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

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE CATASTROPHE—THE LAST MEETING OF TWO ENEMIES.

The outrage inflicted by the Rat on the Iroquois deputies, and which he managed to have attributed to the Marquis de Denonville, worked in the minds of that people like a secret and deadly leaven. And, added to this cause of resentment, there was the remembrance of the unwarrantable seizure, and transportation to France, of the chiefs who preceded, on a mission of peace, the envoys waylaid by Kondiarak; and whose deportation we noticed in the earlier portion of our narrative. True it was, that these chiefs, immediately after their arrival in France, had been liberated by order of King Louis, and sent back to Canada. Still, the Iroquois never forgave the insult to their chiefs, and, through their chiefs, to their nation; and the recollection of it rankled in their bosoms with a virulence that refused to be assuaged or mollified.

But, during the winter of 1688 and the spring of 1689, a treacherous calm brooded over the Province; and the war-spirit of the implacable Iroquois seemed to have been buried with their hatchets. The breathing-spell of peace came to the harassed colonists like the welcome sleep after the fiery fever. Yet, there were those who feared even while they rejoiced; and keen eyes, accustomed to read the dark diplomacy of the forest, fancied that they saw, in the wilderness south of the St. Lawrence, the weaving of a web, destined, on a sudden, to involve in its crimson folds the lives and the fortunes of the colonists.

The Marquis had been informed by men whom stern experience had taught to understand the Indian nature, that the Iroquois were preparing to descend on the province in a storm of massacre and desolation. But he neglected to give ear to these warnings. There was no outward sign that the Indians were about to move; and he refused to sound the alarm on the unsupported suspicion of distant danger. The calm, however, looked ominous; and the tranquillity of the Iroquois was a thing inexplicable. The Governor applied to the Jesuit missionaries for information as to the unwonted peacefulness of the Iroquois. The fathers, deceived by the skillful secrecy with which the Indians enveloped their proceedings, gave it as their belief that those who suspected them of evil designs, had been misinformed as to facts, or had given to unpleasant rumours an importance and a construction they did not deserve. And thus lulled in an inflated security, the colony lay with its bosom bared to the knife of its bitterest enemies.

On the night of the 5th of August, amid a storm of hail and rain, fourteen hundred warriors of the Iroquois confederacy crossed Lake St. Louis. They landed, without having been seen or heard, at Lachine, the upper limit of the island of Montreal. Favoured by the elements and by the darkness, they moved rapidly and noiselessly to the points which had been marked out beforehand; and ere the sun rose next morning they had surrounded, in platoons, every dwelling within a circle of several leagues.

At a signal from their chief the Iroquois commenced their work of death. Breaking in through doors and windows, the savages dragged the sleepers from their beds and massacred them indiscriminately, old and young, men, women and children. Where the tomahawk could not cleave an entrance, the torch was applied; and the inmates, rushing out of their burning homes, were butchered on their own thresholds. The fury of the Iroquois was demoniac. Not content with the hideous license of an unsparing and unrestricted slaughter, they piled mental torture upon physical suffering, and forced parents to fling their own offspring into the flames. Up to within a short league of the city of Montreal, the country was littered with fire, and reeked with blood. Everything that could yield to the tomahawk or to the flames was swooped within the red radius of destruction. Two hundred human beings were burned alive; numbers were put to death after having been subjected to every torture which diabolical ingenuity could devise; and many were reserved for the torment of the stake and fagot in the land of the Iroquois.

While the work of death was at its height, the surge of massacre dashed up in vain against a stone-built dwelling which was situated near the banks of the St. Lawrence.

At length a warrior who stood head and shoulders above a band that he led, arrived in front of the dwelling. His quick eye saw at a glance that the fire kept up by the inmates upon their savage assailants, was so rapid and

so well delivered, that it was telling visibly on the numbers and courage of the Indians. Retiring out of the line of the bullets, the newly arrived warrior stepped under the eaves of the building, and, clambering upon the shoulders of a companion, applied a lighted pine-torch to the roof. In a few minutes the flames spread everywhere, and soon the upper part of the building fell inward with a crash like thunder. The new mode of attack immediately proved its success, for the musketry fire from within began to slacken; and the agonizing shrieks of the inmates proclaimed to the exulting savages outside that Death, in its most appalling form, was laying hold of those whom they could not reach with their tomahawks.

