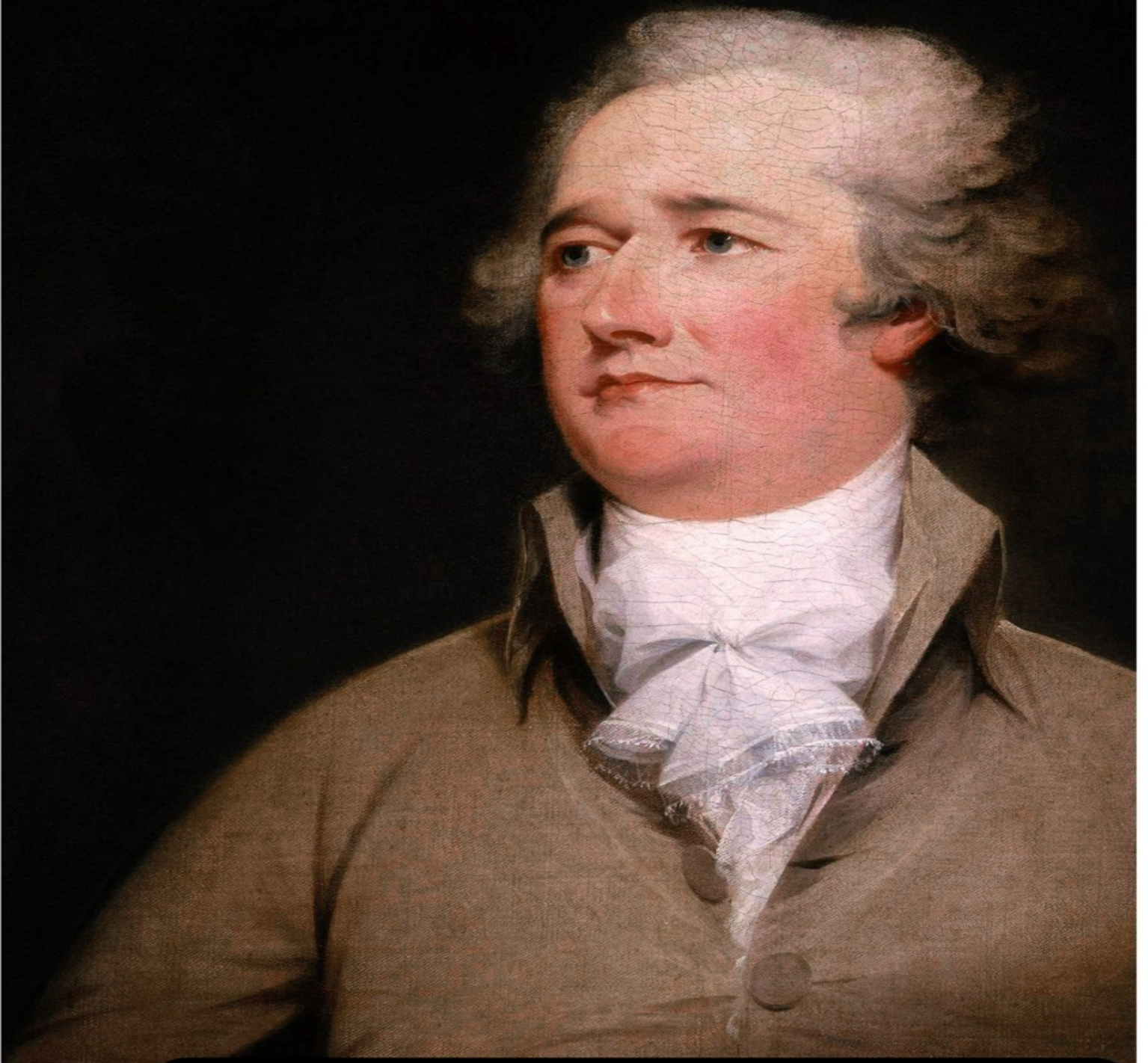


***GERTRUDE  
FRANKLIN HORN  
ATHERTON***



***THE CONQUEROR***

**Gertrude Franklin Horn Atherton**

# **The Conqueror**

**Being the True and Romantic Story of Alexander  
Hamilton**

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# **NEVIS**

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## **EXPLANATION**

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It was my original intention to write a biography of Alexander Hamilton in a more flexible manner than is customary with that method of reintroducing the dead to the living, but without impinging upon the territory of fiction. But after a visit to the British and Danish West Indies

