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BY

THE MARSHES OF MINAS

BY

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

AUTHOR OF

"THE FORGE IN THE FOREST," "AROUND THE CAMP FIRE,"
"EARTH'S ENIGMAS," ETC.

TORONTO:

WILLIAM BRIGGS

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Prefatory Note

THE stories in this collection all deal with that romantic period in Canadian history when the French were making their last struggle to retain their hold upon the peninsula of Acadie —now called Nova Scotia. The book is named from those wide sea-meadows and that restless water around which chiefly clusters the romance of Acadian story. Two of the tales—"The Eye of Gluskâp" and "A Tragedy of the Tides"—are here reprinted from the volume entitled *Earth's Enigmas*, for the reason that their subjects bring them obviously within the scope of this collection rather than the other.

C. G. D. R.

LONDON, July, 1899.

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BY THE MARSHES OF MINAS

The Ramparts of Port Royal

Being an Adventure of Captain Seth Waldo, of the Connecticut Battalion, Serving under Sir William Phips in Acadie

"BOSTON HARBOUR itself is scarce more sightly, nor half so spacious!" exclaimed Major Ephraim Whitman, as he leaned upon the bulwarks of the Boston ketch *God's Mercy*, and gazed with great content across the wide waters of the Basin to the low green ramparts of Port Royal.

In very truth, there was nothing in the bay of Boston to compare with it. Nor even in the havens of my own Connecticut could one match that great and sheltered expanse of safe anchorage, lying in wondrous peace between rich shores

and high umbrageous hills. But Major Ephraim was a Boston man, and I thought it not well to contend with him in the matter. He had paid this place of Port Royal, this lovely lair of our most pestilent annoyers, the highest compliment that lay within his compass. I answered, therefore, in such a manner as to stir no contention.

"'T is indeed a fair water and a fair shore," said I. "And fair would seem our chance of soon possessing that same fairness." But in my heart was the thought of something fairer far, the possession of which I held of more account by an infinite deal than all the lands commanded by the ramparts of Port Royal.

As Major Ephraim, wrapped in glad contemplation of some imagined similitude to the bay of Boston, spoke no further at the moment, I was free to think of my good fortune in being once more within a neighbourhood that held Diane de Menneval. One year agone, I being then a poor captive in Montreal, Diane had looked upon me with a pity whose nigh kinship to love she had at last sweetly confessed to me. My exchange being accomplished (I was held at the price of a little pock-marked French colonel whom I might

have stowed away in one of my jack-boots), I had gone back to New England with an ill-disguised reluctance; but at parting with Diane I had sworn that I would come to her in the following spring. Since that parting and that oath she had removed to Acadie, that her gracious presence might cheer the loneliness of her uncle, the Sieur de Menneval, Governor of Port Royal. Now, thanks to a favouring wind and honest piloting, here was I at my lady's very threshold, so to speak, making good my oath. But would she pardon the manner of my coming? Would she welcome the gallant a-wooing sword in hand? I shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, as I bethought me of a certain imperiousness in her stately carriage, of a certain aptitude for scorn in the green dusks of her deep eyes. As I gazed desirously across the smooth yellow tide to the clustering cottages of the village and the green ramparts guarding them, something of my solicitude must have shown itself in my face, for Major Ephraim spoke suddenly.

"Seth," said he, with a sly chuckle, "I 've heard say there is a maid in Port Royal whose name dwelleth more in thy heart than on thy

lips; and in sooth I begin to believe it. Such a moonsick face as thine have I never seen on a man except he were in love!"

"She is there, behind those very earthen walls, Ephraim," returned I soberly; "and so fair a maid as never came out of Boston."

The Major laughed dryly. He had taken two wives out of Boston.

"I feel for thee, Seth; verily I feel for thee," said he. "If she be a maid of any spirit, she will scarce thank her gallant for the shots that will presently be bringing down the walls about her ears. Thou hadst done better, to my thinking, to have held back from this venture of our Sir William's, and suffered thy wooing to abide a more convenient season." And the Major searched my countenance with his merry shrewd eyes, right full of wisdom of the worldly as well as of the godly sort.

"You touch me on the raw," I answered, confessing to my trouble of heart. "But I had sworn to come at this time; and there was no other way that consisted with honour. It seemed to me, moreover, that I might be so fortunate as to do her some service during the contention

or thereafter. Had I not thought more of this than of her good-will, I had surely stayed behind."

"Well, well," said Major Ephraim in a voice of encouragement, "'t is an ancient and well-accredited custom to woo a maid with the sword's point; and there may yet be women to commend it, though it fits not well with these mincing days. And who is the damsel, Seth?"

"Mademoiselle de Menneval," said I.

Major Ephraim whistled, and was silent.

"The Governor's niece," I continued.

"I know, I know!" exclaimed the Major. "This enterprise of ours will, without doubt, commend you to her mightily, my boy. She cannot but love you, if only for the kindness we will do her uncle!" And without another word he turned again to lean upon the bulwarks. The yellow bubbles on the tide, as they raced smoothly past the black side of the ketch appeared to engross his meditation; and I walked aft with a very downcast spirit. Never till now had my eyes been fully opened to the loftiness of the obstacles before me. I had thought of them as barriers to be surmounted with some boldness

and some firmness, such as I held myself not altogether lacking in; but when I minded me of Diane's pride of race, I confess that I felt daunted. For was I not helping to put a manner of discredit upon her house?

It was by this a little past noon hour. As I stood beside the wheel I must have worn a black countenance, for everyone avoided me. The ketch *God's Mercy* (which ever seemed to me a strange name for a battailous craft) swung easily at her anchor. A little over by lay Sir William's own ship, and in my bitter mood I went nigh to cursing his pennon as it flaunted jauntily from the mizzen peak. Our stout commander had one frigate and six smaller vessels, sloops and ketches, for this Acadian venture of his; and they swung now in ominous array before the menaced ramparts. On his decks he had seven hundred good men of New England, of an excellent fervour to fight, to trade, to pray, or to harry the Quakers. Of Port Royal, the word had gone abroad that she was ill-garrisoned and her walls in a condition of grievous disrepair. I could not doubt that we should soon be masters of the place. But for me what comfort in this?

In that hour I saw all black, so completely had Major Ephraim's view of the matter dashed me.

Whilst I was thus buried in my gloom a message came aboard from the commander's ship, and I found myself summoned to his presence. Sir William Phips had already honoured me with his confidence in more than one affair of import, and he knew that the French tongue was to me almost as that of my own people. The upshot was that a half-hour later my boat thrust out from the frigate, and as fast as four good oars could speed me I made for the long grey pier beneath the ramparts of Port Royal.

I, of all men upon that expedition, was bearing to the Sieur de Menneval a peremptory summons to surrender!

What would come of it all I durst not think. I had my orders, and could but obey them to the best of my power. I put on a face of iron as the boat pulled in under the dripping shadow of the pier. I mounted the weedy stairs. My white flag of parley had been marked, of course, from the moment that I put out from the ship, and a guard awaited me at the stair-head. Right

well did I know those white Bourbon uniforms, grown familiar during my long captivity.

With all courtesy I was conducted up through a curious crowd of Acadian villagers,—short, swarthy, gesticulating men, and bright-eyed women whose faces looked out demurely from their hoods of unbleached linen. The great gate of the fort swung open to me. I had time to note how ruinous were the ramparts. I had time to mark the heavy guns which lay waiting to be mounted on their carriages. I saw right well that we had come in time, catching our adversary while he was yet unready. Then I passed through a low doorway and a dark passage. A thick red curtain lifted, and I stood before the Governor.

The Sieur de Menneval, standing beside a table covered with red cloth, faced me in an attitude of extreme haughtiness, which was somewhat belied, however, by the fine courtesy of his greeting. He was tall,—almost of my own inches—but spare exceedingly. His uniform of fine white cloth was brave with gold lace, and his breast glittered with many a jewelled decoration. He was not only a brave soldier and of most honourable lineage, as I well knew, but he was

Diane's uncle; and I think that the deep respect of my obeisance left him nothing to complain of. His dark and hawk-like features softened to a marvellous graciousness, insomuch that I almost forgot Major Ephraim's discouragement.

When I had delivered my harsh message, Monsieur de Menneval seemed no whit perturbed thereby, but smiled upon me with a certain indulgence which much bewildered me.

"Captain Waldo," said he,—and smiled the more as he noted my astonishment at being called by name,—"Captain Waldo will hardly, I think, persuade himself that a stronghold like Port Royal is to be got for the asking?"

"Your Excellency," I replied gently, "it is not for me to have any opinion upon this matter. I am but a plain soldier obeying my orders. I would to God this duty had been required of any other rather than of me. But I had no choice. I am ordered to demand of your Excellency nothing less than instant and unconditional surrender."

I spoke with a sufficient firmness, but in my distress of spirit I lowered my eyes before his searching scrutiny. His long, fine hand, which was resting lightly on the red cloth, pressed hard

upon the table at my words, and I saw the finger-nails whiten. But his voice betrayed no anger as he made reply, "And if I refuse, what then?"

"The ships will open fire at once, your Excellency," I answered in a low voice. I could not dream that he would let it come to that, and the place so ill-prepared to make resistance.

"The demand is a most preposterous one," said he coldly. "What can I do but refuse, Captain Waldo?"

"Oh, sir," I broke out, with a great earnestness, looking suddenly into his eyes, and catching a meaning there which I could not fathom, "I entreat you, do not refuse! I have seen your helplessness. Where is your garrison? Where are your guns? In what state are your defences? You cannot hold out for one hour against our heavy metal. But in that hour what mischief may not befall! For your own sake, for the sake of—for the sake of those whose destinies you control, do not push the lost game to an extremity!"

"You plead with eloquence in an enemy's cause, Captain Waldo," said he, with a smile. "But I will not pretend to misunderstand you.

I believe you do me the honour of wishing well to my house, and I trust much to your good-will. I will ask you to allow me two hours for consideration before giving you my answer. And in the meantime, Mademoiselle de Menneval——"

But in a desperation I interrupted him. I knew what he had it on his tongue to say. He was for giving me those two hours with Diane. The blood surged into my head at the thought of it, and a sickness came about my heart because I must refuse. But I durst not let him speak the words.

"No! no!" I cried, putting out my hands. "Do not make it harder for me, sir, than I can bear. I perceive that you suspect the nature of my sentiments towards Mademoiselle de Menneval, for whose sake I count life nothing save as it may be spent in her service and to her honour. But no one can know better than you the duty of a soldier. Whether you answer or refuse to answer my general's summons, I must return to him at once. There is no room to question as to my duty on this errand!"

De Menneval was silent for some moments, pondering. Whether he was angered or not by

my reply I could not guess. His features wore a mask of courteous gravity.

"I must reluctantly acknowledge that you are in the right in this," he replied, "and that I cannot take amiss your refusal. But this at least I can ask, this at least I can put upon your friendship (which, you see, I make so bold as to claim for myself): that when you return to Sir William Phips with my rejection of his demands, you refrain from uncovering to him the helplessness of our condition,—for we *are* helpless, as you say. You see I trust you. Let me tell you this further: immediately on your arrival at the pier I sent agents of my own to your commander, offering to give up the fort on terms not inconsistent with my own honour and the importance of this post. All that this will mean to me and mine I need not remind you. If, now, you should desire to do me a great service, the occasion will without doubt expose itself to you very clearly."

Whilst he spoke I was in an anguish. That I should hold my tongue a little,—it seemed not much to ask of me; yet how much it might mean to him and to Diane! I was shaken, moreover,

by the man's kindness, by his unexpected favouring of my hopes. Let me confess it, too, I was flattered by all his speech and bearing. This was no common man who sought my aid, but one whose power and quality would command reverence in any company. To say him yea, to do him this great and lasting service, to so prove my fidelity to Diane's interests, to win admittance, free and favoured, to her adored companionship, — why not? Why not? implored the eager heart within me. But with a rush of heat and shame that set my face a-prickling to the ears, I remembered that 't was a sheer treason that he asked of me; and at that my manhood came back in some measure. I affected not to see his drift.

"Alas, sir," said I in a pained voice, and looking upon the floor, "I have no interest with the commander at all, that he should put my private petition before the public advantage."

"You mistake me, Captain Waldo!" he exclaimed, with a faint sharpness of irritation in his tones. "I will rest much indebted to you, believe me, if your commander is allowed to think (as he doubtless thinks by now) that Port Royal

is in a position for defence! That is the whole matter!"

At that I raised my eyes, and met his with a sorrowful firmness.

"Your Excellency," said I, "there is no one who knows better than you how a man shall keep his honour stainless. This that you ask of me,—if I were to say yea to it, would you hold my honour stainless? Could I— But you know well what it is you ask! I will give up all but honour to serve Mademoiselle de Menneval. If I would give up *that* for her, then were I utterly unworthy to serve her at all!"

De Menneval turned, with a stern gesture of dismissal. "Be assured," said he, "that the man who stands in my path this day, and uncovers my weakness to my enemy, will be forever after accounted the enemy of my house."

"At least, sir," I answered, "he will not be accounted a traitor. I beg you to tell Mademoiselle de Menneval that!" And somewhat blindly I made for the door.

Now it chanced that there were many red curtains, all of a like fashion, covering the wall of that room. But one curtain was lifted aside,

revealing a door. Down the dim passage I blundered, in a fever of pain and wrath and fierce hopelessness. I came, as was natural, to another door. I flung it open and strode through, to find myself, not in the sunlit square of the fort, but in a dim chamber, richly hung and furnished. I had but time to note that it had the air of a lady's withdrawing-room, when the door shut behind me with a click.

I sprung and wrenched at it furiously, but the lock had caught. Was it treachery or an accident? I looked at the window. It was small, high up in the wall, and heavily barred. I caught the glint and shimmering of spring's young leafage against it, and wondered what could be its outlook, for I had seen no tree in the fort yard. Perceiving that there was no escape for me by the window, I turned in a sort of desperation to seek some weapon wherewith to batter at the door. I turned—and found myself face to face with Diane de Menneval. I was dumb with amazement, with doubt, with impotent wrath at my position, with a consuming hunger of love at the sight of her.

Questioning and a sorrowful reproach were in

her pale proud face; and for the moment I could answer neither. I stood and gazed upon her, and my utter worship must have burned clearly in my eyes, for her lips softened to a faint smile.

"Do you come as a friend or as an enemy?" she asked.

How could I answer her? I threw myself down at her feet, and pressed my face into the silken folds of her gown.

"Diane," I cried in a broken voice, "I love you! You are more to me than life, than——"

"Set', my dear friend," quoth she softly, speaking in English which I had taught her, and tripping adorably on the last letter of my name, of which her tongue could never win the mastery, "will you not shelter us now against your harsh and grasping general? He knows not the courtesies due to a De Menneval. And his heart is as rough as his own granite hills."

It seemed more than my heart could endure, to say no to this; but gathering all my resolution I forced myself to continue, as if she had not interrupted me. My voice was so shaken that I scarce formed the words articulately.

——"more than my life," I went on, "more

than my own soul, beyond measure, more than all else but honour! "

" I heard your conversation with my uncle," said she slowly. " Never will he forgive you or forget to curse you, if you lift a hand to balk him in this matter. And I, Set', I am a soldier's daughter. I have learned the lesson of obedience. I will obey my uncle."

I arose and stood before her, and looked into her grave eyes. There was all my world, and I was throwing it away for this phantom, this bubble that a breath might shatter, this thing called " honour "! My heart was like lead, but I spoke steadily.

" Then," said I, " this is my farewell to hope, to all that might have made this life a paradise. My love for you, Diane, is of such a quality that never will I dishonour you with the love of a traitor. The lips, dear, which have touched yours will not betray a trust. You may hate me forever, but you shall not blush to have once loved me. Give me the key " (for I now perceived for the first time that she was holding a key in her hand), " give me the key, I implore you, and let me go quickly! "

At this, as once before in her uncle's glance, I caught in her eyes a look which I could not understand. But it was gone on the instant.

"No, Set'," she replied very gently, "I will not give you the key."

As I realised what this meant, I could not refrain from a cry at the new torment thrust upon me.

"No! no! you do not mean it, Diane!" I pleaded. "Give me the key, I adjure you! Be merciful!" And in the passion of my entreaty I pressed closer to her side.

"I will not!" she answered, with something of arrogant firmness in her voice; and, lightly avoiding me, she drew aside nearer to the window.

"Then," said I, "I have no choice, Diane. I am only a soldier on duty. I must *take* the key."

At that she turned upon me, her great eyes all ablaze with indignation.

"What!" she exclaimed, "you would dare—" Then something in my look seemed to convince her that I meant what I said, and her face changed on the instant. She looked this way and that, and made as if to thrust the

key into her bosom,—in which sanctuary it must have been safe indeed,—and I darted forward to prevent her. But ere I could grasp her arm she had changed her purpose, and with a swift, vehement gesture she hurled the key through the high window.

"There!" she cried, facing me with a defiance that hung on the verge of tears. "*You shall not* bring down upon your head my uncle's curse! And—and"—she added softly, with the little catching of her breath which I knew and loved so well—"neither need you do any dishonour to my love, Set'." She came a step nearer to me, and held out both white hands.

The blood surged back upon my heart so suddenly that for an instant I was dizzied, and as I took her hands I steadied myself by them. It was ever so little, but she understood by it more than a whole book of words could have made plain. She laughed, with a kind and tender merriment, and made as if to hold me up,—me, who overtopped her queenly head by a good seven inches. I thought no more of the price which my general might have to pay for possession of the ramparts of Port Royal. I cared no

whit whether I had been tricked or not, but rather if I had, thanked God for it. I felt myself absolved from all the burden of the affair. I was Diane's prisoner, and no act of mine could set me free! I think I may even say, without vanity, that in praising my lady's wit and resource, which had so delivered me unstained from an intolerable situation, my passion and my gratitude enabled me to achieve some small measure of eloquence. The time in that dim chamber sped by with no great count of it taken, till on a sudden (an hour, perhaps, or two, having elapsed) there came a shrill whistle under the window.

Diane sprang up, and thrust her hand into a niche above the fireplace. Turning to me with eyes of dancing mischief, she held out a key.

"There are two keys to yon door!" she laughed. "This one was within your reach all the time. You are free now, Set'. Port Royal has surrendered upon very honourable terms!"

But I refused to rise.

"I am no longer in haste, then, dear heart," said I. "But you, as a punishment for having dealt so high-handedly with the sacred person of

a herald, are now under the necessity of bearing witness for me before Sir William!"

"I will tell him," quoth she, with a sweet petulance, "that you value honour before my love! And if he be a true lover, or ever have been, I swear he will not believe the monstrous tale!"

The Bewitchment of Lieutenant Hanworthy

Being Leaves from his Memoirs, Setting forth Certain Adventures which Befell him on Thanksgiving Day

AS the sun, dropping through a raw and fire-edged slit in the cloud, sank behind South Mountain, some three miles off to my right, I snuggled my head deeper into the fold of my thick cloak, and spurred my good sorrel to a trot.

This wind, drawing down the long valley of the Port Royal stream, had a bleaker unfriendliness than even the bleak east wind which I imagined whistling at this moment over my own hill pastures of Salem. Across the harsh, salty smells that blew in gusts from the half-uncovered mud-flats of the river, my memory of old Thanksgivings at home called up most rich and tender savours of roast goose, till an appetite of huge anticipation began to riot beneath my waistcoat.

Should I be in time? For my sake the hour had been set late, far beyond the ordinary; but it was even now near, and the roofs of Port Royal were yet a good six miles distant. With dejection I remembered the Major's parting words:

"Punctuality, remember! Be on hand at the minute! Not even for you, Mark, my boy, shall such a goose as Tamin has brought in be suffered to spoil by waiting."

Though the good sorrel was tired, and owed me naught on that day's journeying, I pushed him to his utmost. I could not contemplate with equanimity the loss of such a dinner as might make me forget my long months of Acadian exile.

It was five months since I had left Salem, coming to Acadia with the Boston expedition for the capture of Port Royal. In the taking of it there had been some spirit, some diversion, in truth; but the holding of it was a daily-growing monotony. The Acadians seemed passably content with their new masters. No peril menaced the green-sodded ramparts of our prize; the townsfolk trafficked in an established peace, selling us their fish and flax; and, in the dearth of

matters more stirring for discussion, the Major's Thanksgiving dinner had been for days a theme of grave import.

I thought of the gravity with which the Major, on Monday of the preceding week, had announced his purpose. With his little council of five officers, among whom I had the honour to be his secretary and aide, he had been considering certain weighty matters of his government, when suddenly, swerving from questions of toll and tax, his voice took on a deeper tone, and he said:

"Gentlemen, since duty dooms us to this exile, even upon the approaching day of Thanksgiving, I have resolved that New England shall, in a sense, upon that day, be brought to us!"

He paused for a moment, and approbation shone in our faces.

"These good people of Acadia," he went on, "do not observe our feast, but I have noted that they can supply the wherewithal for its proper observance. Their ducks and geese feed fat upon these marshes. Their gardens are instructed in the growth of sage and onions. They are not unskilled in the subtleties of apple sauce;

and I have found pumpkins! You observe the possibilities! Well, I may add that our good Josephte, who has ruled our kitchen so capably these months past, has acquired, with suggestions from myself, the art of making such a pumpkin pie as might pass for the product of Duxbury or Dedham." (The Major hailed from Duxbury.) "Oh, her pies will pass, I assure you! But mince I have not suffered her to essay, for failure there, you will agree, would be a desecration!"

The memory of this speech appealed now most potently to my imagination. The Major's face, too, as he leaned forward over the council table to note the effect of his words, came pleasantly before me. It was a strange face, but I loved it well. The forehead, broad, low-arched, and bald far back to the very crown of the skull, was fenced, as it were, with a stiff, forward bristling fringe of red hair, recalcitrant to the brush. The eyes, small but deeply clear, beamed sweet humour; but the mouth, little better than a long crevice across the bleak and stony promontory of his chin, was such as men make haste to conciliate. The nose, large and much awry, gave me ever a notion that the rest of the face had been

finished earlier, and this feature added afterward, lavishly but hastily, in the dark.

It came upon me now, as I mused, that herein lay the incongruity which ever sat upon our good Major's face—this nose, a ceaseless entertainment to the tolerantly mirthful eyes, was a ceaseless affront to the uncompromising mouth. Thence conflict perennial in the Major's countenance!

Pleased at this whimsical solution of an ancient enigma, I chuckled aloud. The patient sorrel cocked his ears at the sound, and cheerily bettered his pace. He doubtless reasoned that, if his master were pleased, some good thing for both must be close at hand.

I looked carefully about me. There, behind a screen of fir trees, a stone's throw back from the road, rose three sharp gables in a row. It was the place of the Sieur de Belleisle, a very great man among the Acadians. I perceived that, in my musings of Thanksgiving meats and the Major's nose, I had beguiled a good mile of the journey. My appetite was furious, but my humour was mending.

"The Major will wait a half-hour for me!" I said confidently, in my heart.

As I passed the wide-open gate of the De Belleisle place, the sorrel swerved obstinately to enter, as if here, in his opinion, were the fitting termination to his journey. Reining him back to the road, I could not but laugh again, for I recalled another word of the Major's to me as I was setting out on my journey.

"Better not stop at the De Belleisle place on your way," he had said, his eyes twinkling askance over the biased nose; "if you do you will be sure to miss the goose!"

"Why, sir?" I had inquired with interest.

"There is a witch there!" And he had turned away into the barracks, very stiff and soldierly in his well-kept uniform. Had he been a Salem man, he would not have spoken so lightly of witches.

I had heard of Mademoiselle de Belleisle, but I had never seen her. She had been in Quebec, and was but lately returned to Acadia with her uncle. I had heard of her strange beauty, of her mocking gayety, the warmth of her great eyes, the illimitable coldness of her heart.

Now, as I passed her uncle's gates, a sense of the wonder and the nearness of her beauty came

upon me in a fashion that made me marvel. My interest in the Major's dinner went out like a snuffed candle, so inconsistent an organ is the stomach of a man who has brains and imagination. The fat goose, at that moment being discreetly basted at Port Royal, was forgotten, just because I had apprehended that a woman's eyes were beautiful. I regretted that I had not let my sorrel carry me through the gate. But the notion of turning back was not for a moment entertained. Never have I accounted myself a candidate for the fellowship of Lot's wife.

Then of a sudden the face of Mademoiselle de Belleisle flashed upon the eyes of my soul. Her face—it could be none other; yet never, as I have already said, had I seen the maiden; and never had she been described to me, save in a general shining confusion of mobile features and unfathomable eyes. It did not occur to me to doubt that the face which now so curiously crossed my brain could be any face but hers; and I found myself muttering:

"Renée de Belleisle. It is a name of music, very fitting to so fair a face!"

Then I remembered that, to the best of my

knowledge, I had never been told her name was Renée!

"Fool!" I snapped aloud, pulling myself together and sitting erect in the saddle. "Fool! These are the hallucinations of the fasting! Her name is most like to be Ninette, Babette, Lisette, or such light nonsense. Renée, indeed! Why should I think of that for a name! Let me return to thoughts of the Major's goose, well stuffed with sage and onions!"

But there was a witchcraft in the air, and do what I would my thoughts flew wild, dispersed like a covey of birds. I noted now particularly —though why it was matter for particular notice I could not have told—that I had come to the limit of the thick spruce hedge which fronted the garden of the De Belleisle place. Beyond this limit I passed with a dragging, incomprehensible reluctance, and I perceived, to my astonishment, that my hand upon the rein had brought the good sorrel to a stop.

As if to give me a reason for my stopping, pat upon the moment came a sharp cry of distress from behind the covert of the hedge. It was not loud, but it was imperative.

"Who 's there? What 's the matter?" I demanded brusquely.

There was a moment of silence, thrilled by the passing phantom of a sob. Then came a voice, so close that I started:

"I am afraid, monsieur, that it is very much that I need your help. I fear it is that I have sprained my poor ankle, for I have not the power to at all stand up."

The voice was very low and quiet, but penetratingly clear. The quaintly accented and foreignly ordered syllables seemed to me the sweetest music I had ever heard. The blood throbbed up into my temples.

"I am coming, mademoiselle!" I cried, a sort of thickness in my tones; and whirling my sorrel I put him at a fast gallop back to the gate.

Along the hedge just within ran a broad path. In but a handful of seconds, so to speak, I had flung myself from the saddle and was standing beside a girl whose downcast, half-averted face made me think of the flower of a white lily. A heavy lock of dark hair had fallen far forward, hiding half the rondure of her cheek and chin. She was dressed all in black, save for a scarf of

orange-coloured silk flung carelessly about her shoulders. She sat in an attitude of tense constraint, as if resolved upon no weak feminine outcry; and with both white hands she clasped a slippered foot of exceeding smallness and grace, at glimpse of which the old saw came across my memory:

"The littlest foot may be heaviest on a man's neck!"

"Do you think, mademoiselle, you could walk with my assistance?" I inquired, bending over her, cap in hand.

She lifted her face, she lifted her drooping white lids, and gave me one darkly brilliant look. Eyes so large, so enigmatic, so mysteriously deep, I had never before imagined. The look dropped again upon the moment; but in that moment I experienced a swift and breathless sinking of the heart, and it seemed that life rushed by me dizzily. The sensation was incomprehensible to me then; but afterward I knew that it was a sensation very proper to one falling a great depth; for in that moment my spirit fell into the deeps of her eyes. After a little hesitation, she gave me her hand and tried to rise; but

I took her gently by the arms and lifted her. For an instant so she stood, leaning upon me, then she sank to the ground again with a catching of the breath.

"I am afraid it is no use, monsieur!" she said, speaking now in French, as I had addressed her in that tongue. "It hurts too much. Perhaps —though I am afraid I am terribly heavy—you could lift me into the saddle, and in that way, monsieur, you could get me to the house!"

How had I deserved that Fate should so favour me? The blood hummed in my ears, and I think a foolish grin of ecstasy came upon my face. But I managed to stammer: "Permit me, then, mademoiselle!" and, stooping low, I lifted her in my arms with reverent care. I carried her as if she were a child. In truth, she was no great weight to carry; for among women of English blood she would have been accounted small, and her body was of a very slender, delicate mould, girlish, but not thin.

I lifted her, but I did not put her into the saddle. Whistling the horse to follow me, which he did at the heel, like a dog, with his nose down, I strode up a narrow path which led direct to the house.

"But—but, monsieur!" she exclaimed in a voice of surprise and protest, "you are not going to try to carry me all that distance. Indeed, you must not. Put me on the horse's back, please!"

This last was spoken with a touch of imperiousness—quite lost upon me!

"You must, please! And you can hold me on!" she continued, less assuredly.

"No, mademoiselle," said I; "this, believe me, is the only way. Suffering so, you could not sit in the saddle. And the jolting would hurt you. For the moment, I am your physician, and you must obey. It is only for a minute. See, we are almost there—unfortunately!" I added in my heart.

She made no answer; and I wondered uneasily if she were vexed at my positive air. But no, she was not vexed, for presently she said:

"But how strong you are, monsieur!"

The simple, unaffected admiration in her words thrilled me.

"If I am strong, mademoiselle," said I, "the present enchanted enterprise were no proof of it. A flower, a dream, and a prayer make no great weight to carry!"

"Oh, monsieur!" she said rebukingly, "I had heard you English were rough and direct of speech; but no Frenchman dare flatter me so extravagantly as that!"

"I cannot flatter at all, mademoiselle. But I can tell merely some poor fragments of the truth, as my own heart sees it!" I rejoined with dogged earnestness.

At this she kept silence. Her wit was accustomed to skilled fence. I guessed that my sudden plainness perplexed her. She kept her eyes cast down. Wonderful to me were those long lashes sweeping the clear pallor of her skin.

With one hand I flung open the door. Into a spacious hall I stepped, and closed the door behind me—to the disappointment of my faithful sorrel, who seemed ready to follow me in! No candles were lit; but from a large room upon my right came the red flicker of a fire upon the hearth. I paused irresolutely on the threshold.

"In there, if you please, monsieur," said mademoiselle. "You may put me on the divan in the corner."

I set her down with a slow, and, I fear, too obvious reluctance. Then I arranged the cushions

that she might lie at ease. This done, I paused beside the couch, wavering. What excuse had I to stay longer? Plainly, I must make my adieu. But she did not help me to go. She raised her eyes to mine for the least part of a moment, and said gratefully:

"How kind you are, monsieur! I feel better already!"

"But your ankle must be bathed at once, or bandaged! Something must be done for it at once!" I exclaimed. "Whom shall I call to attend you, mademoiselle?"

"I am afraid there is no one, monsieur!" she said very sweetly, as if the situation were the most usual in the world. "But, truly, my ankle needs no attendance at all. I could not bear to have it touched—at least yet. It needs only that I should lie quite still for the present!"

"Do you mean to say, mademoiselle, that you are all alone in this house?" I cried in amazement.

"Why, it is nothing!" she replied. "My uncle, with his guest, Captain Duchesne, and with our two men, has gone away—shooting, not to be back before midnight. The maids, Lize

and Susette, I have foolishly allowed to go and visit friends down the valley for an hour or two. But I am not at all afraid to be alone!"

