

Then bursting into a wild and scornful laugh : " By heaven ! " he exclaimed, " this is indeed a high compliment you pay me at the expense of these fine fellows. What, Colonel de Haldimar afraid to liberate an unarmed prisoner, hemmed in by a forest of bayonets ? This is good ; gentlemen," and he bent himself in a sarcastic reverence to the astonished troops, " I beg to offer my very best congratulations on the high estimation in which you are held by your colonel."

" Peace, sirrah ! " exclaimed the governor, enraged beyond measure at the insolence of him who thus held him up to contempt before his men, " or, by heaven ! I will have your tongue cut out ! — Mr. Lawson, let what this fellow requires be procured immediately." Then addressing Lieutenant Boyce, who commanded the immediate guard over the prisoner, — " Let his hands be liberated, sir, and enjoin your men to be watchful of the movements of this supple traitor. His activity I know of old to be great, and he seems to have doubled it since he assumed that garb."

The command was executed, and the prisoner stood, once more, free and unfettered in every muscular limb. A deep and unbroken silence ensued ; and the return of the adjutant was momentarily expected. Suddenly a loud scream was heard, and the slight figure of a female, clad in white, came rushing from the piazza in which the apartment of the deceased De Haldimar was situated. It was Clara. The guard of Wacousta formed the fourth front of the square ; but they were drawn up somewhat in the distance, so as to leave an open space of several feet at the angles. Through one of these the excited girl now passed into the area, with a wildness in her air and appearance that riveted every eye in painful interest upon her. She paused not until she had gained the side of the captive, at whose feet she now sank in an attitude expressive of the most profound despair.

" Tiger ! — monster ! " she raved, " restore my brother ! — give me back the gentle life you have taken, or destroy my own ! See, I am a weak defenceless girl : can you not strike ? — you have no pity for the innocent. But come," she pursued mournfully, regaining her feet and grasping his iron hand, — " come and see the sweet calm face of him you have slain : — come with me, and behold the image of Clara Beverley ; and, if you ever loved her as you say you did, let your soul be touched with remorse for your crime."

The excitement and confusion produced by this unexpected interruption was great. Murmurs of compassion for the unhappy Clara, and of indignation against the prisoner, were no longer sought to be repressed by the men ; while the officers, quitting their places in the ranks, grouped themselves indistinctly in the fore-ground. One, more impatient than his companions, sprang forward, and forcibly

drew away the delicate hand that still grasped that of the captive. It was Sir Edward Valletort.

" Clara, my beloved wife ! " he exclaimed, to the astonishment of all who heard him, " pollute not your lips by further communion with such a wretch ; his heart is as inaccessible to pity as the rugged rocks on which his spring-life was passed. For heaven's sake, — for my sake, — linger not within his reach. There is death in his very presence."

" Your wife, sir ! " haughtily observed the governor, with irrepressible astonishment and indignation in his voice ; " what mean you ? — Gentlemen, resume your places in the ranks. Clara — Miss de Haldimar, I command you to retire instantly to your apartment. We will discourse of this later, Sir Everard Valletort. I trust you have not dared to offer an indignity to my child."

While he was yet turned to the officer, who had taken his post, as commanded, in the inner angle of the square, and with a countenance that denoted the conflicting emotions of his soul, he was suddenly startled by the confused shout and rushing forward of the whole body, both of officers and men. Before he had time to turn, a loud and well-remembered yell burst upon his ear. The next moment, to his infinite surprise and horror, he beheld the bold warrior rapidly ascending the very staff that had been destined for his scaffold, and with Clara in his arms !

Great was the confusion that ensued. To rush forward and surround the flag-staff, was the immediate action of the troops. Many of the men raised their muskets, and in the excitement of the moment, would have fired, had they not been restrained by their officers, who pointed out the certain destruction it would entail on the unfortunate Clara. With the rapidity of thought, Wacousta had snatched up his victim, while the attention of the troops was directed to the singular conversation passing between the governor and Sir Everard Valletort, and darting through one of the open angles already alluded to, had gained the rampart before they had recovered from the stupor produced by his daring action. Stepping lightly upon the pegs, he had rapidly ascended to the utmost height of these, before any one thought of following him ; and then grasping in his teeth the cord which was to have served for his execution, and holding Clara firmly against his chest, while he embraced the smooth staff with his knees and feet closely compressed around it, accomplished the difficult ascent with an ease that astonished all who beheld him. Gradually, as he approached the top, the tapering pine waved to and fro : and at each moment it was expected, that yielding to their united weight, it would snap asunder, and precipitate both Clara and himself, either upon the rampart, or into the ditch beyond.

More than one officer now attempted to follow the fugitive in his adventurous course ; but even