CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE

VOL. LIII. DECEMBER, 1896. No. 2.

A GROUP OF AMERICAN GIRLS.

EARLY IN THE CENTURY.

A REGRET frequently uttered by middle-aged persons is that in youth they had not paid more heed to the reminiscences of their elders. I also utter this regret, although, having always been intensely interested in the tales which my grandparents told of the events and friends of their early days, I have in this respect less to mourn than most.

Especially was I enchanted by the accounts given by my grandmother of her girlhood on the banks of the Hudson, and of her one winter in New York society, in 1806–7, culminating in a voyage up the Hudson in Fulton's first steamboat, the *Clermont*, in August, 1807. After an evening at my grandmother's, I often wrote out the things she had told me, as nearly as possible in her own words, and have since had the good fortune to find some letters which have helped me to piece together a connected narrative of this period of her life. The grandmother referred to was Helen, second daughter of Gilbert R. Livingston of Red Hook (now Tivoli) on the Hudson. In 1809, being then nineteen years of age, she married William Mather Smith, Esq., of Sharon, Connecticut, only son of Governor John Cotton Smith of that State.

My grandmother often said that it was fortunate for herself and sisters that they were not born a few years earlier than they were; for in the troublous times immediately succeeding the American Revolution things were not made very pleasant for the defeated party.

Unlike the rest of the Livingstons, most of whom had, in one way or another, taken an active part with the resisting colonies, my grandmother's father espoused the principles of his wife's family, the Kanes, and remained loyal to the king. Mr. Livingston was one of those who emigrated to Nova Scotia, returning to the States only after the conclusion of the war. It does not appear that he was ever actually in field service against his country, but it is certain that he held a captain's commission in the British army, and that a pension from the crown was paid to him and afterward to his widow. Of course Mr. Livingston's property interests suffered heavily (a thing which, her republican descendants never failed to remind my grandmother, was richly deserved), and would have suffered still more but for the fact that their kindred welcomed back the humbled recusants, and relinquished to them much which might have been legally withheld. Red Hook was really Reade's Hoeck, named after the Reade family, which held large estates there, and the head of which

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had married the favorite sister of Captain Livingston.[1] At this place several farms and a fairly handsome residence had belonged to the father of Captain Livingston. These were now allotted to him, and his British military title was politely ignored by his kindly neighbors, who would not willingly remind his young family of what was felt to be their father's disgraceful adherence to the cause of his country's oppressors, though there were many Livingstons, and so many bearing the names of Robert, Gilbert, John, and Philip, that titles were extremely useful to distinguish one from another. For this reason we shall here give to Captain Livingston his despised title.

The vicinity of the new home to Clermont, the country-seat of Captain Livingston's father's cousin, Robert R., better known as Chancellor Livingston, was a great blessing to the young sons and daughters of the late Tory. Members of this large family filled some of the most important positions in the States of New Jersey and New York and in the General Government; but perhaps the chancellor filled the largest place of all in the public esteem. Whether as an orator, as a magistrate, or as an ambassador to foreign courts, he has had few superiors, and American society has probably never known a more high-minded, courtly, and accomplished gentleman.

Chancellor Livingston had been attached heart and soul to the cause of the colonies, and it is said that he admitted that it might have been much harder for him to forgive the course taken by the «British Livingston» had it not been for the personal beauty of the latter's sons and daughters. It is a family tradition that when the question was mooted of how the families of the late Tories were to be received in the new society, the chancellor declared that, «seeing the wrong-headed creatures *would* have such deucedly pretty daughters, there was nothing else to be done but to let bygones be bygones»—a humorous turn by which he doubtless thought to conciliate some of those who were inclined to take less lenient views. Traditions from many sources show that personal beauty of a rare sort did indeed belong to such Tory families as the De Lanceys and the Kanes, as well as to that of Captain Livingston. Family traditions are so apt to be misleading on some points, and especially so on this, that sometimes one is led to wonder whether the artists of those days were positively incapable of seizing a resemblance, or whether tradition has not been overkind. But there are those yet living who can recall the fine features and exquisite complexion—with hardly a wrinkle at the age of seventy-six—of the late Mrs. Henry Beeckman (the «Sister Kate» of the following notes), and the noble, intellectual beauty and majestic grace of Mrs. David Codwise («Sister Patty»), as for several years after she had reached seventy she continued to preside at the anniversaries of the New York Female Bible Society, and at the early meetings of the managers of the Woman's Hospital, which her enthusiastic efforts did much to establish.

In the early part of this century Clermont was considered one of the finest residences in North America, and its owner maintained a style of living hardly in consonance with the strictly republican principles which he had hazarded all to maintain. But it must be remembered that social equality was at no time held to be either possible or desirable by the majority of the leaders among those who fought to achieve independence from the rule of Great Britain. They fully believed in and desired political equality and all civil rights for all; but the notion of social equality was peculiar to those who, like Jefferson, had been under the influence of the enthusiasts of the first French Revolution.

The chancellor was fond of riding, and was on horseback a great deal; but when he made calls upon the families of his friends he drove in a great gilded coach drawn by four perfectly black, or four perfectly white, or four dappled-gray horses, according to the weather, using the blacks when the day was bright and dry, the whites when it was gloomy and dry, and the grays in rain and mud. I find in my notes that «grandmother says that rarely more than two or three days passed, when the chancellor was staying at Clermont, that his coach did not drive to our door. Sometimes he would step out from it, tall, stately, magnificent in carriage, but gracious and winning in manner, and ascend our steps to the porch, where, at the first news of his approach, we all speedily assembled to greet him, as was fitting, seeing that he was so great a man, and we but his juniors, whom it pleased him to have taken under his protection. But more often the coach came

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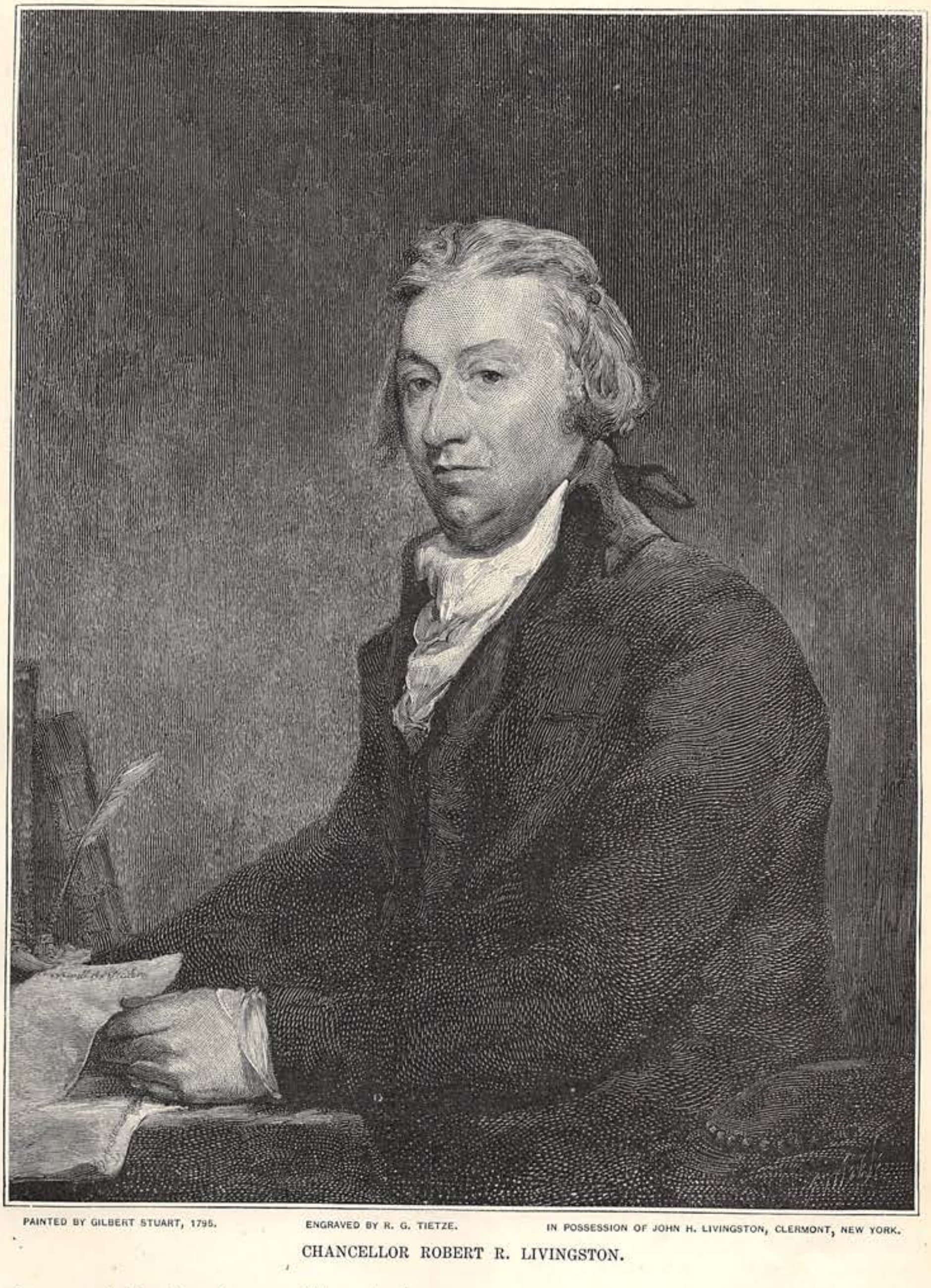
[1] One of the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Reade married Mr. Hooker of Poughkeepsie; another married Nicholas William Stuyvesant; a third married Philip Kearny of Kearny Manor, near Newark, N. J., and was the grandmother of General Kearny, the «fighting Phil» of the war of the rebellion.

