

[Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson](#)



“The Sentiments of an American Woman” (1780)

Esther Reed

THE SENTIMENTS of an  
AMERICAN WOMAN.

ON the commencement of actual war, the Women of America manifested a firm resolution to contribute as much as could depend on them, to the deliverance of their country. Animated by the purest patriotism, they are sensible of sorrow at this day, in not offering more than barren wishes for the success of so glorious a Revolution. They aspire to render themselves more really useful; and this sentiment is universal from the north to the south of the Thirteen United States. Our ambition is kindled by the fame of those heroines of antiquity, who have rendered their sex illustrious, and have proved to the universe, that, if the weakness of our Constitution, if opinion and manners did not forbid us to march to glory by the same paths as the Men, we should at least equal, and sometimes surpass them in our love for the public good. I glory in all that which my sex has done great and commendable. I call to mind with enthusiasm and with admiration, all those acts of courage, of constancy and patriotism, which history has transmitted to us: The people favoured by Heaven, preserved from destruction by the virtues, the zeal and the resolution of Deborah, of Judith, of Esther! The fortitude of the mother of the Maccabees, in giving up her sons to die before her eyes: Rome saved from the fury of a victorious enemy by the efforts of Volturnia, and other Roman Ladies: So many famous sieges where the Women have been seen forgetting the weakness of their sex, building new walls, digging trenches with their feeble hands, furnishing arms to their defenders, they themselves darting the missile weapons on the enemy, resigning the ornaments of their apparel, and their fortune, to fill the public treasury, and to hasten the deliverance of their country; burying themselves under its ruins; throwing themselves into the flames rather than submit to the disgrace of humiliation before a proud enemy.

Born for liberty, disdaining to bear the yoke of a tyrannic Government, we associate ourselves to the grandeur of those Sovereigns, cherished and revered, who have held with so much splendour the scepter of the greatest States, The Bauldas, the Elizabeths, the Marias, the Catharines, who have extended the empire of liberty, and contented to reign by sweetness and justice, have broken the chains of slavery, forged by tyrants in the times of ignorance and barbarity. The Spanish Women, do they not make, at this moment, the most patriotic sacrifices, to increase the means of victory in the hands of their Sovereign. He is a friend to the French Nation. They are our allies. We call to mind, doubly interested, that it was a French Maid who kindled up amongst her fellow-citizens, the flame of patriotism buried under long misfortunes: It was the Maid of Orleans who drove from the kingdom of France the ancestors of that same British, whose odious yoke we have just shaken off; and whom it is necessary that we drive from this Continent.

