

## A CHAPTER FROM WACOSTA.

## THE ESCAPE.

It was the eighth hour of morning, and both officers and men, quitting their ill-relished meal, were to be seen issuing to the parade, where the monotonous roll of the *assemblée* now summoned them. Presently the garrison was formed, presenting three equal sides of a square. The vacant space fronted the guard house, nor one extremity of which was to be seen a flight of steps communicating with the rampart, where the flag-staff was erected. Several men were employed at this staff, passing strong ropes through iron pulleys that were suspended from the extreme top, while in the basement of the staff itself, to a height of about twenty feet, were stuck at intervals strong wooden pegs, serving as steps to the artillery-men for greater facility in clearing, when foul, the lines to which the colours were attached. The latter had been removed; and, from the substitution of a cord considerably stronger than that which usually appeared there, it seemed as if some far heavier weight was about to be appended to it. Gradually the men, having completed their usual preparations, quitted the rampart, and the flag-staff, which was of tapering pine, was left totally unguarded.

The "Attention!" of Major Backwater to the troops, who had been hitherto standing in attitudes of expectancy that rendered the injunction almost superfluous, announced the approach of the governor. Soon afterward that officer entered the area, wearing his characteristic dignity of manner, yet exhibiting every evidence of one who had suffered deeply. Preparations for a drum-head court-martial, as in the first case of Halloway, had already been made within the square, and the only actor wanting in the drama was he who was to be tried.

Once Colonel de Haldimar made an effort to command his appearance, but the huskiness of his voice choked his utterance, and he was compelled to pause. After the lapse of a few moments, he again ordered, but in a voice that was remarked to falter:

"Mr. Lawson, let the prisoner be brought forth."

The feeling of suspense that ensued between the delivery and execution of this command was painful throughout the ranks. All were penetrated with curiosity to behold a man who had several times appeared to them under the most appalling circumstances, and against whom the strongest feeling of indignation had been excited for his barbarous murder of Charles de Haldimar. It was with mingled awe and anger they now awaited his approach. At length the captive was seen advancing from the cell in which he had been confined, his gigantic form towering far above those of the guard of grenadiers by whom he was surrounded; and with a haughtiness in his air, and insolence in his manner, that told he came to confront his enemy with a spirit unsubdued by the fate that too probably awaited him.

Many an eye was turned upon the governor at that moment. He was evidently struggling for composure to meet the scene he felt it to be impossible to avoid; and he turned pale and paler as his enemy drew near.

At length the prisoner stood nearly in the same spot where his unfortunate nephew had lingered on a former occasion. He was unchained; but his hands were firmly secured behind his back. He threw himself into an attitude of carelessness, resting on one foot, and tapping the earth with the other; rivetting his eye, at the same time, with an expression of the most daring insolence, on the governor, while his swarthy cheek was moreover lighted up with a smile of the deepest scorn.

"You are Reginald Morton, the outlaw, I believe," at length observed the governor, in an under tone, that, however, acquired greater firmness as he proceeded,—“one whose life has already been forfeited through his treasonable practices in Europe, and who has, moreover, incurred the penalty of an ignominious death, by acting in this country as a spy of the enemies of England. What say you, Reginald Morton, that you should not be convicted in the death that awaits the traitor?”

"Ha! ha! by heaven, such cold, pompous insolence amuses me," vociferated Wacosta. "It reminds me of Ensign de Haldimar of nearly five and twenty years back, who was then as cunning a dissembler as he is now." Suddenly changing his ribald tone to one of scorn and rage:—"You *believe* me, you say, to be Reginald Morton, the outlaw. Well do you know it. I am that Sir Reginald Morton, who became an outlaw, not through his own crimes, but through your villainy. Ay, frown as you may, I heed it not. You may award me death, but shall not chain my tongue. To your whole regiment do I proclaim you for a false, remorseless villain." Then turning his flashing eye along the ranks:—"I was once an officer in this corps, and long before any of you wore the accursed uniform. That man, that fiend, affected to be my friend; and under the guise of friendship, stole into the heart I loved better than my own life. Yes," fervently pursued the excited prisoner, stamping violently with his foot upon the earth, "he robbed me of my affianced wife; and for that I resented an outrage that should have banished him to some lone region, where he might never again pollute human nature with his presence—he caused me to be tried by a court-martial, and dismissed the service. Then, indeed, I became the outlaw he has described, but not until then. Now, Colonel de Haldimar, that I have proclaimed your infamy, poor and inefficient as the triumph be, do your worst—I ask no mercy. Yesterday I thought that years of toilsome pursuit of the means of vengeance were about to be crowned with success; but fate has turned the tables on me, and I yield."

To all but the baronet and Captain Blessington