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THE WORKS OF
GILBERT PARKER

IMPERIAL EDITION

VOLUME

VI







He felt her hand grasp his arm

GILBERT PARKER

WHEN VALMOND CAME TO
PONTIAC

THE TRAIL OF THE SWORD



NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1912



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PS 2481
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WHEN VALMOND CAME TO PONTIAC

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN VALMOND CAME TO PONTIAC

IN one sense this book stands by itself. It is like nothing else I have written, and if one should seek to give it the name of a class, it might be called an historical fantasy.

It followed *The Trail of the Sword* and preceded *The Seats of the Mighty*, and appeared in the summer of 1895. The critics gave it a reception which was extremely gratifying, because, as it seemed to me, they realised what I was trying to do; and that is a great deal. One great journal said it read as though it had been written at a sitting; another called it a *tour de force*, and the grave *Athenæum* lauded it in a key which was likely to make me nervous, since it seemed to set a standard which I should find it hard to preserve in the future. But in truth the newspaper was right which said that the book read as though it was written at a sitting, and that it was a *tour de force*. The facts are that the book was written, printed, revised, and ready for press in five weeks.

The manuscript of the book was complete within four weeks. It possessed me. I wrote night and day. There were times when I went to bed and, unable to sleep, I would get up at two o'clock or three o'clock in the morning and write till breakfast time. A couple of hours' walk after breakfast, and I would write again until nearly two o'clock. Then luncheon; afterwards a couple of hours in the open air, and I would again write till eight o'clock in the evening. The world was shut out. I moved in a dream. The book was begun at Hot Springs, in Virginia, in the annex to the old Hot Springs Hotel. I could not write in

the hotel itself, so I went to the annex, and in the big building—in the early spring-time—I worked night and day. There was no one else in the place except the old negro caretaker and his wife. Four-fifths of the book was written in three weeks there. Then I went to New York, and at the Lotus Club, where I had a room, I finished it—but not quite. There were a few pages of the book to do when I went for my walk in Fifth Avenue one afternoon. I could not shake the thing off, the last pages demanded to be written. The sermon which the old Curé was preaching on Valmond's death was running in my head. I could not continue my walk. Then and there I stepped into the Windsor Hotel, which I was passing, and asked if there was a stenographer at liberty. There was. In the stenographer's office of the Windsor Hotel, with the life of a caravanseraï buzzing around me, I dictated the last few pages of *When Valmond Came to Pontiac*. It was practically my only experience of dictation of fiction. I had never been able to do it, and have not been able to do it since, and I am glad that it is so, for I should have a fear of being led into mere rhetoric. It did not, however, seem to matter with this book. It wrote itself anywhere. The proofs of the first quarter of the book were in my hands before I had finished writing the last quarter.

It took me a long time to recover from the great effort of that five weeks, but I never regretted those consuming fires which burned up sleep and energy and ravaged the vitality of my imagination. The story was founded on the incident described in the first pages of the book, which was practically as I experienced it when I was a little child. The picture there drawn of Valmond was the memory of just such a man as stood at the four corners in front of the little hotel and scattered his hot pennies to the children of the village. Also, my father used to tell me as a child a story of Napoleon, whose history he knew as well as any man living, and something of that story may be found in the fifth chapter of the book where Valmond promotes

Sergeant Lagroin from non-commissioned rank, first to be captain, then to be colonel, and then to be general, all in a moment, as it were.

I cannot tell the original story as my father told it to me here, but it was the tale of how a sergeant in the Old Guard, having shared his bivouac supper of roasted potatoes with the Emperor, was told by Napoleon that he should sup with his Emperor when they returned to Versailles. The old sergeant appeared at Versailles in course of time and demanded admittance to the Emperor, saying that he had been asked to supper. When Napoleon was informed, he had the veteran shown in and, recognising his comrade of the baked potatoes, said at once that the sergeant should sup with him. The sergeant's reply was: "Sire, how can a non-commissioned officer dine with a general?" It was then, Napoleon, delighted with the humour and the boldness of his grenadier, summoned the Old Guard, and had the sergeant promoted to the rank of captain on the spot.

It was these apparently incongruous things, together with legends that I had heard and read of Napoleon, which gave me the idea of Valmond. First, a sketch of about five thousand words was written, and it looked as though I were going to publish it as a short story; but one day, sitting in a drawing-room in front of a grand piano, on the back of which were a series of miniatures of the noted women who had played their part in Napoleon's life, the incident of the Countess of Carnstadt (I do not use the real name) at St. Helena associated itself with the picture in my memory of the philanthropist of the street corner. Thereupon the whole story of a son of Napoleon, ignorant of his own birth, but knowing that a son had been born to Napoleon at St. Helena, flitted through my imagination; and the story spread out before me all in an hour, like an army with banners.

The next night—for this happened in New York—I went down to Hot Springs, Virginia, and began a piece of work

which enthralled me as I had never before been enthralled, and as I have never been enthralled in the same way since; for it was perilous to health and mental peace.

Fantasy as it is, the book has pictures of French-Canadian life which are as true as though the story itself was all true. Characters are in it like Medallion, the little chemist, the avocat, Lajeunesse the blacksmith, and Madeleinette, his daughter, which were in some of the first sketches I ever wrote of French Canada, and subsequently appearing in the novelette entitled *The Lane That Had No Turning*. Indeed, *When Valmond Came to Pontiac*, historical fantasy as it is, has elements both of romance and realism.

Of all the books which I have written, perhaps because it cost me so much, because it demanded so much of me at the time of its writing, I care for it the most. It was as good work as I could do. This much may at least be said: that no one has done anything quite in the same way or used the same subject, or given it the same treatment. Also it may be said, as the *Saturday Review* remarked, that it contained one whole, new idea, and that was the pathetic—unutterably pathetic—incident of a man driven by the truth in his blood to impersonate himself.

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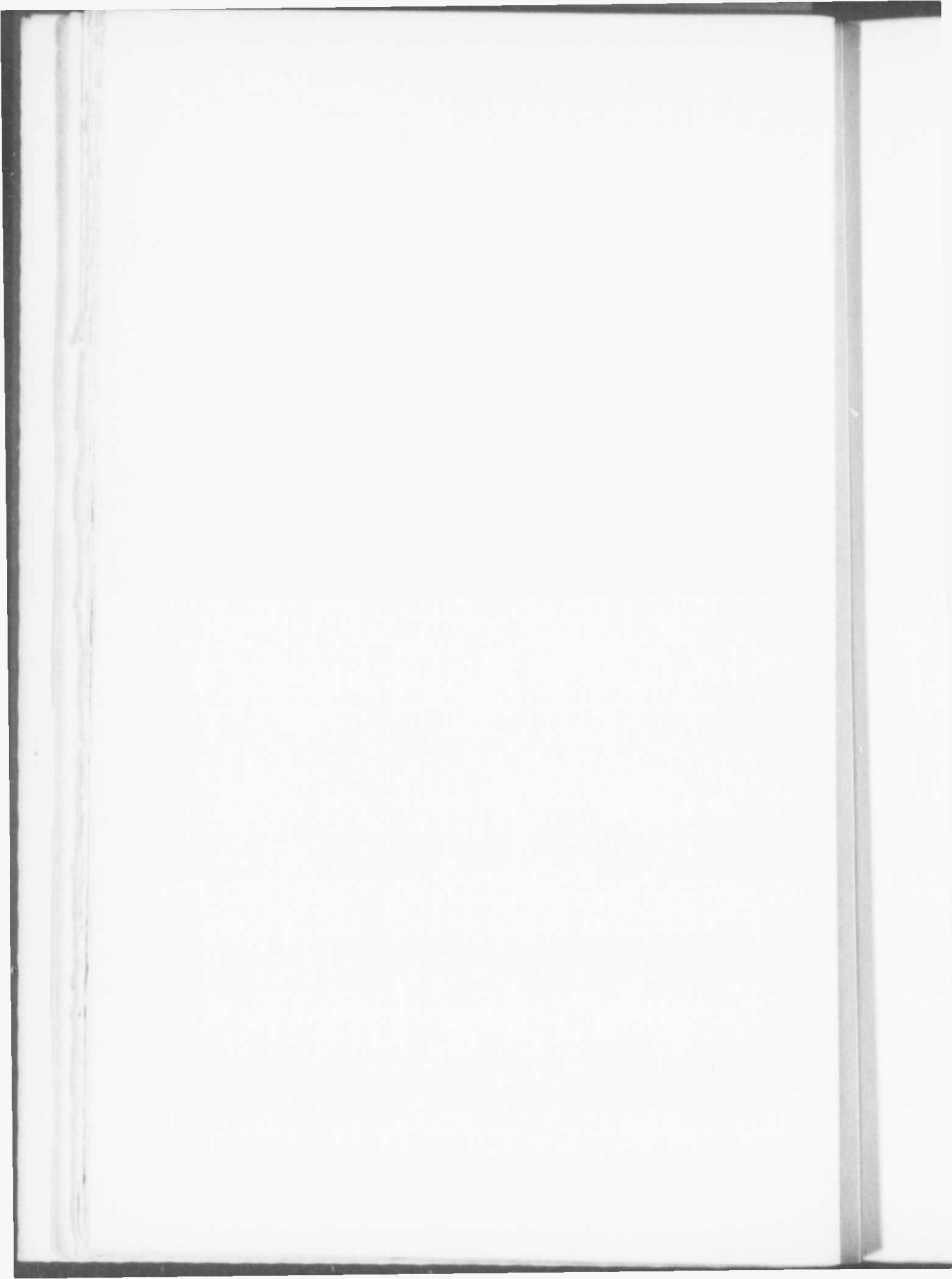
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WHEN VALMOND CAME TO PONTIAC

THE STORY OF A LOST NAPOLEON



TO
MRS. WILSON MARSHALL
VALMOND'S BEST FRIEND
AND
MY COMRADE
IN HIS
FORTUNES



WHEN VALMOND CAME TO PONTIAC

"Oh, withered is the garland of the war,
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WHEN VALMOND CAME TO PONTIAC

CHAPTER I

ON one corner stood the house of Monsieur Garon the avocat; on another, the shop of the Little Chemist; on another, the office of Medallion the auctioneer; and on the last, the Hotel Louis Quinze. The chief characteristics of Monsieur Garon's house were its brass door-knobs, and the verdant vines that climbed its sides; of the Little Chemist's shop, the perfect whiteness of the building, the rolls of sober wall-paper, and the bottles of coloured water in the shop windows; of Medallion's, the stoop that surrounded three sides of the building, and the notices of sales tacked up, pasted up, on the front; of the Hotel Louis Quinze, the deep dormer windows, the solid timbers, and the veranda that gave its front distinction—for this veranda had been the pride of several generations of landlords, and its heavy carving and bulky grace were worth even more admiration than Pontiac gave to it.

The square which the two roads and the four corners made was, on week-days, the rendezvous of Pontiac, and the whole parish; on Sunday mornings the rendezvous was shifted to the large church on the hill, beside which was the house of the Curé, Monsieur Fabre. Travelling towards the south, out of the silken haze of a mid-summer day, you would come in time to the hills of Maine; north, to the city of Quebec and the river

St. Lawrence; east, to the ocean; and west, to the Great Lakes and the land of the English. Over this bright province Britain raised her flag, but only Medallion and a few others loved it for its own sake, or saluted it in the English tongue.

In the drab velvety dust of these four corners, were gathered, one night of July a generation ago, the children of the village and many of their elders. All the events of that epoch were dated from the evening of this particular day. Another day of note the parish cherished, but it was merely a grave fulfilment of the first.

Upon the veranda-stoop of the Louis Quinze stood a man of apparently about twenty-eight years of age. When you came to study him closely, some sense of time and experience in his look told you that he might be thirty-eight, though his few grey hairs seemed but to emphasise a certain youthfulness in him. His eye was full, singularly clear, almost benign, and yet at one moment it gave the impression of resolution, at another it suggested the wayward abstraction of the dreamer. He was well-figured, with a hand of peculiar whiteness, suggesting in its breadth more the man of action than of meditation. But it was a contradiction; for, as you saw it rise and fall, you were struck by its dramatic delicacy; as it rested on the railing of the veranda, by its latent power. You faced incongruity everywhere. His dress was *bizarre*, his face almost classical, the brow clear and strong, the profile good to the mouth, where there showed a combination of sensuousness and adventure. Yet in the face there was an illusive sadness, strangely out of keeping with the long linen coat, frilled shirt, flowered waistcoat, lavender trousers, boots of enamelled leather, and straw hat with white linen streamers. It was a whimsical picture.

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At the moment that the Curé and Medallion the auctioneer came down the street together towards the Louis Quinze, talking amiably, this singular gentleman was throwing out hot pennies, with a large spoon, from a tray in his hand, calling on the children to gather them, in French which was not the French of Pontiac—or Quebec; and this refined accent the Curé was quick to detect, as Monsieur Garon the avocat, standing on the outskirts of the crowd, had done, some moments before. The stranger seemed only conscious of his act of liberality and the children before him. There was a naturalness in his enjoyment which was almost boy-like; a naïve sort of exultation possessed him.

He laughed softly to see the children toss the pennies from hand to hand, blowing to cool them; the riotous yet half-timorous scramble for them, and burnt fingers thrust into hot, blithe mouths. And when he saw a fat little lad of five crowded out of the way by his elders, he stepped down with a quick word of sympathy, put a half-dozen pennies in the child's pocket, snatched him up and kissed him, and then returned to the stoop, where were gathered the landlord, the miller, and Monsieur De la Rivière, the young Seigneur. But the most intent spectator of the scene was Parpon the dwarf, who was grotesquely crouched upon the wide ledge of a window.

Tray after tray of pennies was brought out and emptied, till at last the stranger paused, handed the spoon to the landlord, drew out a fine white handkerchief and dusted his fingers, standing silent for a moment and smiling upon the crowd.

It was at this point that some young villager called, in profuse compliment: "Three cheers for the Prince!"

The stranger threw an accent of pose into his man-

ner, his eye lighted, his chin came up, he dropped one hand negligently on his hip, and waved the other in acknowledgment. Presently he beckoned, and from the hotel were brought out four great pitchers of wine and a dozen tin cups, and, sending the garçon around with one, the landlord with another, he motioned Parpon the dwarf to bear a hand. Parpon shot out a quick, half-resentful look at him, but meeting a warm, friendly eye, he took the pitcher and went round among the elders, while the stranger himself courteously drank with the young men of the village, who, like many wiser folk, thus yielded to the charm of mystery. To every one he said a hearty thing, and sometimes touched his greeting off with a bit of poetry or a rhetorical phrase. These dramatic extravagances served him well, for he was among a race of story-tellers and crude poets.

Parpon, uncouth and furtive, moved through the crowd, dispensing as much irony as wine:

“Three bucks we come to a pretty inn,
‘Hostess,’ say we, ‘have you red wine?’

Brave! Brave!

‘Hostess,’ say we, ‘have you red wine?’

Bravement!

Our feet are sore and our crops are dry,

Bravement!”

This he hummed to the avocat in a tone all silver, for he had that one gift of Heaven as recompense for his deformity,—his long arms, big head, and short stature,—a voice which gave you a shiver of delight and pain all at once. It had in it mystery and the incomprehensible. This drinking-song, hummed just above his breath, touched some antique memory in Monsieur Garon the avocat, and he nodded kindly at the dwarf, though he refused the wine.

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"Ah, M'sieu' le Curé," said Parpon, ducking his head to avoid the hand that Medallion would have laid on it, "we're going to be somebody now in Pontiac, bless the Lord! We're simple folk, but we're not neglected. He wears a ribbon on his breast, M'sieu' le Curé!"

This was true. Fastened by a gold bar to the stranger's breast was the ribbon of an order.

The Curé smiled at Parpon's words, and looked curiously and gravely at the stranger. Tall Medallion the auctioneer took a glass of the wine, and, lifting it, said: "Who shall I drink to, Parpon, my dear? What is he?"

"Ten to one, a dauphin or a fool," answered Parpon, with a laugh like the note of an organ. "Drink to both, Long-legs." Then he trotted away to the Little Chemist.

"Hush, my friend!" said he, and he drew the other's ear down to his mouth. "Now there'll be plenty of work for you. We're going to be gay in Pontiac. We'll come to you with our spoiled stomachs." He edged round the circle, and back to where the miller his master and the young Seigneur stood.

"Make more fine flour, old man," said he to the miller; "pâtés are the thing now." Then, to Monsieur De la Rivière: "There's nothing like hot pennies and wine to make the world love you. But it's too late, too late for my young Seigneur!" he added in mockery, and again he began to hum in a sort of amiable derision:

"My little tender heart,
O gai, vive le roi!
 My little tender heart,
O gai, vive le roi!

'Tis for a grand baron,
Vive le roi, la reine!
 'Tis for a grand baron,
Vive Napoléon!"

The words of the last two lines swelled out far louder than the dwarf meant, for few save Medallion and Monsieur De la Rivière had ever heard him sing. His concert-house was the Rock of Red Pigeons, his favourite haunt, his other home, where, it was said, he met the Little Good Folk of the Scarlet Hills, and had gay hours with them. And this was a matter of awe to the timid *habitants*.

At the words, "*Vive Napoléon!*" a hand touched him on the shoulder. He turned and saw the stranger looking at him intently, his eyes alight.

"Sing it," he said softly, yet with an air of command. Parpon hesitated, shrank back.

"Sing it," he insisted, and the request was taken up by others, till Parpon's face flushed with a sort of pleasurable defiance. The stranger stooped and whispered something in his ear. There was a moment's pause, in which the dwarf looked into the other's eyes with an intense curiosity—or incredulity—and then Medallion lifted the little man on to the railing of the veranda, and over the heads and into the hearts of the people there passed, in a divine voice, a song known to many, yet coming as a new revelation to them all:

"My mother promised it,
O gai, vive le roi!
 My mother promised it,
O gai, vive le roi!
 To a gentleman of the king,
Vive le roi, la reine!
 To a gentleman of the king,
Vive Napoléon!"

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This was chanted lightly, airily, with a sweetness almost absurd, coming as it did from so uncouth a musician. The last verses had a touch of pathos, droll yet searching:

“Oh, say, where goes your love?
O gai, vive le roi!
 Oh, say, where goes your love?
O gai, vive le roi!
 He rides on a white horse,
Vive le roi, la reine!
 He wears a silver sword,
Vive Napoléon!

“Oh, grand to the war he goes,
O gai, vive le roi!
 Oh, grand to the war he goes,
O gai, vive le roi!
 Gold and silver he will bring,
Vive le roi, la reine;
 And eke the daughter of a king—
Vive Napoléon!”

The crowd—women and men, youths and maidens—enthusiastically repeated again and again the last lines and the refrain, “*Vive le roi, la reine! Vive Napoléon!*”

Meanwhile the stranger stood, now looking at the singer with eager eyes, now searching the faces of the people, keen to see the effect upon them. His glance found the faces of the Curé, the avocat, and the auctioneer; and his eyes steadied to Medallion's humorous look, to the Curé's puzzled questioning, to the avocat's bird-like curiosity. It was plain they were not antagonistic (why should they be?); and he—was there any reason why he should care whether or no they were for him or against him?

True, he had entered the village in the dead of night, with many packages and much luggage, had roused the people at the Louis Quinze, the driver who had brought him departing before daybreak gaily, because of the gifts of gold given him above his wage. True, this singular gentleman had taken three rooms in the Louis Quinze, had paid the landlord in advance, and had then gone to bed, leaving word that he was not to be waked till three o'clock the next afternoon. True, the landlord could not by any hint or indirection discover from whence his midnight visitor came. But if a gentleman paid his way, and was generous and polite, and minded his own business, wherefore should people busy themselves about him? When he appeared on the veranda of the inn with the hot pennies, not a half-dozen people in the village had known aught of his presence in Pontiac. The children came first, to scorch their fingers and fill their pockets, and after them the idle young men, and the *habitants* in general.

The stranger having warmly shaken Parpon by the hand and again whispered in his ear, stepped forward. The last light of the setting sun was reflected from the red roof of the Little Chemist's shop upon the quaint figure and eloquent face, which had in it something of the gentleman, something of the comedian. The alert Medallion himself did not realise the touch of the comedian in him, till the white hand was waved grandiloquently over the heads of the crowd. Then something in the gesture corresponded with something in the face, and the auctioneer had a nut which he could not crack for many a day. The voice was musical,—as fine in speaking almost as the dwarf's in singing,—and the attention of the children was caught by the rich, vibrating tones. He addressed himself to them.

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"My children," he said, "my name is—Valmond! We have begun well; let us be better friends. I have come from far off to be one of you, to stay with you for awhile—who knows how long—how long?" He placed a finger meditatively on his lips, sending a sort of mystery into his look and bearing. "You are French, and so am I. You are playing on the shores of life, and so am I. You are beginning to think and dream, and so am I. We are only children till we begin to make our dreams our life. So I am one with you, for only now do I step from dream to action. My children, you shall be my brothers, and together we will sow the seed of action and reap the grain; we will make a happy garden of flowers, and violets shall bloom everywhere out of our dream—everywhere. Violets, my children, pluck the wild violets, and bring them to me, and I will give you silver for them, and I will love you. Never forget," he added, with a swelling voice, "that you owe your first duty to your mothers, and afterwards to your country, and to the spirit of France. I see afar"—he looked towards the setting sun, and stretched out his arm dramatically, yet such was the eloquence of his voice and person that not even the young Seigneur or Medallion smiled—"I see afar," he repeated, "the glory of our dreams fulfilled; after toil and struggle and loss: and I call upon you now to unfurl the white banner of justice and liberty and the restoration."

The women who listened guessed little of what he meant by the fantastic sermon; but they wiped their eyes in sympathy, and gathered their children to them, and said, "Poor gentleman, poor gentleman!" and took him instantly to their hearts. The men were mystified, but wine and rhetoric had fired them, and they cheered him—no one knew why. The Curé, as he turned to

leave, with Monsieur Garon, shook his head in bewilderment; but even he did not smile, for the man's eloquence had impressed him; and more than once he looked back at the dispersing crowd and the quaint figure posing on the veranda. The avocat was thinking deeply, and as, in the dusk, he left the Curé at his own door, all that he ventured was: "Singular—a most singular person!"

"We shall see, we shall see," said the Curé abstractedly, and they said good-night.

Medallion joined the Little Chemist in his shop door and watched the *habitants* scatter, till only Parpon and the stranger were left, and these two faced each other, and, without a word, passed into the hotel together.

"H'm, h'm!" said Medallion into space, drumming the door-jamb with his fingers; "which is it, my Parpon—a dauphin, or a fool?"

He and the Little Chemist talked long, their eyes upon the window opposite, inside which Monsieur Valmond and Parpon were in conference. Up the dusty street wandered fitfully the refrain:

"To a gentleman of the king,
Vive Napoléon!"

And once they dimly saw Monsieur Valmond come to the open window and stretch out his hand, as if in greeting to the song and the singer.

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CHAPTER II

THIS all happened on a Tuesday, and on Wednesday, and for several days, Valmond went about making friends. His pockets were always full of pennies and silver pieces, and he gave them liberally to the children and to the poor, though, indeed, there were few suffering poor in Pontiac. All had food enough to keep them from misery, though often it got no further than sour milk and bread, with a dash of sugar in it of Sundays, and now and then a little pork and molasses. As for homes, every man and woman had a house of a kind, with its low, projecting roof and dormer windows, according to the ability and prosperity of the owner. These houses were whitewashed, or painted white and red, and had double glass in winter, after the same measure. There was no question of warmth, for in snow-time every house was banked up with earth above the foundations, the cracks and intersections of windows and doors filled with cloth from the village looms; and wood was for the chopping far and near. Within these air-tight cubes these simple folk baked and were happy, content if now and then the housewife opened the one pane of glass which hung on a hinge, or the slit in the sash, to let in the cold air. As a rule, the occasional opening of the outer door to admit some one sufficed, for out rushed the hot blast, and in came the dry, frosty air to brace to their tasks the cheerful story-teller and singer.

In summer the little fields were broken with wooden ploughs, followed by the limb of a tree for harrow,

and the sickle, the scythe, and the flail to do their office in due course; and if the man were well-to-do, he swung the cradle in his rye and wheat, rejoicing in the sweep of the knife and the fulness of the swathe. Then, too, there was the driving of the rivers, when the young men ran the logs from the backwoods to the great mills near and far: red-shirted, sashed, knee-booted, with rings in their ears, and wide hats on their heads, and a song in their mouths, breaking a jamb, or steering a crib, or raft, down the rapids. And the *voyageur* also, who brought furs out of the North down the great lakes, came home again to Pontiac, singing in his *patois*:

*"Nous avons passé le bois,
Nous somm's à la rive!"*

Or, as he went forth:

*"Le dieu du jour s'avance;
Amis, les vents sont doux;
Bercés par l'espérance,
Partons, embarquons-nous.
A-a-a-a-a-a-a!"*

And, as we know, it was summer when Valmond came to Pontiac. The river-drivers were just beginning to return, and by and by the flax swingeing would begin in the little secluded valley by the river; and one would see, near and far, the bright sickle flashing across the gold and green area; and all the pleasant furniture of summer set forth in pride, by the Mother of the House whom we call Nature.

Valmond was alive to it all, almost too alive, for at first the flamboyancy of his spirit touched him off with melodrama. Yet, on the whole, he seemed at first

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more natural than involved or obscure. His love for children was real, his politeness to women spontaneous. He was seen to carry the load of old Madame Dégardy up the hill, and place it at her own door. He also had offered her a pinch of snuff, which she acknowledged by gravely offering a pinch of her own from a dirty twist of brown paper.

One day he sprang over a fence, took from the hands of coquettish Élise Malboir an axe, and split the knot which she in vain had tried to break. Not satisfied with this, he piled full of wood the stone oven outside the house, and carried water for her from the spring. This came from natural kindness, for he did not see the tempting look she gave him, nor the invitation in her eye, as he turned to leave her. He merely asked her name. But after he had gone, as though he had forgotten, or remembered, something, he leaped the fence again, came up to her with an air of half-abstraction, half-courtesy, took both her hands in his, and, before she could recover herself, kissed her on the cheeks in a paternal sort of way, saying, "Adieu, adieu, my child!" and left her.

The act had condescension in it; yet, too, something unconsciously simple and primitive. Parpon the dwarf, who that moment perched himself on the fence, could not decide which Valmond was just then—dauphin or fool. Valmond did not see the little man, but swung away down the dusty road, reciting to himself couplets from *Le Vieux Drapeau*:

"Oh, come, my flag, come, hope of mine,
And thou shalt dry these fruitless tears;"

and apparently, without any connection, he passed complacently to an entirely different song:

"She loved to laugh, she loved to drink,
I bought her jewels fine."

Then he added, with a suddenness which seemed to astound himself,—for afterwards he looked round quickly, as if to see if he had been heard,—"Élise Malboir—h'm! a pretty name, Élise; but Malboir—tush! it should be Malbarre; the difference between Lombardy cider and wine of the Empire."

Parpon, left behind, sat on the fence with his legs drawn up to his chin, looking at Élise, till she turned and caught the provoking light of his eye. She flushed, then was cool again, for she was put upon her mettle by the suggestion of his glance.

"Come, lazy-bones," she said; "come fetch me currants from the garden."

"Come, mocking-bird," answered he; "come peck me on the cheek."

She tossed her head and struck straight home. "It isn't a game of pass it on from gentleman to beetle."

"You think he's a gentleman?" he asked.

"As sure as I think you're a beetle."

He laughed, took off his cap, and patted himself on the head. "Parpon, Parpon!" said he, "if Jean Malboir could see you now, he'd put his foot on you and crush you—dirty beetle!"

At the mention of her father's name a change passed over Élise; for this same Parpon, when all men else were afraid, had saved Jean Malboir's life at a log chute in the hills. When he died, Parpon was nearer to him than the priest, and he loved to hear the dwarf chant his wild rhythms of the Little Good Folk of the Scarlet Hills, more than to listen to holy prayers. Élise, who had a warm, impulsive nature, in keeping

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with her black eyes and tossing hair, who was all fire and sun and heart and temper, ran over and caught the dwarf round the neck, and kissed him on the cheek, dashing the tears out of her eyes, as she said:

"I'm a cat, I'm a bad-tempered thing, Parpon; I hate myself."

He laughed, shook his shaggy head, and pushed her away the length of his long, strong arms. "Bosh!" said he; "you're a puss and no cat, and I like you better for the claws. If you hate yourself, you'll get a big penance. Hate the ugly like Parpon, not the pretty like you. The one's no sin, the other is."

She was beside the open door of the oven; and it would be hard to tell whether her face was suffering from heat or from blushes. However that might chance, her mouth was soft and sweet, and her eyes were still wet.

"Who is he, Parpon?" she asked, not looking at him.

"Is he like Duclosse the mealman, or Lajeunesse the blacksmith, or Garotte the lime-burner—and the rest?"

"Of course not," she answered.

"Is he like the Curé, or Monsieur De la Rivière, or Monsieur Garon, or Monsieur Medallion?"

"He's different," she said hesitatingly.

"Better or worse?"

"More—more"—she didn't know what to say—"more interesting."

"Is he like the Judge Honourable that comes from Montreal, or the grand Governor, or the General that travels with the Governor?"

"Yes, but different—more—more like us in some things, like them in others, and more—splendid. He speaks such fine things! You mind the other night at the Louis Quinze. He is like—"

She paused. "What is he like?" Parpon asked slyly, enjoying her difficulty.

"Ah, I know," she answered; "he is a little like Madame the American who came two years ago. There is something—something!"

Parpon laughed again. "Like Madame Chalice from New York—fudge!" Yet he eyed her as if he admired her penetration. "How?" he urged.

"I don't know—quite," she answered, a little pettishly. "But I used to see Madame go off in the woods, and she would sit hour by hour, and listen to the waterfall, and talk to the birds, and at herself too; and more than once I saw her shut her hands—like that! You remember what tiny hands she had?" (She glanced at her own brown ones unconsciously.) "And she spoke out, her eyes running with tears—and she all in pretty silks, and a colour like a rose. She spoke out like this: 'Oh, if I could only do something, something, some big thing! What is all this silly coming and going to me, when I know, I know I might do it, if I had the chance! O Harry, Harry, can't you see!'"

"Harry was her husband. Ah, what a fisherman was he!" said Parpon, nodding. "What did she mean by doing 'big things'?" he added.

"How do I know?" she asked fretfully. "But Monsieur Valmond seems to me like her, just the same."

"Monsieur Valmond is a great man," said Parpon slowly.

"You know!" she cried; "you know! Oh, tell me, what is he? Who is he? Where does he come from? Why is he here? How long will he stay? Tell me, how long will he stay?" She caught flutteringly at Parpon's shoulder.

"You remember what I sang the other night?" he asked.

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"Yes, yes," she answered quickly. "Oh, how beautiful it was! Ah, Parpon, why don't you sing for us oftener, and all the world would love you, and—"

"I don't love the world," he retorted gruffly; "and I'll sing for the devil" (she crossed herself) "as soon as for silly gossips in Pontiac."

"Well, well!" she asked; "what had your song to do with him, with Monsieur Valmond?"

"Think hard, my dear," he said, with mystery in his look. Then, breaking off: "Madame Chalice is coming back to-day; the Manor House is open, and you should see how they fly round up there." He nodded towards the hill beyond.

"Pontiac'll be a fine place by and by," she said, for she had village patriotism deep in her veins. Had not her people lived there long before the conquest by the English?

"But tell me, tell me what your song had to do with Monsieur," she urged again. "It's a pretty song, but—"

"Think about it," he answered provokingly. "Adieu, my child!" he went on mockingly, using Valmond's words, and catching both her hands as he had done; then, springing upon a bench by the oven, he kissed her on both cheeks. "Adieu, my child!" he said again, and, jumping down, trotted away out into the road. Back to her, from the dust he made as he shuffled away, there came the words:

"Gold and silver he will bring,
Vive le roi, la reine!
And eke the daughter of a king—
Vive Napoléon!"

She went about her work, the song in her ears, and the words of the refrain beat in and out, out and in:

"*Vive Napoléon.*" Her brow was troubled, and she perched her head on this side and on that, as she tried to guess what the dwarf had meant. At last she sat down on a bench at the door of her home, and the summer afternoon spent its glories on her; for the sunflowers and the hollyhocks were round her, and the warmth gave her face a shining health and joyousness. There she brooded till she heard the voice of her mother calling across the meadow; then she got up with a sigh, and softly repeated Parpon's words: "He is a great man!"

In the middle of that night she started up from a sound sleep, and, with a little cry, whispered into the silence: "Napoleon—Napoleon!"

She was thinking of Valmond. A revelation had come to her out of her dreams. But she laughed at it, and buried her face in her pillow and went to sleep, hoping to dream again.

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CHAPTER III

IN less than one week Valmond was as outstanding from Pontiac as Dalgrothe Mountain, just beyond it in the south. His liberality, his jocundity, his occasional abstraction, his meditative pose, were all his own; his humour that of the people. He was too quick in repartee and drollery for a bourgeois, too "near to the bone" in point for an aristocrat, with his touch of the comedian and the peasant also. Besides, he was mysterious and picturesque, and this is alluring to women and to the humble, if not to all the world. It might be his was the comedian's fascination, but the flashes of grotesqueness rather pleased the eye than hurt the taste of Pontiac.

Only in one quarter was there hesitation, added to an anxiety almost painful; for to doubt Monsieur Valmond would have shocked the sense of courtesy so dear to Monsieur the Curé, Monsieur Garon, the Little Chemist, and even Medallion the auctioneer, who had taken into his bluff, odd nature something of the spirit of those old-fashioned gentlemen. Monsieur De la Rivière, the young Seigneur, had to be reckoned with independently.

It was their custom to meet once a week, at the house of one or another, for a "causerie," as the avocat called it. On the Friday evening of this particular week, all were seated in the front garden of the Curé's house, as Valmond came over the hill, going towards the Louis Quinze. His step was light, his head laid slightly to one side, as if in pleased and inquiring reverie, and there was a lifting of one corner of the mouth, suggesting

an amused disdain. Was it that disdain which comes from conquest not important enough to satisfy ambition? The social conquest of a village—to be conspicuous and attract the groundlings in this tiny theatre of life, that seemed little!

Valmond appeared not to see the little coterie, but presently turned, when just opposite the gate, and, raising his hat, half paused. Then, without more ado, he opened the gate and advanced to the outstretched hand of the Curé, who greeted him with a courtly affability. He shook hands with, and nodded good-humouredly at, Medallion and the Little Chemist, bowed to the avocat, and touched off his greeting to Monsieur De la Rivière with deliberation, not offering his hand—this very reserve a sign of equality not lost on the young Seigneur. He had not this stranger at any particular advantage, as he had wished, he knew scarcely why. Valmond took the seat offered him beside the Curé, who remarked presently:

“My dear friend, Monsieur Garon, was saying just now that the spirit of France has ever been the Captain of Freedom among the nations.”

Valmond glanced quickly from the Curé to the others, a swift, inquisitive look, then settled back in his chair, and turned, bowing, towards Monsieur Garon. The avocat's pale face flushed, his long, thin fingers twined round each other and untwined, and presently he said, in his little chirping voice, so quaint as to be almost unreal:

“I was saying that the spirit of France lived always ahead of the time, was ever first to conceive the feeling of the coming century, and by its own struggles and sufferings—sometimes too abrupt and perilous—made easy the way for the rest of the world.”

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During these words a change passed over Valmond. His restless body became still, his mobile face steady and almost set—all the life of him seemed to have burnt into his eyes; but he answered nothing, and the Curé, in the pause, was constrained to say:

“Our dear Monsieur Garon knows perfectly the history of France, and is devoted to the study of the Napoleonic times and of the Great Revolution—alas for our people and the saints of Holy Church who perished then!”

The avocat lifted a hand in mute disacknowledgment. Again there was a silence, and out of the pause Monsieur De la Rivière's voice was heard.

“Monsieur Valmond, how fares this spirit of France now—you come from France?”

There was a shadow of condescension and ulterior meaning in De la Rivière's voice, for he had caught the tricks of the *poseur* in this singular gentleman.

Valmond did not stir, but looked steadily at De la Rivière, and said slowly, dramatically, yet with a strange genuineness also:

“The spirit of France, monsieur, the spirit of France looks not forward only, but backward, for her inspiration. It is as ready for action now as when the old order was dragged from Versailles to Paris, and in Paris to the guillotine, when France got a principle and waited, waited—”

He did not finish his sentence, but threw back his head with a sort of reflective laugh.

“Waited for what?” asked the young Seigneur, trying to conquer his dislike.

“For the Man!” came the quick reply.

The avocat rubbed his hands in pleasure. He instantly divined one who knew his subject, though he

talked this melodramatically: a thing not uncommon among the *habitants* and the professional story-tellers, but scarcely the way of the coterie.

"Ah, yes, yes," he said, "for—? monsieur, for—?" He paused, as if to give himself the delight of hearing their visitor speak.

"For Napoleon," was the abrupt reply.

"Ah, yes, dear Lord, yes—a Napoleon—of—the Empire. France can only cherish an idea when a man is behind it, when a man lives it, embodies it. She must have heroes. She is a poet, a poet—and an actress."

"So said the Man, Napoleon," cried Valmond, getting to his feet. "He said that to Barras, to Rémusat, to Josephine, to Lucien, to—to another, when France had for the moment lost her idea—and her man."

The avocat trembled to his feet to meet Valmond, who stood up as he spoke, his face shining with enthusiasm, a hand raised in broad dramatic gesture, a dignity come upon him, in contrast to the figure which had disported itself through the village during the past week. The avocat had found a man after his own heart. He knew that Valmond understood whereof he spoke. It was as if an artist saw a young genius use a brush on canvas for a moment; a swordsman watch an unknown master of the sword. It was not so much the immediate act, as the divination, the *rappor*t, the spirit behind the act, which could only come from the soul of the real thing.

"I thank you, monsieur; I thank you with all my heart," the avocat said. "It is the true word you have spoken."

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auctioneer having pressed Valmond's hand warmly, for he was quick of emotion, and, like the avocat, he recognised, as he thought, the true word behind the dramatic trappings.

Monsieur Garon and Valmond talked on, eager, responsive, Valmond lost in the discussion of Napoleon, Garon in the man before him. By pregnant allusions, by a map drawn hastily on the ground here, and an explosion of secret history there, did Valmond win to a sort of worship this fine little Napoleonic scholar, who had devoured every book on his hero which had come in his way since boyhood. Student as he was, he had met a man whose knowledge of the Napoleonic life was vastly more intricate, searching and vital than his own. He, Monsieur Garon, spoke as from a book or out of a library, but this man as from the Invalides, or, since that is anachronistic, from the lonely rock of St. Helena. A private saying of Napoleon's, a word from his letters and biography, a phrase out of his speeches to his soldiers, sent tears to the avocat's eyes, and for a moment transformed Valmond.

While they talked, the Curé and the young Seigneur listened, and there passed into their minds the same wonder that had perplexed Élise Malboir; so that they were troubled, as was she, each after his own manner and temperament. Their reasoning, their feelings were different, but they were coming to the point the girl had reached when she cried into the darkness of the night, "Napoleon—Napoleon!"

They sat forgetful of the passing of time, the Curé preening with pleasure because of Valmond's remarks upon the Church when quoting the First Napoleon's praise of religion.

Suddenly a carriage came dashing up the hill, with

four horses and a postilion. The avocat was in the house searching for a book. De la Rivière, seeing the carriage first, got to his feet with instant excitement, and the others turned to look. As it neared the house, the Curé took off his baretta, and smiled expectantly, a little red spot burning on both cheeks. These deepened as the carriage stopped, and a lady, a little lady like a golden flower, with sunny eyes and face—how did she keep so fresh in their dusty roads?—stood up impulsively, and before any one could reach the gate was entering herself, her blue eyes swimming with the warmth of a kind heart—or a warm temperament, which may exist without a kind heart.

Was it the heart, or the temperament, or both, that sent her forward with hands outstretched, saying:

“Ah, my dear, dear Curé, how glad I am to see you once again! It is two years too long, dear Curé.”

She held his hand in both of hers, and looked up into his eyes with a smile at once child-like and naïve—and masterful; for behind the simplicity and the girlish manner there was a power, a mind, with which this sweet golden hair and cheeks like a rose-garden had nothing to do. The Curé, beaming, touched by her warmth, and by her tiny caressing fingers, stooped and kissed them both like an old courtier. He had come of a good family in France long ago,—very long ago,—and even in this French-Canadian village, where he had taught and served and lingered forty years, he had kept the graces of his youth, and this beautiful woman drew them all out. Since his arrival in Pontiac, he had never kissed a woman’s hand—women had kissed his; and this woman was a Protestant, like Medallion!

Turning from the Curé, she held out a hand to the young Seigneur with a little casual air, as if she had

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but seen him yesterday, and said: "Monsieur De la Rivière—what, still buried?—and the world waiting for the great touch! But we in Pontiac gain what the world loses."

She turned to the Curé again, and said, placing a hand upon his arm:

"I could not pass without stepping in upon my dear old friend, even though soiled and unpresentable. But you forgive that, don't you?"

"Madame is always welcome, and always unspotted of the dusty world," he answered gallantly.

She caught his fingers in hers as might a child, turned full upon Valmond, and waited. The Curé instantly presented Valmond to her. She looked at him brightly, alluringly, apparently so simply; yet her first act showed the perception behind that rosy and golden face, and the demure eyes whose lids languished now and then—to the unknowing with an air of coquetry, to the knowing—did any know her?—as one would shade one's eyes to see a landscape clearly, or make out a distant figure. As Valmond bowed, a thought seemed to fetch down the pink eyelids, and she stretched out her hand, which he took and kissed, while she said in English, though they had been talking in French:

"A traveller too, like myself, Monsieur Valmond? But Pontiac—why Pontiac?"

A furtive, inquiring look shot from the eyes of the young Seigneur, a puzzled glance from the Curé's, as they watched Valmond; for they did not know that he had knowledge of English; he had not spoken it to Medallion, who had sent into his talk several English words.

How did this woman divine it?

A strange suspicion flashed into Valmond's face, but it was gone on the instant, and he replied quickly:

"Yes, madame, a traveller; and for Pontiac—there is as much earth and sky about Pontiac as about Paris or London or New York."

"But people count, Monsieur—Valmond."

She hesitated before the name, as if trying to remember, though she recalled perfectly. It was her tiny fashion to pique, to appear unknowing.

"Truly, Madame Chalice," he answered instantly, for he did not yield to the temptation to pause before her name; "but sometimes the few are as important to us as the many—*ch*?"

She almost started at the *ch*, for it broke in grimly upon the gentlemanly flavour of his speech.

"If my reasons for coming were only as good as madame's—" he added.

"Who knows!" she said, with her eyes resting idly on his flowered waistcoat, and dropping to the incongruous enamelled knee-boots with their red tassels. She turned to the Curé again, but not till Valmond had added:

"Or the same—who knows?"

Again she looked at him with drooping eyelids and a slight smile so full of acid possibilities that De la Rivière drew in a sibilant breath of delight. Her movement had been as towards an impertinence; but as she caught Valmond's eye, something in it, so really boy-like, earnest, and free from insolence, met hers, that, with a little way she had, she laid back her head slowly, her lips parted in a sweet, ambiguous smile, her eyes dwelt on him with a humorous interest, or flash of purpose, and she said softly:

"Nobody knows—*ch*?"

She could not resist the delicate malice of the exclamation, she imitated the *gaucherie* so delightfully.

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Valmond did not fail to see her meaning, but he was too wise to show it.

He hardly knew how it was he had answered her unhesitatingly in English, for it had been his purpose to avoid speaking English in Pontiac.

Presently Madame Chalice caught sight of Monsieur Garon coming from the house. When he saw her, he stopped short in delighted surprise. Gathering up her skirts, she ran to him, put both hands on his shoulders, kissed him on the cheek, and said:

"Monsieur Garon, Monsieur Garon, my good avocat, my Solon! are the coffee, and the history, and the blest madeira still *chez-toi?*"

There was no jealousy in the Curé; he smiled at the scene with great benevolence, for he was as a brother to Monsieur Garon. If he had any good thing, it was his first wish to share it with him; even to taking him miles away to some simple home where a happy thing had come to poor folk—the return of a prodigal son, a daughter's fortunate marriage, or the birth of a child to childless people; and there together they exchanged pinches of snuff over the event, and made compliments from the same mould, nor desired difference of pattern. To the pretty lady's words, Monsieur Garon blushed, and his thin hand fluttered to his lips. As if in sympathy, the Curé's fingers trembled to his cassock cord.

"Madame, dear madame,"—the Curé approved by a caressing nod,—“we are all the same here in our hearts and in our homes, and if anything seem good in them to us, it is because you are pleased. You bring sunshine and relish to our lives, dear madame.”

The Curé beamed. This was after his own heart and he had ever said that his dear avocat would have been a brilliant orator, were it not for his retiring spirit.

For himself, he was no speaker at all; he could only do his duty and love his people. So he had declared over and over again, and the look in his eyes said the same now.

Madame's eyes were shining with tears. This admiration of her was too real to be doubted.

"And yet—and yet"—she said, with a hand in the Curé's and the avocat's, drawing them near her—"a heretic, a heretic, my dear friends! How should I stand in your hearts if I were only of your faith? Or is it so that you yearn over the lost sheep, more than over the ninety and nine of the fold?"

There was a real moisture in her eyes, and in her own heart she wondered, this fresh and venturing spirit, if she cared for them as they seemed to care for her—for she felt she had an inherent strain of the actress temperament, while these honest provincials were wholly real.

But if she made them happy by her gaiety, what matter! The tears dried, and she flashed a malicious look at the young Seigneur, as though to say: "You had your chance, and you made nothing of it, and these simple gentlemen have done the gracious thing."

Perhaps it was a liberal interpretation of his creed which prompted the Curé to add with a quaint smile:

"Thou art not far from the Kingdom," my daughter."

The avocat, who had no vanity, hastened to add to his former remarks, as if he had been guilty of an oversight:

"Dear madame, you have flattered my poor gleanings in history; I am happy to tell you that there is here another and a better pilot in that sea. It is Monsieur Valmond," he added, his voice chirruping in his pleasure. "For Napoleon—"

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"Ah, Napoleon—yes, Napoleon?" she said, turning to Valmond, with a look half of interest, half of incredulity.

"—For Napoleon is, through him, a revelation," the avocat went on. "He fills in the vague spaces, clears up mysteries of incident, and gives, instead, mystery of character."

"Indeed," she added, still incredulous, but interested in this bizarre figure who had so worked upon her old friend, interested because she had a keen scent for mystery, and instinctively felt it here before her. Like De la Rivière, she perceived a strange combination of the gentleman and—something else; but, unlike him, she saw also a light in the face and eyes that might be genius, poetry, adventure. For the incongruities, what did they matter to her? She wished to probe life, to live it, to race the whole gamut of inquiry, experiences, follies, loves, and sacrifices, to squeeze the orange dry, and then to die while yet young, having gone the full compass, the needle pointing home. She was as broad as sumptuous in her nature; so what did a *gaucherie* matter? or a dash of the Oriental in a citizen of the Occident?

"Then we must set the centuries right, and so on— if you will come to see me when I am settled at the Manor," she added, with soft raillery, to Valmond. He bowed, expressed his pleasure a little oracularly, and was about to say something else, but she turned deftly to De la Rivière, with a sweetness which made up for her previous irony to him, and said:

"You, my kind Seigneur, will come to breakfast with me one day? My husband will be here soon. When you see our flag flying, you will find the table always laid for four."

Then to the Curé and the avocat: "You shall visit me whenever you will, and you are to wait for nothing, or I shall come to fetch you. *Voilà!* I am so glad to see you. And now, dear Curé, will you take me to my carriage?"

Soon there was a surf of dust rising behind the carriage, hiding her; but four men, left behind in the little garden, stood watching, as if they expected to see a vision in rose and gold rise from it; and each was smiling unconsciously.

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CHAPTER IV

SINCE Friday night the good Curé, in his calm, philosophical way, had brooded much over the talk in the garden upon France, the Revolution, and Napoleon. As a rule, his sermons were commonplace almost to a classical simplicity, but there were times when, moved by some new theme, he talked to the villagers as if they, like himself, were learned and wise. He thought of his old life in France, of two Napoleons that he had seen, and of the time when, at Neuilly, a famous general burst into his father's house, and, with streaming tears, cried:

"He is dead—he is dead—at St. Helena—Napoleon! Oh, Napoleon!"

A chapter from Isaiah came to the Curé's mind. He brought out his Bible from the house, and, walking up and down, read aloud certain passages. They kept singing in his ears all day:

He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. . . .

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah:

And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand. . . .

And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house.

And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue. . . .

He looked very benign as he quoted these verses in the pulpit on Sunday morning, with a half smile, as of

pleased meditation. He was lost to the people before him, and when he began to speak, it was as in soliloquy. He was talking to a vague audience, into that space where a man's eyes look when he is searching his own mind, discovering it to himself. The instability of earthly power, the putting down of the great, their exile and chastening, and their restoration in their own persons, or in the persons of their descendants—this was his subject. He brought the application down to their own rude, simple life, then returned with it to a higher plane.

At last, as if the memories of France, "beloved and incomparable," overcame him, he dwelt upon the bitter glory of the Revolution. Then, with a sudden flush, he spoke of Napoleon. At that name the church became still, and the dullest *habitant* listened intently. Napoleon was in the air—a curious sequence to the song that was sung on the night of Valmond's arrival, when a phrase was put in the mouths of the parish, which gave birth to a personal reality. "*Vive Napoléon!*" had been on every lip this week, and it was an easy step from a phrase to a man.

The Curé spoke with pensive dignity of Napoleon's past career, his work for France, his too proud ambition, behind which was his great love of country; and how, for chastening, God turned upon him violently and tossed him like a ball into the wide land of exile, from which he came out no more.

"But," continued the calm voice, "his spirit, stripped of the rubbish of this quarrelsome world, and freed from the spite of foes, comes out from exile and lives in our France to-day—for she is still ours, though we find peace and bread to eat, under another flag. And in these troubled times, when France needs a man, even as a

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barren woman a child to be the token of her womanhood, it may be that one sprung from the loins of the Great Napoleon may again give life to the principle which some have sought to make into a legend. Even as the deliverer came out of obscure Corsica, so from some outpost of France, where the old watchwords still are called, may rise another Napoleon, whose mission will be civic glory and peace alone, the champion of the spirit of France, defending it against the unjust. He shall be fastened as a nail in a sure place, as a glorious throne to his father's house."

He leaned over the pulpit, and, pausing, looked down at his congregation. Then, all at once, he was aware that he had created a profound impression. Just in front of him, his eyes burning with a strange fire, sat Monsieur Valmond. Parpon, beside him, hung over the back of a seat, his long arms stretched out, his hands applauding in a soundless way. Beneath the sword of Louis the Martyr, the great treasure of the parish, presented to this church by Marie Antoinette, sat Monsieur Garon, his thin fingers pressed to his mouth as if to stop a sound. Presently, out of pure spontaneity, there ran through the church like a soft chorus:

"O, say, where goes your love?

O gai, vive le roi!

He wears a silver sword,

Vive Napoléon!"

The thing was unprecedented. Who had started it? Afterwards some said it was Parpon, the now chosen comrade—or servant—of Valmond, who, people said, had given himself up to the stranger, body and soul; but no one could swear to that. Shocked, and taken out of his dream, the Curé raised his hand against the

song. "Hush, hush, my children!" he said. "Hush, I command you!"

It was the sight of the upraised hands, more than the Curé's voice, which stilled the outburst. Those same hands had sprinkled the holy water in the sacrament of baptism, had blessed man and maid at the altar, had quieted the angry arm lifted to strike, had anointed the brow of the dying, and laid a crucifix on breasts which had ceased to harbour breath and care and love, and all things else.

Silence fell. In another moment the Curé finished his sermon, but not till his eyes had again met those of Valmond, and there had passed into his mind a sudden, startling thought.

Unconsciously the Curé had declared himself the patron of all that made Pontiac for ever a notable spot in the eyes of three nations: and if he repented of it, no man ever knew.

During mass and the sermon Valmond had sat very still, once or twice smiling curiously at thought of how, inactive himself, the gate of destiny was being opened up for him. Yet he had not been all inactive. He had paid much attention to his toilet, selecting, with purpose, the white waistcoat, the long, blue-grey coat cut in a fashion anterior to this time by thirty years or more, and particularly to the arrangement of his hair. He resembled Napoleon—not the later Napoleon, but the Bonaparte, lean, shy, laconic, who fought at Marengo; and this had startled the Curé in his pulpit, and the rest of the little coterie.

But Madame Chalice, sitting not far from Élise Malboir, had seen the resemblance in the Curé's garden on Friday evening; and though she had laughed at it,—for, indeed, the matter seemed ludicrous enough at first,

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—the impression had remained. She was no Catholic, she did not as a rule care for religious services; but there was interest in the air, she was restless, the morning was inviting, she was reverent of all true expression of life and feeling, though a sad mocker in much; and so she had come to the little church.

Following Élise's intent look, she read with amusement the girl's budding romance, and was then suddenly arrested by the head of Valmond, now half turned towards her. It had, indeed, a look of the First Napoleon. Was it the hair? Yes, it must be; but the head was not so square, so firm set; and what a world of difference in the grand effect! The one had been distant, splendid, brooding (so she glorified him); the other was an impressionist imitation, with dash, form, poetry, and colour. But where was the great strength? It was lacking. The close association of Paron and Valmond—that was droll; yet, too, it had a sort of fitness, she knew scarcely why. However, Monsieur was not a fool, in the vulgar sense, for he had made a friend of a little creature who could be a wasp or a humming-bird, as he pleased. Then, too, this stranger had conquered her dear avocat; had won the hearts of the mothers and daughters—her own servants talked of no one else; had captured this pretty Élise Malboir; had caused the young men to imitate his walk and retail his sayings; had won from herself an invitation to visit her; and now had made an unconscious herald and champion of an innocent old Curé, and set a whole congregation singing "*Vive Napoléon*" after mass.

Napoleon? She threw back her pretty head, laughed softly, and fanned herself. Napoleon? Why, of course there could be no real connection; the man was an impostor, a base impostor, playing upon the credulities

of a secluded village. Absurd—and interesting! So interesting, she did not resent the attention given to Valmond, to the exclusion of herself; though to speak truly, her vanity desired not admiration more than is inherent in the race of women.

Yet she was very dainty this morning, good to look at, and refreshing, with everything in flower-like accord; simple in general effect, yet with touches of the dramatic here and there—in the little black patch on the delicate health of her cheek, in the seductive arrangements of her laces. She loved dress, all the vanities, but she had something above it all—an imaginative mind, certain of whose faculties had been sharpened to a fine edge of cleverness and wit. For she was but twenty-three; with the logic of a woman of fifty, without its setness and lack of elasticity. She went straight for the hearts of things, while yet she glittered upon the surface.

This was why Valmond interested her—not as a man, a physical personality, but as a mystery to be probed, discovered. Sentiment? Coquetry? Not with him. That for less interesting men, she said to herself. Why should a point or two of dress and manners affect her unpleasantly? She ought to be just, to remember that there was a touch of the fantastic, of the barbaric, in all genius.

Was he a genius? For an instant she almost thought he was, when she saw the people make way for him to pass out of the church, as though he were a great personage, Parpon trotting behind him. He carried himself with true appreciation of the incident, acknowledging more by look than by sign this courtesy.

"Upon my word," she said, "he has them in his pocket." Then, unconsciously plagiarising Parpon: "Prince or barber—a toss-up!"

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Outside, many had gathered round Medallion. The auctioneer, who liked the unique thing and was not without tact, having the gift of humour, took on himself the office of inquisitor, even as there rose again little snatches of "*Vive Napoléon*" from the crowd. He approached Valmond, who was moving on towards the Louis Quinze, with appreciation of a time for disappearing.

"We know you, sir," said Medallion, "as Monsieur Valmond; but there are those who think you would let us address you by a name better known—indeed, the name dear to all Frenchmen. If it be so, will you not let us call you Napoleon" (he took off his hat, and Valmond did the same), "and will you tell us what we may do for you?"

Madame Chalice, a little way off, watched Valmond closely. He stood a moment in a quandary, yet he was not outwardly nervous, and he answered presently, with an air of *empressement*:

"Monsieur, my friends, I am in the hands of fate. I am dumb. Fate speaks for me. But we shall know each other better; and I trust you, who, as Frenchmen, descended from a better day in France, will not betray me. Let us be patient till Destiny strikes the hour."

Now for the first time to-day Valmond saw Madame Chalice.

She could have done no better thing to serve him than to hold out her hand, and say in her clear tones, which had, too, a fascinating sort of monotony:

"Monsieur, if you are idle Friday afternoon, perhaps you will bestow on me a half-hour at the Manor; and I will try to make half mine no bad one."

He was keen enough to feel the delicacy of the point through the deftness of the phrase; and what he said

and what he did now had no pose, but sheer gratitude. With a few gracious words to Medallion, she bowed and drove away, leaving Valmond in the midst of an admiring crowd.

He was launched on an adventure as whimsical as tragical, if he was an impostor; and if he was not, as pathetic as droll. He was scarcely conscious that Parpon walked beside him, till the dwarf said:

"Hold on, my dauphin, you walk too fast for your poor fool."

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CHAPTER V

FROM this hour Valmond was carried on by a wave of fortune. Before vespers on that Sunday night, it was common talk that he was a true son of the Great Napoleon, born at St. Helena.

Why did he come to Pontiac? He wished to be in retirement till his friends, acting for him in France, gave him the signal, and then with a small army of French-Canadians he would land in France. Thousands would gather round his standard, and so marching on to Paris, the Napoleonic faith would be revived, and he would come into his own. It is possible that these stories might have been traced to Parpon, but he had covered up his trail so well that no one followed him.

On that Sunday night, young men and old flocked into Valmond's chambers at the Louis Quinze, shook hands with him, addressing him as "Your Excellency" or "Your Highness." He maintained towards them a mysterious yet kindly reserve, singularly effective. They inspected the martial furnishing of the room: the drum, the pair of rifles, the pistols, in the corner, the sabres crossed on the wall, the gold-handled sword that lay upon the table, and the picture of Napoleon on a white horse against the wall. Tobacco and wine were set upon a side table, and every man as he passed out took a glass of wine and enough tobacco for his pipe, and said: "Of grace, your health, monseigneur!"

There were those who scoffed, who from natural habit disbelieved, and nodded knowingly, and whispered in each other's ears; but these were in the minority; and

all the women and children declared for this new "Man of Destiny." And when some foolish body asked him for a lock of his hair, and old Madame Dégardy (crazy Joan, as she was called) followed, offering him a pinch of snuff, and a lad appeared with a bunch of violets from Madame Chalice, the dissentients were cast in shadow, and had no longer courage to doubt.

Madame Chalice had been merely whimsical in sending these violets, which her gardener had brought her that very morning.

"It will help along the pretty farce," she had said to herself; and then she sat her down to read Napoleon's letters to Josephine, and to wonder that a woman could have been faithless and vile with such a man. Her blood raced indignantly in her veins as she thought of it. She admired intellect, supremacy, the gifts of temperament, deeds of war and adventure beyond all. As yet her brain was stronger than her feelings; there had been no breakers of emotion in her life. A wife, she had no child; the mother in her was spent upon her husband, whose devotion, honour, name, and goodness were dear to her. Yet—yet she had a world of her own; and reading Napoleon's impassioned letters to his wife, written with how great homage! in the flow of the tide washing to famous battle-fields, an exultation of ambition inspired her, and the genius of her distinguished ancestors set her heart beating hard. Presently, her face alive with feeling, a furnace in her eyes, she repeated a paragraph from Napoleon's letters to Josephine:

The enemy have lost, my dearest, eighteen thousand men, prisoners, killed, and wounded. Wurmzer has nothing left but to throw himself into Mantua. I hope soon to be in your arms. I love you to distraction. All is well. Nothing is wanting to your husband's happiness, save the love of Josephine.

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She sprang to her feet. "And she, wife of a hero, was in common intrigue with Hippolyte Charles at the time! She had a conqueror, a splendid adventurer, and coming emperor, for a husband, and she loved him not. I—I could have knelt to him—worshipped him. I"—With a little hysterical, disdainful laugh, as of the soul at itself, she leaned upon the window, looking into the village below, alternately smiling and frowning at the thought of this adventurer down at the Louis Quinze.

"Yet, who can tell? Disraeli was half mountebank at the start," she said. "Napoleon dressed infamously, too, before he was successful." But again she laughed, as at an absurdity.

