

IN TREATY WITH HONOR  
A Romance of Old Quebec.

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CHAPTER XXI. CONTINUED.

After a drive of an hour with my friend, we stopped the horse at a farm among the hills. The farmer had just gone out to his barn in the early light to feed his cattle and ponies. Monsieur Droulet briefly told him who I was and he agreed to keep me in hiding. Here the young man I met in the woods, who I had met with satisfaction that the light snow which was beginning to fall would soon cover all tracks of his carriage wheels. There would be no means of tracing me to this retreat. Half an hour later I was sleeping soundly amid the fragrant new hay in the barn. The next day the farmer brought me food. In the afternoon M. Droulet returned to give me the news.

"Ma foi, but there has been a to-do over your escape, Major Adair," he said. "The commandant, Sir James Macdonald, raved like a madman when it was reported to him. He says the devil may take care of the Yankee prisoners; he has had enough of you. But, for the disgrace brought upon him, every man whose negligence abetted the carrying out of your plot shall sup on sorrows. The whole garrison is under arms, the town gates are trebly guarded, sentinels are posted in every street, alley, and lane with orders to permit no one to pass without being examined. The houses of the French are being searched, and many people have been hurried to the guard-house, Pascal among the rest. His ignorance of English was declared by the watch to be a suspicious circumstance."

"Have you heard anything of my companions?" I inquired anxiously. "Droulet hesitated, but seeing that I would not be put off, finally answered, 'Captain Rycoerski is still at liberty, but the others have been retaken.'"

"My God!" I broke out. "Where?" "In a tavern where he went to get food and drink for himself and Culver who, disabled, was hiding in a patriot's house. The landlord suspected Hull and went out to warn the soldiers. A servant-maid tried to aid our friend. Unluckily ere he got off a party of soldiers came in and recognized him. He was immediately handcuffed and led back to the garrison under a guard of at least a hundred men. Of course he denied all knowledge of the whereabouts of any of you, but Culver was soon found and returned to prison also."

"Poor, poor fellows," I sighed. "Well what has happened to them may be our fate before long. What reward is offered for the capture of Rycoerski and myself?" "The regiment has offered a thousand pounds and Lord Durham five hundred," answered Droulet, reluctantly. "It was one of the men whom you met in the street who betrayed you. He pretends that but for the lady's pleading he would not have let you go. The soldiers have even forced their way into the convents to search for you, and they would have it that a middle-aged, masculine-looking sister was yourself in disguise."

"Ho, ho, ho!" I thought of any one expecting to find my face under a nun's hood," I laughed. "But what is to be done now?" "Remain quiet for the day, Major, since your foot is so much worse. To-night we shall try to take you off in a boat."

Early in the evening Droulet came once more, bringing a French doctor, who bathed my injured ankle, rubbed it with a liniment which, he maintained, possessed marvellous curative power, and bandaged it again. Then they helped me to a carriage and we started for the Beauport shore. The roads being all guarded, we had to take a round-about route. Through the fields and woods and over sloughs we went, following by roads perhaps never before traversed. After much trouble and several breakdowns, we reached the strand at the point agreed upon, namely, near the house of the curé. But, alas, here, where we expected to find the boat, there was neither friend nor skill to meet us.

"Some accident must have happened," declared Droulet in distress. "The boat was here this morning; the troops must have taken it."

Leaving me with the doctor, he posted off to ascertain if the boatmen were anywhere about the village. He was gone an hour, and on his return admitted sadly that he could learn nothing of the boat, which we had come so far to meet. The way by which we had come was so bad that we could not hope to reach the farm again before daylight. We began to meet people on the road going to market with the produce of their gardens and farms. To avoid them, we turned into the woods. Here we reached the climax of our difficulties. The axle-tree of the carriage broke down.

In a trepidation that I should have found laughable under other circumstances. "My oath of office forbids; it would be against my honor, and I would have, monsieur, so dear, honor?" "Skill, I will tell you what I will do," he went on, darting a keen glance at me. "About a mile back in the woods there is a hut which is used only in the spring at the time of the sugar boiling. No one ever goes that way. Your friend will be entirely safe there and may stay as long as he pleases. Stay, I will give you a loaf of bread for him."

While he was gone I begged the others to obtain from him minute directions how to get to the sugar camp. Presently he reappeared, bringing a large loaf which he handed to Droulet. "Go now," he said. "Take the path through the woods, the one yonder by the big maple. 'Ciel messieurs, go!' Opening my lips for the first time during the interview, I thanked him profusely. We took the way he pointed out, but as soon as we got fairly into the wood again, I reined in the horse. "Sacre, I see myself going to the sugar camp," I cried. "That fellow would lead the searching party straight there before noon. Gentlemen, it is now broad day. You are only compromising yourselves by coming with me. You would better go back to the city. I can shift for myself. The magistrate's loaf may not be very palatable, but it will keep me from hunger, and say ditch will supply me with water. I will remain hereabouts all day and come out by the house of the curé to-night again. Perhaps by that time you will be able to get a boat to take me across to the Ile d'Orleans."