By degrees, the cries within the doomed dwelling grew fainter and fainter; and the last shriek had just died away when, of a sudden, the door opened, and a young man, almost suffocated with smoke, and bearing a female form in his arms, staggered out into the darkness, and into the midst of enemies.

The warrior who had set fire to the building raised his tomahawk but did not strike. The next moment, half-a-dozen other Indians dragged the female from the young man's arms, while he himself, as he wore the dress of a superior officer, was at once pinioned from behind, and his life saved in order that he should be reserved for the torture.

A savage, more stalwart than his fellows, had obtained possession of the female, and his right hand was already grasping her dishevelled locks, while his right hand was drawing his scalping knife, when the keen eye of the warrior who had fired the mansion caught the gleam of a white necklace. He sprang forward on the instant, and, seizing the arm of the savage as his knife was descending, looked in the face of the struggling victim, and uttered the word "Isanta." In a faint and quivering voice she replied, "I was her sister," and then swooned away.

"Stand back, this girl belongs to me," said the warrior to the savage, who still held his intended victim by the hair.

"She is mine," responded the savage.

"I am Kondiarak," said the warrior. "Release the girl."

The savage did not dare to disobey; and, losing his hold of the girl, who was no other than Julie de Châtelet, slunk back among his companions.

Lifting the girl in his arms as if she had been a feather, Kondiarak, turning to some of the Indians, who, although impatient for the work of slaughter elsewhere, could not help for the moment looking on with wonder, said, "Bring hither the companion of this girl."

He was brought forward; Kondiarak recognized him as de Belmont.

"Come with me," said the Huron chief; and carrying the girl in his arms, he walked rapidly in the direction of the river.

As soon as he reached the bank, Kondiarak, stooping down, picked up a smouldering fire torch, which, having fanned into flame, he waved three times over his head. In a few moments a canoe, which had been stationed some distance from the shore, shot rapidly to the spot where the Huron chief was standing; and its occupant bounded quickly upon the strand.

"Brother of the Hurons," said Kondiarak—for it was none other than our old acquaintance, Tambour, who had sole charge of the canoe—"we have two friends here, whom I have saved. Let us help them to escape."

Tambour, with a rapid glance at the male companion of Kondiarak, rushed up and seized him warmly by the hand. But it was no time for words; and, motioning de Belmont to follow, Tambour assisted Kondiarak to place Julie on board the canoe. In less than five minutes after having embarked her two passengers, the little vessel, propelled by the vigorous arms of the Huron chief and Tambour, was fairly out of sight of the shore.

Having rested a few minutes to resuscitate the girl, and to deliberate on the course it was best to pursue, Kondiarak and his companion were about to strike the water with their paddles, and push up the river on their homeward voyage, when the trained ear of the chief caught the faint noise of distant splashing. Handing his paddle to Tambour, the Huron went to the stern of the canoe, and listened attentively in the direction whence the sound proceeded. Lowering his voice to a whisper he said to Tambour, "hand me a pistol."

The command was obeyed, and the Huron, waiting until the canoe, which was coming from the shore almost upon a line with his stern, had approached within about a dozen yards, discharged his pistol straight in the direction of the skiff.

The blaze lit up its occupants, and the quick eye of the Huron recognized them by the aid of the momentary flash.

"It is a canoe of the Abenakis," he cried. "I see the Serpent. Now, for revenge."

The Huron listened, and perceived by the sound of the paddles that the Abenakis canoe was heading down the river. He at once directed Tambour to let their canoe swing round, in order to pursue.

By this time Julie de Châtelet had returned to consciousness, and enquired in a faint voice where she was, and where they were conveying her.

De Belmont, although his heart misgave him, assured her that she was among friends, and was on her way to a place of safety.

Kondiarak directed de Belmont to cause the girl to lie down in the bottom of the canoe, and cover her with a couple of buffalo robes. The young man obeyed.

