Myths And Legends Of Our Own Land, v3

Charles M. Skinner

Table of Contents

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Vol. 3. ON AND NEAR THE DELAWARE

THE PHANTOM DRAGOON

The height that rises a mile or so to the south of Newark, Delaware, is called Iron Hill, because it is rich in hematite ore, but about the time of General Howe's advance to the Brandywine it might well have won its name because of the panoply of war the sullen guns, the flashing swords, and glistening bayonets that appeared among the British tents pitched on it. After the red−coats had established camp here the American outposts were advanced and one of the pickets was stationed at Welsh Tract Church. On his first tour of duty the sentry was thrown into great alarm by the appearance of a figure robed from head to foot in white, that rode a horse at a charging gait within ten feet of his face. When guard was relieved the soldier begged that he might never be assigned to that post again. His nerves were strong in the presence of an enemy in the flesh but an enemy out of the grave! Ugh! He would desert rather than encounter that shape again. His request was granted. The sentry who succeeded him was startled, in the small hours, by a rush of hoofs and the flash of a pallid form. He fired at it, and thought that he heard the sound of a mocking laugh come back.

Every night the phantom horseman made his rounds, and several times the sentinels shot at him without effect, the white horse and white rider showing no annoyance at these assaults. When it came the turn of a sceptical and unimaginative old corporal to take the night detail, he took the liberty of assuming the responsibilities of this post himself. He looked well to the priming of his musket, and at midnight withdrew out of the moonshine and waited,

with his gun resting on a fence. It was not long before the beat of hoofs was heard approaching, and in spite of himself the corporal felt a thrill along his spine as a mounted figure that mighe priming of his musket, and at midnight withdrew out of the moonshine and waited, with his gun resting on a fence. It was not long before the beat of hoofs was heard approaching, and in spite of himself the corporal felt a thrill along his spine as a mounted figure that might have represented Death on the pale horse came into view; but he jammed his hat down, set his teeth, and sighted his flint− lock with deliberation. The rider was near, when bang went the corporal's musket, and a white form was lying in the road, a horse speeding into the distance. Scrambling over the fence, the corporal, reassured, ran to the form and turned it over: a British scout, quite dead. The daring fellow, relying on the superstitious fears of the rustics in his front, had made a nightly ride as a ghost, in order to keep the American outposts from advancing, and also to guess, from elevated points, at the strength and disposition of their troops. He wore a cuirass of steel, but that did not protect his brain from the corporal's bullet.

DELAWARE WATER GAP

The Indian name of this beautiful region, Minisink, “the water is gone,” agrees with the belief of geologists that a lake once existed behind the Blue Ridge, and that it burst its way through the hills at this point. Similar results were produced by a cataclysm on the Connecticut at Mount Holyoke, on the Lehigh at Mauch Chunk, and Runaway Pond, New Hampshire, got its name by a like performance. The aborigines, whatever may be said against them, enjoyed natural beauty, and their habitations were often made in this delightful region, their councils being attended by chief Tamanend, or Tammany, a Delaware, whose wisdom and virtues were such as to raise him to the place of patron saint of America. The notorious Tammany Society of New York is named for him. When this chief became old and feeble his tribe abandoned him in a hut at New Britain, Pennsylvania, and there he tried to kill himself by stabbing, but failing in that, he flung burning leaves over himself, and so perished. He was buried where he died. It was a princess of his tribe that gave the name of Lover's Leap to a cliff on Mount Tammany, by leaping from it to her death, because her love for a young European was not reciprocated.

There is a silver−mine somewhere on the opposite mountain of Minsi, the knowledge of its location having perished with the death of a recluse, who coined the metal he took from it into valuable though illegal dollars, going townward every winter to squander his earnings. During the Revolution “Oran the Hawk,” a Tory and renegade, was vexatious to the people of Delaware Valley, and a detachment of colonial troops was sent in pursuit of him. They overtook him at the Gap and chased him up the slopes of Tammany, though he checked their progress by rolling stones among them. One rock struck a trooper, crushed him, and bore him down to the base of a cliff, his blood smearing it in his descent. But though he seemed to have eluded his pursuers, Oran was shot in several places during his flight, and when at last he cast himself into a thicket, to rest and get breath, it was never to rise again. His bones, cracked by bullets and gnawed by beasts, were found there when the leaves fell.

THE PHANTOM DRUMMER

Colonel Howell, of the king's troops, was a gay fellow, framed to make women false; but when he met the rosy, sweet−natured daughter of farmer Jarrett, near Valley Forge, he attempted no dalliance, for he fell too seriously in love. He might not venture into the old man's presence, for Jarrett had a son with Washington, and he hated a red−coat as he did the devil; but the young officer met the girl in secret, and they plighted troth beneath the garden trees, hidden in gray mist. As Howell bent to take his first kiss that night, a rising wind went past, bringing from afar the roll of a drum, and as they talked the drum kept drawing nearer, until it seemed at hand. The officer peered across the wall, then hurried to his mistress' side, as pale as death. The fields outside were empty of life.

Louder came the rattling drum; it seemed to enter the gate, pass but a yard away, go through the wall, and die in the distance. When it ceased, Howell started as if a spell had been lifted, laxed his grip on the maiden's hand, then drew her to his breast convulsively. Ruth's terror was more vague but no less genuine than his own, and some moments passed before she could summon voice to ask him what this visitation meant. He answered, “Something is about to change my fortunes for good or ill; probably for ill. Important events in my family for the past three generations have been heralded by that drum, and those events were disasters oftener than benefits.” Few more words passed, and with another kiss the soldier scaled the wall and galloped away, the triple beat of his charger's hoofs sounding back into the maiden's ears like drum−taps. In a skirmish next day Colonel Howell was shot. He was carried to farmer Jarrett's house and left there, in spite of the old man's protest, for he was willing to give no shelter to his country's enemies. When Ruth saw her lover in this strait she was like to have fallen, but when she learned that it would take but a few days of quiet and care to restore him to health, she was ready to forgive her fellow− countrymen for inflicting an injury that might result in happiness for both of them.