"It is out of the question, mademoiselle," said I, with an air of virtuous decision (my heart the while thumping mightily), "that you should be left alone! If you will excuse me for a moment, I will go and stand my beast out of the wind! He has served me faithfully to-day, and I must not forget him."

"Since you are so decided, monsieur, I will not try to dissuade you," said she smiling. "But you are undertaking a stay of perhaps some hours, so you must stand the good beast in the stables, and bait him. May I stay alone so long?"

At this there was a laughter about her mouth, triumphant and mysterious. It confused me, and I retired without reply.

The sorrel, awaiting impatiently, whinnied at my approach. I led him around to the back of the many-gabled house, and found the barns, a little village in themselves. The horse-stalls were all empty, whereat I might have wondered had my brain not been dazed with the vision of

mademoiselle's eyes. I found oats for the horse, and hay and a blanket, yet moved the while as one in a dream. Then I made haste back to the firelit room.

Mademoiselle apparently had not stirred from her cushions. She did not look up as I entered, but she spoke at once.

"I very well know, monsieur, what you are sacrificing for me," she murmured musingly. "It is wonderful to me that an Englishman should give up a dinner for a woman! Your brother officers will miss you sorely at their Thanksgiving feast; and me, I know, they never, never, will forgive!"

"How did you know," I asked in astonishment, "that we were having a Thanksgiving dinner at Port Royal to-night?"

"All the master's doings are of consequence to the slave! The conqueror sits in a fierce light, Lieutenant Hanworthy," she said, deliciously stumbling at my name, and turning, as she spoke it, the full glory of her eyes upon my face.

"You know my name too? But how, mademoiselle?" I stammered, amazement making my own eyes wide.

"Oh, I am a kind of witch!" she laughed merrily. "I know all about you, and I have seen you before, Lieutenant Hanworthy! Have you not seen me—a glimpse of me—once, in Port Royal? Think!"

"No, never, mademoiselle, save in my dreams!" I declared boldly.

A slight flush crept up into her pale face—or was it the firelight?

"Monsieur—" she began.

"Mademoiselle—" said I, patiently expecting a rebuke.

"Being an Englishman, and surely hungry, you must eat!"

"Yes, mademoiselle," I assented very cheerfully, as I should have done to any proposition that she might have made, save one—that I should leave her.

"Please go into the next room and light the candles. Then you may help me in there also. It is the dining-room. On the buffet you will find some wine of Bordeaux which is good, if my good uncle be not deceived; and some cakes of the country; and a pasty which your politeness, monsieur, shall swear to be unsurpassable, for

my own hands made it. You shall have your Thanksgiving dinner, but translated into French!"

"No, mademoiselle; rather translated, like Elijah, into Heaven!" I cried extravagantly, springing up in a kind of intoxication to do her bidding.

The candles lighted, I found the dining-room, a large, low-ceiled chamber, with walls of dark oak, a long table in the centre, and all one side occupied by a buffet which bore a lavish profusion of wines and viands. The pasty, fresh-cut and sweet-smelling, I set upon the table, and a dish of Acadian cakes—a kind of sweet dough fried in lard and rolled in maple sugar, which I liked. Then, pulling a couch from the wall to the table, I went to get my hostess.

"I can walk now, monsieur!" she said, giving me her hand.

I ignored it.

"One step now, and you may be helpless for weeks! It is impossible, mademoiselle, that such a hurt should be so soon recovered!" said I decisively; and before she could find words of effective protest I had carried her to the couch in the dining-room. Her face flushed this time

most unmistakably, and she bit her lips—but whether in amusement or in anger I could not tell.

"Allow me to give you a glass of wine, mademoiselle!" said I, pouring and presenting it.

"I never touch it, monsieur," said she, lightly waving the glass aside.

"Then I do not want it," I exclaimed, replacing the decanter on the buffet. "But hungry I am, strange as it may seem. I have not eaten since breakfast."

"I pray you make a good meal, monsieur," she said gently.

I dug from the delectable depths of the pasty a plump pigeon-breast for her. She picked at it, while I set myself vigorously to break my long fast. But eating, for me, then, was a business to be got through with. I scarce knew what I ate, and in a few minutes I had enough. I turned my chair so as to face her squarely. She was looking at me through the fringe of her lashes, but dropped her gaze at once, and began a frowning scrutiny of her hands, as if displeased at their snowy slenderness.

"Thanks, mademoiselle," said I slowly, "for

dropping your eyes. I am thus enabled to observe, not utterly blinded, the rest of your beauty."

"As I suppose you will never see my face again, monsieur," said she, "I am flattered that you should be at such pains to note and remember my poor features."

"I will surely see your face again, mademoiselle!" I said very quietly, but through set teeth. At the passion which crept into my voice her eyelids fluttered; but she did not look up.

"You do not even know my name!" said she.

"I have never heard it!" I assented.

"I am Mademoiselle de Belleisle."

"Your name is—Renée!" said I.

She opened her eyes widely upon me, and my veins tingled under the look.

"How do you know?" she asked.

"It came into my heart that it was Renée," said I, "when I was riding past, just before you called me!"

Was it joy sent that warm wave over her face and neck? It left her all the paler in a moment. I sat and looked at her, and for some minutes no word was said. The silence was big with wonder and destiny.

Suddenly she flushed again and sat up from her cushions.

"Stop, monsieur!" she cried, a kind of desperation in her voice. "Do not look at me so! I know what you are thinking of. You are thinking of me! You must not!"

"I could never deceive you," I said very slowly. "I was thinking of you!"

"But I can deceive you!" she cried, with something like a sob. "I have deceived you!" she added. And, springing to her feet, she ran across the room and back, lightly as a blown leaf.

I was dumbfounded.

"But what—" I began.

"What does it mean?" she interrupted. "It means that I wanted you here—to keep you here—I could think of no other way. Oh, do not think me all unmaidenly, monsieur! But a great danger, a terrible danger, threatened you on the road to Port Royal! I had to save you. And there was no other way!"

"What danger?" I asked, suddenly suspecting. "If danger for me, then danger for my comrades? I must go at once. Have you betrayed me, mademoiselle?"

"Oh, do not go. It can do no good. It could do no good. Wait. It was already too late. I will explain." And she clung so firmly to my arm that I could not, without violence, undo the tense grip of those fine and nervous fingers.

"Captain Duchesne came," she went on, "with four hundred Indians. My uncle has two hundred French soldiers. They moved upon the fort this afternoon. Port Royal is surrounded. You could not get through. Had you gone on, you would have been a prisoner ere now—or scalped!" and she closed her eyes with a shudder. "Port Royal will fall to-night. Then I will hide you and get you away to your own people!"

I bowed my head. I could not upon the instant decide what I ought to do. She looked at me, a sort of fear growing in her eyes as I kept silence. At this moment came a tramping of feet outside, and a din of angry voices. Her face went ashen with terror.

"They are back!" she gasped. "They have failed. They will be in a fury. Oh, they will take you for a spy! Come! There is only one

way. Come! Come!" And dragging me by the arm, she ran out of the dining-room, up the wide stairs, along a narrow corridor, and into a spacious room beneath the gable. Then she grasped both my arms, and looked me full in the face.

"You cannot escape alone!" she whispered. "The Indians will be all about the place. But I can take you through safely. I will set you free to-night. Give me your word that you will wait here till I come."

I laughed softly, seized her hands, and kissed them in turn.

"I give you my word," said I. "I am altogether in your power, dear—where I would ever be!"

The next instant she was gone. I heard the key turn quietly in the lock. Then I heard her laughter in gay greeting.

For a few seconds I stood motionless in the dusk. There was a faint sweetness in the air of the room—the breath of her hair and garments. The place was a-thrill with her. I knew it was her own room—the one sure sanctuary in that house. My head bowed in a passion of rever-

ence. I groped my way noiselessly to a chair. The wonder that filled my brain prevented thought; the joy that filled my heart made thought seem idle. She loved me, or was on the way to loving me. That filled life's horizon. Aims, interest, ambitions, of a few hours back, seemed to me like matters read of in a story-book.

Downstairs the bustle and din of voices increased, but I heeded not. Perhaps two hours went by in my reverie. Then the key turned again, the door opened, and in the dark I felt Renée come in. I rose up, stretching out my hands. Instead of her own hands, she gave me a hat and cloak.

"What are these?" I asked.

"They belong to one of our officers," she answered. "Put them on, and we will go. Do not speak."

I followed her obediently down a narrow stairway and to a small door. This she opened. Then she took my arm, and we stepped boldly out into the garden. Here we walked up and down for several minutes. Twice we passed soldiers; but in the glimmering light Renée's face was plainly recognisable, and the men stepped aside.

From the garden we walked boldly forth into a lane which led down to the river. No one presumed to challenge us. The lane ended in a little wharf, with a clump of willows beside it. Here Renée pointed to a canoe. She had not spoken all this while—nor had I, my heart being too full. The tide was brimming high. I launched the canoe, pulled the prow up onto the grass a little, and turned to Renée.

She was weeping, shaken with deep sobs. I took both her hands in mine, pulling them down from her face. "I love you!" said I. "What is the matter, beloved?"

"Good-by. I shall never see you again!"

"What do you mean?' I asked, trembling. Then I went on passionately: "There can be no good-by between us in all my life. You are all my life. You are mine. I shall come back for you at once. These fellows will be gone to-morrow. They are beaten!"

"No! no!" she answered. "When they go, I shall go with them. My uncle has betrothed me to Captain Duchesne. Before Lent—I shall be his wife!"

The words came hard. I could scarce catch them.

"Do you love him?" I asked stiffly.

"No! no! no!" she said, lifting her face like a child who would be comforted. "You know whom I love."

I caught her into my arms, sharply, and held her very close for a moment.

"Before Lent, indeed!" said I with a low laugh. "Before to-morrow's sunset you are my wife, Renée. Come, beloved! We shall be a little late at Port Royal."

Lifting her into the canoe, I thrust off, and paddled down the full, still tide.

From Renée, in the prow of the canoe, came a little sigh, but not of sorrow.

"It is so nice, Mark," she said presently, "to have difficult questions decided for you."

I need only add that, owing to circumstances which had delayed the Major's dinner, we were in time for dessert, after all.

Gaspar of the Black Le Marchands

THE very heart of the green Acadian land was Grand Pré, village of apples and willows. Behind it rose the long, moderate slopes of Gaspereau Ridge, blue-patched in summer with blossoming flax-fields, but in late autumn softly crimsoned with the stalks of the ripening buckwheat. Past the eastern skirt of the village ebbed and flowed tumultuously the yellow currents of Gaspereau stream, filling with noise the red mud chasm of their channel. In front lay outrolled the treasure of Grand Pré,—the fruitful marshes which her dyke-builders had patiently reclaimed from the sea. Beyond the marshes, gnawing with sleepless depredation at the dykes, rose and fell the huge grey tides of Minas, the unstable among waters; and beyond Minas stood the looming purple bastion of Blomidon. West

of the village flourished a thick beech wood, stretching over toward the mouth of the river Habitants; and there by the river, part of Grand Pré, yet set apart from her, was the little settlement of the Black Le Marchands, with its barley- and flax-fields hewn from the beech wood, its snug acreage of dyke marsh snatched from the Habitants tide.

The Le Marchand men were dark, even for Acadians. Unlike their fellows, they were of Basque rather than Normandy or Picardy blood. Swarthy of skin, black-haired, black-bearded, and with heavy coal-black eyebrows meeting over the nose, they well deserved their name "the Black Le Marchands." Blackest of all, a Le Marchand of the Le Marchands, was Gaspar, son of Pierre, —save that he went with cheek and chin clean-shaven, and his eyes, instead of being black, had the cool, invincible hue of dark steel. The cottage next the beech wood, just where the Grand Pré trail emerged, was Gaspar's,—a low, white cottage, with widely overhanging eaves, door and window frames stained to a slate colour with a wash of lime and wood ash, and squat apple trees gathered about it. Here, with his mother and

his boy brother Pierrot, lived Gaspar, and kept, as it were, the gâtes of the Le Marchands. Young though he was,—but two and twenty,—his level eyes and visibly resolute mouth made him much of a force among his kinsmen.

The red after-light of autumn sunset, shooting low over the tide and the marshes, poured into the west windows of the cottage and dimmed the blaze on the great kitchen hearth. The smooth dark wood of the walls and the low ceiling warmly reflected it. It lit the bunches of herbs and strings of onions hanging from the beams. It played cheerily over the polished crockery—yellow and brown and blue and grey—on the dresser shelves. It threw a pinkish flush on the sanded floor, and on the well-whitened table whereat sat Gaspar and Pierrot. It laughed upon the happy, expectant face of the boy, whose eyes were intent on his mother, as she bent her broad, homespun-clad form over the pot swung in the fireplace; but upon Gaspar's face it only brought out the lines of anxious annoyance.

There was no sound in the kitchen but the crisp spluttering of the hot lard in the pot. Mistress Le Marchand dexterously dipped out a dish

of little brown crescent-shaped cakes, steaming and savoury to smell. Carrying them to the dresser, she dusted them with powdered maple sugar. There she left them, the loadstone of Pierrot's eyes, while from two covered dishes by the fire she fetched a baked shad and a pile of hot barley-cakes. This portion of the meal was to be dealt with before Pierrot should be let loose upon the hot cookies. She seated herself opposite her two sons, and her round, hot, gentle face turned beaming from one to the other; but it grew troubled at Gaspar's gloom.

"What is it?" she asked in the old Normandy dialect which prevailed among the Acadians.

"The Black Abbé!" answered Gaspar sententiously, breaking his barley-cake into a bowl of milk.

"Well, and what of him, Gaspar?" inquired the dame, mildly.

"Just this, mother," said the young man, looking up, his black brows one straight frown across his face: "he is in Grand Pré, and on his way to see me, according to what I have just heard from yellow Ba'tiste at the ferry."

"But—what can the good Father want with you, my son?" asked the mother, tremulously.

"You call him good to ward off his evil, mother," replied Gaspar, with a short laugh. "Well, it 's no harm to try. But I fear he has heard I am not hot enough against the English to suit him. No knowing what he may have heard. There is like to be trouble for us out of this visit!"

"Oh, don't anger him, my son!" pleaded his mother, growing white and worried.

"Why are you not hot against the English, Gaspar?" asked Pierrot in a tone of rebuke. "Are they not our enemies? Have they not trampled us down, and torn us from our own king? Are we not French, Gaspar?"

"You don't know what you are talking about, boy!" retorted Gaspar, with the wonted gentle patience of the elder brother.

"Don't I!" cried the lad, indignantly, his eyes flaming. "Oh, but when I am old enough I won't stay here, grub-grub-grubbing; but I 'll go to Quebec and fight for France, for King Louis, and for the Golden Lilies."

A rare smile softened the harshness of Gaspar's face.

"I spoke in haste, because I am troubled,"

said he. "Only a brief while back I thought as you do now, Pierrot; and I like your spirit too. But look! Years ago France sold us to the English to purchase peace! We belong to England. These years she has ruled us better than we were ever ruled before, and we have prospered; nevertheless, we have been forever troublesome and a thorn in her side."

"I should hope so!" interrupted Pierrot, scornfully.

"But she has been patient and never punished us, and let us have our own way; and we have waxed fat under her care. You and I, Pierrot, are born under the English flag! Consider that. It is hard to see one's duty clearly. Think of what the Black Abbé has made us do,—things to make us ashamed of the name of Frenchmen! Think of the massacre of sleeping women and children at Dartmouth! Think of the good and brave Howe, murdered by La Garne's savages under a flag of truce!"

The boy was taken aback for a moment; then he cried passionately, "One bad priest could not make me turn against my country!"

"I say, now, it is hard to know what *is* our

country," said Gaspar, earnest in his argument. "We are born English, some will say. Yet we are surely not English. France we love, but she cast us off, and now tries to make a catspaw of us, or else forgets us and leaves us to the mercies of Quebec. Oh, Quebec! There 's rottenness for you! You don't want to go there, Pierrot. There, New France is being betrayed, murdered! There Bigot, the great thief, the prince of cheats, fattens himself and his crew on the people, and sucks his country's blood. The people are crushed with wicked taxes, Pierrot. They groan and starve there. And then look at us, the English ruling us, and plenty in our houses, and no misery save what Quebec and the Black Abbé make for us. Look at it, Pierrot. No, it is clear we have no country, we, save this good, kindly Acadian land. Let us be true to Acadie."

The door behind the speaker opened suddenly.

"A very proper sentiment, if properly understood, Gaspar Le Marchand," came a strident, authoritative voice, and a lean figure in a black cassock upgirt for marching strode into the room. The face of the newcomer, though almost grotesque by reason of its long, bulbous-tipped

nose, was never known to excite derision. The chin and mouth were too fanatically domineering, too much of power spoke in the bitter, narrow-set, piercing pale eyes, to make pleasantry easy for the bravest.

Mistress Le Marchand sprang up in a flutter, ran around the table, sank on her knees, and besought a blessing. Rather doubtfully, Pierrot followed his mother's example. But Gaspar merely arose, bowed respectfully, and asked the visitor to be seated.

"I heard that you were on your way hither, sir," said he, "and in part expected that you might honour us."

"A guilty conscience, I fear," replied the grim priest, dismissing the woman and the boy with a somewhat perfunctory benediction. "I will not sit down in your house, Gaspar Le Marchand, till I know if it be the house of a loyal man."

"Be seated, then, Father La Garne," said Gaspar, with a cool civility. "My conscience is at ease, —I confessed to good Father Fafard last Sunday; and I am a loyal man according to my lights."

La Garne's lips became thin with anger, and his voice took on a menacing edge.

"Hark you!" said he. "You speak well of the English, and ill of the authorities at Quebec. Is this true?"

"Would you have me speak well of Monsieur the Intendant, sir?" asked Gaspar, unsmiling, but with irony under his tongue.

"Speak of him not at all, then," snapped La Garne. "But what of the other charge?"

"I must confess, sir, I have remarked upon the forbearance of these English, and upon their moderate rule," answered Gaspar, firmly.

The Black Abbé looked at him with a long, silent scrutiny, under which Pierrot trembled and Mistress Le Marchand began to sob. But Gaspar's black brows took it serenely.

"So much an enemy may concede," said La Garne at last, in a voice grown smooth, as was ever his wont when most dangerous. "But you are young, and not yet quite resolute to follow the path of duty, my son. I must strengthen you, I perceive. You must choose here, now, between France and England."

"Under what compulsion, sir?" asked Gaspar, very civilly, though a flush glowed under the swart tan of his face.

"Do you need to ask, my young friend?" inquired La Garne, almost tenderly, but still standing. "My faithful Micmacs are with me. Remember how difficult it is, at times, to restrain their zeal for France, their rage against traitors. Beaubassin, luckless village, defied them—and alas, Beaubassin is not! This is a pleasant home of yours, my son. It were pity, indeed, if they should turn their zealous indignation against this house. Yet a lesson would not be amiss in these parts!"

There was dead silence for a moment in the room; then Gaspar Le Marchand laughed aloud. La Garne eyed him with angry amazement.

"I can see a corner," said Gaspar, "when I am in it!"

"What do you mean?" asked La Garne, curtly. He liked not riddles save of his own propounding.

"I had hoped but to till my fields here, and not meddle," replied Gaspar, with an air of resignation. "But since I must choose, I have chosen. Even if I loved the English, which I don't; even if I were cold toward France, which I am not, my choice would be the same. I am for France,

sir." The Black Abbé sat down; but Gaspar continued: "I am for France, of a surety. Your arm, Father La Garne, is long and nimble. The arm of the English Governor at Halifax is not so long, and it moves very slowly. Nevertheless, it may be long enough to reach you, sir, some day. Report says it gropes for you very zealously."

"You have chosen with discretion," said La Garne; "but the manner of your choice is something lacking in the reverence due to your superiors. It were well to amend that, perhaps."

Gaspar promptly seated himself, and fixed his cool, grey eyes on the eyes of the priest.

"Do not push me too hard," said he, significantly. "You have now my obedience. Do not demand what it may be difficult for me to give."

"You are right!" exclaimed the singular Churchman, springing up, and speaking with evident sincerity. "Your obedience is necessary for the cause; your reverence,—that would be to me as a man. Who am I that I should demand it? I am but the humble instrument." His eyes gleamed with a fanatical brilliancy. "But

look you, Gaspar Le Marchand," he went on, drawing himself up and stretching out his arm solemnly, "this land of Acadie shall again shine among the rich jewels of the crown of France; and this hand of mine, mark you, this hand of mine shall place it there!"

With this he strode to the door, and a look of deep relief came upon the countenances of his hearers. But at the door he stopped. He turned. He came back to the table. His whole demeanour had changed. His mouth wore a smile of caustic irony.

"I was forgetting," said he, "the chief part of my purpose. Your conversion, my son (upon which I had counted, indeed), was perhaps something sudden. I will fortify you in it. You shall signally serve France, and that at once."

Gaspar bowed his readiness, betraying neither anxiety nor reluctance. He was not one to spoil a gift by grudging.

"A band of my faithful followers will set out to-night for the Isthmus," continued La Garne, scrutinising Gaspar's face. "They go on a grave enterprise, of great moment to the fortunes of this land, and they will be strengthened by your

presence. You shall go with them, my son, that I may thereafter feel assured of you."

"And the enterprise?" asked Gaspar.

"There are some English settlers to be discouraged," answered La Garne, grimly. "You will know more when the time comes, my son. You will clothe yourself and paint yourself as an Indian, of course. Be ready at moonrise."

"It is not war, this," protested the young man.

"What have we to do with war?" sneered the visitor. "It is victory we need! Are you with us or against us, Gaspar Le Marchand?"

"I will be ready," replied Gaspar, with indifference; and the Black Abbé, turning abruptly, departed without a word.

"Eat your supper, Pierrot," ordered Gaspar. "I have work for you." And the boy, with a white and frightened face, did as he was bidden. Gaspar went on with his meal in silence, his black brows lowering over his eyes. His mother sat sobbing.

"Oh, my boy, my Gaspar, you will be killed!" she exclaimed brokenly, after a few minutes.

"Nonsense, mother! It 's not that," said the young man. "There 's no danger for me."

"What is it, then, Gaspar?" she asked, drying her eyes.

He looked at her in wonder.

"It means," he answered presently, "that some harmless English settlers are to be murdered in their beds by the Black Abbé's red devils, and that *I* am to take a hand in it, in order that it may be impossible for me ever after to expect any mercy from Halifax."

"Why do you go, then?" demanded the boy indignantly, his ardour for France much diminished.

"Because," replied Gaspar, "rather those strangers than my mother and my brother. La Garne and his power are *here*. If I defied him, this house would be ashes and you homeless, perhaps worse, this very night. Slow, slow and stupid are the English," he went on, flaming into sudden anger. "Why do they not shield those of us who wish to live at peace and obey their laws? We are ground to dust between the upper and the lower stone. Let them look to themselves. Nevertheless, I will warn them. Slip you out, now, Pierrot, down back of the barn and into the cover of the wood; and run, run

your best to Father Fafard. Tell him to get word to the English at Piziquid that a raid is afoot against one of the English settlements. *Vite!*"

The boy, pleased at the weighty errand, was off noiselessly in a moment, despite his mother's tearful attempt to stop him.

"He 's like a shadow. Don't be afraid, mother," said the elder brother, reassuringly, hasting to finish his meal. "Come and eat, for there 's much to be done after."

Late that night, when the moon, shapeless and withering, crept up over the fringed line of the beech woods, the Black Abbé came again to the door of Gaspar's cottage. He was met in silence by a painted, leathern-leggined young warrior, whose steady eyes met his with a cold, grey gleam. La Garne was too hot a fanatic, too dominant and domineering, to be a discerner of men's minds. He was satisfied with his taciturn consort.

"Come," he said, leading the way to the river, where the canoes lay at the brink of the full tide.

. . . . . .

The night fell dark over the marshes of Main-

à-Dieu. The half-dozen new cottages of the English settlers showed no glimmer of candle-light from their windows. Secure in the neighbourhood of Fort Lawrence, not ten miles distant, and happy in the fertility of their new lands, proved by the rich harvest just garnered, the settlers slept the sound sleep of those who rise at dawn to work with their hands.

The raiding party had made their journey from Grand Pré, by canoe and trail, in three days. Haste was not urgent, or they might have done it in less time. It wanted some hours of moon-rise when they came upon the first rail fence of the Main-à-Dieu fields.

Gaspar's heart sank as he perceived that there had been no warning,—that Pierrot's errand to Father Fafard had been in vain. A minute more and the cabins were surrounded, with no sound but here and there a hushed rustling, like the wind among dead leaves. A dog barked, but the bark ended abruptly in a whining sob.

Then, in three or four places, little flickers of flame appeared, punctuating the darkness. In a second the rolls of white birch bark flared up vividly, and were set to stack and barn. At the

same instant every door was beaten in, windows went to pieces with a shivering crash, and the cruel yell of the Micmacs, wolfish, appalling, rose over the sudden glare, wavered in long-drawn cadence, and stopped. After what seemed to Gaspar an interminably prolonged silence, shrieks, oaths, and shouting broke out within the cabins.

At first he had stood inactive, sick with pity and impotence; but at this first sign of living humanity in the dark cottages Gaspar made up his mind what to do. The largest of the houses was just before him. Springing through the open door, he stumbled over two prone and writhing figures in the passage. The glare from the stacks showed him a painted Micmac and a white man in his shirt, locked in a death grip. This was no affair of his. He slipped past, darted up a narrow stairway, and found himself before two doors, one open and one shut. To the shut one he turned, with a flash of thought that here, perhaps, he might be in time.

The door was bolted, but snapped open as his shoulder surged against it; and he paused upon the threshold.

The little room was brilliantly alight from a

blaze of hay just before the window. Against one wall was a low bed. He had a vision of a young girl starting up from the pillow, her great eyes wide with fear, her face whitely gleaming with a wild glory of red-gold hair. A cry froze on her lips, and she clutched at the blankets as if to try to hide some small form that lay between her and the wall.

At this moment, another door, opposite to Gaspar, burst open, and a savage darted in. His fierce black eyes fell on the bed, and with a whoop he pounced forward, scalping knife in hand. The girl cowered, shuddering, and hid her face.

But Gaspar was there as soon as the savage. With his left hand he caught the uplifted wrist, and the stroke never fell. Under the raised arm his long knife shot home to the hilt, driven hotly. The redskin dropped, with a deep, gasping grunt.

Gaspar rolled the limp body under the bed. The girl who had looked up in time to see the end of the swift encounter, was gazing at him in bewilderment.

"Quick, mademoiselle! Get up! Come!

There 'll be others here on the instant!" He ordered sharply, thrusting into her hands a heavy woollen skirt which lay on a chair near by.

She had her wits about her in a moment.

"No," she answered. "Save *him* if you can!" and pulling aside the covering she showed him a rosy child asleep beside her.

Gaspar's jaw set like iron.

"Jesu-Marie!" he vowed between his teeth, "I will save you both. But it will be hard! Come! Come!" And hastily rolling the little one in the blanket, he snatched him up and turned to the door by which he had entered. The girl, meanwhile, had slipped small white feet into the shoes which lay by the bed, thrown on the skirt deftly, flung a quilt over her head and shoulders, and was at his side without a further word. Even in that desperate moment Gaspar gloried in her self-control.

"How our women would have been shrieking!" he said to himself.

The bundle on his left arm began to squirm awkwardly, and muffled cries came from within it. He turned, and thrust it into the girl's arms.

"Keep him quiet!" he muttered,—though in truth there seemed little need of silence, for the red night was one quavering horror of yells, shrieks, and curses, penetrated sharply with a musket shot now and then. As the girl took the child a brief lull in the uproar let her hear deep groans from a neighbouring room.

"Oh, that is my uncle's room!" she gasped, beginning to tremble violently, and leaning against the wall. But in a second she was firm again, and followed steadily with the child in her arms.

At the foot of the stairs opened a small, windowless closet; and into this, perceiving the approach of several savages by the front door, Gaspar pushed his charges. He took his stand in the entrance, leaning indifferently against the doorpost. His musket hitherto unused, its one charge guarded for a supreme emergency, rested in his left arm. His right hand lay on the handle of his sheathed knife.

"Huh?" grunted the foremost savage inquiringly, while the others passed on. He peered over Gaspar's shoulder into the thick shadows of the closet. Then he attempted to push past,

but the young man's elbow, jerked forward ungently, balked him. The savage grunted again with resentment, and half raised his hatchet; but Gaspar's cold gaze made him hesitate.

"*My* business, brother! Go on!" was the curt command; and after an angry pause the redskin followed his fellows up the stairs.

The moment he disappeared Gaspar turned, clutched the girl's arm, and dragged her at a run out of the door, into the lurid street. There he paused; and they walked, as if there were no need of haste, straight down the middle of the street. A savage in the doorway opposite eyed them curiously, but, not recognising Gaspar in his war paint, supposed his brother savage knew his business. Then three yelling redskins ran past, hard on the heels of a half-naked and unarmed white man, who fled with chalk face and mad eyes of horror. As they passed, one of the redskins aimed a slash at the girl with his knife; but his arm was caught by Gaspar with a wrench that nearly snapped it, and with a cry of pain and astonishment he ran on, not stopping to investigate the mystery.

A minute more and the fugitives found them-

selves opposite a lane which led down between some burning outbuildings to a spur of thick woodland. Here they turned; but as they did so two savages stepped out from the nearest house, to which they had set fire, and stood squarely in their path. Simultaneously they caught at the bundle in the girl's arms. But quick as a flash Gaspar swept her behind him.

"Mine!" said he, curtly and coolly, warning them off with a gesture. "Have a care, brothers."

"Huh! Chief Cope say no captives this time!" said one of the savages, while the other stood irresolute.

"But *I* say captives," rejoined Gaspar in a haughty voice. "If Chief Cope objects, he can talk to me by and by. I am Gaspar Le Marchand, and am minding my business. Go you about yours, brothers."

The two savages looked at each other, and then at Gaspar's steady eyes confronting them.

"We want our share, brother," grumbled the spokesman.

"You shall have that,—the scalp money!" replied Gaspar, with a sneer. "One *livre tournois*

to each of you I will pay. Come to me for it, at Grand Pré, when you will."

"How we know? The French lie, sometimes, eh what?" objected the savage.

"The Black Le Marchands don't lie," answered Gaspar, sternly. I will pay you. Go!"

And they went, judging this Frenchman one ill to thwart. Gaspar fetched a deep breath of relief as he led the girl with her silent burden down the lane, safe out of the glaring exposure of the street. The heat was stifling as they passed between the blazing sheds, but he judged the worst of the peril was behind him. From a noticeable change in the character of the shouts and yells that still rent the air, he knew that certain supplies of potent New England rum had been discovered, and that for a time the raiders would have other things than dry pursuit to think of.

