

# A WOMAN'S HEROISM.

A True Story of the American Revolution.

DIRECTLY after their wedding day young Mr. and Mrs. Fisher had gone to their new home. It is true, this was only a rude little building, but it was better than most of the houses in North Castle, and, indeed, in all Westchester county, N. Y., for the matter of that; and the young wife had been supremely happy. There was the same rugged aspect to the country then as now, and the huge, moss-covered granite bowlders, the wooded hillsides and winding valleys, and beyond all the glistening waters of the sound, provided a landscape upon which Mistress Fisher never tired of gazing.

But the young people were not to be left to the peaceful enjoyment of their new home. The war clouds which had long been gathering broke in a storm, and among the first to respond to his country's call was Mr. Fisher. Enrolled in Maj. Paulding's band of patriots, he speedily became one of the most trusted of Washington's scouts in the so-called neutral ground. But his young wife, left to herself, was as bold of heart as her husband, and soon found many methods of displaying a courage and loyalty as strong as his.

After the battle at White Plains she had gone to the camp and nursed the wounded continentals with a care which endeared her to all the soldiers, and when Washington himself had en-

At one time he had been traced by the redcoats, hoping to capture the bold scout, and not long after he had entered the house his enemies had surrounded the place and boldly called upon him to surrender. Mistress Fisher, terrified but undaunted, had lifted the rough boards of the kitchen floor and concealed her husband beneath them, and then, with an appearance of boldness she was far from feeling, had faced the soldiers and bidden them search the house—a search which proved unavailing.

At another time—and the young wife could never repress the shudder which crept over her at the recollection—he had been surprised by the band of Blindberry, the most detested of all the Tories in the neutral ground, and unable to escape had been seized by the men and bidden to give over the gold which he was supposed to have concealed somewhere about the place. When the young patriot had sturdily and steadily refused, his captors had led him forth into the yard and throwing a halter over one of the lower limbs of a tree had suspended him from it. Upon his repeated refusals to reveal the hiding place they at last left him hanging dead, as they supposed, and departed. The grief-stricken young wife had cut down the body of her husband, never once thinking that he was still alive, but to her inexpressible joy she had discov-



MISTRESS FISHER COVERED HIM WITH ASHES.

camped near her home she had provided for his table in such a manner as to call forth the thanks of the great commander in words which were long after cherished in the family. When the army had departed she returned to her home, but the stirring experiences in the camp were to be followed by still more stirring experiences in the neutral ground. Prowling bands of Tories and Hessians sent out from New York soon created a veritable reign of terror. Possessions were stolen, homes were burned, and in the awful rage which was begotten of the war it almost seemed as if every man's hand was lifted against his neighbor.

Still young Mistress Fisher remained alone in her home, cheered by the occasional visits of her husband, and on rare occasions fleeing to the shelter of Coney hill with her neighbors when it was reported that a larger band of marauders than usual was approaching; but for the most part she stayed behind to guard her few possessions and defend her home. And she well knew that her presence was demanded. At one time a force of red-coats had carried away with them the roan colt, which was her own special pride and property; but, undismayed, she had mounted the other horse, which had been left behind, and ridden straight to the British camp at Morrisania, and with flashing eyes had demanded of the captain the return of her possessions. The officer had laughed, and moved perhaps by her very boldness, had granted her request. She had left the camp leading the roan colt behind her.

Of late matters had become steadily worse. The visits of the marauders had increased, while those of her husband were less and less frequent. And, indeed, twice had he had such an experience that, eager as she was to see him, the young wife had tearfully begged of him not to make the attempt again.

ered a faint fluttering in the heart, and through her careful nursing he was soon restored and more determined than ever to do his part in defending his home and country against the attacks of the Hessians and the lawless bands which had been quick to turn the struggle to their own advantage.