in search of the truth regarding his birth and ancestry, and after a wider acquaintance with the generally romantic character of his life, to say nothing of the personality of this most endearing and extraordinary of all our public men, the instinct of the novelist proved too strong; I no sooner had pen in hand than I found myself working in the familiar medium, although preserving the historical sequence. But, after all, what is a character novel but a dramatized biography? We strive to make our creations as real to the world as they are to us. Why, then, not throw the graces of fiction over the sharp hard facts that historians have laboriously gathered? At all events, this infinitely various story of Hamilton appealed too strongly to my imagination to be frowned aside, so here, for better or worse, is the result. Nevertheless, and although the method may cause the book to read like fiction, I am conscientious in asserting that almost every important incident here related of his American career is founded on documentary or published facts or upon family tradition; the few that are not have their roots among the probabilities, and suggested themselves. As for the West Indian part, although I was obliged to work upon the bare skeleton I unearthed in the old Common Records and Church Registers, still the fact remains that I did find the skeleton, which I have emphasized as far as is artistically possible. No date is given nor deed referred to that cannot be found by other visitors to the Islands. Moreover, I made a careful study of these Islands as they were in the time of Hamilton and his maternal ancestors, that I might be enabled to exercise one of the leading principles of the novelist, which is to create

character not only out of certain well-known facts of heredity, but out of understood conditions. In this case I had, in addition, an extensive knowledge of Hamilton's character to work backward from, as well as his estimate of the friends of his youth and of his mother. Therefore I feel confident that I have held my romancing propensity well within the horizon of the probabilities; at all events, I have depicted nothing which in any way interferes with the veracity of history. However, having unburdened my imagination, I shall, in the course of a year or two, write the biography I first had in mind. No writer, indeed, could assume a more delightful task than to chronicle, in any form, Hamilton's stupendous services to this country and his infinite variety.

## **G.F.A.**

## **NEVIS**

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In the eighteenth century Nevis was known as The Mother of the English Leeward Caribbees. A Captain-General ruled the group in the name of the King, but if he died suddenly, his itinerant duties devolved upon the Governor of Nevis until the crown heard of its loss and made choice of another to fill that high and valued office. She had a Council and a House of Assembly, modelled in miniature upon the

Houses of Peers and Commons; and was further distinguished as possessing the only court in the English Antilles where pirates could be tried. The Council was made up of ten members appointed by the Captain-General, but commanded by "its own particular and private Governor." The freeholders of the Island chose twenty-four of their number to represent them in the House of Assembly; and the few chronicles of that day agree in asserting that Nevis during her hundred proud years of supremacy was governed brilliantly and well. But the careful administration of good laws contributed in part only to the celebrity of an Island which to-day, still British as she is, serves but as a pedestal for the greatest of American statesmen. In these old days she was a queen as well as a mother. Her planters were men of immense wealth and lived the life of grandees. Their cane-fields covered the mountain on all its sides and subsidiary peaks, rising to the very fringe of the cold forest on the cone of a volcano long since extinct. The "Great Houses," built invariably upon an eminence that commanded a view of the neighbouring islands.—St. Christopher, Antigua, Montserrat,—were built of blocks of stone so square and solid and with a masonry so perfect that one views their ruins in amazement to-day. They withstood hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and tidal waves. They were impregnable fortresses against rioting negroes and spasmodically aggressive Frenchmen. They even survived the abolition of slavery, and the old gay life went on for many years. English people, bored or in search of health, came for the brilliant winter, delighted with the hospitality of the planters, and to renew their vitality in the

famous climate and sulphur baths, which, of all her possessions, Time has spared to Nevis. And then, having weathered all the ills to which even a West Indian Island can be subject, she succumbed—to the price of sugar. Her great families drifted away one by one. Her estates were given over to the agent for a time, finally to the mongoose. The magnificent stone mansions, left without even a caretaker, yielded helplessly to the diseases of age, and the first hurricane entering unbarred windows carried their roofs to the sea. In Charles Town, the capital since the submergence of James Town in 1680, are the remains of large town houses and fine old stone walls, which one can hardly see from the roadstead, so thick are the royal palms and the cocoanut trees among the ruins, wriggling their slender bodies through every crevice and flaunting their glittering luxuriance above every broken wall.

But in the days when the maternal grandparents of Alexander Hamilton looked down a trifle upon those who dwelt on other isles, Nevis recked of future insignificance as little as a beauty dreams of age. In the previous century England, after the mortification of the Royalists by Cromwell, had sent to Nevis Hamiltons, Herberts, Russells, and many another refugee from her historic houses. With what money they took with them they founded the great estates of the eighteenth century, and their sons sent their own children to Europe to become accomplished men and women. Government House was a miniature court, as gay and splendid as its offices were busy with the commerce of the world. The Governor and his lady drove about the Island in a carriage of state, with outriders and postilions in livery.



