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## ANN STORY

By DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

*The achievements of the Vermont pioneer woman remain a part of the unrecorded history of the state. Here and there in documents of various types, in oral tradition, in firelight tales, in a phrase or two that has survived in print or a letter, glimpses of her appear, and then she vanishes. We intend to recall her from the past and accord her the recognition she deserves. Mrs. Fisher's contribution is the first in a series. Further comment will be found in the Postscript. Editor.*

ANN STORY is, literally, one of our Vermont great-grandmothers. Perhaps she is one of yours too, for she had five children, every one of whom she brought up to strong, useful maturity. They all married, had children, moved with their families, here and there in our country as is the American way. As she was born about 1739, and all her children before 1774, there has been plenty of time for one or the other of her descendants to have become one or another of your ancestors.

Whether they factually did or not, she is, spiritually, an ancestress for every American. Yet I doubt if you ever heard of her, perhaps because her story has in it neither mating, nor murdering. Nor yet money-making. Mostly, if you'll notice, those are the elements considered "dramatic." We who were brought up on old Vermont stories think hers quite dramatic enough.

We know familiarly most of the homely-heroic details of her life, for the people who settled Vermont, from 1764 to the 1790's, were younger sons and daughters of decently educated Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island people, hence quite literate. They left behind many kinds of written records of those first years—letters, diaries, account books, memoirs, amateur local histories.

In addition, Vermont oral tradition is vivid and unbroken. The grandparents of my youth had heard from their grandparents all about the life of the early settlers. It is from talk as well as from yellowed letters, deeds, and daily journals that we know accurately how the primeval Vermont forests were turned into the mellow home-farms now all around us.

Usually the first of the family to come into Vermont over the Indian trails was the father, always a young father. He brought a helper; a son if he had one old enough, or a brother or a friend who also planned to settle in Vermont. If the water-ways ran in the right directions, these men came by canoe. But mostly on foot or with a pack horse, carrying the minimum of tools and supplies—axes, wedges, levers, seed for the first crop of grain, a kettle or two (very precious), a frying pan (called a spider because it had legs), blankets, and a very small iron ration of food, generally Indian corn, to fall back on in the infrequent days when neither fish nor game could be had.

Thus in September, 1774, did Ann Story's husband, Amos, arrive at the spot in the dense forest which was to become the town of Salisbury, Vermont. With him was his son, Solomon, then thirteen years old. Look attentively at the next boy of thirteen you see (perhaps there is one in your family circle) so that you will know how old was the boy who swung an axe beside his father, then perhaps thirty-five years old. Together, through that long, cold, dark Vermont winter, they felled trees, built a strong log-house, and constructed a chimney. As spring came on, the man and boy (he was fourteen then) called the new home done, and turned to clearing a field in the forest, to plant wheat for the family bread the next winter.

And as they toiled together, forward-looking, creative-minded, peaceable young father and sturdy son, disaster struck. A huge sugar-maple (we know exactly what kind of a tree it was, for this is one of the details of the story, told and written down over and over) did not fall as Amos Story had thought it would. As it plunged downward, its great branches roaring in its fall, it turned and, crashing to the earth, pinned Amos Story's body beneath it.

He died instantly. But his son could not believe it. Snatching up his axe the boy began frantically chopping at the giant cylinder of the granite-hard tree so that he could roll it away from the crushed body. Hardly more than a little boy, he swung his axe desperately, with the skill learned in the long winter's chopping. But when, dripping with sweat, his heart pounding wildly, he had driven his axe blade clear through the great tree-trunk, he still could not stir it. He knelt down by his father again, and saw he was dead. He was quite alone in the wilderness. Getting up to his feet, he laid his young hand again to the axe, chopping slowly now but delivering steadily those powerful well-aimed blows, till once more he had gone through the thickness of the primeval giant. Then he could roll away the section which lay across his father's dead body, and straighten it for burial.

The nearest human being was in a clearing where the town of Middlebury now stands—miles away from the solitary fatherless boy. The young woodsman knew where the trail ran, followed it, and brought back one Benjamin Smauley (we know the names of the people in this story) and his two sons. They carried the body to lie beside the grave of one of Smauley's daughters who, at twenty years of age, had lost her way in the forest and starved to death before she could be found—this as a reminder to the fourteen-year-old boy of what the wilderness meant.