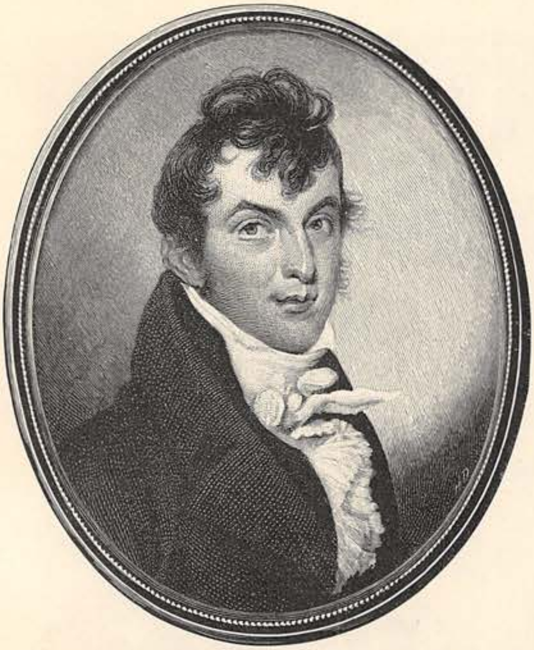


PAINTED BY GILBERT STUART, 1795. ENGRAVED BY R. G. TIETZE. IN POSSESSION OF JOHN H. LIVINGSTON, CLERMONT, NEW YORK.

CHANCELLOR ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON.

empty, an outrider bearing a polite note from the chancellor to our mother, begging the pleasure of the society of any two or four of her sons or daughters whom she might be pleased to spare to him for the day. Needless to say that we were always delighted to accept. The chancellor's wife was not living, but one or the other of his two married daughters was nearly always at home to act as hostess, and he had always, besides, some matron or elderly spinster of the family connection. Generally there was more than one, as all esteemed it an honor to be invited to spend a few months at Clermont, and it was an agreeable way for him to discharge his duty to such female members of the clan as might not be otherwise so well provided for.»

At about this point in her narrative my grandmother always expatiated upon the fact that «any one who aspired to the title of

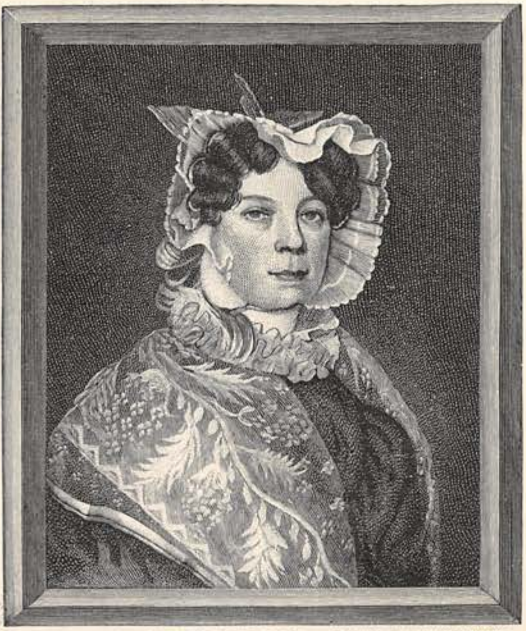


FROM A MINIATURE IN POSSESSION OF THE AUTHOR. ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

WILLIAM MATHER SMITH AT 21.

gentleman would have found himself irretrievably disgraced if he allowed a female member of his family, even as remote as a third or fourth cousin, to do aught for her own support or to accept assistance from any one not a relative,» and would add that «the cases in which such a dependent was allowed to feel herself such were rare indeed. Certainly at Clermont those ladies were always treated by their host (and consequently by all others) as if they were the true owners of the place, and he but the most obliged of their guests.» Sometimes, tradition declares, they would get to imagine that this was the actual state of affairs! In such a case the host has been known to write to some other relative, not well provided with the sinews of war, inclosing a liberal draft, and requesting that an urgent invitation might be immediately forwarded to «Cousin Sally» or «Betty» to arrive by a certain day. After an interval a letter of recall to Clermont was issued, and the experiment tried anew, usually with a more agreeable result.

All of Captain Livingston's descendants always spoke of their visits at their «Cousin Chancellor's» as the «fairy days» of their youth. His grounds, extending a mile or more along the river-front, were beautifully laid out and cared for; his fine and spacious house, «built in the shape of a letter H, the long arms of which were over a hundred feet in length, without counting the four pavilions which terminated them,» was elegantly furnished, mainly with articles brought from Paris shortly after the French Revolution, when the returning *émigrés* were glad to sell to a wealthy American the wonderfully carved and inlaid pieces of furniture, and the costly tapestries, which until then had been used only by the great courts of Europe and the nobles attached to them. I remember in particular that my grandmother and aunts often mentioned a buhl writing-desk, and four corner cabinets of the same, which had been the property of the Cardinal de Rohan whose «wicked vanity and presumption» were the cause of the «*affaire* of the diamond necklace,» which did so much toward pushing poor Marie Antoinette on to the scaffold which was even then building for her, though all unseen. There was also at Clermont a spinet said to have belonged to the ill-fated Princesse de Lamballe, adorned with paintings by Mme. Lebrun. Another article of much interest was



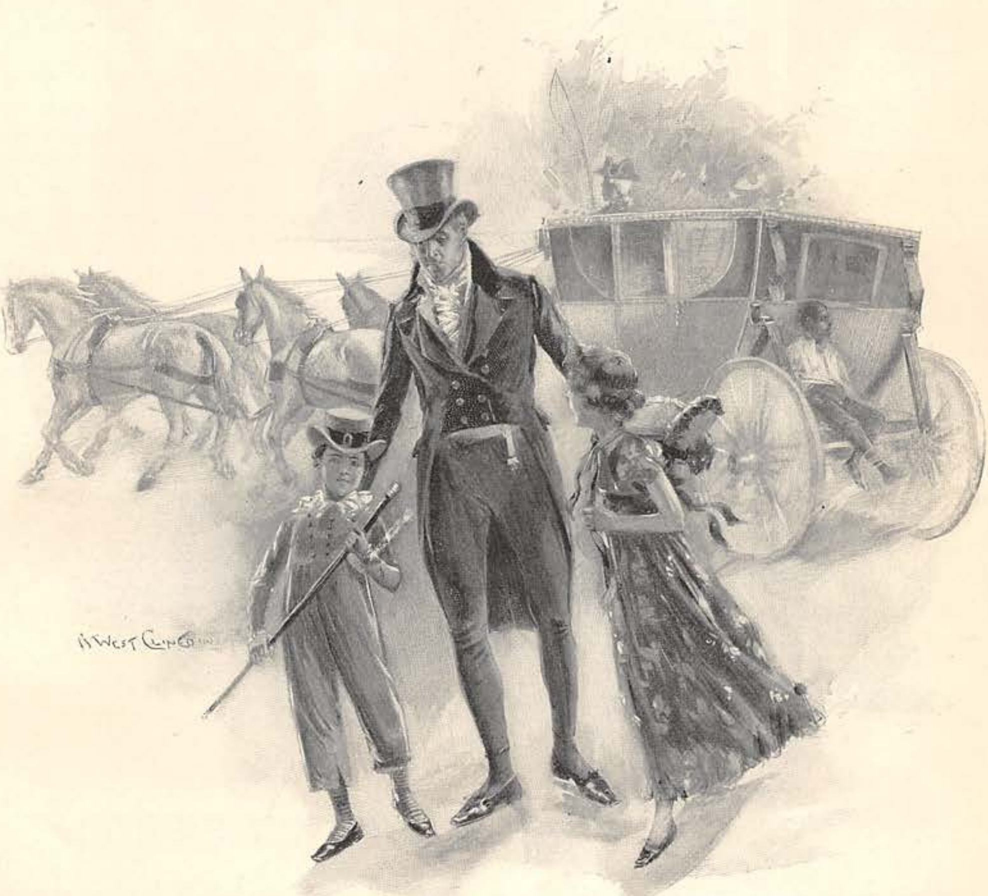
FROM A MINIATURE IN POSSESSION OF THE AUTHOR. ENGRAVED BY W. A. HIRSCHMANN.