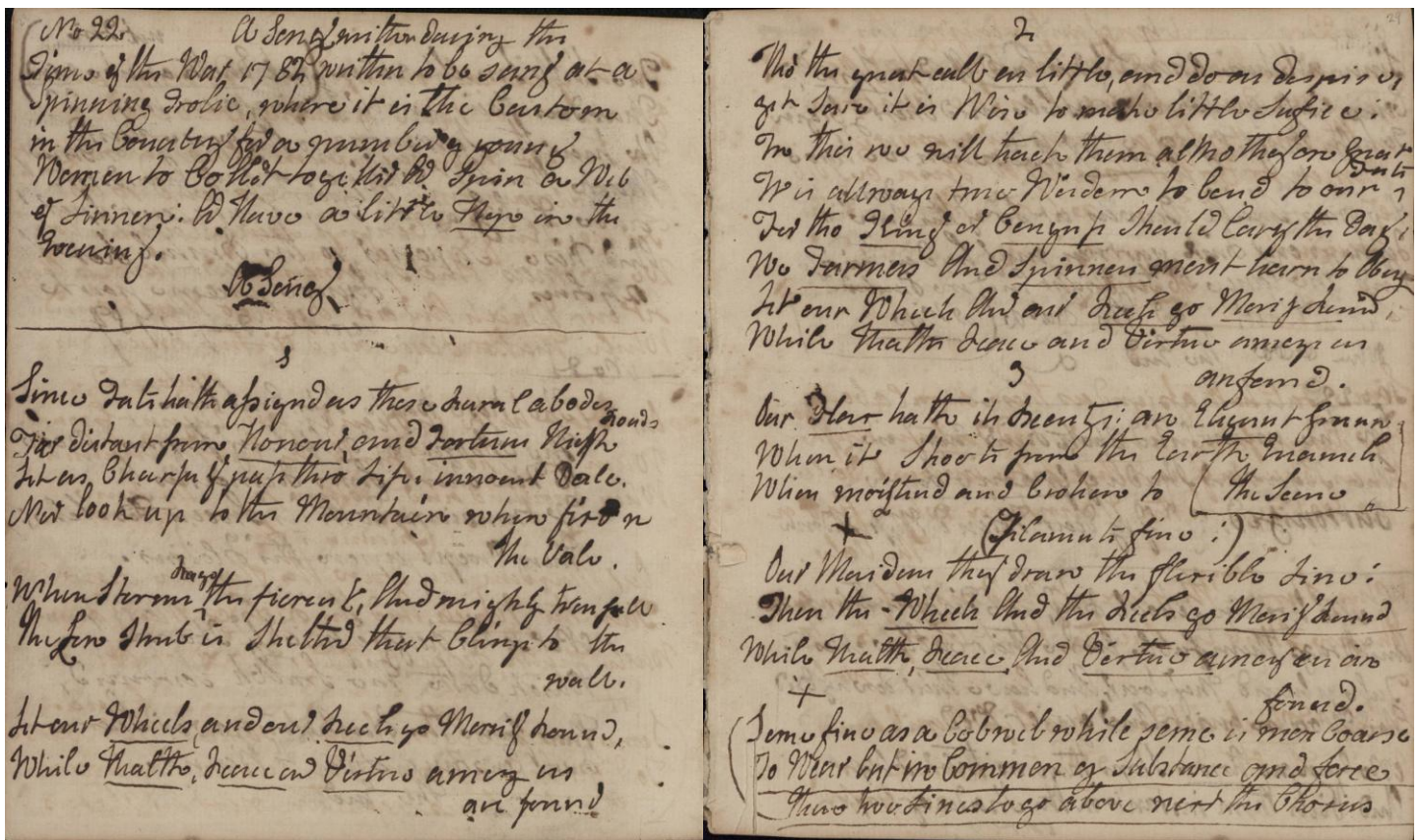
But I must limit myself to the recollection of this small number of achievements. Who knows if persons disposed to censure, and sometimes too severely with regard to us, may not disapprove our appearing acquainted even with the actions of which our sex boasts? We are at least certain, that he cannot be a good citizen who will not applaud our efforts for the relief of the armies which defend our lives, our possessions, our liberty? The situation of our soldiery has been represented to me; the evils inseparable from war, and the firm and generous spirit which has enabled them to support these. But it has been said, that they may apprehend, that, in the course of a long war, the view of their distresses may be lost, and their services be forgotten. Forgotten! never; I can answer in the name of all my sex. Brave Americans, your disinterestedness, your courage, and your constancy will always be dear to America, as long as she shall preserve her virtue.

We know that at a distance from the theatre of war, if we enjoy any tranquillity, it is the fruit of your watchings, your labours, your dangers. If I live happy in the midst of my family; if my husband cultivates his field, and reaps his harvest in peace; if, surrounded with my children, I myself nourish the youngest, and press it to my bosom, without being afraid of seeing myself separated from it, by a ferocious enemy; if the house in which we dwell; if our barns, our orchards are safe at the present time from the hands of those incendiaries, it is to you that we owe it. And shall we hesitate to evidence to you our gratitude? Shall we hesitate to wear a clothing more simple, but dressed less elegant, while at the price of this small privation, we shall deserve your benedictions. Who, amongst us, will not renounce with the highest pleasure, those vain ornaments, when she shall consider that the valiant defenders of America will be able to draw some advantage from the money which she may have laid out in these, that they will be better defended from the rigours of the seasons, that after their painful toils, they will receive some extraordinary and unexpected relief; that these presents will perhaps be valued by them at a greater price, when they will have it in their power to say: *This is the offering of the Ladies.* The time is arrived to display the same sentiments which animated us at the beginning of the Revolution, when we renounced the use of tea, however agreeable to our taste, rather than receive them from our persecutors; when we made it appear to them that we placed former necessities in the rank of superfluities, when our liberty was interested; when our republican and laborious hands (pun the flax, prepared the linen intended for the use of our soldiers; when exiles and fugitives we supported with courage all the evils which are the concomitants of war. Let us not lose a moment; let us be engaged to offer the homage of our gratitude at the altar of military valour, and you, our brave deliverers, while mercenary slaves combat to cause you to share with them, the toils with which they are loaded, receive with a free hand our offering, the purest which can be presented to your virtue.