And after that funeral, what? The fourteen-year-old boy was a good deal more than a hundred and fifty miles from where his mother waited with the little brothers and sisters. There was no way of reaching her except by walking—over a trail through the deep woods most of the way. In those days, the long distances, the lack of roads or bridges or places of shelter along the way, the absence of any system of mail communication, quite often resulted simply in the breaking apart of families. How could it be otherwise? Sturdy young people were assets in any frontiersman's house. Boys and girls separated by chance from their parents were welcomed as helpers to the nearest log cabin. What else could they do?

Ann Story's son could do something else. As steadily as he had driven his axe through the great tree which had killed his father, he set off on foot to go back to tell his mother.

The many accounts of this homespun epic which have come down to us, are Vermontishly factual. We know fully the details of what was done. But not what was felt. Nobody ever told us about the day when young Ann Story (for she was thirty-three when her husband died) back in the Connecticut town, weary with waiting for news, watching the road anxiously, saw her eldest son, foot-sore, dusty, ragged, his head hanging, trudging in on the highway from the north. When Vermonters, telling this story, come to the meeting of mother and son, they stop, swallow hard, and are silent for a moment.

But that is the last pathos in this tale. From that point on the story of this woman and mother rings with vitality, like axe-strokes on oak. This seemed natural to those around her. To us too, who live a good deal by old rather than modern ideas. Not till the Victorian and Romantic-School tradition (which did not begin till the first of the industrial revolution some forty years after this) of females as frail, timorous, ornamental sofa-creatures, were women admired for being cowards and weaklings. In the pioneering boat they were generally expected to pull their full weight. So they could—and did.

Ann Story had planned with her husband the creation of the new home in the north woods where their boys and girls could grow up children of free and independent landowners. For I must tell you that there was much more in the migration to Vermont, after the ending of the French-and-Indian War, than just the random itching foot common to returned soldiers, more than the stories then going the rounds in New England homes, of good land, and plentiful game in the Green Mountain forests, now recently opened to settlers.

The ferment, political, economic, social, which boiled over into our Revolution, was bubbling hotly among the younger people in the settlements to which the colonial soldiers returned after they were mustered out from the British army at Quebec, in 1763. That date was, note well, only ten years before the Boston tea-party, twelve years before the shooting at Lexington and Concord, and the rhetorical demand of Ethan Allen for the surrender of Ticonderoga. Men who had been in the colonial troops were still young when they set out to make homes in the Vermont woods.

They were looking for new land and good hunting, just as the debunking modern historians tell us, yes, of course. But we who know them very well from the records they left, have plenty of proof that they were also simple-hearted enough to be on fire with the love for liberty, which they spelled, pronounced, and lived for with a capital L. When, before long, they wrote a Constitution for the new State, those buckskin-clad farmer-hunters laid down their rifles and their axes to write into it (the first state which did this on the North American continent as far as we can find out) a clause forbidding human slavery in any form. The rising wind of the passion for human freedom, for recognition of individual human dignity sang loudly in the ears of these young family men, then British Colonials, soon to become American, who pushed into Vermont along Indian trails.

And of their wives and sisters, too, as you will see from what Ann Story did.

Her sorrow over her husband's death seemed to her a mighty reason for carrying out what they had planned together, to make free landowners and citizens of their children. Without him, she took up the effort they had thought to share with each other. She made the usual preparations of people who went into the wilderness of the North to make new homes, she bought a pack horse with money from the sale of most of her household gear; she gathered her brood around her and set out—a young widow with three sons and two daughters. Wouldn't you like to know their names? Stout Yankee Bible names—

Hannah and Susanna, Samuel, Ephraim, and Solomon. Their ages ran from fourteen down.

Ann carried a rifle over her shoulder as her husband would have done, and so did her first-born. After plunging into the Vermont forests, they knew they would depend largely for food on what game they could shoot. They slept out at night, around a campfire, over which, turn by turn, one of them kept watch. Steadily, slowly, held back by the short steps of the younger children, drawn forward by Ann's vision of earned independence, day after day, week after week, they pushed on through the great dark trees.

It was about a year after her husband had reached the spot in the forest which was to be their home-farm—in the latter part of 1775—that Ann Story led her children into the ragged, bramble-overgrown clearing, saw the log-cabin built by her children's father, and knelt beside it to strike the spark which would light the first home fire.

