

**A
CAVALIER MAID**

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A Cavalier Maid by Emilie Benson Knipe & Alden Arthur Knipe

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EMILIE BENSON KNIPE & ALDEN ARTHUR KNIPE

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"I've always heard that a request from royalty was a command."

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BY
EMILIE BENSON KNIPE
AND

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Authors of "Polly Trotter, Patriot," "A Maid of Old
Manhattan," "A Maid of '76," etc.

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M. S. -

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A CAVALIER MAID

CHAPTER I

GEORGIANA RECEIVETH A SUMMONS TO COURT

A GIRL in a brown stuff gown that did little to set off her face or her figure stepped as lightly as her stiff shoes would allow across the cobles of the courtyard.

"Make haste, Susan," she whispered excitedly. "I would not have my uncle see what you carry for the crown jewels themselves!"

Her attendant giggled nervously and changed her bundle from hand to hand.

"I'll lay the master will be in a fine taking!" she said.

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"He will not really care," she answered. "Were I a bullfinch I'd be of more interest to him than I am."

"He do love his finches and that be the fact," the woman responded. "'Tis naught to blame a man for, though it scarce seems natural to sit for hours tootling on a pipe at a pimmicky bird — and nigh in pitch dark at that."

"They learn better so," the girl explained indifferently. "'Tis said that if they hear another bird whistle ere they're full feathered you may spare your breath at the flageolet, for 'tis the bird they will copy thereafter. Though why they should be so

quick to learn from a bird and so slow to learn from a man, I know not."

They had mounted the stone staircase as they talked and now paused on the landing.

"Make all ready for me," the young girl whispered under her breath, "I go first to my uncle." Saying which she turned to the left and laid her hand on the knob of a great oak door.

"'Tis Georgiana," she called gayly. "May I enter?"

"Enter, Georgiana," was the reply, and she threw the door open and went in, waving a caution at her tire-woman to be on her way ere she closed it behind her.

There was a fire of logs in the huge fireplace and before it, wrapped in a furred gown, sat a man, who from his years should have been still in the prime of life but who seemed shrunken and bloodless like an invalid. On his finger perched a bullfinch, and beside him stood an attendant holding a small bowl of bread and milk.

"Take it away, Fordham!" the sick man said fretfully. "Strephon likes it not. I am assured that the milk is not of the sweetest, else would he relish it."

The servant knew better than to enter any protest; but left the room bearing the bowl with him, and Sir Roger Wheatland turned his attention to his ward, who always gave him the courtesy title of "uncle," although there was no blood kinship between them.

"The little new one hath given me a 'return' already," he announced triumphantly, his face quite transfigured by his enthusiasm. "Didst ever hear the like? And he scarce out of the nest! Three notes he gave me, as clear and true as ever were sounded. I have named him 'Ariel' and long for

the day when his lesson is learned and I can show him to thee."

"'Tis no marvel that your wonderful patience should be rewarded," Georgiana replied gravely, but that did not please her companion.

"'Tis the fledgling is a marvel and not I," he answered pettishly. "It grieves me that you have so little taste for birds."

"I like them better than they like me, it seems," the maid laughed, drawing back a finger, that had been soundly pecked when she had ventured to offer Strephon an apple-pip. "But birds cannot make up to me for lack of people."

His pet's action appeared to flatter Sir Roger.

"Strephon is jealous," he chuckled, and indeed the little creature on his finger ruffled up its feathers angrily and gave vent to indignant cries and hisses when Georgiana ventured near his chair.

"Faith, then," she said, seating herself on a stool, "I'll keep my distance, for I want to talk to you on matters of importance."

Her tone was so portentous that her guardian was amused.

"Zounds! This sounds serious!" He drew a solemn face. "Madam, my attention is yours." But even as he spoke he caressed the bird, and it was plain that his mind was more on it than on the maid at his side who, full of her grievances, went on, unheeding:

"I passed through the village just now, uncle. Curtsies were bobbed here and there and the men capped to me; — but, after all, I'm just one of themselves —"

"There was no disrespect?" Sir Roger cried hotly, half rising from his chair. "I'll lesson those hinds —"

"No, no!" Georgiana interrupted in her turn. "'Tis not of disrespect that I complain. 'Tis that they are quite right! I *am* one of them! I've had tutors, masters. I know a little Latin and some Greek; but what have I ever seen that they have not? How am I superior in experiences to any of them? And yet you tell me that I am the richest heiress in all England."

"Now what is in your mind?" Sir Roger asked, looking at the girl questioningly.

"'Tis in my mind that I want to see something of the world," she answered boldly. "I want to be dressed to suit my rank when I go abroad, not in fustian." She picked up a fold of her dress disdainfully in her fingers. "I want to mingle with my equals!"

Sir Roger laughed uneasily.

"You have no equal, my dear," he said airily.

"Nay!" Georgiana replied hotly. "I will not be put off with a quip! You know well what I mean. I'm young! I want to make friends — to see other maids and men, not clods — and cowslips and — and birds," she ended, her eyes resting on Strephon's bullet head and rosy breast.

For a long moment Sir Roger did not reply; but when at last he spoke it was both kindly and positively.

"My dear, I realize that this life we lead is not a gay one, but thou art scarce more than a child, and, in the present unsettled state of the country, I feel that thou canst well afford to spend another year or two in safety — and the study of Greek."

"Well, so do not I!" Georgiana's retort was as positive. "I've seen too many females grow to fit their molds so snugly that they ne'er slip out of them. Oh, uncle," she cried imploringly, "I know