

"Inhuman ruffian!" exclaimed the governor, with increasing indignation; "to the point. What pledge have you to offer that my son will be restored?"

"Nay, the pledge is easily given, and without much risk. You have only to defer my death until your messenger return from his interview with Pontecac. If Captain de Haldimar accompany him back, shoot me as I have requested; if he come not, then it is but to hang me, after all."

"Ha! I understand you; this is but a pretext to gain time, a device to enable your subtle brain to plan some mode of escape."

"As you will, Colonel de Haldimar," calmly retorted Wacosta; and again he sank into silence, with the air of one utterly indifferent to results.

"Do you mean," resumed the colonel, "that a request from yourself to the Ottawa chief will obtain the liberation of my son?"

"Unless the Indian be false as yourself, I do."

"And of the lady who is with him?" continued the colonel, coloring with anger.

"Of both."

"How is the message to be conveyed?"

"Ha, sir!" returned the prisoner, drawing himself up to his full height, "now are you arrived at a point that is pertinent. My wampum belt will be the passport, and the safeguard of him you send; then for the communication. There are certain figures, as you are aware, that, traced on bark, answer the same purpose among the Indians with the European language of letters. Let my hands be cut loose," he pursued, but in a tone in which agitation and excitement might be detected, "and if bark be brought me, and a burnt stick or coal, I will give you not only a sample of Indian ingenuity, but a specimen of my own progress in Indian acquirements."

"What, free your hands, and thus afford you a chance of escape?" observed the governor, doubtingly.

Wacosta bent his steadfast gaze on him for a few moments as if he questioned he had heard aright. Then bursting into a wild and scornful laugh,—

"By heaven!" he exclaimed, "this is, indeed, a high compliment you pay me at the expense of these fine fellows. What, Colonel de Haldimar afraid to liberate an unarmed prisoner, hemmed in by a forest of bayonets? This is good; gentlemen," and he bent himself in sarcastic reverence to the astonished troops, "I beg to offer my very best congratulations on the high estimation in which you are held by your colonel."

"Peace, sirrah!" exclaimed the governor, enraged beyond measure at the insolence of him who thus held him up to contempt before his men. "or, by heaven, I will have your tongue cut out!—Mr. Lawson, let what this fellow requires be procured immediately." Then addressing Lieutenant Boyce, who commanded the immediate guard over the prisoner,—

"Let his hands be liberated, sir, and enjoin your men to be watchful of the movements of this supple traitor. His activity I know of old to be great, and he seems to have doubled it since he assumed that garb."

The command was executed, and the prisoner stood, once more free and unfettered in every muscular limb. A deep and unbroken silence ensued, and the return of the adjutant was momentarily expected. Suddenly a loud scream was heard, and the slight figure of a female, clad in white, came rushing from the piazza in which the apartment of the deceased De Haldimar was situated. It was Clara. The guard of Wacosta formed the fourth front