During the next few days Valmond was everywhere—kind, liberal, quaint, tireless, at times melancholy; "in the distant perspective of the stage," as Monsieur De la Rivière remarked mockingly. But a passing member of the legislature met and was conquered by Valmond, and carried on to neighbouring parishes the wondrous tale.

He carried it through Ville Bambord, fifty miles away; and the story of how a Napoleon had come to Pontiac reached the ears of old Sergeant Eustache Lagroin of the Old Guard, who had fought with the Great Emperor at Waterloo, and in his army on twenty other battle-fields. He had been at Fontainebleau when Napoleon bade farewell to the Old Guard, saying: "*For twenty years I have ever found you in the path of honour and glory. Adieu, my children! I would I were able to press you all to my heart—but I will at least press your eagle. I go to record the great deeds we have done together.*"

When the gossip came to Lagroin, as he sat in his doorway, babbling of Grouchy and Lannes and Da-

voust, the Little Corporal outflanking them all in his praise, his dim blue eyes flared out from the distant sky of youth and memory, his lips pursed in anger, and he got to his feet, his stick fiercely pounding the ground.

"Tut! tut!" said he. "A lie! a pretty lie! I knew all the Napoleons—Joseph, Lucien, Louis, Jerome, Caroline, Eliza, Pauline—all! I have seen them every one. And their children—pah! Who can deceive me? I will go to Pontiac, I will see to this tomfoolery. I'll bring the rascal to the drumhead. Does he think there is no one? Pish! I will spit him at the first stroke. Here, here, Manette," he cried to his grand-daughter; "fetch out my uniform, give it an airing, and see to the buttons. I will show this brag how one of the Old Guard looked at Saint Jean. Quick, Manette, my sabre polish; I'll clean my musket, and to-morrow I will go to Pontiac. I'll put the scamp through his facings—but yes! I am eighty, but I have an arm of thirty."

True to his word, the next morning at daybreak he started to walk to Pontiac, accompanied for a mile or so by Manette and a few of the villagers.

"See you, my child," he said, "I will stay with my niece, Désire Malboir, and her daughter Élise, there in Pontiac. You shall hear how I fetch that vagabond to his potage!"

Valmond had purchased a tolerable white horse through Medallion. After a day's grooming the beast showed off very well; and he was now seen riding about the parish, dressed after the manner of the First Napoleon, with a cocked hat and a short sword at his side. He rode well, and the silver and pennies he scattered were most fruitful of effect from the martial elevation. He happened to be riding into the village at one end as Sergeant Lagroin entered it at the other, each going

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towards the Louis Quinze. Valmond knew nothing of Sergeant Lagroin, so that what followed was of the inspiration of the moment. It sprang from his wit, and from his knowledge of Napoleon and the Napoleonic history, a knowledge which had sent Monsieur Garon into tears of joy in his own home, and afterwards off to the Manor House and also to the Seigneury, full of praise of him.

Catching sight of the sergeant, the significance of the thing flashed to his brain, and his course was mapped out on the instant. Sitting very straight, Valmond rode steadily down towards the old soldier. The sergeant had drawn notice as he came up the street, and people came to their doors, and children followed the grey, dust-covered veteran, in his last-century uniform. He came as far as the Louis Quinze, and then, looking on up the road, he saw the white horse, the cocked hat, the white waistcoat, and the long grey coat. He brought his stick down smartly on the ground, drew himself up, squared his shoulders, and said: "Courage, Eustache Lagroin. It is not forty Prussians, but one rogue! Crush him! Down with the pretender!"

So, with a defiant light in his eye, he came on, the old uniform sagging loosely on the shrunken body, which yet was soldier-like from head to foot. Years of camp and discipline and battle and endurance were in the whole bearing of the man. He was no more of Pontiac and this simple life than was Valmond himself.

So they neared each other, the challenger and the challenged, the champion and the invader, and quickly the village emptied itself out to see.

When Valmond came so close that he could observe every detail of the old man's uniform, he suddenly reined in his horse, drew him back on his haunches with

his left hand, and with his right saluted—not the old sergeant, but the coat of the Old Guard, to which his eyes were directed. Mechanically the hand of the sergeant went to his cap, then, starting forward with an angry movement, he seemed as though he would attack Valmond.

Valmond sat very still, his right hand thrust in his bosom, his forehead bent, his eyes calmly, resolutely, yet distantly, looking at the sergeant, who grew suddenly still also, while the people watched and wondered.

As Valmond looked, a soft light passed across his face, relieving its theatrical firmness, the half-contemptuous curl of his lip. He knew well enough that this event would make or unmake him in Pontiac. He became also aware that a carriage had driven up among the villagers, and had stopped; and though he did not look directly, he felt that it was Madame Chalice. This soft look on his face was not all assumed; for the ancient uniform of the sergeant touched something in him, the true comedian, or the true Napoleon, and it seemed as if he might dismount and take the old soldier in his arms.

He set his horse on a little, and paused again, with not more than fifteen feet between them. The sergeant's brain was going round like a top. It was not he that challenged after all.

"Soldier of the Old Guard," cried Valmond, in a clear, ringing voice, "how far is it to Friedland?"

Like a machine the veteran's hand again went up to his cap, and he answered:

"To Friedland—the width of a ditch!"

His voice shook as he said it, and the world to him was all a muddle then; for Napoleon the Great had asked a private this question after that battle on the

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Alle, when Berningsen, the Russian, threw away an army to the master strategist.

The private had answered the question in the words of Sergeant Lagroin. It was a saying long afterwards among the Old Guard, though it may not be found in the usual histories of that time, where every battalion, almost every company, had a watchword, which passed to make room for others, as victory followed victory.

"Soldier of the Old Guard," said Valmond again, "how came you by those scars upon your forehead?"

"I was a drummer at Auerstadt, a corporal at Austerlitz, a sergeant at Waterloo," rolled back the reply, in a high, quavering voice, as memories of great events blew in upon the ancient fires of his spirit.

"Ah!" answered Valmond, nodding eagerly; "with Davoust at Auerstadt—thirty against sixty thousand men. At eight o'clock, all fog and mist, as you marched up the defile towards the Sonnenberg hills, the brave Gudin and his division feeling their way to Blucher. Comrade, how still you stepped, your bayonet thrust out before you, clearing the mists, your eyes straining, your teeth set, ready to thrust. All at once a quick-moving mass sprang out of the haze, and upon you, with hardly a sound of warning; and an army of hussars launched themselves at your bayonets! You bent that wall back like a piece of steel, and broke it. Comrade, that was the beginning, in the mist of morning. Tell me how you fared in the light of evening, at the end of that bloody day."

The old soldier was trembling. There was no sign, no movement, from the crowd. Across the fields came the sharpening of a scythe, the cry of the grasshoppers, and the sound of a mill-wheel arose near by. In the

mill itself, far up in a deep dormer window, sat Parpon with his black cat, looking down upon the scene with a grim smiling.

The sergeant saw that mist fronting Sonnenberg rise up, and show ten thousand splendid cavalry and fifty thousand infantry, with a king and a prince to lead them down upon those malleable but unmoving squares of French infantry. He saw himself drumming the Prussians back and his Frenchmen on.

"Beautiful God!" he cried proudly, "that was a day! And every man of the Third Corps that time lift up the lid of hell and drop a Prussian in. I stand beside Davoust once, and *ping!* come a bullet, and take off his *chapeau*. It fell upon my drum. I stoop and pick it up and hand it to him, but I keep drumming with one hand all the time. 'Comrade,' say I, 'the army thanks you for your courtesy.' 'Brother,' he say, 'twas to your drum,' and his eye flash out where Gudin carved his way through those pigs of Prussians. 'I'd take my head off to keep your saddle filled, comrade,' say I. *Ping!* come a bullet and catch me in the calf. 'You hold your head too high, brother,' the general say, and he smile. 'I'll hold it higher,' answer I, and I snatch at a soldier. 'Up with me on your shoulder, big comrade,' I say, and he lift me up. I make my sticks sing on the leather. 'You shall take off your hat to the Little Corporal to-morrow, if you've still your head, brother'—speak Davoust like that, and then he ride away like the devil to Morand's guns. Ha, ha, ha!"

The sergeant's face was blazing with a white glare, for he was very pale, and seemed unconscious of all save the scene in his mind's eye. "Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed again. "Beautiful God, how did Davoust bring us on up to Sonnenberg! And next day I saw

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the Little Corporal. 'Drummer,' say he, 'no head's too high for my Guard. Come you, comrade, your general gives you to me. Come, Corporal Lagroin,' he call; and I come. 'But, first,' he say, 'up on the shoulder of your big soldier again, and play.' 'What shall I play, sire?' I ask. 'Play ten thousand heroes to Walhalla,' he answer. I play, and I think of my brother Jacques, who went fighting to heaven the day before. Beautiful God! that was a day at Auerstadt."

"Soldier," said Valmond, waving his hand, "step on. There is a drum at Louis Quinze. Let us go together, comrade."

The old sergeant was in a dream. He wheeled, the crowd made way for him, and at the neck of the white horse he came on with Valmond. As they passed the carriage of Madame Chalice, Valmond made no sign. They stopped in front of the hotel, and Valmond, motioning to the garçon, gave him an order. The old sergeant stood silent, his eyes full fixed upon Valmond. In a moment the boy came out with the drum. Valmond took it, and, holding it in his hands, said softly:

"Soldier of the Old Guard, here is a drum of France."

Without a word the old man took the drum, his fingers trembling as he fastened it to his belt. When the sticks were in his hand, all trembling ceased, and his hands became steady. He was living in the past entirely.

"Soldier," said Valmond in a loud voice, "remember Austerlitz. The Heights of Pratzen are before you. Play up the feet of the army."

For an instant the old man did not move, and then a sullen sort of look came over his face. He was not a drummer at Austerlitz, and for the instant he did not remember the tune the drummers played.

"Soldier," said Valmond softly, "with 'the Little Sword that Danced' play up the feet of the army."

A light broke over the old man's face. The swift look he cast on Valmond had no distrust now. Instantly his hand went to his cap.

"My General!" he said, and stepped in front of the white horse. There was a moment's pause, and then the sergeant's arms were raised, and down came the sticks with a rolling rattle on the leather. They sent a shiver of feeling through the village, and turned the meek white horse into a charger of war. No man laughed at the drama performed in Pontiac that day, not even the little coterie who were present, not even Monsieur De la Rivière, whose brow was black with hatred, for he had watched the eyes of Madame Chalice fill with tears at the old sergeant's tale of Auerstadt, had noticed her admiring glance, "at this damned comedian," as he now called Valmond. When he came to her carriage, she said, with oblique suggestion:

"What do you think of it?"

"Impostor! fakir!" was his sulky reply. "Nothing more."

"If fakirs and impostors are so convincing, dear monsieur, why be yourself longer? Listen!" she added.

Valmond had spoken down at the aged drummer, whose arms were young again, as once more he marched on Prätzen. Suddenly from the sergeant's lips there broke, in a high, shaking voice, to the rattle of the drum:

*"Conscrits, au pas;
Ne pleurez pas;
Ne pleurez pas;
Marchez au pas,
Au pas, au pas, au pas, au pas!"*

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They had not gone twenty yards before fifty men and boys, caught in the inflammable moment, sprang out from the crowd, fell involuntarily into rough marching order, and joined in the inspiring refrain:

*"Marchez au pas,
Au pas, au pas, au pas, au pas!"*

The old man in front was charged anew. All at once, at a word from Valmond, he broke into the Marseillaise, with his voice and with his drum. To these Frenchmen of an age before the Revolution, the Marseillaise had only been a song. Now in their ignorant breasts there waked the spirit of France, and from their throats there burst out, with a half-delirious ecstasy:

*"Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé."*

As they neared the Louis Quinze, a dozen men, just arrived in the village, returned from river-driving, carried away by the chant, tumultuously joined in the procession, and so came on in a fever of vague patriotism. A false note in the proceedings, a misplay on the part of Valmond, would easily have made the thing ridiculous; but even to Madame Chalice, with her keen artistic sense, it had a pathetic sort of dignity, by virtue of its rude earnestness, its raw sincerity. She involuntarily thought of the great Napoleon and his toy kingdom of Elba, of Garibaldi and his handful of patriots. There were depths here, and she knew it.

"Even the pantaloons may have a soul," she said; "or a king may have a heart."

In front of the Louis Quinze, Valmond waved his hand for a halt, and the ancient drummer wheeled and

faced him, fronting the crowd. Valmond was pale, and his eyes burned like restless ghosts. Surely the Cupid bow of the thin Napoleonic lips was there, the distant yet piercing look. He waved his hand again, and the crowd were silent.

"My children," said he, "we have begun well. Once more among you the antique spirit lives. From you may come the quickening of our beloved country; for she is yours, though here under the flag of our ancient and amiable enemy you wait the hour of your return to her. In you there is nothing mean or dull; you are true Frenchmen. My love is with you. And you and I, true to each other, may come into our own again—over there!"

He pointed to the East.

"Through you and me may France be born again; and in the villages and fields and houses of Normandy and Brittany you may, as did your ancestors, live in peace, and bring your bones to rest in that blessed and honourable ground. My children, my heart is full. Let us move on together. Napoleon from St. Helena calls to you, Napoleon in Pontiac calls to you! Will you come?"

Reckless cheering followed; many were carried away into foolish tears, and Valmond sat still and let them kiss his hand, while pitchers of wine went round.

"Where is our fakir now, dear monsieur?" said Madame Chalice to De la Rivière once again.

Valmond got silence with a gesture. He opened his waistcoat, took from his bosom an order fastened to a little bar of gold, and held it in his hand.

"Drummer," he said, in a clear, full tone, "call the army to attention."

The old man set their blood tingling with the impish sticks.

"I advance Sergeant Lagroin, of the Old Guard of glorious memory, to the rank of Captain in my Household Troops, and I command you to obey him as such."

His look bent upon the crowd, as Napoleon's might have done on the Third Corps.

"Drummer, call the army to attention," fell the words.

And again like a small whirlwind of hailstones the sticks shook on the drum.

"I advance Captain Lagroin to the rank of Colonel in my Household Troops, and I command you to obey him as such."

And once more: "Drummer, call the army to attention."

The sticks swung down, but somehow they faltered, for the drummer was shaking now.

"I advance Colonel Lagroin to the rank of General in my Household Troops, and I command you to obey him as such."

Then he beckoned, and the old man drew near. Stooping, he pinned the order upon his breast. When the sergeant saw what it was, he turned pale, trembled, and the drumsticks fell from his hand. His eyes shone like sun on wet glass, then tears sprang from them upon his face. He caught Valmond's hand and kissed it, and cried, oblivious of them all:

"Ah, sire, sire! It is true. It is true. I know that ribbon, and I know you are a Napoleon. Sire, I love you, and I will die for you!"

For the first time that day a touch of the fantastic came into Valmond's manner.

"General," he said, "the centuries look down on us as they looked down on him, your sire—and mine!"

He doffed his hat, and the hats of all likewise came off in a strange quiet. A cheer followed, and Valmond motioned for wine to go round freely. Then he got off his horse, and, taking the weeping old man by the arm, himself loosening the drum from his belt, they passed into the hotel.

"A cheerful bit of foolery and treason," said Monsieur De la Rivière to Madame Chalice.

"My dear Seigneur, if you only had more humour and less patriotism!" she answered. "Treason may have its virtues. It certainly is interesting, which, in your present gloomy state, you are not."

"I wonder, madame, that you can countenance this imposture," he broke out.

"Excellent and superior monsieur, I wonder sometimes that I can countenance you. Breakfast with me on Sunday, and perhaps I will tell you why—at twelve o'clock."

She drove on, but, meeting the Curé, stopped her carriage.

"Why so grave, my dear Curé?" she asked, holding out her hand.

He fingered the gold cross upon his breast—she had given it to him two years before.

"I am going to counsel him—Monsieur Valmond," he said. Then, with a sigh: "He sent me two hundred dollars for the altar to-day, and fifty dollars to buy new cassocks for myself."

"Come in the morning and tell me what he says," she answered; "and bring our dear avocat."

As she looked from her window an hour later, she saw bonfires burning, and up from the village came the old song, that had prefaced a drama in Pontiac.

But Élise Malboir had a keener interest that night,

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for Valmond and Parpon brought her uncle "General Lagroin," in honour to her mother's cottage; and she sat and listened dreamily, as Valmond and the old man talked of great things to be done.

CHAPTER VI

PRINCE or plebeian, Valmond played his part with equal aplomb at the simple home of Élise Malboir and at the Manoir Hilaire, where Madame Chalice received him. His dress had nothing of the bizarre on this occasion. He was in black—long coat, silk stockings, the collar of his waistcoat faced with white, his neckerchief white and full, his enamelled shoes adorned with silver buckles. His present repose and decorum contrasted strangely with the fanciful display at his first introduction. Madame Chalice approved instantly, for though the costume was, in itself, an affectation, previous to the time by a generation, it was in the picture, was sedately refined. She welcomed him in the salon where many another distinguished man had been entertained—from Frontenac, and Vaudreuil, down to Sir Guy Carleton. The Manor had belonged to her husband's people seventy-five years before, and though, as a banker in New York, Monsieur Chalice had become an American of the Americans, at her request he had bought back from a kinsman the old place, unchanged, furniture and all. Bringing the antique plate, china, and bric-à-brac, made in France when Henri Quatre was king, she fared away to Quebec, set the rude mansion in order, and was happy for a whole summer, as was her husband, the best of fishermen and sportsmen. The Manor House stood on a knoll, behind which, steppe on steppe, climbed the hills, till they ended in Dalgrothe Mountain. Beyond the mountain were unexplored regions, hill and valley floating into hill and valley, lost

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in a miasmatic haze, ruddy, silent, untenanted, save, mayhap, by the strange people known as the Little Good Folk of the Scarlet Hills.

The house had been built in the seventeenth century, and the walls were very thick, to keep out both cold and attack. Beneath the high-pointed roof were big dormer windows, and huge chimneys flanked each side of the house. The great roof gave a sense of crouching or hovering, for warmth or in menace. As Valmond entered the garden, Madame Chalice was leaning over the lower half of the entrance door, which opened latitudinally, and was hung on large iron hinges of quaint design, made by some seventeenth-century forgeron. Behind her deepened hospitably the spacious hall, studded and heavy beamed, with its unpainted pine ceiling toned to a good brown by smoke and time. Caribou and moose antlers hung along the wall, with arquebuses, powder-horns, big shot-bags, swords, and even pieces of armour, such as Cartier brought with him from St. Malo.

Madame Chalice looked out of this ancient avenue, a contrast, yet a harmony; for, though her dress was modern, her person had a rare touch of the archaic, and fitted into the picture like a piece of beautiful porcelain, coloured long before the art of making fadeless colours was lost.

There was an amused, meditative smiling at her lips, a kind of wonder, the tender flush of a new experience. She turned, and, stepping softly into the salon, seated herself near the immense chimney, in a heavily carved chair, her feet lost in rich furs on the polished floor. A quaint table at her hand was dotted with rare old books and miniatures, and behind her ticked an ancient clock in a tall mahogany case.

Valmond came forward, hat in hand, and raised to his lips the fingers she gave him. He did it with the vagueness of one in a dream, she thought, and she neither understood nor relished his uncomplimentary abstraction; so she straightway determined to give him some troublesome moments.

"I have waited to drink my coffee with you," she said, motioning him to a seat; "and you may smoke a cigarette, if you wish."

Her eyes wandered over his costume with critical satisfaction.

He waved his hand slightly, declining the permission, and looked at her with an intent seriousness, which took no account of the immediate charm of her presence.

"I'd like to ask you a question," he said, without preamble. She was amused, interested. Here was an unusual man, who ignored the conventional preliminary nothings, beating down the grass before the play, as it were.

"I was never good at catechism," she answered. "But I will be as hospitable as I can."

"I've felt," he said, "that you can—can see through things; that you can balance them, that you get at all sides, and—"

She had been reading Napoleon's letters this very afternoon.

"Full squared?" she interrupted quizzically.

"As the Great Emperor said," he answered. "A woman sees farther than a man, and if she has judgment as well, she is the best prophet in the world."

"It sounds distinctly like a compliment," she answered. "You are trying to break that square!"

She was mystified; he was different from any man

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she had ever entertained. She was not half sure she liked it. Yet, if he were in very truth a prince—she thought of his *début* in flowered waistcoat, panama hat, and enamelled boots!—she should take this confidence as a compliment; if he were a barber, she could not resent it; she could not waste wit or time; she could not even, in extremity, call the servant to show the barber out; and in any case she was too comfortably interested to worry herself with speculation.

He was very much in earnest. "I want to ask you," he said, "what is the thing most needed to make a great idea succeed."

"I have never had a great idea," she replied.

He looked at her eagerly, with youthful, questioning eyes.

"How simple, and yet how astute he is!" she thought, remembering the event of yesterday.

"I thought you had—I was sure you had," he said in a troubled sort of way. He did not see that she was eluding him.

"I mean, I never had a fixed and definite idea that I proceeded to apply, as you have done," she explained tentatively. "But—well, I suppose that the first requisite for success is absolute belief in the idea; that it be part of one's life; to suffer for, to fight for, to die for, if need be—though that sounds like a handbook of moral mottoes, doesn't it?"

"That's it, that's it," he said. "The thing must be in your bones—*hein?*"

"Also in—your blood—*hein?*" she rejoined slowly and meaningly, looking over the top of her coffee-cup at him. Somehow again the plebeian quality in that *hein* grated on her, and she could not resist the retort.

"What!" said he confusedly, plunging into another pitfall. She had challenged him, and he knew it.

"Nothing what—ever," she answered, with an urbanity that defied the suggestion of malice. Yet, now that she remembered, she had sweetly challenged one of a royal house for the like lapse into the vulgar tongue. A man should not be beheaded because of a *what*. So she continued more seriously: "The idea must be himself, all of him, born with him, the rightful output of his own nature, the thing he must inevitably do, or waste his life."

She looked him honestly in the eyes. She had spoken with the soft irony of truth, the blind tyranny of the just. She had meant to test him here and there by throwing little darts of satire, and yet he made her serious and candid in spite of herself. He was of kin to her in some part of his nature. He did not concern her as a man of personal or social possibilities—merely as an active originality. Leaning back languidly, she was eyeing him closely from under drooping lids, smiling, too, in an unimportant sort of way, as if what she had said was a trifle.

Consummate liar and comedian, or true man and no pretender, his eyes did not falter. They were absorbed, as if in eager study of a theme.

"Yes, yes, that's it; and if he has it, what next?" said he meaningly.

"Well, then, opportunity, joined to coolness, knowledge of men, power of combination, strategy, and"—she paused, and a purely feminine curiosity impelled her to add suggestively—"and a woman."

He nodded. "And a woman," he repeated after her musingly, and not turning it to account cavalierly, as he might have done. He was taking himself with a simple seriousness that appealed to her.

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"You may put strategy out of the definition, leaving in the woman," she continued ironically.

He felt the point, and her demure dart struck home. But he saw what an ally she might make. Tremendous possibilities moved before him. His heart beat faster than it did yesterday when the old sergeant faced him. Here was beauty—he admired that; power—he wished for that. What might he not accomplish, no matter how wild his move, with this wonderful creature as his friend, his ally, his— He paused, for this house had a master as well as a mistress.

"We will leave in the woman," he said quietly, yet with a sort of trouble in his face.

"In your idea?" was the negligent question.

"Yes."

"Where is the woman?" insinuated the soft, bewildering voice.

"Here!" he answered emotionally, and he believed it was the truth. She stood looking meditatively out of the window, not at him.

"In Pontiac?" she asked presently, turning with a child-like surprise. "Ah, yes, yes! I know—one of the people; suitable for Pontiac; but is it wise? She is pretty—but is it wise?"

She was adroitly suggesting *Élise Malboir*, whose little romance she had discovered.

"She is the prettiest and wisest lady I ever knew, or ever hoped to know," he said earnestly, laying his hand upon his heart.

"How far will your idea take you?" she asked evasively, her small fingers tightening a gold hair-pin.

"To Paris—to the Tuileries!" he answered, rising to his feet.

"And you start—from Pontiac?"

"What difference, Pontiac or Cannes, like the Great

Master after Elba," he said. "The principle is the same."

"The money?"

"It will come," he answered. "I have friends—and hopes."

She almost laughed. She was suddenly struck by the grotesqueness of the situation. But she saw how she had hurt him, and she said instantly:

"Of course, with those one may go far. Sit down and tell me all your plans."

He was about to comply, when, glancing out of the window, she saw the old sergeant, now "General Lagroin," and Parpon hastening up the walk. Parpon ambled comfortably beside the old man, who seemed ten years younger than he had done the day before.

"Your army and cabinet, monseigneur!" she said with a pretty, mocking gesture of salutation.

He glanced at her reprovingly. "My General and my Minister; as brave a soldier and as able a counselor as ever prince had. Madame," he added, "they only are *farceurs* who do not dare, and have not wisdom. My General has scars from Auerstadt, Austerlitz, and Waterloo; my Minister is feared—in Pontiac. Was he not the trusted friend of the Grand Seigneur, as he was called here, the father of your Monseieur De la Rivière? Has he yet erred in advising me? Have we yet failed? Madame," he added, a little rhetorically, "as we have begun, so will we end, true to our principles, and—"

"And gentlemen of the king," she said provokingly, urging him on.

"Pardon, gentlemen of the Empire, madame, as time and our lives will prove. . . . Madame, I thank you for your violets of Sunday last."

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She admired the acumen that had seized the perfect opportunity to thank her for the violets, the badge of the Great Emperor.

"My hives shall not be empty of bees—or honey," she said, alluding to the imperial bees, and she touched his arm in a pretty, gracious fashion.

"Madame—ah, madame!" he replied, and his eyes grew moist.

She bade the servant admit Lagroin and Parpon.

They bowed profoundly, first to Valmond, and afterwards to Madame Chalice. She saw the point, and it amused her. She read in the old man's eye the soldier's contempt for women, together with his new-born reverence and love for Valmond. Lagroin was still dressed in the uniform of the Old Guard, and wore on his breast the sacred ribbon which Valmond had given him the day before.

"Well, General?" said Valmond.

"Sire," said the old man, "they mock us in the streets. Come to the window, sire."

The "sire," fell on the ears of Madame Chalice like a *mot* in a play; but Valmond, living up to his part, was grave and solicitous. He walked to the window, and the old man said:

"Sire, do you not hear a drum?"

A faint rat-tat came up the road. Valmond bowed.

"Sire," the old man continued, "I would not act till I had your orders."

"Whence comes the mockery?" Valmond asked quietly.

The other shook his head. "Sire, I do not know. But I remember of such a thing happening to the Emperor. It was in the garden of the Tuileries, and twenty-four battalions of the Old Guard filed past our

great chief. Some fool sent out a gamin dressed in regimentals in front of one of the bands, and then—”

“Enough, General,” said Valmond; “I understand. I will go down into the village—eh, monsieur?” he added, turning to Parpon with impressive consideration.

“Sire, there is one behind these mockers,” answered the little man in a low voice.

Valmond turned towards Madame Chalice. “I know my enemy, madame,” he said.

“Your enemy is not here,” she rejoined kindly.

He stooped over her hand, and bowed Lagroin and Parpon to the door.

“Madame,” he said, “I thank you. Will you accept a souvenir of him whom we both love, martyr and friend of France?”

He drew from his breast a small painting of Napoleon, on ivory, and handed it to her.

“It was the work of David,” he continued. “You will find it well authenticated. Look upon the back of it.”

She looked, and her heart beat a little faster.

“This was done when he was alive?” she said.

“For the King of Rome,” he answered. “Adieu, madame. Again I thank you, for our cause as for myself.”

He turned away. She let him get as far as the door.

“Wait, wait!” she said suddenly, a warm light in her face, for her imagination had been touched. “Tell me, tell me the truth. Who are you? Are you really a Napoleon? I can be a constant ally, but, I charge you, speak the truth to me. Are you—” She stopped abruptly. “No, no; do not tell me,” she added quickly. “If you are not, you will be your own executioner. I

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will ask for no further proof than did Sergeant Lagroin. It is in a small way yet, but you are playing a terrible game. Do you realise what may happen?"

"In the hour that you ask a last proof I will give it," he said almost fiercely. "I go now to meet an enemy."

"If I should change that enemy into a friend—" she hinted.

"Then I should have no need of stratagem or force."

"Force?" she asked suggestively. The drollery of it set her smiling.

"In a week I shall have five hundred men."

"Dreamer!" she thought, and shook her head dubiously; but, glancing again at the ivory portrait, her mood changed.

"*Au revoir*," she said. "Come and tell me about the mockers. Success go with you—sire."

Yet she did not know whether she thought him sire or sinner, gentleman or comedian, as she watched him go down the hill with Lagroin and Parpon. But she had the portrait. How did he get it? No matter, it was hers now.

Curious to know more of the episode in the village below, she ordered her carriage, and came driving slowly past the Louis Quinze at an exciting moment. A crowd had gathered, and boys, and even women, were laughing and singing in ridicule snatches of, "*Vive Napoléon!*" For, in derision of yesterday's event, a small boy, tricked out with a paper cocked-hat and incongruous regimentals, with a hobby-horse between his legs, was marching up and down, preceded by another lad, who played a toy drum in derision of Lagroin. The children had been well rehearsed, for even as Valmond arrived upon the scene, Lagroin and Parpon

on either side of him, the mock Valmond was bidding the drummer: "Play up the feet of the army!"

The crowd parted on either side, silenced and awed by the look of potential purpose in the face of this yesterday's hero. The old sergeant's glance was full of fury, Parpon's of a devilish sort of glee.

Valmond approached the lads.

"My children," he said kindly, "you have not learned your lesson well enough. You shall be taught." He took the paper caps from their heads. "I will give you better caps than these." He took the hobby-horse, the drum, and the tin swords. "I will give you better things than these." He put the caps on the ground, added the toys to the heap, and Parpon, stooping, lighted the paper. Scattering money among the crowd, and giving some silver to the lads, Valmond stood looking at the bonfire for a moment, and then, pointing to it dramatically, said:

"My friends, my brothers, Frenchmen, we will light larger fires than these. Your young Seigneur sought to do me honour this afternoon. I thank him, and he shall have proof of my affection in due time. And now our good landlord's wine is free to you, for one goblet each. My children," he added, turning to the little mockers, "come to me to-morrow and I will show you how to be soldiers. My General shall teach you what to do, and I will teach you what to say."

Almost instantly there arose the old admiring cries of, "*Vive Napoléon!*" and he knew that he had regained his ground. Amid the pleasant tumult the three entered the hotel together, like people in a play.

As they were going up the stairs, Parpon whispered to the old soldier, who laid his hand fiercely upon the fine sword at his side, given him that morning by Valmond;

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for, looking down, Lagroin saw the young Seigneur maliciously laughing at them, as if in delight at the mischief he had caused.

That night, at nine o'clock, the old sergeant went to the Seigneur, knocked, and was admitted to a room where were seated the young Seigneur, Medallion, and the avocat.

"Well, General," said De la Rivière, rising with great formality, "what may I do to serve you? Will you join our party?" He motioned to a chair.

The old man's lips were set and stern, and he vouchsafed no reply to the hospitable request.

"Monsieur," he said, "to-day you threw dirt at my great master. He is of royal blood, and he may not fight you. But I, monsieur, his General, demand satisfaction—swords or pistols!"

De la Rivière sat down, leaned back in his chair, and laughed. Without a word the old man stepped forward, and struck him across the mouth with his red cotton handkerchief.

"Then take that, monsieur," said he, "from one who fought for the First Napoleon, and will fight for this Napoleon against the tongue of slander and the acts of fools. I killed two Prussians once for saying that the Great Emperor's shirt stuck out below his waistcoat. You'll find me at the Louis Quinze," he added, before De la Rivière, choking with wrath, could do more than get to his feet; and, wheeling, he left the room.

The young Seigneur would have followed him, but the avocat laid a restraining hand upon his arm, and Medallion said: "Dear Seigneur, see, you can't fight him. The parish would only laugh."

De la Rivière took the advice, and on Sunday, over the coffee, unburdened the tale to Madame Chalice.

Contrary to his expectations, she laughed a great deal, then soothed his wounded feelings and advised him as Medallion had done. And because Valmond commanded the old sergeant to silence, the matter ended for the moment. But it would have its hour yet, and Valmond knew this as well as did the young Seigneur.

CHAPTER VII

It was no jest of Valmond's that he would, or could, have five hundred followers in two weeks. Lagroin and Parpon were busy, each in his own way—Lagroin, open, bluff, imperative; Parpon, silent, acute, shrewd. Two days before the feast of St. John the Baptist, the two made a special tour through the parish for certain recruits. If these could be enlisted, a great many men of this and other parishes would follow. They were, by name, Muroc the charcoalman, Duclosse the mealman, Lajeunesse the blacksmith, and Garotte the lime-burner, all men of note, after their kind, with influence and individuality.

Lagroin chafed that he must play recruiting-sergeant and general also. But it gave him comfort to remember that the Great Emperor had not at times disdained to be his own recruiting-sergeant; that, after Friedland, he himself had been taken into the Old Guard by the Emperor; that Davoust had called him brother; that Ney had shared his supper and slept with him under the same blanket. Parpon would gladly have done this work alone, but he knew that Lagroin in his regimentals would be useful.

The sought-for comrades were often to be found together about the noon hour in the shop of José Lajeunesse. They formed the coterie of the humble, even as the Curé's coterie represented the aristocracy of Pontiac—with Medallion as a connecting link.

Arches and poles were being put up, to be decorated against the feast-day, and piles of wood for bonfires

were arranged at points on the hills round the village. Cheer and goodwill were everywhere, for a fine harvest was in view, and this feast-day always brought gladness and simple revelling. Parish interchanged with parish; but, because it was so remote, Pontiac was its own goal of pleasure, and few fared forth, though others came from Ville Bambord and elsewhere to join the *fête*. As Lagroin and the dwarf came to the door of the smithy, they heard the loud laugh of Lajeunesse.

"Good!" said Parpon. "Hear how he tears his throat!"

"If he has sense, I'll make a captain of him," remarked Lagroin consequentially.

"You shall beat him into a captain on his own anvil," rejoined the little man.

They entered the shop. Lajeunesse was leaning on his bellows, laughing, and holding an iron in the spitting fire; Muroc was seated on the edge of the cooling tub; and Duclosse was resting on a bag of his excellent meal. Garotte was the only missing member of the quartette.

Muroc was a wag, a grim sort of fellow, black from his trade, with big rollicking eyes. At times he was not easy to please, but if he took a liking, he was for joking at once. He approved of Parpon, and never lost a chance of sharpening his humour on the dwarf's impish whetstone of a tongue.

"Lord! Lord!" he cried, with feigned awe, getting to his feet at sight of the two. Then, to his comrades, "Children, children, off with your hats! Here is Monsieur Talleyrand, if I'm not mistaken. On to your feet, mealman, and dust your stomach. Lajeunesse, wipe your face with your leather. Duck your heads, stupid!"

With mock solemnity the three greeted Parpon and

Lagroin. The old sergeant's face flushed, and his hand dropped to his sword; but he had promised Parpon to say nothing till he got his cue, and he would keep his word. So he disposed himself in an attitude of martial attention. The dwarf bowed to the others with a face of as great gravity as the charcoalman's, and waving his hand, said:

"Keep your seats, my children, and God be with you. You are right, smutty-face; I am Monsieur Talleyrand, Minister of the Crown."

"The devil, you say!" cried the mealman.

"Tut, tut!" said Lajeunesse, chaffing; "haven't you heard the news? The devil is dead!"

The dwarf's hand went into his pocket. "My poor orphan," said he, trotting over and thrusting some silver into the blacksmith's pocket, "I see he hasn't left you well off. Accept my humble gift."

"The devil dead?" cried Muroc; "then I'll go marry his daughter."

Parpon climbed up on a pile of untired wheels, and with an elfish grin began singing. Instantly the three humorists became silent and listened, the blacksmith pumping his bellows mechanically the while.

"O mealman white, give me your daughter,
Oh, give her to me, your sweet Suzon!
O mealman dear, you can do no better
For I have a château at Malmaison.

Black charcoalman, you shall not have her
She shall not marry you, my Suzon—
A bag of meal—and a sack of carbon!
Non, non, non, non, non, non, non, non!

Go look at your face, my *fanfaron*,
For my daughter and you would be night and day.

Non, non, non, non, non, non, non, non,
 Not for your château at Malmaison,
Non, non, non, non, non, non, non,
 You shall not marry her, my Suzon."

A better weapon than his waspish tongue was Parpon's voice, for it, before all, was persuasive. A few years before, none of them had ever heard him sing. An accident discovered it to them, and afterwards he sang for them but little, and never when it was expected of him. He might be the minister of a dauphin or a fool, but he was now only the mysterious Parpon who thrilled them. All the soul cramped in the small body was showing in his eyes, as on that day when he had sung before the Louis Quinze.

A face suddenly appeared at a little door just opposite him. No one but Parpon saw it. It belonged to Madelinette, the daughter of Lajeunesse, who had a voice of merit. More than once the dwarf had stopped to hear her singing as he passed the smithy. She sang only the old *chansons* and the songs of the *voyageurs*, with a far greater sweetness and richness, however, than any in the parish; and the Curé could detect her among all others at mass. She had been taught her notes, but that had only opened up possibilities, and fretted her till she was unhappy. What she felt she could not put into her singing, for the machinery, unknown and tyrannical, was not hers. Twice before she had heard Parpon sing—at mass when the miller's wife was buried, and he, forgetting the world, had poured forth all his beautiful voice; and on that notable night before the Louis Quinze. If he would but teach her those songs of his, give her that sound of an organ in her throat! Parpon guessed what she thought. Well, he would see what could be done, if the blacksmith joined Valmond's standard.

He stopped singing.

"That's as good as dear Caron, the *vivandière* of the Third Corps. Blood o' my body, I believe it's better—almost!" said Lagroin, nodding his head patronisingly. "She dragged me from under the mare of a damned Russian that cut me down, before he got my bayonet in his liver. Caron! Caron! ah yes, brave Caron! my dear Caron!" said the old man, smiling through the alluring light that the song had made for him, as he looked behind the curtain of the years.

Parpon's pleasant ridicule was not lost on the charcoalman and the mealman; but neither was the singing wasted; and their faces were touched with admiration, while the blacksmith, with a sigh, turned to his fire and blew the bellows softly.

"Blacksmith," said Parpon, "you have a bird that sings."

"I've no bird that sings like that, though she has pretty notes, my bird." He sighed again. "'Come, blacksmith,' said the Count Lassone, when he came here a-fishing, 'that's a voice for a palace,' said he. 'Take it out of the woods and teach it,' said he, 'and it will have all Paris following it.' That to me, a poor blacksmith, with only my bread and sour milk, and a hundred dollars a year or so, and a sup of brandy when I can get it."

The charcoalman spoke up. "You'll not forget the indulgences folks give you more than the pay for setting the dropped shoe—true gifts of God, bought with good butter and eggs at the holy auction, blacksmith. I gave you two myself. You have your blessings, Lajeunesse."

"So; and no one to use the indulgences but you and Madelinette, giant," said the fat mealman.

"Ay, thank the Lord, we've done well that way!"

said the blacksmith, drawing himself up—for he loved nothing better than to be called the giant, though he was known to many as *petit enfant*, in irony of his size.

Lagroin was now impatient. He could not see the drift of this, and he was about to whisper to Parpon, when the little man sent him a look, commanding silence, and he fretted on dumbly.

"See, my blacksmith," said Parpon, "your bird shall be taught to sing, and to Paris she shall go by and by."

"Such foolery!" said Duclosse.

"What's in your noddle, Parpon?" cried the charcoalman.

The blacksmith looked at Parpon, his face all puzzled eagerness. But another face at the door grew pale with suspense. Parpon quickly turned towards it.

"See here, Madelinette," he said, in a low voice.

The girl stepped inside and came to her father. Lajeunesse's arm ran round her shoulder. There was no corner of his heart into which she had not crept.

"Out with it, Parpon!" called the blacksmith hoarsely, for the daughter's voice had followed herself into those farthest corners of his rugged nature.

"I will teach her to sing first; then she shall go to Quebec, and afterwards to Paris, my friend," he answered.

The girl's eyes were dilating with a great joy. "Ah, Parpon—good Parpon!" she whispered.

"But Paris! Paris! There's gossip for you, thick as mortar," cried the charcoalman, and the mealman's fingers beat a tattoo on his stomach.

Parpon waved his hand. "'Look to the weevil in your meal, Duclosse; and you, smutty-face, leave true things to your betters. See, blacksmith," he added, "she shall go to Quebec, and after that to Paris."

Here he got off the wheels, and stepped out into the centre of the shop. "Our master will do that for you. I swear for him, and who can say that Parpon was ever a liar?"

The blacksmith's hand tightened on his daughter's shoulder. He was trembling with excitement.

"Is it true? is it true?" he asked, and the sweat stood out on his forehead.

"He sends this for Madelinette," answered the dwarf, handing over a little bag of gold to the girl, who drew back. But Parpon went close to her, and gently forced it into her hands.

"Open it," he said. She did so, and the blacksmith's eyes gloated on the gold. Muroc and Duclosse drew near, and peered in also. And so they stood there for a little while, all looking and exclaiming.

Presently Lajeunesse scratched his head. "Nobody does nothing for nothing," said he. "What horse do I shoe for this?"

"La, la!" said the charcoalman, sticking a thumb in the blacksmith's side; "you only give him the happy hand—like that!"

Duclosse was more serious. "It is the will of God that you become a marshal or a duke," he said wheezingly to the blacksmith. "You can't say no; it is the will of God, and you must bear it like a man."

The child saw further; perhaps the artistic strain in her gave her keener reasoning.

"Father," she said, "Monsieur Valmond wants you for a soldier."

"Wants *me*?" he roared in astonishment. "Who's to shoe the horses a week days, and throw the weight o' Sundays after mass? Who's to handle a stick for the Curé when there's fighting among the river-men?"

But there, la, la! many a time my wife, my good Florienne, said to me, 'José—José Lajeunesse, with a chest like yours, you ought to be a corporal at least.'

Parpon beckoned to Lagroin, and nodded.

"Corporal! corporal!" cried Lagroin; "in a week you shall be a lieutenant and a month shall make you a captain, and maybe better than that!"

"Better than that—bagosh!" cried the charcoalman in surprise, proudly using the innocuous English oath.

"Better than that—sutler, maybe?" said the mealman, smacking his lips.

"Better than that," replied Lagroin, swelling with importance. "Ay, ay, my dears, great things are for you. I command the army, and I have free hand from my master. Ah, what joy to serve a Napoleon once again! What joy! Lord, how I remember—"

"Better than that—eh?" persisted Duclosse, perspiring, the meal on his face making a sort of paste.

"A general or a governor, my children," said Lagroin. "First in, first served. Best men, best pickings. But every man must love his chief, and serve him with blood and bayonet; and march o' nights if need, and limber up the guns if need, and shoe a horse if need, and draw a cork if need, and cook a potato if need; and be a hussar, or a tirailleur, or a trencher, or a general, if need. But yes, that's it; no pride but the love of France and the cause, and—"

"And Monsieur Valmond," said the charcoalman slyly.

"And Monsieur the Emperor!" cried Lagroin almost savagely.

He caught Parpon's eye, and instantly his hand went to his pocket.

"Ah, he is a comrade, that! Nothing is too good for his friends, for his soldiers. See!" he added.

He took from his pocket ten gold pieces. "These are bagatelles," said His Excellency to me; 'but tell my friends, Monsieur Muroc and Monsieur Duclosse and Monsieur Garotte, that they are buttons for the coats of my sergeants, and that my captains' coats have ten times as many buttons. Tell them,' said he, 'that my friends shall share my fortunes; that France needs us; that Pontiac shall be called the nest of heroes. Tell them that I will come to them at nine o'clock to-night, and we will swear fidelity.'

"And a damned good speech too—bagosh!" cried the mealman, his fingers hungering for the gold pieces.

"We're to be captains pretty soon—eh?" asked Muroc.

"As quick as I've taught you to handle a company," answered Lagroin, with importance.

"I was a patriot in '37," said Muroc. "I went against the English; I held a bridge for two hours. I have my musket yet."

"I am a patriot now," urged Duclosse. "Why the devil not the English first, then go to France, and lick the Orleans!"

"They're a skittish lot, the Orleans; they might take it in their heads to fight," suggested Muroc, with a little grin.

"What the devil do you expect?" roared the blacksmith, blowing the bellows hard in his excitement, one arm still round his daughter's shoulder. "D'you think we're going to play leap-frog into the Tuileries? There's blood to let, and we're to let it!"

"Good, my leeches!" said Parpon; "you shall have blood to suck. But we'll leave the English be. France first, then our dogs will take a snap at the flag on the citadel yonder." He nodded in the direction of Quebec.

Lagroin then put five gold pieces each into the hands of Muroc and Duclosse, and said:

"I take you into the service of Prince Valmond Napoleon, and you do hereby swear to serve him loyally, even to the shedding of your blood, for his honour and the honour of France; and you do also vow to require a like loyalty and obedience of all men under your command. Swear."

There was a slight pause, for the old man's voice had the ring of a fatal earnestness. It was no farce, but a real thing.

"Swear," he said again. "Raise your right hand."

"Done!" said Muroc. "To the devil with the charcoal! I'll go wash my face."

"There's my hand on it," added Duclosse; "but that rascal Pétrie will get my trade, and I'd rather be strung by the Orleans than that."

"Till I've no more wind in my bellows!" responded Lajeunesse, raising his hand, "if he keeps faith with my Madelinette."

"On the honour of a soldier," said Lagroin, and he crossed himself.

"God save us all!" said Parpon. Obeying a motion of the dwarf's hand, Lagroin drew from his pocket a flask of cognac, with four little tin cups fitting into each other. Handing one to each, he poured them brimming full. Then, filling his own, he spilled a little in the steely dust of the smithy floor. All did the same, though they knew not why.

"What's that for?" asked the mealman.

"To show the Little Corporal, dear Corporal Violet, and my comrades of the Old Guard, that we don't forget them," cried Lagroin.

He drank slowly, holding his head far back, and as he

brought it straight again, he swung on his heel, for two tears were racing down his cheeks.

The mealman wiped his eyes in sympathy; the charcoalman shook his head at the blacksmith, as though to say, "Poor devil!" and Parpon straightway filled their glasses again. Madelinette took the flask to the old sergeant. He looked at her kindly, and patted her shoulder. Then he raised his glass.

"Ah, the brave Caron, the dear Lucette Caron! Ah, the time she dragged me from under the Russian's mare!" He smiled into the distance. "Who can tell? Perhaps, perhaps—again!" he added.

Then, all at once, as if conscious of the pitiful humour of his meditations, he came to his feet, straightened his shoulders, and cried:

"To her we love best!"

The charcoalman drank, and smacked his lips. "Yes, yes," he said, looking into the cup admiringly; "like mother's milk that. White of my eye, but I do love her!"

The mealman cocked his glance towards the open door. "Élise!" he said sentimentally, and drank.

The blacksmith kissed his daughter, and his hand rested on her head as he lifted the cup, but he said never a word.

Parpon took one sip, then poured his liquor upon the ground, as though down there was what he loved best; but his eyes were turned to Dalgrothe Mountain, which he could see through the open door.

"France!" cried the old soldier stoutly, and tossed off the liquor.

CHAPTER VIII

THAT night Valmond and his three new recruits, to whom Garotte the limeburner had been added, met in the smithy and swore fealty to the great cause. La-jeunesse, by virtue of his position in the parish, and his former military experience, was made a captain, and the others sergeants of companies yet unnamed and unformed. The limeburner was a dry, thin man of no particular stature, who coughed a little between his sentences, and had a habit, when not talking, of humming to himself, as if in apology for his silence. This humming had no sort of tune or purpose, and was but a vague musical sputtering. He almost perilled the gravity of the oath they all took to Valmond by this idiosyncrasy. His occupation gave him a lean, arid look; his hair was crisp and straight, shooting out at all points, and it flew to meet his cap as if it were alive. He was a genius after a fashion, too, and at all the feasts and on national holidays he invented some new feature in the entertainments. With an eye for the grotesque, he had formed a company of jovial blades, called Kalathumpians, after the manner of the mimes of old times in his beloved Dauphiny.

"All right, all right," he said, when Lagroin, in the half-lighted blacksmith shop, asked him to swear allegiance and service. "*Brigadier, vous avez raison,*" he added, quoting a well-known song. Then he hummed a little and coughed. "We must have a show"—he hummed again—"we must tickle 'em up a bit—touch 'em where they're silly with a fiddle and fife—raddy

dee dee, ra dee, ra dee, ra dee!" Then, to Valmond: "We gave the fools who fought the Little Corporal sour apples in Dauphiny, my dear!"

He followed this extraordinary speech with a plan for making an ingenious *coup* for Valmond, when his Kalathumpians should parade the streets on the evening of St. John the Baptist's Day.

With hands clasped the new recruits sang:

"When from the war we come,
Allons gai!
 Oh, when we ride back home,
 If we be spared that day,
Ma luronne lurette,
 We'll laugh our scars away,
Ma luronne luré,
 We'll lift the latch and stay,
Ma luronne luré."

The huge frame of the blacksmith, his love for his daughter, his simple faith in this new creed of patriotism, his tenderness of heart, joined to his irascible disposition, spasmodic humour, and strong arm, roused in Valmond an immediate liking, as keen, after its kind, as that he had for the Curé and the avocat. With both of these he had had long talks of late, on everything but purely personal matters. They would have thought it a gross breach of etiquette to question him on that which he avoided. His admiration of them was complete, although he sometimes laughed half sadly, half whimsically, as he thought of their simple faith in him.

At dusk on the eve of St. John the Baptist's Day, after a long conference with Lagroin and Parpon, Valmond went through the village, and came to the smithy to talk with Lajeunesse. Those who recognised him in passing took off their *bonnets rouges*, some

saying, "Good-night, your Highness;" some, "How are you, monseigneur?" some, "God bless your Excellency;" and a batch of bacchanalian river-men, who had been drinking, called him "General," and insisted on embracing him, offering him cognac from their tin flasks.

The appearance among them of old Madame Dégardy shifted the good-natured attack. For many a year, winter and summer, she had come and gone in the parish, all rags and tatters, wearing men's knee-boots and cap, her grey hair hanging down in straggling curls, her lower lip thrust out fiercely, her quick eyes wandering to and fro, and her sharp tongue, like Parpon's, clearing a path before her whichever way she turned. On her arm she carried a little basket of cakes and *confitures*, and these she dreamed she sold, for they were few who bought of Crazy Joan. The stout stick she carried was as compelling as her tongue, so that when the river-men surrounded her in amiable derision, it was used freely and with a heart all kindness: "For the good of their souls," she said, "since the Curé was too mild, Mary in heaven bless him high and low!"

She was the Curé's champion everywhere, and he in turn was tender towards the homeless body, whose history even to him was obscure, save in the few particulars that he had given to Valmond the last time they had met.

In her youth Madame Dégardy was pretty and much admired. Her lover had deserted her, and in a fit of mad indignation and despair she had fled from the village, and vanished no one knew where, though it had been declared by a wandering hunter that she had been seen in the far-off hills that march into the south, and that she lived there with a barbarous mountaineer, who had himself long been an outlaw from his kind.

But this had been mere gossip, and after twenty-five years she came back to Pontiac, a half-mad creature, and took up the thread of her life alone; and Parpon and the Curé saw that she suffered nothing in the hard winters.

Valmond left the river-men to the tyranny of her tongue and stick, and came on to where the red light of the forge showed through the smithy window. As he neared the door, he heard a voice singularly sweet, and another of commoner calibre was joining in the refrain of a song:

“‘Oh, traveller, see where the red sparks rise,’
 (Fly away, my heart, fly away!)
 But dark is the mist in the traveller’s eyes.
 (Fly away, my heart, fly away!)
 ‘Oh, traveller, see far down the gorge,
 The crimson light from my father’s forge.
 (Fly away, my heart, fly away!)”

“‘Oh, traveller, hear how the anvils ring.’
 (Fly away, my heart, fly away!)
 But the traveller heard, ah, never a thing.
 (Fly away, my heart, fly away!)
 ‘Oh, traveller, loud do the bellows roar,
 And my father waits by the smithy door.
 (Fly away, my heart, fly away!)”

“‘Oh, traveller, see you thy true love’s grace.’
 (Fly away, my heart, fly away!)
 And now there is joy in the traveller’s face.
 (Fly away, my heart, fly away!)
 Oh, wild does he ride through the rain and mire,
 To greet his love by the smithy fire.
 (Fly away, my heart, fly away!)”

In accompaniment, some one was beating softly on the anvil, and the bellows were blowing rhythmically.

He lingered for a moment, loath to interrupt the song, and then softly opened the upper half of the door, for it was divided horizontally, and leaned over the lower part.

Beside the bellows, her sleeves rolled up, her glowing face cowed in her black hair, comely and strong, stood Élise Malboir, pushing a rod of steel into the sputtering coals. Over the anvil, with a small bar caught in a pair of tongs, hovered Madelinette Lajeunesse, beating, almost tenderly, the red-hot point of the steel. The sound of the iron hammer on the malleable metal was like muffled silver, and the sparks flew out like jocund fireflies. She was making two hooks for her kitchen wall, for she was clever at the forge, and could shoe a horse if she were let to do so. She was but half-turned to Valmond, but he caught the pure outlines of her face and neck, her extreme delicacy of expression, which had a pathetic, subtle refinement, in acute contrast to the quick, abundant health, the warm energy, the half-defiant look of Élise. It was a picture of labour and life.

A dozen thoughts ran through Valmond's mind. He was responsible, to an extent, for the happiness of these two young creatures. He had promised to make a songstress of the one, to send her to Paris; had roused in her wild, ambitious hopes of fame and fortune—dreams that, in any case, could be little like the real thing: fanciful visions of conquest and golden living, where never the breath of her hawthorn and wild violets entered; only sickly perfumes, as from an odalisque's fan, amid the enervating splendour of voluptuous boudoirs—for she had read of these things.

Valmond had, in a vague, graceless sort of way, worked upon the quick emotions of Élise. Every little

touch of courtesy had been returned to him in half-shy, half-ardent glances; in flushes, which the kiss he had given her the first day of their meeting had made the signs of an intermittent fever; in modest yet alluring waylayings; in restless nights, in half-tuneful, half-silent days; in a sweet sort of petulance. She had kept in mind everything he had said to her; the playfully emotional pressure of her hand, his eloquent talks with her uncle, the old sergeant's rhapsodies on his greatness; and there was no place in the room where he had sat or stood, which she had not made sacred—she, the mad-cap, who had lovers by the dozen. Importuned by the Curé and her mother to marry, she had threatened, if they worried her further, to wed fat Duclosse, the mealman, who had courted her in a ponderous way for at least three years. The fire that corrodes, when it does not make glorious without and within, was in her veins, and when Valmond should call she was ready to come. She could not, at first, see that if he were, in truth, a Napoleon, she was not for him. Seized of that wilful, daring spirit called Love, her sight was bounded by the little field where she strayed.

Élise's arm paused upon the lever of the bellows, when she saw Valmond watching them from the door. He took off his hat to them, as Madelinette turned towards him, the hammer pausing in the stroke.

"Ah, monseigneur!" she said impulsively, and then paused, confused. Élise did not move, but stood looking at him, her eyes all flame, her cheeks going a little pale, and flushing again. With a quick motion she pushed her hair back, and as he stepped inside and closed the door behind him, she blew the bellows, as if to give a brighter light to the place. The fire flared up, but there were corners in deep shadow. Valmond

doffed his hat again and said ceremoniously: "Mademoiselle Madelinette, Mademoiselle Élise, pray do not stop your work. Let me sit here and watch you."

Taking from his pocket a cigarette, he came over to the forge and was about to light it with the red steel from the fire, when Élise, snatching up a tiny piece of wood, thrust it in the coals, and, drawing it out, held it towards the cigarette, saying:

"Ah, no, your Excellency—this!"

As he did so, a cry ran through the smithy. Madelinette was standing, tense and set with terror, her eyes riveted on something that crouched beside a pile of cart-wheels a few feet away; something with shaggy head, flaring eyes, and a devilish face. The thing raised itself and sprang towards hers with a devouring cry. With desperate swiftness leaping forward, Valmond caught the half man, half beast—it seemed that—by the throat. Madelinette fell fainting against the anvil, and, dazed and trembling, Élise hurried to her.

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Valmond was in the grasp of a giant, and, struggle as he might, he could not withstand the powerful arms of his assailant. They came to their knees on the ground, where they clutched and strained for a wild minute,

Valmond desperately fighting to keep the huge bony fingers from his neck. Suddenly the giant's knee touched the red-hot steel that Madelinette had dropped, and with a snarl he flung Valmond back against the anvil, his head striking the iron with a sickening thud. Then, seizing the steel, he raised it to plunge the still glowing point into Valmond's eyes.

Centuries of doom seemed crowded into that instant of time. Valmond caught the giant's wrist with both hands, and with a mighty effort wrenched himself aside. His heart seemed to strain and burst, and just as he felt the end was come, he heard something crash on the murderer's skull, and the great creature fell with a gurgling sound, and lay like a parcel of loose bones across his knees. Valmond raised himself, a strange, dull wonder on him, for as the weapon smote this lifeless creature, he had seen another hurl by and strike the opposite wall. A moment afterwards the dead man was pulled away by Parpon. Trying to rise he felt blood trickling down his neck, and he turned sick and blind. As the world slipped away from him, a soft shoulder caught his head, and out of a vast distance there came to him the wailing cry: "He is dying! my love! my love!"

Peril and horror had brought to Élise's breast the one being in the world for her, the face which was etched like a picture upon her eyes and heart.

Parpon groaned with a strange horror as he dragged the body from Valmond. For a moment he knelt gasping beside the shapeless being, his great hands spasmodically feeling the pulseless breast.

Soon afterwards in the blacksmith's house the two girls nestled in each other's arms, and Valmond, shaken and weak, returned to the smithy.

In the dull glare of the forge fire knelt Parpon, rocking back and forth beside the body. Hearing Valmond, he got to his feet.

"You have killed him," he said, pointing.

"No, no, not I," answered Valmond. "Some one threw a hammer."

"There were two hammers."

"It was Élise?" asked Valmond, with a shudder.

"No, not Élise; it was you," said the dwarf, with a strange insistence.

"I tell you no," said Valmond. "It was you, Parpon."

"By God, it is a lie!" cried the dwarf, with a groan. Then he came close to Valmond. "He was—my brother! Do you not see?" he demanded fiercely, his eyes full of misery. "Do you not see that it was you? Yes, yes, it was you."

Stooping, Valmond caught the little man in an embrace. "It was I that killed him, Parpon. It was I, comrade. You saved my life," he added significantly.

"The girl threw, but missed," said Parpon. "She does not know but that she struck him."

"She must be told."

"I will tell her that you killed him. Leave it to me—all to me, my grand seigneur."

A half-hour afterwards the avocat, the Curé, and the Little Chemist, had heard the story as the dwarf told it, and Valmond returned to the Louis Quinze a hero. For hours the *habitants* gathered under his window and cheered him.

Parpon sat long in gloomy silence by his side, but, raising his voice, he began to sing softly a lament for the gross-figured body, lying alone in a shed near the deserted smithy:

"Children, the house is empty,
 The house behind the tall hill;
 Lonely and still is the empty house.
 There is no face in the doorway,
 There is no fire in the chimney.
 Come and gather beside the gate,
 Little Good Folk of the Scarlet Hills.

"Where has the wild dog vanished?
 Where has the swift foot gone?
 Where is the hand that found the good fruit,
 That made a garret of wholesome herbs?
 Where is the voice that awoke the morn,
 The tongue that defied the terrible beasts?
 Come and listen beside the door,
 Little Good Folk of the Scarlet Hills."

The pathos of the chant almost made his listener shrink, so immediate and searching was it. When the lament ceased, there was a long silence, broken by Valmond.

"He was your brother, Parpon—how? Tell me about it."

The dwarf's eyes looked into the distance.

"It was in the far-off country," he said, "in the hills where the Little Good Folk come. My mother married an outlaw. Ah, he was cruel, and an animal! My brother Gabriel was born—he was a giant, his brain all fumbling and wild. Then I was born, so small, a head as a tub, and long arms like a gorilla. We burrowed in the hills, Gabriel and I. One day my mother, because my father struck her, went mad, left us and came to—" He broke off, pausing an instant. "Then Gabriel struck the man, and he died, and we buried him, and my brother also left me, and I was alone. By and by I travelled to Pontiac. Once Gabriel came down from the hills, and Lajeunesse burnt him with a hot

iron, for cutting his bellows in the night, to make himself a bed inside them. To-day he came again to do some terrible thing to the blacksmith or the girl, and you have seen—ah, the poor Gabriel, and I killed him!”

