

A DAUGHTER OF NEW FRANCE.

BY MARY CATHERINE CROWLEY.

CHAPTER XXII.

TO BE SHOT AT SUNRISE.

To be shot at sunrise. It was a fate tragic enough, although the Bostonnais had welcomed it so gladly as a concession from the hangman's noose. One so brave, and but little over thirty years of age, was to be shot as a spy in the wilderness! Yes, it was a sad fate for an honorable man who had only done his duty as he knew it. The consequences might indeed have been disastrous to us had he succeeded, yet, since he had failed—well, he had gained but the fortune of such service. Of this I thought as I sat alone in my room at the house of Frere Constantin, an hour after the breaking up of the court.

Much as I pitied the Englishman, it had cut me to the heart to hear Barbe admit so deep an interest in him; and presently I saw a woman that she had loved all my life have denied my love by a look to a duel a l'outrance—a challenge to be followed up in a more formal manner once we were out of the lady's presence.

Still, I liked not at all the certainty of so soon being rid of him, either. He was a prisoner, sentenced to die at sunrise. Our goal to offer him such spiritual consolation as he would accept, and presently I would go and write down any last instructions he might wish to give; and if he desired companionship during these final hours, I would remain with him as long as might be.

From these reflections I was aroused by a sound as of some one beating with a stick upon the pickets of the palisade which surrounded the house. Going out, I found at the entrance Jules, the little Paris slave.

"For you, Monsieur Guyon," he said, as I opened the gate; and, thrusting a thin strip of birch bark into my hand, he was off again ere I could question him.

Puzzled, I carried the strange little missive into the cabin and read it by the light of the hearth-fire. "Be at the beach at sunrise," it said. "The King's Garden as soon as may be."

This I saw writ in characters once to me familiar, albeit more elegant than when I knew them. And then I held the note nearer to the blaze and smiled as I deciphered the signature—a little Spanish scrawl.

"Miladi!" I exclaimed under my breath, and smiled again at the recollection of a day long ago, when my uncle Guyon had brought to little Barbe the dainty footgear affected by the beauties of Spain when they walk abroad—little pattens or sandals of velvet set upon plates of gold which raise the feet some inches from the ground.

And the pretty child had sported them upon the beach of Beauport, leaving the story of her play writ in count the less fairy-like footprints upon the strand. Thereat we had together traced in these footprints a likeness to the characters I wrote in my Latin themes; and afterwards sometimes I had found upon the margin of my fairest and most serious copies, slyly lined there by a childish hand, a little shoe like to this, with maybe a few letters added such as these, "Barbe, her mark."

Barbe! There was nothing unworldly in her sending for me at the hour of 9 in the evening, yet so extraordinary a thing I might have suspected the ruse of an enemy, and have hesitated to play the fool by going alone to obey the summons.

But the little shoe! No one knew it stood for the name of Barbe but our two selves; she had not made use of it to call me to her side since her early girlhood, yet, had she now by it should mood me across the world, I should have gone, understanding that she had need of my aid. Perhaps, indeed, it would be but another kind message from her I should find in the King's Garden.

By the river under the beech tree it was, I told herself who awaited me, however, although, muffled as she was in her cloak, I did not at first recognize her.

I soon found that her thoughts were not of me, nor was this to be at all a lover's trust. "Normand, Nor mand, I am so thankful you have come," she whispered anxiously. "Oh, Nor mand, is not this most terrible? He must not die! We must save him!"

"Save the Bostonnais now! It is impossible!" I exclaimed. "Cadillac is inexorable. Did you not exhaust your powers of pleading in vain?"

"Yes, yes. I also besought Therese to plead with him; and when he returned to the manor I prayed him on my knees to at least delay the execution of the sentence. He would not. Nevertheless the Bostonnais must not die. Ah, why have I revealed to you even so much? But you, as a clerk, will have learned, be permitted to go to him shortly to take down his last wishes. You, and you alone, will see him. All I ask of you then is to tell him that his rescue will be attempted ere morning, in order that when the moment comes he may avail of it."

