

the edge of the clearing. Half-way she paused. He lifted his hat and held out his hand. She laid hers in it and they gave each other the long clinging grasp of affection.

"Always be a good man," she said, tightening her grasp and turning her face away.

As he was hurrying off, she called to him in a voice full of emotion :

"Come back!"

He wheeled and walked towards her blindly.

She scanned his face, feature by feature.

"Take off your hat!" she said with a tremulous little laugh. He did so and she looked at his forehead and his hair.

"Go now, dear friend!" she said calmly but quickly.

XXI

It was the morning of the wedding.

According to the usage of the time the marriage ceremony was to take place early in the forenoon, in order that the guests, gathered in from distant settlements of the wilderness, might have the day for festivity and still reach home before night. Late in the afternoon the bridal couple, escorted by many friends, were to ride into town to Joseph's house, and in the evening there was to be a house-warming.

The custom of the backwoods country ran that a man must not be left to build his house alone; and one day some weeks before this wagons had begun to roll in from this direction and from that direction out of the forest, hauling the logs for Joseph's cabin.

Then with loud laughter and the writhing of tough backs and the straining of powerful arms and legs, men old, middle-aged, and young had raised the house like overgrown boys at play, and then had returned to their own neglected

business: so that to him was left only the finishing.

He had finished it and furnished it for the simple scant needs of pioneer life. But on this, his wedding morning, he had hardly left the town, escorted by friends on horseback, before many who had variously excused themselves from going began to issue from their homes: women carrying rolls of linen and pones of bread; boys with huge joints of jerked meat and dried tongues of the buffalo, bear, and deer. There was a noggin, a piggin, a churn, a home-made chair; there was a quilt from a grandmother and a pioneer cradle—a mere trough scooped out of a walnut log. An old pioneer sent the antlers of a stag for a hat-rack, and a buffalo rug for the young pair to lie warm under of bitter, winter nights; his wife sent a spinning-wheel and a bundle of shingles for johnny-cakes. Some of the merchants gave packages of Philadelphia groceries; some of the aristocratic families parted with heirlooms that had been laboriously brought over the mountains—a cup and saucer of Sèvres, a pair of tall brass candlesticks, and a Venus-mirror framed in ebony.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when John Gray jumped on the back of a strong trusty horse at the stable of the Indian Queen, leaned over to shake the hands of the friends who had met there to see him off, and turned his horse's head in the direction of the path that led to the Wilderness Road.

But when he had gone about a mile, he struck into the forest at right angles and rode across the country until he reached that green woodland pathway which led from the home of the Falconers to the public road between Lexington and Frankfort. He tied his horse some distance away, and walking back, sat down on the roots of an oak and waited.

It was a day when the beauty of the earth makes itself felt like ravishing music that has no sound. The air, warm and full of summer fragrance, was of that ethereal untinged clearness which spreads over all things the softness of velvet. The far-vaulted heavens, so bountiful of light, were an illimitable weightless curtain of pale-blue velvet; the rolling clouds were of white velvet; the grass, the stems of bending wild flowers, the drooping sprays of woodland foliage, were so many forms of emerald

velvet; the gnarled trunks of the trees were gray and brown velvet; the wings and breasts of the birds, flitting hither and thither, were of gold and scarlet velvet; the butterflies were stemless, floating velvet blossoms.

"Farewell, Kentucky! farewell!" he said, looking about him at it all.

Two hours passed. The shadows were lengthening rapidly. Over the forest, like the sigh of a spirit, swept from out the west the first intimation of waning light, of the mysteries of coming darkness. At last there reached his ear from far down the woodland path the sounds of voices and laughter — again and again — louder and louder — and then through the low thick boughs he caught glimpses of them coming. Now beneath the darker arches of the trees, now across pale-green spaces shot by slanting sunbeams. Once there was a halt and a merry outcry. Long grape-vines from opposite sides of the road had been tied across it, and this barrier had to be cut through. Then on they came again: At the head of the procession, astride an old horse that in his better days had belonged to a mounted rifleman, rode the parson. He was several yards ahead

of the others and quite forgetful of them. The end of his flute stuck neglectedly out of his waistcoat pocket; his bridle reins lay slack on the neck of the drowsy beast; his hands were piled on the pommel of the saddle as over his familiar pulpit; his dreamy moss-agate eyes were on the tree-tops far ahead. In truth he was preparing a sermon on the affection of one man for another and ransacking Scripture for illustrations: and he meant to preach this the following Sunday when there would be some one sadly missed among his hearers. Nevertheless he enjoyed great peace of spirit this day: it was not John who rode behind him as the bridegroom: otherwise he would as soon have returned to the town at the head of the forces of Armageddon.

