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THE PATRIOT.

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WOODS OCK.

Extracts concluded from our last.

"In one sense, lovely Alice, you have neither over-rated my power nor my affection. It is your King—it is Charles Stuart who speaks to you!—he can confer duchies, and if beauty can merit them, it is that of Alice Lee. Nay, nay—rise do not kneel—it is for your sovereign to kneel to thee, Alice, to whom he is a thousand times more devoted, than the wanderer Louis, dared venture to profess himself. My Alice has, I know, been trained up in those principles of love and obedience to her sovereign, that she cannot in her senses or in mercy, inflict on him such a wound as would be implied in the rejection of his suit."

In spite of all Charles's attempts to prevent her, Alice had persevered in kneeling on one knee, until she had touched with her lip the hand which he attempted to raise her. But this salutation ended, she stood upright, with her arms folded on her bosom—her looks humble, but composed, keen and watchful, and so possessed of herself, so little flattered by the communication which the King had supposed would have been overpowering, that he scarce knew in what terms next to urge his solicitation.

"Though art silent—thou art silent," he said, my pretty Alice. Hasten the King no more influence with thee than the poor Scottish page."

"In one sense every influence," said Alice; "for he commands my best thoughts, my best wishes, my earnest prayers, my devoted loyalty, which as the men of the House of Lee have been ever ready to testify with the sword, so are the women bound to seal, if necessary, with their blood. But beyond the duties of a true and devoted subject, the King is even less to Alice Lee than poor Louis Kerneguy. The page could have tendered an honorable union—the Monarch can but offer a contaminated coronet."

"You mistake, Alice—you mistake," said the King, eagerly. "Sit down and let me speak to you—sit down—What is't you fear?"

"I fear nothing, my lord," answered Alice. "What can I fear from the King of Britain—I the daughter of his loyal subject, and under my father's roof? But I remember the distance betwixt us, and though I might trifle and jest with mine equal, to my King I must only appear in the dutiful posture of a subject, unless where his safety may seem to require, that I do not acknowledge his dignity."

Charles though young, being no novice in such scenes, was surprised to encounter resistance of a kind which had not been opposed to him in similar pursuits, even in cases where he had been unsuccessful. There was neither anger, nor injured

pride, nor disorder, nor disdain, real or affected, in the manners or conduct of Alice. She stood, as it seemed, calmly prepared to argue on the subject, which is generally decided by passion—showed no inclination to escape from the apartment, but appeared determined to hear with patience the suit of the lover—while her countenance and manner intimated that she had this complaisance only in deference to the commands of the King.

"She is ambitious," thought Charles; "it is by dazzling her love glory, not by mere passionate entreaties, that I must hope to be successful. I pray you be seated, by fair Alice," he said, "the lover entreats you—the King commands you."

"The King," said Alice "may permit the relaxation, of the ceremonies due to royalty, but he cannot abrogate the subject's duty, even by express command. I stand here while it is your Majesty's pleasure to address me—a patient listener, as in duty bound."

"Know then, simple girl," said the King, "that in accepting my proffered affection and protection, you break through no law, either of virtue or morality. Those who are born to royalty are deprived of many of the comforts of private life—chiefly that which is perhaps, the dearest and most precious, the power of choosing their own mates for life. Their formal weddings are guided

only, and those to whom they are wedded are frequently, in temper, person, and disposition, the most unlikely to make them happy wedlocks with chains of a lighter and more easy character than those which fetter other men, whose marriage ties, as more voluntarily assumed, ought, in proportion, to be more strictly binding. And therefore, ever since the time that old Henry built these walls, priests and prelates, as well as nobles and statesmen, have been accustomed to see a Fair Rosamond rule the heart of an affectionate monarch, and console him for the few hours of constraint and state which he must bestow upon some angry and jealous Eleanor. To such a connection the world attaches no blame; they rush to the festival to admire the beauty of the lovely Esther, while the imperious Vashti is left to queen in solitude; they throng the palace to ask her protection, whose influence is more in the state an hundred times than that of the proud consort; her offspring rank with the nobles of the land, and vindicate by their courage, like the celebrated Longsword Earl of Salisbury, their descent from royalty and from love. From such connexions our richest ranks of nobles are recruited; and the mother lives, in the greatness of her posterity honoured and blessed, as she died lamented and wept in the arms of love and friendship."

"Did Rosamond so die, my Lord?" said Alice, "Our records say she was poisoned by the injured Queen—poisoned, without time allowed to call to God for the parson of her many faults. Did her memory so live? I have heard, that when the bishop purified the church at Godstow, her monument was broken open by his orders, and her bones thrown out into unconsecrated ground."

"Those were rude old days, sweet Alice," answered Charles; "Queens are not now so rigorous. And know beside, that in the lands to which I would lead the loveliest of her sex, other laws obtain which remove from such ties even the slightest show of scandal. There is a mode of matrimony, which, fulfilling all the rites of the church, leaves no stain on the conscience: yet investing the bride

with none of the privileges peculiar to her husband's condition, infringes not upon the duties which the King owes to his subject. So Alice Lee may, in all respects, become the real and lawful wife of Charles Stuart, except that their private union gives her no title to be Queen of England."

