

THE WOMEN

OF THE

AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

BY ELIZABETH F. ELLET.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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VII.

NANCY GREEN.

AN interesting glimpse into the life and character of the Scotch-Irish patriots of South Carolina at the period of the Revolution, is afforded in the history of Mrs. Green. She was the daughter of Robert Stephenson, (commonly called Stinson) a native of Scotland, and was born in the county of Antrim, Ireland, in 1750. The family was reared in the strictest tenets of the covenanting faith, in the parish of Ballymoney, under the pastoral care of the Rev. William Martin, who about the year 1773 emigrated to America and took up his abode on the banks of Rocky Creek, a branch of Catawba River, in the county, now district of Chester, South Carolina. Many of his congregation quitted their country with him, following their pastor under the impulse of the same desire—of “freedom to worship God.” Among these emigrants were James, William and Elizabeth Stinson and their brother-in-law, William Anderson, who had married Nancy Stinson shortly before the sailing of the ship. Her wedded life thus commenced with a voluntary renunciation of home and the society of her early friends,

to seek a new country—encountering unforeseen privations and difficulties. They were accompanied by an orphan girl—Lizzy Craig—a niece of Anderson, and his only relative who came to America. At this time bounty lands were bestowed by the government as inducements to emigration. Those who received such warrants, on their arrival took care to fix their location as near as possible to a central point, where it was their intention to build a meeting-house. The spirit was that of the ancient patriarchs, who, wherever they went, first built an altar unto the Lord. The spot selected for this purpose was the dividing ridge between Great and Little Rocky Creek. Here, in the summer of 1773, the pious covenanters might be seen from day to day, felling trees and clearing a space of ground, on which they reared a large log meeting-house, many of them living in tents at home, till a place was provided in which they could assemble for religious service.

The land selected by William Anderson lay about two miles to the east, half a mile from what is now Rossville, near Great Rocky Creek. On a small elevation near the road leading to McDonald's Ferry, stood his tent, until the meeting house was completed. He then went to work for himself, and built a log cabin, clearing around it a patch of ground in which he planted Indian corn. He was ignorant of the manner of cultivating this grain, but the first settlers, or "country-borns," were ever ready to offer assistance, and took pains to instruct the Irish emigrants in its

culture. The wants of a small family were supplied with small crops, for corn was then only used for making bread, the woods affording abundant supplies of grass, cane and wild pea vines, to serve their horses and cattle for provender the year round. The streams abounded in shad and various other fish in their season, and the trusty rifle that hung on the rack over the door, was never brought back without having performed its duty in slaying the deer, the bear, or whatever small game might be sought in the forest. Often have the old men who lived at that day spoken of the abundance that prevailed, and the ease with which money could be made; a good hunter, when he chose making five dollars a day in deer skins and hams, while if generous he might give away the remainder of venison to the poor. The hams and skins were sent to Charleston and exchanged for powder, lead, and other necessary articles. The wealth of these primitive planters consisted in stock, their labors in tilling the earth, felling the woods and fencing their fields, while they were disturbed by none of the wants or cares created by a more advanced state of civilization. Such was the condition of the Covenanters who had left their native Ireland for the religious liberty found in these wilds. During seven years after their settlement in the woods, the Andersons enjoyed a life in which nothing of earthly comfort was wanting. Year after year the little patch of corn was enlarged, till it became a field of respectable dimensions, ten acres being then considered a good clearing for a farm.

Their stock, small in the beginning, had increased to a numerous herd of cattle. William was now a man of substance, well to do in the world, able to assist others, and now and then to show his kind feeling towards a countryman or old acquaintance by the present of a cow. Not only had their basket and store been blessed, but their dwelling was gladdened by the voice of infancy. Of their three children the first-born—Mary—was able to read and repeat the catechism to the minister; Robert could read the Bible, and little William was just able to walk. Every Sabbath morning the parents, in their Sunday clothes, with their neatly-dressed and well-behaved little ones, might be seen at the log church, their pocket Bibles containing the old Psalms, in their hands. Turning over the leaves, they would follow the preacher in all the passages of Scripture cited by him, as he commented on his text. Thus their simple, trustful piety caused the wilderness to rejoice.

But this happiness could not be lasting. The rumor of war had gone over the land; it was heard even in this remote section, and these refugees who had found peace could not but sympathise with their oppressed brethren. The desolation that ravaged the North, ere long took its way southward. The attack on Sullivan's Island startled many who had fancied themselves in security. Some persons from the Catawba region were at the scene of strife, and brought a report to those remaining at home, while several did their part by going out against the Cherokee Indians; yet so far

this pleasant neighborhood had been spared, and seemed likely to continue exempt from the miseries of civil war ; its families were unmolested, and the pure ordinances of the gospel were regularly administered, with none to make them afraid. This immunity was of short duration. John McClure, of Fishing Creek, coming home, brought intelligence of the surrender of Charleston, and his own defeat at Monk's Corner. Still worse was the news from across the river—of the inhuman massacre of Buford's command by Tarleton's corps, at the Waxhaws. This event gave a more sanguinary character to the war. Directly after this appalling announcement, spread the rumor that a strong party of British was posted at Rocky Mount, that the people of Wateree were flocking to take protection, and profess themselves loyal subjects of King George, and that the conquerors were sending forces in every direction to reduce the province to submission. Such was the aspect of affairs up to a certain Sabbath in June 1780.

