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THE PEACE-KILLER; OR, THE MASSACRE OF LACHINE.

BY S. J. WATSON.

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CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

"You know an elm tree that grows close by the edge of the lake, and about two miles from the fort?" the Huron inquired of his sister.

"I have sat under it a hundred times."

"Then go there to-night, about an hour after sunset; it was the place where my warriors appointed to meet me, after they had come from looking after the beaver. If you see no sign of friends, light five sticks; each stick will signify each of the five canoes. As soon as you have made the lights, put them out one by one. That is our signal. Wait for half-an-hour; then, if you get no answer to your signal, come back to me."

"I will do all this," said the girl resolutely. "But if your warriors answer my signal, what next?"

"Bring twelve of them with you. Steal unseen to that part of the palisade opposite the window of this cell. Let some of the warriors dig an opening under the palisade. Two of them can creep through; let them bring a coil of rope and a third tomahawk. Let one of them climb to the grating outside, and putting the tomahawk through, lower it down to me by means of the rope. I shall answer for the rest. But can you remember all these things, Isanta?"

"They are easy to remember. But is this all you wish me to do?"

"No. I have something more to say. You know the man who brought you the little roll of bark which told you I was here?"

"I know him. He is my friend."

"He is a brave man. He loves you and hates the Serpent. Before you go to the elm tree, see this man. Tell him all I have told you; and bring him with you to the lake. If my warriors answer your signal, then send this man to set fire to the huts of the Abenakis. That will divert them from prowling round, and allow my warriors to remain unobserved."

"But, my brother, if the French find out that Tambour has done this harm to their allies, they will put him to death."

"They will not catch him. He will follow me. He will become one of ourselves."

"How do you know that?"

"Because he loves you, and where you go he will follow."

"Alas!" replied the girl sadly, "if he knew all he would not risk his life to serve me."

"And why not?" inquired the Chief abruptly. "There are none of the daughters of the pale faces who are more beautiful than Isanta."

"I cannot say now all I might wish to say. But I hope that Tambour will run no risk. It is a pity that a brave man should toil in vain."

"Isanta, you speak like a child. I am a judge of men; and I tell you there is no better nor braver man in this fort than Tambour. He does not wear the richest clothes. But would you prefer the poplar, with its silver coat, to the oak with its cloak of wrinkles? I will say no more now. Go on your errand, and be successful."

"But if I am not successful, what then?"

"Come back and tell me."

"What will you do, if I should fail? Remember nothing can save you from the vengeance of the Serpent."

"Even should you fail in this, I have two other ways to escape. But time is everything. So, for the present, farewell!"

The chieftain embraced his sister once more, and the girl, with a light step and a resolute heart, left the cell, and began to prepare herself for her mission.

As darkness drew on, the cell was opened, and a soldier, armed with a musket, and bearing a lantern, entered, and stood with his back to the door. The Huron observed him narrowly, feeling, at the same time, a sense of disappointment, such as he had not experienced since his capture. He determined, however, to ascertain as much as he could from his guard, and asked him:

"Has the warrior of the French garrison come here to put the Huron to death?"

The soldier replied in a tone of astonishment—"A soldier of the French army does not kill unarmed men."

"Why, then, has he come here?"

"To guard you, so that you may not escape."

"There is no chance of escape here. I am unarmed and the walls are thick."

"True, but the Serpent told the Governor you have more cunning than a hundred men, and that it was best to send a French soldier to guard you."

"Why did not the Serpent come here himself?"

"There is no Indian allowed to enter the fort after sunset," replied the soldier.

"What time am I to be led out to die?"

"At sunrise, and I remain with you till then. But I do not like to be here keeping guard over a brave man. I would rather the Serpent were in your place, and that you were free."

"But why am I to be led out so early as sunrise? That is not the hour at which the Abenakis put their prisoners to death."

"The army starts against the Iroquois early to-morrow morning. That must be the reason why you have to die at sunrise."

