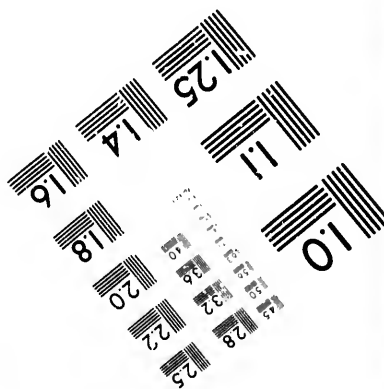
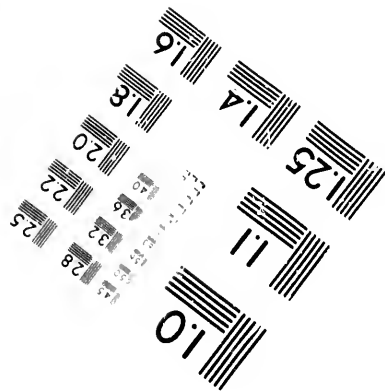
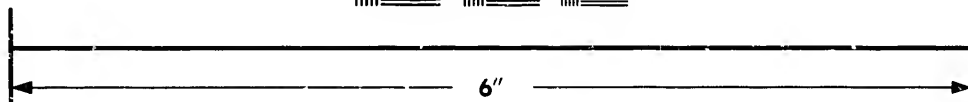
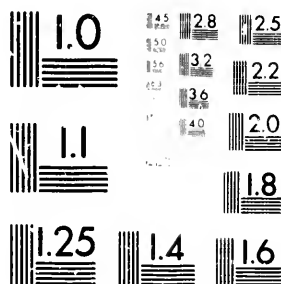


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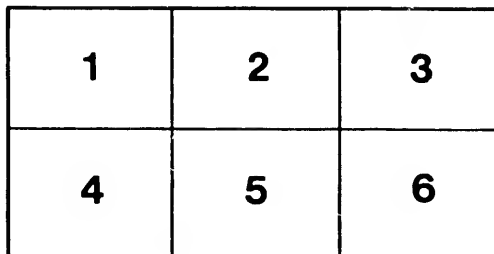
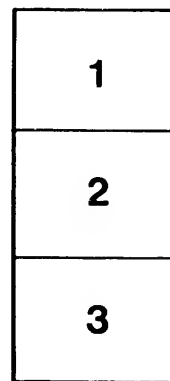
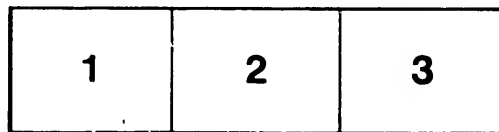
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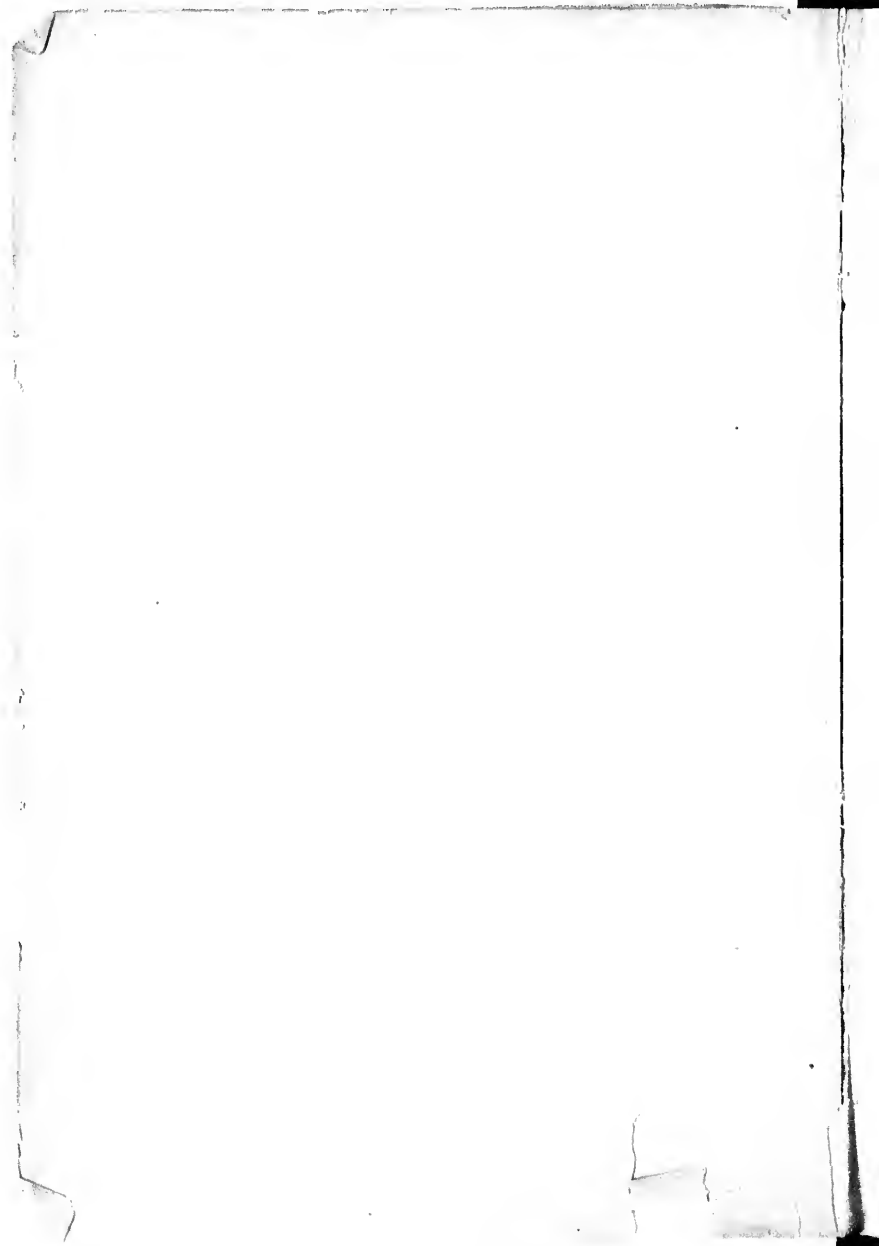
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THE YOUNG GUNBEARER

The Woodranger Tales

by

G. Waldo Browne

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The Woodranger

The Young Gunbearer

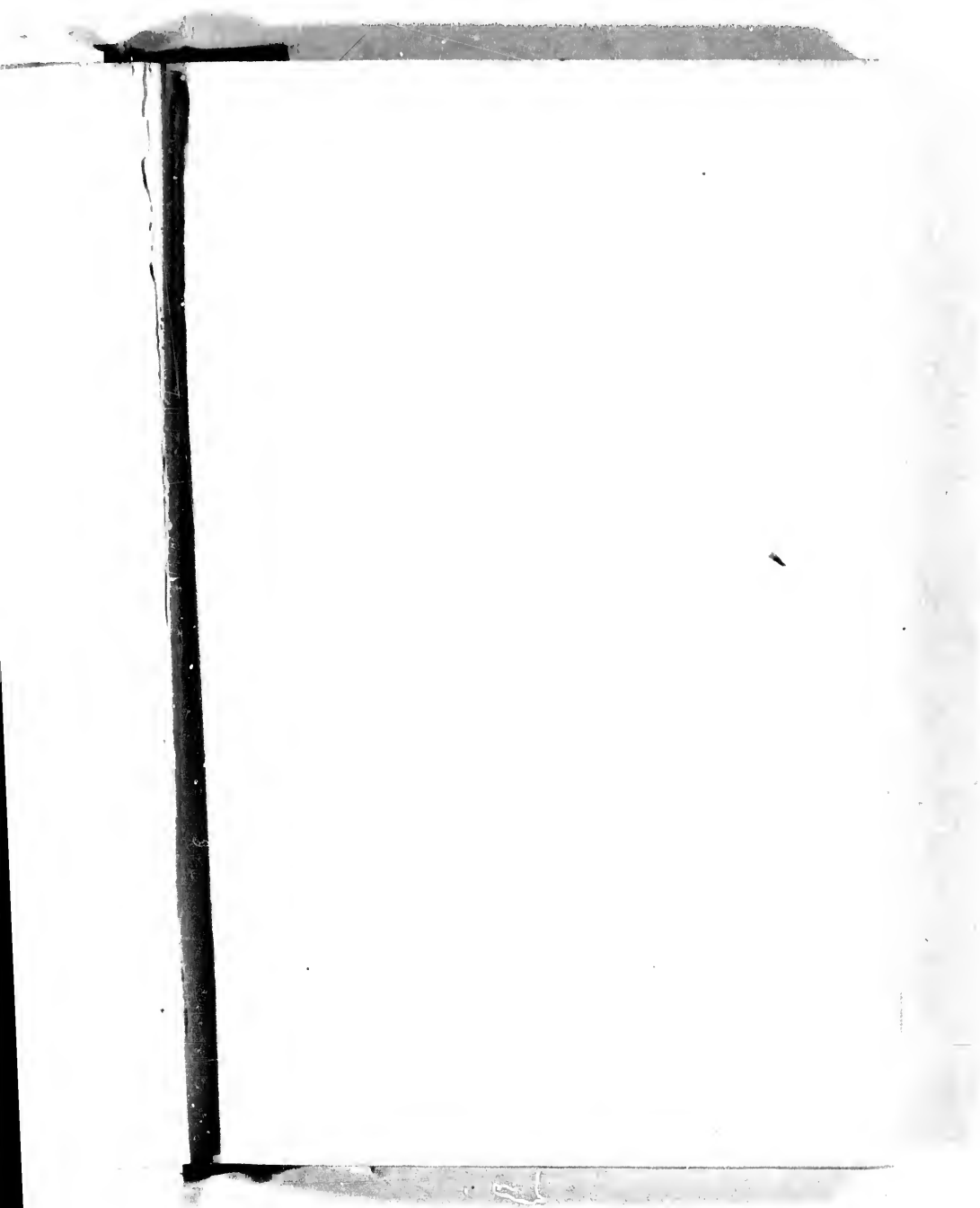
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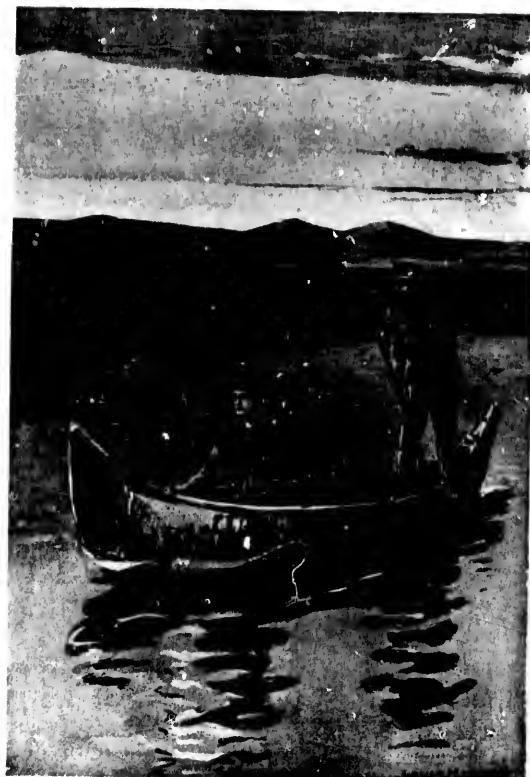
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THE WOODRANGER AND ROBERT ROGERS

(See page 15.)



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THE
YOUNG GUNBEARER

A TALE OF THE NEUTRAL GROUND, ACADIA,
AND THE SIEGE OF LOUISBURG

BY
G. WALDO BROWNE
AUTHOR OF "THE WOODRANGER," ETC., ETC.

Illustrated by
LOUIS MEYNELL



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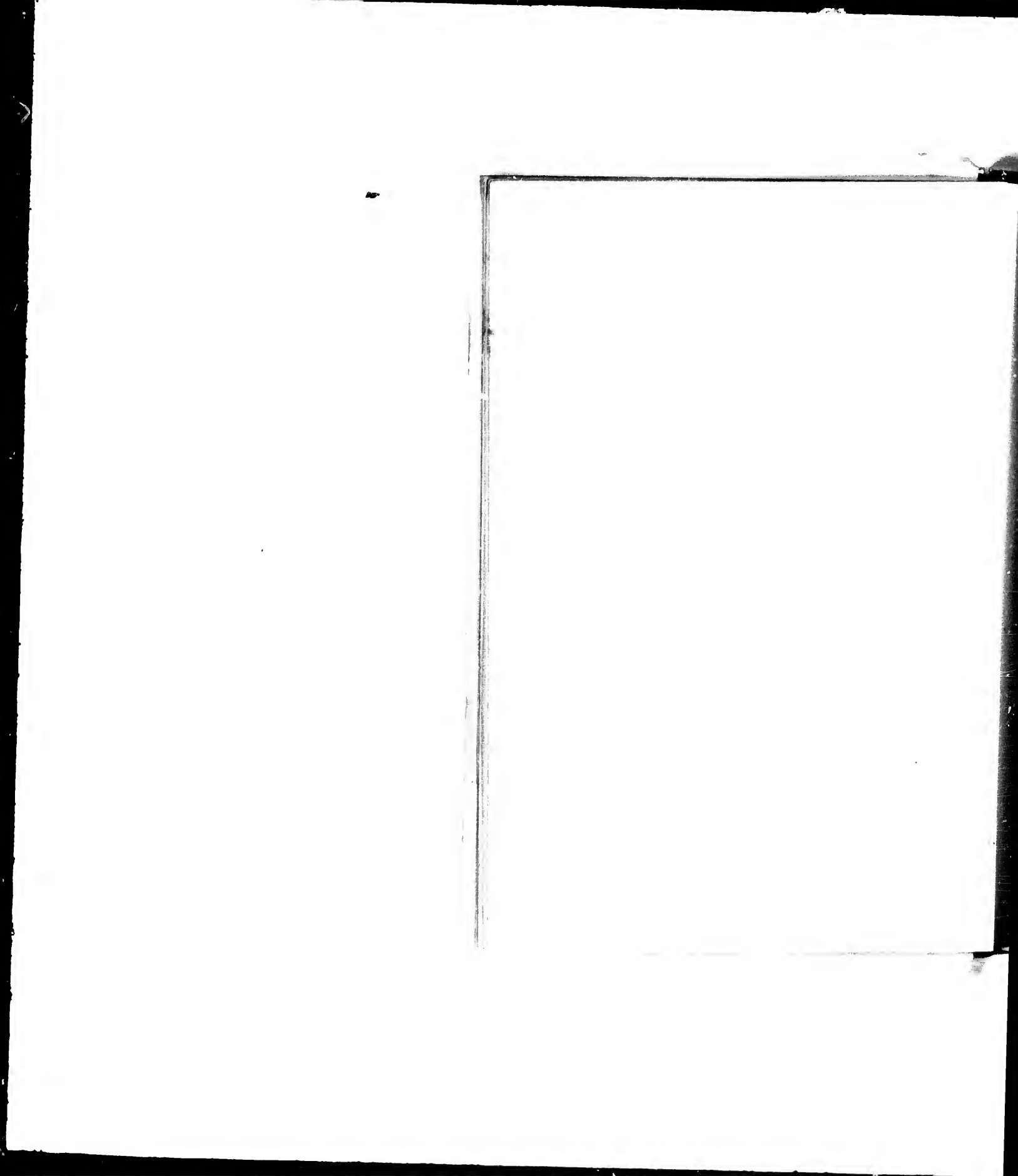
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FORECAST.

THE incidents of "The Young Gunbearer," the second of "The Woodranger Tales," belong to that period of colonial history known in America as "King George's War." In Europe this was called the "War of the Austrian Succession." In reality it was the reopening of an old quarrel between England and France, and, like all of their wars, was quickly transplanted to their colonies in the New World. Here, in addition to their bitter opposition to the English, the French rallied around them their Indian allies, whose bloody deeds carried terror to the hearts of the New England colonists.

The French domains in America, styled New France, extended from the Banks of Newfoundland to the Gulf of Mexico. The shape of this vast territory, considerable of it unexplored, was that of a huge crescent. Exposed on all sides to the attacks of enemies, it was guarded on the frontiers by forts defended by armed troops, and by fortified bulwarks on the North Atlantic coast. It had a most checkered history. At no time did peace prevail throughout the colony. At the opening scenes of "The

Young Gunbearer" the great West was not disturbed by any more serious danger than the echoes of battles already fought, and the warning notes of others to come. In the East, however, the alarm of war had spread over Acadia, and the first guns had been fired. Acadia, in its most limited sense, comprising what is now known as Nova Scotia, standing at the gateway to the Canadas, the wilderness of the boundless North, with its savage tribes, its inland seas, and their maritime importance, as it had many times previously, became debatable ground, though denominated in the various treaties as the "Neutral Country." Before describing the events which lay the foundation of our historic narrative, it is fitting that we briefly trace the history of this peninsula.

This coast was discovered by the Cabots June 24, 1497, only five years after Columbus had sailed on his first voyage, though no attempt was made by England to colonise the territory. Seventy-two years later, however, a body of colonists from Virginia sought to hold it on the ground of first discovery by their countrymen. This claim was successfully resisted by the fishermen and merchants, who had found the Banks of Newfoundland and the Bay of Fundy valuable fishing waters.

Sieur de Monts, the patron of De Champlain, first colonised the territory in 1604, by planting a settlement at Port Royal, afterward Englished into An-

napolis-Royal, and he named the peninsula L'Acadie, from the Indian term *Aquoddie*,—a pollock,—changed by the succeeding French into Acadie, and converted by the English into Acadia.

Regardless of the claim of the French, in 1630 King James I., of England, granted the peninsula to William Alexander, and the grant was named by him Nova Scotia, though frequently called New Scotland. Quite a number of nobles and their followers immediately settled in the new province. Nine years later Charles I. sold to one hundred and fifty of the nobility, some of whom were living in the territory, what his father had given away. The original French inhabitants and their descendants, however, were allowed to remain unmolested. They were not disturbed until Cromwell, in 1654, made an unsuccessful attempt to drive them out.

In 1667, under Charles II., Acadia, or Nova Scotia, was ceded to France under the treaty of Breda, and it remained under French rule until 1689, when Sir William Phipps, at the head of an expedition of English colonists from Massachusetts, captured the country.

Following the conquest of Sir William Phipps, Nova Scotia was given a period of comparative peace, until the French Chevalier Villabon made a successful attack on the province, and again the red cross of St. George was supplanted by the white lilies

of Louis. By the treaty of Ryswick, in 1696, for the second time this territory was ceded to France, and again it became known as L'Acadie.

Exultant over his triumph here, Villabon at once undertook to recover all of the territory which had at one time belonged to France, from the Isle Royal, on the east, to the Penobscot on the west. This aroused the English colonists of Massachusetts, and Captain Church was sent at the head of an expedition to teach the French a lesson. This old Indian fighter, celebrated as the slayer of King Philip, was amply capable of doing this. A sort of pious bigot, who could shut his eyes to all sorts of indignities if the victims happened to be French or Indian, but who was ready to retaliate any wrong done by the enemy with terrible vengeance, there are many instances of his cold indifference to humanity, but they do not make wholesome reading here. Well, this man, in 1710, laid waste the fair meadows of Grand Pré, as they had never been ravaged before, and applied the torch to the homes of the inhabitants, who were either slain like creatures of the wilderness, or driven in nakedness to the forests for refuge. Not until the last of the ruthless invaders had disappeared from the scene did the survivors of their cruel attack dare to come out from their concealment. With commendable resignation, they set about repairing the destruction done them; their

cottages were rebuilt, their chapels restored, and again the fertile meadows took on their carpet of green.

As a result of this conquest of Captain Church, under the terms of the treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, with Queen Anne as sovereign of England, Nova Scotia was ceded back to the English, and has remained a British possession ever since. Under the conditions of this treaty, the French inhabitants were to remain unmolested on their taking the oath of allegiance to their new rulers. This was done in 1727-28, when they pledged themselves not to move against the English, and were promised that they should not be called upon to take up arms against their countrymen. Placed in the position of neutrals, they became known as such, and Acadia, instead of being debatable ground, was considered "neutral ground."

Besides these attacks and counter-attacks by kingly powers, in 1613 an adventurer from Virginia, named Argall, seized the feeble settlement of Port Royal, and laid waste the surrounding country. Tradition says that a church at this place, plundered by this freebooter and his band, contained two bells of solid silver, which of their own weight sank into the ground out of sight, where they lie to this day. Port Royal had a most checkered career, and was almost continually under the fire of English or French guns,

and when not assailed by one of these was fighting within itself. The torch and the gun were constantly in hand for over two hundred years, until the hand of Britain closed too firmly upon it, in 1710, to be loosened, and its name was changed to Annapolis-Royal in honour of Queen Anne.

If the puppets of kings, who traded them back and forth like so many men on the checker-board, the Acadians remained quiet and contented under the various treaties, and if the cross or lily surmounted their sceptre, whether as L'Acadie or New Scotland, the people thrived through their industry, and increased in numbers. Holding their property to all intents and purposes in common, there were no paupers, and few indeed had no thatch-roofed cottages to call their homes. Money was not plenty with them, but they had little need of it. Each family owned cows, sheep, and horses, had, in fact, all the requirements toward a living a pastoral people needed. Churches were comfortably supported by a portion of the harvests, one twenty-seventh being set apart for that purpose. Crime was quite unknown, and the petty quarrels were usually settled by the priests. It will thus be seen that Acadie, as it was called at that time, was as near an earthly Paradise as it is apparently possible for a people to make it.

The ancestors of the Acadians were immigrants from Poitou, Saintonge, and La Rochelle, who had

come in the early years of the seventeenth century. Grand Pré, which means the "Great Meadow," with its hundreds of white-walled cottages, built after the Normandy idea of architecture, and white chapels, was one of the most beautiful settlements in all New France. The people had reclaimed their homesteads very largely from the sea, and their lands afforded a bountiful harvest. They exported much grain to Boston, and were prosperous and contented. Light-hearted and simple in his methods of living, of a deeply religious nature, the Acadian was of spotless character. The care for his flocks, the cultivation of his fields, and the welfare of his spiritual being completed the dream of his life. The number of the Acadians was probably about seven thousand, though they have been estimated as high as eighteen thousand.