HELEN LIVINGSTON (MRS. WILLIAM MATHER SMITH) AT 32.

Caps were then worn by all matrons from the birth of their first child. At this time the caps were elaborate structures of fine lace, trimmed with gauze ribbons in bows kept stiff by «ribbon-wires.»

a snuff-box containing a portrait of Napoleon by Isabey, presented to Chancellor Livingston as the latter was leaving France in 1804. In showing it the recipient used always to say: «I value it, of course, he is so great a man; but the picture is n't in the least like him. None of his pictures are. To paint him would take as great a genius as himself.» The chancellor used to relate the history of each piece to his delighted young relatives, and they found it all as «interesting as any story-book, and more, for Cousin Chancellor was an eloquent man, with the gift of touching hearts; and as he walked about with us, with perhaps a hand kindly resting on one of our young shoulders (not for support, but for friendliness, for he was but sixty and not at all infirm, though so deaf that he had had to relinquish public life), and told us tale after tale, pausing by this table or that chair, as his mind traveled back over all the events he had taken part in, and the grand people he had known and perhaps personally helped in their great troubles, we would forget everything but the charm of his voice, and weep or smile at his will.»

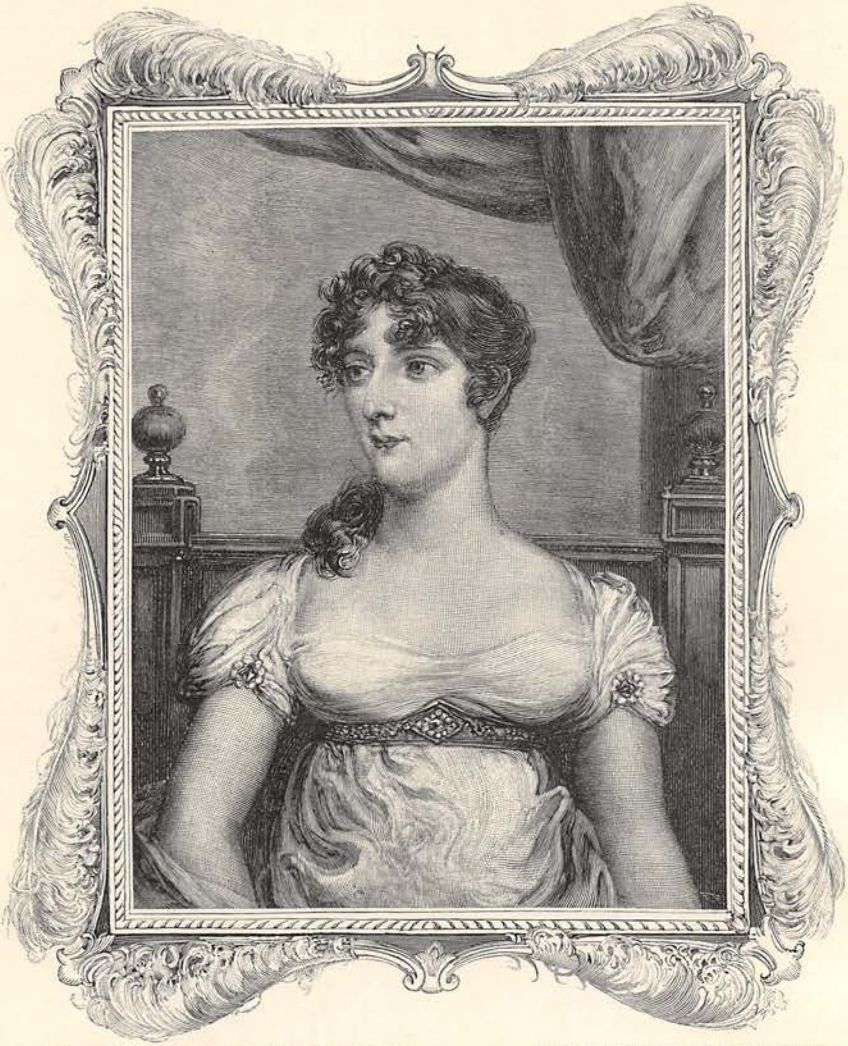
There were few conservatories and not many greenhouses in America at that time; but the chancellor had both, and all were well stocked with rare things, under the care of a Scotch head gardener, who was far more pompous and assuming than the owner of it all, and often begrudged the liberal orders which he was obliged to fill for less fortunate neighbors, to whom the earliest melons and the choicest grapes, oranges, and lemons were always sent.



DRAWN BY B. WEST CLINEDINST.

«HE DROVE IN A GREAT GILDED COACH.»

Clermont was nearly always filled with guests, and these were among the most distinguished persons of our own country, as well as of those foreigners who visited our shores. Many a bearer of an ancient and



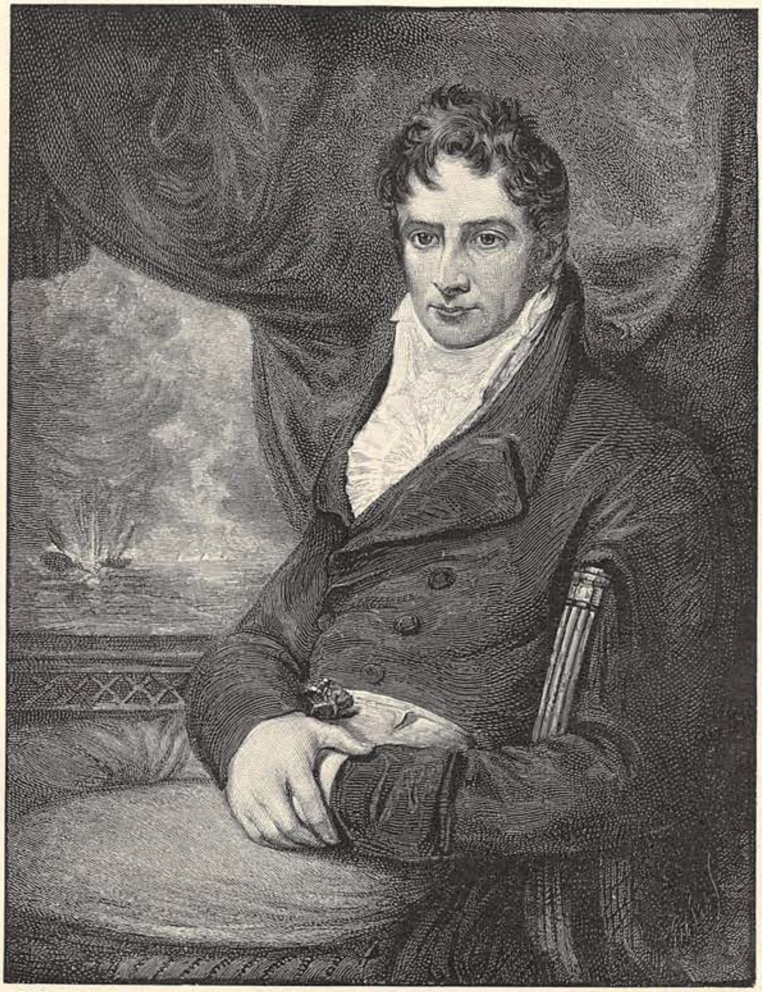
FROM A MINIATURE IN POSSESSION OF ROBERT FULTON BLIGHT, ESQ. ENGRAVED AND BORDER DESIGNED BY FRANK FRENCH.

MRS. ROBERT FULTON.

honored name of the old French *noblesse* (no longer owning anything but his name) was here received and sheltered for months, and even years, by the chancellor, who, strong republican as he was, sincerely pitied the sufferers from the French Revolution, and, as he used often to say, «loved all Frenchmen for the sake of those who had fought for us.» For several years one of these refugees gratefully insisted upon acting as teacher of his own language, dancing, and fencing to such of his patron's young relatives as chose to avail themselves of his instructions. His pupils grew very fond of him, and always mentioned him with gratitude.

The Clermont dinners were grand affairs even when there was no state occasion, and the daughters of Captain Livingston were not allowed to attend them very often, as their mother feared that «so much grandeur would foster worldly pride in their hearts,» which she was far too strict a Calvinist to wish to do. «And truly,» said Mrs. Smith, «it must be confessed that, though personally Cousin Chancellor was as kindly and gentle to the lowliest as he was magnificent to the loftiest in station, and was ever a stanch republican in politics, there was little that savored of republican simplicity in the retinue of liveried servants always employed about him, and in the general sumptuousness and state of his manner of living.»