“I killed him,” said Valmond—“I, Parpon, my friend.”

“My poor fool, my wild dog!” wailed the dwarf mournfully.

“Parpon,” asked Valmond suddenly, “where is your mother?”

“It is no matter. She has forgotten—she is safe.”

“If she should see him!” said Valmond tentatively, for a sudden thought had come to him that the mother of these misfits of God was Madame Dégardy.

Parpon sprang to his feet. “She shall not see him. Ah, you know! You have guessed?” he cried.

“She is all safe with me.”

“She shall not see him. She shall not know,” repeated the dwarf, his eyes huddling back in his head with anguish.

“Does she not remember you?”

“She does not remember the living, but she would remember the dead. She shall not know,” he said again.

Then, seizing Valmond’s hand, he kissed it, and, without a word, trotted from the room—a ludicrously pathetic figure.

CHAPTER IX

Now and again the moon showed through the cloudy night, and the air was soft and kind. Parpon left behind him the village street, and, after a half mile or more of travel, came to a spot where a crimson light showed beyond a little hill. He halted a moment, as if to think and listen, then crawled up the bank and looked down. Beside a still smoking lime-kiln an abandoned fire was burning down into red coals. The little hut of the lime-burner was beyond in a hollow, and behind that again was a lean-to, like a small shed or stable. Hither stole the dwarf, first pausing to listen a moment at the door of the hut.

Leaning into the darkness of the shed, he gave a soft, crooning call. Low growls of dogs came in quick reply. He stepped inside, and spoke to them:

"Good dogs! good dogs! good Musket, Coffee, Filthy, Jo-Jo—steady, steady, idiots!" for the huge brutes were nosing him, throwing themselves against him, and whining gratefully. Feeling the wall, he took down some harness, and, in the dark, put a set on each dog—mere straps for the shoulders, halters, and traces; called to them sharply to be quiet, and, keeping hold of their collars, led them out into the night. He paused to listen again. Presently he drove the dogs across the road, and attached them to a flat vehicle, without wheels or runners, used by Garotte for the drawing of lime and stones. It was not so heavy as many machines of the kind, and at a quick word from the dwarf the dogs darted away. Unseen, a mysterious figure hur-

ried on after them, keeping well in the shadow of the trees fringing the side of the road.

The dwarf drove the dogs down a lonely side lane to the village, and came to the shed where lay the uncomely thing he had called brother. He felt for a spot where there was a loose board, forced it and another with his strong fingers, and crawled in. Reappearing with the dead body, he bore it in his huge arms to the stoneboat: a midget carrying a giant. He covered up the face, and, returning to the shed, placed his coat against the boards to deaden the sound, and hammered them tight again with a stone, after having straightened the grass about. Returning, he found the dogs cowering with fear, for one of them had pushed the cloth off the dead man's face with his nose, and death exercised its weird dominion over them. They crouched together, whining and tugging at the traces. With a persuasive word he started them away.

The pursuing, watchful figure followed at a distance, on up the road, on over the little hills, on into the high hills, the dogs carrying along steadily the grisly load. And once their driver halted them, and sat in the grey gloom and dust beside the dead body.

"Where do you go, dwarf?" he said.

"I go to the Ancient House," he made answer to himself.

"What do you get?"

"I do not go to get; I go to give."

"What do you go to give?"

"I go to leave an empty basket at the door, and the lantern that the Shopkeeper set in the hand of the pedlar."

"Who is the pedlar, hunchback?"

"The pedlar is he that carries the pack on his back."

"What carries he in the pack?"

"He carries what the Shopkeeper gave him—for he had no money and no choice."

"Who is the Shopkeeper, dwarf?"

"The Shopkeeper—the Shopkeeper is the father of dwarfs and angels and children—and fools."

"What does he sell, poor man?"

"He sells harness for men and cattle, and you give your lives for the harness."

"What is this you carry, dwarf?"

"I carry home the harness of a soul."

"Is it worth carrying home?"

"The eyes grow sick at sight of the old harness in the way."

The watching figure, hearing, pitied.

It was Valmond. Excited by Parpon's last words at the hotel, he had followed, and was keen to chase this strange journeying to the end, though suffering from the wound in his head, and shaken by the awful accident of the evening. But, as he said to himself, some things were to be seen but once in the great game, and it was worth while seeing them, even if life were the shorter for it.

On up the heights filed the strange procession until at last it came to Dalgrothe Mountain. On one of the foot-hills stood the Rock of Red Pigeons. This was the dwarf's secret resort, where no one ever disturbed him; for the Little Good Folk of the Scarlet Hills (of whom it was rumoured, he had come) held revel there, and people did not venture rashly. The land about it, and a hut farther down the hill, belonged to Parpon; a legacy from the father of the young Seigneur.

It was all hills, gorges, rivers, and idle, murmuring pines. Of a morning, mist floated into mist as far as

eye could see, blue and grey and amethyst, a glamour of tints and velvety radiance. The great hills waved into each other like a vast violet sea, and, in turn, the tiny earth-waves on each separate hill swelled into the larger harmony. At the foot of a steep precipice was the whirlpool from which Parpon, at great risk, had rescued the father of De la Rivière, and had received this lonely region as his reward. To the dwarf it was his other world, his real home; for here he lived his own life, and it was here he had brought his ungainly dead, to give it housing.

The dogs drew up the grim cargo to a plateau near the Rock of Red Pigeons, and, gathering sticks, Parpon lit a sweet-smelling fire of cedar. Then he went to the hut, and came back with a spade and a shovel. At the foot of a great pine he began to dig. As the work went on, he broke into a sort of dirge, painfully sweet. Leaning against a rock not far away, Valmond watched the tiny man with the long arms throw up the soft, good-smelling earth, enriched by centuries of dead leaves and flowers. The trees waved and bent and murmured, as though they gossiped with each other over this odd gravedigger. The light of the fire showed across the gorge, touching off the far wall of pines with burnished crimson, and huge flickering shadows looked like elusive spirits, attendant on the lonely obsequies. Now and then a bird, aroused by the flame or the snap of a burning stick, rose from its nest and flew away; and wild-fowl flitted darkly down the pass, like the souls of heroes faring to Walhalla. When an owl hooted, a wolf howled far off, or a loon cried from the water below; the solemn fantasy took on the aspect of the unreal.

Valmond watched like one in a dream, and twice or thrice he turned faint, and drew his cloak about him as

if he were cold; for a sickly air, passing by, seemed to fill his lungs with poison.

At last the grave was dug, and, sprinkling its depth with leaves and soft branches of spruce, the dwarf drew the body over, and lowered it slowly, awkwardly, into the grave. Then he covered all but the huge, unlovely face, and, kneeling, peered down at it pitifully.

"Gabriel, Gabriel," he cried, "surely thy soul is better without its harness! I killed thee, and thou didst kill, and those we love die by our own hands. But no, I lie; I did not love thee, thou wert so ugly and wild and cruel. Poor boy! Thou wast a fool, and thou wast a murderer. Thou wouldst have slain my prince, and so I slew thee—I slew thee."

He rocked to and fro in abject sorrow, and cried again: "Hast thou no one in all the world to mourn thee, save him who killed thee? Is there no one to wish thee speed to the Ancient House? Art thou tossed away like an old shoe, and no one to say, The Shoemaker that made thee must see to it if thou wast ill-shapen, and walked crookedly, and did evil things? Ah, is there no one to mourn thee, save him that killed thee?"

He leaned back, and cried out into the high hills like a remorseful, tortured soul.

Valmond, no longer able to watch this grief in silence, stepped quickly forward. The dogs, seeing him, barked, and then were still; and the dwarf looked up as he heard footsteps.

"Another has come to mourn him, Parpon," said Valmond.

A look of bewilderment and joy swam into Parpon's eyes. Then he gave a laugh of singular wildness, his face twitched, tears rushed down his cheeks, and he

threw himself at Valmond's feet, and clasped his knees, crying:

"Ah—ah, my prince, great brother, thou hast come also! Ah, thou didst know the way up the long hill! Thou hast come to the burial of a fool. But he had a mother—yes, yes, a mother! All fools have mothers, and they should be buried well. Come, ah, come, and speak softly the Act of Contrition, and I will cover him up."

He went to throw in the earth, but Valmond pushed him aside gently.

"No, no," he said, "this is for me." And he began filling the grave.

When they left the place of burial, the fire was burning low, for they had talked long. At the foot of the hills they looked back. Day was beginning to break over Dalgrothe Mountain.

CHAPTER X

WHEN, next day, in the bright sunlight, the Little Chemist, the Curé, and others, opened the door of the shed, taking off their hats in the presence of the Master Workman, they saw that his seat was empty. The dead Caliban was gone—who should say how, or where? The lock was still on the doors, the walls were intact, there was no window for entrance or escape. He had vanished as weirdly as he came.

All day the people sought the place, viewing with awe and superstition the shed of death, and the spot in the smithy where, it was said, Valmond had killed the giant.

The day following was the feast of St. John the Baptist. Mass was said in the church, all the parish attending; and Valmond was present, with Lagroin in full regimentals.

Plates of blessed bread were passed round at the close of mass, as was the custom on this feast-day; and with a curious feeling that came to him often afterwards, Valmond listened to his General saying solemnly:

“Holy bread, I take thee;
If I die suddenly,
Serve me as a sacrament.”

With many eyes watching him curiously, he also ate the bread, repeating the holy words.

All day there were sports and processions, the *habitants* gay in rosettes and ribbons, flowers and maple-leaves, as they idled or filed along the streets, under arches of evergreens, where the Tricolor and Union

Jack mingled and fluttered amiably together. Anvils, with powder placed between, were touched off with a bar of red-hot iron, making a vast noise and drawing applausive crowds to the smithy. On the hill beside the Curé's house was a little old cannon brought from the battle-field of Ticonderoga, and its boisterous salutations were replied to from the Seigneury, by a still more ancient piece of ordnance. Sixty of Valmond's recruits, under Lajeunesse the blacksmith, marched up and down the streets, firing salutes with a happy, casual intrepidity, and setting themselves off before the crowds with a good many airs and nods and simple vanities.

In the early evening the good Curé blessed and lighted the great bonfire before the church; and immediately, at this signal, an answering fire sprang up on a hill at the other side of the village. Then fire on fire glittered and multiplied, till all the village was in a glow. This was a custom set in memory of the old days when fires flashed intelligence, after a fixed code, across the great rivers and lakes, and from hill to hill.

Far up against Dalgrothe Mountain appeared a sumptuous star, mystical and red. Valmond saw it from his window, and knew it to be Parpon's watch-fire, by the grave of his brother Gabriel. The chief procession started with the lighting of the bonfires. Singing softly, choristers and acolytes in robes preceded the devout Curé, and pious believers and youths on horseback, with ribbons flying, carried banners and shrines. Marshals kept the lines steady, and four were in constant attendance on a gorgeous carriage, all gilt and carving (the heirloom of the parish), in which reclined the figure of a handsome lad, impersonating John the Baptist, with long golden hair, dressed in rich robes and skins—a sceptre in his hand, a snowy lamb

at his feet. The rude symbolism was softened and toned to an almost poetical refinement, and gave to the harmless revels a touch of Arcady.

After this semi-religious procession, evening brought the march of Garotte's Kalathumpians. They were carried on three long drays, each drawn by four horses, half of them white, half black. They were an outlandish crew of comedians, dressed after no pattern, save the absurd—clowns, satyrs, kings, soldiers, imps, barbarians. Many had hideous false-faces, and a few horribly tall skeletons had heads of pumpkins containing lighted candles. The marshals were pierrots and clowns on long stilts, who towered in a ghostly way above the crowd. They were cheerful, fantastic revelers, singing the maddest and silliest of songs, with singular refrains and repetitions. The last line of one verse was the beginning of another:

*"À Saint Malo, beau port de mer,
Trois gros navir' sont arrivés.*

*Trois gros navir' sont arrivés
Chargés d'avoïn', chargés de blé."*

For an hour and more their fantastic songs delighted the simple folk. They stopped at last in front of the Louis Quinze. The windows of Valmond's chambers were alight, and to one a staff was fastened. Suddenly the Kalathumpians quieted where they stood, for the voice of their leader, a sort of fat King of Yvetot, cried out:

"See there, my noisy children!" It was the inventive lime-burner who spoke. "What come you here for, my rollicking blades?"

"We are a long way from home; we are looking for our brother, your Majesty," they cried in chorus.

"Ha, ha! What is your brother like, jolly dogs?"

"He has a face of ivory, and eyes like torches, and he carries a silver sword."

"But what the devil is his face like ivory for, my fanfarons?"

"So that he shall not blush for us. He is a grand seigneur," they shouted back.

"Why are his eyes like torches, my ragamuffins?"

"To show us the way home."

Valmond appeared upon the balcony.

"What is it you wish, my children?" he asked.

"Brother," said the fantastic leader, "we've lost our way. Will you lead us home again?"

"It is a long travel," he answered, after the fashion of their own symbols. "There are high hills to climb; there may be wild beasts in the way; and storms come down the mountains."

"We have strong hearts, and you have a silver sword, brother."

"I cannot see your faces, to know if you are true, my children," he answered.

Instantly the clothes flew off, masks fell, pumpkins came crashing to the ground, the stilts of the marshals dropped, and thirty men stood upon the drays in crude military order, with muskets in their hands and cockades in their caps. At that moment also, a flag—the Tricolor—fluttered upon the staff at Valmond's window. The roll of a drum came out of the street somewhere, and presently the people fell back before sixty armed men, marching in columns, under Lagroin, while from the opposite direction came Lajeunesse with sixty others, silent all, till they reached the drays and formed round them slowly.

Valmond stood watching intently, and the people

were very still, for this seemed like real life, and no burlesque. Some of the soldiery had military clothes, old militia uniforms, or the rebel trappings of '37; others, less fortunate, wore their trousers in long boots, their coats buttoned lightly over their chests, and belted in; and the Napoleonic cockade was in every cap.

"My children," said Valmond at last, "I see that your hearts are strong, and that you have the bodies of true men. We have sworn fealty to each other, and the badge of our love is in your caps. Let us begin our journey home. I will come down among you: I will come down among you, and I will lead you from Pontiac to the sea, gathering comrades as we go; then across the sea, to France; then to Paris and the Tuileries, where an Orleans usurps the place of a Napoleon."

He descended and mounted his waiting horse. At that moment De la Rivière appeared on the balcony, and, stepping forward, said:

"My friends, do you know what you are doing? This is folly. This man—"

He got no further, for Valmond raised his hand to Lagroin, and the drums began to beat. Then he rode down in front of Lajeunesse's men, the others sprang from the drays and fell into place, and soon the little army was marching, four deep, through the village.

This was the official beginning of Valmond's fanciful quest for empire. The people had a phrase, and they had a man; and they saw no further than the hour.

As they filed past the house of Élise Malboir, the girl stood in the glow of a bonfire, beside the oven where Valmond had first seen her. All around her was the wide awe of night, enriched by the sweet perfume of a coming harvest. He doffed his hat to her, then to the Tricolor, which Lagroin had fastened on a tall staff

before the house. Élise did not stir, did not courtesy or bow, but stood silent—entranced. She was in a dream. This man, riding at the head of the simple villagers, was part of her vision; and, at the moment, she did not rouse from the ecstasy of reverie where her new-born love had led her.

For Valmond the scene had a moving power. He heard again her voice crying in the smithy: "He is dying! Oh, my love! my love!"

He was now in the heart of a fantastical adventure. Filled with its spirit, he would carry it bravely to the end, enjoying every step in it, comedy or tragedy. Yet all day, since he had eaten the sacred bread, there had been ringing in his ears the words:

"Holy bread, I take thee;
If I die suddenly,
Serve me as a sacrament."

It came home to him, at the instant, what a toss-up it all was. What was he doing? No matter: it was a game, in which nothing was sure—nothing save this girl. She would, he knew, with the abandon of an absorbing passion, throw all things away for him.

Such as Madame Chalice—ah, she was a part of this brave fantasy, this dream of empire, this inspiring play! But Élise Malboir was life itself, absolute, true, abiding. His nature swam gloriously in his daring exploit; he believed in it, he sank himself in it with a joyous recklessness; it was his victory or his doom. But it was a shake of the dice—had Fate loaded them against him?

He looked up the hill towards the Manor. Life was there in its essence; beauty, talent, the genius of the dreamer, like his own. But it was not for him; daughter or fool, it was not for him! Madame Chalice was

his friendly inquisitor, not his enemy; she endured him for some talent he had shown, for the apparent sincerity of his love for the cause; but that was all. Yet she was ever in this dream of his, and he felt that she would always be; the unattainable, the undeserved, more splendid than his cause itself—the cause for which he would give—what would he give? Time would show.

But Élise Malboir, abundant, true, fine, in the healthy vigour of her nature, with no dream in her heart but love fulfilled—she was no part of his adventure, but of that vital spirit which can bring to the humblest as to the highest the good reality of life.

CHAPTER XI

It was the poignancy of these feelings which, later, drew Valmond to the ashes of the fire in whose glow Élise had stood. The village was quieting down, the excited *habitants* had scattered to their homes. But in one or two houses there was dancing, and, as he passed, Valmond heard the *chansons* of the humble games they played—primitive games, primitive *chansons*:

“ In my right hand I hold a rose-bush,
Which will bloom, *Manon lon la!*
Which will bloom in the month of May.
Come into our dance, pretty rose-bush,
Come and kiss, *Manon lon la!*
Come and kiss whom you love best!”

The ardour, the delight, the careless joy of youth, were in the song and in the dance. These simple folk would marry, beget children, labour hard, obey Mother Church, and yield up the ghost peacefully in the end, after their kind; but now and then there was born among them one not after their kind: even such as Madelinette, with the stirring of talent in her veins, and the visions of the artistic temperament—delight and curse all at once—lifting her out of the life, lonely, and yet sorrowfully happy.

Valmond looked around. How still it was, the home of Élise standing apart in the quiet fields! But involuntarily his eyes were drawn to the hill beyond, where showed a light in a window of the Manor. To-morrow he would go there: he had much to say to Madame

Chalice. The moon was lying off above the edge of hills, looking out on the world complacently, like an indulgent janitor scanning the sleepy street from his doorway.

He was abruptly drawn from his reverie by the entrance of Lagroin into the little garden; and he followed the old man through the open doorway. All was dark, but as they stepped within they heard some one move. Presently a match was struck, and Élise came forward with a candle raised level with her dusky head. Lagroin looked at her in indignant astonishment.

"Do you not see who is here, girl?" he demanded.

"Your Excellency!" she said confusedly to Valmond, and, bowing, offered him a chair.

"You must pardon her, sire," said the old sergeant. "She has never been taught, and she's a wayward wench."

Valmond waved his hand. "Nonsense, we are friends. You are my General; she is your niece." His eyes followed Élise as she set out for them some cider, a small flask of cognac, and some seed-cakes; luxuries which were served but once a year in this house, as in most homes of Pontiac.

For a long time Valmond and his General talked, devised, planned, schemed, till the old man grew husky and pale. The sight of his senile weariness flashed the irony of the whole wild dream into Valmond's mind. He rose, and, giving his arm, led Lagroin to his bedroom, and bade him good-night. When he returned to the room, it was empty.

He looked around, and, seeing an open door, moved to it quickly. It led into a little stairway.

He remembered then that there was a room which had been, apparently, tacked on, like an after-thought, to

the end of the house. Seeing the glimmer of a light beyond, he went up a few steps, and came face to face with Élise, who, candle in hand, was about to descend the stairs again.

For a moment she stood quite still, then placed the candle on the rude little dressing-table, built of dry-goods boxes, and draped with fresh muslin. Valmond took in every detail of the chamber at a single glance. It was very simple and neat, with the small wooden bedstead corded with rope, the poor hickory rocking-chair, the flaunting chromo of the Holy Family, the sprig of blessed palm, the shrine of the Virgin, the print skirts hanging on the wall, the stockings lying across a chair, the bits of ribbon on the bed. The quietness, the alluring simplicity, the whole room filled with the rich presence of the girl, sent a flood of colour to Valmond's face, and his heart beat hard. Curiosity only had led him into the room, something more radical held him there.

Élise seemed to read his thoughts, and, taking up her candle, she came on to the doorway. Neither had spoken. As she was about to pass him, he suddenly took her arm. But, glancing towards the window, he noticed that the blind was not down. He turned and blew out the candle in her hand.

"Ah, your Excellency!" she cried in tremulous fright.

"We could have been seen from outside," he explained. She turned and saw the moonlight streaming in at the window, and lying like a silver coverlet upon the floor. As if with a blind, involuntary instinct for protection, she stepped forward into the moonlight, and stood there motionless. The sight thrilled him, and he moved towards her. The mind of the girl reasserted

itself, and she hastened to the door. Again, as she was about to pass him, he put his hand upon her shoulder.

"Élise—Élise!" he said. The voice was persuasive, eloquent, going to every far retreat of emotion in her.

There was a sudden riot in his veins, and he took her passionately in his arms, and kissed her on the lips, on the eyes, on the hair, on the neck. At that moment the outer door opened below, and the murmur of voices came to them.

"Oh, monsieur—oh, your Excellency, let me go!" she whispered fearfully. "It is my mother and Duclosse the mealman."

Valmond recognised the fat, wheezy tones of Duclosse—Sergeant Duclosse. He released her, and she caught up the candle.

"What can you do?" she whispered.

"I will wait here. I must not go down," he replied. "It would mean ruin."

Ruin! ruin! Was she face to face with ruin already, she who, two minutes ago, was as safe and happy as a young bird in its nest? He felt instantly that he had made a mistake, had been cruel, though he had not intended it.

"Ruin to me," he said at once. "Duclosse is a stupid fellow: he would not understand; he would desert me; and that would be disastrous at this moment. Go down," he said. "I will wait here, Élise."

Her brows knitted painfully. "Oh, monsieur, I'd rather face death, I believe, than that you should remain here."

But he pushed her gently towards the door, and a moment afterwards he heard her talking to Duclosse and her mother.

He sat down on the couch and listened for a moment. His veins were still glowing from the wild moment just passed. Élise would come back—and then—what? She would be alone with him again in this room, loving him—fearing him. He remembered that once, when a child, he had seen a peasant strike his wife, felling her to the ground; and how afterwards she had clasped him round the neck and kissed him, as he bent over her in merely vulgar fright lest he had killed her. That scene flashed before him.

There came an opposing thought. As Madame Chalice had said, either as prince or barber, he was playing a terrible game. Why shouldn't he get all he could out of it while it lasted—let the world break over him when it must? Why should he stand in an orchard of ripe fruit, and refuse to pick what lay luscious to his hand, what this stupid mealman below would pick, and eat, and yawn over? There was the point. Wouldn't the girl rather have him, Valmond, at any price, than the priest-blessed love of Duclosse and his kind?

The thought possessed, devoured him for a moment. Then suddenly there again rang in his ears the words which had haunted him all day:

“Holy bread, I take thee;
If I die suddenly,
Serve me as a sacrament.”

They passed backwards and forwards in his mind for a little time with no significance. Then they gave birth to another thought. Suppose he stayed; suppose he took advantage of the love of this girl? He looked around the little room, showing so peacefully in the moonlight—the religious symbols, the purity, the cleanliness, the calm poverty. He had known the inside of

the boudoirs and the bed-chambers of women of fashion—he had seen them, at least. In them the voluptuous, the indulgent, seemed part of the picture. But he was not a beast, that he could fail to see what this tiny bedroom would be, if he followed his wild will. Some terrible fate might overtake his gay pilgrimage to empire, and leave him lost, abandoned, in a desert of ruin.

Why not give up the adventure, and come to this quiet, and this good peace, so shutting out the stir and violence of the world?

All at once Madame Chalice came into his thoughts, swam in his sight, and he knew that what he felt for this peasant girl was of one side of his nature only. All of him worth the having—was any worth the having?—responded to that diffusing charm which brought so many men to the feet of that lady of the Manor, who had lovers by the score: from such as the Curé and the avocat, gentle and noble, and requited, to the young Seigneur, selfish and ulterior, and unrequited.

He got to his feet quietly. No, he would make a decent exit, in triumph or defeat, to honour the woman who was standing his friend. Let them, the British Government at Quebec, proceed against him; he would have only one trouble to meet, one to leave behind. He would not load this girl with shame as well as sorrow. Her love itself was affliction enough to her. This adventure was serious; a bullet might drop him; the law might remove him: so he would leave here at once.

He was about to open the window, when he heard a door shut below, and the thud of heavy steps outside the house. Drawing back, he waited until he heard the foot of *Élise* upon the stair. She came in without a light, and at first did not see him. He heard her gasp. Stepping forward a little, he said:

"I am here, Élise. Come."

She trembled as she came. "Oh, monsieur—your Excellency!" she whispered; "oh, you cannot go down, for my mother sits ill by the fire. You cannot go out that way."

He took both her hands. "No matter. Poor child, you are trembling! Come."

He drew her towards the couch. She shrank back. "Oh no, monsieur, oh—I die of shame!"

"There is no need, Élise," he answered gently, and he sat on the edge of the couch, and drew her to his side. "Let us say good-night."

She grew very still, and he felt her move towards him, as she divined his purpose, and knew that this room of hers would have no shadow in it to-morrow, and her soul no unpardonable sin. A warm peace passed through her veins, and she drew nearer still. She did not know that this new ardent confidence came near to wrecking her. For Valmond had an instant's madness, and only saved himself from the tumult in his blood by getting to his feet, with strenuous resolution. Taking both her hands, he kissed her on the cheeks, and said:

"Adieu, Élise. May your sorrow never be more, and my happiness never less. I am going now."

He felt her hand grasp his arm, as if with a desire that he should not leave her. Then she rose quickly, and came with him to the window. Raising the sash, she held it, and he looked out. There seemed to be no one in the road, no one in the yard. So, half turning, he swung himself down by his hands, and dropped to the ground. From the window above a sob came to him, and Élise's face, all tears, showed for an instant in the moonlight.

He did not seek the road directly, but, climbing a fence near by, crossed a hay-field, going unseen, as he thought, to the village.

But a lady, walking in the road with an old gentleman, had seen and recognised him. Her fingers clinched with anger at the sight, and her spirit filled with disgust.

"What are you looking at?" said her companion, who was short-sighted.

"At the tricks moonlight plays. Shadows frighten me sometimes, my dear avocat." She shuddered.

"My dear madame!" he said in warm sympathy.

CHAPTER XII

THE sun was going down behind the hills, like a drowsy boy to his bed, radiant and weary from his day's sport. The villagers were up at Dalgrothe Mountain, soldiering for Valmond. Every evening, when the haymakers put up their scythes, the mill-wheel stopped turning, and the Angelus ceased, the men marched away into the hills, where the ardent soldier of fortune had pitched his camp.

Tents, muskets, ammunition came out of dark places, as they are ever sure to come when the war-trumpet sounds. All seems peace, but suddenly, at the wild call, the latent barbarian in human nature springs up and is ready; and the cruder the arms, the fiercer the temper that wields.

Recruits now arrived from other parishes, and besides those who came every night to drill, there were others who stayed always in camp. The lime-burner left his kiln, and sojourned with his dogs at Dalgrothe Mountain; the mealman neglected his trade; and Lajeunesse was no longer at his blacksmith shop, save after dark, when the red glow of his forge could be seen till midnight. He was captain of a company in the daytime, forgeron at night.

Valmond, no longer fantastic in dress, speech, or manner, was happy, busy, buoyed up and cast down by turn, troubled, exhilarated. He could not understand these variations of health and mood. He had not felt equably well since the night of Gabriel's burial in the

miasmatic air of the mountain. At times he felt a wonderful lightness of head and heart, with entrancing hopes; again a heaviness and an aching, accompanied by a feeling of doom. He fought the depression, and appeared before his men cheerful and alert always. He was neither looking back nor looking forward, but living in his dramatic theme from day to day, and wondering if, after all, this movement, by some joyful, extravagant chance, might not carry him on even to the chambers of the Tuileries.

From the first day that he had gathered these peasants about him, had convinced, almost against their will, the wise men of the village, this fanciful exploit had been growing a deep reality to him. He had convinced himself; he felt that he could, in a larger sphere, gather thousands about him where he now gathered scores—with a good cause. Well, was his cause not good, he asked himself?

There were others to whom this growing reality was painful. The young Seigneur was serious enough about it, and more than once, irritated and perturbed, he sought Madame Chalice; but she gave him no encouragement, remarking coldly that Monsieur Valmond probably knew very well what he was doing, and was weighing all consequences.

She had become interested in a passing drama, and De la Rivière's attentions produced no impression on her, and gave her no pleasure. They were, however, not obtrusive. She had seen much of him two years before; he had been a good friend of her husband. She was amused at his attentions then; she had little to occupy her, and she felt herself superior to any man's emotions: not such as this young Seigneur could win her away from her passive but certain fealty. She had

played with fire, from the very spirit of adventure in her, but she had not been burnt.

"You say he is an impostor, dear monsieur," she said languidly: "do pray exert yourself, and prove him one. What is your evidence?"

She leaned back in the very chair where she had sat looking at Valmond a few weeks before, her fingers idly smoothing out the folds of her dress.

"Oh, the thing is impossible," he answered, blowing the smoke of a cigarette; "we've had no real proof of his birth, and life—and so on."

"But there are relics—and so on!" she said suggestively, and she picked up the miniature of the Emperor.

"Owning a skeleton doesn't make it your ancestor," he replied.

He laughed, for he was pleased at his own cleverness, and he also wished to remain good-tempered.

"I am so glad to see you at last take the true attitude towards this," she responded brightly. "If it's a comedy, enjoy it. If it's a tragedy"—she drew herself up with a little shudder, for she was thinking of that figure dropping from *Élise's* window—"you cannot stop it. Tragedy is inevitable; but comedy is within the gift and governance of mortals."

For a moment again she was lost in the thought of *Élise*, of Valmond's vulgarity and commonness; and he had dared to speak words of love almost to her! She flushed to the hair, as she had done fifty times since she had seen him that moonlit night. Ah, she had thought him the dreamer, the enthusiast—maybe, in kind, credulous moments, the great man he claimed to be; and he had only been the sensualist after all! That he did not love *Élise*, she knew well enough: he had been cold-blooded; in this, at least, he was Napoleonic.

She had not spoken with him since that night; but she had had two long letters superscribed: "*In Camp, Headquarters, Dalgrothe Mountain,*" and these had breathed only patriotism, the love of a cause, the warmth of a strong, virile temperament, almost a poetical abandonment of unnamed ambitions and achievements. She had read the letters again and again, for she had found it hard to reconcile them with her later knowledge of this man. He wrote to her as to an ally, frankly, warmly. She felt the genuine thing in him somewhere; and, in spite of all, she felt a sort of kinship for him. Yet that scene—that scene! She flushed with anger again, and, in spite of her smiling lips, the young Seigneur saw the flush, and wondered.

"The thing must end soon," he said, as he rose to go, for a messenger had come for him. "He is injuring the peace, the trade, and the life of the parishes; he is gathering men and arms, drilling, exploiting military designs in one country, to proceed against another. England is at peace with France!"

"An international matter, this?" she asked sarcastically.

"Yes. The Government at Quebec is English; we are French and he is French; and, I repeat, this thing is serious."

She smiled. "I am an American. I have no responsibility."

"They might arrest you for aiding and abetting if—"

"If what, dear and cheerful friend?"

"If I did not make it right for you." He smiled, approving his own kindness.

She touched his arm, and said with ironical sweetness: "How you relieve my mind!" Then with delicate insinuation: "I have a lot of old muskets here, at least

two hundred pounds of powder, and plenty of provisions, and I will send them to—Valmond Napoleon.”

He instantly became grave. “I warn you—”

She interrupted him. “Nonsense! You warn me!” She laughed mockingly. “I warn you, dear Seigneur, that you will be more sorry than satisfied, if you meddle in this matter.”

“You are going to send those things to him?” he asked anxiously.

“Certainly—and food every day.”

And she kept her word.

De la Rivière, as he went down the hill, thought with irritation of how ill things were going with him and Madame Chalice—so different from two years ago, when their friendship had first begun. He had remembered her with a singular persistency; he had looked forward to her coming back; and when she came, his heart had fluttered like a schoolboy's. But things had changed. Clearly she was interested in this impostor. Was it the man himself or the adventure? He did not know. But the adventure was the man—and who could tell? Once he thought he had detected some warmth for himself in her eye, in the clasp of her hand; there was nothing of that sort now. A black, ungentlemanly spirit seized him.

It possessed him most strongly at the moment he was passing the home of Élise Malboir. The girl was standing by the gate, looking down towards the village. Her brow was a little heavy, so that it gave her eyes at all times a deep look, but now De la Rivière saw that they were brooding as well. There was sadness in the poise of the head. He did not take off his hat to her.

“Oh, grand to the war he goes,
O gai, vive le roi!”

he said teasingly. He thought she might have a lover among the recruits at Dalgrothe Mountain.

She turned to him, startled, for she thought he meant Valmond. She did not speak, but became very still and pale.

"Better tie him up with a garter, Élise, and get the old uncle back to Ville Bambord. Trouble's coming. The game'll soon be up."

"What trouble?" she asked.

"Battle, murder, and sudden death," he answered, and passed on with a sour laugh.

She slowly repeated his words, looked towards the Manor House, with a strange expression, then went up to her little bedroom and sat on the edge of the bed for a long time, where she had sat with Valmond. Every word, every incident, of that night came back to her; and her heart filled up with worship. It flowed over into her eyes and fell upon her clasped hands. If trouble did come to him?—He had given her a new world, he should have her life and all else.

A half-hour later, De la Rivière came rapping at the Curé's door. The sun was almost gone, the smell of the hay-fields floated over the village, and all was quiet in the streets. Women gossiped in their doorways, but there was no stir anywhere. With the young Seigneur was the member of the Legislature for the county. His mood was different from that of his previous visit to Pontiac; for he had been told that whether the cavalier adventurer was or was not a Napoleon, this campaign was illegal. He had made no move. Being a member of the Legislature, he naturally shirked responsibility, and he had come to see the young Seigneur, who was justice of the peace, and practically mayor of the county. They found the Curé, the avocat, and Medallion, talking together amiably.

The three were greatly distressed by the representations of the member and De la Rivière. The Curé turned to Monsieur Garon, the avocat, inquiringly.

"The law—the law of the case is clear," said the avocat helplessly. "If the peace is disturbed, if there is conspiracy to injure a country not at war with our own, if arms are borne with menace, if His Excellency—"

"His Excellency—my faith!—You're an ass, Garon!" cried the young Seigneur, with an angry sneer.

For once in his life the avocat bridled up. He got to his feet, and stood silent an instant, raising himself up and down on his tiptoes, his lips compressed, his small body suddenly contracting to a firmness, and grown to a height, his eyelids working quickly. To the end of his life the Curé remembered and talked of the moment when the avocat gave battle. To him it was superb—he never could have done it himself.

"I repeat, *His Excellency*, Monsieur De la Rivière. My information is greater than yours, both by accident and through knowledge. I accept him as a Napoleon, and as a Frenchman I have no cause to blush for my homage or my faith, or for His Excellency. He is a man of loving disposition, of great knowledge, of power to win men, of deep ideas, of large courage. Monsieur, I cannot forget the tragedy he stayed at the smithy, with risk of his own life. I cannot forget—"

The Curé, anticipating, nodded at him encouragingly. Probably the avocat intended to say something quite different, but the look in the Curé's eyes prompted him, and he continued:

"I cannot forget that he has given to the poor, and liberally to the Church, and has promised benefits to the deserving—ah, no, no, my dear Seigneur!"

He had delivered his speech in a quaint, quick way,

as though addressing a jury, and when he had finished, he sat down again, and nodded his head, and tapped a foot on the floor; and the Curé did the same, looking inquiringly at De la Rivière.

This was the first time there had been trouble in the little coterie. They had never differed painfully before. Tall Medallion longed to say something, but he waited for the Curé to speak.

"What is your mind, Monsieur le Curé?" asked De la Rivière testily.

"My dear friend, Monsieur Garon, has answered for us both," replied the Curé quietly.

"Do you mean to say that you will not act with me to stop this thing," he urged—"not even for the safety of the people?"

The reply was calm and resolute:

"My people shall have my prayers and my life, when needed, but I do not feel called upon to act for the State. I have the honour to be a friend of His Excellency."

"By Heaven, the State shall act!" cried De la Rivière, fierce with rancour. "I shall go to this Valmond to-night, with my friend the member here. I shall warn him, and call upon the people to disperse. If he doesn't listen, let him beware! I seem to stand alone in the care of Pontiac!"

The avocat turned to his desk. "No, no; I will write you a legal opinion," he said, with professional honesty. "You shall have my legal help; but for the rest, I am at one with my dear Curé."

"Well, Medallion, you too?" asked De la Rivière.

"I'll go with you to the camp," answered the auctioneer. "Fair play is all I care for. Pontiac will come out of this all right. Come along."

But the avocat kept them till he had written his legal opinion and had handed it courteously to the young Seigneur. They were all silent. There had been a discourtesy, and it lay like a cloud on the coterie. De la Rivière opened the door to go out, after bowing to the Curé and the avocat, who stood up with mannered politeness; but presently he turned, came back, was about to speak, when, catching sight of a miniature of Valmond on the avocat's desk, before which was set a bunch of violets, he wheeled and left the room without a word.

The moon had not yet risen, but stars were shining, when the young Seigneur and the member came to Dalgrothe Mountain. On one side of the Rock of Red Pigeons was a precipice and wild water; on the other was a deep valley like a cup, and in the centre of this was a sort of plateau or gentle slope. Dalgrothe Mountain towered above. Upon this plateau Valmond had pitched his tents. There was water, there was good air, and for purposes of drill—or defence—it was excellent. The approaches were patrolled, so that no outside stragglers could reach either the Rock of Red Pigeons or the valley, or see what was going on below, without permission. Lagroin was everywhere, drilling, commanding, browbeating his recruits one minute, and praising them the next. Lajeunesse, Garotte, and Muroc were invaluable, each after his kind. Duclosse the mealman was sutler.

The young Seigneur and his companions were not challenged, and they passed on up to the Rock of Red Pigeons. Looking down, they had a perfect view of the encampment. The tents had come from lumber-camps, from river-driving gangs, and from private stores; there was some regular uniform, flags were flying everywhere,

many fires were burning, the voice of Lagroin in command came up the valley loudly, and Valmond watched the drill and a march past. The fires lit up the sides of the valley and glorified the mountains beyond. In this inspiring air it was impossible to feel an accent of disaster or to hear the stealthy footfall of ruin.

The three journeyed down into the valley, then up onto the plateau, where they were challenged, allowed to pass, and came to where Valmond sat upon his horse. At sight of them, with a suspicion of the truth, he ordered Lagroin to march the men down the long plateau. They made a good figure filing past the three visitors, as the young Seigneur admitted.

Valmond got from his horse, and waited for them. He looked weary, and there were dark circles round his eyes, as though he had had an illness; but he stood erect and quiet. His uniform was that of a general of the Empire. It was rather dingy, yet it was of rich material, and he wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honour on his breast. His paleness was not of fear, for when his eyes met Monsieur De la Rivière's, there was in them waiting, inquiry—nothing more. He greeted them all politely, and Medallion warmly, shaking his hand twice; for he knew well that the gaunt auctioneer had only kindness in his heart; and they had exchanged humorous stories more than once—a friendly bond.

He motioned towards his tent near by, but the young Seigneur declined. Valmond looked round, and ordered away a listening soldier.

"It is business and imperative," said De la Rivière. Valmond bowed. "Isn't it time this burlesque was ended?" continued the challenger, waving a hand towards the encampment.

"My presence here is my reply," answered Valmond.
 "But how does it concern monsieur?"

"All that concerns Pontiac concerns me."

"And me; I am as good a citizen as you."

"You are troubling our people. This is illegal—this bearing arms, these purposes of yours. It is mere filibustering, and you are an—"

Valmond waved his hand, as if to stop the word.

"I am Valmond Napoleon, monsieur."

"If you do not promise to forego this, I will arrest you," said De la Rivière sharply.

"You?" Valmond smiled ironically.

"I am a justice of the peace. I have the power."

"I have the power to prevent arrest, and I will prevent it, monsieur. You alone of all this parish, I believe of all this province, turn a sour face, a sour heart, to me. I regret it, but I do not fear it."

"I will have you in custody, or there is no law in Quebec," was the acrid set-out.

Valmond's face was a feverish red now, and he made an impatient gesture. Both men had bitter hearts, for both knew well that the touchstone of this malice was Madame Chalice. Hatred looked out of their eyes. It was, each knew, a fight to the dark end.

"There is not law enough to justify you, monsieur," answered Valmond quickly.

"Be persuaded, monsieur," urged the member to Valmond, with a persuasive, smirking gesture.

"All this country could not persuade me; only France can do that; and first I shall persuade France," he answered, speaking to his old cue stoutly.

"Mummer!" broke out De la Rivière. "By God, I will arrest you now!"

He stepped forward, putting his hand in his breast,

as if to draw a weapon, though, in truth, it was a summons.

Like lightning the dwarf shot in between, and a sword flashed up at De la Rivière's breast.

"I saved your father's life, but I will take yours, if you step farther, dear Seigneur," he said coolly

Valmond had not stirred, but his face was pale again.

"That will do, Parpon," he said quietly. "Monsieur had better go," he added to De la Rivière, "or even his beloved law may not save him!"

"I will put an end to this," cried the other, bursting with anger. "Come, gentlemen," he said to his companions, and turned away.

Medallion paused, then came to Valmond and said:

"Your Excellency, if ever you need me, let me know. I'd do much to prove myself no enemy."

Valmond gave him his hand courteously, bowed, and, beckoning a soldier to take his horse, walked towards his tent. He swayed slightly as he went, then a trembling seized him. He staggered as he entered the door of the tent, and Parpon, seeing, ran forward and caught him in his arms. The little man laid him down, felt his pulse, his heart, saw a little black stain on his lips, and cried out in a great fear:

"My God! The black fever! Ah, my Napoleon!"

Valmond lay in a burning stupor; and word went abroad that he might die; but Parpon insisted that he would be well presently, and at first would let no one but the Little Chemist and the Curé come in or near the tent.

CHAPTER XIII

THE sickness had come like a whirlwind: when it passed, what would be left? The fight went on in the quiet hills—a man of no great stature or strength, against a monster who raked him in a fierce embrace. A thousand scenes flashed through Valmond's brain, before his eyes, while the great wheel of torture went round, and he was broken, broken—mended and broken again, upon it. Spinning—he was for ever spinning, like a tireless moth through a fiery air; and the world went roaring past. In vain he cried to the wheelman to stop the wheel: there was no answer. Would those stars never cease blinking in and out, or the wind stop whipping the swift clouds past? So he went on, endless years, driving through space, some terrible intangible weight dragging at his heart, and all his body panting as it spun.

Grotesque faces came and went, and bright-eyed women floated by, laughing at him, beckoning to him; but he could not come, because of this endless going. He heard them singing, he felt the divine notes in his battered soul; he tried to weep for the hopeless joy of it; but the tears came no higher than his throat. Why did they mock him so? At last, all the figures merged into one, and she had the face—ah, he had seen it centuries ago!—of Madame Chalice. Strange that she was so young still, and that was so long past—when he stood on a mountain, and, clambering a high wall of rock, looked over into a happy No-man's Land.

Why did the face elude him so, flashing in and out of the vapours? Why was its look sorrowful and distant? And yet there was that perfect smile, that adorable aspect of the brow, that light in the deep eyes. He tried to stop the eternal spinning, but it went remorselessly on; and presently the face was gone; but not till it had given him ease of his pain.

Then came fighting, fighting, nothing but fighting—endless charges of cavalry, continuous wheelings and advancings and retreatings, and the mad din of drums; afterwards, in a swift quiet, the deep, even thud of the horses' hoofs striking the ground. Flags and banners flaunted gaily by. How the helmets flashed, and the foam flew from the bits! But those flocks of black-birds flying over the heads of the misty horsemen—they made him shiver. Battle, battle, battle, and death, and being born—he felt it all.

All at once there came a wide peace and clearing, and the everlasting jar and movement ceased. Then a great pause, and light streamed round him, comforting him.

It seemed to him that he was lying helpless and still by falling water in a valley. The water soothed him, and he fell asleep. After a long time he waked, and dimly knew that a face, good to look at, was bending over him. In a vague, far-off way he saw that it was Élise Malboir; but even as he saw, his eyes closed, the world dropped away, and he sank to sleep again.

It was no vision or delirium; for Élise had come. She had knelt beside his bed, and given him drink, and smoothed his pillow; and once, when no one was in the tent, she stooped and kissed his hot dark lips, and whispered words that were not for his ears to hear, nor to be heard by any one of this world. The good Curé

found her there. He had not heart to bid her go home, and he made it clear to the villagers that he approved of her great kindness. But he bade her mother also come, and she stayed in a tent near by.

Lagroin and two hundred men held the encampment, and every night the recruits arrived from the village, drilled as before, and waited for the fell disease to pass. No one knew its exact nature, but now and again, in long years, some one going to Dalgrothe Mountain was seized by it, and died, or was left stricken with a great loss of the senses, or the limbs. Yet once or twice, they said, men had come up from it no worse at all. There was no known cure, and the Little Chemist could only watch the swift progress of the fever, and use simple remedies to allay the suffering. Parpon knew that the disease had seized upon Valmond the night of the burial of Gabriel. He remembered now the sickly, pungent air that floated past, and how Valmond, weak from the loss of blood in the fight at the smithy, shuddered, and drew his cloak about him. A few days would end it, for good or ill.

Madame Chalice heard the news with consternation, and pity would have sent her to Valmond's bedside, but that she found Élise was his faithful nurse and servitor. This fixed in her mind the belief that if Valmond died, he would leave both misery and shame behind; if he lived, she should, in any case, see him no more. But she sent him wines and delicacies, and she also despatched a messenger to a city sixty miles away, for the best physician. Then she sought the avocat, to discover whether he had any exact information as to Valmond's friends in Quebec, or in France. She had promised not to be his enemy, and she remembered with a sort of sorrow that she had told him she meant to be

his friend; but, having promised, she would help him in his sore strait.

She had heard of De la Rivière's visit to Valmond, and she intended sending for him, but delayed it. The avocat told her nothing: matters were in abeyance, and she abided the issue; meanwhile getting news of the sick man twice a day. More, she used all her influence to keep up the feeling for him in the country, to prevent flagging of enthusiasm. This she did out of a large heart, and a kind of loyalty to her temperament and to his own ardour for his cause. Until he was proved the comedian (in spite of the young Seigneur) she would stand by him, so far as his public career was concerned. Misfortune could not make her turn from a man; it was then she gave him a helping hand. What was between him and Élise was for their own souls and consciences.

As she passed the little cottage in the field the third morning of Valmond's illness, she saw the girl entering. Élise had come to get some necessaries for Valmond and for her mother. She was pale; her face had gained a spirituality, a refinement, new and touching. Madame Chalice was tempted to go and speak to her, and started to do so, but turned back.

"No, no, not until we know the worst of this illness—then!" she said to herself.

But ten minutes later De la Rivière was not so kind. He had guessed a little at Élise's secret, and as he passed the house on the way to visit Madame Chalice, seeing the girl, he came to the door and said:

"How goes it with the distinguished gentleman, Élise? I hear you are his slave."

The girl turned a little pale. She was passing a hot iron over some coarse sheets, and, pausing, she looked steadily at him and replied:

"It is not far to Dalgrothe Mountain, monsieur."

"The journey's too long for me; I haven't your hot young blood," he said suggestively.

"It was not so long a dozen years ago, monsieur."

De la Rivière flushed to his hair. That memory was a hateful chapter in his life—a boyish folly, which involved the miller's wife. He had buried it, the village had forgotten it,—such of it as knew,—and the remembrance of it stung him. He had, however, brought it on himself, and he must eat the bitter fruit.

The girl's eyes were cold and hard. She knew him to be Valmond's enemy, and she had no idea of sparing him. She knew also that he had been courteous enough to send a man each day to inquire after Valmond, but that was not to the point; he was torturing her, he had prophesied the downfall of her "spurious Napoleon."

"It will be too long a journey for you, and for all, presently," he said.

"You mean that His Excellency will die?" she asked, her heart beating so hard that it hurt her. Yet the flat-iron moved backwards and forwards upon the sheets mechanically.

"Or fight a Government," he answered. "He has had a good time, and good times can't last for ever, can they, Élise? Have you ever thought of that?"

She turned pale and swayed over the table. In an instant he was beside her; for though he had been irritable and ungenerous, he had at bottom a kind heart. Catching up a glass of water, he ran an arm round her waist and held the cup to her lips.

"What's the matter, my girl?" he asked. "There, pull yourself together."

She drew away from him, though grateful for his new attitude. She could not bear everything. She felt nervous and strangely weak.

"Won't you go, monsieur?" she said, and turned to her ironing again.

He looked at her closely, and not unkindly. For a moment the thought possessed him that evil and ill had come to her. But he put it away from him, for there was that in her eyes which gave his quick suspicions the lie. He guessed now that the girl loved Valmond, and he left her with that thought. Going up the hill, deep in thought, he called at the Manor, to find that Madame Chalice was absent, and would not be back till evening.

When Élise was left alone, a weakness seized her again, as it had done when De la Rivière was present. She had had no sleep in four days, and it was wearing on her, she said to herself, refusing to believe that a sickness was coming. Leaving the kitchen, she went up to her bedroom. Opening the window, she sat down on the side of the bed and looked round. She figured Valmond in her mind as he stood in this place and that, his voice, his words to her, the look in his face, the clasp of his hand.

All at once she sprang up, fell on her knees before the little shrine of the Virgin, and burst into tears. Her rich hair, breaking loose, flowed round her—the picture of a Magdalen; but it was, in truth, a pure girl with a true heart. At last she calmed herself and began to pray:

"Ah, dear Mother of God, thou who dost speak for the sorrowful before thy Son and the Father, be merciful to me and hear me. I am but a poor girl, and my life is no matter. But he is a great man, and he has work to do, and he is true and kind. Oh, pray for him, divine Mother, sweet Mary, that he may be saved from death! If the cup must be emptied, may it be given to

me to drink! Oh, see how all the people come to him and love him! For the saving of Madelinette, oh, may his own life be given him! He cannot pray for himself, but I pray for him. Dear Mother of God, I love him, and I would lose my life for his sake. Sweet Mary, comfort thy child, and out of thy own sorrow be good to my sorrow. Hear me and pray for me, divine Mary. Amen."

Her whole nature had been emptied out, and there came upon her a calm, a strange clearness of brain, exhausted in body as she was. For an instant she stood thinking.

"Madame Dégardy! Madame Dégardy!" she cried, with sudden inspiration. "Ah, I will find her; she may save him with her herbs!"

She hurried out of the house and down through the village to the little hut by the river, where the old woman lived.

Élise had been to Madame Dégardy as good a friend as a half-mad creature, with no memory, would permit her. Parpon had lived for years in the same village, but, though he was her own son, she had never given him a look of recognition, had used him as she used all others. In turn, the dwarf had never told any one but Valmond of the relationship; and so the two lived their strange lives in their own singular way. But the Curé knew who it was that kept the old woman's house supplied with wood and other necessaries. Parpon himself had tried to summon her to Valmond's bedside, for he knew well her skill with herbs, but the little hut was empty, and he could get no trace of her. She had disappeared the night Valmond was seized of the fever, and she came back to her little home in the very hour that Élise visited her. The girl found her boiling herbs

before a big fire. She was stirring the pot diligently, now and then sprinkling in what looked like a brown dust, and watching the brew intently.

She nodded, but did not look at Élise, and said crossly:

"Come in, come in, and shut the door, silly."

"Madame," said the girl, "His Excellency has the black fever."

"What of that?" she returned irritably.

"I thought maybe your herbs could cure him. You've cured others, and this is an awful sickness. Ah, won't you save him, if you can?"

"What are you to him, pale-face?" she said, her eyes peering into the pot.

"Nothing more to him than you are, madame," the girl answered wearily.

"I'll cure because I want, not because you ask me, pretty brat."

Élise's heart gave a leap: these very herbs were for Valmond! The old woman had travelled far to get the medicaments immediately she had heard of Valmond's illness. Night and day she had trudged, and she was more brown and weather-beaten than ever.

"The black fever! the black fever!" cried the old woman. "I know it well. It's most like a plague. I know it. But I know the cure—ha, ha! Come along now, feather-legs, what are you staring there for? Hold that jug while I pour the darling liquor in. Ha, ha! Crazy Joan hasn't lived for nothing. They have to come to her; the great folks have to come to her!"

So she meandered on, filling the jug. Later, in the warm dusk, they travelled up to Dalgrothe Mountain, and came to Valmond's tent. By the couch knelt Parpon, watching the laboured breathing of the sick

man. When he saw Madame Dégardy, he gave a growl of joy, and made way for her. She pushed him back with her stick contemptuously, looked Valmond over, ran her fingers down his cheek, felt his throat, and at last held his restless hand. Élise, with the quick intelligence of love, stood ready. The old woman caught the jug from her, swung it into the hollow of her arm, poured the cup half full, and motioned the girl to lift up Valmond's head. Élise raised it to her bosom, leaning her face down close to his. Madame Dégardy instantly pushed back her head.

"Don't get his breath—that's death, idiot!" she said, and began to pour the liquid into Valmond's mouth very slowly. It was a tedious process at first, but at length he began to swallow naturally, and finished the cup.

There was no change for an hour, and then he became less restless. After another cupful, his eyes half opened. Within an hour a perspiration came, and he was very quiet, and sleeping easily. Parpon crouched near the door, watching it all with deep, piercing eyes. Madame Dégardy never moved from her place, but stood shaking her head and muttering. At last Lagroin came, and whisperingly asked after his chief; then, seeing him in a healthy and peaceful sleep, he stooped and kissed the hand lying upon the blanket.

"Beloved sire! Thank the good God!" he said.

Soon after he had gone, there was a noise of tramping about the tent, and then a suppressed cheer, which was fiercely stopped by Parpon, and the soldiers of the Household Troops scattered to their tents.

"What's that?" asked Valmond, opening his eyes bewilderedly.

"Your soldiers, sire," answered the dwarf.

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Valmond smiled languidly. Then he saw Madame Dégardy and Élise.

"I am very sleepy, dear friends," he said, with a courteous, apologetic gesture, and closed his eyes.

Presently they opened again. "My snuff-box—in my pocket," he said to the old woman, waving a hand to where his uniform hung from the tent-pole; "it is for you, madame."

She understood, smiled grimly, felt in a waistcoat pocket, found the snuff-box, and, squatting on the ground like a tailor, she took two pinches, and sat holding the antique silver box in her hand.

"Crazy Joan's no fool, dear lad," she said at last, and took another pinch, and knowingly nodded her head again and again, while he slept soundly.

CHAPTER XIV

"LIGHTS out!"

The bugle-call rang softly down the valley, echoed away tenderly in the hills, and was lost in the distance.

Roused by the clear call, Élise rose from watching beside Valmond's couch, and turned towards the door of the tent. The spring of a perfect joy at his safety had been followed by an aching in all her body and a trouble at her heart. Her feet were like lead, her spirit quivered and shrank by turn. The light of the camp-fires sent a glow through the open doorway upon the face of the sleeper.

She leaned over him. The look she gave him seemed to her anxious spirit like a farewell. This man had given her a new life, and out of it had come a new sight. Valmond had escaped death, but in her poor confused way she felt another storm gathering about him. A hundred feelings possessed her; but one thought was master of them all: when trouble drew round him, she must be near him, must be strong to help him, protect him, if need be. Yet a terrible physical weakness was on her. Her limbs trembled, her head ached, her heart throbbled in a sickening way.

He stirred in his sleep; a smile passed over his face. She wondered what gave it birth. She knew well it was not for her, that smile. It belonged to his dream of success—when a thousand banners should flaunt in the gardens of the Tuileries. Overcome by a sudden rush of emotion, she fell on her knees at his side, bursting into noiseless sobs, which shook her from head to foot.

Every nerve in her body responded to the shock of feeling; she was having her dark hour alone.

At last she staggered to her feet and turned to the open door. The tents lay silent in the moonshine, but wayward lights flickered in the sumptuous dusk, and the quiet of the hills hung like a canopy over the bivouac of the little army. No token of misfortune came out of this peaceful encampment, no omen of disaster crossed the long lane of drowsy fires and huge amorous shadows. The sense of doom was in the girl's own heart, not in this deep cradle of the hills.

Now and again a sentinel crossed the misty line of vision, silent, and majestically tall, in the soft haze, which came down from Dalgrothe Mountain and fell like a delicate silver veil before the face of the valley.

As she looked, lost in a kind of dream, there floated up from the distant tent the refrain she knew so well:

"Oh, say, where goes your love?
O gai, vive le roi!"

Her hand caught her bosom as if to stifle a sudden pain. That song had been the keynote to her new life, and it seemed now as if it were also to be the final benediction. All her spirit gathered itself up for a great resolution: she would not yield to this invading weakness, this misery of body and mind.

Some one drew out of the shadows and came towards her. It was Madame Dégardy. She had seen the sobbing figure inside the tent, but, with the occasional wisdom of the foolish of this world, she had not been less considerate than the children of light.

With brusque, kindly taps of her stick, she drove the girl to her own tent, and bade her sleep: but sleep was not for Élise that night; and in the grey dawn, while

yet no one was stirring in the camp, she passed slowly down the valley to her home.

Madame Chalice was greatly troubled also. Valmond's life was saved. In three days he was on his feet, eager and ardent again, and preparing to go to the village; but what would the end of it all be? She knew of De la Rivière's intentions, and she foresaw a crisis. If Valmond were in very truth a Napoleon, all might be well, though this crusade must close here. If he were an impostor, things would go cruelly hard with him. Impostor? Strange how, in spite of all evidence against him, she still felt a vital sureness in him somewhere; a radical reality, a convincing quality of presence. At times he seemed like an actor playing his own character. She could never quite get rid of that feeling.

In her anxiety—for she was in the affair for good or ill—she went again to Monsieur Garon.

"You believe in Monsieur Valmond, dear avocat?" she asked.

The little man looked at her admiringly, though his admiration was a quaint, Arcadian thing; and, perching his head on one side abstractedly, he answered:

"Ah, yes, ah, yes! Such candour! He is the son of Napoleon and a certain princess, born after Napoleon's fall, not long before his death."

"Then, of course, Monsieur Valmond is really nameless?" she asked.

"Ah, there is the point—the only point; but His Excellency can clear up all that, and will do so in good time, he says. He maintains that France will accept him."

"But the Government here, will they put him down? proceed against him? Can they?"

"Ah, yes, I fear they can proceed against him. He

may recruit men, but he may not drill and conspire, you see. Yet"—the old man smiled, as though at some distant and pleasing prospect—"the cause is a great one; it is great. Ah, madame, dear madame"—he got to his feet and stepped into the middle of the floor—"he has the true Napoleonic spirit. He loves it all. At the very first, it seemed as if he were going to be a little ridiculous; now it is as if there was but one thing for him—love of France and loyalty to the cause. Ah, think of the glories of the Empire! of France as the light of Europe, of Napoleon making her rich and proud and dominant! And think of her now, sinking into the wallow of bourgeois vulgarity! If—if, as His Excellency said, the light were to come from here, even from this far corner of the world, from this old France, to be the torch of freedom once again—from our little parish here!"

His face was glowing, his thin hands made a quick gesture of charmed anticipation.

Madame Chalice looked at him in a sort of wonder and delight. Dreamers all! And this visionary Napoleon had come into the little man's quiet, cultured, passive life, and had transformed him, filled him with adventure and patriotism. There must be something behind Valmond, some real, even some great thing, or this were not possible. It was not surprising that she, with the spirit of dreams and romance deep in her, should be sympathetic, even carried away for the moment.

"How is the feeling in the country since his illness?" she asked.

"Never so strong as now. Many new recruits come to him. Organisation goes on, and His Excellency has issued a proclamation. I have advised him against

that—it is not necessary, it is illegal. He should not tempt our Government too far. But he is a gentleman of as great simplicity as courage, of directness and virtue—a wholesome soldier—”

She thought again of that moonlit night, and Élise's window, and a kind of hatred of the man came up in her. No, no, she was wrong; he was not the true thing.

