



# FOR FAITH and KING

a Romance of Ville-Marie

By BLANCHE L. MACDONELL.

## CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

She was like a soldier, who must fight till the last gasp, who must bear every blow like a stoic, so long as there was any excuse for the conflict. "They call you, Du Chêne; leave Lydia to my care."

An expression of sharp anguish for a moment marred the composure of his countenance. A quick breath escaped him; one long, lingering look, and he was gone.

Pierre Le Ber and De Crisase were standing for an instant side by side. As Diane regarded the two men she quivered with a poignant pang of self-reproach. Had her girlish levity, indeed, made havoc of their lives? Pierre was thin and haggard. He had drifted far from that state of acquiescent contemplation, passionless and impersonal, without desire or movement, which, in the estimation of the ascetic, constitutes the highest conception of enduring bliss. A dim anguish of fear and impotence drove him frantic. His passion blinded him, but it could not stifle his abhorrence of the chains that bound him or restore his self-esteem. De Crisase, on the contrary, in the perfection of his perfect breeding, was blander and more courtly than ever. As Diane's glance met his, over her whole frame there came a tremulous fluttering of apprehension, something inexpressibly touching came into her eyes, and that look of soft strength overcame the man who loved her. He removed his hat and bowed punctiliously.

"M. le Chevalier," the girl exclaimed, impulsively, "let me wish you God-speed. My prayers scorched like fire, gathered in her eyes. "M. le Chevalier, my cousin Du Chêne carries with him all our hopes, those of my uncle, my poor Lydia. If it is in your power to shield him from danger I know we can rely upon you."

De Crisase spoke in a low, moved tone. "The confidence with which you have honoured me, Mademoiselle, shall not be in vain. It is a soldier's fate to die with fortitude and resignation professing the faith of a Christian. Can any act of mine bring back Du Chêne, were it at the cost of my life, you may rely upon me."

"Diane, hold up the little one that his last look may rest upon his face, I can no longer see," pleaded Madame de St. Rochs.

"For Our Blessed Lady's sake, try to comfort her," were Du Chêne's parting words.

"Diane, I can't bear it, take me home," sobbing and quivering, Lydia clung to her friend.

"My daughter!" Jacques Le Ber grasped his ward's arm. He spoke almost sternly, the strong lines about his mouth quivered in their muscles without losing their firm and sagacious character.

A soft golden haze lay on the water, obscuring the view of the opposite shore. The parting in the agitated urgency, the stress and hurry of the hour was over. The Indians manned the large elm bark canoes. With a gleam of living light, the paddles cleaved the sunshine and dimpled the waters of the river. The savage voices arose in a wild tumult of resounding yells, the soldiers cheered, a sharp, wailing cry resounded from the shore. Du Chêne stood erect in the bow of his canoe. His handsome, young face, animated and eager with the excitement of adventure, bore no trace of grief or care. As the boats vanished from the receding eyes that watched the last gleam of the sounds across the waves in peals of rhythmic thunder:

"Grand Dieu! sauvez le roi,  
Grand Dieu! sauvez le roi,  
Sauvez le roi.

Que toujours glorieux,  
Louis victorieux.  
Voyez ses ennemies,  
Tourjours sommies."

## CHAPTER XIII.

"No hope, but prayer,  
A breath that fleets beyond this iron world  
And touches him that made it."

—TENNYSON.

Le Ber stood alone. His individuality was so marked and striking that he had many associates and few genuine friends. Old griefs, seared over by time and distance, now acquired fresh vitality to sting. Pierre had betaken himself to the hospital to pray. His sister was as remote from her father as though she had already attained that Heaven which was the object of her thoughts and prayers. The merchant's spirit tainted for need of human help, human nearness. It was the stranger whom he had sheltered, who clasped his hand, whispering bright words of cheer and encouragement, who offered sweet and gracious sympathy.

"You must learn to be brave as becomes a soldier's bride, my sweet," Du Chêne had exhorted Lydia. But the girl had no power of ripening or mellowing under any searching mental experience. The atmosphere was antagonistic—she hated pain, longed for brightness, pined for sunshine. Le Ber, who had conceived some suspicion that his plans for an alliance with the de Monestrol family might be frustrated by the presence of the English captive, looked upon her with cold disapproval. Whenever she dared, Nanon, whose sense of exasperation reached fever point, jeered and flouted. Madame la Marquise, who had had good occasion to cry many times in her life, declared that ceaseless tears gave her the *migraine*.