"My ambition," said Alice, "will be sufficiently gratified to see Charles King, without aiming to share either his dignity in public, or his wealth and regal luxury in private."

"I understand thee, Alice," said the King, "but get displeased, 'You trouble me being a fugitive for speaking like a king. It is a habit, I admit, which I have learned and of which even misfortune cannot cure me. But my case is not so desperate as you may suppose. My friends are still many in these kingdoms, my allies abroad are bound, by regard to their own interest, to espouse my cause. I have hopes given me from Spain, from France, and from other nations; and I have confidence that my father's blood has not been poured forth in vain, nor is doomed to dry up without due vengeance. My trust is in Him from whom princes derive their title, and, think what thou wilt of my present condition, I have perfect confidence that I shall all one day sit on the throne of England."

"May God grant it!" said Alice; "and that he may grant it, noble Prince, deign to consider whether you now pursue a conduct likely to ensure your return. Think of the course you recommend to a motherless maiden, who has no better defence against your sophistry, than what the natural feeling of female dignity inspires. Whether the death of her father, which would be the consequence of her imprudence; whether the despair of her brother, whose life has been so often in peril to save that of your Majesty;—whether the dishonor of the roof which has sheltered you, will read well in your annals, or are events likely to propitiate God, whose controversy with your House has been too visible, or recover the affections of the people of England, in whose eyes such actions are an abomination, I leave to your own royal mind to consider."

Charles paused, struck with a turn to the conversation which placed his own interests more in collision with the gratification of his present passion than he had supposed.

"If your Majesty," said Alice, curtesying deeply, "has no further commands for my attendance, may I be permitted to withdraw?"

"Say yet a little, strange and impracticable girl," said the King, "and answer me but one question;—Is it the lowness of my present position that makes my suit contemptible?"

"I have nothing to conceal, my liege," said she, "and my answer shall be as plain and direct as the question you have asked. If I could have been moved to an act of ignominious, insane, and ungrateful folly, it could only arise from my being blinded by that passion, which I believe is pleaded as an excuse for folly and for crime much more often than it has a real existence. I must in short, have been in love, as it is called—and that might have been with my equal—but surely never with my sovereign, whether such only in title, or in possession of his kingdom."

"Yet loyalty was ever the pride almost the ruling passion of your family, Alice," said the King.

"And could I reconcile that loyalty?" said Alice, "with indulging my sovereign, by permitting him to prosecute a suit dishonorable to himself as to me: ought I, as a faithful subject, to join him in a folly which might throw yet another stumbling

block in the path to his restoration, and could only serve to diminish his security, even if he were seated upon his throne?"

"At this rate," said Charles, discontentedly, "I had better have retained my character of the page, than assumed that of a sovereign, which it seems is still more irreconcilable with my wishes."

"My candor will go still further," said Alice, "I could have felt as little for Louis Kerneguy as for the heir of Britain: for such love as I have to bestow, (and it is not such as I read of in romance, or hear poured forth in song,) has been already conferred on another object. This gives your Majesty pain—I am sorry for it—but the wholesomest medicines are often bitter."

"Y—s," answered the king with some asperity, "and physicians are reasonable enough to expect their patients to swallow them, as if they were honeycomb—it is true then that whispered tale of the cousin Colonel; and the daughter of the loyal Lee has set her heart upon a rebellious fanatic?"

"My love was given ere I knew what these words fanatic and rebel meant. I recalled it not, for I am satisfied, that amidst the great distractions which divide the kingdom, the person to whom you allude has chosen his part, erroneously perhaps, but conscientiously—he, therefore, has still the highest place in my esteem. More he cannot have, and will not ask, until some happy turn shall reconcile these public differences, and my father be once more reconciled to him. Devoutly do I pray that such an event may occur by your Majesty's speedy and unanimous restoration."

"You have found out a reason," said the King pettishly, "to make me detest the thought of such a change, nor have you, Alice, any sincere interest to pray for it. On the contrary, do you not see that your lover, walking side by side with Cromwell, may, or rather must, share his power? nay, if Lambert does not anticipate him, he may trip up Oliver's heels, and reign in his stead. And think you not he will find means to overcome the pride of the loyal Lees and achieve a union, for which things are better prepared than which Cromwell is said to meditate betwixt one of his brats and the no less loyal heir of Fauconberg?"

"Your Majesty," said Alice, "has found a way at length to avenge yourself—if what I have said deserves vengeance."

"I could point out a yet shorter road to your union," said Charles, without minding her distress, or perhaps enjoying the pleasure of retaliation.

"Suppose that you sent your Colonel word that there was one Charles Stewart here, who had come to disturb the Saints in their peaceful government, which they had acquired by prayer and preaching pike and gun—and suppose he had the art to bring down a half-score of troopers, quite enough, as times go, to decide the fate of this heir of royalty—think you not the possession of such a prize as this might obtain from the Rumpers, or from Cromwell, such a reward as might overcome your father's objections to a roundhead's alliance, and place the fair Alice and her cousin Colonel in full possession of their wishes?"

"My lord," said Alice, her cheeks glowing, and her eyes sparkling for she too had her share of hereditary temperament of her family... "this passes my patience. I have heard, without expressing anger, the most ignominious persuasions addressed to myself, and I have vindicated myself for refusing to be the paramour