"So be it, then. But when I have to die so early, it is time I should try to sleep." So saying, the prisoner lay down in the centre of the floor, with his face turned in the direction of the grating in the wall.

In a few minutes he began to snore, and the sentry concluded he was fast asleep. But no slumber in reality had come over the senses of the wary Huron, who, unnoticed by his guard, had turned his feet towards the latter. As the hours drew on, the prisoner was rejoiced to see that the lantern was growing dimmer and dimmer, and that the sentinel, lulled into security by his peaceful demeanour, had sunk down in a sitting posture beside his light. Presently the Huron heard from his companion the sounds of unmistakable slumber; and, propelling himself along the ground, feet foremost, he suddenly rose on his haunches and sprang upon his guard. The soldier had no opportunity to cry out, before he found one hand of the Huron upon his throat, and the other pressed firmly over his mouth. To gag and bind the soldier was the work of but a few minutes. The prisoner next proceeded to secure the rifle; and this done he extinguished the lantern. The guard rolled himself over and over on the floor, expecting his death-blow every moment. But the Huron reassured him by telling him that he intended him no violence whatever.

At length, to his infinite relief, the prisoner beheld a bright red light flash up outside the grating of his cell. He knew that the hand of a friend had fired the huts of the Abenakis—he knew that relief was approaching; and he went and stood opposite the grating.

He had not long to wait. Soon his practised ear discerned the whispering of voices outside. In a few moments more a tomahawk, attached to a rope, came through the grating of the cell. The prisoner transferred the weapon to his belt, and seizing the sentry's gun, hoisted himself, by means of the rope, to the level of the grating. Words of encouragement greeted him from the outside, as he grasped hold of the centre bar of the grating and tried to shake it from its place. But to his disappointment the iron bar stood firm. He could have driven it out by a few blows of his tomahawk, but this would have alarmed the soldiers in the guard house, which was not more than twenty yards from the cell. In this emergency he bethought himself of the gun, and applying it as a lever dislodged the bar from its place. The gun, however, went off just as the bar fell outward, and the noise was at once heard in the guard-room. But the Huron was instantly through the grating, and almost as soon as the explosion had died away, his friends and himself had disappeared beneath the passage which the former had prepared beforehand under the palisade. The officer of the guard, that night, happened to be no other than Lieut. de Belmont. On hearing the report of the gun, he at once hurried toward the cell, suspecting that something was wrong inside. He found the sentry bound and gagged, and saw that the Huron had escaped. Without taking time to release the soldier from his bonds, de Belmont rushed outside, and cast a rapid survey in the direction of the palisade. He noticed that a passage had been newly made underneath it; and through this passage he instantly made his way, and followed in the direction in which he heard the crackling of the brushwood. The young man continued the chase until he came within sight of the lake. Here the noise suddenly ceased, and he stopped to listen. But ere he had regained his breath, four pairs of strong arms pinioned him from behind, and he felt himself rapidly borne towards the water's edge. In a few moments more, he was in a canoe, the last of five, the heads of which were turned up Lake Ontario, the little vessels flying through the water and leaving the Port of Catarqui far behind. He recognized three persons in the canoe; they were Kondiarak, Isanta, and Tambour.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BATTLE.

The escape of the Huron prisoner, and the partial conflagration of the Abenakis encampment, filled the Serpent and his tribe with the utmost indignation. On the other hand, the French were mystified and surprised at the disappearance of Lieut. de Belmont, Tambour, and Isanta. The first impression was that the two former had been slain, and that it was the Iroquois who had perpetrated the deed; and Lieut. Vruze took pains to have it circulated that the Serpent had been correct in his assertion that the captive had been an Iroquois spy.

But there were two persons in the fort who, perhaps, more than any others, were agitated by the events that had transpired during the

night; and these were the Serpent and Julie de Châtelet. The former was infuriated that his prospective wife and his prisoner had both escaped; the latter, in deep chagrin, brooded over the last meeting she had had with her lover; and leaped to the conclusion that he had assisted the Huron to escape, for the sake of Isanta, and had accompanied her brother and herself to the native territory of the tribe. And then Julie blamed herself that she had not discovered the treachery of de Belmont sooner; but, on the other hand, she sought comfort in the grim consolation that the suspicions of his loyalty to herself, with which she had charged de Belmont, at their last interview, had now the strongest claims to her belief.