"All you ask!" I ejaculated, aghast. "Barbe, what you ask is impossible! Do you not know that the Englishman has information which would serve the enemy well against us?"

"No, no, no treason!" she protested. "You must require him to give his assurance that he will not use against us any information he has acquired; that he will not fight against us at all in this war. Not even to save him would I commit treason."

"A woman! No, did you not hear Monsieur le Commandant say it be unbecomingly to make an example of this unfortunate gentleman? Moreover, the safety of the fort, our possessions on Le Detroit, may lie in the balance. Would you risk a hundred lives to save

one, the life of an enemy of New France?"

"The safety of Fort Pontchartrain, how can it be affected when the man is required to take oath that he will be as one blind to what passed before him? And will the English be so greatly affrighted, think you, by the sacrifice of the life of a free lance? Monsieur de Cadillac may strike terror to the hearts of the Five Nations by his threats, but, ha, ha, ha, ha! he can never hope to make a Bostonnais afraid," she concluded, with a toss of her pretty head which angered me, and a laugh that was most musical withal. "Barbe," I queried, turning upon her almost brusquely, "tis a strange question, yet I must needs ask it: 'What are you now, French or Bostonnais?'"

"She caught her breath with a sob like an unhappy child, in such I do not know," she faltered, wringing her hands. "Ever to this hour have I been French; but—but if the Bostonnais is shot at sunrise, I will go to the English; I will say to them: 'The people whom I have loved all my life have denied my love by a look to a duel a l'outrance—a challenge to be followed up in a more formal manner once we were out of the lady's presence.'"

"Oh, Normand, No mand, I am talking wildly, I mean not what I say," she cried, burying her face in her hands. "But what—what am I to do?"

"I bent nearer to her. I gently laid hold of her jewelled fingers and drew them away from her sweet eyes that still overflowed with tears, as I could see in the moonlight. "Barbe," I said abruptly, "you love this Bostonnais."

"No, no," she answered. "It is not he, but I went on obstinately, 'else why this agony? Spies have been shot before in New France, yet you have not grieved in this fashion.'"

"Oh, it was never brought home to me before," she urged. "I gently laid hold of her jewelled fingers and drew them away from her sweet eyes that still overflowed with tears, as I could see in the moonlight. "Barbe," I said abruptly, "you love this Bostonnais."

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"May I ask how the lady is called?" he inquired with uplifted pen.

"Madame de Chateauguay," I replied tersely. "Ah! I know not that she was married," he sighed, throwing down the quill. "And yet, an ardent lover I was to suppose otherwise, since one so lovely must of a surety have attracted many eligible suitors."

"She is the widow of the noble Henri le Moyne, who was killed by the English or their allies the Iroquois some years since."

"He sighed again, took up the pen, but at its feather in indecision, and after a few moments of reflection continued—"

"At least it is only becoming that I should express to her my gratitude for her noble pleading of my case."

"You have already done so, monsieur; however, if you wish to send her a message, I will pledge you my word that she shall have it." I stopped short.

"Yes, after all is over," he said, thinking I was unwilling to refer to what was to take place at the setting of the sun. "When all is over I pray the gentle lady's slumber may be deep in the early hours of to-morrow morning. Perchance, after the first sentence had been best."

"There was something weird, to my thinking, in the calm manner where with he spoke of his approaching end, his sole anxiety being, seemingly, to shut out from the pretty ears of the Lady of Chateauguay the report of the volley of musketry that would bring him death."

"Your Frere Constantin has been here," he said in digression. "I am of a harsher creed than yours. But when these present matters are completed, and I am again alone, I will do as he counselled me, and turn my thoughts from the things of earth. Recalling the lessons my conscientious P. Ritau mother taught me in my early boyhood, I will prepare to meet my God."

"Madame de Chateauguay," he continued, going back to his writing—"what a gracious act it was, thus to make the cause of an unknown soldier your own! This letter will disclose her name and lineage of the officer whom she strove to save from an inglorious fate. Yet destiny, or providence if you will, has decreed otherwise."

