

Madeleine Verchères

By Alan Sullivan

'Twixt the stream and forest tall,
 Seven leagues from Montreal
 Lay Verchères. The yellow harvest shook its golden-bearded head.
 "Pioneers, come, cut and bind me," every nodding tassel said,
 Till the reapers sought the grain;
 Scythe and sickle swing amain
 In the clear autumnal weather; left the fortress all unguarded,
 Left the blockhouse without watcher and the bastions unwarded—
 Maid and matron labored there
 For the harvest of Verchères.

Ran a whispered word that day,
 Where the silent redmen lay
 Peering through the screen of branches at the reapers and the grain:
 Iroquois, athirst for carnage, from the fastness of Cnamplain.
 And the Indian yell arose
 As they leaped upon their foes,
 Till the clear autumnal noonday saw the death-blow flash and fall
 Fierce on man and maid and matron—heard the hoarse triumphant
 Not a reaper did they spare [call—
 For the harvest of Verchères.

From the stricken fields a cry
 Reached the fortress: "It is I,
 Madeleine. Oh, haste ye, haste ye! Arm! The Iroquois are here!
 And the grain is red with slaughter and their feet are drawing near.
 I have seen a hundred foemen—
 Tho' the half of us be women,