



# FOR FAITH and KING

## a Romance of Ville-Marie

BY BLANCHE L. MACDONELL.

### CHAPTER II.—Continued.

The Iroquois turned and fought desperately with courage and address, leaping and dodging among trees, rocks and bushes, then seeing themselves confronted by numbers that seemed endless, retreated, bearing their wounded and most of their dead with them.

As the thick, white cloud of smoke rolled away, allowing surrounding objects to be seen, the young Canadian exclaimed exultantly: "It is a war party of Hurons and Algonquins returning from an expedition. Have no apprehension, Diane, our adversaries have fled."

"Is it then quite certain, M'sieur—but beyond doubt," pleaded a timorous voice from some remote depth of obscurity.

"Wretched coward! where hast thou hidden thy miserable carcass?" With a look of smirking bewilderment on his fat face, the valet crept from his place of concealment.

"Scaramouch! screech owl! that I had the wringing of thine unworthy neck," panted Nanon.

"Ouf! that should exist! Art thou not ashamed to show thy face?"

"But no, M'sieur. It is quite simple," with an affectation of innocent frankness. "Figure to yourself, it is the nature of M'sieur to have courage—it is well. It is the delight of Nanon to chatter and the instinct of Bibelot to detest the pagans—it is still well, and for me I have an invincible repugnance for the scalping knives of the Iroquois. Had I permitted myself to be killed, M'sieur would have been deprived of a faithful servant, and these savages would have added a fresh crime to their list of enormities. May I ask M'sieur is it the duty of good Christians to tempt the heathen?"

The new arrivals were sun-gilt warriors; tall, stalwart figures, limbed like Grecian statues. Success had crowned their arms, and they gloried in an imposing array of scalps. Most of them wore nothing but horns on their heads and the tails of beasts tied behind their backs. Their faces were painted red or green with black or white spots, their ears and noses were hung with ornaments of iron, and their naked bodies daubed with figures of various animals. They looked like painted spectres, grotesquely horrible in horns and tails. The fierce and capricious warriors smiled upon the prompt and fiery young soldier whose dauntless courage had won their approbation, and whose sympathetic vivacity rendered him gracious and winning.

"Ho! my brother," exclaimed the principal war chief. "The face of our white brother is welcome as the flowers of spring. And has the Snow Flower left the wigwams of her people?"

The last time Du Chêne had met Howaka his head had been plumed, his face painted, his tall form draped in a heavy blanket and his feet decked in embroidered moccasins. He was much less imposing now, as he squatted on the grass, resting after his triumphs, with a piece of board laid across his lap, chopping rank tobacco with a scalping knife, with a face of leathery solidity, while he entertained the grinning circle that surrounded him with grotesque jokes. An astute old savage, well-trained in the arts of policy, showed every disposition to render himself agreeable to the son of the great French trader.

"But look, Du Chêne, it is a white prisoner."

"A young New England girl whom one of the chiefs, Nitschona, claims to replace a wife he lost during the last winter."

"An English heretic—take care, then, Mademoiselle," urged Nanon. "She may have the power of the evil eye. True sorcerers, these English; it is said they devour little children even to the bones. They are, indeed, wicked, but of a wickedness truly terrific. Yet this one has not the appearance of a veritable monster."

In the lethargy of utter exhaustion, her limbs relaxed, and nerveless the girl lay on the grass as though she were utterly unconscious of the clamour of voices or curious regards which were directed towards her. So wild and wandering was her look that it seemed as though excessive terror had deprived her of her senses. She appeared very young and frail and helpless, like some fragile flower bleached by rough wind and rain. Her features were so delicately perfect, her complexion of an exquisite purity so utterly devoid of colour that she resembled some beautiful statue of Despair. Diane looked at her with that inexplicable attraction which so often exists between persons of singularly opposite nature and opinions. The new desires and aspirations recently awakened in her own breast endowed all existence with a novel pathos as well as a fresh delight. She knelt down, clasping the cold, passive hand in hers, whispering soft words of comfort and encouragement.

"There has been a violent dispute concerning the prisoner," explained Du Chêne, who understood the Indian

dialects perfectly. "Nitschona claims her as his own, but there is another party who desires to torture her, and Howaka has threatened to settle the quarrel by a blow of the tomahawk, which will end at once the discussion and the captive's existence."

