

seemed, far below their feet—came the muffled sound of shots, and between the shots hoarse cries of rage.

“Courage!” whispered John. He could hear that men were grappling and fighting down there, and supposed the Forty-sixth to be at hand. He could not know that the parleyers at the gate, appalled for an instant by the vision of Diane with a dozen savages in chase, had rallied at a yell from Dominique Guyon, pelted after him to the rescue, and were now at grips with the rearmost Indians—a locked and heaving mass choking the narrow spirals of the stairway.

“Courage!” he whispered again, and pressing a knee on the edge of the hatch reached out a hand to steady her. What mattered it if they died now—together—he and she? “*Tu dois*”—she loved him; her lips had betrayed her. “*Tu dois*”—the words sang through him, thrilling, bathing him in bliss.

“O my love! O my love!”

The blows beat upward against the hatch and ceased. He sprang up, slid an arm around her and dragged her back—not a second too soon. A gun exploded against the hinges at their feet, blowing one loose. John saw the crevices gaping and the muzzle of a gun pushed through to prise it open. He sprang upon the hatch, pistol in hand.

“Forty-sixth! Forty-sixth!”

What was that? Through the open crevice a British cheer answered him. The man levering against his weight lost hold of the gun, leaving it jammed. John heard the slide and thud of his fall.

“Hulloa!” hailed a cheerful voice from the foot of the ladder. “You there!—open the trap-way and show us some light!”

John knelt, slipped back the bolt, and turned to Diane. She had fallen on her knees—but what had happened to her? She was cowering before the joy in his face, shrinking away from him and yet beseeching.

“Le pistolet—donnez-moi le pistolet!”—her voice hissed