



FOR FAITH and KING

a Romance of Ville-Marie

By BLANCHE L. MACDONELL.

CHAPTER I.—Continued.

Diane turned on the world the frank, friendly, confiding look of a child, mischievous often, haughtily scornful occasionally, but always the innocent regard of a soul as yet undisturbed by passion or distrust. Mademoiselle de Monestrol's hair, lightly powdered, was partly curled. Her gown of dark cloth, opened at the throat; the long waisted corsage fitted perfectly over the beautifully shaped bust; the sleeves terminated at the elbows in deep falls of lace; a flounce of lace finished the underskirt, which permitted a glimpse of daintily buckled shoes.

"And it has been pleasant to have me with you, is it not so, my uncle?" The girl clung to her guardian's arm, looking up into his face, her eyes shining, her lips parted, showing the glittering line of her teeth.

The wrinkles about Le Ber's deep set eyes, the tense lines about his mouth, relaxed in an indulgent smile.

"That goes without saying my marmot. We must remember, however, the nerves of Madame. If we would reach Ville Marie by daylight, it is time to start. Nanon has at last completed her preparations."

"I should like the Iroquois to comprehend that we understand the use of birch bark," a tall Canadian, whose skill with the paddle had gained him the name of *le Canotier*, was explaining to his companions. "I don't deny that these savages possess some skill in constructing a canoe, but have they, I ask you, the address to give their craft the slender shape that renders ours so coquettish as they dance upon the waves? Well may I call it no longer a canoe—it is a feather—a bird that skims the air—a cloud chased by the wind. Say then, is it not so, my comrades?"

Madame Sainte Hélène, an elegant and distinguished woman, whose figure savored too much of the refinements of capitals to be altogether in harmony with these sylvan solitudes, stood surrounded by her little children and attendants. As the soldiers and settlers gathered around the boats, a woman, scolding, laughing, gesticulating wildly, pushed her way among them. A comely woman of her class, with a face full of piquancy and variety, she was strong and thickset. Brown as a berry, with red cheeks and eyes as black as sloes. She wore a brown petticoat, a crimson apron with a bib, a lace cap with hanging lappets; at every quick movement her long gold earrings quivered.

"Behold, Madame and Mademoiselle and ces Messieurs, the whole party well accommodated, and I—I attend the good pleasure of the Sieur du Chêne."

"Eh, corbleu! but, no. This good Nanon attends no pleasure of mine," remonstrated a laughing, boyish voice. "There is place in the craft of Sans Quartier, my father, it is Diane who has consented to share my canoe, and I'll engage it is we who reach Lachine first."

"Heine! no," protested Nanon, reducing her forehead to an inch of tight cords, "I have morals, me. Even in the wilderness it is necessary to remember *les convenances*. In our country the demoiselles are guarded close to their mothers, like chicks under the hen's wing. My demoiselle was confided to my care, not a step, not even the shadow of a step, goes my demoiselle without me." Nanon crossed her arms and shook herself from side to side in the most approved style of obstinacy.

"Jean and Nanon shall follow close in the second small canoe." Le Ber himself decisively settled the question. Then holding his hat under his arm, with a profound bow, the merchant offered his arm to conduct Madame de Sainte Hélène to the boat.

No one was ever able to resist Jean Le Ber Du Chêne's gay confidence. His face owed its attractiveness to its beaming play of expression; its generous, expansive enthusiasm; its tremulously, keen sensibilities; the sunny, olive skin, finely moulded chin, the curved lips parting from white teeth, sparkled with vivacity; his dark eyes were bright with laughter, he possessed a sort of joyous audacity which marked him as one of Fortune's favourites. Born and nurtured in the colony, versed in woodcraft, seasoned to the climate and trained amidst dangers and alarms, while yet in his teens, the youth had earned a reputation for dauntless courage, tact and experience. Le Ber Du Chêne might serve as the highest type of the Canadian youth of the period. As the sea is the sailor's native element, so the forest was his. In the elastic buoyancy of early manhood, perils and hardships had only served to develop his unconquerable vitality and afforded opportunity for the display of his fiery, impetuous valour. The austerity of the most sombre ascetic relaxed at the sight of his *débonair* countenance; wily Indians and lawless gangs of *coueurs de bois* were as wax to be moulded by the adroit cleverness of young Du Chêne.

"We shall keep Bibelot with us, Diane has no desire to furnish *soupe à l'Iroquoise*. We should neither of us enjoy being put into the kettle," said he, and his gay, inadvertent

laugh rang out cheerily as he jested carelessly with one of the grimmest dangers of colonial life. "Hasten then, my son, follow us closely." Le Ber looked around anxiously.

