Grey looked calmly across at me, saying to Sir Peter, "He *is* too young to do such things, isn't he?"

That set them into fits of laughter, Sir Peter begging me to pause in my mad career and consider the chief end of man, and Tully O'Neil generously promising moral advice and the spiritual support of Rosamund Barry, which immediately diverted attention from me to a lightning duel of words between Rosamund and O'Neil—parry and thrust, innuendo and eloquent silence, until Lady Coleville in pantomime knocked up the crossed blades of wit, and Sir Peter vowed that this was no place for an innocent married man.

When Lady Coleville rose we drew our swords and arched a way for her, and she picked up her silken petticoat and ran under, laughing, one hand pressed to her ears to shut out the cheers.

There were long black Spanish cigars, horribly strong, served with spirits after the ladies had left. O'Neil and Harkness used them; Sir Peter and I accepted the long cool pipes, and we settled for a comfortable smoke.

Sir Peter spoke of the coming cock-fight with characteristic optimism—not shared by Harkness, and but partially approved by O'Neil. Details were solemnly discussed, questions of proper heeling, of silver and steel gaffs, of comb and wattle cutting, of the texture of feather and hackle, and of the "walks" at Flatbush and Horrock's method of feeding in the dark.

Tiring of the subject, Harkness, spoke of the political outlook and took a gloomy view, paying his Excellency a compliment by referring to him as "no fox, but a full-grown wolf, with an appetite for a continent and perhaps for a hemisphere."

"Pooh!" said Sir Peter, lazily sucking at his pipe, "Sir Henry has him holed. We'll dig him out before snow flies."

"What folly, Sir Peter!" remonstrated Harkness, leaning forward so that the candle-light blazed on his gold and scarlet coat. "Look back five years, Sir Peter, then survey the damnable situation now! Do you realize that to-day England governs but one city in America?"

"Wait," observed Sir Peter serenely, expelling a cloud of smoke so that it wreathed his handsome head in a triple halo.

"Wait? Faith, if there's anything else to do but wait I'll take that job!" exclaimed O'Neil ruefully.

"Why don't you take it, then?" retorted Sir Peter. "It's no secret, I fancy—that plan of Walter Butler's—is it?" he added, seeing that we knew nothing of any plan.

"Sir Henry makes no secret of it," he continued; "it's talked over and disparaged openly at mess and at headquarters. I can see no indiscretion in mentioning it here."

It was at such moments that I felt a loathing for myself, and such strong self-disgust must surely have prevailed in the end to make me false to duty if, as I have said, I had not an absolute faith that his Excellency required no man to tarnish his honor for the motherland's salvation.

"What's afoot?" inquired Harkness curiously.

"Why, you remember how the rebel General Sullivan went through the Six Nations, devastating the Iroquois country, laying waste, burning, destroying their orchards and crops—which, after all, accomplished the complete destruction of our own granary in the North?"

"'Twas a dhirty thrick!" muttered O'Neil. "Sure, 'tis the poor naked haythen will pay that score wan day, or I'm a Hessian!"

"They'll pay it soon if Walter Butler has his way," said Sir Peter. "Sir John Johnson and the Butlers and Colonel Ross are gathering in the North. Haldimand's plan is to strike at the rebels' food supply—the cultivated region from Johnstown south and west—do what Sullivan did, lay waste the rebel grain belt, burn fodder, destroy all orchards—God! it will go hard with the frontier again." He swung around to Harkness: "It's horrible to me, Captain—and Walter Butler not yet washed clean of

the blood of Cherry Valley. I tell you, loyal as I am, humble subject of my King, whom I reverence, I affirm that this blackened, blood-soaked frontier is a barrier to England which she can never, never overcome, and though we win out to-day, and though we hang the rebels thick as pears in Lisperard's orchards, that barrier will remain, year by year fencing us in, crowding us back to the ocean, to our ships, back to the land from whence we English came. And for all time will the memory of these horrors set America's face against us—if not for all time, yet our children's children and their children shall not outlive the tradition burned into the heart of this quivering land we hold to-day, half shackled, still struggling, already rising to its bleeding knees."

"Gad!" breathed O'Neil, "'tis threason ye come singin' to the chune o' Yankee Doodle-doo, Sir Peter."

"It's sense," said Sir Peter, already smiling at his own heat.

"So Ross and the Butlers are to strike at the rebel granaries?" repeated Harkness, musing.

"Yes; they're gathering on the eastern lakes and at Niagara—Butler's Rangers, Johnson's Greens, Brant's Iroquois, some Jägers, a few regulars, and the usual partizan band of painted whites who disgrace us all, by Heaven! But there," added Sir Peter, smiling, "I've done with the vapors. I bear no arms, and it is unfit that I should judge those who do. Only," and his voice rang a little, "I understand battles, not butchery. Gentlemen, to the British Army! the regulars, God bless 'em! Bumpers, gentlemen!"

I heard O'Neil muttering, as he smacked his lips after the toast, "And to hell with the Hessians! Bad cess to the Dootch scuts!"

"Did you say the rendezvous is at Niagara?" inquired Harkness.

"I've heard so. I've heard, too, of some other spot—an Indian name—Thend—Thend—plague take it! Ah, I have it—Thendara. You know it, Carus?" he asked, turning so suddenly on me that my guilty heart ceased beating for a second.

"I have heard of it," I said, finding a voice scarce like my own. "Where is it, Sir Peter?"

"Why, here in New York there has ever been a fable about a lost town in the wilderness called Thendara. I never knew it to be true; but now they say that Walter Butler has assigned Thendara as his gathering place, or so it is reported in a letter to Sir Henry, which Sir Henry read to me. Have *you* no knowledge of it, Carus?"

"None at all. I remember hearing the name in childhood. Perhaps better woodsmen than I know where this Thendara lies, but I do not."

"It must lie somewhere betwixt us and Canada," said Harkness vaguely. "Does not Sir Henry know?"

"He said he did not," replied Sir Peter, "and he sent out a scout for information. No information has arrived. Is it an Iroquois word, Carus?"

"I think it is of Lenape origin," I said—"perhaps modified by the Mohawk tongue. I know it is not pure Oneida."

Harkness glanced at me curiously. "You'd make a rare scout," he said, "with your knowledge of the barbarians."

"The wonder is," observed Sir Peter, "that he is not a scout on the other side. If my home had been burned by the McDonalds and the Butlers, I'm damned if I should forget which side did it!"

"If I took service with the rebels," said I, "it would not be because of personal loss. Nor would that same private misfortune deter me from serving King George. The men who burned my home represent no great cause. When I have leisure I can satisfy personal quarrels."

"Lord!" laughed Sir Peter, "to hear you bewail your lack of leisure one might think you are now occupied with one cause or t'other. Pray, my dear Carus, when do you expect to find time to call out these enemies of yours?"

"You wouldn't have me deprive the King of Walter Butler's services, would you?" I asked so gravely that everybody laughed, and we rose in good humor to join the ladies in the drawing-rooms.

Sir Peter's house on Wall Street had been English built, yet bore certain traces of the old Dutch influence, for it had a stoop leading to the front door, and the roof was Dutch, save for the cupola; a fine wide house, the façade a little scorched from the conflagration of '78 which had ruined Trinity Church and the Lutheran, and many fine buildings and homes.

The house was divided by a wide hallway, on either side of which were drawing-rooms, and in the rear of these was a dining-room giving on a conservatory which overlooked the gardens. The ground floor served as a servant's hall, with a door at the area and another in the rear leading out through the garden-drive to the stables.

The floor above the drawing-rooms had been divided into two suites, one in gold leather and blue for Sir Peter and his lady, the other in crimson damask for guests. The third floor, mine, was similarly divided, I occupying the Wall Street side, with windows on that fashionable street and also on Broadway.

Thus it happened that, instead of entering the south drawing-room where I saw the ladies at the card-table playing Pharaoh, I turned to the right and crossed the north, or "state drawing-room," and parted the curtains, looking across Broadway to see if I might spy my friend the drover and his withered little mate. No doubt prudence and a dislike for the patrol kept them off Broadway at that hour, for I could not see them, although a few street lamps were lit and I could make out wayfarers as far north as Crown Street.

Standing there in the dimly lighted room, my nose between the parted curtains, I heard my name pronounced very gently behind me, and, turning, beheld Miss Grey, half lying on a sofa in a distant corner. I had not seen her when I entered, my back being turned to the east, and I said so, asking pardon for an unintentional rudeness—which she pardoned with a smile, slowly waving her scented fan.

"I am a little tired," she said; "the voyage from Halifax was rough, and I have small love for the sea, so, Lady Coleville permitting, I came in here to rest from the voices and the glare of too bright candle-light. Pray you be seated, Mr. Renault—if it does not displease you. What were you looking for from the window yonder?"

"Treason," I said gaily. "But the patrol should be able to see to that. May I sit here a moment?"

"Willingly; I like men."

Innocence or coquetry, I was clean checked. Her white eyelids languidly closing over the pure eyes of a child gave me no clue.

"All men?" I inquired.

"How silly! No, very few men. But that is because I only know a few."