"Do not abandon all hope," I broke in abruptly. "The lady has not abandoned her interest; she is still minded to save you."

"What say you?" he exclaimed, springing to his feet. "Oh, beg her to desist! In her impetuosity in my behalf she will incur some fatal risk to herself. Say to her that I will not accept the aid which would compromise her and perchance imperil her life. Tell her it is an imputation upon my honor, since it seems she would assume that I fear death. Tell her a soldier would rather die when his heart beats high, his frame is stalwart, his grasp still strong, than live on to be mayhap set aside as too old to lead a command, to see the sword he loves so well drop from his palsied hand."

"Monsieur, I shall not see her again to-night," I said, "nor am I a party to her plan, save only that I pledged myself to deliver to you this message. That her attempt may fail is very like; therefore let me gladness the life blood through your veins. A brave man fears not death, yet the love of life is strong to the last in the nature of the most valiant. This only I will say, if the chance to escape is offered you and you let it pass, you are sure to bring great peril to the lady."

"He hesitated, now for the first time undecided. "I will remember," "Come what may, I will write her my farewell, and I may almost say, my greeting."

"Forthwith he sat down again and penned a few lines which he handed me together with the letter to his mother, to be forwarded upon such occasion as might come in the future, after the missive should be, as he knew, carefully scanned by the Commandant."

"I avowed so inopportunistly some hours since," proceeded the Englishman, who had become restless since my communication. "Ever since the day a Quebec when I first beheld this lady, a fair young maiden scarce more than a child, she has seemed my ideal of womanly loveliness, purity, and truth. Could I but venture to imagine that her gentle compassion sprang from even a passing interest in myself, I should die happy. Die, I say, for I see not how her plan can succeed."

"A young maid's fancy is sometimes lightly caught, monsieur, and the lady has given you no small proof of her interest," I rejoined savagely. "Moreover, her marriage was arranged by her foster mother, Madame Guyon."

"She calls me," and such indeed I went on musingly, "Never have I beheld the land beyond the seas. The New World is the world I love; its spirit is my spirit. Ah, to woo and win this fair lady for my wife; to take her to the Trinitarian city where I was born; to sail with her along the rocky coast where her forefathers and mine stepped ashore, after having crossed the ocean to escape from tyranny and injustice; to do this it would indeed be worth while to snatch again at the life that is so fast ebbling away from me!"

"Monsieur, if a man finds his prison door unlocked, his gaoler negligent, he is a fool if he does not walk out; if good fortune waits without to lead him on, he is a fool if he does not accept her guidance. As for your dream castle, built upon the verge of a precipice, Chateauguay has suitors here in New France with whom you may have to reckon ere you can wed and take her away to your southern home."

"The bitterness in my voice betrayed me. "You love her, too?" he cried, starting up and peering into my face. "You love her, yet you do not deny that I may have awakened an interest

in her gentle heart! You risk discredit in the eyes of your Commandant to hold out a hope of rescue to me, a rival!" he exclaimed.

"Monsieur," I replied with dignity, "if it happens that you regain your liberty, if in time of peace you return to New France to seek the favor of this lady, it may be I shall have occasion to challenge you to a duel to the death. At present, it is because you are my rival that I feel your claim upon my honor is above every other."

"For a moment he stared at me in silence. "Monsieur Guyon, you are a noble gentleman," he said at length. "It is like enough you will not find me in your path after sunrise to-morrow. But if I am to live, I pray that I may not be outdone in generosity. It is, after all, the lady herself who will choose her husband, if she is inclined to take one. And if we must needs be rivals, at least there will be fair play between us."

"Good night, monsieur," I said; and to my ears the words sounded truly a sad mockery. Yet how important was it, either for an escape into the wilderness or a journey to the next world, that the hours should deal well with him! "Good night! It was in my mind to stay with you if so you would have me, but now perchance it would serve you better for me to go."