"And now, young warrior, you will remain in the bow and keep your eyes fastened on the Abenakis canoe, while my brother and I are at the paddles," said the Huron. "If we get alongside, he and I will leap aboard, kill the Serpent and afterwards take our chance; you will remain in the canoe, with the girl, and, no matter what happens to us two, you can bring her to a place of safety."

"I will stay with you to the last," said de Belmont. "I detest the Serpent as much as you do. The coward! He was in the stone house with us to-night, and two hours before it was fired, he skulked away by a door in the rear, loaded with plunder. He is worse than an Iroquois!"

"You know him at last," drily observed Kondiarak. In the meantime the canoe of the Huron, urged by the vigorous arms of him and Tambour, went flying through the water; and, from time to time, de Belmont, from his post in the bow, reported that the skiff of the Abenakis was still in sight.

After about an hour's hard work at the paddles, the Huron who, at first, had trusted to the lightness of his canoe to overhaul the more heavily laden craft of his enemy, came to the conclusion merely to keep the Abenakis in sight until daybreak; for he saw it was useless to try to come up with them.

At length the East began to show the signs of dawn; and, by degrees, the stern, and afterwards the entire length of the enemies' canoe became visible, better than a quarter of a mile ahead. It carried five of the Abenakis.

At a signal from the Huron, de Belmont left his post of observation at the bow, and took Tambour's paddle, with which he managed to keep stroke with the unyielding and unwearied Huron.

Tambour went forward to the bow, raised his rifle, and, just as the Abenakis canoe rose on a swell, fired. A yell followed the report, and when the fresh morning breeze blew the smoke aside, there was one paddle less on board the canoe of the enemy.

Kondiarak, with a proud smile on his expressive countenance, looked towards Tambour and said "Brother of the Hurons, you have done well."

Tambour loaded the gun, and then relieved the Huron of his paddle. The chief went forward to the bows, and, leaning his rifle on the gunwale, aimed straight for the Indian who worked the hindmost paddle. A loud shriek of agony arose, and the next moment, the stricken Abenakis fell headlong into his grave beneath the waters.

Having loaded the rifle, the Huron advanced and took the paddle from de Belmont; and the chief and Tambour, redoubling their energies, were gratified to find that they were gaining upon their enemies.

The Serpent, finding that he was losing distance, suddenly turned his canoe and headed for the South shore, with the intention, if he gained it, of escaping into the woods. But the Huron, who penetrated the design the instant its author attempted to put it in execution, put forth a tremendous effort, and got between his enemy and the shore. The Serpent, cut off from this means of escape, formed a desperate resolve. Bringing the head of his canoe on a line with the flow of the current, he made straight for the Lachine Rapids, intending to gain the City of Montreal, whither he knew his enemy would not care to follow him.

The Huron instantly comprehended the motives of the Serpent's resolve, and directed Tambour to sit down in the bow, and de Belmont to take a seat in the middle of the canoe; and bade Julie not to make a single movement as she valued her life. Taking the paddle in his own hands, Kondiarak headed his skiff for the rapids. It was a terrible venture, but the spectres of his kindred, slain in cold blood, and in treachery, by the hand of the Serpent, and the memory, too, of Isanta urged him on with an impulse which set death, fear and prudence alike at defiance. And Tambour also partook of the Huron's hatred of the murderer of Isanta; and hesitated at no peril which presented the faintest prospect of revenge.

Under the eagle eye and iron hand of Kondiarak, the skiff sped through the thundering and precipitous waters with the buoyant velocity of a bird.

At the foot of the rapids, the Huron closed with the canoe of his enemy, and bounded aboard, tomahawk in hand. The Serpent sent his tomahawk at the Huron's head. The weapon missed; then uttering a yell of disappointed rage, the Abenakis chief, taking his knife between his teeth, leaped overboard, to swim to the shore, not over a quarter of a mile distant. Kondiarak, burying his tomahawk in the head of the Indian next him, also placed his knife between his teeth, and plunged into the river after the Serpent. The latter, looking behind, saw that Tambour and de Belmont had boarded his canoe, and overpowered the three remaining Abenakis. By this time, the Huron was close to him; and

the Serpent, finding escape impossible, turned to bay.