When the Captain-General came he outshone his proud second by the gorgeousness of his uniform only, and both dignitaries were little more imposing than the planters themselves. It is true that the men, despite their fine clothes and powdered perukes, preferred a horse's back to the motion of a lumbering coach, but during the winter season their wives and daughters, in the shining stuffs, the pointed bodices, the elaborate head-dress of Europe, visited Government House and their neighbours with all the formality of London or Bath. After the first of March the planters wore white linen; the turbaned black women were busy among the stones of the rivers with voluminous wardrobes of cambric and lawn.

Several estates belonged to certain offshoots of the ducal house of Hamilton, and in the second decade of the eighteenth century Walter Hamilton was Captain-General of the English Leeward Caribbees and "Ordinary of the Same." After him came Archibald Hamilton, who was, perhaps, of all the Hamiltons the most royal in his hospitality. Moreover, he was a person of energy and ambition, for it is on record that he paid a visit to Boston, fleeing from the great drought which visited Nevis in 1737. Then there were William Leslie Hamilton, who practised at the bar in London for several years, but returned to hold official position on Nevis, and his brother Andrew, both sons of Dr. William Hamilton, who spent the greater part of his life on St. Christopher. There were also Hugh Hamilton, Charles, Gustavus, and William Vaughn Hamilton, all planters, most of them Members of Council or of the Assembly.

And even in those remote and isolated days, Hamiltons and Washingtons were associated. The most popular name in our annals appears frequently in the Common Records of Nevis, and there is no doubt that when our first President's American ancestor fled before Cromwell to Virginia, a brother took ship for the English Caribbees.

From a distance Nevis looks like a solitary peak in mid-ocean, her base sweeping out on either side. But behind the great central cone—rising three thousand two hundred feet—are five or six lesser peaks, between which are dense tropical gorges and mountain streams. In the old days, where the slopes were not vivid with the light green of the cane-field, there were the cool and sombre groves of the cocoanut tree, mango, orange, and guava.

Even when Nevis is wholly visible there is always a white cloud above her head. As night falls it becomes evident that this soft aggravation of her beauty is but a night robe hung on high. It is at about seven in the evening that she begins to draw down her garment of mist, but she is long in perfecting that nocturnal toilette. Lonely and neglected, she still is a beauty, exacting and fastidious. The cloud is tortured into many shapes before it meets her taste. She snatches it off, redispenses it, dons and takes it off again, wraps it about her with yet more enchanting folds, until by nine o'clock it sweeps the sea; and Nevis, the proudest island of the Caribbees, has secluded herself from those cynical old neighbours who no longer bend the knee.

# **BOOK I**

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## **RACHAEL LEVINE**

### **I**

Nevis gave of her bounty to none more generously than to John and Mary Fawcett. In 1685 the revocation of the Edict of Nantes had sent the Huguenots swarming to America and the West Indies. Fawcette was but a boy when the Tropics gave him shelter, and learning was hard to get; except in the matter of carving Caribs. But he acquired the science of medicine somehow, and settled on Nevis, remodelled his name, and became a British subject. Brilliant and able, he was not long accumulating a fortune; there were swamps near Charles Town that bred fever, and the planters lived as high and suffered as acutely as the English squires of the same period. His wife brought him money, and in 1714 they received a joint legacy from Captain Frank Keynall; whether a relative of hers or a patient of his, the Records do not tell.

Mary Fawcett was some twenty years younger than her husband, a high-spirited creature, with much intelligence, and a will which in later years John Fawcett found himself unable to control. But before that period, when to the

disparity in time were added the irritabilities of age in the man and the imperiousness of maturity in the woman, they were happy in their children, in their rising fortunes, and, for a while, in one another.

For twenty-eight years they lived the life of the Island. They built a Great House on their estate at Gingerland, a slope of the Island which faces Antigua, and they had their mansion in town for use when the Captain-General was abiding on Nevis. While Mary Fawcett was bringing up and marrying her children, managing the household affairs of a large estate, and receiving and returning the visits of the other grandees of the Island, to say nothing of playing her important part in all social functions, life went well enough. Her children, far away from the swamps of Charles Town, throve in the trade winds which temper the sun of Nevis and make it an isle of delight. When they were not studying with their governesses, there were groves and gorges to play in, ponies to ride, and monkeys and land crabs to hunt. Later came the gay life of the Capital, the routs at Government House, frequent even when the Chief was elsewhere, the balls at neighbouring estates, the picnics in the cool high forests, or where more tropical trees and tree ferns grew thick, the constant meeting with distinguished strangers, and the visits to other islands.