“Dear avocat,” she said suddenly, “you are a good friend. May I have always as good! But have you ever thought that this thing may end in sore disaster? Are we doing right? Is the man worthy our friendship and our adherence?”

“Ah, dear madame, convictions, principles, truth, they lead to good ends—somewhere. I have a letter here from Monsieur Valmond. It breathes noble things; it has humour, too—ah, yes, so quaint! I am to see him this afternoon. He returns to the Louis Quinze to-day. The Curé and I—”

She laid her hand on his arm, interrupting him. “Will you take me this evening to Monsieur Valmond, dear friend?” she asked.

She saw now how useless it was to attempt anything through these admirers of Valmond; she must do it herself. He must be firmly and finally warned and dissuaded. The conviction had suddenly come to her with great force, that the end was near—come to her as it came to Élise. Her wise mind had seen the sure end; Élise's heart had felt it.

The avocat readily promised. She was to call for him at a little before eight o'clock. But she decided that she would first seek Élise; before she accused the man, she would question the woman. Above and beyond all anger she felt at this miserable episode, there

was pity in her heart for the lonely girl. She was capable of fierce tempers, of great caprices, of even wild injustice, when her emotions had their way with her; but her heart was large, her nature deep and broad, and her instincts kind. The little touch of barbarism in her gave her, too, a sense of primitive justice. She was self-analytical, critical of life and conduct, yet her mind and her heart, when put to the great test, were above mere anatomising. Her rich nature, alive with these momentous events, feeling the prescience of coming crisis, sent a fine glow into her face, into her eyes. Excitement gave a fresh elasticity to her step.

In spite of her serious thoughts, she looked very young, almost irresponsible. No ordinary observer could guess the mind that lay behind the eloquent, glowing eyes. Even the tongue at first deceived, till it began to probe, to challenge, to drop sharp, incisive truths in little gold-leaved pellets, which brought conviction when the gold-leaf wore off.

The sunlight made her part of the brilliant landscape, and she floated into it, neither too dainty nor too luxurious. The greatest heat of the day was past, and she was walking slowly under the maples, on the way to Élise's home, when she was arrested by a voice near her. Then a tall figure leaped the fence, and came to her with outstretched hand and an unmistakable smile of pleasure.

"I've called at the Manor twice, and found you out; so I took to the highway," said the voice gaily.

"My dear Seigneur," she answered, with mock gravity, "ancestors' habits show in time."

"Come, that's severe, isn't it?"

"You have waylaid me in a lonely place, master highwayman!" she said, with a torturing sweetness.

He had never seen her so radiantly *débonnaire*; yet her heart was full of annoying anxiety.

"There's so much I want to say to you," he answered more seriously.

"So very much?"

"Very much indeed."

She looked up the road. "I can give you ten minutes," she said. "Suppose we walk up and down under these trees. It is shady and quiet here. Now proceed, monsieur. Is it my money or my life?"

"You are in a charming mood to-day."

"Which is more than I could say for you the last time we met. You threatened, stormed, were childish, impossible to a degree."

His face became grave. "We were such good friends once!"

"Once—once?" she asked maliciously. "Once Cain and Abel were a happy family. When was that once?"

"Two years ago. What talks we had then! I had so looked forward to your coming again. It was the alluring thing in my life, your arrival," he went on; "but something came between."

His tone nettled her. He talked as if he had some distant claim on her.

"Something came between?" she repeated slowly, mockingly. "That sounds melodramatic indeed. What was it came between—a coach-and-four, or a grand army?"

"Nothing so stately," he answered, piqued by her tone: "a filibuster and his ragamuffins."

"*Ragamuffins* would be appreciated by Monsieur Valmond's followers, spoken at the four corners," she answered.

"Then I'll change it," he said: "a ragamuffin and his filibusters."

"The 'ragamuffin' always speaks of his enemies with courtesy, and the filibusters love their leader," was her pointed rejoinder.

"At half a dollar a day," he answered sharply.

"They get that much from His Excellency, do they?" she asked in real surprise. "That doesn't look like filibustering, does it?"

"His Excellency!" he retorted. "Why won't you look this matter straight in the face? Napoleon or no Napoleon, the end of this thing is ruin."

"Take care that you don't get lost in the débris," she said biting.

"I can take care of myself. I am sorry to have you mixed up in it."

"You are sorry? How good of you! How paternal!"

"If your husband were here—"

"If my husband were here, you would probably be his best friend," she rejoined, with acid sweetness; "and I should still have to take care of myself."

Had he no sense of what was possible to leave unsaid to a woman? She was very angry, though she was also a little sorry for him; for perhaps in the long run he would be in the right. But he must pay for his present stupidity.

"You wrong me," he answered, with a quick burst of feeling. "You are most unfair. You punish me because I do my public duty; and because I would do anything in the world for you, you punish me the more. Have you forgotten two years ago? Is it so easy to your hand, a true and constant admiration, a sincere homage, that you throw it aside like—"

"Monsieur De la Rivière," she said, with exasper-

ating deliberation, her eyes having a dangerous light, "your ten minutes is more than up. And it has been quite ten minutes too long."

"If I were a filibuster"—he answered bitterly and suggestively.

She interrupted him, saying, with a purring softness: "If you had only courage enough—"

He waved his hand angrily. "If I had, I should hope you would prove a better friend to me than you are to this man."

"Ah, in what way do I fail towards 'this man'?"

"By encouraging his downfall. See—I know I am taking my life in my hands, as it were, but I tell you this thing will do you harm when it goes abroad."

She felt the honesty of his words, though they angered her. He seemed to impute some personal interest in Valmond. She would not have it from any man in the world.

"If you will pick up my handkerchief—ah, thank you! We must travel different roads in this matter. You have warned; let me prophesy. His Highness Valmond Napoleon will come out of this with more honour than yourself."

"Thanks to you, then," he said gallantly, for he admired her very stubbornness.

"Thanks to himself. I honestly believe that you will be ashamed of your part in this, one day."

"In any case, I will force the matter to a conclusion," he answered firmly. "The fantastic thing must end."

"When?"

"Within a few days."

"When all is over, perhaps you will have the honesty to come and tell me which was right—you or I. Good-bye."

Élise was busy at her kitchen fire. She looked up, startled, as her visitor entered. Her heavy brow grew heavier, her eyes gleamed sulkily, as she dragged herself forward with weariness, and stood silent and resentful. Why had this lady of the Manor come to her?

Madame Chalice scarcely knew how to begin, for, in truth, she wanted to be the girl's friend, and she feared making her do or say some wild thing.

She looked round the quiet room. Some fruit was boiling on a stove, giving out a fragrant savour, and Élise's eye was on it mechanically. A bit of sewing lay across a chair, and on the wall hung a military suit of the old sergeant, beside it a short sabre. An old Tricolor was draped from a beam, and one or two maps of France were pinned on the wall. She fastened her look on the maps. They seemed to be her cue.

"Have you any influence with your uncle?" she asked.

Élise remained gloomily silent.

"Because," Madame Chalice went on smoothly, ignoring her silence, "I think it would be better for him to go back to Ville Bambord—I am sure of it."

The girl's lip curled angrily. What right had this great lady to interfere with her or hers? What did she mean?

"My uncle is a general and a brave man; he can take care of himself," she answered defiantly.

Madame Chalice did not smile at the title. She admired the girl's courage. She persisted however.

"He is one man, and—"

"He has plenty of men, madame, and His Excellency—"

"His Excellency and hundreds of men cannot stand, if the Government send soldiers against them."

"Why should the Gover'nment do that? They're only going to France; they mean no trouble here."

"They have no right to drill and conspire here, my girl."

"Well, my uncle and his men will fight; we'll all fight," Élise retorted, her hands grasping the arms of the rocking-chair she sat in.

"But why shouldn't we avoid fighting? What is there to fight for? You are all very happy here. You were very happy here before Monsieur Valmond came. Are you happy now?"

Madame Chalice's eyes searched the flushed face anxiously. She was growing more eager every moment to serve, if she could, this splendid creature.

"We would die for him!" answered the girl quickly.

"*You* would die for him," came the reply, slowly, meaningly.

"And what's it to you, if I would?" came the sharp retort. "Why do you fine folk meddle yourselves with poor folk's affairs?"

Then, remembering she was a hostess, with the instinctive courtesy of her race, she said: "Ah, pardon, madame; you meant nothing, I'm sure."

"Why should fine folk make poor folk unhappy?" said Madame Chalice, quietly and sorrowfully, for she saw that Élise was suffering, and all the woman in her came to her heart and lips. She laid her hand on the girl's arm. "Indeed yes, why should fine folk make poor folk unhappy? It is not I alone who makes you unhappy, Élise."

The girl angrily shook off the hand, for she read the true significance of the words.

"What are you trying to find out?" she asked fiercely. "What do you want to do? Did I ever come

in your way? Why do you come into mine? What's my life to you? Nothing, nothing at all. You're here to-day and away to-morrow. You're English; you're not of us. Can't you see that I want to be left alone? If I were unhappy, I could look after myself. But I'm not, I'm not—I tell you I'm not! I'm happy. I never knew what happiness was till now. I'm so happy that I can stand here and not insult you, though you've insulted me."

"I meant no insult, Élise. I want to help you; that is all. I know how hard it is to confide in one's kinsfolk, and I wish with all my heart I might be your friend, if you ever need me."

Élise met her sympathetic look clearly and steadily.

"Speak plain to me, madame," she said.

"Élise, I saw some one climb out of your bedroom window," was the slow reply.

"Oh, my God!" said the girl; "oh, my God!" and she stared blankly for a moment at Madame Chalice. Then, trembling greatly, she reached to the table for a cup of water.

Madame Chalice was at once by her side. "You are ill, poor girl," she said anxiously, and put her arm around her.

Élise drew away.

"I will tell you all, madame, all; and you must believe it, for, as God is my judge, it is the truth."

Then she told the whole story, exactly as it happened, save mention of the kisses that Valmond had given her. Her eyes now and again filled with tears, and she tried, in her poor untutored way, to set him right. She spoke for him altogether, not for herself; and her listener saw that the bond which held the girl to the man might be proclaimed in the streets, with no dishonour.

"That's the story, and that's the truth," said Élise at last. "He's a gentleman, a great man, and I'm a poor girl, and there can be nothing between us; but I'd die for him."

She no longer resented Madame Chalice's solicitude: she was passive, and showed that she wished to be alone.

"You think there's going to be great trouble?" she asked, as Madame Chalice made ready to go.

"I fear so, but we will do all we can to prevent it."

Élise watched her go on towards the Manor in the declining sunlight, then turned heavily to her work again.

There came to her ears the sound of a dog-churn in the yard outside, and the dull roll and beat seemed to keep time to the aching pulses in her head, in all her body. One thought kept going through her brain: there was, as she had felt, trouble coming for Valmond. She had the conviction, too, that it was very near. Her one definite idea was, that she should be able to go to him when that trouble came; that she should not fail him at his great need. Yet these pains in her body, this alternate exaltation and depression, this pitiful weakness! She must conquer it. She remembered the hours spent at his bedside; the moments when he was all hers—by virtue of his danger and her own unwavering care of him. She recalled the dark moment when Death, intrusive, imminent, lurked at the tent door, and in its shadow she emptied out her soul in that one kiss of fealty and farewell.

That kiss—there came to her again, suddenly, Madame Dégardy's cry of warning: "Don't get his breath—it's death, idiot!"

That was it: the black fever was in her veins! That one kiss had sealed her own doom. She knew it now.

He had given her life by giving her love. Well, he should give her death too—her lord of life and death. She was of the chosen few who could drink the cup of light and the cup of darkness with equally regnant soul.

But it might lay her low in the very hour of Valmond's trouble. She must conquer it—how? To whom could she turn for succour? There was but one,—yet she could not seek Madame Dégardy, for the old woman would drive her to her bed, and keep her there. There was only this to do: to possess herself of those wonderful herbs which had been given her Napoleon in his hour of peril.

Dragging herself wearily to the little hut by the river, she knocked, and waited. All was still, and, opening the door, she entered. Striking a match, she found a candle, lighted it, and then began her search. Under an old pan on a shelf she found both herbs and powder. She snatched up a handful of the herbs, and kissed them with joyful heart. Saved—she was saved! Ah, thank the Blessed Virgin! She would thank her for ever!

A horrible sinking sensation seized her. Turning in dismay, she saw the face of Parpon at the window. With a blind instinct for protection, she staggered towards the door, and fell, her fingers still clasping the precious herbs.

As Parpon hastily entered, Madame Dégardy hobbled out of the shadow of the trees, and furtively watched the hut. When a light appeared, she crept to the door, opened it stealthily upon the intruders of her home, and stepped inside.

Parpon was kneeling by Élise, lifting up her head, and looking at her in horrified distress.

With a shrill cry the old woman came forward and dropped on her knees at the other side of Élise. Her

hand, fumbling anxiously over the girl's breast, met the hard and warty palm of the dwarf. She stopped suddenly, raised the sputtering candle, and peered into his eyes with a vague, wavering intensity. For minutes they knelt there, the silence clothing them about, the body of the unconscious girl between them. A lost memory was feeling blindly its way home again. By and by, out of an infinite past, something struggled to the old woman's eyes, and Parpon's heart almost burst in his anxiety. At length her look steadied. Memory, recognition, showed in her face.

With a wild cry her gaunt arms stretched across, and caught the great head to her breast.

"Where have you been so long, Parpon—my son?" she said.

CHAPTER XV

VALMOND'S strength came back quickly, but something had given his mind a new colour. He felt, by a strange telegraphy of fate, that he had been spared death by fever to meet an end more in keeping with the strange exploit which now was coming to a crisis. The next day he was going back to Dalgrothe Mountain, the day after that there should be final review, and the succeeding day the march to the sea would begin. A move must be made. There could be no more delay. He had so lost himself in the dream, that it had become real, and he himself was the splendid adventurer, the maker of empires. True, he had only a small band of ill-armed men, but better arms could be got, and by the time they reached the sea—who could tell!

As he sat alone in the quiet dusk of his room at the Louis Quinze waiting for Parpon, there came a tap at his door. It opened, the garçon mumbled something, and Madame Chalice entered slowly.

Her look had no particular sympathy, but there was a sort of friendliness in the rich colour of her face, in the brightness of her eyes.

"The avocat was to have accompanied me," she said; "but at the last I thought it better to come without him, because—"

She paused. "Yes, madame—because?" he asked, offering her a chair. He was dressed in simple black, as on that first day when he called at the Manor, and it set off the ivory paleness of his complexion, making his face delicate yet strong.

She looked round the room, almost casually, before she went on:

"Because what I have to say were better said to you alone—much better."

"I am sure you are right," he answered, as though he trusted her judgment utterly; and truly there was always something boy-like in his attitude towards her. The compliment was unstudied and pleasant, but she steeled herself for her task. She knew instinctively that she had influence with him, and she meant to use it to its utmost limit.

"I am glad, we are all glad, you are better," she said cordially; then added, "how do your affairs come on? What are your plans?"

Valmond forgot that she was his inquisitor; he only saw her as his ally, his friend. So he spoke to her, as he had done at the Manor, with a sort of eloquence, of his great theme. He had changed greatly. The rhetorical, the *bizarre*, had left his speech. There was no more grandiloquence than might be expected of a soldier who saw things in the bright flashes of the battle-field—sharp pinges of colour, the dyes well soaked in. He had the gift of telling a story: some peculiar *timbre* in the voice, some direct dramatic touch. She listened quietly, impressed and curious. The impossibilities seemed for a moment to vanish in the big dream, and she herself was a dreamer, a born adventurer among the wonders of life. Were she a man, she would have been an explorer or a soldier.

But good judgment returned, and she gathered herself together for the unpleasant task that lay before her.

She looked him steadily in the eyes. "I have come to tell you that you must give up this dream," she said

slowly. "It can come to nothing but ill; and in the mishap you may be hurt past repair."

"I shall never give up—this dream," he said, surprised, but firm, almost dominant.

"Think of these poor folk who surround you, who follow you. Would you see harm come to them?"

"As soldiers, they will fight for a cause."

"What is—the cause?" she asked meaningly.

"France," was the quiet reply; and there was a strong ring in the tone.

"Not so—you, monsieur!"

"You called me 'sire' once," he said tentatively.

"I called my maid a fool yesterday, under some fleeting influence; one has moods," she answered.

"If you would call me puppet to-morrow, we might strike a balance and find—what should we find?"

"An adventurer, I fear," she remarked.

He was not taken aback. "An adventurer truly," he said. "It is a far travel to France, and there is much to overcome!"

She could scarcely reconcile this acute, self-contained man with the enthusiast and comedian she had seen in the Curé's garden.

"Monsieur Valmond," she said, "I neither suspect nor accuse; I only feel. There is something terribly uncertain in this cause of yours, in your claims. You have no right to waste lives."

"To waste lives?" he asked mechanically.

"Yes; the Government is to proceed against you."

"Ah, yes," he answered. "Monsieur De la Rivière has seen to that; but he must pay for his interference."

"That is beside the point. If a force comes against you—what then?"

"Then I will act as becomes a Napoleon," he answered, rather grandly.

So there was a touch of the bombastic in his manner even yet! She laughed a little ironically. Then all at once her thoughts reverted to *Élise*, and some latent cruelty in her awoke. Though she believed the girl, she would accuse the man, the more so, because she suddenly became aware that his eyes were fixed on herself in ardent admiration.

"You might not have a convenient window," she said, with deliberate, consuming suggestion.

His glance never wavered, though he understood instantly what she meant. Well, she had discovered that! He flushed.

"Madame," he said, "I hope that I am a gentleman at heart."

The whole scene came back on him, and a moisture sprang to his eyes.

"She is innocent," he continued—"upon my sacred honour! Yes, yes, I know that the evidence is all against me, but I speak the absolute truth. You saw—that night, did you?"

She nodded.

"Ah, it is a pity—a pity. But, madame, as you are a true woman, believe what I say; for, I repeat, it is the truth."

Then, with admirable reticence, even great delicacy, he told the story as *Élise* had told it, and as convincingly.

"I believe you, monsieur," she said frankly, when he had done, and stretched out her hand to him with a sudden impulse of regard. "Now, follow up that unselfishness by another."

He looked inquiringly at her.

"Give up this mad chase," she added eagerly.

"Never!" was his instant reply. "Never!"

"I beg of you, I appeal to you—my friend," she urged, with that ardour of the counsel who pleads a bad cause.

"I do not impeach you or your claims, but I ask that you leave this village as you found it, these happy people undisturbed in their homes. Ah, go! Go now, and you will be a name to them, remembered always with admiration. You have been courageous, you have been loved, you have been inspiring—ah, yes, I admit it, even to me!—inspiring! The spirit of adventure in you, your hopes, your plans to do great things, roused me. It was that made me your ally more than aught else. Truly and frankly, I do not think that I am convinced of anything save that you are no coward, and that you love a cause. Let it go at that—you must, you must. You came in the night, privately and mysteriously; go in the night, this night, mysteriously—an inscrutable, romantic figure. If you are all you say,—and I should be glad to think so,—go where your talents will have greater play, your claims larger recognition. This is a small game here. Leave us as you found us. We shall be the better for it; our poor folk here will be the better. Proceed with this, and who can tell what may happen? I was wrong, wrong—I see that now—to have encouraged you at all. I repent of it. Here, as I talk to you, I feel, with no doubt whatever, that the end of your bold exploit is near. Can you not see that? Ah yes, you must, you must! Take my horses to-night, leave here, and come back no more; and so none of us shall feel sorrow in thinking of the time when Valmond came to Pontiac."

Variable, accusing, she had suddenly shown him some-

thing beyond caprice, beyond accident of mood or temper. The true woman had spoken; all outer modish garments had dropped away from her real nature, and showed its abundant depth and sincerity. All that was roused in him this moment was never known; he never could tell it; there were eternal spaces between them. She had been speaking to him just now with no personal sentiment. She was only the lover of honest things, the friend, the good ally, obliged to flee a cause for its terrible unsoundness, yet trying to prevent wreck and ruin.

He arose and turned his head away for an instant, her eloquence had been so moving. His glance caught the picture of the Great Napoleon, and his eyes met hers again with new resolution.

"I must stay," he answered; "I will not turn back, whatever comes. This is but child's play, but a speck beside what I mean to do. True, I came in the dark, but I will go in the light. I shall not leave them behind, these poor folk; they shall come with me. I have money, France is waiting, the people are sick of the Orleans, and I—"

"But you must, you must listen to me, monsieur!" she said desperately.

She came close to him, and, out of the frank eagerness of her nature, laid her hand upon his arm, and looked him in the eyes with an almost tender appealing.

At that moment the door opened, and Monsieur De la Rivière was announced.

"Ah, madame!" said the young Seigneur in a tone more than a little carboic; "secrets of State, no doubt?"

"Statesmen need not commit themselves to newsmongers, monsieur," she answered, still standing very near Valmond, as though she would continue a familiar talk when the disagreeable interruption had passed.

She was thoroughly fearless, clear of heart, above all littlenesses.

"I had come to warn Monsieur Valmond once again, but I find him with his ally, counsellor—and comforter," he retorted, with perilous suggestion.

Time would move on, and Madame Chalice might forget that wild remark, but she never would forgive it, and she never wished to do so. The insolent, petty, provincial Seigneur!

"Monsieur De la Rivière," she returned, with cold dignity, "you cannot live long enough to atone for that impertinence."

"I beg your pardon, madame," he returned earnestly, awed by the look in her face; for she was thoroughly aroused. "I came to stop a filibustering expedition, to save the credit of the place where I was born, where my people have lived for generations."

She made a quick, deprecatory gesture. "You saw me enter here," she said, "and you thought to discover treason of some kind—Heaven knows what a mind like yours may imagine! You find me giving better counsel to His Highness than you could ever hope to give—out of a better heart and from a better understanding. You have been worse than intrusive; you have been rash and stupid. You call His Highness filibuster and impostor. I assure you it is my fondest hope that Prince Valmond Napoleon will ever count me among his friends, in spite of all his enemies."

She turned her shoulder on him, and took Valmond's hand with a pronounced obeisance, saying, "Adieu, sire" (she was never sorry she had said it), and passed from the room. Valmond was about to follow her.

"Thank you, no; I will go to my carriage alone," she said, and he did not insist.

When she had gone he stood holding the door open, and looking at De la Rivière. He was very pale; there was a menacing fire in his eyes. The young Seigneur was ready for battle also.

"I am occupied, monsieur," said Valmond meaningly.

"I have come to warn you—"

"The old song; I am occupied, monsieur."

"Charlatan!" said De la Rivière, and took a step angrily towards him, for he was losing command of himself.

At that moment Parpon, who had been outside in the hall for a half-hour or more, stepped into the room, edged between the two, and looked up with a wicked, mocking leer at the young Seigneur.

"You have twenty-four hours to leave Pontiac," cried De la Rivière, as he left the room.

"My watch keeps different time, monsieur," said Valmond coolly, and closed the door.

CHAPTER XVI

FROM the depths where Élise was cast, it was not for her to see that her disaster had brought light to others; that out of the pitiful confusion of her life had come order and joy. A half-mad woman, without memory, knew again whence she came and whither she was going; and bewildered and happy, with a hungering tenderness, moved her hand over the head of her poor dwarf, as though she would know if he were truly her own son. A new spirit also had come into Parpon's eyes, gentler, less weird, less distant. With the advent of their joy a great yearning came to save Élise. They hung watchful, solicitous, over her bed.

It must go hard with her, and twenty-four hours would see the end or a fresh beginning. She had fought back the fever too long, her brain and emotions had been strung to a fatal pitch, and the disease, like a hurricane, carried her on for hours, tearing at her being.

Her own mother sat in a corner, stricken and numb. At last she fell asleep in her chair, but Parpon and his mother slept not at all. Now and again the dwarf went to the door and looked out at the night, so still, and full of the wonder of growth and rest.

Far up on Dalgrothe Mountain a soft brazen light lay like a shield against the sky, a strange, hovering thing. Parpon knew it to be the reflection of the camp-fires in the valley, where Lagroin and his men were sleeping. There came, too, out of the general stillness, a long, low murmur, as though nature were crooning:

the untiring rustle of the river, the water that rolled on and never came back again. Where did they all go—those thousands of rivers for ever pouring on, lazily or wildly? What motive? What purpose? Just to empty themselves into the greater waters, there to be lost? Was it enough to travel on so inevitably to the end, and be swallowed up?

And these millions of lives hurrying along? Was it worth while living, only to grow older and older, and, coming, heavy with sleep, to the Homestead of the Ages, enter a door that only opened inwards, and be swallowed up in the twilight? Why arrest the travelling, however swift it be? Sooner or later it must come—with dusk the end of it.

The dwarf heard the moaning of the stricken girl, her cry, "Valmond! Valmond!" the sobs that followed, the woe of her self-abnegation, even in delirium.

For one's self it mattered little, maybe, the attitude of the mind, whether it would arrest or be glad of the terrific travel; but for another human being, who might judge? Who might guess what was best for the other; what was most merciful, most good? Destiny meant us to prove our case against it, as well as we might; to establish our right to be here as long as we could, so discovering the world day by day, and ourselves to the world, and ourselves to ourselves. To live it out, resisting the power that destroys so long as might be—that was the divine secret.

"Valmond! Valmond! O Valmond!"

The voice moaned out the words again and again.

Through the sounds there came another inner voice, that resolved all the crude, primitive thoughts here defined; vague, elusive, in Parpon's own brain.

The girl's life should be saved at any cost, even if to

save it meant the awful and certain doom his mother had whispered to him over the bed an hour before.

He turned and went into the house. The old woman bent above Élise, watching intently, her eyes straining, her lips anxiously compressed.

"My son," she said, "she will die in an hour if I don't give her more. If I do, she may die at once. If she gets well, she will be—" She made a motion to her eyes.

"Blind, mother, blind!" he whispered, and he looked round the room. How good was the sight of the eyes!

"Perhaps she'd rather die," said the old woman. "She is unhappy." She was thinking of her own far, bitter past, remembered now after so many years. "Misery and blindness too—ah! What right have I to make her blind? It's a great risk, Parpon, my dear son."

"I must, I must, for your sake. Valmond! Valmond! O Valmond!" cried Élise again out of her delirium.

The stricken girl had answered for Parpon. She had decided for herself. Life! that was all she prayed for: for another's sake, not her own.

Her own mother slept on, in the corner of the room, unconscious of the terrible verdict hanging in the balance.

Madame Dégardy quickly emptied into a cup of liquor the strange brown powder, mixed it, and held it to the girl's lips, pouring it slowly down.

Once, twice, during the next hour, a low, anguished voice filled the room; but just as dawn came, Parpon stooped and tenderly wiped a soft moisture from the face, lying so quiet and peaceful now against the pillow.

"She breathes easy, poor pretty bird!" said the old woman gently.

"She'll never see again?" asked Parpon mournfully.

"Never a thing while she lives," was the whispered reply.

"But she has her life," said the dwarf; "she wished it so."

"What's the good!" The old woman had divined why Élise had wanted to live.

The dwarf did not answer. His eyes wandered about abstractedly, and fell again upon Élise's mother sleeping, unconscious of the awful peril passed, and the painful salvation come to her daughter.

The blue-grey light of morning showed under the edge of the closed window-blind. In the room day was mingling incongruously with night, for the candle looked sickly, and the aged crone's face was of a leaden colour, lighted by the piercing eyes that brooded hungrily on her son—her only son: the dwarf had told her of Gabriel's death.

Parpon opened the door and went out. Day was spreading over the drowsy landscape. There was no life as yet in all the horizon, no fires, no animals stirring, no early workmen, no anxious harvesters. But the birds were out, and presently here and there cattle rose up in the fields.

Then, over the foot-hills, he saw a white horse and its rider show up against the grey dust of the road.

Élise's sorrowful words came to him: "Valmond! Valmond! O Valmond!"

His duty to the girl was done; she was safe; now he must follow that figure to where the smoke of the camp-fires came curling up by Dalgrothe Mountain. There were rumours of trouble; he must again be minister, counsellor, friend, to his master.

A half hour later he was climbing the hill where he had

seen the white horse and its rider. He heard the sound of a drum in the distance. The gloom and suspense of the night just passed went from him, and into the sunshine he sang:

"Oh, grand to the war he goes,
O gai, vive le roi!"

Not long afterwards he entered the encampment. Around one fire, cooking their breakfasts, were Muroc the charcoalman, Duclosse the mealman, and Garotte the lime-burner. They all were in good spirits.

"For my part," Muroc was saying, as Parpon nodded at them, and passed by, "I'm not satisfied."

"Don't you get enough to eat?" asked the mealman, whose idea of happiness was based upon the appreciation of a good dinner.

"But yes, and enough to drink, thanks to His Excellency, and the buttons he puts on my coat." Muroc jingled some gold coins in his pocket. "It's this being clean that's the devil! When I sold charcoal, I was black and beautiful, and no dirt showed; I polished like a pan. Now if I touch a potato, I'm filthy. Pipe-clay is hell's stuff to show you up as the Lord made you."

Garotte laughed. "Wait till you get to fighting. Powder sticks better than charcoal. For my part, I'm always clean as a whistle."

"But you're like a bit of wool, lime-burner, you never sweat. Dirt don't stick to you as to me and the mealman. Duclosse there used to look like a pie when the meal and sweat dried on him. When we reach Paris, and His Excellency gets his own, I'll take to charcoal again; I'll fill the palace cellars. That suits me better than chalk and washing every day."

"Do you think we'll ever get to Paris?" asked the mealman, cocking his head seriously.

"That's the will of God, and the weather at sea, and what the Orleans do," answered Muroc grinning.

It was hard to tell how deep this adventure lay in Muroc's mind. He had a prodigious sense of humour, the best critic in the world.

"For me," said the lime-burner, "I think there'll be fighting before we get to the Orleans. There's talk that the Gover'nent's coming against us."

"Done!" said the charcoalman. "We'll see the way our great man puts their noses out of joint."

"Here's Lajeunesse," broke in the mealman, as the blacksmith came near to their fire. He was dressed in complete regimentals, made by the parish tailor.

"Is that so, monsieur le capitaine?" said Muroc to Lajeunesse. "Is the Gover'nent to be fighting us? Why should it? We're only for licking the Orleans, and who cares a sou for them, *hein?*"

"Not a go-dam," said Duclosse, airing his one English oath. "The English hate the Orleans too."

Lajeunesse looked from one to the other, then burst into a laugh. "There's two gills of rum for every man at twelve o'clock to-day, so says His Excellency; and two yellow buttons for the coat of every sergeant, and five for every captain. The English up there in Quebec can't do better than that, can they? And will they? No. Does a man spend money on a hell's foe, unless he means to give it work to do? Pish! Is His Excellency like to hang back because Monsieur De la Rivière says he'll fetch the Government? Bah! The bully soldiers would come with us as they went with the Great Napoleon at Grenoble. Ah, that! His Excellency told me about that just now. Here stood the soldiers,"

—he mapped out the ground with his sword,—“here stood the Great Napoleon, all alone. He looks straight before him. What does he see? Nothing less than a hundred muskets pointing at him. What does he do? He walks up to the soldiers, opens his coat, and says, ‘Soldiers, comrades, is there one of you will kill your Emperor?’ Damned if there was one! They dropped their muskets, and took to kissing his hands. There, my dears, that was the Great Emperor’s way, our Emperor’s father’s little way.”

“But suppose they fired at us ’stead of at His Excellency?” asked the mealman.

“Then, mealman, you’d settle your account for light-weights sooner than you want.”

Duclosse twisted his mouth dubiously. He was not sure how far his enthusiasm would carry him. Muroc shook his shaggy head in mirth.

“Well, ’tis true we’re getting off to France,” said the lime-burner. “We can drill as we travel, and there’s plenty of us for a start.”

“Morrow we go,” said Lajeunesse. “The proclamation’s to be out in an hour, and you’re all to be ready by ten o’clock in the morning. His Excellency is to make a speech to us to-night; then the General—ah, what a fine soldier, and eighty years old!—he’s to give orders, and make a speech also; and I’m to be colonel,”—he paused dramatically,—“and you three are for captains; and you’re to have five new yellow buttons to your coats, like these.” He drew out gold coins and jingled them. Every man got to his feet, and Muroc let the coffee-tin fall. “There’s to be a grand review in the village this afternoon. There’s breakfast for you, my dears!”

Their exclamations were interrupted by Lajeunesse,

who added: "And so my Madelinette is to go to Paris, after all, and Monsieur Parpon is to see that she starts right."

"Monsieur" Parpon was a new title for the dwarf. But the great comedy, so well played, had justified it.

"Oh, His Excellency 'll keep his oath," said the mealman. "I'd take Élise Malboir's word about a man for a million francs, was he prince or ditcher; and she says he's the greatest man in the world. She knows."

"That reminds me," said Lajeunesse gloomily, "Élise has the black fever."

The mealman's face seemed to petrify, his eyes stood out, the bread he had in his teeth dropped, and he stared wildly at Lajeunesse. All were occupied in watching the mealman, and they did not see the figure of a girl approaching.

Muroc, dumfounded, spoke first. "Élise—the black fever!" he gasped, thoroughly awed.

"She is better, she will live," said a voice behind Lajeunesse. It was Madelinette, who had come to the camp early to cook her father's breakfast.

Without a word, the mealman turned, pulled his clothes about him with a jerk, and, pale and bewildered, started away at a run down the plateau.

"He's going to the village," said the charcoalman. "He hasn't leave. That's court-martial!"

Lajeunesse shook his head knowingly. "He's never had but two ideas in his nut—meal and Élise; let him go."

The mealman was soon lost to view, unheeding the challenge that rang after him.

Lagroin had seen the fugitive from a distance, and came down, inquiring. When he was told he swore that Duclosse should suffer divers punishments.

"A pretty kind of officer!" he cried in a fury. "Damn it, is there another man in my army would do it?"

No one answered; and because Lagroin was not a wise man, he failed to see that in time his army might be entirely dissipated by such awkward incidents. When Valmond was told, he listened with a better understanding.

All that Lajeunesse had announced came to pass. The review and march and show were goodly, after their kind; and, by dint of money and wine, the enthusiasm was greater than ever it had been; for it was joined to the pathos of the expected departure. The Curé and the avocet kept within doors; for they had talked together, and now that the day of fate was at hand, and sons, brothers, fathers, were to go off on this far crusade, a new spirit suddenly thrust itself in, and made them sad and anxious. Monsieur De la Rivière was gloomy. Medallion was the one comfortable, cool person in the parish. It had been his conviction that something would occur to stop the whole business at the critical moment. He was a man of impressions, and he lived in the light of them continuously. Wisdom might have been expected of Parpon, but he had been won by Valmond from the start; and now, in the great hour, he was deep in another theme—the restoration of his mother to himself, and to herself.

At seven o'clock in the evening, Valmond and Lagroin were in the streets, after they had marched their men back to camp. A crowd had gathered near the church, for His Excellency was on his way to visit the Curé.

As he passed, they cheered him. He stopped to speak to them. Before he had ended, some one came

cried wildly that the soldiers, the red-coats were come. The sound of a drum rolled up the street, and presently, round a corner, came the well-ordered troops of the Government.

Instantly Lagroin wheeled to summon any stray men of his little army, but Valmond laid a hand on his arm, stopping him. It would have been the same in any case, for the people had scattered like sheep, and stood apart.

They were close by the church steps. Valmond mechanically saw the mealman, open-mouthed and dazed, start forward from the crowd; but, hesitating, he drew back again almost instantly, and was swallowed up in the safety of distance. He smiled at the mealman's hesitation, even while he said to himself: "This ends it—ends it!"

He said it with no great sinking of heart, with no fear. It was the solution of all; it was his only way to honour.

The soldiers were halted a little distance from the two; and the officer commanding, after a dull mechanical preamble, in the name of the Government, formally called upon Valmond and Lagroin to surrender themselves, or suffer the perils of resistance.

"Never!" broke out Lagroin, and, drawing his sword, he shouted: "*Vive Napoléon!* The Old Guard never surrenders!"

Then he made as if to rush forward on the troops.

"Fire!" called the officer.

Twenty rifles blazed out. Lagroin tottered back, and fell at the feet of his master.

Raising himself, he clasped Valmond's knee, and, looking up, said gaspingly:

"Adieu, sire! I love you; I die for you." His head

fell at his Emperor's feet, though the hands still clutched the knee.

Valmond stood over his body, one leg on either side, and drew a pistol.

"Surrender, monsieur," said the officer, "or we fire!"

"Never! A Napoleon knows how to die!" was the reply, and he raised his pistol at the officer.

"Fire!" came the sharp command.

"*Vive Napoléon!*" cried the doomed man, and fell, mortally wounded.

At that instant the Curé, with Medallion, came hurrying round the corner of the church.

"Fools! Murderers!" he said to the soldiers. "Ah, these poor children!"

Stooping, he lifted up Valmond's head, and Medallion felt Lagroin's pulseless heart.

The officer picked up Valmond's pistol. A moment afterwards he looked at the dying man in wonder; for he found that the weapon was not loaded!

CHAPTER XVII

"How long, Chemist?"

"Two hours, perhaps."

"So long?"

After a moment he said dreamily: "It is but a step."

The Little Chemist nodded, though he did not understand. The Curé stooped over him.

"A step, my son?" he asked, thinking he spoke of the voyage the soul takes.

"To the Tuileries," answered Valmond, and he smiled. The Curé's brow clouded; he wished to direct the dying man's thoughts elsewhere. "It is but a step—anywhere," he continued; and looked towards the Little Chemist. "Thank you, dear monsieur, thank you. There is a silver night-lamp in my room; I wish it to be yours. Adieu, my friend."

The Little Chemist tried to speak, but could not. He stooped and kissed Valmond's hand, as though he thought him still a prince, and not the impostor which the British rifles had declared him. To the end, the coterie would act according to the light of their own eyes.

"It is now but a step—to anything," repeated Valmond.

The Curé understood him at last. "The longest journey is short by the light of the grave," he responded gently.

Presently the door opened, admitting the avocat. Valmond calmly met Monsieur Garon's pained look, and courteously whispered his name.

"Your Excellency has been basely treated," said the avocat, his lip trembling.

"On the contrary, well, dear monsieur," answered the ruined adventurer. "Destiny plays us all. Think: I die the death of a soldier, and my crusade was a soldier's vision of conquest. I have paid the price. I have—"

He did not finish the sentence, but lay lost in thought. At last he spoke in a low tone to the avocat, who quickly began writing at his dictation.

The chief clause of the record was a legacy of ten thousand francs to "my faithful Minister and constant friend, Monsieur Parpon;" another of ten thousand to Madame Joan Dégardy, "whose skill and care of me merits more than I can requite;" twenty thousand to "the Church of St. Nazaire of the parish of Pontiac;" five thousand to "the beloved Monsieur Fabre, curé of the same parish, to whose good and charitable heart I come for my last comforts;" twenty thousand to "Mademoiselle Madelinette Lajeunesse, that she may learn singing under the best masters in Paris." To Madame Chalice he left all his personal effects, ornaments, and relics, save a certain decoration given the old sergeant, and a ring once worn by the Emperor Napoleon. These were for a gift to "dear Monsieur Garon, who has honoured me with his distinguished friendship; and I pray that our mutual love for the same cause may give me some title to his remembrance."

Here the avocat stopped him with a quick, protesting gesture.

"Your Excellency! your Excellency!" he said in a shaking voice, "my heart has been with the man as with the cause."

Other legacies were given to Medallion, to the family

of Lagroin, of whom he still spoke as "my beloved General who died for me;" and ten francs to each recruit who had come to his standard.

After a long pause, he said lingeringly: "To Mademoiselle Élise Malboir, the memory of whose devotion and solicitude gives me joy in my last hour, I bequeath fifty thousand francs. In the event of her death, this money shall revert to the parish of Pontiac, in whose graveyard I wish my body to lie. The balance of my estate, whatever it may now be, or may prove to be hereafter, I leave to Pierre Napoleon, third son of Lucien Bonaparte, Prince of Canino, of whom I cherish a reverent remembrance."

A few words more ended the will, and the name of a bank in New York was given as agent. Then there was silence in the room, and Valmond appeared to sleep.

Presently the avocat, thinking that he might wish to be alone with the Curé, stepped quietly to the door and opened it upon Madame Chalice. She pressed his hand, her eyes full of tears, passed inside the room, going softly to a shadowed corner, and sat watching the passive figure on the bed.

What were the thoughts of this man, now that his adventure was over and his end near? If he were in very truth a prince, how pitiable, how paltry! What cheap martyrdom! If an impostor, had the game been worth the candle?—Death seemed a coin of high value for this short, vanished comedy. The man alone could answer, for the truth might not be known, save by the knowledge that comes with the end of all.

She looked at the Curé, where he knelt praying, and wondered how much of this tragedy the anxious priest would lay at his own door.

"It is no tragedy, dear Curé," Valmond said suddenly, as if following her thoughts.

"My son, it is all tragedy until you have shown me your heart, that I may send you forth in peace."

He had forgotten Madame Chalice's presence, and she sat very still.

"Even for our dear Lagroin," Valmond continued, "it was no tragedy. He was fighting for the cause, not for a poor fellow like me. As a soldier loves to die, he died—in the dream of his youth, sword in hand."

"You loved the cause, my son?" was the troubled question. "You were all honest?"

Valmond made as if he would rise on his elbow, in excitement, but the Curé put him gently back.

"From a child I loved it, dear Curé," was the quick reply. "Listen, and I will tell you all my story."

He composed himself, and his face took on a warm light, giving it a look of happiness almost.

"The very first thing I remember was sitting on the sands of the sea-shore, near some woman who put her arms round me and drew me to her heart. I seem even to recall her face now, though I never could before—do we see things clearer when we come to die, I wonder? I never saw her again. I was brought up by my parents, who were humble peasants, on an estate near Viterbo, in Italy. I was taught in the schools, and I made friends among my schoolfellows; but that was all the happiness I had; for my parents were strict and hard with me, and showed me no love. At twelve years of age I was taken to Rome, and there I entered the house of Prince Lucien Bonaparte, as page. I was always near the person of His Highness."

He paused, at sight of a sudden pain in the Curé's face. Sighing, he continued:

"I travelled with him to France, to Austria, to England, where I learned to speak the language, and read what the English wrote about the Great Napoleon. Their hatred angered me, and I began to study what French and Italian books said of him. I treasured up every scrap of knowledge I could get. I listened to all that was said in the Prince's palace, and I was glad when His Highness let me read aloud private papers to him. From these I learned the secrets of the great family. The Prince was seldom gentle with me—sometimes almost brutal, yet he would scarcely let me out of his sight. I had little intercourse then with the other servants, and less still when I was old enough to become a valet; and a valet I was to the Prince for twelve years."

The Curé's hand clasped the arm of his chair nervously. His lips moved, but he said nothing aloud, and he glanced quickly towards Madame Chalice, who sat moveless, her face flushed, her look fixed on Valmond. So, he was the mere impostor after all—a valet! Fate had won the toss-up; not faith, or friendship, or any good thing.

"All these years," Valmond continued presently, his voice growing weaker, "I fed on such food as is not often within the reach of valets. I knew as much of the Bonapartes, of Napoleonic history, as the Prince himself, so much so, that he often asked me of some date or fact of which he was not sure. In time, I became almost like a private secretary to him. I lived in a dream for years; for I had poetry, novels, paintings, music, at my hand all the time, and the Prince, at the end, changed greatly, was affectionate indeed, and said he would do good things for me. I became familiar with all the intrigues, the designs of the Bonapartes;

and what I did not know was told me by Prince Pierre, who was near my own age, and who used me always more like a friend than a servant.

"One day the Prince was visited by Count Bertrand, who was with the Emperor in his exile, and I heard him speak of a thing unknown to history: that Napoleon had a son, born at St. Helena, by a countess well known in Europe. She had landed, disguised as a sailor, from a merchant-ship, and had lived in retirement at Longwood for near a year. After the Emperor died, the thing was discovered, but the governor of the island made no report of it to the British Government, for the event would have reflected on himself; and the returned exiles kept the matter a secret. It was said that the child died at St. Helena. The story remained in my mind, and I brooded on it.

"Two years ago Prince Lucien died in my arms. When he was gone, I found that I had been left five hundred thousand francs, a château, and several relics of the Bonapartes, as reward for my services to the Prince, and, as the will said, in token of the love he had come to bear me. To these Prince Pierre added a number of mementoes. I went to visit my parents, whom I had not seen for many years. I found that my mother was dead, that my father was a drunkard. I left money for my father with the mayor, and sailed for England. From London I came to New York; from New York to Quebec. All the time I was restless, unhappy. I had had to work all my life, now I had nothing to do. I had lived close to great traditions, now there was no habit of life to keep them alive in me. I spent money freely, but it gave me no pleasure. I once was a valet to a great man, now I had the income of a gentleman, and was no gentleman. Ah, do you not shrink from me, Monsieur le Curé?"

The Curé did not reply, but made a kindly gesture, and Valmond continued:

"Sick of everything, one day I left Quebec hurriedly. Why I came here I do not know, save that I had heard it was near the mountains, was quiet, and I could be at peace. There was something in me which could not be content in the foolishness of idle life. All the time I kept thinking—thinking. If I were only a Napoleon, how I would try to do great things! Ah, my God! I loved the Great Napoleon. What had the Bonapartes done? Nothing—nothing. Everything had slipped away from them. Not one of them was like the Emperor. His own legitimate son was dead. None of the others had the Master's blood, fire, daring in his veins. The thought grew on me, and I used to imagine myself his son. I loved his memory, all he did, all he was, better than any son could do. It had been my whole life, thinking of him and the Empire, while I brushed the Prince's clothes or combed his hair. Why should such tastes be given to a valet? Some one somewhere was to blame, dear Curé. I really did not conceive or plan imposture. I was only playing a comedian's part in front of the Louis Quinze, till I heard Parpon sing a verse of '*Vive Napoléon!*' Then it all rushed on me, captured me—and the rest you know."

The Curé could not trust himself to speak yet.

"I had not thought to go so far when I began. It was mostly a whim. But the idea gradually possessed me, and at last it seemed to me that I was a real Napoleon. I used to wake from the dream for a moment, and I tried to stop, but something in my blood drove me on—invariably. You were all good to me; you nearly all believed in me. Lagroin came—and so it has gone on till now, till now. I had a feeling what the end would be. But I should have had my dream, I should

have died for the cause as no Napoleon or Bonaparte ever died. Like a man, I would pay the penalty Fate should set. What more could I do? If a man gives all he has, is not that enough? . . . There is my whole story. Now, I shall ask your pardon, dear Curé."

"You must ask pardon of God, my son," said the priest, his looks showing the anguish he felt.

"The Little Chemist said two hours, but I feel"—his voice got very faint—"I feel that he is mistaken." He murmured a prayer, and crossed himself thrice.

The Curé made ready to read the office for the dying. "My son," he said, "do you truly and earnestly repent you of your sins?"

Valmond's eyes suddenly grew misty, his breathing heavier. He scarcely seemed to comprehend.

"I have paid the price—I have loved you all. Pardon—where are you?—Élise!"

A moment of silence, and then his voice rang out with a sort of sob. "Ah, madame," he cried chokingly, "dear madame, for you I—"

Madame Chalice arose with a little cry, for she knew whom he meant, and her heart ached for him. She forgot his imposture—everything.

"Ah, dear, dear monsieur!" she said brokenly.

He knew her voice, he heard her coming; his eyes opened wide, and he raised himself on the couch with a start. The effort loosened the bandage at his neck, and blood gushed out on his bosom.

With a convulsive motion he drew up the coverlet to his chin, to hide the red stream, and said gaspingly: "Pardon, madame."

Then a shudder passed through him, and with a last effort to spare her the sight of his ensanguined body, he fell face downward, voiceless—for ever.

The very earth seemed breathing. Long waves of heat palpitated over the harvest-fields, and the din of the locust drove lazily through. The far cry of the king-fisher, and idly clacking wheels of carts rolling down from Dalgrothe Mountain, accented the drowsy melody of the afternoon. The wild mustard glowed so like a golden carpet, that the destroying hand of the anxious farmer seemed of the blundering tyranny of labour. Whole fields were flaunting with poppies, too gay for sorrow to pass that way; but a blind girl, led by a little child, made a lane through the red luxuriance, hurrying to the place where vanity and valour, and the remnant of an unfulfilled manhood, lay beaten to death.

Destiny, which is stronger than human love, or the soul's fidelity, had overmastered self-sacrifice and the heart of a woman. This woman had opened her eyes upon the world again, only to find it all night, all strange; she was captive of a great darkness.

As she broke through the hedge of lilacs by the Curé's house, the crowd of awe-stricken people fell back, opening a path for her to the door. She moved as one unconscious of the troubled life and the vibrating world about her.

The hand of the child admitted her to the chamber of death; the door closed, and she stood motionless.

The Curé made as if to rise and go towards her, but Madame Chalice, sitting sorrowful and dismayed at the foot of the couch, by a motion of her hand stopped him.

The girl paused a moment, listening. "Your Excellency," she whispered. It was as if a soul leaned out of the casement of life, calling into the dark and the quiet which may not be comprehended by mortal man.

"Monsieur—Valmond!"

Her trembling hands were stretched out before her yearningly. The Curé moved. She turned towards the sound with a pitiful vagueness.

"Valmond, O Valmond!" again she cried beseechingly, her clouded eyes straining into the silence.

The cloak dropped from her shoulders, and the loose robe enveloping her fell away from a bosom that throbbed with the passion of a great despair.

Nothing but silence.

She moved to the wall like a little child feeling its way, ran her hand vaguely along it, and touched a crucifix. With a moan she pressed her lips to the nailed feet, and came on gropingly to the couch. She reached down towards it, but drew back as if in affright; for a dumb, desolating fear was upon her.

But with that direful courage which is the last gift to the hopeless, she stooped down again, and her fingers touched Valmond's cold hands.

They ran up his breast, to his neck, to his face, and fondled it, as only life can fondle death, out of that pitiful hunger which never can be satisfied in this world; then they moved with an infinite tenderness to his eyes, now blind like hers, and lingered there in the kinship of eternal loss.

A low, anguished cry broke from her:

"Valmond—my love!" and she fell forward upon the breast of her lost Napoleon.

When the people gathered again in the little church upon the hill, Valmond and his adventure had become almost a legend, so soon are men and events lost in the distance of death and ruin.

The Curé preached, as he had always done, with a simple, practical solicitude; but towards the end of his

brief sermon he paused, and, with a serious tenderness of voice, said:

“My children, vanity is the bane of mankind; it destroys as many souls as self-sacrifice saves. It is the constant temptation of the human heart. I have ever warned you against it, as I myself have prayed to be kept from its devices—alas! how futilely at times. Vanity leads to imposture, and imposture to the wronging of others. But if a man repent, and yield all he has, to pay the high price of his bitter mistake, he may thereby redeem himself even in this world. If he give his life repenting, and if the giving stays the evil he might have wrought, shall we be less merciful than God?

“My children” (he did not mention Valmond’s name), “his last act was manly; his death was pious; his sin was forgiven. Those rifle bullets that brought him down let out all the evil in his blood.

“We, my people, have been delivered from a grave error. Forgetting—save for our souls’ welfare—the misery of this vanity which led us astray, let us remember with gladness all of him that was commendable in our eyes: his kindness, eloquence, generous heart, courage, and love of Mother Church. He lies in our graveyard; he is ours; and, being ours, let us protect his memory, as though he had not sought us a stranger, but was of us: of our homes, as of our love, and of our sorrow.

“And so atoning for our sins, as did he, may we at last come to the perfect pardon, and to peace everlasting.”

EPILOGUE

I

(EXTRACT FROM A LETTER WRITTEN BY MADAME CHALICE TO
MONSIEUR FABRE, CURÉ OF THE PARISH OF PONTIAC, THREE
MONTHS AFTER VALMOND'S DEATH.)

“ . . . AND here, dear Curé, you shall have my justification for writing you two letters in one week, though I should make the accident a habit if I were sure it would more please you than perplex you.

“Prince Pierre, son of Prince Lucien Bonaparte, arrived in New York two days ago, and yesterday morning he came to the Atlantic Bank, and asked for my husband. When he made known his business, Harry sent for me, that I might speak with him.

“Dear Curé, hearts and instincts were right in Pontiac: our unhappy friend Valmond was that child of Napoleon, born at St. Helena, of whom he himself spoke at his death in your home. His mother was the Countess of Carnstadt. At the beginning of an illness which followed Napoleon's death, the child was taken from her by Prince Lucien Bonaparte, and was brought up and educated as the son of poor peasants in Italy. No one knew of his birth save the companions in exile of the Great Emperor. All of them, with the exception of Count Bertrand, believed, as Valmond said, that the child had died in infancy at St. Helena.

“Prince Lucien had sworn to the mother that he would care personally for the child, and he fulfilled his

promise by making him a page in his household, and afterwards a valet—base redemption of a vow.

“But even as Valmond drew our hearts to him, so at last he won Prince Lucien’s, as he had from the first won Prince Pierre’s.

“It was not until after Valmond’s death, when receiving the residue of our poor friend’s estate, that Prince Pierre learned the whole truth from Count Bertrand. He immediately set sail for New York, and next week he will secretly visit you, for love of the dead man, and to thank you and our dear avocat, together with all others who believed in and befriended his unfortunate kinsman.

“Ah, dear Curé, think of the irony of it all—that a man be driven, by the very truth in his blood, to that strangest of all impostures—to impersonate himself! He did it too well to be the mere comedian; I felt that all the time. I shall show his relics now with more pride than sorrow. Prince Pierre dines with us to-night. He looks as if he had the Napoleonic daring,—or rashness,—but I am sure he has not the good heart of our Valmond Napoleon. . . .”

II

THE haymakers paused and leaned upon their forks, children left the strawberry vines and climbed upon the fences, as the coach from the distant city dashed down the street towards the four corners, and the welcoming hotel, with its big dormer windows and well-carved veranda. As it whirled by, the driver shouted something at a stalwart forgeron, standing at the doorway of his smithy, and he passed it on to a loitering mealman and a lime-burner.

A girl came slowly over the crest of a hill. Feeling her way with a stick, she paused now and then to draw in long breaths of sweet air from the meadows, as if in the joy of Nature she found a balm for the cruelties of Destiny.

Presently a puff of smoke shot out from the hillside where she stood, and the sound of an old cannon followed. From the Seigneury, far over, came an answering report; and Tricolors ran fluttering up on flag-staffs, at the four corners, and in the Curé's garden.

The girl stood wondering, her fine, calm face expressing the quick thoughts which had belonged to eyes once so full of hope and blithe desire. The serenity of her life—its charity, its truth, its cheerful care for others, the confidence of the young which it invited, showed in all the aspect of her. She heard the flapping of the flag in the Curé's garden, and turned her darkened eyes towards it. A look of pain crossed her face, and a hand trembled to her bosom, as if to ease a great throbbing of her heart. These cannon shots and this shivering pennant brought back a scene at the four corners, years before.

Footsteps came over the hill: she knew them, and turned.

"Parpon!" she said, with a glad gesture.

Without a word he placed in her hand a bunch of violets that he carried. She lifted them to her lips.

"What is it all?" she asked, turning again to the Tricolor.

"Louis Napoleon enters the Tuileries," he answered.

"But ours was the son of the Great Emperor!" she said. "Let us be going, Parpon: we will place these on his grave." She pressed the violets to her heart.

"France would have loved him, as we did," said the dwarf, as they moved on.

"As we do," the blind girl answered softly.

Their figures against the setting sun took on a strange burnished radiance, so that they seemed as mystical pilgrims journeying into that golden haze, which veiled them in beyond the hill, as the Angelus sounded from the tower of the ancient church.

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THE TRAIL OF THE SWORD

WHEREIN IS SET FORTH THE HISTORY OF JESSICA LEVERET,
AS ALSO THAT OF PIERRE LE MOYNE OF IBERVILLE, GEORGE
GERING, AND OTHER BOLD SPIRITS; TOGETHER WITH
CERTAIN MATTERS OF WAR, AND THE DEEDS OF ONE
EDWARD BUCKLAW, MUTINEER AND PIRATE



DEDICATION

My Dear Father:

Once, many years ago, in a kind of despair, you were impelled to say that I would "never be anything but a rascally lawyer." This, it may be, sat upon your conscience, for later you turned me gravely towards Paley and the Thirty-nine Articles; and yet I know that in your deepest soldier's heart, you really pictured me, how unavailingly, in scarlet and pipe-clay, and with sabre, like yourself in youth and manhood. In all I disappointed you, for I never had a brief or a parish, and it was another son of yours who carried on your military hopes. But as some faint apology—I almost dare hope some recompense—for what must have seemed wilfulness, I send you now this story of a British soldier and his "dear maid," which has for its background the old city of Quebec, whose high ramparts you walked first sixty years ago; and for setting, the beginning of those valiant fightings, which, as I have heard you say, "through God's providence and James Wolfe, gave England her best possession."

You will, I feel sure, quarrel with the fashion of my campaigns, and be troubled by my anachronisms; but I beg you to remember that long ago you gave my young mind much distress when you told that wonderful story, how you, one man, "surrounded" a dozen enemies, and drove them prisoners to headquarters. "Surrounded" may have been mere lack of precision, but it serves my turn now, as you see. You once were—and I am precise here—a gallant swordsman: there are legends yet of your doings with a crack Dublin bully. Well, in the last chapter of this tale you shall find a duel which will perhaps recall those early days of this century, when your blood was hot and your hand ready. You would be distrustful of the details of this scene, did I not tell you that, though the voice is Jacob's the hand is another's. Swordsmen are not so many now in the army or out of it, that, among them, Mr. Walter Herries Pollock's name will

have escaped you: so, if you quarrel, let it be with Esau; though, having good reason to be grateful to him, that would cause me sorrow.

My dear father, you are nearing the time-post of ninety years, with great health and cheerfulness; it is my hope you may top the arch of your good and honourable life with a century key-stone.

Believe me, sir,

Your affectionate son,

GILBERT PARKER.

*15th September, 1894,
7 Park Place,
St. James's S.W.*

INTRODUCTION

THE TRAIL OF THE SWORD

THIS book, like *Mrs. Falchion*, was published in two volumes in January. That was in 1894. It appeared first serially in the *Illustrated London News*, for which paper, in effect, it was written, and it also appeared in a series of newspapers in the United States during the year 1893. This was a time when the historical novel was having its vogue. Mr. Stanley Weyman, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and a good many others were following the fashion, and many of the plays at the time were also historical—so-called. I did not write *The Trail of the Sword* because it was in keeping with the spirit of the moment. Fashion has never in the least influenced my writing or my literary purposes. Whatever may be thought of my books, they represent nothing except my own bent of mind, my own wilful expression of myself, and the setting forth of that which seized my imagination.

I wrote *The Trail of the Sword* because the early history of the struggles between the French and English and the North American Continent interested me deeply and fascinated my imagination. Also, I had a most intense desire to write of the Frenchman of the early days of the old régime; and I have no idea why it was so, because I have no French blood in my veins nor any trace of French influence in my family. There is, however, the Celtic strain, the Irish blood, immediate of the tang, as it were, and no doubt a sympathy between the Celtic and the Gallic strain is very near, and has a tendency to become very dear. It has always been a difficulty for me to do anything except show the more favourable side of French character and life.

I am afraid that both in *The Trail of the Sword*, which was the forerunner of *The Seats of the Mighty*, the well sunk, in a sense, out of which the latter was drawn, I gave my Frenchman the advantage over his English rival. In *The Trail of the Sword*, the gallant French adventurer's chivalrous but somewhat merciless soul, makes a better picture than does his more phlegmatic but brave and honourable antagonist, George Gering. Also in *The Seats of the Mighty*, Doltaire, the half-villain, overshadows the good English hero from first to last; and yet, despite the unconscious partiality for the individual in both books, English character and the English as a race, as a whole, are dominant in the narrative.

There is a long letter, as a dedication to this book, addressed to my father; there is a note also, which explains the spirit in which the book was written, and I have no desire to enlarge this introduction in the presence of these prefaces to the first edition. But I may say that this book was gravely important to me, because it was to test all my capacity for writing a novel with an historical background, and, as it were, in the custom of a bygone time. It was not really the first attempt at handling a theme belonging to past generations, because I had written for *Good Words*, about the year 1890, a short novel which I called *The Chief Factor*, a tale of the Hudson's Bay Company. It was the first novel or tale of mine which secured copyright under the new American copyright act of 1892.