"Dog and coward, I have you at last," roared the Huron as he closed with his mortal enemy. They both went down, locked in each other's grasp, and each brandishing his knife in his right hand.

Tambour and de Belmont rowed to the place where the chiefs disappeared, and which they could discern by the rising of the death bubbles. Anxiety was on their faces, for they supposed that both had perished. But it was not wholly so. One chief rose to the surface, and in his right hand was a knife which he waved triumphantly. It was Kondiarak. The only trace he bore of the fearful combat was a slight scratch on his left shoulder.

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed the victorious chief, as he took his seat in the canoe. "I told my enemy, when I struck him with my tomahawk, after running the gauntlet—that is the second mark I have branded on the Serpent; the next time, Death and I will make the mark together. And I spoke the truth; I have made good my promise. Now I am satisfied."

Two hours after the combat, Kondiarak and Tambour were on their way to Michilimackinac; and Lieutenant de Belmont, and his betrothed, Julie de Châtelet, were safe in the mansion of M. de Callières in the city of Montreal.

Fifteen years had passed away, and the Iroquois Confederacy had been humbled under the vigorous governorship of M. de Frontenac.

It was late on the evening of the 5th of August, the anniversary of the 'Year of the Massacre,' as the terrible catastrophe at Lachine had been named in the Colonial Annals, when two men, attired after the manner of the Hurons, entered the mansion of Col. de Belmont in Montreal.

The Colonel, and his wife, Julie de Belmont, recognized them in a few moments, and welcomed them with the warmest tokens of friendship. The two men, who were still in the vigour of life, were Kondiarak and Tambour.

"We have come," said the Huron chieftain, "to see your little daughter, who is called Isanta."

"I wish her the goodness and the beauty of her namesake," said Tambour with deep earnestness, "but nothing more."

Julie de Belmont retired for a few moments, and led with her, by the hand, a beautiful dark-eyed little girl, on whose cheeks four summers had left their smiles and roses.

Tambour took a white necklace from his bosom, and handed it to his companion, Julie, as she saw it, uttered a cry of delight, and exclaimed—

"That was my sister Isanta's, and once saved my life!"

"It saved you at Lachine," said the Huron Chief; "and it was all the reward I accepted for rescuing you and your husband. It has remained with my white brother ever since. But now we have come to give it to your daughter, who is called after my sister."

With these words the Chief placed the necklace on the child, and taking her in his arms kissed her; and Tambour did the same.

The next moment the men disappeared through the door. De Belmont, in the utmost astonishment, followed after them, in order to bring them back, and make them partake of his hospitality. But they would not be persuaded. Hurrying to the river, they sprang into a canoe; and, in a few moments more, Kondiarak, The Rat—the Machiavel of the Wilderness—and Tambour, his companion, passed for ever from the sight, but not from the memory of the colonists.

FINIS.

CHURCH ASSEMBLY.—Some twenty years ago a beautiful little church in the west was ready for consecration. On the day appointed, the venerable Bishop Chase, with several clergy, was present. Just before going into the church, the bishop had written the 'Deed of consecration,' and in so doing had soiled his hands with ink. He did not observe this until after he was in the chancel, and during the progress of the service; and when his eyes rested upon his blackened fingers he was apparently much annoyed. He called some of the clergy to his side, and exhibited the soiled hand, and said he must wash it. But he was very heavy and unwieldy, and he could not get out and in the chancel without great difficulty, and therefore declined going out in the vestry room, where there was a bowl. 'Bring the bowl and towel to me,' he said. One clergyman ventured to suggest to him *sub voce*, that a towel might do as well, and would be less noticed by the congregation. The bishop looked at him over his spectacles, and said: 'Sir, I never wash with a towel.' At last the senior warden of the parish was obliged to go out and bring in a bowl of water. And by a singular coincidence, just as the officiating clergyman was giving out the twenty-first Psalm:—

"I'll wash my hands in innocence, And around thy altar go;"—the bishop dipped his hands in the bowl and