It took a great deal of teasing to overcome the scruples of the farmer, but he gruffly consented to receive the young man until his hurt should heal. Ruth attended him faithfully, and the cheerful, manly nature of the officer so won the farmer's heart that he soon forgot the color of Howell's coat. Nor was he surprised when Howell told him that he loved his daughter and asked for her hand; indeed, it had been easy to guess their affection, and the old man declared that but for his allegiance to a tyrant he would gladly own him as a son−in−law. It was a long struggle between love and duty that ensued in Howell's breast, and love was victor. If he might marry Ruth he would leave the army. The old man gave prompt consent, and a secret marriage was arranged. Howell had been ordered to rejoin his regiment; he could not honorably resign on the eve of an impending battle, and, even had he done so, a long delay must have preceded his release. He would marry the girl, go to the country, live there quietly until the British evacuated Philadelphia, when he would return and cast his lot with the Jarrett household.

Howell donned citizen's dress, and the wedding took place in the spacious best room of the mansion, but as he slipped the ring on the finger of his bride the roll of a drum was heard advancing up the steps into the room, then on and away until all was still again. The young colonel was pale; Ruth clung to him in terror; clergymen and guests looked at each other in amazement. Now there were voices at the porch, the door was flung open, armed men entered, and the bridegroom was a prisoner. He was borne to his quarters, and afterward tried for desertion, for a servant in the Jarrett household, hating all English and wishing them to suffer, even at each other's hands, had betrayed the plan of his master's guest. The court−martial found him guilty and condemned him to be shot. When the execution took place, Ruth, praying and sobbing in her chamber, knew that her husband was no more. The distant sound of musketry reverberated like the roll of a drum.

THE MISSING SOLDIER OF VALLEY FORGE

During the dreadful winter of the American encampment at Valley Forge six or eight soldiers went out to forage for provisions. Knowing that little was to be hoped for near the camp of their starving comrades, they set off in the direction of French Creek. At this stream the party separated, and a little later two of the men were attacked by Tory farmers. Flying along the creek for some distance they came to a small cave in a bluff, and one of them, a young Southerner named Carrington, scrambled into it. His companion was not far behind, and was hurrying toward the cave, when he was arrested by a rumble and a crash: a block of granite, tons in weight, that had hung poised overhead, slid from its place and completely blocked the entrance. The stifled cry of despair from the living occupant of the tomb struck to his heart. He hid in a neighboring wood until the Tories had dispersed, then, returning to the cave, he strove with might and main to stir the boulder from its place, but without avail.

When he reached camp, as he did next day, he told of this disaster, but the time for rescue was believed to be past, or the work was thought to be too exhausting and dangerous for a body of men who had much ado to keep life in their own weak frames. It was a double tragedy, for the young man's sweetheart never recovered from the shock that the news occasioned, and on her tomb, near Richmond, Virginia, these words are chiselled: “Died, of a broken heart, on the 1st of March, 1780, Virginia Randolph, aged 21 years, 9 days. Faithful unto death.” In the summer of 1889 some workmen, blasting rock near the falls on French Creek, uncovered the long−concealed cavern and found there a skeleton with a few rags of a Continental uniform. In a bottle beside it was an account, signed by Arthur L. Carrington, of the accident that had befallen him, and a letter declaring undying love for his sweetheart.

He had starved to death. The bones were neatly coffined, and were sent to Richmond to be buried beside those of the faithful Miss Randolph.

THE LAST SHOT AT GERMANTOWN

Many are the tales of prophecy that have been preserved to us from war times. In the beginning of King Philip's war in Connecticut, in 1675, it was reported that the firing of the first gun was heard all over the State, while the drumbeats calling settlers to defence were audible eight miles away. Braddock's defeat and the salvation of Washington were foretold by a Miami chief at a council held in Fort Ponchartrain, on Detroit River, the ambush and the slaughter having been revealed to him in a dream. The victims of that battle, too, had been apprised, for one or two nights before the disaster a young lieutenant in Braddock's command saw his fellow−officers pass through his tent, bloody and torn, and when the first gun sounded he knew that it spoke the doom of nearly all his comrades. At Killingly, Connecticut, in the autumn before the outbreak of the Revolution, a distant roar of artillery was heard for a whole day and night in the direction of Boston, mingled with a rattle of musketry, and so strong was the belief that war had begun and the British were advancing, that the minute men mustered to await orders. It was afterward argued thatthese noises came from an explosion of meteors, a shower of these missiles being then in progress, invisible, of course, in the day−time. Just after the signing of the Declaration of Independence the royal arms on the spire of the Episcopal church at Hampton, Virginia, were struck off by lightning. Shortly before the surrender of Cornwallis a display of northern lights was seen in New England, the rays taking the form of cannon, facing southward. In Connecticut sixty−four of these guns were counted.

At the battle of Germantown the Americans were enraged by the killing of one of their men who had gone out with a flag of truce. He was shot from the windows of Judge Chew's house, which was crowded with British soldiers, and as he fell to the lawn, dyeing the peaceful emblem with his blood, at least one of the Continentals swore that his death should be well avenged. The British reinforcements, sixteen thousand strong, came hurrying through the street, their officers but half−dressed, so urgent had been the summons for their aid. Except for their steady tramp the place was silent; doors were locked and shutters bolted, and if people were within doors no sign of them was visible. General Agnew alone of all the troop seemed depressed and anxious. Turning to an aide as they passed the Mennonist graveyard, he said, “This field is the last I shall fight on.”

