

**MEMOIRS OF AN AMERICAN LADY,  
WITH SKETCHES OF MANNERS AND  
SCENERY IN AMERICA, AS THEY EXISTED  
PREVIOUS TO THE REVOLUTION. TWO  
VOLS. OF THE LONDON EDITION IN ONE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649646715

Memoirs of an American Lady, with Sketches of Manners and Scenery in America, as They Existed Previous to the Revolution. Two Vols. of the London Edition in One by Mrs. Anne Macvicar Grant

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**MRS. ANNE MACVICAR GRANT**

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BY MRS. GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM THE MOUNTAINS," ETC., ETC.

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203041  
18. 5. 26

NEW YORK:

D. APPLETON & CO., 200 BROADWAY.

PHILADELPHIA:

GEO. S. APPLETON, 148 CHESNUT STREET.

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

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AFTER we had announced our design to republish Mrs. GRANT'S "History of an American Lady," we received from Mr. GRANT THORBURN, of New York, the ensuing letter, which is so characteristic of the parties, and so apposite, that we prefix it to the work; as the recent and final attestation of the narrator to the fidelity of the biographical records with which her attractive volume is replete.

NEW YORK, 1845.

Having heard that you contemplate the republication of the "American Lady," by the late Mrs. Grant, of Langan, Scotland, and having been personally acquainted with her, I thought it proper to present to you a few circumstances *anent* the authenticity of that very interesting history. It is not a romance; nor a novel, nor a fiction, nor a tale partly founded on reality—but it is an authentic detail of facts.

Mrs. Grant was the daughter of Duncan McVickar, and was born in 1755. Her father came to this country in 1757, as an officer in the fifty-fifth regiment of the British army. In the following year, 1758, Mrs. McVickar and her daughter also arrived in New York; and speedily after removed to Claverack, where she resided while Mr. McVickar was absent on military service with his regiment. After which his family were first transferred to Albany, and thence subsequently were stationed at Oswego.

The description of that romantic journey, as given in the American Lady, from Schenectady to Oswego, in flat-bottomed boats, is one of Mrs. Grant's most pleasing efforts; and excited great attention when the volume was first published in London, in 1808. Those

youthful reminiscences rendered her extensively known in this country, and were additionally interesting to Americans, because at that period it was the only work which delineated a faithful picture of the manners of the early settlers in the province of New York. Indeed, without that Narrative, there would be a complete chasm in our social history of the times anterior to the Revolution. Her anecdotes of the Cuylers, Schuylers, Van Rensselaers, and other distinguished old Dutch families of Albany, and its vicinity, gave universal satisfaction.

In 1810, Mrs. Grant removed from London to Edinburgh, where, during thirty years, her house was the resort of the best society of Scotland. American citizens always considered themselves obliged to pay their respects to her; and it was a privilege to have an interview with that lady, for she always received them with manifest attention and regard. Calm and resigned, she ceased to live in 1838, being then eighty-five years of age.

I was in Edinburgh in 1834; and on the morning of February the fifth, I called at her house to see and converse with that venerable octogenarian lady. The ring of the bell was answered by the appearance of a neat and tidy Scotch *lassie*.

"Is Mrs. Grant at home?" I inquired.

"She is," answered the *lassie*, "but she never sees company till after two o'clock."

As she was then nearly eighty years of age, I thought that perhaps she still was in bed.

"Is she up?" I again asked.

"She is."

"Is she dressed?"

"She is."

I had travelled two miles in a real "*Scotch mist*;" and loath to lose that opportunity of seeing my namesake and favorite authoress, a circumstance which perhaps might not again recur, I took out my card, saying, "Please to give this to your mistress, and say to her, that I shall consider it a peculiar kindness, if she will favor me with only a few minutes' conversation."

The girl speedily returned, saying, "Will you please to walk up stairs, sir?"

In the middle of an elegant parlor sat the old lady, with her back to the fire ; and before her a large desk, covered with books and writing materials.

"Be so good, sir," said Mrs. Grant, "as to help yourself to a chair, and sit down by me. I am not so able now to wait on my friends, as I was sixty years ago."