But he congratulated himself too soon. One pair of vindictive eyes, at least, had seen him turn into the lane, and had been concerned that Chief Cope's order, "All scalps; no captives," should be enforced. The girl's quick ear caught a footfall behind her. She glanced back, and

sudden as light swung herself, with a warning cry, around in front of her protector. Gaspar wheeled in his tracks and faced a huge savage, whose knife dripped blood still steaming.

For several seconds the two eyed each other in silence. But Gaspar could not waste time.

"I don't want to kill you!" said he, no longer cool and masterful, but beginning to lose himself in rage. "Don't interfere with me. Be off!"

Losing control of himself, he lost control of his opponent.

"Ugh!" snarled the savage. "Acadian no good!" and made a lightning pass at him. But Gaspar had the eye and hand which work quicker than the brain can order them. Ere that stroke formed itself he swerved lithely, and the muzzle of his musket, shooting upward, caught the red-skin just below the chin. His head and both hands flew up; and as he staggered backward Gaspar swung the butt in a short circle so that it fetched him terrifically in the ribs.

"That fellow will not trouble us any further," he explained to the girl, as he eyed the painted heap in the gutter. Less than a minute more and they were within the shadow of the ancient woods.

The girl sank, half fainting, at the foot of a tree, but Gaspar pulled her to her feet.

"No, no," he muttered sternly, "you must not break down now! You have been wonderful, wonderfully brave and strong, mademoiselle; but you must keep it up. We may be followed. We must get away this instant!"

"Yes, I will be strong. I will do anything you bid me, sir," she answered, leaning upon him for a moment, but still firmly clutching the child, who meanwhile had got his little yellow head from the smother of blanket, and was watching Gaspar with round, blue, wondering eyes.

"I 'll carry him now," said Gaspar; and the little fellow came to him readily, laughing, and rubbing the paint from his cheek with delighted fingers.

"You take the musket," he continued. "Could you use it at need, mademoiselle—or—*not* madame?"

"No, not madame," she answered, the faintest colour returning to her white cheek. "He is my little cousin,—alas, an orphan now, as I have been since a child like him! But as for this,"—

and she examined the musket with a brave face, —"yes, I can use it, sir; and will fight beside you, if you will let me. But how do you come to be among those fiends, and painted as one of them? Oh no,—why do I ask questions, instead of just thanking God on my knees that you *were* among them!"

She knelt, but was up again before Gaspar could bid her take a more convenient season for her devotions. Through the woods they pressed breathlessly, till first the babel behind them died out, and at last the glare of the burning grew dim; and then, with the earliest rose of dawn they came out upon the marshes, and saw, not half a league away, the low ramparts of Fort Lawrence.

As they journeyed, now at an easier pace, Gaspar's eyes could not keep themselves from the strangely clad but wholly bewildering figure at his side. Her calm, her marvellous courage, the confidence of her white, fine-chiselled face, the wonder of her hair aglow in the early light, were a revelation of unguessed womanhood to him. His brain fumed with a thousand plans, but his tongue was wisely dumb.

At last they reached the foot of a gentle slope, some half mile from the fort gates; and here Gaspar stopped.

"I will watch you safely in, mademoiselle," said he, putting the child back into her arms and taking his musket. "But——"

"My name is Ruth, sir," she interrupted. "You have not asked it, but I hope you will remember it a little while. Ruth Allison, sir."

Gaspar's grey eyes flamed upon her, and his speech grew stammering.

"Ruth—I mean mademoiselle," he cried—"I will not go up to the fort now, because I should be detained for explanations, and I must make the utmost haste back to Grand Pré. I must get my house sold, and take my mother and young brother to a place of safety, before the Black Abbé gets wind of my part in this night's work. Then I must see you again, mademoiselle, to ask if you—if you and the little one—who seems to love me, I think—are recovered after these horrors. You will stay here, will you not? And I may come, may I not?"

"Surely, I should be grieved indeed if your interest in those you have saved were not enough

to bring you, sir," she answered simply. "And for your noble courage, your splendid— Oh, sir, how can I find words for such generosity? God will surely reward you!"

"I pray, mademoiselle," said Gaspar in a low voice, turning to go, "that you will not leave my reward altogether to God."

Brown Witch and Black Abbé

THE warm dusk of the loft smelt pleasantly of dried sage, marjoram, and other herbs which hung in bunches from the roof. From three chinks in the south-east gable streamed three long streaks of yellow light, wherein the dust motes danced merrily. The place had an air of security and peace. I could not bring myself to believe that my precious life was in any very real peril—and of a priest too! Nevertheless, I moved softly as a cat, for was not the priest none other than the notorious Black Abbé, La Garne, whose treacheries we in Halifax had cause to rue? And had not Madame been very positive that my scalp was in instant demand? I crept across the light planks till I reached a spot nearly over the door, well under the eaves. There I lay down, and noted with satisfaction that I was so hidden by a pile of yellow squashes that if one should thrust his head curiously above

the trap-door the loft would appear quite untenanted. In the flooring whereon I stretched myself there were several knot-holes, by means of which I could command a fairish view of the room below.

I could see the fire flickering lazily under the pot which hung in the wide, dirty fireplace. I could see the heavy, well-scrubbed and whitened table, with its wooden platter of barley-cakes and its bowl yet half full of the new milk which my haste had not left me chance to finish. I wanted the milk, for I was thirsty from my long tramp over the Piziquid trail; and I roundly cursed the interrupter of my meal. Then light steps on the sanded floor diverted my thoughts from the bowl of milk; and Madame's slender figure came into my restricted line of vision. My eyes rested upon her with a keen interest as she busied herself deftly over household affairs. How small were her feet; how small, though brown with sun and somewhat toil-hardened, were those two nimble hands! I admired the fine poise of her head, with the heavy hair, low over the ears, hair of the darkest brown, shot with ruddy colour where the sunshine caught in it. Her dress was of

the light greyish Acadian homespun linen, and a bodice of dull dark blue fitted her waist and shoulders trimly. Her sleeves were rolled up to the elbows, displaying brown arms very slim and shapely. I wished she would look up, that I might see again her amazingly large, dark eyes —black, you might say, save for a tawny fire in them. In our raw little town of Halifax, at this time, there were few women, and none to make a man's head turn twice, except, maybe, two or three of the younger officers' wives. I thought how this Acadian beauty would be admired in Halifax, and I said to myself: "She is surely not a woman of the habitant class. She seems city-born, and not ungently bred; and I 'll wager there is blood in those fine veins that does not all derive from Jacques Bonhomme!"

In this reverie I grew so interested that for the moment I forgot my situation. The hard planks irked me, and I changed my posture with a portentous creaking. On the instant the heavy table below was drawn sharply over the floor, cloaking my noise. I had but time to marvel at her quickness of resource, when a shadow darkened the open doorway, and a harsh, masterful voice demanded:

"Daughter, has the Englishman passed this way?"

"Yes, Father La Garne," came her respectful and ready answer. "Will you not honour me by resting here a little?"

"How long since?" asked the curt voice.

"An hour, perhaps, or less, Monsieur l'Abbé," was the reply, a trace of coldness coming into Madame's tones.

The visitor noted the change. He was not at the moment ready to offend. He wanted willing and full information. He stepped inside and stood near the table, so that I could note his spare, hardy, dark-robed figure, the indomitable spirit that spoke in every movement. But his face I could not see.

"Pardon me, my daughter," he said more graciously, "I am in haste to catch this fellow. The fool is crossing me on this errand. It is necessary he should be removed, for a lesson to the other fools at Halifax. Did you talk with him? Whither was he bound?"

"Yes, Father," said Madame, very graciously; "he was courteous, and talked freely during the few minutes that he paused here. He said he

had come to get cattle from the Grand Pré farmers for the garrison at Halifax, and to forbid the sending of our cattle to Louisbourg. He was going straight to Monsieur de Lamourie, whom he counted upon to further his errand."

The visitor stepped quickly back to the door and gave a guttural call. At once I heard the furtive, confused approach of moccasined feet, and with both hands grasped the pistols in my belt. There were a few sharp orders given in the Micmac tongue, which I did not understand; then I heard a measured loping as a band set out upon the run down the road towards Grand Pré. I could not see, of course, and I was troubled to know whether he had sent all his savage followers, or was keeping a reserve at hand.

On this point I might have trusted the ready wit of my hostess. As the Black Abbé turned again into the room and seated himself beside the table, just where I had been sitting so few minutes before, Madame asked him, in a tone of irreverent banter:

"Why do you send six of your twelve red lambs, Monsieur l'Abbé, to capture one lonely Englishman? Is he, then, so redoubtable a warrior?"

The Black Abbé did not seem annoyed at the question.

"I know not of his prowess, my daughter," said he, "but he is an Englishman, and so, liable to be blundering and brave. It is well to be on the safe side when dealing with him. Six are none too many. I pray you, bring me some milk!" and I saw him break a piece of the fresh barley-cake.

The milk she fetched at once, in a brown pitcher, and poured it for him into a pewter mug.

"And why have you kept the other six Indians here with you?" she asked. "They make me nervous. I don't like them!"

He laughed cynically.

"Again it is well to be on the safe side," said he. "I never know when I may need them; these are pregnant times. Since when have you grown nervous, Madame La Fleur?"

"Can you ask that, Father La Garne?" she rejoined, coldly.

"Tut, tut!" said he, with careless impatience. "That husband of yours can have been no great loss to you! and he has been dead these two years. Don't reproach me, Madame La Fleur.

You never loved him. A thief and disgraced, he came here from Quebec."

"True, I never loved him; but I kept a good home for him and he made a home for me," she answered very coldly. "And here, where he was not known, he might have recovered something of what he had lost; but you twisted him around your finger and made him your tool. Oh, he was pitifully weak! But it is lonely living here. Can you reproach me if I grow nervous? Poor creature though he was, I owe the English a grudge for his death!"

I tried every knot-hole within reach to get a glimpse of La Garne's face, but in vain. I could see only his black-frocked knees and heavily-shod feet. He laughed meaningly.

"Oh, yes, my daughter," he said, "you owe these English a grudge. But this fellow is comely—I have seen him; and you say he is very courteous. Perhaps you think these English owe you a new husband!"

I grew hot with rage at the coarseness of it; and I saw Madame's beautiful face flush dusky crimson under its clear tan. She drew herself up haughtily.

"How dare you, sir, insult me? You take advantage of my unprotectedness! What excuse have I given you for such an insinuation?"

"Oh!" he answered, his voice grown soft and sneering, "though he is an enemy, and on an errand hostile to your people, you have entertained him here at your table! Here is the bread of which he has been eating! Here is the bowl of milk from which he drank!"

"But, Father," she protested, growing suddenly anxious and persuasive, "you would not have me refuse a cup and a loaf to any wayfarer, surely?"

"He is very comely and courteous!" he sneered. "You acknowledged it yourself!"

"I did not!" she cried angrily.

He ignored the contradiction.

"How long ago was it, my daughter, that he went by?" he asked, with a smoothness in which I discerned danger.

"An hour, perhaps, Father La Garne," she answered frankly and without hesitation.

There was a pause, to me full of significance.

"Marie La Fleur," he said, drawing out each syllable, "you have lied to me!"

The suddenness of the accusation confused her.

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"The milk is not yet dry on the edge of the bowl where he drank!" went on those edged syllables. "I command you, tell me at once where he is! You dare not defy me, Marie——"

"I dare!" she flashed, but with a sob of fear in her throat.

"Think, think just a little, my daughter!" he continued, his voice sweetening to the note of utmost menace.

She burst into tears.

"Oh, no! It is true. I dare not!" she cried, anger and fear contending in her words. "I do fear you! Oh, I hate you, but I fear you! I will tell you everything."

She stopped, as if the words choked in her throat. Would she, then, betray me? My heart sank—not with fear—but with an anguish of disappointment. I could not dream of her a traitor! But I set my teeth, and thought of a good fight to be fought within the next two minutes.

She got her voice again, and the intensity of hate that thrilled it startled me.

"May my bitterest curse rest upon you!" she said slowly. "You force me to defile my soul with treason! I fear no man living but you, you dishonourer of Holy Church!"

"Never mind about that, woman!" said he. "You are trying to gain time for him, I see! Tell me where he is—or I give you over in his place to——"

She fell on her knees and clutched his gown.

"I will tell you!" she sobbed. "But spare him, spare him! Would you slay my soul?"

"Enough!" he growled, tearing himself away and stepping to the door, "I will absolve you! But you have no more time for choice! I will call them."

Her voice grew calm, as with resignation of despair—and clutching my pistols, I rose to my knees, feeling that the moment had come.

"He went," she said, "stepping on those stones so as to leave no trail——"

Could I believe my ears? What an astounding actress! And no traitor! All this a part of her matchless contriving!

"I told him," she went on, brokenly, "to follow those stepping-stones, through the swale

to the spring, and then run down the bed of the brook till he came to the path through the pasture and the birch wood over to the— No! no! I cannot tell you, for then he will have no chance of escape! He will die like a rat in a hole!"

"Thank you," said the Black Abbé, quietly. "That will do. I know the cave. I might have thought of it myself, and spared you these qualms!"

He stepped to the door, and there was a rapid exchange of gutturals. Then the moccasined footsteps fled away softly toward the cave.

But La Garne did not go. He came back into the room, where Madame crouched upon the floor, sobbing.

I wondered if she would get me away, or if I had better come down and settle my enemy at once. I had acquired such confidence in her resources that I decided to wait a minute or two before taking things into my own hands.

"Stop being a fool, now!" he said impatiently. "Get up and bring me food, and be thankful that you have not forced me to teach you a lesson!"

"My God! do I need more lessons?" she

wailed. But she arose, went to a closet, and fumbled therein for a few seconds.

"Make haste, my daughter!" said he, more smoothly and more dangerously.

With a movement swift as light she turned and faced him, the table between them. Her voice came cool and steady:

"Lift but a hand, or give one call, and you are a dead dog, Monsieur l'Abbé!"

She had him covered with the muzzle of a large pistol. Before he could make any reply I had sprung across the loft and was down the ladder.

"You wonder among women!" I whispered, as I passed her. Then I went and stood before the astonished priest.

"I regret to be uncivil, monsieur," said I, politely, "but I must bind and gag you, with no loss of time, or else silence you in a more effectual manner."

I paused to consider, studying his face carefully the while. It was a strange face, repellent but powerful—the head high and narrow, the mouth wide and thin-lipped, the nose very long, with an aggressively bulbous tip, the jaw wolfish,

the eye pale, small, keen. Here was no lack of courage, I could see.

"She has outwitted me, I am beaten! Can we not make terms?" he asked calmly, looking me straight in the eye.

"We have small time for parley," said I. "It is plain I must kill you unless I can trust your oath!"

"I keep my oath—when I give it!" said he, curtly.

I turned to Madame, whose great eyes were flaming with excitement, though the rest of her face was as calm as a statue's. To the question in my own eyes she assented with a lowering of her brows.

"Swear to me by the Holy Ghost, Sir Abbé," said I, "that neither directly nor indirectly will you execute any vengeance upon Madame La Fleur for this day's doings. That to the utmost of your power, and without mental reservation, you will guarantee to Madame La Fleur and to myself safe passage back to Halifax, and that any tenant whom Madame La Fleur may place in this house shall not be molested in his work, or hindered in the payment of his rents! Please repeat this after me, word for word!"

The grim face stiffened, the keen eyes glanced through the window.

"It is not yet time for them to return," said I, "but if you refuse we shall need all the time we can secure, so you must decide on the instant. I shall be sorry to kill you if you say no, but I really cannot wait!" And I set my sword point convenient to his neck.

He shrugged his shoulders with an excellent coolness.

"I will swear!" said he.

Then, word by word, I gave him the oath, and, word by word, he clearly enunciated it.

I lowered my point and bowed. "You are a bad priest, but a brave man, monsieur," said I, civilly, "and I am quite at ease now."

"But, monsieur," interposed my fair hostess and saviour, "you have received for me a safe-conduct to Halifax! Might I not claim the honour of being consulted?"

"Time pressed too sharp for ceremony, madame," said I. "But, as you must know, I overheard all your conversation with Monsieur La Garne; and you must know it is impossible for you to remain here!"

She blushed scarlet and made to speak; but I gave her no time.

"I beg that you will permit me to escort you to Halifax, and place you under the protection of the Governor and his excellent lady. What more I would beg I dare not yet, madame, lest raw haste should bungle a hope but born this hour past, and still diffident; though, sure of itself, it has already grown to be the greater half of my heart."

"You speak in hard riddles, monsieur," she said gravely, "but I desire you not to unravel them at present. I will go to Halifax because I think that will be wisest, and I thank you for your courtesy, monsieur."

La Garne arose from his chair with a sarcastic smile which set my blood boiling. He went to the door, and was met by six of his followers just back from their vain errand toward Grand Pré. The vanity of it they had learned from one of the Abbé's spies before they had half covered their journey. Their dark, gleaming eyes betrayed no astonishment at my attitude of easy fellowship with their master. He addressed them with autocratic brevity.

"Go with this gentleman and this lady to Halifax," said he. "See that no hurt comes to them. You will answer to me for them until they are safe within the English walls."

Turning upon his heel with a kind of disdain, he left us without farewell, and strode rapidly down toward Grand Pré. I looked into the great eyes of Madame—and in that look I spoke the love which it would have been presumptuous for my lips to utter. She blushed, looked down, but seemed in nowise vexed, and from this I augured well for my future.

La Mouche

THE autumn sky was clear along the blue top of Blomidon, the autumn sunlight settled in yellow haze on the wide, low-lying meadows and comfortable slopes of Grand Pré. The barns were overflowing from a rich harvest. The orchards were red with apples. But a heavy sorrow lay like night upon the village, and not a hearth therein but was washed with tears. With dull and reddened eyes the women went about their work. All day long no laughter was heard but that of the young children. It was the year of the Great Exile.

The men of Grand Pré were under lock and guard in the village chapel. Their long, stubborn refusal to take the oath of allegiance to England, though Nova Scotia had become an English colony, had at last borne its inevitable fruit. Since they would not turn their eyes away from the France which had deserted them, the decree

of banishment had been reluctantly spoken against them. To the chapel Colonel Winslow had summoned them all to hear a royal proclamation; and that proclamation had declared to them their fate. The soldiers at the doors had held them captive. The sails of the ships that should take them into exile were already drawing near.

Food for the sad-faced prisoners in the chapel was brought daily by the women and children. Mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, and sons so young that their long locks had not yet fallen under the shears, jostled each other at the chapel door; and girls, whose lovers were within, came eagerly, and went away not daring to tell their errands. Of the men, some lounged heavily about the familiar building, and wondered in dull misery if these walls, now grown so hateful, were the same which had watched benignantly over their baptism, their first communion, and their marriage. Others of the prisoners crowded the window spaces and gazed longingly across the dear fields which they never again should till, turning up the long, black furrow behind their slow-paced oxen. Others again there were who wept and prayed in the darkest corners of the chapel.

But not quite all the men of Grand Pré village were thus captive. There were several of these Acadian farmers who had long ago been politic enough to take the oath of allegiance to King George, and honest enough to adhere to it in spite of all threat and persuasion. These were treated with marked favour by the British authorities. Among them was Pierre Maillard, a prosperous old habitant whose farm lay around the bend of the hill from Grand Pré, just in the mouth of the Gaspereau valley. Here, with his industrious and bright-eyed old wife, and his wilful daughter Céleste, he cultivated his flax and potatoes, and kept his mind at ease. Without alarm he had obeyed the call of the New England colonel; and from the chapel-prison he had been released with many flattering compliments upon his loyalty. But the old man's heart was heavy for his countrymen.

There was one, however, whose absence from the chapel-prison was much marked, but who surely owed his freedom to no English favour. Ba'tiste Perrot, better known by the nickname of La Mouche, was wanted by the English authorities. He was their most daring and restless opponent

among the Acadians. The names of France, Quebec, Louisbourg, were ceaselessly on his lips. He was deep in the counsels of La Garne, the Black Abbé. A bold hunter, a skilled bush-ranger, he carried to Louisbourg information of the English plans; and from Louisbourg he brought messages of menace or exhortation to keep the Acadians mindful of their old flag.

When La Mouche, who had his usual head-quarters at Grand Pré, heard of the English proclamation, he smiled and went warily. When he saw his fellow-villagers bound for the chapel, he discreetly set his face toward the forests and dim ravines that guarded the upper valley of the Gaspereau; and Winslow's New England musketeers sought him in vain. His woodcraft made derision of their clumsy search.

One evening, when the search had long been dropped, and Grand Pré sorrow had wept itself into silence, and already one shipload of exiles had vanished over the wild tides of Minas, Céleste Maillard was driving her cows to pasture after the milking. In a thicket beside the path came a light rustle, and La Mouche stood before her.

"Ba'tiste!" exclaimed the girl, in a tone of

mingled pleasure and reserve. Then she glanced about her in apprehension.

"Don't be alarmed, Céleste," said La Mouche, stepping to her side. "You may be sure I saw that there were no enemies in sight before I showed myself."

The girl made no reply, and the man eagerly scanned her face as he walked beside her. He was thrilled by the note of pleasure he had caught in her quick utterance, and his eyes had a confident light.

"You were, then, a little bit alarmed on my account, lest the English should get hold of me, were you not, Céleste?" he continued, craving to hear again that kindness in the girl's voice.

It was a blundering speech. The swarthy and lean-faced woodsman was an unpractised lover. Far less knew he of women than of lynx and moose and panther, and in presence of Céleste his wonted subtlety failed him. The reserve in the girl's face deepened; the cordiality faded out. Turning her head so that she could look her companion calmly in the eyes, she said:

"Certainly, Ba'tiste, I was anxious and afraid,

as I would have been for any other of our countrymen in danger of being captured by the English. I have been glad because of your escape, and I have been glad, so glad, because of Larocque's escape. But oh, *mon Dieu!*" she continued, her voice changing and her eyes wandering with sudden forgetfulness from the face of La Mouche, "because of those who have *not* escaped my eyes will never more be dry."

To this La Mouche made no answer. His heart, too, was sore with grief and wrath, for he loved his countrymen and he hated all the enemies of France. But at this moment he had room for no emotion except his hungry love for the girl beside him. His heart throbbed in his throat, and he could find no words. In silence the two walked on, and the chilly autumn dusk gathered thicker around them.

Presently they reached the pasture bars. Instead of lowering them for the girl to pass out, La Mouche turned around, leaned against them, and what he was burning to say trembled upon his lips. But Céleste met his gaze so quietly that he was disconcerted, and hurriedly substituted other words.

"Your father," said he, "he is safe, of course. The English would do no harm to him."

"They are kind to all my father's house," replied Céleste.

But La Mouche had again found his voice. With his eyes fixed upon a piece of rough bark, which he had peeled from the top bar and was now tearing into bits, he began, hoarsely:

"Céleste, I must ask you something. No, no, don't speak till you have heard me. I cannot keep back my question for a happier time. I must ask you now, because all my future hangs on your answer. I am at the crossroads, and you will decide which way I turn. When I heard the kindness in your voice a few minutes ago I thought you loved me, and in my joy I spoke foolishly. Forgive me, Céleste. If now you say you do not love me, if you say you cannot and will not learn to love me, then this night I leave this land—my fatherland—forever. I know that never again will the Lilies of France float over my Acadie, for the English have set their teeth into her side, and they will not let go. If your heart is set against me, Céleste, I will go to Louisbourg and fall fighting, I pray, in that great war

which my heart hears drawing nigh. In the loneliness and silence of my hiding-place, Céleste, I have seen things clearly which I did not understand before. I have seen the end of this long strife. I have seen the Lions trample the Lilies. I have seen the mighty walls of Louisbourg levelled before the English guns, and I have seen the sheep pasturing over her grass-grown ramparts. My part is with this ruin; but one word from you would make it all different for me, Céleste. Your people are now to become English. For your sake, I will tear up my heart and make it all over to call itself English too. If you will but let me hope a little, I will give in my submission to the Governor at Halifax, and take the oath of allegiance to the English King, and turn my eyes away from all the past. They will accept my oath, even at this late day, because they would rather win La Mouche for a friend than punish him as an enemy. And they know that I keep my word. Céleste, may I go to the English Governor?"

As he concluded, La Mouche leaned forward as if to take the girl's hand. Céleste had heard him quietly, but upon this movement she drew back

with almost harsh abruptness. At another time she would have been filled with pity; and she would have remembered with pride that La Mouche was one whose love greatly distinguished her above the other maidens of Grand Pré. But just now she was thinking of a sad-eyed lad among the prisoners in the chapel. She thought of tall young Jules, soon to sail into exile, and never again to know the comforts of her hands. On the very night before the captivity she had given him the promise he pled for. Her heart filled with a sudden wild bitterness against La Mouche. Why was he here, free, full of life and strength and offering her a love she did not want, while Jules was a hopeless captive? She turned away angrily, saying, in a hard voice:

"Do not on my account rob France of your services, Ba'tiste; for I shall never have anything to give you in return."

The undeserved sarcasm in her tone cut La Mouche to the quick, and his keen face flushed darkly. Twice he tried to speak, but speech died on his lips. Then he turned, lowered the bars, and let Céleste pass through. After walking beside her in silence for a few moments he said, gently:

"From the scorn with which you have treated my poor offer, Céleste, I may gather that some one more fortunate has been before me."

The phrase "more fortunate" was fuel to the girl's bitterness. She cried, sharply:

"It is more fortunate then, to be dragged a captive among strangers, and never to see one's land and people again?"

"I might think so, Céleste," he answered in a low voice; but in an instant his brow knit and his voice changed. Scanning the girl's face he went on, with slow emphasis:

"I think I remember a certain long-legged, lamb-faced weanling called Jules—I forget his other name, if he had one—who used to hang about wherever Mademoiselle Céleste Maillard might chance to be, and blush if one spoke to him suddenly. He seemed, as I remember, to have much concern about his arms and legs. I see from Mademoiselle's face that I have guessed rightly." Here the slow words began to cut like steel. "Indeed, I feel myself much honoured by so distinguished a rival!"

The girl stopped short, as if she had been stung, and faced her companion. Even through

the dusk he could see the blazing wrath of her eyes.

"Coward!" she said, in a trembling whisper, scarcely able to control her breath. "Young as he is, and with neither blood on his hands nor stain in his heart, you would never dare speak that way to his face. Go! go! lest I call the English soldiers!"

But La Mouche did not go; he laughed coolly.

"Doubtless," said he, "his mother's milk is by this time quite dry upon his lips, and his mighty sinews, his practised weapons, would make short work of me!"

"Go! go!" repeated Céleste, desperately; and the next instant she was speeding up the path.

"Wait!" commanded La Mouche; and to her own astonishment Céleste found herself pausing in her flight and listening, with sudden, wild apprehension for what the woodranger would say next.

"I will go, as you wish," and his voice conveyed to her soul a nameless threat, "but not to Louisbourg. Since the boy has dared to become my rival, I must honour him as such and make him realise what a responsibility he has assumed.

Do not think, Céleste, that La Mouche has lost his power, or that I cannot reach the lamb-faced youth in his prison behind the English guards! Moreover, his heart is yours—and you shall have it! I will send it to you! My honour will not permit me to let the English keep what is yours!"

A wavering grey figure in the gloom, pausing on tiptoe as if for instant flight, Céleste had listened. At this menace of La Mouche all her pride gave way. Her heart stood still with fear for her young lover. Like a cold wave swept over her the remembrance of La Mouche's relentless will, his matchless cunning, his patience in pursuit of his aim. She flew, with a sob, to throw herself at his feet and implore his pity for Jules; but in the same instant he was gone; noiselessly and swiftly as a ghost, he had vanished. The dusky thickets had swallowed him. She heard not a sound but the rough *tankle-tankle* of the cow-bells. She threw herself down on the cold moss of a hillock and wept and besought the Blessed Virgin to guard Jules; and during the long days that followed before the next ship was to sail, her sorrow was mixed with a ceaseless anguish of fear.

One evening, just two days before the embarkation, Céleste was again returning through the twilight from letting out the cows to pasture. As she drew near the cottage a well-known form advanced to meet her. With joy and doubt and wonder her knees so trembled that she stopped and clung to the fence. It was Jules. In an instant he was at her side, and the sorrow and fear were forgotten. But presently a pang tightened about her heart; perhaps Jules had but come on his parole, to bid her a last farewell. She could hardly frame the question; but Jules interrupted it with the assurance that he was really free—that Colonel Winslow had himself given him his freedom, though for what reason he could not dream.

"I was the only one, Céleste. He came with the interpreter, and called me by name. And when I stepped forward, wondering, he told me I could go free, and that I must take the oath and be a loyal subject to King George. Gladly I took the oath; and I came right here!"

To Jules it was enough that he was again with Céleste, and he had not yet had time to trouble himself for an explanation of the marvel. But

the girl's more nimble thought was casting about for a clue, and suddenly she remembered La Mouche, and her flushed cheek turned pale. Some cunning of his it was, surely, that had compassed Jules's escape, in order that he might get his rival within reach of his vengeance. Her whole being quailed at this proof of La Mouche's power. It was a face of instant despair that she raised to her lover's, as she asked:

"Have you seen or heard anything of La Mouche?"

Not noticing in the dusk the change that had come over her countenance, the young fellow answered lightly:

"Oh yes, I saw him not an hour ago."

Intoxicated as he was with his delight, he nevertheless could not help observing that Céleste clung more heavily to him now; and it seemed to him she would have fallen if he had not held her up strongly.

"How glad she is to see me!" he said to himself, with loving pride.

But Céleste whispered, glancing fearfully around:

"Where was he?"

"Oh, La Mouche?"—Jules spoke somewhat impatiently—"I saw him in the chapel. He was rude to me."

"In the chapel!" echoed Céleste, in astonishment.

"Yes; but what do you care about La Mouche?" said Jules.

"I must know. It is important. Tell me at once, dear. I 'll explain by and by," cried Céleste, with breathless eagerness.

Such interest in La Mouche, and just at this time, appeared to Jules unseasonable; and he gave his answer with a certain sullenness, releasing Céleste from his arms as he spoke. But the girl was too much excited to heed this.

"He came in under guard about half an hour before I was set free," said Jules. "We all crowded about him to learn how he had been captured. He looked very black and would tell us nothing; but he spoke civilly enough to every one. I was sorry to see that he had been caught after all; and by and by when I got near enough I stretched out my hand and tried to tell him so. But the impudent dog just eyed me as if I were so much dirt, and then turned his back on me

with a snarl. Had I not been sorry for him I should have struck him in the face, though he killed me for it. And once I could have loved him and bowed down to him, because he has done great things and loves our people."

"And then what happened?" persisted Céleste.

"Nothing!" said Jules. "Oh, yes," he continued, "there was one thing rather queer, I thought. After a few minutes he looked at me again, and this time with a sort of sudden fierceness. Then he strode to the door and began talking to the guards as if he owned the whole place, and was going right out when he wanted to. I could n't hear what he was saying, and the guards did n't seem to understand him. But some way they were more polite to him than they ever were to any of the rest of us. While he was talking to them along came Colonel Winslow. And the first thing I knew I was free and out on the hills, and running to my Céleste."