There was a circumstance connected with this publication which is interesting. When I arrived in New York, I had only three days in which to have the book printed in order to secure the copyright before *Good Words* published the novel as its Christmas annual in its entirety. I tried Messrs. Harper & Brothers, and several other publishers by turn, but none of them could undertake to print the book in the time. At last some kind friend told me to go to the Trow Directory Binding Company, which I did. They said they could not print the

story in the time. I begged them to reconsider. I told them how much was at stake for me. I said that I would stay in the office and read the proofs as they came from the press, and would not move until it was finished. Refusal had been written on the lips and the face of the manager at the beginning, but at last I prevailed. He brought the foreman down there and then. Each of us, elated by the conditions of the struggle, determined to pull the thing off. We printed that book of sixty-five thousand words or so, in forty-eight hours, and it arrived in Washington three hours before the time was up. I saved the copyright, and I need hardly say that my gratitude to the Trow Directory Binding Company was as great as their delight in having done a really brilliant piece of work.

The day after the copyright was completed, I happened to mention the incident to Mr. Archibald Clavering Gunter, author of *Mr. Barnes of New York*, who had a publishing house for his own books. He immediately made me an offer for *The Chief Factor*. I hesitated, because I had been dealing with great firms like Harpers, and, to my youthful mind, it seemed rather beneath my dignity to have the imprint of so new a firm as the Home Publishing Company on the title-page of my book. I asked the advice of Mr. Walter H. Page, then editor of *The Forum*, now one of the proprietors of *The World's Work* and *Country Life*, and he instantly said: "What difference does it make who publishes your book! It is the public you want."

I did not hesitate any longer. *The Chief Factor* went to Mr. Archibald Clavering Gunter and the Home Publishing Company, and they made a very large sale of it. I never cared for the book however; it seemed stilted and amateurish, though some of its descriptions and some of its dialogues were, I think, as good as I can do; so, eventually, in the middle nineties, I asked Mr. Gunter to sell me back the rights in the book and give me control of it. This he did. I thereupon withdrew it from publication at once, and am not including it in this sub-

scription edition. I think it better dead. But the writing of it taught me better how to write *The Trail of the Sword*; though, if I had to do this book again, I could construct it better.

I think it fresh and very vigorous, and I think it does not lack distinction, while a real air of romance—of refined romance—pervades it. But I know that Mr. W. E. Henley was right when, after most generously helping me to revise it, with a true literary touch wonderfully intimate and affectionate, he said to me: "It is just not quite big, but the next one will get home."

He was right. *The Trail of the Sword* is "just not quite," though I think it has charm; but it remained for *The Seats of the Mighty* to get home, as "W. E. H.," the most exacting, yet the most generous, of critics, said.

This book played a most important part in a development of my literary work, and the warm reception by the public—for in England it has been through its tenth edition, and in America through proportionate thousands—was partly made possible by the very beautiful illustrations which accompanied its publication in *The Illustrated London News*. The artist was A. L. Forestier, and never before or since has my work received such distinguished pictorial exposition, save, perhaps, in *The Weavers*, when André Castaigne did such triumphant work. It is a joy still to look at the illustrations of *The Trail of the Sword*, for, absolutely faithful to the time, they add a note of verisimilitude to the tale.

A NOTE

THE actors in this little drama played their parts on the big stage of a new continent two hundred years ago. Despots sat upon the thrones of France and England, and their representatives on the Hudson and the St. Lawrence were despots too, with greater opportunity and to better ends. In Canada, Frontenac quarrelled with his Intendant and his Council, set a stern hand upon the Church when she crossed with his purposes, cajoled, treated with, and fought the Indians by turn, and cherished a running quarrel with the English Governor of New York. They were striving for the friendship of the Iroquois on the one hand, and for the trade of the Great West on the other. The French, under such men as La Salle, had pushed their trading posts westward to the great lakes and beyond the Missouri, and north to the shores of Hudson's Bay. They traded and fought and revelled, hot with the spirit of adventure, the best of pioneers and the worst of colonists. Tardily, upon their trail, came the English and the Dutch, slow to acquire but strong to hold; not so rash in adventure, nor so adroit in intrigue, as fond of fighting, but with less of the gift of the woods, and much more the faculty for government. There was little interchange of friendliness and trade between the rival colonists; and Frenchmen were as rare on Manhattan Island as Englishmen on the heights of Quebec—except as prisoners.

G. P.



THE TRAIL OF THE SWORD



THE TRAIL OF THE SWORD

EPOCH THE FIRST

CHAPTER I

AN ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY

ONE summer afternoon a tall, good-looking stripling stopped in the midst of the town of New York, and asked his way to the governor's house. He attracted not a little attention, and he created as much astonishment when he came into the presence of the governor. He had been announced as an envoy from Quebec. "Some new insolence of the County Frontenac!" cried old Richard Nicholls, bringing his fist down on the table. For a few minutes he talked with his chamber-fellow; then, "Show the gentleman in," he added.

In the room without, the envoy from Quebec had stood flicking the dust from his leggings with a scarf. He was not more than eighteen, his face had scarcely an inkling of moustache, but he had an easy upright carriage, with an air of self-possession, the keenest of grey eyes, a strong pair of shoulders, a look of daring about his rather large mouth, which lent him a manliness well warranting his present service. He had been left alone, and the first thing he had done was to turn on his heel and examine the place swiftly. This he seemed to do mechanically, not as one forecasting danger, not as a spy. In the curve of his lips, in an occasional droop of his eyelids, there was a suggestion

of humour: less often a quality of the young than of the old. For even in the late seventeenth century, youth took itself seriously at times.

Presently, as he stood looking at the sunshine through the open door, a young girl came into the lane of light, waved her hand, with a little laugh, to some one in the distance, and stepped inside. At first she did not see him. Her glances were still cast back the way she had come. The young man could not follow her glance, nor was he anything curious. Young as he was, he could enjoy a fine picture. There was a pretty demureness in the girl's manner, a warm piquancy in the turn of the neck, and a delicacy in her gestures, which to him, fresh from hard hours in the woods, was part of some delightful Arcady—though Arcady was more in his veins than of his knowledge. For the young seigneur of New France spent far more hours with his gun than with his Latin, and knew his bush-ranging vassal better than his tutor; and this one was too complete a type of his order to reverse its record. He did not look to his scanty lace, or set himself seemingly; he did but stop flicking the scarf held loose in his fingers, his foot still on the bench. A smile played at his lips, and his eyes had a gleam of raillery. He heard the girl say in a soft, quaint voice, just as she turned towards him, "Foolish boy!" By this he knew that the pretty picture had for its inspiration one of his own sex.

She faced him, and gave a little cry of surprise. Then their eyes met. Immediately he made the most elaborate bow of all his life, and she swept a graceful courtesy. Her face was slightly flushed that this stranger should have seen, but he carried such an open, cordial look that she paused, instead of hurrying into the governor's room, as she had seemed inclined to do.

In the act the string of her hat, slung over her arm, came loose, and the hat fell to the floor. Instantly he picked it up and returned it. Neither had spoken a word. It seemed another act of the light pantomime at the door. As if they had both thought on the instant how droll it was, they laughed, and she said to him naïvely: "You have come to visit the governor? You are a Frenchman, are you not?"

To this in slow and careful English, "Yes," he replied; "I have come from Canada to see his excellency. Will you speak French?"

"If you please, no," she answered, smiling; "your English is better than my French. But I must go." And she turned towards the door of the governor's room.

"Do not go yet," he said. "Tell me, are you the governor's daughter?"

She paused, her hand at the door. "Oh no," she answered; then, in a sprightly way—"are you a governor's son?"

"I wish I were," he said, "for then there'd be a new intendant, and we'd put Nick Perrot in the council."

"What is an intendant?" she asked, "and who is Nick Perrot?"

"*Bien!* an intendant is a man whom King Louis appoints to worry the governor and the gentlemen of Canada, and to interrupt the trade. Nicolas Perrot is a fine fellow, and a great *coureur du bois*, and helps to get the governor out of troubles to-day, the intendant to-morrow. He is a splendid fighter. Perrot is my friend."

He said this, not with an air of boasting, but with a youthful and enthusiastic pride, which was relieved by the twinkle in his eyes and his frank manner.

"Who brought you here?" she asked demurely. "Are they inside with the governor?"

He saw the raillery; though, indeed, it was natural to suppose that he had no business with the governor, but had merely come with some one. The question was not flattering. His hand went up to his chin a little awkwardly. She noted how large yet how well-shaped it was, or, rather, she remembered afterwards. Then it dropped upon the hilt of the rapier he wore, and he answered with good self-possession, though a little hot spot showed on his cheek: "The governor must have other guests who are no men of mine; for he keeps an envoy from Count Frontenac long in his ante-room."

The girl became very youthful indeed, and a merry light danced in her eyes and warmed her cheek. She came a step nearer. "It is not so? You do not come from Count Frontenac—all alone, do you?"

"I'll tell you after I have told the governor," he answered, pleased and amused.

"Oh, I shall hear when the governor hears," she answered, with a soft quaintness, and then vanished into the governor's chamber. She had scarce entered when the door opened again, and the servant, a Scotsman, came out to say that his excellency would receive him. He went briskly forward, but presently paused. A sudden sense of shyness possessed him. It was not the first time he had been ushered into vice-regal presence, but his was an odd position. He was in a strange land, charged with an embassy which accident had thrust upon him. Then, too, the presence of the girl had withdrawn him for an instant from the imminence of his duty. His youth came out of him, and in the pause one could fairly see him turn into man.

He had not the dark complexion of so many of his race, but was rather Saxon in face, with rich curling brown hair. Even in that brave time one might safely have bespoken for him a large career. And even while the Scotsman in the doorway eyed him with distant deprecation,—as he eyed all Frenchmen, good and bad, ugly or handsome,—he put off his hesitation and entered the governor's chamber. Colonel Nicholls came forward to greet him, and then suddenly stopped, astonished. Then he wheeled upon the girl. "Jessica, you madcap!" he said in a low voice.

She was leaning against a tall chair, both hands grasping the back of it, her chin just level with the top. She had told the governor that Count Frontenac had sent him a lame old man, and that, enemy or none, he ought not to be kept waiting, with arm in sling and bandaged head. Seated at the table near her was a grave member of the governor's council, William Drayton by name. He lifted a reproving finger at her now, but with a smile on his kindly face, and "Fie, fie, young lady!" he said, in a whisper.

Presently the governor mastered his surprise, and seeing that the young man was of birth and quality, extended his hand cordially enough, and said: "I am glad to greet you, sir;" and motioned him to a seat. "But, pray, sit down," he added, "and let us hear the message Count Frontenac has sent. Meanwhile we would be favoured with your name and rank."

The young man thrust a hand into his doublet and drew forth a packet of papers. As he handed it over, he said in English—for till then the governor had spoken French, having once served with the army of France, and lived at the French Court: "Your excellency, my name is Pierre le Moyne of Iberville, son of

Charles le Moyne, a seigneur of Canada, of whom you may have heard." (The governor nodded.) "I was not sent by Count Frontenac to you. My father was his envoy: to debate with you our trade in the far West and our dealings with the Iroquois."

"Exactly," said old William Drayton, tapping the table with his forefinger; "and a very sound move, upon my soul."

"Ay, ay," said the governor, "I know of your father well enough. A good fighter and an honest gentleman, as they say. But proceed, Monsieur le Moyne of Iberville."

"I am called Iberville," said the young man simply. Then: "My father and myself started from Quebec with good Nick Perrot, the *coureur du bois*—"

"I know him too," the governor interjected—"a scoundrel worth his weight in gold to your Count Frontenac."

"For whose head Count Frontenac has offered gold in his time," answered Iberville, with a smile.

"A very pretty wit," said old William Drayton, nodding softly towards the girl, who was casting bright, quizzical glances at the youth over the back of the chair.

Iberville went on: "Six days ago we were set upon by a score of your Indians, and might easily have left our scalps with them; but, as it chanced, my father was wounded, I came off scot-free, and we had the joy of ridding your excellency of half a dozen rogues."

The governor lifted his eyebrows and said nothing. The face of the girl over against the back of the chair had become grave.

"It was in question whether Perrot or I should bear

Count Frontenac's message. Perrot knew the way, I did not; Perrot also knew the Indians."

"But Perrot," said the governor bluffly, "would have been the letter-carrier; you are a kind of ambassador. Upon my soul, yes, a sort of ambassador!" he added, enjoying the idea; for, look at it how you would, Iberville was but a boy.

"That was my father's thought and my own," answered Iberville coolly. "There was my father to care for till his wound was healed and he could travel back to Quebec, so we thought it better Perrot should stay with him. A Le Moyne was to present himself, and a Le Moyne has done so."

The governor was impressed more deeply than he showed. It was a time of peace, but the young man's journey among Indian braves and English outlaws, to whom a French scalp was a thing of price, was hard and hazardous. His reply was cordial, then his fingers came to the seal of the packet; but the girl's hand touched his arm.

"I know his name," she said in the governor's ear, "but he does not know mine."

The governor patted her hand, and then rejoined: "Now, now, I forgot the lady; but I cannot always remember that you are full fifteen years old."

Standing up, with all due gravity and courtesy, "Monsieur Iberville," he said, "let me present you to Mistress Jessica Leveret, the daughter of my good and honoured and absent friend, the Honourable Hogarth Leveret."

So the governor and his councillor stood shoulder to shoulder at one window, debating Count Frontenac's message; and shoulder to shoulder at another stood Iberville and Jessica Leveret. And what was between

these at that moment—though none could have guessed it—signified as much to the colonies of France and England, at strife in the New World, as the deliberations of their elders.

CHAPTER II

THE THREAT OF A RENEGADE

IBERVILLE was used to the society of women. Even as a young lad, his father's notable place in the colony, and the freedom and gaiety of life in Quebec and Montreal, had drawn upon him a notice which was as much a promise of the future as an accent of the present. And yet, through all of it, he was ever better inspired by the grasp of a common soldier, who had served with Carignan-Salières, or by the greeting and gossip of such woodsmen as Du Lhut, Mantet, La Durantaye, and, most of all, his staunch friend Perrot, chief of the *coureurs du bois*. Truth is, in his veins was the strain of war and adventure first and before all. Under his tutor, the good Père Dollier de Casson, he had never endured his classics, save for the sake of Hector and Achilles and their kind; and his knowledge of English, which his father had pressed him to learn,—for he himself had felt the lack of it in dealings with Dutch and English traders,—only grew in proportion as he was given Shakespeare and Raleigh to explore.

Soon the girl laughed up at him. "I have been a great traveller," she said, "and I have ears. I have been as far west as Albany and south to Virginia, with my father, who, perhaps you do not know, is in England now. And they told me everywhere that Frenchmen are bold, dark men, with great black eyes and very fine laces and wigs, and a trick of bowing and making foolish

compliments; and they are not to be trusted, and they will not fight except in the woods, where there are trees to climb. But I see that it is not all true, for you are not dark, your eyes are not big or black, your laces are not much to see, you do not make compliments—”

“I shall begin now,” he interrupted.

“—you must be trusted a little, or Count Frontenac would not send you, and—and—tell me, would you fight if you had a chance?”

No one of her sex had ever talked so to Iberville. Her demure raillery, her fresh, frank impertinence, through which there ran a pretty air of breeding, her innocent disregard of formality, all joined to impress him, to interest him. He was not so much surprised at the elegance and cleverness of her speech, for in Quebec girls of her age were skilled in languages and arts, thanks to the great bishop, Laval, and to Marie of the Incarnation. In response to her a smile flickered upon his lips. He had a quick fierce temper, but it had never been severely tried; and so well used was he to looking cheerfully upon things, so keen had been his zest in living, that, where himself was concerned, his vanity was not easily touched. So, looking with genial dryness, “You will hardly believe it, of course,” he said, “but wings I have not yet grown, and the walking is bad 'twixt here and the Château St. Louis.”

“Iroquois traps,” she suggested, with a smile.

“With a trick or two of English footpads,” was his reply.

Meanwhile his eye had loitered between the two men in council at the farther window and the garden, into which he and the girl were looking. Presently he gave a little start and a low whistle, and his eyelids slightly drooped, giving him a handsome sulkiness. “Is it so?”

he said between his teeth: "Radisson—Radisson, as I live!"

He had seen a man cross a corner of the yard. This man was short, dark-bearded, with black, lanky hair, brass earrings, and buckskin leggings, all the typical equipment of the French *coureur du bois*. Iberville had only got one glance at his face, but the sinister profile could never be forgotten. At once the man passed out of view. The girl had not seen him, she had been watching her companion. Presently she said, her fingers just brushing his sleeve, for he stood eyeing the point where the man had disappeared: "Wonderful! You look now as if you would fight. Oh, fierce, fierce as the governor when he catches a French spy!"

He turned to her and, with a touch of irony, "*Par-don!*" he retorted. "Now I shall look as blithe as the governor when a traitor deserts to him."

Of purpose he spoke loud enough to be heard by the governor and his friend. The governor turned sharply on him. He had caught the ring in the voice, that rash enthusiasm of eager youth, and, taking a step towards Iberville, Count Frontenac's letter still poised in his hand: "Were your words meant for my hearing, monsieur?" he said. "Were you speaking of me or of your governor?"

"I was thinking of one Radisson a traitor, and I was speaking of yourself, your excellency."

The governor had asked his question in French, in French the reply was given. Both the girl and Councillor Drayton followed with difficulty. Jessica looked a message to her comrade in ignorance. The old man touched the governor's arm. "Let it be in English if monsieur is willing. He speaks it well."

The governor was at work to hide his anger: he

wished good greeting to Count Frontenac's envoy, and it seemed not fitting to be touched by the charges of a boy. "I must tell you frankly, Monsieur Iberville," he said, "that I do not choose to find a sort of challenge in your words; and I doubt that your father, had he been here, would have spoke quite so roundly. But I am for peace and happy temper when I can. I may not help it if your people, tired of the governance of Louis of France, come into the good ruling of King Charles. As for this man Radisson: what is it you would have?"

Iberville was now well settled back upon his native courage. He swallowed the rebuke with grace, and replied with frankness: "Radisson is an outlaw. Once he attempted Count Frontenac's life. He sold a band of our traders to the Iroquois. He led your Hollanders stealthily to cut off the Indians of the west, who were coming with their year's furs to our merchants. There is peace between your colony and ours—is it fair to harbour such a wretch in your court-yard? It was said up in Quebec, your excellency, that such men have eaten at your table."

During this speech the governor seemed choleric, but a change passed over him, and he fell to admiring the lad's boldness. "Upon my soul, monsieur," he said, "you are council, judge, and jury all in one; but I think I need not weigh the thing with you, for his excellency, from whom you come, has set forth this same charge,"—he tapped the paper,—"and we will not spoil good-fellowship by threshing it now." He laughed a little ironically. "And I promise you," he added, "that your Radisson shall neither drink wine nor eat bread with you at my table. And now, come, let us talk awhile together; for, lest any accident befall the

packet you shall bear, I wish you to carry in your memory, with great distinctness, the terms of my writing to your governor. I would that it were not to be written, for I hate the quill, and I've seen the time I would rather point my sword red than my quill black."

By this the shadows were falling. In the west the sun was slipping down behind the hills, leaving the strong day with a rosy and radiant glamour, that faded away in eloquent tones to the grey, tinsel softness of the zenith. Out in the yard a sumach bush was aflame. Rich tiger-lilies thrust in at the sill, and lazy flies and king bees boomed in and out of the window. Something out of the sunset, out of the glorious freshness and primal majesty of the new land, diffused through the room where those four people stood, and made them silent. Presently the governor drew his chair to the table, and motioned Councillor Drayton and Iberville to be seated.

The girl touched his arm. "And where am I to sit?" she asked demurely. Colonel Nicholls pursed his lips and seemed to frown severely on her. "To sit? Why, in your room, mistress. Tut, tut, you are too bold. If I did not know your father was coming soon to bear you off, new orders should be issued. Yes, yes, e'en as I say," he added, as he saw the laughter in her eyes.

She knew that she could wind the big-mannered soldier about her finger. She had mastered his household; she was the idol of the settlement, her flexible intelligence, the flush of the first delicate bounty of womanhood had made him her slave. In a matter of vexing weight he would not have let her stay, but such deliberatings as he would have with Iberville could well bear her scrutiny. He reached out to pinch her cheek, but

she deftly tipped her head and caught his outstretched fingers. "But where am I to sit?" she persisted.

"Anywhere, then, but at the council-table," was his response, as he wagged a finger at her and sat down. Going over she perched herself on a high stool in the window behind Iberville. He could not see her, and, if he thought at all about it, he must have supposed that she could not see him. Yet she could; for against the window-frame was a mirror, and it reflected his face and the doings at the board. She did not listen to the rumble of voices. She fell to studying Iberville. Once or twice she laughed softly to herself.

As she turned to the window a man passed by and looked in at her. His look was singular, and she started. Something about his face was familiar. She found her mind feeling among far memories, for even the past of the young stretches out interminably. She shuddered, and a troubled look came into her eyes. Yet she could not remember. She leaned slightly forward, as if she were peering into that by-gone world which, maybe, is wider than the future for all of us—the past. Her eyes grew deep and melancholy. The sunset seemed to brighten around her all at once, and enmesh her in a golden web, burnishing her hair, and it fell across her brow with a peculiar radiance, leaving the temples in shadow, softening and yet lighting the carmine of her cheeks and lips, giving a feeling of life to her dress, which itself was like dusty gold. Her hands were caught and clasped at her knees. There was something spiritual and exalted in the picture. It had, too, a touch of tragedy, for something out of her nebulous past had been reflected in faint shadows in her eyes, and this again, by strange, delicate processes, was expressed in every line of her form, in all the aspect of her face. It

was as if some knowledge were being filtered to her through myriad atmospheres of premonition; as though the gods in pity foreshadowed a great trouble, that the first rudeness of misery might be spared.

She did not note that Iberville had risen, and had come round the table to look over Councillor Drayton's shoulder at a map spread out. After standing a moment watching, the councillor's finger his pilot, he started back to his seat. As he did so he caught sight of her still in that poise of wonderment and sadness. He stopped short, then glanced at Colonel Nicholls and the councillor. Both were bent over the map, talking in eager tones. He came softly round the table, and was about to speak over her shoulder, when she drew herself up with a little shiver and seemed to come back from afar. Her hands went up to her eyes. Then she heard him. She turned quickly, with the pageant of her dreams still wavering in her face; smiled at him distantly, looked towards the window again in a troubled way, then stepped softly and swiftly to the door, and passed out. Iberville watched the door close and turned to the window. Again he saw, and this time nearer to the window, Radisson, and with him the man who had so suddenly mastered Jessica.

He turned to Colonel Nicholls. "Your excellency," he said, "will you not let me tell Count Frontenac that you forbid Radisson your purlieus? For, believe me, sir, there is no greater rogue unhanged, as you shall find some day to the hurt of your colony, if you shelter him."

The governor rose and paced the room thoughtfully. "He is proclaimed by Frontenac?" he asked.

"A price is on his head. As a Frenchman I should shoot him like a wolf where'er I saw him; and so I

would now were I not Count Frontenac's ambassador and in your excellency's presence."

"You speak manfully, monsieur," said the governor, not ill-pleased; "but how might you shoot him now? Is he without there?" At this he came to where Iberville stood, and looked out. "Who is the fellow with him?" he asked.

"A cut-throat scoundrel, I'll swear, though his face is so smug," said Iberville. "What think you sir?" turning to the councillor, who was peering between their shoulders.

"As artless yet as strange a face as I have ever seen," answered the merchant. "What's his business here, and why comes he with the other rogue? He would speak with your excellency, I doubt not," he added.

Colonel Nicholls turned to Iberville. "You shall have your way," he said. "Yon renegade was useful when we did not know what sudden game was playing from Château St. Louis; for, as you can guess, he has friends as faithless as himself. But to please your governor, I will proclaim him."

He took his stick and tapped the floor. Waiting a moment, he tapped again. There was no sign. He opened the door; but his Scots body-guard was not in sight. "That's unusual," he said. Then, looking round: "Where is our other councillor? Gone?" he laughed. "Faith, I did not see her go. And now we can swear that where the dear witch is will Morris, my Scotsman, be found. Well, well! They have their way with us whether we will or no. But, here, I'll have your Radisson in at once."

He was in act to call when Morris entered. With a little hasty rebuke he gave his order to the man. "And look you, my good Morris," he added, "tell Sherlock

and Weir to stand ready. I may need the show of fire-arms."

Turning to Iberville, he said: "I trust you will rest with us some days, monsieur. We shall have sports and junketings anon. We are not yet so grim as our friends in Massachusetts."

"I think I might venture two days with you, sir, if for nothing else, to see Radisson proclaimed. Count Frontenac would gladly cut months from his calendar to know you ceased to harbour one who can prove no friend," was the reply.

The governor smiled. "You have a rare taste for challenge, monsieur. To be frank, I will say your gift is more that of the soldier than the envoy. But upon my soul, if you will permit me, I think no less of you for that."

Then the door opened, and Morris brought in Radisson. The keen, sinister eyes of the woodsman travelled from face to face, and then rested savagely on Iberville. He scented trouble, and traced it to its source. Iberville drew back to the window and, resting his arm on the high stool where Jessica had sat, waited the event. Presently the governor came over to him.

"You can understand," he said quietly, "that this man has been used by my people, and that things may be said which—"

Iberville waved his hand respectfully. "I understand, your excellency," he said. "I will go." He went to the door.

The woodsman as he passed broke out: "There is the old saying of the woods, 'It is mad for the young wolf to trail the old bear.'"

"That is so," rejoined Iberville, with excellent coolness, "if the wolf holds not the spring of the trap."

In the outer room were two soldiers and the Scot. He nodded, passed into the yard, and there he paced up and down. Once he saw Jessica's face at a window, he was astonished to see how changed. It wore a grave, an apprehensive look. He fell to wondering, but, even as he wondered, his habit of observation made him take in every feature of the governor's house and garden, so that he could have reproduced all as it was mirrored in his eye. Presently he found himself again associating Radisson's comrade with the vague terror in Jessica's face. At last he saw the fellow come forth between two soldiers, and the woodsman turned his head from side to side, showing his teeth like a wild beast at sight of Iberville. His black brows twitched over his vicious eyes. "There are many ways to hell, Monsieur Iberville," he said. "I will show you one. Some day when you think you tread on a wisp of straw, it will be a snake with the deadly tooth. You have made an outlaw—take care! When the outlaw tires of the game, he winds it up quick. And some one pays for the candles and the cards."

Iberville walked up to him. "Radisson," he said in a voice well controlled, "you have always been an outlaw. In our native country you were a traitor; in this, you are the traitor still. I am not sorry for you, for you deserve not mercy. Prove me wrong. Go back to Quebec; offer to pay with your neck, then"—

"I will have my hour," said the woodsman, and started on.

"It's a pity," said Iberville to himself—"as fine a woodsman as Perrot, too!"

CHAPTER III

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

At the governor's table that night certain ladies and gentlemen assembled to do the envoy honour. There came, too, a young gentleman, son of a distinguished New Englander, his name George Gering, who was now in New York for the first time. The truth is, his visit was to Jessica, his old playmate, the mistress of his boyhood. Her father was in England, her mother had been dead many years, and Colonel Nicholls and his sister being kinsfolk, a whole twelvemonth ago she had been left with them. Her father had thought at first to house her with his old friend Edward Gering, but he loved the Cavalier-like tone of Colonel Nicholls's household better than the less inspiring air which Madam Puritan Gering suffused about her home. Himself in early youth had felt the austerity of a Cavalier father turned a Puritan on a sudden, and he wished no such experience for his daughter. For all her abundancy of life and feeling, he knew how plastic and impressionable she was, and he dreaded to see that exaltation of her fresh spirit touched with gloom. She was his only child, she had been little out of his sight, her education had gone on under his own care, and, in so far as was possible in a new land, he had surrounded her with gracious influences. He looked forward to any definite separation (as marriage) with apprehension. Perhaps one of the reasons why he chose Colonel Nicholls's house

for her home, was a fear lest George Gering should so impress her that she might somehow change ere his return. And in those times brides of sixteen were common as now they are rare.

She sat on the governor's left. All the brightness, the soft piquancy, which Iberville knew, had returned; and he wondered—fortunate to know that wonder so young—at her varying moods. She talked little, and most with the governor; but her presence seemed pervasive, the aura in her veins flowed from her eye and made an atmosphere that lighted even the scarred and rather sulky faces of two officers of His Majesty near. They had served with Nicholls in Spain, but not having eaten King Louis's bread, eyed all Frenchmen askance, and were not needlessly courteous to Iberville, whose achievements they could scarce appreciate, having done no Indian fighting.

Iberville sat at the governor's end, Gering at the other. It was noticed by Iberville that Gering's eyes were much on Jessica, and in the spirit of rivalry, the legitimate growth of race and habit, he began to speak to her with the air of easy but deliberate playfulness which marked their first meeting.

Presently she spoke across the table to him, after Colonel Nicholls had pledged him heartily over wine. The tone was a half whisper as of awe, in reality a pretty mockery. "Tell me," she said, "what is the bravest and greatest thing you ever did?"

"Jessica, Jessica!" said the governor in reproof. An old Dutch burgher laughed into his hand, and His Majesty's officers cocked their ears, for the whisper was more arresting than any loud talk. Iberville coloured, but the flush passed quickly and left him unembarrassed. He was not hurt, not even piqued, for he

felt well used to her dainty raillery. But he saw that Gering's eyes were on him, and the lull that fell as by a common instinct—for all could not have heard the question—gave him a thrill of timidity. But, smiling, he said drily across the table, his voice quiet and clear: "My bravest and greatest thing was to answer an English lady's wit in English."

A murmur of applause ran round, and Jessica laughed and clapped her hands. For the first time in his life Gering had a pang of jealousy and envy. Only that afternoon he had spent a happy hour with Jessica in the governor's garden, and he had then made an advance upon the simple relations of their life in Boston. She had met him without self-consciousness, persisting in her old ways, and showing only when she left him, and then for a breath, that she saw his new attitude. Now the eyes of the two men met, and Gering's dark face flushed and his brow lowered. Perhaps no one saw but Iberville, but he, seeing, felt a sudden desire to play upon the other's weakness. He was too good a sportsman to show temper in a game; he had suddenly come to the knowledge that love, too, is a game, and needs playing. By this time the dinner was drawing to its close and now a singular thing happened. As Jessica, with demure amusement, listened to the talk that followed Iberville's sally, she chanced to lift her eyes to a window. She started, changed colour, and gave a little cry. The governor's hand covered hers at once as he followed her look. It was a summer's night and the curtained windows were partly open. Iberville noted that Jessica's face wore the self-same shadow as in the afternoon when she had seen the stranger with Radisson.

"What was it, my dear?" said the governor.

She did not answer, but pressed his hand nervously.

"A spy, I believe," said Iberville, in a low voice.

"Yes, yes," said Jessica in a half whisper; "a man looked in at the window; a face that I have seen—but I can't remember when."

The governor went to the window and drew the curtains. There was nothing to see. He ordered Morris, who stood behind his chair, to have the ground searched and to bring in any straggler. Already both the officers were on their way to the door, and at this point it opened and let in a soldier. He said that as he and his comrade were returning from their duty with Radisson they saw a man lurking in the grounds and seized him. He had made no resistance, and was now under guard in the ante-room. The governor apologised to his guests, but the dinner could not be ended formally now, so the ladies rose and retired. Jessica, making a mighty effort to recover herself, succeeded so well that ere she went she was able to reproach herself for her alarm; the more so because the governor's sister showed her such consideration as would be given a frightened child—and she had begun to feel something more.

The ladies gone, the governor drew his guests about him and ordered in the prisoner. Morris spoke up, saying that the man had begged an interview with the governor that afternoon, but, being told that his excellency was engaged, had said another hour would do. This man was the prisoner. He came in under guard, but he bore himself quietly enough and made a low bow to the governor. He was not an ill-favoured fellow. His eye was steely cold, but his face was hearty and round, and remarkably free from viciousness. He had a cheerful air and an alert freedom of manner, which suggested good-fellowship and honest enterprise.

Where his left hand had been was an iron hook, but not obtrusively in view, nor did it give any marked grimness to his appearance. Indeed, the effect was almost comical when he lifted it and scratched his head and then rubbed his chin with it; it made him look part bumpkin and part sailor. He bore the scrutiny of the company very well, and presently bowed again to the governor as one who waited the expression of that officer's goodwill and pleasure.

"Now, fellow," said the colonel, "think yourself lucky my soldiers here did not shoot you without shrift. You chance upon good-natured times. When a spying stranger comes dangling about these windows, my men are given to adorning the nearest tree with him. Out with the truth now. Who and what are you, and why are you here?"

The fellow bowed. "I am the captain of a little trading schooner, the *Nell Gwynn*, which anchors in the roadstead till I have laid some private business before your excellency and can get on to the Spanish Indies."

"Business—private business! Then what in the name of all that's infernal," quoth Nicholls, "brought your sneaking face to yon window to fright my lady-guests?" The memory of Jessica's alarm came hotly to his mind. "By Heaven," he said, "I have a will to see you lifted, for means to better manners."

The man stood very quiet, now and again, however, raising the hook to stroke his chin. He showed no fear, but Iberville, with his habit of observation, caught in his eyes, shining superficially with a sailor's open honesty, a strange ulterior look. "My business," so he answered Nicholls, "is for your excellency's ears." He bowed again.

"Have done with scraping. Now, I tell you what, my gentle spy, if your business hath not concern, I'll stretch you by your fingers there to our public gallows, and my fellows shall fill you with small shot as full as a pod of peas."

The governor rose and went into another room, followed by this strange visitor and the two soldiers. There he told the guard to wait at the door, which entered into the ante-room. Then he unlocked a drawer and took out of it a pair of pistols. These he laid on the table (for he knew the times), noting the while that the seaman watched him with a pensive, deprecating grin.

"Well, sir," he said sharply (for he was something nettled), "out with your business, and your name in preface."

"My name is Edward Bucklaw, and I have come to your excellency because I know there is no braver and more enterprising gentleman in the world." He paused.

"So much for preamble; now for the discourse."

"By your excellency's leave. I am a poor man. I have only my little craft and a handful of seamen picked up at odd prices. But there's gold and silver enough I know of, owned by no man, to make cargo and ballast for the *Nell Gwynn*, or another twice her size."

"Gold and silver," said the governor, cocking his ear and eyeing his visitor up and down. Colonel Nicholls had an acquisitive instinct; he was interested. "Well, well, gold and silver," he continued, "to fill the *Nell Gwynn* and another! And what concern is that of mine? Let your words come plain off your tongue; I have no time for foolery."

"'Tis no foolery on my tongue, sir, as you may please to see."

He drew a paper from his pocket and shook it out as he came a little nearer, speaking all the while. His voice had gone low, running to a soft kind of chuckle, and his eyes were snapping with fire, which Iberville alone had seen was false. "I have come to make your excellency's fortune, if you will stand by with a good, stout ship and a handful of men to see me through."

The governor shrugged his shoulders. "Babble," he said, "all babble and bubble. But go on."

"Babble, your honour! Every word of it is worth a pint of guineas; and this is the pith of it. Far down West Indies way, some twenty-five, maybe, or thirty years ago, there was a plate ship wrecked upon a reef. I got it from a Spaniard, who had been sworn upon oath to keep it secret by priests who knew. The priests were killed and after a time the Spaniard died also, but not until he had given me the ways whereby I should get at what makes a man's heart rap in his weasand."

"Let me see your chart," said the governor.

A half-hour later he rose, went to the door, and sent a soldier for the two king's officers. As he did so, Bucklaw eyed the room doors, windows, fireplaces, with a grim, stealthy smile trailing across his face. Then suddenly the good creature was his old good self again—the comfortable shrewdness, the buoyant devil-may-care, the hook stroking the chin pensively. And the king's officers came in, and soon all four were busy with the map.

CHAPTER IV

THE UPLIFTING OF THE SWORDS

IBERVILLE and Gering sat on with the tobacco and the wine. The older men had joined the ladies, the governor having politely asked them to do so when they chose. The other occupant of the room was Morris, who still stood stolidly behind his master's chair.

For a time he heard the talk of the two young men as in a kind of dream. Their words were not loud, their manner was amicable enough, if the sharing of a bottle were anything to the point. But they were sitting almost the full length of the table from him, and to quarrel courteously and with an air hath ever been a quality in men of gentle blood.

If Morris's eyesight had been better, he would have seen that Gering handled his wine nervously, and had put down his long Dutch pipe. He would also have seen that Iberville was smoking with deliberation, and drinking with a kind of mannered coolness. Gering's face was flushed, his fine nostrils were swelling viciously, his teeth showed white against his red lips, and his eyes glinted. There was a kind of devilry at Iberville's large and sensuous mouth, but his eyes were steady and provoking, and while Gering's words went forth pantingly, Iberville's were slow and concise, and chosen with the certainty of a lapidary.

It is hard to tell which had started the quarrel, but an edge was on their talk from the beginning. Gering had been moved by a boyish jealousy; Iberville, who

saw the injustice of his foolish temper, had played his new-found enemy with a malicious adroitness. The aboriginal passions were strong in him. He had come of a people which had to do with essentials in the matter of emotions. To love, to hate, to fight, to explore, to hunt, to be loyal, to avenge, to bow to Mother Church, to honour the king, to beget children, to taste outlawry under a more refined name, and to die without whining: that was its range of duty, and a very sufficient range it was.

The talk had been running on Bucklaw. It had then shifted to Radisson. Gering had crowded home with flagrant emphasis the fact that, while Radisson was a traitor and a scoundrel,—which Iberville himself had admitted with an ironical frankness,—he was also a Frenchman. It was at this point that Iberville remembered, also with something of irony, the words that Jessica had used that afternoon when she came out of the sunshine into the ante-room of the governor's chamber. She had waved her hand into the distance and had said: "Foolish boy!" He knew very well that that part of the game was turned against him, but with a kind of cheerful recklessness, as was ever his way with odds against him,—and he guessed that the odds were with Gering in the matter of Jessica,—he bent across the table and repeated them with an exasperating turn to his imperfect accent. "Foolish boy!" he said, and awaited, not for long, the event.

"A fool's lie," retorted Gering, in a low, angry voice, and spilled his wine.

At that Iberville's heart thumped in his throat with anger, and the roof of his mouth became dry; never in his life had he been called a liar. The first time that insult strikes a youth of spirit he goes a little mad.

But he was very quiet—an ominous sort of quietness, even in a boy. He got to his feet and leaned over the table, speaking in words that dropped on the silence like metal: "Monsieur, there is but one answer."

At this point Morris, roused from his elaborate musings, caught, not very clearly, at the meaning of it all. But he had not time to see more, for just then he was called by the governor, and passed into the room where Mammon, for the moment, perched like a leering, little dwarf upon the shoulders of adventurous gentlemen grown avaricious on a sudden.

"Monsieur, there is but one way. Well?" repeated Iberville.

"I am ready," replied Gering, also getting to his feet.

The Frenchman was at once alive to certain difficulties. He knew that an envoy should not fight, and that he could ask no one to stand his second; also that it would not be possible to arrange a formal duel between opposites so young as Gering and himself. He sketched this briefly, and the Bostonian nodded moody assent.

"Come, then," said Iberville, "let us find a place. My sword is at my hand. Yours?"

"Mine is not far off," answered Gering sullenly.

Iberville forbore to point a moral, but walked to the mantel, above which hung two swords of finest steel, with richly-chased handles. He had noted them as soon as he had entered the room. "By the governor's leave," he said, and took them down. "Since we are to ruffle him let him furnish the spurs—eh? Shall we use these, and so be even as to weapons? But see," he added, with a burst of frankness, "I am in a—a trouble." It was not easy on the instant to find the English word. He explained the duties of his mission. It was singular to ask his enemy that he should see his papers handed

to Count Frontenac if he were killed, but it was characteristic of him.

"I will see the papers delivered," said Gering, with equal frankness.

"That is, if by some miraculous chance I should be killed," added Iberville. "But I have other ends in view."

"I have only one end in view," retorted Gering. "But wait," he said, as they neared the door leading into the main hall; "we may be seen. There is another way into the grounds through a little hall here." He turned and opened a door almost as small as a panel. "I was shown this secret door the other day, and since ours is a secret mission let us use it."

"Very well. But a minute more," said Iberville. He went and unhooked a fine brass lantern, of old Dutch workmanship, swung from the ceiling by a chain. "We shall need a light," he remarked.

They passed into the musty little hallway, and Gering with some difficulty drew back the bolts. The door creaked open and they stepped out into the garden, Iberville leading the way. He had not conned his surroundings that afternoon for nothing, and when they had reached a quiet place among some firs he hung the lantern to the branch of a tree, opening the little ornamental door so that the light streamed out. There was not much of it, but it would serve, and without a word, like two old warriors, they took off their coats.

Meanwhile Morris had returned to the dining-room to find Jessica standing agaze there. She had just come in; for, chancing to be in her bed-chamber, which was just over the secret hallway, she had heard Gering shoot the bolts. Now, the chamber was in a corner, so that the window faced another way, but the incident seemed

strange to her, and she stood for a moment listening. Then hearing the door shut, she ran down the stairs, knocked at the dining-room door and, getting no answer, entered, meeting Morris as he came from the governor's room.

"Morris, Morris," she said, "where are they all?"

"The governor is in his room, mistress."

"Who are with him?"

He told her.

"Where are the others?" she urged. "Mr. Gering and Monsieur Iberville—where are they?"

The man's eyes had flashed to the place where the swords were used to hang. "Lord God!" he said under his breath.

Her eyes had followed his. She ran forward to the wall and threw up her hands against it. "Oh Morris," she said distractedly, "they have taken the swords!" Then she went past him swiftly through the panel and the outer door. She glanced around quickly, running, as she did so, with a kind of blind instinct towards the clump of firs. Presently she saw a little stream of light in the trees. Always a creature of abundant energy and sprightliness, she swept through the night, from the comedy behind to the tragedy in front; the grey starlight falling about her white dress and making her hair seem like a cloud behind her as she ran. Suddenly she came in on the two sworders with a scared, transfigured face.

Iberville had his man at an advantage, and was making the most of it when she came in at an angle behind the other, and the sight of her stayed his arm. It was but for a breath, but it served. Gering had not seen, and his sword ran up Iberville's arm, making a little trench in the flesh.

She ran in on them from the gloom, saying in a sharp, aching voice: "Stop, stop! Oh, what madness!"

The points dropped and they stepped back. She stood between them, looking from one to the other. At that moment Morris burst in also. "In God's name," he said, "is this your honouring of the king's governor! Ye that have eat and drunk at his table the night! Have ye nae sense o' your manhood, young gentlemen, that for a mad gossip ower the wine ye wend into the dark to cut each other's throats? Think—think shame, baith o' ye, being as ye are of them that should know better."

Gering moodily put on his coat and held his peace. Iberville tossed his sword aside, and presently wrung the blood from his white sleeve. The girl saw him, and knew that he was wounded. She snatched a scarf from her waist and ran towards him. "You are wounded," she said. "Oh, take this!"

"I am so much sorry, indeed," he answered coolly, winding the scarf about his arm. "Mistress Leveret came too soon."

His face wore a peculiar smile, but his eyes burned with anger; his voice was not excited. Immediately, however, as he looked at Jessica, his mood seemed to change.

"Morris," he said, "I am sorry. Mademoiselle," he added, "*pardon!* I regret whatever gives you pain."

Gering came near to her, and Iberville could see that a flush stole over Jessica's face as he took her hand and said: "I am sorry—that you should have known."

"Good!" said Iberville, under his breath. "Good! he is worth fighting again."

A moment afterwards Morris explained to them that if the matter could be hushed he would not impart it to

the governor—at least, not until Iberville had gone. Then they all started back towards the house. It did not seem incongruous to Iberville and Gering to walk side by side; theirs was a superior kind of hate. They paused outside the door, on Morris's hint, that he might see if the coast was clear, and return the swords to their place on the wall.

Jessica turned in the doorway. "I shall never forgive you," she said, and was swallowed by the darkness.

"Which does she mean?" asked Iberville, with a touch of irony. The other was silent.

In a moment Morris came back to tell them that they might come, for the dining-room was empty still.

CHAPTER V

THE FRUITS OF THE LAW

BUCKLAW having convinced the governor and his friends that down in the Spaniards' country there was treasure for the finding, was told that he might come again next morning. He asked if it might not be late afternoon instead, because he had cargo from the Indies for sale, and in the morning certain merchants were to visit his vessel. Truth to tell he was playing a deep game. He wanted to learn the governor's plans for the next afternoon and evening, and thought to do so by proposing this same change. He did not reckon foolishly. The governor gave him to understand that there would be feasting next day: first, because it was the birthday of the Duke of York; secondly, because it was the anniversary of the capture from the Dutch; and, last of all, because there were Indian chiefs to come from Albany to see New York and himself for the first time. The official celebration would begin in the afternoon and last till sundown, so that all the governor's time must be fully occupied. But Bucklaw said, with great candour, that unfortunately he had to sail for Boston within thirty-six hours, to keep engagements with divers assignees for whom he had special cargo. If his excellency, he said, would come out to his ship the next evening when the shows were done, he would be proud to have him see his racketing little craft; and it could then be judged if, with furbishing and armaments, she could by any means be used for the expedition. Nich-

olls consented, and asked the king's officers if they would accompany him. This they were exceedingly glad to do: so that the honest shipman's good nature and politeness were vastly increased, and he waved his hook in so funny and so boyish a way it set them all a-laughing.

So it was arranged forthwith that he should be at a quiet point on the shore at a certain hour to row the governor and his friends to the *Nell Gwynn*. And, this done, he was bade to go to the dining-room and refresh himself.

He obeyed with cheerfulness, and was taken in charge by Morris, who, having passed on Iberville and Gering to the drawing-room, was once more at his post, taciturn as ever. The governor and his friends had gone straight to the drawing-room, so that Morris and he were alone. Wine was set before the sailor and he took off a glass with gusto, his eye cocked humorously towards his host. "No worse fate for a sinner," quoth he; "none better for a saint."

Morris's temper was not amiable. He did not like the rascal. "Ay," said he, "but many's the sinner has wished yon wish, and footed it from the stocks to the gallows."

Bucklaw laughed up at him. It was not a pretty laugh, and his eyes were insolent and hard. But that changed almost on the instant. "A good thrust, mighty Scot," he said. "Now what say you to a pasty, or a strip of beef cut where the juice runs, and maybe the half of a broiled fowl?"

Morris, imperturbably deliberate, left the room to seek the kitchen. Bucklaw got instantly to his feet. His eye took in every window and door, and ran along the ceiling and the wall. There was a sudden click in

the wall before him. It was the door leading to the unused hallway, which had not been properly closed and had sprung open. He caught up a candle, ran over, entered the hallway, and gave a grunt of satisfaction. He hastily and softly drew the bolts of the outer door, so that any one might come in from the garden, then stepped back into the dining-room and closed the panel tight behind him, remarking with delight that it had no spring-lock, and could be opened from the hallway. He came back quickly to the table, put down the candle, took his seat, stroked his chin with his hook, and chuckled. When Morris came back, he was holding his wine with one hand while he hummed a snatch of song and drummed lightly on the table with the hook. Immediately after came a servant with a tray, and the Scotsman was soon astonished, not only at the buxomness of his appetite, but at the deftness with which he carved and handled things with what he called his "tiger." And so he went on talking and eating, and he sat so long that Jessica, as she passed into the corridor and up the stairs, wearied by the day, heard his voice uplifted in song. It so worked upon her that she put her hands to her ears, hurried to her room, and threw herself upon the bed in a distress she could set down to no real cause.

Before the governor and his guests parted for the night, Iberville, as he made his adieu to Gering, said in a low voice: "The same place and time to-morrow night, and on the same conditions?"

"I shall be happy," said Gering, and they bowed with great formality.

The governor had chanced to hear a word or two and, thinking it was some game of which they spoke, said: "Piquet or a game of wits, gentlemen?"

"Neither, your excellency," quoth Gering—"a game called fox and goose."

"Good," said Iberville, under his breath; "my Puritan is waking."

The governor was in ripe humour. "But it is a game of wits, then, after all. Upon my soul, you two should fence like a pair of veterans."

"Only for a pass or two," said Iberville dryly. "We cannot keep it up."

All this while a boat was rowing swiftly from the shore of the island towards a craft carrying *Nell Gwynn* beneath the curious, antique figurehead. There were two men in her, and they were talking gloatingly and low.

"See, bully, how I have the whole thing in my hands. Ha! Received by the governor and his friends! They are all mad for the doubloons, which are not for them, my Radisson, but for you and me, and for a greater than Colonel Richard Nicholls. Ho, ho! I know him—the man who shall lead the hunt and find the gold—the only man in all that cursed Boston whose heart I would not eat raw, so help me Judas! And his name—no. That is to come. I will make him great."

Again he chuckled. "Over in London they shall take him to their bosoms. Over in London his blessed majesty shall dub him knight—treasure-trove is a fine reason for the touch of a royal sword—and the king shall say: 'Rise, Sir William'—No, it is not time for the name; but it is not Richard Nicholls, it is not Hogarth Leveret." He laughed like a boy. "I have you, Hogarth Leveret, in my hand, and by God I will squeeze you until there is a drop of heart's blood at every pore of your skin!"

Now and again Radisson looked sideways at him,

a sardonic smile at his lip. At last: "*Bien*," he said, "you are merry. So—I shall be merry too, for I have scores to wipe away, and they shall be wiped clean—clean."

"You are with me, then," the pirate asked; "even as to the girl?"

"Even as to the girl," was the reply, with a brutal oath.

"That is good, dear lad. Blood of my soul, I have waited twelve years—twelve years."

"You have not told me," rejoined the Frenchman; "speak now."

"There is not much to tell, but we are to be partners once and for all. See, my beauty. He was a kite-livered captain. There was gold on board. We mutinied and put him and four others—their livers were like his own—in a boat with provisions plenty. Then we sailed for Boston. We never thought the crew of skulkers would reach land, but by God they drifted in again the very hour we found port. We were taken and condemned. First, I was put into the stocks, hands and feet, till I was fit for the pillory; from the pillory to the wooden horse." Here he laughed, and the laugh was soft and womanlike. "Then the whipping-post, when I was made pulp from my neck to my loins. After that I was to hang. I was the only one they cooked so; the rest were to hang raw. I did not hang; I broke prison and ran. For years I was a slave among the Spaniards. Years more—in all, twelve—and then I came back with the little chart for one thing, this to do for another. Who was it gave me that rogues' march from the stocks to the gallows's foot? It was Hogarth Leveret, who deals out law in Massachusetts in the king's name, by the grace of God. It was

my whim to capture him and take him on a journey—such a journey as he would go but once. Blood of my soul, the dear lad was gone. But there was his child. See this: when I stood in the pillory a maid one day brought the child to the foot of the platform, lifted it up in her arms and said: ‘Your father put that villain there.’ That woman was sister to one of the dogs we’d set adrift. The child stared at me hard, and I looked at her, though my eyes were a little the worse for wear, so that she cried out in great fright—the sweet innocent! and then the wench took her away. When she saw my face to-night—to-day—it sent her wild, but she did not remember.” He rubbed his chin in ecstasy and drummed his knee. “Ha! I cannot have the father—so I’ll have the goodly child, and great will be the ransom. Great will be the ransom, my Frenchman!” And once more he tapped Radisson with the tiger.

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CHAPTER VI

THE KIDNAPPING

THE rejoicing had reached its apogee, and was on the wane. The Puritan had stretched his austereness to the point of levity; the Dutchman had comfortably sweated his obedience and content; the Cavalier had paced it with a pretty air of patronage and an eye for matron and maid; the Indian, come from his far hunting-grounds, bivouacked in the governor's presence as the pipe of peace went round.

About twilight the governor and his party had gone home. Deep in ceremonial as he had been, his mind had run upon Bucklaw and the Spaniards' country. So, when the dusk was growing into night, the hour came for his visit to the *Nell Gwynn*. With his two soldier friends and Councillor Drayton, he started by a round-about for the point where he looked to find Bucklaw. Bucklaw was not there: he had other fish to fry, and the ship's lights were gone. She had changed her anchorage since afternoon.

"It's a bold scheme," Bucklaw was saying to his fellow-ruffian in the governor's garden, "and it may fail, yet 'twill go hard, but we'll save our skins. No pluck, no pence. Once again, here's the trick of it. I'll go in by the side door I unlocked last night, hide in the hallway, then enter the house quietly or boldly, as the case may be. Plan one: a message from his excellency to Miss Leveret, that he wishes her to join him on the *Nell*

Gwynn. Once outside it's all right. She cannot escape us. We have our cloaks and we have the Spanish drug. Plan two: make her ours in the house. Out by this hall door—through the grounds—to the beach—the boat in waiting—and so, up anchor and away! Both risky, as you see, but the bolder the game the sweeter the spoil. You're sure her chamber is above the hallway, and that there's a staircase to it from the main hall?"

"I am very well sure. I know the house up-stairs and down."

Bucklaw looked to his arms. He was about starting on his quest when they heard footsteps, and two figures appeared. It was Iberville and Gering. They paused a moment not far from where the rogues were hid.

"I think you will agree," said Iberville, "that we must fight."

"I have no other mind."

"You will also be glad if we are not come upon, as last night; though, confess, the lady gave you a lease of life?"

"If she comes to-night, I hope it will be when I have done with you," answered Gering.

Iberville laughed a little, and the laugh had fire in it—hatred, and the joy of battle. "Shall it be here or yonder in the pines, where we were in train last night?"

"Yonder."

"So." Then Iberville hummed ironically a song:

"Oh, bury me where I have fought and fallen,
Your scarf across my shoulder, lady mine."

They passed on. "The game is in our hands," said Bucklaw. "I understand this thing. That's a pair

of gallant young sprigs, but the choice is your Frenchman, Radisson."

"I'll pink his breast-bone full of holes if the other doesn't—curse him."

A sweet laugh trickled from Bucklaw's lips like oil. "That's neither here nor there. I'd like to have him down Acapulco way, dear lad. . . . And now, here's my plan all changed. I'll have my young lady out to stop the duel, and, God's love, she'll come alone. Once here she's ours, and they may cut each other's throats as they will, sweetheart."

He crossed the yard, tried the door,—unlocked, as he had left it,—pushed it open, and went in, groping his way to the door of the dining-room. He listened, and there was no sound. Then he heard some one go in. He listened again. Whoever it was had sat down. Very carefully he felt for the spring and opened the door. Jessica was seated at the table with paper and an ink-horn before her. She was writing. Presently she stopped—the pen was bad. She got up and went away to her room. Instantly Bucklaw laid his plan. He entered as she disappeared, went to the table and looked at the paper on which she had been writing. It bore but the words, "Dear Friend." He caught up the quill and wrote hurriedly beneath them, this:

"If you'd see two gentlemen fighting, go now where you stopped them last night. The wrong one may be killed unless."

With a quick flash of malice he signed, in half a dozen lightning-like strokes, with a sketch of his hook. Then he turned, hurried into the little hall, and so outside, and posted himself beside a lilac bush, drawing down a bunch of the flowers to drink in their perfume. Jessica,

returning, went straight to the table. Before she sat down she looked up to the mantel, but the swords were there. She sighed, and a tear glistened on her eyelashes. She brushed it away with her dainty fingertips and, as she sat down, saw the paper. She turned pale, caught it up, read it with a little cry, and let it drop with a shudder of fear and dismay. She looked round the room. Everything was as she had left it. She was dazed. She stared at the paper again, then ran and opened the panel through which Bucklaw had passed, and found the outer door ajar. With a soft, gasping moan she passed into the garden, went swiftly by the lilac bush and on towards the trees. Bucklaw let her do so; it was his design that she should be some way from the house. But, hidden by the bushes, he was running almost parallel with her. On the other side of her was Radisson, also running. She presently heard them and swerved, poor child, into the gin of the fowler! But as the cloak was thrown over her head she gave a cry.

The firs, where Iberville and Gering had just plucked out their swords, were not far, and both men heard. Gering, who best knew the voice, said hurriedly: "It is Jessica!"

Without a word Iberville leaped to the open, and came into it ahead of Gering. They saw the kidnappers and ran. Iberville was the first to find what Bucklaw was carrying. "Mother of God," he called, "they're taking her off!"

"Help! help!" cried Gering, and they pushed on. The two ruffians were running hard, but it had been an unequal race at the best, and Jessica lay unconscious in Bucklaw's arms, a dead weight. Presently they plunged into the bushes and disappeared. Iberville

and Gering passed through the bushes also, but could neither see nor hear the quarry. Gering was wild with excitement and lost his presence of mind. Meanwhile Iberville went beating for a clue. He guessed that he was dealing with good woodsmen, and that the kidnapers knew some secret way out of the garden. It was so. The Dutch governor had begun to build an old-fashioned wall with a narrow gateway, so fitted as to seem part of it. Through this the two had vanished.

Iberville was almost in despair. "Go back," he suddenly said to Gering, "and rouse the house and the town. I will get on the trail again if I can."

Gering started away. In this strange excitement their own foolish quarrel was forgotten, and the stranger took on himself to command; he was, at least, not inexperienced in adventure and the wiles of desperate men. All at once he came upon the wall. He ran along it, and presently his fingers felt the passage. An instant and he was outside and making for the shore, in the sure knowledge that the ruffians would take to the water. He thought of Bucklaw, and by some impossible instinct divined the presence of his hand. Suddenly he saw something flash on the ground. He stooped and picked it up. It was a shoe with a silver buckle. He thrilled to the finger-tips as he thrust it in his bosom and pushed on. He was on the trail now. In a few moments he came to the waterside. He looked to where he had seen the *Nell Gwynn* in the morning, and there was never a light in view. Then a twig snapped, and Bucklaw, the girl in his arms, came bundling out of the trees upon the bank. He had sent Radisson on ahead to warn his boat's crew.

He saw Iberville as soon as Iberville saw him. He knew that the town would be roused by this time and

the governor on fire for revenge. But there was nothing for it but fight. He did not fear the result. Time was life to him, and he swung the girl half behind him with his hook-hand as Iberville came on, and, whipping out his hanger, caught the Frenchman's thrust. Instantly he saw that his opposite was a swordsman, so he let the girl slip to the ground, and suddenly closing with Iberville, lunged desperately and expertly at him, straight for a mortal part. But the Frenchman was too agile and adroit for him: he took the thrust in the flesh of his ribs and riposted like lightning. The pirate staggered back, but pulled himself together instantly, lunged, and took his man in the flesh of his upper sword arm. Iberville was bleeding from the wound in his side and slightly stiff from the slash of the night before, but every fibre of his hurt body was on the defensive. Bucklaw knew it, and seemed to debate if the game were worth the candle. The town was afoot, and he had earned a halter for his pains. He was by no means certain that he could kill this champion and carry off the girl. Moreover, he did not want Iberville's life, for such devils have their likes and dislikes, and he had fancied the chivalrous youngster from the first. But he doubted only for an instant. What was such a lad's life compared with his revenge? It was madness, as he knew, for a shot would guide the pursuit: none the less did he draw a pistol from his belt and fire. The bullet grazed the lad's temple, carrying away a bit of his hair. Iberville staggered forwards, so weak was he from loss of blood, and, with a deep instinct of protection and preservation, fell at Jessica's feet. There was a sound of footsteps and crackling of brush. Bucklaw stooped to pick up his prey, but a man burst on him from the trees. He saw that the game was up and he half raised

his knife, but that was only the mad rage of the instant. His revenge did not comprise so unheard-of a crime. He thought he had killed Iberville: that was enough. He sprang away towards the spot where his comrades awaited him. Escape was his sole ambition now. The new-comer ran forwards, and saw the boy and girl lying as they were dead. A swift glance at Iberville, and he slung his musket shoulderwards and fired at the retreating figure. It was a chance shot, for the light was bad and Bucklaw was already indistinct.

Now the man dropped on his knee and felt Iberville's heart. "Alive!" he said. "Alive, thank the mother of God! *Mon brave!* It is ever the same—the great father, the great son."

As he withdrew his hand it brushed against the slipper. He took it out, glanced at it, and turned to the cloaked figure. He undid the cloak and saw Jessica's pale face. He shook his head. "Always the same," he said, "always the same: for a king, for a friend, for a woman! That is the Le Moyne."

But he was busy as he spoke. With the native chivalry of the woodsman, he cared first for the girl. Between her lips he thrust his drinking-horn and held her head against his shoulder.

"My little ma'm'selle—ma'm'selle!" he said. "Wake up. It is nothing—you are safe. Ah, the sweet lady! Come, let me see the colour of your eyes. Wake up—it is nothing."

