

## THE FORT OF ST. JOHN'S.

"Adèle," he continued more calmly, "I do not love you now; that youthful passion which was once the sun of my existence, has lost its strength in other ties and sterner duties; but can I meet you eye again, and not recal the perfidy which drove me forth from friends and country, an adventurer in the pathless wilderness? Can I look upon your face, and not curse the wretch who basely won from me its smiles, who burst our love asunder, while yet in all its purity and fervor, unruined by one shade of doubt, one fear of disappointment!"

"La Tour," said Madame D'Aulney, striving to conceal her emotion, "why all this bitter invective,—now indeed most vain and useless! why wound my ear, by accusations which I surely do not merit, and which my duty to another forbids me to listen to? If you believe me innocent!"—

"I do from my soul believe you are most innocent," interrupted La Tour impetuously. "Yours was a heart too guileless to deceive, too firm in virtuous principle to be sullied, even by a union with the vicious and depraved. No, Adèle! I have never cherished one feeling of resentment towards you; you, like myself, were the victim of that baseness and of that meanness which flattered your father's ambition by a boast of rank and wealth, while my only offer was a sincere heart—my only wealth an untarnished name, and a sword which I trusted would one day gather me renown in the field of honor."

"Enough of this," said the lady, exerting all her firmness; "it is unwise to recall the past, nor is this a fitting time to indulge in reminiscences of pain or pleasure; the night is waning fast, and every moment's delay is fraught with danger of discovery."

"What mean you?" asked La Tour, a sudden hope of escape, darting through his mind. "I fear no danger, but you may well fear a tyrant's wrath, should you be seen hovering round a prison which he would be loath to cheer with one ray of brightness; so I pray you, gentle Adèle, depart and leave me to my fate."

"I must first fulfil the mission which has brought me here," she replied; "and then I trust the good saints will guide me safely back to the couch of my sick infant, from which I stole when every eye was closed in sleep,—for fervently have I invoked them, La Tour, to aid me in effecting your escape."

"My escape!" said La Tour. "May heaven bless you for the generous thought, Adèle, but alas! it cannot be. You deceive yourself if you admit the possibility."

"You know not my resources," she answered

with a smile; "I have weighed all the difficulties, and find the chance of success much greater than the danger of discovery."

"There is no chance which I would not hazard," said La Tour, "to free myself from this hateful prison, which is more intolerable to me than the most hopeless dungeon ever invented by despotic jealousy. Yet I would endure any suffering, rather than involve you in difficulty, or expose you to the suspicion of one, too unrelenting I well know, to extend forgiveness to any who have offended."

"Your situation is too perilous to permit any idle scruples," replied Madame D'Aulney; "and what is to be done cannot safely be delayed. You need fear nothing on my account. My husband thinks me ignorant of your situation, and of course my agency in your escape will not be suspected." She blushed deeply as she added, "He led me to believe that your lieutenant commanded in the late skirmish, and was taken prisoner, and that he was at present confined in this apartment. Had I not accidentally caught a glimpse of you, I should have still believed it."

"Dastard!" exclaimed La Tour indignantly, "such jealous fear accords well with the baseness of his heart, and I marvel not that he deems that affection insecure which was so unjustly gained, if indeed it was ever truly his."

"Must I ask you again, M. La Tour," she said, gravely, "to refrain from invectives which I cannot listen to, and which render my attempt to serve you almost criminal!"

"Forgive me, madame," said La Tour, "and I will not offend again. And now will you briefly impart your plan to me, and if you incur no danger, how shall I bless the noble courage which prompted you to act in my behalf?"

"My good father confessor has been severely ill," said Madame D'Aulney, "and during his confinement he was frequently visited by his holy brethren, who had permission to pass the gates, at their pleasure, without questioning. Early this morning I met one of the holy order whose person was unknown to me; he had been to the priest's apartment, and I have since learned, with a message from one who usually attended him, but who had been unexpectedly called away. There was something in his tall figure, and in the expression of his pale and melancholy features which arrested my attention, but I might not have thought of him again, if I had not observed him afterwards in conversation with Antoine, the guard who now waits at the door, ready to assist you."

"That priest must have been father Gilbert,"