In the midst of their idyllic happiness a shadow fell on the Eden-like scene, a premonition of the storm to follow. This cloud, though a speck on the horizon no larger than one's hand, had been discovered by a few at the time of our tale, though that was more than ten years before the banishment of the Acadians, which forms one of the most pathetic incidents in American history. Our beloved Longfellow made immortal this sad story of the fate of a race. My purpose, if he who writes to amuse can claim that dignity, is to portray the causes, in a slight

way, which led up to the despoliation of the people. We do this with no malice toward the hapless victims, though they may have been peculiarly blind to their unfortunate situation, but rather to show their helplessness between the two mighty powers that were at war with each other, and who, like a pair of huge scissors, were bound to cut whatever came between them, without materially injuring themselves. Several of those who figure so prominently in the adventures of "The Young Gunbearer" later belonged to that band of exiles. It is well to remember that there were many Gabriels and Evangelines made to suffer. An ancient willow still marks the site of the smithy of Basil the Basque; a well is still shown as the one where Evangeline and her lover were wont to meet; the stone that formed the foundation of Father Fafard's little chapel is yet to be seen; the rock from which Jean Vallie made his remarkable leap has remained unchanged through all the years; in fact, while the footprints of man have been washed away, the handiwork of nature still retains its ancient grandeur and beauty. Acadia is Acadia still, the richer for its legends and historic interest, its pathos and its religious contentment.

G. WALDO BROWNE.

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THE YOUNG GUNBEARER.

CHAPTER I.

THE WATCH-FIRES.

"WELL, lad, here we are at last, and it's a goodish perambulation o' woods and waters we've had."

"Strong three hundred miles, Woodranger. But look to the south ; is not that bright spot on the horizon a fire ? The moon is not yet in sight, though she cannot be far below the skirt of the forest."

"Well spoken, Rob. I was marking the spot myself. As you say, the moon is too deep in yon wilderness to put sich an eye in the brow o' the great green wood. Nay, it is not the moon, lad. And if you want to see its mate, look yon on ol' North Mountain," swinging his long right arm slowly around in a direction opposite to that first observed.

"You are right, Woodranger," acknowledged his companion, as he followed the other's movement.

"I can see another fire plainly, now you have called my attention to it. Perhaps they are watch-fires, kindled on those heights to warn vessels which happen to be off the coast."

"Nay, lad, now you let your knack at reading signs run a wild-goose race with your judgment. Watch-fires yon bright blazes may be, but they be the watch-fires o' scouts and not life-savers. There be no 'casion for either, 'cording to my knack o' unravelling a skein. See the lectle tongues o' flame leap up from this one on our right. The other burns perfectly even, as if it had been trimmed by a pair o' big shears. I ne'er claim great credit for reading sich sign, seeing the book o' natur' is open to all, but some message is being sent from mountain top to mountain top. It is a message o' war, too, and you'd chide me for being simple enough to say it is being sent abroad by the dusky heathens o' this land."

"So you think there is mischief afoot, Woodranger? But this is the neutral ground of the French and English."

"Neutral ground it be, lad, but it does not signify that men with bloody hearts may not kindle signal-fires. It may not be the heathen who is alone to blame. New Scotland, in the midst o' which we are, is a British province, as it must be for the safety o' New England, but it's peopled mainly by an alien race. Harmony 'tween this people and their rulers is not

'cording to the rules o' natur'. There be no man so ill o' fare as him who sarves his master begrudgingly. I ne'er like the willingness with which these Acadian neutrals don the feathers and war-paint o' the dusky heathens. The red man's love fo' bright colours be his gift, and when the white man mimics him, natur' clashes. I fear me the simple neutral is blind to his own interest. These be fruitful meadows, and the industrious people have prospered under King George's easy ways. Mark the difference 'tween 'em and the *habitants* under the French, who are everywhere groaning 'neath the burdens laid on 'em by the corrupted government o' a corrupted king."

"So you think Captain Vaughan was right in expecting trouble, Woodranger?"

"I durst not dissemble, lad, as pleasanter as it might be to prevaricate the truth. It does seem to me the lesson o' Lovewell's bloody fight has all got to be l'arned over ag'in. The tarm o' peace is breaking, as a dry stick in the forest snaps under the keardless foot o' some invader. I read it in all the signs, as far as my knack goes in reading the great unwritten language. It is hence the craft o' the gun, lad, the craft o' the gun."

"But see! the watch-fires are losing their brightness in the light o' the rising moon. No doubt the cunning reds have flashed their sign abroad to 'em who were looking for it."

The setting sun of a late summer day, 1744, was throwing long, shadowy arms over the silvery water, as the speaker and his companion propelled their back canoe leisurely up the Strait of Minas leading to that inland sea known as Minas Basin, lying on the northeast coast of Nova Scotia. They had passed through the "Narrows," that dangerous channel where the flood-tides of the Bay of Fundy often reach the appalling height of seventy feet, the highest tide in the world, and now paused to scan the surrounding country.

The older of the two was a man still on the sunny side of fifty, though his abundant hair and beard were streaked with threads of silver, and his rugged features, beaming with honest simplicity, were bronzed and marked with years of exposure to the hardships of a life in the wilderness. His garb was that of a woodsman, a pair of tight-fitting buckskin pantaloons, frilled up and down the seams, a hunting-frock of the colour of the greenwood, fringed along the sleeves and around the bottom with yellow, and girthed closely about the waist by a wide belt, so the garment could not flutter as he moved through the forest. A cap made of the skin of the silver fox, shorn of its fur for summer wear, with the long tail hanging down his shoulders, covered his head. His feet were encased in moccasins of Indian pattern and ornamentation.

He had risen from his seat at the words of his companion, and now his erect figure was drawn up to its six feet of sterling manhood, his right foot slightly ahead, and his body inclined forward, as he gazed into the distance. His left hand had been raised over his eyes to shield them from the conflicting rays of light, while in his right he held upright, with its butt resting in the bottom of the canoe, his serviceable firearm, a weapon which had been his constant companion for nearly twenty years. Its muzzle nearly reached his head, tall as he was, for every frontiersman of those days had faith only in the gun that had a long barrel. It had a smooth bore, the rifle being then unknown, was single-barrelled, and under his experienced marksmanship carried a bullet with wonderful precision. The handle of a stout knife appeared above the rim of his belt. A bullet-pouch and powder-horn, slung from his shoulders, completed his accoutrements. His home wherever the wildwood shielded him from heat, cold, or storm, he was known in northern New England, Canada, or New France as "The Woodranger."

His companion, though a beardless youth, was of a physique scarcely less strong, being almost as tall as the Woodranger, with a breadth of chest and strength of limb unusual for a boy of seventeen. His countenance was of marked beauty, except the

nose, which was very prominent. His dress was more fanciful and picturesque than that of his companion, as might have been expected of one of his years. The cape of his tunic-like hunting-shirt, which was made of dressed buckskin, as well as its skirt, was tastefully fringed and embroidered with the stained quills of the porcupine. His leggings, of the same material, were heavily frilled, while the seams of his moccasins were treated in the same manner. A cap of the raccoon skin, the fur left on, sat jauntily on his head, the long tail, with its dark, transverse bars, hanging down behind like the drooping plume of a helmet.

He, too, carried a long, single-barrelled gun, now conveniently at hand, as he sat in the bow of the canoe. The handle of a knife showed itself above his belt, while two leathern sashes, crossing each other upon his breast, held respectively a bullet-pouch, made from the head of a wood-duck, and a crescent-shaped powder-horn, a grotesque image of some strange imp carved at one end. Attached to these belts by leathern strings were a wiper and picker for his gun, and steel for striking fire.

The name of this youth was Robert Rogers, and, young as he was, in the vicinity of his home in the Merrimac valley, in the Province of New Hampshire, it was a synonym of deeds of daring and skill in woodcraft. Of him it had been said, "he was a dead

shot, as fleet as a deer, as nimble as a fox, and he could swim like an otter."

As their conversation has led us to think, this couple have only just reached this country, coming overland from the valley of the Merrimac, the Woodranger having been in Acadia before. Their errand in being here was to look after some property interests held in this vicinity by one Captain William Vaughan, who was one of the New England men who sent fishing-vessels to the coasts of that region. Captain Vaughan was then concentrating his time and energies in founding a pioneer settlement at Damariscotta, in the Province of Maine. Of him we shall hear more anon, as well as learn further particulars of the work of his agents.

Even in that land of delightful prospects and dreamy beauty, a more entrancing landscape and sea view could not have been found than that upon which the Woodranger and Rob Rogers gazed, as their keen sights swept the country far and near. In the distance, far enough removed to lend additional charm to the happy scene, lay the lawnlike meadows of Grand Pré, their broad plains unbroken by a fence. The cottage homes of the peaceful people, the groves of willows and maples, apple orchards, stately elms and lone sycamores were in sight. Near to them opened the wide mouth of the Gaspereau, with its forest of beeches and maples, and a border of pines,

where the long range of hills fretted the horizon. Right at hand there frowned down upon them that dark bulwark of Nature, Cape Blomidon, then called "Blow-me-down."¹ The lower portion of this towering promontory, composed of red sandstone, afforded a meagre existence in its seams and crevices for a growth of stunted birches and willows, while the upper half was a bare wall of dark gray rock, fringed at the crest by a scanty strip of fir-trees. This forbidding sentinel at the gateway of Minas Basin stood nearly six hundred feet high, or one hundred and fifty feet higher than the walls of Quebec.

Blomidon is to the "Land of Evangeline" what Mount Katahdin is to Maine, and the White Hills to New Hampshire. Around its dizzy form clings a perfect network of mythical tales. It was the very battleground of the gods of the early aborigines. Here lived the gods and demi-gods of the Micmacs, who, with the Penobscot tribes of Maine and the St. Francis Indians of the North, were known to the English as the Abnakis. Here was evolved a mythology, which, could it have been traced in season, would have out-rivalled the wild legends of Odin and the beautiful myths of the Southland. Here the seas, forests, and

¹ Early navigators declared they could not pass this rocky barrier without being blown on their beams-end. Hence the term, which the French way of taking down orally seems to have converted into Blomidon.

skies were peopled with races of giants, demons of darkness and angels of light. Blomidon was the sacred abode of these spirits whose dwelling no man dared to invade. If in these legends we trace many an Aryan fancy, an Eskimo dream, or a Norse tale, it shows the close connection of the origin of the North American race to those of the Old World.

Over this landscape and the silvery waters the rising moon lent a bewitching colouring, while a resinous odour from the pines, fresh and invigorating, filled all the air.

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CHAPTER II.

THE FOREST FORGE.

"AWEEL, now's me," said the Woodranger, as he seated himself in the canoe, and exchanged his gun for the paddle, "it may be well for us to be moving, though there be many things to invite one to tarry longer here. Once I remember o' coming up this waterway in company with a friendly Micmac, and if his skin was dusky his heart was white. He told me many a queer conceit o' his heathen ancestors. And I must say I was not displeased with what he said.

"He told me," continued the forester, as he and Rob began to use gently their paddles, "that his worship taught him that every created object, be it animal or plant, had a soul and a hereafter, which to me is a pretty conceit, and speaks well for the man whose great gift is the craft o' war. No creature with a heart deep enough to feel the pain-cry o' the vine that lies crushed under its own foot, or the songs o' freedom in the rushing waters, can be all evil. He will not be forgotten by the Master in the great wigwam above. I believe it, lad, I do.

"The red was unequalled in the resources o' his imagination. He saw shapes in the rocks, figures in the air, in the rippling o' waters and the sighing o' the wind a language o' abiding eloquence. He loved to people the valleys and deep wildwood with elfs, naiads, and fairies o' surpassing beauty; the rocky heights he habitated with gods and spirits o' the wildest and most grotesque forms. To every waterfall and precipice belonged some hero-tale; to every laughing cascade and sunny water some love romance. So you see the wilder the place the wilder and more weird the legend. It was natural the legends of this vicinity should partake of the mighty and mysterious. Everything about natur' here is on a grand scale. The very fogs give peculiar effects to objects, and make trees into walking men o' monstrous size. I've seen this myself, and I claim no great knack at reading sich signs. The simple red man sees with his soul in clus touch with natur', in each bush stirred by a passing breeze some creatur', in the cloud-swept pine a figure of giant form, and in the undying thunder o' ol' Fundy the voice o' a mighty and terrible power calling unto him.

"The hero o' this vicinity was a demigod called Glooscap, whose abiding-place, when stopping hereabouts, was ol' Blow-me-down. But this ol' fellow, who was so tall that, when he straightened up, his head touched the stars, had a mortal inemy in the

beaver. The beaver took great delight in tormenting him, and to do so the better took up his home in Minas Basin, which was then a big lake, with no connection to the sea. Glooscap stood this as long as ne could, and one day, when the beaver was taking his daily wash, he flung a bucketful o' water in Glooscap's face. This made the old fellow so mad he caught up a handful of the nearest missiles he could find, and throwed 'em at the beaver's head. The stone missiles the god threw are the five islands over yon, and they hit the beaver so hard he ne'er so much as quivered arter he was struck. Seeing he had killed his inemy so easily, Glooscap broke down the dam between Blow-me-down and the home o' the beaver, letting the water o' the lake out with a terrific noise down through the Narrows, so no beaver has ever taken up his abode in the basin since.

"Another inemy o' the god was the moose, which was a powerful creatur' then, going about and devouring everything it came across. Its stride was so mighty it could step from mountain top to mountain top, and at its coming everything shrank into the earth. Meeting him one day, as he was storming abroad, the god hit him with his hand atween the eyes, and Mister Moose quickly shrunk down to his present size, and in humble acknowledgment of his downfall began to eat the green boughs o' trees. And this has been its food ever since.

"Glooscap overcame other inemies in sich ways, until he was able to go about his business in peace. Another lectle tale which I remember o' him speaks well for his intentions. A village o' people was at one time left without a warrior to defend it, all having been called away on the war-path. Some of their inemies, hearing that only ol' men, women, and children were left, thought it would be a good time to pay an ol' debt, by wiping the whole place out. So the war-party drew nigh the place, and seeing 'em coming, and knowing the peril o' the homes o' some o' his favourite people, Glooscap tied stones on the feet o' the invaders. This made 'em so tired they were glad to lie down and rest just afore they reached the village, saying to 'emselves they would wake just afore dawn and sweep down on the town like an eagle on its prey. But while they slept Glooscap let fly an arrow from his mighty bow right into the tops o' the trees o'er their heads, when a terrible white frost fell upon them, closing their eyes in that sleep which knows no waking this side o' the happy hunting-grounds.

"So far man and animals had spoken the same language, and dwelt much together. But the growing wickedness o' the four-footed creatur's so displeased Glooscap that he called a mighty council, when all the beasts o' the forests, all the Indian hunters, ol' men, women, and children met together.

He then told 'em he was going away, but that some day he would come back to take 'em with him to the great sky-wigwam o' his father. Then a strange thing happened. When he broke up the council, dismissing 'em all with a wave o' his hand, lo! each kind o' animal spoke a different language, and there was, too, many tongues spoken by the people. So it has been ever since. The Indians are still waiting for his coming, and the animals look forward to the time when all shall again meet in harmony, and converse one with another. All o' which I hol' is a pretty conceit, lad.

"But the birch has flown even faster'n my tongue, for here we are at the mouth o' the Gaspereau. Them cottages scattered o'er the meadows in this vicinity are the abiding-places o' the *habitants*, a people o' a different blood from the Acadians, but this settlement is considered to be a part o' Grand Pré, whither we are bound. We can ne'er do better'n to run up the creek a leetle way, and, leaving our canoe on the bank, perambulate o'er to the other settlement."

Five minutes later the twain had run in ashore, and pulling their light craft up into a clump of willows, started across the valley toward the village of Grand Pré, considered to be the crown of Acadia. Their course led for some time through the growth of beech and maple which skirted the ridge of the

Gaspereau, and stretched away toward the south farther than the eye could reach. In the thick woods the beams of the moon penetrated feebly, so that it was quite dark along their pathway, as they advanced with the stealthy steps of the woodsmen, until they paused at last near the edge of the growth.

"How still it is, Woodranger," said Rob, in a low tone, as if impressed deeply by the solemn silence. "Seems as if there was no one besides us nearer than yonder cottages half a mile away."

"An amazing speech for you, Rob, who is no novice in the ways o' natur'. There be some one at our elbows."

Though there was no indication of alarm in the simple statement, Rob Rogers started, and looked hastily around, as if he expected to see some one step from out of the shadows into his presence. There was no living creature to be seen, or any sign of life. The Woodranger smiled, saying:

"Dost think me dissembling, lad? List an ear to that sound. If there be not a human hand 'pon that hammer I'll ne'er prate o' what in all consistency I can ne'er know."

As the Woodranger gave utterance, in a low tone, to his speech, the low ting-a-ling of two metals brought sharply together reached their ears. The sound came from his right, and the boy ranger

turned quickly in that direction, when he noticed for the first time that the view was cut off a few rods away by a dense growth of underbrush.

"Chide not thyself, lad, that you let your eyes for once stop your ears. If my memory has not taken to the cunning o' deceit, yon thicket o' ragged robin is the shop o' Le Noir the gunsmith, whose ways seem to me like his face, dark. At any rate, we should ne'er be faithful to the trust reposed in us by William should we cross his path without due discretion. Mebbe it will do no harm to sort o' look over the premises in secret, seeing it must be some uncommon object which keeps the smith at his forge at this hour."

Without waiting for a reply from his companion, the Woodranger advanced with his swift, silent steps in the direction indicated by the sounds. Rob, vexed that he had for once been outdone by his companion in woodcraft, followed as rapidly and noiselessly as he. In the forest it was too dark to see an object with any distinctness, but they had not gone far before the glimmer of a light shimmered through the dense undergrowth ahead.

The gray tracing of a road winding through the woods was now to be seen, but the Woodranger avoided this and kept to their left, until their progress was stopped by the mass of shrubbery. Through this obstruction struggled the glimmer of a light. The

Woodranger parted the foliage with one hand, when he and his companion gazed on a scene of striking effect.

The Woodranger had pulled aside the shrubbery at a place where an aperture in the rough wall of the building had once been a window, but which the overhanging vines had now completely draped, to the exclusion of sunlight and air. The place upon which they looked was the smoke-begrimed smithy of Le Noir the gunmaker, now lighted by the fire on the forge and a torch stuck in a crevice of the stone chimney. This light was adjusted to shine to the best advantage upon the anvil placed near the forge. Scattered about on the dusty floor was a miscellaneous array of tools, scraps of iron, horse-shoes, and other belongings of a blacksmith. The wide door on the opposite side of the smithy was open, a refreshing breeze from the surrounding forest filling the shop, while a wide sheen of moonlight fell upon the floor.

CHAPTER III.

AN OLD GAME.

WHILE the Woodranger and Robert Rogers were paddling leisurely up the Strait of Minas, the boys of Grand Pré were pitching horseshoes in friendly rivalry with the youth of a neighbouring village. The ring of metal striking metal, the merry shouts of triumph, and the medley of boyish voices in argument over some disputed point told that the game was a spirited one.

The playground was the wide lane leading from the single street of the town, under an arcade of apple-trees, to the picturesque home of the Acadian farmer, Benedict le Fontaine. To the right of the pitchers, as they stood with the slanting rays of the westering sun falling over their shoulders, could be seen the long row of cottages making the village of Grand Pré, the white walls and thatched roofs in most cases nearly hidden by embowering willows and apple orchards. To the south, behind these groves, and beyond the cluster of trees affording shade and protection to the buildings and grounds of Le Fontaine,

lay the wide-spreading meadows which had given name to the town. Every foot of these fertile acres had been rescued from the hungry sea held at bay by a far-reaching line of dikes, whose gray wall could be seen in the distance, while beyond that rose and fell the fitful tide of Minas Basin.

A short distance apart from the youthful players was another gathering, over which hung a spell of repose in better keeping with the lazy atmosphere. The individuals comprising this company were a representative body of men upon whose countenances care at all times sat lightly. On this particular occasion, their hay-bins well filled, the corn in its milk, the flax-fields reddening in the summer sun, between the two seasons of harvest, their sole duty to look after the fattening flocks, an hour that might otherwise have hung heavily was warded away in light story-telling, drinking cider flip, or watching the airy gyrations of the luck-bringing horseshoe flung by the hand of a youthful pleasure-seeker.

That it was eminently a respectable party was shown by the presence of a tall, sedate, dark-robed man, who, regardless of his clerical calling, laughed with the merriest and cheered with the loudest over the skilful manoeuvres of the players. He was Father Fafard, the village curé, whom all knew and loved. Near him reclined on a rustic bench Jean Hebert, the notary public. Another, as dear to the hearts of

his companions as those named, was the owner of this quaint, pastoral home, a middle-aged farmer whom old and young were accustomed to address, in the familiar manner of these plain people, as "Good Benedict." He was the same our inspired Longfellow immortalised in poetic story. Others were present who were scarcely of less account, so it was a very respectable party drawn hither, enjoying alternately the boyish tournament and the hospitality of the generous-hearted farmer.

Their surroundings were typical of an Acadian home. The cottage, a type of Norman architecture, with low, broad eaves overhanging the walls by a wide margin, dormer windows, and projecting gables, stood on a slight eminence, so that it commanded an extensive panorama of country. Seen through the openings of the network of woodbine overhanging them, the walls were white, except the casings of door and windows, which had been given a coat of dusky brown by a liquid mixture of ash and lime. In front of the dwelling, with its top overarching the roof, stood the "family maple," a huge, gnarled sugar-maple claimed to have been growing there when the first house at Grand Pré had been built. Under its thickly matted branches the family had often passed the heated period of the day and eaten their evening meal, while here Benedict delighted most to entertain his friends. Against the rugged trunk he had

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arranged a shelf to hold pipes, tobacco, mugs, and a quaintly shaped pitcher, an heirloom in the family, and usually filled with the best cider julep to be found in that land of the red apple. Rustic benches were ranged about for the comfort of the guests who preferred them to reposing at full length, as many were now, on the deep green sward of velvety softness. By the side of a younger maple, a short distance away, a box had been placed, containing the image of the blessed Mary, and a drawer to hold offerings for the poor.

A little below these trees was the orchard, loaded with the season's fruit, already taking on the pink and gold of the harvest hues. Down through this inviting grove a footpath ran as straight as a string from the door to a spring of refreshing water. A little removed from the eastern end of the cottage was a row of beehives, overhung with a drapery of melon and cucumber vines. Under the shade of a brown cherry-tree a hen had burrowed into the cool earth, while half a dozen tiny heads peeped shyly from under her expansive wings. By the stone step, with his great red tongue out, and his sides working furiously, as he panted under his warm coat, lay the house dog. Over his head, nailed upon the casing of the door, with two or three rusty, twisted nails left in their holes, was the horseshoe of good luck. In this case its charm could not be refuted.

