

HETTY.

When the British and Tories attacked New London, Connecticut, and set a price on the head of Gov. Griswold, the latter fled to the town of Lyme, where his cousin, Mrs. Martin, hid him for some days in the secluded farmhouse. But at length the subtle foe discovered his retreat, and one sunny afternoon in May he was routed from his hiding place by the tidings that a band of horsemen was approaching to capture him.

His only chance of escape was to reach the mouth of a little creek which emptied itself into the Connecticut river, just above the entrance of the latter into Long Island sound. There he had a boat stationed, with two faithful attendants hidden beneath the high banks of the creek.

The distance from the farmhouse to the boat was two miles of the usual traveled road. But a little path across the farmer's orchard would bring him to the road, only a mile from the boat, and save a quarter's length of his fearful run for life.

Just where the narrow path from the orchard opened into the road Hetty Marvin sat bleaching her household linen. The long web of 40 yards or more, which was diligently spun and woven during the long winter months, was whitened in May and thus made ready for use.

Thus sat Hetty Marvin, the younger daughter of Gov. Griswold's cousin, when her hunted friend sprang past her into the road to escape his pursuers. She was frightened by the headlong haste with which the governor rushed across the meadow. But she quickly comprehended the scene and instantly quieted her faithful Towser, who, tho' a friend of the family guest, thought it becoming to bark loudly at his hurried steps.

Her wise forethought arrested the governor's notice and suggested a scheme to elude his pursuers.

"Hetty," he said, "I am flying for my life, and unless I can reach my boat before I am overtaken I am a lost man.—You see the road forks here. But you must tell those who are chasing me that I have gone up the road to catch the mail wagon, which will soon be along; you know. Then they will turn off the other way."

"Oh, cousin," said the little girl, in an agony of distress, "I cannot tell a lie; indeed I cannot. Why did you tell which way you were going?"

"Hetty, child, certainly you would not betray me to my death? Hark! they are coming—I hear the click of their horses' feet. Oh, Hetty, tell me I have gone up the road instead of down, and heaven will bless you."

"Heaven never blesses those who speak falsely. But I will not tell them which way you go, even if they kill me; so run as quickly as possible."

"It's of no use. Unless I can deceive them I am a dead man." "Cousin, cousin, hide under my web of cloth; they'd never think of looking here for you. Come, get down as quickly as you can, and I'll cover you, and stand sprinkling my linen."

Angry that their expected prey had escaped from the house where they hoped to secure him, six mounted Tories headed by a British officer, dashed along the road in swift pursuit. At sight of the girl in the meadow, the leader of the party paused.

"Child," he said, sternly, "have you seen a man running hereabouts?"

"Yes, sir," replied Hetty, trembling and flushing.

"Which way did he go?" "I promised not to tell, sir."

"But you must, or take the consequences."

"I said I wouldn't tell, if you killed me, sobbed the frightened girl."

"I'll have it out of her," exclaimed the furious officer with an oath;

"Let me speak to her," said his Tory guide. "I know the child, I believe. Isn't your name Hetty Marvin?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Yes, sir."

"And this man who ran by you a few minutes ago was your mother's cousin, wasn't he?"

"Yes, sir, he was."

"Well, we are friends of his. What did he say to you when he came along?"

"He told me—that he was flying for his life."

"Just so, Hetty; that was very true. I hope he won't have to fly far. Where was he going to hide? You see, I could help him if I knew his plans."

Now, Hetty was not a whit deceived by this smooth speech.

"My cousin said he was going down to the river where he had a boat and wanted me to tell the men that were chasing him that he had gone the other way, to catch the mail wagon."

"Why didn't you do as he told you, then, when I asked you where he had gone?" thundered the officer fiercely.

"I could not tell a lie, sir," was the tearful answer.

"Hetty," again began the smooth-tongued Tory, "you are a nice child. Everybody knows that you are a girl of truth. What did your cousin say when you told him you could not tell a falsehood?"

"He said he shouldn't think I'd betray him to his death."

"And then you promised him that you would not tell which way he went if you were killed for it?"

"Yes, sir."

"That was brave; and I suppose he thanked you for it and ran down the road as quickly as possible."

"I promised not to tell where he went, sir."

"Oh, yes, I forgot. Well, tell us his last words and we won't trouble you any more."

"His last words were: 'It's my only chance, child, and I'll get down as you say.'"

And, overcome with fright and the sense of her kinsman's danger, should they rightly interpret the language which she had reported, she sobbed aloud and hid her face from sight.

Her tormentors did not stay longer to soothe or question her. They all immediately pushed rapidly on down to the river. The horsemen reached the shore only in season to see the boat with two men in it nearly out of sight, and, supposing their destined prey had escaped, relinquished the pursuit.