All of the Livingstons had large quantities of silverware, a good deal of it having come



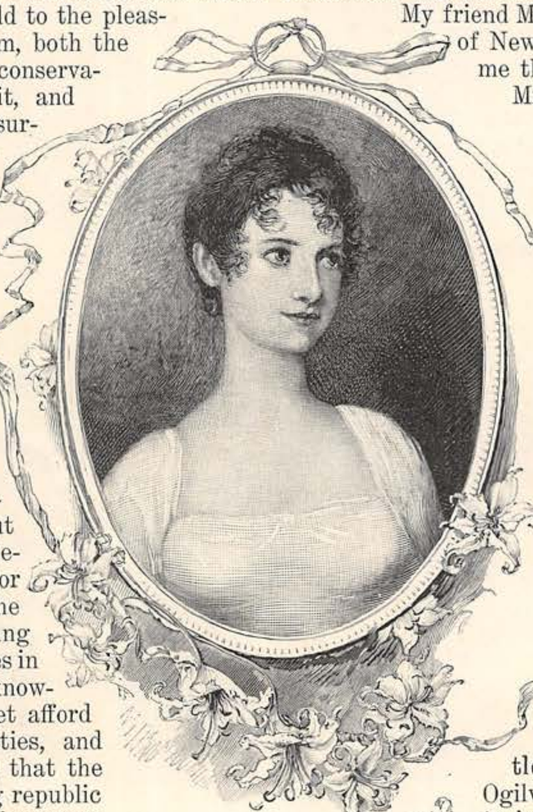
FROM A PORTRAIT IN POSSESSION OF ROBERT FULTON BLIGHT, ESQ. ENGRAVED BY R. G. TIETZE.

ROBERT FULTON.

over from Scotland with the first Robert, whom it is now the fashion to call «Robert the Founder,» and much having been acquired by later generations. «But,» said Mrs. Smith, «all the silver of all the other branches put together would not equal the amount in daily use at Cousin Chancellor's, and among it all there was not a single silver knife or fork; yet now you think you could not dine without them. Three-tined steel forks, and steel knives with silver handles, were then the highest style.» China in plenty, including many most beautiful specimens of Sèvres, filled the glazed closets about the great dining-room; but it was kept carefully locked away for service only on very stately occasions, solid silver plate being employed for all daily uses. In those days people were not so much afraid of thieves as of breakage.

But to the young people, especially to Helen, the chief attraction of Clermont, after its owner and his wonderful tales, was the library. In Mrs. Lamb's «History of New York» it is stated that this consisted of more than four thousand volumes, and was then held to be the finest private library in the State. Mrs. Smith and her brother made a catalogue of it for their cousin, and «found it to number more than six thousand books (not volumes), besides quantities of pamphlets.»

The room itself was a grand one, lofty and well lighted, its broad windows overlooking the Hudson and the cloud-capped Catskills beyond it, and all the wall-spaces filled from floor to ceiling with the best books of the day, not only in English and the learned languages, but in Spanish and French, both of which tongues the chancellor read and spoke with ease, a most unusual accomplishment for an American of his day. «Indeed,» said Mrs. Smith, «his knowledge of French was so perfect that I have seen him move a group of French persons to weep or smile at his pleasure as readily as in his younger days he had swayed and borne away the victory from such famous opponents as Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr.» To add to the pleasantness of this room, both the orangery and the conservatory opened into it, and it was in these surroundings that the young sons and daughters of Captain Livingston, and some of their cousins, had many a lesson in literature, elocution, and singing from the gifted and eccentric but courtly and kindly Scottish gentleman known as Lord Ogilvie, who, without money or price, devoted himself for many years to the instruction of young gentlemen and ladies in this new country, knowing that it could yet afford but few opportunities, and generously wishing that the scions of the young republic should lack none of the graces of a polite education. «A strange man he was in many ways,» said my grandmother, «but gifted beyond any I have ever known in his own favorite lines.» He was always welcomed at Clermont, and made it his headquarters for several years, going and coming as he willed, sometimes appearing at breakfast, after an absence of months, as unceremoniously as if he had been only a few hours away, and disappearing again after months of sojourn as silently as an Indian brave. «Odd enough he was, but a most rare and lovable man; and though plain of face, endowed with remarkable manly beauty of form and grace of manner.»

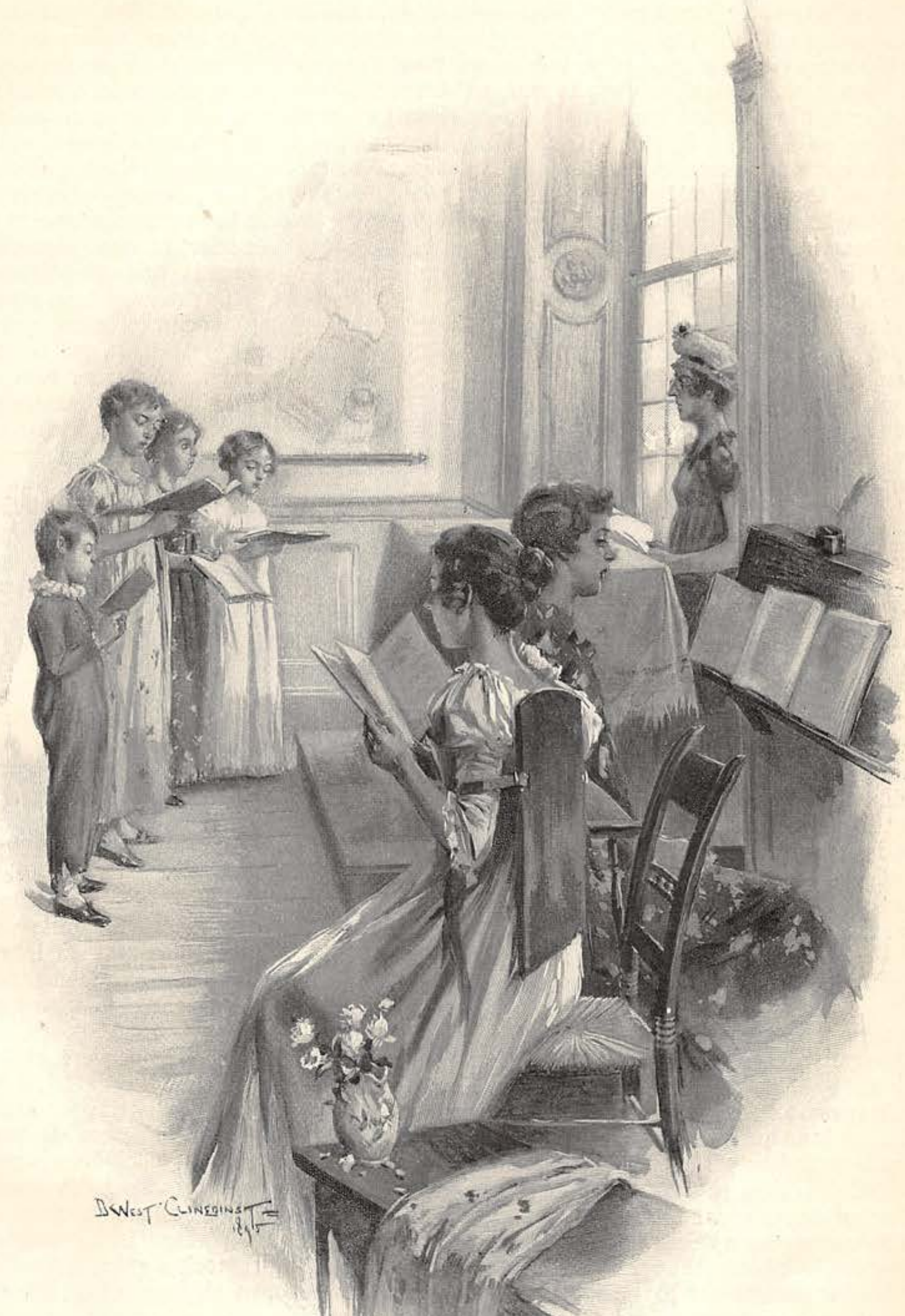


FROM A MINIATURE IN POSSESSION OF HER DAUGHTER, MRS. HELEN LIVINGSTON GRAHAM, CHICAGO. ENGRAVED AND BORDER DESIGNED BY FRANK FRENCH.

«SISTER KATE» (MRS. BEECKMAN) AT 19.

It is to be wished that we could gather more information in regard to this gentleman. Mrs. Smith thought it probable that his title of «lord» was bestowed upon him in this country, either through a misunderstanding of the Scottish designation of «laird,» or in a sort of half-tender, half-ironical courtesy. At any rate, he always accepted it with grave politeness, as if it were his right; and it may have been. If his antecedents were known to his host, the confidence was sacredly kept.