"You will retire to your chamber, my daughter," the Marquise commanded with a disdainful condescension which was not unkindly, looking down at the tear-stained face with a serene surprise which was too elevated to partake of the nature of disgust. "You will have *tisane* for the sick, you will say your prayers and remain in seclusion. Where there are many anxious hearts we need cheer. There will be time for tears and swooning when hope no longer exists. When the men give their lives for their faith and their country, it is the women's part to nerve and encourage them—what are our pitiful weaknesses that they should stand in the way of our duty? It is the forte of our nobles to submit, to subdue the body, to show ourselves models of cheerfulness and resignation. Thou art not of this quality and hast no spirit to learn the lesson; therefore, my kitten, retire to thine own apartment."

It must be admitted that the Marquise de Monestrol was given to contemplate calamities with a courage overwhelming to less undaunted spirits.

Madame de St. Rochs took up her abode at Le Ber's. She came rushing in, impetuously, white, cold and shivering in the midst of the August heat, clasping the baby and a bundle, which seemed all one, so closely were they held. She threw herself at Diane's feet, clutching her friend's knees, still grasping the bundle and the little waxen baby in the other arm.

"I can't keep up any longer. Let me be quiet, hide me and don't let anybody look at me. I can never live till news comes."

Under the soothing influence of Diane's presence the baby wife recovered her courage. As her spirits rose, the absurd, hapless child com-

mitted a hundred extravagances. She chattered and laughed, playing wild games with the baby and Nanon, pastimes that were continually interrupted by impetuous thunder showers of despair. Madame de Monestrol's reception room was always thronged by women whose gaiety was almost reckless in its exuberance, but there was an intent listening look upon the vivacious French faces, and sobs struggled up often amidst the laughter. After all, most experienced a sort of desperate trust in circumstances to which those suffering an extremity of suspense are often driven, and the fact that duty was the thing to be thought of, not anybody's feelings, was cheerfully recognized.

For the Demoiselle de Monestrol the old order of things had been completely overthrown. She was still looking out upon a world not realized, a spectator of something like the throes of creation seeing the new landscape tumble and roll into place, the heights and hollows changing. Whatever she endured she bore without a moment's failure of her desperate courage. Reserve forces of strength, hitherto unsuspected, developed themselves under the strain of inspiration. Only a supreme resolve could have steadied her nerves, calmed her pulses and retained her self-command. That expression of collected strength that was becoming habitual to Diane's face, settled down upon it. These days had made the change of years. Her brow was contracted with lines unknown to its broad serenity, her eyes looked out eagerly from lids that had grown curved with anxiety, her mouth was drawn and colourless. The joy of her youth had withered; but God was still in heaven, faith and mercy on earth, duty must teach her to be wise and strong and courageous.

Then followed an interval of persistent, haunting suspense, most terrible to an ardent temperament. The long, vacant days, with little occupation, save that of watching and listening, with a sense of time lost and opportunity deferred, with endless, dreadful suggestions of what might be happening, were a severe ordeal. The flame of suffering burnt so fiercely that it permitted no rest. Wild rebellion of spirit, paroxysms of impatience with life and its complications, a longing to escape what was almost unbearable, alternated with brief, ecstatic visions of complete self-renunciation. What was the strength of her womanhood good for, Diane asked herself, if not to afford solace to those dependant upon her? if not to teach her to endure, with high fate and constancy, the buffets of Fortune.

Three days had passed, and to Ville Marie, awaiting anxiously, no news had come. The night was oppressively warm, and the excitement tingling in Diane de Monestrol's veins, drove away all thought of sleep. Her pulses leapt with a prescient thrill of some blow about to fall. She was convinced that a supreme crisis had arrived whose poignant and intolerable anguish would require all her strength to encounter. It was as though she had been caught in the midst of her gay and fearless career by some gigantic iron hand of Fate. Suspense had imparted an unnatural vividness to all her faculties, imagination was stimulated, fears and fancies thronged her excited brain. Suddenly her whole being seemed to contract a shiver with a nameless agony of apprehension. Breathless, trembling, she rushed out into the garden. Over Mount Royal the moon was shining in a cloudless sky. Her sheen lit up the tin roof of Notre Dame until it blazed like silver, it illuminated the dark foliage of the quaint garden peering in patches of pearly light through the close woven branches, cleaving for itself a bright pathway. Diane moved with dazed and bewildered consciousness that made the scene appear like the dim reality of a dream. She heard a hundred crackling sounds, echoes, movements, the rustling of the leaves, the twittering of some bird disturbed in its nest, all the subdued and broken tones of Nature seemed to go over her heart, treading it into dust. A depression, deep and dark, the inevitable reaction succeeding long hours of excitement, took possession of her. The feverish energy which had sustained her until now gave way, and with the physical exhaustion came the mental. All the pain