Presently the girl did open her eyes. He put the drinking-horn again to her lips. She shuddered and took a sip, and then, invigorated, suddenly drew away from him. "There, there," he said; "it is all right. Now for my poor Iberville." He took Iberville's head to his knee and thrust the drinking-horn between his

teeth, as he had done with Jessica, calling him in much the same fashion. Iberville came to with a start. For a moment he stared blindly at his rescuer, then a glad intelligence flashed into his eyes.

"Perrot! dear Nick Perrot!" he cried. "Oh, good—good," he added softly. Then with sudden anxiety: "Where is she? Where is she?"

"I am safe, monsieur," Jessica said gently; "but you—you are wounded." She came over and dropped on her knees beside him.

"A little," he said; "only a little. You cared for her first?" he asked of Perrot.

Perrot chuckled. "These Le Moynes!" he said; under his breath. Then aloud: "The lady first, monsieur."

"So," answered Iberville. "And Bucklaw—the devil, Bucklaw?"

"If you mean the rogue who gave you these," said Perrot, touching the wounds, which he had already begun to bind, "I think he got away—the light was bad."

Jessica would have torn her frock for a bandage, but Perrot said in his broken English: "No, *pardon*. Not so. The cloak *là-bas*."

She ran and brought it to him. As she did so Perrot glanced down at her feet, and then, with a touch of humour, said: "*Pardon*, but you have lost your slipper, ma'm'selle?"

He foresaw the little comedy, which he could enjoy even in such painful circumstances.

"It must have dropped off," said Jessica, blushing. "But it does not matter."

Iberville blushed too, but a smile also flitted across his lips. "If you will but put your hand into my waist-

coat here," he said to her, "you will find it." Timidly she did as she was bid, drew forth the slipper, and put it on.

"You see," said Iberville, still faint from loss of blood, "a Frenchman can fight and hunt too—hunt the slipper."

Suddenly a look of pain crossed her face.

"Mr. Gering, you—you did not kill him?" she asked.

"Oh no, mademoiselle," said Iberville; "you stopped the game again."

Presently he told her what had happened, and how Gering was rousing the town. Then he insisted upon getting on his feet, that they might make their way to the governor's house. Stanchly he struggled on, his weight upon Perrot, till presently he leaned a hand also on Jessica's shoulder—she had insisted. On the way, Perrot told how it was he chanced to be there. A band of *coureurs du bois*, bound for Quebec, had come upon old Le Moyne and himself in the woods. Le Moyne had gone on with these men, while Perrot pushed on to New York, arriving at the very moment of the kidnaping. He heard the cry and made towards it. He had met Gering, and the rest they knew.

Certain things did not happen. The governor of New York did not at once engage in an expedition to the Spaniards' country. A brave pursuit was made, but Bucklaw went uncaptured. Iberville and Gering did not make a third attempt to fight; Perrot prevented that. Iberville left, however, with a knowledge of three things: that he was the first Frenchman from Quebec who had been, or was likely to be, popular in New York; that Jessica Leveret had shown a tender gratitude towards him—naïve, candid—which set him dreaming gaily of the future; that Gering and he, in spite of

outward courtesy, were still enemies; for Gering could not forget that, in the rescue of Jessica, Iberville had done the work while he merely played the crier.

"We shall meet again, monsieur," said Iberville at last; "at least, I hope so."

"I shall be glad," answered Gering mechanically.

"But 'tis like I shall come to you before you come to me," added Iberville, with meaning. Jessica was standing not far away, and Gering did not instantly reply. In the pause, Iberville said: "*Au revoir! À la bonne heure!*" and walked away. Presently he turned with a little ironical laugh and waved his hand at Gering; and laugh and gesture rankled in Gering for many a day.

EPOCH THE SECOND

CHAPTER VII

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL

MONTREAL and Quebec, dear to the fortunes of such men as Iberville, were as cheerful in the still iron winter as any city under any more cordial sky then or now: men loved, hated, made and broke bargains, lied to women, kept a foolish honour with each other, and did deeds of valour for a song, as ever they did from the beginning of the world. Through the stern soul of Nature ran the temperament of men who had hearts of summer; and if, on a certain notable day in Iberville's life, one could have looked through the window of a low stone house in Notre Dame Street, Montreal, one could have seen a priest joyously playing a violin; though even in Europe, Maggini and Stradivarius were but little known, and the instrument itself was often called an invention of the devil.

The room was not ornamented, save by a crucifix, a pleasant pencil-drawing of Bishop Laval, a gun, a pair of snow-shoes, a sword, and a little shrine in one corner, wherein were relics of a saint. Of necessaries even there were few. They were unremarkable, save in the case of two tall silver candlesticks, which, with their candles at an angle from the musician, gave his face strange lights and shadows.

The priest was powerfully made; so powerful indeed, so tall was he, that when, in one of the changes of the

music, a kind of exaltation filled him, and he came to his feet, his head almost touched the ceiling. His shoulders were broad and strong, and though his limbs were hid by his cassock, his arms showed almost huge, and the violin lay tucked under his chin like a mere toy. In the eye was a penetrating but abstracted look, and the countenance had the gravity of a priest lighted by a cheerful soul within. It had been said of Dollier de Casson that once, attacked by two renegade Frenchmen, he had broken the leg of one and the back of the other, and had then picked them up and carried them for miles to shelter and nursing. And it was also declared by the romantic that the man with the broken back recovered, while he with the shattered leg, recovering also, found that his foot, pointing backwards, "made a fool of his nose."

The Abbé de Casson's life had one affection, which had taken the place of others, now almost lost in the distance of youth, absence, and indifference. For France lay far from Montreal, and the priest-musician was infinitely farther off: the miles which the Church measures between the priest and his lay boyhood are not easily reckoned. But such as Dollier de Casson must have a field for affection to enrich. You cannot drive the sap of the tree in upon itself. It must come out or the tree must die—burst with the very misery of its richness.

This night he was crowding into the music four years of events: of memory, hope, pride, patience, and affection. He was waiting for some one whom he had not seen for these four years. Time passed. More and more did the broad sonorous notes fill the room. At length they ceased, and with a sigh he pressed the violin once, twice, thrice to his lips.

"My good Stradivarius," he said, "my earless one!"

Once again he kissed it, and then, drawing his hand across his eyes, he slowly wrapped the violin in a velvet cloth, put it away in an iron box, and locked it up. But presently he changed his mind, took it out again, and put it on the table, shaking his head musingly.

"He will wish to see it, maybe to hear it," he said half aloud.

Then he turned and went into another room. Here there was a *prie-dieu* in a corner, and above it a crucifix. He knelt and was soon absorbed.

For a time there was silence. At last there was a crunching of moccasined feet upon the crisp snow, then a slight tap at the outer door, and immediately it was opened. A stalwart young man stepped inside. He looked round, pleased, astonished, and glanced at the violin, then meaningly towards the nearly closed door of the other room. After which he pulled off his gloves, threw his cap down, and with a significant toss of the head, picked up the violin.

He was a strong, handsome man of about twenty-two, with a face at once open and inscrutable: the mouth with a trick of smiling, the eyes fearless, convincing, but having at the same time a look behind this—an alert, profound speculation, which gave his face singular force. He was not so tall as the priest in the next room, but still he was very tall, and every movement had a lithe, supple strength. His body was so firm that, as he bent or turned, it seemed as of soft flexible metal.

Despite his fine manliness, he looked very boylike as he picked up the violin, and with a silent eager laugh put it under his chin, nodding gaily, as he did so, towards the other room. He bent his cheek to the instru-

ment—almost as brown as the wood itself—and made a pass or two in the air with the bow, as if to recall a former touch and tune. A satisfied look shot up in his face, and then with an almost impossible softness he drew the bow across the strings, getting a distant delicate note, which seemed to float and tenderly multiply upon itself—a variation, indeed, of the tune which De Casson had played. A rapt look came into his eyes. And all that look behind the general look of his face—the look which has to do with a man's past or future—deepened and spread, till you saw, for once in a way, a strong soldier turned artist, yet only what was masculine and strong. The music deepened also, and, as the priest opened the door, swept against him like a wind so warm that a moisture came to his eyes.

"Iberville!" he said, in a glad voice. "Pierre!"

The violin was down on the instant. "My dear abbé!" he cried. And then the two embraced.

"How do you like my entrance?" said the young man. "But I had to provide my own music!" He laughed, and ran his hands affectionately down the arms of the priest.

"I had been playing the same old chansonette"—

"With your original variations?"

"With my poor variations, just before you came in; and that done—"

"Yes, yes, abbé, I know the rest: prayers for the safe return of the sailor, who for four years or nearly has been learning war in King Louis's ships, and forgetting the good old way of fighting by land, at which he once served his prentice time—with your blessing, my old tutor, my good fighting abbé! Do you remember when we stopped those Dutchmen on the Richelieu, and you—"

The priest interrupted with a laugh. "But, my dear Iberville—"

"It was 'Pierre' a minute gone; 'twill be 'Monsieur Pierre le Moyne of Iberville' next," the other said in mock reproach, as he went to the fire.

"No, no; I merely—"

"I understand. Pardon the wild youth who plagues his old friend and teacher, as he did long ago—so much has happened since."

His face became grave and a look of trouble came. Presently the priest said: "I never had a pupil whose teasing was so pleasant, poor humourist that I am. But now, Pierre, tell me all, while I lay out what the pantry holds."

The gay look came back into Iberville's face. "Ahem," he said—"which is the way to begin a wonderful story: Once upon a time a young man, longing to fight for his king by land alone, and with special fighting of his own to do hard by"—(here De Casson looked at him keenly and a singular light came into his eyes)—"was wheeled away upon the king's ships to France, and so

'Left the song of the spinning-wheel,
The hawk and the lady fair,
And sailed away—'

But the song is old and so is the story, abbé; so here's the brief note of it. After years of play and work,—play in France and stout work in the Spaniards' country,—he was shipped away to

'Those battle heights, Quebec heights, our own heights,
The citadel our golden lily bears,
And Frontenac—'

But I babble again. And at Quebec he finds the old song changed. The heights and the lilies are there, but Frontenac, the great, brave Frontenac, is gone: confusion lives where only conquest and honest quarrelling were—”

“Frontenac will return—there is no other way!” interposed De Casson.

“Perhaps. And the young man looked round and lo! old faces and places had changed. Children had grown into women, with children at their breasts; young wives had become matronly; and the middle-aged were slaving servants and apothecaries to make them young again. And the young man turned from the world he used to know, and said: ‘There are but three things in the world worth doing—loving, roaming, and fighting.’ Therefore, after one day, he turned from the poor little Court-game at Quebec, travelled to Montreal, spent a few hours with his father and his brothers, Bienville, Longueil, Maricourt, and Sainte-Hélène, and then, having sent word to his dearest friend, came to see him, and found him”—his voice got softer—“the same as of old: ready with music and wine and *aves* for the prodigal.”

He paused. The priest had placed meat and wine on the table, and now he came and put his hand on Iberville’s shoulder. “Pierre,” he said, “I welcome you as one brother might another, the elder foolishly fond.” Then he added: “I was glad you remembered our music.”

“My dear De Casson, as if I could forget! I have yet the Maggini you gave me. It was of the things for remembering. If we can’t be loyal to our first loves, why to anything?”

“Even so, Pierre; but few at your age arrive at that.

Most people learn it when they have bartered away every dream. It is enough to have a few honest emotions—very few—and stand by them till all be done.”

“Even hating?” Iberville’s eyes were eager.

“There is such a thing as a noble hate.”

“How every inch of you is man!” answered the other, clasping the priest’s arms. Then he added: “Abbé, you know what I long to hear. You have been to New York twice; you were there within these three months—”

“And was asked to leave within these three months—banished, as it were.”

“I know. You said in your letter that you had news. You were kind to go—”

“Perrot went too.”

“My faithful Perrot! I was about to ask of him. I had a birch-bark letter from him, and he said he would come— Ah, here he is!”

He listened. There was a man’s voice singing near by. They could even hear the words:

“O the young seigneur! O the young seigneur!
A hundred bucks in a day he slew;
And the lady gave him a ribbon to wear,
And a shred of gold from her golden hair—
O the way of a maid was the way he knew;
O the young seigneur! O the young seigneur!”

“Shall we speak freely before him?” said the priest.

“As freely as you will. Perrot is true. He was with me, too, at the beginning.”

At that moment there came a knock, and in an instant the *coureur du bois* had caught the hands of the young man, and was laughing up in his face.

“By the good Sainte Anne, but you make Nick Perrot a dwarf, dear monsieur!”

"Well, well, little man, I'll wager neither the great abbé here nor myself could bring you lower than you stand, for all that. Comrade, 'tis kind of you to come so prompt."

"What is there so good as the face of an old friend!" said Perrot, with a little laugh. "You will drink with a new, and eat with a coming friend, and quarrel with either; but 'tis only the old friend that knows the old trail, and there's nothing to a man like the way he has come in the world."

"The trail of the good comrade," said the priest softly.

"Ah!" responded Perrot, "I remember, abbé, when we were at the Portneuf you made some verses of that—eh! eh! but they were good!"

"No fitter time," said Iberville; "come, abbé, the verses!"

"No, no; another day," answered the priest.

It was an interesting scene. Perrot, short, broad, swarthy, dressed in rude buckskin gaudily ornamented, bandoleer and belt garnished with silver,—a recent gift of some grateful merchant,—standing between the powerful black-robed priest and this gallant sailor-soldier, richly dressed in fine skins and furs, with long waving hair, more like a Viking than a man of fashion, and carrying a courtly and yet sportive look, as though he could laugh at the miseries of the sinful world. Three strange comrades were these, who knew each other so far as one man can know another, yet each knowing from a different stand-point. Perrot knew certain traits of Iberville of which De Casson was ignorant, and the abbé knew many depths which Perrot never even vaguely plumbed. And yet all could meet and be free in speech, as though each read the other thoroughly.

"Let us begin," said Iberville. "I want news of New York."

"Let us eat as we talk," urged the abbé.

They all sat and were soon eating and drinking with great relish.

Presently the abbé began:

"Of my first journey you know by the letter I sent you: how I found that Mademoiselle Leveret was gone to England with her father. That was a year after you left, now about three years gone. Monsieur Ger-
ing entered the navy of the English king, and went to England also."

Iberville nodded. "Yes, yes, in the English navy; I know very well of that."

The abbé looked up surprised. "From my letter?"

"I saw him once in the Spaniards' country," said Iberville, "when we swore to love each other less and less."

"What was the trouble?" asked the priest.

"Pirates' booty, which he, with a large force, seized as a few of my men were carrying it to the coast. With his own hand he cut down my servant, who had been with me since from the first. Afterwards in a parley I saw him, and we exchanged—compliments. The sordid gentleman thought I was fretting about the booty. Good God, what are some thousand pistoles to the blood of one honest friend!"

"And in your mind another leaven worked," ventured the priest.

"Another leaven, as you say," responded Iberville.

"So, for your story, abbé."

"Of the first journey there is nothing more to tell, save that the English governor said you were as brave a gentleman as ever played ambassador—which was, you remember, much in Count Frontenac's vein."

Iberville nodded and smiled. "Frontenac railed at my impertinence also."

"But gave you a sword when you told him the news of Radisson," interjected Perrot. "And by and by I've things to say of him."

The abbé continued: "For my second visit, but a few months ago. We priests have gone much among the Iroquois, even in the English country, and, as I promised you, I went to New York. There I was summoned to the governor. He commanded me to go back to Quebec. I was about to ask him of Mademoiselle when there came a tap at the door. The governor looked at me a little sharply. 'You are,' said he, 'a friend of Monsieur Iberville. You shall know one who keeps him in remembrance.' Then he let the lady enter. She had heard that I was there, having seen Perrot first."

Here Perrot, with a chuckle, broke in: "I chanced that way, and I had a wish to see what was for seeing; for here was our good abbé alone among the wolves, and there were Radisson and the immortal Bucklaw, of whom there was news."

De Casson still continued: "When I was presented she took my hand and said: 'Monsieur l'Abbé, I am glad to meet a friend—an old friend—of Monsieur Iberville. I hear that he has been in France and elsewhere.'"

Here the abbé paused, smiling as if in retrospect, and kept looking into the fire and turning about in his hand his cassock-cord.

Iberville had sat very still, his face ruled to quietness; only his eyes showing the great interest he felt. He waited, and presently said: "Yes, and then?"

The abbé withdrew his eyes from the fire and turned them upon Iberville.

"And then," he said, "the governor left the room. When he had gone she came to me, and, laying her hand upon my arm, said: 'Monsieur, I know you are to be trusted. You are the friend of a brave man.'"

The abbé paused, and smiled over at Iberville.

"You see," he said, "her trust was in your friend, not in my office. Well, presently she added: 'I know that Monsieur Iberville and Mr. Gering, for a foolish quarrel of years ago, still are cherished foes. I wish your help to make them both happier; for no man can be happy and hate.' And I gave my word to do so."

Here Perrot chuckled to himself and interjected softly: "*Mon Dieu!* she could make a man say anything at all. I would have sworn to her that while I lived I never should fight. Eh, that's so!"

"*Allons!*" said Iberville impatiently, yet grasping the arm of the woodsman kindly.

The abbé once more went on: "When she had ended questioning I said to her: 'And what message shall I give from you?' 'Tell him,' she answered, 'by the right of lifelong debt I ask for peace.' 'Is that all?' said I. 'Tell him,' she added, 'I hope we may meet again.' 'For whose sake,' said I, 'do you ask for peace?' 'I am a woman,' she answered, 'I am selfish—for my own sake.'"

Again the priest paused, and again Iberville urged him.

"I asked if she had no token. There was a flame in her eye, and she begged me to excuse her. When she came back she handed me a little packet. 'Give it to Monsieur Iberville,' she said, 'for it is his. He lent it to me years ago. No doubt he has forgotten.'"

At that the priest drew from his cassock a tiny packet, and Iberville, taking, opened it. It held a silver buckle

ted by a velvet ribbon. A flush crept slowly up Iberville's face from his chin to his hair, then he sighed, and presently, out of all reason, laughed.

"Indeed, yes; it is mine," he said. "I very well remember when I found it."

Here Perrot spoke. "I very well remember, monsieur, when she took it from your doublet; but it was on a slipper then."

Iberville did not answer, but held the buckle, rubbing it on his sleeve as though to brighten it. "So much for the lady," he said at last; "what more?"

"I learned," answered the abbé, "that Monsieur Gering was in Boston, and that he was to go to Fort Albany at Hudson's Bay, where, on our territory, the English have set forts."

Here Perrot spoke. "Do you know, monsieur, who are the poachers? No? Eh? No? Well, it is that Radisson."

Iberville turned sharply upon Perrot. "Are you sure of that?" he said. "Are you sure, Nick?"

"As sure as I've a head. And I will tell you more: Radisson was with Bucklaw at the kidnapping. I had the pleasure to kill a fellow of Bucklaw, and he told me that before he died. He also told how Bucklaw went with Radisson to the Spaniards' country treasure-hunting. Ah! there are many fools in the world. They did not get the treasure. They quarrelled, and Radisson went to the far north, Bucklaw to the far south. The treasure is where it was. *Eh bien*, such is the way of asses."

Iberville was about to speak.

"But wait," said Perrot, with a slow, tantalising smile; "it is not wise to hurry. I have a mind to know; so while I am at New York I go to Boston. It makes

a man's mind great to travel. I have been east to Boston; I have been west beyond the Ottawa and the Michilimackinac, out to the Mississippi. Yes. Well, what did I find in Boston? *Peste!* I found that they were all like men in purgatory—sober and grave. Truly. And so dull! Never a saint-day, never a feast, never a grand council when the wine, the rum, flow so free, and you shall eat till you choke. Nothing. Everything is stupid; they do not smile. And so the Indians make war! Well, I have found this. There is a great man from the Kennebec called William Phips. He has traded in the Indies. Once while he was there he heard of that treasure. Ha! ha! There have been so many fools on that trail. The governor of New York was a fool when Bucklaw played his game; he would have been a greater if he had gone with Bucklaw."

Here Iberville would have spoken, but Perrot waved his hand. "*De grace*, a minute only. Monsieur Gering, the brave English lieutenant, is at Hudson's Bay, and next summer he will go with the great William Phips—*Tonnerre*, what a name—*William Phips!* Like a pot of herring! He will go with him after the same old treasure. Boston is a big place, but I hear these things."

Usually a man of few words, Perrot had bursts of eloquence, and this was one of them. But having made his speech, he settled back to his tobacco and into the orator's earned repose.

Iberville looked up from the fire and said: "Perrot, you saw her in New York. What speech was there between you?"

Perrot's eyes twinkled. "There was not much said. I put myself in her way. When she saw me her cheek came like a peach-blossom. 'A very good morning, ma'm'selle,' said I, in English. She smiled and said the same. 'And your master, where is he?' she asked

with a fine smile. 'My friend Monsieur Iberville?' I said; 'ah! he will be in Quebec soon.' Then I told her of the abbé, and she took from a chain a little medallion and gave it me in memory of the time we saved her. And before I could say Thank you, she had gone. Well, that is all—except this."

He drew from his breast a chain of silver, from which hung the gold medallion, and shook his head at it with good-humour. But presently a hard look came on his face, and he was changed from the cheerful woodsman into the chief of bushrangers. Iberville read the look, and presently said:

"Perrot, men have fought for less than gold from a woman's chain and a buckle from her shoe."

"I have fought from Trois Pistoles to Michilimackinac for the toss of a louis-d'or."

"As you say. Well, what think you—"

He paused, rose, walked up and down the room, caught his moustache between his teeth once or twice, and seemed buried in thought. Once or twice he was about to speak, but changed his mind. He was calculating many things: planning, counting chances, marshalling his resources. Presently he glanced round the room. His eyes fell on a map. That was it. It was a mere outline, but enough. Putting his finger on it, he sent it up, up, up, till it settled on the shores of Hudson's Bay. Again he ran the finger from the St. Lawrence up the coast and through Hudson's Straits, but shook his head in negation. Then he stood, looked at the map steadily, and presently, still absorbed, turned to the table. He saw the violin, picked it up, and handed it to De Casson

"Something with a smack of war," he said.

"And a woman for me," added Perrot.

The abbé shook his head musingly at Perrot, took the

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violin, and gathered it to his chin. At first he played as if in wait of something that eluded him. But all at once he floated into a powerful melody, as a stream creeps softly through a weir, and after many wanderings broadens suddenly into a great stream. He had found his theme. Its effect was striking. Through Iberville's mind there ran a hundred incidents of his life, one chasing upon the other without sequence—phantasmagoria out of the scene-house of memory:

The light upon the arms of De Tracy's soldiers when they marched up Mountain Street many years before—The frozen figure of a man standing upright in the plains—A procession of canoes winding down past Two Mountains, the wild chant of the Indians joining with the romantic songs of the voyageurs—A girl flashing upon the drawn swords of two lads—King Louis giving his hand to one of these lads to kiss—A lady of the Court for whom he might easily have torn his soul to rags, but for a fair-faced English girl, ever like a delicate medalion in his eye—A fight with the English in the Spaniards' country—His father blessing him as he went forth to France—A dark figure taking a hundred shapes, and yet always meaning the same as when he—Iberville—said over the governor's table in New York, "Foolish boy!"—A vast stretch of lonely forest, in the white coverlet of winter, through which sounded now and then the *boom-boom* of a bursting tree—A few score men upon a desolate northern track, silent, desperate, courageous; a forlorn hope on the edge of the Arctic circle, with the joy of conquest in their bones, and at their thighs the swords of men.

These are a few of the pictures, but the last of them had not to do with the past: a dream grown into a fact, shaped by the music, become at once an emotion and a purpose.

Iberville had now driven home the first tent-peg of a wonderful adventure. Under the spell of that music his body seemed to grow larger. He fingered his sword, and presently caught Perrot by the shoulder and said: "We will do it, Perrot."

Perrot got to his feet. He understood. He nodded and seized Iberville's hand. "Bravo! There was nothing else to do," he replied.

De Casson lowered his violin. "What do you intend?" he asked gravely.

Iberville took his great hand and pressed it. "To do what you will commend, abbé: at Hudson's Bay to win back forts the English have taken, and get those they have built."

"You have another purpose," added De Casson softly.

"Abbé, that is between me and my conscience. I go for my king and country against our foes."

"Who will go with you?— You will lead?"

"Not I to lead—that involves me." Iberville's face darkened. "I wish more freedom, but still to lead in fact."

"But who will lead? And who will go?"

"De Troyes, perhaps, to lead. To go, my brothers Sainte-Hélène and Maricourt, Perrot and a stout company of his men; and then I fear not treble as many English."

The priest did not seem satisfied. Presently Iberville, with a winning smile, ran an arm over his shoulder and added: "We cannot go without you, Dollier."

The priest's face cleared, and a moment afterwards the three comrades shook hands together.

CHAPTER VIII

AS SEEN THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY

WHEN King Louis and King James called for peace, they could not know that it was as little possible to their two colonies as between rival buccaneers. New France was full of bold spirits who loved conquest for conquest's sake. Besides, in this case there was a force at work, generally unknown, but as powerful as the convincing influence of an army. Behind the worst and the best acts of Charles II was a woman. Behind the glories and follies of Louis XIV was also a woman. Behind some of the most striking incidents in the history of New France, New England, and New York, was a woman.

We saw her when she was but a child—the centre of singular events. Years had passed. Not one of those events had gone for nothing; each was bearing fruit after its kind.

She is sitting alone in a room of a large unhandsome house, facing on Boston harbour. It is evening. The room itself is of dark wood, and evening has thrown it into gloom. Yet somehow the girl's face has a light of its own. She is turned fair towards the window, and is looking out to sea. A mist is rising from the water, and the shore is growing grey and heavy as the light in the west recedes and night creeps in from the ocean. She watches the waves and the mist till all is mist without; a scene which she had watched, how often she could not count. The night closes in entirely upon

her, but she does not move. At last the door of the room opens and some one enters and closes it again.

"My daughter!" says an anxious voice. "Are you here, Jessica?"

"I am here, father," is the reply.

"Shall we have lights?"

"As you will."

Even as they speak a servant enters, and lighted candles are put upon the table. They are alone again. Both are pale. The girl stands very still, and so quiet is her face, one could never guess that she is passing through the tragic moment of her life.

"What is your answer, Jessica?" he asks.

"I will marry him when he comes back."

"Thank God!" is the old man's acknowledgment. "You have saved our fortunes."

The girl sighs, and then, with a little touch of that demure irony which we had seen in her years before, says: "I trust we have not lost our honour."

"Why, you love him, do you not? There is no one you care for more than George Gering?"

"I suppose not," is her reply, but the tone is enigmatical.

While this scene is on, another appears in Cheapside, London. A man of bold and vigorous bearing comes from the office of a well-known solicitor. That very morning he had had an interview with the King, and had been reminded with more exactness than kindness that he had cost King Charles a ship, scores of men, and thousands of pounds, in a fruitless search for buried treasure in Hispaniola. When he had urged his case upon the basis of fresh information, he was drily told that the security was too scant, even for a king. He had then pleaded his case to the Duke of Albemarle

and other distinguished gentlemen. They were seemingly convinced, but withheld their answer till the following morning.

But William Phips, stubborn adventurer, destined to receive all sorts of honours in his time, has no intention of quitting London till he has his way; and this is his thought as he steps into Cheapside, having already made preparations upon the chance of success. He has gone so far as to purchase a ship, called the *Bridgewater Merchant* from an alderman in London, though he has not a hundred guineas at his disposal. As he stands debating, a hand touches his arm and a voice says in his ear: "You were within a mile of it with the *Algier Rose*, two years ago."

The great adventurer turns. "The devil I was! And who are you?"

Satanic humour plays in the stranger's eyes as he answers: "I am Edward Bucklaw, pirate and keeper of the treasure-house in the La Planta River."

"Blood of Judas," Phips says, "how dare you speak to me? I'll have you in yon prison for an unhung rascal!"

"Ah! you are a great man," is the unmoved reply. "I knew you'd feel that way. But if you'll listen for five minutes, down here at the Bull-and-Daisy, there shall be peace between us."

An hour later, Phips, following Bucklaw's instructions, is tracing on a map the true location of the lost galleon's treasure.

"Then," says Bucklaw, "we are comrades?"

"We are adventurers."

Another scene. In a northern inland sea two men are standing on the deck of a ship: the one stalwart, clear-

eyed, with a touch of strong reserve in face and manner; the other of middle height, with sinister look. The former is looking out silently upon the great locked hummocks of ice surrounding the vessel. It is the early morning. The sun is shining with that hard brightness only seen in the Arctic world—keen as silver, cold as steel. It plays upon the hummocks, and they send out shafts of light at fantastic angles, and a thin blue line runs between the almost unbearable general radiance and the sea of ice stretching indefinitely away. But to the west is a shore, and on it stands a fort and a few detached houses. Upon the walls of the fort are some guns, and the British flag is flying above. Beyond these again are the plains of the north—the home of the elk, musk-ox, silver fox, the white bear and the lonely races of the Pole. Here and there, in the south-west, an island of pines breaks the monotony, but to the north there is only the white silence, the terrible and yet beautiful trail of the Arctic.

The smaller man stands swinging his arms for warmth; the smack of the leather in the clear air like the report of a gun. Presently, stopping his exercise, he says:

“Well, monsieur, what do you say?”

Slowly the young man withdraws his eyes from the scene and turns.

“Radisson,” he says, “this is much the same story as Bucklaw told Governor Nicholls. How come you to know of it?”

“You remember, I was proclaimed four years ago? Well, afterwards I fell in with Bucklaw. I sailed with him to the Spaniards’ country, and we might have got the treasure, but we quarrelled; there was a fight, and I—well, we end. Bucklaw was captured by the French

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and was carried to France. He was a fool to look for the treasure with a poor ship and a worse crew. He was for getting William Phips, a man of Boston, to work with him, for Phips had got something of the secret from an old sailor, but when he would have got him, Phips was on his way with a ship of King Charles. I will tell you something more. Mademoiselle Leveret's—"

"What do you know of Mademoiselle Leveret?"

"A little. Mademoiselle's father lost much money in Phips's expedition."

"How know you that?"

"I have ears. You have promised to go with Phips. Isn't that so?"

"What then?"

"I will go with you."

"Booty?"

"No, revenge."

"On whom?"

"The man you hate—Iberville."

Gering's face darkens. "We are not likely to meet."

"*Pardon!* very likely. Six months ago he was coming back from France. He will find you. I know the race."

A sneer is on Gering's face. "Freebooters, outlaws like yourself!"

"*Pardon!* gentlemen, monsieur; noble outlaws. What is it that once or twice they have quarrelled with the governor, and because they would not yield have been proclaimed? Nothing. Proclaimed yesterday, today at Court. No, no. I hate Iberville, but he is a great man."

In the veins of the renegade is still latent the pride of race. He is a villain but he knows the height from

which he fell. "He will find you, monsieur," he repeats. "When Le Moyne is the hunter he never will kennel till the end. Besides, there is the lady!"

"Silence!"

Radisson knows that he has said too much. His manner changes. "You will let me go with you?"

The Englishman remembers that this scoundrel was with Bucklaw, although he does not know that Radisson was one of the abductors.

"Never!" he says, and turns upon his heel.

A moment after and the two have disappeared from the lonely pageant of ice and sun. Man has disappeared, but his works—houses and ships and walls and snow-topped cannon—lie there in the hard grasp of the North, while the White Weaver, at the summit of the world, is shutting these lives into the woof of battle, murder, and sudden death.

On the shore of the La Planta River a man lies looking into the sunset. So sweet, so beautiful is the landscape,—the deep foliage, the scent of flowers, the flutter of bright-winged birds, the fern-grown walls of a ruined town, the wallowing eloquence of the river, the sonorous din of the locust,—that none could think this a couch of death. A Spanish priest is making ready for that last long voyage, when the soul of man sloughs the dross of earth. Beside him kneels another priest—a Frenchman of the same order.

The dying man feebly takes from his breast a packet and hands it to his friend.

"It is as I have said," he whispers. "Others may guess, but I know. I know—and another. The rest are all dead. There were six of us, and all were killed save myself. We were poisoned by a Spaniard. He

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thought he had killed all, but I lived. He also was killed. His murderer's name was Bucklaw—an English pirate. He has the secret. Once he came with a ship to find, but there was trouble and he did not go on. An Englishman also came with the king's ship, but he did not find. But I know that the man Bucklaw will come again. It should not be. Listen: A year ago, and something more, I was travelling to the coast. From there I was to sail for Spain. I had lost the chart of the river then. I was taken ill and I should have died, but a young French officer stayed his men beside me and cared for me, and had me carried to the coast, where I recovered. I did not go to Spain, and I found the chart of the river again."

There is a pause, in which the deep breathing of the dying man mingles with the low wash of the river, and presently he speaks again. "I vowed then that he should know. As God is our Father, swear that you will give this packet to himself only."

The priest, in reply, lifts the crucifix from the dying man's breast and puts his lips to it. The world seems not to know, so cheerful is it all, that, with a sob,—that sob of farewell which the soul gives the body,—the spirit of a man is passing the mile-posts called Life, Time, and Eternity.

Yet another glance into passing incidents before we follow the straight trail of our story. In the city of Montreal fourscore men are kneeling in a little church, as the mass is slowly chanted at the altar. All of them are armed. By the flare of the torches and the candles—for it is not daybreak yet—you can see the flash of a scabbard, the glint of a knife, and the sheen of a bandolier.

Presently, from among them, one man rises, goes to the steps of the sanctuary and kneels. He is the leader of the expedition, the Chevalier de Troyes, the chosen of the governor. A moment, and three other men rise and come and kneel beside him. These are three brothers, and one we know—gallant, imperious, cordial, having the superior ease of the courtier.

The four receive a blessing from a massive, handsome priest, whose face, as it bends over Iberville, suddenly flushes with feeling. Presently the others rise, but Iberville remains an instant longer, as if loth to leave. The priest whispers to him: "Be strong, be just, be merciful."

The young man lifts his eyes to the priest's: "I will be just, abbé!"

Then the priest makes the sacred gesture over him.

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CHAPTER IX

TO THE PORCH OF THE WORLD

THE English colonies never had a race of woodsmen like the *coureurs du bois* of New France. These were a strange mixture: French peasants, half-breeds, Canadian-born Frenchmen, gentlemen of birth with lives and fortunes gone askew, and many of the native Canadian noblesse, who, like the nobles of France, forbidden to become merchants, became adventurers with the *coureurs du bois*, who were ever with them in spirit more than with the merchant. The peasant prefers the gentleman to the bourgeois as his companion. Many a *coureur du bois* divided his tale of furs with a distressed noble or seigneur, who dare not work in the fields.

The veteran Charles le Moyne, with his sons, each of whom played a daring and important part in the history of New France,—Iberville greatest,—was one of the few merchants in whom was combined the trader and the noble. But he was a trader by profession before he became a seigneur. In his veins was a strain of noble blood; but leaving France and settling in Canada, he avoided the little Court at Quebec, went to Montreal, and there began to lay the foundation of his fame and fortune, and to send forth men who were as the sons of Jacob. In his heart he was always in sympathy with the woodsmen, and when they were proclaimed as perilous to the peace and prosperity of the king's

empire, he stood stoutly by them. Adventurers, they traded as they listed; and when the Intendant Duchesneau could not bend them to his greedy will, they were to be caught and hanged wherever found. King Louis hardly guessed that to carry out that order would be to reduce greatly the list of his Canadian noblesse. It struck a blow at the men who, in one of the letters which the grim Frontenac sent to Versailles not long before his death, were rightly called "The King's Traders"—more truly such than any others in New France.

Whether or not the old seigneur knew it at the time, three of his own sons were among the *coureurs du bois*—chieftains by courtesy—when they were proclaimed. And it was like Iberville, that, then only a lad, he came in from the woods, went to his father, and astonished him by asking for his blessing. Then he started for Quebec, and arriving there with Perrot and Du Lhut, went to the citadel at night and asked to be admitted to Count Frontenac. Perhaps the governor—grand half-barbarian as he was at heart—guessed the nature of the visit and, before he admitted Iberville, dismissed those who were with him. There is in an old letter still preserved by an ancient family of France, an account of this interview, told by a cynical young nobleman. Iberville alone was admitted. His excellency greeted his young visitor courteously, yet with hauteur.

"You bring strange comrades to visit your governor, Monsieur Iberville," he said.

"Comrades in peace, your excellency, comrades in war."

"What war?"

"The king makes war against the *coureurs du bois*. There is a price on the heads of Perrot and Du Lhut. We are all in the same boat."

"You speak in riddles, sir."

"I speak *of* riddles. Perrot and Du Lhut are good friends of the king. They have helped your excellency with the Indians a hundred times. Their men have been a little roystering, but that's no sin. I am one with them, and I am as good a subject as the king has."

"Why have you come here?"

"To give myself up. If you shoot Perrot or Du Lhut you will have to shoot me; and, if you carry on the matter, your excellency will not have enough gentlemen to play *Tartuffe*."

This last remark referred to a quarrel which Frontenac had had with the bishop, who inveighed against the governor's intention of producing *Tartuffe* at the château.

Iberville's daring was quite as remarkable as the position in which he had placed himself. With a lesser man than Frontenac it might have ended badly. But himself, courtier as he was, had ever used heroic methods, and appreciated the reckless courage of youth. With grim humour he put all three under arrest, made them sup with him, and sent them away secretly before morning—free. Before Iberville left, the governor had word with him alone.

"Monsieur," he said, "you have a keen tongue, but our king needs keen swords, and since you have the advantage of me in this, I shall take care you pay the bill. We have had enough of outlawry. You shall fight by rule and measure soon."

"In your excellency's bodyguard, I hope," was the instant reply.

"In the king's navy," answered Frontenac, with a smile, for he was pleased with the frank flattery.

A career different from that of George Gering, who,

brought up with Puritans, had early learned to take life seriously, had little of Iberville's gay spirit, but was just such a determined, self-conscious Englishman as any one could trust and admire, and none but an Englishman love.

And Jessica Leveret? Wherever she had been during the past four years, she had stood between these two men, regardful, wondering, waiting; and at last, as we know, casting the die against the enemy of her country. But was it cast after all?

Immediately after she made a certain solemn promise, recorded in the last chapter, she went once again to New York to visit Governor Nicholls. She had been there some months before, but it was only for a few weeks, and then she had met Dollier de Casson and Perrot. That her mind was influenced by memory of Iberville we may guess, but in what fashion who can say? It is not in mortal man to resolve the fancies of a woman, or interpret the shadowy inclinations, the timid revulsions, which move them—they cannot tell why, any more than we. They would indeed be thankful to be solved unto themselves. The great moment for a man with a woman is when, by some clear guess or some special providence, he shows her in a flash her own mind. Her respect, her serious wonder, are all then making for his glory. Wise and happy if by a further touch of genius he seizes the situation: henceforth he is her master. George Gering and Jessica had been children together, and he understood her, perhaps, as did no one else, save her father; though he never made good use of his knowledge, nor did he touch that side of her which was purely feminine—her sweet inconsistency; therefore, he was not her master.

But he had appealed to her, for he had courage, strong

ambition, thorough kindness, and fine character, only marred by a want of temperament. She had avoided as long as she could the question which, on his return from service in the navy, he asked her, almost without warning; and with a touch of her old demureness and gaiety she had put him off, bidding him go win his laurels as commander. He was then commissioned for Hudson's Bay, and expected, on his return, to proceed to the Spaniards' country with William Phips, if that brave gentleman succeeded with the king or his nobles. He had gone north with his ship, and, as we have seen, when Iberville started on that almost impossible journey, was preparing to return to Boston. As he waited Iberville came on.

CHAPTER X

QUI VIVE!

FROM Land's End to John O' Groat's is a long tramp, but that from Montreal to Hudson's Bay is far longer, and yet many have made it; more, however, in the days of which we are writing than now, and with greater hardships also then. But weighed against the greater hardships there was a bolder temper and a more romantic spirit.

How strange and severe a journey it was, only those can tell who have travelled those wastes, even in these later days, when paths have been beaten down from Mount Royal to the lodges of the North. When they started, the ice had not yet all left the Ottawa River, and they wound their way through crowding floes, or portaged here and there for miles, the eager sun of spring above with scarcely a cloud to trail behind him. At last the river cleared, and for leagues they travelled to the north-west, and came at last to the Lake of the Winds. They travelled across one corner of it, to a point where they would strike an unknown path to Hudson's Bay.

Iberville had never before seen this lake, and, with all his knowledge of great proportions, he was not prepared for its splendid vastness. They came upon it in the evening, and camped beside it. They watched the sun spread out his banners, presently veil his head in them, and sink below the world. And between them

and that sunset was a vast rock stretching out from a ponderous shore—a colossal stone lion, resting Sphinx-like, keeping its faith with the ages. Alone, the warder of the West, stormy, menacing, even the vernal sun could give it little cheerfulness. But to Iberville and his followers it brought no gloom at night, nor yet in the morning when all was changed, and a soft silver mist hung over the “great water,” like dissolving dew, through which the sunlight came with a strange, solemn delicacy. Upon the shore were bustle, cheerfulness, and song, until every canoe was launched, and then the band of warriors got in, and presently were away in the haze.

The long bark canoes, with lofty prows, stained with powerful dyes, slid along this path swiftly, the paddles noiselessly cleaving the water with the precision of a pendulum. One followed the other with a space between, so that Iberville, in the first, looking back, could see a diminishing procession, the last seeming large and weird—almost a shadow—as it were a part of the weird atmosphere. On either side was that soft plumbless diffusion, and ahead the secret of untravelled wilds and the fortunes of war.

As if by common instinct, all gossip ceased soon after they left the shore, and, cheerful as was the French Canadian, he was—and is—superstitious. He saw sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, and the supernatural in everything. Simple, hardy, occasionally bloody, he was ever on the watch for signs and wonders, and a phase of nature influenced him after the manner of a being with a temperament. Often, as some of the woodsmen and river-men had seen this strange effect, they now made the sacred gesture as they ran on. The pure moisture lay like a fine exudation on

their brown skins, glistened on their black hair, and hung from their beards, giving them a mysterious look. The colours of their canoes and clothes were softened by the dim air and long use, and there seemed to accompany each boat and each person an atmosphere within this other haze, a spiritual kind of exhalation; so that one might have thought them, with the crucifixes on their breasts, and that unworldly, distinguished look which comes to those who live much with nature, as sons of men going upon such mission as did they who went into the far land with Arthur.

But the silence could not be maintained for long. The first flush of the impression gone, these half-barbarians, with the simple hearts of children, must rise from the almost melancholy, somewhat religious mood, into which they had been cast. As Iberville, with Sainte-Hélène and Perrot, sat watching the canoes that followed, with voyageurs erect in bow and stern, a voice in the next canoe, with a half-chanting modulation, began a song of the wild-life. Voice after voice slowly took it up, until it ran along the whole procession. A verse was sung, then a chorus altogether, then a refrain of one verse which was sung by each boat in succession to the last. As the refrain of this was sung by the last boat it seemed to come out of the great haze behind. Verses of the old song are still preserved:

“Qui vive!

Who is it cries in the dawn—
Cries when the stars go down?
Who is it comes through the mist—
The mist that is fine like lawn,
The mist like an angel's gown?
Who is it comes in the dawn?

Qui vive! Qui vive! in the dawn.

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"Qui vive!

Who is it passeth us by,
 Still in the dawn and the mist?
 Tall seigneur of the dawn:
 A two-edged sword at his thigh,
 A shield of gold at his wrist:
 Who is it hurrieth by?

Qui vive! Qui vive! in the dawn."

Under the influence of this beautiful mystery of the dawn, the slow thrilling song, and the strange, happy loneliness—as though they were in the wash between two worlds, Iberville got the great inspiration of his life. He would be a discoverer, the faithful captain of his king, a trader in provinces. . . . And in that he kept his word—years after, but he kept it. There came with this, what always comes to a man of great ideas: the woman who should share his prowess. Such a man, if forced to choose between the woman and the idea, will ever decide for the woman after he has married her, sacrificing what—however much he hides it—lies behind all. But he alone knows what he has sacrificed. For it is in the order of things that the great man shall be first the maker of kingdoms and homes, and then the husband of his wife and a begetter of children. Iberville knew that this woman was not more to him than the feeling just come to him, but he knew also that while the one remained the other would also.

He stood up and folded his arms, looking into the silence and mist. His hand mechanically dropped to his sword, and he glanced up proudly to the silver flag with its golden lilies floating softly on the slight breeze they made as they passed.

"The sword!" he said under his breath. "The world and a woman by the sword; there is no other way."

He had the spirit of his time. The sword was its faith, its magic. If two men loved a woman, the natural way to make happiness for all was to let the sword do its eager office. For they had one of the least-believed and most unpopular of truths, that a woman's love is more a matter of mastery and possession than instinct, two men being of comparatively equal merit and sincerity.

His figure seemed to grow larger in the mist, and the grey haze gave his hair a frosty coating, so that age and youth seemed strangely mingled in him. He stood motionless for a long time as the song went on:

“Qui vive!

Who saileth into the morn,
Out of the wind of the dawn?—

‘Follow, oh, follow me on!’

Calleth a distant horn.

He is here—he is there—he is gone,

Tall seigneur of the dawn!

Qui vive! Qui vive! in the dawn.”

Some one touched Iberville's arm. It was Dollier de Casson. Iberville turned to him, but they did not speak at first—the priest knew his friend well.

“We shall succeed, abbé,” Iberville said.

“May our quarrel be a just one, Pierre,” was the grave reply.

“The forts are our king's; the man is with my conscience, my dear friend.”

“But if you make sorrow for the woman?”

“You brought me a gift from her!” His finger touched his doublet.

“She is English, my Pierre.”

“She is what God made her.”

"She may be sworn to the man."

Iberville started, then shook his head incredulously.

"He is not worthy of her."

"Are you?"

"I know her value better and prize it more."

"You have not seen her for four years."

"I had not seen you for four years—and yet!"

"You saw her then only for a few days—and she was so young!"

"What are days or years? Things lie deep in us till some great moment, and then they spring into life and are ours for ever. When I kissed King Louis' hand I knew that I loved my king; when De Montespan's, I hated, and shall hate always. When I first saw this English girl I waked from youth, I was born again into the world. I had no doubts, I have none now."

"And the man?"

"One knows one's enemy even as the other. There is no way but this, Dollier. He is the enemy of my king, and he is greatly in my debt. Remember the Spaniards' country!"

He laid a hand upon his sword. The face of the priest was calm and grave, but in his eyes was a deep fire. At heart he was a soldier, a loyalist, a gentleman of France. Perhaps there came to him then the dreams of his youth, before a thing happened which made him at last a servant of the Church after he had been a soldier of the king.

Presently the song of the voyageurs grew less, the refrain softened and passed down the long line, and, as it were, from out of far mists came the muffled challenge:

"*Qui vive! Qui vive!* in the dawn."

Then a silence fell once more. But presently from out of the mists there came, as it were, the echo of their challenge:

"Qui vive! Qui vive! in the dawn."

The paddles stilled in the water and a thrill ran through the line of voyageurs—even Iberville and his friends were touched by it.

Then there suddenly emerged from the haze on their left, ahead of them, a long canoe with tall figures in bow and stern, using paddles. They wore long cloaks, and feathers waved from their heads. In the centre of the canoe was what seemed a body under a pall, at its head and feet small censers. The smell of the wood came to them, and a little trail of sweet smoke was left behind as the canoe swiftly passed into the mist on the other side and was gone.

It had been seen vaguely. No one spoke, no one challenged; it had come and gone like a dream. What it was, no one, not even Iberville, could guess, though he thought it a pilgrimage of burial, such as was sometimes made by distinguished members of Indian tribes. Or it may have been—which is likely—a dead priest being carried south by Indian friends.

The impression left upon the party was, however, characteristic. There was none but, with the smell of the censers in his nostrils, made the sacred gesture; and had the Jesuit Silvy or the Abbé de Casson been so disposed, the event might have been made into the supernatural.

After a time the mist cleared away, and nothing could be seen on the path they had travelled but the plain of clear water and the distant shore they had left.

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Ahead of them was another shore, and they reached this at last. Where the mysterious canoe had vanished, none could tell.

Days upon days, they travelled with incredible labour, now portaging over a stubborn country, now placing their lives in hazard as they shot down untrav-elled rapids.

One day on the Black Wing River a canoe was torn open and its three occupants were thrown into the rapids. Two of them were expert swimmers and were able to catch the stern of another canoe as it ran by, and reached safe water, bruised but alive. The third was a boy, Maurice Joval, the youngest of the party, whom Iberville had been at first loth to bring with him. But he had remembered his own ambitious youth, and had consented, persuading De Troyes that the lad was worth encouragement. His canoe was not far behind when the other ran on the rocks. He saw the lad struggle bravely and strike out, but a cross current caught him and carried him towards the steep shore. There he was thrown against a rock. His strength seemed to fail, but he grasped the rock. It was scraggy, and though it tore and bruised him he clung to it.

Iberville threw off his doublet, and prepared to spring as his boat came down. But another had made ready. It was the abbé, with his cassock gone, and his huge form showing finely. He laid his hand upon Iberville's arm. "Stay here," he said, "I go; I am the stronger."

But Iberville, as cries of warning and appeal rang out around him,—the drowning lad had not cried out at all,—sprang into the water. Not alone. The abbé looked around him, made the sacred gesture, and then sprang also into an eddy a distance below, and at an

angle made his way up towards the two. Priest though he was, he was also an expert river-man, and his vast strength served him royally. He saw Iberville tossed here and there, but with impossible strength and good fortune reach the lad. The two grasped each other and then struck out for the high shore. De Casson seemed to know what would happen. He altered his course, and, making for the shore also at a point below, reached it. He saw with a kind of despair that it was steep and had no trees; yet his keen eyes also saw, not far below, the dwarfed bole of a tree jutting out from the rock. There lay the chance. Below this was a great turmoil of rapids. A prayer mechanically passed the priest's lips, though his thoughts were those of a warrior then. He almost enjoyed the danger for himself: his fear was for Iberville and for the motherless boy.

He had guessed and hoped aright. Iberville, supporting the now senseless boy, swung down the mad torrent, his eyes blinded with blood so that he could not see. But he heard De Casson's voice, and with a splendid effort threw himself and the lad towards it. The priest also fought upwards to them and caught them as they came, having reserved his great strength until now. Throwing his left arm over the lad he relieved Iberville of his burden, but called to him to hold on. The blood was flowing into Iberville's eyes and he could do nothing else. But now came the fight between the priest and the mad waters. Once—twice—thrice they went beneath, but neither Iberville nor himself let go, and to the apprehensive cries of their friends there succeeded calls of delight, for De Casson had seized the jutting bole and held on. It did not give, and they were safe for a moment.

A quarter of a mile below there was smoother water,

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and soon the canoes were ashore, and Perrot, Sainte-Hélène, and others were running to the rescue. They arrived just in time. Ropes were let down, and the lad was drawn up insensible. Then came the priest, for Iberville, battered as he was, would not stir until the abbé had gone up—a stout strain on the rope. Fortunately there were clefts and fissures in the wall, which could be used in the ascent. De Casson had consented to go first, chiefly because he wished to gratify the still youthful pride of Iberville, who thought the soldier should see the priest into safety. Iberville himself came up slowly, for he was stiff and his limbs were shaking. His clothes were in tatters, and his fine face was like that of a warrior defaced by swords.

But he refused to be carried, and his first care was for the boy, who had received no mortal injury.

“You have saved the boy, Pierre,” said the priest, in a low voice.

“Self-abasing always, dear abbé; you saved us both. By heaven, but the king lost a great man in you!”

“Hush! Mere brawn, Pierre. . . . By the blessing of God,” he added quickly.

CHAPTER XI

WITH THE STRANGE PEOPLE

AFTER this came varying days of hardship by land and water, and then another danger. One day they were crossing a great northern lake. The land was moist with the sweat of quick-springing verdure; flocks of wild fowl rose at all points, and herds of caribou came drinking and feeding at the shore. The cries of herons, loons, and river-hens rose with strange distinctness, so delicate was the atmosphere, and the blue of the sky was exquisite.

As they paddled slowly along this lake, keeping time to their songs with the paddles, there suddenly grew out of the distance a great flotilla of canoes with tall prows, and behind them a range of islands which they had not before seen. The canoes were filled with men—Indians, it would seem, by the tall feathers lifting from their heads. A moment before there had been nothing. The sudden appearance was even more startling than the strange canoe that crossed their track on Lake of the Winds. Iberville knew at once that it was a mirage, and the mystery of it did not last long even among the superstitious. But they knew now that somewhere in the north—presumably not far away—was a large band of Indians, possibly hostile; their own numbers were about fourscore. There was the chance that the Indians were following or intercepting them. Yet, since they had left the Ottawa River, they had seen no human being, save in that strange canoe on Lake

of the Winds. To the east were the dreary wastes of Labrador, to the west were the desolate plains and hills, stretching to the valley of the Saskatchewan.

Practically in command, Iberville advised watchfulness and preparation for attack. Presently the mirage faded away as suddenly as it came. For days again they marched and voyaged on, seeing still no human being. At last they came to a lake, which they crossed in their canoes; then they entered the mouth of a small river, travelling northward. The river narrowed at a short distance from its mouth, and at a certain point the stream turned sharply. As the first canoe rounded the point it came full upon half a hundred canoes blocking the river, filled by Indians with bended bows. They were a northern tribe that had never before seen the white man. Tall and stern, they were stout enemies, but they had no firearms, and, as could be seen, they were astonished at the look of the little band, which, at the command of De Troyes, who with Iberville was in the first boat, came steadily on. Suddenly brought face to face there was a pause, in which Iberville, who knew several Indian languages, called to them to make way.

He was not understood, but he had pointed to the white standard of France flaring with the golden lilies; and perhaps the drawn swords and the martial manner of the little band—who had donned gay trappings, it being Iberville's birthday—conveyed in some way his meaning. The bows of the strangers stayed drawn, awaiting word from the leader. Near the chief stood a man seven feet in height, a kind of bodyguard, who presently said something in his ear. He frowned, then seemed to debate, and his face cleared at last. Raising a spear, he saluted the French leaders, and then pointed

towards the shore, where there was a space clear of trees, a kind of plateau. De Troyes and Iberville, thinking that a truce and parley were meant, returned the salute with their swords, and presently the canoes of both parties made over to the shore. It was a striking sight: the grave, watchful faces of the Indians, who showed up grandly in the sun, their skin like fine rippling bronze as they moved; their tall feathers tossing, rude bracelets on their wrists, while some wore necklets of brass or copper. The chief was a stalwart savage with a cruel eye, but the most striking figure of all—either French or Indian—was that of the chief's body-guard. He was, indeed, the Goliath of the tribe, who, after the manner of other champions, was ever ready for challenge in the name of his master. He was massively built, with long sinewy arms; but Iberville noticed that he was not powerful at the waist in proportion to the rest of his body, and that his neck was thinner than it should be. But these were items, for in all he was a fine piece of humanity, and Iberville said as much to De Casson, involuntarily stretching up as he did so. Tall and athletic himself, he never saw a man of calibre but he felt a wish to measure strength with him, not from vanity, but through the mere instincts of the warrior. Priest as he was, it is possible that De Casson shared the young man's feeling, though chastening years had overcome impulses of youth. It was impossible for the French leaders to guess how this strange parley would end, and when many more Indians suddenly showed on the banks they saw that they might have tough work.

"What do you think of it, Iberville?" said De Troyes.

"A juggler's puzzle—let us ask Perrot," was the reply.

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Perrot confessed that he knew nothing of this tribe of Indians. The French leaders, who had never heard of Indians who would fight in the open, were, in spite of great opposing numbers, in warrior mood. Presently all the canoes were got to land, and without any hostile sign the Indians filed out on the centre of the plateau, where were pitched a number of tents. The tents were in a circle, surrounding a clear space of ground, and the chief halted in the middle of this. He and his men had scarcely noticed the Frenchmen as they followed, seemingly trusting the honour of the invaders that they would not attack from behind. It was these Indians who had been seen in the mirage. They had followed the Frenchmen, had gone parallel with them for scores of miles, and had at last at this strategic point waylaid them.

The conference was short. The French ranged in column on one side, the Indians on the other, and then the chief stepped forward. De Troyes did the same and not far behind him were Iberville, the other officers, and Perrot. Behind the chief was the champion, then, a little distance away, on either side, the Indian councillors.

The chief waved his hand proudly towards the armed warriors behind him, as if showing their strength, speaking meanwhile, and then with effective gesture, remarking the handful of French. Presently, pointing to his fighting man, he seemed to ask that the matter be settled by single combat.

The French leaders understood: Goliath would have his David. The champion suddenly began a sing-song challenge, during which Iberville and his comrades conferred. The champion's eyes ran up and down the line and alighted on the large form of De Casson, who

calmly watched him. Iberville saw this look and could not help but laugh, though the matter was serious. He pictured the good abbé fighting for the band. At this the champion began to beat his breast defiantly.

Iberville threw off his coat, and motioned his friends back. Immediately there was protest. They had not known quite what to do, but Perrot had offered to fight the champion, and they, supposing it was to be a fight with weapons, had hastily agreed. It was clear, however, that it was to be a wrestle to the death. Iberville quelled all protests, and they stepped back. There was a final call from the champion, and then he became silent. From the Indians rose one long cry of satisfaction, and then they too stilled, the chief fell back, and the two men stood alone in the centre. Iberville, whose face had become grave, went to De Casson and whispered to him. The abbé gave him his blessing, and then he turned and went back. He waved his hand to his brothers and his friends,—a gay Cavalier-like motion,—then took off all save his small clothes and stood out.

Never was seen, perhaps, a stranger sight: a gentleman of France ranged against a savage wrestler, without weapons, stripped to the waist, to fight like a gladiator. But this was a new land, and Iberville could ever do what another of his name or rank could not. There was only one other man in Canada who could do the same—old Count Frontenac himself, who, dressed in all his Court finery, had danced a war-dance in the torch-light with Iroquois chiefs.

Stripped, Iberville's splendid proportions could be seen at advantage. He was not massively made, but from crown to heel there was perfect muscular proportion. His admirable training and his splendidly nour-

ished body—cared for, as in those days only was the body cared for—promised much, though against so huge a champion. Then, too, Iberville in his boyhood had wrestled with Indians and had learned their tricks. Added to this were methods learned abroad, which might prove useful now. Yet any one looking at the two would have begged the younger man to withdraw.

Never was battle shorter. Iberville, too proud to give his enemy one moment of athletic trifling, ran in on him. For a time they were locked, straining terribly, and then the neck of the champion went with a snap and he lay dead in the middle of the green.

The Indians and the French were both so dumfounded that for a moment no one stirred, and Iberville went back and quietly put on his clothes. But presently cries of rage and mourning came from the Indians, and weapons threatened. But the chief waved aggression down, and came forward to the dead man. He looked for a moment, and then as Iberville and De Troyes came near, he gazed at Iberville in wonder, and all at once reached out both hands to him. Iberville took them and shook them heartily.

There was something uncanny in the sudden death of the champion, and Iberville's achievement had conquered these savages, who, after all, loved such deeds, though at the hand of an enemy. And now the whole scene was changed. The French courteously but firmly demanded homage, and got it, as the superior race can get it from the inferior, when events are, even distantly, in their favour; and here were martial display, a band of fearless men, weapons which the savages had never seen before, trumpets, and, most of all, a chief who was his own champion, and who had snapped the neck of their Goliath as one would break a tree-branch.

From the moment Iberville and the chief shook hands they were friends, and after two days, when they parted company, there was no Indian among all this strange tribe but would have followed him anywhere. As it was, he and De Troyes preferred to make the expedition with his handful of men, and so parted with the Indians, after having made gifts to the chief and his people. The most important of these presents was a musket, handled by the chief at first as though it were some deadly engine. The tribe had been greatly astonished at hearing a volley fired by the whole band at once, and at seeing caribou shot before their eyes; but when the chief himself, after divers attempts, shot a caribou, they stood in proper awe. With mutual friendliness they parted. Two weeks later, after great trials, the band emerged on the shores of Hudson's Bay, almost without baggage, and starving.

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CHAPTER XII

OUT OF THE NET

THE last two hundred miles of their journey had been made under trying conditions. Accidents had befallen the canoes which carried the food, and the country through which they passed was almost devoid of game. During the last three days they had little or nothing to eat. When, therefore, at night they came suddenly upon the shores of Hudson's Bay, and Fort Hayes lay silent before them, they were ready for desperate enterprises. The high stockade walls with stout bastions and small cannon looked formidable, yet there was no man of them but was better pleased that the odds were against him than with him. Though it was late spring, the night was cold, and all were wet, hungry, and chilled.