The young Fawcetts married early. One went with her husband, Peter Lytton, to the island of St. Croix. The Danish Government, upon obtaining possession of this fertile island, in 1733, immediately issued an invitation to the planters of the Leeward Caribbees to immigrate, tempting many who were dissatisfied with the British Government or wished for

larger estates than they could acquire on their own populous islands. Members of the Lytton, Mitchell, and Stevens families of St. Christopher were among the first to respond to the liberal offer of the Danish Government. The two sons of James Lytton, Peter and James, grew up on St. Croix, Danish by law, British in habit and speech; and both married women of Nevis. Peter was the first to wed, and his marriage to young Mary Fawcett was the last to be celebrated in the Great House at Gingerland.

When Peter Lytton and his wife sailed away, as other sons and other daughters had sailed before, to return to Nevis rarely,—for those were the days of travel unveneered,—John and Mary Fawcett were left alone: their youngest daughter, she who afterward became the wife of Thomas Mitchell of St. Croix, was at school in England.

By this time Dr. Fawcett had given up his practice and was living on his income. He took great interest in his cane-fields and mills, and in the culture of limes and pine-apples; but in spite of his outdoor life his temper soured and he became irritable and exacting. Gout settled in him as a permanent reminder of the high fortunes of his middle years, and when the Gallic excitability of his temperament, aggravated by a half-century of hot weather, was stung to fiercer expression by the twinges of his disease, he was an abominable companion for a woman twenty years closer to youth.

In the solitudes of the large house Mary Fawcett found life unendurable. Still handsome, naturally gay of temper, and a brilliant figure in society, she frequently deserted her elderly husband for weeks at a time. The day came when he

peremptorily forbade her to leave the place without him. For a time she submitted, for although a woman of uncommon independence of spirit, it was not until 1740 that she broke free of traditions and astonished the island of Nevis. She shut herself up with her books and needlework, attended to her house and domestic negroes with the precision of long habit, saw her friends when she could, and endured the exactions of her husband with only an occasional but mighty outburst.

It was in these unhappy conditions that Rachael Fawcett was born.

## II

The last affliction the Fawcetts expected was another child. This little girl came an unwelcome guest to a mother who hated the father, and to Dr. Fawcett, not only because he had outgrown all liking for crying babies, but because, as in his excited disturbance he admitted to his wife, his fortune was reduced by speculations in London, and he had no desire to turn to in his old age and support another child. Then Mary Fawcett made up her definite mind: she announced her intention to leave her husband while it was yet possible to save her property for herself and the child to whom she soon became passionately attached. Dr. Fawcett laughed and shut himself up in a wing where the sounds of baby distress could not reach him; and it is doubtful if his glance ever lingered on the lovely face of his youngest born. Thus came into the world under the most painful conditions one of the unhappiest women that has lived. It was her

splendid destiny to become the mother of the greatest American of his centuries, but this she died too soon to know, and she accomplished her part with an immediate bitterness of lot which was remorselessly ordained, no doubt, by the great Law of Compensation.

There were no divorce laws on the Islands in the eighteenth century, not even an act for separate maintenance; but Mary Fawcett was a woman of resource. It took her four years to accomplish her purpose, but she got rid of Dr. Fawcett by making him more than anxious to be rid of her. The Captain-General, William Matthew, was her staunch friend and admirer, and espoused her cause to the extent of issuing a writ of supplicavit for a separate maintenance. Dr. Fawcett gradually yielded to pressure, separated her property from his, that it might pass under her personal and absolute control, and settled on her the sum of fifty-three pounds, four shillings annually, as a full satisfaction for all her dower or third part of his estate.

Mistress Fawcett was no longer a woman of consequence, for even her personal income was curtailed by the great drought of 1737, and Nevis, complaisant to the gallantry of the age, was scandalized at the novelty of a public separation. But she was free, and she was the woman to feel that freedom to her finger tips; she could live a life with no will in it but her own, and she could bring up her little girl in an atmosphere of peace and affection. She moved to an estate she owned on St. Christopher and never saw John Fawcett again. He died a few years later, leaving his diminished property to his children. Rachael's share was the house in Charles Town.

The spot on which Rachael spent her childhood and brief youth was one of the most picturesque on the mountain range of St. Christopher. Facing the sea, the house stood on a lofty eminence, in the very shadow of Mount Misery. Immediately behind the house were the high peaks of the range, hardly less in pride than the cone of the great volcano. The house was built on a ledge, but one could step from the terrace above into an abrupt ravine, wrenched into its tortuous shape by earthquake and flood, but dark for centuries with the immovable shades of a virgin tropical forest. The Great House, with its spacious open galleries and verandahs, was surrounded with stone terraces, overflowing with the intense red and orange of the hybiscus and croton bush, the golden browns and softer yellows of less ambitious plants, the sensuous tints of the orchid, the high and glittering beauties of the palm and cocoanut. The slopes to the coast were covered with cane-fields, their bright young greens sharp against the dark blue of the sea. The ledge on which the house was built terminated suddenly in front, but extended on the left along a line of cliff above a chasm, until it sloped to the road. On this flat eminence was an avenue of royal palms, which, with the dense wood on the hill above it, was to mariners one of the most familiar landmarks of the Island of "St. Kitts." From her verandah Mary Fawcett could see, far down to the right, a large village of negro huts, only the thatched African roofs visible among the long leaves of the cocoanut palms with which the blacks invariably surround their dwellings. Beyond was Brimstone Hill with its impregnable fortress. And on the left, far out at sea, her purple heights and palm-fringed shores deepening