"And may I dare to hope that—" I began in stilted gallantry, cut short by her opening eyes and smile. "Of course I like you, Mr. Renault. Can you not see that? It's a pity if you can not, as all the others tease me so about you. Do you like me?"

"Very, *very* much," I replied, conscious of that accursed color burning my face again; conscious, too, that she noted it with calm curiosity.

"Very, *very* much," she repeated, musing. "Is that why you blush so often, Mr. Renault—because you like me very, *very* much?"

Exasperated, I strove to smile. I couldn't; and dignity would not serve me, either.

"If I loved you," said I, "I might change color when you spoke. Therefore my malady must arise from other causes—say from Sir Peter's wine, for instance."

"I knew a man who fell in love with me," she said. "You may do so yet."

"Do you think it likely?" I asked, scarcely knowing how to meet this cool attack.

"I think it possible—don't you?" she asked.

I considered, or made pretense to. My heart had begun to beat too fast; and as for her, I could no more fathom her than the sea, yet her babble was shallow enough to strand wiser men than I upon its sparkling shoals.

"I do like men," she said thoughtfully, "but not all men, as I said I did. Now at supper I looked about me and I found only you attractive, save Sir Peter, and he counts nothing in a game of hearts."

"When you come to mingle with New York society you will, no doubt, find others far more attractive," I said stupidly.

"No doubt. Still, in the interim"—she looked straight at me from under her delicate level brows—"in the meanwhile, will you not amuse me?"

"How, madam?"

"I shall not tell you if you call me 'madam.'"

"Will the Hon. Elsin Grey inform me how I may amuse her ladyship?"

"Nor that, either."

I hesitated, then leaned nearer: "How may I amuse you, Elsin?"

"Why, by courting me, silly!" she said, laughing, and spreading her silken fan. "How else is a woman amused?"

Her smooth hand lay across the velvet arm of the sofa; I took it and raised it to my lips, and she smiled approval, then drew a languid little sigh, fanned, and vowed I was the boldest man she had ever known.

I told her how exquisite her beauty was, I protested at her coldness, I dedicated myself to her service, vowing eternal constancy; and presently my elaborate expressions rang truer and grew more simple, and she withdrew her hand with a laugh, looking at me out of those beautiful eyes which now were touched with curiosity.

"For a jester, Carus, you are too earnest," she said.

"Does pretense frighten you?"

She regarded me, silent, smiling, her fan at her lips.

"You are playing with fire," she said.

"Tell me, heart of flint, am I the steel to strike a spark from?" I asked, laughing.

"I do not know yet of what metal you are made, Carus," she said thoughtfully, yet with that dim smile hovering ever upon her lips.

She dropped her fan and held up one finger. "Listen; let me read you. Here is my measure of such a man as you: First of all, generous!—look at your mouth, which God first fashions, then leaves for us to make or mar. Second, your eyes—sincere! for though you blush like a maiden, Carus, your eyes are steady to the eyes that punish. Third, dogged! spite of the fierce impatience that sets your chiseled nose a-quiver at the nostrils. There! Am I not a very gipsy for a fortune? Read me, now."

After a long silence I said, "I can not."

"Truly?"

"Truly. I can not read you, Elsin."

She opened her palm and held her fingers, one by one, frowning in an effort to be just: "First, I am a fool; second, I am a fool; third, I am a fool; fourth—"

I caught her hand, and she looked at me with a charming laugh.

"I *am*," she insisted, her hand resting in mine.

"Why?"

"Why, because I—I am in love with Walter Butler—and—and I never liked a man as well as I like you!"

I was astounded. She sighed, slowly shaking her head. "That is it, you see. Love is very different from having a good time. He is so proud, so sad, so buried in noble melancholy, so darkly handsome, and all afire with passion—which advances him not a whit with me nor commends him to my mercy—only when he stands before me, his dark golden eyes lost in delicious melancholy; then, *then*, Carus, I know that it must be love I feel; but it is not a very cheerful sentiment." She sighed again, picking up her fan with one hand—I held the other.

"Now, with you—and I have scarce known you a dozen hours—it is so charming, so pleasant and cheerful—and I like you so much, Carus!—oh, the sentiment I entertain for you is far pleasanter than love. Have you ever been in love?"

"I am, Elsin—almost."

"Almost? Mercy on us! What will the lady say to 'almost'?"

"God knows," I said, smiling.

"Good!" she said approvingly; "leave her in God's care, and practise on me to perfect your courtship. I like it, really I do. It is strange, too," she mused, with a tender smile of reminiscence, "for I have never let Captain Butler so much as touch my hand. But discretion, you see, is love; isn't it? So if I am so indiscreet with you, what harm is there?"

"Are you unhappy away from him?" I asked.

"No, only when with him. He seems to wring my heart—I don't know why, but, oh, I do so pity him!"

"Are you—plighted?"

"Oh, dear me, yes—but secretly. Ah, I should not have told you that!—but there you are, Carus; and I do believe that I could tell you everything I know if our acquaintance endures but twelve more hours. And *that*," she added, considering me calmly, "is rather strange, I think. Don't you?"

Ere I could reply came Sir Peter, talking loudly, protesting that it was a monstrous shame for me to steal away their guest, that I was a villain and all knew it, he himself best of all; and without more ado he tucked her arm under his and marched triumphantly away, leaving me there alone in the deserted room.

But as Elsin gained the door she turned, looking back, and, laying her hand upon her lips, threw me a kiss behind Sir Peter's shoulders.

## CHAPTER III

### THE COQ D'OR

The days that followed were brilliant links in a fierce sequence of gaiety; and this though the weather was so hot that the very candles in their sconces drooped, dripping their melted wax on egrette and lace, scarlet coat and scarf. A sort of midsummer madness attacked the city; we danced in the hot moonlit nights, we drove at noontide, with the sun flaring in a sky of sapphire, we boated on the Bronx, we galloped out to the lines, escorted by a troop of horse, to see the Continental outposts beyond Tarrytown—so bold they had become, and no "skinners," either, but scouts of Heath, blue dragons if our glasses lied not, well horsed, newly saddled, holsters of bearskin, musket on thigh, and the July sun a-flashing on crested helmet and crossed sling-buckles. And how my heart drummed and the red blood leaped in me to beat in neck and temple, at sight of my own comrades! And how I envied them, free to ride erect and proud in the light of day, harnessed for battle, flying no false colors for concealment—all fair and clean and aboveboard! And I a spy!

We were gay, I say, and the town had gone mid-summer mad of its own fancy—a fevered, convulsive reaction from a strain too long endured; and while the outlook for the King was no whit better here, and much worse in the South, yet, as it was not yet desperate, the garrison, the commander, and the Governor made a virtue of necessity, and, rousing from the pent inertia of the dreadful winter and shaking off the lethargy of spring, paced their cage with a restlessness that quickened to a mania for some relief in the mad distraction of folly and frivolity.

And first, Sir Peter gave a ball at our house in honor of Elsin Grey, and we danced in the state drawing-room, and in the hallway, and in the south drawing-room, and Sir Henry walked a minuet with the Hon. Elsin Grey, and I had her to wine and later in a Westchester reel. Too much punch was drunk, iced, which is a deadly thing, and worse still when the foundation is laid in oranged tea! Too many officers, too many women, and all so hot, so suffocating, that the red ran from lip and cheek, streaking the face-powder, and the bare enameled shoulders of the women were frosted with perspiration like dew on wet roses.

That was the first frolic given in her honor, followed by that wild dance at the Governor's, where the thickets of clustered candles drooped like lilies afire, and great islands of ice melted in the punch-bowls ere they had been emptied a third. And yet the summer madness continued; by day we drove in couples, in Italian chaises, or made cherry-parties to Long Island, or sailed the bay to the Narrows, or played rustic and fished in the bay; at night we danced, danced, danced, and I saw little of Elsin Grey save through a blaze of candle-light to move a minuet with her, to press her hand in a reel, or to conduct her to some garden pavilion where servants waited with ices amid a thirsty, breathless, jostling throng.

The heat abated nothing; so terrible was it in the city that spite of the shade afforded by elm, lime, and honey-locust, men and horses were stricken on the streets, and the Tea Water ran low, and the Collect, where it flows out into a stream, dried up, and Mr. Rutger's swamps stank. Also, as was noted by men like me, who, country-bred, concern themselves with trifles, the wild birds which haunted the trees in street and lane sang no more, and I saw at times Lord Baltimore's orioles and hedge-birds, beaks open, eyes partly closed, panting from the sun, so fierce it beat upon us in New York that summertide.

As for the main Sir Peter had meant to fight with his Flatbush birds, we tried a shake-bag, stags, which, though fairly matched and handled by past masters, billed and pecked and panted without a blow from wing or spur, till we understood that the heat had stunned them, and so gave up to wait for cooler sport.

We waited, but not in idleness; the cage-fever drove us afield, and the De Lanceys had us to the house for bowls and cricket, which the ladies joined, spoiling it somewhat for my taste; and we played golf at Mr. Lisperard's, which presently lost all charm for me, as Elsin Grey remained at the pavilion and touched no club, neither wood nor iron, save to beat the devil's tattoo upon the grass and smile into the bold eyes of Captain O'Neil.

