

what will you; a day sooner or later makes little difference. Diane, you are strong and true, you could not fail one who trusts you."

The strength and light of one dedicated to a great purpose flamed into Mademoiselle de Monesthol's eyes, all her face grew nobly luminous. "You can trust me, Du Chêne," every word was crystal clear. "I will be to Lydia a loving sister. With our Blessed Lady's help I will be true and tender to her as I would be to you."

Du Chêne bent reverently to kiss the little hand. "In life or death I commit her to your charge, and I shall have perfect peace in trusting to the loyalty of my brave and tender sister."

CHAPTER XII.

"God be praised, that to believing souls
Gives light in darkness, comfort in despair."

KING HENRY VI.—Part II.

Pierre Le Ber had painted upon a piece of fair, white linen, a picture of the Virgin, out of which his sister, who excelled in embroidery, had made a very beautiful banner, and this emblem of the protectress of the colony was presented to the war party. Recognizing the fact that the panic-stricken settlers required every available encouragement that could be derived from both faith and patriotism the authorities organized a procession, as imposing as the resources of the colony would allow, to carry this flag to the Parish Church of Notre Dame, where it was to be consecrated by Dollier de Casson.

The church was a spacious building with five altars. Above the great altar, blazing with lights, was an immense wooden image of the Saviour on the cross. Behind it the dim glories of the choir deepened into golden gloom. From the lofty rood screen, dark shadows thrown from the lights of distant altars brooded over the space beyond. At the head of the church, near the chancel, was placed a *prie dieu* for the Governor of Ville Marie, who was surrounded by a brilliant group of officers. Soldiers thronged the side aisles, and all the intervening space was occupied by the confused movement of the throng of spectators. The surging sea of eager faces all turned towards the glory of the high altar, as though therein lay their hope. Wistful women scarcely able for pity to restrain the streaming tears, or rapt in the heroism of some higher purpose, gazed, hushed and awed, upon the little band of heroes, who, for the idolized ideal of faith and country, had sunk all egotistical considerations. Rapturous tears rush to haggard eyes as they looked upon the banner which, to many, represented hope of relief and salvation; there was even a thrill of rapturous sweetness in the thought of dying for it. Patriotism was an inspiring principle, and in the contagion of popular enthusiasm there was but slight betrayal of individual weakness. A fine and simple courage sustained many a sinking spirit. Many were moved to a sense of passionate exaltation by the martial music or overcome by the wonderful pathos of the brave show, with its implied possibilities of horror, agony and death. There was chanting of litanies and intoning of psalms. From a grated gallery, beyond the obscurity of a screen and crucifix, floated the delicate harmonies of feminine voices in wave after wave of soft melody, like the measured refrain of an angelic choir, the echo of an eternal voice speaking to the soul of man. When the choir had intoned the *libera*, the concluding word of the last verse had scarcely died away in the arched roof when a woman's voice, clear and pure and piercingly sweet, arose in the *miseramine*.

"Miseramini mea," it sang, "Miseramini mea saltem vos amici mei,"
"De profundis clamavi ad te Domini, Domini exaudi vocem meam."

In her anguish Diane de Monesthol repeated:
"Out of the depths I cry unto thee, oh! my God."

For herself nothing remained but an absolute, solitary and sorrowful renunciation, but this was no time for sinking of heart or depression of soul. Some spirit stronger than herself seemed to possess the Demoiselle de Monesthol, causing her to look like an embodied passion, beautiful and terrible. There was a tremulous breathlessness about her;

her whole figure and attitude were instinct with resolution, every word and movement was vitalized by an indescribable inspiration. Her face was full of vehement life, eyes kindling, cheeks flushed, lips trembling, nostrils quivering. Led by some subtle intuition timid souls crept near her for comfort and support.

"Hold me fast, then, Diane, let me feel you close while I look my last on Armand's face. I am a soldier's wife—don't let me forget it. I promised him to be brave, though my heart breaks; he must not see me fail," whispered little Madame de St. Rochs, all her features quivering in her vehement efforts to restrain her grief.

Lydia, the tears running down the pretty, piteous face, with so sad a curve of lips that seemed made for smiles, so wistful a glance in swimming blue eyes, clung helplessly to her friend's arm, and Diane was able to soothe her, as a generous woman in her tribulation will seek to console a creature more dependent than herself. An old woman, with two weeping children clutching frantically at her gown, paused in mumbling her rosary and held up withered hands imploringly.

"Oh, Mademoiselle, it is Perrot, my youngest, the father of these little ones. Three of his brothers went the same way and never returned. Oh, my good and noble demoiselle! you are of those who are listened to by the Blessed Virgin and the holy saints, pray for us, I implore you."

