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Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
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Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
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Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
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Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
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Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
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Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
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A Little Maid of Old Maine

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A little Maid
of old
Maine



Alice Turner Curtis



SHE ADDED WOOD TO THE FIRE

Introduction

“A Little Maid of Old Maine” is a true story of the brave effort of two girls to bring help to a little settlement on the Maine coast at the time of the War of the Revolution. Parson Lyon, the father of Melvina, was a friend and correspondent of Washington, and the capture of the English gunboat by the Machias men is often referred to in history as “The Lexington of the Seas,” being the first naval battle after the Lexington encounter.

The story is based on facts, and its readers cannot fail to be interested and touched by the courage and patriotism of Rebecca and Anna Weston as they journeyed through the forest after the powder that was to make possible the conquest of America’s foe.

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SHE ADDED WOOD TO THE FIRE

“WE’LL WADE OUT TO FLAT ROCK”

“BUT WHICH ONE IS TO BE MINE?”

HOW LONG THE AFTERNOON SEEMED!

A MAN CAME AROUND THE CORNER OF THE
HOUSE

A Little Maid of Old Maine

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CHAPTER I

A LIBERTY POLE

Anna and Rebecca Weston, carrying a big basket between them, ran along the path that led from their home to the Machias River. It was a pleasant May morning in 1775, and the air was filled with the fragrance of the freshly cut pine logs that had been poled down the river in big rafts to be cut into planks and boards at the big sawmills. The river, unusually full with the spring rains, dashed against its banks as if inviting the little girls to play a game with it. Usually Anna and Rebecca were quite ready to linger at the small coves which crept in so near to the footpath, and sail boats made of pieces of birch-bark, with alder twigs for masts and broad oak leaves for sails. They named these boats *Polly* and *Unity*, after the two fine sloops which carried lumber from Machias to Boston and returned 10 with cargoes of provisions for the little settlement.

But this morning the girls hurried along without a thought for such pleasant games. They were both anxious to get to the lumber yard as soon as possible, not only to fill their basket with chips, as their mother had bidden them, but to hear if there were not some news of the *Polly*, the return of which was anxiously awaited; for provisions were getting scarce in this remote village, and not until the *Polly* should come sailing into harbor could there be any sugar cakes, or even bread made of wheat flour.

As they hurried along they heard the cheerful whistle of Mr. Worden Foster, the blacksmith, who was just then taking a moment of well-earned leisure in the door of his shop, and stood looking out across the quiet waters of the river and harbor. As the girls came near he nodded pleasantly, but did not stop whistling. People in Machias declared that the blacksmith woke up in the morning whistling, and never stopped except to eat. And, indeed, his little daughter Luretta said that when her father wanted a second helping of anything at the table he would whistle and point toward it with his knife; so it 11 might be said that Mr. Foster whistled even at his meals.

"There's Father! There's Father!" Anna called out as they passed a big pile of pine logs and came to where stacks of smooth boards just from the sawmill shut the river from sight.

"Well, Danna, do you and Rebby want your basket filled with golden oranges from sunny Italy and dates from Egypt? Or shall it be with Brazilian nuts and ripe pineapples from South America?"

"Oh, Father! Say some more!" exclaimed Anna, laughing with delight; for she never tired of hearing her father tell of the wonderful fruits of far-off lands that he had seen in his sailor days, before he came to live in the little settlement of Machias, in the Province of Maine, and manage the big sawmill.

"Father, tell us, is the *Polly* coming up the bay?" Rebecca asked eagerly. She had a particular reason for wanting the sloop to reach harbor as soon as possible, for her birthday was close at hand, and her father had told her that the *Polly* was bringing her a fine gift; but what it was Rebecca could not imagine. She had guessed everything from a gold ring to a prayer-book; but at every guess her father had only smilingly shook his head.

"No sign of the *Polly* yet, Rebby," Mr. Weston replied.

Rebecca sighed as her father called her "Rebby," and a little frown showed itself on her forehead. She was nearly fourteen, and she had decided that neither "Rebecca" nor "Rebby" were names that suited her. Her middle name was "Flora," and only that morning Anna had promised not to call her by any other name save Flora in future.

Mr. Weston smiled down at Rebecca's serious face.

"So 'tis not spices from far Arabia, or strings of pink coral, this morning," he continued, taking the basket, "but pine chips. Well, come over here and we will soon fill the basket," and he led the way to where two men were at work with sharp adzes smoothing down a big stick of timber.

In a few minutes the basket was filled, and the little girls were on their way home.

"Would it not be a fine thing, Rebby, if we could really fill our basket with pineapples and sweet-smelling spices?" said Anna, her

brown eyes looking off into space, as if she fancied she could see the wonderful things of which her father spoke; "and do you not wish that we were both boys, and could go sailing off to see far lands?"

