

"Are you sure you are well enough to take up such matters?" anxiously queried Renée.

"*Certainement!* However, only with permission of my physician," he replied smilingly.

Her consent gained, Tonti broke the seal and passed his eyes over the pages. From them he learned that La Salle had been obliged to return to France for means whereby to satisfy his creditors. He also read numerous plans and instructions in regard to the colony, but the closing sentences burned before his eyes in letters of fire: "There is one matter about which I have had much anxiety, and that is the exposed position of Mademoiselle d'Outaise amid the hardships of the frontier life. I feel in a great measure responsible for her being there. She, undoubtedly, when obliged to flee from France, turned toward the Western World where I was for protection, while I, recreant that I was, found myself unable to meet her and tell her — the truth. Yes, *mon ami*, her bright eyes were alluring whilst I stood in the full blaze of the glory of the court or the delicious serenity of Choisy Mademoiselle, and they indeed stirred what little portion of my heart there remained unfilled by ambitious schemes, and I thought I loved her. But once the smell of the forest and the stream greeted me I realized that I had no room in my life for woman's love, sweet and precious though it might