The doctor, after some demur, went back, taking his horse with him, but Droulet would not leave me. Eager to get me away from the neighborhood, he hailed a market cart and offered the habitant who drove it half a crown to bring us to a farm named. Between them they lifted me into the cart.

"I am taking you to friends of whom I did not think until now," said my guide. "The man is timid, but his heart is with us. His wife is a true patriot and she will presently have half a hundred plans for keeping you safe, for the time, while I go and inquire why the boat was not at hand this morning."

When we reached the house we found that the master had gone to town on business. Madame welcomed me with great cordiality, however, gave us a substantial breakfast, and concealed me in the garret of the mansion, where, thoroughly tired out, I slept a good part of the day. Droulet returned in the afternoon with much news.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed, as we sat on a chest in the loft, making ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit. "This morning old Gudbont told the whole story of our call upon him last night, just as you predicted he would. He even declared you were at the moment in the hut at the sugar camp and demanded that a posse of soldiers be sent out to capture you. Luckily for you though, Adair, so many stories about you are current in the city, and so many people claim to have seen you, and have led the searchers on a wild-goose chase, that the old fool was not believed. I will not deny, however, that the government are vigilantly taking their own way to secure your capture. No vehicle is allowed to pass the gates without being thoroughly examined. The bakers' carts have been stopped in the streets by the guards, and all the leaves thrown out, in the hope of finding you hidden under them. Loads of hay, grain, and even of manure have been overhauled, and I myself saw a soldier thrust his bayonet into a wagon full of straw, with the design of finishing you, if you should happen to be concealed beneath it. To cap the climax, a funeral procession slowly winding its way toward the cemetery was halted by the military and the coffin was opened to see if, perhaps, you might be trying to get away by passing yourself off as a corpse."

"Surely this was unnecessary," said I, grimly. "Had they followed the coffin and seen it duly buried they might have safely concluded I was then done for, dead or alive. But what of the boat? Can I get off to-night?" "Our friends were here with the canoe last night, as they promised, but the tide being low they were forced to keep out from the shore. The boats of the man-of-war at anchor in the river kept cruising around, and as we did not come on time, our boat-men feared to remain waiting longer, lest thus they might cause you to be captured. To-night they will try again. When they have taken you into the canoe they will be able to elude the sentinels until they are able to reach the sentinels in the darkness. Then they will make straight across to the island. You will not be suspected of being in that vicinity, and once there you can remain or not as you like. They will so disguise you that you will be able to take all the exercise necessary for your health."

"How do they mean to disguise me?" "Have you any objection to wearing a gown?" "Decidedly. Rather than don petticoats I would almost rather be taken."

Forgetting that I was in hiding he quickly controlled his mirth. "And how about a priest's gown?" "That is better, though I fear I should make a sorry curé."

ly we drove over the rough Beauport bridge and onward until we came to the little River St. Charles. Between the road and the Marine Hospital, Droulet reined in his pony. "The boys ought to be here," he said, "and other friends have arranged to be crossing the bridge at this time, so as to deaden the sound of the oars."

Almost as he spoke two men emerged from the shadow of a building and came toward us. I drew my cloak tighter around me, so as to somewhat conceal my features. Droulet leaned forward. "Soyez pret," one of the strangers said softly. My guide breathed a sigh of relief. "It is all right," said he. "The men, after grasping my hand in token of their friendliness, lifted me out of the cart and carried me between them to a boat a few yards distant. They waited until by the challenge of the sentinel we knew our friends were on the bridge. Then, assured that the sound of their horses' feet and of the carriage wheels would prevent him from hearing our boat, dipping their oars with as little noise as might be, they rowed across the river. On the opposite side a man led his horse to the water's edge as though to let him drink. "Soyez pret," he said as we approached. "Soyez pret," answered Droulet. The men lifted me on to the horse's back.

"Take these," said my friend, thrusting a brace of pistols upon me, "and you walk ahead at some distance and you must ride after alone, until you see me stop at the door of a certain house. Re-in in your horse then, also. I have arranged that you shall be sheltered there for the night."

CHAPTER XXII.  
OFF FOR THE BORDER.

It was nearly morning when we stopped at a house in the St. John suburb. Here we found a supper prepared, and much kindness, but just as we were sitting down to the meal a messenger, who proved to be none other than Pascal, came running in.