By An AMERICAN WOMAN.

The American Spinning Wheel (1782)

Elizabeth Fergusson



### The American Spinning Wheel (1782)

Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson

No 22      A Song written during the Time of the War 1782, written to be sung at a Spinning Frolic, where it is the Custom in the Country for a number of young Women to Collect together And Spin a Web of Linen: And Have a little Hope in the Evening.

1  
Since Fate has assigned us these rural abodes,  
Remote both from fortune and honor's high roads;  
Let us cheerfully pass through life's innocent dale,  
Nor look up to the mountain since fix'd in the vale.  
When storms rage the fiercest, and mighty trees fall;  
The low shrub is sheltered which clings to the wall.  
Let our wheels and our reels go merrily round,  
While health, peace, and virtue amongst us are found.

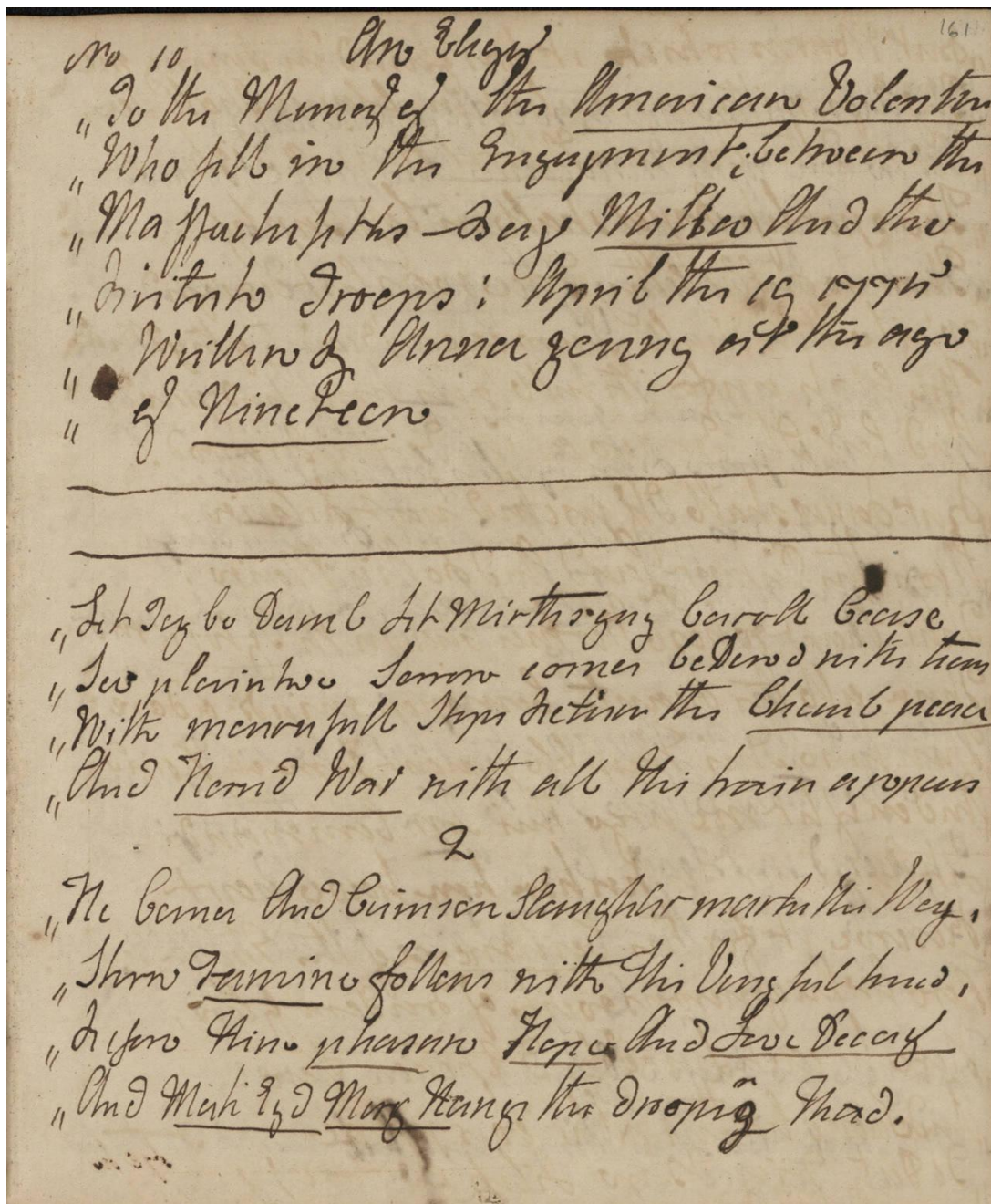
2  
Though the great deem us little, and do us despise;  
Let them know it is wise to make little suffice.  
In this we will teach them, though ever so great;  
It is always true wisdom to yield to your fate.  
For though King or Congress stand to carry the day;  
We farmers and spinners at last must obey.  
*Let our wheels and our reels go merrily round,  
While health, peace, and virtue amongst us are found.*

