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# In the Days of Poor Richard

By IRVING BACHELLER  
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## "A PRETTY DRAMA"

**SYNOPSIS.**—Solomon Binkus, veteran scout and interpreter, and his young companion, Jack Irons, passing through Horse Valley, New York, in September, 1753, to warn settlers of an Indian uprising, rescue from a band of redskins the wife and daughter of Colonel Hare of England. Jack distinguishes himself in the fight and later rescues Margaret Hare from the river. Jack and Margaret fall in love. On reaching Fort Stanwix, Colonel Hare says both are too young to marry. The Hare family sail for England, and the Irons family move to Albany. Unrest grows in the colonies because of the oppressive measures of the English government. Solomon and Jack visit Boston. In November, 1770, Jack goes to Philadelphia and works in Benjamin Franklin's printing plant. Nearly three years later Margaret writes him from London, reminding him that her youth is passing and saying she has appealed to Doctor Franklin. Binkus has received a letter from Washington to be carried across the ocean, and Jack sails with him. Arriving in England, Binkus is arrested, but Jack has the letter and proceeds to London. Jack delivers the papers to Franklin in London. Binkus is released and joins them in the great city. Jack orders fashionable clothes.

### CHAPTER VI —8— The Lovers.

The fashionable tailor was done with Jack's equipment. Franklin had seen and approved the admirably shaped and fitted garments. The young man and his friend Solomon had moved to their new lodgings on Bloomsbury square. The scout had acquired a suit for street wear and was now able to walk abroad without exciting the multitudes. The Doctor was planning what he called "a snug little party." So he announced when Jack and Solomon came, adding:

"But first you are to meet Margaret and her mother here at half after four."

Jack made careful preparation for that event. Fortunately it was a clear, bright day after foggy weather. Solomon had refused to go with Jack for fear of being in the way.

"I want to see her an' her folks, but I reckon ye'll have yer hands full to-day," he remarked. "Ye don't need no scout on that kind o' reconnoiterin'. You go on ahead an' git through with yer smacking an' bym-by I'll straggle in."

Precisely at four thirty-five Jack presented himself at the lodgings of his distinguished friend. He has said in a letter, when his dramatic adventures were all behind him, that this was the most thrilling moment he had known. "The butler had told me that the ladies were there," he wrote. "Upon my word it put me out of breath climbing that little flight of stairs. But it was in fact the end of a long journey. It is curious that my feeling then should remind me, as it does, of moments when I have been close up to the enemy, within his lines, and lying hard against the ground in some thicket while British soldiers were tramping so near I could feel the ground shake. In the room I saw Lady Hare and Doctor Franklin standing side by side. What a smile he wore as he looked at me! I have never known a human being who had such a cheering light in his countenance. I have seen it brighten the darkest days of the war aided by the light of his words. His faith and good cheer were immovable. I felt the latter when he said:

"See the look of alarm in his face. Now for a pretty drama!"

"Mrs. Hare gave me her hand and I kissed it and said that I had expected Margaret and hoped that she was not ill. There was a thistle-down touch on my cheek from behind and turning I saw the laughing face I sought looking up at me. I tell you, my mother, there never was such a pair of eyes. Their long, dark lashes and the glow between them I remember chiefly. The latter was the friendly light of her spirit. To me it was like a candle in the window to guide my feet. 'Come,' it seemed to say. 'Here is a welcome for you.' I saw the pink in her cheeks, the crimson in her lips, the white of her neck, the glow of her abundant hair, the shapelessness of brow and nose and chin in that first glance. I saw the beating of her heart even. I remember there was a tiny mole on her temple under the edge of that beautiful, golden crown of hers. It did not escape my eye. I tell you she was fair as the first violets in Meadowvale on a dewy morning. Of course, she was at her best. It was the last moment in years of waiting in which her imagination had furnished me with endowments too romantic. I have seen great moments, as you know, but this is the one I could least afford to give up. I had long been wondering what I should do when it came. Now it was come and there was no taking thought of what we should do. That would seem to have been settled out of court. I kissed her lips and she kissed mine and for a few moments I think we could have stood in a half bushel measure. Then the Doctor laughed and gave her ladyship a smack on the cheek.

"I don't know about you, my lady, but it fills me with the glow of youth to see such going on," he remarked. "I'm only twenty-one and nobody knows it—nobody suspects it even

These wrinkles and gray hair are only a mask that covers the heart of a boy."

"I confess that such a scene does push me back into my girlhood," said Lady Hare. "Alas! I feel the old thrill."

"Suddenly Solomon arrived. Of course where Solomon is, one would expect solecisms. They were not wanting. I had not tried to prepare him for the ordeal. Solomon is bound to be himself wherever he is, and why not? There is no better man living."

"You're as purty as a golden robin," he said to Margaret, shaking her hand in his big one.

"He was not so much put out as I thought he would be. I never saw a gentler man with women. As hard as iron in a fight, there has always been a curious vein of chivalry in the old scout. He stood and joked with the girl, in his odd fashion, and set us all laughing. Margaret and her mother enjoyed his talk and spoke of it, often, after that."

"I dressed and went to dine with the Hares that evening. They lived in a large house on a fashionable 'road' as certain of the streets were called. It was a typical upper class, English home. There were many fine old things in it but no bright colors, nothing to dazzle or astonish you like the wooden Indian in war paint and feathers and the stuffed bear and high colored rugs in the parlor of Mr. Gosport in Philadelphia. Every piece of furniture was like the quiet, still-footed servants who came and went making the smallest possible demand upon your attention."

"I was shown into the library where Sir Benjamin sat alone reading a newspaper. He greeted me politely."

"The news is disquieting," he said presently. "What have you to tell us of the situation in America?"