A little to the rear, and placed so as to protect the cottage from the storms of winter, were the barns and folds for the sheep, the deep bins of the former filled to overflowing with hay and barley. In the yard were to be seen the rude farm implements of the time, and the two-wheeled wains with their wire rims and wooden axles. In one corner were placed one above another the short sleds used in winters. There were also ploughs of ancient pattern, with straight handles and heavy, awkward beams, harrows, and smaller tools used upon the farm.

A steep staircase on the outside of the barn led to the corn loft now open, ready to receive the growing crop as soon as it should be harvested. To one side of this, sheltered by the wide, overhanging eaves, was a row of dove-cotes, from which at present came no sign of life, though many a white, blue, or yellow bunch of soft feathers bespoke the presence of the peaceful inmates. Concealed somewhere in the odorous hay was a shrill-toned August cricket, whose piercing notes told that he, at least, of all in this pastoral scene was keenly alive to his love of song and work.

In the midst of this a lazy good humour reigned, broken now and then by some outburst from the boys or the shrill cries of the cricket, until the host, placing the drinking-mug back upon its accustomed rest, asked of one of his guests :

"What hast caught your alert eye, Michel?"

"Only a speck on the horizon, good Benedict, but so rapidly has it grown that I fear me it broods a storm."

At this several of the party looked in the direction of the setting sun, to discover what had escaped their notice so far, — a gray fleece hanging between the earth and the sky, too low to belong to the one, too high to be a part of the other. Presently Jean Hebert explained the mystery.

"It looks to me like a cloud of dust flung up from the dry road by the feet of a flying horse. Am I not right, good Benedict? It is coming rapidly nearer, — some one is riding a mad chase."

"Who rides a steed like that ruins a good horse," replied Benedict, who, on all occasions, seemed to be the oracle of the village. "But whoever he be, no man could ride like that who was not capable of looking out for his own welfare. Go on, good Gabriel, and tell us more of the Order of Good Cheer that reigned at Port Royal in the days of Louis the Great."

Meanwhile two comely youths had stepped forth from among the young rivals, to struggle for the honours of the pastime in which they were engaged. These two, the objects of all eyes now, presented a marked contrast in personal appearance. The older of these, by name Michel Vallie, who lived on

the Habitant beyond the deep-set wood of the Gas-pereau, was a stalwart youth of eighteen, with dark features, flashing black eyes, and an air of confidence which promised to stand him well in the trial to follow.

His contestant was Alexander Briant, the apprentice of Basil le Noir, the gunmaker of Acadia, whose smithy stood under the edge of the beech wood on the road leading to the west country. Alex was at least two years younger than Michel, though his slender figure was quite as tall as the other's. He had blue eyes and a light skin, which together told that he, at least, did not come from those of Norman blood. In truth, his parents had come from Scotland, but if not of the same race as his associates, his frankness and open-hearted generosity had won for him a host of friends in Grand Pré. If less bulky in frame than his rival, his bare arms showed muscles hardened by work, which is the secret and power of success.

The score now stood at forty-two for the boys of Grand Pré, with forty-five credited to their rivals from the Habitant. As the count was for fifty the home team must rely solely on young Alex, if they were to win the tournament.

It had been the rule that each competing pair should toss up to see who would pitch the first discus, and the one gaining the second position must

throw also the third quoit, thus leaving him who had tossed the first shoe the privilege of closing their personal contest, when their scores were added to their respective teams. This plan had proved very satisfactory.

It fell to Alex to lead this time, and, stepping to the home meg, he sent his first shoe describing a circle through the air before his friends or rival had been quick enough to follow its airy flight. So well directed was the discus that it fell just inside the goal, and, slipping through the light sand, stopped only when it had fairly encircled the stout stake.

"A ringer — counts three!" cried half a dozen spectators in the same breath, and cheering awoke the laboured silence of the previous moment. The score of the players now stood even at forty-five. But there was a chance that Michel might undo the feat of Alex, as a removal of this shoe would take the count from the owner's credit and place it to that of the successful rival.

"Michel surely wins," cried an admirer. "See, he carries his luck shoes. Where now are your boasts, you boys of Grand Pré?"

As soon as the cheering had subsided the young *habitan* advanced to the meg, and poised himself slowly and carefully for his first throw. The silence of the spectators was broken by the discordant

scream of a jay perched in the top of an apple-tree. The cry coming at the moment when the pitcher sent his shoe flying on its way, caused him to give an undue jerk to his elbow, which caused the discus to fly wide of its goal. He claimed the bird had startled him, and asked the privilege of repeating the attempt, which was finally granted.

Descrying a beautiful circle in the air the second time, the homely discus, turning like a wheel in space, dropped beside the pin, and pitting its corks firmly into the ground, lay where it had fallen, fairly touching the meg. There was no cheering, for the result had not met the expectations of his friends, though the effort had not been an entire failure.

The second shoe, spun from his experienced hand, went whirling through space, and settled at just the right angle to drop over beside the meg, striking Alex's shoe with a dull ring as it tipped up against the meg on top of both the others.

There was cheering then, though the Habitant champion still lacked two points of a victory. Alex could not hope to win, they reasoned.

Alex now took his position, while his companions held their breath. The cheering ended, and silence again reigned, as his last shoe sped on its mission. The thrower stood like a statue in his tracks, until the gyrating quoit struck the goal with a loud ring of metal. The two shoes of Michel were sent hurt-

ling in opposite directions, while that of Alex settled squarely about the meg, and remained there.

All previous cheering was outdone now. The boys of Grand Pré were exultant. It was two or three minutes before the referee could make himself heard to announce :

“ A double ringer for Alex Briant, counts six ; the taking of his opponent's count, three ; in all, nine ; makes fifty-one for the boys of Grand Pré, and they have won the game.”

CHAPTER IV.

NEWS OF WAR.

THE tumult of applause which followed the announcement of the referee in the game of the boys, as well as the most interesting point in the story being told under the maple, was suddenly checked by the clatter of horse's hoofs, and the appearance of a horseman coming upon the scene at breakneck speed. At sight of the wondering throngs of boys and men, he turned from the main street and came along the lane without slowing up the speed of his foam-flecked steed. Stopping the furious pace of the animal with an abruptness which nearly threw it from its feet, and which threatened to unseat him, he cried, in a loud voice :

"News from Port Royal!" A regiment of the English have been surprised and killed or captured. The town is now at the mercy of our soldiers. Terms of capitulation are being drawn up. Acadie is free!"

¹ This name had been changed to Annapolis-Royal by the English, but the French still clung to the original Port Royal.

The listeners stood with open-mouthed wonder, unable to credit their hearing, or, even if thinking they had heard aright, at a loss to account for the newcomer's wild alarm.

"Hold, sir!" commanded Benedict le Fontaine, by far the most calm of the crowd; "prithee, what means this speech?"

"That the triumph of France has come at last. Ay, good Benedict, ere the frosts of autumn shall have blighted yon cucumber vine the lilies of Louis will once more wave over Acadie."

"God forbid that the meadows of Grand Pré shall ever again be deluged with blood, as they have been many times," declared the farmer, fervently.

"Amen," said Father Fafard, solemnly, crossing his hands on his breast.

"What! be gone so soon?" asked Benedict, as the rider gathered up his reins.

"I speed the glorious news to the *habitans*."

"If thou must ride on, have a drink of julep," handing him the well-filled mug, which the other seized and drained at a single quaff. Then, waving his hand to the half-frightened spectators, he touched smartly his jaded horse, and the next moment was riding swiftly in the direction of the Gaspereau district.

While these peace-loving people, unable to comprehend the tidings he had told, stood watching the messenger of war, as he sped on his merciless errand,

the clear, solemn notes of the Angelus fell upon the hushed scene.

The last peal of the evening bell had died away, and the men and boys were beginning to disperse in groups to talk over the afternoon's proceedings, when some one pulled at Alex's arm, and, turning about, he discovered beside him a pretty girl a few years his junior.

"Oh, Alex!" she said, in a low tone, "your father is at the shop. I saw him as I was coming past. He wants you to come to him at once. I am afraid he is dying. He charged me to tell you to come alone."

"I will go at once, Evangeline, trusting it is not as bad as you think. You were very kind to do this errand."

Without stopping to make any explanations, Alex started toward Le Noir's smithy, leaving the others to think he had received a call to work. As has been stated, Basil the blacksmith or gunmaker, for he plied his craft with equal adeptness, whether it was shoeing a horse or putting together the intricate parts of a gun, had his shop under cover of the woods, where the jays sang their sauciest songs and the squirrels played their boldest pranks, on good terms with this man of a warlike trade. His shop was known as the rendezvous of many of the discontented sons of New France, who fretted at the fact of being under British rule, while themselves claiming to be French-

men. Le Noir was of Basque descent himself, but a hater of the English. His father had been a sort of lord over the region of the Canard, but English supremacy had taken his possessions from him, and he died leaving his wife and son poor, with a heritage of hatred for the British.

No sooner had Alex come in sight of the smithy, than he saw, lying across the grimy threshold, a man whom he recognised as his father, who had been away from home for over a month.

"What has happened, father?" he cried, anxiously.

Upon hearing his voice, the fallen man moved a little, saying, in a husky voice:

"I am wounded, Alex. I was shot by a party of French while trying to carry a message of the danger of the English to the governor. I am hunted as a spy by the French. I must get home as soon as I can, and before I am seen."

"I will help you, father. Ay, here comes Basil; he will help. He has come home before—"

"No—no, my son, he must not see me. You do not understand. He favours the French. I am hunted as an enemy to them,—a spy. Is Basil coming to the shop?"

"Yes, father," replied the now frightened Alex. "What shall I do?"

"Conceal me somewhere. I cannot go another step, and to be found here would be death."

Alex proved himself a brave boy, and, though for a moment taken aback at his father's startling announcement, his presence of mind quickly returned. Looking swiftly around, he saw that there was ample room behind the forge to conceal his father from the searching gaze of the gunmaker. Surely the other would not long remain at the smithy at this late hour. As soon as the smith should go home he could return for his father. He hurriedly told his plan, and then lent such assistance as he could toward helping the fugitive to a place of concealment. The latter could not suppress a cry of pain, as he moved.

"The wound has broken out afresh, now I have moved. But it will stop bleeding as soon as I am quiet again. Work quickly, my son, or it will be too late."

Even as he spoke he reached the dark nook selected, and then sank heavily upon the blackened mass of dirt, cinders, and iron filings accumulated in the dingy corner. Alex had barely time to cover his lower limbs with the débris, and throw a couple of old aprons over his head and body, before the burly form of Basil le Noir appeared in the doorway. His first words seemed to indicate to Alex that he mistrusted something of what had taken place, though it may have been only his imagination.

"Alone, Alex? Has no one been here since I went away?"

"Pierre called soon after noon to have a shoe reset that his horse had thrown," replied the young smith. "No one calling after him, I took the liberty, as you said I might, to leave the shop long enough to pitch shoes with the Grand Pré boys against the *habitans*."

"And won a handsome victory from them, eh, lad? You are a bright fellow, Alex, and I hold no grudge against you, let them say what they will of your father. Your day's work is over, but on your way home I wish you would find Jean le Craft, and give him my compliments, telling him to call at my house three hours hence. Mind you this is for his ear only. Now hasten. I will remain at the smithy until I have finished that new gun for Indian John, though I have to do it by forge-light."

Here was a dilemma Alex had not counted upon, and he hesitated, not knowing what to do. Should he refuse to perform the slight duty asked of him by his master, he would at once arouse the suspicious nature of Le Noir, while he did not like to leave the shop for a moment. But he quickly decided that it was best for him to do the errand, and return as speedily as possible, with the hope that his father would not be discovered during his absence. Accordingly, though not without great misgivings, he left the smithy. After watching him out of sight, the gunsmith started toward the forge.

CHAPTER V.

THE SON OF A SPY.

ALEX BRIANT had not been gone long on his errand, and Le Noir had barely fanned the forge fire into renewed life, when the Woodranger and Rob Rogers appeared at the opening in the shrubbery behind the smithy, and fixed their gaze upon the owner of this primitive shop. At that moment he was standing near the anvil, his left elbow resting on his hip, while he poised in his hand on a level with his eye a newly made gun. Holding it steadily in that position, he closely scanned both stock and barrel, as if giving the weapon a final examination.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a heavy mass of coal-black hair, beard, and beetling eyebrows, which met in a snarl over his nose. Evidently he was well pleased with his work, for a smile suffused his dark countenance, and his steel-gray eyes sparkled with a look of triumph. But his pleasure was short-lived, for a moment later a shadow fell across the glare of the forge, as a newcomer, as tall, or taller than he, and clothed in black from head to foot, paused in front of him.

Although the gunmaker was taken by surprise, the Woodranger had seen this stranger as he had stepped silently over the worn threshold, and touching Rob lightly, whispered in his ear :

"The Dark Abbé, and French spy."

This strange individual, whose tall figure would have been of still greater height had it not been for a stoop of the shoulders, was of swarthy complexion, though not as dark as the gunmaker. His face was cleanly shaven, the roots of his black beard giving an undue darkness to his skin. His countenance was long, the jaws massive, the lips thin, with an expression of cruelty rather than sanctity hovering over them. His outer garment was a black cassock, girthed up for marching through the forest.

He smiled at the gunmaker's display of fright at his sudden appearance, saying :

"Forgive me, Basil le Noir, if I caught you off your guard. A guilty mind needs time to put on its armour before meeting a faithful follower of the cross."

"I must own you did surprise me, good father, the more to my shame," acknowledged the gunmaker, showing that he felt his discomfiture more than he cared to own. "What cheer bring you now?"

At this juncture, unobserved by either of the men, Alex Briant appeared upon the scene. He stopped near a bench on the opposite side of the

shop, standing as if transfixed at the sight of the two men.

"It is time to act," replied the Dark Abbé, and the simple speech must have been very significant to the other, for he trembled and turned his gaze toward the floor. "It looks as if you, too, realised it, else why does the gunmaker of Acadie ply his craft with so much industry at this hour? The Angelus sometime since ceased its evening notes."

As Le Noir made no reply, he continued, after a brief pause:

"Does the heart of Basil the craftsman shrink at the thought of duty? The French are triumphant at Port Royal. It is time the heretics were driven from the valley of the Gaspereau. Is there reason to doubt your fidelity to the noble cause?"

"Basil le Noir has armed more Micmacs than any other man in New France," replied the gunsmith, cautiously.

"Forgive me, good Basil; I doubt not your heart is as true as the guns you have made to help us poor down-trodden people to live under British rule. The Micmacs are still faithful. If the sons of Grand Pré are half as true, it will not be long ere the golden lilies of France will again wave by the side of the cross over Acadie."

The gunmaker still held the unfinished gun poised in his left hand, as if the limb had become rigid, and

his steely eye now locked the priest squarely in the face, though his voice quavered slightly as he demanded :

"Hast come recently from Quebec : "

"Straight as the crow flies, good Basil. And there to-night the eyes of the nobles of New France are fixed upon the sons of Acadie."

It was not Basil le Noir's nature to yield easily. If a moment before he had feared this man before him, and trembled at his glance, he had now recovered his usual stubbornness, and he said, to the abbé's surprise :

"In Quebec the crushed people groan and writhe under the taxes and burdens heaped upon them by Intendant Bigot, the chief of thieves and robbers. Woe to France as long as she has such minions feeding upon her colonies."

The Dark Abbé crossed himself piously, while he uttered a groan of despair, saying, in a sharp, rasping voice :

"God forbid that I should hear such speech from Basil le Noir. The best of us cannot serve two masters, sir ; you must choose between France and England. In other words, you are either a neutral, bound hand and foot to the British, or a Gunbearer, who dares to say 'I will be a freeman.'"

"Why need a peaceful people meddle, sir? Cannot the Acadiens till their fields and tend their flocks in peace? There was no talk of war —"

"Beware of treasonable utterances," broke in the priest.

"Until France made it," completed Basil, with a rising inflection. "If that sounds of treason it is the truth."

"I never dreamed," said the abbé, trying hard to conceal the anger which threatened to break forth at any moment, "that Basil le Noir would need to be given a lesson along with the fools of Grand Pré."

"Say not that which will anger me, Father le Petite," replied Basil, who was measuring his ground carefully, and calculating just how far it would do for him to go. "I have not expressed any love for the British, whom I hate and detest for the wrong they have done me and my family. If I have grown lukewarm for my motherland, it is because she has been unfaithful to her children. France would make a catspaw of us to pull her chestnuts out of the fire."

"Rash words," replied Le Petite. "Let me whisper you that which will show you the folly of your speech. The noble Bigot and his associates have already a plan on foot by which they expect to annihilate every Englishman in New England. To aid in this glorious work, at this moment there is a fleet of French ships coming to this shore. Ay, soon all this country will be New France, from the Banks of Newfoundland to the Great River of the West.'

' The Mississippi.

Then you will learn that a true Frenchman never forgets! But who am I, but a humble instrument of a higher power? Perhaps I am overjealous, but it is my dream that Acadie shall yet be restored to France, to shine as the fairest jewel in her crown. You and I, Basil le Noir, can be the leaders in that grand undertaking, and reap the golden fruit that comes with success. To-night your sincerity shall be tested. I will know ere midnight if you be true or false to France."

The gunmaker simply bowed to this direct speech, and Le Petite was unable to read his thoughts. While given to speaking in riddles himself, nothing provoked him more than to have others put on a mask. Finally, Le Noir said :

"There are no truer hearts in all Acadie than those which burn at the Canard with hatred for the British."

"Spoken like a true son of Basque," declared the abbé, quickly, the frown instantly driven from his dark features. "Can you say as much for the men of Grand Pré?"

"Gossipers say that such men as Le Fontaine are growing fat and lazy on the easy-going Englishmen. And you know a well-filled stomach makes a servant good-natured toward his master."

"Well said, good Basil. Hast heard of others whose stomachs have been petted rather than their minds?"

"Fewer visit me than formerly. It may be they do not like my company, or my wares may be less to their liking."

"The fools!" hissed, rather than spoke, the priest. "They cannot be given a lesson too soon. The time has come to strike the first blow. Let Main-à-Dieu be the object. Do you understand?"

"When?" asked Le Noir, by way of reply.

"Four days, or rather nights, hence."

"It will require all of that time to reach the place, even by water."

"Then there is more need of a prompt start. The faithful of Chebucto¹ are on hand, and impatient to be on the way. I shall hold you accountable that twelve faithful men from Grand Pré are at the Isthmus at midnight. They had better be disguised in the paint and leather leggings of their allies, who will not fail them. A failure on your part or theirs means —"

If the Dark Abbé left his sentence unfinished, it was to make its impression felt the more keenly by the other. Basil le Noir knew the thought completed would say :

"The desolation of your own and companions' homes!"

¹ A rendezvous of the Micmac Indians at that time. Five years later a party of English colonists took possession of the place, and changed the name of the town to Halifax.

His errand performed, the Dark Abbé was about to leave the smithy, when he discovered Alex, who had remained a listener to the foregoing dialogue until it was too late for him to escape without being seen. Basil le Noir saw his apprentice at the same time as Le Petite, and his breath came quick and furious, as he demanded :

“How long have you been there, Alex?”

Realising the meaning which might be put to his answer, Alex replied, guardedly :

“A brief while, good Basil. I forgot the hammer and I had to come back.”

“And listened to what has been said,” exclaimed the Dark Abbé, “that which none but a true son of France should hear. Canst vouch for him, Basil le Noir?”

“I have seen nothing amiss in the youth since he came six months ago to learn something of my craft.”

“Out upon you for such a foolish speech. It does not answer my question. Do you vouch for him in this extremity, Basil le Noir?”

“I vouch for no one, sir.”

“Wisely said, sir gunmaker. He is not of the blood of Acadie?”

“He is of Irish or Scotch heritage, I believe. I never took the trouble to find out. His home is in Grand Pré.”

“The Scotch are no better than the English. I

am amazed at you, Basil le Noir!" Turning to the trembling boy, he demanded:

"What is your name? I do not remember seeing you before, and I intend to keep well acquainted with the good people of Grand Pré."

"Alexander Briant, sir. My father —"

"Is Wallace Briant!" exclaimed the Dark Abbé, his dark countenance suddenly becoming as black as the sooted roof overhead, "the traitor — the spy! If he is living at this moment his scalp is worth a good fifty pounds at Chebucto."

"My father —"

"Stop!" fairly roared the priest, his face now crimson with rage. "An eavesdropper is no better than a spy, and a spy is always an eavesdropper. Is it possible, Le Noir, you do not know the judgment set against him in Quebec? A coat of tar and feathers and a roast at the stake awaits him as soon as he can be caught, and that time is not far off. At Port Royal I learned the Micmacs were on his track. Not a month ago the audacious fool dared to enter one of the good Intendant's banquets, and there learned many secrets dangerous to the welfare of Bigot, should they get to the British. Now this son of a spy has possessed himself of secrets which make him our deadly enemy!"

"I hope you do not blame me, good father. Truly —"

"He was under your roof," retorted the abbé, quick to improve the opportunity to show his power over the gunmaker. "I shall look to you to see that he is cared for!"

The words conveyed less than the look Le Petite gave Le Noir, and the latter shrank back, as he said:

"Not that, good father! He is so young. Let him swear he will never tell what he has heard, if he has heard aught that is dangerous. You will do that, Alex?"

"I pledged myself to Father Fafard only last Sabbath to be a true son of Acadie," replied Alex. "I am very sorry for what I could not avoid."

"A fig for that. If you are a true son of Acadie, you will answer me a question — only one. You shall go free if you will do that, and promise never to repeat what you may have overheard here. Will you do it, boy?"

"If it be such a question as I can answer, sir."

"You can, and *shall*," with a strong accent on the last word, which did not escape Alex. "Where is your father?"

The abruptness of the question gave Alex a tremor of fear, but with this came the thought that his father had not been discovered, and it gave him courage to reply with a firmness which surprised himself:

"I cannot tell you, sir. He is away from home, and has been for some months."

"I have reason for knowing that. Will you tell where he is?"