Meanwhile the victim lay safe and quiet where the shrewdness of the little cousin had hidden him, until the time came for her return to supper. Then he bade her go as usual to her home, telling her to ask her mother to place the signal lamp as soon as it grew dark in the window for the boatmen, and send him there some supper, with his valise, which, in the hurry of his departure, he had left behind. The signal recalled the boat, which after twilight had ventured in sight of the shore and the farm house, and the governor quietly made his way to the river in safety.

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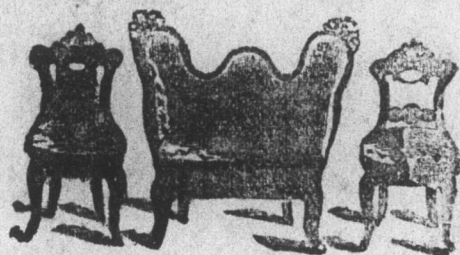
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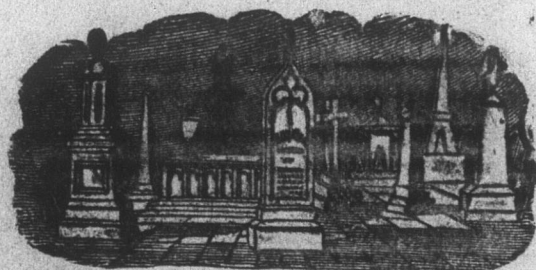
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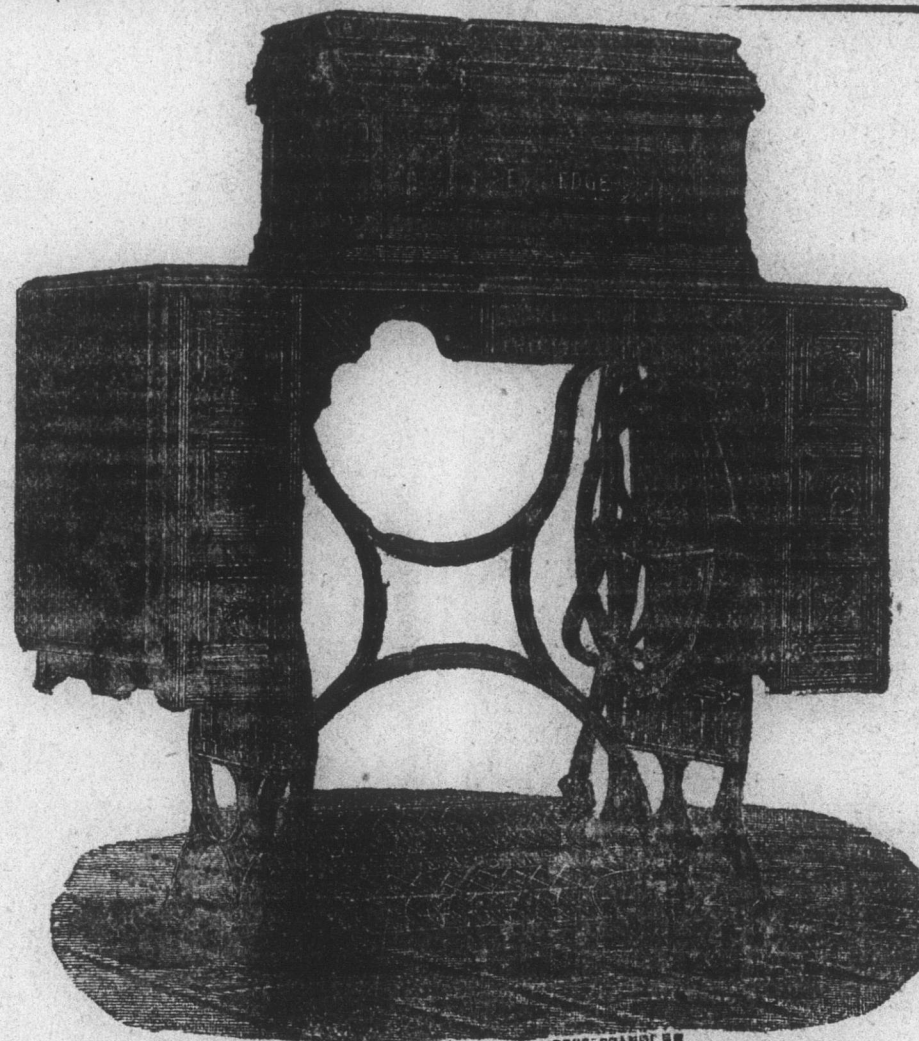
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