

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

The Soldier of the Revolution

SARAH JOSEPHA HALE

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While many remembrances of war emphasize events of the battlefield, it is important to keep in mind the costs of war to loved ones left behind, as well as the sacrifices soldiers make in leaving them. These costs and sacrifices are poignantly presented in this story by Sarah Josepha Hale (1788–1879), first published in her Sketches of American Character (1829). The New Hampshire-born Hale was a well-known writer and editor, champion of education for women and a common national culture for the United States, and a dogged—and finally successful—campaigner for establishing a national day of Thanksgiving.¹ In this story, Captain Blake, an aged veteran of the Revolutionary War, tells his granddaughter and her young suitor of the personal circumstances and sacrifices of his going to war.

Why, according to Captain Blake, did the soldiers of the Revolution go to war? How did their motives compare with those (cited by Hale) of the “hero of Agincourt” [Shakespeare’s Henry V]? What, according to Blake, is the soldier’s biggest fear and greatest test of courage? What does he mean by “that warfare of the mind which every soldier must undergo” when he first goes forth to fight? Describe the attitude of Blake’s father and mother to his enlistment. Could Whig and Tory have been friends? Must partisan political differences, then or now, necessarily impair possibilities for love and friendship? Do you think Blake would have loved Mary Saunders, had she shared the Tory views of her father? How does Blake describe his father’s attitude and parting blessing? How does he characterize the attitudes and conduct of American women during the Revolutionary War? How should those who come later—yourself included—regard the trials of old soldiers? Is there sufficient evidence in the story to make us confident that Blake speaks for his author, Sarah Josepha Hale?

‘Old men forget; yet all shall not be forgot,
But they’ll remember with advantages,
The feats they did that day.’²

¹ For more about the Thanksgiving holiday and Hale’s role in it, see [The Meaning of Thanksgiving at www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-american-calendar/the-meaning-of-thanksgiving-day](http://www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-american-calendar/the-meaning-of-thanksgiving-day).

² William Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 4, Scene 3.

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Almost every man, who is advanced in years, has, in his past life, some particular period which is remembered with peculiar interest. The circumstances connected with that period are treasured in the memory, often repeated, and but few topics of conversation can be introduced without furnishing an opportunity of referring, at least, if not expatiating on the important affair. It is deserving of notice that what is, in fact, the engrossing pursuit of the multitude, namely, the acquisition of *wealth*, is not, even by the most devoted worldling, accounted matter of such glorious triumph as those deeds which shame the propensity he is indulging. You rarely hear such an one boast of the cunning bargain which laid the foundation of his fortune, or the plodding thrift by which he accumulated his thousands.

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Avarice is a deep rooted passion in the human breast, and its gratification ministers to vanity, yet none are vain of being thought avaricious. There is a feeling of degradation in the mind, if known to place its sole affections on the paltry, perishable things of earth, which should admonish even the most stupid, of that more noble destiny which man was formed capable of enjoying. But feats of personal strength and activity, and 'hair breadth 'scapes' from danger, are recounted with a satisfaction commensurate to the labors performed, and the perils encountered; because there is a pride of personal desert in such achievements and escapes. But above all, the glory gained in the tented field, is the theme which those who have any claim to the title of soldier, are the most ambitious to display. They all appear to feel somewhat of that yearning for martial fame which agitated the princely hero of Agincourt when he exclaimed—

'By Jove I am not covetous for gold;
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires;
But if it be a sin to covet honor,
I am the most offending soul alive.'³

Yet whoever has heard, or read the narratives of the veterans of our revolutionary war, must have remarked that they dwell not so much on the detail of the battles and skirmishes in which they were engaged, as on the effect those actions had in deciding the contest in favor of liberty and independence. The causes which roused the Americans to take up arms, were most favorable to the development of the virtuous energies of men,