Alex deemed it most prudent for him to remain silent, while, for the first time, he calculated his chances of escape by flight. He realised that his situation was becoming desperate. The Dark Abbé was known to him by reputation as a man who held great power, whether for good or ill, over the inhabitants of Grand Pré. Basil le Noir, while considered an odd, peculiar man, had always been very friendly toward him, and he believed he could rely on his friendship in this extremity. So he decided to meet the worst with a brave front, determined not to betray his father.

"You can tell, and you shall be made to, if you do not feel like doing it voluntarily," declared Le Petite. "Basil, I call upon you to lend your assistance. Bring the fellow over to this cleared spot, and under that beam."

The gunmaker hesitated but a moment. A flash of the bead-like eyes and a scowl on the dark features warned him that his safety demanded obedience. Seizing Alex stoutly by the shoulder, he dragged him to the spot pointed out by the Dark Abbé.

While he was doing this the abbé picked up two small chains, each about ten feet in length. He then fastened them to Alex's thumbs, and tossed the ends

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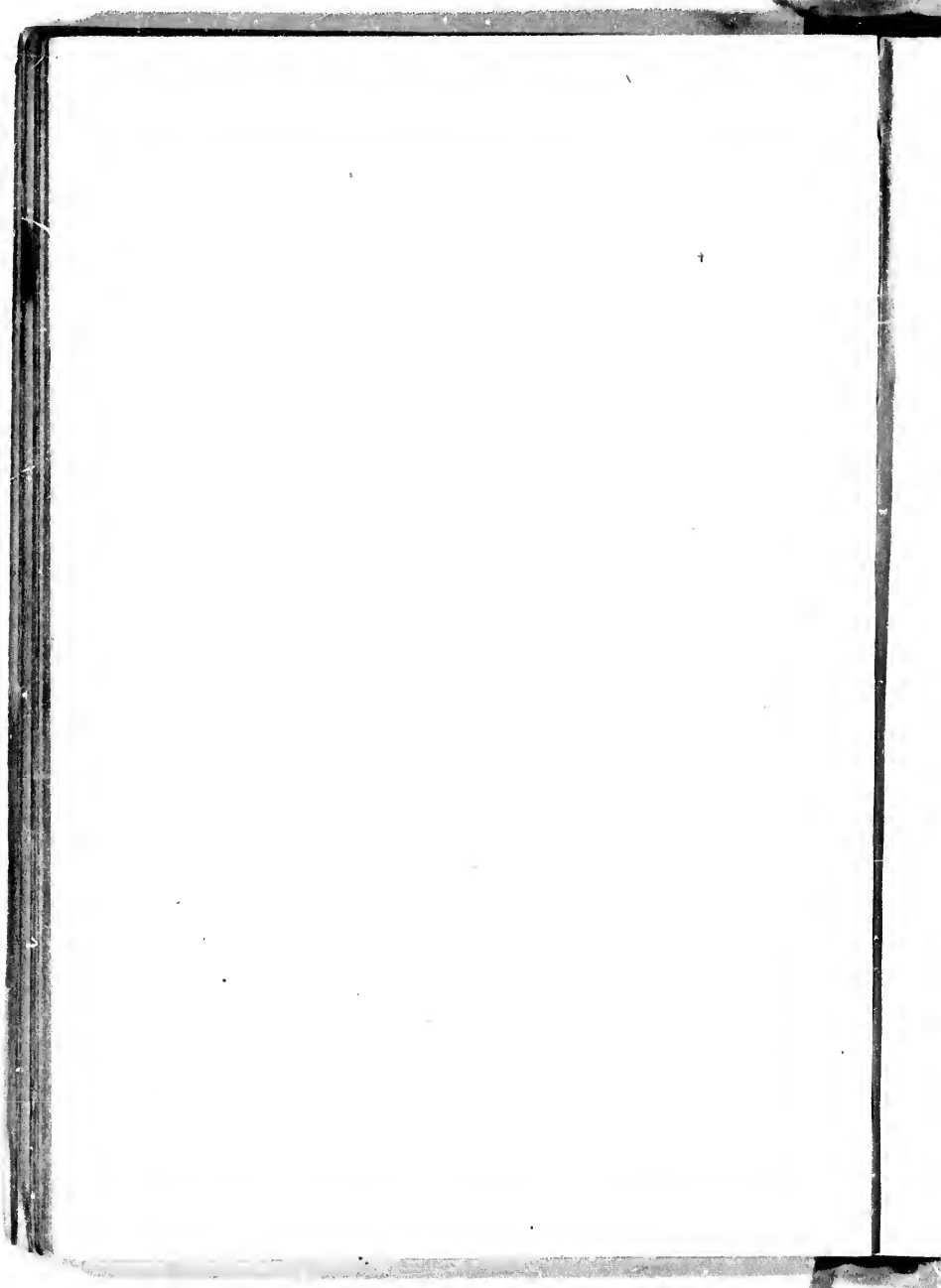
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"ALEX . . . WAS LIFTED UPWARD UNTIL ONLY HIS TOES
TOUCHED THE FLOOR."



over the beam, which he could easily reach with his hand.

"Take hold of these, Basil, and with your strong arm raise him up. We will soon fetch the truth from the obstinate puppy."

The horrible intentions of the Dark Abbé were now evident, even to the frightened boy, who began to beg for mercy.

"Tell us the truth about your father," was the grim reply. "A word will save you all torture, and us further trouble. Will you do it?"

"Father is not at home. More I cannot —"

"A likely story," sneered the priest. "But we will get the truth from you. Pull on the chains, friend Basil; pull until I tell you to stop."

Then the gunmaker plied his great strength to the chains, which slipped slowly over the beam, while Alex, struggling to free himself, was lifted upward until only his toes touched the floor.

CHAPTER VI.

RESCUE OF ALEX.

It will not be supposed that the Woodranger or Robert Rogers had lost any part of the preceding scene. Every word of the Dark Abbé had been listened to with intense interest, while the sharp thrusts and parries of Basil le Noir had brought a look of disgust to the countenance of the forester, as he saw through the thin artifice of the gunmaker to assume a defiance of the priest which he was far from feeling. Then the seizure of Alex aroused the watchers to deeper emotions at the treatment accorded the helpless boy. Rob found it difficult to remain inactive as the preparations for the torture were made.

In his zeal to find a suitable place for carrying out his inhuman purpose, the Dark Abbé had selected a spot in that part of the smithy near the window outside of which the watchers were concealed. That they might not be discovered, both drew back slightly, but they were able to view the whole proceeding. Noticing the suppressed excitement of his youthful

and fiery companion, the Woodranger whispered in Rob's ear:

"It's a sorry amazement, lad, but ne'er let thy heart run off with thy head. Sich races are short, lad. I dare say the varmint will ne'er kill the lad outright, though I claim no very good reason for saying so, seeing I have sich poor opinion o' the creature. How dost think we had better meddle in the matter?"

"A shot apiece will fix both," replied the impetuous Rob.

"Nay, that'll ne'er do. It would be a wanton waste o' a good opportunity. Hark, lad! didst hear that cry?"

"The cry of the tree-toad—the spring cry, too, and this late in the season," answered Rob, in the same cautious whisper.

"You need no code to show you the sign, lad. Be that the cry o' a toad three months belated, it came from the throat o' a red. There's an answer off to the right. I would stake my reputation as a prophet that the woods are abounding with reds."

"In that case we cannot act too quickly."

"Nor with a wanton waste o' caution, lad. You are uncommon nervous to-night."

"I know it, Woodranger. The sight of that black wretch has set fire to my heart. See! they will kill the boy by inches."

"It is ne'er sich a sight as one would look for on

neutral ground. The lad is put to sore straits. We cannot act too cautiously, lad, too cautiously!"

This was spoken, or rather whispered, at the time when Alex, his whole weight resting on his toes and thumbs, gave expression to sharp cries of pain, in spite of his attempt to meet his fate with resignation. A slight sound from behind the forge at that moment reached his ears, and he thought that his father was unable to remain a silent listener to the cruel treatment any longer.

"Stop — father — let me think!" he exclaimed, hoping his words would quiet his father, and check the torture of his enemies. But the abbé showed no signs of relenting, as he commanded:

"Up with him, Basil, higher! Nothing unlocks a fool's tongue like pain."

The Woodranger could bear no more. The restraining hand which he had laid on his companion tightened, while he whispered:

"Lay low, Rob, while I perambulate round to the other side. When I get their attention, pull the boy out through the window here. Then look out for yourselves. I'll meet you somewhere 'tween here and the town."

As he finished his hurried explanation, the Woodranger began to move noiselessly away. In his present state of feeling Rob would have preferred to assume this more dangerous part of the adventure,

but he was too good a soldier to question orders. Nor did he allow his gaze to leave the scene in front, while he watched and waited.

Making no sound in his retreat, Rob had no way of knowing the Woodranger's progress except by the passage of time. The Dark Abbé had again questioned his victim, and received the same reply as he had before. Having sympathy for the young sufferer, the gunmaker had allowed the chains to slacken until Alex for a moment stood squarely on his feet. This aroused the anger of Le Petite, who exclaimed :

"Look to yourself, Basil le Noir, or you shall take the fool's place. Up — up with him, till I command you to stop, or he lets the truth out of his foul mouth."

By this time the Woodranger had made a semi-circuit of the smithy, and appeared in front of the dingy structure. Though intent on watching Alex Briant, Rob saw the forester before either of the men in the shop. Basil le Noir was again pulling at the chains, when he suddenly caught sight of the woodsman coming swiftly and silently toward the forge. With a low exclamation, the gunmaker let go upon the chains, and seized the priest excitedly by the shoulder.

Released thus suddenly, Alex Briant dropped to the floor, the chains falling off from his thumbs, so that he was free and upon his feet in a moment.

"Ill fares the hand that slays a human being from

sheer wantonness," said the Woodranger, in a deep, impressive voice, as he paused on the threshold. "I can ne'er dissemble, but to me sich work as this takes on the spirit we might naturally look for in the red man, but ne'er expect in the breast o' the white."

The Woodranger had stopped in such a position that he stood with his left side toward the startled couple, and his gaze so fixed that he could command a view both inside and outside the smithy. The long firearm he carried had been drooped into the hollow of his left arm, while his right hand rested on its stock close to the hammer, which was raised. Both men saw that the weapon was cocked, and the Dark Abbé shivered, as he looked into the ominous muzzle which stared him in the eye.

"Who are you?" demanded the priest, as soon as he could find his speech.

"A peaceful perambulator o' the forests; one who claims no great knack at unravelling the skein o' man's jedgment, 'less the threads be reeled from the big spool o' common sense. I 'low there be much to warp man's jedgment in the ways he has made, but there be no cross trails in the plan o' the Infinite One. Being a man following in God's path, if not after God's own —"

"What babbling fool is this?" cried the puzzled priest, making no attempt to conceal his anger at this inopportune appearance of the forester.

"He is a stranger in Acadie," said Le Noir, "be he fool or madman. Look out, Father le Petite, I don't like the way he handles that firearm. He's either criminally careless, or intent on mischief."

"Turn that weapon aside," commanded the Dark Abbé, with a tremor in his voice which the Woodranger did not fail to notice, and his bearded lips parted with a grim smile, as he replied :

"This weapon o' mine is ne'er a wanton slayer, and I do not disremember that we are on neutral ground. Mebbe you do?"

The Dark Abbé and his companion looked one upon the other, wondering what sort of a person they had to deal with. They did not believe the Woodranger was to be feared if he could be made to put aside that threatening firearm. Naturally both had forgotten for the time being their captive. Finally, the abbé plucked up courage to say :

"Prithee, man, how dare you declare yourself to be on neutral ground while you offer such hostility? I remember it, and, in the name of peace, once more ask you put aside that gun. It might explode without such intention on your part."

The Woodranger laughed in his peculiar way, and replied, in that deliberate tone of his :

"That weepen l'arned the ways o' thy brethren in dark cloth long ere it came to be mine. Could this slayer o' beasts and men, both red and white, find a

tongue, not of fire, it would tell you how it defended Norridgewock in the hands o' Father Ralle at his last stand. I was there, who ask no credit for it, and saw the truth."

The words were not without the desired effect, for both instantly showed a deep interest in what he was saying.

"It has some of the points of a French gun," said Le Noir, with a critical look. "That is a Richelieu stock, though I am not so sure of the barrel. I fain would examine the weapon," he added, addressing the Woodranger. "Being a maker of such implements, I take an interest in them beyond that of a common man."

The forester smiled, but shook his head.

"So you were with the unfortunate Father Ralle?" asked the Black Abbé, who was following this dialogue, hoping to gain some advantage by it.

"I will not prevaricate the truth, man. It was for me, whether it was for good or ill, to see the father fall. Mebbe I was nearest, and now my attention has been called to it, I am quite sure sich was the case, when he went down like a man o' war rather than one o' peace. Yes, I fit with Ralle."

Coming at once to a conclusion far from the truth, the priest said, fervently:

"Let me clasp thy hand, faithful son. I would walk to Quebec for the privilege."

"I have no desire to dissemble, sir, but, and mind you I say it in good faith, if you were to look behind you, you might see that which, without walking a step, would surprise and amaze you."

Acting upon the suggestion, both men turned quickly about, when they discovered that Alex Briant was missing.

"Gone! he has got away!" exclaimed the priest. "Quick, Basil, stranger—" but when he looked back to address the Woodranger, he found that he, too, had disappeared!

CHAPTER VII.

"KNACK 'GAINST CUNNING."

THE Dark Abbé had good reason for uttering his exclamation of surprise, for so silently and swiftly had the Woodranger disappeared that neither the priest nor his companion could tell whither he had gone. Like his race, the latter was superstitious, and he was quick to ascribe the assistance of evil powers to have enabled the strange man to get away so easily, and he said :

"The good saints protect us from the power of —"

"Out upon you for a fool!" cried Le Petite. "He cannot yet be far away. He must be overtaken, and the boy, too. It will not do for either to get off. Do you find the boy and bring him to me, or your life will not be worth a forfeit. I will look after the babbling woodsman. Stir your clumsy legs, man, or you will rue this night's work."

By this time Basil le Noir had noticed the disturbed appearance of the foliage about the window, and he concluded that Alex had escaped by that place. Thinking to cut off the youth's flight by

going around the end of the smithy, he started as fast as his stout legs could well carry him out at the door. Even in his alarm he did not neglect to close the heavy door, the abbé having already rushed out into the open air.

Leaving the precious couple to follow, each his own way, in their search for the fugitives, our interest naturally takes us to the fugitives themselves. It will be easily understood that it had been a part of the Woodranger's object in calling the attention of the priest and the gunmaker to the escape of Alex, that he might find time to get away himself. He believed, and with good reason, that the Dark Abbé had Indian allies within calling, and that he would summon them to his assistance the moment his suspicions should be aroused. Thus he darted rapidly around the corner of the shop, and when his enemies were looking with amazement upon the empty space he had filled a moment before, he was threading the forest several rods away.

Knowing that Rob would lose no time in getting away from the smithy, and that he would keep under cover of the growth, the forester anticipated the other's course so well that he was not long in overtaking his youthful companion and Alex. At that moment a low, but distinct, whistle, sounding very much like the call of the brooding grouse, reached the ears of the three.

"The ol' he-wolf is signalling his herd," declared the Woodranger, in a cautious tone. "They will gather below here. I see you have the lad with you, Rob. We'll keep on in the way you were moving. Hast l'arned where the lad lives?"

"My home is near the lower orchards, not far from the basin," replied Alex. "But, kind sirs, I know not what to do. Mother will be worried about me. But in Basil's smithy lies father concealed behind the forge. I must not desert him, for he is wounded sore, and if either Le Noir or the priest should find him, I am sure they would put him to death."

Robert Rogers allowed his surprise to be shown in his looks, but the Woodranger spoke in his usual matter-of-fact tone, as he said:

"A truth 'yond prevication, lad. How long has thy father been in ambushment in the sloop o' his inemy?"

"Since sunset, sir. Oh, you seem like an honest —"

"Tut — tut, lad. Spare thy time and breath. I hear the red wolves replying to their leade.. We must be moving, but while we move we can busy our minds with some plan out of this amazement." He led the way along the edge of the woods toward the town of Grand Pré, Rob and Alex keeping close behind him, though it puzzled the latter either to

imitate the pace or the noiseless movements of his companions.

"It requires no great adeptness o' judgment, arter what has been said and heard," resumed the Woodranger, "for me to say that the inemy are not going to give your family any perticular rest till they have captured you, and, it may be, have glutted their thirst for revenge, which I am prone to say is as dry as the hot sands in summer."

"You will help us, sir?" said Alex, anxiously.

"I ne'er wish to previcate, lad, but my young friend here and I have come to the neutral ground on business, and not to stir an amazement that would be like raking over a hornet's nest on a hot day. Mebbe you can tell us where habitates one Benedict le Fontaine?"

"His farm is just off the main street on our left, as we go to my home. It will be in sight, sir, and you cannot miss it for the big maple. Do you think they will find father at the smithy?"

"Not for a time, lad, not for a time. The inemy will naturally leave the smithy to look for us."

"I am so glad father is safe, if for only a short time. Do you think the Micmacs are arming against us? And have the French really been successful at Port Royal?"

"The last be too sure, lad, too sure. As to the other, the stick seems to float that way. But my

'vice is for you to keep a still tongue. The brook that runs deep does not gurgle. It is the tongue that makes the trouble, lad."

"You are English," declared the other, who seemed determined to keep up the conversation.

"Peaceful perambulators o' the great woods, lad, nothing more. I wist thy father has a more discreet tongue than thine."

This served to quiet Alex, who moved along with his companions in silence. Judging from the stillness of the night there was no human being within a long distance. At a point where the road entered the forest the Woodranger stopped.

"Where does this dark-faced maker o' weepsons o' war live?" he asked. "Mebbe I didst know once, but the memory o' it has slipped from my mind."

"His home is on the Canard, some distance from here, toward Blow-me-down."

"Now my attention has been called to it, I remember the spot, a little corner cut from the sea and the beech wood. I remember the aged dame who wore her faded cap and spun the flax, with a tongue as busy as her wheel, and with far less o' music in its shrill tone. What think you, Rob, o' the enemy?"

"That they will look for the boy at home, and for you in the woods. They cannot know there is a third, which is myself," replied the young ranger to the abrupt question.

"Which is a credit to your judgment, or mine be in fault. Presuming that sich be the case, and to me it seems no arrant presumption, it ill becomes us to act other than discreetly, and with sich promptness as is consistent with good judgment. From what I have heerd, lad, I conclude it will not be safe for your father to remain in Grand Pré longer than he can get somewhere else. The Dark Abbé has reason, too, I jedge, to look for you. Have you no friend where you and your mother can go until this disturbance has blown over?"

"I think of none better than Jean Vallie on the Avon, sir."

"Then speed thy steps to Jean Va'lie's, and Rob shall go with you to see that you fall into no ambushment. I will go back and see what fare befalls your father."

"You are very kind, sir. I know you will do the best you can for father."

"That I will, lad, and you may say to your mother from me, which is arrant presumption, seeing I am an entire stranger,—mind you I say this not as a meddler,—that she ne'er need feel undue misapprehension over what in all consistency can be but a passing breeze."

"Who may I tell her is so kind?"

"It does not matter, it does not matter. Mebbe I've committed a blameful indiscretion in speaking

out as I did, seeing I've said that which in all consistency can be only speculation on my part. I judge the enemy be ranging low, and close at hand, 'cording to their signal-cries. They tell me, too, they be a bit confused in their drift. You had better be moving, lads, afore the dusky-skins smell your tracks. I need not tell you to act discreetly, Rob; that it be knack 'gainst cunning, white knack 'gainst red cunning. It would be giving you just cause to doubt my faith in you."

The shrill cry of a catbird at that moment fell on their ears, and pressing the hand of his older companion in reply to his caution, Rob Rogers, motioning to Alex to follow him, led the way noiselessly in the direction of the village, keeping under cover as much as possible.

"Rob will not be caught like the bee that o'erloads with sweets in his greediness. Nay, the lad is not o'erconfident, and his cunning is a match for the reds. How childish I be getting to be, and yet it may be an indiscretion on my part to let them go alone. An ol' man's prudence, arter all, is *preferable* to all the zeal o' youth."

Having watched his young friends out of sight, the Woodranger turned about and plunged into the woods, retracing with noiseless steps the course he and his companions had just come.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ACADIAN RANGER.

THE path of the Woodranger was really less environed by danger than might have been considered at first thought. Both the French and the Indians had left the vicinity of Le Noir's smithy, expecting the fugitives would leave the place with all speed possible. Still it was not unreasonable to suppose that some straggling member of the party might be hanging behind the others. Even this stimulus was not needed to make the forester cautious, as he advanced through the beech growth, where only at rare intervals the moonlight threw its bars of silver. Caution with him was a part of his nature, and, avoiding the openings in the forest, he flitted like a shadow toward the lone smithy, until for the second time he stood near the hidden window.

The fire on the forge was now burning low, and not a sound came from within or about the building, as he pushed aside the vines, to get a view of the interior. Le Noir, in the haste of his departure, had left the torch burning, but its light was nearly spent.

Despite this unfavourable lighting of the scene, the Woodranger was able to distinguish the figure of a man lying at full length on the floor in the shadow of the forge. He was so motionless that at first he thought he was dead, but presently a low groan, like a half-suppressed moan of pain, escaped his lips. Feeling confident of his identity, the forester lost no time in addressing him by name.

The wounded fugitive started with surprise, and lifting himself upon one elbow, asked, as he tried to discover the speaker :

“Who are you?”

“I do not prevaricate the truth in saying that I am your friend, seeing I've left your boy to find his way home without me. The reds are perambulating round considerable, with fingers naturally itching for scalp-locks. I judge you are not well equipped to move about.”

“I carry an ounce of French lead in my right side, sir. Still I am stronger than I was when I reached this shop at sunset. I crawled out from my hiding-place, hoping I could get to my home. But it is all up with me, and you can do me no greater favour than to warn my wife and children of the danger hanging over them. Tell them —”

“Forgive an ol' man for his weakness, sir, for conceit is but a form o' weakness, but I believe I can do you a better turn by examining your hurt than by

listening to sich talk, which in all consistency I couldn't think o' following. If French lead be not as bad as red lead, it do chaw considerable, I 'low; and yet this perticarler chunk may have been more marcfuif than you conclude. Anyway, it'll do no harm to find out, and though I claim no great adeptness in the matter o' dressing sich, I think I can say, without boasting, that I'm no novice at the knack. It be an ugly rent. Let me move you so the light from the fire will fall on it. I would add a leetle lightwood to the blaze, but that might be the means o' calling the red imps this way. Darkness is not the worst ill that can befall one on 'casions like this."

