

cheered by the retrospect of a life well spent, she sank, as it were, into a tranquil sleep. . . .

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Captain George Dabney, my grandfather by the father's side, was . . . the eldest son of Col. William Dabney. I give him the title of Captain, though it was only in the militia, because in revolutionary times these military designations signified something more than mere appellations of honor and distinction. Then they were often the badges of real service and, when the whole power of the country was constantly required for its defense, were generally assumed from motives of patriotism. . . . He was married some years prior to the Declaration of Independence and had several children when the troubles began. . . .

Sometime before the war he had undertaken the superintendence of the numerous and extensive estates of General Thomas Nelson, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and afterwards Governor of Virginia. He continued in this business throughout the revolutionary struggle and, from his intimate acquaintance with the affairs of his employer, had the best opportunities of knowing the efforts and sacrifices made by that distinguished patriot in the common cause. The generous, self-sacrificing character of General Nelson had engaged his warmest attachment; and he always expressed great indignation at the signal ingratitude with which the State of Virginia permitted that gentleman's ample fortune to be exhausted in the payment of debts mainly contracted for public purposes. He once told me that General Nelson, at one stage of the contest, raised a troop of cavalry, furnishing both officers and men with the necessary equipments, and sent them on to Philadelphia at his own expense, that his instructions to his managers were to supply gratuitously from his estates all necessaries required by any bodies of American troops which might pass in their vicinity, that in compliance with this direction provisions and other articles to a considerable amount had actually been contributed, that when he was Governor of Virginia, having been authorized by law to borrow money for the public use, he was defeated in the negotiation of a loan in consequence of the total prostration of public credit, and was constrained (such was the desperate condition of our affairs) to procure pecuniary advances on his private responsibility to meet the pressing exigencies of the republic, that his property was actually under execution at the time of his death for debts thus incurred. . . . For these losses and sacrifices neither General Nelson or his representatives ever received, so far as I am informed, any reimbursement from the public treasury. Sometime after my grandfather's death, when all who could have attested these facts were in the grave, an ineffectual appeal was made to the legislature of Virginia in behalf of the General's posterity to obtain some recognition of the services of their ancestor, and, if the magnitude of the demand were objected to, some partial compensation, at least, for his vast pecuniary expenditures in the public service. They were not spurned as sturdy beggars from the doors of the Capitol, but their application was allowed to sleep unnoticed on the legislative table. While men, not worthy to unloose the latchet of General Nelson's shoe, have been extolled as public benefactors and enriched with the spoils of the treasury, the descendants of that disinterested patriot, who had sunk an opulent fortune in support of the revolutionary cause, were suffered to languish in want, to wrestle with all the privations of indigence unheeded and unpitied.

Captain Dabney always retained an affectionate memory of General Nelson. . . . I remember a circumstance evincing his strong regard for the family of that illrequited patriot. Having learned that the widow of General Nelson, then very old and stricken with blindness, was in his neighborhood, he determined, though very feeble and inform himself, to visit that venerable lady, and actually rode several miles for the purpose. The meeting of these two old people, tottering on the verge of the grave, must have been extremely affecting, for I shall never forget my grandfather's touching account of the interview on his return. I mention these circumstances

¹ called "of the Grove"