At Rivington's we found tennis, too, and good rackets, and I played one whole morning with Elsin Grey, nor wearied of her delight that she beat me easily; though why I permitted it and why her victory gave me pleasure is more than I can comprehend, I always desiring to appear well in trials of skill at which it is a shame for gentlemen not to excel, and not ungallant to do one's best with ladies to oppose.

Every Tuesday, at Bayard's Hill near the pump, a bull was baited; but that bloody sport, and the matching of dogs, was never to my taste, although respectable gentlemen of fashion attended.

However, there was racing at many places—at Newmarket on Salisbury plain, and at Jamaica; also Mr. Lisperard had a fine course at Greenwich village, near the country house of Admiral Warren, and Mr. De Lancey another between First and Second streets, near the Bowery Lane; but mostly we drove to Mr. Rutger's to see the running horses; and I was ashamed not to bet when Elsin Grey provoked me with her bantering challenge to a wager, laying bets under my nose; but I could not risk money and remember how every penny saved meant to some prisoner aboard the *Jersey* more than a drop of water to a soul in torment.

And how it hurt me—I who love to please, and who adore in others that high disregard of expense that I dared now never disregard! And to appear poor-spirited in her eyes, too! and to see the others stare at times, and to be aware of quiet glances exchanged, and of meaning eyes!

It was late in July that the cooling change came—a delicious breath from the Narrows blowing steady as a trade; and the change having been predicted a week since by Venus, a negro wench of Lady Coleville's, Sir Peter had wisely taken precaution to send word to Horrock in Flatbush; and now the main was to be fought at the cockpit in Great George Street, at the Frenchman's "Coq d'Or," a tavern maintained most jealously by the garrison's officers, and most exclusive though scarce decent in a moral sense, it being notorious for certain affairs in which even the formality of Gretna Green was dispensed with.

Many a daintily cloaked figure stole, masked, to the rendezvous in the garden under the cherry-trees, and many a duel was fought in the pleasant meadows to the south which we called Vauxhall; and there I have seen silent men waiting at dawn, playing with the coffee they scarce could swallow, while their seconds paced the path beyond the stile, whistling reflectively, switching the wild roses, with a watchful eye for the coming party.

But now, concerning that cocking-main at the Coq d'Or, and how it came about. The day was to be a merry one, Lady Coleville and Elsin Grey sleeping until afternoon from the dissipation of the dance at the Assembly, which lasted until the breakfast hour; Sir Peter, Captains Harkness and O'Neil, and I to see the main in the morning, lunch at the tavern, and return to rest until time to dress for the great ball and supper given by the officers of the artillery at Fort George.

The day, the 28th of July, broke cloudless and sweetly cool. Dressing, I saw the jack flying straight in the sea-wind and a schooner in the North River heeled over and scudding south, with a white necklace of foam trailing from her sprit back along half her water-line.

Sir Peter, in riding-boots and coat, came in high spirits to drink a morning cup with me, saying his birds had arrived and Horrock had gone forward with them, and that we must bolt breakfast and mount, for the Fifty-fourth's officers were early risers, and we should not detain them. And so he chattered on, joyously, pacing my chamber while Dennis buckled my spurs.

At breakfast we bolted what was set before us, with many a glance through the windows where, in the garden drive, our horses stood saddled in the shade of an elm, a black at each bit, and the whole stable-force out, all a-grinning to wish the master luck of his Flatbush birds and the main to boot.

"Carus," said Sir Peter, fork poised, glass in hand, "it's a thousand on the main, a hundred on each battle, and I must win. You know that!"

I knew it only too well and said so, speaking cheerfully yet seriously of his affairs, which had become so complicated since the closer blockade of the city. But he was ever gaily impatient of details and of pounds and pence. Accounts he utterly refused to audit, leaving it to me to pay his debts, patch up gaps left by depreciated securities, and find a fortune to maintain him and his wife in the style which, God knows, befitted him, but which he could no longer properly afford. And when it came to providing money to fling from race-track to cockpit, and from coffee-house to card-room, I told him plainly he had none, which made him laugh and swear and vow I was treating him most shabbily. And it was no use; he would have his pin-money, and I must sell or pledge or borrow, at an interest most villainous, from the thrifty folk in Duke Street.

So now, when I offered to discuss the danger of extravagance, he swore he would not have a day's pleasure ruined by a sermon, and presently we rose and went into the garden to mount, and I saw Sir Peter distributing silver among the servants, so that all could share the pleasure and lay wagers among their kind for the honor of the Flatbush birds and the master who bred them.

"Come, Carus," he sang out from his saddle, and I followed him at a gallop out into Broadway and up the street, keeping under the shade of the trees to save our horses, though the air was cool and we had not far to go.

Presently he drew bridle, and we walked our horses past Partition Street, past Barckley, and the common, where I glanced askance at the ominous row of the three dread buildings, the Bridewell, the Almshouse, the Prison, with the Provost's gallows standing always ready between; and it brought sullen thoughts to me which four years of patience could not crush; nor had all these years of inaction dulled the fierce spark that flashed to fire within me when I looked up at the barred windows and at the sentinels, and thought of mine own people rotting there, and of Mr. Cunningham, the Provost, whom hell should one day be the worse for.

"Is aught amiss, Carus?" asked Sir Peter, catching my eye.

"Yes, the cruelty practised yonder!" I blurted out. Never before had I said as much to any man.

"You mean the debtors—or those above in the chain-room?" he asked, surprised.

"I was not speaking of the Bridewell, but of the Prison," I said.

"What cruelty, Carus? You mean the rigor Cunningham uses?"

"Rigor!" I said, laughing, and my laugh was unpleasant.

He looked at me narrowly. We rode past Warren Street and the Upper Barracks in silence, saluting an officer here and there with preoccupied punctiliousness. Already I was repenting of my hardness in mixing openly with politics or war—matters I had ever avoided or let pass with gay indifference.

"Carus," he said, patting his horse's mane, "you will lay a bet for the honor of the family this time—will you not?"

"I have no money," I replied, surprised; for never before had he offered to suggest an interference into my own affairs—never by word or look.

"No money!" he repeated, laughing. "Gad, you rake, what do you do with it all?" And as I continued silent, he said more gravely, "May I speak plainly to a kinsman and dear friend?"

"Always," I said uneasily.

"Then, without offense, Carus, I think that, were I you, I should bet a little—now and again—fling the guineas for a change—now and then—if I were you, Carus."

"If you were I you would not," I said, reddening to the temples.

"I think I should, nevertheless," he persisted, smiling. "Carus, you know that if you need money to bet with—"

"I'll tell you what I need, Sir Peter," said I, looking him in the eye. "I need your faith in me that I am not by choice a niggard."

"God forbid!" he cried.

"Yet I pass among many for that," I said hotly. "I know it, I suffer. Yet I can not burn a penny; it belongs to others, that's all."

"A debt!" he murmured.

"Call it as you will. The money you overpay me for my poor services is not even my own to enjoy."

Sir Peter dropped his bridle and slapped his gloved hands together with a noise that made his horse jump. "I knew it," he cried, "I knew it, and so I told Elsin when she came to me, troubled, because in you this one flaw appeared; yet though she questioned me, in the same breath she vowed the marble perfect, and asked me if you had parents or kin dependent. She is a rare maid, my pretty kinswoman—" He hesitated, glancing cornerwise at me.

"Do you know Walter Butler well?" I asked carelessly.

"No, only a little. Why, Carus?"

"Is he married?"

"I never heard it. He is scarcely known to me save through Sir John Johnson, and that his zeal led him to what some call a private reprisal."

"Yes, he burned our house, or his Indians did, making pretense that they did not know who lived there, but thought the whole Bush a rebel hotbed. It is true the house was new, built while Sir John lay brooding there in Canada over his broken parole. Perhaps Walter Butler did not know the house was ours."

"You are very generous, Carus," said Sir Peter gravely.

"No, not very. You see, my father and my mother were in France, and I here, and Butler's raiders only murdered one old man—a servant, all alone there, a man too old and deaf to understand their questions. I know who slew that ancient body-servant to my father, who often held me on his knees. No, Sir Peter, I am not generous, as you say. But there are matters which must await the precedence of great events ere their turn comes in the mills which grind so slow, so sure, and so exceeding fine."

Sir Peter looked at me in silence, and in silence we rode on until we came to the tavern called the Coq d'Or.

They were there, the early risers of the Fifty-fourth—a jolly, noisy crowd, all scarlet and gold; and they set up a cheer, which was half welcome, half defiance, when we rode into the tavern yard and dismounted, bowing right and left; and the landlord came to receive us, and servants followed with champagne-cup, iced; and there was old Horrock, too, hat in hand, to attend Sir Peter, with a shake of his wise old head and a smile on his furrowed face—Horrock, the prince of handlers, with his chicken-men, and his scales, and his Flatbush birds a-crowning defiance to the duck-wings, spangles, pyles, and Lord knows what, that his Majesty's Fifty-fourth Regiment of Foot had backed to win with every penny and farthing they could scrape to lay against us.