"Good night," he responded. "Remember, to your hand I commit the letters. You will see by the superscription how that to my mother is sent. Farewell!—I like your fine French word—adieu! A Dieu!"

"It was now not far from 12 of the clock. The town was asleep, but as I approached the eastern gate I saw a light still in the house of Frere Constantin. Ah, well I knew the meaning of that light! It told me that the good Reollet was keeping one of his austere vigils; that he would spend the night in prayer for the stranger who had de- clined his ministrations, the gallant Bostonnais who was to die at sunrise."

"Of a sudden my resolve was taken. I would not go outside the fort again ere dawn. I would watch near the manor, and when Barbe came forth upon her errand of succor, I would persuade her to give it all into my charge, or, this failing, I would follow to protect and defend her if need should be."

"But how poor a match is a man's dull brain against a woman's wit! Within the shadow of the house I waited. An hour passed; another slipped away, and still another. My heart reproached me in that I had aroused a delirious, vain hope of life in the breast of the prisoner, only to torture him the more in his last moments. The first light of dawn began to appear in the sky in the direction over against which lay Michilimackinac. Either the plot of Miladi's courage had failed, or escape for the Englishman was now impossible."

"Assuming an air as if fresh awakened for the day, I made my way to the blockhouse, hoping for a word with the prisoner when he should be brought out."

"Everything there was silent. The doors were secured; the guards on duty. Half an hour later a posse of soldiers came for the Bostonnais. The moment was come; he was to be led away and presently shot."

"The doors were opened and they called to him to step forth. He did not come. Pardieu! What a commotion and confusion there was, then, what a brouhaha and excitement, while I stood by as astounded as the rest. For the prisoner was empty. The Bostonnais had disappeared, and not for many a day did we hear tale or tidings of him."

"How Miladi Barbe compassed his escape; whether he went through the woods or by the great waters, east or west, she has never told me even to this time of my writing (1735). And if I had then my own thoughts upon the subject, I kept them to myself. After this lapse of years, however, without peril to her safety, I may freely set down that in my opinion the Lady of Chateauguay was not far from me on that evening when I left the prison, and kept a watch on me so I might not discover her; that she sent a generous draught of eau de vie to the guards, and mingled a few drops of some harmless drug which yet induces sleep. During the brief time wherein they nodded at their post she herself released the prisoner, gave him an Indian blanket to cover himself, and brought him through the water gate to the strand of the river. Either the guards at the shore had been stupefied by liquor too, or else madame, having gold to cast away, had blinded them. Here she found the coureur de bois who had guided the party of Madame Oudilac through the forest, and who, smitten by the beauty of Miladi, was become her willing slave. To the guidance of this wanderer Miladi committed the Bostonnais officer, having required the wood ranger to swear by all he held sacred that he would be faithful to the trust."

"The two men stepped into a waiting canoe; the lady cut short the thanks and protestations of devotion which broke from her gallant countryman, and waved him an adieu while the boat shot away down the strait in the direction of the Lake of the Eries."

"Then enveloped in her camel-cloak, Barbe stole back through the darkness, and crouched among the trees until she saw me depart from the manor, when she re-entered the house by a window which she had left unbarred."

"Such is my theory. I will not attempt to depict the rage of the Commandant when he discovered that the Bostonnais was gone. In cover her whereabouts and induce her to live with him again in her own position in life; but so far she had successfully evaded all his endeavors."

"A shadow crossed the priest's face as he heard Carrie tell this story. He reminded her rather pathetically of a dark episode in his own life when his favorite sister had left her home in a act of mad folly, and been lost to those who loved her for five years now, or more."

"Father Leigh had never succeeded in

returned to the St. Lawrence. The guards suffered a term of imprisonment, but later, Madame de Chateauguay, by presents to their wives and children, recompensed them, I judge, for whatever ill fortune she brought upon them that night.