³ *William Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 4, Scene 3.*

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and consequently that recklessness of moral character and abandonment of pious principles, which too often fatally distinguishes the mass of that profession, when composed of hired mercenaries, never attached to the soldiers of our armies. It was doubtless matter of astonishment to the governments of Europe, that no disturbance followed the disbanding of the American troops; those foreigners did not know that our *soldiers*, when assuming that name, never abandoned the one of *citizens*. In fact the latter was the most gratifying to those who fought the battles of freedom,—and when the necessity for farther resistance ceased, they gladly relinquished their weapons and returned to the firesides their valor had preserved from insult and spoliation. It was their boast to have fought for their country, and to their country they cheerfully resigned the laurels they had won. This generous devotedness of the American soldiery to the principles of liberty and equal rights, and their prompt obedience to civil government, have no parallel in history. They have never been adequately rewarded, but let them be gratefully remembered. They deserve to have their deeds the theme of story, and of song; and a sketch of one of those veterans will not surely be considered inappropriate in a work like this, especially by those who consider how much the ladies of America are indebted to the free institutions established by the war of the Revolution, for their inestimable privileges of education, and that elevation of character and sentiment they now possess.

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‘This walk has quite tired me,’ said old Captain Blake, seating himself in his capacious armed chair, and placing one foot on the low stool his granddaughter Maria arranged for his accommodation. ‘A little matter overcomes me now, I find. Maria, my love, bring me a tumbler of beer. Well, Mr. Freeman, you look as if nothing could fatigue you; and I have seen the time when I thought no more of walking a dozen miles, than I do now of creeping as many rods. I remember when I marched with General Starke to Bennington—that was the first time I went as a soldier. I was then just twenty, and I carried my gun and ammunition, and a huge knapsack, containing clothing and provisions, for my kind mother was very much afraid I should suffer with hunger; and I marched with all that load about forty miles in one day, and never thought of complaining.’

‘You had then a glorious object in view to animate your spirit,’ said Horace Freeman.

‘Yes, and we obtained it,’ replied the old gentleman, briskly, sitting upright in his chair; ‘and the country is now enjoying the reward of our labors and sufferings. Those were dark days,’ he continued, with the air of one who is endeavouring to recall ideas of

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scenes and feelings long past, and almost forgotten. ‘Dark days and perilous times for America, Mr. Freeman;—and the events of that period cannot be too often related to the rising generation.’

He paused, and seemed gathering strength and breath for a long harangue, and the young people expected the history of his three campaigns. Horace Freeman had heard the whole just six times over, and Maria at least sixty—but she was never tired of listening to her grandfather, and Horace, if he might but look on her, could listen very patiently.

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It is probable the old gentleman noticed the glances interchanged by the lovers, and that they recalled forcibly to his mind some passages in his early life—at least it might have been so inferred, as the circumstances he proceeded to narrate he had never before been heard to mention.

Captain Blake resumed—‘It is easy for you young men to imagine the deeds of valor you should have performed, had you lived in the days that tried men’s souls—but it is not in the battle that the heart or courage is most severely tested. Indeed there are but few men who feel any fear to fight when once the engagement has begun; ’tis the anticipation of the combat that makes cowards, and sometimes brave men tremble. But the most painful moment of a soldier’s life, at least of those who have a dear home and kind friends, is when they part from them. I said the expedition under General Starke was the first I joined. When the news of the Lexington battle arrived, I was eager to be a soldier—but my father objected. ‘No, my son,’ he said, ‘you are not yet arrived at your full strength, and the country requires the assistance of men. I will go.’ And he went, and fought at Bunker Hill—and in the retreat across Charlestown neck he was wounded by a cannon ball from the British man of war. The ball shattered his right knee, and amputation was found necessary. It was some time before he could be brought home, and he never recovered his former health. My father was a poor, but a very respectable man; for in those days the display of wealth was not necessary to make a man respected. Good sense, industry, economy and piety were passports to the best society among the descendants of the pilgrims. My father possessed all these requisites; and, moreover, his reputation for personal courage and tried patriotism was firmly established,—for who could doubt either, when his harangues, justifying the proceedings of Congress and condemning the British ministry, were always followed by a vivid description of the Bunker Hill battle, and the pain he endured from his wound; the whole closed by the solemn declaration, that his greatest anxiety and distress, during the whole operation on his limb, arose from the conviction that he was for the future incapacitated from taking an