At this point, everyone of us should shake from his imagination the thick layer of dust deposited on it by too many movies, and too much romantic fiction. You will not get the flavor of this true story unless you try to realize that this woman and her children were real, actually did live and do all this. This is no historical novel printed in a book or flickering on a movie screen. Ann Story was only thirty-three years old, a sore-hearted, lonely widow, who left the safety of a settled, century-old town to carry out single-handed the hopes for independence which she and her husband had had for their children. Those were flesh-and-blood little boys and girls, journeying on, day after day, through the primeval forest. If you ever took five lively children, running from fourteen years down, out for a single day's walk in the country, you know that you were lucky if you brought all five back without minor mishaps—bumped heads, stubbed toes, skinned knees, thorns in fingers, quarrels, queasy stomachs, hurt feelings—up to scalp wounds, a broken shoulder-bone or maybe even an arm. Ann Story's five were exactly like yours—don't look at them with the glassed eye we all turn on Hollywood movie-children pretending to be something different from what they are. Everything happened to them that is likely to happen to any children. Yet their young mother brought them through weeks and weeks of solitary journeying. Along that Indian trail was no doctor. Not a grocery store to sell food. There was no man with them to cut wood for the campfire; to pitch the bit of sloping canvas under which they slept; to shoot the game to keep them alive; to keep off the wolves and catamounts which screamed around their fire at night; to deal with casual Indians

encountered on the trail. Little and bigger, boy and girl, every one of the five who started out with their young mother stood around her, safe, when she lighted the first fire on the hearth of the new home.

She set to work at once to provide for her children, inside the home and out of it. They soon came to be as much at home in the woods as the squirrel and partridge. The boys helped as they could to clear the land of the monstrous great trees, to plant the crops and split the mountains of firewood needed in the long Vermont winter. The little girls helped too, cooking, mending, picking and drying wild fruits, manufacturing soap out of grease and lye made from the wood ashes. They used this soap to keep the family clothes and home spotlessly clean. They smoked the haunches of the deer their mother and the boys shot. They rendered into birchbark pails the great slabs of fat from the occasional bear brought down by their mother. She, like any other pioneer, kept her rifle close to her hand as her axe.

One of the smaller details of the old-time stories told us by the oldest of our Vermont old folks, was the lament of their old folks about the lack of the wonderful provision of bear-fat every family then had. Sweet and tasty it was for cooking, they said. Every meat dish made with it was strengthening and appetizing. Wonderful for greasing your thick leather winter boots, a fine preparation for keeping your hair in good condition, excellent for the wooden axles of the first clumsy carts. And such a lot of it. All you wanted. No measly little paper-wrapped pounds you had to pay the grocer good money for.

We who had never tasted bear-fat and didn't like the sound of it any too well, used to think these nostalgic yearnings rather comic. They took on another aspect after what we have heard in the two great world wars of the intense sufferings of people deprived of fats and oils.

On this diet of venison, fish, bear-fat, wild fruit, Indian corn mush, and maple syrup, Ann Story's children grew strong, hardy, muscular, alert, and as boldly courageous as their mother, who was said by those who knew her just not to know the meaning of fear. As her grief for her husband's death was buried deeper under the incredible activity and responsibility of every day, she herself grew, too, not taller, like the children, but stronger in mind and body and spirit. An old settler, reminiscing about her in his last years, said, "She was a busting great woman who could cut off a two-foot log as quick as any man in the settlement." She had always been a good-looking woman, and as she grew in power, she took on a stately handsomeness which became

legendary. With her tanned, bright-eyed, lithe, disciplined, and skilled boys and girls about her (she taught them to read in the Bible she had brought up in the pack-saddle, from the old home) she was a model mother and homemaker, the admiration of all who passed that way.

But she was more than a home-body. She was a citizen. And a patriot. Like the stout, plain chairs of our great-grandfathers, which we still keep in our Vermont living-rooms, not for show as antiques but to rest ourselves in after a day's work, we still keep such words as "patriot" in our everyday vocabulary. This mother had set her bold, fiery heart on independence for her children. She wanted the same thing for her country. In a time when political opinions meant something, in times like ours, now, that showed the stuff men and women were made of, she was passionately on the side of self-government by the people.