I heard old Horrock whisper to Sir Peter, who was reading over the match-list, "They're the best we can do, sir; combs low-cut, wings rounded, hackle and saddle trimmed to a T, and the vanes perfect." He laughed: "What more can I do, sir? They had aniseed in their bread on the third day, and on the weighing-day sheep-heart, and not two teacups of water in the seven. They came from the walks in prime condition, and tartar and jalap did the rest. They sparred free in the boots and took to the warm ale and sweet-wort, and the rooms were dark except at feeding. What more can I do, sir, except heel them to a hair's-breadth?"

"You have no peer, Horrock, and you know it," said Sir Peter, kindly, and the old man's furrowed face shone as he trotted off to the covert-room.

Meanwhile I had been hailed by a dozen friends of a dozen different regiments, good fellows all: Major Jamison of the Partisans; Ensign Halvar, young Caryl of the Fortieth Foot; Helsing of the Artillery, and apparently every available commissioned officer of the Fifty-fourth, including Colonel

Eyre, a gentleman with a scientific taste for the pit that gained him the title of "The Game 'Un" from saucy subalterns, needless to say without his knowledge.

"A good bird, well handled, freely backed—what more can a gentleman ask?" said Major Neville, waddling beside Sir Peter as we filed into the tavern. "My wife calls it a shameful sport, but the cockpit is a fashionable passion, damme! and a man out o' fashion is worse than an addled cluck-egg! Eh, Renault? Good gad, sir! Do not cocks fight unurged, and are not their battles with nature's spurs more cruel than when matched by man and heeled with steel or even silver, which mercifully ends the combat in short order? And so I tell my wife, Sir Peter, but she calls me brute," he panted plaintively.

"Pooh!" said Sir Peter, laughing, "I can always find a reason for any transgression in the list from theft to murder, and justify each crime by logic—if I put my mind to do so. But my mind is not partial to logic. I fight game-fowl and like it, be the fashion and the ethics what they may."

He was unjust to himself as usual; to him there was no difference between the death of a pheasant afield and the taking off of a good bird in the pit.

Seated around the pit, there was some delay in showing, and Dr. Carmody of the brigade staff gave me, unsolicited, his mature opinions upon game-fowl:

"Show me a bird of bold carriage, comb bright red and upright, eye full and bright, beak strong and in good socket, breast full, body broad at shoulder and tapering to tail, thigh short, round, and hard as a nail, leg stout, flat-footed, and spur low—a bird with bright, hard feathers, strong in a quill, warm and firm to the hand—and I care not what breed he be, spangle or black-red, I'll lay my last farthing with you, Mr. Renault, if it shall please you."

"And what am I to back?" said I, laughing—"a full plume, a long, soft hackle, a squirrel-tail, a long-thighed, in-kneed, weak-beaked, coarse-headed henning-fowl selected by you?"

The little doctor roared with laughter; the buzz and hum of conversation increased around us—bits of banter, jests tossed from friend to friend.

"Who dubs your birds for you. Sir Peter?" cried Helsing—"the Bridewell barber?"

"Ten guineas to eight with you on the first battle," retorted Sir Peter, courteously; and, "Done with you, sir!" said Helsing, noting the bet, while Sir Peter booked his memorandum and turned to meet a perfect shower of offers, all of which he accepted smilingly. And I—oh, I was sick to sit there without a penny laid to show my loyalty to Sir Peter. But it must be so, and I bit my lip and strove to smile and parry with a jest the well-meant offers which now and then came flying my way. But O'Neil and Harkness backed the Flatbush birds right loyally, cautioned by Sir Peter, who begged that they wait; but they would not—and one was Irish—so nothing would do but a bold front and an officer snapped with, "Done, sir!"

The judges and the referee had been chosen, the color-writers selected, and Sir Peter had won the draw, choosing, of course, to weigh first, the main being governed by rules devised by the garrison regiments, partly Virginian, partly New York custom. Matches had been made in camera, the first within the half-ounce, and allowing a stag four ounces; round heels were to be used; all cutters, twists, and slashers barred; the metal was steel, not silver.

And now the pitters had taken station, Horrock and a wall-eyed Bat-man of the Train, and the birds had billed three times and had been fairly delivered on the score—a black brass-back of ours against a black-red of the Fifty-fourth. Scarcely a second did they eye one another when crack! slap! they were at it, wing and gaffle. Suddenly the black-red closed and held, struck like lightning five or six times, and it was all over with Sir Peter's Flatbush brass-back, done for in a single heat.

"Fast work," observed Sir Peter calmly, taking snuff, with a pleasant nod to the enemy.

Then odds on the main flew like lightning, all taken by Sir Peter and O'Neil and a few others of ours, and I biting my lip and fixing my eyes on the roof. Had I not dreaded to hurt Sir Peter I should never, never have come.

We again showed a brass-back and let him run in the pit before cutting a feather, whereupon Sir Peter rashly laid ten to five and few takers, too, for the Fifty-fourth showed a pyle of five-pounds-three—a shuffler which few fancied. But Lord! the shuffler drummed our brass-back to the tune of Sir Daniel O'Day, and though two ounces light, took just eight minutes to crow for victory.

Again we showed, this time a duck-wing, and the Fifty-fourth a blue hackle, heavily backed, who proved a wheeler, but it took twenty minutes for him to lay the duck-wing upon the carpet; and we stood three to the bad, but game, though the odds on the main were heavily against us. Our fourth, a blinker, blundered to victory; our fifth hung himself twice to the canvas and finally to the heels of a bewildered spangle; our sixth, a stag, and a wheeling lunatic at that, gave to the Fifty-fourth a bad quarter of an hour, and then, when at the last moment our victory seemed certain, was sent flying to eternity in one last feathered whirlwind, leaving us four to split and four to go, with hopeless odds against us, and Sir Peter calmly booking side-bets on anything that anybody offered.

When the call came we all rose, leaving the pit by the side-entrance, which gave on the cherry garden, where tables were spread for luncheon and pipes fetched for all who cared not to scorch their lips with Spanish cigars.

Sir Peter, hard hit, moved about in great good humor, a seed-cake in one hand, a mug of beer in t'other; and who could suppose he stood to lose the thousand guineas he had such need of—and more besides!—so much more that it turned me cold to think of Duke Street, and how on earth I was to find funds for the bare living, luxuries aside.

As for O'Neil, the crazy, warm-hearted Irishman went about blustering for odds—pure, generous bravado!—and the Fifty-fourth, to their credit, let him go unharmed, and Harkness, too. As for me, I was very quiet, holding my peace and my opinions to myself, which was proper, as I had laid not one penny on a feather that day.

Sir Peter, seeing me sitting alone under a cherry-tree, came strolling over, followed by Horrock.

"Well, Carus," he said, smiling blandly, "more dealing with Duke Street, eh? Pooh! There's balm in Gilead and a few shillings left still in the Dock-Ward!" He laughed, but I said nothing. "Speak out, man!" he said gaily; "what do you read by the pricking of your thumbs?"

"Ask Horrock," I said bluntly. He turned to the grim-visaged retainer, laying his hand familiarly on the old man's shoulder.

"Horrock begs me to ride for an even break," he said; "don't you, O paragon among pitters?"

"Yes, sir, I do. Ask Mr. Renault what Sir William Johnson's Huron Reds did to the Patroon's Tartars in every main fought 'twixt Johnstown and Albany in '72 and '73."

I looked up, astounded. "Have you four Hurons to show?" I asked Sir Peter, incredulously.

"I have," he said.

A desperate hope glimmered in my mind—nay, not merely a hope but a fair certainty that ruin could be held at arm's length for a while. So possessed was I by absolute faith in Sir William Johnson's strain, called Hurons, that I listened approvingly to Sir Peter's plans for a dashing recoup. After all, it was now or never; the gamblers' fever seized me, too, in a vise-like grip. Why should I not win a thousand guineas for my prisoners, risking but a few hundred on such a hazard!

"You will be there, of course," he said. And after a long silence, I answered:

"No, I shall walk in the garden until you finish. The main should be ended at five."

"As you choose, Carus," he answered pleasantly, glancing at his watch. Then turning, he cried: "Time, gentlemen—and four to ten we split the main!"

"Done with you, Sir Peter!" came the answering shout as from a single throat; and Sir Peter, smiling to himself, booked briefly and sauntered toward the tavern door, old Horrock trotting faithfully at heel.

I had risen and was nervously pacing the grass under the cherry-trees, miserable, full of bitterness, depressed, already bitterly regretting the chance lost, arguing that it was a certainty and no hazard. Yet, deep in my heart, I knew no gentleman can bet on certainty, and where there is no

certainty there is risk. That risk I had not taken; the prisoners were to gain or suffer nothing. Thinking of these matters I started to stroll through the cherry grove, and as I stepped from the shade out upon the sunny lawn the shadow of an advancing figure warned me, and I looked up to behold a young officer, in a black and green uniform, crossing my path, his head turned in my direction, his dark, luminous gaze fastened curiously upon me.