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active part in defending the liberty of his country. My father had one enemy and opponent. This was a man by the name of Saunders, our nearest neighbour. They moved into the wilderness together, and it might have been expected that mutual hardships would have made them mutual friends. But, in the first place, there was no similarity of mind or temper between them—and in the second place, Saunders married a rich wife; giving him an advantage in point of property, which he was very fond of displaying. My father, though various untoward accidents kept him poor, was nevertheless proud, and knew his own abilities were far superior to those of his neighbour; and so, the more ostentatiously Saunders displayed his wealth, the more contemptuously my father treated his opinions. There was scarcely a point on which they agreed; and when the troubles between Great Britain and the Colonies commenced, they immediately took different sides; my father was a flaming whig, and it was perhaps as much to avoid being termed a follower of his, for my father always took the lead in town meetings,—as from principle, that Saunders declared himself for the government.

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It would be a curious inquiry to trace the operation of the causes that have contributed to establish those principles, which men often boast of having adopted solely from a conviction of their truth and usefulness. How much of personal convenience, of private pique, of selfishness, envy, anger or ambition, would be found to mingle in the motives of the patriot and the politician! But this we will not now discuss. My father was a firm friend of his country, and a fervent christian; but he had, like other good men, his infirmities; and among them, perhaps none was more conspicuous than a persevering habit of advancing his own sentiments on almost every occasion, and a dogmatical obstinacy in defending them. And he availed himself to the utmost of the advantage which the popularity of his own opinions gave him over his adversary. Though I embraced with enthusiasm my father's political sentiments, yet one reason made me regret, very much, the animosity that seemed every day more bitter, between him and Mr. Saunders. There was a fair girl in the case, and I was just at the age when the affections of the heart are most warm and romantic. Mary Saunders was not an extraordinary beauty: I have seen fairer girls than she; but I never saw one whose expression of countenance was more indicative of purity of mind and sweetness of temper. But you can judge for yourself, Mr. Freeman, for Maria here is her very image—all but the eyes. Mary Saunders' had black eyes; and black is, in my opinion, much the handsomest color for the eye, and generally the most expressive. Maria's eyes, you see, are blue—do, my love, look up—but their expression is very much like her grandmother's eyes.'

Horace Freeman was doubtless very glad of an opportunity of examining, and that too by the permission of her guardian, the eyes of the girl he adored; but her confusion and

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blushes admonished him that the indulgence of his passion was fraught with pain to the object of his affection, and he endeavoured to change the conversation to the subject of the battle of Bennington.

‘You observed, you accompanied General Starke,’ said he to the old man; ‘were you present when the tories under Baum were defeated?’ Page | 6

‘Was I?’ returned the old gentleman, his eyes flashing with the keenness of youthful ardor—‘I guess I was, and I believe I have told you the whole story; nevertheless I will detail it again, some time, as I find you like to hear such accounts, as indeed all sensible young men do; but now I was intending more particularly to tell my own feelings and views when I first left home. Accounts of battles are quite common, but we seldom read or hear a description of that warfare of mind which every soldier must undergo when he, for the first time, girds himself and goes forth to fight. I said I loved Mary Saunders, and she returned my affection; but the difficulties, every day increasing, between our families, threatened to prevent our intercourse. Mr. Saunders was the first to object, and he intimated that my father encouraged the match, notwithstanding his pretended aversion to tories, because he thought it advantageous. This accusation kindled my father’s anger to a high degree, for nothing roused his spirit like a charge of meanness—and so he absolutely prohibited me from seeing or speaking to Mary, or corresponding with her in any manner. How absurdly our passions are often allowed to control our reason and judgment, and even our inclination. At the time when Mary and I were thus positively forbidden to meet had our fathers spoken their real sentiments, I am persuaded they would both of them have approved our affection for each other. I was always a favorite with Mr. Saunders, and as Mary was an only child, and had no companion at home, she had passed much of her time with my sisters, and my parents had seemed equally fond of her as of their own daughters. But now all intercourse between the families was annihilated, and for us to have met, would have been considered a great crime.