Behind the parson came William Penn in the glory of a new bridle and saddle and a blanket of crimson cloth; his coat smooth as satin, his mane a tumbling cataract of white silk; bunches of wild roses at his ears; his blue-black eyes never so soft, and seeming to lift his feet cautiously like an elephant bearing an Indian princess.

They were riding side by side, the young

husband and wife. He keeping one hand on the pommel of her saddle, thus holding them together; while with the other he used his hat to fan now his face, now hers, though his was the one that needed it, she being cool and quietly radiant with the thoughts of her triumph that day—the triumph of her wedding, of her own beauty. Furthermore she was looking ahead to the house-warming that night when she would be able to triumph again and also to count her presents.

Then came Major and Mrs. Falconer. Her face was hidden by a veil and as they passed, it was held turned toward him: he was talking, uninterrupted.

Then followed Horatio Turpin and Kitty Poythress; and then Erskine and his betrothed, he with fresh feathers of the hawk and the scarlet tanager gleaming in his cap above his swart, stern aquiline face. Then Peter, beside the widow Babcock; he openly aflame and solicitous; she coy and discreetly inviting, as is the wisdom of some. Then others and others and others—a long gay pageant, filling the woods with merry voices and laughter.

They passed and the sounds died away—

passed on to the town awaiting them, to the house-warming, and, please God, to long life and some real affection and happiness.

Once *he* had expected to ride beside her at the head of this procession. There had gone by him the vision of his own life as it was to have been.

Long after the last sound had ceased in the distance he was sitting at the root of the red oak. The sun set, the moon rose, he was there still. A loud, impatient neigh from his horse aroused him. He sprang lightly up, meaning to ride all night and not to draw rein until he had crossed the Kentucky River and reached Traveller's Rest, the home of Governor Shelby, where he had been invited to break his travel.

All that night he rode and at sunrise was far away. Pausing on a height and turning his horse's head, he sat a long time motionless as a statue. Then he struck his feet into its flank and all that day rode back again.

The sun was striking the tree-tops as he neared the clearing. He could see her across the garden. She sat quite still, her face turned toward the horizon. Against her breast, opened but forgotten, lay a book. He could recognize

it. By that story she had judged him and wished to guide him. The sight smote his eyes like the hilt of a knight's sword used as a Cross to drive away the Evil One. For he knew the evil purpose with which he had returned.

And so he sat watching her until she rose and walked slowly to the house.

XXII

It was early autumn when the first letters from him were received over the mountains. All these had relation to Mount Vernon and his business there.

To the Transylvania Library Committee he wrote that the President had made a liberal subscription for the buying of books and that the Vice-President and other public men would be likely to contribute.

His sonorous, pompous letter to a member of the Democratic Society was much longer and in part as follows :

"When I made known to the President who I was and where I came from, he regarded me with a look at once so stern and so benign, that I felt like one of my own school-boys overtaken in some small rascality and was almost of a mind to march straight to a corner of the room and stand with my face to the wall. If he had seized me by the coat collar and trounced me well, I should somehow have felt that he had

the right. From the conversations that followed I am led to believe that he knows the name of every prominent member of the Democratic Society of Lexington, and that he understands Kentucky affairs with regard to national and international complications as no other living man. While questioning me on the subject, he had the manner of one who, from conscientiousness, would further verify facts which he had already tested. But what impressed me even more than his knowledge was his justice; in illustration of which I shall never forget his saying, that the part which Kentucky had taken, or had wished to take, in the Spanish and French conspiracies had caused him greater solicitude than any other single event since the foundation of the National Government; but that nowhere else in America had the struggle for immediate self-government been so necessary and so difficult, and that nowhere else were the mistakes of patriotic and able men more natural or more to be judged with mildness.