The Woodranger possessed the happy faculty of using his hands while he talked, and by this time he had not only gently removed the clothing about the wound, but carefully wiped away the clotted blood with some of the lint he always carried with him for that purpose.

"It is an ugly spot," he mused, "and the bullet must lay purty near the skin on the back. It 'pears to have struck a rib and sort o' slewed downward." Turning the sufferer over on his stomach, without checking his speech, he went on: "Now's me, it does lay handy, and handier still, as it comes out to show itself," holding up between his forefinger and thumb the bullet, which he had removed

with a swiftness and dexterity a surgeon might have envied.

The Woodranger then stanchd the flow of blood with more of the lint, and bound the wound carefully with strips of soft-tanned doeskin. It was less than five minutes from the time he had entered the smithy before he had dressed the gunshot and replaced the clothing.

"I feel better already," declared Briant, thankfully. "I shall pick up strength now surely." Then he betrayed something of the caution of his nature, as he asked: "Who are you who have done me this favour? You are not French, as I can teil by your speech. You are a man of the woods. You come from New England?"

"Your discernment tells me that you are one lettered in the unwritten ways o' woodcraft. I think I commit no indiscretion in saying that you are the man the French are looking for as the reds seek a fat deer in the hunting season."

"Who told you that? You are not a spy?"

"If knowing that wath your enemies would ne'er care to have me know makes o' me a spy, then I'm a spy. If telling 'em things to you makes me a friend, then I'm a friend."

"Forgive me, friend. In my concern over the reverses of fortune I jumpe] at hasty conclusions. Yes; I am Wallace Briant, the ranger, the outlaw,

the fugitive, whom the French are hunting as they would run down a deer. I must not tarry longer here. Now you have treated me so well, I feel that I can move again."

"Nay, Friend Briant, if you will take the advice o' one who can claim no great judgment outside the little craft he has picked up in the haunts that he loves best, you'll tarry a bit. Nay, there is no time gained by hurrying a tired foot, let alone a wounded body. A few minutes of rest will work much good. A friend o' mine has gone to your home with your boy, and they will see that no ill befalls the lad's mother. It has been thought best that a flight be taken to one Jean Vallie on the Avon, until this affair has blown over."

"The very plan that was in my mind. And of all the men I know Jean will be the most likely to succour us. He does not accept kindly this underhand work of the government of New France and the priests. But who are you who has taken such an interest in me and my family? I do not remember that I ever have seen you before; and yet you seem like an old friend."

"I'm called 'The Woodranger,' which name may and may not fit me well. As it will not be prudent for you to try to reach this Jean Vallie's to-night in your condition, can you think o' a place where it will be safe for you to tarry for awhile?"

"I have no truer friend in Grand Pré than Benedict le Fontaine. His home will be on the most direct course to the Avon. Let us go to Benedict's with all haste possible. I am strong enough now to walk."

The Woodranger shook his head, but did not offer further opposition. In fact he knew himself they were losing valuable time. As he assisted Briant to his feet, he was wondering if it was faring well with Rob.

Leaning heavily on the forester's arm, the Acadian ranger at first was able to move only with great difficulty and pain. But gradually the strength returned to his limbs, and once outside of the smithy the open air gave him new vitality. The moon had now risen so that its mellow beams were beginning to filter down through the dense, beechen foliage, giving to the scene the ghostly light so peculiar to forests on moonlight nights.

"By this time the priest and his followers are at the lower end o' the town," whispered the Woodranger, "so the way is clearer for us. Lean on me all you can. You will need such assistance as I can give you afore you reach Benedict's, or I miscalculate in my string o' knots."

It was a slow, tedious journey down the silent beech woods, until at last they stood under a clump of apple-trees in sight of the tall white chapel which spoke so eloquently of the peace of Grand Pré. Up

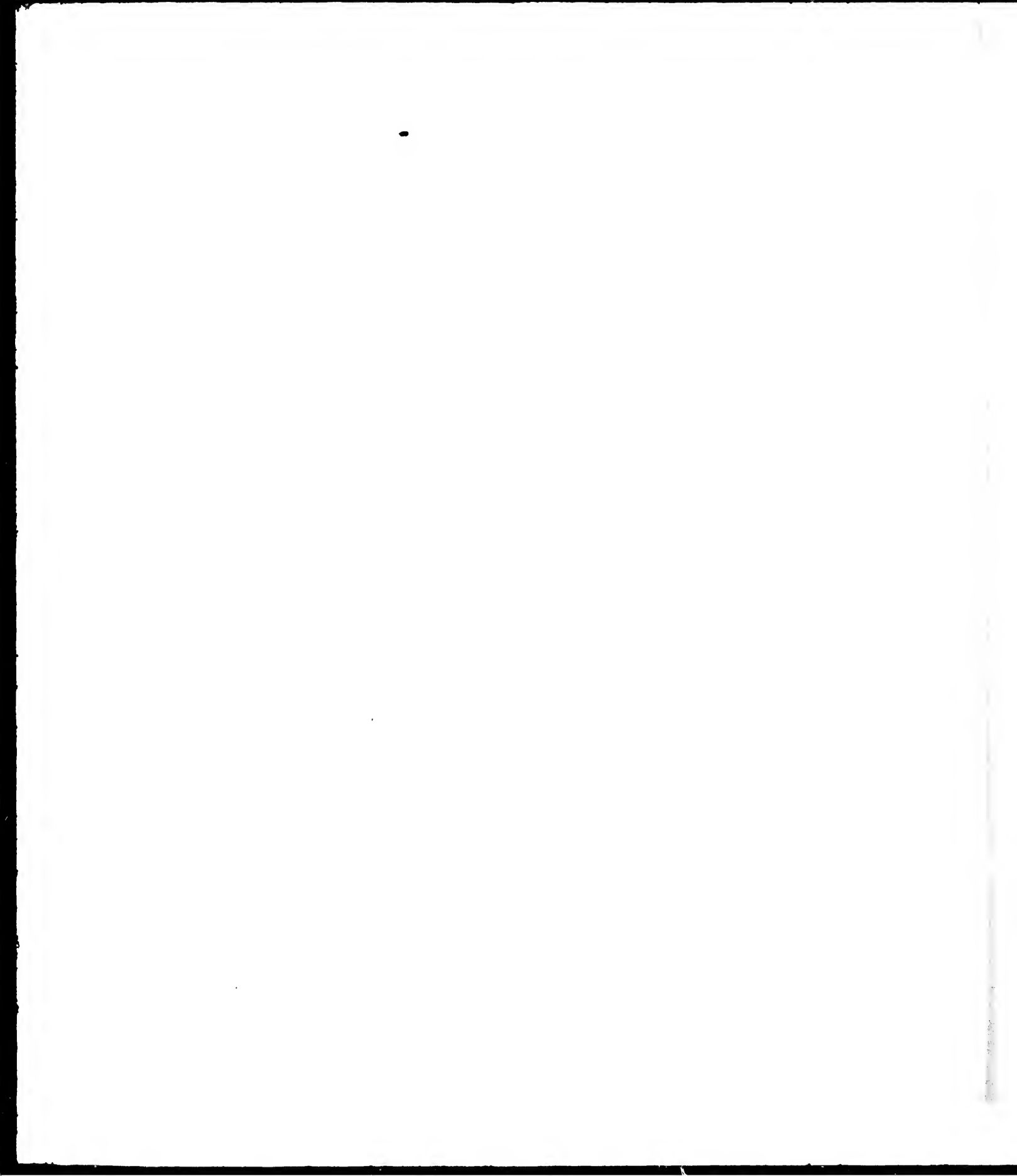
and down the long street, as far as they could see, not one was astir. At the end of a short lane running off in front of the church, under a row of ancient Lombardy poplars, stood a white cottage, the home of Father Fafard.

"Would that all were as faithful to Acadie as he," said Briant, rallying slightly. "Good Benedict's cottage is at the end of this lane. I feel stronger; you need not fear but I can reach his home. I am the more troubled over what is taking place at *my* home. I am trusting completely in you in following this course."

The Woodranger made no reply to this, and a few minutes later they paused under the "Mary maple," close by the farmer's cottage, when he said:

"If you will rest here on this bench a minute, I will perambulate ahead, and see if there be no cross paths for us to trail."

There were no bolts to the doors in Acadia, which spoke well for the honesty of the people. Neither was it the custom to draw the curtains after nightfall, so the Woodranger was favoured with an unobstructed view of this Acadian farmer's kitchen and dining-room, as he paused near the cottage to see if it would be safe to announce himself and companion at the door. His first glance within seemed to show him that he had been wise in taking this cautious survey of the situation.





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He saw that the walls of the room were smooth and highly polished, the glistening wood reflecting the light of the embers glowing on the wide hearth, a fire having been kindled to cook the evening meal. Overhead, the dark beams and sooted rafters seemed a fitting support for huge clusters of herbs and long plaits of onions, suspended from numerous pegs. The furnishings of the apartment were simple and plain, everything from the straight high-backed chairs, with their basket bottoms, to the dresser-shelves bearing evidence of the thrift and neatness of the good housewife. Upon these last was a modest display of crockery, arranged so as to show their intermingling shades of blue, brown, and yellow, sprinkled with different designs of vines and grotesque images, all of which stood out in bold relief in the flickering glow of the candles set at either end of the shelf over the hearth.

Near the centre of the sanded and well-scrubbed floor stood the dining-table, and for that matter the table for general use, as there was none other in the room. This had no covering, save for the dishes of food now placed on it, and it shone as white and clear as much patient rubbing could make the beech wood. The food consisted of some crescent-shaped cakes, warm from the frying-pot and snowy with a sprinkling of powdered maple sugar. A large dish held a shad done to a nice crispness and browned by the frugal

cook just as her master liked it best, and another contained a hot barley loaf. Beside each plate was a bowl of new milk.

Seated at this table were four persons, two men, a woman, and a girl of seven or eight. It would be natural to suppose that three of these people were the farmer, his good wife and little daughter, Evangeline, whose childlike countenance bore the beauty and sweetness of youthful innocence and purity. The visitor, if a neighbour running in could be called such, was Jean Hebert, the notary public.

That the evening meal had been delayed by his coming was evident from appearance, but it was really no fault of his. The recent news from Port Royal had afforded them a theme for discussion which had completely dulled their appetites for even the tempting food placed before them by the faithful housewife, who knew far less of the intrigues of plotting kings and their tools than she did of her homely duties.

"For my part, good Benedict, I can't see why any news from Port Royal should cause a good supper to be spoiled. Have the British broken their faith?"

"Nay, good wife," he replied, speaking, as she had done, in the Normandy dialect, which prevailed among the Acadians, "you misinterpret the news. The French have gained what Father le Petite considers a great victory for them. A whole regiment

at the capital, and you know the British are not strong there, has been surprised and either killed or captured. The defence must fall soon. Port Royal has ever been a bone of contention between the French and the English, you know."

"I do not know why," she said, frankly. "I do not like this shedding of so much blood, when it seems to me unnecessary. Had the French any just cause for complaint, Jean Hebert? Being a learned man, you ought to answer my question plainly."

"France can well claim that she has," replied the notary, with what might be termed a cautious speech, seeing that it was capable of different significations. "Acadie is rightfully a child of France, and the mother should have her own."

"How does France show the parental love she professes to have for us?" asked Le Fontaine, quickly. "Years ago she sold her child to England to obtain peace with an enemy she could not conquer. Little cares she now for the bond-child she cast off for her own selfish ends. I know Father le Petite and his followers have a powerful influence when they talk of the love of motherland, and of the glory of the lilies of King Louis. They forget or ignore that the flower and beauty of Acadie are truly English subjects, born under the British cross of the Georges of England. If of Normandy blood, you, my sweet Evangeline, are in truth English.

"And what blame have we to fling at our king? If we have proved ungracious subjects, ready to rise and smite our master in secret, he has ever been kind to us. He has left us in peace and contentment to grow fat. Our bins are overflowing, our cattle look sleek, our markets are good, and peace reigns in our homes. But we should neither let the favours of one nor the prejudices of the other influence us; let us show some independence; remain true to ourselves, — to Acadie, the favourite child of America."

"We should not forget that France is its motherland," persisted the notary public. "The good abbé tells us that the pig is well fed for the fall slaughter, which means that we are being liberally fed by the British that we may make better spoils for them. I cannot say it is not so."

"I do not know how Benedict feels about it," spoke up his wife, "but as for me, I am sorry the Dark Abbé has come among us again. Troubles always follow his —"

"Hush, good wife!" interrupted Benedict. Now you let your woman's tongue run away with your usual good judgment. Only last Sabbath Father Fafard admonished us all to be faithful to Acadie, and that means we should not forget the ties of homeland."

"If we could only be let alone," she said, and the

men having no reply to make, both began to break some of the barley bread into the bowls of milk, when the rap of the Woodranger at the door suddenly broke the silence, causing the four to start with surprise if not alarm.

to break
of milk,
suddenly
with sur-

CHAPTER IX.

ROB ACTS THE SCOUT.

ALTHOUGH a youth in age, Robert Rogers was a man in experience. Possessing a hardy constitution and a fondness for the sports of the forest, at six years of age he went into the woods with his father's gun and shot a wildcat. This love for adventure and outdoor life strengthened with his growing frame, so that as a hunter and scout he penetrated even the remotest regions of the extensive wilderness stretching between the English and French settlements. In these woods roamed the bear, panther, deer, moose, wildcat, and other wild animals more or less ferocious, all of which had suffered at his hands, many of them in close encounter. Besides the wild beasts of the forests, he had often met those still more savage denizens of the wildwood, the Indians. It is true that comparative peace had existed between the latter and the white settlers since the end of Lovewell's war in 1725, two years before our hero was born; still, he had studied their ways and methods, until none of their young braves were more proficient on the trail

than he. Rob Rogers was a born Indian trailer and fighter.

On this particular summer evening in Acadia, hundreds of miles from home, he was conscious that at last he should be called upon to exercise some of the cunning arts of the race he looked upon as his natural enemy. He was glad the Woodranger had given him this, his first opportunity of proving his metal on the war-path.

The forest from this vicinity swung off southward, leaving a wide tract of meadow on the right of the narrow village of Grand Pré. But the hamlet was so bordered by its orchards that it was fairly embowered in a forest, though not in the sense of the term as generally used. Many of these trees had branches so near to the ground that they afforded ample protection to any number of persons who might choose to approach under cover of this kind. These low-hanging fruit-trees at the same time promised shelter for Rob and Alex, as they advanced.

But Rob selected the road as the safest way of advance, reasoning that any one seen prowling in or around the orchards might be looked upon as a suspicious character, especially by the Indians, while any number of pedestrians would attract no attention moving leisurely along the street.

Lights were burning at most of the cottages, but no one was seen either moving about the houses

or on the street. It was not the custom of the Acadians to be abroad much after the Angelus had rung its evening summons to home-worship, so to Alex, at least, this absence of others did not appear unusual or portentous of anything out of the usual order.

Rob noticed this quietness of the scene, but he kept on in silence. Alex's mind was too deeply occupied in meditation upon the trouble which had so recently come into his young life to speak. Thus they were nearing the lower part of the town, where the sea shone in the clear moonlight like a huge silver shield, when Rob asked :

"That is your house standing back a little from the main street, is it not, Alex?"

"Yes, sir; but how came you to know?" asked the young Acadian, in surprise.

"From the number of dusky watchers around it," replied Rob. Then, seeing the look of wonder on the face of his companion, he added: "If you'll promise not to make any fuss I will tell you a bit of startling news."

"Has anything happened to mother?" inquired Alex, in alarm.

"Not that I know of. Your father is a brave man, Alex?"

"There is not one in Acadie braver than he, sir."

"And you want to be worthy of his name?"

"Yes, sir, for his sake and mother's. But what has happened? I promise to be brave and meet the worst without flinching."

"I think you have got the right stuff in you. Well, it is no use for me to beat about the bush, particularly when that bush happens to have a red enemy concealed in it. Alex, we are likely to have a hot time before we get your mother and sister into safety. The house is already surrounded by Indians."

Though he had expected something like this, Alex had hard work to keep from giving expression to an exclamation of dismay at this intelligence.

"And mother —"

"Is, I believe, unharmed now. Do not be over-alarmed. The situation is critical, and you might as well know the worst, but there is a chance that we are not too late. At any rate, we will do our best to prove it so."

"I do not see any Indians," said Alex, looking sharply around.

"You would not expect them to be standing out as targets for the eyes of every passer-by. They are skulking in the orchard yonder, and I believe have fairly encircled the house. No doubt they are waiting for the signal from their leader to spring out and attack the inmates. The night is not favourable for such work, and they have to be extremely slow and

cautious. So shall we, for that matter. While the moon is in our favour, it is still against us."

"What shall we do?" asked Alex, anxiously.

"We must reach the house before the enemy, and then get your mother and sister away, if possible. If not, we will hold the fort against the red imps and their allies until the Woodranger comes. As the French and Indians are planning to start at midnight for their raid on Main-à-Dieu, I judge they will not delay a great while in their attack here."

"How I tremble for mother's and sister's safety. Tell me what I must do and I will do it as best I can."

"I want you to go to the house alone. The enemy will naturally think there is nothing in that to excite their suspicion, and it will not hasten their assault. If I should go with you it would perhaps cause them to suspect something wrong."

"How will you get there?"

"I shall have to do it without being seen. I think I can see sufficient cover to enable me to reach the house without arousing the suspicion of the lynx-eyed red men. Trust me for that. I haven't followed their trails in Canada for nothing, and I should be a dull pupil of the Woodranger did I fail. But as it will take me longer to reach the house than it will you, I want you to remain right here under the shade of these trees until I have been gone ten minutes, unless

the reds precipitate a crisis in affairs, when I advise you to look out for yourself. But their plans are not ripe enough for anything of that sort. When you judge I have been gone ten minutes, start down the road as unconcerned as if you had no thought of a Micmac being within a hundred miles. To keep up appearances it will be better for you to whistle or sing, as you approach the house. I shall hear this and know you are doing your part. After reaching the house, don't alarm your mother by any account of the Indians. You may tell her about your father. When I have reached the house I will signal you by the shrill piping of an August cricket three times, -- twice in rapid succession, and once again after a short pause. Remember all these directions and act your part with a brave heart. Good-bye, till I meet you in your own home."

A moment later Alex stood alone, and so silently and adroitly did Robert Rogers quit his presence that he soon lost track of him. In the brief outline of his plan to Alex, Rob had improved the opportunity to select the course that was most favourable for him to follow, and as he left his companion he dropped flat upon the earth, to begin a tedious passage to the Briant home, keeping under cover of the row of willows skirting the roadside for several rods. On his right the meadows lay as level and smooth as a house floor for half a furlong or more, over which

fell the shadows of the willows and apple-trees below him, these shades growing shorter as the moon rose higher and higher into the cloudless sky.

Fortunately the rowen had grown up so that, as he crept prostrate on the ground, it afforded him considerable protection from the sharp eyes of the Micmac scouts. Necessarily his progress was very slow, and he had used up half of the time he had allotted to Alex before he had got beyond the cover of the willows, and was moving slowly and silently along toward the orchard.

The apple-trees afforded a thicker foliage, so the moonlight did not fall so brightly here, but he knew now that he was getting into close proximity of the foe. If he needed any proof of this it followed soon, when the cry of a night bird rang out shrilly from a clump of bushes scarcely a rod from him.

Thinking it possible he had been discovered, Rob paused to listen intently. He did not have long to wait before an answering cry came from below the Briant cottage. This was succeeded by another to the south, and then by a fourth from the direction of the beech woods. Then all was silent again, until a voice with a boyish intonation awoke the stillness with the words of a sweet Acadian song.

It was Alex, faithfully following his part of the plan, and as he continued to send forth his musical notes his voice grew clearer and sweeter. And as

the notes swelled on the still evening air the cry of the supposed bird again rang out, sharper than before, to be answered again by the three in the distance. As the last note of these died away, the first cry was repeated, though it received no reply.

"Alex has been discovered," thought Rob. "The red imps will act soon, but they will wait till he reaches the house. Now I know your positions, Mr. Reds, I can shape my course so as to avoid you. I shall never have a better chance to scoop a scalp, but Woodranger would call me a fool. I suppose I must wait."

He was already creeping away from the hiding-place of the Micmac scout, moving slower and more cautiously than ever, if that were possible. Down through the low branches of the trees he caught sight of the house he hoped to reach. Each movement now placed a greater distance between him and the foremost Indian.

He could tell by the sound of Alex's voice how fast he was progressing, until at last he approached the house. A moment later the song was ended, which showed that the singer had entered the dwelling.

Rob fancied he heard a slight rustle, as of a body moving through the thick grass in his rear, but it was distinguishable for only a moment. The Micmac was following almost in his track. His great-

est fear now was that the sharp-eyed savage would discover his trail, which he had no means of concealing.

Thus, inch by inch and foot by foot, Rob approached the house, every sense on the alert to catch some sign of the enemy behind him, and to guard against betraying his own presence by some careless act. A spot of earth was flooded by the moonlight where a tree was missing near the cottage, but the boy scout had no other alternative than to hazard the risk of crossing it. Accordingly, lying as closely to the ground as possible, after having covered his head with some of the rowen pulled from the earth, he crawled with the pace of a snail across the bar of moonlight.

No alarm reaching his ears, a little later he stopped at the cottage side, to breathe a minute, and scan the scene over before he should signal to Alex. Seeing a door a few feet to his right, he crept along to that, and then the sharp chirrup of an August cricket rang out on the evening air. The third note had scarcely died away when the door opened cautiously, and Alex stood before him.

"I am so glad you have come," said the latter, but unheeding him, Rob, still creeping, crossed over the threshold, until he lay at full length on the floor inside.

"Step outside, as if you were intent on some

errand," whispered Rob. "But don't go far nor be gone long."

Alex did as he was told, and a minute later the two stood facing each other in the Briant kitchen. Alex's mother was present, looking anxious and excited, and beside her was a girl three or four years younger than Alex.

"My friend, mother and sister," began Alex, but she stopped him by saying :

"I understand, Alex. But, sir," addressing the young scout, "I do not understand what all this means. My boy tells me his father is in trouble, and your very actions show that some great danger is over us."