Party spirit was then, and always will be, wherever indulged, the bane of society and good neighbourhood. But the peculiar circumstances in which the whigs were placed justified, in some measure, the asperity they cherished against all denominated tories. There are some nowadays that write histories of that war, and pretend to describe the feelings and spirit that then pervaded America, but this cannot be done. There was at that time agitation in the minds of men which words can never describe. The uncertainty that hung over the destiny of our country, the exertions and sacrifices that all good patriots

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felt must be made before success could be hoped for—the possibility of a failure, and a dread of the consequences that must ensue, all these thoughts pressed on the soul, filling it with an indescribable anxiety and gloom. But though there was, sometimes, in the mind of the firmest and most determined patriot, doubt, there was seldom dismay. He considered the principles for which he contended so important and the prize so glorious, that even though assured that he could not have succeeded, he would not have yielded. ‘Give me liberty or give me death!’ was not the motto of Patrick Henry only,—thousands of our citizens subscribed to the same sentiment. I remember when the news of the approach of Burgoyne’s army, and the retreat of the Americans from Ticonderoga, reached us. We were at dinner when a messenger, sent by General St. Clair, to rouse the inhabitants of New Hampshire to come to the assistance of the retreating army, entered our house abruptly, without even the ceremony of rapping at the door. The dress of the man showed him to be a soldier, and his countenance displayed such deep concern, that my father seemed instantly to guess his errand. He dropped his knife and fork, and turning his chair so as to face the messenger, demanded his news. I was always something of a physiognomist,⁴ and while the man related the disasters that had befallen our troops, and described the numbers and appearance of the British army, I watched my father’s features, and never did I see such an expression as his then displayed. During the first part of the recital there was an eagerness an agitation, a quivering of the lips and eyelids, that showed the deep, even painful sympathy he felt for the embarrassments of the American general—but when the royal commander was named, his brow instantly contracted, his eye dilated, every muscle of his face grew rigid as with determined resolve, and the stern expression of his features seemed bidding defiance to the whole British army. At length, while the man was proceeding to describe the proud array of the invading foe, and the number of the Indian allies, my father suddenly struck his clenched hand on the table, with a force and clatter that made all the children instantly start from their seats, while he exclaimed—‘O! if it had only been God’s will that I should have kept my leg, I would soon be on the ground and show them red coats the metal of a Yankee.’ I caught his eye as he ceased, and there was an instant change in his countenance. I presume he noticed the eagerness of my look, for there was nothing on earth, except to see Mary, that I then longed so much to do as to become a soldier. This my father had never appeared to permit. He could face danger without shrinking, but he trembled for me. I urged my wishes to go. He appeared for a few moments irresolute—drew his hand twice across his forehead, and then calmly said—‘My son, you may go.

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⁴ *One who professes to judge human character from facial features.*

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The crisis demands the sacrifice of all selfish and private feelings on the part of Americans—You shall go.’

To know the whole merit of the sacrifice my father then made, it will be necessary to state that I was the eldest of eleven children, all girls, excepting myself and the youngest babe. My father was not able to do any labor—it was in the month of July, when the farmer has, necessarily, so much business on his hands, and yet I am persuaded there was not one self-interested motive, excepting his fears of the danger to which I would be exposed, that caused his hesitation.

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It is impossible, in these days of peace and plenty, to estimate truly the generous, devoted, self-denying spirit that was exhibited during the revolution. The thirst for private gain, that is now so engrossing, was then a feeble passion, compared with the ardor to promote the public good; and the final success of our arms is mainly to be attributed to the virtue and patriotism of the people. We had, to be sure, a commander worthy of our cause and country, one undoubtedly designed and prepared by Heaven for the task he performed—but then, his powers and those of the Congress were so limited, he never would have succeeded, but for the zealous and spontaneous co-operation of our citizens. But I am wandering from the subject of my own feelings,’ he continued, smiling, ‘as indeed I am very apt to do whenever I begin to think, or speak of, the public excitement. But to comprehend rightly an old man’s story, you must allow him to tell it in his own way. Often when he appears to wander the most widely from his purpose, it is not that he forgets it, but because so many circumstances, which he thinks important, connected with the event he would relate, press on his mind, that he fears you will not get a right understanding of his subject, unless he relates all those circumstances. It is not so often from loss of memory that the aged are garrulous, as from remembering too much.