While he was speaking the truth had flashed in upon the girl's mind. She saw the whole great-heartedness of La Mouche, the splendour of self-sacrifice which had been veiled behind his threats; and a flood of passionate pity swept over her

for the man whom she had spurned and so harshly wronged in her judgment. At the same time the cold autumn gloom seemed to grow bright about her, so black a cloud of fear was rolled from her heart! Jules was safe. No cunning and resistless sword was awaiting his throat. In her love for Jules there was something of a mother's protecting indulgence, and it never occurred to her to love him the less for his plain inferiority to his rival. La Mouche was a hero —brave, strong, famous, faithful, and of a superb devotion, for which she felt that she and Jules must always worship him! But as for Jules, he needed none of these qualities; it was enough that he should be himself! Heedless of his slightly aggrieved air, she reached her arms again about his neck and cried:

"Jules, it was La Mouche who set you free, because I told him I loved you. He has given himself up to the English in exchange for you."

"*Mon Dieu!*" muttered the lad; "and just now I called him a dog! I called him a dog! Céleste, Céleste!" he went on in the bitterness of self-abasement; "how can you love me when

you have known La Mouche? No, no! I am not worth it! I will go back!"

He undid the girl's arms firmly, and turned to go; but she was otherwise minded. Before he had gone far she had brought him back again. A little later the two sat hand in hand before the wide hearth of Pierre Maillard's kitchen; and La Mouche in his captivity was far from their happy thoughts. After the last ship had sailed, and Grand Pré village had been laid in ashes, and the storms of winter had lashed the naked ruins, and spring had brought back the drift of blossom to the lonely apple trees, a farm was granted to Jules and Céleste on the Gaspereau slope, beyond sight of the ruined village.

And La Mouche? He had been sent away in the very ship that was to have carried Jules into exile. But La Mouche was not one whom chains could long imprison. Ere the ship was well past Blomidon he had roused the hearts of his fellow-captives by whispered word and look. Down Fundy's Bay sailed the English captain without a dream of danger, till suddenly, in a thick fog, the prisoners rose as one man, and the crew were overpowered before they could make resistance.

The ship was run into the rock-bound harbour of the St. John, and La Mouche led his followers ashore. Some of them went up the river to form a new settlement; others went to Louisbourg. And La Mouche died fighting, when came that day which he had prophesied to Céleste—when the mighty fortress of Louisbourg was expunged like a wrong score, and the Lions trod down the Lilies in the garden of New France.

A Tragedy of the Tides

THIS is the story of the fate that befell Lieutenant Henry Crewe and Margaret Neville, his betrothed, who disappeared from the infant city of Halifax on the afternoon of September 18, 1749. The facts were gathered by one Nicholas Pinson from the mouths of Indians more or less concerned, from members of the Neville family, and from much sagacious conjecture; and woven, with an infinite deal of irrelevant detail, into a narrative which has been rigorously condensed in the present rendering. The industrious Pinson's manuscript, with all its attenuated old French characters, its obscure abbreviations, and its well-bred contempt for orthographical accuracy, might perhaps be found even yet in the provincial archives at Halifax. At least, if anyone be curious to examine this story in the original, just as M. Pinson wrote it, he may search the archives of Halifax with a reasonable surety

that the manuscript is as likely to be found there as anywhere else.

There was a faint, opaline haze in the afternoon air, and in the still waters of the harbour the low hills, with their foliage lightly touched in bronze and amethyst and amber, were faithfully reproduced. Into a hollow between two knolls wooded with beech trees, ran a shallow cove, its clear waters edged with sand of a tender, greenish grey. Close to the water's edge stood the lovers, and across the silence they could hear, pulsating dimly, the hammers of them that were building the city.

"Listen," said the man, as he drew the girl closely to him and kissed her on the forehead; "those are the strokes that are making a home for us."

The girl lifted her lips for a kiss that never reached them. The man was seized from behind, a dark hand covered his mouth; and Lieutenant Henry Crewe, his sword unstirred in its scabbard, found himself pinioned hand and foot, ere he had time to realise that other arms were about him than those of the woman he loved. With her it fared in like fashion, save that before they covered

her mouth she found time for one long piercing cry. It was heard by those who were working on the city palisades; but no man could tell the direction whence it came. Presently a search-party set out for the thick woods lying a little north of west from the city; but in the meantime the Indians had carried their captives north-eastward to the lakes, and were making all speed on the Fundy coast by way of the Shubenacadie trail.

Henry Crewe was a tall man, and well sinewed, and for a brief space he strove so fiercely with his bonds that his fair skin flushed well-nigh purple, and his lips, under the yellow moustache, curled apart terribly, like those of a beast at bay. Unable to endure the anguish of his effort, Margaret averted her eyes, for she knew the hopelessness of it. Like all the Nevilles of Nova Scotia to this day, the girl was somewhat spare of form and feature, with dark hair, a clear, dark skin, and eyes of deep colour that might be either grey or green. Her terrible cry had been far less the utterance of a blind terror than a deliberate signal to the garrison at the fort, and so complete was her self-control that when Crewe presently met

her gaze his brain grew clearer, he forgot the derision in the Indians' painted faces, ceased his vain struggles, and bent all his thought to the task of finding means of deliverance.

The captives were thrown into canoes and paddled swiftly to the head of the long basin which runs inland for miles from the head of the harbour. At the beginning of the portage their feet were unbound, and their mouths set free from the suffocating gags.

"Oh, Margaret! Margaret! To think I should have brought you to this!" exclaimed Crewe in a harsh voice, the moment his lips were free.

The girl had confidence in her lover's power to find some way of protecting her, in case no help should come from the city. Her sole thought now was to show herself brave, and in no way to embarrass his judgment. Before she could answer, however, the leader of the band struck Crewe across the mouth with the flat of his hatchet, as a hint that he should keep silence. Had Crewe been alone, bound as he was, he would have felled his assailant with a blow of the foot; but for Margaret's sake he forced himself to endure the indignity tamely, though his blue

eyes flamed with so dangerous a light that the Indian raised his hatchet again in menace. The girl's heart bled under the stroke and at sight of the wounded mouth, but she prudently abstained from speech. Only she spoke one word in a low voice that said all things to her lover's ear, the one word "Beloved!"

To the chief now spoke one of the band in the Micmac tongue:

"Why not let the paleface talk to his young squaw? It will be the more bitter for them at the last!"

"No," said the chief, grinning; "it is as death to the palefaces to keep silence. But they shall have time to talk at the last."

Throughout the long journey, which was continued till midnight, under the strong light of a moon just at the full, the lovers held no converse save in the mute language of eye and gesture, and that only during the rough marches from one lake to another. The greater part of the journey was by canoe. At night they were lashed to trees some way apart, and separated by the camp-fire. Crewe dared not address a word to Margaret lest he should anger his captors into doing him

some injury that might lessen his powers of thought or action, and the girl, seeing that no immediate gain could be had from speech, dreaded to be smitten on the mouth in a way that might disfigure her in her lover's eyes. Only at times, when a wind would blow the smoke and flame aside, she looked across the camp-fire into the young man's face, and in the look and in the smile of the steady lips he read not only an unswerving courage, but also a confidence in his own resourceful protection, which pierced his heart with anguish. All night he pondered schemes of rescue or escape, until his brain reeled and his soul grew sick before the unsolvable problem. He could move neither hand nor foot, and just before dawn he sank to sleep in his bonds. Then for the waking girl the loneliness became unspeakable, and her lips grew ashen in the first light of the dawn.

Late on the following day the band drew up their canoes on the banks of the Shubenacadie, where its waters began to redden with the tide, and struck through the woods by a dark trail. The next day the captives were tortured by the sight of a white steeple in the distance, belonging

to an Acadian settlement. Crewe judged this to be the village of Beaubassin. The surmise was confirmed when, a few hours later, after a wide detour to avoid the settlement, the flag of France was seen waving over the foliage that clothed a long line of heights. By this time the band was traversing a vast expanse of salt marshes, and after crossing a little tidal stream near its head, they turned sharply south-westward toward the sea. Presently the raw red earthworks of Beauséjour rose into view some seven or eight miles distant across the marshes. There, among his bitter enemies, Crewe knew he might find sure succour, if only the gallant Frenchmen could be made aware of what was passing so near them. He saw Margaret's eyes fixed with terrible appeal upon the hostile works, wherein for her and for her lover lay safety; and agonised to feel his utter helplessness, he raised a long and ringing shout which, as it seemed to him, must reach the very souls of those behind the ramparts. Margaret's heart leaped with hope, which flickered out as she saw the Indians laugh grimly at the foolish effort. To be within sight of help, and yet so infinitely helpless! For the first time the girl

yielded to complete despair, and her head sank upon her breast. In the Journal of the Sieur Carré, at this time a lieutenant at Beauséjour, occurs this entry, under date of September 20, 1749:

"Noted this morning a small party of natives moving down the shores of the river Tintamarre. Too far off to distinguish whether it was a war party or not, but this their order of march seemed to suggest."

After skirting for perhaps an hour a red and all but empty channel, which Crewe recognised by hearsay as the bed of the Tantramar (or *Tintamarre*, "water of hubbub"), the savages suddenly led their captives down the steep, gleaming abyss of mud to the edge of the shallow current, which now, at low tide, clattered shrilly seaward over clods of blue clay and small stones rolled down from the uplands.

Margaret awoke from her despair enough to shudder disdainfully as her feet sank more than ankle-deep in the clinging ooze, and to wonder why the Indians should halt in such a place. She met her lover's glance, and saw that he was singularly disturbed.

The place was like a hideous gaping pit. A double winding of the channel closed it in above and below. Some forty or fifty feet over their heads, against a pure sky of loveliest blue, waved a shaggy fringe of salt grasses, yellowing in the autumn air. This harsh and meagre herbage encircled the rim of the chasm, and seemed to make the outer world of men infinitely remote. The sun, an hour or two past noon, glared down whitely into the gulf, and glistened, in a myriad of steely reflections, from the polished but irregular steeps of slime. There was something so strange and monstrous in the scene that Margaret's dull misery was quickened to a nameless horror. Suddenly a voice, which she hardly recognised as that of her lover, said slowly and steadily:

"Margaret, this is the end of our journey; we have come to the end."

Looking up she met Crewe's eyes fastened upon her with a gaze which seemed to sustain her and fill her nerves with strength. With the end of his uncertainty his will became clear, and his resolution as perfect as tempered steel. An Indian had brought two stakes and thrown them

on the mud at the leader's feet. Margaret looked at the rough-trimmed saplings, at the tide-mark far up the dreadful slope, then again into her lover's face. She understood; but she gave no sign, save that her skin blanched to a more deathly pallor, and she exclaimed in a voice of poignant regret: "Have we kept silence all these long hours only for this? And I had so much to say to you!"

"There will be time," he said gently, and his voice was a caress. "The flood-tide has not yet begun, and it will take some hours. And it was well, dear, that we could not speak; for so you had hope till the last to support you, while I had none, having heard the Indians say we were to die, though they said not in my hearing when or how. Had you known, you might not have had this high courage of yours, that now gives me strength to endure the utmost. Dear, your heroic fortitude has been everything to me."

A faint flush of pride rose into the girl's face, and she stretched out her pinioned arms to him, and cried: "You shall not be deceived in me. I will be worthy of you, and will not shame our race before these beasts."

By this time the stakes were driven into the strong clay. They were placed some way up the slope, and one a little space above the other. To the lower stake they fastened Crewe. As the girl was being bound to the other, her arms were freed for a moment that the savages might the more readily remove her upper garments, and by a swift movement she loosened her hair so that it fell about her to her knees,—the splendid Neville hair, still famous in the Province. There was no bounty then on English scalps, and the horror of the scalping-knife was not threatened them. When the savages had made their task complete, they laughed in their victims' faces and retreated up the steep and over the grassy rim.

"Are they gone?" asked the girl.

"No, they are lying in wait to watch us," answered Crewe; and as he ceased speaking a muffled sound was heard, and with a sudden hubbub that filled the chasm with clamour, the first of the flood-tide came foaming round the curve, and the descending current halted as if in fear of the meeting. The next moment the bed of the stream was hidden by a boiling reddish

torrent, racing up the channel; and the tide was creeping by inches toward the captives' feet. For an hour or more the bright gulf of death was so loud in this turmoil and with the echoes from the red walls of mud, and the yellow eddies of foam whirled and swept so dizzily past their eyes, that the captives' senses were dulled in a measure, as if by some crude anodyne or vast mesmeric influence. When, however, the channel was about one-third full and the water now beginning to cover Crewe's feet, the flood became more quiet and equable, spreading smoothly over freer spaces. Presently there was a frightful silence, intensified by the steady sunlight, and broken only by the stealthy, soft rush and snake-like hiss of the tide. Then, as Margaret's brain grew clear in the stillness, a low cry, which tortured Crewe's features, forced itself from her lips. She realised for the first time why the stake to which she was bound had been set higher than her lover's. She would watch the cruel coloured water creep over Crewe's mouth, then cover his eyes, and hide at last the brave head she had longed to kiss, ere it climbed to ease her own lips of life. She said: "Love, I will lay my face

down in the water as soon as it is near enough, and I shall not be far behind you."

A wide-winged grey gull, following the tide up the channel, gave a startled cry as he came upon the silent figures, and rose higher, with sudden flapping, as he turned his flight away across the marshes.

In the Journal of the Sieur Carré, in Beauséjour, there is a second entry under the date of September 20, 1749. It was added on a succeeding day. Translated fully it runs thus:

"In the afternoon took a guard and marched across the Tintamarre to see what mischief the redskins had been at, having observed them to leave two of their number in the channel, and to linger long on the brink, as if watching something in the stream. It was within an hour of high tide when we reached the spot, the savages disappearing on our approach. Saw on the farther shore a piteous sight, whereat our hearts burned to follow the redskins and chastise their devilish malice. A woman was bound to a stake, her face fallen forward in the water, and a wonderful luxuriance of dark hair spread about her and floating on the

current. Swam across the river, with those of my men following who could, and, plunging beneath the tide, cut her bonds. But found the life had fled, at which we wondered; for had she held her head erect the water would not yet have been within a little of her chin. But presently we found, beneath the water, the body of a young man, bound likewise to a stake; and it seemed to us we thereupon understood why the poor lady had been in such haste to die. The lovers, for so we deemed them, were plainly English, and we took them with us back to the Beauséjour, purposing to give them Christian burial, —and more than ever cursing the hard necessity which forces us to make alliance with the natives."

The Blue Dwarf of Belle Mare

THE sun was shining hot and bright in my face as I opened my eyes. This was not unusual; but I felt a moment's wonder at the intolerable inflexibility of my couch. Then a choking sense of horror came over me, preceding the realisation of my miserable plight. I sat up, bracing myself with my hands on either side upon the warm, wave-rounded rocks, and turned my eager gaze toward the sea.

A few paces below me the water was lapping with a simulated mildness, a sort of reticent pulsation which barely hinted at the turmoil still prevailing beyond the windless shelter of the cove. Past the yellow-brown rock-jumble of the point, the waves still ran high, with a purple undertow in their blueness, which told of a fury not yet quite assuaged.

Farther out, perhaps a mile from my refuge, a low reef stood up sharply from a snarl of white

surf; and on the easternmost spur of it clung the fragment of a ship's prow, with bowsprit pointing straight heavenward. I noted that it was the time of low tide, which counted for the reef's exposure. I noted, too, but without even the dullest surprise, that no living soul was to be seen about the wreck. Neither was there wreckage along the shore anywhere within my straining vision. I covered my eyes with both hands, and my throat contracted in a dry sob. Of the merry little company that had sailed from Boston for Halifax in the *God's Providence*, manifestly it was I alone who was left alive.

Presently I got up, resolved that in this bitter strait I would yield to no unnerving remembrances. What had fallen, had fallen. I would set my face toward the days to come, and demand of life compensation for this brute buffet. The sun was near to the height of noon. By journeying a little to the west of north, straight across the peninsula, I reckoned I should without fail strike some one of the Acadian settlements between Annapolis and Grand Pré; for I calculated that I was now not far from the lonely harbour of Rossignot, on the Atlantic coast of Acadia.

Exhausted to the verge of death by my long swim through the darkness, I had slept perhaps twelve hours there on the naked rocks, and the midsummer sun had well-nigh dried my uniform. My hat was gone; my black hair, at all times rebellious, was now confirmed in wiry curls crisp with salt. My sword was still at my side, crusted into the sodden scabbard. I drew it forth, looked with discontent upon the swift encroachment of rust, and then debased it to the task of prying oysters from the rocks for my noon meal. In faith, I had a hunger that proved me still all sound and whole. I ate abundantly, not knowing how long it might be ere I should again have food more satisfying than the berries of the inland woods.

The beach at this point was skirted by a line of cliff, of no great height, but just here in a measure unassailable.

I walked perhaps a mile to the west, over rock and sand, seeking trace of my lost comrades. But some whimsical current of the coast had carried them otherwheres. Then, scaling the heights—if, being in truth so low, they might be called heights by a stranger's courtesy,—I retraced

my steps to a point immediately overlooking the spot where my senses had so late returned to me, wishing from that elevation, the highest in the neighbourhood, to take a final and more extended view before plunging into the forest. I approached the fringe of green shrub which masked the brink of the cliff. But on the instant, instead of parting the foliage to peer forth, I dropped like lightning behind its shelter.

Below me, so near that I might have dropped a stone among them, was a band of Indians, the Micmacs of Acadia, examining with attention my footmarks on a patch of sand, and gesticulating toward the wreck. A moment more and they started at a long, deliberate lope along my trail.

I knew of these Micmacs. Just at this time French and English were vying with each other in the bloody game of paying for scalps. Never had the price of an English scalp been so high. The Micmacs were a brave and businesslike tribe, caring little for bloodshed in itself, but quite merciless when they had an object in view. Scalp money was always an object. When, therefore, there was no bounty on scalps, they took prisoners, and treated them with easy tolerance till

exchanged. With a price on scalps, prisoners became a mere tradition. I thanked a merciful Heaven, therefore, which had so led me back upon my trail and warned me of my imminent peril. I praised my sires, who had bequeathed to me great strength of wind and limb and a certain handiness in running; and I bethought me of some cunning in woodcraft learned among the rocky hills of New Hampshire. It was not without good hope of baffling my sleuth-like pursuers that I dropped back into the woods and ran, at a good pace, northward. The earth being soft here, and the trail broadly palpable, I ran straight without subterfuge, depending upon my start and my speed to enlarge my distance.

An hour later I came out upon an open, ragged, hard-crusted country of thickets and boulders. Here I ran cunningly, breaking my trail from time to time, and seizing every chance to draw it blind. This reach of barren was about two leagues across, and I struck the thick woodland again at a point much west of the general trend of my course. Here encountering a shallow brook, babbling westerly, I trotted with patience down its shaded channel for the space of an hour.

Its amber stream was swept in places by sturdy boughs of ash, maple, or water birch; and by and by, feeling spent, I swung myself neatly up into a tree, clambered from that to the next, and yet the next, as a liveried ape might have done, and coming to a broad, commodious crotch, rested moveless for half an hour. Then, feeling that I had set my pursuers a task to try their perspicacity, I dropped to the mossy ground and hastened directly northward, hungry indeed, but not a little pleased with myself.

While it wanted yet an hour or more of sunset, the woods fell away before me, and I found myself on the edge of a ravine at whose bottom clamoured a living little river. Two or three hundred yards to the right the ravine turned northward at an acute angle. There was a blithe music about this wilderness water which made me think it good company for a solitary fugitive; and, moreover, I saw no chance to cross it. I resolved to follow it until some better course should present itself.

I was letting myself down the steep, when from the corner of my eye I caught glimpse of something bright a-flutter on the wind. I

raised my eyes—and held my breath with astonishment.

Straight across the ravine, scarce fifty paces as the bee flies, leaning against the tilted trunk of an old birch tree, stood a young girl, her profile toward me, gazing down into the swift water. The brightness which had caught my eye was the streaming of a yellow silk shawl twisted about her waist to serve as a girdle. Her hair, fallen loose and smitten by the sun, was of a deep red, the strangest, most living red I had ever seen in a woman's locks. Of a dull green was the gown which hung almost to her ankles, showing dainty yellow leggings of deerskin. Her gown had no sleeves, and her arms, round but girlishly slim, were tanned, like her face, to a glowing ivory richness. The profile was of a purity that made me think of certain engravings from old Greek seals, contained in a folio of my friend Master Anthony Apgood's, in Boston.

For some seconds I almost feared to breathe, lest she should dissolve and vanish. Then I craved to see her full face, to make her eyes meet mine. I was too engrossed to marvel at such a vision appearing in the wilderness of Acadia.

Indeed, I am of the temperament to which miracles always seem more probable and more real than the platitudinous sequence of expected things. Presently I said, speaking clearly but not loudly:

"Are you a woman, or a fairy, or the witch of these wild waters, or a dream?"

With a slight start, she lifted her head and looked at me. I could not, at the distance, tell the colour of her eyes, but they were very large, set far apart under a serene, low brow, and very dark. They rested upon me with a mingling of wonder and apprehension. But she did not speak.

"Plainly," thought I, "she does not understand English."

But in French I felt constrained to stick to the most direct and simple phrases.

"Mademoiselle," said I, "I am a stranger, and pursued by enemies who seek my life. I am an English officer, lately shipwrecked on your coast. I beg the hospitality and protection of your house!"

Her face had changed as I spoke, like a summer pool under veering gusts. First pity; then a

darkening of anger; then compassion again, and a rising interest; then fear. And straightway she answered:

"Yes, monsieur! But, oh, no! no! There is danger. Do not come! Go away, go!" And pointing vehemently up the stream she turned and vanished behind the thick branches.

I did not obey the gesture; and the tones of her voice were not command at all, but entreaty. Moreover, there was danger, she said. The danger behind, from which I had been fleeing so diligently, was forgotten, and even more diligently I set myself to seek the danger lying ahead. I desired it, because it was likely to afford me at least one further chance to speak with, or to look at, her.

In an instant I was at the water's edge. There was no practicable ford; so I ran in feverish haste down the bank.

After turning the abrupt corner, of which I have already spoken, the stream ran between smooth, perpendicular walls, and I was obliged to climb once more about half-way up the side of the glen, which now swept to the right in a bold curve. A stone's throw farther on, the walls

parted, and I found myself upon the lip of a mountain tarn, the fairest pool my eyes had ever rested upon. There was magic in the transparency of the water, whose surface, unruffled save where the hurried river came in, flashed with its emerald lights along the nearer shore. In three or four places the greenery of the summer forest slipped fairly down to the water; but everywhere else a smooth wall of dark yellowish rock rose to a height of ten or fifteen feet above the windless mirror. The whole amphitheatre engirdling this liquid crystal was not a third of a mile across. There was no apparent outlet to the pool; but as I gazed in bewilderment I discovered a darkness in the rock wall opposite, and made it out to be the mouth of a low cavern. I thought, too, there was a disturbance of the water at that point, and concluded that the pool's overflow was sucked down into the heart of the hills.

My instant desire was to get over to that side of the water where the vision of the ravine had disappeared. But straight ahead I saw a little cottage, of a rain-beaten grey and with wide, flaring eaves, snuggled down into the leafage. Here, doubtless, dwelt the lady elusive; and

hither she must come by the long way around the pool. I resolved to be there ahead of her. I pushed forward with more haste than circumspection.

Through the partial screen of branches I caught view of a little garden plot, neatly tilled; and then a smooth yard-space, sloping from the cottage threshold to the pool. The place looked not perilous, unless its very magic were a peril. There was no wind, the circumscribing hills being so high. There was no sound, not so much as of a bird singing, or a hyla piping in the leaves.

But suddenly from up the veiled slope came a low, swishing murmur as of a body pushing swiftly through a grain field. I could not explain it; and there was something ominous about it. Instantly on the alert, I drew away from the thicket and nearer to the rock-rim of the pool. A moment later the thicket swayed with noiseless vehemence.

Instinctively I sprang aside, drawing my sword in the same motion; and as I did so a long, yellow body shot from the leafage. In the ruddy light it was like a glowing thunderbolt. I saw the flattened ears, the wide, greenly flaming eyes, the set, bared claws.

Had I not jumped, the panther would have caught me on the shoulders. But I had jumped, and as the shape of death passed by through the air my sword pierced it in mid-loins, smoothly.

There was a harsh sound; and clinging to the sword-hilt I was thrown to my knees, as the bulk went on. My grip was not to be broken, so the steel dragged clear again; and the beast, doubling himself under the stroke, came to the ground upon his head and rolled over the clean brink into the water. I sprang to look down, and saw him sink like lead, leaving a discoloured foam behind him.

It was a neat stroke, neatly timed. I wiped my sword with no small satisfaction.

But as I looked up again, toward the cottage, the complacency upon my face must have faded into anxious amazement. The new foe whom I saw, darting toward me in malignant and ominous silence, was of a fashion quite strange to me. At first glance I did not recognise it for human; but then I perceived it to be a baboon-like dwarf, with square head set close upon shoulders of amazing breadth, and arms of such a length as to almost reach the ground. His twisted legs were

ludicrously thin for the support of his misshapen trunk, but were sufficient to propel him toward me with a speed which seemed beyond all necessity. He wore a coat of ragged fur which added to his brute-like aspect; and his mouth was wide grinning, like an angry but breathless dog's. All this was no more than interesting to me; but there was something else that at first, I confess, went far to shake my self-possession. His hairless face was blue—a horrid, unnatural colour. I could see that his strength was greater than that of ordinary men; yet he seemed to me rash in attacking, unarmed, one who had just shown himself at least a ready swordsman.

He was descending upon me, not twenty paces distant; and his yellow eyes, boring into mine, seemed like sword-blades in themselves. I stood lightly balanced, ready and determined not to kill if I could avoid it; for this horrible being, I guessed, was a servitor to the maid of the rocks. Suddenly a huge knife, whipped from under the ragged coat of fur, was hurled at me, swift and illusive as a flash of light.

My readiness saved me, however. I swerved at the same breath. With a lightning parry, my

sword turned the vicious missile, and it went hurtling idly aside into the underbrush. On the very hiss of his diverted weapon, however, came my antagonist. It was no moment for the courtesies of the code. Perforce I stooped to tricks—in fact, to this trick,—I fell down so that in falling my outstretched foot intercepted his ridiculous, spindling shanks. With a kind of squeal of rage and terror, he went sprawling headlong over the brink, vainly clutching for a hold. I heard him splash heaving into the emerald crystal of the pool.

In leisurely fashion I stepped to the brink to look down upon my discomfited assailant, whose wrath I hoped would be something cooled by the bath. To my surprise, I saw that he could not swim. A pillow of air beneath his skin coat kept him grotesquely buoyed up for the moment, but he was aimlessly thrashing the water with his long arms, and his set eyes, staring with deadly fear, were fixed upon a point in the rock-wall about fifty yards to the left of where I stood.

I was puzzled at this. Then I noted that, placid as the pool appeared, there was a current. The dwarf was already several yards away. I

craned my neck over the brink, to follow his agonising gaze. I saw a slight, oil-smooth depression there under the rock wall. It was plain the pool had two underground outlets, which probably united somewhere in the bowels of the mountain. Even as I looked, I saw the tawny carcase of the panther I had slain lurch slowly to the surface just at the lip of that malignant smoothness, then vanish with a kicking plunge, as if snatched by an unseen hand.

I understood my enemy's terror. Glancing down upon him with something like compassion, I caught his eye upturned to mine with a wild appeal which would surely have melted me had he been the devil himself. I remembered that great knife darting at my throat. I thought of what might have been the choking clutch of those huge, hideous hands. But it was not to be endured that the creature should go shrieking down that vortex under the rock. I threw off my sword belt.

"Courage!" I cried to him in French; "I 'll pull you out, my lad!" and over I went.

God! but that fair water was cold, cold beyond telling! I shuddered and gasped, and felt

for half an instant curiously afraid. Then, with a vexed laugh, I got grip on my nerve again. Half a dozen strokes and I was up to my adversary. Just out of reach of his long, struggling arms I paused.

"Keep still!" I ordered, sternly. "Don't touch me! I 'll save you!"

The threshing stopped. Swimming around behind him, I seized him by the neck of his jacket, and struck out for shore, aiming at a point some five rods farther up, where the cliff was broken down sufficiently to afford a landing.

Not till I tried to swim against it did I realise the force of the glassy current which was drawing us so noiselessly toward that horrible pit. There seemed a cruel magic in it; or possibly it was the depressing influence of the cold, and of the strange, ghostly twilight now settling upon the pool, that deadened my forces. The light, seeming to wave across the water as an enchantment, was a mingling of the sunset's amber green with pinkish rays of a distorted moon just rising through the hilltop firs. Through this elvish atmosphere I swam painfully, slowly, and with something of a panic dread close upon my heels.

When we reached the broken rocks I know not which, the dwarf or I, was in the greater haste to climb ashore.

It never occurred to me that there could be anything more to be dreaded from the creature I had just saved; but I was not prepared for the idolatrous fervour with which, as soon as we had both gained the top of the rocks, he threw himself at my feet. Looking up at my face, his mouth wide with a grin which was now sheer ecstasy, he fawned upon me like a dog.

"Master, I did n't know you were good," he cried in a voice that was soft and sweet, but a French that was so barbarous I could scarce comprehend it. "I thought you wished to hurt Reine, my mistress. I was angry when you killed Reine's tiger. But now I know you have the kind heart, and will take care of Reine better than I and the tiger could. Forgive me, master!"

His hideous face looked kindly and gently now, and so like that of some faithful but miraculously blue-faced dog that I half-expected him to lick the hand that I put forth to raise him.

"Get up, lad," said I, slightly laughing.

"You were only trying to protect your mistress, so we 'll let bygones be bygones. I fear I shall have to beg you and your mistress to protect me before many hours go by. Take me to her, pray."

"She is here, monsieur, and has no words to thank as you deserve for the rescue of her loved and faithful servant," said a clear, sweet voice at my side.

It was the French of gentlefolk. I turned, my veins thrilling with pleasure and surprise. The lady of the ravine was beside me.

"But, to my great sorrow, I was compelled to kill another favourite of yours, mademoiselle," I cried. "Your great panther gave me a most inhospitable greeting. Will you forgive me?"

"Poor kitten!" she exclaimed, a sadness in her voice. And then, with a faint smile: "He was apt to be hasty with strangers! You, monsieur, came especially within the eye of his anger, by reason of your red coat. He had been taught, from a cub, to spring upon and tear a red coat. But what is this protection you ask of such poor and lonely folk as Bebe and me?"

Devout as I was, in the sanctity of the air with

which her loveliness and gentleness enclosed her, I could not but smile at the name which so exquisitely misbecame her sturdy and horrible-visaged servitor. A gleam of answering amusement flashed for a second into the serious, wide intentness of her gaze, showing the chances of mirth beneath the Madonna calm. But I spoke only of my plight.

"I see plainly that you cannot help me—that I should only involve you in my own ruin!" said I. "Therefore, I must bid you farewell and hasten onward!"