A justice of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia speaking forty years ago, naturally in the rather overstuffed language of his period, at the dedication in Salisbury of the monument in Ann Story's honor, said of her, "She gave herself, heart and soul, to the great cause of the people against their tyrants. She was a revolutionary. The American Revolution was not at bottom a struggle between the colonies and Great Britain. It was a line of cleavage which divided the English-speaking people wherever they happened to be—on one side those who believed in self-government, in the people, on the other those who believed in the doctrine that 'one part of the race is born booted and spurred, ready to ride, and the other part is born ready saddled and bridled to be ridden'. Ann Story had the vigor of mind to do her own thinking, to take in the whole scope of the question at issue. She was brave and strong, and what her mind approved her arm did not tremble to execute."

As Ann Story saw it, what she wanted for her children as Vermonters was the right to own their land as free men and not to be forced into the semi-feudal subservience to rich folks, like the people who lived as tenants in New York, dependent on patroons. As Americans, what was at stake was their right to free themselves from traditional obedience to an overseas political authority over which they had no control. She was ready to stand by those causes with as forthright a civic conscience and courage as, in her personal life, she showed in taking care of her children.

After the beginning of the Revolutionary War the British enlisted the Indians to fight for them against the Colonial rebels. As soon as this dire news was known, those few Vermont families who had



begun building up their homes in the region north of Rutland knew that they would not be safe. They were scattered sparsely around in the forests, dangerously close to the Canadian border. They gave up their dearly earned log-homes, they abandoned their laboriously cleared fields, they moved to the southern part of the state, where the settlements were more numerous.

But not Ann Story.

It was her home-place. It had been founded by the father of her children, she herself was building it up. It was all she had for her sons and daughters. But for her it had a far more than personal value. It was an outpost of the fighting front. If she stayed in it, she could be of use in the battle for freedom. She was already a valued aid and adviser to the loosely organized guerrilla fighters called the Green Mountain Boys. A few of those men, either single, or whose families had been moved back of the lines at Rutland, came and went and camped out, over this now deserted region, ostensibly as casual hunters. They were to keep track of enemy movements, coming from the north, from Canada. To them, as she boldly announced her determination to stay on, she now said—the exact words of her phrase are carefully preserved, and passed on to us, in all the Vermont stories, written and oral, told about her—“Give me a place among you, and see if I am the first to desert my post.”

It was not long before in the British-led Indians came, torch and tomahawk in hand.

The Story children had been trained to act as sentinels, and there were enough of them so that in every direction around the house, some sharp young Story ear was cocked for suspicious sounds. One spring day, in 1776, a little boy came running—but silently—to tell his mother in a whisper that an Indian war-party, about half a mile away, was pillaging and setting fire to the cabin of a neighbor (one of those who had gone south for safety, leaving his home empty).

The river was high with melted snow, had overflowed its banks and flooded low-lying parts of the forest. Working at top speed, Ann and her children loaded their big canoe with the most vital household belongings—blankets, the precious “iron kittle” and spider, the bags of seed soon to be planted, the wooden tub of maple sugar, and the birch-bark pails of bear grease. Stepping in themselves, they paddled off swiftly on the flood-waters in amongst the dense trees, which hid them, but through which they could see everything done by the Indians, who soon came whooping into the clearing. The Story family watched them ravage the carefully kept home, and with relishing

shouts, set it on fire in a dozen places. When the cabin was quite burned down, they shouldered their booty and were off.

Ann and her children waited cautiously till it was safe to return to the desolation which had been their home. We do not need to try to imagine what they felt as they stood by the smoldering logs, for Ann's words have come down to us, accurately repeated by people who heard her tell the story with terse Vermont understatement. She evidently did not even once think of giving up and beating a retreat to safety. Nor did she waste an instant's time in laments. With one of the first instances we have on record of the Vermont distaste for personal dramatics, she resolutely presented this as an incident, not a catastrophe. Her account of her reason for staying on is dry and matter-of-fact. "If the smoking ruins of our home disheartened us," she explained, years afterwards, "the hope arose that the Indians had made so little in this excursion, they might not visit the region any more. So we began cutting and laying up small trees, such as the children and I could handle, and it was not long before we had quite a comfortable cabin, made of poles instead of logs, on the spot where the former one had stood."

Watching from a distance we of the twentieth century have seen the savage forces of war pillage and burn down our old home of isolated nationalism, very dear to us. We too stand beside ruins, and face the need of building up a new home, somehow, out of the materials available to us, whether or not they are as good as we would like.