"How beautiful she is, and already half dead with misery, fatigue and terror. This might have been our case had the Holy Virgin not sent us succour. Du Chêne, we must ransom her," a compassion, passionate in its tender intensity, pleaded in Diane's faltering accents.

"I don't know. It must be admitted there is but a pinch of hope."

The same thought had already crossed the young man's mind. The chief impression made upon him by the English girl was one of forlorn beauty and innocence. He was chivalrous and tender hearted, yet he comprehended that the ransom of the prisoner was secondary in paramount importance to the necessity of propitiating the savage allies. Du Chêne thoroughly understood the art of dealing with these children of the forest. He could conform to their customs and flatter them with great address. He understood the uncertain, vacillating temper common to all savages. Unsteady as aspens, fierce as wild-cats, rent by mutual jealousies, a perilous crew who changed their intentions as the wind blew, whose dancing, singing, yelling might at any moment turn into warwhoops against each other or against the French. The youth stood, his full, deep eyes fixed upon the motley tribe with the cool, vigilant, masterful scrutiny with which the wild beast tamer might regard the ferocious animals committed to his charge. His nerves were tense with a sense of resistance against the cruelty of circumstances, the protest of humanity. His dark eyes were aflame; there was so much agile strength in his bearing, so much fire and force in his handsome, young face, that, as she listened to his glowing words, Diane's heart beat high with pride. With bold adroitness he assured Howaka that if the white prisoner were a subject of dispute to his red brothers, he was willing to relieve them of the burden. He imitated the prolonged accents of the savages and addressed them in turn by their respective tribes, bands and families, calling their men of note by name, as if he had been born among them. The naked crew, with wild eyes and long, lank hair, gathered around their chiefs, silent and attentive, with eyes fixed on the bows of their pipes, listening with strict, impartial interest. Plainly, the impression he had made was favourable. Their exclamations of approval came thick and fast at every pause of his harangue. At one time Nitschona started forward, brandishing his hatchet, declaring that, as the prisoner belonged to him by right of war, he would kill her rather than waive his claim.

"Have I killed foes on the war path? Yes, my arm is weary of slaying, my eye of counting. The enemies' scalps ornament the wigwag of the chief in so great a number that they shelter it from rain on stormy nights."

The English maiden was far too spent by fear and exhaustion to be greatly moved by this menace. Occurrences had been struck off by time in such quick repetition that they seemed like a nightmare, an awful void in which every wretchedness was conceivable and in which there was no comfort or solace to be found. Within the last few days she had become familiar with massacre and pillage, she had seen the home that sheltered her burnt to the ground, relatives butchered before her eyes, had witnessed the torture of friends and neighbours, had endured incredible fatigue and uncertainty concerning her own fate, now the overstrained brain refused to receive fresh impressions, a merciful lethargy deadened all sensation. With an intuition inspired by instinct rather than by reason, she turned to Diane with a mute, agonized, but half-unconscious, appeal. The French girl returned the glance with a sob of excitement and agitation swelling in her slender throat. Finally, on the promise of a rich ransom being given, Nitschona began to dance, holding his hands upraised, as though apostrophizing the sky. Suddenly he seized his tomahawk, brandished it wildly, and then flung it from him.

"Thus I throw away my anger," he shouted. "Thus I cast off my weapons of blood. Let the Wounded Fawn be led away to the wigwams of the French. Now, are we brothers forever?"

A swift expression, like a flash of light, crossed Du Chêne's face. Howaka rose and spoke with an air of dignity.

"Farewell, war! Farewell, tomahawk! We have been often fools, henceforth the French are our brothers; Ononthis is our father. Brother, our covenant with you is a silver chain which can neither break nor rust. We are of the race of the bear, and the bear never yields to force so long as there is a drop of blood in his body; but

the ear of the bear is ever open to the voice of a friend. The Snow-Drop will adopt the Wounded Fawn as a sister. Shall the bird in its nest fear the wind or tempest, so shall the captive rest with the pale faces. Canawish, the prisoner is yours."

Knowing that the savages might change like a drift of dried leaves, Du Chêne had no idea of resting in a false and fatal security.

"We will go down the river with Howaka," he decided promptly.