The Marquis de Denonville, though at first somewhat disconcerted by the news of the escape of the prisoner, whom he now believed to be an Iroquois spy, managed to conciliate the Serpent, and extorted a solemn promise that he should accompany the expedition. The Marquis delayed starting for a couple of hours beyond the time originally decided upon, in order to allow an opportunity of searching the woods around the fort for traces of de Belmont, Tambour, and Isanta. But, on the return of those who had been engaged scouring the woods, and on hearing of their want of success, the Marquis gave orders to march to the army, who had been awaiting from an early hour in the morning the word of command. The troops received it with delight, and started on their march chanting the following

BATTLE SONG:

Welcome to the bugle blast!
And the order, "Forward, fast!"
Greet it with a ringing cheer,
Swordsman, gunner, musketeer!
Foeman-ward our flags are shaken;
"Forward, fast!" our homes are dear;
Leave to Heaven to guard the rear,
And our children, when they waken.

Fate may strike: who fears to die?
Hosts may come: who dares to fly?
Many a grave, by good right hand
Shall be dug, ere hostile band
'Mongst our homesteads shall have wan-
[dered];
Hail! then, to our chief's command,
"Forward, fast!" for Native Land,
For one Monarch 'neath one standard.

"Forward!" rings along the line,
Valour hails it as the sign
That our dreams, by day and night,
Victory shall read aright
When we break the foe asunder:
"Forward, fast!" through dark or bright
Glory's in the vanguard's sight,
Fame behind, with trump of thunder.

One heart throbs within our ranks,
From the centre to the flanks.
Roll the charge step from the drum,
It will sound, through years to come,
Telling how we hailed the order.
Let our deeds speak when we're dumb;
Echo back to Christendom,
Canada can guard her border!

The troops, after crossing Lake Ontario, disembarked at the Rivière des Sables, on the south bank, near the place where the Iroquois were known to be entrenched. The expedition was composed of the reinforcements the Chevalier de Vaudreuil had brought over from France; and these men, who had been disciplined anew by M. de Callières, on St. Helen's Island, were under the command respectively of that veteran and the Chevalier. The native Canadian militia, divided into four battalions, were commanded by Messrs. Lavaltrie, Berthier, Grandville and Longueuil. The day of their arrival at the Rivière des Sables, the little army of the Marquis was augmented by an additional force of six hundred men, brought from Detroit by Messrs. La Durantaye, Tonti and De Luth.

In order to reach the enemy, the French had to march through a tract of country, which was interspersed with hills and marshes, and was in every way adapted for ambuscades. The progress was necessarily somewhat slow, for every precaution had to be put in operation, in order to prevent a surprise by the ever-watchful enemy. The troops, especially those from Europe, were great sufferers from the intense summer heat, and the insect pests of the forest. Still they never flagged, nor murmured; but toiled forward with the earnest hope that every marsh through which they plodded, and every hill they ascended, might bring them within sight of the enemy.

On the other hand, the Iroquois were well aware of the approach of the French; for one of the tribe captured by the latter, had managed to make his escape, and informed his brethren of the coming up of the expedition.