And now Mistress Fisher was again expecting a visit from her husband. It was true, she had not received any direct word from him, but it had been long since she had seen him and somehow she could not shake off the feeling that he would come that very afternoon. Again and again she had left her work and gone out on the low piazza to gaze up and down the road, but the sun had sunk lower in the sky, the night would soon come and still he had not appeared. She must be mistaken, she thought, and resolutely strove to drive her fears and hopes alike from her mind. But with all her efforts she could not succeed, and as the long shadows began to lengthen she once more left the house to take her stand outside and satisfy herself that no one was in sight.

As she passed through the doorway she suddenly stopped and peered intently before her. Down the road just where it left the woods she could see a man running swiftly toward her house. Her first thought was that it must be her husband, but why was he in such haste? He was running desperately, and the frequent glances he cast behind him showed that he was in fear of something coming from that direction. In an agony of suspense Mistress Fisher clasped her hands and watched the man. She was tempted to seize the one gun in the house and go to his aid, but restraining the impulse, as she realized that the man was coming toward her, she paused and waited. Once he stumbled and fell and a low cry escaped the waiting woman's lips, but in an instant he had regained his footing and dashed forward with increased speed.

On and on ran the man, still casting occasional glances behind him, and soon she could see that he was not her husband, but a neighbor, Mr. Butler, one of the staunchest whigs in all the region.

It was evident, however, that he was in trouble, and Mistress Fisher, relieved as she was to discover it was not her husband who was being pursued, waited with almost breathless eagerness for him to approach. He was near now, and she could easily see that he was laboring under great excitement; the perspiration poured in streams down his face and his alarm was evident in every movement. He was soon near the house, and as she thought he was going to pass without recognizing her, Mistress Fisher called:

"Mr. Butler! Mr. Butler! What is it? What is it?"

The fleeing man glanced up, and instantly changing his course, darted into the house after her.

"What is it? What is it?" repeated the excited woman.

"The Tories! the Tories!" gasped the almost exhausted man. "They're after me. They're close behind me! They'll get me sure, Mistress Fisher, if you don't hide me!"

Mrs. Fisher stepped to the door again and gazed down the road. Just emerging from the woods she could see a band of men coming swiftly up the road, and her neighbor's words needed no further confirmation. Had they seen him turn into her house? She could not tell, but, satisfied that in any event they would stop there to make inquiries, if nothing more, the courageous woman instantly turned and once more faced the panting man in the room. "Hide me! Hide me somewhere, anywhere!" he pleaded. "Don't let them get me!"

Mistress Fisher glanced hastily about the room. What could she do? Through the kitchen door she could see the hens fluttering in the ash heap. Beyond was the barn, and it was useless to think of hiding there. And the Tories were already approaching and would soon be in the house.

"Here!" exclaimed the unfeared woman, seizing a brush made of goose quills lying on the table. Taking a knife she quickly cut several of the quills loose. Then, cutting the feathered parts away, she blew the "pith" out of each and joined four of them in the form of a long tube. She worked rapidly and with a desperation born almost of despair, the man meanwhile watching her and not uttering a sound.

As soon as she had the tube ready, she grasped the shovel, which was near the kitchen door, and said: "Come! Be quick! We haven't a minute to spare."

The man followed her, not perceiving her purpose, but too frightened to question or protest. Quickly Mistress Fisher ran to the ash heap and began to dig with feverish haste. Every moment was precious now, and she labored desperately, knowing that the fate of a life depended upon her efforts. As soon as she had made a hole large enough to satisfy her, she dropped the shovel, and, taking the quill tube, said to her companion: "Here! keep this in your mouth! Now jump in and I'll hide you. Be sure and keep your eyes and mouth closed. Quick!"

Her purpose was clear now, and instantly the man obeyed. Then Mistress Fisher covered him with ashes, being careful to see that the end of the tube was left free, and as soon as the labor was completed she flung the shovel to one side of the house and entered the kitchen, just as the Tories came up on the piazza. Her heart was trembling, though her countenance was bold, as she advanced to meet the band.

"Who are you? What wish you here?" the brave woman demanded.

