

THE BLACK WOLF'S BREED

FOREWORD

***I** T is fitting that old men, even those whose trade is war, should end their days in peace, yet it galls me grievously to sit idly here by the fire, in this year of grace 1746, while great things go on in the world about me.*

The feeble hound at my feet, stretching his crippled limbs to the blaze, dreams of the chase, and bays delighted in his sleep. Nor can I do more than dream and meditate and brood.

News of Fontenoy and the glory of Prince Maurice thrills my sluggish blood; again I taste the wild joys of conflict; the clashing steel, the battle shouts, the cries of dying men—yea, even the death scream of those sorely stricken comes as a balm to soothe my droning age. But the youthful vigor is gone. This arm could scarcely wield a bodkin; the old friend of many campaigns rusts in its scabbard, and God knows France had never more urgent need of keen and honest swords.