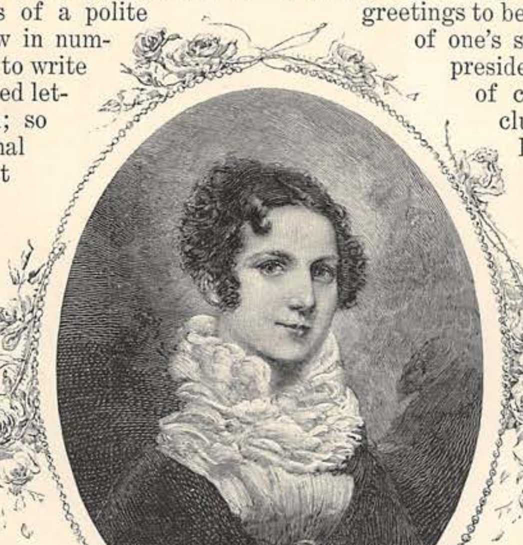
My friend Miss Susan Hayes Ward of Newark, New Jersey, tells me that her grandmother, Mrs. William A. Hayes of South Berwick, Maine, when Miss Susan Lord, heard Lord Ogilvie read the then new poem of «Marmion» in Portsmouth. She was enraptured with the poem, and the next morning hastened to the book-store to buy a copy. Here she was heard by the reader of the previous evening, who, in grateful appreciation of her enthusiasm, begged to present her with a copy of the book. A little later than this Lord Ogilvie took great pains to instruct Miss Lord, who was a fine musician for the place and time, in the proper pronunciation of the Scotch songs which she sang. Mrs. Hayes always loved to recall anecdotes concerning her voluntary tutor. Miss Ward has heard that Lord Ogilvie was at one time in Virginia and Kentucky, pursuing his original but highly valuable kind of educational mission work. Surely there should be more traces left of this remarkable man. Who was he? What led him here? How long was he in America? What became of him? At the time of his stays at Clermont he was, in my grandmother's estimation, «quite an elderly man»; but she was then so young that a man of forty would have seemed old to her. He may have been the heir of the Lord Ogilvie who, with his «clan regiment of six hundred men from Strathmore and Airlie,» was «out


B.West Clinedinst 97

DRAWN BY B. WEST CLINEDINST.

«THE GIRLS WERE OBLIGED TO STUDY.»

in Forty-five,» at Prestonpans. In that case his estates would have been confiscated. He was certainly violently opposed to the house of Hanover, and endued his pupils with an exaggerated love of the «martyred» Queen of Scots and Charles I, while his affection for this country seemed to be rather on account of the humiliation it had inflicted upon England than for any sympathy with republican ideas.

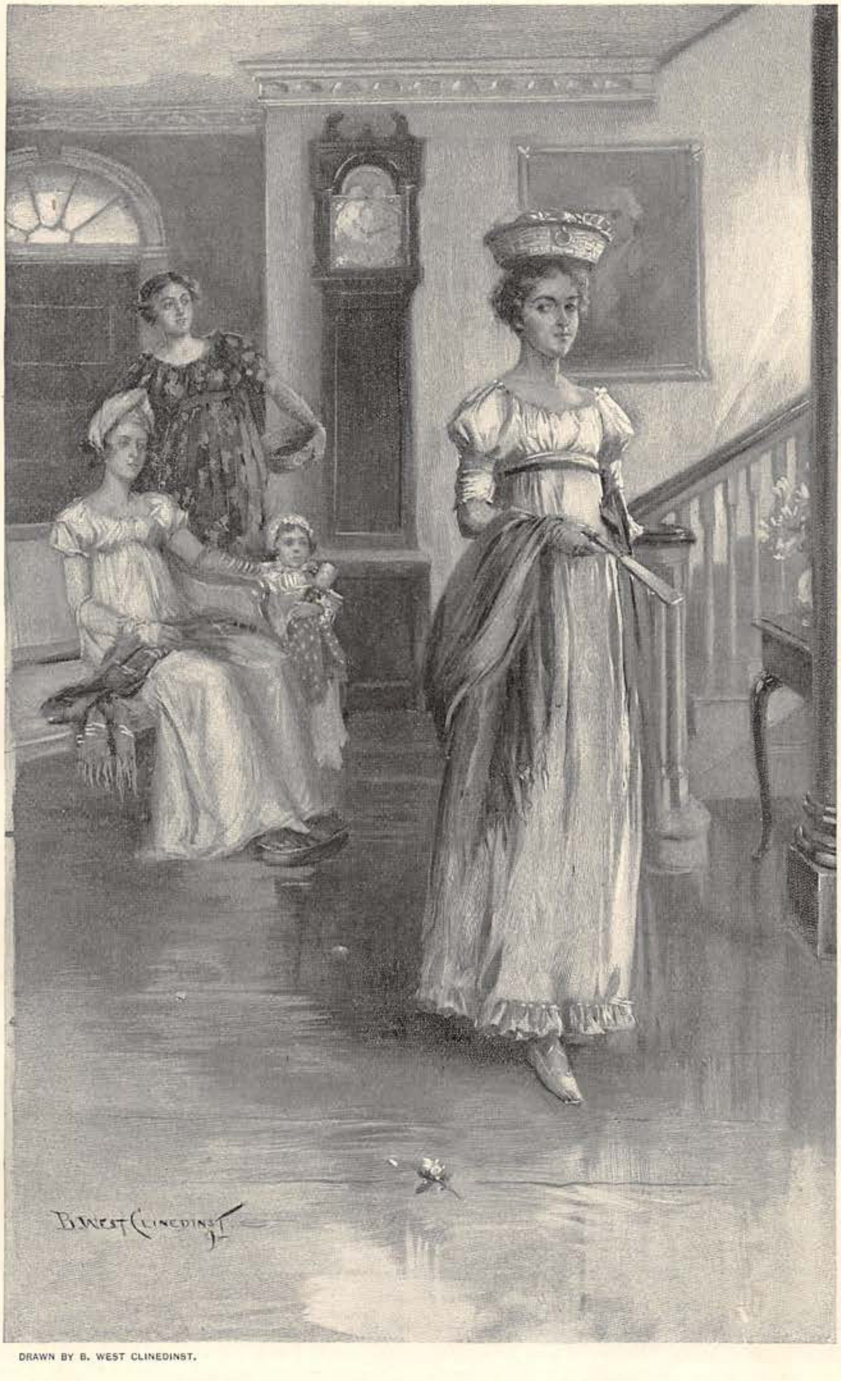


ENGRAVED AND BORDER DESIGNED BY FRANK FRENCH.

«SISTER PATTY»
(MRS. CODWISE) AT 32.

At this date schools where girls could receive «the elements of a polite education» were few in number; even the ability to write a passably well-spelled letter was not common; so that the exceptional advantages offered at Clermont gave to the daughters of Captain Livingston a recognized superiority over most of their contemporaries—at least over those who had not had the advantage of attending the celebrated school of Mrs. Isabella Graham, at which were taught, «by competent instructors, reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, grammar, geography, deportment, plain sewing, embroidery, cloth-work, filigree-work, japanning, drawing, painting, music, dancing, and French.» What the so-called accomplishments amounted to may be a matter of doubt, but there is no question that some of the finest women that New York has ever known received their training at Mrs. Graham's school.

During the season when Clermont was open, and its many guests were coming and going, riding, driving, boating, hunting, and exchanging dinners and dancing parties with «neighbors» whose country-seats sparsely lined the Hudson from Yonkers to Albany, the instructions of Lord Ogilvie and the French tutor were somewhat desultory; and during this season of gaiety the careful mother did not wish to have her sons and daughters too much under its influence. So for these months they were kept pretty constantly at home, under the authority of a theological student who acted as tutor in fitting the boys for college, and of an elderly governess who taught the girls all that she knew about the three R's, fine sewing, embroidery, and (not least) «deportment.» By this term was understood the practice of the etiquette of the time: the art of entering and leaving a room; the gradations of the courtesy, whether intended to express the reverence due to an acknowledged superior or the politeness proper for one's equals, and the different greetings to be extended to all grades of one's social inferiors; how to preside at table and the art of carving were also included in «deportment.» For majestic and graceful carriage the three daughters of Captain Livingston who have already been mentioned, as well as Susan, afterward Mrs. John Constable of Schenectady, were justly noted all their lives; and they themselves attributed this advantage to the training of their old governess, which at the time they had heartily disliked. The girls were obliged to study their lessons with their backs and their arms as far as the elbows strapped flat to an upright board. On one side of the school-room were shelves at various heights, to accommodate the eyes of the students whether sitting or standing, on which the books were fastened open before them. The back-boards were worn during the entire school day, except when the free use of the hands was required, as in writing and sewing. In all weathers both boys and girls took a great deal of exercise in the open air, not being deterred from competing with one another in all sorts of active sports. The girls did not skate or shoot, save with bow and arrows, but in all else they freely joined their brothers and cousins; and these made a group of not less than forty who lived near enough to one another to be considered as neighbors in the days when rides and drives of fifteen or twenty miles were frequently taken in order



DRAWN BY B. WEST CLINEDINST.

«CARRYING LADEN BASKETS ON THEIR HEADS.»

to breakfast at the houses of kindred. When the weather was too inclement for outdoor pastimes dumb-bell exercises, and games of «battledore and shuttlecock» and «graces,» were played in the large and well-ventilated garret.