An eerie face peered over the cemetery wall, a scarred, unshaven face framed in long hair and surmounting a body clothed in skins, with the question, “Is that the brave General Gray who beat the rebels at Paoli?” One of the soldiers, with a careless toss of the hand, seemed to indicate General Agnew. A moment later there was a report, a puff of smoke from the cemetery wall, and a bullet whizzed by the head of the general, who smiled wanly, to encourage his men. Summary execution would have been done upon the stranger had not a body of American cavalry dashed against the red−coats at that moment, and a fierce contest was begun. When the day was over, General Agnew, who had been separated from his command in the confusion of battle, came past the graves again. Tired and depressed, he drew rein for a moment to breathe the sweet air, so lately fouled with dust and smoke, and to watch the gorgeous light of sunset. Again, like a malignant genius of the place, the savage−looking stranger arose from behind the wall. A sharp report broke the quiet of evening and awoke clattering echoes from the distant houses. A horse plunged and General Agnew rolled from his saddle, dead: the last victim in the strife at Germantown.

A BLOW IN THE DARK

The Tory Manheim sits brooding in his farmhouse near Valley Forge, and his daughter, with a hectic flush on her cheek, looks out into the twilight at the falling snow. She is worn and ill; she has brought on a fever by exposure incurred that very day in a secret journey to the American camp, made to warn her lover of another attempt on the life of Washington, who must pass her father's house on his return from a distant settlement. The Tory knows nothing of this; but he starts whenever the men in the next room rattle the dice or break into a ribald song, and a frown of apprehension crosses his face as the foragers crunch by, half−barefoot, through the snow. The hours go on, and the noise in the next room increases; but it hushes suddenly when a knock at the door is heard. The Tory opens it, and trembles as a tall, grave man, with the figure of an athlete, steps into the fire−light and calmly removes his gloves. “I have been riding far,” said he. “Can you give me some food and the chance to sleep for an hour, until the storm clears up?”

Manheim says that he can, and shuffling into the next room, he whispers, “Washington!” The girl is sent out to get refreshments. It is in vain that she seeks to sign or speak to the man who sits there so calmly before the fire, for her father is never out of sight or hearing. After Washington has finished his modest repast he asks to be left to himself for a while, but the girl is told to conduct him to the room on the left of the landing on the next floor.

Her father holds the candle at the foot of the stairs until he sees his guest enter; then he bids his daughter go to her own bed, which is in the chamber on the right of the landing. There is busy whispering in the room below after that, and the dice box is shaken to see to whose lot it shall fall to steal up those stairs and stab Washington in his sleep. An hour passes and all in the house appear to be at rest, but the stairs creak slightly as Manheim creeps upon his prey. He blows his candle out and softly enters the chamber on the left. The men, who listen in the dark at the foot of the stair, hear a moan, and the Tory hurries back with a shout of gladness, for the rebel chief is no more and Howe's reward will enrich them for life.

Glasses are filled, and in the midst of the rejoicing a step is heard on the stair. Washington stands before them. In calm, deep tones he thanks the farmer for his shelter, and asks that his horse be brought to the door and his reckoning be made out. The Tory stares as one bereft. Then he rushes aloft, flings open the door of the room on the left, and gazes at the face that rests on the pillow,—a pillow that is dabbled with red. The face is that of his daughter. The name of father is one that he will never hear again in this world. The candle falls from his hand; he sinks to the floor; be his sin forgiven! Outside is heard the tramp of a horse. It is that of Washington, who rides away, ignorant of the peril he has passed and the sacrifice that averted it.

THE TORY'S CONVERSION

In his firelit parlor, in his little house at Valley Forge, old Michael Kuch sits talking with his daughter. But though it is Christmas eve the talk has little cheer in it. The hours drag on until the clock strikes twelve, and the old man is about to offer his evening prayer for the safety of his son, who is one of Washington's troopers, when hurried steps are heard in the snow, there is a fumbling at the latch, then the door flies open and admits a haggard, panting man who hastily closes it again, falls into a seat, and shakes from head to foot. The girl goes to him. “John!” she says. But he only averts his face. “What is wrong with thee, John Blake?” asks the farmer. But he has to ask again and again ere he gets an answer. Then, in a broken voice, the trembling man confesses that he has tried to shoot Washington, but the bullet struck and killed his only attendant, a dragoon. He has come for shelter, for men are on his track already. “Thou know'st I am neutral in this war, John Blake,” answered the farmer,—“although I have a boy down yonder in the camp. It was a cowardly thing to do, and I hate you Tories that you do not fight like men; yet, since you ask me for a hiding−place, you shall have it, though, mind you, 'tis more on the girl's account than yours. The men are coming. Out—this way—to the spring−house. So!”

Before old Michael has time to return to his chair the door is again thrust open, this time by men in blue and buff. They demand the assassin, whose footsteps they have tracked there through the snow. Michael does not answer. They are about to use violence when, through the open door, comes Washington, who checks them with a word. The general bears a drooping form with a blood splash on its breast, and deposits it on the hearth as gently as a mother puts a babe into its cradle. As the firelight falls on the still face the farmer's eyes grow round and big; then he shrieks and drops upon his knees, for it is his son who is lying there. Beside him is a pistol; it was dropped by the Tory when he entered. Grasping it eagerly the farmer leaps to his feet. His years have fallen from him. With a tiger−like bound he gains the door, rushes to the spring−house where John Blake is crouching, his eyes sunk and shining, gnawing his fingers in a craze of dismay. But though hate is swift, love is swifter, and the girl is there as soon as he. She strikes his arm aside, and the bullet he has fired lodges in the wood. He draws out his knife, and the murderer, to whom has now come the calmness of despair, kneels and offers his breast to the blade. Before he can strike, the soldiers hasten up, and seizing Blake, they drag him to the house—the little room—where all had been so peaceful but a few minutes before.