In truth, this resolution came hard; for I felt that the neighbourhood of this mysterious maiden, this aristocrat of the wilderness, who kept panthers trained to tear red coats, and blue-faced dwarfs to leap upon unbidden visitors, was where my desire was straitly tethering me. Moreover, I had, in fact, no great fear of the savages, for I flattered myself I had thrown them quite off the trail.

"You shall not evade my hospitality so, monsieur!" she replied, quietly positive. "Bear in mind that we are solitary here, and having killed poor kitten you owe us at least some entertain-

ment. Tell me your peril—and that will tell me what brings you to the shunned valley of Belle Mare."

"A word explains it all, mademoiselle," said I. "I am an English officer. The ship on which I was voyaging from Boston to Halifax was wrecked on your coasts last night. I alone escaped to land. A band of savages, discovering my footsteps on the sandy beach, have followed me, coveting the price of my scalp. I think I have outwitted them; but, if not, they must be here within the hour. I must be gone, or their ferocity will turn upon you." And bowing low, I set my face toward the northward steep.

"Stay, monsieur!" she said, putting her hand upon my dripping sleeve to detain me, whereat I stopped perforce. "No Indian will dare to molest you here!"

The dwarf, who had been crouching at our feet, his long arms spread raptly up into our faces, arose nimbly.

"Redskins!" he muttered, with scorn, very humanly oblivious to the peculiarities of his own complexion, and waddled swiftly to fetch my sword and belt. Clearly my hosts had nothing

to fear from the savages, even if they should come to Belle Mare.

"Then I am most gladly and gratefully at your service, most gracious one," said I.

Side by side, the dwarf at our heels, we walked up through the sweet-smelling shrubs toward the lawn before the cottage porch. With the whitening moonlight the air of the valley grew chill; but there was no mist. The clearness was, somehow, like that of a magic crystal. The common world of men was eternities behind me. The grave, beautiful girl at my side, in the green gown that seemed to melt into the leafage, was half-enchantress, half-child, but all a queen, a queen of faeries. I, a sober New Englander, an officer in the royal army, with a substantial estate in New Hampshire and certain substantial and circumspect kinsfolk in Boston, was burning to lay all my substance and respectability at her little moccasined feet. Oh, it was sorcery, doubtless! How painfully unusual the Blue Dwarf would look on Beacon Street! I pinched myself hard, and listened for some sound that might awake me from the delusion of all my other senses. There was no sound save a remote,

obscure, sucking gurgle, where the glassy water of Belle Mare went down the sink.

I turned for refuge to the sound of my own voice.

"Mademoiselle Reine," I said, "why did you——"

"My name is Lys," she interrupted, smiling. "Reine is but Bebe's name for me."

"I know not which is the more supremely fitting," I rejoined, "or whether you be most a queen or most a flower."

This was not the direction of escape to explain sanity, so I continued: "Tell me, then, O queen of lilies, why that amiable panther who fell upon my sword-point had been taught by you to rend a scarlet coat."

"It was my father taught him," she answered. "He came here, years ago, bringing Bebe and me, a child of six. Since then, monsieur, with the exception of my dear father, you are the only man of my own kind—of gentle breeding, I mean —whom I have seen. My father had suffered some great wrong at the hands of the English soldiery—I know not what, but it was ever on his mind, and when Bebe found the panther cub my

father brought it up so that it might kill an English soldier if ever it should see one. To us the kitten was gentle and loving. My father died three years ago. He was a great scholar. He taught me. Since his death I have been most wretched. But my faithful Bebe takes care of me. I have my harp, my books. And some day, if the saints permit, I shall go back into the wonders of the great world!"

"The great world, mademoiselle, contains no such wonder as yourself!" I exclaimed.

As we came at this moment to the cottage door, she made no reply to this blunt assault, but welcomed me sweetly over the threshold.

There was no hallway. I found myself at once in a small but well-appointed living-room. The broad moonlight, flooding through two windows, showed books all about the walls, a settee and low chair or two draped with skins, and a gilded harp beside the open fireplace. Through a doorway on the left came a warm, wavering light from the kitchen hearth.

"Well have you called the place 'Belle Mare,' mademoiselle," said I, intoxicated with the

beauty of herself and this her little kingdom of dream.

Before she could reply there came a long hail across the water, and she laughed softly.

"There they are, your Indian friends, monsieur!" she exclaimed. "You do not find our Acadian savages so easy to throw off the trail!"

A wave of horrible misgiving passed over me. What if the bloodthirsty wretches should, after all, turn upon her! I felt for my sword-hilt.

"Are you sure, mademoiselle," I pleaded in a voice whose intensity must have told her more than the words could, "that they will not harm or annoy you? Unless you are quite sure, I will go out and give myself up at once!"

"Oh, hush!" she cried, putting out her hand with a little detaining gesture which made my heart jump. "I mean, certainly they will not harm me, or you, or Bebe, or this place. Only they will delay supper, and you are wet and hungry," she added lightly.

Meanwhile the dwarf, stepping out upon the moonlit grass, had answered the hail with a peculiar cry,

"Is the good panther tied up, father?" came the question, in broken French.

"It is dead. You can come in safety," answered the dwarf. The sounds carried like bell-notes on the clear air.

"Will they come in here? Will they see you?" I asked, still doubtful.

"No; Bebe will talk to them, and send them away," said she. "They think him a kind of god, and almost worship his poor blue face."

"What will he tell them?" I questioned.

"We will stand here at this side of the window, where they can't see us," she replied, taking my hand in her soft little fingers and bestowing me in the spot she thought fitting. "And you shall hear for yourself just what my good Bebe may decide to say. I leave all these things to his sagacity."

The squat monster took on a new interest in my eyes; but as I looked at him, waiting there in the moonlight with a grotesque dignity that made me feel like the spectator of an acted fairy tale, I was conscious of one thing most real. That was, the slight, bewildering warmth of her bare arm, as she stood close to my side. That,

just then, was the great thing. The approaching savages, hungry for my scalp, were an episode.

We stood in a pulsing, eloquent silence, as the savages came trotting in single file along the river of the pool, and up the slope—a full score of them in their paint and feathers. Not a word was said as they came up. Four or five paces from the motionless dwarf they stopped, ranging themselves in a semicircle before him, and waited.

"Well!" said Bebe, in a tone which meant "Go on. Say what you want."

The leader held out his hand, palm up, with a gesture of deference.

"The wise father knows," said he, "that we seek the stranger, the Englishman, our enemy."

"Yes!" said Bebe, coldly.

"Let not the wise father be angry," went on the savage orator. "Is the stranger here?"

"He is in the house," answered the dwarf, with deliberate calm.

"Will not the wise father send him forth to us? He is ours!" urged the redskin.

The dwarf seemed suddenly to tower, and a great voice came from him that filled all the valley.

"Fools!" rang the trumpet of his throat. "He is not yours! He is mine! Would you bid me betray my guest?"

The semicircle seemed to shrink, each man drawing closer to his fellow. Then the dwarf's voice softened, grew tender and persuasive.

"Sit and I will talk to you a little," said he.

Instantly they squatted themselves upon their haunches, knees up nearly to their chins, attentive, obedient, utterly ridiculous figures, stiff as wooden images. Their eyes, full of awe, followed the dwarf as he moved slowly to and fro from one tip of the crescent to the other, fixing each Indian in turn with his magnetising stare.

"Listen, my children," he began at length, "and I will tell you all, that I may not seem to do you any injustice. My great, white father, who was gathered to his fathers three winters back, and who was ever your kind friend, left behind him in his own country a sister who was married to an Englishman. That sister had a son, a boy in those days. He grew to manhood, and became a great warrior among the English, our enemies. But—he is Reine's cousin! My children, the stranger whom you pursue is that

Englishman, my white father's sister's son, Reine's cousin!"

He paused, dramatically. The savages grunted comprehension. I turned to the girl, full of wonder at such readiness. Her eyes were shining, her lips parted. The tale did not displease her.

Presently the dwarf resumed his harangue, gravely gesticulating.

"The stranger, no stranger, but our close kin" (I saw Reine smile at this stupendous claim) "was on his way to find us when the storm overwhelmed his ship. He escaped. You followed, thirsting for his innocent blood." (Here the voice again awoke the echoes over the water.) "Had you slain him—" he stopped, and in his silence there was a menace at which his red listeners shuddered. Even I felt the threat. Then his voice grew gentle again. "But you did not know, my children, and I forgive you. The Englishman will rest here with us till the moon of the morning hoarfrosts." (I looked at my beautiful companion, and her eyes said yes to the surprising statement.) "Then, for a time, he will take us to Reine's people and his people." (I thrilled wildly at this. "I have a mother

who would love you. May I?" I whispered; and got no direct denial.) "Then, my children, he will marry Reine, and we will come back to Belle Mare and to you, and be good to you in the hard winters when the salmon and the bear's meat run low. The saints guard you! Farewell!" and waving them off he turned in squat majesty back to the house.

As one in a dream I saw the savages rise and file away like shadows. But that was irrelevant. My head was humming, my heart thumping, at that last wildly sweet picture. I turned to Reine, but she was no longer at my side. She stood at the door, a suggestion of ice in the calm of her fine profile.

"Mademoiselle Lys," I began in a low voice, "do not crush me for my presumption, but I swear to you before God that if this strange fellow prove not a true prophet then life is of no more worth to me!"

She did not turn her head, but she answered coldly.

"His presumption trespasses beyond all pardon, monsieur. He shall be punished! But I beg you to think no more of his folly!"

"I shall never cease to think of it, mademoiselle—Reine!" I murmured.

"Then I forbid you to speak of it, monsieur!" she retorted, severely.

The dwarf, meanwhile, had come in, thrown himself down upon the floor, and was looking up at us with fidelity in his yellow eyes and a dog-like grin on his astounding mouth. Reine paid no heed to him. She was angry, and her small brown fingers were knotted hard in the yellow shawl.

"If you are angry at me, mademoiselle," I said, "there is nothing for me to do but make my farewells at once, and go!"

She turned quickly, and the anger died out of her face, to leave only a mirthful spark behind it.

"Yes, monsieur, go and betray Bebe's wicked lying to the savages, and get us all killed!" she exclaimed. "Oh, no, you are not to blame, poor gentleman! You could not in courtesy say less than you have said, to save my blushes. Believe me, I remember it not, save as showing you can be most courteous to a maid when her servant has shamed her. But I desire you to prove him a true prophet in this, monsieur—that you will

rest here with us at Belle Mare till the moon of the morning hoarfrosts."

I bowed gravely.

"I will accept your gracious hospitality, Mademoiselle Lys," said I, "for as long as my duties will permit—and long enough, I trust, to persuade you to let me carry farther the question of Bebe's gift in prophecy!"

Her chin went up in the air.

"You will make me repent of my courtesy to you, monsieur!" she said.

"Pardon me, pardon me, mademoiselle! I will set guard upon my lips!" I murmured.

But the dwarf, seeing that his adored mistress had turned her back upon us both, rolled upon me a yellow glance of droll encouragement.

"Lad," said I, holding out my hand to him, "right well have you repaid to me that little debt not yet an hour old. I thank you for my life—and hope!" I added under my breath.

By the Thickness of a Door

"THOUGH you are only an Englishman," said Claire, contemplatively teasing the black-and-white cat with the toe of her little beaded moccasin,—"though you *are* only an Englishman, and *such* a stupid one, I do think you are worth more than five *livres Tournois;* which is just what the Black Abbé's Micmacs will get for your scalp at Quebec if you do not go away at once."

The black-and-white cat, much gratified, got up and curled himself, purring ecstatically, about her slim ankles. And I, thinking not at all of the Black Abbé and his red rabble, but wholly intent upon the whiteness of her drooped eyelids, the wonder of her brow and cheek and chin, the bronzy dark luxuriance of her hair, the grace of her light form in its frock of creamy woollen, and the exceeding daintiness of the yellow beaded moccasins, could but stammer a lame protest against this dismissal.

"But, mademoiselle," I pleaded, "I have only just arrived, and there is so much,—so many things I want to say,—and Heaven has so far beyond my fondest expectation favoured me by this opportunity, and——"

"But, monsieur," she interrupted, with the faintest delicate mockery of my pleading inflection, "it is your absence just now that I especially covet."

"You are expecting some one!" I cried, a certain heat in my voice.

"Yes, monsieur," she answered, her eyes still intent upon the ecstatic cat; "I am momentarily expecting a visitor."

"More welcome than I, plainly, mademoiselle," said I, my heart sinking. "But I have come far, in the hope of a word with you; and I cannot quietly yield up this dear occasion to another man. Who is it that thrusts me from you?" I demanded with quick wrath. There was the faintest suggestion of a smile at the corners of her lips.

"I don't remember to have given you any right to ask such questions!" she said thoughtfully rather than unkindly.

"Of course not, mademoiselle," I protested, aghast at my own presumption. "But,—surely you were more gracious to me when I was here last autumn. You did not send me away so abruptly."

The broad white eyelids remained cast down; the sweet mouth grew grave; neglecting the cat for a moment, she said:

"Indeed, I am not now ungracious to you, monsieur. The visitor I am expecting is Father La Garne, the Black Abbé himself. And he comes to see, not me, I assure you, but an English officer whom he expects to capture here this morning. He does not guess that I am warned and look for his coming."

"Then," I cried joyously, "there is a little time for me before he comes. I promise you I will make my adieus in——"

But at this she grew suddenly excited. She sprang up (greatly offending the cat), laid both appealing little hands upon my scarlet coat-sleeve, and lifted at last to my face her wonderful eyes. Such eyes,—for a year now I had been carrying their deep light in my heart of hearts! They were of the darkest brown,—not hazel, and not

velvety, but with lurking lights of amber-green and ethereally crystalline, like the water of a deep woodland pool. Now they seemed to blacken with unmistakable fear.

"Oh," she implored, "go! Go at once, if you have *any* care for me! Go, for my sake!" And she pushed me toward the door. "Go through the house! I have let you stay too long! I *feel* them coming! Go out through the sheds, and down through the spruce woods,—quick, quick!"

But as I yielded to her terror,—a terror which thrilled me with joy, being a terror for me,—she checked herself, her face whitened to the lips, her hands dropped to her sides.

"It is too late!" she said faintly, her glance going past my shoulder and out across the fields. "There they go, five of them, into the spruce woods!"

I followed her glance with, I confess, some uneasiness, and a vast remorse for having brought this trouble upon her by my obstinacy. She turned and looked through the screen of hop vines which shaded the spacious porch.

"And here comes the Black Abbé," she whis-

pered, her hand going up to her breast as she leaned hopelessly against the pillar.

I laid my hand on my sword, much perplexed at the snarl I had got myself into. But in a moment Claire recovered her wits.

"Right here! Right behind this door!" she exclaimed. "And I will tie it back with this old string as if it had been tied back for ages! It 's the only place they won't look!"

The outer door of the hall opened back against one wing of the house, leaving a space scant enough into which I slipped. A moment more and her nimble fingers had the door tied carelessly to the wall, leaving an inch-wide crack through which I could peer forth upon the shaded porch and the sunlit world of Acadia beyond. I saw Claire reseat herself with the composure of coolest indolence in her Indian wicker-chair and conciliate the black-and-white cat back to her lap.

I saw the Black Abbé, a tall, sinister form in his shabby soutane, striding up the yellow-brown road between the basking, buttercup-golden meadows. He came slowly, with a secure deliberation which seemed to say: "He is in the

trap! He cannot wriggle out at any corner! There is no need to hurry!"

This look of confidence on the grim priest's face was the thing that first brought home to me the gravity of my peril. For the first time I felt that here, on this fair morning of the green Acadian summer, under the roof and before the very eyes of the woman I loved, I was in truth only too likely to lose my life ingloriously to a priest and a pack of savages.

Shame, more than fear, I think, burned within me as I stood moveless in my precarious hiding-place. I had a fierce impulse to step out, with bare sword, and end the thing swiftly, with at least the satisfaction of feeling ere I fell that I had rid the Acadian land of its greatest curse. To kill the Black Abbé would be a public service indeed. Yet,—I could not stain my sword on an unarmed priest. Further, I feared to involve Claire. I felt that she had taken the threads of fate into her own white fingers, and that it was no business of mine to snarl the pattern she had set herself to weave.

All this I thought rapidly. At the same time the shining, tender-coloured world which I saw

so vividly through the crack between door and wall cut itself deep into my memory, as things seen in a crisis are wont to do.

Beyond the hop vines, down the southerly sloping meadows, past the roadside fence with its scattered thorn bushes, I saw the red and brimming current of the St. Croix, now at full tide, moving placidly to meet the parent waters of the rosy-breasted Piziquid. How warmly red they were, those tidal streams of Acadia, their lines so sharply drawn against the high green of the fields!

Past the tide, low hills, ever more and more green; then, behind these, the higher slopes of Piziquid village, with some clustering roofs, some poplars, and the spire of the village church. Over these, the sky, purely blue, lonely, yet familiar. It was ridiculous to think that this throat of mine was in deadly jeopardy; that my life now hung upon the wit and resource of a girl.

"She can do it, if ever there was a woman who could," said I to myself as I watched the beautiful, firm, composed face, lighting now with a smile of courteous welcome as La Garne's heavy step creaked autocratically on the platform.

"Good-morning, Father La Garne!" she said

civilly, rising to greet him. "My father has gone over to Piziquid, but I look for his return within the hour. Pray be seated."

"I have not come to see your good father, my child," replied a peculiarly rasping voice, not unkindly, but with a too scant ceremony, which made me itch to teach him manners. The next moment the owner of the harsh voice came clearly into my line of view as he stepped over beside the chair wherein Claire had been sitting. He peered out between the hop vines.

With interest and repulsion I noted the strong, fanatic, bitter lines of his face, the long and deep jaw, the piercing light eyes, pinched narrowly into the root of the nose, the high-peaked, narrow skull, whose tonsure seemed to me (he had removed his hat) the mark of its struggle to climb clear of the prickly irritation of its stiff hair.

"There would be time for him to seek a secure hiding-place," said he, thoughtfully. "Tell me, my daughter, has he retired to the cellar or to the attic?"

The deepening insolence of his tone maddened me.

"What do you mean, Father La Garne?"

asked Claire, very coldly, seating herself on a bench that stood where it would best obstruct any chance disturbance of my hiding-place.

The Black Abbé turned and gave her a long, penetrating look, full of irony.

"I chance to know, my child," said he, with dangerous smoothness, his voice softening to a marvel, "that Captain Marsh is in this house. I want him."

"You have been misinformed," answered Claire, curtly positive.

"My own eyes informed me of his coming, my daughter," continued the priest in tones now soft as silk. "And I have taken sufficient precaution that he should not go away."

"As I have already said, you are mistaken, Father La Garne," repeated mademoiselle, rising, and with a plain intimation in her attitude that her visitor might consider himself dismissed.

The visitor ignored both her attitude and her denial. He turned upon her, towering in dark authority. "Tell me where he is hiding!" he commanded, no longer smooth of speech or accent.

But upon Mademoiselle de la Mare his air of command was wasted.

"You forget, monsieur," she retorted scornfully, "that you are not talking to one of your flock or to a girl of the villages!"

The priest's eyes contracted angrily. Hitherto he had seemed to take a dramatic interest in the matter, varying his tones, acting and speaking for the effect, and pleasing himself with the game. Now he was himself.

"I have no time to waste in parley with a chit of a girl!" he snapped. "My men will find him!" And, at a guttural word which I knew not, there came to my ear the light padding of moccasined feet upon the porch. Claire sprang into the doorway.

"I forbid you or your followers to enter my father's house in his absence!" she exclaimed with firmness, but with a certain tremor in her voice as if she had a fear which she could not quite control.

"Stand aside, girl!" he ordered curtly.

"You shall answer to my father for this, monsieur!" she cried. I noted and began to understand the cunning assumption of terror behind the brave words. "Excellent! Oh, wise and ready wit!" I murmured to myself.

"Oh, you can safely leave Monsieur de la Mare to me!" retorted the Abbé, with an unpleasant laugh.

"I have told you, monsieur, that there is no one there! *There is no one there!*" she repeated, and her voice was now pleading almost to tears.

"Girls have lied before this to shield their lovers!" was the brutal answer. "Come, stand aside, lest you be made to!"

"How dare you!" she gasped, and slipped again into the chair where I could see her. Her face was averted from my hiding-place, but I could see one little ear and the sweet rondure of her neck. They were crimson with shame. I had much ado to hold myself in check at this sign of distress.

In went the padding feet, and for an instant longer I heard them on the wide hall floor. But the priest failed to do as she had expected. He remained beside her on the porch.

"I will wait here and explain to your father when he comes."

"If you set those animals to desecrate our house," cried Claire, her teeth shutting viciously between every other word, "you would at least,

"The Black Abbé turned and gave her a long, penetrating look, full of irony."—(*Page 164.*)

if you had ever been a gentleman, go with them and see what they do!"

I saw her nervously jerking her handkerchief to and fro between her slim fingers. She was baffled and trembling.

"Don't be alarmed for your gewgaws!" sneered La Garne, still too angry to amuse himself by affecting good-humour. "It is only your lover they are after."

At this gratuitous insolence she did not seem even angry, at which I was profoundly astonished.

I had been on the point of stepping forth to whip the cur with my scabbard, but perceiving that she was no more moved than to smile coolly upon him, tapping her little moccasins on the hop-vine trellis, I thought better of it. If she did not feel herself insulted it were mere presumption on my part to interfere. Was *I* to teach her she had received an insult? I quenched my wrath in wonder, wherein there lurked a sweet delight.

It was not till long afterward—so dull was I—that I understood the matter. She had feared that I might break out, avenge the rudeness, and ruin all. Therefore she had put the curb on her galled pride and seemed to take no offence.

"You reassure me most marvellously, monsieur!" she murmured, and turned upon him a glance of mirth so genuine and so inexplicable that he glared at her with unaffected wonder from beneath his shapeless narrow brows. He did not like to be puzzled. This girl, with her unaccountable variations of temper, puzzled him.

I saw him redden a bricky colour in the wrinkles of his rough-hewn jaw. But he spoke not a word. He simply eyed her, seeking to disconcert her; and she,—she grew but the more gayly at ease under the glance which, as I had heard, was wont to make all Acadia tremble.

Presently he shifted this unprofitable exercise of his eyes and grew intent upon the doorway whence he expected his savages to drag me with no more delay. I saw Claire give a quick glance out through the hop leaves and turn her face at once back toward her antagonist. What she had seen plainly gave her satisfaction. I looked also.

Up from the red St. Croix, striding hastily through the buttercup meadows, came the tall form of Denys de la Mare. He came with an anxious air upon his face, as of one who sees

something amiss. Perhaps he had marked the savages lurking about.

Just now came the running of furtive feet from within, and La Garne broke out with angry interrogatories in Micmac, from which I gathered, not without reason, that the savages had failed to find me. There were low replies, strange mixture of the harsh and musical, as that language is, and the priest turned sharply to mademoiselle.

"There is one chamber locked," said he. "Give me the key!"

"Pardon me, Father La Garne," she answered very sweetly, but with a sort of exultation in her voice, "but you surely cannot ask a young girl to throw open her private chamber to this rabble. That is my own room. I took occasion to lock it some hours ago for reasons quite personal."

Having, as he imagined, his quarry now marked down where there could be no mistake, La Garne recovered his composure and lost some haste.

"I doubt not, my daughter, that your reason is quite personal,"—he spoke in an indulgent tone,—"and looks well in a red coat. But, indeed, it was not some hours ago that you locked him in, since it was not one hour back that he

passed up this way from the village. It was little courteous of him to seek such a place for hiding and subject a maiden's refuge to such disclosure. But the King's service respects not ladies' chambers. Give me the key, child, or I must force the door! The game is up!"

The words were scarce out of his mouth when, with a little cry, Claire sprang forward and clutched her father's arms.

"Father!" she panted, "this base priest insults me! He says I have a man locked up in my room!" And she sobbed a little. The strain had been long and terrible, and now she shifted it to her father's shoulders.

There was silence for a second, and very greatly I desired to see the face of Denys de la Mare, which was not within the scant range of my view. His voice when he spoke was stern enough.

"I beg you to explain yourself, Father La Garne!" was all he said. But I gathered that, however intimate had been these two, they were like to be divided now.

"It is soon told, my friend!" responded the Black Abbé, coolly. "Less than an hour back there came to this house, presumably to see your

daughter in your absence, an English officer from Halifax, one Captain Marsh." (The priest, being a fanatic, with no great knowledge of human nature and no understanding of the comradeship betwixt this father and daughter, thought to set the one against the other by his suggestion.) "My followers saw him enter the house. It has been closely surrounded ever since. There is no escape. He is within, as surely as if I now saw him there with these eyes,—which have seen the undoing of many another English dog. The outbuildings have been searched, the house has been searched, attic to cellar. In vain! One room has not been searched,—your daughter's chamber. The door is locked. She refuses me the key. I call upon you, Denys de la Mare, in the name of France and of the Church, bid the girl give up the key,—deliver up the shaking wretch she hides!"

"I have given him my word of honour, father," interrupted Claire, "that there is no man in the house. I give it now to you. Will you shame me before this low fellow, who disgraces his gown and tonsure?"

"Surely your word is enough for me, chérie,"

answered De la Mare. "If you say it, there is no man there. That 's all. But as for you, Father La Garne, you have presumed grossly in sending your red scum through my house without my authority. It served nothing but your own vainglorious pride. The King's service could safely have awaited my return from the village, if, as you say, you had your prey fairly trapped."

"Pish!" said the priest. "What I want of you now, Denys de la Mare, is that door opened. We can argue the point of ceremony afterward."

There was a weighty pause. I felt for the high-spirited Frenchman, forced to hold himself in check lest he bring peril on his child. In a second or two he answered, but not to the priest.

"Dear heart!" said he, tenderly, "this fellow must have his way. You can not rest under his insinuation. His lie must be thrust back into his throat. Go then with him alone, open the door, open every box and cupboard, shake out for him your cloaks and kirtles. After all, he is a priest,—of a kind. But if one of his redskins goes with you I 'll run that one through with my sword!"

La Garne laughed, but seemed satisfied. To get his way was enough for him.

"Go on, mistress. I follow you!" said he. And I saw that at least he lacked not courage.

For some minutes there was silence save for De la Mare's impatient drumming on the porch post and a faint scuffling of moccasins in the hall, where, as I inferred, the savages awaited a signal from their leader. Then the redskins came out, descended the steps, and gathered in a stolid, painted group over against a bed of blossoming phlox, where I could well see them and learn to pray for deliverance from so murderous a crew.

Close after them, and heeding them just so much as if they had been a puff of dust blown before her, came Claire, seating herself once more in her wicker-chair by the vines. And the black-and-white cat followed her, arching his back and stepping delicately.

The picture gave me a strange sense of security, there—while my life clung on the thinnest edge of hazard, the veil between this world and the next reduced to the thickness of a painted door.

La Garne came lingeringly, and I cursed him with unreasonable vexation because he came not where I could see his disappointed face.

"It is unbelievable!" he muttered. "The room is empty. Were it in France, now, I 'd swear there was a secret cupboard wherein she 'd bestowed him. But what need of such contrivances in Acadia? It looks as if he had escaped us, and by your face you 're glad of it, Denys de la Mare!" He flashed out in sudden fury, "I 'll search yet once more!"

I heard De la Mare spring into his doorway.

"By God!" he cried, "you cross not this threshold again! You 've had your way. Your insolence has gone unpunished. Now go you!"

"I go when I please, — and come when I please!" retorted the priest, and in the colossal egotism of his tones there was yet a something which said he was not going to force a final quarrel, at least on the moment. "I will not search again,—not because you forbid me, but because I see it is idle. But I tell you, Denys de la Mare, did I still think this chit here had the dog concealed within, I 'd burn your house about your ears rather than he should escape! You,

and such as you, need a lesson, if Acadia would be kept true to King and Church."

De la Mare took a stride forward, and on the edge of the steps the Black Abbé turned and faced him.

"It is you who need a lesson," cried the Acadian gentleman, his voice trembling. "My hand itches sorely to lay this scabbard about your ears!"

"Yonder are ten reasons why you should not," retorted the priest, with a scorching calm. "And there are a score more reasons like it in the woods yonder."

My heart was hot within me for this high-spirited Frenchman, compelled to curb his righteous indignation. Had it not been for Claire, I truly believe he would have kicked the tonsured bully down the steps and taken any consequences with good-will. But he mightily held himself in hand.

"It is a proper way to serve your cause, surely," he said with accusing bitterness and a certain sorrow in his voice, "to drive into the arms of England the few honest gentlemen of Acadia whose hearts yet hold true to King Louis.

To the English, forsooth, we are compelled to turn for protection from a mad priest and a pack of redskins who pretend to serve France. You, François La Garne, well called the Black Abbé, are the curse of this land!"

"Fool!" retorted La Garne, with easy contempt, "*you* to prate to me of taking refuge with the English. What have I to do but send the Governor a hint, through my tools in Halifax, of the part you played so zealously three years ago at——"

But at this moment I foresaw complications. My mind for once worked on the instant.

"Hold!" I shouted, snapping the string and swinging the door with a mighty slam as I strode forth. "I 'll hear no secrets!"

My sword was naked in my right hand. I had had it ready this long time, you may be sure. With my left I drew a pistol from my belt, and knowing that now the fat was all in the fire, I discharged it point-blank at La Garne.

That miscreant leaped, however, at the lifting of my arm, else had he sorely defrauded an honest gallows; and my shot fetched down a vermilion-faced savage who was happily in range.

As my black-frocked enemy jumped, De la Mare was at my side on the instant, his sword drawn.

"Within! get within!" he shouted to Claire; but she, picking up my empty pistol, coolly proceeded to reload it.

The savages were brave enough, but somewhat taken aback by my appearance and the death of their fellow. Ever sparing of their own skins, and seeing us two well armed and desperate, they nimbly withdrew out of pistol-shot to take counsel.

"They give us time, monsieur," muttered De la Mare, his long, dark face working with the fever of the fight. "The guns! The guns, Claire! They 're both loaded!"

But as she sprang to obey I stayed her with my left hand. I had looked down toward the red St. Croix. I had seen something.

"No need!" said I, striving to keep the exultation from my voice. "Look!" and I strode out upon the steps where my scarlet coat shone in the sun, and waved my sword above my head and shouted at the top of my lungs:

"England! This way! This way! *Double!*"

Up from the waterside came a squad of English infantry on the run.

La Garne saw, and, gathering up his soutane, ran too, with more speed than priestly decorum.

He knew there was a rope at Halifax itching hotly for his neck. His followers seemed to drop into the grass, so instantly they vanished, stooping and gliding like snakes.

I turned to my astonished hosts. Claire had reseated herself in the wicker-chair,—but the black-and-white cat, offended by the clap of my pistol, had gone. De la Mare stood beside me, leaning on his naked sword, interrogation in his grave eyes,—and a vague apprehension which I speedily set at rest.

I held out my hand to him.

"Thank you with all my heart, monsieur," said I, with fervour, "for your most loyal backing!"

"I was committed! But I have more to thank you for, Captain Marsh!"

I waved this aside.

