



FOR FAITH and KING

a Romance of Ville-Marie

BY BLANCHE L. MACDONELL.

CHAPTER VI.—Continued.

The whole community had recently passed through unheard-of suffering; yet, on the first appearance of the faintest gleam of sunshine, the colonists were ready to deck themselves in their bravest, to smile, to eagerly seize all the brightness of the hour. Yielding themselves up readily to the influences of the present, the supple adroitness, the capacity for present enjoyment, undisturbed by retrospection or dread of the future, of the French character, served them well. They extracted much joy out of life, because they were taught to regard the most ordinary causes as susceptible of giving out satisfaction of some kind. Everyone was bound to contribute something to the common fund of gladness. Poverty was not only an imperious obligation, but a cheerfully accepted condition of existence. Eyes and jewels flashed brilliantly, brocades rustled, feathers waved, there was a shimmer of filmy lace. In scarf and coif, ladies whose noble manners, stately bearing and sparkling conversation would have graced the Court of Versailles, whose elegant and ingenuous coqueteries were the product of most finished civilization, promenaded, escorted by officers bedecked with gold and silver, powder, plumes and flowing ribbons, all the martial foppery rendered necessary by the etiquette of the day.

"Vive the Count. It is M. le Gouverneur who has saved us from the clutches of these vultures, the Iroquois. Yes, and revived the fur trade. Vive M. le Gouverneur," shouted the crowd, with wildest enthusiasm.

Twenty-four guards in the King's livery preceded the Governor. He was followed by four pages and six valets, and surrounded by a troop of young nobles gorgeous in lace and ribbons, majestic in leonine wigs. Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac, Chevalier of the Order of St. Louis, and Governor-General of New France, had already attained his seventieth year, though Time had scarcely diminished the unconquerable vitality of the bold and impetuous warrior. Representing the best type of gentleman soldiers who surrounded Louis the Magnificent, he carried himself with the air of distinction natural to one familiar with Court life. He had a fine martial figure, erect and vigorous. His keen, black eyes shone beneath a broad brow, upon which the years had scarcely traced a wrinkle. The Roman nose, thin lips and firm, prominent chin, imparted a severe and imperious expression to his physiognomy. He wore a wig lightly powdered, with long ringlets falling on either side of his face, crowned by a three-cornered hat bordered with gold. His fine, red surtout and embroidered vest were of the latest fashion. A cravat of point lace was loosely knotted about his throat; deep frills fell over his wrists; he wore shoulder and sword knots. A broad belt inlaid with gold fell from the right shoulder, encircling the waist and supporting a sword whose hilt, resting upon the left hip, glittered with jewels. The Governor had a decided taste for splendor, extravagance and profusion, delighting in brilliancy and luxury of table and equipage. All his surroundings presented as much pomp and magnificence as the slender resources of the colony would permit. This was an hour of triumph sweet to the daring and potent spirit. After his first term of office he had been recalled to France in disgrace: now, to the confusion of his enemies, he had returned to the colony with increased power and consideration.

Around the Governor stood the interpreters and a group of French and Canadian officers, nearly every one of whom had been the hero of some

marvellous exploit. The Chevalier de Callière, Governor of Ville Marie, dark, haughty, almost as imperious as Frontenac himself, a brave soldier, feared by the savages and adored by his own men, stood leaning on his sword. His rival, the fluent and voluble Gascon de Vaudreuil, was in attendance upon the beautiful Louise de Joybert, his affianced bride, and listened with some impatience to the compliments which d'Aillebout de Mousseaux, civil and criminal Magistrate of Ville Marie, and his brother, d'Aillebout de Maulet, who had won laurels at the taking of Schnecktady, were paying the lady. All three turned ceremoniously to salute Boisbertholet de Beaucourt and Augustin Le Gardeur de Courtemanche as they passed. Behind stood the Sieur d'Hertel, who, at the head of forty-two Canadians and savages, had taken Salmon Falls during the winter of 1690; Boucher de Boucherville, who, with forty-six Frenchmen, had held the Fort of Three Rivers against five hundred Iroquois; the Sieur de Montigny, whose body bore traces of conflict in innumerable wounds, who, in command of twelve Canadians, had taken forcible possession of Portugal Cove; M. de Pontneuf, son of the Baron de Becancour, who the preceding winter had gallantly silenced the light cannon defending Casco. The Sieurs de Beaujeu, de St. Ours, Baby de Rainville, de Lanaudiere, Deschambault, Chartier de Lobiniere, d'Estimaerville, de la Brosse, Repentigny de Montesson, Captains Subercase and d'Orvillers, Sieur de Valrenne and his lieutenants, M. Dupuy and M. de St. Cirque, conversed together with something emphatically Gallic in their absorbed faces and vivacious gesticulations. Dollier de Casson, Superior of the Seminary, gigantic in stature, frank and simple in expression, hearty of voice, talked earnestly to Callière. The Superior had once been a cavalry officer and fought under Turenne. The soldier and the gentleman both existed under the cassock of the priest. Father Joseph Denys, Superior of the Recollets, basking openly in the favour of Frontenac and eyed askance by the Jesuits, stood close behind the Governor. In a group apart were Jacques Le Ber, Le Moyne de Longueuil, Le Chesnaye, de Niverville and Aubert de Gaspé. During the Governor's first term of office some of these men had been his most resolute antagonists, and at the present time were not by any means sure of the ground on which they were treading.