Three soldiers rowed the large boat occupied by Le Ber, Le Moyné de Sainte Hélène, his wife and children. Three canoes followed, laden with soldiers, labourers, utensils and provisions. The oars were raised, a shower of quivering drops flashed in the sunshine, the voices of the boatmen broke out in a lusty chorus that rung cheerfully over the waters.

"Ya-t-il un étang.
Fringue, Fringue, sur l'aviron.
Trois beaux canards,
Y'en vout baignant
Fringue, Fringue, sur la rivière,
Fringue, Fringue, sur l'aviron."

"Monsieur! Where then is the Sieur Du Chêne?" Nanon in hot haste, her stout figure quivering with excitement, shrieked wildly, "It is that snake of a Michel who disputes with the soldiers. Come, then, Monsieur, ere there is murder done."

Diane remained on the shore, gaily waiving a bright hued silken scarf as she watched the rapidly disappearing boats. She looked out on a prospect of tranquil loveliness, quiet and peaceful as a dream. Shadowy gradations of light revealed ridges of hill and woodland, with a delicate, faint tracery of outline and a clear distinctness in the softly tinted air. The light lay tenderly upon the grass and on the stems of great trees, dappled with sunshine and with shade. What a pleasure the voyage down the river would be! The serenity of the blue sky, the tender greenness and stillness of the summer day, would all borrow a new charm from Du Chêne's presence. The young man and his father's ward had always been the closest friends and comrades.

Bibelot was plainly dissatisfied with the existing condition of things. He was a direct descendant of Pilot, one of a number of dogs sent from France to Ville Marie, shortly after its foundation, in order to assist the brave colonists in their warfare against the savages. He and all his tribe detested the Indians by instinct and were invaluable in detecting ambushes. Bibelot ran here and there, his bushy tail raised high as he sniffed among the branches, his slender, alert head and bright eyes looking as if solicitous of some trails of fox or rabbit. Game abounded in the woods. Far in the distance Diane could see a great herd of elks defile between the water and the wood. It was the dog's uneasiness that first attracted her attention, then the long drawn melancholy cry of a water fowl, several times repeated, fell upon her ear. Was that a signal? The trunk of an enormous tree, lying on the ground, close at hand, certainly stirred with a tremulous, vibrant motion. One unaccustomed to the life of the woods would have paid no attention, but Diane had grown up amidst the difficulties and dangers of the adventurous colonial life. The Iroquois roamed the settlement or prowled like lynxes around the forts continually. No one could account for the mysterious movements of these agile warriors. It was an urgent moment of action and caution. She stood perfectly still as if she were merely a figure painted on the plain, green background. A gray squirrel with small, bright eyes, scudded through the grass. As Mademoiselle de Monestrol listened, with sharpened senses, an insidious icy chill crept along her nerves.

At that instant, almost imperceptibly, the log moved again. No doubt existed but that in the hollow trunk an Indian lay concealed. The loud clamour of Bibelot's bark rang out clear and distinct. Soft gleams of light were piercing shyly through the branches. In a moment the forest was alive with the shadows of men stealing silently amidst the trees. In an instantaneous flash of realization, Diane comprehended that her one chance of escape lay in immediate action, that the lives of those in the fort might depend upon her own courage.

CHAPTER II.

"Arouse him then—this is thy part,
Show him the claim, point out the need,
And nerve his arm and cheer his heart,
Then stand aside and say 'God speed.'"

—A. A. PROCTOR.

"Aux armes! Aux armes!" the girlish voice rang out in a clear, startled cry. Bibelot's resounding howls were lost in the din as the Indians screeched their war whoop and dashed out from their shelter with agile impetuosity. Like an arrow from a bow, fleet as a young fawn, Diane sprang forward, several of the dusky braves starting in swift pursuit. A false step a fall on the sunburnt grass would prove fatal. The French girl understood but too well the nameless horrors that captivity among the savages would mean. Death in comparison was nothing. Bullets whistled around her. She could hear the dog's panting breath as, with flaming eyes and lolling tongue, he rushed before her, as well as the flying noiseless footsteps of the foremost of her

pursuers. With every muscle strained to its utmost tension, she was perfectly conscious that her foe was steadily gaining upon her. She had almost reached the threshold of the fort when, shouting his own name in Indian fashion, the Iroquois stretched out his hand to grasp her shoulder, the next instant the report of a pistol rent the air with a sharp shudder and convulsion; without a sigh the savage fell prostrate and Diane, panting and trembling, was drawn into the fort by Du Chêne.