In that day «stays» were *de rigueur*, but Mrs. Livingston boldly declared that she would none of them either for herself or for her daughters; that if they took a proper amount of healthful exercise they would need nothing of the sort. At least two of her daughters, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Codwise, never wore, and did not need, the support of even the corset, which is so vast an improvement upon that fearful instrument of torture known in their youthful days as «stays.» Part of the elastic grace of carriage which so distinguished them was undoubtedly due to the practice, required by their mother, of carrying laden baskets on their heads. Prizes, in the form of little treats, were offered to the girl who should be able to run farthest on a level, or to mount and descend flights of stairs the greatest number of times during each week, bearing on her head a basket full of light and breakable articles, without mishap. Mr. John Kane, the father of Mrs. Livingston, had observed the easy and majestic carriage imparted by this sort of burden-bearing to the peasant women of Italy and the slaves of the West Indies, and insisted that his descendants should have the benefit of the practice.

What the sewing and embroidery of that day were everybody knows because so many specimens of feminine handiwork remain, but less is known of the games and exercises which did much to develop the fine physiques so often admired in the women of the early part of this century. It was not until the next generation, when schools became plentier and home education less rigorous, that physical training fell into neglect.

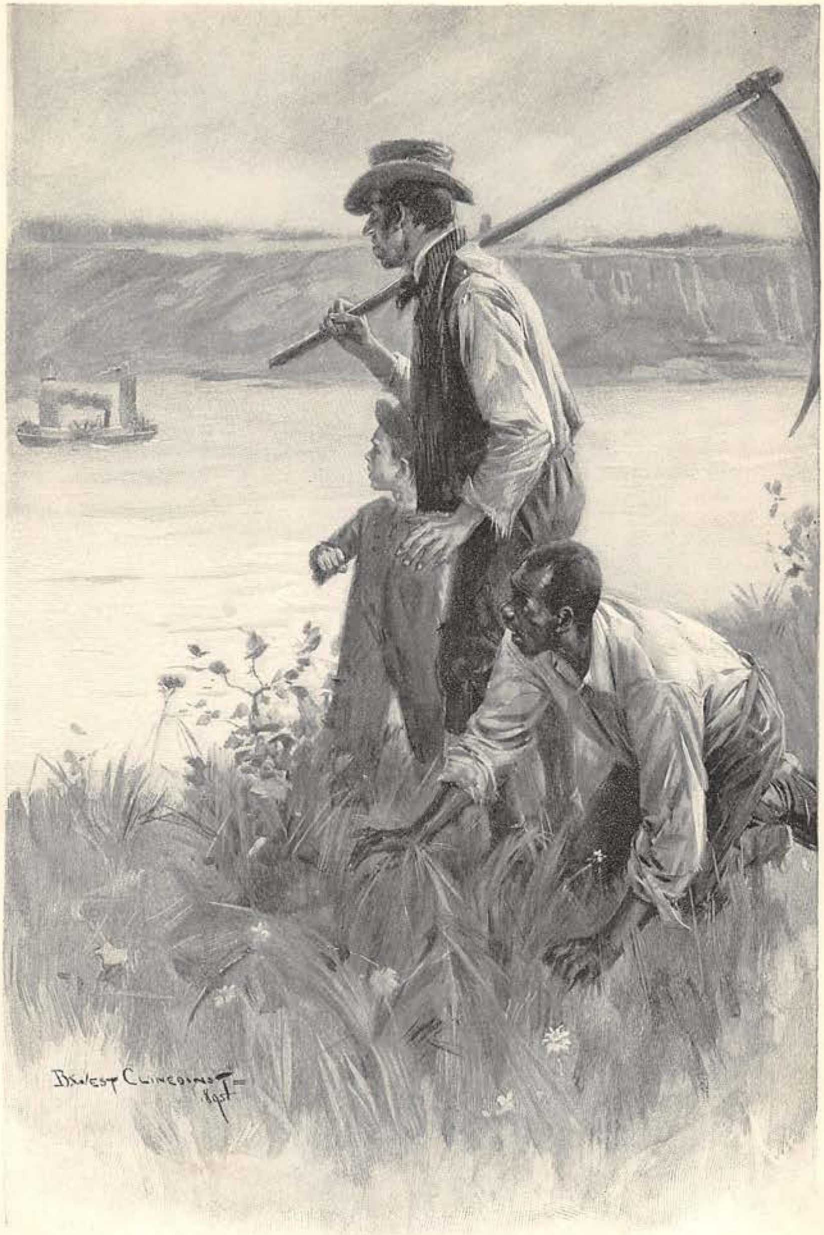
In the autumn of 1806 there arose a great commotion in the hearts of two of the family of Captain Livingston: Kate and Helen were invited to spend the winter in «the society of the metropolis.» It was felt that Helen, being only seventeen, was a little too young; but it was right that Kate should be introduced into the great world, and it was thought that, though Helen was the younger, her superior sedateness would prove a check upon the sometimes thoughtless gaiety of the elder sister.

The journey itself was then a matter of some moment. It was to be taken in the chancellor's sloop, which made what were then called «regular» trips up and down the Hudson, carrying farm produce for sale in New York, and bringing back all the articles that might be needed in so large an establishment as Clermont, or in the homes of the chancellor's relatives. This, of course, included everything that could not be raised on the farm or made in the house. At that time, it will be remembered, several trades were always carried on in every house of pretension, and all the linen and woolen fabrics for ordinary household use were made at home. All, or nearly all, the goods not so made were imported, and at prices which were practically prohibitive to all but the very wealthy. As the «regularity» of the sloop's trips depended upon the winds, it was not uncommon for cargoes and passengers to have to wait a week or more after all was in readiness, and of course in winter navigation was closed.

On this private trading-sloop were accommodations for from eight to sixteen passengers. That is, there were two little state-rooms in the stern, in each of which four persons could sleep by making two beds on the floor and slinging two hammocks above them. The state-rooms were always reserved for ladies, if any were present, while the gentlemen were provided with similar beds and hammocks in the tiny main cabin. All these were gathered up by the servants and cleared away at an early hour, in order to leave space for the breakfast-table to be laid.

The beds and bedding did not belong to the sloop, but were provided by the passengers, who also brought provisions and servants. The crew was always provisioned for a ten days' voyage, but the passengers seldom took more than enough for four days, as it was expected that, in case of getting becalmed, they could always be rowed ashore and spend the time of waiting in visiting some of their friends on the river's bank; for all the «gentle people» knew one another, at least by repute, and hospitality was a virtue universally practised. It was a usual thing for a vessel flying some well-known pennant to be hailed from the shore, and begged to come to anchor to allow the passengers to attend some festivity that might be going on in the vicinity.

When Kate and Helen Livingston started for New York in November, 1806, they were accompanied only by their Aunt Reade, one of her daughters, and her son Robert; so they were not overcrowded in their tiny cabins. The party was provided with three straw-beds (there were then no springs), three feather-beds, pillows, good store of

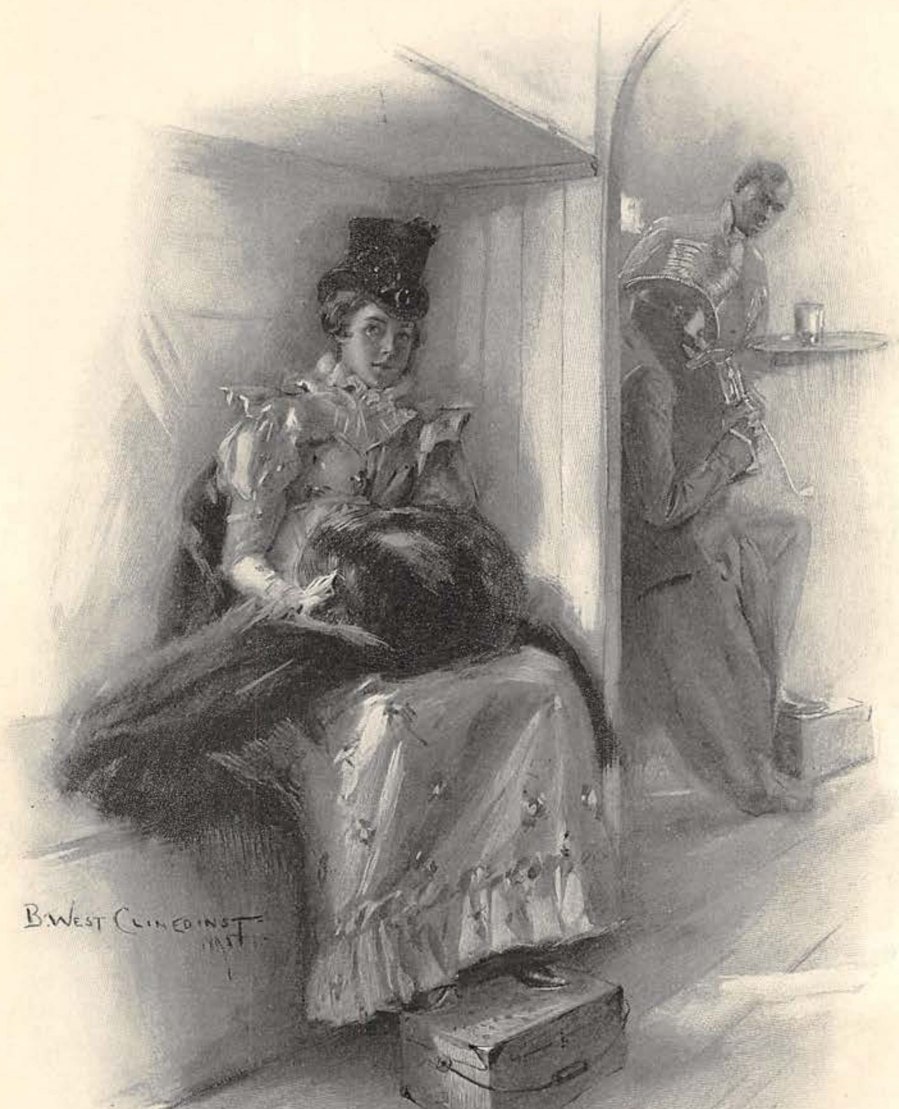


DRAWN BY B. WEST CLINEDINST.