It was settled I should depart next morning, and all was bustle to prepare me for the expedition.

My father would himself inspect and arrange my military equipments. I had an excellent rifle, and a sufficient quantity of powder, but no bullets—but that deficiency was soon supplied. My mother tendered her pewter basons [*sic*; = basins], and we manufactured a sufficient quantity of shot to kill a whole regiment. My mother also packed among my clothes a huge roll of linen, for bandages, remarking as she did so, that she hoped I would not need it, but I might perhaps have it in my power to bind up the wounds of some poor creature. At that time the soldier had often to carry about him his

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hospital, as well as magazine. During all this my parents neither shed a tear nor uttered a desponding word; they even reproved my sisters for weeping, saying, that tears should be reserved for the dead—that they ought to rejoice they had a brother capable and willing to defend his country and family from the ruthless savages; and that God would not suffer the injustice of their oppressors long to triumph, if every American did his duty. In the mean time, my own mind was suffering a severe conflict. I did not fear the battle—I longed to engage in the fight; but there was something in this preparation for wounds and death, that could not but be somewhat appalling to one who had always lived in the security and shelter of home. I reflected on the possibility that I might never see that home again. All the kindness and affection of my parents and sisters, came fresh to my mind. The happy circle we had always formed around the fireside would be broken, and I knew there would be mourning for me. But there was one who I thought would weep bitter tears. I had not seen Mary, excepting at church, for more than six months; but I gathered from the expression of her countenance, that her regard for me was unaltered. She had doubtless suffered more from the separation than I. Women are more constant in their attachments than men, and they have fewer employments and resources to vary the current of their thoughts, and a disappointment of the heart is to them a constantly corroding sorrow. Mary had grown very pale and thin, and when I gazed on her as she joined in singing the praises of God, I had often felt as if she must soon be transferred to a happier world. And I had sometimes taxed my father with cruelty and injustice, in separating us, though, at the same time, I respected the high minded integrity that dictated the command; but I had never thought of disobeying him. He had in his look and manner, that kind of authority which seems to be delegated from Heaven, and which will not brook to be disregarded; such as we may imagine distinguished the patriarchs. Our pilgrim ancestors possessed this domestic authority in an eminent degree; and their descendants for several generations inherited it, though less dignified—but it now seems to be nearly extinct. Whether it was on the whole, more favorable to human improvement in virtue and happiness, than the present *reasoning* manner of family government, is a question I have never seen decided. I wish some one qualified for the task would give us their opinion on the subject. But to return to Mary, from whom my thoughts then seldom wandered. I could not endure the idea of leaving home without seeing her. I went to my father—I trembled in every joint, and the sweat started in large drops on my forehead, but nevertheless I retained sufficient firmness to tell him I must and would see Mary; that I wished for his consent to visit her, and that perhaps it was the last request I should ever make him; and then I added, that if I lived to return, I would still be as obedient to his commands as I had hitherto been. How I summoned sufficient courage to tell him so

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much, was afterwards to me a matter of astonishment; it might be that I felt rather more boldness from knowing I was soon to be a soldier.

I believe my father's first impulse was to rebuke and refuse me, for he assumed one of his stern looks that always quelled all opposition—but luckily for us both, he looked in my face, and I suspect he became sensible I was not in a state to bear rebuke or disappointment. His first words were, 'Do you wish to be friends with the enemies of your country, with traitors?'

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I said, No—but that Mary was not an enemy of her country.

'But her father is,' he replied, 'and children do adopt, indeed they ought to adopt, the opinions of their parents.'

'Not if they think that opinion wrong,' said I. 'And I have told you before that Mary does not approve her father's sentiments, and that she ought not to be judged and condemned on his account.'