Iberville's first glance at the bay and the fort brought disappointment. No vessel lay in the harbour, therefore it was probable Gering was not there. But there were other forts, and this one must be taken meanwhile. The plans were quickly made. Iberville advised a double attack: an improvised battering-ram at the great gate, and a party to climb the stockade wall at another quarter. This climbing-party he would himself lead, accompanied by his brother Sainte-Hélène, Perrot, and a handful of agile woodsmen. He had his choice, and his men were soon gathered round him. A tree was cut down in the woods some distance from the

shore, shortened, and brought down, ready for its duty of battering-ram.

The night was beautiful. There was a bright moon, and the sky by some strange trick of atmosphere had taken on a green hue, against which everything stood out with singular distinctness. The air was placid, and through the stillness came the low humming wash of the water to the hard shore. The fort stood on an upland, looking in its solitariness like some lonely prison-house where men went, more to have done with the world than for punishment. Iberville was in that mood wherein men do stubborn deeds—when justice is more with them than mercy, and selfishness than either.

"If you meet the man, Pierre?" De Casson said before the party started.

Iberville laughed softly. "If we meet, may my mind be his, abbé! But he is not here—there is no vessel, you see! Still, there are more forts on the bay."

The band knelt down before they started. It was strange to hear in that lonely waste, a handful of men, bent on a deadly task, singing a low chant of penitence—a Kyrie eleison. Afterwards came the benediction upon this buccaneering expedition, behind which was one man's personal enmity, a merchant company's cupidity, and a great nation's lust of conquest!

Iberville stole across the shore and up the hill with his handful of men. There was no sound from the fort; all were asleep. No musket-shot welcomed them, no cannon roared on the night; there was no sentry. What should people on the outposts of the world need of sentries, so long as there were walls to keep out wild animals! In a few moments Iberville and his companions were over the wall. Already the attack on the gate had begun, a passage was quickly made, and by the

time Iberville had forced open the doors of the blockhouse, his followers making a wild hubbub as of a thousand men, De Troyes and his party were at his heels. Before the weak garrison could make resistance they were in the hands of their enemies, and soon were gathered in the yard—men, women, and children.

Gering was not there. Iberville was told that he was at one of the other forts along the shore: either Fort Rupert on the east, a hundred and twenty miles away, or at Fort Albany, ninety miles to the north and west. Iberville determined to go to Fort Rupert, and with a few followers, embarking in canoes, assembled before it two nights after. A vessel was in the harbour, and his delight was keen. He divided his men, sending Perrot to take the fort, while himself with a small party moved to the attack of the vessel. Gering had delayed a day too long. He had intended leaving the day before, but the arrival of the governor of the company had induced him to remain another day; entertaining his guest at supper, and toasting him in some excellent wine got in Hispaniola. So palatable was it that all drank deeply, and other liquors found their way to the fo'castle. Thus in the dead of night there was no open eye on the *Valiant*.

The Frenchmen pushed out gently from the shore, paddled noiselessly over to the ship's side, and clambered up. Iberville was the first to step on deck, and he was followed by Perrot and De Casson, who had, against Iberville's will, insisted on coming. Five others came after. Already they could hear the other party at the gate of the fort, and the cries of the besiegers, now in the fortyard, came clearly to them.

The watch of the *Valiant*, waking suddenly, sprang up and ran forward, making no outcry, dazed but bent on fighting. He came, however, on the point of Per-

rot's sabre and was cut down. Meanwhile Iberville, hot for mischief, stamped upon the deck. Immediately a number of armed men came bundling up the hatchway. Among these appeared Gering and the governor, who thrust themselves forward with drawn swords and pistols. The first two men who appeared above the hatchway were promptly despatched, and Iberville's sword was falling upon Gering, whom he did not recognise, when De Casson's hand diverted the blow. It caught the shoulder of a man at Gering's side.

"'Tis Monsieur Gering!" said the priest.

"Stop! stop!" cried a voice behind these. "I am the governor. We surrender."

There was nothing else to do: in spite of Gering's show of defiance, though death was above him if he resisted. He was but half-way up.

"It is no use, Mr. Gering," urged the governor; "they have us like sheep in a pen."

"Very well," said Gering suddenly, handing up his sword and stepping up himself. "To whom do I surrender?"

"To an old acquaintance, monsieur," said Iberville, coming near, "who will cherish you for the king of France."

"Damnation!" cried Gering, and his eyes hungered for his sword again.

"You would not visit me, so I came to look for you; though why, monsieur, you should hide up here in the porch of the world passeth knowledge."

"Monsieur is witty," answered Gering stoutly; "but if he will grant me my sword again and an hour alone with him, I shall ask no greater joy in life."

By this time the governor was on deck, and he interposed.

"I beg, sir," he said to Iberville, "you will see there

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is no useless slaughter at yon fort; for I guess that your men have their way with it."

"Shall my messenger, in your name, tell your people to give in?"

"By Heaven, no: I hope that they will fight while remains a chance. And be sure, sir, I should not have yielded here, but that I foresaw hopeless slaughter. Nor would I ask your favour there, but that I know you are like to have bloody barbarians with you—and we have women and children!"

"We have no Indians, we are all French," answered Iberville quietly, and sent the messenger away.

At that moment Perrot touched his arm, and pointed to a man whose shoulder was being bandaged. It was Radisson, who had caught Iberville's sword when the abbé diverted it.

"By the mass," said Iberville; "the gift of the saints!"

He pricked Radisson with the point of his sword. "Well, Monsieur Renegade, who holds the spring of the trap now? You have some prayers, I hope. And if there is no priest among your English, we'll find you one before you swing next sundown."

Radisson threw up a malignant look, but said nothing; and went on caring for his wound.

"At sunset, remember. You will see to it, Perrot," he added.

"Pardon me, monsieur," said the governor. "This is an officer of our company, duly surrendered."

"Monsieur will know this man is a traitor, and that I have long-standing orders to kill him wherever found. —What has monsieur to say for him?" Iberville added, turning to Gering.

"As an officer of the company," was the reply, "he has the rights of a prisoner of war."

"Monsieur, we have met at the same table, and I cannot think you should plead for a traitor. If you will say that the man—"

But here Radisson broke in. "I want no one to speak for me. I hate you all"—he spat at Iberville—"and I will hang when I must, no sooner."

"Not so badly said," Iberville responded. "'Tis a pity, Radisson, you let the devil buy you."

"T'sh! The devil pays good coin, and I'm not hung yet," he sullenly returned.

By this time all the prisoners save Gering, the governor, and Radisson, were secured. Iberville ordered their disposition, and then, having set a guard, went down to deal with the governor for all the forts on the bay. Because the firing had ceased, he knew that the fort had been captured; and, indeed, word soon came to this effect. Iberville then gave orders that the prisoners from the fort should be brought on board next morning, to be carried on to Fort Albany, which was yet for attack. He was ill-content that a hand-to-hand fight with Gering had been prevented.

He was now all courtesy to the governor and Gering, and, offering them their own wine, entertained them with the hardships of their travel up. He gave the governor assurance that the prisoners should be treated well, and no property destroyed. Afterwards, with apologies, he saw them bestowed in a cabin, the door fastened, and a guard set. Presently he went on deck, and giving orders that Radisson should be kept safe on the after-deck, had rations served out. Then, after eating, he drew his cloak over him in the cabin and fell asleep.

Near daybreak a man came swimming along the side of the ship to the small port-hole of a cabin. He paused

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before it, took from his pocket a nail, and threw it within. There was no response, and he threw another, and again there was no response. Hearing the step of some one on the deck above he drew in close to the side of the ship, diving under the water and lying still. A moment after he reappeared and moved—almost floated—on to another port-hole. He had only one nail left; he threw it in, and Gering's face appeared.

"Hush, monsieur!" Radisson called up. "I have a key which may fit, and a bar of iron. If you get clear, make for this side."

He spoke in a whisper. At that moment he again heard steps above, and dived as before. The watch looked over, having heard a slight noise; but not knowing that Gering's cabin was beneath, thought no harm. Presently Radisson came up again. Gering understood, having heard the footsteps.

"I will make the trial," he said. "Can you give me no other weapon?"

"I have only the one," responded Radisson, not unselfish enough to give it up. His chief idea, after all, was to put Gering under obligation to him.

"I will do my best," said Gering.

Then he turned to the governor, who did not care to risk his life in the way of escape.

Gering tried the key, but it would not turn easily and he took it out again. Rubbing away the rust, he used tallow from the candle, and tried the lock again; still it would not turn. He looked to the fastenings, but they were solid, and he feared noise; he made one more attempt with the lock, and suddenly it turned. He tried the handle, and the door opened. Then he bade good-bye to the governor and stepped out, almost upon the guard, who was sound asleep. Looking round he saw

Iberville's cloak, which its owner had thrown off in his sleep. He stealthily picked it up, and then put Iberville's cap on his head. Of nearly the same height, with these disguises he might be able to pass for his captor.

He threw the cloak over his shoulders, stole silently to the hatchway, and cautiously climbed up. Thrusting out his head he looked about him, and he saw two or three figures bundled together at the mainmast—woodsmen who had celebrated victory too sincerely. He looked for the watch, but could not see him. Then he drew himself carefully up, and on his hands and knees passed to the starboard side and moved aft. Doing so he saw the watch start up from the capstan where he had been resting, and walk towards him. He did not quicken his pace. He trusted to his ruse—he would impersonate Iberville, possessed as he was of the hat and cloak. He moved to the bulwarks and leaned against them, looking into the water. The sentry was deceived; he knew the hat and cloak, and he was only too glad to have, as he thought, escaped the challenge of having slept at his post; so he began resolutely to pace the deck. Gering watched him closely, and moved deliberately to the stern. In doing so he suddenly came upon a body. He stopped and turned round, leaning against the bulwarks as before. This time the watch came within twenty feet of him, saluted and retired.

Immediately Gering looked again at the body near him, and started back, for his feet were in a little pool. He understood: Radisson had escaped by killing his guard. It was not possible that the crime and the escape could go long undetected; the watch might at any moment come the full length of the ship. Gering

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flashed a glance at him again,—his back was to him still,—suddenly doffed the hat and cloak, vaulted lightly upon the bulwarks, caught the anchor-chain, slid down it into the water, and struck out softly along the side. Immediately Radisson was beside him.

“Can you dive?” the Frenchman whispered. “Can you swim under water?”

“A little.”

“Then with me, quick!”

The Frenchman dived and Gering followed him. The water was bitter cold, but when a man is saving his life endurance multiplies.

The Fates were with them: no alarm came from the ship, and they reached the bank in safety. Here they were upon a now hostile shore without food, fire, shelter, and weapons; their situation was desperate even yet. Radisson's ingenuity was not quite enough, so Gering solved the problem: there were the Frenchmen's canoes; they must be somewhere on the shore. Because Radisson was a Frenchman, he might be able to impose upon the watch guarding the canoes. If not, they still had weapons of a kind—Radisson a knife, and Gering the bar of iron. They moved swiftly along the shore, fearing an alarm meanwhile. If they could but get weapons and a canoe they would make their way either to Fort Albany, so warning it, or attempt the desperate journey to New York. Again fortune was with them. As it chanced, the watch, suffering from the cold night air, had gone into the bush to bring wood for firing. The two refugees stole near, and in the very first canoe found three muskets, and there were also bags filled with food. They hastily pushed out a canoe, got in, and were miles away before their escape was discovered.

Radisson was for going south at once to New York, but Gering would not hear of it, and at the mouth of a musket Radisson obeyed. They reached Fort Albany and warned it. Having thus done his duty towards the Hudson's Bay Company, and knowing that surrender must come, and that in this case his last state would be worse than his first, Gering proceeded with Radisson—hourly more hateful to him, yet to be endured for what had happened—southward upon the trail the Frenchmen had taken northward.

A couple of hours after Gering had thrown his hat and cloak into the blood of the *coureur du bois*, and slid down the anchor-chain, Iberville knew that his quarry was flown. The watch had thought that Iberville had gone below, and he had again relaxed, but presently a little maggot of wonder got into his brain. He then went aft. Dawn was just breaking; the grey moist light shone with a naked coldness on land and water; wild-fowl came fluttering, voiceless, past; night was still drenched in sleep. Suddenly he saw the dead body, and his boots dabbled in wet!

In all that concerned the honour of the arms of France and the conquest of the three forts, Hayes, Rupert, and Albany, Iberville might be content, but he chafed at the escape of his enemies.

"I will not say it is better so, Pierre," urged De Casson; "but you have done enough for the king. Let your own cause come later."

"And it will come, abbé," he answered, with anger. "His account grows; we must settle all one day. And Radisson shall swing or I am no soldier—so!"

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CHAPTER XIII

“AS WATER UNTO WINE”

THREE months afterwards George Gering was joyfully preparing to take two voyages. Perhaps, indeed, his keen taste for the one had much to do with his eagerness for the other—though most men find getting gold as cheerful as getting married. He had received a promise of marriage from Jessica, and he was also soon to start with William Phips for the Spaniards' country. His return to New York with the news of the capture of the Hudson's Bay posts brought consternation. There was no angrier man in all America than Colonel Richard Nicholls; there was perhaps no girl in all the world more agitated than Jessica, then a guest at Government House. Her father was there also, cheerfully awaiting her marriage with Gering, whom, since he had lost most traces of Puritanism, he liked. He had long suspected the girl's interest in Iberville; if he had known that two letters from him—unanswered—had been treasured, read, and re-read, he would have been anxious. That his daughter should marry a Frenchman—a filibustering seigneur, a Catholic, the enemy of the British colonies, whose fellow-countrymen incited the Indians to harass and to massacre—was not to be borne.

Besides, the Honourable Hogarth Leveret, whose fame in the colony was now often in peril because of

his Cavalier propensities, and whose losses had aged him, could not bear that he should sink and carry his daughter with him. Jessica was the apple of his eye; for her he would have borne all sorts of trials; but he could not bear to see her called on to bear them. Like most people out of the heyday of their own youth, he imagined the way a maid's fancy ought to go.

If he had known how much his daughter's promise to marry Gering would cost her, he would not have had it. But indeed she did not herself guess it. She had, with the dreamy pleasure of a young girl, dwelt upon an event which might well hold her delighted memory: distance, difference of race, language, and life, all surrounded Iberville with an engaging fascination. Besides, what woman could forget a man who gave her escape from a fate such as Bucklaw had prepared for her? But she saw the hopelessness of the thing, everything was steadily acting in Gering's favour, and her father's trouble decided her at last.

When Gering arrived at New York and told his story—to his credit with no dispraise of Iberville, rather as a soldier—she felt a pang greater than she ever had known. Like a good British maid, she was angry at the defeat of the British, she was indignant at her lover's failure and proud of his brave escape, and she would have herself believe that she was angry at Iberville. But it was no use; she was ill-content while her father and others called him buccaneer and filibuster, and she joyed that old William Drayton, who had ever spoken well of the young Frenchman, laughed at their insults, saying that he was as brave, comely, and fine-tempered a lad as he had ever met, and that the capture of the forts was genius: "Genius and pith, upon my

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soul!" he said stoutly; "and if he comes this way he shall have a right hearty welcome, though he come to fight."

In the first excitement of Gering's return, sorry for his sufferings and for his injured ambition, she had suddenly put her hands in his and had given her word to marry him.

She was young, and a young girl does not always know which it is that moves her: the melancholy of the impossible, from which she sinks in a kind of peaceful despair upon the possible, or the flush of a deep desire; she acts in an atmosphere of the emotions, and cannot therefore be sure of herself. But when it was done there came reaction to Jessica. In the solitude of her own room—the room above the hallway, from which she had gone to be captured by Bucklaw—she had misgivings. If she had been asked whether she loved Iberville, she might have answered no. But he was a possible lover; and every woman weighs the possible lover against the accepted one—often, at first, to fluttering apprehensions. In this brief reaction many a woman's heart has been caught away.

A few days after Gering's arrival he was obliged to push on to Boston, there to meet Phips. He hoped that Mr. Leveret and Jessica would accompany him, but Governor Nicholls would not hear of it just yet. Truth is, wherever the girl went she was light and cheerfulness, although her ways were quiet and her sprightliness was mostly in her looks. She was impulsive, but impulse was ruled by a reserve at once delicate and unembarrassed. She was as much beloved in the town of New York as in Boston.

Two days after Gering left she was wandering in the garden, when the governor joined her.

"Well, well, my pretty councillor," he said—"an hour to cheer an old man's leisure?"

"As many as you please," she answered daintily, putting her hand within his arm. "I am so very cheerful I need to shower the surplus." There was a smile at her lips, but her eyes were misty. Large, brilliant, gentle, they had now also a bewildered look, which even the rough old soldier saw. He did not understand, but he drew the hand further within his arm and held it there, and for the instant he knew not what to say. The girl did not speak; she only kept looking at him with a kind of inward smiling. Presently, as if he had suddenly lighted upon a piece of news for the difficulty, he said: "Radisson has come."

"Radisson!" she cried.

"Yes. You know 'twas he that helped George to escape?"

"Indeed, no!" she answered. "Mr. Gering did not tell me." She was perplexed, annoyed, yet she knew not why.

Gering had not brought Radisson into New York—had indeed forbidden him to come there, or to Boston, until word was given him; for while he felt bound to let the scoundrel go with him to the Spaniards' country, it was not to be forgotten that the fellow had been with Bucklaw. But Radisson had no scruples when Gering was gone, though the proscription had never been withdrawn.

"We will have to give him freedom, councillor, eh? even though we proclaimed him, you remember." He laughed, and added: "You would demand that, yea or nay."

"Why should I?" she asked.

"Now, give me wisdom all ye saints! Why—why?"

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Faith, he helped your lover from the clutches of the French coxcomb."

"Indeed," she answered, "such a villain helps but for absurd benefits. Mr. Gering might have stayed with Monsieur Iberville in honour and safety at least. And why a coxcomb? You thought different once; and you cannot doubt his bravery. Enemy of our country though he be, I am surely bound to speak him well—he saved my life."

Anxious to please her, he answered: "Wise as ever, councillor. What an old bear am I: When I called him coxcomb, 'twas as an Englishman hating a Frenchman, who gave our tongues to gall—a handful of posts gone, a ship passed to the spoiler, the governor of the company a prisoner, and our young commander's reputation at some trial! My temper was pardonable, eh, mistress?"

The girl smiled, and added: "There was good reason why Mr. Gering brought not Radisson here, and I should beware that man. A traitor is ever a traitor. He is French, too, and as a good Englishman you should hate *all* Frenchmen, should you not?"

"Merciless witch! Where got you that wit? If I must, I kneel;" and he groaned in mock despair. "And if Monsieur Iberville should come knocking at our door you would have me welcome him lovingly?"

"Surely; there is peace, is there not? Has not the king, because of his love for Louis commanded all goodwill between us and Canada?"

The governor laughed bitterly. "Much pity that he has! how can we live at peace with buccaneers?"

Their talk was interrupted here; but a few days later, in the same garden, Morris came to them. "A ship enters harbour," he said, "and its commander sends this letter."

An instant after the governor turned a troubled face on the girl and said: "Your counsel of the other day is put to rapid test, Jessica. This comes from monsieur, who would pay his respects to me."

He handed the note to her. It said that Iberville had brought prisoners whom he was willing to exchange for French prisoners in the governor's hands.

Entering New York harbour with a single vessel showed in a strong light Iberville's bold, almost reckless, courage. The humour of it was not lost on Jessica, though she turned pale, and the paper fluttered in her fingers.

"What will you do?" she said.

"I will treat him as well as he will let me, sweetheart."

Two hours afterwards, Iberville came up the street with Sainte-Hélène, De Casson, and Perrot,—De Troyes had gone to Quebec,—courteously accompanied by Morris and an officer of the New York Militia. There was no enmity shown the Frenchmen, for many remembered what had once made Iberville popular in New York. Indeed, Iberville, whose memory was of the best, now and again accosted some English or Dutch resident, whose face he recalled.

The governor was not at first cordial; but Iberville's cheerful soldierliness, his courtier spirit, and his treatment of the English prisoners, soon placed him on a footing near as friendly as that of years before. The governor praised his growing reputation, and at last asked him to dine, saying that Mistress Leveret would no doubt be glad to meet her rescuer again.

"Still, I doubt not," said the governor, "there will be embarrassment, for the lady can scarce forget that you had her lover prisoner. But these things are to be endured. Besides, you and Mr. Gering seem as easily enemies as other men are friends."

Iberville was amazed. So, Jessica and Gering were affianced. And the buckle she had sent him he wore now in the folds of his lace! How could he know what comes from a woman's wavering sympathies, what from her inborn coquetry, and what from love itself? He was merely a man with much to learn.

He accepted dinner and said: "As for Monsieur Gering, your excellency, we are as easily enemies as he and Radisson are comrades-in-arms."

"Which is harshly put, monsieur. When a man is breaking prison he chooses any tool. You put a slight upon an honest gentleman."

"I fear that neither Mr. Gering nor myself is too generous with each other, your excellency," answered Iberville lightly.

This frankness was pleasing, and soon the governor took Iberville into the drawing-room, where Jessica was. She was standing by the great fireplace, and she did not move at first, but looked at Iberville in something of her old simple way. Then she offered him her hand with a quiet smile.

"I fear you are not glad to see me," he said, with a smile. "You cannot have had good reports of me—no?"

"Yes, I am glad," she answered gently. "You know, monsieur, mine is a constant debt. You do not come to me, I take it, as the conqueror of Englishmen."

"I come to you," he answered, "as Pierre le Moyne of Iberville, who had once the honour to do you slight service. I have never tried to forget that, because by it I hoped I might be remembered—an accident of price to me."

She bowed and at first did not speak; then Morris came to say that some one awaited the governor, and the two were left alone.

"I have not forgotten," she began softly, breaking a silence.

"You will think me bold, but I believe you will never forget," was his meaning reply.

"Yes, you are bold," she replied, with the demure smile which had charmed him long ago. Suddenly she looked up at him anxiously, and, "Why did you go to Hudson's Bay?" she asked.

"I would have gone ten times as far for the same cause," he answered, and he looked boldly, earnestly, into her eyes.

She turned her head away. "You have all your old recklessness," she answered. Then her eyes softened, and, "All your old courage," she added.

"I have all my old motive."

"What is—your motive?"

Does a woman ever know how much such speeches cost? Did Jessica quite know when she asked the question, what her own motive was; how much it had of delicate malice—unless there was behind it a simple sincerity? She was inviting sorrow. A man like Iberville was not to be counted lightly; for every word he sowed, he would reap a harvest of some kind.

He came close to her, and looked as though he would read her through and through. "Can you ask that question?" he said most seriously. "If you ask it because from your soul you wish to know, good! But if you ask it as a woman who would read a man's heart, and then—"

"Oh, hush!—hush!" she whispered. Her face became pale, and her eyes had a painful brightness. "You must not answer. I had no right to ask. Oh, monsieur!" she added, "I would have you always for my friend if I could, though you are the enemy of my country and of the man—I am to marry."

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"I am for my king," he replied; "and I am enemy of him who stands between you and me. For see: from the hour that I met you I knew that some day, even as now, I should tell you that—I love you—indeed, Jessica, with all my heart."

"Oh, have pity!" she pleaded. "I cannot listen—I cannot."

"You shall listen, for you have remembered me and have understood. *Voilà!*" he added, hastily catching her silver buckle from his bosom. "This that you sent me, look where I have kept it—on my heart!"

She drew back from him, her face in her hands. Then suddenly she put them out as though to prevent him coming near her, and said:

"Oh, no—no! You will spare me; I am an affianced wife." An appealing smile shone through her tears. "Oh, will you not go?" she begged. "Or, will you not stay and forget what you have said? We are little more than strangers; I scarcely know you; I—"

"We are no strangers," he broke in. "How can that be, when for years I have thought of you—you of me? But I am content to wait, for my love shall win you yet. You—"

She came to him and put her hands upon his arm. "You remember," she said, with a touch of her old gaiety, and with an inimitable grace, "what good friends we were that first day we met? Let us be the same now—for this time at least. Will you not grant me this for to-day?"

"And to-morrow?" he asked, inwardly determining to stay in the port of New York and to carry her off as his wife; but, unlike Bucklaw, with her consent.

At that moment the governor returned, and Iberville's question was never answered. Nor did he dine

at Government House, for word came secretly that English ships were coming from Boston to capture him. He had, therefore, no other resource but to sail out and push on for Quebec. He would not peril the lives of his men merely to follow his will with Jessica.

What might have occurred had he stayed is not easy to say—fortunes turn on strange trifles. The girl, under the influence of his masterful spirit and the rare charm of his manner, might have—as many another has—broken her troth. As it was, she wrote Iberville a letter and sent it by a courier, who never delivered it. By the same fatality, of the letters which he wrote her only one was received. This told her that when he returned from a certain cruise he would visit her again, for he was such an enemy to her country that he was keen to win what did it most honour. Gering had pressed for a marriage before he sailed for the Spaniards' country, but she had said no, and when he urged it she had shown a sudden coldness. Therefore, bidding her good-bye, he had sailed away with Phips, accompanied, much against his will, by Radisson. Bucklaw was not with them. He had set sail from England in a trading schooner, and was to join Phips at Port de la Plante. Gering did not know that Bucklaw had share in the expedition, nor did Bucklaw guess the like of Gering.

Within two weeks of the time that Phips in his *Bridgwater Merchant*, manned by a full crew, twenty fighting men, and twelve guns, with Gering in command of the *Swallow*, a smaller ship, got away to the south, Iberville also sailed in the same direction. He had found awaiting him, on his return to Quebec, a priest bearing messages and a chart from another priest who had died in the Spaniards' country.

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CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH THE HUNTERS ARE OUT

IBERVILLE had a good ship. The *Maid of Provence* carried a handful of guns and a small but carefully chosen crew, together with Sainte-Hélène, Perrot, and the lad Maurice Joval, who had conceived for Iberville friendship nigh to adoration. Those were days when the young were encouraged to adventure, and Iberville had no compunction in giving the boy this further taste of daring.

Iberville, thorough sailor as he was, had chosen for his captain one who had sailed the Spanish Main. He had commanded on merchant-ships which had been suddenly turned into men-of-war, and was suited to the present enterprise: taciturn, harsh of voice, singularly impatient, but a perfect seaman and as brave as could be. He had come to Quebec late the previous autumn with the remnants of a ship which, rotten when she left the port of Havre, had sprung a leak in mid-ocean, had met a storm, lost her mainmast, and by the time she reached the St. Lawrence had scarce a stick standing. She was still at Quebec, tied up in the bay of St. Charles, from which she would probably go out no more. Her captain—Jean Berigord—had chafed on the bit in the little Hôtel Colbert, making himself more feared than liked, till one day he was taken to Iberville by Perrot.

A bargain was soon struck. The nature of the expedition was not known in Quebec, for the sailors were

not engaged till the eve of starting, and Perrot's men were ready at his bidding without why or wherefore. Indeed, when the *Maid of Provence* left the island of Orleans, her nose seawards, one fine July morning, the only persons in Quebec that knew her destination were the priest who had brought Iberville the chart of the river, with its accurate location of the sunken galleon, Iberville's brothers, and Count Frontenac himself—returned again as governor.

"See, Monsieur Iberville," said the governor, as with a fine show of compliment, in full martial dress, with his officers in gold lace, perukes, powder, swords, and ribbons, he bade Iberville good-bye—"See, my dear captain, that you find the treasure, or make these greedy English pay dear for it. They have a long start, but that is nothing, with a ship under you that can show its heels to any craft. I care not so much about the treasure, but I pray you humble those dull Puritans, who turn buccaneers in the name of the Lord."

Iberville made a gallant reply, and, with Sainte-Hélène, received a hearty farewell from the old soldier, who, now over seventy years of age, was as full of spirit as when he distinguished himself at Arras fifty years before. In Iberville he saw his own youth renewed, and foretold the high part he would yet play in the fortunes of New France. Iberville had got to the door and was bowing himself out when, with a quick gesture, Frontenac stopped him, stepped quickly forward, and clasping his shoulders kissed him on each cheek, and said in a deep, kind voice: "I know, *mon enfant*, what lies behind this. A man pays the price one time or another: he draws his sword for his mistress and his king; both forget, but one's country remains—remains."

Iberville said nothing, but with an admiring glance into the aged, iron face, stooped and kissed Frontenac's hand and withdrew silently. Frontenac, proud, impatient, tyrannical, was the one man in New France who had a powerful idea of the future of the country, and who loved her and his king by the law of a loyal nature. Like Wolsey, he had found his king ungrateful, and had stood almost alone in Canada among his enemies, as at Versailles among his traducers—imperious, unyielding, and yet forgiving. Married, too, at an early age, his young wife, caring little for the duties of maternity and more eager to serve her own ambitions than his, left him that she might share the fortunes of Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

Iberville had mastered the chart before he sailed, and when they were well on their way he disclosed to the captain the object of their voyage. Berigord listened to all he had to say, and at first did no more than blow tobacco smoke hard before him. "Let me see the chart," he said at last, and, scrutinising it carefully, added: "Yes, yes, 'tis right enough. I've been in the port and up the river. But neither we nor the English'll get a handful of gold or silver thereabouts. 'Tis throwing good money after none at all."

"The money is mine, my captain," said Iberville good-humouredly. "There will be sport, and I ask but that you give me every chance you can."

"Look then, monsieur," replied the smileless man, "I'll run your ship for all she holds from here to hell, if you twist your finger. She's as good a craft as ever I spoke, and I'll swear her for any weather. The fighting and the gold as you and the devil agree!"

Iberville wished nothing better—a captain concerned only with his own duties. Berigord gathered the crew

and the divers on deck, and in half a dozen words told them the object of the expedition, and was followed by Iberville. Some of the men had been with him to Hudson's Bay, and they wished nothing better than fighting the English, and all were keen with the lust of gold—even though it were for another. As it was, Iberville promised them all a share of what was got.

On the twentieth day after leaving Quebec they sighted islands, and simultaneously they saw five ships bearing away towards them. Iberville was apprehensive that a fleet of the kind could only be hostile, for merchant-ships would hardly sail together so, and it was not possible that they were French. There remained the probability that they were Spanish or English ships. He had no intention of running away, but at the same time he had no wish to fight before he reached Port de la Planta and had had his hour with Gering and Phips and the lost treasure. Besides, five ships was a large undertaking, which only a madman would willingly engage. However, he kept steadily on his course. But there was one chance of avoiding a battle without running away—the glass had been falling all night and morning. Berigord, when questioned, grimly replied that there was to be trouble, but whether with the fleet or the elements was not clear, and Iberville did not ask.

He got his reply effectively and duly however. A wind suddenly sprang up from the north-west, followed by a breaking cross sea. It as suddenly swelled to a hurricane, so that if Berigord had not been fortunate as to his crew, and had not been so fine a sailor, the *Maid of Provence* might have fared badly, for he kept all sail on as long as he dare, and took it in none too soon. But so thoroughly did he know the craft and trust his men that she did what he wanted; and though

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she was tossed and hammered by the sea till it seemed that she must, with every next wave, go down, she rode into safety at last, five hundred miles out of their course.

The storm had saved them from the hostile fleet, which had fared ill. They were first scattered, then two of them went down, another was so disabled that she had to be turned back to the port they had left, and the remaining two were separated, so that their only course was to return to port also. As the storm came up they had got within fighting distance of the *Maid of Provence*, and had opened ineffectual fire, which she—occupied with the impact of the storm—did not return. Escaped the dangers of the storm, she sheered into her course again, and ran away to the south-west, until *Hispaniola* came in sight.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE MATTER OF BUCKLAW

THE *Bridgwater Merchant* and the *Swallow* made the voyage down with no set-backs, having fair weather and a sweet wind on their quarter all the way, to the wild corner of an island, where a great mountain stands sentinel and a bay washes upon a curving shore and up the River de la Planta. There were no vessels in the harbour and there was only a small settlement on the shore, and as they came to anchor well away from the gridiron of reefs known as the Boilers, the prospect was handsome: the long wash of the waves, the curling white of the breakers, and the rainbow-coloured water. The shore was luxuriant, and the sun shone intemperately on the sea and the land, covering all with a fine beautiful haze, like the most exquisite powder sifted through the air. All on board the *Bridgwater Merchant* and the *Swallow* were in hearty spirits. There had been some sickness, but the general health of the expedition was excellent.

It was not till the day they started from Boston that Phips told Gering he expected to meet some one at the port who had gone to prepare the way, to warn them by fires in case of danger, and to allay any opposition among the natives—if there were any. But he had not told him who the herald was.

Truth is, Phips was anxious that Gering should have no chance of objecting to the scoundrel who had, years

before, tried to kidnap his now affianced wife—who had escaped a deserved death on the gallows. It was a rude age, and men of Phips's quality, with no particular niceness as to women, or horror as to mutiny when it was twenty years old, compromised with their conscience for expediency and gain. Moreover, in his humorous way, Bucklaw, during his connection with Phips in England, had made himself agreeable and resourceful. Phips himself had sprung from the lower orders,—the son of a small farmer,—and even in future days, when he rose to a high position in the colonies, gaining knighthood and other honours, he had the manners and speech of "a man of the people." Bucklaw understood men: he knew that his only game was that of bluntness. This was why he boarded Phips in Cheapside without subterfuge or disguise.

Nor had Phips told Bucklaw of Gering's coming; so that when the *Bridgwater Merchant* and the *Swallow* entered Port de la Planta, Bucklaw himself, as he bore out in a small sail-boat, did not guess that he was likely to meet a desperate enemy. He had waited patiently, and had reckoned almost to a day when Phips would arrive. He was alongside before Phips had called anchor. His cheerful countenance came up between the frowning guns, his hook-hand ran over the rail, and in a moment he was on deck facing—Radisson.

He was unprepared for the meeting, but he had taken too many chances in his lifetime to show astonishment. He and Radisson had fought and parted; they had been in ugly business together, and they were likely to be, now that they had met, in ugly business again.

Bucklaw's tiger ran up to stroke his chin with the old grotesque gesture. "Ha!" he said saucily, "cats and devils have nine lives."

There was the same sparkle in the eye as of old, the same buoyant voice. For himself, he had no particular quarrel with Radisson; the more so because he saw a hang-dog sulkiness in Radisson's eye. It was ever his cue when others were angered to be cool. The worst of his crimes had been performed with an air of humorous cynicism. He could have great admiration for an enemy such as Iberville; and he was not a man to fight needlessly. He had a firm belief that he had been intended for a high position—a great admiral, or general, or a notable buccaneer.

Before Radisson had a chance to reply came Phips, who could not help but show satisfaction at Bucklaw's presence; and in a moment they were on their way together to the cabin, followed by the eyes of the enraged Radisson. Phips disliked Radisson; the sinister Frenchman, with his evil history, was impossible to the open, bluff captain. He had been placed upon Phips's vessel because he knew the entrance to the harbour; but try as he would for a kind of comradeship, he failed: he had an ugly vanity and a bad heart. There was only one decent thing which still clung to him in rags and tatters—the fact that he was a Frenchman. He had made himself hated on the ship—having none of the cunning tact of Bucklaw. As Phips and Bucklaw went below, a sudden devilry entered into him. He was ripe for quarrel, eager for battle. His two black eyes were like burning beads, his jaws twitched. If Bucklaw had but met him without this rough, bloodless irony, he might have thrown himself with ardour into the work of the expedition; but he stood alone, and hatred and war rioted in him.

Below in the cabin Phips and Bucklaw were deep in the chart of the harbour and the river. The plan of

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action was decided upon. A canoe was to be built out of a cotton-tree large enough to carry eight or ten oars. This and the tender, with men and divers, were to go in search of the wreck under the command of Bucklaw and the captain of the *Swallow*, whose name Phips did not mention. Phips himself was to remain on the *Bridgewater Merchant*, the *Swallow* lying near with a goodly number of men to meet any possible attack from the sea. When all was planned, Phips told Bucklaw who was the commander of the *Swallow*. For a moment the fellow's coolness was shaken; the sparkle died out of his eye and he shot up a furtive look at Phips, but he caught a grim smile on the face of the sturdy sailor. He knew at once there was no treachery meant, and he guessed that Phips expected no crisis. It was ever his way to act with promptness, being never so resourceful as when his position was most critical: he was in the power of Gering and Phips, and he knew it, but he knew also that his game must be a bold one.

"By-gones are by-gones, captain," he said; "and what's done can't be helped, and as it was no harm came anyhow."

"By-gones are by-gones," replied the other, "and let's hope that Mr. Gering will say so too."

"Haven't you told him, sir?"

"Never a word—but I'll send for him now, and by-gones let it be."

Bucklaw nodded, and drummed the table with his tiger. He guessed why Phips had not told Gering, and he foresaw trouble. He trusted, however, to the time that had passed since the kidnapping, and on Gering's hunger for treasure. Phips had compromised, and why not he? But if Gering was bent on trouble, why, there was the last resource of the peace-lover. He tapped

the rapier at his side. He ever held that he was peaceful, and it is recorded that at the death of an agitated victim, he begged him to "sit still and not fidget."

He laid no plans as to what he should do when Gering came. Like the true gamester, he waited to see how he should be placed; then he could draw upon his resources. He was puzzled about Radisson, but Radisson could wait; he was so much the superior of the coarser villain that he gave him little thought. As he waited he thought more about the treasure at hand than of either—or all—his enemies.

He did not stir, but kept drumming till he knew that Gering was aboard, and heard his footsteps, with the captain's, coming. He showed no excitement, though he knew a crisis was at hand. A cool, healthy sweat stood out on his forehead, cheeks and lips, and his blue eyes sparkled clearly and coldly. He rose as the two men appeared.

Phips had not even told his lieutenant. But Gering knew Bucklaw at the first glance, and his eyes flashed and a hand went to his sword.

"Captain Phips," he said angrily, "you know who this man is?"

"He is the guide to our treasure-house, Mr. Gering."

"His name is Bucklaw—a mutineer condemned to death, the villain who tried to kidnap Mistress Leveret."

It was Bucklaw that replied. "Right—right you are, Mr. Gering. I'm Bucklaw, mutineer, or what else you please. But that's ancient—ancient. I'm sinner no more. You and Monsieur Iberville saved the maid—I meant no harm to her; 'twas but for ransom. I am atoning now—to make your fortune, give you glory. Shall by-gones be by-gones, Mr. Gering? What say you?"

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Bucklaw stood still at the head of the table. But he was very watchful. What the end might have been it is hard to tell, but a thing occurred which took the affair out of Gering's hands.

A shadow darkened the companion-way, and Radisson came quickly down. His face was sinister, and his jaws worked like an animal's. Coming to the table he stood between Gering and Bucklaw, and looked from one to the other. Bucklaw was cool, Gering very quiet, and he misinterpreted.

"You are great friends, eh, all together?" he said viciously. "All together you will get the gold. It is no matter what one English do, the other absolve for gold. A buccaneer, a stealer of women—no, it is no matter! All English—all together! But I am French—I am the dirt—I am for the scuppers. Bah! I will have the same as Bucklaw—you see?"

"You will have the irons, fellow!" Phips roared.

A knife flashed in the air, and Bucklaw's pistol was out at the same instant. The knife caught Bucklaw in the throat and he staggered against the table like a stuck pig, the bullet hit Radisson in the chest and he fell back against the wall, his pistol dropping from his hand. Bucklaw, bleeding heavily, lurched forwards, pulled himself together, and, stooping, emptied his pistol into the moaning Radisson. Then he sank on his knees, snatched the other's pistol, and fired again into Radisson's belly; after which with a last effort he plunged his own dagger into the throat of the dying man, and, with his fingers still on the handle, fell with a gurgling laugh across the Frenchman's body.

Radisson recovered for an instant. He gave a hollow cry, drew the knife from his own throat and, with a wild, shambling motion, struck at the motionless

Bucklaw, pinning an arm to the ground. Then he muttered an oath and fell back dead.

The tournament of blood was over. So swift had it been there was no chance to interfere. Besides, Gering was not inclined to save the life of either; while Phips, who now knew the chart, as he thought, as well as Bucklaw, was not concerned, though he liked the mutineer.

For a moment they both looked at the shambles without speaking. Sailors for whom Phips had whistled crowded the cabin.

"A damned bad start, Mr. Gering," Phips said, as he moved towards the bodies.

"For them, yes; but they might have given us a bad ending."

"For the Frenchman, he's got less than was brewing for him, but Bucklaw was a humorous dog."

As he said this he stooped to Bucklaw and turned him over, calling to the sailors to clean the red trough and bring the dead men on deck, but presently he cried: "By the devil's tail, the fellow lives! Here, a hand quick, you lubbers, and fetch the surgeon."

Bucklaw was not dead. He had got two ugly wounds and was bleeding heavily, but his heart still beat. Radisson's body was carried on deck, and within half an hour was dropped into the deep. The surgeon, however, would not permit Bucklaw to be removed until he had been cared for, and so Phips and Gering went on deck and made preparations for the treasure-hunt. A canoe was hollowed out by a dozen men in a few hours, the tender was got ready, the men and divers told off, and Gering took command of the searching-party, while Phips remained on the ship.

They soon had everything ready for a start in the

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morning. Word was brought that Bucklaw still lived, but was in a high fever, and that the chances were all against him; and Phips sent cordials and wines from his own stores, and asked that news be brought to him of any change.

Early in the morning Gering, after having received instructions from Phips, so far as he knew (for Bucklaw had not told all that was necessary), departed for the river. The canoe and tender went up the stream a distance, and began to work down from the farthest point indicated in the chart. Gering continued in the river nearly all day, and at night camped on the shore. The second day brought no better luck, nor yet the third: the divers had seen no vestige of a wreck, nor any sign of treasure—nothing except four skeletons in a heap, tied together with a chain, where the water was deepest. These were the dead priests, for whom Bucklaw could account. The water was calm, the tide rising and falling gently, and when they arrived among what was called the Shallows, they could see plainly to the bottom. They passed over the Boilers, a reef of shoals, and here they searched diligently, but to no purpose; the divers went down frequently, but could find nothing. The handful of natives in the port came out and looked on apathetically; one or two Spaniards also came, but they shrugged their shoulders and pitied the foolish adventurers. Gering had the power of inspiring his men, and Phips was a martinet and was therefore obeyed; but the lifeless days and unrewarded labour worked on the men, and at last the divers shirked their task.

Meanwhile, Bucklaw was fighting hard for life.

As time passed, the flush of expectancy waned; the heat was great, the waiting seemed endless. Adven-

ture was needed for the spirits of the men, and of this now there was nothing. Morning after morning the sun rose in a moist, heavy atmosphere; day after day went in a quest which became dreary, and night after night settled upon discontent. Then came threats. But this was chiefly upon the *Bridgwater Merchant*. Phips had picked up his sailors in English ports, and nearly all of them were brutal adventurers. They were men used to desperate enterprises, and they had flocked to him because they smelled excitement and booty. Of ordinary merchant seamen there were only a few. When the Duke of Albemarle had come aboard at Plymouth before they set sail, he had shrugged his shoulders at the motley crew. To his hint Phips had only replied with a laugh: these harum-scarum scamps were more to his mind than ordinary seamen. At heart he himself was half-barbarian. It is possible he felt there might some time be a tug-of-war on board, but he did not borrow trouble. Bucklaw had endorsed every man that he had chosen; indeed, Phips knew that many of them were old friends of Bucklaw. Again, of this he had no fear; Bucklaw was a man of desperate deeds, but he knew that in himself the pirate had a master. Besides, he would pick up in Boston a dozen men upon whom he could depend; and cowardice had no place in him. Again, the *Swallow*, commanded by Gering, was fitted out with New England seamen; and on these dependence could be put.

Therefore, when there came rumblings of mutiny on the *Bridgwater Merchant*, there was faithful, if gloomy, obedience, on the *Swallow*. Had there been plenty of work to do, had they been at sea instead of at anchor, the nervousness would have been little; but idleness brought irritation, and irritation mutiny. Or had Buck-

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law been on deck, instead of in the surgeon's cabin playing a hard game with death, matters might not have gone so far as they did; for he would have had immediate personal influence repressive of revolt. As it was, Phips had to work the thing out according to his own lights. One afternoon, when Gering was away with the canoes on the long search, the crisis came. It was a day when life seemed to stand still; a creamy haze ingrained with delicate blue had settled on land and sea; the long white rollers slowly travelled over the Boilers, and the sea rocked like a great cradle. Indefiniteness of thought, of time, of event, seemed over all; on board the two ships life swung idly as a hammock; but only so in appearance.

Phips was leaning against the deck-house, watching through his glass the search-canoes. Presently he turned and walked aft. As he did so the surgeon and the chief mate came running towards him. They had not time to explain, for came streaming upon deck a crowd of mutineers. Phips did not hesitate an instant; he had no fear—he was swelling with anger.

"Why now, you damned dogs," he blurted out, "what mean you by this? What's all this show of cutlasses?"

The ringleader stepped forwards. "We're sick of doing nothing," he answered. "We've come on a wild-goose chase. There's no treasure here. We mean you no harm; we want not the ship out of your hands."

"Then," cried Phips, "in the name of all the devils, what want you?"

"Here's as we think: there's nothing to be got out of this hunt, but there's treasure on the high seas all the same. Here's our offer: keep command of your ship—and run up the black flag!"

Phips's arm shot out and dropped the man to the ground.

"That's it, you filthy rogues!" he roared. "Me to turn pirate, eh? You'd set to weaving ropes for the necks of every one of us—blood of my soul!"

He seemed not to know that cutlasses were threatening him, not to be aware that the man at his feet, clutching his weapon, was mad with rage.

"Now look," he said, in a big loud voice, "I know that treasure is here, and I know we'll find it; if not now, when we get Bucklaw on his feet."

"Ay! Bucklaw! Bucklaw!" ran through the throng.

"Well, then, Bucklaw, as you say! Now here's what I'll do, scoundrels though you be. Let me hear no more of this foolery. Stick to me till the treasure's found—for God take my soul if I leave this bay till I have found it!—and you shall have good share of booty."

He had grasped the situation with such courage that the mutineers hesitated. He saw his advantage and followed it up, asking for three of their number to confer with him as to a bond upon his proposal. After a time the mutineers consented, the bond was agreed to, and the search went on.

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CHAPTER XVI

IN THE TREASURE HOUSE

THE canoes and tender kept husking up and down among the Shallows, finding nothing. At last one morning they pushed out from the side of the *Bridgewater Merchant*, more limp than ever. The stroke of the oars was listless, but a Boston sailor of a merry sort came to a cheery song:

"I knows a town, an' it's a fine town,
And many a brig goes sailin' to its quay;
I knows an inn, an' it's a fine inn,
An' a lass that's fair to see.
I knows a town, an' it's a fine town;
I knows an inn, an' it's a fine inn—
But O my lass! an' O the gay gown,
Which I have seen my pretty in!

"I knows a port, an' it's a good port,
An' many a brig is ridin' easy there;
I knows a home, an' it's a good home,
An' a lass that's sweet an' fair.
I knows a port, an' it's a good port,
I knows a home, an' it's a good home—
But O the pretty that is my sort,
That's wearyin' till I come!

"I knows a day, an' it's a fine day,
The day a sailor man comes back to town.
I knows a tide, an' it's a good tide,
The tide that gets you quick to anchors down.
I knows a day, an' it's a fine day,
I knows a tide, an' its' a good tide—
And God help the lubber, I say,
That's stole the sailor man's bride!"

The song had its way with them and they joined in and lay to their oars with almost too much goodwill. Gering, his arms upon the side of the canoe, was looking into the water idly. It was clear far down, and presently he saw what seemed a feather growing out of the side of a rock. It struck him as strange, and he gave word to back water. They were just outside the Boilers in deep water. Drawing back carefully, he saw the feather again, and ordered one of the divers to go down.

They could see the man descend and gather the feather, then he plunged deeper still and they lost sight of him. But soon he came up rapidly, and was quickly inside the boat, to tell Gering that he had seen several great guns. At this the crew peered over the boat-side eagerly. Gering's heart beat hard. He knew what it was to rouse wild hope and then to see despair follow, but he kept an outward calm and told the diver to go down again. Time seemed to stretch to hours before they saw the man returning with something in his arm. He handed up his prize, and behold it was a pig of silver!

The treasure was found; and there went up a great cheer. All was activity, for, apart from the delight of discovery, Phips had promised a share to every man. The place was instantly buoyed, and they hastened back to the port with the grateful tidings to Phips. With his glass he saw them coming and by their hard rowing he guessed that they had news. When they came within hail they cheered, and when they saw the silver the air rang with shouts.

As Gering stepped on board with the silver Captain Phips ran forwards, clasped it in both hands, and cried: "We are all made, thanks be to God!"

Then all hands were ordered on board, and because

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the treasure lay in a safe anchorage they got the ships away towards it.

Bucklaw, in the surgeon's cabin, was called out of delirium by the noise. He was worn almost to a skeleton, his eyes were big and staring, his face had the paleness of death. The return to consciousness was sudden—perhaps nothing else could have called him back. He wriggled out of bed and, supporting himself against the wall, made his way to the door, and crawled away, mumbling to himself as he went.

A few minutes afterwards Phips and Gering were talking in the cabin. Phips was weighing the silver up and down in his hands.

"At least three hundred good guineas here!" he said.

There was a shuffling behind them, and, as Phips turned, a figure lunged on him, clutched and hugged the silver. It was Bucklaw.

"Mine! mine!" he called in a hoarse voice, with great gluttonous eyes. "All mine!" he cried again. Then he gasped and came to the ground in a heap, with the silver hugged in his arms. All at once he caught at his throat; the bandage of his wound fell away and there was a rush of blood over the silver. With a wild laugh he plunged face forward on the metal—and the blood of the dead Bucklaw consecrated the first-fruits of the treasure.

As the vessel rode up the harbour the body was dropped into the deep.

"Worse men—worse men, sir, bide with the king," said Phips to Gering. "A merry villain, that Bucklaw."

The ship came to anchor at the buoys, and no time was lost. Divers were sent down, and by great good luck found the room where the bullion was stored. The number of divers was increased, and the work of rais-

ing the bullion went on all that day. There is nothing like the lust for gold in the hearts of men. From stem to stern of the *Bridgwater Merchant* and the *Swallow*, this wild will had its way. Work went on until the last moment of sun. That night talk was long and sleep short, and work was on again at sunrise. In three days they took up thirty-two tons of bullion. In the afternoon of the third day the store-room was cleared, and then they searched the hold. Here they found, cunningly distributed among the ballast, a great many bags of pieces-of-eight. These, having lain in the water so long, were crusted with a strong substance, which they had to break with iron bars. It was reserved for Phips himself to make the grand discovery. He donned a diving-suit and went below to the sunken galleon. Silver and gold had been found, but he was sure there were other treasures. After much searching he found, in a secret place of the captain's cabin, a chest which, on being raised and broken open, was found stocked with pearls, diamonds, and other precious stones.

And now the work was complete, and on board the *Bridgwater Merchant* was treasure to the sum of three hundred thousand pounds, and more. Joyfully did Phips raise anchor. But first he sent to the handful of people in the port a liberal gift of money and wine and provisions from the ship's stores. With a favourable breeze he got away agreeably, and was clear of the harbour and cleaving northwards before sunset—the *Swallow* leading the treasure-ship like a pilot. All was joy and hilarity; but there remained one small danger yet: they had raised their treasure unmolested, but could they bring it to Boston and on to England? Phips would have asked that question very seriously indeed had he known that the *Maid of Provence* was

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bowling out of the nor'-east towards the port which he had just left.

The *Maid of Provence* had had a perilous travel. Escaping the English war-ships, she fell in with a pirate craft. She closed with it, plugged it with cannon-shot, and drew off, then took the wind on her beam and came drifting down on her, boarded her and, after a swift and desperate fight, killed every pirate-rogue save one—the captain—whom for reasons they made a prisoner. Then they sank the rover, and got away to Port de la Planta as fast as they were able. But by reason of the storm and the fighting, and drifting out of their course, they had lost ten days; and thus it was they reached the harbour a few hours after the *Bridgewater Merchant* and the *Swallow* had left.

They waited till morning and sailed cautiously in—to face disappointment. They quickly learned the truth from the natives. There was but one thing to do and Iberville lost no time. A few hours to get fresh water and fruit and to make some repairs, for the pirate had not been idle in the fight—and then Berigord gave the nose of the good little craft to the sea, and drove her on with an honest wind, like a hound upon the scent. Iberville was vexed, but not unduly; he had the temper of a warrior who is both artist and gamester. As he said to Perrot: “Well, Nick, they’ve saved us the trouble of lifting the treasure; we’ll see now who shall beach it.”

He guessed that the English ships would sail to Boston for better arming ere they ventured to the English Channel. He knew the chances were against him, but it was his cue to keep heart in his followers. For days they sailed without seeing a single ship; then three showed upon the horizon and faded away. They kept

on, passing Florida and Carolina, hoping to reach Boston before the treasure-ships, and to rob them at their own door. Their chances were fair, for the *Maid of Provence* had proved swift, good-tempered, and a sweet sailer in bad waters.

Iberville had reckoned well. One evening, after a sail northwards as fine as the voyage down was dirty, they came up gently within forty miles of Boston, and then, because there was nothing else to do, went idling up and down all night, keeping watch. The next morning there was a mist in the air, which might become fog. Iberville had dreaded this; but he was to have his chance, for even when Berigord's face lowered most the look-out from the shrouds called down that he sighted two ships. They were making for the coast. All sail was put on, they got away to meet the newcomers, and they were not long in finding these to be their quarry.

Phips did not think that any ship would venture against them so near Boston, and could not believe the *Maid of Provence* an enemy. He thought her an English ship eager to welcome them, but presently he saw the white ensign of France at the mizzen, and a round shot rattled through the rigging of the *Bridgwater Merchant*.

But he was two to one, and the game seemed with him. No time was wasted. Phips's ships came to and stood alongside, and the gunners got to work. The *Bridgwater Merchant* was high in the water, and her shot at first did little damage to the *Maid of Provence*, which, having the advantage of the wind, came nearer and nearer. The *Swallow*, with her twenty-odd guns, did better work, and carried away the foremast of the enemy, killing several men. But Iberville came on

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slowly, and, anxious to dispose of the *Swallow* first, gave her broadsides between wind and water, so that soon her decks were spotted with dying men, her bulwarks broken in, and her mainmast gone. The cannonade was heard in Boston, from which, a few hours later, two merchantmen set out for the scene of action, each carrying good guns.

But the wind suddenly sank, and as the *Maid of Provence*, eager to close with the *Bridgewater Merchant*, edged slowly down, a fog came between, and the firing ceased on both sides. Iberville let his ship drift on her path, intent on a hand-to-hand fight aboard the *Bridgewater Merchant*; the grappling-irons were ready, and as they drifted there was silence.

Every eye was strained. Suddenly a shape sprang out of the grey mist, and the *Maid of Provence* struck. There was a crash of timbers as the bows of the *Swallow*—it was she—were stove in, and then a wild cry. Instantly she began to sink. The grappling-irons remained motionless on the *Maid of Provence*. Iberville heard a commanding voice, a cheer, and saw a dozen figures jump from the shattered bow towards the bow of his own ship intent on fighting, but all fell short save one. It was a great leap, but the Englishman made it, catching the chains, and scrambling on deck. A cheer greeted him—the Frenchmen could not but admire so brave a feat. The Englishman took no notice, but instantly turned to see his own ship lurch forwards and, without a sound from her decks, sink gently down to her grave. He stood looking at the place where she had been, but there was only mist. He shook his head and a sob rattled in his throat; his brave, taciturn crew had gone down without a cry. He turned and faced his enemies. They had crowded for-

wards—Iberville, Sainte-Hélène, Perrot, Maurice Joval, and the staring sailors. He choked down his emotion and faced them all like an animal at bay as Iberville stepped forwards. Without a word Gering pointed to the empty scabbard at his side.

“No, pardon me,” said Iberville drily, “not as our prisoner, monsieur. You have us at advantage; you will remain our guest.”

“I want no quarter,” said Gering proudly and a little sullenly.

“There can be no question of quarter, monsieur. You are only one against us all. You cannot fight; you saved your life by boarding us. Hospitality is sacred; you may not be a prisoner of war, for there is no war between our countries.”

“You came upon a private quarrel?” asked Gering.

“Truly; and for the treasure—fair bone of fight between us.”

There was a pause, in which Gering stood half turned from them, listening. But the *Bridgwater Merchant* had drifted away in the mist. Presently he turned again to Iberville with a smile defiant and triumphant. Iberville understood, but showed nothing of what he felt, and he asked Sainte-Hélène to show Gering to the cabin.

When the fog cleared away there was no sign of the *Bridgwater Merchant* and Iberville, sure that she had made the port of Boston, and knowing that there must be English vessels searching for him, bore away to Quebec with Gering on board.

He parted from his rival the day they arrived—Perrot was to escort him a distance on his way to Boston.

Gering thanked him for his courtesy.

“Indeed, then,” said Iberville, “this is a debt—if you choose to call it so—for which I would have no

thanks—no. For it would please me better to render accounts all at once some day, and get return in different form, monsieur."

"Monsieur," said Gering, a little grandly, "you have come to me three times; next time I will come to you."

"I trust that you will keep your word," answered Iberville, smiling.

That day Iberville, protesting helplessly, was ordered away to France on a man-of-war, which had rocked in the harbour of Quebec for a month awaiting his return. Even Frontenac himself could not help him, for the order had come from the French minister.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GIFT OF A CAPTIVE

FORTUNE had not been kind to Iberville, but still he kept a stoical cheerfulness. With the pride of a man who feels that he has impressed a woman, and knowing the strength of his purpose, he believed that Jessica should yet be his. Meanwhile matters should not lie still. In those days men made love by proxy, and Iberville turned to De Casson and Perrot.

The night before he started for France they sat together in a little house flanking the Château St. Louis. Iberville had been speaking.

"I know the strength of your feelings, Iberville," said De Casson, "but is it wise, and is it right?"

Iberville made an airy motion with his hand. "My dear abbé, there is but one thing worth living for, and that is to follow your convictions. See: I have known you since you took me from my mother's last farewell. I have believed in you, cared for you, trusted you; we have been good comrades. Come, now, tell me: what would you think if my mind drifted! No, no, no! to stand by one's own heart is the gift of an honest man. I am a sad rogue, abbé, as you know, but I swear I would sooner let slip the friendship of King Louis himself than the hand of a good comrade. Well, my sword is for my king. I must obey him, I must leave my comrades behind, but I shall not forget, and they must not forget." At this he got to his feet, came over, laid a

hand on the abbé's shoulder, and his voice softened: "Abbé, the woman shall be mine."

"If God wills so, Iberville."

"He will, He will."

"Well," said Perrot, with a little laugh; "I think God will be good to a Frenchman when an Englishman is his foe."

"But the girl is English—and a heretic," urged the abbé helplessly.

Perrot laughed again. "That will make Him sorry for her."

Meanwhile Iberville had turned to the table, and was now reading a letter. A pleased look came on his face, and he nodded in satisfaction. At last he folded it up with a smile and sealed it. "Well," he said, "the English is not good, for I have seen my Shakespeare little this time back, but it will do—it must do. In such things rhetoric is nothing. You will take it, Perrot?" he said, holding up the letter.

Perrot reached out for it.

"And there is something more." Iberville drew from his finger a costly ring. It had come from the hand of a Spanish noble, whose place he had taken in Spain years before. He had prevented his men from despoiling the castle, and had been bidden to take what he would, and had chosen only this.

"Tell her," he said, "that it was the gift of a captive to me, and that it is the gift of a captive to her. For, upon my soul, I am prisoner to none other in God's world."

Perrot weighed the ring up and down in his hand. "*Bien*," he said, "monsieur, it is a fine speech, but I do not understand. A prisoner, eh? I remember when you were a prisoner with me upon the Ottawa. Only a

boy—only a boy, but, holy Mother, that was different! I will tell her how you never gave up; how you went on the hunt after Grey Diver, the Iroquois. Through the woods, silent—silent for days and days, Indians all round us. Death in the brush, death in the tree-top, death from the river-bank. I said to you, Give up; but you kept on. Then there were days when there was no sleep—no rest—we were like ghosts. Sometimes we come to a settler's cabin and see it all smoking; sometimes to a fort and find only a heap of bones—and other things! But you would not give up; you kept on. What for? That Indian chief killed your best friend. Well, that was for hate; you keep on and on and on for hate—and you had your way with Grey Diver; I heard your axe crash in his skull. All for hate! And what will you do for love?—I will ask her what will you do for love. Ah, you are a great man—but yes! I will tell her so.”

“Tell her what you please, Perrot.”