THE FIRST STEAMBOAT ON THE HUDSON.

blankets (because there was no means of heating the little vessel), and a fine variety of cooked food, for these trips were like prolonged picnics. The facilities for cooking consisted only of what are called «charcoal-kettles,» something like those which plumbers use for heating solder. A supply of tin foot-stoves was always kept on board. These could be filled with lighted charcoal, and were often required, whether in the cabin or on deck. Little cooking was attempted, save the making of tea and coffee, the baking of «shortcake» or griddle-cakes, or the frying of bacon or a mess of fresh fish.

The voyage from Clermont to New York sometimes occupied seven or eight days; four days and nights was considered an average trip, and forty-eight hours a remarkably


B. WEST CLINEDINST

DRAWN BY B. WEST CLINEDINST.

«A SUPPLY OF TIN FOOT-STOVES WAS ALWAYS KEPT ON BOARD.»

quick one, although in a few instances the run had been made in less than twenty hours. On this occasion the time was from one Monday morning till the next Sunday morning; but twenty-four hours had been taken by a stop-over at Van Cortlandt Manor, the chancellor's boat having been hailed, and its passengers pressingly invited to stop for a dinner, an evening of dancing, and a morning of hunting. The families of Livingston and Van Cortlandt being connected, it would have been esteemed discourteous to decline unless some pressing business could be pleaded in excuse. It was at the dance that evening that «Sister Kate» first met her future husband, a Mr. Cuyler, although she was not married until two or more years later, and after Helen. Mr. Cuyler was killed by a hunting accident not very long after his marriage, and a few years later his young widow married Mr. Henry Beeckman, a wealthy and most upright and lovable man.

I am not able to say exactly where the two sisters stayed during their New York winter, only knowing that it was at the house of one of their mother's brothers, of whom she had two, and perhaps three, then living in the city. It was probably at the house of Mr. John Kane.

It would be desirable to locate the house at which the sisters stayed on account of a little incident concerning Washington Irving which was often told by my grandmother. As related in his biography, Mr. Irving had suffered an irreparable loss in the death of his fiancée, Miss Matilda Hoffman, daughter of Mr. Josiah Ogden Hoffman, in whose law office Mr. Irving had been a student.

The windows of the room which the sisters occupied overlooked the cemetery in which the body of Miss Hoffman was laid to rest. New York was but a small place then, hardly more than a big village, in fact, and everybody in society knew everybody else. Hence the sisters were constantly meeting Washington Irving, although he shunned all the gaieties he could. He was never gloomy, but never gay, and his romantic sorrow attracted the unspoken sympathy of all, but of none more than of the two country girls who used to watch from behind their curtains for the twilight hour, at which he always slipped quietly in through the cemetery gate, and sought the shadow beneath which lay the grave of her whom he loved so well. The cemetery was surrounded by a high wall and a hawthorn hedge, so that one walking in the grounds would remain unseen, save from neighboring windows, and of these there were only those of the Kane house, which overlooked it. So here, all unaware of the gentle, sympathetic espionage of the two sisters, the handsome, sad-faced mourner came almost daily, in all weathers, to lay his tribute of flowers, and to stand, sometimes for a few moments only, but oftener for a half-hour or longer, with bowed, uncovered head, as if communing with the departed. One night he did not come, and after his usual time had long passed by, Helen shyly sought the place and left there a few flowers of her own. The next night he came as usual. Finding flowers which were not his own, he seized them and made as if about to throw them away. «But,» said my grandmother, «he was too gentle for that, and laid them back again, putting his own flowers at his loved one's feet. I never took any more.»

This small incident was the only one ever related of that winter in which appeared the slightest tinge of sadness. In general all was rose-colored to the two young country girls launched into society with every advantage which youth, cultivation, beauty, and high connections could bestow. Riches they did not possess, but they were too happy to care for that. Their wardrobe strikes one as having been decidedly limited, but at that time it was held that simplicity should rule the attire of all young girls, so they did not feel abashed in the fresh, sheer white India-muslin gowns, relieved with broad sashes, which were their only evening wear. These were made with low, square-cut necks, and full sleeves gathered into a puff a little above the elbow. The so-called Empire styles were then prevalent, and probably in an exaggerated form, as is apt to be the case when fashions have to be copied at a distance not only of thousands of miles, but also of a year or more of time. The skirts were short, showing not only the thin slipper, but the clocked silk stockings well above the ankle, and were so very scant that it required skill to dance in them without rending the slight fabric. Neither of the sisters had a silk dress. Gowns of that material were hardly considered suitable for unmarried women under twenty-five years of age. Gowns of pretty flowered chintz were worn at home, except in extremely cold weather, when a heavy but soft material known as «stuff» was permitted. For driving or walking each sister had a gown of dark crimson broadcloth. These were made with close sleeves coming a little below the elbow, where, as well as around the neck and the bottom of the skirt, was an edging of swan's-down, changed later in the season for a border of marten fur. Long pelisses of crimson cloth, lined and trimmed with the marten fur, and great muffs and tippets of the same were worn in all suitable weather. The crimson velvet bonnets were large and scoop-like things, adorned with an abundance of white ostrich plumes, but not by any means as exaggerated in size as those worn a few years later.

In a fragment of a letter written by Helen to her mother, she says that «we last night attended a great party at Cousin Stuyvesant's; one hundred and twenty-five persons were present, and all of us related to each other.» Of course this was nothing remarkable, because the few great families of the colonies had intermarried so freely. The «Livingston clan» alone might easily have numbered as many, no less than twelve families bearing the name having their winter residences within a short distance of one another, and most of them not far from Trinity Church. Of these, besides the chancellor, there were the families of his two brothers, John R., a man of singular cultivation and intellectual power, and Henry, familiarly known as «Colonel Harry,» who had gained distinction in Washington's army. Not far away were the houses of their sisters, Janet, the widow of General Montgomery; Gertrude, wife of Governor Morgan Lewis; and a third, the wife of General Armstrong. Brockholst Livingston, son of New Jersey's patriotic war governor, was a judge in the city, and very popular in society; and his brilliant sisters, one of whom was the wife of Chief-Justice John Jay, were often there. Though with very few outside sources of amusement, this charming coterie missed nothing; for, embracing as it did the most brilliant minds of the time, it had the added charm of that perfect freedom which can spring from kinship alone. Toward the close of this winter Helen writes: «We have attended a dinner or an evening party on every week-day this four months, and sometimes both.» As the fashionable dinner hour was three in the afternoon, this did not imply such late home-coming as the same thing would now do. «We were not often at the same house more than once in each month, and were always at the house of a relative. All have vied with each other in efforts to make it pleasant for us. I did not know there were so many agreeable people in the world. We have been perfectly happy.»

One of the chief amusements was to drive in sleighs for a long distance out of town, and, returning, stop at the house of some friend living «out of the city» to dinner or supper. One of the houses which the sisters most frequently visited in this way was that of their father's sister, Mrs. Hake,[1] who had built «an elegant country-seat on the New Bowery Road.» This «country-seat» was not far from the corner of Houston street! Another favorite place was the house of Mr. Archibald Gracie, which must have seemed a long way off, being on the East River, at Eighty-eighth street, opposite Hell Gate.