On the morning of this memorable Sabbath—the picture is drawn in no hues of fiction—the different paths leading to the log meeting-house were unusually thronged. The old country folk were dressed with their usual neatness, especially the women, whose braw garments, brought from Ireland, were carefully preserved, not merely from thrift, but as a memorial of the green isle of their birth. They wore fur hats with narrow rims and large feathers—their hair neatly braided,—hanging over their shoulders, or fastened by

the black ribbon bound around their heads. The handsome dress of silk or chintz—a mixture of wool and flax—or of Irish calico, fitted each wearer with marvellous neatness, and the collar or ruffles of linen white as snow, with the high-heeled shoes, completed their holiday attire. It was always a mystery to the dames who had spent their lives, or many years in the country, how the gowns of the late comers could be made to fit so admirably, their own, in spite of every effort, showing a sad deficiency in this respect. The secret of the difference probably lay in the circumstance that the females from the old country were stays well fortified with whalebone. The men, on their part, appeared not less adorned in their coats of fine broadcloth, with their breeches, large knee buckles of pure silver, and hose of various colors. They wore shoes fastened with a large strap secured with a buckle, or white topped boots, leaving exposed three or four inches of the hose from the knee downward. It must be acknowledged that this people, so strict in their religious opinions, were somewhat remarkable in their fondness for dress. They considered it highly irreverent to appear at church not clad in their best attire, and though when engaged in labor during the week they conformed to the custom of their neighbors, wearing the coarse homespun of their own manufacture, on the Sabbath it was touching to see how much of decent pride there was in the exhibition of the fine clothes brought from beyond seas. As years rolled on, many of the dresses and coats began to show marks

of decay ; but careful repairing preserved the hoarded garments linked with such endeared associations, and only a few who had married with the "country-borns" had made any alteration in them. This peculiarity in dress gave the congregation assembled to worship in that rude sanctuary, a strange and motley appearance—European finery being contrasted with the homespun gowns, hunting-shirts and moccasins of the country people. It was always insisted on as a point of duty among the Covenanters, that children should be brought to church with their parents. The little ones sat between the elders, that they might be kept quiet during divine service, and be ready at the appointed hour for the catechism. The strict deportment and piety of this people had already done much to change the customs formerly prevalent ; men and women who used to hunt or fish on the Sabbath now went regularly to meeting, and some notorious ones, whose misconduct had been a nuisance to the community left the neighborhood. The Strouds, Kitchens and Morrisises, formerly regarded as the Philistines of the land were regular in their attendance upon divine worship.

On this particular day, the whole neighborhood seemed to have turned out, and every face wore an expression of anxiety. Groups of men might be seen gathered together under shade trees in every direction, talking in loud and earnest tones ; some laying down plans for the assent of their friends ; some pale with alarm, listening to others telling the news, and some,

transported with indignation, stamping the ground and gesticulating vehemently as they spoke. Everywhere the women mingled with the different groups, and appeared to take an active part in what was going on. At eleven o'clock precisely, the venerable form of Martin, the preacher, came in sight. He was about sixty years of age, and had a high reputation for learning and eloquence. He was a large and powerful man, with a voice which it is said might have been heard at the distance of half a mile. As he walked from the place where he had hitched his horse, towards the stand, it being customary, when the congregation was too large to be accommodated in the meeting-house, to have the service in the open air, the loud and angry words of the speakers must have reached his ears. The voices ceased as he approached, and the congregation was soon seated in silence upon the logs around the stand.

When he arose to speak, every eye was fixed upon him. Those who had been most noisy expected a reproof for their desecration of the Sabbath, for their faithful pastor was never known to fail of rebuking those whose deportment was unsuited to the solemnity of the day. But at this time he too seemed absorbed with the subject that agitated every bosom. "My hearers," he said, in his broad Scotch-Irish dialect—"talk and angry words will do no good. *We must fight!* As your pastor—in preparing a discourse suited to this time of trial—I have sought for all light, examined the Scriptures and other helps in ancient

