

carried a long flint-lock rifle slung across his shoulders, pistols in his holsters, and a sword at his side.

His face was tanned to a red-brown as deep as an Indian's; and from that savage-hued mask his blue eyes shone out with startling brightness. His light brown hair, where it lay on his neck unpowdered, and tied with a narrow ribbon, was bleached by the sun to the shade of ripe corn-husks. He was slender of figure, and but little above the medium height of men of his race; but he was well-muscled and well-featured, thin and hard as a hound, and with courage in eyes and brow to be read at a glance. For all his service-worn equipment, and sixty days of campaigning, he sat straight and rode lightly.

At a gap in a hedge barred with rails, Francis Drurie dismounted. Here began a shaded path which he knew; and by it he would ride, coolly and free of dust, across the groves of Fairwood Manor and Admiral's Pride, and into the arms of his family. He lowered the rails, led his horse over and swung to the saddle.

The narrow path was carpeted with short, thin grass as soft as moss. The hoofs of his horse made no sound. Suddenly across the still air, fragrant with the breath of ripened leaves and mellow earth, and cones purpling in the sun, lifted a voice, singing.