the exquisite blue of the Caribbean by day, a white ever changing spirit in the twilight, and no more vestige of her under the stars than had she sunk whence she came—Nevis. Mary Fawcett never set foot on her again, but she learned to sit and study her with a whimsical affection which was one of the few liberties she allowed her imagination. But if the unhappiest years of her life had been spent there, so had her fairest. She had loved her brilliant husband in her youth, and all the social triumphs of a handsome and fortunate young woman had been hers. In the deep calm which now intervened between the two mental hurricanes of her life, she sometimes wondered if she had exaggerated her past afflictions; and before she died she knew how insignificant the tragedy of her own life had been.

Although Rachael was born when her parents were past their prime, the vitality that was in her was concentrated and strong. It was not enough to give her a long life, but while it lasted she was a magnificent creature, and the end was abrupt; there was no slow decay. During her childhood she lived in the open air, for except in the cold nights of a brief winter only the jalousies were closed; and on that high shelf even the late summer and early autumn were not insufferable. Exhausted as the trade winds become, they give what little strength is in them to the heights of their favourite isles, and during the rest of the year they are so constant, even when storms rage in the North Atlantic, that Nevis and St. Christopher never feel the full force of the sun, and the winter nights are cold.

Rachael was four years old when her parents separated, and grew to womanhood remembering nothing of her father

and seeing little of her kin, scattered far and wide. Her one unmarried sister, upon her return from England, went almost immediately to visit Mrs. Lytton, and married Thomas Mitchell, one of the wealthiest planters of St. Croix. Mary Fawcett's children had not approved her course, for they remembered their father as the most indulgent and charming of men, whose frequent tempers were quickly forgotten; and year by year she became more wholly devoted to the girl who clung to her with a passionate and uncritical affection.

Clever and accomplished herself, and quick with ambition for her best beloved child, she employed the most cultivated tutors on the Island to instruct her in English, Latin, and French. Before Rachael was ten years old, Mistress Fawcett had the satisfaction to discover that the little girl possessed a distinguished mind, and took to hard study, and to *les graces*, as naturally as she rode a pony over the hills or shot the reef in her boat.

For several years the women of St. Christopher held aloof, but many of the planters who had been guests at the Great House in Gingerland called on Mistress Fawcett at once, and proffered advice and service. Of these William Hamilton and Archibald Hamn became her staunch and intimate friends. Mr. Hamn's estate adjoined hers, and his overlooker relieved her of much care. Dr. James Hamilton, who had died in the year preceding her formal separation, had been a close friend of her husband and herself, and his brother hastened with assurance of his wish to serve her. He was one of the eminent men of the Island, a planter and a member of Council; also, a "doctor of physic." He carried

Rachael safely through her childhood complaints and the darkest of her days; and if his was the hand which opened the gates between herself and history, who shall say in the light of the glorified result that its master should not sleep in peace?

In time his wife called, and his children and stepchildren brought a new experience into the life of Rachael. She had been permitted to gambol occasionally with the "pic'nees" of her mother's maids, but since her fourth year had not spoken to a white child until little Catherine Hamilton came to visit her one morning and brought Christiana Huggins of Nevis. Mistress Huggins had known Mary Fawcett too well to call with Mistress Hamilton, but sent Christiana as a peace offering. Mary's first disposition was to pack the child off while Mistress Hamilton was offering her embarrassed explanations; but Rachael clung to her new treasure with such shrieks of protest that her mother, disconcerted by this vigour of opposition to her will, permitted the intruder to remain.

The wives of other planters followed Mistress Hamilton, for in that soft voluptuous climate, where the rush and fret of great cities are but a witch's tale, disapproval dies early. They would have called long since had they not been a trifle in awe of Nevis, more, perhaps, of Mistress Fawcett's sharp tongue, then indolent. But when Mistress Hamilton suddenly reminded them that they were Christians, and that Dr. Fawcett was dead, they put on their London gowns, ordered out their coaches, and called. Mary Fawcett received them with a courteous indifference. Her resentment had died long since, and they seemed to her, with their coaches and

brocades and powdered locks, but the ghosts of the Nevis of her youth. Her child, her estate, and her few tried friends absorbed her. For the sake of her daughter's future, she ordered out her ancient coach and made the round of the Island once a year. The ladies of St. Kitts were as moderately punctilious.