and modern history, and have considered especially the controversy between the United Colonies and the mother country. Sorely have our countrymen been dealt with, till forced to the declaration of their independence—and the pledge of their lives and sacred honor to support it. Our forefathers in Scotland made a similar one, and maintained that declaration with their lives ; it is now our turn, brethren, to maintain this at all hazards.” After the prayer and singing of the Psalms—he calmly opened his discourse. He cited many passages from Scripture to show that a people may lawfully resist wicked rulers ; pointed to historical examples of princes trampling on the people’s rights ; painted in vivid colors the rise and progress of the reformation—the triumph of truth over the misrule and darkness of ages—and finally applied the subject by fairly stating the merits of the Revolutionary controversy. Giving a brief sketch of the events of the war from the first shedding of blood at Lexington, and warming with the subject as he went on, his address became eloquent with the fiery energy of a Demosthenes. In a voice like thunder, frequently striking with his clenched fist the clapboard pulpit, he appealed to the excited concourse, exhorting them to fight valiantly in defence of their liberties. As he dwelt on the recent horrid tragedy—the butchery of Buford’s men, cut down by the British dragoons while crying for mercy—his indignation reached its height. Stretching out his hand towards Waxhaw—“Go see,” he cried—“the tender mercies of Great Britain ! In that church

you may find men, though still alive, hacked out of the very semblance of humanity : some deprived of their arms—mutilated trunks : some with one arm or leg, and some with both legs cut off. Is not this cruelty a parallel to the history of our Scottish fathers, driven from their conventicles, hunted like wild beasts ? Behold the godly youth, James Nesbit—chased for days by the British for the crime of being seen on his knees upon the Sabbath morning !” etc. To this stirring sermon the whole assembly responded. Hands were clenched and teeth set in the intensity of feeling ; every uplifted face expressed the same determination, and even the women were filled with the spirit that threatened vengeance on the invaders. During the interval of divine worship they went about professing their resolution to do their part in the approaching contest ; to plough the fields and gather the crops in the absence of the men—aye, to fight themselves, rather than submit. In the afternoon the subject was resumed and discussed with renewed energy—while the appeals of the preacher were answered by even more energetic demonstrations of feeling. When the worship was concluded, and the congregation separating to return homeward, the manly form of Ben Land was seen walking among the people, shaking hands with every neighbor and whispering in his ear the summons to the next day’s work.

As the minister quitted the stand, William Stroud stepped up to him. This man, with his sons, was noted for strength and bravery. They were so tall in

stature, that like Saul, they overlooked the rest of the congregation. He doubted not, he said, that Mr. Martin had heard of his "whipping the pets." "I rather think," he continued, "some people will be a little on their guard how they go to Rocky Mount for 'tection papers! Yesterday I was down at old deaf Lot's still-house; who do you think was there? John and Dick Featherston! John said he had been to Rocky Mount to see the fine fellows, and they were so good to him, to give him 'tection. Do, John, tell me what that is, I asked. He said it was a paper, and whoever had one was safe; not a horse, cow or hog would the British take from him without paying two prices for it. So, John, says I, I know now who told the British about James Stinson's large stock of cows, which they drove off yesterday, knocking down Mrs. Stinson for putting up old Brindle in the horse stable, so as to keep one cow to give milk for the children! Now, John, as you have British 'tection, I will give you Whig 'tection! With that I knocked him down; Dick came running up; I just gave him a kick in front; he doubled up; John got up and ran for it, and Dick begged like a whipped boy. I told him he might carry the news that 'tection paper men should be whipped and have their cows taken from them to pay James Stinson for his. I think this is what you call the law of Moses! and as for these Britishers, if I don't make old Nelly ring in their ears and be *dad* to them! Excuse me for swearing this time, if you please. Now, Mr. Minister, here is old Bill—that is two; then here

is young Will, Tom, Jack, Hamp, Erby, Ransom, and Hardy ; and there are some girls, you know, and the baby, little Anzel. I have heard you say children are a crown to old men who sit at the gate." The manner in which this characteristic speech was delivered, may be imagined. Martin showed his acceptance of the proffered aid by taking William's hand, and introducing him to Capt. Land.

On his way home from meeting William Anderson was unusually silent, as if some weighty matter engaged all his thoughts. Mrs. Anderson spoke first—after she too had been reflecting. "I think, William, little Lizzy and I can finish the crop, and gather it in if need be, as well as take care of the stock." "I am glad of that, Nancy," was the reply. "I was silent, for I did na ken how to let you know it, but to-morrow morning I leave home. The way is now clear ; the word of God approves, and it shall ne'er be said that the Covenanters, the followers of the reformers of Scotland, would na lend a helpin' hand to the renewal of the Covenant in the land of America ! Now, Nancy, Capt. Land will be out before day, giving notice that up at the cross road hard by, he will drill the men who are willing to fight ; this wæs agreed upon as I left." Their conversation through the day was in the same strain. As they rose from dinner, Mrs. Anderson said, "William, were you out at kirk in Ballymoney on that Sabbath when Mary Martin, our minister's first wife, lay a corpse in his house ? No one thought he could attend to preaching in his sore dis-