The culprit is brought face to face with Washington, who asks him what harm he has ever suffered from his fellow countrymen that he should turn against them thus. Blake hangs his head and owns his willingness to die. His eyes rest on the form extended on the floor, and he shudders; but his features undergo an almost joyous change, for the figure lifts itself, and in a faint voice calls, “Father!” The young man lives. With a cry of delight both father and sister raise him in their arms. “You are not yet prepared to die,” says Washington to the captive. “I will put you under guard until you are wanted. Take him into custody, my dear young lady, and try to make an American of him. See, it is one o'clock, and this is Christmas morning. May all be happy here. Come.” And beckoning to his men he rides away, though Blake and his affianced would have gone on their knees before him. Revulsion of feeling, love, thankfulness and a latent patriotism wrought a quick change in Blake. When young Kuch recovered Blake joined his regiment, and no soldier served the flag more honorably.

LORD PERCY'S DREAM

Leaving the dissipations of the English court, Lord Percy came to America to share the fortunes of his brethren in the contest then raging on our soil. His father had charged him with the delivery of a certain package to an Indian woman, should he meet her in his rambles through the western wilds, and, without inquiring into the nature of the gift or its occasion, he accepted the trust. At the battle of the Brandywine— strangely foretold by Quaker prophecy forty years before—he was detailed by Cornwallis to drive the colonial troops out of a graveyard where they had intrenched themselves, and though he set upon this errand with the enthusiasm of youth, his cheek paled as he drew near the spot where the enemy was waiting.

It was not that he had actual physical fear of the onset: he had dreamed a dream a few nights before, the purport of which he had hinted to his comrades, and as he rode into the clearing at the top of Osborn's Hill he drew rein and exclaimed, “My dream! Yonder is the graveyard. I am fated to die there.” Giving a few of his effects to his brother officers, and charging one of them to take a message of love to his betrothed in England, he set his lips and rode forward.

His cavalry bound toward the scene of action and are within thirty paces of the cemetery wall, when from behind it rises a battalion of men in the green uniform of the Santee Rangers and pours a withering fire into the ranks. The shock is too great to withstand, and the red−coats stagger away with broken ranks, leaving many dead and wounded on the ground. Lord Percy is the coolest of all. He urges the broken columns forward, and almost alone holds the place until the infantry, a hundred yards behind, come up. Thereupon ensues one of those hand−to−hand encounters that are so rare in recent war, and that are the sorest test of valor and discipline. Now rides forward Captain Waldemar, chief of the rangers and a half−breed Indian, who, seeing Percy, recognizes him as an officer and engages him in combat. There is for a minute a clash of steel on steel; then the nobleman falls heavily to the earth—dead. His dream has come true. That night the captain Waldemar seeks out the body of this officer, attracted by something in the memory of his look, and from his bosom takes the packet that was committed to his care.

By lantern−light he reads, carelessly at first, then rapidly and eagerly, and at the close he looks long and earnestly at the dead man, and seems to brush away a tear. Strange thing to do over the body of an enemy! Why had fate decreed that they should be enemies? For Waldemar is the half−brother of Percy. His mother was the Indian girl that the earl, now passing his last days in England, had deceived with a pretended marriage, and the letters promise patronage to her son. The half−breed digs a grave that night with his own hands and lays the form of his brother in it.

SAVED BY THE BIBLE

It was on the day after the battle of Germantown that Warner, who wore the blue, met his hated neighbor, the Tory Dabney, near that bloody field.

By a common impulse the men fell upon each other with their knives, and Warner soon had his enemy in a position to give him the death−stroke, but Dabney began to bellow for quarter. “My brother cried for quarter at Paoli,” answered the other, “and you struck him to the heart.”

“I have a wife and child. Spare me for their sakes.”

“My brother had a wife and two children. Perhaps you would like to beg your life of them.”

Though made in mockery, this proposition was caught at so earnestly that Warner at length consented to take his adversary, firmly bound, to the house where the bereaved family was living. The widow was reading the Bible to her children, but her grief was too fresh to gather comfort from it. When Dabney was flung into the room he grovelled at her feet and begged piteously for mercy. Her face did not soften, but there was a kind of contempt in the settled sadness of her tone as she said, “It shall be as God directs. I will close this Bible, open it at chance, and when this boy shall put his finger at random on a line, by that you must live or die.”

The book was opened, and the child put his finger on a line: “That man shall die.”

Warner drew his knife and motioned his prisoner to the door. He was going to lead him into the wood to offer him as a sacrifice to his brother's spirit.

“No, no!” shrieked the wretch. “Give me one more chance; one more! Let the girl open the book.”

The woman coldly consents, and when the book is opened for the second time she reads, “Love your enemies.” There are no other words. The knife is used, but it is to cut the prisoner's bonds, and he walks away with head hung down, never more to take arms against his countrymen. And glad are they all at this, when the husband is brought home—not dead, though left among the corpses at Paoli, but alive and certain of recovery, with such nursing as his wife will give him. After tears of joy have been shed she tells him the story of the Bible judgment, and all the members of the family fall on their knees in thanksgiving that the blood of Dabney is not upon their heads.

