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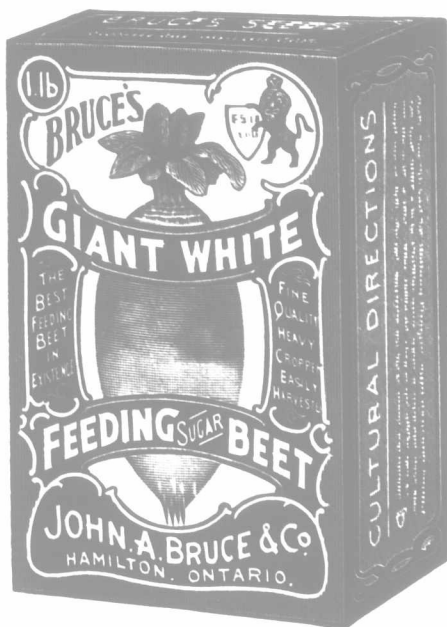
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The Golden Dog

(Le Chien D'Or.)

A Canadian Historical Romance.

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CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

In marked contrast with the military uniforms of the officers surrounding the council-table were the black robes and tonsured heads of two or three ecclesiastics, who had been called in by the Governor to aid the council with their knowledge and advice. They were the Abbe Metavet, of the Algonquins of the North; Pere Oubal, the Jesuit missionary of the Abenauquais of the East, and his confrere, La Richardie, from the wild tribes of the Far West; but conspicuous among the able and influential missionaries who were the real rulers of the Indian nations allied with France, was the famous Sulpicien, Abbe Piquet, "the King's missionary," as he was styled in royal ordinances, and the apostle to the Iroquois, whom he was laboring to convert and bring over to the side of France in the great dispute raised between France and England for supremacy in North America.

Upon the wall behind the vice-regal chair hung a great map, drawn by the bold hand of Abbe Piquet, representing the claims as well as actual possessions of France in America. A broad, red line, beginning in Acadia, traversed the map westerly, taking in Lake Ontario, and running southerly along the crests and ridges of the Appalachian Mountains. It was traced with a firm hand down to far-off Louisiana, claiming for France the great valleys of the Ohio, the Mississippi, and the vast territories watered by the Missouri and the Colorado—thus hemming the English in between the walls of the Appalachian range on the west and the seacoast on the east.

The Abbe Piquet had lately, in a canoe, descended the Belle Riviere, as the voyageurs called the noble Ohio. From its source to its junction with the solitary Mississippi the Abbe had planted upon its conspicuous bluffs the ensigns of France, with tablets of lead bearing the fleur-de-lis and the proud inscription, "Manibus date lilia plenis,"—lilies destined, after a fierce struggle for empire, to be trampled into the earth by the feet of the victorious English.

The Abbe, deeply impressed with the dangers that impended over the Colony, labored zealously to unite the Indian nations in a general alliance with France. He had already brought the powerful Algonquins and Nipissings into his scheme, and planted them at Two Mountains as a bulwark to protect the city of Ville Marie. He had created a great schism in the powerful confederacy of the Five Nations by adroitly fanning into a flame their jealousy of English encroachments upon their ancient territory on Lake Ontario; and bands of Iroquois had, not long since, held conference with the Governor of New France, denouncing the English for disregarding their exclusive right to their own country. "The lands we possess," said they, "at a great council in Ville Marie, the lands we possess were given to us by the Master of Life, and we acknowledge to hold of no other!"

The Abbe had now strong hopes of perfecting a scheme which he afterwards accomplished. A powerful body of the Iroquois left their villages and castles on the Mohawk and Genesee rivers, and, under the guidance of the Abbe, settled round the new Fort of La Presentation on the St. Lawrence, and thus barred that way, for the future, against the destructive inroads of their countrymen who remained faithful to the English alliance.

Pending the arrival of the Royal

Intendant, the members of the Council indulged freely in conversation bearing more or less upon the important matters to be discussed—the state of the country, the movements of the enemy, and not seldom intermingled remarks of dissatisfaction and impatience at the absence of the Intendant.

The revel at Beaumanoir was well known to them; and eyes flashed and lips curled in open scorn at the well-understood reason of the Intendant's delay.

"My private letters by the Fleur-de-lis," remarked Beauharnais, "relate, among other Court gossip, that orders will be sent out to stop the defensive works at Quebec, and pull down what is built! They think the cost of walls round our city can be better bestowed on political favorites and certain high personages at Court." Beauharnais turned towards the Governor. "Has your Excellency heard aught of this?" asked he.

"Yes! It is true enough, Beauharnais! I also have received communications to that effect!" replied the Governor, with an effort at calmness which ill-concealed the shame and disgust that filled his soul.

There was an indignant stir among the officers, and many lips seemed trembling with speech. The impetuous Rigaud de Vaudreuil broke the fierce silence. He struck his fist heavily on the table.

"Ordered us to stop the building of the walls of Quebec, and to pull down what we have done by virtue of the King's corvée?—did I hear your Excellency right?" repeated he in a tone of utmost incredulity. "The King is surely mad to think of such a thing!"

"Yes, Rigaud! it is as I tell you; but we must respect the royal command, and treat His Majesty's name as becomes loyal servants."

"Ventre saint bleu!—heard ever Canadian or Frenchman such moonshine madness! I repeat it, your Excellency—dismantle Quebec? How in God's name are the King's dominions and the King's subjects to be defended?" Rigaud got warmer. He was fearless, and would, as everyone knew, have out his say had the King been present in person. "Be assured, your Excellency, it is not the King who orders that affront to his faithful colony; it is the King's ministers—the King's mistresses—the snuff-box-tapping courtiers at Versailles, who can spend the public money in more elegant ways than in raising up walls round our brave old city! Ancient honor and chivalry of France! what has become of you?"

Rigaud sat down angrily; the emotion he displayed was too much in accord with the feelings of the gallant officers present to excite other than marks of approbation, except among a few personal friends of the Intendant, who took their cue from the avowed wishes of the Court.

"What reason does His Majesty give," asked La Corne St. Luc, "for this singular communication?"

"The only reason given is found in the concluding paragraph of the despatch. I will allow the Secretary to read so much of it, and no more, before the Intendant arrives." The Governor looked up at the great clock in the hall with a grim glance of impatience, as if mentally calling down anything but a blessing upon the head of the loitering Intendant.

"The Count de le Galissoniere ought to know," said the despatch, sneeringly, "that works like those of Quebec are not to be undertaken by the governors of colonies, except under express orders from the King; and therefore it is His Majesty's desire that upon the reception of this despatch your Excellency will discontinue the works that have been begun upon Quebec. Extensive fortifications require strong garrisons for their defence, and the King's treasury is already exhausted by the extraordinary expenses of the war in Europe. It cannot at the same time carry on the war in Europe and meet the heavy drafts made upon it from North America."