3  
Our flax has it's beauties, an elegant green;  
When it shoots from the earth it enamels the scene.  
When moistened and broken in filaments fine,  
Our maidens they draw out the flexible line;  
Some fine as a cobweb, while others more coarse,  
To wear but on work days for substance and force.  
Then the wheels and our reels go merrily round,  
While health, peace, and virtue among us are found.

4  
Since all here assembled to card and spin;  
Come girls, lets be nimble and quickly begin,  
To help neighbor Friendly, and when we have done,  
The boys they shall join us at close of the sun.  
Perhaps our brisk partners may lead us through life,  
And the dance of the night end in husband and wife.  
Let our wheels and our reels go merrily round,  
While health, peace, and virtue amongst us are found.  
Graeme Park, 1782

“An Elegy” (1775)

Anna Young Smith



## Women and the Revolutionary War

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Excerpt from: An Elegy to the Memory of the American  
Volunteers who fell in the engagement between the  
Massachusetts Bay militia, and the British troops, April  
19, 1775

Written by Sylvia (Anna Young at the age of nineteen)

Let joy be dumb, let mirth's gay carol cease—  
See plaintive sorrow comes bedew'd with tears,  
With mournful steps retires the cherub Peace,  
And horrid War with all his train appears.

He comes, and crimson slaughter marks his way, 5  
Stern famine follows in his vengeful tread,  
Before him pleasure, hope, and love decay,  
And meek-eyed mercy hangs her drooping head.

Fled like a dream are those delightful hours, 10  
When here with innocence and peace we roved,  
Secure and happy in our native bowers,  
Bless'd with the presence of the youths we loved.

The blow is struck, which through each future age 15  
Shall call from Pity's eye the frequent tear;  
Which gives the brother to the brother's rage,  
And dyes with British blood the British spear.

Where'er the barbarous story shall be told,  
The British cheek shall glow with conscious shame,  
This deed, in bloody characters enroll'd,  
Shall stain the lustre of their former name. 20

But you, ye brave defenders of our cause,  
The first in this dire contest call'd to bleed,  
Your names hereafter, crown'd with just applause,  
Each manly breast with joy-mixt woe shall read.

Your memories dear to every freeborn mind, 25  
Shall need no monument your fame to raise,  
Forever in our grateful hearts enshrined;  
And bless'd by your united country's praise.