Dazzled somewhat by the sun in my eyes, I peered at him as he passed, noting the strange cut of his regimentals, the silver buttons stamped with a motto in relief, the curious sword-knot of twisted buck-thong heavily embroidered in silver and scarlet wampum. Wampum? And what was that devil's device flashing on button and shoulder-knot?

"Butler's Rangers!"

Slowly I turned to stare; he halted, looking back at me, a slim, graceful figure in forest-green, his own black hair gathered in a club, his dark amber eyes fixed on mine with that veiled yet detached glare I had not forgotten.

"Captain Butler," I said mechanically.

Hats in hand, heels together, we bowed low in the sunshine—so low that our hands on our hilts alone retained the blades in their scabbards, while our hats swept the short grass on the lawn; then, leisurely erect, once more we stood face to face, a yard of sod betwixt us, the sunshine etching our blue shadows motionless.

"Mr. Renault," he said, in that colorless voice he used at times, "I had thought to know you, but you are six years older. Time's alchemy"—he hesitated, then with a perfect bow—"refines even the noblest metal. I trust your health and fortune are all that you could desire. Is madam, your mother, well, and your honorable father?"

"I thank you, Captain Butler."

He looked at me a moment, then with a melancholy smile and a gesture wholly graceful: "It is poor reparation to say that I regret the error of my Cayugas which committed your house to the flames."

"The fortune of war, Captain Butler. I trust your home at Butlersbury still survives intact."

A dull color crept into his pallid cheeks.

"The house at Butlersbury stands," he said, "as do Johnson Hall, Guy Park, and old Fort Johnson. We hope ere long to open them again to our friends, Mr. Renault."

"I have understood so," I said politely. "When do you march from Thendara?"

Again the dark color came into his face. "Sir Frederick Haldimand is a babbler!" he said, between tightening lips. "Never a secret, never a plan, but he must bawl it aloud to all who care to listen, or sound it as he gads about from camp to city—aye, and chatters it to the forest trees for lack of audience, I suppose. All New York is humming with it, is it not, Mr. Renault?"

"And if it is, what harm?" I said pleasantly. "Who ever heard of Thendara, save as a legend of a lost town somewhere in the wilderness? Who in New York knows where Thendara lies?"

He looked at me with unwinking eyes—the empty stare of a bird of prey.

"*You* know, for one," he said; and his eyes suddenly became piercing.

I smiled at him without comprehension, and he took the very vagueness of my smile for acquiescence.

Like the luminous shadow of summer lightning the flame flickered in his eyes, and went out, leaving them darkly drowned in melancholy. He stepped nearer.

"Let us sit under the trees for a moment—if I am not detaining you, Mr. Renault," he said in a low, pleasant voice. I bowed. We turned, walking shoulder to shoulder toward the shade of the cherry-trees, now in full foliage and heavily fruited. With perfect courtesy he halted, inclining his head, a gesture for me to pass before him. We seated ourselves at a rustic table beneath the trees; and I remember the ripe cherries which had dropped upon it from the clusters overhead, and how, as we talked, I picked them up, tasting them one by one.

"I am here," he began abruptly, "of my own idea. No one, not even Sir Henry, is aware that I am in New York. I came from Halifax by the *Gannet*, schooner, landing at Coenties Slip among the fishing-smack in time for breakfast; then to Sir Peter Coleville's, learning he was here—cock-fighting!" A trace of a sneer edged his finely cut nostrils.

"If you desire concealment, is it wise to wear that uniform?" I asked.

"I am known on the fighting-line, not in this peaceful garrison of New York," he said haughtily. "We of the landed gentry of Tryon County make as little of New York as New York makes of us!" A deeper sneer twitched his upper lip. "Had I my way, this port should be burned from river to river, fort, shipping, dock—all, even to the farms outlying on the hills—and the enervated garrison marched out to take the field!" He made a violent gesture toward the north. "I should fling every man and gun pell-mell on that rebels' rat-nest called West Point, and uproot and tear it from the mountain flank! I should sweep the Hudson with fire; I should hurl these rotting regiments into Albany and leave it a smoking ember, and I should tread the embers into the red-wet earth! That is the way to make war! But this—" He stared south across the meadows where in the distance the sunlit city lay, windows aglitter, spires swimming in the blue, and on the bay white sails glimmering off shores of living green.

"Mr. Renault," he said, "I am here to submit this plan to Sir Henry Clinton. Lord Cornwallis advocated the abandonment of New York last May. I am here to urge it. If Sir Henry will approve, then the war ends before the snow flies; if he will not, I still shall act my part, and lay the north in ashes so that not one ear of corn may be garnered for the rebel army, not one grain of wheat be milled, not a truss of hay remain betwixt Johnstown and Saratoga! Nothing in the north but blackened desolation and the silence of annihilation. That is how I make war."

"That is your reputation," I said calmly.

His smile was ghastly—a laugh without sound, that touched neither eyes nor mouth.

At that moment I heard cries and laughter and a great babel of voices from the tavern. He rose instantly, I also; the stable-lads were bringing up the horses; the tavern door was flung wide, and out of it poured the cockers, a turbulent river of scarlet and gold, the noisy voices and laughter increasing to tumult as the officers mounted with jingle of spur and scabbard, draining the stirrup-cup and hastening to their duties.

"By gad, sir!" cried Jamison, turning in his saddle as he passed me, "those Hurons did the trick for Sir Peter. He's split the main, so help me! and stands to win a fortune."

And Dr. Carmody, galloping past, waved his hand with a hopeless laugh. "We're cleaned out! cleaned out!" he cried; "that main has beggared the brigade staff. Damme, he's beggared the entire garrison!"

Others rode by, gaily uproarious in defeat, clean, gallant sportsmen all, saluting misfortune as cheerily and as recklessly as they might have greeted victory.

"Have at thee, buck!" shouted young Caryl, waving his hand as he passed me. "We'll try it again, you villain, if there's life left in our fasting mess!"

And Helsing, passing at a canter, grinned and beat his gold-laced breast in mock despair, shouting back to me: "I'm for Duke Street and Mendoza! Dine well, Carus, you who can afford to sup on chicken!"

Then came Sir Peter, cool, debonair, surrounded by a crowd afoot, Horrock at heel, his old eyes dim with joy, his grim mouth set; and after him two lads leading our horses, and O'Neil and Harkness mounted, curbing the triumph that glittered in their eyes.

"Yonder comes Sir Peter," I said to Walter Butler. "Shall I have the honor of making you known to one another?"

"He has forgotten me, I think," said Butler slowly, as Sir Peter raised his hat in triumphant greeting to me and then included Butler in a graver salute.

"You have heard the news, Carus?" he asked gaily.

"I give you joy," I said. Then, with colorless ceremony, I made them known to one another, and with greater ceremony they exchanged salutes and compliments—a pair matched in flawless breeding and the usages of perfect courtesy.

"I bear a letter," said Walter Butler, "and have this morning done myself the honor of waiting upon Lady Coleville and the 'Hon. Elsin Grey.'"

And as Sir Peter acknowledged the courtesy, I looked suddenly at Walter Butler, remembering what Elsin Grey had told me.

"The letter is from General Sir Frederick Haldimand," he said pleasantly, "and I fear it bears you news not too agreeable. The Hon. Miss Grey is summoned home, Sir Peter—pending a new campaign."

"Home!" exclaimed Sir Peter, surprised. "Why, I thought—I had hoped we were to have her with us until winter. Gad! It is as you say, not too agreeable news, Captain Butler. Why, she has been the life of the town, sir; she has waked us and set us all a-dancing like yokels at a May-pole or a ring-around-a-rosy! Split me! Captain Butler, but Lady Coleville will be sorry to learn this news—and I, too, sir, and every man in New York town."

He looked at me in genuine distress. My face was perfectly expressionless.

"This should hit you hard, Carus," he said meaningly. Then, without seeing, I felt Walter Butler's head slowly turning, and was aware of his eyes on me.

"Come, gentlemen," said Sir Peter, "the horses are here. Is not that fine chestnut your mount, Captain Butler? You will ride with us, will you not? Where is your baggage? At Flocks? I shall send for it—no, sir, I take no excuse. While you are in New York you shall be my guest, Captain Butler."

And so, Sir Peter naming Butler to O'Neil and Harkness, and salutes being decently exchanged, we mounted and cantered off along Great George Street, Horrock on his hunter bringing up the rear.

And at every stride of my horse a new misgiving, a deeper distrust of this man Butler stirred in my troubled heart.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUNSET AND DARK

It was six o'clock in the early evening, the sun still shining, and in the air a sea-balm most delicious. Sir Peter and Captain Butler had gone to see Sir Henry, Butler desiring to be presented by so grand a personage as Sir Peter, I think, through mere vanity; for his own rank and title and his pressing mission should have been sufficient credentials. Sir Henry Clinton was not too difficult of approach.