PARRICIDE OF THE WISSAHICKON

Farmer Derwent and his four stout sons set off on an autumn night for the meeting of patriots at a house on the Wissahickon,—a meeting that bodes no good to the British encamped in Philadelphia, let the red−coats laugh as they will at the rag−tag and bob−tail that are joining the army of Mr. Washington in the wilds of the Skippack. The farmer sighs as he thinks that his younger son alone should be missing from the company, and wonders for the thousandth time what has become of the boy. They sit by a rock that juts into the road to trim their lantern, and while they talk together they are startled by an exclamation. It is from Ellen, the adopted daughter of Derwent and the betrothed of his missing son. On the night that the boy stole away from his father's house he asked her to meet him in this place in a year's time, and the year is up to−night.

But it is not to meet him that she is hastening now: she has heard that the British have learned of the patriot gathering and will try to make prisoners of the company. Even as she tells of this there is a sound to the southward: the column is on the march. The farmer's eye blazes with rage and hate. “Boys,” he says, “yonder come those who intend to kill us. Let them taste of their own warfare. Stand here in the shadow and fire as they pass this rock.”

The troopers ride on, chuckling over their sure success, when there is a report of rifles and four of the red−coats are in the dust. The survivors, though taken by surprise, prove their courage by halting to answer the volley, and one of them springs from his saddle, seizes Derwent, and plunges a knife into his throat. The rebel falls. His blood pools around him. The British are successful, for two of the young men are bound and two of them have fallen, and there is a cheer of victory, but the trooper with the knife in his hand does not raise his voice. He bends above the farmer as still as one dead, until his captain claps him on the shoulder. As he rises, the prisoners start in wonder, for the face they see in the lantern−light is that of their brother, yet strange in its haggardness and its smear of blood on the cheek. The girl runs from her hiding−place with a cry, but stands in horror when her foot touches the gory pool in the road. The trooper opens his coat and offers her a locket. It contains her picture, and he has worn it above his heart for a year, but she lets it fall and sinks down, moaning. The soldier tears off his red coat, tramples it in the dust, then vaulting to his saddle he plunges into the river, fords it, and crashes through the underbrush on the other side. In a few minutes he has reached the summit of a rock that rises nearly a hundred feet above the stream. The horse halts at the edge, but on a fierce stab of the spur into his flank he takes the leap. With a despairing yell the traitor and parricide goes into eternity.

THE BLACKSMITH AT BRANDYWINE

Terrible in the field at Brandywine was the figure of a man armed only with a hammer, who plunged into the ranks of the enemy, heedless of his own life, yet seeming to escape their shots and sabre cuts by magic, and with Thor strokes beat them to the earth. But yesterday war had been to him a distant rumor, a thing as far from his cottage at Dilworth as if it had been in Europe, but he had revolted at a plot that he had overheard to capture Washington and had warned the general. In revenge the Tories had burned his cottage, and his wife and baby had perished in the flames. All day he had sat beside the smoking ruins, unable to weep, unable to think, unable almost to suffer, except dumbly, for as yet he could not understand it. But when the drums were heard they roused the tiger in him, and gaunt with sleeplessness and hunger he joined his countrymen and ranged like Ajax on the field. Every cry for quarter was in vain: to every such appeal he had but one reply, his wife's name—Mary.

Near the end of the fight he lay beside the road, his leg broken, his flesh torn, his life ebbing from a dozen wounds. A wagoner, hasting to join the American retreat, paused to give him drink. “I've only five minutes more of life in me,” said the smith. “Can you lift me into that tree and put a rifle in my hands?” The powerful teamster raised him to the crotch of an oak, and gave him the rifle and ammunition that a dying soldier had dropped there. A band of red−coats came running down the road, chasing some farmers. The blacksmith took careful aim; there was a report, and the leader of the band fell dead. A pause; again a report rang out, and a trooper sprawled upon the ground. The marksman had been seen, and a lieutenant was urging his men to hurry on and cut him down. There was a third report, and the lieutenant reeled forward into the road, bleeding and cursing. “That's for Mary,” gasped the blacksmith. The rifle dropped from his hands, and he, too, sank lifeless against the boughs.

FATHER AND SON

It was three soldiers, escaping from the rout of Braddock's forces, who caught the alleged betrayer of their general and put him to the death. They threw his purse of ill−gotten louis d'or into the river, and sent him swinging from the edge of a ravine, with a vine about his neck and a placard on his breast. And so they left him.

Twenty years pass, and the war−fires burn more fiercely in the vales of Pennsylvania, but, too old to fight, the schoolmaster sits at his door near Chad's Ford and smokes and broods upon the past. He thinks of the time when he marched with Washington, when with two wounded comrades he returned along the lonely trail; then comes the vision of a blackening face, and he rises and wipes his brow. “It was right,” he mutters. “He sent a thousand of his brothers to their deaths.”

Gilbert Gates comes that evening to see the old man's daughter: a smooth, polite young fellow, but Mayland cannot like him, and after some short talk he leaves him, pleading years and rheumatism, and goes to bed. But not to sleep; for toward ten o'clock his daughter goes to him and urges him to fly, for men are gathering near the house—Tories, she is sure,—and they mean no good. Laughing at her fears, but willing to relieve her anxiety, the old man slips into his clothes, goes into the cellar, and thence starts for the barn, while the girl remains for a few minutes to hide the silver.

