

"I presume not. But Messieurs, it may be well for us to return within the fort. Madame, may I have the pleasure of escorting you?"

We made our way slowly through the fringe of woods, and across the open space before the fort gates which still stood open. The dead bodies of savages were on all sides, so horribly mutilated, many of them, that I hid my eyes from the sight. De Tonty tried to speak of other things, and to shield me from the view, but I was so sick at heart I could hardly answer him. De la Durantaye, with a dozen men to aid, was already busily engaged in seeking the wounded, and I caught sight of De Baugis far down the western slope clambering up, a body of Indians at his heels. Cassion had disappeared; indeed there was not so much as a single guard at the gate when we entered, yet we were greeted instantly by his voice.

"'Tis well you return, M. de Tonty," he said loudly. "I was about to call those soldiers yonder, and close the gates. 'Tis hardly safe to have them left thus with all these strange Indians about."

"They are Illini, Monsieur — our allies."

"Pah! an Indian is an Indian to my mind; bid M. de la Durantaye come hither." He stared at De Artigny and me, seeing us first as he stepped forward. A moment he gasped, his voice failing; then anger conquered, and he strode forward, sword in hand.