And so the life of Rachael Fawcett for sixteen years passed uneventfully enough. Her spirits were often very high, for she inherited the Gallic buoyancy of her father as well as the brilliant qualities of his mind. In the serious depths of her nature were strong passions and a tendency to melancholy, the result no doubt of the unhappy conditions of her birth. But her mother managed so to occupy her eager ambitious mind with hard study that the girl had little acquaintance with herself. Her English studies were almost as varied as a boy's, and in addition to her accomplishments in the ancient and modern languages, she painted, and sang, played the harp and guitar. Mary Fawcett, for reasons of her own, never let her forget that she was the most educated girl on the Islands.

"I never was one to lie on a sofa all day and fan myself, while my children sat on the floor with their blacks, and munched sugar-cane, or bread and sling," she would remark superfluously. "All my daughters are a credit to their husbands; but I mean that you shall be the most brilliant woman in the Antilles."

The immediate consequences of Rachael's superior education were two: her girl friends ceased to interest her, and ambitions developed in her strong imaginative brain. In those days women so rarely distinguished themselves

individually that it is doubtful if Rachael had ever heard of the phenomenon, and the sum of her worldly aspirations was a wealthy and intellectual husband who would take her to live and to shine at foreign courts. Her nature was too sweet and her mind too serious for egoism or the pettier vanities, but she hardly could help being conscious of the energy of her brain; and if she had passed through childhood in ignorance of her beauty, she barely had entered her teens when her happy indifference was dispelled; for the young planters besieged her gates.

Girls mature very early in the tropics, and at fourteen Rachael Fawcett was the unresponsive toast from Basseterre to Sandy Point. Her height was considerable, and she had the round supple figure of a girl who has lived the out-door life in moderation; full of strength and grace, and no exaggeration of muscle. She had a fine mane of reddish fair hair, a pair of sparkling eager gray eyes which could go black with passion or even excited interest, a long nose so sensitively cut that she could express any mood she chose with her nostrils, which expanded quite alarmingly when she flew into a temper, and a full well-cut mouth. Her skin had the whiteness and transparency peculiar to the women of St. Kitts and Nevis; her head and brow were nobly modelled, and the former she carried high to the day of her death. It was set so far back on her shoulders and on a line so straight that it would look haughty in her coffin. What wonder that the young planters besieged her gates, that her aspirations soared high, that Mary Fawcett dreamed of a great destiny for this worshipped child of her old age? As for the young planters, they never got beyond the gates, for a

dragon stood there. Mistress Fawcett had no mind to run the risk of early entanglements. When Rachael was old enough she would be provided with a distinguished husband from afar, selected by the experienced judgement of a woman of the world.

But Mary Fawcett, still hot-headed and impulsive in her second half-century, was more prone to err in crises than her daughter. In spite of the deeper passions of her nature, Rachael, except when under the lash of strong excitement, had a certain clearness of insight and deliberation of judgement which her mother lacked to her last day.

### III

Rachael had just eaten the last of her sixteenth birthday sweets when, at a ball at Government House, she met John Michael Levine. It was her *début*; she was the fairest creature in the room, and, in the idiom of Dr. Hamilton, the men besieged her as were she Brimstone Hill in possession of the French. The Governor and the Captain General had asked her to dance, and even the women smiled indulgently, disarmed by so much innocent loveliness.

Levine, albeit a Dane, and as colourless as most of his countrymen, was her determined suitor before the night was half over. It may be that he was merely dazzled by the regal position to which the young men had elevated her, and that his cold blood quickened at the thought of possessing what all men desired, but he was as immediate and persistent in his suit as any excitable creole in the room. But Rachael gave him scant attention that night. She

may have been intellectual, but she was also a girl, and it was her first ball. She was dazzled and happy, delighted with her conquests, oblivious to the depths of her nature.

The next day Levine, strong in the possession of a letter from Mr. Peter Lytton,—for a fortnight forgotten,—presented himself at Mistress Fawcett's door, and was admitted. The first call was brief and perfunctory, but he came the next day and the next. Rachael, surprised, but little interested, and longing for her next ball, strummed the harp at her mother's command and received his compliments with indifference. A week after his first call Mary Fawcett drove into town and spent an hour with the Governor. He told her that Levine had brought him a personal letter from the Governor of St. Croix, and that he was wealthy and well born. He was also, in his Excellency's opinion, a distinguished match even for the most beautiful and accomplished girl on the Island. Peter Lytton had mentioned in his letter that Levine purposed buying an estate on St. Croix and settling down to the life of a planter. On the following day Levine told her that already he was half a West Indian, so fascinated was he with the life and the climate, but that if she would favour his suit he would take Rachael to Copenhagen as often as she wished for the life of the world.