After the close of the winter's festivities the sisters were not allowed to return immediately to the home at Red Hook. There was a little round of visits to be paid among their kindred, including some of the De Lanceys (with whom most of the Livingstons were not on very good terms on account of their Tory principles), and winding up with a delightful fortnight at Liberty Hall, the residence of the family of the late Governor William Livingston, at Elizabethtown, New Jersey. Writing from here, Helen says:

> My dear mother will be glad to know that we are soon to return home. Cousin Chancellor has a wonderful new boat which is to make the voyage up the North River some day soon. It will hold a good many passengers, and he has, with his usual kindness to us, invited us to be of the party. He says it will be something to remember all our lives. He says we need not trouble ourselves about provision, as his men will see to all that. In the mean time we are enjoying ourselves very much, everybody is so kind and cordial.
>
> This house is immense and quite full of visitors. Last evening many assembled, and we amused ourselves in various ways. There were many beautiful young ladies present, but not one was so beautiful as Sister Kate. She was compelled to sing «My Face is my Fortune» three times over, and many slyly made the remark that *she* needed no other. Cousin Robert Reade played on the flute to accompany her, whereat Mr. C—— looked very black, because he cannot play the flute, and drank so much wine that he became noisy and had to be taken away.

This last sentence turns the search-light upon the one great blot on the otherwise charming society of the early years of the present century. The adulteration of liquors had by no means reached its present point, hence there were not so many cases of violence resulting from their use; but the habit of drinking wines, and even brandy and rum (whisky does not yet appear), was so well-nigh universal, and excess was so common, that it excited the gravest apprehension in all thoughtful minds. In time this resulted in the great moral wave called the temperance movement; but in 1807 it had not arrived, and such scenes as the one referred to in the foregoing quotation were so sadly common as to attract little attention. The wife of Captain Livingston, descended on the mother's side from the stanch Connecticut families of Kent and Whiting, had inherited rigid principles which were far from popular in the jovial set into which she had married. But as a result of them, all of her four sons became model young men at a time when it was unfashionable to be so. She had declared that, «to gain her consent, suitors for the hands of her daughters must, of course, be well born and well brought up, but the only other point upon which she would insist was that they should be men of good moral character, and above all be strictly temperate.» She was often told that she would thus leave her daughters to the then so much dreaded fate of spinsterhood; but the prophets were mistaken. All of her daughters married, and married well in all senses. The husband of Helen became one of the most active and efficient temperance reformers in a day when to enroll himself on that side meant social ostracism.

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[1] The husband of Mrs. Hake had been a commissary-general in the British army, and was the claimant of an English title and estates. I do not know whether he was living at this time. Their daughter Maria married General Frederick de Peyster.

The «new boat» of the letter was the now celebrated *Clermont*, the steamboat of Robert Fulton, which in August, 1807, made the first successful steam voyage up the astonished Hudson, and demonstrated to the world that a new force had been discovered by which old methods in nearly all lines were to be revolutionized.

Very likely, with all their loving confidence in the wisdom of the chancellor, the sisters embarked with some distrust of his new boat's making good its promise to get them home in less than three days, even if both wind and tide should prove unfavorable; but they were not afraid of anything worse than delay, though most of their friends feared for them. During the nine years that had passed since «Robert R. Livingston and Robert Fulton had first secured the concession to navigate the waters in New York State for twenty years, providing they should build a boat of not less than twenty tons, that would go not less than four miles an hour against wind and tide,» the subject had been so often talked over in their presence that the sisters were already quite intelligent upon it, and laughed at the fears of their timorous friends.

The embarkation was from a dock «near the State prison» (which was in «Greenwich village» on the North River), and was witnessed by a crowd of «not less than five hundred persons.» Many were friends of the passengers, who bade them farewell with as much solicitude as if they were going to Madagascar, especially trembling with apprehension at the «terrible risk run by sailing in a boat full of fire.»

The adventurous voyagers, who were the guests of Robert Fulton and Chancellor Livingston, were about forty in number, including but few ladies.[1] Among the latter, besides our two young sisters and their aunt, Mrs. Thomas Morris (daughter-in-law of Robert Morris, the financier of the Revolution), were at least one of the chancellor's two daughters, four of the many daughters of his brothers John R. and Colonel Harry, and a young lady who was more interested in the result of this memorable experiment than any one save the inventor himself. In all the biographies of Fulton, Miss Harriet Livingston is called the chancellor's niece, but she was really his cousin. She was a beautiful, graceful, and accomplished woman, and had long given her heart to Robert Fulton. The fair Harriet was at this time about two-and-twenty, and «as deeply in love with her handsome, gifted lover as any girl well could be.» There were many distinguished and fine-looking men on board the *Clermont*, but my grandmother always described Robert Fulton as surpassing them all. «That son of a Pennsylvania farmer,» she was wont to say, «was really a prince among men. He was as modest as he was great, and as handsome as he was modest. His eyes were glorious with love and genius.»

A little before reaching Clermont, when the success of the voyage was well assured, the betrothal was announced by the chancellor in a graceful speech, in the course of which he prophesied that the «name of the inventor would descend to posterity as that of a benefactor to the world, and that it was not impossible that before the close of the present century vessels might even be able to make the voyage to Europe without other motive power than steam.»

This hardy prediction was received with but moderate approval by any, while smiles of incredulity were exchanged between those who were so placed that they could not be seen by the speechmaker or the inventor. John R. was heard to say, in an aside to his cousin John Swift Livingston, that «Bob had many a bee in his bonnet before now, but this steam folly would prove the worst one yet.» Both the chancellor's brothers lived to see the ocean regularly traversed by steam vessels, but the prophet himself, and the inventor, both passed away before the realization of their dreams.

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[1] In none of the lives of Fulton is it mentioned that any ladies were present on this first trip; but the facts are as here stated.

If the lodgings on board the sloop which brought our two girls to New York in the previous autumn had struck us as uncomfortable, we should have been still less pleased with those on the first steamboat. Even four years later,—June, 1811,—when Gouverneur Morris, «with true public spirit,» ventured to «intrust himself to the mercies» of the new-fangled craft, he found «the lodging so uncomfortable» that he «could stay in bed but a short time,» though «the evening was cool,» and so remained on deck until reaching Albany, «which was not until midnight, having left New York eleven hours before.» This was a great advance over the speed attained on the first trip.

My grandmother always described the *Clermont* as «the very ugliest craft that could well be imagined.» It was decked over but a short distance at stem and at stern. In the center, exposed to the view of all, was the strange-looking machinery; only the boiler was roofed over. The fuel was dry pine-wood, and the smoke seemed excessive.

On the same afternoon on which the *Clermont* left her dock upon her adventurous trip she fell in with numbers of sailing craft coming and going, to which she was an object of unmitigated astonishment, if not of actual alarm. It is related that when the crews of some of these vessels saw this queer-looking, sailless thing approaching steadily, and gaining on them in spite of contrary wind and tide, they abandoned their vessels and took to the woods, being convinced that this shapeless and smoke-vomiting monster must have come straight from the infernal regions.

When about opposite Fishkill the *Clermont* was met by the *Admiral*, a private sloop, with which, its pennant being known as that of Mr. Jacob Evertson of Pleasant Valley, the *Clermont* exchanged signals. On board it was Helen Livingston's future husband, a grandson of Mr. Evertson, and then unknown to her. It was not until several months later that they became acquainted. My grandfather always declared that no sight of his life ever seemed to him so strange as that of this ungainly craft, «looking precisely like a backwoods sawmill mounted on a scow and set on fire,» while all the stern of the scow was crowded with a party of gaily dressed gentlemen and ladies singing a song which, as long as he lived, seemed to him to be the sweetest in the world—«Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon.»

For Helen Livingston there remained hardly one more year of happy girlhood, free to go and come, dance and be merry, in the old innocent girlish fashion; for at that time betrothal was as sacred as marriage itself, and much more restrictive of privileges. That is, the freedom of girlhood was lost, and that of the matron had not come. If the lover were present, of course these restrictions were not felt, but in his absence the poor girl had little more liberty than a Hindu widow. She must not accept even the most ordinary attentions from any man, must dance with no one except her father or brother, and she must always wear, conspicuously displayed hanging from her neck, face outward, the miniature of her future husband. These miniatures were often skilfully painted on ivory, and were usually oval in shape and about three and a half inches by two and a half in size, without counting the gold frames, which were sometimes quite heavy. The broad remarks which it was considered in order for even chance acquaintances to address to the fiancée upon sight of this badge of appropriation were intolerable to Helen Livingston, and rather than subject herself to them she resolutely refrained from accepting an invitation even to her loved «Cousin Chancellor's» during the few months of her engagement, which ended in a happy marriage in the spring of 1809. On one occasion, when a large and most interesting company of American and foreign guests was expected at Clermont, Helen vainly sought her mother's permission to attend without wearing the telltale portrait. Finding that this would not be allowed, and realizing that her sister's disappointment would be great, «Sister Patty,» only fifteen, but already tall and stately, heroically volunteered to wear the obnoxious picture, personating its rightful owner. But the innocent fraud was not permitted, and as Helen would not go if obliged to wear the miniature, she was compelled to relinquish the coveted pleasure. Of course the boy lover—he was barely twenty-one—was in no way responsible for this custom, which he subsequently often, and justly, characterized as odious; and I think that he never liked to see the miniature which had been the means of depriving of ever so small a pleasure the woman whom he idolized through a long life.

Helen Evertson Smith.