


A Tale of Acadie

 OUTSIDE the rain fell in torrents. For days a ceaseless fall of water had come from the gray vault of heaven, bearing with it that feeling so suggestive of Autumn, bleak and cold. A dismal wind accompanied the unbroken patter of the raindrops, and, lashing the waters of the Basin of Minas till the waves roared and the surf beat high, further added to the already cheerless scene. Lingering traces of the dying summer, as seen in the bared trees, and shattered leaves floating in the rivulets which filled every hollow, completed a picture that helped to make one forget that life ever held a brighter prospect than this dreary November afternoon.

Within the old stone fort at Pezaquid, the scene was scarcely less gloomy. A strange foreboding seemed settled upon the handful of officers seated in the messroom, so strange and so foreboding, that even the afterdinner pipe was forgotten and the jocularity so usual at such times, had entirely given place to stern looks and still sterner thoughts. Their thoughts were not altogether upon the French and their tactics, for *these* were English officers. In fact there was little cause for fear from this source, for the French had attacked the fort a few days previous and only a small remnant had been left, scattered to the four winds of Heaven. Their anxiety was caused rather by their fear of the Indians, who were ever an enemy to those who seemed most likely to deprive them of home and hunting grounds and whose juncture with the French might, at this time, result disastrously to the fort and its occupants. Besides, provisions were low and in case of siege could last not longer than a few days. Weeks of anxious waiting, spent in such preparations to withstand an assault as could be made, weeks of sleepless nights, for at night of all times, were they to be on guard, had played sad havoc with their physical as well as mental constitutions. Attack after attack and skirmish after skirmish, had so weakened their forces, that, unless help came from some quarter, death from starvation and despair, if not at the hands of the enemy, was all they could expect.

At last a long silence was broken by an exclamation from one of the younger officers.

"Surely there can be little danger of an attack now! Send out a foraging party and let us eat, drink and be merry. This suspense