"This is my command coming," said I. "It was nigh coming too late. One of my reasons

for calling this morning, monsieur, was to ask your advice as to where they had best be quartered in Piziquid. Under the circumstances——"

"Under the circumstances, I beg that they be quartered here and on my tenants," he interrupted eagerly, "unless there be any other in the country who needs your protection more. And what was your other reason, monsieur?"

I hesitated. Should I? Could I dare at that lucky moment? I looked at Claire. Her great eyes met mine with an instant's flaming glance of imperious prohibition. I dared not.

"Not—not just now!" I stammered, suddenly disheartened. "By and by, when we have better occasion, I will beg you to listen to me."

"At your pleasure, monsieur," he answered, with a courtesy which I could not but note had warmth in it.

I ventured to look again at Claire, but could not catch her eye. She had thrust forward one little foot and was very intently studying the beadwork on her moccasin. I took courage at seeing a flush slowly steal over her wonderful face.

Then I turned, my heart swelling with sudden triumph, and my squad halted before the steps. Very pleasantly their bayonets rattled as they came to attention.

How Viardeau Obeyed the Black Abbé

THE time was night, on the 23d of December, 1754. The place was a spruce forest in old Acadie, or—as its new masters, the English, had rechristened it—Nova Scotia.

The encampment was in the deep snow of the Acadian winter. Nowhere else did the straight trunks of the ancient spruce and fir trees shoot up so gigantically as here. In the fitful red illumination of the camp-fire they cast goblin shadows upon the band of Micmacs, painted savages squatting on their haunches about the blaze. Standing very erect, near the fire, was the spare figure of La Garne, "The Black Abbé," bane of the English, terror of the Acadians, shame of the Church, but idol of his savage flock, the Micmacs of the Shubenacadie.

The ruddy light, falling upon his face as he

gazed into the fire, intensified the harsh and bitter lines of the wide, thin mouth and indomitable jaw; made more grotesque than fate had planned it the long, bulb-tipped nose; deepened with abrupt shadows the frown of his high, narrow forehead; and lit a cruel red spark in the gleam of his close-set eyes. Over his coarse, furred leggings and stout coat of Acadian homespun, he wore the black soutane of that priestly office which he dishonoured.

A few steps back of the half-circle of squatting and grunting savages stood Jean Viardeau, leaning against a tree, both mittened hands clasped over the muzzle of his musket. A short but athletic figure, very broad in the shoulders, with stiff black curls crowding irrepressibly from under the edge of his blue woollen toque, he would have been handsome but for the settled cloud of anger on his face. He was a man with a grudge. Vengeance upon the English was his one thought; and when vengeance delayed, resentment deepened. There had been, he thought, too much delay in this camp among the fir woods.

There was no wind. The flame and smoke

went straight up, toward that far, black hole in the forest roof through which two great stars sparkled icily. A few feet from the main fire was a heap of glowing coals, raked forth for convenience in the cooking; and from the unctuous splutter of the broiling bear's meat came a savour of richness somewhat rank.

Suddenly the dark form by the fire turned, and strode over to the young Acadian's side. Viardeau looked up, and a flash of expectancy lightened the gloom of his square-jawed face.

"Work for me to do?" he asked eagerly.

"Work for you!" answered the priest, shutting his thin lips, and pausing to eye the young man with an atomising scrutiny before unfolding his purpose.

"I know, my son," he went on in a moment or two, "both your love for France and your righteous hatred of the English. We—I, and you, and a few—alas, too few!—faithful and resolute like ourselves—are the instruments of vengeance on the enemies of our country. You, unlike myself, have a personal grudge against them, I believe!"

The young man's eyes flashed, and he opened his mouth to speak; but La Garne continued:

"I think they robbed you of your little patrimony. I think, too, your father fell by an English sword, by the banks of the Tantramar. But that was years ago, when you were too young to remember!"

"I remember it as if it had been yesterday! I remember my mother's tears!" exclaimed Viardeau, fiercely.

"It was long ago," went on the Black Abbé, "and it was in fair fight! But of late, I think, the English have been kind to you. Is it not so? This cannot but ease your bitterness against them in some measure!"

But none knew better than La Garne the freshness of Jean Viardeau's injuries, his new rage born as it were yesterday.

"Curse them!" he muttered between his clenched teeth. "They have robbed me of my last hope, the stay of my mother's age. My hand is against their name and race, while I have strength to lift it up!"

"Why, my son, what is this new injury? As if you had not suffered enough from the usurpers' violence!" said La Garne, softly, with a sympathetic wonder in his voice.

"Did you not hear of it, Father?" exclaimed Viardeau, husky with the vehemence of his hate. "They seized my schooner, the *Belle Marie*, with all her cargo of barley, flax, and fish, bound for Louisbourg; confiscated them; sold them in Halifax. And there was a fortune for me in that cargo, had I got it safe to Louisbourg. We escaped with but the stuff on our backs,—Louis, Tamin, and I!"

"Then where are Louis and Tamin?" asked the Black Abbé.

"Oh," cried Jean, with angry scorn, "back at Grand Pré,—smoking, smoking, talking, talking, and watching the pot on the fire. They are tame. They are not men. But I—I will strike back!"

"You shall strike at once, and strike hard, my son!" said the Black Abbé.

"How?—When?"

"To-night, when you have eaten," continued La Garne, "you shall take one of my faithful followers here, and meat enough in your pack for three days' journey, and set out for the Nappan. You know the little marsh where the Des Rochers brook flows in. On the upland bordering the

marsh on the south an English settler has built his cabin. He has cleared fields. He has dyked in part of the marsh. He is prospering. Soon other English will come and do likewise, setting a greedy grasp upon the lands of our people. They must be discouraged. Terror must seize the souls of any that would follow them. You must get there to-morrow night, Jean. Not one of them must see the next daybreak. The cabin must be smoke and ashes under the next sun. The lesson must be one to be read far off. If these robbers will not spare our lands for justice, they shall for fear."

"Will we two be enough for the fight, Father?" asked Viardeau.

"There will be no fight, my son," answered La Garne, coolly. "There is but one Englishman; and he will be asleep. It is simple. And I have work elsewhere for the rest of these!"

"I should like a fair fight!" muttered the young man, doubtfully. "I would see his eyes. I would strike him down, and he should know my vengeance. I like not stabbing in the dark!"

"So,—it is not only Tamin and Louis," said

La Garne, with a slow sneer, "who can 'talk, talk,' and 'sit by the fire,' and fear to strike. It is enough, Jean Viardeau; you Acadians are not men. I have my savages. I will send Sacobi and Big Paul. They are men! They——"

"You speak in haste, Father La Garne!" broke in Viardeau hotly. "I will not be talked to so. And I will go. I meant to go from the first, if you had no fighting for me to do. I could do you better service in fighting; and your redskins could perhaps do better at stabbing in the dark. But I go. Give me Sacobi. He 's got more brains than the rest, and talks French."

Taking no notice whatever of the young man's anger, the Black Abbé coolly summoned Sacobi from his place beside the broiling bear's meat, and proceeded to give orders for the conduct of the enterprise. Half an hour later Viardeau and his redskin companion, slipping their moccasined toes under the moose-hide thongs of their snow-shoes, turned their backs on the camp-fire and the smells of the broiled bear's meat, and struck off into the moon-mottled shadows and clean balsamy savours of the forest.

Sacobi was a lean, active savage, a head taller than the Acadian, but of slimmer build. Shrewd, quick-witted, less reticently monosyllabic than his fellows, and at ease in the French tongue, Viardeau regarded him as the one Indian fit to hold speech with. There was little speech between them, however, on that night march. There was occupation enough for thought and sense in picking their path through the misleading shadows. When they had marched perhaps three hours, and the moon had sunk so low as to be no longer of use to them, they halted, dug a roomy hole in the snow with their snow-shoes, built a fire in the centre of the cleared space, and bivouacked for the night.

Viardeau was restless, and little in love with his undertaking. Hence it came that he slept ill. He was not one to set his hand to the plough and look back, however ugly might seem to him the furrow he was doomed to turn. But he wanted the business done quickly. Before dawn he had aroused his indifferent comrade, and with the first flood of rose-pink staining the eastern faces of the fir trees, the two were again under way. The snow was firmly packed, the snow-shoeing

easy; and Viardeau's bitter impatience brought them out too soon upon the edge of the marsh by the Nappan water.

It was a little after sunset, and the winter night was beginning to close in. The channel of the Nappan, at half-tide and choked with muddy ice-cakes, groaned in shadow. But the open clearing beside them, with its blackened stumps up thrust through mounds and curling drifts of snow, caught the last of the daylight. Across this dying pallor came a cheery yellow radiance from the windows of the settler's cabin, set close for shelter under the forest-edge at the north side of the clearing. Flanked by its wide-eaved log-barn and lean-to shed, it made a homely picture in the wilderness; and Viardeau's scowl deepened.

"Three—four hours, may be," said the Indian, "before they sleep yonder!"

"Why not tackle him now, and give him a chance in fair fight?" growled the Acadian, fingering his musket impatiently.

"No fair fight now!" retorted Sacobi. "Him inside. See us plain. We no see him! All on one side!"

Viardeau could not but acknowledge the force of this; and he knew the nice markmanship of the English settlers.

"Bien, Sacobi," he assented reluctantly. "I guess that 's so. And there are only the two of us, so we can't throw ourselves away. But I tell you there 's got to be a fair fight. When we get the blaze going we 'll wake him up and let him come out to take his chance. No knifing in the dark for me!"

The Indian looked faintly surprised at this sentiment; but being a brave man, assented willingly enough. As long as the command of the Black Abbé was carried out, he was content that Viardeau, whom he admired, should be suited in the manner of it.

Cautiously Viardeau led the way around the skirts of the clearing, and into the dense growth of mixed young and old timber which almost touched the roofs upon the north. From this post of vantage they could survey the situation and lay their deadly plans. They commanded a view of the front of the cabin, and of a beaten trail running down the gentle slope from the doorway to a narrow opening in the opposite woods.

A very bright light shone down the trail from the cabin windows.

"That must be the trail to Des Rochers village," whispered Viardeau.

The savage grunted assent; and then muttered:

"Why make so great light?"

"It is the eve of Noël, you know!" answered the Acadian with some surprise. "*Christmas Eve* the English call it; and it is a great festival with them, even more than with us!"

"See candles, many candles, in window!" went on the savage, still puzzled.

"Ah, somebody is expected!" replied Viardeau, at once growing more interested. "Somebody more to fight. A good fight, maybe, after all! Eh, my Sacobi?"

"Good fight, no fight,—all same to me, so long as job done and Black Father satisfied," said the Indian with a large indifference.

Just then the door opened, and a woman stood in the doorway, peering anxiously down the trail. Framed with light as she was, and her face therefore enshadowed, her features could in no way be distinguished. But the form was that of a slender girl.

At this sight Viardeau growled an impatient curse. His companion understood it.

"No prisoners!" he grunted. "No time for prisoners! *That 's* less trouble!"

And he made a significant gesture at his scalp-lock.

Viardeau started.

"No!" said he, in a tone of icy conclusiveness, "none of that, my friend! There will be a prisoner. I will have no murder of women or children!"

The savage looked at him askance. There were unknown quantities in this Acadian which his less complex brain had not yet estimated. But he was an astute savage, and saw nothing to be profited by argument. It was clear, however, to him that Viardeau was angry at finding there was a woman to be reckoned with. Presently he saw Viardeau smile. How could his wrath vanish so rapidly? Sacobi could not grasp the quick workings of his companion's mind. It had occurred to Viardeau that to save the woman's life would in some degree compensate for the treachery of the business to which La Garne and his own vindictiveness had committed him.

While he was revolving this thought, and deriving much satisfaction therefrom, he was fairly startled by a sound from across the clearing. A piercing and piteous scream, a child's scream of mortal terror and despair, thrilled through the evening quietude. Jean Viardeau instinctively sprang forward, clutching his musket.

At the foot of the slope, where the Des Rochers trail emerged from the woods, came into view the small figure of a child, running for life.

In a second it came into the line of light. It was a little boy. His sturdy legs were all too short for the speed required of them. In one mittened fist he frantically clutched the handle of a small wooden bucket. His light curls streamed out behind his shoulders, from under his woollen cap. And now Viardeau saw his little round face, the eyes wide with awful fear and hopeless appeal, fixed upon the lighted windows of home.

At the sight of that childish agony, Jean Viardeau's heart came uncomfortably into his throat. He had never been at ease when he saw a child suffer.

"What can have scared the tot?" he mused to himself.

But even as he asked it, he was answered.

Out from the darkness of the trail came a wolf, galloping low, muzzle down, tongue lolling from the fangs. And after him two more, close upon the leader's gaunt flanks.

Viardeau dared not fire. The child was in a line between his musket and the wolves. But he did not pause to weigh the consistency of his action. His throat aching with pity, he dashed down the slope, shouting to the child that he would save him.

Upon the hope of help the little fellow's strength all at once gave way. His knees failed him, and he fell headlong, face in the snow; and Viardeau groaned.

But at that great shout the wolves had paused, wavered an instant. It was but an instant, and they sprang again to the attack, seeing a single foe before them. But that instant was enough. Viardeau was already between them and their quarry.

Before they could leap upon him he fired, and one sank kicking on the snow. The fangs of the next were fairly at his throat, ere his long knife, driven upward with a tremendous short-arm

stroke, went through the mad beast's gullet and reached the brain. But the heavy onrush at the same moment all but overbalanced him; and in the wrench to keep his feet he swung violently aside, still clinging to the knife-hilt where it stuck fast in his adversary's neck.

That swing probably saved Viardeau; for the leap of the third wolf fell short. Its jaws clashed like a trap, but merely ploughed a furrow in the flesh of his shoulder, and gained no damaging grip. In the same second the brute caught sight of the long form of Sacobi, loping down to the rescue; and wheeling with a fierce snarl, it fled for the woods. Before it had gone ten paces the Indian's musket crashed, and the lean grey body, stretching on the gallop, suddenly doubled up into a shuddering heap of fur.

"Well done, my brother!" panted Viardeau, shaking himself like a dog just from the water. Then he ran to pick up the boy, who still lay face downward, shaking and sobbing.

"There, there! Don't be scared, sonny, they 're all killed!" he said gently in English, lifting the poor little figure. But at the sound of the kind voice the sobs broke into violent crying,

The child clung convulsively to his neck, and hid his face in the comforting homespun bosom.

"There, there, I 'll take you home," he went on soothingly, all forgetful of his grim errand.

"Oh, thank God you were in time! God bless you! God will bless you,—sir!" exclaimed a choking voice at his elbow.

He turned, somewhat embarrassed by the clinging arms, and saw the young girl who had stood in the doorway. She was trembling so that she could scarcely stand up; and her face was ashen white. The light from the door, which stood wide open, shone full upon her; and for all her pallor Viardeau's first thought was that never before had he seen such a face. Smooth, heavy masses of fair hair, ruddy in the candlelight, were drawn low to either side of a very broad, low forehead, and half covered the small ears. The eyes, astonishingly large, and now wide with agitation, were set far apart, and seemed to Viardeau like pools of liquid darkness. The short upper lip and short, upturned chin made Viardeau think, even in that moment, of an old Venetian coin which he had taken in the way of

trade one day at Louisburg, and for its beauty had kept by him ever since.

Jean Viardeau was more disturbed than he had been by the wolves.

"It was nothing, miss — they were only wolves!" he stammered. "Shall I carry the little fellow up to the house for you?" And he started up the lighted slope with his burden.

At the same time, however, he kept a sidelong gaze upon the girl who walked at his side.

"Oh," she cried again, in a poignant voice, pressing her hands to her eyes as if she would shut out a vision of horror. "If you had not come! If you had not come in time!"

Then she reached out her arms to the child. "Come to me, Boysie! Come to me!" she entreated.

But the boy clung the tighter to Viardeau's neck. And the young Acadian glowed with an absurd warmth of satisfaction at the preference.

"How did I let him go so far alone, and so late?" she went on, reproaching herself, with no tears, but hard, choking sobs. "And the wolves. Father always said there were *no* wolves in Nova Scotia!"

"The hard winter, the deep snow so early, that 's driven them in, from over the neck, miss!" spoke Viardeau.

By this they were come to the house. Silently the Indian stalked in after them, seated himself by the great open fire, and gazed into it with unwinking eyes. The child had by this time recovered himself somewhat, and stood upon his feet, releasing Viardeau from the solid burden of a sturdy lad of eight. But he kept close to his protector's side, and shivered if the latter moved a foot's length away from him. Playing with a rude wooden doll, near the hearth, sat a little flax-haired girl of five or six. Looking up, she smiled indulgently upon the visitors. Then her look changed to one of deep concern. Jumping to her feet, she ran over to Viardeau and seized his hand.

"Poor man! Poor man!" she cried earnestly. "Oh, what bit you? Oh, the blood!"

Bewildered by his emotions, and by the events which had brought him as a trusted protector into the household which he was sent to destroy, Jean Viardeau had not noticed his wound; but now he awoke to the burning throb of it. In-

stantly the tall girl was at his side, her eyes brimming with tears of self-reproach.

"All I have thought of has been Boysie and myself!" she cried. "Forgive me. Sit here, sir. I must dress it for you! Oh, but your poor shoulder is so badly torn! *Please* sit down!"

But Viardeau was now awake. He saw for the first time in all its hideousness the work which had been set him. He shook at the thought of it.

"No, miss," he answered, growing white about the lips. "It is nothing. We have far to go. We must go at once!" And firmly he unclasped the child's fingers from the flap of his woollen capote.

The girl's level brows went up in wonder and displeasure.

"You can not go, sir, till I dress your wound!" And gently, but with a certain positive authority, she pushed him toward a settle. "You can not go till we have supper. You can not go till my father comes, to thank you for saving the life of his only son. When father comes, he will *keep* you, to help us celebrate this happy Christmas, which but for you—" and with a passionate

gesture she covered her eyes again, nor trusted herself to say what would have been but for him.

Viardeau felt that the wound—a tearing gash—should be dressed. And her fingers were very soft and cool to the angry flesh. He looked at Sacobi; but the savage sat like a statue, gazing into the fire. The young man yielded. He would go right afterward.

At this moment the steps of a heavy runner came up to the door. The door was dashed open. A big, ruddy man, light-haired, grey-eyed, frank of countenance, carrying a heavy pack, burst in. The pack fell by the door with a thud, and he sprang across the room to crush the boy to his heart. His father—instinct had told him the situation at once. Then he held out his hand to Viardeau.

"God reward you, stranger!" he exclaimed in a deep voice that thrilled with fervour. "I see a bit of what 's happened. I heerd the shots. I seen the carcasses out there. And I reckon you 've saved for me what 's more 'n my life! Now, tell me all about it, Marjy, my girl!"—and he stopped, panting, and hugely out of breath.

"It was nothing! It was all in the way of a day's hunt!" interposed Viardeau hastily.

But the girl Marjory, breaking in indignantly, told the story as it was; and the boy, forsaking his father, emphasised it by running to cling again to Viardeau's side.

The big man's eyes were wet. He came and wrung Viardeau's hand once more.

"I"—he stopped with a gulp,—"I see jest how it was!" he cried. "You can't thank a man that 's done what you 've done for me this night, stranger. But—but—if ever you want a friend, why, I 'm John Brant,—and I 'd give my right hand for you,—I 'd—Marjy, my girl, make haste now and get supper. We 're all hungry, I reckon! Eh, sissy?" And to hide his emotion he snatched up the little girl with her wooden doll, and began careering boisterously up and down the room.

After a minute or two of this he quieted down.

"I say, stranger, it was God Himself that sent you, I allow," said he. "But where in thunder did you come from, so in the nickest of time?"

Jean Viardeau could stand it no longer. This gratitude, trust, devotion, were crushing him to

the ground. He arose, and putting out his left hand in earnestness, he grasped the child's arm and held it tight, unconsciously, while he spoke.

"John Brant," said he, "stop this gratitude. I will not eat of your bread. I will leave this roof as soon as I have spoken. I do not deserve that you should bear to look upon me. Where did I come from? Not from God. From the devil! I came to murder. I was sent to destroy this house, and all in it!"

"Well! I'll be—" gasped the big man, sitting down and staring, while anger, astonishment, and a sort of sick horror chased each other over his broad face.

Now Sacobi, as it chanced, understood English, though he could not speak it. At the first of Viardeau's passionate speech he had turned, his eyes ablaze with scorn. As the young man went on, the Indian slipped noiselessly toward the door. No one heeded him. Over the big Englishman's shoulder Viardeau saw him open the door and vanish into the night. He had no wish to hinder that flight. He went on with his self-denunciation.

"Before morning, this house would have been ashes, you a dead man, your children captives—had I done what I was sent to do!" concluded Viardeau, dropping his head, not daring to meet the look which he felt must be in Marjory Brant's eyes. There was a silence when he stopped—a silence that seemed to overtop and bear him down. Then he saw that the girl had come to his side—was standing close by him.

"You did n't know!" she said softly. "You came to bring us death; but you brought us life, and shed your own blood for a stranger child."

"Right you are, Marjy, my girl!" exclaimed the big man, springing up yet once more to wring the hand that had saved his son. "Cheer up, man! Don't look so down! Your heart 's in the right place. What care I for all you *thought* you was goin' to do? You 're the man in all the world for me, that 's what. You 've given me my boy. Come, come, supper, my girl! Shall we starve on Christmas Eve? Where 's your Injin?"

"He did n't see it just as I did," answered Viardeau. "He 's gone!"

" Best place for him!" said John Brant, heartily.

" He 'd have been dreadfully in the way for Christmas!" said Marjory, laughing into Viardeau's eyes.

Grûl's Gift

I

IN his first sleep the child sobbed with the cold.

The young mother stooped a white face over him, drew him closer to her breast, and strove to cover him more warmly with the one scant robe of red fox skins which her captors had spared to her. She was astonished to find that she had slept in her bonds.

Her arms were free, indeed, that she might care for the child and save her captors trouble. She was sitting on a pile of spruce boughs, her back against the trunk of a tree, to which she was securely tied.

The fire, in the centre of the circle of snow, had died down to a heap of glowing embers, the light of which, falling upon her face as she raised it, and gazed about her in bewildered despair,

showed her to be a woman of English blood and obviously gentle breeding.

The hood of her cloak had fallen back, revealing a great abundance of ruddy brown hair, in part still piled in a coiffure somewhat elaborate for the wilderness, the rest hanging in rich dishevelment over her shoulders.

As she stared about her, bewilderment passed into a spasm of horror. Her gravely sweet face grew pinched as the sudden disaster of yesterday reënacted itself in her brain.

She saw herself and her boy, well muffled in furs and blankets, driving in their roomy box-sleigh along the forest trail. Slowly they went, through the deep snow, but merrily enough, for the bells jingled loud on the harness, the horses were willing, the morrow would be Christmas, and each hour brought them the nearer to a joyous meeting. She saw the driver slouching on the front seat, his pointed hood of grey flannel over his head. She saw the orderly sitting erect beside him, the collar of his great coat turned up to meet the edge of his bearskin shako.

She saw Boy Jerry lift his laughing little face from the furs at her side to lisp:

"Don't you think we 'll get there pretty soon, mamma?"

Then she heard again the heavy crash of muskets on both sides of the trail, their reports thinning instantly into the wolfish, appalling war-cry of the Micmacs. She saw the smoke spurt white out of the underbrush. She saw the big orderly fling up his musket with a violent, convulsive jerk, discharge it blindly, straight in the air, and topple from his seat, a limp, dreadful sprawl of legs and coat-skirts. She saw the driver lean forward, with screams and strange curses, to lash the horses into a gallop,—but too late.

She saw the painted red fiends swarm forth, surround the sleigh, seize the horses, cut the traces, drag the driver from his place, and cut him down with their hatchets. She saw herself clutch Jerry to her arms, and bury her face as she crouched over him to shut out from the eyes of both the sickening butchery.

She felt again that icy numbness in the back of her head and neck, expecting the crunch of the iron. But then, as she was pulled violently out upon the snow, she recovered her senses, and stood upright, facing the butchers with steady

eyes. As she had not been killed at once, as Jerry had not been at once torn from her arms, she concluded that they were reserved either for torture or for captivity, and with a strenuous effort of will she resolved to think of nothing that might weaken her, lest she might miss some chance offer of that hope which lasts with life. She saw the savages rifle the sleigh, emptying it of all her possessions, while two of them disappeared into the woods, leading the horses.

With a curious spasm of pity she saw herself and Jerry standing there in the snow by the trail, waiting for their captors to notice them,—the most miserable, the most infinitely alone, the most hopelessly deserted, it seemed to her, of all the world's wretched. She remembered herself soothing Jerry's hushed but heart-breaking sobs with the promise that "Mamma will take care of her boy!" a promise which in her heart translated itself into a wild prayer that God might make it good.

And then, again, she shrank with a physical horror as a savage suddenly came up to her, gave her some guttural command which she could make nothing of, and struck her on the face with

the flat of his reeking hatchet because she did not obey. At once, however, another Indian had intervened in her behalf.

He had spoken in a *patois* French, of which she could gather the drift, and had ordered her to put on a pair of snowshoes which the other Indian was holding. A New Hampshire woman by birth, she was an adept with the woven moose-hide; and she had therefore been apt to join in the march at once, carrying Jerry, and murmuring thanksgivings in her heart for the bodily strength which now,—for the present at least,—saved her from she knew not what indignities. Her captors had struck off from the trail, and into what seemed to her the pathless woods; and they had journeyed not only past sunset but on till moonset. When bound to her tree beside the camp-fire she had resolved not to sleep, lest she should miss some chance of rescue; but fatigue and anguish had forced upon her their own anodyne. She had slept in her bonds; and now she was so stiff she feared she could not move.

The camp, which she now for the first time took note of, was a tiny amphitheatre, dug by the Indians with their snowshoes. The walls

were of snow, and about four feet in height, sufficing to keep off the wind.

Round the heap of embers and charring sticks, in the centre sprawled the sleeping savages, comfortably bedded on spruce boughs, and wraps from the looted sleigh. The two on guard sat bolt upright, close to the fire, motionless as statues. The stony profile of the one nearest to her froze the woman's soul with a deadly terror, which was succeeded by a wave of half-animal ferocity,—the mother-fury. It set her chilled blood racing again. Her strong white fingers clenched, and she muttered to herself,—half prayer, half pledge:

"Oh, God! as long as they leave me Jerry, I 'll be servile to these beasts. But if they take him from me, I 'll kill some of them! I 'll kill that one by the fire!"

Soon she noticed a change in the colour of the night. An icy pallor stole upon it, and the coals began to turn grey. Looking up through the tree-tops far above her head, she saw that the stars had faded, and the sky was whitening with dawn. Several of the sleepers stirred, preparatory to waking.

"Christmas! Christmas morning!" she whispered to herself. "And so happy a Christmas we had looked for, Jerry and I!" The pity of it,—pity for the little one's disappointment,—gripped her throat. It came near weakening her and breaking her down to tears; but she set her teeth, and thrust the thought from her heart.

And now a strange sound came echoing solemnly through the woods. It was a great and bell-like voice chanting in French:

"Woe, woe to Acadie the Fair, for the hour of her desolation cometh!"

At first a wild hope of succour leaped in her heart, but it sank again instantly as she noted the attitude of the Indians. They awoke at the first notes of that strange voice; but they did not appear alarmed. They all seated themselves gravely around the fire, and seemed to await something. Jerry, too, awoke and sat up. He stared questioningly at his mother, wondering awe in his wide, blue eyes; and he forgot to complain that he was cold.

That deep-toned proclamation was repeated thrice, each time nearer and louder; but its sound so pervaded the forest that the woman, searching

everywhere with her eyes, could not tell the direction whence it came. It was followed by a minute of tense silence, and then, she could not tell how, a grotesque but impressive figure stood by the fire.

A murmur ran round the circle. She caught just the one word, "Grûl!" "Grûl!" repeated by different voices.

He was tall, and a high, conical cap added to his stature. In the cap were stuck sprigs of hemlock and of that false mistletoe which grows in the fir trees. From under it streamed long wisps of snowy hair, meeting and mingling with the long streamers of his snowy beard. About his shoulders swung a heavy woollen cloak, woven of black and yellow in a staring but mystical pattern.

In his left hand—and the woman noted with wonder the aristocratic fineness of the long, pallid fingers,—he held a short wand of white wood, topped with a grotesquely carved head of vivid scarlet. His right hand he held outstretched over the fading embers, into which he gazed fixedly. His face was turned half toward her, and with a new hope fluttering up she noted the

noble mould of the features, the high serenity of his forehead.

Slowly he turned his face, and his eyes met hers. They pierced like points of pale, glancing steel, and her new hope chilled to extinction. Then a terrible and daunting white flame seemed to dance within them, and she shuddered, saying to herself, "Mad!" The next moment she wondered if she had spoken the word aloud, for, as if in retort, he came over to her, and stood before her, thrusting the fantastic wand toward her.

She shrank in overmastering fear, and averted her eyes; but little Jerry in her lap was not in the least afraid. With a cry of delight he caught the grinning scarlet head of the wand, laughed confidingly up to that terrifying face, and asked:

"Are n't you good Mr. Santa Claus? Have you come to save mamma and me?"

Slowly Grûl turned his eyes upon the child, and slowly the white fire faded out of them. They softened first into a sort of wonder, and then into mild compassion. Without a word, but very gently, he removed the child's grasp from the wand. Then, with another and more

human look at the mother's face, he gathered his bright cloak closer about him, and glided off soundlessly into the receding vistas of the forest.

Dawn was now fairly abroad, and the savages stirred the fire to cook their moose-steaks before resuming the march.

II

The sloping *glacis* of Fort Lawrence, mantled with snow, gleamed in the noon sun. From the flagstaff on its south-west bastion flapped lazily the red ensign of England, sentinelling the white levels of the marshes out to the winding line where the dark gash of the Missiguash Channel divided English sway from the domains of France.

In the low, wood-ceiled dining-room of the officers' quarters, within the fort quadrangle, Major Ford, with Captain John Sansom and a half-dozen trim subalterns, were but lately seated at their Christmas dinner. Major Ford, being a Warwickshire Englishman, the dinner was an English dinner, with a juicy roast in sight, and a round plum pudding aflame with cognac, in neighbourly prospect.

Captain Sansom was a New Englander, but

well inclined to see the Christmas feast no less honoured at the board than his native festival of Thanksgiving. He had praised the deep-shelled Baie Verte oysters as fit to grace a banquet of Lucullus. The Madeira had been especially commended, sipped and savoured, and sipped again, by all who valued the Major's good opinion—which is to say, by all the company. Nor in this did anyone compromise his conscience, for, indeed, the Major had a nice palate for Madeira. The beef, carved with ceremony, had been pronounced a credit to the fat meadows of Maccan.

At this juncture an orderly appeared, saluted, and stood just inside the door.

The Major had a red, smooth-shaven face, and little irascible eyes which served to mask a very amiable sort of soul. He looked up, and glared at the orderly.

"If you please, sir," said the latter, saluting again, "some one houtside wants to see you hat once—without any delay, sir."