Meanwhile I, finding neither Lady Coleville nor the Hon. Elsin Grey at home, had retired to my chambers to write to Colonel Willett concerning Butler's violent designs on the frontier. When I finished I made a sealed packet of all papers accumulated, and, seizing hat, snuff-box, and walking-stick, went out into Wall Street, through the dismal arcades of the City Hall, and down to Hanover Square. Opposite Mr. Goelet's Sign of the Golden Key, and next door to Mr. Minshall's fashionable Looking-Glass Store, was the Silver Box, the shop of Ennis the Tobacconist, a Boston man in our pay; and it was here that for four years I was accustomed to bring the dangerous despatches that should go north to his Excellency or to Colonel Willett, passed along from partizan to partizan and from agent to agent, though who these secret helpers along the route might be I never knew, only that Ennis charged himself with what despatches I brought, and a week or more later they were at Dobbs Ferry, West Point, or in Albany. John Ennis was there when I entered; he bowed his dour and angular New England bow, served a customer with snuff, bowed him to the door, then returned grinning to me, rubbing his long, lean, dangerous hands upon his apron—hands to throttle a Tryon County wolf!

"Butler's in town," he said harshly, through his beak of a nose. "I guess there's blood to be smelled somewhere in the north when the dog-wolf's abroad at sunup. He came by sloop this morning," he added, taking the packet from my hands and laying it upon a table in plain sight—the best way to conceal anything.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"A Bull's-Head drover whistled it an hour since," he said carelessly. "That same drover and his mate desire to see you, Mr. Renault. Could you, by chance, take the air at dusk—say on Great George Street—until you hear a whippoorwill?"

I nodded.

"You will not fail, then, sir? This drover and his fellow go north to-night, bearing the cross o' fire."

"I shall not fail them," I said, drawing a triple roll of guineas from my pocket. "This money goes to the prison-ships; they are worse off there than under Cunningham. See to it, Ennis. I shall bring more to-morrow."

He winked; then with grimace and circumstance and many a stiff-backed bow conducted me to the door, where I stood a moment, snuff-box in hand, as though testing some new and most delicious brand just purchased from the Silver Box.

There were many respectable folk abroad in Hanover Square, thronging the foot-paths, crowding along the gay shop-windows, officers lagging by the jeweler's show, sober gentlemen clustering about the book-stalls, ladies returning from their shopping or the hair-dresser's, young bucks, arm in arm, swaggering in and out of coffee-house and tavern.

As I stood there, making pretense to take snuff, I noticed a sedan-chair standing before Mrs. Ballin's millinery-shop, and seeing that the bearers were Lady Coleville's men, I crossed the street.

As I came up they touched their hats, and at the same moment the shop-door opened and out tripped, not Lady Coleville at all, but the Hon. Elsin Grey in the freshest of flowered gowns, wearing a piquant chip hat à la Gunning, with pink ribbons tied under her dainty chin.

"You!" she cried. "Of all men, to be caught a-raking in Hanover Square like some mincing macaroni, peeping into strange sedan-chairs!"

"I knew it was Lady Coleville's chair," I said, laughing, yet a little vexed, too.

"It isn't; it's Mrs. Barry's," she said. "Our chairs are all at the varnishers. Now what excuse can you trump up?"

"The bearers are Lady Coleville's," I said. "Don't be disagreeable. I came to walk with you."

"Expecting to meet Rosamund Barry! Thank you, Carus. And I may add that I have seen little of you since Friday; not that I had noticed your absence, but meeting you on your favorite promenade reminded me how recreant are men. Heigho! and alas! You may hand me to my chair before you leave me to go ogling Broad Street for your Sacharissa."

I conducted her to the curb in silence, tucking her perfumed skirts in as she seated herself. The bearers resumed the bars, and I, hat under one arm and stick at a fashionable angle, strolled along beside the chair as it proceeded up Wall Street. It was but a step to Broadway. I opened the chair door and aided her to descend, then dismissed the bearers and walked slowly with her toward the stoop.

"This silence is truly soothing," she observed, nose in the air, "but one can not expect everything, Mr. Renault."

"What is it that you lack?" I asked.

"A man to talk to," she said disdainfully. "For goodness sake, Carus, change that sulky face for a brighter mask and find a civil word for me. I do not aspire to a compliment, but, for mercy's sake, say something!"

"Will you walk with me a little way?" I inquired stiffly.

"Walk with you? Oh, what pleasure! Where? On Broadway? On Crown Street? On Queen Street? Or do you prefer Front Street and Old Slip? I wish to be perfectly agreeable, Carus, and I'll do anything to please you, even to running away with you in an Italian chaise!"

"I may ask you to do that, too," I said.

"Ask me, then! Mercy on the man! was there ever so willing a maid? Give me a moment to fetch a sun-mask and I'm off with you to any revel you please—short of the Coq d'Or," she added, with a daring laugh—"and I might be persuaded to that—as far as the cherry-trees—with *you*, Carus, and let my reputation go hang!"

We had walked on into Broadway and along the foot-path under the lime-trees where the robins were singing that quaint evening melody I love, and the pleasant scent of grass and salt breeze mingled in exquisite freshness.

"I had a dish of tea with some very agreeable people in Queen Street," she remarked. "Lady Coleville is there still. I took Mrs. Barry's chair to buy me a hat—and how does it become me?" she ended, tipping her head on one side for my inspection.

"It is modish," I replied indifferently.

"Certainly it is modish," she said dryly—"a Gunning hat, and cost a penny, too. Oh, Carus, when I think what that husband of mine must pay to maintain me—"

"What husband?" I said, startled.

"Why, *any* husband!" She made a vague gesture. "Did I say that I had picked him out yet, silly? But there must be one some day, I suppose."

We had strolled as far as St. Paul's and had now returned as far as Trinity. The graves along the north transept of the ruined church were green and starred with wild flowers, and we turned into the churchyard, walking very slowly side by side.

"Elsin," I began.

"Ah! the gentleman has found his tongue," she exclaimed softly. "Speak, Sir Frippon; thy Sacharissa listens."

"I have only this to ask. Dance with me once to-night, will you?—nay, twice, Elsin?"

She seated herself upon a green mound and looked up at me from under her chip hat. "I have not at all made up my mind," she said. "Captain Butler is to be there. He may claim every dance that Sir Henry does not claim."

"Have you seen him?" I asked sullenly.

"Mercy, yes! He came at noon while you and Sir Peter were gambling away your guineas at the Coq d'Or."

"He waited upon *you*?"

"He waited on Lady Coleville. I was there."

"Were you not surprised to see him in New York?"

"Not very"—she considered me with a far-away smile—"not very greatly nor very—agreeably surprised. I have told you his sentiments regarding me."

"I can not understand," I said, "what you see in him to fascinate you."

"Nor I," she replied so angrily that she startled me. "I thought to-day when I met him, Oh, dear! Now I'm to be harrowed with melancholy and passion, when I was having such an agreeable time! But, Carus, even while I pouted I felt the subtle charm of that very sadness, the strange, compelling influence of those melancholy eyes." She sighed and plucked a late violet, drawing the stem slowly between her white teeth and staring at the ruined church.

After a while I said: "Do you regret that you are so soon to leave us?"

"Regret it?" She looked at me thoughtfully. "Carus," she said, "you are wonderfully attractive to me. I wish you had acquired that air of gentle melancholy—that poet's pallor which becomes a noble sadness—and I might love you, if you asked me."

"I'm sad enough at your going," I said lightly.

"Truly, are you sorry? And when I am gone will you forget la belle Canadienne? Ah, monsieur, l'amitié est une chose si rare, que, n'eut-elle duré qu'un jour, on doit en respecter jusqu'au souvenir."

"It is not I who shall forget to respect it, madam, jusqu'au souvenir."

"Nor I, mon ami. Had I not known that love is at best a painful pleasure I might have mistaken my happiness with you for something very like it."

"You babble of love," I blurted out, "and you know nothing of it! What foolish whim possesses you to think that fascination Walter Butler has for you is love?"

"What is it, then?" she asked, with a little shudder.

"How do I know? He has the devil's own tenacity, bold black eyes and a well-cut head, and a certain grace of limb and bearing nowise remarkable. But"—I waved my hand helplessly—"how can a sane man understand a woman's preference?—nay, Elsin, I do not even pretend to understand *you*. All I know is that our friendship began in an instant, opened to full sweetness like a flower overnight, and, like a flower, is nearly ended now—nearly ended."

"Not ended; I shall remember."

"Well, and if we both remember—to what purpose?"

"To what purpose is friendship, Carus, if not to remember when alone?"

I listened, head bent. Then, pursuing my own thoughts aloud: "It is not wise for a maid to plight her troth in secret, I care not for what reasons. I know something of men; it is a thing no honest man should ask of any woman. Why do you fear to tell Sir Frederick Haldimand?"

"Captain Butler begged me not to."

"Why?" I asked sharply.

"He is poor. You must surely know what the rebels have done—how their commissioners of sequestration seized land and house from the Tryon County loyalists. Captain Butler desires me to say nothing until, through his own efforts and by his sword, he has won back his own in the north. And I consented. Meanwhile," she added airily, "he has a glove of mine to kiss, I refusing him my hand to weep upon. And so we wait for one another, and pin our faith upon his sword."

"To wait for him—to plight your troth and wait for him until he and Sir John Johnson have come into their own again?"