As they floated down with the current, the Indians sang their songs of victory, striking the edge of their paddles against the sides of their bark vessels, in cadence with their voices; first one wild voice raised itself in strange discordant sounds, dropped low and then abruptly rose again, swelling into shrill yelps, in which the whole party joined in chorus. Among them two Iroquois prisoners stood upright, shouting loudly and defiantly, as men not fearing torture or death, while from seven poles raised aloft seven fresh scalps fluttered in the breeze.

The red sunset was flaring on the river, and though the vermilion disk still lingered over purple Mount Royal, the moon a luminous sphere, pearly and splendid, swung high in the east, accompanied by the vaguely scintillating star at the zenith. So it came to pass that the Puritan damsel, Lydia Longloy, entered upon a new existence, protected by Diane de Monestral's tender care, succoured by the charity of French Catholics, the sound of whose name had all her life long been a haunting terror.

### CHAPTER III.

"Thou who didst make and knowest whereof we are made,  
Oh! bear in mind our dust and nothingness;  
Our word's, fearless, dumbness of distress;  
Bear thou in mind the burden thou hast laid  
Upon us and our feebleness unstayed,  
Except thou stay us."

The house occupied by Jacques Le Ber stood at the corner of St. Paul and St. Joseph streets, the front windows commanding a fine view of the river, while the back ones overlooked undulating meadows and woodland. Away in the distance appeared Mount Royal, on whose summit, amidst thick foliage, gleamed the cross which, in fulfilment of his vow, Maisonneuve had himself borne up the steep mountain track. Le Ber's house was a substantial stone building, long and low, with high peaked roof and overhanging eaves. The rooms were large, having low ceilings and immense chimneys which occupied half of one side of the wall. On either side of the street door were placed wooden benches where the family and visitors collected for recreation on the summer evenings. In an addition adjoining the house was the shop, the foundation of the successful traders' wealth, in which were stored quantities of golden beaver skins waiting shipment to France, as well as the various commodities required by the colonists and such provisions as were considered necessary in fitting out the canoes of voyageurs for long expeditions. At the back the garden bloomed with fragrant, old-fashioned flowers, while tastefully cultivated pear and plum trees revived a memory of Old France. The establishment bore evidence of wealth and comfort in a plain, solid bourgeois style.

Though Le Ber's own family consisted only of a daughter and three sons, one of whom was at this time in France, yet the household was a large one. The great merchant extended a broad and kindly hospitality to all who might seek the shelter of his home. Friends, relatives, guests, servants and retainers, the house was always full to overflowing, and, like the settlement, its occupants were divided into two clearly defined parties—the worldly and the devout. In her early days, Ville Marie had been regulated like a religious community. The mental atmosphere was saturated with harebrained enthusiasm. It was an age of miracles, the very existence of the colony was a marvel. But already the trail of the serpent had entered this priestly Paradise. The severity of the ecclesiastical rule and the unrelenting vigilance of the Jesuits was resented by many. In the midst of pressing dangers and heroic struggles there was a natural reaction in favour of the frivolous gaiety so eminently characteristic of the volatile French temperament. The presence of a number of officers from France whose piety was less conspicuous than their love of enjoyment, served to keep alive this sentiment.

The home of the wealthy burgher had acquired, in public opinion, a peculiar sanctity from the presence of his only daughter, the richest heiress of New France, who, in the bloom of her youth, had separated herself from all earthly pleasures and interests in order to devote herself to a life of contemplation. The halo of saintship glittered before this girl's eyes like a diamond crown, and she had firmly resolved to emulate the virtues of St. Paul the Hermit, St. Anthony and St. Mary of Egypt. Lost in the vagaries of an absorbing mysticism, Jeanne Le Ber was unrelenting in every practice of humiliation. Looking down with lofty spiritual pride upon the common herd of Christians who busied themselves with the ordinary duties of life, she eschewed the visible and present, aspiring to live only for God. Wonderful tales of her superior sanctity were whispered abroad. Though her face was never seen nor her voice heard by those most nearly connected with her, yet from the secluded chamber, which for several years she had never quitted, that voiceless presence exercised a most potent ascendancy. This influence had operated most powerfully upon her eldest brother, Pierre, an enthusiastic devotee of mystical tendencies, who was quick and impulsive as a thoroughbred; sensitive, full of refinement and tender delicacy.

(To be continued.)