At length, to their infinite satisfaction, the French came in sight of the village of the Tsonnonthouans, one of the five tribes that composed the Iroquois Confederation. The enemy, however, declined to accept battle; and having fired their village, at once retired further back into the forest. But their retreat was not of long duration; for they returned, and, unobserved by the French, posted themselves, to the number of three hundred strong,

on a brook which ran between two wooded hills in front of their ruined town. At the same time, five hundred more of the Tsonnonthouans placed themselves in ambuscade in a morass, thick with reeds, at some distance from the brook. In this position the two ambuscades awaited the approach of the French, who having charged a smaller body of the enemy, purposely placed on the road leading to the village, this detachment of the Iroquois, as had been previously concerted with their brethren in ambuscade, took to flight. The vanguard of the French, in the eagerness of its pursuit, separated themselves from the main body, and neared the guarded brook. But the three hundred Iroquois lost their advantage, by reason of their impetuosity. Instead of allowing the French army to pass, then getting into its rear and driving it upon the second ambuscade in the morass, the Iroquois, treating the van as if it had been the whole force, and observing, at the same time, that it was chiefly composed of the Abenakis, sounded their war-whoop and opened a volley of musketry. Terrified by this fire from an unseen foe, the Abenakis fled; and the Iroquois at once sallied out in pursuit. But they were scarcely four hundred yards from their late place of concealment on the brook, when they were met by Lavaltrie, at the head of the Provincial militia, who were advancing at the quick step, the drums beating a charge. It was now the turn of the Iroquois to fly. Afraid to meet the gallant militia, whose prowess they had often experienced before, the enemy turned, and made for the marsh where the other ambuscade was posted. Here the panic of the fugitives seized upon the occupants of the marsh; and they all fled together, flinging away their arms as they ran.

The loss of the French was inconsiderable; while the Iroquois had to lament the death of many gallant warriors, whose bodies, in spite of the efforts of the Marquis de Denonville and his officers, were carried away secretly at night, by the Abenakis, who made of them, according to their custom, a cannibal banquet.

The morning after the battle, the French took possession of the granaries of the Tsonnonthouans, and found stored therein, four hundred thousand bushels of maize. For ten days they ravaged the country, destroyed the standing crops and slaughtered the cattle, without having seen the face of an Iroquois. The whole population of the Tsonnonthouan Canton, terrified by the results of the battle, had fled the country, some of them having even passed into Virginia.

The Iroquois, as a whole people, were completely demoralized; and might have easily been conquered in detail. But the Marquis contented himself with taking formal possession of the country in the name of the King of France; and, contrary to the expectation of his officers and men, neglected to follow up his success, and ordered his troops to prepare for their return homeward.

The French army had again reached Rivière des Sables, and the sun was going down, when they had finished their preparations for recrossing Lake Ontario on the morrow. The officers had just posted the sentinels, when the report of a musket, close at hand, brought every man in camp to his feet. In a few minutes anxiety gave way to a feeling of painful curiosity, as the Serpent and a portion of his band were seen escorting two prisoners in the direction of the head-quarters of the Marquis. One of the prisoners was a white man; and he carried in his arms a female, whose head drooped upon his shoulder. Those who were close to the group could discern that blood was oozing from her mouth; and that she seemed either in a swoon or dying. She was recognized as Isanta; and he who carried her was Lieut. de Belmont.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

In the Council-room of the Fort a Court-Martial had assembled for the trial of Henri de Belmont, Lieutenant in the Colonial Forces of His Majesty the King of France. The President was the Marquis de Denonville, Commander-in-Chief of the French troops in Canada. The officers composing the Court were the Chevalier de Callières, the Chevalier de Vaudreuil, and Messrs. Granville, Longueuil, Lavaltrie, Berthier, La Durantaye, Tonti and De Luth. To Lieut. Vruze was assigned the duty of marshalling the evidence against the prisoner.

The charges against de Belmont were:

1st. For having caused the destruction by fire, of divers of the habitations of the tribe of Indians known as the Abenakis, the friends and allies of the King of France.

2nd. For having treasonably aided and abetted the escape of a prisoner of the nation of the Iroquois, the enemies of the King—the said prisoner being in the King's custody, and being by the laws of war adjudged worthy of death as a spy.

To these charges Lieut. de Belmont replied with an absolute denial.

Lieut. Vruze performed the duty assigned to him with accurate and ingenious malice. First of all he asserted that the Indian prisoner, although he had stated he was a Huron, was in reality an Iroquois spy. Next, he argued that there must have been some secret