

one or two ventured to follow her as she went round the walls.

An old man of eighty, who had spent the chief part of his life in the service of the Sieur de Verchères, was sleeping under the shelter of the parapet. Octave awoke him.

"Father Grammont," he said, "will you not help us? The savages are coming on. They will take your scalp."

The old man rose.

"We are young," Marguerite said. "We will do all we can; but you can do something."

"What use should I be to the Iroquois?" the old man asked. "It is not *me*, but you *garçons* they want. They shall not take my scalp while I am within the fort of Verchères."

"Octave will take the north bastion," Marguerite proceeded, "Auguste the west. You, De Grammont, can stand on the east, I will take the south, Hélène will bring up food and water."

They repaired to the places—the posts assigned. Marguerite brought out all the small store of arms and ammunition of which the fort could boast, and then arranged with the women, who, a little reassured by her energy and self-possession, had gained some little courage, that they should come up, at regular intervals of time, and call the *bon quart*.

"And now, my brothers," she said, "we must defend ourselves, if needful, to the death. We will fight for our country and for religion; and remember, in this hour of need, what our father has taught you, that gentlemen are born for the service of God and of the King."

For herself, this noble child said, she would, while she had life, combat for God and for her country. It was, in truth, her own and her brothers' lives she had to save.

The light clouds, which in misty streaks had begun to veil the sun, now stretched in dark masses across the sky; thin showers of snow came sweeping over the woods, while keen, autumnal breezes sent chilling blasts and driving hail on the unsheltered watchers round the bastions. Marguerite made her brothers conceal themselves from the enemy's sight. Venturing herself to look through a loophole she saw the band

of savages, forty-five in number, alternately advance and retreat, brandishing their spears as they came near, then, intimidated by the sound of the *bon quart* which gave the idea of a large garrison being within, they stood for a while irresolute and retired, throwing out scouting parties to watch for an opportunity of some surprise.

For two days and nights Marguerite dared not leave her post. Hélène, the bravest among the women, came up occasionally to watch, while the boys, in turn, took a little repose,—Marguerite, without sleep or food, incessantly watching the movements of the enemy. Once only she descended to look for the little monogram, the withered golden rod, which she had dropped in the alarm of their entrance. She carefully wrapped this in the folds of her dress, and, sitting on a stone, would close her eyes for a few moments, then, quickly rousing herself, peer out to see if the enemy were in sight.

CHAPTER II.

The third night, as a dim gleam of moonlight cast a flickering light over the bastion, a low rustling sound made Marguerite start, and, turning her head, she saw a dark figure emerge from the stairs. It was Annette, a young woman who had been admitted with the others into the fort, and, with them, allowed to remain. She was an orphan, of Huguenot extraction, and in return for the hospitality she received had made herself useful as far as was in her power.

Though of a different faith to the inmates of the fort, Annette's gentleness and assiduity had made her an especial favorite with Madame de Verchères; while her kindness and readiness to assist had gained her the goodwill of all the dependents. She now came to offer herself to keep watch, while the young lady took a little repose. Marguerite gladly availed herself of the opportunity to visit the bastions; but, instead of reposing herself, she sent the old man to rest. De Grammont, with feeble steps, proceeded to Octave's post, where, under shelter of the wall, wrapping himself in a cloak, he stretched his weary