So, after avoiding me most pointedly during the winter, Barbe, at the breaking up of the ice, returned to Quebec. And, albeit my brother was still angered against her, she did him good service there at this critical time in his fortunes, by reporting much of his sagacious management of the fort, and laughing to scorn the pretensions of the company's commissioners, while she enlightened many as to the manner in which the three rogues had borne themselves during their stay at Le Detroit—a revelation not wholly to the taste of the company, since "he sins as much who holds the bag as he who puts into it."

"TO BE CONTINUED."

THE CHEERING OF FATHER LEIGH.

Father Leigh threw himself into an armchair for a moment's rest before starting forth again on the work of his overworked mission in Stepieny.

An August sun was blazing over the dusty streets and ugly houses, revealing every detail of squalor with its unmercifully on the heads of the luckless toilers in the noonday heat.

Father Leigh was looking and feeling thoroughly discouraged and deheartened. It was a rare occurrence with him, despite his hard life. He was an optimistic man, on the whole, with a healthy belief in human nature, which had suffered nothing so far from daily contact with evil, and all manner of sad experiences with the stunted souls of his mission.

Now, however, he had been seized with a fit of great depression, for all this week had been spent in apparently fruitless endeavor.

He had been grossly deceived in two particular instances, and three specially bad "cases" had become worse than bad; and so to-day Father Leigh sat down for a minute—which was also unusual—with a trite conviction that all men are liars, and factory hands pre-eminently so.

"You may preach forever, and work as long," he soliloquized gloomily, "but where are the fruits." The house-bell rang vigorously at this point and gave him no time to answer his own question.

"Young woman wants to speak to you, Father. The priest went down to the guest parlor with a resigned expression. A young girl, evidently a factory hand, pale and tired-eyed, with a very sweet expression, rose at his entrance.

"What can I do for you?" asked Father Leigh, in his usual courteous tones. The girl's face was slowly assuming a rapturous look, as of one beholding at last the living embodiment of a long cherished ideal.

"Her words, when she spoke, were not, however, exactly transcendent. "Oh, my!" she ejaculated, "I've been that longing to see you this twelvemonth!"

Father Leigh waited—wearily. "After hearing of your preach, you know, so often in S—" she went on in explanation. "I've never heard any explanation. He was with me on the mission here, and heard you on comin' to see you if I could find a minute, for as well as the pleasure of hearin' yer again, I want to get your help for somethin'."

"I shall be very glad to help you if I possibly can," answered Father Leigh. The girl paused to recollect her thoughts and then launched into a wordy explanation.

"There was, it seemed, in her neighborhood a branch of a Letter Guild, which had for its object the epistolary correspondence of the Catholic members one with another in philanthropic grounds.

Many sad and lonely lives were brightened by this means of intercourse with sympathetic, though unknown, friends from, perhaps, far away.

This girl, Carrie Greene, was a zealous member of this Guild, and despite her unbecoming speech, had a certain happy knack of expressing herself in a bright and amusing way on paper.

She had got into a very intimate correspondence with a girl in London in very bad health and terribly reduced circumstances—a lady by birth and education, who had taken a fancy to the quaintness and originality of Carrie's cheery epistles, and had formed quite a friendship with the factory girl, who had never seen, but whom she seemed to know so well through the medium of the Catholic Letter Guild which had brought them together, by post at least.

The girl, Carrie state, was in a state of complete prostration resulting from overwork. She was an apprentice in some dressmaking firm, and although very ill and at starvation point, was too proud to communicate with her relations and let them know her circumstances, for she had quarreled with them some years previously and the breach had never been healed.

She had been to blame, Carrie gathered, and not her family. They had attempted many times to bring about a reconciliation, but she had in willful pride preferred to sink to her present condition of poverty and loneliness rather than acknowledge herself to be wrong.

Her nearest relative was a brother, who was untrusting in his efforts to discover her whereabouts and induce her to live with him again in her own position in life; but so far she had successfully evaded all his endeavors. A shadow crossed the priest's face as he heard Carrie tell this story. He reminded her rather pathetically of a dark episode in his own life when his favorite sister had left her home in a act of mad folly, and been lost to those who loved her for five years now, or more. Father Leigh had never succeeded in