"Give up that rebel, Joe Butler," said the leader; "we saw him turn in here."

"Think you I would give him up if he were here?"

"You've got him here somewhere. Now, give him over!" shouted the leader, flourishing a pistol as he spoke.

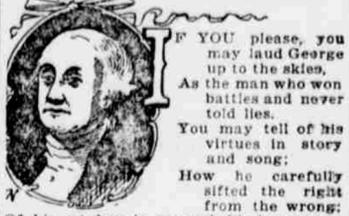
Mistress Fisher felt strangely sick and faint, but, still striving to keep up her bold appearance, said: "Keep your pistol to frighten children with; you shall not intimidate me! If you want to give up your chase and look for my neighbor Butler here, it is your privilege. 'Tis not the first time defenseless women in Westchester county have had their homes invaded by hirelings!"

"Come on, boys!" called the leader, restoring his pistol to his belt and turning to his followers as he spoke. "She hid that rebel husband of hers under the kitchen floor, and perhaps Joe Butler is there now!"

with many threats against her "rebel husband" and the whig who for the present had escaped them the men departed. The woman waited until a half hour had gone and then, taking her shovel, began to dig into the ash heap again. Soon she had freed her neighbor from his hiding place, but what a spectacle he presented! Almost too exhausted to stand, streaked with the ashes, and almost blinded as well, it was long before he was restored. But at last, by the aid of soap and water and such simple means as were in the house, he was made ready to return to his home or go to the camp, as he deemed best.

As he stood on the piazza he said: "I thought I was a dead man when I crawled into that ash heap. I was thinking of the words of the preacher—'Dust to dust, ashes to ashes.'" "Out of the ashes you came to life again," responded Mistress Fisher, solemnly. "So may it be with our country and with us all." And the true-hearted woman stood in the doorway and watched her neighbor until he disappeared in the forest.—Everett F. Tomlinson, in *Congregationalist*.

## WHERE HONOR IS DUE



IF YOU please, you may laud George up to the skies. As the man who won battles and never told lies. You may tell of his virtues in story and song; How he carefully sifted the right from the wrong; Of his wisdom in counsel, his bravery in war; How he drove the grim British away from our shore. You may cherish forever his hat and his sword. And up to the skies our brave Washington laud. Long, long may we hold him an example to youth. For honesty, temperance, courage and truth.

While we gaze with delight on a structure so grand, Let us honor the builder who drew out the plan. And added, through years of infinite care, Small stone upon stone, firmly fixing them there; And though this may be but a girl's point of view, Let us give credit where it is certainly due, And pluck from his laurels one leaf for another. So three cheers for our George, and four for his mother. —Margaret S. Underwood, in *Youth's Companion*.

**Washington's Answer.**  
The Father of His Country was a shrewd observer of men, and he understood feminine character pretty well, too, as witness the following letter written about a young lady who was contemplating a second marriage. It was evidently in response to some appeal for his advice that Washington wrote: "For my own part I never did, nor do I believe I ever shall, give advice to a woman who is setting out on a matrimonial voyage. First, because I never could advise one to marry without her own consent, and, secondly, because I know it is to no purpose to advise her to refrain when she has obtained it. A woman very rarely asks an opinion or requires advice on such an occasion till her resolution is formed, and then it is with the hope and expectation of obtaining a sanction, not that she means to be governed by your disapprobation, that she applies. In a word, the plain English of the application may be summed up in these words: 'I wish you to think as I do; but if, unhappily, you differ from me in opinion, my heart I must confess, is fixed and I have gone too far to retract.'"—Troy Times.

## HE DIDN'T WORK.



This cute little boy with his fist in his eye said: "In order to be a great man I'll chop down a tree;" but twist you and me. His dad didn't approve of the plan.

**And Made a Holiday.**  
Teacher—Now, children, what did George Washington do for his country?  
Chorus of Children—He had a birthday.—Puck.

## IRRIGATION.

The Reclamation of Arid Lands—What the Government is Doing.—The Census Office.