He does not go far before Gates is at his elbow with the whispered words, “Into the stack−quick. They are after you.” Mayland hesitates with distrust, but the appearance of men with torches leaves no time for talk. With Gilbert's help he crawls deep into the straw and is covered up. Presently a rough voice asks which way he has gone. Gilbert replies that he has gone to the wood, but there is no need for getting into a passion, and that on no account would it be advisable to fire the stack. “Won't we though?” cries one of the party. “We'll burn the rebel out of house and home,” and thrusting his torch into the straw it is ablaze in an instant. The crowd hurries away toward the wood, and does not hear the stifled groan that comes out of the middle of the fire. Gates takes a paper from his pocket, and, after reading it for the last time, flings it upon the flame. It bears the inscription, “Isaac Gates, Traitor and Spy, hung by three soldiers of his majesty's army. Isaac Mayland.”

From his moody contemplation he rouses with a start, for Mayland's daughter is there. Her eyes are bent on a distorted thing that lies among the embers, and in the dying light of the flames it seems to move. She studies it close, then with a cry of pain and terror she falls upon the hot earth, and her senses go out, not to be regained in woful years. With head low bowed, Gilbert Gates trudges away. In the fight at Brandywine next day, Black Samson, a giant negro, armed with a scythe, sweeps his way through the red ranks like a sable figure of Time. Mayland had taught him; his daughter had given him food. It is to avenge them that he is fighting. In the height of the conflict he enters the American ranks leading a prisoner—Gilbert Gates. The young man is pale, stern, and silent. His deed is known, he is a spy as well as a traitor, but he asks no mercy. It is rumored that next day he alone, of the prisoners, was led to a wood and lashed by arms and legs to a couple of hickory trees that had been bent by a prodigious effort and tied together by their tops. The lashing was cut by a rifle−ball, the trees regained their straight position with a snap like whips, and that was the way Gilbert Gates came to his end.

THE ENVY OF MANITOU

Behind the mountains that gloom about the romantic village of Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania, was once a lake of clear, bright water, its winding loops and bays extending back for several miles. On one of its prettiest bits of shore stood a village of the Leni Lenape, and largest of its wigwams, most richly pictured without, most luxurious in its couching of furs within, was that of the young chief, Onoko. This Indian was a man of great size, strength, and daring. Single−handed he had slain the bear on Mauch Chunk [Bear Mountain], and it was no wonder that Wenonah, the fairest of her tribe, was flattered when he sued for her hand, and promptly consented to be his wife. It was Onoko's fortune in war, the chase, and love that roused the envy of Mitche Manitou.

One day, as the couple were floating in their shallop of bark on the calm lake, idly enjoying the sunshine and saying pretty things to each other, the Manitou arose among the mountains. Terrible was his aspect, for the scowl of hatred was on his face, thunder crashed about his head, and fire snapped from his eyes. Covering his right hand with his invincible magic mitten, he dealt a blow on the hills that made the earth shake, and rived them to a depth of a thousand feet. Through the chasm thus created the lake poured a foaming deluge, and borne with it was the canoe of Onoko and Wenonah. One glance at the wrathful face in the clouds above them and they knew that escape was hopeless, so, clasping each other in a close embrace, they were whirled away to death. Manitou strode away moodily among the hills, and ever since that time the Lehigh has rolled through the chasm that he made. The memory of Onoko is preserved in the name of a glen and cascade a short distance above Mauch Chunk.

It is not well to be too happy in this world. It rouses the envy of the gods.

THE LAST REVEL IN PRINTZ HALL

“Young man, I'll give thee five dollars a week to be care−taker in Printz Hall,” said Quaker Quidd to fiddler Matthews, on an autumn evening.

Young Matthews had just been taunting the old gentleman with being afraid to sleep on his own domain, and as the eyes of all the tavern loungers were on him he could hardly decline so flattering a proposition, so, after some hemming and hawing, he said he would take the Quaker at his word. He played but two or three more tunes that evening, did Peter Matthews, and played them rather sadly; then, as Quidd had finished his mulled cider and departed, he took his homeward way in thoughtful mood. Printz Hall stood in a lonely, weed−grown garden near Chester, Pennsylvania, and thither repaired Peter, as next day's twilight shut down, with a mattress, blanket, comestibles, his beloved fiddle, and a flask of whiskey. Ensconcing himself in the room that was least depressing in appearance he stuffed rags into the vacant panes, lighted a candle, started a blaze in the fireplace, and ate his supper.

“Not so bad a place, after all,” mumbled Peter, as he warmed himself at the fire and the flask; then, taking out his violin, he began to play. The echo of his music emphasized the emptiness of the house, the damp got into the strings so that they sounded tubby, and there were unintentional quavers in the melody whenever the trees swung against the windows and splashed them with rain, or when a distant shutter fell a− creaking. Finally, he stirred the fire, bolted the door, snuffed his candle, took a courageous pull at the liquor, flung off his coat and shoes, rolled his blanket around him, stretched himself on the mattress, and fell asleep. He was awakened by—well, he could not say what, exactly, only he became suddenly as wide awake as ever he had been in his life, and listened for some sound that he knew was going to come out of the roar of the wind and the slamming, grating, and whistling about the house. Yes, there it was: a tread and a clank on the stair. The door, so tightly bolted, flew open, and there entered a dark figure with steeple−crowned hat, cloak, jack−boots, sword, and corselet. The terrified fiddler wanted to howl, but his voice was gone. “I am Peter Printz, governor−general of his Swedish Majesty's American colonies, and builder of this house,” said the figure. “'Tis the night of the autumnal equinox, when my friends meet here for revel. Take thy fiddle and come. Play, but speak not.”