"Nothing that we cannot overcome," replied Rob. "Mr. Briant has been wounded, but a friend of mine is looking after him, and I am here to see what can be done in your welfare."

His assuring tone gave her hope, and she immediately appeared more calm, saying, in a tone which told that she was equal to what she professed :

"There is some great danger menacing us. I know as well as if you had said so. But I do not understand its nature. I wish you would tell me, so I can do my part toward defending our home. I am used to danger, and I know my husband has offended the French, for we are not Acadians by birth. It will be better for me to know the full truth."

Rob was examining the priming of his gun at that moment, but he had seen that she was a beautiful woman of middle life, whose every action showed that she was brave and to be trusted. He realised the truth of what she had said, and quickly apprised her of the real situation. She listened without trepidation.

"I am glad I know," she said. "Wallace left a gun at home with me, and I will show you that I can use it as well as half the men, in a case of necessity."

"I will get mine," added Alex. "The Micmacs will find it no easy matter to gain entrance here."

Alex started for his weapon, and when both he and his mother had armed themselves and joined Rob, the latter said:

"At present we can only watch and wait. One of you had better take a station where a view of the street can be had, both up and down the road. The other will do well to keep a close watch toward the east. I will look out toward the west and south. Let me know at the least cause for alarm."

This plan was at once acted upon, Alex taking the post which commanded a view of the road, as directed by Robert Rogers.

The three watched and waited in silence for nearly half an hour, and it began to seem to Mrs. Briant that they were not going to be molested, when the young scout called to her. Upon reaching his side

he pointed toward the woods, when she saw crossing the meadow a small body of men led by one who was carrying over his head a sort of rude flag.

"They are Indians — Micmacs!" she declared. "What does it mean?"

"They want to speak to some one, probably the occupant of the house. We will watch them awhile."

Soon finding that the party continued to approach in a body, he said:

"It begins to look so they were working a dodge to get upon us in a body. That must be stopped. You must show a flag, and order them to stop as soon as they come within hearing. It will not be best for me to be seen at present, but I will be ready to fire upon them the instant I see anything wrong about their actions. Never fear but I will see that they do not surprise you."

"I am not afraid," she replied. "And here is a kerchief which will be all I shall need. I suppose I had better open the door."

She spoke calmly, and quickly prepared to carry out the plan.

"You had better display your signal from the window. If they do not stop at sight of it, shout for them to do so. If that does not have the effect, I will see what a chunk of lead will do toward stopping them. It will fix at least one."

Raising the nearest window, she was soon shaking

in the open air the hastily improvised flag of truce, while Rob from another opening close by watched the approaching Indians to see what effect the signal would have upon them. In the midst of this intense suspense, Alex came in from the adjoining room, saying, excitedly :

“The Dark Abbé is coming to the house!”

CHAPTER X.

OUTWITTING THE ENEMY.

It was a critical moment at the Briant cottage, and Rob felt that only immediate action could save them. It looked as if this party had appeared to attract the attention of the inmates, while the abbé effected a surprise upon them. But, whether in answer to the signal of Mrs. Briant or not, the approaching party of Micmacs stopped, the leader swaying his flag to and fro with an evident purpose. This body had kept in the opening of the meadow, so that they were in plain sight of the house. They could also command a view of the road.

"The abbé must not be allowed to enter," declared Rob. "Here, Alex, take my stand, and do not hesitate to fire at the foremost of the reds, in case they show any hostile movement. Your mother will parley with them, until I can dispose of the Dark Abbé."

Alex obeyed with alacrity, while Rob ran lightly to the post he had just left. A glance up the road showed him the figure of the approaching priest, as he was seen through the intersecting branches of the

trees lining the roadside. The element of fear never existed in the heart of Robert Rogers. The false priest had shown himself to be an enemy, not only to the peace of the community, but to the safety of all honest people. With this thought in his mind, he raised his gun to his shoulder, to glance along its barrel, as the man came into plain sight under the next stretch of moonlight.

Simultaneously with this action on his part, his quick eye caught the uplifting of a hand, and saw it move gently and swiftly to and fro, and then drop. A smile overspread the set features of Rob, and his gun was lowered as quickly as it had been lifted, while he murmured, in a tone of relief :

"The Woodranger!"

Concealing his true feelings under that calm indifference which characterised the men of the frontier, Rob returned to his companions in the adjoining room. Both mother and son were maintaining a close watch over the party of Indians halted under the flag of truce. Seeing that the situation here had not changed, the young scout said :

"Have courage. The Dark Abbé proves to be a friend in disguise. Ha! there he is at the door. Keep a sharp lookout while I let him in."

A minute later the Woodranger stood within the cottage, the black cassock and hood of the priest still concealing his garb of a forester.

"I am glad to see you, Woodranger," greeted Rob, "though I cannot say I like that manner of dress. Do you know it came near costing you a bit of lead."

"It has sarved a good turn, lad, a good turn, though I must say it ill becomes the craft o' the man who wears it. I see you are on aidge, lad, and that ne'er chase o' buck nor moose e'er pleased you more than this lectle amazement with the red and yellow bearers o' yon pizen rag."

"So you think there are French among the Indians waiting out there?" asked Rob, though he had come to the same conclusion some time before.

"I jedge so, lad. Mebbe I had a better sight at 'em as I come along, but it's my idee. The chap with the flag is Black Basil, the gunmaker. But lest they get onpatient, we must parley with 'em. We must keep 'em at arm's length till succour comes, which I believe I'm safe in saying is not a long way off."

Rob led the way into the room where Mrs. Briant and Alex were still keeping vigil over the little group on the meadow, the Woodranger following him, bringing forth from under the priest's cassock his firearm.

"Will you speak to them, Woodranger?" asked Rob. "Or shall Mrs. Briant? I see they have not moved, though the leader acts as if he would like to. I have not thought it best to show myself, as I got here without their knowing it."

"Which showed good discretion on your part, lad. Mebbe, as they know I'm here, it will be best for me to have a few words with 'em. As we want to keep them at a good distance, mebbe I will just step outside."

Opening the door, the forester stepped out into the open air, and, after advancing a couple o' rods, hailed the bearer of the truce, imitating the voice of the priest so closely that even Rob, who knew the deception, was surprised. The effect of the brief dialogue which followed was that the party drew back into the shadows of the forest, and the Woodranger returned to the cottage.

"They think I have got matters fixed here to suit my fancy, and so I have, for that concern. It will give us ten minutes, when I have promised to lead out the captives —"

At this point in his speech the Woodranger suddenly found himself met by Mrs. Briant, who had given up her post to Rob, when he stopped. Usually so indifferent about meeting the gaze of another, he looked her squarely in the countenance for a moment, and then he started back, as if frightened. The pallor of his countenance was not seen under the shadow of the priest's hood, which nearly concealed it, but he trembled from head to foot, and for a short time it seemed as if he would fall. Rob saw his sudden weakness and said :

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"You are sick, Woodranger! What has happened?"

The voice of his young companion instantly aroused him, and he replied, though his voice was not as steady as common:

"It's nothing, lad, nothing. Mebbe the air is clus; I feel that way. I must go outside; I cannot stay here. I do not think the varmints will disturb you for a little spell, but you had better keep 'em kivered. I hope you'll pardon an ol' man's weakness, but the air be clus — very clus," saying which, the Woodranger hastened to the front door, and, standing on its threshold, drank in a good long draught of the sea-wet air as it came in from Minas Basin. Apparently forgetful of the danger surrounding them, he stood there, until Rob, who could stand the suspense no longer, joined him, having left Alex and his mother at the lookout. The strange action of his friend and his complete disregard for his usual caution had alarmed the boy scout, who asked, anxiously, as he reached the side of the forester:

"Are you better, Woodranger?"

"Is that you, Rob?" inquired the Woodranger, starting back like one suddenly awakened from a deep sleep, but quickly recovering something of his composure. "Have I been — alack! now's me, I do not disremember, now my memory has called my attention to it. It was an awful lack o' jedgment. Say, lad," clasping him by the hand, "as you love

me, durst think she understood it so? The air was
clus, very clus."

"I do not understand you, Woodranger. I never
saw you so affected before. Of course Mrs. Briant
did not notice it. It was I who was surprised."

"Thank you, lad, thank you, though I be ashamed
to look you in the eye. So *she* is *his* wife; and the
boy and gal are their children? Didst hear me say
aught that committed me in my weakness?"

"Not a word, Woodranger. But she was anxious
about you, as I was, and took my place while I came
to speak to you."

"Which was very considerate. And she said no
more? Let fall no word that might be construed
into — now's me, how childish I be growing, and for-
getting this outlandish garb covering me from head
to foot. Durst know I love it for its deception?
Lad, there be times when it seems to me that decep-
tion is a vartue. Say, Rob," renewing his clasp upon
his young companion's arm, "you and I have had
many long perambulations together, sometimes for
the blessed privilege o' imbibing the free, pure air o'
the pine-scented forests; anon bent on some stern
chase that led us a Joe English ' race. In all 'em

¹ Joe English was a friendly Indian who once escaped from a
party of enemies by a leap for life over a high precipice forming
the side of a rugged eminence, which bears his name, among the
hills of the Granite State.

trails, and cross-trails, and crisscross-trails, didst e'er see me too tired o' foot to do you a favour, or too faint o' heart not to risk myself in your defence?"

"Never, Woodranger. A truer friend never lived."

"Nay, nay, lad, it was not that! I do not deserve it, and 'less my good opinion o' you be shaken, do not repeat it. Sich boasting makes us all weak. What I had to ask was, — and you'll not be thinking I'm asking too much, seeing I ask it in good faith, — promise to forgive and forget the ol' man this indiscretion, blameful though it may be. You'll promise, lad? The air was clus, very clus."

Without fully understanding what his companion meant, Rob clasped his hand firmly, saying:

"I know of nothing to forgive or to forget, but I promise on my sacred honour to do both."

"And never mention it to any person? And if she should mention, which I do not believe she will, — mind you, I only surmise this, — you will recall nothing I said or did which will fix it in her mind?"

"I promise all, Woodranger. Now I want you to tell what has happened since we parted, and what we are to do."

"I was coming to that, lad, I was. Talking does make one forget."

The Woodranger then briefly described to Rob his second visit to Le Noir's smithy, and how he had

taken Wallace Briant to the home of Benedict le Fontaine. As the reader is in ignorance of his following adventures, it would only be justice to him that the forester's story should be recorded from the time he reached the home of the Acadian farmer to his appearance, in the guise of the Dark Abbé, at the Briant cottage.

"Well, as I was saying, or rather as I was going to say—how flustered I be! Now's me, to begin over ag'in, Benedict hailed me with joy, and wouldst fain have pulled me into the house that I might sup with him and the notary, Jean Hebert. But when I tol' him o' my comrade, he grew discreet, which I set down as a good sign. I tol' him o' friend Briant's predicament, keeping back sich parts 'bout ourselves as my jedgment counselled me. He soon showed me he was no ways the liker o' the Dark Abbé, and more'n that, the priest is losing favour in Grand Pré. Father Fafard does not prove o' sich wanton ways, and finally Benedict promised to trail with Briant, even to harbouring him if that became necessary. Then he asked me to keep under kiver till he could talk with Jean Hebert and see how the stick floated with him.

"The notary public, whom I'm free to set down as a purty righteous sort o' a man, 'greed to help us in this amazement. He was the more free to do this when I tol' him a part o' what I'd overheard in Le

Noir's smithy. This all goes to prove me that the more discreet neutrals are fair and above mark in this scrimmage. We, arter talking the 'fair over, decided that it would be better for Briant and his family to get away from Grand Pré to-night. He thinks they will be tolarable safe at a settlement of Scotch people on the Barney River. You and I are to go up the basin and then the Subenacadie River with them, and then take a cross-cut for Main-à-Dieu. Briant thought one Jean Vallie would go with us, and Benedict sent a messenger to find this Basque, who lives on one of the small rivers above here. We are to pick him up as we go along.

"Both Benedict and Jean Hebert were determined to call in the village priest, which course I was free to call an indiscretion. I was very free to acquaint them with my idee, but let 'em foller the trail as they had set the stick. While the priest was coming, Briant, at the 'vice o' Benedict, had the notary make out papers putting his property into the hands o' one o' the neutrals. No Micmac will run counter to an Acadian, and I could see this was like hitting the bull's-eye with a good gun at sixty paces. When Briant comes back ag'in, arter the storm has blown over, he will have his home safe and sound.

"By that time Father Fafard came, and I'm free to say that I found him agreeabler than I expected. What set me a-liking the man was his way of speaking

right out. As soon as I l'arned this I could see that my prejudice had warped my judgment, and that Benedict and the notary were in the right. I ain't one to dam the waters o' a clear stream, especially when that stream be the one along which I've got to paddle my own canoe, and told him o' my prefarment and my prejudice, which seemed to set him in good humour. Being clever in sich doings, as well as in praying, he fixed up Briant's wound, not but what I had done a good job under the circumstances. I think I may be pardoned in saying this much for myself.

"While the priest was doing this, the rest o' us pieced out a plan by which we could carcumvent the inemy and get Briant on to a boat at the mouth o' the Gaspereau. Benedict showed a cunning which I am free took my judgment. He said he was expected to take a load o' barley straw in the morning down to mend a break in the dike, and that the stuff was already loaded on one o' his ox-wains. His plan was to take Briant in the midst o' the litter to the boat-landing near the river. He would have to go past Briant's home, and under pretence o' putting on more straw could secrete his wife and boy and garl on the cart. If any one, as in all likelihood there would be, should see him starting at this unseemly hour, he would jedge that the dike had grown leakier so fast that Benedict durst not wait till morning, and think nothing strange o' the trip.

"The priest being as much concerned as any one, and willing to take hold like a man, to circumvent the Dark Abbé in his plotting and killing, I could see that I was ne'er needed to help make the start. So I left 'em to perambulate ahead, and see what amazement was working with you. Now I'm coming to the queerest part o' my tale, which I'm taking a deal o' time to tell.

"Just as I was coming down the lane, which was darkened by the shadows o' the trees overhanging the path, I suddenly found myself beset by that blameful priest. I see that he was in 'arnest, so I don't profess to say that I hild back a bit. I just clubbed ol' Darger, and sooner than a squirrel could shake his tail I dropped the ol' feller at my feet. My first thought was to leave him there as he had fell, but a bit o' cunning came into my head, and I see how I could make something out o' this amazement to our good. So I took off his long black gown and put it on myself. Then I put on his cap. Having done this, and finding him coming to, I took the liberty to tie up his hands and feet, and stuffed his mouth full o' cloth. Then, arter pulling him out of the path, I came down here. And, as I say it, here comes good Benedict with his ox-wain loaded with barley straw."

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CHAPTER XI.

THE FUGITIVES.

THE history of the colonial wars is largely a record of long and arduous marches by the opposing forces through trackless forests, in order to make an attack on some isolated garrison or settlement, that the fortunes of the warlike hosts demanded should be captured and held. In a yet more fearful manner is the biography of the colonists filled with perilous and hazardous flights from home at the sudden appearance of the savage enemy; or with those still more trying and terrible journeys as captives in the power of merciless captors; or, Providence permitting that they should succeed in escaping their captors, with the sufferings and hardships of a hundred-mile flight through an unbroken wilderness, beset by wild beasts and pursued by revengeful foes.

The intended flight of the Briant family was thus no exception to the general trend of the times, and they submitted to the inevitable with unflinching fortitude. Benedict had not trusted any one to drive the oxen for him, so that he was walking beside the

slow-moving wain as it entered the yard in front of the cottage where the Woodranger and Rob Rogers were anxiously awaiting its approach.

"Lend such assistance as you can, lad," said the forester. "I will keep a watch over the prowling heathens to see that they do not steal an amazement on us. Have the woman take all the food she has on hand, for there is nothing like being prepared for what may happen."

With these words the Woodranger turned away, and Rob went to apprise Mrs. Briant of the undertaking ahead. She had already expected that flight of some kind would have to be made, and now, knowing that her husband was able to go with her, she began her preparations with calmness and alacrity. And while she quickly gathered together the few things she wished to take with her, Benedict and Rob, assisted some by Alex, who was helping both them and his mother, brought out the barley straw they wished to add to the load. The wain had been purposely left near to the house, and as soon as possible Mrs. Briant was allowed to ascend by a short ladder, under the covering of barley straw held over her head by the forks in the hands of Benedict le Fontaine and Rob Rogers. In the same way Alex and Mab gained the load, when more straw was pitched over them, and such things thrown up as they wished to take.

Benedict closed the door, scratched up with the fork a few of the scattered straws, and telling Rob to keep close beside the loaded wain, he picked up his goad-stick, calling loudly to the oxen to move on. The flight was begun.

As Rob was looking anxiously around for the Woodranger, the latter came swiftly and silently to his side, saying :

"I have been thinking very fast, lad, and I have a leetle argyment to offer at this perticular time. We've come to the neutral grounds on private business, and I'm the last person that's going to desart the man who has confided me with some perticular work. In that line o' reasoning it be our duty to look arter the interests o' Captain Vaughan before we run haphazard into an amazement for a stranger. But I 'low there be delicate p'int's in this matter which do not float on the surface like a stick. The captain's business can wait a few weeks. I have already hinted some things to Benedict, and he says he will look arter some matters for us. But I can't keep 'em poor settlers at Main-à-Dieu out'n my mind. Now the p'int I wish to ask you to settle is this: Shall we remain here, or go to Main-à-Dieu helping along the Briants as we can?"

"I am with you, Woodranger, in whatever you decide. But I am in favour of going to Main-à-Dieu."

"I knew it, lad, I knew it. Well, it shall be so.

And there is another snarl in my string o' knots which I want to unkink. There is likely to be— and mind you I ne'er like to prod a hornet's nest just to hear the critters buzz—a hot chase for the Briants. So I ha minded that it might be wiser for you and me to separate. By that I design that you keep along with 'em, while I will take a light canoe and sort o' trail behind. I will keep a lookout for the reds, and be on hand in case I be needed."

Though this plan was a complete surprise to Rob, he knew his companion too well to offer any objections. If he guessed that the Woodranger had a motive he did not care to mention in proposing this plan, he was wise enough not to suggest it.

"It shall be as you say, Woodranger, and I know you will be on hand if you should be needed."

This seemed to arouse a new thought in the forester's mind, for he caught Rob's hand with an impetuosity quite foreign to his nature, exclaiming:

"You don't think the ol' man means to shirk his part, lad?"

"I should never think that of you for a moment. I believe your way is best, and I will do as you say."

"Thank you, lad, thank you. I knew I could depend on you. I'll risk you, too, where an ol' man might—mind you, I say might—fail. But always remember, lad, that the experience o' years counts for

more in the sum o' knots than the zeal o' untried youth."

At that moment the musical notes of a bird perched in the topmost branches of a moon-silvered poplar fell on their ears, and as the inimitable song rang out sweetly on the Acadian scene, the Woodranger declared :

"Such songs fill my heart with peace. I hail it as a good omen. Adieu, lad, adieu."

Silently grasping his hand, Rob lost no further time in following after the loaded wain, which was now some distance away, pursuing singularly enough the same path to the mouth of the Gaspereau that the exiled Acadians were destined to follow, eleven years later, while being escorted by their captors to the vessels lying at anchor but a short distance below the place where our fugitives were expecting to take their boat.

The journey to the seashore was uneventful, though as Benedict finally stopped the oxen at the landing-place, the report of a gun reached their ears, and Rob thought he heard the cries of a mob of men. But of this he was not quite sure. The thought at once came into his mind that the Woodranger had met with the enemy. He was confident the report was that of his firearm. As the little party listened the sound of several shots fired in rapid succession came to them, and Benedict le Fontaine exclaimed :

"The old ranger has got into trouble, and like enough the horde will be down this way! Here, Monsieur Rogers, lend a hand."

Alex had already sprung to the ground, and his mother and sister were quickly assisted from the loaded wain. It was a more difficult task to lift Mr. Briant from his hiding-place in the middle of the load, but Rob and Le Fontaine proved equal to the task. While they were doing it Mrs. Briant thoughtfully placed some of the straw in the bottom of the boat, making a comfortable resting-place for her husband.

The boat belonged to Benedict, and was fortunately large enough to receive the things they had taken with them, and give plenty of room for the occupants. No sounds came from the direction of the town now, but the farmer was both anxious that the party should push out from the land and that he might get away from the spot before they should be discovered.

"I am sorry there is no more I can do for you, Friend Briant, but I wish you a safe journey and a speedy return. Believe me, I shall think of you, and I will keep an eye out to see that François looks well after your home."

"For all of your kindness, Neighbour Le Fontaine, you have my sincere thanks, if I am never able to repay you in any more substantial manner," replied the Acadian ranger, who was bearing up as best he could with the great pain he was suffering. "I am

quite sure that we have got a start of the Micmacs, and that we shall keep ahead of them. I am sure Jean Vallie will be on hand at the Avon. Peace and happiness, good Benedict."

A moment later the farmer was driving his ox-wain along the shore, while Rob and Alex took up the paddle to begin their long and perilous journey. The latter had, at the request of Rob, taken the bow, while the other stationed himself at the stern. Little seas slapped the sides of the boat as they steered up the basin. The moon shone as brightly as ever, though there were signs of clouds in the west.

The events of the past few hours had crowded so rapidly, one upon another, that to Mrs. Briant it seemed like a fearful dream, and she was silent, as well as her husband, who lay on his pallet of straw, wan and worn. Rob and Alex, intent on their rowing, were silent also, so nothing was said during the passage to the mouth of the Avon, where they were expecting to find Jean Vallie waiting for them.

This Basque settlement was considered to be a part of Grand Pré, though removed by a distance of three miles. At a word from Alex, for Rob knew nothing of the country, he steered the boat into the wide-mouthed river, with its marshes reaching back into the country and its broad belt of shallow water, where it let loose its flood into the basin.

It was now past midnight, and the silence of that

solemn hour hung over the little village of farmers, a solitary light being all that was seen. Mr. Briant now rallied enough to take a survey of the scene, saying, as he saw the cottage light :

"Jean's home is farther up the river on the left bank. As he is nowhere in sight, we can do no better than to paddle up to his place, as serious as the loss of time may prove to us. I am afraid the messenger has failed to find him."

"How far is it to his house?" asked Rob.

"About half a mile. Strange I haven't thought of it before, but I have a presentment he is not at home."

CHAPTER XII.

A STOUT ARM.

