

which we welcome you as though you brought a message from the General himself." A sudden thought fetched the Commandant to a standstill. "You are sure that the sergeant, your comrade, carried no message?"

John paused with Menehwehna's arm supporting him.

"If he carried a message, monsieur, he told me of none."

Where were his faculties? Why were they hanging back and refusing to come to grips with the crisis? Why did this twilight riverside persist in seeming unreal to him, and the actors, himself included, as figures moving in a shadow-play?

Once, in a dream, he had seen himself standing at the wings of a stage—an actor, dressed for his part. The theatre was crowded; some one had begun to ring a bell for the curtain to go up; and he, the hero of the piece, knew not one word of his part, could not even remember the name of the play or what it was about. The dream had been extraordinarily vivid, and he had awakened in a sweat. Some such tremor held him now.

"But," the Commandant urged, "he must have had some reason for striking through the forest. What was his name?"

"Barboux."

John, as he answered, could not see Menehwehna's face; but Menehwehna's supporting arm did not flinch.

"Was he, too, of the regiment of Béarn?"

"He was of the Béarnais, monsieur."

"Tell us now. When the Iroquois overtook you, could he have passed on a message, had he carried one?"

While John hesitated, Menehwehna answered him. "It was I only who saw the sergeant," said Menehwehna quietly. "He gave me no message."

"You were close to him?"

"Very close."

"It is curious," mused the Commandant, and turned to John again. "Your falling in with the Iroquois, monsieur, gives me some anxiety; since it happens that a party from here and from Fort Frontenac was crossing the Wilderness at