Mary Fawcett made up her mind that he should marry Rachael, and it seemed to her that no mother had ever come to a wiser decision. Her health was failing, and it was her passionate wish not only to leave her child encircled by the protection of a devoted husband, but to realize the high

ambitions she had cherished from the hour she foresaw that Rachael was to be an exceptional woman.

Levine had not seen Rachael on the morning when he asked for her hand, and he called two days later to press his suit and receive his answer. Mistress Fawcett told him that she had made up her own mind and would perform that office for Rachael at once, but thought it best that he should absent himself until the work was complete. Levine, promised an answer on the morrow, took himself off, and Mary Fawcett sent for her daughter.

Rachael entered the library with a piece of needlework in her hand. Her mind was not on her books these days, for she had gone to another ball; but her hands had been too well brought up to idle, however her brain might dream. Mary Fawcett by this time wore a large cap with a frill, and her face, always determined and self-willed, was growing austere with years and much pain: she suffered frightfully at times with rheumatism, and her apprehension of the moment when it should attack her heart reconciled her to the prospect of brief partings from her daughter. Her eyes still burned with the fires of an indiminishable courage however; she read the yellow pages of her many books as rapidly as in her youth, and if there was a speck of dust on her mahogany floors, polished with orange juice, she saw it. Her negroes adored her but trembled when she raised her voice, and Rachael never had disobeyed her. She expected some dissatisfaction, possibly a temper, but no opposition.

Rachael smiled confidently and sat down. She wore one of the thin white linens, which, like the other women of the Islands, she put aside for heavier stuffs on state occasions



only, and her hair had tumbled from its high comb and fallen upon her shoulders. Mary Fawcett sighed as she looked at her. She was too young to marry, and had it not been for the haunting terror of leaving her alone in the world, the Dane, well circumstanced as he was, would have been repulsed with contumely.

"Rachael," said her mother, gently, "put down your tapestry. I have something to say to you, something of great import."

Rachael dropped her work and met her mother's eyes. They were hard with will and definite purpose. In an instant she divined what was coming, and stood up. Her face could not turn any whiter, but her eyes were black at once, and her nostrils spread.

"It cannot be possible that you wish me to marry that man—Levine," she stammered. "I do not know how I can think of such a thing—but I do—it seems to me I see it in your eyes."

"Yes," said her mother, with some uneasiness. "I do; and my reasons are good—"

"I won't listen to them!" shrieked Rachael. "I won't marry him! His whiteness makes me sick! I know he is not a good man! I feel it! I never could be happy with him! I never could love him!"

Mary Fawcett looked at her aghast, and, for a moment, without answering; she saw her own will asserting itself, heard it on those piercing notes, and she knew that it sprang from stronger and more tragic foundations than had ever existed in her own nature; but believing herself to be right, she determined to prevail.

"What do you know about men, my darling?" she said soothingly. "You have been dreaming romantic dreams, and young Levine does not resemble the hero. That is all. Women readjust themselves marvellously quick. When you are married to him, and he is your tender and devoted husband, you will forget your prince—who, no doubt, is dark and quite splendid. But we never meet our princes, my dear, and romantic love is only one of the things we live for—and for that we live but a little while. Levine is all that I could wish for you. He is wealthy, aristocratic, and chivalrously devoted."

Her long speech had given her daughter time to cool, but Rachael remained standing, and stared defiantly into the eyes which had relaxed somewhat with anxious surprise.

"I *feel* that he is not a good man," she repeated sullenly, "and I hate him. I should die if he touched me. I have not danced with him. His hands are so white and soft, and his eyes never change, and his mouth reminds me of a shark's."

"Levine is a remarkably handsome man," exclaimed Mistress Fawcett, indignantly. "You have trained your imagination to some purpose, it seems. Forget your poets when he comes to-morrow, and look at him impartially. And cannot he give you all that you so much desire, my ambitious little daughter? Do you no longer want to go to Europe? to court? to be *grande dame* and converse with princes?"

"Oh, yes," said Rachael. "I want that as much as ever; but I want to love the man. I want to be happy."

"Well, *do* love him," exclaimed her mother with energy. "Your father was twenty years older than myself, and a

Frenchman, but I made up my mind to love him, and I did—for a good many years."

"You had to leave him in the end. Do you wish me to do the same?"

"You will do nothing of the kind. There never was but one John Fawcett."

"I don't love this Levine, and I never shall love him. I don't believe at all that that kind of feeling can be created by the brain, that it responds to nothing but the will. I shall not love that way. I may be ignorant, but I know that."

"You have read too much Shakespeare! Doubtless you imagine yourself one of his heroines—Juliet? Rosalind?"