"I think I can quote his very words when he spoke of the foolish jealousies and heartburnings, due to misrepresentations, that have influenced Kentucky against the East as a section

and against the Government as favouring it: 'The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort; and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must of necessity owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, directed by an indissoluble community of interests, as *One Nation*.'

"Memorable to me likewise was the language in which he proceeded to show that this was true:

"'The inhabitants of our Western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head. They have seen in the negotiations by the Executive, and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate of the treaty with Spain, and in the universal satisfaction of that event throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions propagated among them of a policy in the General Government and in the Atlantic States unfriendly to their interests in regard to the Mississippi. . . . Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such there are, who would sever them

from their Brethren and connect them with Aliens?’

“I am frank to declare that, having enjoyed the high privilege of these interviews with the President and been brought to judge rightly what through ignorance I had judged amiss, I feel myself in honour bound to renounce my past political convictions and to resign my membership in the Lexington Democratic Society. Nor shall I join the Democratic Society of Philadelphia, as had been my ardent purpose; and it will not be possible for me on reaching that city to act as the emissary of the Kentucky Clubs. But I shall lay before that Society the despatches of which I am the bearer. And will you lay before yours the papers herewith enclosed, containing my formal resignation with the grounds thereof carefully stated?”

To Mrs. Falconer he wrote buoyantly:

“I have crossed the Kentucky Alps, seen the American Cæsar, carried away some of his gold. I came, I saw, I overcame. How do you think I met the President? I was riding toward Mount Vernon one quiet sunny afternoon and unexpectedly came upon an old gentleman who was putting up some bars that opened into a

wheat-field by the roadside. He had on long boots, corduroy smalls, a speckled red jacket, blue coat with yellow buttons, and a broad-brimmed white hat. He held a hickory switch in his hand. An umbrella and a long staff were attached to his saddle-bow. His limbs were so long, large, and sinewy; his countenance so lofty, masculine, and contemplative; and altogether he was of a presence so statue-like and venerable that my heart with a great throb cried out, It is Washington!”

“My dear friend,” he wrote at the close, “it is of no little worth to me that I should have come to Mount Vernon at this turning-point of my life. I find myself uplifted to a plane of thought and feeling higher than has ever been trod by me. When I began to draw near this place, I seemed to be mounting higher, like a man ascending a mountain; and ever since my arrival there has been this same sense of rising into a still loftier atmosphere, of surveying a vaster horizon, of beholding the juster relations of surrounding objects.

“All this feeling has its origin in my contemplation of the character of the President. You know that when a heavy sleet falls upon

the Kentucky forest, the great trees crack and split, or groan and stagger, with branches snapped off or trailing. In adversity it is often so with men. But he is a vast mountain-peak, always calm, always lofty, always resting upon a base that nothing can shake; never higher, never lower, never changing; from every quarter of the earth storms have rushed in and beaten upon him; but they have passed; he is as he was. The heavens have emptied their sleets and snows on his head,—these have made him look only the purer, only the more sublime.

“From the spectacle of this great man thus bearing the great burdens of his great life, a new standard of what is possible to human nature has been raised within me. I have seen with my own eyes a man whom the adverse forces of the world have not been able to wreck—a lover of perfection, who has so wrought it out in his character that to know him is to be awed into reverence of his virtues. I shall go away from him with nobler hopes of what a man may do and be.

“It is to you solely that I owe the honour of having enjoyed the personal consideration of the President. His reception of me had been

in the highest degree ceremonious and distant; but upon my mentioning the names of your father and brother, his manner grew warm: I had touched that trait of affectionate faithfulness with which he has always held on to every tie of kin and friendship. That your father should have fought against him and your brother under him made no difference in his memory. He had many questions to ask regarding you—your happiness, your family—to some of which I could return the answers that gave him pleasure or left him thoughtful. Upon my setting out from Mount Vernon, his last words made me the bearer of his message to you, the child of an old comrade and the sister of a gallant young soldier.”

Beyond this there was nothing personal in his letter and nothing as to his return.