"What 's his name? What does he want?" demanded the Major, sharply.

"If you please, sir," answered the man, "'e won't give no name whatever; an' 'is business,

'e says as 'ow hit's most hinstant! If I might make so bold, sir, I think as 'ow 'e 's mad. 'E looks queer; an' 'is 'at 's like a steeple; an' 'e carries a little stick with a most hextrayordinary 'ead, like a Punch-an'-Judy show."

The Major had little imagination and much appetite. He was about to bid the stranger wait till after dinner; but Captain Sansom tactfully intervened before the decree went forth.

"I have heard of this man, Major Ford," said he. "A very strange being, who goes by the name of Grûl. Mad, doubtless, but with so far a method in his madness that he never appears save when something important is afoot. He has a strange power in Acadia. He is the mortal foe of La Garne. And he does nothing to cheapen himself. I beg you to let him come in!"

Exclamations ran around the table, indorsing the Captain's request.

"It will be so entertaining, don't you think, Major?" lisped young Lieutenant Wrenne, whose proud courage won tolerance for his affectations.

"Well, well, well," grumbled the Major. "If

you like; if you like! More entertaining with the nuts and port, I should say; but at once, if you like, gentlemen. Show him in, Jenkins."

The orderly disappeared like an automaton, and a minute later the tall, fantastic form of Grûl moved noiselessly into the room.

His eyes gleamed coldly upon the Major's face. Then they rested for a few seconds upon the dark, wide-awake countenance of Captain Sansom, and then, with an indescribable power, they swept the whole circle.

Grotesque as was his appearance, no one laughed. No one knew till afterward, in looking back upon the incident, that he was grotesque. Major Ford took a keen scrutiny, and muttered:

"Crazy; crazy as a coot! But a gentleman,—yes! yes!" and rising from the table he very courteously offered him a chair.

The visitor waved it aside with a sort of civil scorn.

"It may concern you to know," said he, with penetrating slowness, "that not far from here a white woman and her child are being carried into captivity by savages."

"I thank you for the information, sir," replied

the Major, as if it had been the most ordinary affair in the world. "Where are they?"

"By now, passing through Jolicœur, on their way north to the villages of the Nepisiguit," said Grûl. "If you march from here straight toward Tidnish you will cross their trail."

"I am obliged to you," said the Major again. "It shall be seen to. Have a glass of wine with —" but he stopped with an indignant snort when he found himself addressing the visitor's unceremonious back. In a second Grûl was gone, as swiftly and noiselessly as he came.

"'Pon my word!" ejaculated the Major, sitting down. "Most singular! But clear; quite clear! Come, gentlemen, do justice to this good roast. Another cut, I beg you, Mr. Wrenne. We must be stirring right after we have finished dinner!"

But Mr. Wrenne was on his feet, preparing to protest against delay. Captain Sansom, however, was ahead of him.

"I entreat you, sir," he cried passionately, "let me take twenty file and go at once in pursuit. They will be already far ahead of us!"

"Tut! tut!" rejoined the Major, impatiently.

"They must travel but slowly, with a woman. Our fellows will soon overtake them. Shall a dinner like this be spoiled for a matter of two hours' extra tramping? Sit down, sit down, Captain Sansom!"

The Captain sat down, but instantly sprang up again, in a strong excitement. "But the case is urgent, sir!" he cried. "I feel that it is most urgent. This morning, an hour or two back, when I was in the casemate, I distinctly heard a woman's voice call for help, somewhere from the woods beyond Beaubassin. You may laugh, but I cannot rest a moment till we set out."

The Major sat back in his chair and scanned the speaker.

"Totally absurd, Captain Sansom," said he. "The woods are two miles away. And moreover, you were in the casemate, where you could not hear if she had called from the barracks windows!"

"I know it is impossible, but——"

"But, sit down, sir!" interrupted the Major testily. And you, too, Mr. Wrenne. I know my business, gentlemen!"

Both sat down, but rose again at once, and

this time the other officers got up with them. The Major's face darkened; but before he could thunder, Captain Sansom spoke again with vehement appeal:

"And we know our duty, sir, and will obey you to the letter," he cried, "but let me beg you to hear me patiently. How can we sit here, warm and safe, laughing over this good dinner, when a countrywoman of ours and a little child are out there helpless and hopeless, in the hands of those red devils of La Garne's, being dragged to who knows what fate? Think of it, sir. Why, how could we sit here guzzling? The stuff would choke us. You have no child of your own,—no wife,—or you could not be so unmoved, Major Ford, at the thought of that——"

"No, Captain Sansom, I have no wife, no child," interrupted the Major, gravely, and a little sadly. "I thank God for it! Be thankful your own are safe in Boston, far away from the perils of a soldier's life. I am not so indifferent, however, as you think; only, impetuosity seemed to me needless in this matter. Sit down, gentlemen! It shall be as you wish. You may go at once, Captain, taking one of our officers with

you, and twenty men. Let them put bread and beef in their knapsacks. You will select, of course, men who can use these abominable snow-shoes. Whom do you wish to help you ?"

All the company sprang up to volunteer, but Captain Sansom laid his hand on young Wrenne's shoulder.

"Thank you, Major!" he exclaimed with elation in his voice. "I 'll take Wrenne, if he is willing. And if the rest of you will save a little of the pudding for us, you will see us back shortly to eat it, with good appetite and good conscience!"

"Who would have thought, gentlemen," grumbled the Major, peering around upon the diminished company as Sansom and Wrenne hastily withdrew, "that my staff would be threatening mutiny in the very teeth of a Christmas dinner!"

III

Of the half-raw, half-burned moose-meat, thrown to her by her captors, as to a dog, the woman forced herself to eat abundantly, fearing what might happen if her strength should fail.

The child was by this time hungry enough to make a meal off the shreds which had chanced upon a fair roasting.

At the first of the march the woman found herself so stiff that she could hardly take a step without groaning and tottering; but the dread of having Jerry taken from her held her silent, and presently her force came back and she was able to march rapidly and easily. This fact, however, she was astute enough to conceal. She realised that if haste were an object to her captors, delay must be an object to the captives. She therefore kept her fatigue in evidence, and lagged as much as she dared, enduring blows without a murmur, and finally convincing the savages that she was doing her best.

Well on in the morning, when the sun was high over the ancient, imperturbable fir-trees, the band crossed a narrow piece of open, jutting into the forest from the marsh-levels. Here there was a moment's pause. The savage who spoke French came up to her and grabbed her roughly by the arm.

"Look!" said he, grinning maliciously. "English there! Call them! Maybe they hear and come get you!"

Following his gesture, she looked blankly out across the marshes; but started and quivered to see the red flag flying over the low ramparts of an English fort.

Her eyes blinded at once with tears, and her first impulse was to scream for succour. But she saw the folly of it, and would not give the savages cause for jeers. Only her heart,—that cried out desperately, till she felt that those in the fort must feel, if they could not hear, the frantic summons.

Some while later they crossed the bed of a small tidal stream left empty by the ebb. It was a chaos of ragged and mud-stained ice-cakes, where the footing was painfully difficult. Carrying her snowshoes on one arm, Jerry on the other, she struggled to keep up with the band, but in the effort she fell and bruised herself sorely. Jerry, too, was shaken, though not hurt, and he began to cry.

For a few minutes the sound passed unnoticed. Then fierce eyes turned menacingly upon her, and she strove to quiet him, but in vain. At last the nearest savage made a cruel pass at the little one's head with the handle of his hatchet.

The woman swerved like lightning, and caught the stroke upon her own arm, at the same time flashing upon the brute a look of such murderous fury that he laughed, and made no attempt to provoke her further. Jerry, however, seemed to realise the need of silence, for he suddenly stopped crying, and even strove to choke back his wrenching, voiceless sobs.

From this forward the woman walked sunken in a sort of numbness. She forgot to hang back and delay the march. She did not think, nor fear, nor hope, nor despair. She merely hugged the child close to her breast, and aimlessly counted her steps.

As she remembered afterward, however, her sense of smell became abnormally acute; so that she noted, unconsciously, the different kinds of woods as they passed through them. The biting, medicinal savour of the cedar thickets fixed itself in her brain, to be followed by the thin pungency of the hackmatack swamps, the tonic spiciness of the fir and spruce groves, the nutty aroma of the hardwood ridges. The curious legacy of that horrible march was a quite useless but remarkable capacity for distinguishing different kinds

of forest growth when passing through them in the dark all her life after.

About sunset halt was called and a fire built, although, as there were no preparations for a camp such as they had occupied the night before, the woman vaguely concluded that the march would be resumed after eating. Jerry had complained of hunger, and now a piece of dried raw fish was flung to her.

Repugnant as it was, she forced herself to eat it, and tried to get the child to follow her example. He refused obstinately, and at length began to cry for bread and butter.

In a growing panic she tried to soothe him, conscious of the cruel eyes of anger which the sound drew upon them. With desperate haste she began to whisper to him a wonderful fairy story to divert his attention.

In the midst of the tale she was startled by a scattering volley of musket shots almost at her back. The savages leaped up, some of them to fall back again and lie quite still.

Then came shouts and cries, English voices, rude but blessed English oaths; and she sprang to her feet. The savages were fleeing. Fur-

capped, long-coated men were running toward her. One of them, his dark face smitten with amazement, was far in advance,—was close to her! Jerry struggled to escape from her encircling arms.

"Papa! Papa! Papa!" he cried; and the woman, tottering forward, felt her knees give way. She fell, blind with joy, into the arms of Captain John Sansom.

The Maid of the Drift

Being an Adventure of Orderly-Sergeant Peter Cunliffe of the —th Company, Connecticut Volunteers, Stationed at Annapolis Royal, January, 1755, A.D.

EMERGING from the thick woods south of the Habitants River and coming suddenly upon the open crest of Gaspereau Ridge, I caught my first glimpse of Grand Pré village far down upon the skirt of the spacious Minas Valley. Much had I heard of Grand Pré, chief settlement of these Acadian folk whom we had conquered and torn from the Crown of France; and now that my eyes rested upon it, full little likeness did I find therein to my own Connecticut hamlets. Its one snowy street, along by the marsh edge, was beaded, in a manner of speaking, with black roofs, wide-gabled and flaring at the eaves. Here and there along the street, stiff and tall as the spire of the village church, rose the leafless towers

of the Lombardy poplars, while behind and about the cottages huddled the squat shapes of apple-tree and willow. I cast a curious eye out over the dead-white levels of the famed Acadian marshes to the shifting tide-fields of Minas water, and the blue-black rampart of Mount Blomidon guarding its mouth. All this ample scene I took in at a sweep, so that I have remembered it as if graved upon my brain. It was but one look, however, and that a brief one. Then came the snow.

It came thick, dry, fine, swirling fiercely on a bone-piercing blast; and between two gasps, as it were, I found myself imprisoned in a whirlwind. Not three paces before me or upon either hand could I see. Had the trail not been deep trodden I should have lost it in a trice; but as it was my feet striking the hard side-ridges of frozen snow kept me straight. When the wind blew dead in my teeth I bowed my head, leaned up against it sturdily, and made some way. But anon it would ease of a sudden, whereupon I would stumble forward all but headlong; and anon, ere I could recover, it would swoop with roar and whistle upon my flank, nigh routing me. To

prevent my cloak being whisked away I had to keep my arms folded close, which made balance hard to maintain in the face of this vindictive buffeting. Right heartily did I curse my heavy and smooth-soled jack-boots, ill-fitted for a march like this; and I growled at my folly in having refused the old Acadian's offer of moccasins that same morning, when, my horse having on a sudden gone lame, I was forced to leave him at old Masson's cabin on the upper Habitants stream and push forward afoot with my despatches.

What with fighting the wind, keeping the drift out of my eyes, catching for breath and condemning my boots, I was soon in a fine ill-humour. And I had calculated—before giving up the horse—that I might achieve to reach Halifax that same night.

"But no step beyond Grand Pré for me this day," I grunted to myself.

At last a black mass loomed suddenly before me through the drift, and under shelter of it the air cleared a little, revealing a thicket of firs. At this point the trail turned sharply down into the valley. But my journeying was not eased by the change, for the wind came terrifically along

the open hillside, and my feet proved even less manageable on the slope than on the level. Nevertheless, I made advance, for whether I walked, or plunged, or fell, it was ever down-hill, ever so much the nearer to a Grand Pré fireside.

Now, when I had thus with more determination than dignity accomplished a good portion of the descent, the unexpected happened, as it will. Under my very feet appeared a woman's figure, cloaked and muffled, crouched in the middle of the way. With a huge effort I saved myself from stumbling over her.

As it was, I struck her right smartly with my foot, and cried out, fearing I had hurt her.

She stirred and sat straight up with a startled exclamation. By the voice I knew that she was young; but her face, hidden by a heavy cloak which wrapped her whole form, I tried in vain to see.

"Pardon me, mademoiselle," I said in French, "but I almost fell over you. This beastly drift! One can't see past his nose. Allow me to help you. Are you hurt?"

"Oh, but no, monsieur, I assure you!" she

cried in a laughing voice, and sprang lightly to her feet. "This dreadful storm, that 's all! It almost tired me out. So I just sat down and covered up my head to get my breath, you see!"

To my ears this was the sweetest voice I had ever heard. It seemed like a ray of clear sunlight across the whirling dusk of the storm.

"It must," thought I, "come from lovely lips. Such a voice could not be without beauty to neighbour it!"

But aloud I said—"'T is no place here for such as you, mademoiselle! I beg that you will let me conduct you to the nearest shelter."

At this she laughed very prettily.

"But I am none the worse for this, monsieur!" she exclaimed. "I am Acadienne. We do not fear storms, we! Only, I got tired out. I was coming over from the Gaspereau when the storm caught me. I must make haste down to the village."

"That way lies my way also, mademoiselle," said I, with perhaps more eagerness than necessary, so wrought her voice upon my heart-strings. "If you will not let me serve you as escort, I pray you of your charity serve me as guide, for I am a stranger and confused in this pother."

"Since you acknowledge, monsieur," she answered, with a delicate mockery in her tone, "that it is you, not I, who need the help, for your humility, so rare a virtue in a man and an Englishman, I will help you. You may walk down to the village with me, and I will show you the way!"

But for all her wilful spurning of my succour it was instantly clear that she required me. The wind, clapping huge hands upon her heavy cloak, whisked her light form hither and thither with a most fatiguing incivility. I could not endure to see it.

"Mademoiselle!" I pleaded, "let me entreat you to take my arm and steady yourself. This wind is too violent for you!"

Blown up against me for an instant she as instantly fluttered away out of reach of the hand which I put forth to detain her.

"I see that you go not so very steadily yourself," she retorted, "for all your stature, monsieur!"

I grew subtle in my wits, as her wilfulness worked upon me.

"Alas, mademoiselle!" said I, "you penetrate

my weakness. It was but my device to gain your help again. I cannot deceive you. You see how I go slipping about in these great boots; and how the wind makes merry with my inches! I pray you, take my arm to steady *me!* And salve my vanity by letting me think my bulk may break the gale for you a little!"

"Since you are so modest I will take your arm and help you to walk steadily, monsieur!" she assented, coming up upon my left side and trustfully slipping a small, mittened hand under my cloak. "And—yes, you do keep off the wind very well. Big men are often quite useful—but they are so often stupid! Have you not observed it, monsieur?"

As she spoke the hood of her cloak fell open, and I saw the most radiant of faces upturned to mine. I trembled, veritably, as the enchantment of those great, laughing eyes smote into my heart. The face was a clear, pale olive, the ruddy attestation of health aglow upon cheeks and lips.

I was bewildered. For the moment I quite lost my wits. I desired desperately to prove to her that I did not fall within her swooping condemnation of big men. I burned to say nice things

and to say them with that nicety which would commend me in her eyes. But alas! my tongue was dumb. Not often has it so shamelessly failed me as there on the Grand Pré hillside.

She appeared to misunderstand my silence. Perhaps she thought that, being large and an Englishman and stupid, I was offended. Be that as it may, she quit her raillery and asked with a kindly warmth of interest:

"Have you journeyed far, monsieur? You seem nigh spent!"

"I have come all the way from Annapolis, mademoiselle," said I, "and in much haste, for I bear despatches to the Governor at Halifax. My horse went lame on a sudden last night, and I have come on from old Masson's afoot this morning."

"You have done well, monsieur—and in those boots!" said she. "And you do well now to turn aside and bide in Grand Pré till the storm lightens!"

There was something of a searching earnestness in the look she turned upon me, but its significance slipped me at the time.

"Indeed, you wrong me!" I answered in

haste. "This storm would not stay me or turn me from the straight path. But I have papers also for that good friend of the English, Monsieur Giles de Lamourie, of Grand Pré village. It is to him, mademoiselle, I would pray you guide me."

"Do you realise," she asked very gravely, after a pause, "that these are perilous times for the bearer of despatches? How do you know, monsieur, that I am not a spy of the Black Abbé?"

"For the danger," said I, with as grand an air as one may well assume in a gale of wind, "for the danger, if there be any, I thank Heaven. I have found your Acadie very safe and tame hitherto. And for your treachery, mademoiselle, let me hazard it that if you be a traitor there is no woman true! Though I know not so much as your name, I have looked into your eyes and I dare swear that a man's life and honour both would rest safe in the keeping of your loyalty."

My speech was earnest, perhaps, for an acquaintance so exceeding brief. She thrust off to arm's length and dropped me a little courtesy.

"For my name, monsieur," she exclaimed mocking my stilted phrases, "it is Lise Le Blanc,

at your service, and for my loyalty, your confidence, great as it is, does it no more than justice."

"It is a name of melody," I muttered, savouring it softly on my tongue.

To this, if she heard it, she made no reply; and for a space we pushed on in silence. The conversation, it is to be remembered, had taken longer in the making than in the telling, for it is ill talking in a hurricane of snow, and there was breath to be gasped for; and words blown incontinently away had to be repeated. So by now we were come well down into the valley. I was content with the silence. The feel of her small hand within my arm, the pressing of her slim shoulder to my side, gave me unspeakable satisfaction. The more I took note of this the more I grew amazed.

"Peter, my son," I said to myself presently, "of a surety thou art in love. And so lightly overthrown, too! Fie upon thee, and thou this thirty year a bachelor! Well do I know what thou 'lt be doing. Thou wilt get leave of absence, this business done, and returning in foolish haste to Grand Pré, thou 'lt set thyself to woo

this maid in right New England fashion." And here I laughed softly, being by nature hopeful.

The girl stopped:

"There is nothing to laugh at, monsieur," she cried quickly.

I felt abashed.

"I laughed but for sheer joy at my good fortune in meeting you, mademoiselle," I stammered.

"You are uttering but light breath of compliment, monsieur," she answered very seriously. "But indeed in having met me you are more fortunate than you dream. Here is Grand Pré." And peering through the whirl of drift I made out the dim shape of a cottage. "Listen," she went on. "I have let you come so far because I could not see clearly in my mind what was best to be done. You must now make haste back, take the Piziquid trail and put many miles between you and Grand Pré ere you sleep. But no, you must first rest and eat. This storm is a hiding in itself. I will take you to the house of the good Curé, Father Fafard, whom you can trust. But you must not linger. You must get away from this place while the storm lasts."

I stared down in dumb bewilderment at her eager, determined face. "But how, mademoiselle? What do you mean?" I managed to gasp. "How can I leave Grand Pré without doing my errand to Monsieur de Lamourie? And why should I leave Grand Pré by stealth? It is not so I have come!"

She made a little impatient gesture—though why she should expect me to understand on so slight an explanation and to obey her blindly was something I could not well comprehend.

"Oh," she cried, "but it is death for you to go on to Monsieur de Lamourie's! Listen! The Black Abbé is there. His savages from the Shubenacadie are there. It is for you they are watching. The Black Abbé knows you have left Annapolis with despatches both for Halifax and for Monsieur de Lamourie, against whom he seeks proof of dealings with the English. If you go forward now your papers will never reach their goal, and you will never see Halifax!"

It is always hard for me to believe in a stone wall till I run my head against it. I smiled upon her, well pleased at her anxiety, which seemed to be in part on my own account.

"I have heard of this La Garne—'The Black Abbé,' as you call him. I am very curious to meet him, mademoiselle!" said I. "He is certainly a great scoundrel, and I think I see my opportunity to do this land a service, to say nothing of serving myself to a speedy promotion!"

"You are conceited as well as stupid, monsieur!" she retorted, severely. "Let me tell you, you will win no credit off Father La Garne!"

"I will but do my duty and obey my orders in trying," said I, more humbly.

"He has a half-score of savages at his back," she went on.

"Indians!" I cried, with some scorn in my voice. "Ten of them! That 's about two and a half white men! 'T is but odds enough to make the matter interesting. I pray you direct me to the place, mademoiselle, for I am hungry and may have to fight for my dinner, as it seems."

But she held my arm persuasively, and I could but await her pleasure.

"Think of others, monsieur," she pleaded, "if you won't think of yourself or of the papers in your charge. You will compromise Monsieur

de Lamourie and bring I know not what swift ruin upon his house!"

"De Lamourie is a brave man, if report speaks true," said I, obstinately. "We will stand together, he and I. But have no fear for him, mademoiselle. He has all the power of England behind him!"

"Little may that avail him, alas!" she exclaimed bitterly, hopeless, as it seemed, of persuading me. "You forget Dartmouth, monsieur!"

I had forgotten Dartmouth. I remembered now with horror that red outrage which our soldiers in Halifax, just across the harbour, had been powerless to prevent.

"But that was before our eyes were opened, mademoiselle," I persisted.

"Yours are so wide open now!" she muttered, scornfully. "But come, if you must, monsieur. At least I will lead you by the safer way, that you may have some ghost of a chance of coming at Monsieur de Lamourie before your doom overtakes you."

Turning aside from the main road she led me quickly along a narrow trail. From a glimpse of a barn and outhouses caught through the drift I

gathered that we were skirting the rear of the village. We struggled on in silence, the gale now squarely in our teeth; and I felt that she was displeased with me. It was clear to me, however, that I could not in decency be thwarted by a rascal abbé or affrighted by a handful of redskins. Much more did her displeasure affright me, and even that I brought myself to endure for the moment.

Presently we came to a small cottage whose bright red door confronted us abruptly through the drift. Here mademoiselle stopped and turned to me with her hand upon the latch.

"But surely," I exclaimed, "so modest a dwelling is not the home of the chief man in Grand Pré!"

"This is not Monsieur de Lamourie's house," she answered with something of agitation in her voice which I could not understand. "But here lives one of his most faithful friends and servants, old Mother Pêche. I beg you to come inside and wait a few moments while I make a little reconnoisance!" Herewith she laughed, but in a manner that seemed to me unnatural.

Seeing me hesitate, loath to delay yet loath to refuse her, she burst out passionately;

"I love the house of De Lamourie, monsieur! Mademoiselle Yvonne de Lamourie I love better than anyone else in the world. I will not have ruin brought upon them by your obstinacy, when it may so easily be avoided! I have served you faithfully in guiding you so far and keeping you from running your neck into the noose. You cannot, for shame's sake, deny me this little that I ask now. Come in and wait here. I will find out where the sentinels are posted, and then, if necessary, lead you myself safely into Monsieur de Lamourie's presence!"

What could I do but yield?

"Not to shun the Black Abbé, mademoiselle," I answered, "but to obey your wishes and to gain the pleasure of your further guidance, I will wait. But my orders are stringent. They forbid me to wait long. A soldier has small freedom to choose between desire and duty—you know that and will forgive me if I seem uncompliant, will you not?"

She flashed upon me a wide-eyed glory of thanks for reward, and murmured as she threw open the red door:

"You are not quite so unkind and wrong-

headed as I began to fear! I should have hated you forever if you had refused."

"It is well for thee, Peter Cunliffe," said I to myself, following her into a little low-ceiled warm room," that thou hadst wit enough not to refuse."

The room was inviting to a cold and hungry man. Its walls of dark wood, polished in spots by the rubbing of many shoulders, reflected pleasant gleams from the fire on the roomy hearth. The ceiling was of the same time-stained wood. On the floor were plaited mats of divers colouring. Against one wall stood a dresser, its shelves bright with blue, yellow, and brown crockery. Through the two windows, small and dull, the whirling of the storm was glimpsed in a far-off, comfortable fashion. On a clumsy crane swung over the hottest of the fire was hanging a covered pot whence came unctuous bubblings and a most appetising savour. I flung off my cloak and drew up a chair into the close neighbourhood of that aroma. I had not realised that I was so hungry.

Mademoiselle had disappeared right promptly upon our entrance. For some minutes I was alone. Then a bent and gaunt old woman ap-

peared briskly from a back room, courtesied to me a very amiable welcome and set a ruddy steak of moose-meat to broil right before my interested nose.

"'T is a bit for you, monsieur," she exclaimed, with a confidential air, "to rest you while she 's gone. A bit an' a sup won't be amiss, now, to a man who 's footed it all the way from old Masson's!"

I thanked her with a hearty agreement; and I considered how a man may be ill-fitted for emergencies when he carries an empty stomach. It was with an easy mind as to my duty, then, that I watched the old dame at her cooking. Surely, I thought, she would pass for a witch in New England. A dark-red shawl folded over her shoulders made a glow of colour with the sallow dark of her skin, and her high-boned cheeks, astonishingly lean, appeared to me like grim abutments to the lofty arch of her nose. But her eyes most took me. The pupils, very small, black, piercing like knife-points, were set in so large and clear an expanse of white that whensoever they turned glittering upon me I felt a curious thrill. There was something unholy about those eyes at first

acquaintance. But the old dame was plainly well disposed, and it was not many minutes ere even those startling eyes ceased to trouble me, so pleasant was the smell of the sputtering steak. And then—the relish of it! The memory lingers yet upon my palate. Whilst I was eating it she brewed me a hot and well-spiced brandy toddy which I honestly swore to her, as the most fitting form of thanks, was the best drink that ever crossed my lips. Almost upon the instant I felt sleepy—which was not unnatural, but highly inconvenient.

"You have made me quite too much at ease, mother!" I exclaimed, "I am in danger of forgetting my immediate duty. I must get a breath of air to wake me up!"

I stooped for my cloak and would have made for the door; but the old dame's voice came so sweetly persuasive that somehow I found myself back in my chair, nodding at the fire in amicable content.

"Bide still here yet a little, monsieur," she murmured. "'T is but a bit to wait, and maid Lise will be back!"

The words seemed some sort of a pleasant,

crooning charm, and my lids drooped. With a violent effort I raised them and sat up in my chair. I caught the old dame's eyes glittering at me shrewdly, but not, as I thought, in malice. Then I heard a heavy breathing somewhere, doubtless my own—and I knew no more.

. . . . . .

With a sense that I had overslept I started awake and sat up in bewilderment. But I could see nothing. I was in total darkness. In my arms and wrists I felt a most unpleasant constriction; and presently I realised that my hands were securely bound. Then a swelling bitterness surged over me, the rage of trust betrayed and a pang of disappointment that pierced my very soul. How I had trusted her—and for this! There was a swooning sensation in my head, so I lay back again to gather my wits. I felt that I was softly couched on thick furs. By the fresh, earthy smell, with a scent of roots and apples and butter subtly blended, I decided that I was in a cellar. Then a trap-door somewhere out of my range of vision opened and let down light enough for me to observe that in truth I was in a cellar. I sat up and turned to mark who came.

Mademoiselle it was. With a lighted candle in her hand she came down the steps. The trap closed, and I heard the bolt slide to behind her. She approached smiling gayly, her eyes of an unearthly beauty in the flaring light. But I faced her with a bitter indignation in my frown.

"I trust you have slept well, monsieur!" she exclaimed, very gayly and innocently.

I sprang up, but sank back at once, being still dizzy from the drug which that old white-eyed witch had put into my cup. Nevertheless, looking upon the girl's face I felt my righteous anger fading out in spite of myself.

"You are a traitor!" I said. But alas! I spoke it tamely; in sorrow, not in just wrath.

Her face grew sober. She stood there in front of me, scanning me for some moments in silence.

"I have saved you from yourself, monsieur. I am no traitor to you!" she said at length, in a low voice.

I looked down at my fettered hands.

"Free me, then!" said I.

"Yes, if you will give me your word not to be

rash, but to let me get you out of the deadly peril which you have blindly run into," she answered.

"It seems I have much reason to trust you, mademoiselle," I retorted bitterly.

"What you mean for derision is but the bare truth, monsieur," said she. "Oh, you are very blind in your English self-sufficiency. Did you not say to me out there on the hillside that you would trust your life and your honour in my hands? I have taken you at your word. Left to yourself you had flung both away for nothing by this time yesterday. Your body would have been among the ice-cakes of the Gaspereau; your papers in the hands of the Black Abbé; your honour, wheresoever it might chance to be scattered! And the house of De Lamourie would have been whelmed in your ruin! You would not hear reason. You thought to do impossibilities single-handed. So I got Mother Pêche, who knows herbs and simples, to put you to sleep. A trustworthy neighbour, Nicole Brun the smith, helped us carry you down here—and a task it was! We feared the Black Abbé or his followers might chance in; which, indeed, has twice hap-

pened. But here is something that may concern you more than that!"

She handed me a paper, which I made shift to read by the dim light:

This is to attest that I have duly received from Mr. Sergeant Cunliffe the papers which he was commissioned to deliver to me.

GILES DE LAMOURIE.

AT GRAND PRÉ,
29th January, A.D., 1755.

I looked at her with stupid inquiry.

"I delivered it into his own hands," said she. "He read it, and burned it; and gave this as your quittance!"

My heart leaped with joy! I began to see. She was, after all, true. Slowly I came to understand the whole situation and to feel convinced of my own gross folly. I held out my hands to her.

"Free me!" said I a second time; and I added, humbly, "I will follow your guidance in this matter!"

The cords fell apart. Instantly I felt in my breast for the other packet.

It was gone! I sprang up, very white and trembling.

She laughed softly at my scare.

"Sit down, monsieur; it is safe," she said. "Had your enemies found you here your life would have gone out—*pouf!*—but your honour would have been saved! I should have got your papers into the Governor's hands for you. Here they are!" And pulling off the end of what seemed a solid log of the under-pinning, she took the packet out of its cunning concealment.

Eagerly I stretched out my hand, but she slipped the packet back into the hiding-place.

"No," she said, with decision. "You cannot tell what may happen any moment when you have the Black Abbé to deal with. You know now where to find it. Leave it there till you are ready to go!"

"And when will that be, mademoiselle?" I inquired, very submissively.

My new tractability won her favour, and she looked upon me with eyes of some approval.

"Nicole Brun shall guide you," she answered, "so you will not have to touch the beaten trail. He is a woodsman to match the savages in their own craft. He will get you safely to Halifax once you are out of Grand Pré. And you can

leave to-night, when dark falls, for there is nothing now to keep you at Grand Pré."

"By Heaven, but there is, mademoiselle," I blurted out, making to grasp her hand. She drew back and looked at me curiously, though not, as it seemed, in anger.

"I mean, not to keep me, but to bring me back in haste!" I stammered, abashed at my own presumption.