I was going to apologize for intruding on her hours of seclusion, when she interrupted me, by remarking—

"Stop, if you please, sir !"

Then raising my card, which was printed, "Grant Thorburn, New York ;" and placing her finger on the word "New York," she added, "That is a passport to me at any hour."

We went back, and talked of the times when Niagara was the only fort on the northern frontier. She referred to the times when the Cuylers, Schuylers, Van Cortlandts, and Van Rensselaers, were her playmates at school. Mrs. Hamilton, a Schuyler, the widow of General Hamilton, who yet lives in the eighty-eighth year of her age, was among the number.

When I told Mrs. Grant that I was personally acquainted with Mrs. Hamilton, and with many other descendants of those old worthies, and that the race had not degenerated, the days o' "*Auld lang syne*" sprung up from her heart, and her eyes sparkled with the fire of a heroine of twenty-five summers.

Mrs. Grant remembered Albany when it contained only two streets ; one along the river, and the other, now State-street, running down from the old fort on the top of the hill. She alluded to the unsophisticated customs of the times past ; and gave me the story of the lads and lasses, sometimes fifty in a group, when at their rustic sports. She depicted the boys with an axe, gun, or fishing-tackle ; and the girls with their knitting-work, cakes, pies, and tea. The longest day, Mrs. Grant said, seemed far too short ; and especially for the fishing parties, which she humorously described, and especially noticed the vexation of the lads, and the merriment of the lasses with the boys, when they only caught drows instead of trout.

Mrs. Grant also described the old nuptial ceremonies ; and particularly specified the marriage of couples, of which the eldest was



not seventeen years of age. In that case the fathers and mothers held a council; and the parents who had most house-room, or raised the largest crop, took the young couple to live with them.

I also conversed with Mrs. Grant especially on the subject of her work the "American Lady;" and she assured me that there is not any romance in the history; but that it is a plain and faithful narrative of her Aunt Schuyler, and of the persons and manners of that period as they existed in the then province of New York.

Mrs. Grant is the author also of the "Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland"—"The Cottagers of Glenburnie"—and "Letters from the Mountains;" but neither of those works has attained the popularity of the "American Lady."

GRANT THORBURN.

The preceding notice, by Mr. Thorburn, of Mrs. Grant's chief work, not only affirms the authenticity of the facts, but it exhibits the amiable historian so attractively, that it will render her volume additionally acceptable to all who are desirous to behold a genuine picture of our ancestors, prior to the changes made in our country by the Revolution, and our subsequent independence. Therefore, to the women of our republic especially, the "American Lady" is confidently recommended.

*New York, November 19, 1845.*

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE  
SIR WILLIAM GRANT, KNT.,  
MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

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SIR :—

It is very probable that the friends, by whose solicitations I was induced to arrange, in the following pages, my early recollections, studied more the amusement I should derive from executing this task, than any pleasure they could expect from its completion.

The principal object of this work is to record the few incidents, and the many virtues, which diversified and distinguished the life of a most valued friend. Though no manners could be more simple, no notions more primitive, than those which prevailed among her associates, the stamp of originality with which they were marked, and the peculiar circumstances in which they stood, both with regard to my friend, and the infant society to which they belonged, will, I flatter myself, give an interest, with reflecting minds, even to this desultory narrative, and the miscellany of description, observation, and detail which it involves.

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If truth, both of feeling and narration, which are its only merits, prove a sufficient counterbalance to carelessness, laxity, and incoherence of style, its prominent faults, I may venture to invite you, when you unbend from the useful and honorable labors to which your valuable time is devoted, to trace this feeble delineation of an excellent though unembellished character; and of the rapid pace with which an infant society has urged on its progress from virtuous simplicity to the dangerous "knowledge of good and evil;" from tremulous imbecility to self-sufficient independence.

To be faithful, a delineation must necessarily be minute. Yet if this sketch, with all its imperfections, be honored by your indulgent perusal, such condescension of time and talent must certainly be admired, and may perhaps be imitated, by others.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your faithful, humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON, *October*, 1808.