And whether he wished or no, Peter was drawn to follow the figure, which he could make out by the phosphor gleam of it. Down−stairs they went, doors swinging open before them, and along corridors that clanged to the stroke of the spectre's boot heels. Now they came to the ancient reception−room, and as they entered it Peter was dazzled. The floor was smooth with wax, logs snapped in the fireplace, though the flame was somewhat blue, the old hangings and portraits looked fresh, and in the light of wax candles a hundred people, in the brave array of old times, walked, courtesied, and seemed to laugh and talk together. As the fiddler appeared, every eye was turned on him in a disquieting way, and when he addressed himself to his bottle, from every throat came a hollow laugh. Finding his way to a chair he sank into it and put his instrument in position. At the first note the couples took hands, and as he struck into a jig they began to circle swiftly, leaping wondrous high.

Faster went the music, for the whiskey was at work in Peter's noddle, and wilder grew the dance. It was as if the storm had come in through the windows and was blowing these people hither and yon, around and around. The fiddler vaguely wondered at himself, for he had never played so well, though he had never heard the tune before. Now loomed Governor Printz in the middle of the room, and extending his hand he ordered the dance to cease. “Thou bast played well, fiddler,” he said, “and shalt be paid.” Then, at his signal, came two negro men tugging at a strong box that Printz unlocked. It was filled with gold pieces. “Hold thy fiddle bag,” commanded the governor, and Peter did so, watching, open mouthed, the transfer of a double handful of treasure from box to sack. Another such handful followed, and another. At the fourth Peter could no longer contain himself. He forgot the injunction not to speak, and shouted gleefully, “Lord Harry! Here's luck!”

There was a shriek of demon laughter, the scene was lost in darkness, and Peter fell insensible. In the morning a tavern−haunting friend, anxious to know if Peter had met with any adventure, entered the house and went cautiously from room to room, calling on the watcher to show himself. There was no response. At last he stumbled on the whiskey bottle, empty, and knew that Peter must be near. Sure enough, there he lay in the great room, with dust and mould thick on everything, and his fiddle smashed into a thousand pieces. Peter on being

awakened looked ruefully about him, then sprang up and eagerly demanded his money. “What money?” asked his friend. The fiddler clutched at his green bag, opened it, shook it; there was nothing. Nor was there any delay in Peter's exit from that mansion, and when, twenty−four hours after, the house went up in flames, he averred that the ghosts had set it afire, and that he knew where they brought their coals from.

THE TWO RINGS

Gabrielle de St. Pierre, daughter of the commandant of Fort Le Boeuf, now—Waterford, Pennsylvania, that the French had setup on the Ohio River, was Parisian by birth and training, but American by choice, for she had enjoyed on this lonesome frontier a freedom equal to that of the big−handed, red−faced half−breeds, and she was as wild as an Indian in her sports. Returning from a hunt, one day, she saw three men advancing along the trail, and, as it was easy to see that they were not Frenchmen, her guide slipped an arrow to the cord and discharged it; but Gabrielle was as quick as he, for she struck the missile as it was leaving the bow and it quivered harmlessly into a beech. The younger of the men who were advancing—he was Harry Fairfax, of Virginia—said to his chief, “Another escape for you, George. Heaven sent one of its angels to avert that stroke.”

Washington, for it was he, answered lightly, and, as no other hostile demonstrations were made, the new−comers pressed on to the fort, where St. Pierre received them cordially, though he knew that their errand was to claim his land on behalf of the English and urge the French to retire to the southwest. The days that were spent in futile negotiation passed all too swiftly for Fairfax, for he had fallen in love with Gabrielle. She would not consent to a betrothal until time had tried his affection, but as a token of friendship she gave him a stone circlet of Indian manufacture, and received in exchange a ring that had been worn by the mother of Fairfax.

After the diplomats had returned the English resolved to enforce their demand with arms, and Fairfax was one of the first to be despatched to the front.

Early in the campaign his company engaged the enemy near the Ohio River, and in the heat of battle he had time to note and wonder at the strange conduct of one of the French officers, a mere stripling, who seemed more concerned to check the fire of his men than to secure any advantage in the fight. Presently the French gave way, and with a cheer the English ran forward to claim the field, the ruder spirits among them at once beginning to plunder the wounded. A cry for quarter drew Fairfax with a bound to the place whence it came, and, dashing aside a pilfering soldier, he bent above a slight form that lay extended on the earth: the young officer whose strange conduct had so surprised him. In another moment he recognized his mother's ring on one of the slender hands. It was Gabrielle. Her father had perished in the fight, but she had saved her lover.

In due time she went with her affianced to his home in Williamsburg, Virginia, and became mistress of the Fairfax mansion. But she never liked the English, as a people, and when, in later years, two sturdy sons of hers asked leave to join the Continental army, she readily consented.

FLAME SCALPS OF THE CHARTIERS

Before Pittsburg had become worthy to be called a settlement, a white man rowed his boat to the mouth of Chartiers creek, near that present city. He was seeking a place in which to make his home, and a little way up−stream, where were timber, water, and a southern slope, he marked a “tomahawk claim,” and set about clearing the land. Next year his wife, two children, and his brother came to occupy the cabin he had built, and for a long time all went happily, but on returning from a long hunt the brothers found the little house in ashes and the charred remains of its occupants in the ruins. Though nearly crazed by this catastrophe they knew that their own lives were in hourly peril, and they wished to live until they could punish the savages for this crime. After burying the bodies, they started east across the hills, leaving a letter on birch bark in a cleft stick at the mouth of Chartiers creek, in which the tragedy was recounted.