When she next heard, he was in Philadelphia, giving his attention to the choosing and shipment of the books. One piece of news, imparted in perfect calmness by him, occasioned her acute disappointment. His expectation of coming into possession of some ten thousand dollars had not quite been realized. An appeal had been taken and the case was yet pending.

He was pleased neither with the good faith nor with the good sense of the counsel engaged; and he would remain on the spot himself during the trial. He added that he was lodging with a pleasant family. Then followed the long winter during which all communication between the frontier and the seaboard was interrupted. When spring returned at last and the earliest travel was resumed, other letters came, announcing that the case had gone against him, and that he had nothing.

She sold at once all the new linen that had been woven, got together all the money she otherwise could and despatched it with Major Falconer's consent, begging him to make use of it for the sake of their friendship—not to be foolish and proud: there were lawyers' fees it could help to pay, or other plain practical needs it might cover. But when the post-rider returned, he brought it all back with a letter full of gratitude: only, he couldn't accept it. And the messenger had been warned not to let it be known that he was in prison for debt on account of these same suit expenses; for having from the first formed a low opinion of his counsel's honour and ability and having later

expressed this opinion at the door of the courtroom with a good deal of fire and a good deal of contempt, and being furthermore unable and unwilling to pay the exorbitant fee, he had been promptly clapped into jail by the incensed attorney, as well for his poverty as for his temper and his pride.

In jail he spent that spring and summer and autumn. Then an important turn was given to his history. It seems that among the commissions with which he was charged on leaving Lexington was one from Edward West, the watchmaker and inventor, who some time before, and long before Fulton, had made trial of steam navigation with a small boat on the Town Fork of the Elkhorn, and who desired to have his invention brought before the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia. He had therefore placed a full description of his steamboat in John's hands with the request that he would enforce this with the testimony of an eye-witness as to its having moved through the water. At this time, through Franklin's influence, the Society was keenly interested in the work of inventors, having received also some years previous from Hya-

cinthe de Magellan two hundred guineas to be used for rewarding the authors of improvements and discoveries. Accordingly it took up the subject of West's invention but desired to hear more regarding the success of the experiment; and so requested John to appear before it at one of its meetings. But upon looking for this obscure John and finding him in jail, the committee were under the necessity of appearing before him. Whereupon, grown interested in him and made acquainted with the ground of his unreasonable imprisonment, some of the members effected his release—by recourse to the attorney with certain well-directed threats that he could easily be put into jail for his own debts. Not only this; but soon afterwards the young Westerner was taken into the law-office of one of these gentlemen, binding himself for a term of years.

It was not until spring that he wrote her humorously of his days in jail; but when it came to telling her of the other matter, the words refused to form themselves before his will or his hand to shape them on the paper. He would do this in the next letter, he said to himself mournfully.

But early that winter Major Falconer had died, and his next letter was but a short hurried reply to one from her, bringing him this intelligence. And before he wrote again, certain grave events had happened that led him still further to defer acquainting her with his new situation, new duties, new plans.

That same spring, then, during which he was entering upon his career in Philadelphia, she too began really to live. And beginning to live, she began to build—inwardly and outwardly; for what is all life but ceaseless inner and outer building?

As the first act, she sold one of the major's military grants, reserving the ample, noble, parklike one on which she had passed existence up to this; and near the cabin she laid the foundations of her house. Not the great ancestral manor-house on the James and yet a seaboard aristocratic Virginia country-place: two-story brick with two-story front veranda of Corinthian columns; wide hall, wide stairway; oak wood interior, hand-carved, massive; sliding doors between the large library and large dining-room; great bedrooms, great fire-

places, great brass fenders and fire-dogs, brass locks and keys: full of elegance, spaciousness, comfort, rest.

In every letter she sent him that spring and summer and early autumn, always she had something to tell him about this house, about the room in it built for him, about the negroes she had bought, the land she was clearing, the changes and improvements everywhere: as to many things she wanted his advice. That year also she sent back to Virginia for flower-seed and shrubs and plants—the same old familiar ones that had grown on her father's lawn, in the garden, about the walls, along the water—some of which had been brought over from England: the flags, the lilies, the pinks, the Virginia creeper, the lilacs, honeysuckles, calacanthus, snowdrops, roses—all of them. Speaking of this, she wrote him that of course the most of these would have to be set out that autumn, and little could be done for grounds till the following season; but the house!—it was to be finished before winter set in. In the last of these letters, she ended by saying: "I think I know now the very day you will be coming back. I can hear your horse's feet

rustling in the leaves of—I said—October; but I will say November this time."