The most visibly picturesque part of this homespun Ann Story epic begins here, the part in which the imaginations of Vermont children have reveled ever since—for did a child ever live who did not love the idea of a cave hide-out? In the daytime, the Story children and their mother could go on, growing food, preparing it, keeping house (and incidentally gathering valuable information for the guerrilla forces on their side), because they could stand guard, and at the first sound of danger could take to their canoe and paddle noiselessly out of sight. But at night?

It was as patriot that she stayed on, at the front. It was as patriot as well as home-maker that she kept her house of poles clean, snug and smelling pleasantly of good food. It continued to be what it had been from the first, like the switchboard of a modern telephone system. To it came singly, or in small sauntering groups, men who looked like trappers or hunters, dropping in for a chat with the widow Story over a dish of her excellent venison stew. But they left an im-

portant message to be passed on orally to other buckskin-clad, musket-carrying men who were to drop in, some days or weeks later. Or, while the children scattered into the woods in a wide circle, all around the clearing, to keep watch, a canoe would come up the creek, loaded with kegs of gunpowder, which would be hastily rolled out and hidden, till a party of the Green Rangers later arrived with the right password. Often the men dropped in just to get what information Ann and her active children had picked up about British or Indian movements, for the children were everywhere, and Ann acquired an F. B. I. ability to piece together isolated odd items to make a clear whole, or, perhaps the visitors came just to get Ann Story's slant about what to think of some new move, political or military. For, of course, as always happens to people who are in the thick of things, and not sheltered, her understanding fed on experience and grew stronger.

As to what the family did at night, for a long time nobody knew. Ann kept her own counsel and the children were as mum as young partridges hiding in the dry leaves at the mother bird's command. But we now know the device.

The banks of the Otter Creek where their home stood, were high above the water. Selecting a place where tall old trees stood thickly, their roots intertwining into a strong, wiry network, the Storys began to dig an underground passageway into the bank. Prisoners digging escape tunnels have trouble hiding the fresh dirt. The Story diggers slid this into the swift-flowing stream. The mouth of the passage, at the water level, they made just large enough to let the canoe float in, all its passengers lying flat. And they kept that entrance thickly planted with overhanging bushes, so it would not be seen by any of the men in canoes, pro-British, Indian, or pro-American, who used the Otter as a road into and out of the northern wilderness. A place to sleep was dug out at one side, well above the level of the water. Here the roots of the trees acted as a natural arch to hold up the roof, over what was a sizable underground room.

Till her husband's death, Mrs. Story had been an indoor house-mother in an orderly, safe, old Connecticut town. But she had now learned well the lessons of wood lore, and so placed the cave that, entered as it was from the trackless water, no sign of trodden leaf or broken stick could betray it to the sharpest Indian trackers. A well-worn path led down, naturally enough, to where, during the day, the canoe lay moored back of the cabin.

Every night, after dark, they filed silently down to the river,

stepped into the canoe, pushed it out without a sound, and glided between the high wooded banks, around a bend in the Otter. With one deft paddle stroke, the light craft was swung around and slid in under the overhanging bushes. The Storys were gone, all six of them, as if they had evaporated.

I have said that this great-grandmother of yours and mine was not only a good woman but a good citizen. As Justice Stafford said of her, "She was one of Plutarch's women." The other way around, also. She was no less a woman, mother, and protector to human beings in distress, because she was on fire with passion for the ideals which we Americans are brought up to revere.

She did not hesitate, the day one of her children returned from a far-ranging woods-expedition, reporting that he had heard somebody crying. Going cautiously to see, noiseless on his moccasined feet, he had peeped through the leaves from a distance and had seen a woman, a white woman, sunk in a heap on the forest floor, sobbing.

Ann Story reflected. It might be an Indian trick. But it might not be. Everybody in those times knew that when Indians, under British instructions, burned the homes of the American revolutionaries, part of the recompense for the red-skinned allies was to carry off as many white captives as they could. This was not to scalp and torture them. It was a business operation. If the captives could be taken along, alive and well as far as Canada, they could be sold as servants to white Canadians. This too was a commercial matter. The Canadians who bought those captives often made a big cash profit on them, through the ransom exacted for them from their New England families.

Yes, this weeping young woman alone in the forest might well be such a captive left to starve. Or she might be a decoy, carrying out some plot against the guerrilla "resistance" fighters called the Green Mountain Boys.

Musket on shoulder, guided by the little boy, both of them as silent as cloud-shadows, Ann Story made her way to a place where she could see and not be seen. The child's story was true. The mother waited a long time, with Indian patience, standing invisible in the forest, till she was sure it was no trick. Then she stepped forward.

