

Exciting days followed the first Fourth of July. Philadelphia was in the heart of the excitement. And Mary Redmond's home was in the heart of the city.

Some of the people in that city were loyal to England. And some, like Mary's father, were not. The Redmond home soon became a news center. Weary men on horseback brought word of big battles. They brought news for families. Had sons been killed or fathers captured? People had to know. Often it was Mary's duty to pass the messages on to them. Sometimes it was a sad job, but it was an exciting one.

Then came the bad day in September 1777. British soldiers arrived in the city. It seemed that Philadelphia had become too well known as a rebel center.

The soldiers watched the people closely. The men who brought news had to be more careful. They always came at night, but sometimes they were seen. Then soldiers would search the Redmond house. But they never caught anyone. There was a secret closet beside the fireplace, and the messengers hid there.

But one day there was a special message. To bring it straight to the house was too great a risk. It would have to be delivered in a different way. Mary's father explained how:

"A young boy will come to the marketplace tomorrow. Someone will pick up the message from him. But it will be dangerous, for the British suspect that he is coming."

Then he turned to Mary. "Will you meet him? The soldiers are not so likely to stop a young girl." Mary nodded.

"He will be about your size," her father went on. "He will be dressed in brown. And he will whistle this tune." Mr. Redmond hummed a few notes. "He will carry a turkey over his shoulder. Pretend that you want to buy the turkey. Ask how much it weighs, and poke at it. And as you do, get the secret message from him."

Next morning Mary went to the marketplace. She bought a few vegetables and put them in her basket. She kept watching for the boy. At last, when her basket was half full, she saw him. But before she could do a thing, she saw two soldiers moving toward him. They were going to search him! They would find the message! She must act quickly! She threw down her basket and cried, "Dear cousin!" She rushed toward the boy and threw her shawl around him.

"What is this?" he hissed.

Mary whispered, "Give me the message. Hurry!"

He slipped it into her hand. Quickly she tucked it into her sleeve.

At just that moment a soldier pushed them apart. "Search him!" he ordered. The other man grabbed the boy. Mary slipped away before they could catch her. She ran all the way home.

It was wonderful news she carried. General Burgoyne had surrendered to General Gates. That night the patriots in Philadelphia rejoiced. They knew the war would soon be over.

Mary rejoiced too. She was proud that she had had a small part in bringing the good news.

**CHECK YOUR READING**

1. The city in which this story took place was
  - A Boston
  - B Washington
  - C Philadelphia
2. Mary Redmond thought that living there was very
  - A lonely
  - B exciting
  - C terrible
3. Mary's father was a
  - A soldier
  - B redcoat
  - C rebel
4. When soldiers searched Mary's house, messengers hid in
  - A a basement tunnel
  - B an unused fireplace
  - C a secret closet
5. The special message was to be delivered in the
  - A marketplace
  - B town hall
  - C schoolyard
6. One way Mary would know the boy was by the
  - A hat he wore
  - B tune he whistled
  - C way he walked
7. The plan was for Mary to pretend that she wanted to buy the boy's
  - A basket
  - B coat
  - C turkey
8. Mary had to make a new plan when she saw two soldiers about to
  - A search the boy
  - B grab her shawl
  - C clear the street
9. She pretended that
  - A she knew the boy
  - B the boy was sick
  - C her basket had broken
10. The message told the patriots that the war
  - A had ended
  - B was going badly
  - C would soon be over