

"Boyce, for God's sake open the gate, and place men in readiness to lower the drawbridge," implored Sir Everard of the office of the guard, and in a tone of deep emotion that was not meant to be overheard by the governor. "I fear the boldness of this vengeful man may lead him to some desperate means of escape."

While the officer whom he addressed issued a command, the responsibility of which he fancied he might, under the peculiar circumstances of the moment, take upon himself, Wacousta began his descent, not as before, by adhering to the staff but by the rope which he held in his left hand, while he still supported the apparently senseless Clara against his right breast with the other.

"Now, Colonel de Haldimar, I hope your heart is at rest," he shouted, as he rapidly glided by the cord; "enjoy your triumph as best may suit your pleasure."

Every eye followed his movement with interest; every heart beat lighter at the certainty of Clara being again restored, and without other injury than the terror she must have experienced in such a scene. Each congratulated himself on the favorable termination of the terrible adventure, yet were all ready to spring upon and secure the desperate author of the wrong. Wacousta had now reached the centre of the flag-staff. Pausing for a moment, he grappled it with his strong and nervous feet, on which he apparently rested, to give a momentary relief to the muscles of his left arm. He then abruptly abandoned his hold, swinging himself out a few yards from the staff, and returning again, dashed his feet against it with a force that caused the weakened mass to vibrate to its very foundation. Impelled by his weight, and the violence of his action, the creaking pine gave way; its lofty top gradually bending over the exterior rampart until it finally snapped asunder, and fell with a loud crash across the ditch.

"Open the gate, down with the drawbridge!" exclaimed the excited governor.

"Down with the drawbridge," repeated Sir Everard to the men already stationed there ready to let loose at the first order. The heavy chains rattled sullenly through the rusty pulleys, and to each the bridge seemed an hour descending. Before it had reached its level, it was covered with the weight of many armed men rushing confusedly to the front; and the foremost of these leaped to the earth before it had sunk into its customary bed. Sir Everard Valletort and Lieutenant Johnstone were in the front, both armed with their rifles, which had been brought them before Wacousta commenced his descent. Without order or combination, Erskine, Blessington, and nearly half of their respective companies, followed as they could; and dispersing as they advanced, sought only which could outstrip his fellows in the pursuit.

Meanwhile the fugitive, assisted in his fall by the gradual rending asunder of the staff, had obeyed the impulsion first given to his active form, until, suddenly checking himself by the rope, he dropped with his feet downward into the centre of the ditch. For a moment he disappeared, then came again uninjured to the surface; and in the face of more than fifty men, who, lining the rampart with their muskets levelled to take him at advantage the instant he should reappear, seemed to laugh their efforts to scorn. Holding Clara before him as a shield, through which the bullets of his enemies must pass before they could attain him, he impelled his gigantic form with a backward movement toward the opposite bank, which he rapidly ascended; and, still