'I know,' he replied, 'that you think favorably of her. At your age this is not strange, but remember, that though I do not forbid your seeing her, if you insist upon it, I warn you of the consequences. The path of duty is now plain before you; it is to fight manfully for liberty and independence. You seem to have such strength and courage given you, as we may hope will bear you up; but if you join hands with those who are wishing to riot in the blood of their country, you will probably be forsaken by Him who is the God of battles.'

There was in my father's manner a solemnity that awed me, but still his prophetic warning had no effect to deter me from my purpose of seeing Mary. I knew, what my father would not credit, that she was an enthusiast in the cause of her country, though the mildness and modesty of her disposition, and respect for her parent, restrained her from openly expressing her sentiments. Indeed, it is worthy of notice that during the whole war, the American women were almost universally patriots; and they encountered their full share of privation and suffering, and that too with a cheerfulness and fortitude that often infused courage and vigor into the hearts of the almost desponding soldiery. And they not only submitted to separations from their friends without murmuring, but they exerted themselves to provide for their families at home, by performing much of the labor and business that usually devolves on the men. A volume of anecdotes might be collected

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of the heroism and devotion to freedom, manifested by the ladies during that period. There were wives, and mothers, and sisters, who encouraged and assisted to prepare for the battle, those they held dearest on earth. And there were maidens who animated their betrothed lovers for the fight. I was confident Mary was not deficient in this generous self-denying spirit, and I had no fear she would exert her power over me by endeavouring to dissuade me from going into the army. I did not then hesitate a moment on my own account; but I had to procure the consent of her father, as well as mine, for the meeting. I wrote to Mr. Saunders, and very respectfully requested permission to visit his daughter, stating my reasons, and that my father had consented. I afterwards learned it was that which made Mr. Saunders object. He would agree to nothing that my father approved. He wrote me a very cool and provoking answer, in which he took care to repeat all the account of Burgoyne's success, and warn me against joining in a sinking cause; and he concluded by declaring he would not allow one who was intending to fight against his sovereign to visit at his house, and that his daughter entirely agreed with him in opinion. I was never so disappointed in my life, and I do not remember that I was ever more angry. The more so perhaps, because my father seemed to enjoy my chagrin. I did not believe Mary was thus indifferent about seeing me; but still a young man scarce twenty, and a lover beside, is not usually the most reasonable being under the sun. I thought of a thousand things, and imagined a thousand improbable events. These were some of my fancies. If the enemy should succeed, Saunders would doubtless join the victorious army, at least, he would wish to pay his compliments to Burgoyne; and he might take Mary with him; and I was too deeply in love to imagine any person could see her with indifference. And then I thought it probable some English officer would admire her, and succeed in gaining her hand—and then I felt as if I could annihilate the whole British host.

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While I was indulging in one of these paroxysms of feeling, a boy who lived with Mr. Saunders appeared at the end of the lane leading to our house. I knew him in a moment, although it was nearly dark, and hastened to meet him. He brought me a letter from Mary. I know you expect I treasured that letter in my mind, and remember it now—and though it may sound rather silly to hear an old man like me, saying over his love-letters, I will repeat it. It had been begun with 'Dear Samuel,'—but those words had been scratched out, though not so entirely but I could trace them. The next beginning was—'Worthy Friend, I have just seen a letter you sent my father, and from what he has told me, I fear you will think I am ungrateful and have forgotten you. But this I never shall do. I think of you almost constantly, and pray that you may be directed in the path of duty. I believe you are now pursuing it. I feel that our country needs aid, and wish I could render it. But

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that is out of my power; but if prayers and tears could avail to save you from harm, I would offer them daily. I do not say this to discourage you, but to show you that I approve your determination to be a soldier. May God shield you.—Mary Saunders

‘P. S. I hope you will not forget me.’

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‘Such was the letter, word for word,’ continued the old man. ‘I remember it well, for I carried it three years in a little pocket book, and read it pretty often, as you doubtless guess. It was at the time a precious treasure, for it assured me of Mary’s affection, and that she approved my being a soldier, and perhaps I departed with a lighter heart than I should have done had we actually met.’