Washington, D. C., Feb. 6.—The reclamation of arid lands, which was a prominent feature of food-producing operations in India, China, Egypt and Mexico many centuries ago, is now receiving more attention from the United States government than ever before.

In congress, the house has appointed a strong standing committee on irrigation, with a chairman and a majority of its members interested in or representing irrigable sections. In the senate, the committee on reclamation of arid lands is similarly constituted. These committees listen to the demands of the people and formulate legislation when it is intended to add to the resources of nature quite as substantially as if large areas of prolific territory were being acquired from the outside.

The officers of the geological survey are making an extended investigation of the quantity and constancy of water supplies in irrigable districts; locating and surveying sites available for permanent impounding reservoirs; measuring the wastes from seepage, evaporation and unchecked floods, and generally determining or comparing the values of different methods of irrigation, and the utility of different sources of water supply.

The census office, confining itself strictly to exact facts and conditions, is supplementing these efforts of the government by making a census of irrigation works, dams, reservoirs, springs, canals and ditches, and the cost and character thereof; of ownership, volume and constancy of water sources; of water-rights, sales and rates; of the acreage, quantity and value of irrigated crops; of unreclaimed but irrigable land areas, etc. Most of this work is being accomplished by means of schedules sent through the mails in advance of the main field work, which the law says shall be done in June, 1900. Director Merriam deemed such a course warranted by the estimated increase in irrigation wells to 12,000 and the ditches and canals to 15,000 during the past ten years, which means that probably more than 100,000 producers are now raising crops and herds abundantly on lands which, without irrigation, were desolate and valueless.

Preliminary returns to the census office from irrigators and irrigation companies are quite satisfactory, and the director requests that all who have received or may receive hereafter schedules from the department do their best to answer the several questions therein, and return the blanks at their earliest convenience. Also, that irrigators who have not received, will write and ask to be supplied with schedules. The request will be complied with by return mail. In this way, accurate statistics will be secured of an industrial feature which, in effect, is equal to adding several productive states to the domain of a nation whose staple food supplies already dominate the markets of the world.

**To Save Time.**  
An old man who was cook at a western camp went by the name of Bunch Grass. He had his own way of looking at things. On one occasion the camp was to be moved along the stream, and Bunch packed up the outfit preparatory to the moving. "Got a match, Bunch?" asked one of the party, for he had rolled up a big cigarette and wanted to light it. The old man's fingers went to his vest pocket; then he paused and looked thoughtful. Evidently no match was forthcoming. But suddenly Bunch, showed his originality of thought. Without a word he climbed into the wagon and started to pitch off his load. Bedding, tents, kettles sailed out on the grass. The petitioner for the match looked at him in amazement. Had he gone crazy? "Why, what is the matter with you? What are you doing?" he asked. Bunch stopped throwing out the goods, and replied, in a slow drawl: "Which it's like this. When you requested that match, I suddenly happened to recall that them combustibles allus lurks in the last pocket. I got a coat and waistcoat in the bottom of this wagon, and I'm reachin' down for that last pocket first, just to save time." And he proceeded to throw off the rest of the load.—*Youth's Companion*.

**Yes—What?**  
A good story is going the rounds at Harvard college concerning a last year's graduate, a dutiful son and an industrious student, yet withal a somewhat literal youth. At the beginning of his concluding year, his father, who was just setting out for Europe, said to him: "Now, Harry, you get your degree, and I'll send for you to come over and travel all summer." Harry was delighted. "Father," said he, "I will." He studied faithfully all the college year, and in June went through with flying colors. Then he cabled his father: "Yes." But the father, alas! had forgotten his impulsive offer. He mused over the message, wondered, and then cabled back: "Yes, what?" The son was in turn perplexed, but being a well-trained lad, he did not remain long in the dark, and fired by dutiful zeal, cabled back: "Yes, sir." Letters of explanation followed, and he was permitted to make the "grand tour."—*Youth's Companion*.