We rather like to imagine the moment when that girl abandoned by her Indian captors, saw, before her, the "busting great," tall, stately homespun-clad Ann.

The girl came from a settlement far inside the American lines, which had been raided by a war-party of Indians in the service of the British. The prisoners were hurried along the trail to Canada. And

this girl (here is one name that has not come down to us, in Story-lore, so I can only call her the girl) was far advanced in pregnancy. Quite as much afraid of the wilderness as of their tomahawks, she had tried desperately to keep up with the swift dog-trot of the Indians. But she had finally fallen so far behind as to be out of their sight. They had gone on. It was less trouble to leave her there to starve than to turn back and split her skull.

Ann Story had borne five children. She knew that the young woman's time was near. It might have been, she thought perhaps—although, Vermont fashion, she said in her later safe and comfortable years very little about what she had thought or felt—one of her own little girls a few years on. There was nothing for it but to add another to the incredible sum of her responsibilities. The young mother was taken in, the baby was born—Ann Story midwife—and like all babies, he was anything but self-controlled and disciplined. One of the stock sayings of her contemporaries about Ann Story was that “she feared neither Tory, Indian, nor wild beast,” because she felt herself to be stronger than they. But even she could not keep a baby from crying when he felt like crying. The soundless caution of the canoe-approach to the underground shelter, the whispers of their talk in the cave, were ruthlessly broken by the baby's lusty yells when something displeased him. If you have ever been acquainted with a baby, I need say no more. You can imagine what the Storys' situation now became.

Ann had not shrunk back from what she thought a patriot's duty, because it was dangerous. Nor did she now from a woman's obligation. Babies and their mothers must be cared for at no matter what peril. For the present, till the mother could walk, there was no way of moving them on to another place of safety. So the baby stayed, continuing to cry when the spirit moved him.

And he was the hinge on which a small—but not unimportant—piece of American history swung into place—the right place.

As the Honorable Justice from Washington, D. C., pointed out in his address delivered at Ann Story's monument, the American Revolution was not at bottom a struggle between the colonists and Great Britain. It was between those, everywhere, who steadfastly believed that people should be free to govern themselves and those who did not. In the colonies there were many men and women who took no stock in the republican ideas which, with Cromwell, had shaken the English state to its foundation, which were in a few years to flame all over France. Always, everywhere, there are plenty of backward-looking lovers of the past, and of old ways hallowed by old traditions.

Even in Vermont, so new that the bark was still on it, there were people deeply attached to the much-loved old Church, and to the institution of the Crown, which seemed to them the only basis for a decently orderly society. They were, also, alarmed about their property and social position, for lovers of the past usually have more money and put on more style than those who press forward into the future. Naturally such people hated and feared the rawly new, violently egalitarian principles of the American Revolution, sacred to Ann Story—and to us, her descendants.

A band of these royalists and anti-Americans were, unknown even to the wide-spread intelligence system of the Green Mountain Rangers, leaving the various Vermont settlements in which they lived, starting north, to go to Canada. Their purpose was not only to join the British Army, but to take to them and their allies, the Indians, exact detailed information about the location and defenses of the Vermont settlements, and about the movements, organizations, and resources of the guerrilla fighters. Their success might very well have meant the wiping out of those settlements altogether. Traveling separately, to avoid detection, they were on the last lap of the journey, crossing the no-man's strip of the extreme frontier, where Ann Story lived and kept her eyes open.

They went by night. At that time, the keen Story eyes were underground, asleep. The northbound anti-Americans would have slipped through, if just before dawn one morning, that baby had not taken it into his head to cry. At the sound, coming from the ground under his feet, one Ezekiel Jenny, following the trail north along the river-bank, stopped and stood still in his tracks. He was of that region, he was known to Ann Story, he was well acquainted with her way of life. So this, he thought in exultation, was the key to the secret of the Storys vanishing at night.

He tiptoed to the edge of the water, hid himself in the bushes, looking keenly up and down the river, as the dawn slowly broke. Before long, sure enough, just under where he stood, the tip of a canoe was silently pushed through the bushes. It hung there a moment, probably to make sure no one was passing. Then with one swift paddle-thrust, it was in mid-stream, loaded with women and children, and shot towards the bend of the river, and the landing place, back of the Story cabin.