A prescient excitement kindled in the young man's eyes; his spirited face was full of resolution and confidence; his physical vigour imparted elasticity and buoyancy of temperament; his hope was strong, courage sound, and nerves well poised. The young commandant's easy composure and debonair grace; his supple agility, independent and imperious bearing were the pride of his followers.

"Fear not, Diane," he said, as he barricaded the door. "We are safe enough here. There are not a great number of Iroquois and they rarely attack a fort. The most serious danger is that the sound of the guns might induce my father to return, then they would fire upon the boats from the shore. I have already posted the men. We must not allow them to suspect that our party is so small. And Jean! Where is he? *Rassemble!* that lazy valet has no heart for fighting, that I'll swear. Nanon, thou canst manage an arquebuse as well as a man, my brave girl."

Nanon's black eyes darted furious glances; she ground her strong white teeth in dire wrath.

"The brigands. Yes, even I am capable of that. My hairs are all rubbed the wrong way at the sight of these wolves. Chut, Mademoiselle, I think little of such affairs, me. There is no laughing under the nose when it relates to the Iroquois."

"Place yourself behind me, Diane. Load as I fire. We will stand on our defence. These savages will lurk about and try to climb into the fort under the cover of darkness. We must not permit them to approach too near lest they set us on fire."

The Iroquois showed no disposition to retire, but commenced industriously to erect barricades of stones and bushes, as though undismayed by the determined resistance they had encountered they had resolved to prolong the siege.

"Brrrrr. It appears we shall be inconvenienced.. These pagans take us, then, for targets. The tongue of our good Nanon goes like the clapper of a mill. Sapristi! When the violins play, then is the time to dance."

Bibelot kept up a continuous fierce barking that added to the tumult. Nanon's fierce denunciations amused the soldiers and soothed her own nerves, even if they failed to annihilate the transgressors. Occupied in loading one gun while Du Chêne fired another, Diane thought of many things. She regarded the young man with a sort of amazement. It was an hour of revelation. All the careless boyishness of his face had been replaced by an expression, keen, stern, resolute; his eyes flamed with a light which was almost cruel in its unflinching intensity; there was something splendid and imposing in his stalwart pride of courage. Noting this novel moulding of the familiar features, the girl was beset by a strange sense of unreality. For the first time she appreciated the bold and salient individuality of her companion. This was no longer her boyish comrade whom she had teased and flattered and cajoled; this was a man strong to command, to defy Fate, who would grow with every emergency and rise equal to every crisis. Her heart swelled with a new spring of impassioned emotion; a subtle intoxication ran, like an electric spark, thrilling through her veins. Du Chêne was a hero and she had been counted worthy of aiding him in his extremity, nay, if it were necessary, even of laying down her life beside him. Once speaking rather breathlessly, she ventured: "Gentlemen are born to shed their blood for God and King." "That goes without saying," simply. Then his jovial, sunshiny temperament reasserted itself. "Bah! Diane! this is but comedy, our hour is not yet;" then his voice arose in a glad cry: "Aid is at hand. Saved, Diane, do you understand, saved." His eyes were young and very keen. He had discovered a swarm of canoes, thick as a flight of blackbirds in autumn, sailing down the river.

"The good God has saved us from the hands of our enemies;" with a strange look of exaltation in her eyes, Diane sank on her knees. "Our Lady of Bonsecours shall have two as fine wax tapers as money can buy," Nanon protested excitedly. "I make no clamour like that vulture Mam'zelle Anne, but I make my religion. Never could I believe that the holy saints could show such inconsiderate ingratitude as to refuse to listen to a lady of quality like my demoiselle."

Suddenly the air resounded with yells and a rapid fire was opened upon the Iroquois. The woods were still dense on their left and rear. Advancing through a ridge of thick forest beyond the open fields, hurrying through a tangled growth of beech trees, swarmed scores of naked savages, some armed with swords and some with hatchets, as they leaped, screeching from their ambushes and hurled themselves upon their foes. The hostile band, ensconced behind their sylvan ramparts, watched in vigilant silence. The leafy arches of the woods, through hill and hollow, still swamp and gurgling brook, the forest rang with warwhoops of the new arrivals, who immediately threw themselves along the thickets in front of the Iroquois and opened a galling fire upon their foes.

"It is now the turn of the wolves to dance and we can assist at that game," Du Chêne proclaimed hilariously.

(To be continued.)