She was silent.

"I mean," said I, desperately making another trial, "I mean—I beseech you, let me come back to Grand Pré when this business is done. Let me come back and strive to win a better place in your regard. I have been such a dull-witted animal — and you, mademoiselle, you have been——"

But she interrupted me.

"Let me see," said she, coolly meditating—but with her eyes, as I could not but notice, discreetly cast down. "Let me see, monsieur! I am not unwilling to think better of you than you have so far given occasion. A month hence the Black Abbé will be far away, at Louisburg. You may come to Grand Pré then, if you wish; and

your safety then will not lie upon my poor shoulders. Yes, I think you may come. I love the English, if they *are* stupid!"

"It is not necessary or desirable that you should love them all, mademoiselle," said I, plucking up great courage. "But it has come to be a matter of the deepest import in life to me that you should learn to love one of them!"

"I think it of the deepest import to you, monsieur, that I should fetch your dinner without delay. Men talk nonsense when their brains grow faint from fasting," she retorted, hurriedly, and vanished up the cellar stairs.

The Eye of Gluskâp

I

IT was close upon high tide, and the creek that wound in through the diked marshes was rapidly filling to the brim with the swirling, cold, yellow-grey waters of Minas. The sun, but half risen, yet lingered on the wooded crest of the Gaspereau hills; while above hung a dappled sky of pink and pale amber and dove-colour. A yellow light streamed sharply down across the frost-whitened meadows, the smouldering ruins of Grand Pré village, and out upon the glittering expanse of Minas Basin. The beams tinged brightly the cordage and half-furled sails of two ships that rode at anchor in the Basin, near the shore. With a pitilessly revealing whiteness the rays descended on the mournful encampment at the creek's mouth, where a throng of Acadian peasants were getting ready to embark for exile.

"Late grew the year, and stormy was the sea."

Already had five ships sailed away with their sorrowful freight, disappearing around the towering front of Blomidon, from the straining eyes of friends and kinsfolk left behind. Another ship would sail out with the next ebb, and all was sad confusion and unwilling haste till the embarkation should be accomplished. The ship's boats were loaded down with rude household stuff, and boxes full of homespun linens and woollens.

Children were crying with the cold, and a few women were weeping silently; but the partings which had succeeded each other at intervals throughout the last few weeks had dulled the edge of anguish, and most of the Acadians wore an air of heavy resignation. The New England soldiers on guard gave what help they could, but sullenly; for they were weary of the misery that they had so long been forced to watch.

The people were huddled on a little patch of marsh within a curve of the dike. Beyond the dike there spread a stretch of reddish-brown salt-flats, covered with water only at the highest spring tides, and now meagrely sprinkled with sharp-edged blades and tufts of the grey salt-grasses. The flats were soft between the bunches

of the grass, and a broad track was trampled into mire by the passing down of many feet from the dike's edge to the boats.

In a work like this there are always a thousand unlooked-for delays, and before half the embarkation was effected the tide had reached the full, and paused and turned to ebb. As the strip of shining red mud began to widen between the grasses and the water's edge, the bustle and confusion increased. Sometimes a woman who had already stepped into the boat, thinking that her people had preceded her, would spring over the side into the shallow water, and rush, sobbing with anxious fear, back to the encampment. Sometimes a child would lose sight of its father or mother in the press, and lift its shrill voice in a wail of desolation which found piteous echo in every Acadian heart.

Lower and lower fell the tide. The current was now thick and red with the mud which it was dragging from the flats to redeposit it on some crescent shoal at the mouth of the Canard or Piziquid. Over the dike and down toward the waiting boats came an old man, bent with years, supported by his son and his son's wife, a middle-

aged couple. The decrepit figure in its quaint Acadian garb was one to be remembered. Old Remi Corveau was a man of means among the Acadian peasants. His feet were incased in high-top moccasins of vividly embroidered moose-hide, and his legs in gaiters, or *mitasses*, of dark blue woollen homespun, laced with strips of red cloth. His coat was a long and heavy garment of home-spun blanket, dyed to a yellowish-brown with many decoctions of a plant which the country-folk now know as "yaller-weed." A cap of coarse sealskin covered his head, and was tied beneath his chin with a woollen scarf of dull red. The old man clutched his stick in his mittened right hand, muttering to himself, and seemed but half aware of what was going on. When he came to the edge of the wet red clay, however, he straightened himself and looked about him. He gazed at the boats and at the anchored ships beyond. A light of sudden intelligence flashed into his feeble eyes. He turned half round and looked back upon the ruined village, while his son and daughter paused respectfully.

"Hurry along there now!" exclaimed one of the guards, impatiently; and the Acadian couple,

understanding the tone and gesture, pulled at their father's arms to lead him into the boat. The old man's eyes flamed wildly, and crying, "*J'ne veux pas! j'ne veux pas!*" he broke from them and struggled back toward the dike. Instantly his son overtook him, picked him up in his arms, and carried him, now sobbing feebly, down to the boat, where he laid him on a pile of blankets. As the laden craft moved slowly toward the ship the old man's complainings ceased. When they went to hoist him over the ship's side they discovered that he was dead.

And now the very last boat-load was well-nigh ready to start. The parish priest, who was staying behind to sail with the next and final ship, was bidding his sad farewells. A young woman drew near the boat, but hardly seemed to see the priest's kind face of greeting, so anxiously was she fumbling in the depths of a small bag which she carried on her arm.

The bag was of yellow caribou-skin, worked by Indian fingers in many-coloured designs of dyed porcupine quills.

"What 's the matter, Marie, my child?" inquired the priest, gently. "Hast thou lost

something more, beside thy country and thy father's house ?"

As he spoke the girl, whose name was Marie Beaugrand, looked up with a sigh of relief, and turned to him affectionately.

"I have found it, Father! *V'la!*" she exclaimed, holding up a gigantic amethyst of marvellous brilliancy. "Pierrot gave it to me to keep for him, you know," she added, timidly, "because of the bad luck that goes with it when a *man* has it!"

This was no time to chide the girl for her belief in the superstition which he knew was connected with the wondrous jewel. The priest merely smiled and said: "Well, well, guard it carefully, my little one; and may the Holy Saints enable it to mend the fortunes of thee and thy Pierrot! Farewell; and God have thee ever in his keeping, my dear child!"

Hardly were the words well past his lips when the girl gave a scream of dismay, and sprang forward down the slippery red incline. She had dropped the amethyst, by some incomprehensible mischance. The priest beheld the purple gleam as it flashed from between the girl's fingers. Her

high cap of coarse undyed French linen fell away from her black locks as she stooped to grope passionately in the ooze which had swallowed up her treasure. In a moment the comely picture of her dark blue sleeves, grey petticoat, and trim red stockings was sadly disfigured by the mud. The girl's despair was piercing; but the impatient guards, who knew not what she had lost, were on the point of taking her forcibly to the boat, when Colonel Winslow, who stood near by, checked them peremptorily.

Seeing the priest gird up his cassock and step forward to help the sobbing girl in her search, Colonel Winslow questioned of the interpreter as to what the damsel had lost to cause such lament.

"A toy, a mere gaud, your Excellency," said the shrewd interpreter, giving Winslow a title which he would not have employed had there been any one present of higher rank than the New England Colonel. "A mere gaud of a purple stone; but they do say it would be worth a thousand pounds if one had it in London. These poor folk call it the 'Witch Stone,' because, they say, it brings bad luck to the man that has it. The more learned sort smile at such

a superstition, and call the stone the 'Star' by reason of its surpassing beauty,—Pierrot Desbarats's Star, they call it now, since that youth picked it up last spring on Blomidon, where it had once before been found and strangely lost again. They say the youth gave the jewel to his betrothed yonder to keep for him, if so she might ward off the evil fortune."

The New England colonel's high-arched eyebrows went up into his forehead at this tale. His round and ruddy face softened with sympathy for the poor girl's despair. Winslow was convinced of the wisdom and justice of the orders which he was carrying out so firmly; but he wished the task of removing the Acadians had been confided to any other hands than his. "This affair is more grievous to me," he wrote to a friend about this time, "than any service I was ever employed in."

Presently, remarking that the girl's efforts were fruitless, and the tide ebbing rapidly, Winslow ordered several of his soldiers down into the mud to assist her search. Veiling their reluctance the men obeyed, and the ooze was explored to the very water's edge. At length, realising that

the departure could not safely be longer delayed, Winslow ordered the quest to cease.

As the girl turned back to the boat the colonel caught sight of the despair upon her face; and reddening in the folds of his double chin he slipped some gold pieces into the muddy hand of the priest.

"Be good enough, sir, to give the damsel these," he said, stiffly. "Tell her I will have the search continued. If the stone is found she shall have it. If any one steals it I will hang him."

As the priest, leaning over the boat-side, slipped the pieces into the buckskin bag, Colonel Winslow turned away, and rather roughly ordered the bespattered soldiers back to camp to clean themselves.

After the priest had bid farewell to the still weeping Marie and the little company about her, he stood waiting to receive the other boat which was now returning from the ship. He saw that something unexpected had taken place. His old parishioner was lying back in the stern, covered with a blanket, while his son and daughter lamented over him with the unrestraint of child-

ren. On the following day, under the stern guard of the Puritan soldiers, there was a funeral in the little cemetery on the hillside, and the frozen sods were heaped upon the last Acadian grave of Grand Pré village. Remi Corveau had chosen death rather than exile.

And what was the jewel whose loss had caused such grief to Marie Beaugrand? For generations the great amethyst had sparkled in the front of Blomidon, visible at intervals in certain lights and from certain standpoints, and again unseen for months or years together. The Indians called it "The Eye of Gluskâp," and believed that to meddle with it at all would bring down swiftly the vengeance of the demigod. Fixed high on the steepest face of the cliff, the gem had long defied the search of the most daring climbers. It lurked, probably, under some overhanging brow of ancient rock, as in a fit and inviolable setting. At length, some years before the date of the events I have been describing, a French sailor, fired by the far-off gleaming of the gem, had succeeded in locating the spot of splendour. Alone, with a coil of rope, he made his way to the top of the ancient cape. A few days later his bruised

and lifeless body was found among the rocks below the height, and taken for burial to the little hillside cemetery by the Gaspereau. The fellow had evidently succeeded in finding the amethyst and dislodging it from its matrix, for when next the elfin light gleamed forth it was seen to come from a point far down the cliff, not more than a hundred feet above the tide.

Here it had been found by Pierrot Desbarats, who, laughing to scorn the superstitious fears of his fellow-villagers, had brought it home in triumph. It was his purpose to go, at some convenient season, to Halifax, and there sell the matchless crystal, of whose value the priest had been able to give him some idea. But that very spring ill luck had crossed the threshold of Pierrot's cabin, a threshold over which he was even then preparing to lead Marie Beaugrand as his bride. Two of his oxen died mysteriously, his best cow slipped her calf, his horse got a strain in the loins, and his apple blossoms were nipped by a frost which passed by his neighbour's trees. Thereupon, heeding the words of an old Micmac squaw, who had said that the spell of the stone had no power upon a woman, Pierrot had placed

his treasure in Marie's keeping till such time as it could be transformed into English gold—and from that day the shadow of ill-fate had seemed to pass from him, until the edict of banishment came upon Grand Pré like a bolt out of a cloudless heaven.

From the ship, on whose deck he awaited her coming, Pierrot saw the apparently causeless accident which had befallen the gem, and watched with dry lips and burning eyes the vain endeavours of the search. His hands trembled and his heart was bitter against the girl for a few moments; but as the boat drew near, and he caught the misery and fathomless self-reproach on her averted face, his anger melted away in pity. He took Marie's hand as she came over the bulwarks, and whispered to her: "Don't cry about it, '*Tite Chèrie*, it would have brought us bad luck anywhere we went. Let 's thank the Holy Saints it 's gone."

As the ship forged slowly across the Basin and came beneath the shadow of the frown of Blomidon, Pierrot pointed out first the perilous ledge to which he had climbed for the vanished Star, and then the tide-washed hollow under the cliff,

where they had picked up the body of the luckless sailor from St. Malo. "Who knows, Marie," continued Pierrot, "if thou hadst not lost that evil stone thou might 'st one day have seen *me* in such a case as that sailor came unto!" And then, not because she was at all convinced by such reasoning, but because her lover's voice was kind, the girl looked up into Pierrot's face and made shift to dry her tears.

II

Late in December the last ship sailed away. Then the last roof-tree of Grand Pré village went down in ashes; and Winslow's lieutenant, Osgood, with a sense of heavy duty done, departed with his New England troops. Winslow himself had gone some weeks before.

For five years after the great exile the Acadian lands lay deserted, and the fogs that gathered morning by morning on the dark top of Blomidon looked down on a waste where came and went no human footstep. All the while the fated amethyst lay hidden, as far as tradition tells, beneath the red ooze and changing tides of the creek.

Then settlers began to come in, and the empty

fields were taken up by men of English speech. Once more a village arose on Grand Pré, and cider-presses creaked on the hills of Gaspereau. Of the Acadians, to keep their memory green on the meadows they had captured from the sea, there remained the interminable lines of mighty dike, the old apple orchards and the wind-breaks of tall poplars, and some gaping cellars full of ruins wherein the newcomers dug persistently for treasure.

By and by certain of the settlers, who occupied the higher grounds back of the village, began to talk of a star which they had seen, gleaming with a strange violet radiance from a patch of unreclaimed salt marsh by the mouth of the creek. In early evening only could the elfin light be discerned, and then it was visible to none but those who stood upon the heights. Soon, from no one knew where, came tales of the Eye of Gluskâp, and the Witch's Stone, and *L'Étoile de Pierrot Desbarat*, and the death of the sailor of St. Malo, and the losing of the gem on the day the ship sailed forth. Of the value of the amethyst the most fabulous stories went abroad, and for a season the good wives of the settlers had but a

sorry time of it, cleansing their husbands' garments from a daily defilement of mud.

While the vain search was going on, an old Scotchman, shrewder than his fellows, was taking out his title-deeds to the whole expanse of salt-flats, which covered perhaps a score of acres. Having quietly made his position secure at Halifax, Dugald McIntyre came down on his fellow-villagers with a firm celerity, and the digging and the defiling of garments came suddenly to an end by Grand Pré Creek. Soon a line of new dike encompassed the flats, the spring tides swept no more across those sharp grasses which had bent beneath the unreturning feet of the Acadians, and the prudent Scot found himself the richer by twenty acres of exhaustlessly fertile meadow, worth a hundred dollars an acre any day. Moreover, he felt that *he had the amethyst.* Could he not see it almost any evening toward sundown by merely climbing the hillside back of his snug homestead? How divinely it gleamed, with long, pale, steady rays, just inside the lines of circumvallation which he had so cunningly drawn about it! In its low lurking-place beside the hubbub of the recurring ebb and flow, it seemed

to watch, like an unwinking eye, for the coming of curious and baleful fates.

But it never fell to the Scotchman's fortune to behold his treasure close at hand. To the hilltop he had to go whenever he would gloat upon its beauty. To the most diligent and tireless searching of every inch of the marsh's surface it refused to yield up its implacably virginal lustre. Sometimes, though rarely, it was visible as the moon drew near her setting, and then it would glitter whitely and malignantly, like a frosty spear-point.

At last the settlers began to whisper that the Star was not in the marsh at all, but that Dugald McIntyre, after the fashion of these canny folk, had o'er-reached himself, and run the lines of the dike right over it. That it could continue to shine under such discouraging circumstances, the settlement by this time scorned to doubt. To the Eye of Gluskâp the people were ready to attribute any powers, divine or devilish.

Whether the degree of possession to which Dugald McIntyre had attained could be considered to constitute a legal ownership of the jewel or not, is a question for lawyers, not for the

mere teller of a plain tale, the mere digger among the facts of a perishing history. Suffice it to say that the finger of ill-fortune soon designated Dugald McIntrye as the man whose claim to the Eye was acknowledged by the Fates.

From the time of the completion of the new dike dated the Scotchman's troubles. His cattle one year, his crops another, seemed to find the seasons set against them. Dugald's prudence, watchfulness, and untiring industry minimised every stroke; nevertheless, things went steadily to the worse.

It was Destiny *versus* Dugald McIntyre, and with true Scottish determination Dugald braced himself to the contest. He made a brave fight; but wherever there was a doubtful point at issue, the Court Invisible ruled inexorably and without a scruple against the possessor of the Eye of Gluskâp. When he was harvesting his first crop of hay off the new dike—and a fine crop it seemed likely to be—the rains set in with a persistence that at length reduced the windrows to a condition of flavourless grey straw. Dugald McIntyre set his jaws grimly together, took good hay from another meadow, and by a discreet construction

of his bundles succeeded in selling the whole lot at a good price to his most gracious Majesty's Government at Halifax. This bold stroke seemed to daunt the Fates for a time, and while they were recovering from their confusion affairs went bravely with Dugald. When haying season came round again the weather kept favourable, and the hay was all harvested in perfect shape. Dugald was much too prudent to boast; but in his innermost heart he indulged a smile of triumph. That night his barns and outbuildings were burned to the ground, and two fine horses with them; and his house was saved hardly. This was too much even for him. Refusing to play longer a losing game, he sold the New Marsh at some sacrifice to a settler who laughed at superstition. This sceptical philosopher, however, proved open to conviction. A twelvemonth later he was ready almost to give the land away, and the Eye of Gluskâp with it. For a mere song the rich and smiling tract, carrying a heavy crop just ready for the scythe, was purchased by a young New Englander with an admirable instinct for business. This young man went to Halifax and mortgaged the land and crop to their full value; and with

the cash he left to seek his fortune. Thus the Eye of Gluskâp, and the Marsh with it, came into the possession of a widow of great wealth, on whom the spell, it seemed, was of none effect. Her heirs were in England, and it came to pass, in the course of a generation, that Grand Pré knew not the owners of the fated Marsh, and could not tell what troubles, if any, were falling upon the possessors of the Star. Nevertheless the Star kept up its gleaming, a steady eye of violet under the sunsets, a ray of icy pallor when the large moon neared her setting; and at length it was discovered that the enchanted jewel had yet other periods of manifestation. Belated wayfarers, on stormy December nights, had caught the unearthly eye-beam when no other light could be seen in earth or sky. When this took place the tide was always near about the full, and beating hoarsely all along the outer dikes. Then would be heard, between the pauses of the wind, the rattle of oars at the mouth of the creek, and the creaking of ship's cordage, and anon the sound of children crying with the cold! If voices came from the spot where the New Marsh lay unseen and the Star shone coldly watchful,

they were for the most part in a tongue which the wayfarers could not understand. But now and again, some said, there were orders spoken in English, and then the clank of arms and the tramp of marching feet. Of course these things were held in question by many of the settlers, but there were none so hardy as to suffer themselves to be caught upon the New Marsh after nightfall. The Eye of Gluskâp discerned a supernatural terror in many a heart that claimed renown for courage.

III

A hundred years had rolled down the hillsides of the Gaspereau and out across the Minas tides into the fogs and hollows of the past; and still the patch of diked land at the creek's mouth was lit by the unsearchable lustre of the Eye of Gluskâp.

As for the various distinguished scientists who undertook to unravel the mystery, either much study had made them blind, or the lights were unpropitious; for not one of them ever attained to a vision of the violet gleam. They went away with laughter on their lips.

One spring there came to Grand Pré a young Englishman named Desbra, a long-limbed, ample-chested youth, with whitish hair and ruddy skin, and clear, straightforward blue eyes. Desbra was resolved to learn farming in a new country, so he bought an old farm on the uplands, with an exhausted orchard, and was for a time surprised at the infertility of the soil.

Gradually he made himself master of the situation, and of some more desirable acres, and also, incidentally it seemed, of the affections of a maiden who lived not far from Grand Pré.

Dugald McIntyre had prospered again when the Eye of Gluskâp no longer looked malignantly on his fortunes; and to his descendants he had left one of the finest properties within view of Blomidon. It was Jessie McIntyre, his great-grandchild, who had captured the heart of young Desbra.

One rosy September afternoon, as Jessie stood in the porch where the wild grapes clustered half-ripe, the young Englishman came swinging his long legs up the slope, sprang over the fence between the apple trees, and caught the maiden gleefully in his arms.

"Congratulate me, Mistress McIntyre," he cried, as the girl pushed him away in mock disapproval. "I have just made a bargain,—a famous bargain,—a thing I never did before in my life."

"Good boy," replied Jessie, standing tip-toe to pat the pale brush of her lover's well-cropped hair. "Good boy, we 'll make a Blue Nose of you yet! And what is this famous bargain, may I ask?"

"Why, I 've just bought what so many of your fellow-countrymen call the 'Noo Ma'sh,'" answered Desbra. "I have got it for twenty dollars an acre, and it 's worth a hundred any day! I 've got the deed, and the thing 's an accomplished fact."

Jessie looked grave, and removed herself from her lover's embrace in order to lend impressiveness to her words. "Oh, Jack, Jack!" she said, "you don't know what you have done! You have become a man of Destiny, which I don't believe you want to be at all. You have bought the Star. You have made yourself the master of the Witch's Stone. You have summoned the Eye of Gluskâp to keep watch upon

you critically. In fact, it would take a long time to tell you all you have done. But one thing more you must do,—you must get rid of that famous bargain of yours without delay. I 'm not superstitious, Jack, but truly in this case I am disturbed. Bad luck, horrid bad luck, has always befallen every man owning that piece of Marsh, for the Marsh contains the Witch's Stone, and a spell is on the man that possesses that fatal jewel."

Jack Desbra laughed and recaptured the maiden. "All right," said he, "if a man must n't possess it, I shall give it away to a woman! How will that suit you, my lady?"

Jessie looked dubious, but said anything would be better than for him to keep it himself. Whereupon the young man continued: "Put on your hat, then, and come down into the village with me, and I will forthwith transfer the property, with all appurtenances thereof, to Jessie McIntyre, spinster, of the parish of Grand Pré, County of Kings, Province of Nova Scotia, in her Majesty's Dominion of Canada; and the Eye of Gluskâp will find something better to keep watch upon than me!"

To this proposal Miss Jessie, being in the main a very level-headed young lady, in spite of her little superstitions, assented without demur, and the two proceeded to the village.

On the way thither and back, Desbra learned all the history of the "Star on the Marsh," as I have endeavoured to unfold it in the preceding pages. As it happened, however, there was no mention of Pierrot Desbarat's surname in Jessie's account. Marie Beaugrand she spoke of, but Marie's *fiancé*, the last finder of the amethyst, she simply called Pierrot.

"But have you yourself ever seen the sinister glory you describe?" asked Desbra, as they neared the McIntyre home. Jessie's story had interested him keenly. He was charmed with the tale as constituting at least a notable bit of folk-lore.

"Of course I 've seen it," replied Jessie, almost petulantly. "I dare say I can show it to you now. Let us go to the top of the hill yonder, where that old poplar stands up all by itself. That tree is a relic of the Acadians, and the Eye watches it, I fancy, when it has nothing better to look at!"

When the lovers reached the hilltop and paused beside the ancient and decaying poplar, the sun had just gone down behind North Mountain, and a sombre splendour flooded the giant brow of Blomidon. The girl pointed toward the mouth of the creek. Desbra could not restrain a cry of astonishment. From just inside the dike, in a deep belt of olive shadow, came a pale, fine violet ray, unwavering and inexplicable. Presently he remarked:

"That is a fine gem of yours, my dear; and if *I* owned such a treasure I should n't leave it lying around in that careless fashion. Who knows what might happen to it, away down there on the New Marsh? What if a gull, now, should come along and swallow it, to help him grind his fish bones!"

"Don't be silly, Jack!" said the girl, her eyes dilating as she watched the mystic beam. "You know you don't half like the look of it yourself. It makes you feel uncanny, and you 're just talking nonsense to make believe you don't think there is anything queer about it!"

"Quite the contrary, I assure you, O Mistress of the Witch Stone, O Cynosure of the Eye of Gluskâp!" answered Desbra. "I am, indeed,

so much impressed that I was taking pains to remind the Powers of the transfer I have just effected! I desire to hide me from the Eye of Gluskâp by taking refuge behind a certain little spinster's petticoats!"

There was a long silence, while Desbra kept gazing on the mystic gleam as if fascinated. At last Jessie made a move as if she thought it time to return to the house, whereupon the young man, waking out of his fit of abstraction, said slowly:

"Do you know, it seems to me now as if you had been telling me an old story. I feel as if you had merely recalled to my memory incidents which I had long forgotten. I remember it all now, with much that I think you did not tell me. Looking at that strange point of light I have seen —*did* you tell me anything of an old man dying in a boat and being brought to shore just as Marie was leaving for the ship? That is a scene that stands out upon my memory sharply now. And did you say anything about an old priest? I saw him leaning over the side of the boat and slipping something into Marie's sack."

"No," said Jessie, "I did n't tell you any of

that, though it all happened as you say. Let us go home, Jack, it frightens me terribly. Oh, I wish you had n't bought that Marsh!" and she clung trembling to the young man's arm.

"But what can it mean?" persisted Desbra, as they descended the hill. "Why should I think that I was there when it all happened,—that it all happened to me, in fact? My grandmother was of French blood,—perhaps Acadian blood, for my grandfather married her in the West Indies. After the exile the Acadians, you say, were scattered all over the face of the New World! Can there be in my veins any of the blood of that unhappy people?"

Jessie stopped short and looked up at her lover's face. "Why, your name," she cried, "sounds as if it might have been French once!"

"My grandfather's name was Manners Sutton," responded Desbra, musing. My father had to take my grandfather's name to inherit some property in Martinique. I, of course, pronounce my name in English fashion, but it is spelled just as my father's was—D-e-s-b-r-a!"

As the young Englishman gave his name its French accent and pronunciation, Jessie uttered

a little cry of intelligence and wonder. She looked at her lover a moment in silence, and then said very slowly, very deliberately, pausing for every word to tell.

"The name of Marie's lover, the young man who found the Witch's Stone, was Pierrot Desbarat! D-e-s-b-a-r-a-t. You are none other, Jack, than the great-grandson of Marie and Pierrot!"

"Truly," said Desbra, "when I come to think of it, the name was spelled that way once upon a time!"

"Well, you shall *not* be a man of Destiny, Jack!" exclaimed the girl. "I won't have it! But as for me, that is another matter. We shall see if the Eye of Gluskâp has any malign influence over *me!*"

IV

Early in December, having just returned to Grand Pré from their wedding journey, Jack Desbra and his wife were standing one evening in a window that looked out across the marshes and the Basin. It was a wild night. A terrific wind had come up with the tide, and the waves raged

in thunderously all along the Minas Dikes. There was nothing visible without, so thick was the loud darkness of the storm; but the young Englishman had suggested that they should look to see if the Star would shine a welcome to their home-coming.

"It is *my* Star, remember, Jack," said his wife, "and it will be guilty of no such irregularity as showing itself on a night like this."

"You forget, my lady," was the reply, "that the Star is now mine. The Marsh has the Star, and my lady has the Marsh; but I have my lady, and so possess all!"

"Oh, Jack," cried the girl, with a shudder, "there it is! I am sure something will happen. Let us sell the Marsh to-morrow, dear; for now that I belong to you I can no longer protect you from the spell. I had forgotten that!"

"Very well," said Desbra, lightly, "if you say so, we 'll sell to-morrow."

As the two stood locked in each other's arms, and straining their eyes into the blackness, the violet ray gathered intensity, and almost seemed to reveal, by fits, the raving turmoil of the rapidly mounting tide.

In a few moments Desbra became absorbed, as it were, in a sort of waking dream. His frank, merry, almost boyish countenance took on a new expression, and his eyes assumed the strange, far-focussed steadfastness of the seer's. His wife watched, with a growing awe which she could not shake off, the change in her husband's demeanour; and the firelight in the cheerful room died away unnoticed.

At last the girl could bear no longer the ghostly silence, and that strange look in her husband's face. "What do you see, Jack?" she cried. "What do you see? Oh, how terribly it shines!"

When Desbra replied, she hardly recognised his voice.

"I see many ships," said he, slowly, and as if he heard not the sound of his own words. "They sail in past Blomidon. They steer for the mouths of the Canard and Gaspereau. Some are already close at hand. The strange light of the Eye of Gluskâp is on the sails of all. From somewhere I hear voices singing, '*Nos bonnes gens reviendront.*' The sound of it comes beating on the wind. Hark! how it swells over the Marshes!"

"I do not hear anything, Jack, dear, except

these terrible gusts that cry past the corners of the house," said Jessie, tremulously.

"How light it grows upon the New Marsh now!" continued her husband, in the same still voice. "The Eye shines everywhere. I hear no more the children crying with the cold; but on the Marsh I see an old man standing. He is waiting for the ships. He waves his stick exultingly to welcome them. I know him,—it is old Remi Corveau. They told me he died and was buried when the ships sailed away from Grand Pré.

"There comes a great ship heading for Long Island shoal. Cannot the captain see how the waves break furiously before him? No ship will live a moment that strikes the shoal to-night. She strikes! God have—No! she sails straight through the breakers!—and not three feet of water on the shoal!

"Two ships have reached the creek," continued Desbra, speaking more rapidly. "How the violet light shines through their sails! How crowded the decks are! All the faces are turned toward shore, with laughter and with streaming eyes, and hands outstretched to the fields of

Grand Pré. I know the faces. There is Evangeline, and there is Jacques Le May,—but why don't they drop anchor? They will ground if they come any nearer shore! And in this sea—Merciful Heaven, they are on the dikes! They strike—and the dike goes down before them! The great white waves throng in behind them—the Marsh is buried—and the light goes out!"

The young man started back and put his hand to his eyes, as if awaking from a dream. He caught the sound of his wife's sobbing, and, throwing both arms about her, he stooped to kiss her hair, which gleamed in the dark.

"What 's the matter, darling?" he whispered, anxiously. "And what has become of our fire?"

"Oh, Jack, you have frightened me so!" replied the girl. "You have been dreaming or in a trance, and seeing dreadful things that I could not see at all! I could see nothing but that hateful Eye, which has been shining as if all the fires of hell were in it. Come away! we will sell the Marsh to-morrow at *any* price!"

"But, dear," said Desbra, "the Star has gone out! There is not a sign of it to be seen. All outside is black as Egypt. Look!"

Reluctantly the girl turned toward the window. She gave a little cry. "That 's just what you said a minute ago!" she exclaimed. "You said 'the light goes out,' and then you came to yourself. I believe the dike is washed away!"

"Well," said Desbra, "we 'll see to-morrow." And they drew the curtains and lit the lamps and stirred the fire to a blaze; and between the shriekings of the wind they heard the roar of the breakers, trampling the low and naked coast.

When morning broke over the Gaspereau hills, and men looked out of their windows, every vestige of the dike that had inclosed the New Marsh was gone. The site of the Marsh was much eaten away, and a bank of sand was piled at the other side of the creek, near the mouth, in such a way as to divert the channel many feet from its old course.

Thereafter the tides foamed in and out with daily and nightly clamour across the spot where the Star on the Marsh had gleamed; and men made no new effort to reclaim the ruined acres.

THE END