"It is critical," I answered. "It can be mended, however, if the government will act promptly."

"What should it do?"

"Make concessions, sir, stop shipping tea for a time. Don't try to force an export with a duty on it. I think the government should not shake the mallet fist at us."

"But think of the violence and the destruction of property?"

"All that will abate and disappear if the cause is removed. We, who keep our affection for England, have done our best to hold the passions of the people in check, but we get no help from this side of the ocean."

"Sir Benjamin sat thoughtfully feeling his silvered mustache. He had grown stouter and fuller-faced since we had parted in Albany when he had



looked like a prosperous, well-bred merchant in military dress and had been limbered and soiled by knocking about in the bush. Now he wore a white wig and ruffles and looked as dignified as a Tory magistrate.

"In the moment of silence I mustered up my courage and spoke out."

"Sir Benjamin," I said. "I have come to claim your daughter under the promise you gave me at Fort Stanwix. I have not ceased to love her and if she continues to love me I am sure that our wishes will have your favor and blessing."

"I have not forgotten the promise," he said. "But America has changed. It is likely to be a hotbed of rebellion—perhaps even the scene of a bloody war. I must consider my daughter's happiness."

"Conditions in America, sir, are not so bad as you take them to be," I assured him.

"I hope you are right," he answered. "I am told that the whole matter rests with your Doctor Franklin. If we are to go on from bad to worse he will be responsible."

"If it rests with him I can assure you, sir, that our troubles will end," I said, looking only at the surface of the matter and speaking confidently out of the bottomless pit of my inexperience as the young are like to do."

"I believe you are right," he declared and went on with a smile. "Now, my young friend, the girl has a notion that she loves you. I am aware of that—so are you, I happen to know. Through Doctor Franklin's influence we have allowed her to receive your letters and to answer them. I have no doubt of your sincerity, or hers, but I did not foresee what has come to pass. She is our only child and you can scarcely blame me if I talk of a marriage which promises to turn

her away from us and fill our family with dissension."

"May we not respect each other and disagree in politics?" I asked.

"In politics, yes, but not in war. I begin to see danger of war and that is full of the bitterness of death. If Doctor Franklin will do what he can to re-establish loyalty and order in the colonies my fear will be removed and I shall welcome you to my family."

"I began to show a glint of intelligence and said: 'If the ministers will co-operate it will not be difficult.'"

"The ministers will do anything it is in their power to do."

"Then the timely entrance of Margaret and her mother."

"I suppose that I shall shock my father but I cannot help it," said the girl as she kissed me.

"You may be sure that I had my part in that game. She stood beside me, her arm around my waist and mine around her shoulders."

"Father, can you blame me for loving this big, splendid hero who saved us from the Indians and the bandits? It is unlike you to be such a hardened wretch. But for him you would have neither wife nor daughter."

"She put it on thick but I held my peace as I have done many a time in the presence of a woman's cunning. Anyhow, she is apt to believe herself and in a matter of the heart can find her way through difficulties which would appal a man."

"Keep yourself in bounds, my daughter," her father answered. "I know his merits and should like to see you married and hope to, but I must ask you to be patient until you can go to a loyal colony with your husband."

"It was a pleasant dinner through which they kept me telling of my adventures in the bush. Save the immediate family only Mrs. Biggars, a sister of Lady Hare, and a young nephew of Sir Benjamin were at the table."

### CHAPTER VII —9— The Dawn.

Franklin, whom Jack saw the next day, liked not the attitude of the baronet.

"He is one of the king's men on the big chess board," said the old philosopher. "All that he said to you has the sound of strategy. I have reason to believe that they are trying to tow us into port and Margaret is only one of many ropes. Hare's attitude is not that of an honest man."

Only three days before the philosopher had had a talk with North at the urgent request of Howe, who, to his credit, was eager for reconciliation. The king's friend and minister was contemptuous.

"I am quite indifferent to war," he had cynically declared at last. "The confiscations it would produce will provide for many of our friends."

It was an astonishing bit of frankness.

"I take this opportunity of assuring your lordship that for all the property you seize or destroy in America, you will pay to the last farthing," said Franklin.

This treatment was like that he had received from other members of the government since the unfortunate publication of the Hutchinsons, Rogers and Oliver letters. They seemed to entertain the notion that he had forfeited the respect due a gentleman.

A few days after Franklin had given air to his suspicion that the government party would try to tow him into port three stout British ships had broken their cables on him. An invitation not likely to be received by one who had really forfeited the respect of gentlemen was in his hands. The shrewd philosopher did not think twice about it. He knew that here was the first step in a change of tactics. He could not properly decline to accept it and so he went to dine and spend the night with a most distinguished company at the country seat of Lord Howe.

Some of the best people were there—Lord and Lady Cathcart, Lord and Lady Hyde, Lord and Lady Dartmouth, Sir William Erskine, Sir Henry Clinton, Sir James Baird, Sir Benjamin Hare and their ladies were also present. Doctor Franklin said that the punch was calculated to promote cheerfulness and high sentiment. As was the custom at like functions, the ladies sat together at one end of the table, Franklin being seated at the right of Lady Howe, who was most gracious and entertaining. The first toast was to the venerable philosopher.

The dinner over, Lady Howe conducted Doctor Franklin to the library, where she asked him to sit down. There were no other persons in the room. She sat near him and began to speak of the misfortunes of the colony of Massachusetts Bay.

Lord Howe joined them in a moment. He was most polite.

"I am sensible of the fact that you have been mistreated by the ministry," he said. "I have not approved of their conduct. I am unconnected with those men save through personal friendships. My zeal for the public welfare is my only excuse for asking you to open your mind. The plan is now to send a commission to the colonies, as you have urged."

"Your lordship, I am not looking for rewards, but only for justice."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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