Now, thought Ezekiel Jenny, putting his musket on the cock, and darting across the neck of land to lie in wait for the unsuspecting party, now is the time to make that pestiferous woman rebel talk.

Crouched in the bushes, beside the landing place, he waited till Ann had stepped out of the canoe and then springing up, he presented the muzzle of his gun at her very breast, and proceeded to terrorize her in betraying her allies.

Let Ann Story talk for herself here. Her own inimitably dry words have come down to us. Beside them, anything I could write would be as boneless as boiled macaroni. "I gave evasive and dissatisfactory replies to his questions. This exasperated Jenny and he threatened to shoot me on the spot; but to all his threats I bid defiance, and told him I had no fears of being shot by so consummate a coward as he, and finally he passed along down the creek."

Ezekiel did not shoot her. He had other things to do that day, and had interrupted his hurried secret journey only on a chance. He sped on his way, not dreaming that back of him in the remote clearing, the motherly woman, encumbered with young children and a new baby, had wit enough to note which way he went, and inside information enough to guess what his purpose was, or had any means of giving notice of his presence in the region.

What she did was to snatch a fly-leaf from her Bible, the only paper she had, write a hasty note on it, and send one of her sons flying to the camp of the nearest Green Mountain Rangers. Part of their advance-scout system was always to keep her informed of the whereabouts of the buckskin-shirted guerrillas who patrolled that section of the Vermont wilderness. The long-legged, sure-footed boy knew the dimly marked forest trail as our children know the way to the nearest movie-theater, knew when he could make a short-cut across its windings, wade a stream, dodge a swamp, climb a hill, and come racing down to the camp of the Vermonters.

It was not long before Daniel Foot, Samuel Bentley (don't you like their names?), and other Americans had snatched their muskets and set off in pursuit. From my little girlhood, I have always hoped that the men let that Story boy who took them the message go along with them. I was sure he would not have felt he needed to get his mother's permission.

Silent as the wild animals of the forests, those American settlers, transformed from family men to fighters, followed the trail of the unsuspecting would-be English soldiers. When night fell, the scattered band of British sympathizers were far north beyond the last cabins. It seemed to them safe to come together to make camp, to lie down to sleep around their fire. Without a sound, the Green Mountain Rangers, closed in closer and closer around them and then,

on a signal, broke upon them with yells and ferocious volleys of musket shots.

But not to kill. These ancestors of ours were men bred in a civilized tradition. They fought for human rights, not for the chance to cut other people's throats. The men they were attacking had intended the betrayal of American families to fire and tomahawks. But their capture had prevented that. There was no need to kill them. Their captors were fathers and husbands as well as guerrillas. The prisoners were not harmed.

We Vermonters are proud—yet we laugh too over the quaintness of that record—of the fact that in all the years of strife on our soil for the right to own as free men the land our great-grandfathers had bought and paid for and cleared and tilled, not one human life was sacrificed. Did you ever happen to hear that the only personal violence done to anyone in a fight during the Green Mountain Boys' defense of Vermont was that one man had his thumb put out of joint?

So those frontiersmen, leaping into the firelight with savage whoops and a rattle of gun-fire, did not massacre the men they took by surprise. Every one of them was a hunter to whom shooting was as natural as breathing. They were part of a rough-and-ready organization loosely held together with practically no military discipline. With them in that hour of red-hot excitement, there was present no curbing "authority" save their own self-respect. But they acted like the self-controlled, reasonable police force, which we hope the armies of the future will be, rather than like slaughtering men at arms, or a lynching rabble, or scalping Indians. Prosaically—we think gloriously—they marched their prisoners across country to Fort Ticonderoga, then in American hands, and as their own report runs, "gave them up to the proper constituted authorities." We, their descendants, respect and admire the end of that fracas as one of the proofs that the natural barbarism lying in every human heart can be kept down to harmlessness by civilized traditions.

Ann Story's monument stands on the spot where her husband built their first log-cabin home. On it are these plain unrheterical words:

ANN STORY  
IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF HER  
SERVICE IN THE STRUGGLE OF THE  
GREEN MOUNTAIN BOYS FOR INDEPENDENCE

You might think that those who designed the monument would have put that well-known saying of hers to the defenders of Vermont



when she was urged to be wholly mother, not also citizen and patriot —“Give me a place among you and see if I am the first to desert my post.”

But that doesn't need to be carved in stone, or cast in bronze. We remember it, all right.

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