

"Well, cheer up, Antoine!" he replied, "for thou shalt have good lands on the other side of the hill; and thou wilt count thyself blest when thou seest what shall happen to some of these slow beasts here, who care neither for France nor the Church so long as they be let alone to sleep and fill their bellies."

As the great cart went creaking on, Lecorbeau looked over his shoulder, with an unscrutable gaze, and watched the retreating figure of the priest.

"Thou mayst be a good servant to France," he murmured, "but it is an ill service, a sorry service, thou dost our Holy Mother the Church!"

Within the next few hours, while Antoine and his family had been getting nearly all their possessions across the Missaguash, first by the fords, and then by the aid of the great scow which served for a ferry at high tide, the tireless Abbé had managed to coax or threaten nearly every inhabitant of the village. His Indians stalked after him, apparently heedless of everything. His few allies among the Acadians, who had assumed the Indian for the occasion, scattered themselves over the settlement repeating the Abbé's exhortations. But the villagers, though with anxious hearts, held to their cabins, refusing to stir, and watching for the English boats to come ashore. They did not realize how intensely in earnest and how merciless the Abbé could be, for they had nothing but hearsay, and his angry face, to judge by. But their awakening was soon to come.

Early in the afternoon the tide was nigh the full. At a signal from the mast-head of the largest ship there spread a sudden activity throughout the fleet, and immediately a number of boats were lowered. For this the Abbé had been waiting. Snatching a blazing splinter of pine from the hearth of a cottage close to the church, he rushed up to the homely but sacred building about which clustered the warmest affections of the villagers. At the same moment several of his followers appeared with armfuls of straw from a neighbouring barn. This inflammable stuff, with some dry brush, was piled into the porch and fired by the Abbé's own hand. The structure was dry as tinder, and almost instantly a volume of smoke rolled up, followed by long tongues of eager flame, which looked strangely pallid and cruel in the afternoon sunshine. A yell broke from the Indians, and then there fell a silence, broken only by the

crackling of the flames. The English troops, realizing in a moment what was to occur, bent to their oars with redoubled vigour, thinking to put a stop to the shameless work. And the name of Le Loutre was straightway on their lips.

CHAPTER II.

The ships were a mile from shore, and the shore nearly a league from the doomed village. When that column of smoke and flame rolled up over their beloved church, the unhappy Acadian villagers knew, too late, the character of the man with whom they had to deal. It was no time for them to look to the ships for help. They began with trembling haste to pack their movables, while Le Loutre and a few of his supporters went from house to house with great coolness, deaf to all entreaties; and behind the feet of each sprang up a flame. A few of the more stolid or more courageous of the villagers still held out, refusing to move even at the threat of the fire-brand; but these gave way when the Indians came up, yelling and brandishing their tomahawks. Le Loutre proclaimed that any one refusing to cross the lines and take refuge at Beauséjour should be scalped. The rest, he said, might retain possession of just so much of their stuff as they could rescue from the general conflagration. The English, he swore, should find nothing of Beaubassin except its ashes.

Presently the thin procession of teams, winding its gloomy way across the plains of the Missaguash toward Beauséjour, became a hurrying throng of astonished and wailing villagers, each one carrying with him, on his back or in his rude ox-cart, the most precious of his movable possessions; while the women, with loud sobbing, dragged along by their hands the frightened and reluctant little ones. By another road, leading into the wooded hills where the villagers were wont to cut their winter fire-wood, a few of the more hardy and impetuous of the Acadians, disdaining to bend to the authority of Le Loutre, fled away into the wilds with their muskets and a little bread; and these the Indians dared not try to stop.

The English boats, driven furiously, dashed high up the slippery beach, and the troops swarmed over the brown and sticky dykes. Major Lawrence led the way at a run across the marshes; but the soft soil clogged their steps, and a wide bog forced them far to one side. When they reached the outskirts of the village