It often happens that when we feel the most despondent hope is nearest, as the night is darkest just before the dawn of a new day. Briant had barely given expression to his discouraging words, when the keen eyes of Robert Rogers discovered the hazy outlines of a canoe in the distance up the river. As this object grew rapidly in size and clearness, it was seen that it was being propelled down the stream by powerful strokes from its single occupant. The hearts of the little party of fugitives beat very fast, as they checked their advance to watch the approaching stranger. Alex soon broke the silence by exclaiming:

"It is Jean! See! he is paddling as if his life depended on getting here in the quickest time possible."

"I think you are right, my son," replied his father. "It *is* Jean, faithful fellow, and we can do no better than to wait for him to come along."

Their suspense was of short duration, for it was

but a few minutes before the canoe shot alongside their boat. The occupant was a small, wiry-framed man, clad in leathern coat and leggins, with a tight-fitting woollen cap upon his bullet-shaped head. Two pistols were stuck in his belt while a whinger lay in the bottom of the canoe. His dark countenance—the Basques were of darker skin than the Acadians—now bore an anxious expression, though the natural good humour of this alert individual was evident in each feature. It is proper to add here, which no doubt will be learned later on, that if Jean Vallie could not boast of his size, he could claim an endurance and strength that few, if any, could equal. His greeting rang with the cheer of a rare good fellowship, as he said:

“Good evening, Monsieur Briant; what ill news is this which has reached me?”

“The Micmacs, urged on by some of the French, are on the war-path, good Jean, and they have selected me and my family as their first example. My friends have advised me to flee to a place of greater safety than Grand Pré. As I have been hard hit by a French bullet, I was fain to consent. We are on our way to Fordhaven, and we are in a strait for more help.”

“I wish I had known it,” said Vallie, promptly. “Louis le Grande, my cousin, would have gladly lent his arm at my request. If there is time I will find

him at once. It will not delay more than half an hour."

"Nay, good Jean, it is your own stout arm we need. That is all-sufficient."

"And that is yours already, as you must know. Is it your plan to keep on to Cobequid?"

"It is, Jean. And you will have to set your canoe in ashore, for we shall need you at the oars here."

"With your permission, Monsieur Briant, I will secure it behind the other. It will not add much to our labours, it is so light, and it may come in handy by and by. One can never tell what will happen."

This idea was favourably considered by the others, and Jean at once carried his plan into effect. This done, he climbed into the larger canoe, saying:

"I am under your orders, monsieur, only I wish to suggest that we move along as rapidly as possible. I am no weather-wise if there is not going to be a storm within four and twenty hours."

"We must move with as little delay as possible, Jean, and I am going to leave the command with you entirely. This young man here," indicating our hero, "is Robert Rogers from New England, and he has shown himself a true friend in thus assisting me."

"Good cheer to you, Monsieur Rogers," greeted Jean Vallie, extending his right hand, which, as it

clasped that of the boy scout, closed in a vise-like grip. But the hand of Rob had muscles of iron, and, finding the purpose of the other was to test him, he concentrated the strength of his strong forearm for that handshake, which made the sturdy Basque wince, while an exclamation of pain left his lips.

"What is the trouble, Jean?" asked Briant.

"*Ouch!* he has a grip of steel. He'll do, monsieur."

"So you have found your match for once, Jern?" said Briant, with a smile. "I imagine you and he will pull well together."

"Port your helm," said Jean; "stand straight out to sea."

Rob now took Alex's place in the bow, while the latter, somewhat against his wishes, was told to rest awhile, until he might be needed to relieve one of the others. Jean Vallie took the stern paddle. Mr. Briant, who declared that he felt much better, and wanted to be bolstered up so he could watch the surroundings, was made as comfortable as possible, while his wife, Alex, and Mab sat beside him.

The tide being now on the ebb, they were obliged to steer farther out into the bay than they had at the start, and already a wide strip of red and yellow and brown mud lay between them and the land, with its green fringe of forest. As if to warrant Jean in his prediction of a storm, thin clouds were already veil-

ing the night sky, so their view was curtailed considerably.

When the canoe was once more headed nearly southward, and they were fairly started on their journey, Rob Rogers cast a sweeping gaze behind, in the hope that he might catch sight of the Woodranger. He did discover in the distance a small craft which seemed to be putting in toward the landing of the Gaspereau; but nowhere was anything to be seen of the forester. Knowing that his friend was amply capable of taking care of himself, however, Rob did not let this fact give him undue concern, and as stoutly and willingly as Jean Vallie did he lend his arm to the work of sending the canoe flying along the swishing tide, the steady dip of their paddles keeping time to the low murmur of the receding waters.

Briant was in better spirits than he had been since he had fallen helpless on the threshold of Le Noir's smithy, and he urged Mrs. Briant and Mab to improve the opportunity to try and sleep. This they declared was impossible, and the family fell into conversation, which naturally referred to their present condition.

"I cannot blame the Acadian very much, except for his blindness to his own interest," said Briant, "even if he has turned against me, when I have ever tried to be his friend. French rule is never content

to see its subjects thrive. Acadia, under the British, has experienced an era of prosperity, and yet its people, at least many of them, fail to see that it is better to serve a king who does not profess to love them, but who is willing to let them alone, to one who refers to her in terms of endearment, while he filches her pockets of the last livre. Acadia is blind to her own interest, and while I lay no claim to being a prophet, if she continues to cling to her ancient traditions they will pull her down into a gulf of misery.

"I feel safe in saying that the whole of New France stands to-day on the brink of disaster, for the reason that her population lacks the direct application of purpose that is the ruling passion of the English. The two can never live together in harmony. Now that this stupendous plot of the French government is on foot to banish every English settler from New England and New York soil, the strife will wax more bitter than ever.

"It is not France alone, nor yet the Church, which is making all this trouble. It is unscrupulous men, such as was Thury, the plotting priest, and now Bigot the intendant, and Le Petite, the Dark Abbé, his willing tool in all his schemes for personal gains. This visit of the abbé to Acadia at this time portends trouble to many, if not all. Unless the Acadians see their mistake and renounce such leaders as Le Petite soon, a dark day will come for these misguided

people. Another thing I do not like about this warfare, and that is the willingness with which those Acadians, who lend their assistance to the French, join the Micmacs in their war-paint and feathers. It is natural, perhaps, that the disfranchised seignior and the hopeless *habitant* should see in the fancied liberty of the red man the realisation of his own dreams, but he makes a sad mistake when he follows the Indian's methods of winning that freedom."

"How dark it has grown," said Alex, as his father finished speaking. "A thick mist is settling over the bay."

Rob Rogers at that moment stopped his paddling, and motioned for Jean Vallie to do the same.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LONG LEAP.

"ANYTHING wrong, Robert?" asked Briant, anxiously, as the boat, no longer urged forward by the strong strokes of the rowers, drifted leisurely with the tide.

As Alex had said, a mist had fallen on the water, which, with the fact that the moon had now sunk below the distant ridge of mountains, made it quite dark. It being ebb tide, they had been forced to leave the shore so far to their right that it was not to be seen. In fact, for some time Rob and Jean had been advancing with extreme caution, and now the latter, as well as M. Briant, anxiously awaited the boy ranger's explanation of his signal to stop. Rob, being in the bow of the boat, had made a discovery which might prove of no slight moment to their future actions. His reply, spoken in a low, guarded tone, was:

"I am very sure I heard the dip of oars ahead. Is there any cove or stream out from which a craft might come?"

"We must be close down to the mouth of the Petite," replied Jean. "I have kept as close a calculation as I could, and I was thinking that, when you asked me to stop paddling."

"That explains it," said Rob, in the same cautious voice. "I was sure a boat had put out from the shore or some inland water just in front of us. Hark! I caught the sound of a paddle then. It is not far ahead."

"We cannot move too carefully, then, until we find out who they are," declared Briant. "Oh, if I was only well rid of this wound."

"Are there settlers along this coast?" asked Rob.

"A dozen or more *habitants* live just south of the Petite," replied Briant. "What think you, Jean, would they be likely to fall in with the abbé?"

"More'n likely, monsieur. Have you any idea how many might be in the canoe ahead of us, Monsieur Rogers?"

"I'll warrant you not less than half a dozen. They seem to be pulling along at a good rate, for I cannot hear their oars now."

"I can see no other course for us than to keep along quietly behind them," said Jean. "Any attempt to pass them would be sure to bring us disaster."

"If that must be our plan, let us see to it that we do not let them discover us," said Briant. "If they

should prove to belong to the party bound for *Main-à-Dieu* it is going to make a serious complication."

The others had already foreseen this, and a short consultation followed, as to what was best to do, the prevailing opinion being that they could do no better than to keep quietly in the rear of the unseen boat. After resting on their oars a few minutes, Rob and Jean resumed their paddling. But in less than five minutes Rob again called for another stop.

"I can hear them again," he said. "They are moving more leisurely now. Besides the steady dip of their paddles I can hear the murmur of voices."

His companions now all declared that they could hear the sounds of the party ahead, Briant saying :

"The want of caution with which they are proceeding seems to show that they do not belong to a war-party."

"That may be true, monsieur ; or, if they are on the war-path, that they do not deem themselves far enough started to move with the caution which will be necessary later. Will it not be better for us to run in ashore for a brief stop? With a clear coast ahead, we can soon make up for it."

"If we should do that," said Rob, "one of us could take the light canoe and sort of scout out and find who they are."

This plan met the hearty approval of both Briant and Jean, who, true woodsmen as they were, knew

the importance of moving with extreme caution. So the canoe was headed by the Basque in the direction of the Petite River, which emptied its waters into the bay off that point. So well did the steersman shape his course, that in a few minutes Rob found that they were fairly entering the channel of the stream.

Though the mist hung too darkly about them to allow even a narrow view of their surroundings, Jean was perfectly familiar with their situation, and he could have scarcely steered in a clear day in a more direct course for a sheltered spot on the right bank of the stream than he did in the gloom of that early morning. As the boat grated on the bottom of the river, Rob sprang out and the craft was quickly grounded, and the occupants safe for the time at least from the searching gaze of their enemies.

"Now if you will let me have the use of your canoe, which you so thoughtfully took with you, Jean, I will make a little *détour* to see if I can learn anything of those who have gone up the bay ahead of us," proposed Rob, as soon as the stop had been fairly made.

Jean Vallie, of course, readily agreed, though he would have gladly performed the mission himself. Still, he was honest enough not to object, and a moment later Rob disappeared down the stream, his last words having been for the others, if he did not return inside of half an hour, to act independently of

him. So the little party of fugitives made themselves as comfortable as possible during the interval of waiting. As it was then so near daylight, when they might not have another opportunity to eat, and their recent exertions having given them an appetite, the supply of bacon and barley bread was brought forth, and all ate a hasty breakfast.

"If the boy brings us back good tidings," said Mr. Briant, "and we have a clear path, we ought to make the Subenacadie River before sundown."

"Yes, if the storm does not hinder us. That will give us the night-time in which to pass Fort Alliance,¹ near the fork of the Stewiacke, which is a French and Indian stronghold, and the most dangerous point of our journey. I shouldn't like to get caught there as a friend and I did above Cape Split once."

"A story, Jean? Let us hear it while we wait," said Mr. Briant.

"It doesn't amount to much in telling, Monsieur Briant, and I am a poor story-teller, but the whole adventure impressed itself so on my mind then that the minutest detail has never left my memory. It was thirty-four years ago last spring, and I was then a youth of twenty. I suppose I was fiery then, but I think there was reason for an awakening of what zeal one had for his homeland. I was living at Grand

¹ Afterward re-named Fort Ellis.

Pré then, in a cottage not far from where yours now stands, monsieur, when the fire-eaters came from Massachusetts under the lead of that scourge of the peaceful Acadiens, Captain Church, and his band of despoilers, who, with a gun in one hand and a torch in the other, blighted the fairest scene my eyes ever rested upon.

"These despoilers, without any warning, fell upon Grand Pré, and in one short hour the fair meadows and peaceful homes were blasted. I was among the first to get word of their coming, and, seizing my weapons, rushed out to help defend the town. But it was like fighting the whirlwind. The cottages of the upper end of the town were already in flames and the occupants fleeing, some of them half-naked, to the woods. I was young, and I made up my mind I would never flee, but fight till the last.

"I know more than one Englishman went down before my fire, but I finally found myself, with a handful of others, driven back inch by inch to the seashore. My companions scattered and took to the woods, leaving me alone with an old man, who had been sorely wounded in the knee. I knew him well, as I should, he being of the same race as myself. He begged of me not to desert him. Within plain sight of us that moment was a whole family being put to death in cold blood because they would not be false to their hearts' dictates.

"You need not describe to me the horrors of Indian warfare. What I witnessed that day outdid the greatest cruelty a bloodthirsty Micmac can contrive to do. At any rate, I heeded the supplications of good Michel le Vergie, and looked about for the most feasible way of escape. Michel could not travel any, so, seeing a canoe on the shore just above, I ran to get it. Escaping the bullets of a dozen guns, I sprang into the canoe and, paddling down to where my friend was waiting for me, took him in, and then began my flight down the bay. I think it would have fared better with me if I had gone the other way. But once I had started, there was no turning back.

"I afterward learned that the English were going to make an attack on a settlement down the bay, so in giving us chase they were not going out of their way, though they did before they got through.

"Good Michel soon proved himself better than two dead men, for he seized a paddle, and, in spite of the pain in his knee, did such good work that the English could not gain a foot on us. But they did have one advantage. Being so many of them, they could keep up a noisy fire upon us, while we were obliged to forego any reply. This rankled in Michel's breast so much, that finally I told him I could hold my own with the hounds, if he wanted to return their fire.

"I was too busy to see the expression on the old man's swarthy face, but I heard him chuckle as he

exchanged the paddle for his battle-scarred firearm. A moment later its sharp report rang out, and right after it I heard a cry of pain from the foremost canoe, and knew he had not wasted the shot. But the shot cost us dear. A volley from the English whistled uncomfortably near, and one bullet made a flesh-wound in Michel's arm, while another tore a bad hole in the side of the canoe.

"Michel soon mended this, and thus we kept on down past Blow-me-down, with the English close upon our heels. The wounded arm of my companion now pained him as badly as his knee, and made it impossible for him to lend me any real assistance in paddling the canoe. By that time I was beginning to feel that it must end in a hopeless fight, when I suggested to Michel that we ground the canoe near Miras Point and conceal ourselves in the woods. Another shot striking the canoe at that moment caused my friend to agree with me, though he wanted me to leave him behind to meet his fate at the hands of the enemy.

"I would not do that, and the moment the canoe grounded I lifted him upon my back and ran as fast as I could toward the forest. But there was quite an opening for us to cross, where I knew the English would rake us with a volley. So, instead of following the course I had at first intended, I kept along under the cover of a ridge of rock, until I

found myself a few minutes later upon a narrow neck running out to a bold front of rock overhanging the Narrows, and which now bears my name.

"I didn't know the place then as I do now, and thinking I could make a successful defence against the enemies from the cliff, I followed in that direction. Upon reaching the top, and finding that further flight was cut off by a sheer precipice of fully two hundred feet, I turned at bay. I counted ten of the English, and I do not think my courage will be doubted if I say that I trembled for the result. If I had been alone I would not have cared, but poor Michel was quite helpless. Stunted trees were growing at places, and, bidding him to conceal himself as much as possible, I took a position where I could command the best view of the approach to our retreat.

"After a short consultation, the English approached the narrow strip of rock leading to the cliff, and I fired. A moment later Michel's gun pealed out its loud report, and a second of the enemy was no longer to be counted in the fight. But this aroused the others, who started toward us at a run. I sprang to the side of Michel, who was near the edge of the rock. Looking down, I saw a ledge ten feet below overhung by the shelving cliff. I believed we could defend ourselves better there, while at the top we must soon fall victims to the English.

"Seizing hold of one of the slender saplings, I helped Michel to slip down upon the rim of rock, though his weight uprooted the tree, and he fell in a heap on the ledge. But I was quick of foot, and, just as a volley from the English filled the space where I had stood, I dropped upon the narrow shelf of rock below.

"Michel had **not been** injured by his tumble, and, both of us getting back under the side of the cliff as far as possible, we listened for the movements of our enemies. I saw the head of one peering over the top, and I was tempted to send a bullet into it, only I hadn't yet reloaded my weapon. But it was better as it was, for pretty soon we heard them say that we had no doubt fallen into the sea and been killed by the tremendous fall, for it was more than two hundred feet down to the water. We judged that they waited around there for some time, but after they had gone away we found that we had escaped them only to get into another situation quite as serious.

"Look where we would, we could find no chance to ascend to the top of the cliff, while there was no foothold below as far as we could see. As it was then well on in the afternoon, and our foes were probably lurking somewhere in the vicinity, we decided to remain quietly where we were until morning. I looked to my companion's wounds, and bandaged them as best I could. A stiff sea-breeze set in at

dark, and, as it was still early in the season, we suffered not a little from the cold.

"When the tedious night had worn away, poor Michel was suffering great agony. His limbs had swollen to double their size, and he persisted in saying that he should never live to reach home, even if I did. While we lay there waiting for the sun to come up so I could make a more thorough examination of our positions, Michel, to keep his mind from his injuries, told me much I had not known of our people. While we were considered to belong to the Acadiens, we were of an older, and, according to his ideas, a more honourable race. He spoke at great length upon the antiquity of our people, and traced our lineage back to a people once inhabiting all of southern Europe. He said our ancestors were great navigators, who made long voyages into far-away seas. Michel was well educated, and he talked these things very glibly. He told how they used to make whaling voyages to this coast long before Columbus discovered America, or even before the vikings of old Iceland sailed along these shores. Jacques Cartier, himself a Basque, found several ships belonging to Basque fishermen in the mouth of the St. Lawrence. They called this entire coast at that time, two hundred years ago, Bucalaos, which meant codfish. How the old man's eyes sparkled as he told me about this, and explained that our race was as old on this land

as the red men! He charged me to remember this, and I have. Since then I have learned from others living at Gaspé that he was right.

"I need not tell you how anxiously Michel and I scanned the side of the precipice as soon as it was light enough to do so in the morning. But we were rewarded with no sign of hope. Here and there were irregular projections on the side of the rock, but in all the sheer descent of more than two hundred feet there was no shelf where we could hope to gain a foothold. The top was near, — so near, — but we had no way to reach it, as the rock overhung us, and there was no chance to get a finger-hold in its flinty surface.

"We waited till nearly night in the hope some one might come along who would lend us his assistance; but when the sun had sunk behind our backs, and the cliff was throwing long shadows out over the strait, we decided on the only course open to us. That was to jump into the sea!

"I do not think Michel had any hope of escape, but it would end his sufferings, which were intense. As the distance was so great, it was thought best to make as long a line as we could of our clothing, and, after descending the length of this rope, drop into the water. Accordingly I cut our jackets and leggings into strips, which I fastened together, until I had a line of a goodly length. I then took our waist-

coats, in fact everything that would add to the rope, and when the pieces were all fastened together let one end down. It lacked a long way of reaching the bottom. How much it was I could not tell.

"It took longer to make the rope than I had expected, so it was getting quite dark on the water as I dropped the line. Michel was to go first. In his condition it could not be otherwise. I was to lower him down as far as the rope would let me, and then he was to cut the rope under his arms, and take the fearful fall. As we had but one knife, I would have to descend the line hand over hand, until I reached the end.

"Although I was young, I was strong in my arms, and I lowered Michel easily enough down — down. We had not stopped for leave-taking. Somehow we didn't have the heart for that, for I was sure that we should never meet again alive. I felt his hand press mine in a clasp that I seem to feel now. I turned aside my head that he might not be weakened by the sight of my tears.

"When the end of the rope was reached, I mustered courage to look down upon my friend. How small he looked, dangling in mid-air like a fly. I saw a gleam of the knife blade, and then poor Michel's body shot downward. The sight held me with a horrible fascination, until I heard a dull splash of water, and my friend had disappeared. I now realised that it was farther down to the water from the end

of the rope than I had estimated. I watched in vain for another sight of my companion. I believed that it would be certain death for me to follow him.

"No man ever called me a coward, but for a time my courage failed me. But every moment I lost was valuable to me, for the reason that the tide was ebbing. In a few hours the rocky bottom of the bay would lie below me. So I rallied, and with a courage bordering on frenzy let myself down over the edge of the shelf, and then I had no other alternative but to keep on. Never mind how I reached the extremity of that dangling line, how at last I let go the rope, and spun down — down — down, till I grew dizzy and knew no more. When I recovered my senses I was in a canoe with a couple of friendly Indians, who had seen me drop into the water, and picked me up more dead than alive. We found Michel's mangled body below the cliff, and that ends the story of my escape from the scourge of Acadie.

"I have always cherished a bitterness for the English; but at the same time I have little love for the French such as we have at Quebec. We poor Acadiens are like so many kernels of corn between two millstones, — bound to be crushed whichever way they turn. But, see! the day is breaking. The mist is lifting, and it will soon be light. Where is the young man who went away with my canoe? It is past the time for him to be back."

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW ROB FOUND THE WOODRANGER.

ROB ROGERS paddled silently away from his companions, peering cautiously into the mist enveloping him as he sped on his way down the river. Although a stranger in these regions, he had the intuitive faculty of one versed in woodcraft to pursue his difficult, if not perilous, errand without hesitation. Though the mist hung so densely about him that he could not see the end of his canoe, he was well aware when the mouth of the stream was reached, and he sent his light craft down the bay without misgivings.

He had not gone far on his new course, however, before he checked his swift passage, and, holding the canoe up against the tide, listened intently for any sound which might reach his ear. While he had said nothing of this to the others, he had hoped to find the Woodranger, whom he judged must be along soon, if not already in that part of the bay. The only sound which came to him was the ceaseless lap of the tide.

So Rob resumed his paddling, being careful that each stroke should be made noiselessly. It was five minutes before he again stopped, and listened once more for some sound to break the monotonous murmur of the dark waters. He had not waited long before he fancied he caught the faint dip of a paddle in the darkness ahead. If he had any doubts of this, he soon heard a voice in the same direction, speaking in the *patois* of the French to a companion. The answer quickly came in the guttural tone of a Micmac.

Knowing now he was on the right course, he followed along in the wake of the unknown canoe, guided by an occasional splash from a careless oarsman, but more particularly by the voices of the boatmen. He had learned enough to know that there were five or six in the canoe, and that they were heading up the bay. Presently the sound of the advancing party died away, as if they had moved out of his hearing, and Rob, having nothing further to learn, turned the prow of his canoe back down the bay toward the Petite.