Early the next morning every thing was prepared, and the family all attended while my father made a most fervent and impressive prayer. I observed that he dwelt more earnestly on the salvation of his country, and prayed more heartily that the men who were going forth might have strength and resolution given them to conquer their proud and cruel enemies, than he did that they might be saved from danger and returned in safety. When he concluded, he took my hand; the pride of a soldier was in his eye as he glanced over my military equipments, but I observed a moisture there; and when he spoke, it was in a sharp, quick tone, as if he feared to trust the expression of his feelings, and even felt angry with himself for indulging them. ‘Sam,’ said he, wringing my hand as he spoke. ‘Sam, remember your duty. Your country now requires your services; and next to your duty to God, your country’s claims are sacred. Go, and fight manfully for liberty. Remember it is better to die free than live a slave. Go, and God bless you.’

‘Samuel,’ said my mother, taking my hand in both of hers, and pressing it tenderly, while the tears gushed from her eyes—I had not seen her weep before. ‘Samuel, your father has told you what is your duty, and I know you will do it. I shall pray for you, and if you are hurt, remember the bandages and salve. I have put some salve into your pack, that is very excellent for wounds. Heaven keep you—farewell.’

I do not particularly remember what my sisters said, nor indeed distinctly anything else that passed, till I found myself on the brow of a hill that overlooked the farm of my father, and part of that belonging to Mr. Saunders. I paused there, and looked back on the scene I had left. The sun had not risen, but the eastern sky, as if preparing for his coming, was kindled up with those beautiful hues that the light of noonday never imparts. I saw the green woods stretching away on every side till they blended with the blue of the

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distant mountains. In those woods I had hunted many a time. I heard the birds singing their morning songs; all spoke of peace except the shrill cry of the jay, and that sounded in my ear like a call to battle. Beneath me lay the fields I had traversed so often—the windings of the little brook, the boundary that divided the estate of my father from that of his tory neighbor, were easily to be traced by the mist that hung over it; and I could distinctly see the favorite fishing place where I had passed many happy hours. And then there was the home in which I was born, and the trees in whose shade I had so often played with my sisters—and, in the small meadow, a seat beneath an old elm, where Mary and I had often met.

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I saw all these, and the recollections they awakened, and the thought that, in all probability, I should never see that spot, and those objects, and my dear family, and Mary, again, came so painfully on my heart that my fortitude was overcome, and I wept and even sobbed aloud. I was in the battle at Bennington—I fought at Saratoga—I was one of the twenty under the command of Lieutenant Knox at the capture of Stony Point—I have been wounded, and a prisoner. I have heard bullets whistle as they fell like hail, and seen men dropping around me like leaves in autumn, and I have been in want of a crust of bread, but I never felt that fear, that utter despondency, that misgiving of spirit, which I endured when taking my leave of home.'

'But you did return, my dear grandfather,' said Maria, wiping her eyes. 'You did see that home again?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'I returned to dwell there, and I married Mary; but, it was after my constitution was broken by fatigue and hardship, and my arm rendered, as you see, nearly useless by a fracture in the elbow. Nor had Mary been exempt from sorrow and suffering. The chagrin her father endured in being, as he was, confined to his farm, and knowing himself the object of suspicion, hatred, and contempt of his neighbours, and the disappointment he felt at the failure of the British army, whose triumph he had so confidently predicted, all these things troubled him, and finally undermined his health. He fell into a consumption; but before he died, he renounced his tory principles, and my father and he became reconciled, and he consented I should marry Mary. And so when I returned from my last campaign, where I was disabled, by this wound in my arm, from further service, Mary was the first to welcome me. But O! how pale and thin she looked. You young people have no experience, and can hardly form an idea of the trials we had endured. But we had the satisfaction of thinking our country would be free and independent; and it is so: and yet few, in these days of peace and prosperity, seem to

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

remember that their freedom and privileges were purchased by the sweat, and toils, and blood, of the old soldier.’