This letter was afterward found by trappers. The men themselves were never heard from, and it is believed that they, too, fell at the hands of the Indians. Old settlers used to affirm that on summer nights the cries of the murdered innocents could be heard in the little valley where the cabin stood, and when storms were coming up these cries were often blended with the yells of savages. More impressive are the death lights—the will−o'−the−wisps—that wander over the scene of the tragedy, and up and down the neighboring slopes. These apparitions are said to be the spirits of husband and wife seeking each other, or going together in search of their children; but some declare that in their upward streaming rays it can readily be seen that they are the scalps of the slain. Two of them have a golden hue, and these are the scalps of the children. From beneath them drops of red seem to distil on the grass and are found to have bedewed the flowers on the following morning.

THE CONSECRATION OF WASHINGTON

In 1773 some of the Pietist monks were still living in their rude monastery whose ruins are visible on the banks of the Wissahickon. Chief among these mystics was an old man who might have enjoyed the wealth and distinction warranted by a title had he chosen to remain in Germany, but he had forsworn vanities, and had come to the new world to pray, to rear his children, and to live a simple life. Some said he was an alchemist, and many believed him to be a prophet. The infrequent wanderer beside the romantic river had seen lights burning in the window of his cell and had heard the solemn sound of song and prayer. On a winter night, when snow lay untrodden about the building and a sharp air stirred in the trees with a sound like harps, the old man sat in a large room of the place, with his son and daughter, waiting. For a prophecy had run that on that night, at the third hour of morning, the Deliverer would present himself. In a dream was heard a voice, saying, “I will send a deliverer to the new world who shall save my people from bondage, as my Son saved them from spiritual death.” The night wore on in prayer and meditation, and the hours tolled heavily across the frozen wilderness, but, at the stroke of three, steps were heard in the snow and the door swung open. The man who entered was of great stature, with a calm, strong face, a powerful frame, and a manner of dignity and grace.

“Friends, I have lost my way,” said he. “Can you direct me?”

The old man started up in a kind of rapture. “You have not lost your way,” he cried, “but found it. You are called to a great mission. Kneel at this altar and receive it.”

The stranger looked at the man in surprise and a doubt passed over his face. “Nay, I am not mad,” urged the recluse, with a slight smile. “Listen: to−night, disturbed for the future of your country, and unable to sleep, you mounted horse and rode into the night air to think on the question that cannot be kept out of your mind, Is it lawful for the subject to draw sword against his king? The horse wandered, you knew and cared not whither, until he brought you here.”

“How do you know this?” asked the stranger, in amazement.

“Be not surprised, but kneel while I anoint thee deliverer of this land.”

Moved and impressed, the man bowed his knee before one of his fellows for the first time in his life. The monk touched his finger with oil, and laying it on the brow of the stranger said, “Do you promise, when the hour shall strike, to take the sword in defence of your country? Do you promise, when you shall see your soldiers suffer for bread and fire, and when the people you have led to victory shall bow before you, to remember that you are but the minister of God in the work of a nation's freedom?”

With a new light burning in his eyes, the stranger bent his head.

“Then, in His name, I consecrate thee deliverer of this oppressed people. When the time comes, go forth to victory, for, as you are faithful, be sure that God will grant it. Wear no crown, but the blessings and honor of a free people, save this.” As he finished, his daughter, a girl of seventeen, came forward and put a wreath of laurel on the brow of the kneeling man. “Rise,” continued the prophet, “and take my hand, which I have never before offered to any man, and accept my promise to be faithful to you and to this country, even if it cost my life.”

As he arose, the son of the priest stepped to him and girt a sword upon his hip, and the old man held up his hands in solemn benediction. The stranger laid his hand on the book that stood open on the altar and kissed the hilt of his sword. “I will keep the faith,” said he. At dawn he went his way again, and no one knew his name, but when the fires of battle lighted the western world America looked to him for its deliverance from tyranny. Years later it was this spot that he revisited, alone, to pray, and here Sir William Howe offered to him, in the name of his king, the title of regent of America. He took the parchment and ground it into a rag in the earth at his feet. For this was Washington.

MARION

Blooming and maidenly, though she dressed in leather and used a rifle like a man, was Marion, grand−daughter of old Abraham, who counted his years as ninety, and who for many of those years had lived with his books in the tidy cabin where the Youghiogheny and Monongahela come together. This place stood near the trail along which Braddock marched to his defeat, and it was one of the stragglers from this command, a bony

half−breed with red hair, called Red Wolf, that knocked at the door and asked for water. Seeing no one but Marion he ventured in, and would have tried not only to make free with the contents of the little house but would have kissed the girl as well, only that she seized her rifle and held him at bay. Still, the fellow would have braved a shot, had not a young officer in a silver−laced uniform glanced through the open door in passing and discovered the situation. He doffed his chapeau to Marion, then said sternly to the rogue, “Retire. Your men are waiting for you.” Red Wolf slunk away, and Washington, for it was he, begged that he might rest for a little time under the roof.

This request was gladly complied with, both by the girl and by her grandfather, who presently appeared, and the fever that threatened the young soldier was averted by a day of careful nursing. Marion's innate refinement, her gentleness, her vivacity, could not fail to interest Washington, and the vision of her face was with him for many a day. He promised to return, then he rode forward and caught up with the troops. He survived the battle in which seven hundred of his comrades were shot or tomahawked and scalped. One Indian fired at him eleven times, and five of the bullets scratched him; after that the savage forbore, believing that the officer was under Manitou's protection. When the retreating column approached the place where Marion lived he hastened on in advance to see her. The cabin was in ashes. He called, but there was no answer. When he turned away, with sad and thoughtful mien, a brown tress was wrapped around his finger, and in his cabinet he kept it until his death, folded in a paper marked “Marion, July 11, 1755.”