"It is not safe for m'sieur to remain here," he cried in a low voice. "The soldiers have been through the Faubourg Adair, you need rest. After you have slept, your luncheon will be served in the adjoining study, and my wife, my daughter, and their guest will assist you, with their chatter, to while away the afternoon. I must hasten to my affairs but I shall be at home again by six o'clock."

When he had gone I threw myself on the divan and for some hours knew the blissful unconsciousness of slumber. Waking at last, I bathed, dressed with more neatness than I had been able to do for some days, and passing into the study took up a book in an endeavor to divert my mind from its anxieties. Before long a pleasant distraction presented itself. There was a light tap on the door. I opened it, and beheld a well-laden tray. Taking it to Mrs. Devereux and Phoebe now appeared also, and the three ladies set themselves to entertain me while I lunched.

Phoebe had, clearly, told her hostess and Aileen something of the circumstances of our acquaintance. I now gave them my version of the story, relating with enthusiasm and thankful ness how she had aided my escape to an American soil and how, once again, she had helped me with her kindly sympathy at the Strait.

"Ah, Phoebe dear, I always knew you were a heroine," exclaimed little Miss Devereux, embracing her friend. "Later, mother and daughter slipped away for a few moments, leaving me to tete-a-tete with their charming young visitor. It was then I learned how she happened to be in Quebec."

"My father, having finished his round of inspection of the forts, came here to make his report to the government, and I begged him to bring me with him," Phoebe said. "He and Mr. Devereux have long been friends."

"Mr. Devereux, here is a French curé who apparently wishes to speak to you," she said. Devereux turned abruptly and, perceiving me, said to the other girl, whom I recognized by her resemblance to him to be his daughter, "Aileen, since you are our French scholar, tell the good man to come to my office later. Or if he is collecting for a church or a hospital, I'll give him a dollar and let him go."

Rising from her place, Aileen came toward me and repeated what he had said. "Thank you, mademoiselle," I replied in the same language. "Money I have managed for several days to do without, but I am sadly in need of food and shelter."

Then approaching her father I added resolutely in English, "Sir, as a country-man of yours I come to you for aid trusting in your honor, am a prescribed and hunted man; my name is Nial Adair."

Before he could answer Phoebe turned to her mother. "Oh, Mr. Devereux, you will protect him?" she cried eagerly. "I have met Mr. Adair before."

Aileen, meanwhile, hastened to set a chair for me. "Sir, be seated," she said with pretty dignity. "We bid you welcome in my father's house."

Devereux, aroused from his blank astonishment by her independence, leaped back in his chair and laughed. "Ha, ha, traitress," he protested, "do you not know this gentleman has been convicted of high treason and it is a great risk to harbor him?" "Nevertheless, I feel sure my husband will not refuse hospitality," interposed Mrs. Devereux, serenely.

Devereux exchanged a glance with her, locked the door of the room, and wheeling about stretched out his hand to me, saying, "Sir, since you are here, you may rely on me. I cannot shut my eyes to the injustice of many of the men now prominent in affairs in the province, nor my heart to the appeal of one from my own country who needs my help. Draw near to the table, sir, you have not breakfasted."

Mrs. Devereux now poured coffee for me and Aileen busied herself in waiting upon me, while Phoebe smiled in friendly content. When I had amply testified to my appreciation of the comfortable meal, my host conducted me upstairs to a little suite of apartments kept for his own use. "I am, pointing to a couch, said, 'Sir, and, you need rest. After you have slept, your luncheon will be served in the adjoining study, and my wife, my daughter, and their guest will assist you, with their chatter, to while away the afternoon. I must hasten to my affairs but I shall be at home again by six o'clock.'

When he had gone I threw myself on the divan and for some hours knew the blissful unconsciousness of slumber. Waking at last, I bathed, dressed with more neatness than I had been able to do for some days, and passing into the study took up a book in an endeavor to divert my mind from its anxieties. Before long a pleasant distraction presented itself. There was a light tap on the door. I opened it, and beheld a well-laden tray. Taking it to Mrs. Devereux and Phoebe now appeared also, and the three ladies set themselves to entertain me while I lunched.

Droulet in desperation knocked at the door of a Frenchman, who took me to his stable. "There is a hollow under the floor of the horse's stall, sir," said the habitant. "If you wish to lie concealed there you will be safe."

"Danger makes strange bedfellows. I have no choice but to try it," I replied, "since the soldiers are upon my track."

The horse was already bedded down for the night, but we took him from the stall, cleared out the straw, and raised the planks of the floor.

"There!" said my new host, pointing to a cavity like a grave. I had no time to hesitate, for, from the door of the stable, we could hear the voices of their lanterns. While the men fastened it, Droulet threw down in the hallway robe, and I cast myself prone in the hollow. He and the owner of the barn then replaced the boards above me, brought back the horse, and left me, for the nonce, to the solitude of my living grave.