Now ensued a curious scene. Few white men have ever approached the Count in his skill in dealing with the Indians. He listened to their orators with the greatest attention, and then addressed them with an air of mingled kindness, firmness and condescension that inspired them with respect. Their ejaculations of approval came thick and fast at every pause in his harangue. With the same ceremonious grace with which he might have bowed before Louis the Great the Governor grasped the hatchet, brandished it dexterously in the air, and in a clear, strong voice intoned the war song. To a punctilious courtier the situation might have seemed utterly absurd, but Frontenac was a man of the world in the widest sense of the term, as much at ease in a wigwam as in the halls of princes. Many would have lost respect by an undignified performance, but the Count's native tact enabled him to harmonize the most incongruous elements, his faculty of imitiveness, his utter absence of self-consciousness served his purpose. Instead of exciting ridicule, his achievement aroused his audience to the wildest enthusiasm.

"This poor M. le Gouverneur. Figure to

yourself how these cries and howls must prove trying to the throat," whispered Madame de Monestrol, with a sincere appreciation for the loyal fulfilment of a disagreeable duty.

The principal officers present promptly followed the example of their chief. Some emulation existed as to who should go through the ceremony with the most perfect accuracy, and some of the younger members of the party who had been familiar with forest life, displayed much agility and found no little pleasure in the proceeding. The Christian Iroquois of the two neighbouring missions rose and joined in the dance, then, as though impelled by some irresistible impulse, the Hurons and Algonquins of Lake Nipissing did the same, the whole troop stamping and screeching lustily like an army of madmen, while the Governor, with grave dignity, led the dance, whooping like the rest. With the wildest enthusiasm, the Indians snatched the proffered hatchet, and promised war to the death against the coming enemy.

Afterwards there came a solemn war feast. Two barrels of wine, with abundant tobacco, were served to the guests. Two oxen and six large dogs had been chopped to pieces for the occasion and boiled with a quantity of prunes. Kettles were brought in, their steaming contents ladled out into the wooden bowls which each provident guest had brought with him. Seated gravely in a ring on the grass, the Indians fell to their work, devouring their meal in a species of frenzy. It was a point of conscience not to flinch, and they gorged themselves like vultures, till they fairly choked with repletion.

CHAPTER VII.

"This world is all too sad for tears,
I would not weep, not I,
But smile along my life's short road,
Until I smiling die."

S. WILLIAMS.

Colonial existence was full of incident and stirring action. A whole world of adventurous romance thrilled and palpitated around the settlement, yet the prosaic and practical side of affairs always asserted themselves. One wonders at the steady pertinacity of human nature which, among all these tragic events, could go on in the ordinary habitudes of the flesh, snatching out of the midst of sorrows, satisfaction which only those who have troubled and grieved together can know.

The following day witnessed the opening of the great annual fair. Trade was in full activity, the whole population shared in the universal exhilaration of spirit. Never had Canada known a more prosperous commerce than now in the midst of her dangers and tribulations. That very morning La Durantaye, late Commandant at Michillimackinac, arrived with fifty more canoes, manned by French traders and filled with valuable furs.

Merchants of high and low degree had brought up their goods from Quebec, and every inhabitant of Montreal of any substance sought a share in the profit. The booths were set along the palisades of the town, and each had an interpreter, to whom the trader usually promised a certain portion of his gains. The payment was in card money, common playing cards, each stamped with a crown and a *fleur-de-lys*. The French bush-rangers were the heroes of the hour. Many of them were painted and feathered like their wild companions, whose ways they imitated with perfect success. Some of them appeared brutally savage, but often their bronzed countenances expressed only daredevil courage and reckless gaiety. All the taverns were full. The *coureurs de bois* conducted themselves like the crew of a man-of-war paid off after a long voyage. Their vivacious temperament rendered them boisterously hilarious on their return to familiar scenes.

"These gentry will live like lords, and set no bounds to their revelry as long as their beaver skins last. Swaggering, spending all their gains on dress and revelry, they even try to imagine themselves nobles and despise the peasants, whose daughters they will not marry, even though they are peasants themselves," said one priest to another, as he eyed the noisy, lawless tribe disapprovingly.

(To be continued.)