"Yes, Carus."

"And then you mean to wed him?"

She was silent. The color ebbed in her cheeks.

I stood looking at her through the evening light. Behind her, gilded by the level rays of the sinking sun, a new headstone stood, and on it I read:

**IN MEMORY OF**

**Michael Cresap, First Cap't**

**Of the Rifle Battalions,**

**And Son to Col. Thomas**

**Cresap, Who Departed this**

**Life, Oct. 18, a.d. 1775**

Cresap, the generous young captain, whose dusty column of Maryland riflemen I myself had seen when but a lad, pouring through Broadalbin Bush on the way to Boston siege! This was his grave; and a Tory maid in flowered petticoat and chip hat was seated on the mound a-prattling of rebels!

"When do you leave us?" I asked grimly.

"Captain Butler has gone to see Sir Henry to ask for a packet. We sail as soon as may be."

"Does *he* go with you?" I demanded, startled.

"Why, yes—I and my two maids, and Captain Butler. Sir Frederick Haldimand knows."

"Yes, but he does not know that Captain Butler has presumed—has dared to press a clandestine suit with you!" I retorted angrily. "It does not please me that you go under such doubtful escort, Elsin."

"And pray, who are you to please, sir?" she asked in quick displeasure. "You speak of presumption in others, Mr. Renault, and, unsolicited, you offer an affront to me and to a gentleman who is not here to answer."

"I wish he were," I said between my teeth.

Her fair face hardened.

"Wishes are very safe, sir," she said in a low voice.

At that, suddenly, such a blind anger flooded me that the setting sun swam in my eyes and the blood dinned in ears and brain as though to burst them. At such moments, which are rare with me, I fall silent; and so I stood, while the strange rage shook me, and passed, leaving me cold and very quiet.

"I think we had best go," I said.

She held out her hand. I aided her to rise; and she kept my hand in hers, laying the other over it, and looked up into my eyes.

"Forgive me, Carus," she whispered. "No man can be more gallant and more sweet than you."

"Forgive me, Elsin. No maid so generous and just as you."

And that was all, for we crossed the street, and I mounted the stoop of our house with her, and bowed her in when the great door opened.

"Are you not coming in?" she asked, lingering in the doorway.

"No. I shall take the air."

"But we sup in a few moments."

"I may sup at the Coq d'Or," I said. Still she stood there, the wind blowing through the doorway fluttering the pink bows tied under her chin—a sweet, wistful face turned up to mine, and the early candle-light from the hall sconces painting one rounded cheek with golden lusters.

"Have you freely forgiven me, Carus?"

"Yes, freely. You know it."

"And you will be at the Fort? I shall give you that dance you ask to-night, shall I not?"

"If you will."

There was a silence; she stretched out one hand. Then the door was closed and I descended the steps once more, setting my hat on my head and tucking my walking-stick under one arm, prepared to meet my drover friend, who, Ennis said, desired to speak with me.

But I had no need to walk out along Great George Street to find my bird; for, as I left Wall Street and swung the corner into Broadway, the husky, impatient whisper of a whippoorwill broke out from the dusk among the ruins of Trinity, and I started and turned, crossing the street. Wild birds there were a-plenty in the city, yet the whippoorwill so seldom came into the streets that the note alone would have attracted me had Ennis not warned me of the signal.

And so I strolled once more into the churchyard and among the felled trees which the soldiers had cut down for fire-wood, as they were scorched past hope of future growth; and presently, prowling through the dusk among the graves by Lambert Street, I came upon my drover, seated upon a mound, smoking his clay as innocent as any tavern slug in the sun.

"Good even, friend," he said, looking up. "I thought I heard a whippoorwill but now, and being country bred, stole in to listen. Did you hear it, sir?"

"I thought I did," said I, amused. "I thought it sang, Pro Gloria in Excelsis—"

"Hush!" whispered the drover, smiling; "sit here beside me and we'll listen. Perhaps the bird may sing that anthem once again."

I seated myself on the green mound, and the next moment sprang to my feet as a shape before me seemed to rise out of the very ground; then, hearing my drover laugh, I resumed my place as the short figure came toward us.

"Another drover," said my companion, "and a famous one, Mr. Renault, for he drove certain wild cattle at a headlong gallop from the pastures at Saratoga—he and I and another drover they call Dan'l Morgan. We have been strolling here among these graves, a-prying for old friends—brother drovers. We found one drover's grave—a lad called Cresap—hard by the arch there to the north."

"Did you know him?" I asked.

"Yes, lad. I was a herder of his at Dunmore's slaughter-house. I saw him jailed at Fortress Pitt; I saw him freed, too. And one fine day in '76, a-lolling at my ease in the north, what should I hear but a jolly conch-horn blowing in the forest, and out of it rolled a torrent of men in buckskin, Cresap leading, bound for that famous cattle-drive at Boston town. So I, being by chance in buckskin, and by merest chance bearing a rifle, fell in and joined the merry ranks—I and my young friend Cardigan, who is now with certain mounted drovers called, I think, Colonel Washington's Dragoons, harrying those Carolina cattle owned by Tarleton."

He glanced up at his comrade, who stood silently beside him in the darkness.

"He, too, was there, Mr. Renault—my fellow drover here, at your service. Weasel, remove thy hat and make a bow to Mr. Renault—our brother drover."

The little withered man uncovered with a grace astonishing. So perfect was his bearing and his bow that I rose instinctively to meet it, and match his courtesy with the best I could.

"When like meets like 'tis a duel of good manners," said the big drover quietly. "Mr. Renault, you salute a man as gently bred as any man who wears a gilt edge to his hat in County Tryon. I call him the Weasel with all the reverence with which I say 'your lordship.'"

The Weasel and I exchanged another bow, and I vow he outmatched me, too, in composure, dignity, and grace, and I wondered who he might be.

"Tempus," observed the giant drover, "fugits like the devil in this dawdling world o' sin, as the poet has it—eh, Weasel? So, not even taking time to ask your pardon for my Latin, sir, I catch Time by the scalplock and add a nick to my gun-stock. Lord, sir! That's no language for a peaceful, cattle-driving yokel, is it now? Ah, Mr. Renault, I see you suspect us, and we have only to thank God you're not a lobster-back to bawl for the sergeant and his lanthorn."

"Who are you?" I asked, smiling.

"Did you ever hear of a vile highwayman called Jack Mount?" he asked, pretending horror.

"Yes," I said.

"You wouldn't shake hands with him, would you?"

"Let's try it," I replied seriously, holding out my hand.

He took it with a chuckle, his boyish face wreathed in smiles. "A purse from a magistrate here and there," he muttered—"a Tory magistrate, overfat and proud—what harm, sir? And I never could abide fat magistrates, Mr. Renault," he confided in a whisper. "It is strange; you will scarce credit me, sir, when I tell you that when I'm near a magistrate, and particularly when he's fat, and the moon's low over the hills, why, my pistols leap from my belt of their own accord, and I must snatch them with both hands lest they go flying off like rockets and explode to do a harm to that same portly magistrate."

"He does not mean all that," said the Weasel, laying his wrinkled hand affectionately on Mount's great arm. "He has served nobly, sir, with Cresap and with Morgan."

"But when I'm alone," sighed Mount, "I'm in very bad company, and mischief follows, sure as a headache follows a tavern revel. I do not mean to stop these magistrates, Mr. Renault, only they *will* wander on the highway, under my very pistols, provoking 'em to fly out!" He looked at me and furtively licked the stem of his clay pipe.

"So you leave for the north to-night?" I asked, amused.

"Yes, sir. There's a certain Walter Butler in this town, arrived like a hen-hawk from the clouds, and peep! peep! we downy chicks must scurry to the forest, lad, or there'll be a fine show on the gallows yonder and two good rifles idle in the hills of Tryon."

"You know Walter Butler?"

"Know him? Yes, sir. I had him at my mercy once—over my rifle-sights! Ah, well—he rode away—and had it not been young Cardigan who stayed my trigger-finger—But let that pass, too. What is he here for?"

"To ask Sir Henry Clinton's sanction of a plan to burn New York and fling the army on West Point, while he and Sir John Johnson and Colonel Ross strike the grain country in the north and lay it and the frontier in ashes."

There was a silence, then a quiet laugh from Mount.

"West Point is safe, I think," he murmured.

"But Tryon?" urged the Weasel; "how will it go with Tryon County, Jack?"

Another silence.

"We'd best be getting back to Willett," said Mount quietly. "As for me, my errand is done, and the strange, fishy smells of New York town stifle me. I'm stale and timid, and I like not the shape of the gallows yonder. My health requires the half-light of the woods, Mr. Renault, and the friendly shadows which lie at hand like rat-holes in a granary. I've drunk all the ale at the Bull's-Head—weak stuff it was—and they've sent for more, but I can't wait. So we're off to the north to-night, friend, and

we'll presently rinse our throats of this salt wind, which truly inspires a noble thirst, yet tells nothing to a nose made to sniff the inland breezes."

He held out his hand, saying, "So you can learn no news of this place called Thendara?"

