

as to the welfare of the household, he remarked abruptly,—

"You are a true man, Antoine,—a faithful servant of Holy Church and of France!"

His keen eyes, as he spoke, burned upon the dark face of the Acadian.

Lecorbeau did not flinch. He returned the piercing gaze calmly and respectfully, saying:

"Have I not proved it, reverend Father?"

A phantom of a smile went over the priest's thin lips, leaving his eyes unlightened.

"It is well! You shall have yet another chance to prove it. It is just such men as you whose help I want in my next venture. I have business on hand which my faithful flock at Cobequid are not sufficient for, unaided. You, and certain others whom I need not name, shall join them for little. I will bring you such dress, equipment, and so forth, as you will need to become as one of them. Be ready to-morrow night."

As he spoke, he studied intently the face of Lecorbeau. But the sagacious Acadian was a match for him. Lecorbeau's heart sank in his breast. He was a prey to the most violent feeling of hatred toward his guest and of loathing for the task was required of him. He saw in it, also, the probability of his own ruin, for he believed the complete triumph of the English was at hand. Notwithstanding, his face remained perfectly untroubled, while Pierre flushed hotly, clenching his hands, and Mother Lecorbeau let a sharp cry escape her.

"Be not a child, Jeanne!" said Lecorbeau, rebuking her with his glance. Then he answered to the demand of Le Loutre.

"In truth, Rev. Abbé, I like to prove my zeal in some easier way. Have I not obeyed you with all diligence and cheerfulness, nor complained when your wisdom seemed hard to many? Surely, you will keep such harrassing service for younger men, men who have not a family to care for! Will you not deal a little gently with an old and obedient servant? I pray you, let young men go on such enterprises, and let me serve you at home!"

"I am too lenient to such as you," cried the priest, in a voice grown suddenly high and terrible. "I know you. I have long suspected you. Your heart is with the English. You shall steep your hands in the blood of those accursed, or I will make you and yours as if you had never been!"

Antoine Lecorbeau held his countenance unmoved and bowed his head. "It shall be as you will, Father," he said, quietly. "But is this the way you reward obedience?"

The Abbé's reply was interrupted by Pierre, who stepped forward with flashing eyes, and almost shouted:

"Our hearts are *not* with the English! We are the children of France!"

The Abbé, strange to say, seemed not offended by this hot contradiction. The outburst rather pleased him. He thought he saw in Pierre the making of an effective partizan. Diverted by this thought, and feeling sure of Antoine after the threat he had uttered, he rose abruptly, blessed the household, all unconscious of the irony of the act, and stepped out into the raw evening. There was silence in the cabin for some minutes after his going forth. The blow had fallen, even that which Lecorbeau had most dreaded.

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(*To be continued.*)