"I have never imagined myself anybody but Rachael Fawcett. I *cannot* imagine myself Rachael Levine. But I know something of myself—I have read and thought enough for that. I could love someone—but not this bleached repulsive Dane. Why will you not let me wait? It is my right. No, you need not curl your lip—I am *not* a little girl. I may be sixteen. I may be without experience in the world, but you have been almost my only companion, and until just now I have talked with middle-aged men only, and much with them. I had no real childhood. You have educated my brain far beyond my years. To-day I feel twenty, and it seems to me that I see far down into myself—much deeper than you do. I tell you that if I marry this man, I shall be the most hopeless wretch on earth."

Mary Fawcett was puzzled and distressed, but she did not waver for a moment. The cleverest of girls could not know what was best for herself, and the mother who permitted

her daughter to take her life into her own hands was a poor creature indeed.

"Listen, my dear child," she said tenderly, "you have always trusted in me, believed me. I *know* that this is a wise and promising marriage for you. And—" she hesitated, but it was time to play her trump. "You know that my health is not good, but you do not know how bad it is. Dr. Hamilton says that the rheumatism may fly to my heart at any moment, and I *must* see you married—"

She had ejaculated the last words; Rachael had shrieked, and flung herself upon her, her excitement at this sudden and cruel revelation bursting out in screams and sobs and a torrent of tears. Her mother had seen her excited and in brief ungovernable tempers, but she never had suspected that she was capable of such passion as this; and, much disturbed, she led her off to bed, and sent for her advisers, Archibald Hamn and Dr. Hamilton.

## IV

Mr. Hamn responded at once to the widow's call, his adjacence giving him the advantage of Dr. Hamilton, of whom he was a trifle jealous. He was an old bachelor and had proposed to Mistress Fawcett—a captivating woman till her last hour—twice a year since her husband's death. But matrimony had been a bitter medicine for Mary after her imagination had ceased to sweeten it, and her invariable answer to her several suitors was the disquieting assertion that if ever she was so rash as to take another husband, she certainly should kill him. Archibald was not the man to

conquer her prejudices, although she loved the sterling in him and attached him to her by every hook of friendship. He was a dark nervous little man, spare as most West Indians, used a deal of snuff, and had a habit of pushing back his wig with a jerking forearm when in heated controversy with Dr. Hamilton, or expounding matrimony to the widow.

Dr. Hamilton, for whose arrival Mr. Hamn was kept waiting,—Mistress Fawcett tarried until her daughter fell asleep,—was a large square man, albeit lean, and only less nervous than the widow's suitor. His white locks were worn in a queue, a few escaping to soften his big powerful face. Both men wore white linen, but Dr. Hamilton was rarely seen without his riding-boots, his advent, except in Mistress Fawcett's house, heralded by the clanking of spurs. Mary would have none of his spurs on her mahogany floors, and the doctor never yet had been able to dodge the darkey who stood guard at her doorstep.

The two men exchanged mild surmises as to the cause of the summons; but as similar summons occurred when newly wedded blacks were pounding each other's heads, provoked thereto by the galling chain of decency, or an obeah doctor had tied a sinister warning to Mistress Fawcett's knocker, neither of the gentlemen anticipated serious work. When Mary Fawcett entered the long room, however, both forgot the dignity of their years and position, and ran forward.

Dr. Hamilton lifted her as if she had been a palm leaf, and laid her on the sofa. He despatched Mr. Hamn for a glass of Spanish port, and forbade her to speak until he gave permission.

But Mary Fawcett made brief concessions to the weakness of the flesh.

She drank the wine, then sat up and told her story.

"Oh, Mary," said Dr. Hamilton, sadly, "why do you ask our advice? Your ear may listen, but never your mind. If it were a matter of business, we might even be allowed to act for you; but in a domestic—"

"What?" cried Mistress Fawcett; "have I not asked your advice a thousand times about Rachael, and have I not always taken it?"

"I recall many of the conversations, but I doubt if you could recall the advice. However, if you want it this time, I will give it to you. Don't force the girl to marry against her will—assuredly not if the man is repulsive to her. For all your brains you are a baby about men and women. Rachael knows more by instinct. She is an extraordinary girl, and should be allowed time to make her own choice. If you are afraid of death, leave her to me. I will legally adopt her now, if you choose—"

"Yes, and should you die suddenly, your wife would think Rachael one too many, what with your brood and the Edwardses to boot." Mistress Fawcett was nettled by his jibe at the limit of her wisdom. "I shall leave her with a husband. To that I have made up my mind. What have you to say, Archibald?"

This was an advantage which Mr. Hamn never failed to seize; he always agreed with the widow; Dr. Hamilton never did. Moreover, he was sincerely convinced that—save, perhaps, in matters of money—Mary Fawcett could not err.