Luckily for me the stable was built of squared logs and upon a rising ground. The earth was consequently dry. The floor was also raised about sixteen inches, and through the chinks between the logs, as well as in places where the plaster of the foundation wall had worn away, the wind blew, making a current of air. Notwithstanding my rest at the home of Mr. Devereux, I was so fatigued by my many wanderings that I found the buffalo robe comfortable enough. Feeling that my pursuers would never think to seek me beneath the floor of a horse's stall, I soon fell asleep, and rested as comfortably as though I were already across the border and had found repose upon a bed of down.

Late that night Droulet and my host came to the stable, disintegrated me, and brought me into the house. As I entered the living-room I saw a habitant standing before the fire with his back to me. At the sound of my footsteps he wheeled around and came toward me with outstretched hands and a smiling face. It was Ramon disguised, like myself. With what joy I greeted him I need not say. While we supped he told me of his many and perilous adventures since we were parted. Gladly I would listen down in these pages, but they form another story.

The night we passed in the house, but in the morning, before the children and servants of the family were awake, our host took us to the stable. We made the hollow under the floor larger, and my comrade shared with me the shallow, subterranean chamber.

Here we remained, for days, being brought out at night, but returning to our tomb at dawn taking with us a loaf of bread and a bottle of water. Droulet could no longer come to speak to us in the daytime and not ways at night, for a sentinel was posted at the house of Madame St. Germain, and two others were in the neighborhood. At last, he brought us word that for the third time a boat was ready to take us across the river to Point Levis, and arrangements had been made to start us on the Kennebec road for Maine.

It was the third of November. At seven o'clock in the evening we ventured forth. Ramon still wore the blouse of a habitant, I a long overcoat and broad-brimmed hat, the costume of the priests of the seminary of St. Sulpice. I was now able to walk fairly well with the aid of a cane and, as I leaned upon my staff and upon the arm of our host, I sought to maintain the dignity of the role I assumed.

Thus silenced, the smuggler agreed to go. He and Ramon and I mounted our horses, and covering them with my cloak Droulet came up close to me and in a voice trembling with emotion, said—

"Adair, far-well, we may never meet again. God bless you. Do not let yourself be taken. If they get you I shall be tempted to throw myself into the river."

"Oh, no, whatever happens, remember I shall feel to the end that you left no opportunity untried in order to help me to my freedom. No harm must come to you, my friend, but I'll be hanged, if I let them take me! Au revoir, au revoir."

Ramon in turn took leave of him, and said to part with so true a friend, we rode away. Never, indeed, did I meet Droulet again, but even now, after the lapse of many years, the very mention of his name stirs my pulses with a warmth of gratitude for the services he rendered me, and the risks he ran to save my life, during those days when I was a fugitive. This self-sacrificing generosity I appreciated all the more because, later, I learned he had been not only through friendship for me, but because he loved Jacquesette. Finding it vain to woo her for himself, with the spirit of which heroes are made, he devoted all his energies to insure her happiness, even though his success would give her to a rival. Ah, there are no nobler men than this young Canadian patriot!

When we had ridden some miles our guide, the innkeeper, again essayed to go back, but I showed him the purse with which Droulet had supplied me and offered to give him two golden eagles at the end of the journey. The promise of this reward kept him silent for an hour or more. Then he again faltered.

It is now plain enough to us that he knew who we were and feared arrest if he were found conducting us. Reining in his horse, so that Ramon involuntarily rode ahead, I thus got between him and the tavern-keeper and, turning quickly in my saddle, levelled my pistol at the man who would have so basely deserted us.

"You will guard us to the States," I said peremptorily, with my finger on the trigger. "Oh, yes, sir, yes, yes, I will. Oh, put up your weapon, I beg of you!" he stammered in a tremor of fear. "Remember I have a wife and family. I had no idea you were in such a desperate strait, sir. Of course I will go with you."

Wasting no words further, I motioned him to ride before me, which he hastened to do. Pistol in hand I followed, but we had no more trouble with him. Thus Ramon and I pressed on through the darkness, laughing in our sleeves at the guarded bridges, passes and barricaded posts which we were able so successfully to avoid. We had journeyed about ninety miles when, on the second morning from the time we set out from Quebec, a little after dawn, our guide said, pointing to a frame building a short distance before us on the road, "You see that house, sir?"

"Yes, what of it?" I answered carelessly. "It is the frontier inn, and is built right on the boundary line."

As we rode up to the door he directed our attention to the signboard swinging from a post before it. On one side of this sign were painted the lion and the unicorn, and beneath them the words "Lower Canada." On the other side was an eagle with outspread wings, above him a circlet of stars, and below, in large letters, "The State of Maine."