

"Chief Cope himself, is leading the fight and carrying out the saintly Abbé's orders."

"Fools!" Fools and revilers!" exclaimed a deep and cutting voice behind them; and turning with a start they saw the dreaded Le Loutre standing in their midst. Lecorbeau and Pierre became pale with apprehension and superstitious awe, while the old sergeant laughed awkwardly, abashed though not dismayed.

The Abbé's sallow face worked with anger, and for a moment his narrow eyes blazed upon Lecorbeau, and seemed to read his very soul. Then, as he glanced across the marsh, his countenance changed. A fanatic zeal illumined it, taking away half its repulsiveness.

"Nay!" he cried, "I am *not* there in the battle. France and the Church need me, and what am I that I should risk, to be thought bold, a life that I must rather hold sacred. Should a chance ball strike *me* down, which of you traitors and self-seekers is there that could do my work? Which of you could govern my fierce flock?"

To this tirade, which showed them their tormentor in a new light, Pierre and his father could say nothing. Wondering, but not believing, they exchanged stolen glances. It is probable that the Abbé, in his present mood, was sincere; for in a fanatic one must allow for the wildest inconsistencies. The old sergeant, more skeptical than the Acadians, was, at the same time, more polite. He hastened to murmur, apologetically,—

"Pardon me, Holy Father! I see that I misunderstood you!"

Le Loutre made no answer, for now events on the battlefield were enchaining every eye.

Behind the second line of dyke the Micmacs and Acadians had again entrenched themselves. Major Lawrence, perceiving this, at once ordered another charge. Then the Indians resolved on a bold and perilous stroke.

The right of their position was nearest the attacking force. At this point, acting under a sudden inspiration, they began to cut the dyke. Almost instantly a breach began to appear, under the attack of a dozen dyking-spades, wielded with feverish energy.

An involuntary cry of consternation went up from the group of Acadians on the knoll, but the grim Abbé shouted "Well done! Well done! my brave, my true Laberne!" And he rushed from his

hiding-place on some new errand, leaving the air lighter for his absence.

The English detected at once the manœuvre of their opponents. They broke into a fierce rush, determined to stop the work of destruction before it should be too late. From his left Major Lawrence threw out a few skilled marksmen, who concentrated a telling fire upon the diggers, delaying but not putting an end to the furious energy of their efforts. Already a stream of turbid water was stealing through. Presently it gathered force and volume, spreading out swiftly across the marsh; and at the same time the rest of the dyke was fringed with smoke and the pale flashes of the muskets.

The tide was now on the ebb, and a current set strongly against the point of dyke where the diggers were at work. This fact tended to make the results of their work the more immediately apparent, rendering mighty assistance to every stroke of the spade. At the same time, however, it told heavily in favour of the English, for, in order to counteract the special stream, the dyke at this point was of great additional strength. Moreover, in the tidal rivers of that region the ebb and flow are so vast and so swift that the English hoped the tide would be below a dangerous level before the destruction of the dyke could be accomplished.

In this hope they were right. Ere they had more than half crossed the stretch of marsh the waters of the Missaguash were oozing about their ankles. But as they neared the dyke it had grown no deeper. They saw the diggers throw down their spades, pick up their muskets, and fall in with their comrades behind the dyke. The fire from the top of the barrier ceased, and in silence, with loaded weapons, the Indians awaited the assault. From this it was plain to Major Lawrence that the defence was in the hands of a European. He straightened out his lines before the charge.

CHAPTER IV.

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated Antoine Lecorbeau, "they have saved the dyke!"

In Acadian eyes to tamper with the dykes was sacrilege.

"Well!" said the sergeant, with a somewhat cynical chuckle, "at last the English have got their feet wet!"

Pierre broke off his laugh in the middle, for at this moment the red lines charged. The deadly volley which rang out along the summit for an instant staggered the