

limbs to enjoy the sleep he so much needed. Octave for some time continued to walk backwards and forwards, striving to keep off the feelings of fatigue. Presently he paused in his monotonous march, and in a low voice said: "De Grammont, if the savages get possession of the fort, what will they do to us? Will they send us to hunt the elk and the cariboo, or take us to build their lodges on the Kennebec, far away?"

"My boy," the old man answered, "let us hold out till the last shot is fired, or stand here till the blood freezes in our veins, rather than yield to the savages. Was I not myself at the Isle of Orleans when the Iroquois, forty years ago, came down, attacked the fort, and carried away sixty prisoners? I escaped to the woods; but did I not see them at noonday spread out their canoes and pass Quebec, singing their war songs, while the Governor, M. de Lauzon, could not stop them?"

Feeling secure, while she heard the old man's voice, that the sentinels were awake, Marguerite leaned her head against the parapet. In a moment sleep overcame her, and her excited imagination reposed for a brief time in peaceful and pleasant dreams. Again she rejoiced in the calm tenor of her usual life. She was with her parents, enjoying the summer air, walking by the river side, and with them was the friend for whom she had twisted the withered flowers. In a few minutes she seemed to enjoy years of tranquillity and happiness. Her dream was quickly over. She awoke in terror. Fearful shouts resounded in her ears. The yells of the Indians filled the air, the shrieks of the women below mingling with the horrid tumult without. Marguerite called to Helène and the women to sound the *bon quart*, and with a united effort to raise their voices together. The savages, deceived, again retired.

The next day was Sunday. Not such a Sunday as was usual at Verchères. The morning was fair and bright, but no cheerful groups in their best attire were seen wending their way to church. No village bell summoned the congregation to assemble. The church was destroyed; not a house remained unscathed; many of the inhabitants had fallen victims to the savages;

the rest were scattered fugitives. The boys, as they kept their tedious watch, repeated the hymns and prayers their mother had taught them, and buoyed themselves up with the hope that this would be a quiet day. Vain hope! Again the band, with yells that might have appalled the stoutest heart, advanced with fearful gestures, apparently more furious and more determined than ever; and again, uncertain of success, they retired.

CHAPTER III.

Not far from the fort was a bank, bordering a thick coppice, a favorite resort of the children in happier times. Here in spring the grass was gay with the early violets and trilliums; in summer, the overhanging branches offered a grateful shade; and in the bright days of autumn here the last flowers lingered in the warm sunbeams that shone in full brilliancy on "fairy rings," from which started, after nights of rain, the curious tribes of fungi. The coppice was so dense that it precluded entrance, save to the most experienced woodsman. Tangled stems and branches were closely intertwined, and the decaying leaves hung in heavy masses, guarded by thorns and briars. The morning was just beginning to dawn, when a woman wrapped in a mantle and hood noiselessly approached this thickest part of the coppice. It was Annette. She moved cautiously on, and, stopping before a narrow opening, uttered a low chirrup, which, after a few minutes, was answered from within the bush. She stooped and tried to pierce the gloomy recesses through the faint light. Presently there was a slight rustling of leaves, and Annette could discern a red object projecting from the dense foliage. It was not the crimson berries of the arum. A man crept forward.

"Have you brought me food?" he asked.

Annette drew from under her cloak some bread. "We cannot hold out much longer," she said. "For the love of heaven, for the sake of your mother and sisters, if you have any, try to procure aid to save these helpless children."

"To save myself," replied the man, "is as much as I expect to do. The roads are