"Anna! Only this morning you promised to call me 'Flora,' and now it is 'Rebby,' 'Rebby.' And as for 'far lands' — of course I don't want to see them. Have you not heard Father say that there were no more beautiful places in all the world than the shores of this Province?" responded Rebecca reprovingly. She sometimes thought that it would have been far better if Anna had really been a boy instead of a girl; for the younger girl delighted to be called "Dan," and had persuaded her mother to keep her brown curls cut short "like a boy's"; beside this, Anna cared little for dolls, and was completely happy when her father would take her with him for a day's deep-sea fishing, an excursion which Rebecca could never be persuaded to attempt. Anna was also often her father's companion on long tramps in the woods, where he went to mark trees to be cut for timber. She wore moccasins on these trips, made by the friendly Indians who often visited the little settlement, and her mother had made her a short skirt of tanned deerskin, like such as little Indian girls sometimes wear, and with her blue blouse of homespun flannel, and round cap with a partridge wing on one side, Anna looked like a real little daughter of the woods as she trotted sturdily along beside her tall father.

As the sisters passed the blacksmith shop they could hear the ringing stroke on the anvil, for Mr. Foster had returned to his work of hammering out forks for pitching hay and grain; these same forks which were fated to be used before many months passed as weapons against the enemies of American liberty.

"To-morrow I am to go with Father to the woods," announced Anna as they came in sight of the comfortable log cabin which stood high above the river, and where they could see their mother standing in the doorway looking for their return. The girls waved and called to their mother as they hurried up the path.

"We have fine chips, Mother," called Rebecca, while Anna in a sing-song tone called out: "Pineapples and sweet-smelling spices! Strings of pink coral and shells from far lands."

Rebecca sighed to herself as she heard Anna's laughing recital of their father's words. She resolved to ask her mother to forbid Anna talking in future in such a silly way.

"You are good children to go and return so promptly," said Mrs. Weston, "but you are none too soon, for 'twill take a good blow with the bellows to liven up the coals, and I have a fine venison steak to broil for dinner," and as she spoke Mrs. Weston took the basket and hurried into the house, followed by the girls.

"Mother, what is a 'liberty pole'?" questioned Anna, kneeling on the hearth to help her mother start the fire with the pine chips.

"What dost thou mean, child? Surely the men are not talking of such matters as liberty poles?" responded her mother anxiously.

Anna nodded her head. "Yes, Mother. There is to be a 'liberty pole' set up so it can be well seen from the harbor, for so I heard Mr. O'Brien say; and Father is to go to the woods to-morrow to find it. It is to be the straightest and handsomest sapling pine to be found in a day's journey; that much I know," declared Anna eagerly; "but tell me why is it to be called a 'liberty pole'? And why is it to be set up so it can be well seen from the harbor?"

"Thou knowest, Anna, that King George of 16 England is no longer the true friend of American liberty," said Mrs. Weston, "and the liberty pole is set up to show all Tories on land or sea that we mean to defend our homes. And if the men are talking of putting up the tree of liberty in Machias I fear that trouble is near at hand. But be that as it may, our talking of such matters will not make ready thy father's dinner. Blaze up the fire with these chips, Anna; and thou, Rebbie, spread the table."

Both the girls hastened to obey; but Anna's thoughts were pleasantly occupied with the morrow's excursion when she would set forth with her father to discover the "handsome sapling pine tree," which was to be erected as the emblem of the loyalty of the Machias settlement to Freedom's call. Anna knew they would follow one of the Indian trails through the forest, where she would see many a wild bird, and that the day would be filled with delight.

But Rebecca's thoughts were not so pleasant. Here it was the fifth of May, and no sign of the *Polly*, and on the tenth she would be

fourteen; and not a birthday gift could she hope for unless the sloop arrived. Beside this, the talk of a liberty pole in Machias made her anxious and unhappy. 17 Only yesterday she had spent the afternoon with her most particular friend, Lucia Horton, whose father was captain of the *Polly*; and Lucia had told Rebecca something of such importance, after vowing her to secrecy, that this talk of a liberty pole really frightened her. And the thought that her own father was to select it brought the danger very near. She wished that Lucia had kept the secret to herself, and became worried and unhappy.

Rebecca was thinking of these things, and not of spreading the table, when she went to the cupboard to bring out the pewter plates, and she quite forgot her errand until her mother called:

"Rebby! Rebby! What are you about in the cupboard?" Then, bringing only one plate instead of four, she came slowly back to the kitchen.

"What ails the child?" questioned Mrs. Weston sharply. "I declare, I believe both of my children are losing their wits. Here is Anna making rhymes and sing-songing her words in strange fashion; and thou, Rebecca, a girl of nearly fourteen, careless of thy work, and standing before me on one foot like a heron, staring at naught," and Mrs. Weston hurried to the pantry for the forgotten dishes. 18

Anna smiled at her mother's sharp words, for she did not mind being called a silly girl for rhyming words. "'Tis no harm," thought Anna, "and my father says 'tis as natural as for the birds to sing;" so she added more chips to the fire, and thought no more of it.

But Rebecca, who was used to being praised for her good sense and who was seldom found fault with, had looked at her mother in surprise, and the pewter plate fell from her hands and went clattering to the floor. At that moment the door swung open and Mr. Weston entered the kitchen.

"Father! Father!" exclaimed Rebecca, running toward him, "you won't put up a liberty pole, will you? You won't! Promise you won't, Father!" and she clasped his arm with both hands.