"I may learn yet. Walter Butler said to-day that I knew it. Yet I can not recall anything save the name. Is it Delaware? And yet I know it must be Iroquois, too."

"It might be Cayuga, for all I know," he said. "I never learned their cursed jargon and never mean to. My business is to stop their forest-losing—and I do when I can." He spoke bitterly, like that certain class of forest-runners who never spare an Indian, never understand that anything but evil can come of any blood but white. With them argument is lost, so I said nothing.

"Have you anything for Colonel Willett?" he asked, after a pause.

"Tell him that I sent despatches this very day. Tell him of Butler's visit here, and of his present plans. If I can learn where this Thendara lies I will write him at once. That is all, I think."

I shook their hands, one by one.

"Have a care, sir," warned the Weasel as we parted. "This Walter Butler is a great villain, and, like all knaves, suspicious. If he once should harbor misgivings concerning you, he would never leave your trail until he had you at his mercy. We know him, Jack and I. And I say, God keep you from that man's enmity or suspicion. Good-by, Mr. Renault."

I retained his hand, gazing earnestly into his faded, kindly eyes.

"Do you know aught reflecting on his honor?" I asked.

"I know of Cherry Valley," he replied simply.

"Yes; but I mean his dealings with men in time of peace. Is he upright?"

"He is so considered, though they would have hanged him for a spy in Albany in '78-'79, had not young Lafayette taken pity on him and had him removed from jail to a private house, he pleading illness. Once uncaged, he gnawed through, and was off to the Canadas in no time, swearing to repay tenfold every moment's misery he spent in jail. He did repay—at Cherry Valley. Think, sir, what bloody ghosts must haunt his couch at night—unless he be all demon and not human at all, as some aver. Yet he has a wife, they say—"

"What!"

"He has a wife," repeated Mount—"or a mistress. It's all one to him."

"Where?" I asked quietly.

"She was at Guy Park, the Oneidas told me; and when Sullivan moved on Catharinestown she fled with all that Tory rabble, they say, to Butlersbury, and from thence to the north—God knows where! I saw her once; she is French, I think—and very young—a beauty, sir, with hair like midnight, and two black stars for eyes. I have seen an Oneida girl with such eyes." He shrugged his shoulders. "Walter Butler makes little of women—like Sir John Johnson," he added in disgust.

I was silent.

"We go north by Valentine's and North Castle, the Albany road being unhealthy traveling at night," said Mount, with a grin; "and I think, Cade, we'd best pull foot. I trust, Mr. Renault, that you may not hear of our being taken and hung to disgrace any friends of ours. Come, Cade, old friend, our fair accomplice, the moon, is hid, so lift thy little legs and trot! Au large!"

They pulled off their hats with a gay flourish, turned, and plunged shoulder-deep into the weeds.

And so they left me, creeping away through the low foliage into Greenwich Street, while I, rousing myself, turned my steps toward home. I had no desire to sup; my appetite's edge had been turned by what I heard concerning Walter Butler. Passing slowly through the graveyard and skirting the burned church, I entered Broadway, where here and there a street-lamp was burning. Few people strolled under the lime-trees; cats prowled and courted and fought in the gutters, scattering in silent, shadowy flight before me as I crossed the street to the great house; and so buried in meditation was I that I presently found myself in my own room, and could not remember how I passed the door or mounted the long stairway to my chambers.

Dennis came to do my hair, but I drove him out with boots in a sudden, petty fury new to my nature. Indeed, lying there in my stuffed armchair, I scarcely knew myself, so strangely sad and sullen ran my thoughts—not thoughts, either, for at first I followed no definite train, but a certain irritable despondency clothed me, and trifles enraged me, leaving me bitter and sick at heart, bearing a weight of apprehension concerning nothing at all.

Oh, for a week of liberty from this pit of intrigue! Oh, for a day's freedom to ride like those blue dragoons of Heath I had seen along the Hudson! Oh, to be free to dog-trot back to the north with those two gallant scamps of Morgan, and wear a hunting-shirt once more, and lay the long brown rifle level in this new quarrel coming soon between these Butlers and these Johnsons and our yeomanry of County Tryon!

"By God!" I muttered, "I care not if they take me, for I'm sick of spying and lying, so let them hoist me out upon that leafless tree where better men have swung, and have done with the wretched business once for all!" Which I meant not, and was silly to fume, and thankless, too, to anger the Almighty with ingratitude for His long and most miraculous protection. But I was in a foul humor with the world and myself, and I knew not what ailed me, either. True, the insolence of that libertine, Walter Butler, affronted me, and it gave me a sour pleasure to think how I should quiet his swagger with one plain word aside.

Following this lead, I fell to thinking in earnest. What would it mean—a quarrel? Dare he deny the charge? No; I should command, and he obey, and I'd send him slinking north by the same accursed schooner that brought him; and Elsin Grey should go when she pleased, escorted by a proper retinue. But I'd make no noise about it—not a word to set tongues wagging and eyes peeping—for Elsin's sake. Lord! the silly maid, to steer so near the breakers and destruction!

And what then? Well, I should never see her again, once she was safe among her kin in the Canadas. And she was doubtless the fairest woman I had ever looked upon—but light—not in an evil sense, God wot! but prone to impulse and caprice—a kitten, soft as silk, now staring at the world out of two limpid eyes, now frisking after breeze-blown rose-leaves. A man may admire such a child, nay, learn to love her dearly, in a way most innocent. But love! She did not know its meaning, and how could she inspire it in a man of the world. No, I did not love her—could not love a maid, unripe and passionless, and overpert at times, flouting a man like me with her airs and vapors and her insolent lids and lashes. Lord! but she carried it high-handed with me at times, plaguing me, teasing, pouting when my attention wandered midway in the pretty babble with which she condescended to entertain me. And with all that—and after all is said—there was something in me that warmed to her—perhaps the shadow of kinship—perhaps because of her utter ignorance of all she prated of so wisely. Her very crudity touched the chord of chivalry which is in all men, strung tight or loose, answering to a touch or a blow, but always answering in some faint degree, I think. Yet, if this is so, how could Walter Butler find it in his heart to trouble her?

That he meant her real evil I did not credit, she being what she was. Doubtless he hoped to find some means of ridding him of a wife no longer loved; there were laws complacent for that sort of work. Yet, grant him free, how could he find it in his heart to cherish passion for a child? He was no boy—this pallid rake of thirty-five—this melancholy squire of dames who, ere he was twenty, had left a trail in Albany and Tryon none too savory, if wide report be credited—he and Sir John Johnson!—as pretty a brace of libertines as one might find even in that rotten town of London.

Well, I would send him on his business without noise or scandal, and I'd hold a séance, too, with Mistress Elsin, wherein a curtain-lecture should be read, kindly, gravely, but with firmness fitting!

I lay back, stretching out my legs luxuriously, pleasantly contemplating the stern yet kindly rôle I was to play: first send him skulking, next enact the solemn father to this foolish maid. Then, admonishing and smiling forgiveness in one breath, retire as gravely as I entered—a highly interesting figure, magnanimous and moral—

A rapping at my chamber-door aroused me disagreeably from this flattering rhapsody.

"Enter!" I said ungraciously, and lay back, frowning to see there in the flesh the man whose punishment I had been complacently selecting.

"Mr. Renault," he said, "am I overbold in this intrusion on your privacy? Pray, sir, command me, for my business must await your pleasure."

I bowed, rising, and pointing to a chair. "It is business, then, not pleasure, as I take it, Captain Butler, that permits me to receive you?"

"The business and the pleasure both are mine, Mr. Renault," he said, which was stilted enough to be civil. "The business, sir, is this: Sir Henry Clinton received me like a gentleman, but as soon as Sir Peter had retired he listened to me as though I were demented when I exposed my plan to burn New York and take the field. I say he used me with scant civility, and bowed me out, like the gross boor he is!"

"He is commander-in-chief, Mr. Butler."

"What do I care!" burst out Butler, his dark eyes a golden blaze. "Am I not an Ormond-Butler? Why should a Clinton affront an Ormond-Butler? By Heaven! I must swallow his airs and his stares and his shrugs because he is my superior; but I may one day rise in military rank as high as he—and I shall do so, mark me well, Mr. Renault!—and when I am near enough in the tinselled hierarchy to reach him at thirty paces I shall use the privilege, by God!"

"There are," said I blandly, "many subalterns on his staff who might serve your present purpose, Captain Butler."

"No, no," he said impatiently, his dark eyes wandering about the chamber, "I have too much at stake to call out fledglings for a sop to injured pride. No, Mr. Renault, I shall first take vengeance for a deeper wrong—and the north lies like an unreaped harvest for the sickle that Death and I shall set a-swinging there."

I bent my head, meditating; then looking up:

"You say I know where this Thendara lies?"

"Yes," he answered sullenly. "You know as well as I do *what is written* in the Book of Rites."

At first his words rang meaningless, then far in my memory a voice called faintly, and a pale ray of light grew through the darkened chambers of my brain. And now I knew, now I remembered, now I understood where that lost town must lie—the town of Thendara, lost ever and forever, only to be forever found again as long as the dark Confederacy should endure.

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