Iberville hummed an air as at some goodly prospect. Yet when he turned to the others again there grew a quick mist in his eyes. It was not so much the thought of the woman as of the men. There came to him with sudden force how these two comrades had been ever ready to sacrifice themselves for him, and he ready to accept the sacrifice. He was not ashamed of the mist, but he wondered that the thing had come to him all at once. He grasped the hands of both, shook them heartily, then dashed his fingers across his eyes, and with the instinct of every imperfect man,—that touch of the aboriginal in all of us, who must have a sign for an emotion,—he went to a cabinet and out came a bottle of wine.

An hour after, Perrot left him at the ship's side.

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They were both cheerful. "Two years, Perrot; two years!" he said.

"*Ah, mon grand capitaine!*"

Iberville turned away, then came back again. "You will start at once?"

"At once; and the abbé shall write."

Upon the lofty bank of the St. Lawrence, at the Sault au Matelot, a tall figure clad in a cassock stood and watched the river below. On the high cliff of Point Levis lights were showing, and fires burning as far off as the island of Orleans. And in that sweet curve of shore, from the St. Charles to Beauport, thousands of stars seemed shining. Nearer still, from the heights, there was the same strange scintillation; the great promontory had a coronet of stars. In the lower town there was like illumination, and out upon the river trailed long processions of light. It was the feast of good Sainte Anne de Beaupré. All day long had there been masses and processions on land. Hundreds of Jesuits, with thousands of the populace, had filed behind the cross and the host. And now there was a candle in every window. Indians, half-breeds, *coureurs du bois*, native Canadians, seigneurs, and noblesse, were joining in the function. But De Casson's eyes were not for these. He was watching the lights of a ship that slowly made its way down the river among the canoes, and his eyes never left it till it had passed beyond the island of Orleans and was lost in the night.

"*Mon cher!*" he said, "*mon enfant!* She is not for him; she should not be. As a priest it were my duty to see that he should not marry her. As a man"—he sighed—"as a man I would give my life for him."

He lifted his hand and made the sign of the cross

towards that spot on the horizon whither Iberville had gone.

"He will be a great man some day," he added to himself—"a great man. There will be empires here, and when histories are written Pierre's shall be a name beside Frontenac's and La Salle's."

All the human affection of the good abbé's life centred upon Iberville. Giant in stature, so ascetic and refined was his mind, his life, that he had the intuition of a woman and, what was more, little of the bigotry of his brethren. As he turned from the heights, made his way along the cliff and down Mountain Street, his thoughts were still upon the same subject. He suddenly paused.

"He will marry the sword," he said, "and not the woman."

How far he was right we may judge if we enter the house of Governor Nicholls at New York one month later.

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CHAPTER XVIII

MAIDEN NO MORE

It was late mid-summer, and just such an evening as had seen the attempted capture of Jessica Leveret years before. She sat at a window, looking out upon the garden and the river. The room was at the top of the house. It had been to her a kind of play-room when she had visited Governor Nicholls years before. To every woman memory is a kind of religion; and to Jessica as much as to any, perhaps more than to most, for she had imagination. She half sat, half knelt, her elbow on her knee, her soft cheek resting upon her firm, delicate hand. Her beauty was as fresh and sweet as on the day we first saw her. More, something deep and rich had entered into it. Her eyes had got that fine steadfastness which only deep tenderness and pride can give a woman: she had lived. She was smiling now, yet she was not merry; her brightness was the sunshine of a nature touched with an Arcadian simplicity. Such an one could not be wholly unhappy. Being made for others more than for herself, she had something of the divine gift of self-forgetfulness.

As she sat there, her eyes ever watching the river as though for some one she expected, there came from the garden beneath the sound of singing. It was not loud, but deep and strong:

“As the wave to the shore, as the dew to the leaf,
As the breeze to the flower,
As the scent of a rose to the heart of a child,

As the rain to the dusty land—
 My heart goeth out unto Thee—unto Thee!
The night is far spent and the day is at hand.

“As the song of a bird to the call of a star,
 As the sun to the eye,
 As the anvil of man to the hammers of God,
 As the snow to the north—
 Is my word unto Thy word—to Thy word!
The night is far spent and the day is at hand.”

It was Morris who was singing. With growth of years had come increase of piety, and it was his custom once a week to gather about him such of the servants as would for the reading of Scripture.

To Jessica the song had no religious significance. By the time it had passed through the atmosphere of memory and meditation, it carried a different meaning. Her forehead dropped forward in her fingers, and remained so until the song ended. Then she sighed, smiled wistfully, and shook her head.

“Poor fellow! poor—Iberville!” she said, almost beneath her breath.

The next morning she was to be married. George Gering had returned to her, for the second time defeated by Iberville. He had proved himself a brave man, and, what was much in her father's sight, he was to have his share of Phips's booty. And what was still more, Gering had prevailed upon Phips to allow Mr. Leveret's investment in the first expedition to receive a dividend from the second. Therefore she was ready to fulfil her promise. Yet had she misgivings? For, only a few days before, she had sent for the old pastor at Boston, who had known her since she was a child. She wished, she said, to be married by him and no other at Governor Nicholls's house, rather than at her own

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home at Boston, where there was none other of her name.

The old pastor had come that afternoon, and she had asked him to see her that evening. Not long after Morris had done with singing there came a tapping at her door. She answered and old Pastor Macklin entered,—a white-haired man of kindly yet stern countenance,—by nature a gentleman, by practice a bigot. He came forward and took both her hands as she rose. "My dear young lady!" he said, and smiled kindly at her. After a word of greeting she offered him a chair, and came again to the window.

Presently she looked up and said very simply: "I am going to be married. You have known me ever since I was born: do you think I will make a good wife?"

"With prayer and chastening of the spirit, my daughter," he said.

"But suppose that at the altar I remembered another man?"

"A sin, my child, for which should be due sorrow."

The girl smiled sadly. She felt poignantly how little he could help her.

"And if the man were a Catholic and a Frenchman?" she said.

"A papist and a Frenchman!" he cried, lifting up his hands. "My daughter, you ever were too playful. You speak of things impossible. I pray you listen."

Jessica raised her hand as if to stop him and to speak herself, but she let him go on. With the least encouragement she might have told him all. She had had her moment of weakness, but now it was past. There are times when every woman feels she must have a confidant, or her heart will burst—have counsel or she will

die. Such a time had come to Jessica. But she now learned, as we all must learn, that we live our dark hour alone.

She listened as in a dream to the kindly bigot. When he had finished, she knelt and received his blessing. All the time she wore that strange, quiet smile. Soon afterwards he left her.

She went again to the window. "A papist and a Frenchman—unpardonable sin!" she said into the distance. "Jessica, what a sinner art thou?"

Presently there was a tap, the door opened, and George Gering entered. She turned to receive him, but there was no great lighting of the face. He came quickly to her, and ran his arm round her waist. A great kindness looked out of her eyes. Somehow she felt herself superior to him—her love was less and her nature deeper. He pressed her fingers to his lips. "Of what were you thinking, Jessica?" he asked.

"Of what a sinner I am," she answered, with a sad kind of humour.

"What a villain must I be, then!" he responded.

"Well, yes," she said musingly; "I think you are something of a villain, George."

"Well, well, you shall cure me of all mine iniquities," he said. "There will be a lifetime for it. Come, let us to the garden."

"Wait," she said. "I told you that I was a sinner, George; I want to tell you how."

"Tell me nothing; let us both go and repent," he rejoined, laughing, and he hurried her away. She had lost her opportunity.

Next morning she was married. The day was glorious. The town was garlanded, and there was not an English merchant or a Dutch burgher but wore his holiday

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dress. The ceremony ended, a traveller came among the crowd. He asked a hurried question or two and then edged away. Soon he made a stand under the trees, and, viewing the scene, nodded his head and said: "The abbé was right."

It was Perrot. A few hours afterwards the crowd had gone and the governor's garden was empty. Perrot still kept his watch under the tree, though why he could hardly say—his errand was useless now. But he had the gift of waiting. At last he saw a figure issue from a door and go down into the garden. He remembered the secret gate. He made a *détour*, reached it, and entered. Jessica was walking up and down in the pines. In an hour or so she was to leave for England. Her husband had gone to the ship to do some needful things, and she had stolen out for a moment's quiet. When Perrot faced her, she gave a little cry and started back. But presently she recovered, smiled at him, and said kindly: "You come suddenly, monsieur."

"Yet have I travelled hard and long," he answered.

"Yes?"

"And I have a message for you."

"A message?" she said abstractedly, and turned a little pale.

"A message and a gift from Monsieur Iberville."

He drew the letter and the ring from his pocket and held them out, repeating Iberville's message. There was a troubled look in her eyes and she was trembling a little now, but she spoke clearly.

"Monsieur," she said, "you will tell Monsieur Iberville that I may not; I am married."

"So, madame," he said. "But I still must give my message." When he had done so he said: "Will you take the letter?" He held it out.

There was a moment's doubt and then she took it, but she did not speak.

"Shall I carry no message, madame?"

She hesitated. Then, at last: "Say that I wish him good fortune—with all my heart."

"Good fortune—ah, madame!" he answered, in a meaning tone.

"Say that I pray God may bless him, and make him a friend of my country," she added in a low, almost broken voice, and she held out her hand to him.

The gallant woodsman pressed it to his lips. "I am sorry, madame," he replied, with an admiring look.

She shook her head sadly. "Adieu, monsieur!" she said steadily and very kindly.

A moment after he was gone. She looked at the missive steadfastly for a moment, then thrust it into the folds of her dress and, very pale, walked quietly to the house, where, inside her own room, she lighted a candle. She turned the letter over in her hand once or twice, and her fingers hung at the seal. But all at once she raised it to her lips, and then with a grave, firm look, held it in the flame and saw it pass in smoke. It was the last effort for victory.

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CHAPTER XIX

WHICH TELLS OF A BROTHER'S BLOOD CRYING FROM THE GROUND

Two men stood leaning against a great gun aloft on the heights of Quebec. The air of an October morning fluttered the lace at their breasts and lifted the long brown hair of the younger man from his shoulders. His companion was tall, alert, bronzed, grey-headed, with an eagle eye and a glance of authority. He laid his hand on the shoulder of the younger man and said: "I am glad you have come, Iberville, for I need you, as I need all your brave family—I could spare not one."

"You honour me, sir," was the reply; "and, believe me, there is none in Quebec but thanks God that their governor is here before Phips rounds Isle Orleans yonder."

"You did nobly while I was away there in Montreal waiting for the New Yorkers to take it—if they could. They were a sorry rabble, for they rushed on La Prairie,—that meagre place,—massacred and turned tail."

"That's strange, sir, for they are brave men, stupid though they be. I have fought them."

"Well, well, as that may be! We will give them chance for bravery. Our forts are strong from the Sault au Matelot round to Champigny's palace, the trenches

and embankments are well ended, and if they give me but two days more I will hold the place against twice their thirty-four sail and twenty-five hundred men."

"For how long, your excellency?"

Count Frontenac nodded. "Spoken like a soldier. There's the vital point. By the mass, just so long as food lasts! But here we are with near two thousand men, and all the people from the villages, besides Callières's seven or eight hundred, should they arrive in time—and, pray God they may, for there will be work to do. If they come at us in front here and behind from the Saint Charles, shielding their men as they cross the river, we shall have none too many; but we must hold it."

The governor drew himself up proudly. He had sniffed the air of battle for over fifty years with all manner of enemies, and his heart was in the thing. Never had there been in Quebec a more moving sight than when he arrived from Montreal the evening before, and climbed Mountain Street on his way to the château. Women and children pressed round him, blessing him; priests, as he passed, lifted hands in benediction; men cheered and cried for joy; in every house there was thanksgiving that the imperious old veteran had come in time.

Prevost the town mayor, Champigny the Intendant, Sainte-Hélène, Maricourt, and Longueil, had worked with the skill of soldiers who knew their duty, and it was incredible what had been done since the alarm had come to Prevost that Phips had entered the St. Lawrence and was anchored at Tadousac.

"And how came you to be here, Iberville?" queried the governor pleasantly. "We scarce expected you."

"The promptings of the saints and the happy kind-

ness of King Louis, who will send my ship here after me. I boarded the first merchantman with its nose to the sea, and landed here soon after you left for Montreal."

"So? Good! See you, see you, Iberville: what of the lady Puritan's marriage with the fire-eating Englishman?"

The governor smiled as he spoke, not looking at Iberville. His glance was upon the batteries in lower town. He had inquired carelessly, for he did not think the question serious at this distance of time. Getting no answer, he turned smartly upon Iberville, surprised, and he was struck by the sudden hardness in the sun-browned face and the flashing eyes. Years had deepened the power of face and form.

"Your excellency will remember," he answered, in a low, cold tone, "that I once was counselled to marry the sword."

The governor laid his hand upon Iberville's shoulder. "Pardon me," he said. "I was not wise or kind. But I warrant the sword will be your best wife in the end."

"I have a favour to ask, your excellency."

"You might ask many, my Iberville. If all gentlemen here, clerics and laymen, asked as few as you, my life would be peaceful. Your services have been great, one way and another. Ask, and I almost promise now."

"Tis this. Six months ago you had a prisoner here, captured on the New England border. After he was exchanged you found that he had sent a plan of the fortifications to the Government of Massachusetts. He passed in the name of George Escott. Do you remember?"

"Very well indeed."

"Suppose he were taken prisoner again?"

"I should try him."

"And shoot him, if guilty?"

"Or hang him."

"His name was not Escott. It was Gering—Captain George Gering."

The governor looked hard at Iberville for a moment, and a grim smile played upon his lips. "H'm! How do you guess that?"

"From Perrot, who knows him well."

"Why did Perrot not tell me?"

"Perrot and Sainte-Hélène had been up at Sault Sainte Marie. They did not arrive until the day he was exchanged, nor did not know till then. There was no grave reason for speaking, and they said nothing."

"And what imports this?"

"I have no doubt that Mr. Gering is with Sir William Phips below at Tadousac. If he is taken let him be at my disposal."

The governor pursed his lips, then flashed a deep, inquiring glance at his companion. "The new mistress turned against the old, Iberville!" he said. "Gering is *her* husband, eh? Well, I will trust you: it shall be as you wish—a matter for us two alone."

At that moment Sainte-Hélène and Maricourt appeared and presently, in the waning light, they all went down towards the convent of the Ursulines, and made their way round the rock, past the three gates to the palace of the Intendant, and so on to the St. Charles River.

Next morning word was brought that Phips was coming steadily up, and would probably arrive that day. All was bustle in the town, and prayers and work went on without ceasing. Late in the afternoon the watchers

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from the rock of Quebec saw the ships of the New England fleet slowly rounding the point of the Island of Orleans.

To the eyes of Sir William Phips and his men the great fortress, crowned with walls, towers, and guns, rising three hundred feet above the water, the white banner flaunting from the château and the citadel, the batteries, the sentinels upon the walls—were suggestive of stern work. Presently there drew away from Phips's fleet a boat carrying a subaltern with a flag of truce, who was taken blindfold to the Château St. Louis. Frontenac's final words to the youth were these: "Bid your master do his best, and I will do mine."

Disguised as a river-man, Iberville himself, with others, rowed the subaltern back almost to the side of the admiral's ship, for by the freak of some peasants the boat which had brought him had been set adrift. As they rowed from the ship back towards the shore, Iberville, looking up, saw, standing on the deck, Phips and George Gering. He had come for this. He stood up in his boat and took off his cap. His long clustering curls fell loose on his shoulders, and he waved a hand with a nonchalant courtesy. Gering sprang forward. "Iberville!" he cried, and drew his pistol.

Iberville saw the motion, but did not stir. He called up, however, in a clear, distinct voice: "Breaker of parole, keep your truce!"

"He is right," said Gering quietly; "quite right."

Gering was now hot for instant landing and attack. Had Phips acted upon his advice the record of the next few days might have been reversed. But the disease of counsel, deliberation, and prayer had entered into the soul of the sailor and treasure-hunter, now Sir William

Phips, governor of Massachusetts. He delayed too long: the tide turned; there could be no landing that night.

Just after sundown there was a great noise, and the ringing of bells and sound of singing came over the water to the idle fleet.

"What does it mean?" asked Phips of a French prisoner captured at Tadousac.

"*Ma foi!* That you lose the game," was the reply. "Callières, the governor of Montreal, with his Canadians, and Nicholas Perrot with his *coureurs du bois* have arrived. You have too much delay, monsieur."

In Quebec, when this contingent arrived, the people went wild. And Perrot was never prouder than when, in Mountain Street, Iberville, after three years' absence, threw his arms round him and kissed him on each cheek.

It was in the dark hour before daybreak that Iberville and Perrot met for their first talk after the long separation. What had occurred on the day of Jessica's marriage Perrot had, with the Abbé de Casson's help, written to Iberville. But they had had no words together. Now, in a room of the citadel which looked out on the darkness of the river and the deeper gloom of the Levis shore, they sat and talked, a single candle burning, their weapons laid on the table between them.

They said little at first, but sat in the window looking down on the town and the river. At last Iberville spoke. "Tell me it all as you remember it, Perrot."

Perrot, usually swift of speech when once started, was very slow now. He felt the weight of every word, and he had rather have told of the scalping of a hundred men than of his last meeting with Jessica. When he had finished, Iberville said: "She kept the letter, you say?"

Perrot nodded, and drew the ring from a pouch which he carried. "I have kept it safe," he said, and held it out. Iberville took it and turned it over in his hand, with an enigmatical smile. "I will hand it to her myself," he said, half beneath his breath.

"You do not give her up, monsieur?"

Iberville laughed. Then he leaned forward, and found Perrot's eyes in the half darkness. "Perrot, she kept the letter, she would have kept the ring if she could. Listen: Monsieur Gering has held to his word; he has come to seek me this time. He knows that while I live the woman is not his, though she bears his name. She married him— Why? It is no matter—he was there, I was not. There were her father, her friends! I was a Frenchman, a Catholic—a thousand things! And a woman will yield her hand while her heart remains in her own keeping. Well, he has come. Now, one way or another, he must be mine. We have great accounts to settle, and I want it done between him and me. If he remains in the ship we must board it. With our one little craft there in the St. Charles we will sail out, grapple the admiral's ship, and play a great game: one against thirty-four. It has been done before. Capture the admiral's ship and we can play the devil with the rest of them. If not, we can die. Or, if Gering lands and fights, he also must be ours. Sainte-Hélène and Maricourt know him, and they with myself, Clermont, and Saint Denis, are to lead and resist attacks by land—Frontenac has promised that: so he must be ours one way or another. He must be captured, tried as a spy, and then he is mine—is mine!"

"Tried as a spy—ah, I see! You would disgrace? Well, but even then he is not yours."

Iberville got to his feet. "Don't try to think it out,

Perrot. It will come to you in good time. I can trust you—you are with me in all?"

"Have I ever failed you?"

"Never. You will not hesitate to go against the admiral's ship? Think, what an adventure! Remember Adam Dollard and the Long Sault!"

What man in Canada did not remember that handful of men, going out with an antique courage to hold back the Iroquois, and save the colony, and die? Perrot grasped Iberville's hand, and said: "Where you go, I go. Where I go, my men will follow."

Their pact was made. They sat there in silence till the grey light of morning crept slowly in. Still they did not lie down to rest; they were waiting for De Casson. He came before a ray of sunshine had pierced the leaden light. Tall, massive, proudly built, his white hair a rim about his forehead, his deep eyes watchful and piercing, he looked a soldier in disguise, as indeed he was to-day as much a soldier as when he fought under Turenne forty years before.

The three comrades were together again.

Iberville told his plans. The abbé lifted his fingers in admonition once or twice, but his eyes flashed as Iberville spoke of an attempt to capture the admiral on his own ship. When Iberville had finished, he said in a low voice:

"Pierre, must it still be so—that the woman shall prompt you to these things?"

"I have spoken of no woman, abbé."

"Yet you have spoken." He sighed and raised his hand. "The man—the men—down there would destroy our country. They are our enemies, and we do well to slay. But remember, Pierre—'What God hath

joined let no man put asunder!' To fight him as an enemy of your country—well; to fight him that you may put asunder is not well."

A look, half-pained, half-amused, crossed Iberville's face.

"And yet heretics—heretics, abbé."

"Marriage is no heresy."

"H'm—they say different at Versailles."

"Since De Montespan went, and De Maintenon rules?"

Iberville laughed. "Well, well, perhaps not."

They sat silent for a time, but presently Iberville rose, went to a cupboard, drew forth some wine and meat, and put the coffee on the fire. Then, with a gesture as of remembrance, he went to a box, drew forth his own violin, and placed it in the priest's hands. It seemed strange that, in the midst of such great events,—the loss or keeping of an empire,—these men should thus devote the few hours granted them for sleep; but they did according to their natures. The priest took the instrument and tuned it softly. Iberville blew out the candle. There was only the light of the fire, with the gleam of the slow-coming dawn. Once again, even as years before in the little house at Montreal, De Casson played—now with a martial air. At last he struck the chords of a song which had been a favourite with the Carignan-Salières regiment.

Instantly Iberville and Perrot responded, and there rang out from three strong throats the words:

"There was a king of Normandy,
And he rode forth to war,
Gai faluron falurette!
He had five hundred men—no more!
Gai faluron dondê!

“There was a king of Normandy,
Came back from war again;
He brought a maid, O, fair was she!
And twice five hundred men—
Gai faluron falurette!
Gai faluron dondè!”

They were still singing when soldiers came by the window in the first warm light of sunrise. These caught it up, singing it as they marched on. It was taken up again by other companies, and by the time Iberville presented himself to Count Frontenac, not long after, there was hardly a citizen, soldier, or woodsman, but was singing it.

The weather and water were blustering all that day, and Phips did not move, save for a small attempt—repulsed—by a handful of men to examine the landing. The next morning, however, the attack began. Twelve hundred men were landed at Beauport, in the mud and low water, under one Major Walley. With him was Gering, keen for action—he had persuaded Phips to allow him to fight on land.

To meet the English, Iberville, Sainte-Hélène, and Perrot issued forth with three hundred sharpshooters and a band of Huron Indians. In the skirmish that followed, Iberville and Perrot pressed with a handful of men forward very close to the ranks of the English. In the charge which the New Englander ordered, Iberville and Perrot saw Gering, and they tried hard to reach him. But the movement between made it impossible without running too great risk. For hours the fierce skirmishing went on, but in the evening the French withdrew and the New Englanders made their way towards the St. Charles, where vessels were to meet them, and protect them as they crossed the river and

attacked the town in the rear—help that never came. For Phips, impatient, spent his day in a terrible cannonading, which did no great damage to the town—or the cliff. It was a game of thunder, nothing worse, and Walley and Gering with their men were neglected.

The fight with the ships began again at daybreak. Iberville, seeing that Walley would not attack, joined Sainte-Hélène and Maricourt at the battery, and one of Iberville's shots brought down the admiral's flagstaff, with its cross of St. George. It drifted towards the shore, and Maurice Joval went out in a canoe under a galling fire and brought it up to Frontenac.

Iberville and Sainte-Hélène concentrated themselves on the *Six Friends*—the admiral's ship. In vain Phips's gunners tried to dislodge them and their guns. They sent ball after ball into her hull and through her rigging; they tore away her mainmast, shattered her mizzenmast, and handled her as viciously as only expert gunners could. The New Englander replied bravely, but Quebec was not destined to be taken by bombardment, and Iberville saw the *Six Friends* drift, a shattered remnant, out of his line of fire.

It was the beginning of the end. One by one the thirty-four craft drew away, and Walley and Gering were left with their men, unaided in the siege. There was one moment when the cannonading was greatest and the skirmishers seemed withdrawn, that Gering, furious with the delay, almost prevailed upon the cautious Walley to dash across the river and make a desperate charge up the hill, and in at the back door of the town. But Walley was, after all, a merchant and not a soldier, and would not do it. Gering fretted on his chain, sure that Iberville was with the guns against the ships, and would return to harass his New England-

ers soon. That evening it turned bitter cold, and without the ammunition promised by Phips, with little or no food and useless field-pieces, their lot was hard.

But Gering had his way the next morning. Walley set out to the *Six Friends* to represent his case to the admiral. Gering saw how the men chafed, and he sounded a few of them. Their wills were with him: they had come to fight, and fight they would, if they could but get the chance. With a miraculous swiftness the whispered word went through the lines. Gering could not command them to it, but if the men went forward he must go with them. The ships in front were silent. Quebec was now interested in these men near the St. Charles River.

As Iberville stood with Frontenac near the palace of the Intendant, watching, he saw the enemy suddenly hurry forward. In an instant he was dashing down to join his brothers, Sainte-Hélène, Longueil, and Perrot; and at the head of a body of men they pushed on to get over the ford and hold it, while Frontenac, leading three battalions of troops, got away more slowly. There were but a few hundred men with Iberville, arrayed against Gering's many hundreds; but the French were bush-fighters and the New Englanders were only stout sailors and ploughmen. Yet Gering had no reason to be ashamed of his men that day; they charged bravely, but their enemies were hid to deadly advantage behind trees and thickets, the best sharpshooters of the province.

Perrot had had his orders from Iberville: Iberville himself was, if possible, to engage Gering in a hand-to-hand fight; Perrot, on the other hand, was to cut Gering off from his men and bring him in a prisoner. More than once both had Gering within range of their mus-

kets, but they held their hands, nor indeed did Gering himself, who once also had a chance of bringing Iberville down, act on his opportunity. Gering's men were badly exposed, and he sent them hard at the thickets, clearing the outposts at some heavy loss. His men were now scattered, and he shifted his position so as to bring him nearer the spot where Sainte-Hélène and Longueil were pushing forward fresh outposts. He saw the activity of the two brothers, but did not recognise them, and sent a handful of men to dislodge them. Both Sainte-Hélène and Longueil exposed themselves for a moment, as they made for an advantageous thicket. Gering saw his opportunity, took a musket from a soldier, and fired. Sainte-Hélène fell mortally wounded. Longueil sprang forward with a cry of rage, but a spent ball struck him.

Iberville, at a distance, saw the affair. With a smothered oath he snatched a musket from Maurice Joval, took steady aim and fired. The distance was too great, the wind too strong; he only carried away an epaulet. But Perrot, who was not far from the fallen brothers, suddenly made a dash within easy range of the rifles of the British, and cut Gering and two of his companions off from the main body. It was done so suddenly that Gering found himself between two fires. His companions drew close to him, prepared to sell their lives dearly, but Perrot called to them to surrender. Gering saw the fruitlessness of resistance and, to save his companions' lives, yielded.

The siege of Quebec was over. The British contented themselves with holding their position till Walley returned bearing the admiral's orders to embark again for the fleet. And so in due time they did—in rain, cold, and gloom.

In a few days Sir William Phips, having patched up his shattered ships, sailed away, with the knowledge that the capture of Quebec was not so easy as finding a lost treasure. He had tried in vain to effect Gering's release.

When Gering surrendered, Perrot took his sword with a grim coolness and said: "Come, monsieur, and see what you think your stay with us may be like."

In a moment he was stopped beside the dead body of Sainte-Hélène. "Your musket did this," said Perrot, pointing down. "Do you know him?"

Gering stooped over and looked. "My God—Sainte-Hélène!" he cried.

Perrot crossed himself and mumbled a prayer. Then he took from his bosom a scarf and drew it over the face of the dead man. He turned to Longueil.

"And here, monsieur, is another brother of Monsieur Iberville," he said.

Longueil was insensible but not dangerously wounded. Perrot gave a signal and the two brothers were lifted and carried down towards the ford, followed by Perrot and Gering. On their way they met Iberville.

All the brother, the comrade, in Iberville spoke first. He felt Longueil's hand and touched his pulse, then turned, as though he had not seen Gering, to the dead body of Sainte-Hélène. Motioning to the men to put it down, he stooped and took Perrot's scarf from the dead face. It was yet warm, and the handsome features wore a smile. Iberville looked for a moment with a strange, cold quietness. He laid his hand upon the brow, touched the cheek, gave a great sigh, and made the sacred gesture over the body; then taking his own handkerchief he spread it over the face. Presently he motioned for the bodies to be carried on.

Perrot whispered to him, and now he turned and look at Gering with a malignant steadiness.

"You have had the great honour, sir," he said, "to kill one of the bravest gentlemen of France. More than once to-day myself and my friend here"—pointing to Perrot—"could have killed you. Why did we not? Think you, that you might kill my brother, whose shoe-latchet were too high for you? Monsieur, the sum mounts up." His voice was full of bitterness and hatred. "Why did we spare you?" he repeated, and paused.

Gering could understand Iberville's quiet, vicious anger. He would rather have lost a hand than have killed Sainte-Hélène, who had, on board the *Maid of Provence*, treated him with great courtesy. He only shook his head now.

"Well, I will tell you," said Iberville. "We have spared you to try you for a spy. And after—after!"—His laugh was not pleasant to hear.

"A spy? It is false!" cried Gering.

"You will remember—monsieur, that once before you gave me the lie!"

Gering made a proud gesture of defiance, but answered nothing. That night he was lodged in the citadel.

CHAPTER XX

A TRAP IS SET

GERING was tried before Governor Frontenac and the full council. It was certain that he, while a prisoner at Quebec, had sent to Boston plans of the town, the condition of the defences, the stores, the general armament and the approaches, for the letter was intercepted.

Gering's defence was straightforward. He held that he had sent the letter at a time when he was a prisoner simply, which was justifiable; not when a prisoner on parole, which was shameless. The temper of the court was against him. Most important was the enmity of the Jesuits, whose hatred of Puritanism cried out for sacrifice. They had seen the work of the saints in every turn of the late siege, and they believed that the Lord had delivered the man into their hands. In secret ways their influence was strong upon many of the council, particularly those who were not soldiers. A soldier can appreciate bravery, and Gering had been courageous. But he had killed one of the most beloved of Canadian officers, the gallant Sainte-Hélène! Frontenac, who foresaw an end of which the council could not know, summed up, not unfairly, against Gering.

Gering's defence was able, proud, and sometimes passionate. Once or twice his words stung his judges like whips across their faces. He showed no fear; he asked no mercy. He held that he was a prisoner of war, and entitled to be treated as such. So strong, indeed, was

his pleading, so well did his stout courage stand by him, that had Count Frontenac balanced in his favour he might have been quit of the charge of spying. But before the trial Iberville had had solitary talk with Frontenac, in which a request was repeated and a promise renewed.

Gering was condemned to die. It was perhaps the bravest moment of a brave life.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have heard your sentence, but, careless of military honour as you are, you will not dare put me to death. Do not think because we have failed this once that we shall not succeed again. I tell you, that if, instead of raw Boston sailors, ploughmen and merchant captains, and fishing craft and trading vessels, I had three English war-ships and one thousand men, I would level your town from the citadel to the altar of St. Joseph's. I do not fear to die, nor that I shall die by your will. But, if so, 'twill be with English loathing of injustice."

His speech was little like to mollify his judges, and at his reference to St. Joseph's a red spot showed upon many cheeks, while to the charge against their military honour, Frontenac's eyes lighted ominously. But the governor merely said: "You have a raw temper, sir. We will chasten you with bread and water; and it were well for you, even by your strange religion, to qualify for passage from this world."

Gering was taken back to prison. As he travelled the streets he needed all his fortitude, for his fiery speech had gone abroad, distorted from its meaning, and the common folk railed at him. As chastening, it was good exercise; but when now and again the name of Sainte-Hélène rang towards him, a cloud passed over his face; that touched him in a tender corner.

He had not met Iberville since his capture, but now, on entering the prison, he saw his enemy not a dozen paces from the door, pale and stern. Neither made a sign, but with a bitter sigh Gering entered. It was curious how their fortunes had see-sawed, the one against the other, for twelve years.

Left alone in his cell with his straw and bread and water, he looked round mechanically. It was yet afternoon. All at once it came to him that this was not the cell which he had left that day. He got up and began to examine it. Like every healthy prisoner, he thought upon means and chances of escape.

It did not seem a regular cell for prisoners, for there was a second door. This was in one corner and very narrow, the walls not coming to a right angle, but having another little strip of wall between. He tried to settle its position by tracing in his mind the way he had come through the prison. Iberville or Perrot could have done so instinctively, but he was not woodsman enough. He thought, however, that the doorway led to a staircase, like most doors of the kind in old buildings. There was the window. It was small and high up from the floor, and even could he loosen the bars, it were not possible to squeeze through. Besides, there was the yard to cross and the outer wall to scale. And that achieved, with the town still full of armed men, he would have a perilous run. He tried the door: it was stoutly fastened; the bolts were on the other side; the key-hole was filled. Here was sufficient exasperation. He had secreted a small knife on his person, and he now sat down, turned it over in his hand, looked up at the window and the smooth wall below it, at the mocking door, then smiled at his own poor condition and gave himself to cheerless meditation.

He was concerned most for his wife. It was not in him to give up till the inevitable was on him and he could not yet believe that Count Frontenac would carry out the sentence. At the sudden thought of the rope—so ignominious, so hateful—he shuddered. But the shame of it was for his wife, who had dissipated a certain selfish and envious strain in him. Jessica had drawn from him the Puritanism which had made him self-conscious, envious, insular.

CHAPTER XXI

AN UNTOWARD MESSENGER

A FEW days after this, Jessica, at her home in Boston,—in the room where she had promised her father to be George Gering's wife,—sat watching the sea. Its slow swinging music came up to her through the October air. Not far from her sat an old man, his hands clasping a chair-arm, a book in his lap, his chin sunk on his breast. The figure, drooping helplessly, had still a distinguished look, an air of honourable pride. Presently he raised his head, his drowsy eyes lighted as they rested on her, and he said: "The fleet has not returned, my dear? Quebec is not yet taken?"

"No, father," she replied, "not yet."

"Phips is a great man—a great man!" he said, chuckling. "Ah, the treasure!"

Jessica did not reply. Her fingers went up to her eyes; they seemed to cool the hot lids.

"Ay, ay, it was good," he added, in a quavering voice, "and I gave you your dowry!"

Now there was a gentle, soft laugh of delight and pride, and he reached out a hand towards her. She responded with a little laugh which was not unlike his, but there was something more: that old sweet sprightliness of her youth, shot through with a haunting modulation,—almost pensiveness,—but her face was self-possessed. She drew near, pressed the old man's hand, and spoke softly. Presently she saw that he was asleep.

She sat for some time, not stirring. At last she was about to rise and take him to his room, but hearing noises in the street she stepped to the window. There were men below, and this made her apprehensive. She hurried over, kissed the old man, passed from the room, and met her old servant Hulm in the passage, who stretched out her hand in distress.

"What is it, Hulm?" she asked, a chill at her heart.

"Oh, how can I tell you!" was the answer. "Our fleet was beaten, and—and my master is a prisoner."

The wife saw that this was not all. "Tell me everything, Hulm," she said trembling, yet ready for the worst.

"Oh, my dear, dear mistress, I cannot!"

"Hulm, you see that I am calm," she answered. "You are only paining me."

"They are to try him for his life!" She caught her mistress by the waist, but Jessica recovered instantly. She was very quiet, very pale, yet the plumbless grief of her eyes brought tears to Hulm's face. She stood for a moment in deep thought.

"Is your brother Aaron in Boston, Hulm?" she asked presently.

"He is below, dear mistress."

"Ask him to step to the dining-room. And that done, please go to my father. And, Hulm, dear creature, you can aid me better if you do not weep."

She then passed down a side staircase and entered the dining-room. A moment afterwards Aaron Hulm came in.

"Aaron," she said, as he stood confused before her misery, "know you the way to Quebec?"

"Indeed, madame, very well. Madame, I am sorry—"

"Let us not dwell upon it, Aaron. Can you get a few men together to go there?"

"Within an hour."

"Very well, I shall be ready."

"You, madame—ready? You do not think of going?"

"Yes, I am going."

"But, madame, it is not safe. The Abenakis and Iroquois are not friendly, and—"

"Is *this* friendly? Is it like a good friend, Aaron Hulm? Did I not nurse your mother when—"

He dropped on one knee, took her hand and kissed it. "Madame," he said loyally, "I will do anything you ask; I feared only for your safety."

An hour afterwards she came into the room where her father still slept. Stooping, she kissed his forehead, and fondled his thin grey hair. Then she spoke to Hulm.

"Tell him," she said, "that I will come back soon: that my husband needs me, and that I have gone to him. Tell him that we will *both* come back—both, Hulm, you understand!"

"Dear mistress, I understand." But the poor soul made a gesture of despair.

"It is even as I say. We will both come back," was the quiet reply. "Something as truthful as God Himself tells me so. Take care of my dear father—I know you will; keep from him the bad news, and comfort him."

Then with an affectionate farewell she went to her room, knelt down and prayed. When she rose she said to herself: "I am thankful now that I have no child."

In ten minutes a little company of people, led by

Aaron Hulm, started away from Boston, making for a block-house fifteen miles distant, where they were to sleep.

The journey was perilous, and more than once it seemed as if they could not reach Quebec alive, but no member of the party was more cheerful than Jessica. Her bravery and spirit never faltered before the others, though sometimes at night, when lying awake, she had a wild wish to cry out or to end her troubles in the fast-flowing Richelieu. But this was only at night. In the daytime action eased the strain, and at last she was rewarded by seeing from the point of Levis, the citadel of Quebec.

They were questioned and kept in check for a time, but at length Aaron and herself were let cross the river. It was her first sight of Quebec, and its massive, impregnable form struck a chill to her heart: it suggested great sternness behind it. They were passed on unmolested towards the Château St. Louis. The anxious wife wished to see Count Frontenac himself and then to find Iberville. Enemy of her country though he was, she would appeal to him. As she climbed the steep steps of Mountain Street, worn with hard travel, she turned faint. But the eyes of curious folk were on her, and she drew herself up bravely.

She was admitted almost at once to the governor. He was at dinner when she came. When her message was brought to him, his brows twitched with surprise and perplexity. He called Maurice Joval, and ordered that she be shown to his study and tendered every courtesy.

A few moments later he entered the room. Wonder and admiration crossed his face. He had not thought to see so beautiful a woman. Himself an old courtier, he knew women, and he could understand how Iberville

had been fascinated. She had arranged her toilette at Levis, and there were few traces of the long, hard journey, save that her hands and face were tanned. The eloquence of her eyes, the sorrowful, distant smile which now was natural to her, worked upon the old soldier before she spoke a word. And after she had spoken, had pleaded her husband's cause, and appealed to the nobleman's chivalry, Frontenac was moved. But his face was troubled. He drew out his watch and studied it.

Presently he went to the door and called Maurice Joval. There was whispering, and then the young man went away.

"Madame, you have spoken of Monsieur Iberville," said the governor. "Years ago he spoke to me of you."

Her eyes dropped, and then they raised steadily, clearly. "I am sure, sir," she said, "that Monsieur Iberville would tell you that my husband could never be dishonourable. They have been enemies, but noble enemies."

"Yet, Monsieur Iberville might be prejudiced," rejoined the governor. "A brother's life has weight."

"A brother's life!" she broke in fearfully.

"Madame, your husband killed Iberville's brother."

She swayed. The governor's arm was as quick to her waist as a gallant's of twenty-five: not his to resist the despair of so noble a creature. He was sorry for her; but he knew that if all had gone as had been planned by Iberville, within a half-hour this woman would be a widow.

With some women, perhaps, he would not have hesitated: he would have argued that the prize was to the victor, and that, Gering gone, Jessica would amia-

bly drift upon Iberville. But it came to him that she was not as many other women. He looked at his watch again, and she mistook the action.

"Oh, your excellency," she said, "do not grudge these moments to one pleading for a life—for justice."

"You mistake, madame," he said; "I was not grudging the time—for myself."

At that moment Maurice Joval entered and whispered to the governor. Frontenac rose.

"Madame," he said, "your husband has escaped."

A cry broke from her. "Escaped! escaped!"

She saw a strange look in the governor's eyes.

"But you have not told me all," she urged; "there is more. Oh, your excellency, speak!"

"Only this, madame: he may be retaken and—"

"And then? What then?" she cried.

"Upon what happens then," he as drily as regretfully added, "I shall have no power."

But to the quick searching prayer, the proud eloquence of the woman, the governor, bound though he was to secrecy, could not be adamant.

"There is but one thing I can do for you," he said at last. "You know Father Dollier de Casson?"

To her assent, he added: "Then go to him. Ask no questions. If anything can be done, he may do it for you; that he will I do not know."

She could not solve the riddle, but she must work it out. There was the one great fact: her husband had escaped.

"You will do all you can do, your excellency?" she said.

"Indeed, madame, I have done all I can," he said.

With impulse she caught his hand and kissed it. A

minute afterwards she was gone with Maurice Joval, who had orders to bring her to the abbé's house—that, and no more.

The governor, left alone, looked at the hand that she had kissed and said: "Well, well, I am but a fool still. Yet—a woman in a million!" He took out his watch. "Too late," he added. "Poor lady!"

A few minutes afterwards Jessica met the abbé on his own doorstep. Maurice Joval disappeared, and the priest and the woman were alone together. She told him what had just happened.

"There is some mystery," she said, pain in her voice. "Tell me, has my husband been retaken?"

"Madame, he has."

"Is he in danger?"

The priest hesitated, then presently inclined his head in assent.

"Once before I talked with you," she said, "and you spoke good things. You are a priest of God. I know that you can help me, or Count Frontenac would not have sent me to you. Oh, will you take me to my husband?"

If Count Frontenac had had a struggle, here was a greater. First, the man was a priest in the days when the Huguenots were scattering to the four ends of the earth. The woman and her husband were heretics, and what better were they than thousands of others? Then, Sainte-Hélène had been the soldier-priest's pupil. Last of all, there was Iberville, over whom this woman had cast a charm perilous to his soul's salvation. He loved Iberville as his own son. The priest in him decided against the woman; the soldier in him was with Iberville in this event—for a soldier's revenge was its mainspring. But beneath all was a kindly

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soul which intolerance could not warp, and this at last responded.

His first words gave her a touch of hope.

"Madame," he said, "I know not that aught can be done, but come."

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CHAPTER XXII

FROM TIGER'S CLAW TO LION'S MOUTH

EVERY nation has its traitors, and there was an English renegade soldier at Quebec. At Iberville's suggestion he was made one of the guards of the prison. It was he that, pretending to let Gering win his confidence, at last aided him to escape through the narrow corner-door of his cell.

Gering got free of the citadel—miraculously, as he thought; and, striking off from the road, began to make his way by a roundabout to the St. Charles River, where at some lonely spot he might find a boat. No alarm had been given, and as time passed his chances seemed growing, when suddenly there sprang from the grass round him armed men, who closed in, and at the points of swords and rapiers seized him. Scarcely a word was spoken by his captors, and he did not know who they were, until, after a long *détour*, he was brought inside a manor-house, and there, in the light of flaring candles, faced Perrot and Iberville. It was Perrot who had seized him.

"Monsieur," said Perrot, saluting, "be sure this is a closer prison than that on the heights." This said, he wheeled and left the room.

The two gentlemen were left alone. Gering folded his arms and stood defiant.

"Monsieur," said Iberville, in a low voice, "we are fortunate to meet so at last."

"I do not understand you," was the reply.

"Then let me speak of that which was unfortunate. Once you called me a fool and a liar. We fought and were interrupted. We met again, with the same ending, and I was wounded by the man Bucklaw. Before the wound was healed I had to leave for Quebec. Years passed, you know well how. We met in the Spaniards' country, where you killed my servant; and again at Fort Rupert, you remember. At the fort you surrendered before we had a chance to fight. Again, we were on the hunt for treasure. You got it; and almost in your own harbour I found you, and fought you and a greater ship with you, and ran you down. As your ship sank you sprang from it to my own ship—a splendid leap. Then you were my guest, and we could not fight; all—all unfortunate."

He paused. Gering was cool; he saw Iberville's purpose, and he was ready to respond to it.

"And then?" asked Gering. "Your charge is long—is it finished?"

A hard light came into Iberville's eyes.

"And then, monsieur, you did me the honour to come to my own country. We did not meet in the fighting, and you killed my brother." Iberville crossed himself. "Then"—his voice was hard and bitter—"you were captured; no longer a prisoner of war, but one who had broken his parole. You were thrown into prison, were tried and condemned to death. There remained two things: that you should be left to hang, or an escape—that we should meet here and now."

"You chose the better way, monsieur."

"I treat you with consideration, I hope, monsieur."

Gering waved his hand in acknowledgment, and said: "What weapons do you choose?"

Iberville quietly laid on the table a number of swords.

"If I should survive this duel, monsieur," questioned Gering, "shall I be free?"

"Monsieur, escape will be unnecessary."

"Before we engage, let me say that I regret your brother's death."

"Monsieur, I hope to deepen that regret," answered Iberville quietly. Then they took up their swords.

CHAPTER XXIII

AT THE GATES OF MISFORTUNE

MEANWHILE the abbé and Jessica were making their way swiftly towards the manor-house. They scarcely spoke as they went, but in Jessica's mind was a vague horror. Lights sparkled on the crescent shore of Beauport, and the torches of fishermen flared upon the St. Charles. She looked back once towards the heights of Quebec and saw the fires of many homes—they scorched her eyes. She asked no questions. The priest beside her was silent, not looking at her at all. At last he turned and said:

"Madame, whatever has happened, whatever may happen, I trust you will be brave."

"Monsieur l'Abbé," she answered, "I have travelled from Boston here—can you doubt it?"

The priest sighed. "May the hope that gave you strength remain, madame!"

A little longer and then they stood within a garden thick with plants and trees. As they passed through it, Jessica was vaguely aware of the rich fragrance of fallen leaves and the sound of waves washing the foot of the cliffs.

The abbé gave a low call, and almost instantly Perrot stood before them. Jessica recognised him. With a little cry she stepped to him quickly and placed her hand upon his arm. She did not seem conscious that

he was her husband's enemy: her husband's life was in danger, and it must be saved at any cost.

"Monsieur," she said, "where is my husband? You know. Tell me."

Perrot put her hand from his arm gently, and looked at the priest in doubt and surprise.

The abbé said not a word, but stood gazing off into the night.

"Will you not tell me of my husband?" she repeated. "He is within that house?" She pointed to the manor-house. "He is in danger, I will go to him."

She made as if to go to the door, but he stepped before her.

"Madame," he said, "you cannot enter."

Just then the moon shot from behind a cloud, and all their faces could be seen. There was a flame in Jessica's eyes which Perrot could not stand, and he turned away. She was too much the woman to plead weakly.

"Tell me," she said, "whose house this is."

"Madame, it is Monsieur Iberville's."

She could not check a gasp, but both the priest and the woodsman saw how intrepid was the struggle in her, and they both pitied.

"Now I understand! Oh, now I understand!" she cried. "A plot was laid. He was let escape that he might be cornered here—one single man against a whole country. Oh, cowards, cowards!"

"Pardon me, madame," said Perrot, bristling up, "not cowards. Your husband has a chance for his life. You know Monsieur Iberville—he is a man all honour. More than once he might have had your husband's life, but he gave it to him."

Her foot tapped the ground impatiently, her hands clasped before her. "Go on, oh, go on!" she said.

"What is it? why is he here? Have you no pity, no heart?" She turned towards the priest. "You are a man of God. You said once that you would help me make peace between my husband and Monsieur Iberville, but you join here with his enemies."

"Madame, believe me, you are wrong. I have done all I could: I have brought you here."

"Yes, yes; forgive me," she replied. She turned to Perrot again. "It is with you, then. You helped to save my life once—what right have you to destroy it now? You and Monsieur Iberville gave me the world when it were easy to have lost it; now when the world is everything to me because my husband lives in it, you would take his life and break mine."

Suddenly a thought flashed into her mind. Her eyes brightened, her hand trembled towards Perrot, and touched him. "Once I gave you something, monsieur, which I had worn on my own bosom. That little gift—of a grateful girl, tell me, have you it still?"

Perrot drew from his doublet the medallion she had given him, and fingered it uncertainly.

"Then you value it," she added. "You value my gift, and yet when my husband is a prisoner, to what perilous ends God only knows, you deny me to him. I will not plead; I ask as my right; I have come from Count Frontenac; he sent me to this good priest here. Were my husband in the citadel now I should be admitted. He is here with the man who, you know, once said he loved me. My husband is wickedly held a prisoner; I ask for entrance to him."

Pleading, apprehension, seemed gone from her; she stood superior to her fear and sorrow. The priest reached a hand persuasively towards Perrot, and he was about to speak, but Perrot, coming close to the troubled

wife, said: "The door is locked; they are there alone. I cannot let you in, but come with me. You have a voice—it may be heard. Come."

Presently all three were admitted into the dim hallway.

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CHAPTER XXIV

IN WHICH THE SWORD IS SHEATHED

How had it gone with Iberville and Gering?

The room was large, scantily, though comfortably, furnished. For a moment after they took up their swords they eyed each other calmly. Iberville presently smiled: he was recalling that night, years ago, when by the light of the old Dutch lantern they had fallen upon each other, swordsmen, even in those days, of more than usual merit. They had practised greatly since. Iberville was the taller of the two, Gering the stouter. Iberville's eye was slow, calculating, penetrating; Gering's was swift, strangely vigilant. Iberville's hand was large, compact, and supple; Gering's small and firm.

They drew and fell on guard. Each at first played warily. They were keen to know how much of skill was likely to enter into this duel, for each meant that it should be deadly. In the true swordsman there is found that curious sixth sense, which is a combination of touch, sight, apprehension, divination. They had scarcely made half a dozen passes before each knew that he was pitted against a master of the art—an art partly lost in an age which better loves the talk of swords than the handling of them. But the advantage was with Iberville, not merely because of more practice,—Gering made up for that by a fine certainty of nerve,—but because he had a prescient quality of mind, joined to the calculation of the perfect gamester.

From the first Iberville played a waiting game. He knew Gering's impulsive nature, and he wished to draw him on, to irritate him, as only one swordsman can irritate another. Gering suddenly led off with a disengage from the *carte* line into *tierce*, and, as he expected, met the short parry and *riposte*. Gering tried by many means to draw Iberville's attack, and, failing to do so, played more rapidly than he ought, which was what Iberville wished.

Presently Iberville's chance came. In the carelessness of annoyance, Gering left part of his sword arm uncovered, while he was meditating a complex attack, and he paid the penalty by getting a sharp prick from Iberville's sword-point. The warning came to Gering in time. When they crossed swords again, Iberville, whether by chance or by momentary want of skill, parried Gering's disengage from *tierce* to *carte* on to his own left shoulder.

Both had now got a taste of blood, and there is nothing like that to put the lust of combat into a man. For a moment or two the fight went on with no special feat, but so hearty became the action that Iberville, seeing Gering flag a little,—due somewhat to loss of blood,—suddenly opened such a rapid attack on the advance that it was all Gering could do to parry, without thought of *riposte*, the successive lunges of the swift blade. As he retreated, Gering felt, as he broke ground, that he was nearing the wall, and, even as he parried, incautiously threw a half-glance over his shoulder to see how near. Iberville saw his chance, his finger was shaping a fatal lunge, when there suddenly came from the hallway a woman's voice. So weird was it that both swordsmen drew back, and once more Gering's life was waiting in the hazard.

Strange to say, Iberville recognised the voice first. He was angered with himself now that he had paused upon the lunge and saved Gering. Suddenly there rioted in him the disappointed vengeance of years. He had lost her once by sparing this man's life. Should he lose her again? His sword flashed upward.

At that moment Gering recognised his wife's voice, and he turned pale. "My wife!" he exclaimed.

They closed again. Gering was now as cold as he had before been ardent, and he played with malicious strength and persistency. His nerves seemed of iron. But there had come to Iberville the sardonic joy of one who plays for the final hazard, knowing that he shall win. There was one great move he had reserved for the last. With the woman's voice at the door beseeching, her fingers trembling upon the panel, they could not prolong the fight. Therefore, at the moment when Gering was pressing Iberville hard, the Frenchman suddenly, with a trick of the Italian school, threw his left leg *en arrière* and made a lunge, which ordinarily would have spitted his enemy, but at the critical moment one word came ringing clearly through the locked door. It was his own name, not Iberville, but—"Pierre! Pierre!"

He had never heard the voice speak that name. It put out his judgment, and instead of his sword passing through Gering's body it only grazed his ribs.

Perhaps there was in him some ancient touch of superstition, some sense of fatalism, which now made him rise to his feet and throw his sword upon the table.

"Monsieur," he said cynically, "again we are unfortunate."

Then he went to the door, unlocked it, and threw it open upon Jessica. She came in upon them trembling, pale, yet glowing with her anxiety.

Instantly Iberville was all courtesy. One could not have guessed that he had just been engaged in a deadly conflict. As his wife entered, Gering put his sword aside. Iberville closed the door, and the three stood looking at each other for a moment. Jessica did not throw herself into her husband's arms. The position was too painful, too tragic, for even the great emotion in her heart. Behind Iberville's courtesy she read the deadly mischief. But she had a power born for imminent circumstances, and her mind was made up as to her course. It had been made up when, at the critical moment, she had called out Iberville's Christian name. She rightly judged that this had saved her husband's life, for she guessed that Iberville was the better swordsman.

She placed her hands with slight resistance on the arms of her husband, who was about to clasp her to his breast, and said: "I am glad to find you, George." That was all.

He also had heard that cry, "Pierre," and he felt shamed that his life was spared because of it—he knew well why the sword had not gone through his body. She felt less humiliation, because, as it seemed to her, she had a right to ask of Iberville what no other woman could ask for her husband.

A moment after, at Iberville's request, they were all seated. Iberville had pretended not to notice the fingers which had fluttered towards him. As yet nothing had been said about the duel, as if by tacit consent. So far as Jessica was concerned it might never have happened. As for the men, the swords were there, wet with the blood they had drawn, but they made no sign. Iberville put meat and wine and fruit upon the table, and pressed Jessica to take refreshment. She re-

sponded, for it was in keeping with her purpose. Presently Iberville said, as he poured a glass of wine for her: "Had you been expected, madame, there were better entertainment."

"Your entertainment, monsieur," she replied, "has two sides,"—she glanced at the swords,—"and this is the better."

"If it pleases you, madame."

"I dare not say," she returned, "that my coming was either pleasant or expected."

He raised his glass towards her: "Madame, I am proud to pledge you once more. I recall the first time that we met."

Her reply was instant. "You came, an ambassador of peace to the governor of New York. Monsieur, I come an ambassador of peace to you."

"Yes, I remember. You asked me then what was the greatest, bravest thing I ever did. You ever had a buoyant spirit, madame."

"Monsieur," she rejoined, with feeling, "will you let me answer that question for you now? The bravest and greatest thing you ever did was to give a woman back her happiness."

"Have I done so?"

"In your heart, yes, I believe. A little while ago my husband's life and freedom were in your hands—you will place them in mine now, will you not?"

Iberville did not reply directly. He twisted his wine-glass round, sipped from it pleasantly, and said: "Pardon me, madame, how were you admitted here?"

She told him.

"Singular, singular!" he replied; "I never knew Perrot fail me before. But you have eloquence, madame, and he knew, no doubt, that you would always be welcome to my home."

There was that in his voice which sent the blood stinging through Gering's veins. He half came to his feet, but his wife's warning, pleading glance brought him to his chair again.

"Monsieur, tell me," she said, "will you give my husband his freedom?"

"Madame, his life is the State's."

"But he is in your hands now. Will you not set him free? You know that the charge against him is false—false. He is no spy. Oh, monsieur, you and he have been enemies, but you know that he could not do a dishonourable thing."

"Madame, *my* charges against him are true."

"I know what they are," she said earnestly, "but this strife is not worthy of you, and it is shaming me. Monsieur, you know I speak truly."

"You called me Pierre a little while ago," he said; "will you not now?"

His voice was deliberate, every word hanging in its utterance. He had a courteous smile, an apparent abandon of manner, but there was devilry behind all, for here, for the first time, he saw this woman, fought for and lost, in his presence with her husband, begging that husband's life of him. Why had she called him Pierre? Was it because she knew it would touch a tender corner of his heart? Should that be so—well, he would wait.

"Will you listen to me?" she asked, in a low gentle voice.

"I love to hear you speak," was his reply, and he looked into her eyes as he had boldly looked years before, but his gaze made hers drop. There was revealed to her all that was in his mind.

"Then, hear me now," she said slowly. "There was a motherless young girl. She had as fresh and cheerful

a heart as any in the world. She had not many playmates, but there was one young lad who shared her sports and pleasant hours, who was her good friend. Years passed; she was nearing womanhood, the young man was still her friend, but in his mind there had come something deeper. A young stranger also came, handsome, brave, and brilliant. He was such a man as any girl could like and any man admire. The girl liked him, and she admired him. The two young men quarrelled; they fought; and the girl parted them. Again they would have fought, but this time the girl's life was in danger. The stranger was wounded in saving her. She owed him a debt—such a debt as only a woman can feel; because a woman loves a noble deed more than she loves her life—a good woman.”

She paused, and for an instant something shook in her throat. Her husband looked at her with a deep wonder. And although Iberville's eyes played with his glass of wine, they were fascinated by her face, and his ear was strangely charmed by her voice.

“Will you go on?” he said.

“The three parted. The girl never forgot the stranger. What might have happened if he had always been near her, who can tell—who can tell? Again in later years the two men met, the stranger the aggressor—without due cause.”

“Pardon me, madame, the deepest cause,” said Iberville meaningly.

She pretended not to understand, and continued:

“The girl, believing that what she was expected to do would be best for her, promised her hand in marriage. At this time the stranger came. She saw him but for a day, for an hour, then he passed away. Time went on again, and the two men met in battle—men now, not

boys; once more the stranger was the victor. She married the defeated man. Perhaps she did not love him as much as he loved her, but she knew that the other love, the love of the stranger, was impossible—impossible. She came to care for her husband more and more—she came to love him. She might have loved the stranger—who can tell? But a woman's heart cannot be seized as a ship or a town. Believe me, monsieur, I speak the truth. Years again passed: her husband's life was in the stranger's hand. Through great danger she travelled to plead for her husband's life. Monsieur, she does not plead for an unworthy cause. She pleads for justice, in the name of honourable warfare, for the sake of all good manhood. Will—will you refuse her?"

She paused. Gering's eyes were glistening. Her honesty, fine eloquence, and simple sincerity, showed her to him in a new, strong light. Upon Iberville, the greater of the two, it had a greater effect. He sat still for a moment, looking at the woman with the profound gaze of one moved to the soul. Then he got to his feet slowly, opened the door, and quietly calling Perrot, whispered to him. Perrot threw up his hands in surprise, and hurried away.

Then Iberville shut the door, and came back. Neither man had made any show of caring for their wounds. Still silent, Iberville drew forth linen and laid it upon the table. Then he went to the window, and as he looked through the parted curtains out upon the water—the room hung over the edge of the cliff—he bound his own shoulder. Gering had lost blood, but weak as he was he carried himself well. For full half an hour Iberville stood motionless while the wife bound her husband's wounds.

At length the door opened and Perrot entered. Iberville did not hear him at first, and Perrot came over to him. "All is ready, monsieur," he said.

Iberville, nodding, came to the table where stood the husband and wife, and Perrot left the room. He picked up a sword and laid it beside Gering, then waved his hand towards the door.

"You are free to go, monsieur," he said. "You will have escort to your country. Go now—pray, go quickly."

He feared he might suddenly repent of his action, and going to the door, he held it open for them to pass. Gering picked up the sword, found the belt and sheath, and stepped to the doorway with his wife. Here he paused as if he would speak to Iberville: he was ready now for final peace. But Iberville's eyes looked resolutely away, and Gering sighed and passed into the hallway. Now the wife stood beside Iberville. She looked at him steadily, but at first he would not meet her eye. Presently, however, he did so.

"Good-bye," she said brokenly, "I shall always remember—always."

His reply was bitter. "Good-bye, madame: I shall forget."

She made a sad little gesture and passed on, but presently turned, as if she could not bear that kind of parting, and stretched out her hands to him.

"Monsieur—Pierre!" she cried, in a weak, choking voice.

With hot frank impulse he caught both her hands in his and kissed them. "I shall—remember," he said, with great gentleness.

Then they passed from the hallway, and he was alone. He stood looking at the closed door, but after a moment

went to the table, sat down, and threw his head forward in his arms.

An hour afterwards, when Count Frontenac entered upon him, he was still in the same position. Frontenac touched him on the arm, and he rose. The governor did not speak, but caught him by the shoulders with both hands, and held him so for a moment, looking kindly at him. Iberville picked up his sword from the table and said calmly:

"Once, sir, you made it a choice between the woman and the sword."

Then he raised the sword and solemnly pressed his lips against the hilt-cross.