His replies were unsatisfying. There had been the short, hurried, earnest letter, speaking of Major Falconer's death: that was all right. But since then a vague blinding mist had seemed to lie between her eyes and every page. Something was kept hidden—some new trouble. "I shall understand everything when he comes!" she would say to herself each time. "I can wait." Her buoyancy was irrepressible.

Late that autumn the house was finished—one of those early country-places yet to be seen here and there on the landscape of Kentucky, marking the building era of the aristocratic Virginians and renewing in the wilderness the architecture of the James.

She had taken such delight in furnishing her room: in the great bedstead with its mighty posts, its high tester, its dainty, hiding curtains; such delight in choosing, in bleaching, in weaving the linen for it! And the pillow-cases—how expectant they were on the two pillows now set side by side at the head of the bed, with the delicate embroidery in the centre

of each! At first she had thought of working her initials within an oval-shaped vine; but one day, her needle suddenly arrested in the air, she had simply worked a rose.

Late one afternoon, when the blue of Indian summer lay on the walls of the forest like a still sweet veil, she came home from a walk in the woods. Her feet had been rustling among the brown leaves and each time she had laughed. At her round white throat she had pinned a scarlet leaf, from an old habit of her girlhood. But was not Kentucky turning into Virginia? Was not womanhood becoming girlhood again? She was still so young—only thirty-eight. She had the right to be bringing in from the woods a bunch of the purple violets of November.

She sat down in her shadowy room before the deep fireplace: where there was such comfort now, such loneliness. In early years at such hours she had liked to play. She resolved to get her a spinet. Yes; and she would have myrtle-berry candles instead of tallow, and a slender-legged mahogany table beside which to read again in the *Spectator* and "Tom Jones." As nearly as she could she would bring back everything that she had been used to in her

childhood—was not all life still before her? If he were coming, it *must* be soon, and she would know what had been keeping him—what it was that had happened. She had walked to meet him so many times already. And the heartless little gusts of wind, starting up among the leaves in the woods, how often they had fooled her ear and left her white and trembling!

The negro boy who had been sent to town on other business and to fetch the mail, soon afterwards knocked and entered. There was a letter from him—a short one and a paper. She read the letter and could not believe her own eyes, could not believe her own mind. Then she opened the paper and read the announcement of it printed there: he was married.

That night in her bedroom—with the great clock measuring out life in the corner—the red logs turning slowly to ashes—the crickets under the bricks of the hearth singing of summer gone—that night, sitting by the candle-stand, where his letter lay opened, in a nightgown white as white samite, she loosened the folds of her heavy lustrous hair—wave upon wave—until the edges that rippled over her forehead

rippled down over her knees. With the loosening of her hair somehow had come the loosening of her tears. And with the loosening of her tears came the loosening of her hold upon what she, until this night, had never acknowledged to herself — her love of him, the belief that he had loved her.

The next morning the parson, standing a white, cold shepherd before his chilly wilderness flock, preached a sermon from the text: "I shall go softly all my years." While the heads of the rest were bowed during the last moments of prayer, she rose and slipped out.

"Yes," she said to herself, gathering her veil closely about her face as she alighted at the door of her house and the withered leaves of November were whirled fiercely about her feet, "I shall go softly all my years."

XXIII

AFTER this the years were swept along. Fast came the changes in Kentucky. The prophecy which John Gray had made to his school-children passed to its realization and reality went far beyond it. In waves of migration, hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of settlers of the Anglo-Saxon race hurried into the wilderness and there jostled and shouldered each other in the race passion of soil-owning and home-building; or always farther westward they rushed, pushing the Indian back. Lexington became the chief manufacturing town of the new civilization, thronged by merchants and fur-clad traders; gathered into it were men and women making a society that would have been brilliant in the capitals of the East; at its bar were heard illustrious voices, the echoes of which are not yet dead, are past all dying; the genius of young Jouett found for itself the secret of painting canvases so luminous and true that never