As the crowd surged out of the church and flocked down to the beach, the scene was a bright and varied one. The summer sunshine gleamed brightly upon armour, arquebuse, bayonets and naked swords, on the rich costumes of the officers, whose nodding plumes shaded hats, adorned with gold. Some of the regulars wore light armour, while the Canadians were in plain attire of coarse cloth and buckskin, their provisions strapped on their backs. Among the soldiers walked, with solemn dignity, the dog which was inscribed on the regimental list as M. de Niagara, and to whom regular rations were granted. The son of a dog named Vingt Sols, who had done good service at Niagara, he had been brought from that place by M. de Bergères and taken to Chambly, where his master acted as commander. As the roads leading to this post were often blocked by Iroquois war parties it was found extremely difficult to send or receive news from Montreal. It was noticed that this young dog often found his way, of his own accord, to La Prairie de la Madeleine. Fearing that some of the French, with whom he had started, had been killed by Indians, a letter was written and fastened to his collar; he was then driven out of the fort, when he returned the road from whence he had come. At Chambly the dispatch was read, an answer tied to the dog's collar, and he was sent off again. Thus, by aid of M. de Niagara, communication was established between the two places. He always took part in reviews, was deeply conscious of his own importance, and was regarded by the soldiers with the greatest affection as a true comrade.

A corporal drummer, escorted by two armed soldiers, marched through the streets, and the booming of the drum, with its rhythmic movement, excited sensation to the utmost, the fife, sweet and shrill, thrilled the nerves until the blood coursed wildly in the veins, the air resounded with the deep clamour of the bells, and mingled with the fantastic outcry of Indians and voyageurs. The spirit of adventure, of quivering expectancy, had already made themselves felt in the French blood, a rapid current wonderfully susceptible to elation. A wild gaiety of exhilaration began to exhibit itself. Not to be subdued by any emergency certain lively youths could be heard hilariously shouting to one another, their merriment assuming a spurious note of jocose and boisterous flippancy.

"Lost my tobacco pouch—one quite new, made out of the skin of a little seal I killed on the island of M. de St. Hélène last year," grumbled Baptiste Bras de Fer. "Ah, if one of those sorcerers of English falls into my paws and I don't make a better tobacco pouch out of his skin, may I be scalped before All Saints. My little brother, Jacques, a true imp of the devil, only thirteen, and manages the arquebuse like a grown man, says:

"It's the season for plums and truly we'll make them eat the stones." Our Captain is brave as the King's sword. But pardon, my commandant." Baptiste took the freedom of an old servant. "Pardon, but it is, indeed, an evil day to start on an expedition."

"And why, pray, Master Baptiste? What are you croaking there, old bird of ill-omen?" All shade of melancholy had passed from Du Chêne's spirit. His face was all alert with martial excitement.

"Is not to-day Friday? Don't laugh, my commandant, the day of ill-luck."

"Bah! old wives, tales." Du Chêne laughed merrily.

Bras de Fer shook his head in solemn disapprobation.

Nanon, who for the last few days had been restless as an unquiet spirit, had followed her mistress down to the beach and now stood close at hand. The Frenchwoman's rich, brown complexion had turned to dark, chalk colour; her cap was pushed carelessly to the extreme crown of her head; the crushed lappets hung limply over her shoulders; her eyes were red and swollen with crying.

Pierre smoking his pipe, eyed her reflectively. An heroic resolve was slowly assuming definite proportions in his brain. He meditated upon his long, hopeless passion, upon all the wit and sparkling vivacity that rendered his cruel love charming, the oppressive thralldom in which she had held him, the burning pain of jealousy which he had so patiently endured. No one knew better the dangers of such an expedition or dreaded them less than Baptiste Bras de Fer, but then he might never see Nanon again, and the thought inspired the great, simple fellow with a more desperate courage than any required to resist the attacks of English or Iroquois. He stretched out his strong, right arm, quietly took possession of his coquettish mistress, enveloped her in a great bear's hug, kissed her once, twice, a dozen times, then, recovering himself, loosened his hold. Remembering the enormity of his offence, he stood humbled and contrite, with bowed head, to receive the punishment of his audacity. He had no idea of what form the tempest, which was to break on his devoted head, would assume, but even the noisiest clamour of Nanon's sharp tongue would be less terrible to bear than this breathless silence. Feeling that he could endure it no longer he burst out impetuously:

"I don't care, I could not help it: I could no longer contain myself. If to-morrow I am scalped or thrown into the Iroquois' kettle I'll have had the satisfaction of feeling what it would be like; if you were my own girl, who would welcome me back, if I return, and mourn for me should I fall."

There was still silence. It was hard that she should remain obdurate at such a moment. Bras de Fer at last found courage to steal an anxious, imploring glance in the direction of his sweetheart. Nanon stood still as a statue, the warm tears were streaming down her cheeks, but a strange, happy smile lingered about her lips. Baptiste fairly gasped. A bewildering possibility stole away his breath. Nanon squared her shoulders, her eyes flaming with unspoken accusations.

"If you please, M'sieur Baptiste Bras de Fer. Your wits have been long wool-gathering; say, then, my fine big fellow, is it possible that you have found them at last?"

Du Chêne had drawn Lydia apart from the crowd. The girl, sobbing convulsively, clung to him, as taking her hands in his his eyes went slowly over her from head to foot. He was silent as one who, seeing a face he loves for the last time, would take the memory of it to the wide world's end.

"Stay, let the others go; what does it matter? Do not leave me!"

A low, pitiful broken-hearted wail, like that of some gentle, helpless creature in distress, stole unaware from her quivering lips. Du Chêne shivered and looked around fearfully. In all his bright and pleasant existence he had never endured pain like this. Could his courage desert him now? It was Diane who, raising her dauntless front with a courage that affection alone can give, came to his aid.

(To be continued.)