He had not fairly swung half-way around in his circle, when, without any warning, an indistinct form shot across his pathway. One with less command over his emotions must have given an involuntary expression of surprise, if not of alarm, at this phantom-like object suddenly coming into his pres-

ence. But Rob simply looked closer, and as he did so he uttered a single word, in a guarded tone :

"Woodranger!"

If the forester had crossed his path without having given him any warning of his approach, Rob had as successfully placed himself in the pathway of his friend. The low greeting of the Woodranger told that he appreciated this fact :

"Well done, lad," for, though enveloped in the mist, each had not failed to distinguish his friend at once. The Woodranger had been aided in his discovery by the sound of Rob's voice. "Were the dusky heathens as discreet as you, I should have been now in a lively amazement. You are alone. How floats the stick?"

The twain had allowed their canoes to swing around so that they rode side by side, and, keeping in this position, they exchanged their views of the situation in the following dialogue :

"I left the others a quarter of a mile up the river just back of here, while I took a little trip to see if I could get on the track of the enemy."

"Which gives you credit for proper discretion, lad. Hast got an inkling o' 'em?"

"They are just ahead of us."

"I 'low that, seeing the onseeming war'e o' consideration they give themselves. Durst know from whence the keerless creatur's come?"

"They slipped out of the Petite just ahead of us."

"I didst opine as much, I swan, I did. I was too far down in the heel to ketch sight o' the varmints. But my being so backward about starting—and the blameful creatur's did pester me—I say, this very laggardness o' mine was the means o' bringing a leetle intelligence with me, which might otherwise have been lost, if you can lose that which you ne'er have. A boat-load o' the painted and plumed heathens left Grand Pré just behind me."

"Started for Main-à-Dieu?"

"I have good reason for believing Basil Le Noir is with 'em, and that is the best kind o' circumstantial evidence that they have. Hast any plan to circumvent the heathen?"

"If I had one, your news has changed it. Seeing we cannot get in ahead of all the red imps and their white allies, perhaps we had better let the Le Noir party pass us, and then fall in behind."

"Which sounds like an ol' man's 'vice, and not that o' a youngster fired with the hot blood o' youth. It be to your credit, Rob, but there be personal p'int's in this matter, which are well to consider. In the fust place, it is ne'er safe to count on an enemy in front, especially when your time is limited. With these two boats in our lead it might puzzle us to make the Subenacadie as soon as we would like. We must pass ol' Fort Alliance afore the alarm gets there o' our flight. Then, too, I have reasons for

believing that other boats will follow the dark-skinned maker o' war-weapons, and then we should be caught atween 'em like a wedge in a log o' wood."

"Your plar?" asked Rob, waiting patiently, and with apparent indifference, though this showed no lack of faith in his companion.

"The party behind us is not likely to get along for a goodish spell, seeing I have been playing no childish game in coming up here. If you should return to the Petite for the others as soon as may be, I jedge we can run into the Subenacadie ahead o' Le Noir's Judas gang."

"How about the canoe in front?" asked Rob.

"Leave that to me, lad, leave that to me. I've a leetle amazement to offer 'em, and if they 'cept, — mind you, I say if they 'cept, and an Indian is like a coquettish woman, — we shall skip into the Subenacadie as brisk as a squirrel. But see! the mist is lifting. It will soon be clear, and then there will be no kiver for us. Mind you how the wind comes up the strait? That tells why we hear the dusky heathens so well in front, while there is leetle likelihood o' they hearing us, unless we go bawling round like two loons, which in common sense we are not going to do. The bay is growing rougher every minnit. A storm is rising. So, all in all, we can ne'er get up to Cobequid any too soon."

Without further words, the Woodranger began to

paddle away into the gloom, his form soon disappearing in the mist. Rob headed his canoe toward the Petite and fifteen minutes later reached the rendezvous of his friends, just as they were about to start in search of him. The news that the Woodranger had come to their assistance was hailed with joy, and no time was lost in getting ready to start.

The light canoe was again secured astern, and, as they moved silently down the stream, Rob explained to his companions the plan of the forester, by which it was hoped the passage up the bay could be made successfully. Rob took his accustomed place in the bow, while Jean stationed himself at the stern, and Alex, who counted himself a man in the work of propelling the canoe, took his position near the middle.

Mr. Briant complained because he was not able to lend his assistance, but, as it was already becoming light, he and Mrs. Briant, with the bright eyes of Mab to assist, established a lookout fore and aft. In this way they did more good than they anticipated in the stern chase which was to follow.

As they sped on, the mist cleared away faster and faster, so the view was broadening each moment, making the watchers keenly alive to their importance. When this gradual breaking away of the gray gloom of early morning had progressed to a certain extent, a sudden transformation took place. It seemed as if

the curtain of darkness had been swiftly raised by an invisible hand, and a flood of light thrown over the scene with a brightness that for a moment dazzled the beholders.

On their left the waters of Minas Basin lay throbbing in the new light, moaning like a child sobbing in its sleep. On the right the vast forest of that region stretched farther than the eye could span, crowned in the far distance by the circular crest of Mount Ardois.

But the little party had slight interest in these surroundings, but anxiously looked for a sight of their enemies. In this respect two discoveries were made simultaneously, both of which boded them ill. Mrs. Briant, from her position in the bow, was the first to announce :

"I can see a canoe ahead, containing five or six Indians. Yes ; and in front of that, if I am not mistaken, is another canoe, with one person in it. He seems to be pursued by the other party."

"The Woodranger," said Rob. "He has succeeded in passing the reds; he will lead them a lively race, and keep their attention from us."

"There is another canoe behind us!" declared Briant, "and I can count six in it. They are this side of the Petite. Ha! they have discovered us."

"And look, father!" cried Mab, "there comes another canoe behind the first. It is filled with men."

"You are right, my child," said the Acadian ranger, with a troubled look upon his countenance. "It looks as if that, too, was filled with Indians. The prospect looks dark for us."

"We are between two fires!" said Jean Vallie, as he bent to his work with redoubled vigour. "How we shall come out is past my foretelling; but at any rate, we will do our best."

"The Indians in the canoe ahead are preparing to fire on the Woodranger," said Mrs. Briant, excitedly. "They are within short range, too. There goes their first volley," and the mingle of reports of three or four guns were heard by the fugitives.

CHAPTER XV.

A STORMY FLIGHT.

MRS. BRIANT watched intently the scene ahead, until the smoke of the fire-arms in the hands of the enemies had cleared away, when she said, joyously :

"The man does not seem to be hurt, but I do believe the Indians are gaining on him."

"That may be a trick of the Woodranger," said Rob. "No Micmac, I'll warrant, has a gun that can throw a piece of lead as far as old Danger, and the Woodranger knows when to use it better than any other man."

"But there are five or six in the other canoe, and every man seems to have a paddle."

"There is the weight of a body for every pair of arms," replied Rob. "The arms of the Woodranger have sinews as tough as seasoned oak. The Woodranger will take care of himself against any number of red or French enemies. How is it with those behind us?"

"I believe they are gaining on us," replied Briant, who, though he had not missed a word of the forego-

ing conversation, had been anxiously watching their pursuers. "Hark! there is their reply to the shots of the foremost canoe."

Ere the Acadian ranger had finished his speech, the war-cry of the Micmacs rang out over the waters of Minas, prolonged, and swelling in volume, until it seemed to issue from half a hundred iron throats. And as the wild notes rose and fell the distant cliffs caught them up, sending them along the entire line of rocky breastworks, while the pine forest stretching away to the south flung back an answering appeal, which was repeated over and over, with losing force, until the whole died away in the extreme distance.

These cries were nothing new to Wallace Briant or his faithful friend, Jean Vallie, and it had no effect on them. If it was the first time Robert Rogers had listened to the war-whoop of the Micmac, he was quite familiar with the slogan of their cousins, the St. Francis Indians, and the only consequence that he showed was to ply his paddle with renewed power. If Alex was for a moment startled by the terrible cry, he quickly recovered, and kept at his task with a resolute will. Mrs. Briant was a brave woman, and she did not allow her gaze to leave the scene ahead, while she folded closely to her the quivering form of little Mab, who alone was frightened by the fierce yell.

The war-cry of the enemies pursuing was answered by the canoe in front, though with less vigour, for

they were at that moment very much occupied in caring for their single foe in front.

Jean Vallie showed his utter contempt or defiance for the outcries of their enemies by beginning to sing, in time with the strokes of his paddle, the stirring song once sung by a certain *voyageur* in the wilds of the Ottawa. This daring adventurer, after being pursued by a war-party of Indians, finally sought safety in the cavern of a rocky island in the midst of one of the northern lakes. Hemmed in there by his enemies, he met death from starvation and sleeplessness rather than come forth to meet his fate at their hands. Peeling off the white bark of a birch-tree, he traced on it with a sharp-pointed stick in the juice of some berries his "La Complainte de Cadieux," a death song of matchless pathos and beauty. This was found some time after his death, and became one of the most popular songs of New France.

Both Rob and Alex quickly caught the inspiration of the Basque's defiant song, and the three sent the canoe skimming over the waters at a more rapid rate.

But Briant soon realised that, as good work as his friends with the paddles were doing, the odds were too much against them to enable them to hold their own with the pursuing party. A look of stern determination came over his sunburned countenance; he reached down, and lifted from the bottom of the canoe the gun belonging to Robert Rogers.

"Mine is somewhere in the woods around Annapolis," he said. "But if I cannot hold a paddle, I can show you that my finger is still able to pull the trigger, and that my eye has not lost its keenness, when an enemy is the target."

"The Micmacs are gaining on the Woodranger," declared Mrs. Briant, a tremor apparent in her voice. "They mean to fire at him again."

The next moment the report of a single firearm rang out with uncommon clearness, followed almost instantly by a piercing yell.

"Old Danger!" exclaimed Rob, "and I'll warrant there is one red the less."

As he spoke, the victim of the forester's shot, after reeling for a moment, let the paddle slip away from his nerveless hold, and dropped into the bottom of the canoe. A yell of rage came from his companions at his fate, and three of the survivors quickly seized their firearms, to send another volley after the audacious forester. But, as Rob Rogers had said, their weapons were not equal to the long range of the Woodranger's trusty "Danger," and their shots were fired in vain. As but one was left to propel the canoe, this instantly slackened its speed. Ignoring now the fugitives following in their track, the four were intent on the capture or death of their single foeman ahead. With a smile on his bronzed features, the Woodranger, after having hastily recharged his

faithful weapon, laid it at his feet, and was again sending his canoe over the water like a bird upon wing.

Meanwhile, the leading canoe in the pursuit of the Briant party had continued to lessen the distance between them and the fugitives. The Acadian ranger noted the loss of each foot with cool precision, while he held in his hands Rob's gun. Finally, when he saw two of their enemies exchange their paddles for their guns, he said :

"They mean to try a couple of shots. But it will be a waste of so much powder and speed, for their companions will miss their efforts. He must be indeed an unerring marksman who can send a bullet home from a canoe tossed in such a wild tide as this."

Two ringing reports, two dark puffs of smoke, replied to Briant's words, but, as he had predicted, the bullets flew wide of their mark, and the discomfited marksmen resumed their paddles. Once more the canoe of the Micmacs, with its leeboard down, began to overtake the fugitives. Noting carefully this steady loss of space, Briant began to calculate how long it would take them to come within fair gun-range. As he continued his watch he raised the gun three or four times, to lower it each time without touching the trigger.

"Steer away from the shore," he said, finally. "If the wind continues to gain in ugliness you will soon

have all you can do to manage the canoe, let alone dodging the enemy."

Then the Acadian ranger laid aside Rob's gun and took up the heavy, clumsy weapon belonging to Jean Vallie. Raising the hammer of this ancient weapon, he held it ready for instant use when the proper moment came. He had not long to wait, for as soon as the pursuers came within fair gunshot he saw three of them laying down their paddles, with the evident purpose of trying again their skill in firing at the fugitives. But they had not calculated on the result. Before they had laid hands on their weapons, the big gun of Jean's belched forth its cannon-like report, recoiling against its holder's shoulder with a force which sent him backward at the feet of Alex.

So well had Briant taken aim that the great charge tore a big rent in the side of the birchen craft close down to the water's edge. Instead of trying to shoot the party of whites, they were now forced to look to their own safety.

"That puts them out of the race," declared Briant, with a ring of triumph in his voice, as he raised himself up into his former position, forgetting his pain in the excitement of the situation. "I couldn't have done that with your gun, Rob," he said, and then, leaving the discomfited Micmacs to be picked up by those in the canoe behind them, he turned his attention ahead.

They had gained considerably on the canoe in front, while the Woodranger was still leading them at a tantalising distance.

"If I could put a hole in that with this old blunderbuss, as I did in the other," he thought, "I wouldn't mind the loss of powder. But the distance is too great, and the sea grows uglier fast. Aren't you getting tired, Alex?"

"No, father; I can hold out until we reach the Subenacadic."

"Spare yourself all you can, my son. It is not going to be any longer a matter of speed, but a fight with the wind and tide. I wish we had held back and not attempted the passage until after the storm. Ha! there is another shot from the Woodranger. Another red has bitten the dust, or rather foam. I would give a year of my life if I could handle a gun like him."

Only three were left in the Micmac canoe ahead, and these, with bitter cries, were having all they could do to keep their light skiff right side up, so for the time their hated foe was forgotten.

By this time the wind and tide were giving the three at the paddles all they could do, for Minas Basin under the influence of the elements becomes a dangerous course for light crafts, or even large vessels. The dark clouds of early morning were beginning to keep their threat of rain, and the roll

of distant thunder was heard sullenly above the roar of the tide. Mrs. Briant, who had shown remarkable fortitude through the trying scenes just passed, now looked pale and hopeless, while she clasped closer than ever to her breast the frightened Mab. Rob, Jean, and Alex were all doing their utmost to keep the frail boat afloat among the seething waters.

Briant alone of the little party was able to note their surroundings, and the furious rapidity with which the storm was coming on. He saw that the Woodranger had made away from the shore considerably, while the Micmacs were still hugging close in toward the rocky beach, over which the waves broke and tossed with a fury that was appalling.

When, a little later, a rugged point of land was discovered ahead, thrusting a sharp nose out into the stormy waters, the reason for the change made by the Woodranger in his course was apparent. They were approaching Tenny Cape. The canoe of the Woodranger was being tossed like a cockle-shell on the wild tide, while that of the three Micmacs was having an even harder struggle with the warring elements, on account of having kept in closer to the land.

This was seen by Briant only, as his companions were all occupied with other matters. The three at the paddles were called upon to do all in their power to keep the boat up against wind and wave, while

Mrs. Briant and Mab were locked in each other's arms, awed into silence by the sublimity of the scene around them. The Acadian ranger, having seen that the enemy behind them had dropped out of sight, was now watching closely the action of those in front.

He saw that these were steering farther out from the point of land. In the midst of their struggles a report from the Woodranger rang faintly above the storm, and one of the savages sprang up, to fall over upon one of his companions, with the result that the canoe was quickly capsized, and the occupants found themselves battling with the waves.

"Good for the Woodranger!" cried Briant, joyously. "The coast is now clear for us, boys; but, ha! what is this? The boat has sprung a leak!"

The truth of this startling statement was quickly apparent, and Briant, forgetful of his wounds, began to bail out the water, Mrs. Briant assisting him. Their efforts for a time proved successful, but the leak grew worse, in spite of all they could do, so that Briant finally said:

"You had better put in at Noel Inlet, just above here. It will be folly for us to try and keep on, even if the boat was in better shape. I have a friend living near the bay, where I can stop with Mrs. Briant and Mab. Perhaps the rest of you can mend the boat by the time the storm wears out, when, if you

think best, we can start again. The Woodranger has worsted the Micmacs, so I do not believe we have anything to fear from them. Certainly not until those behind come up. This they cannot do in the teeth of this storm."

Rob and Jean agreed to this proposition gladly, and the boat was steered for the bay, while the bailing was continued.

CHAPTER XVI.

SEEKING SHELTER.

NOEL INLET, or bay as it is now called, is a broad arm of Minas thrust deep into the shore, and as the fugitives reached its more sheltered waters the boat escaped to a great extent the fury of the storm, and for the first time since they had begun to approach Tenny Point the little party of fugitives drew a breath of relief. Alex, assisted by such help as his father could give, was kept as busy as ever bailing out the water from the leaking boat, but the realisation that safety was so near at hand gave him strength. Mrs. Briant looked hopefully around, while Mab ceased her sobbing, and showed the brave spirit she really possessed. Then Mrs. Briant took a turn at dipping out the water, in order that her husband might rest. Presently he said :

"The Woodranger is hovering near the mouth of the creek ; hadn't we better signal him ?"

"I think he understands our intentions," replied Rob. "He will follow us if he thinks best ; if not, he will remain behind to keep an eye out for pursuit."

After watching the forester, whose form was growing smaller each moment, the Acadian ranger said :

"I think you are right. Put in toward the landing on our left, Jean. I want to find Louis Beauchamp."

A few minutes later the boat scraped on the bottom, and then rested firm and fast at the water's edge. The rain was now falling in a shower, but the place was somewhat protected from the wind, and the little party felt like returning thanks for this temporary haven.

"You have done well, boys," declared Briant, "and I know you are as glad as the rest of us to get here. You know Louis Beauchamp, Jean?"

"For a true-hearted, whole-souled man. You will be safe with him for a few days."

"Our stay with him must be short. But I thought Mary and Mab could find shelter until the storm passes over. In the meantime, perhaps you and Rob can repair the boat. I am sorry I cannot help you."

"You have got the worst of it so far," replied Jean. "But there is no need of your staying here in this pelting rain and wind. It is but a short distance to the home of Louis, and we will get you there all right. We shall lose nothing by waiting until after the storm has spent its fury. If I mistake not, the Micmacs have suffered as much by it as we."

"I am going to agree with you, Jean, in all you say. I can't do any better. I think with your aid and Alex's I can reach Louis's home. I wish you, Rob, would take Jean's canoe and go after the Woodranger. Tell him I want to see him at the house of Louis Beauchamp both on business and pleasure. The business is important."

"I will gladly find the Woodranger," replied Rob, "but I do not believe he will go to the house. There is need that he and I should get on toward *Main-à-Dieu* as soon as possible."

"I know it, and I regret that I am hindering you. But even if you were to leave me here, there is a matter I must speak of to you both. It won't take you long to fetch him. I will wait here in the boat until you and he come."

"Very well; but it will not be necessary to keep Mrs. Briant and Mab waiting here in this rain. Let them go on to the home of your friend. Alex can go with them. I will return with the Woodranger in a short time."

"You are right, Rob; Mary and Mab must go on to the house. Fetch the Woodranger as soon as you can, for I feel that every moment's delay means much. The danger which threatens New England, as well as Acadia, is too grave to admit of any one shirking his duty. Now that I am so helpless, I must depend on others to do what I had intended

to perform. Ay, the French shall yet rue the day they loaned me that bit of lead. It shall be paid back. You have heard what our friend has said, Mary, have you any fear about going on to Louis Beauchamp's without Jean and me?"

"No, Wallace; but you must promise to be careful of yourself. I am so —"

"Tut — tut, good wife! you know I am used to this sort of thing. Come, Alex, help your mother and Mab on their way."

By this time Rob had untied Jean's canoe from the stern of the boat, and as Mrs. Briant, Alex, and Mab started away from the place, he paddled swiftly down the bay in quest of the Woodranger. As he had expected, he found the latter lying off the shore just above the mouth of the Noel estuary, out of sight of the landing-place of the boat, on account of the fringe of forest that skirted the shore for many miles. When Rob advised his companion of Briant's wishes, the forester shook his head, saying:

"I ne'er dissemble, lad; I have no eagerness to meet the man. And I cannot prevaricate enough to say that I like this delay. Our duty lies away to Main-à-Dieu. And then New England must be awakened to her peril. Mind you, I say this without being unmindful of the interests of Major Vaughan. There be much for us to do, lad, and delays are but cross-trails o' evil."

But when Rob had described the leak in the boat, and the necessity of its repair, the Woodranger quickly overcame the doubts he had shown.

"Mebbe I was not dis reet, lad, seeing I set the stick afore I had read the sign. The storm be an ugly one, ne'er fitting for a woman and leetle girl to be its playthings. So we will tarry here till it has spent its fury like a painter that scents human blood."

"You will go back with me to see and talk with Briant? He seems very anxious to see you. I had him send the woman and girl ahead to this Beauchamp's home."

"You did that, lad, did you? And they minded sich discretion?"

"Yes, Woodranger. We are losing valuable time, to say nothing of keeping him exposed to the storm. He is waiting at the boat, alone with his Basque friend, Jean Vallie."

"I mind your wisnes, lad, I do. But now's me, an ol' man's fancy be, after all, safer counsel than the logic o' a young heart. And she be gone? Mebbe I'll run in with you, and if the indiscretion work harm 'twill be an ol' man's fault, and he must suffer."

They found Briant awaiting them with no disguise over his anxiety to meet them.

"You have been very kind —"

The Woodranger checked the speech with a wave of his hand, saying :

"If it be for no more than that we've come up here, I shall count it a blameful loss o' time, seeing two score o' human lives are calling us to *Main-à-Dieu*."

"Forgive me, Woodranger. I will come to my purpose at once. You say forty lives are in peril at *Main-à-Dieu*. I have a more fearful statement to make than that. I think you have learned something of what I mean from the talk of the Dark Abbé, which you overheard in Basil le Noir's smithy."

As the forester made no reply to this, simply bowing his head, as if in acquiescence, he continued :

"The French government, through their tools at home and in Quebec, are planning to carry out a scheme which will bring desolation and suffering to all New England. Besides arming their forces at home, for the purpose of driving every Englishman from New England and New Scotland, a powerful fleet of vessels, bearing an army of soldiers, is now on the way here to assist in this wholesale annihilation of a people."

"You l'arned this in Quebec?" asked the Woodranger, whose attention was now fixed upon the other.

"I did. I went in disguise into one of Intendant Bigot's secret conferences, and there learned the whole infamous plot."

"Which showed the cunning o' a master hand. I opine the news have not been spread."

"No—no. It was of that I wished to speak to you and the boy with you. He is a brave youth, and if you two are specimens of New England's defenders, the French will have a bigger undertaking on hand than they calculate. Pardon me for saying this. I will come to what I wished to say. Before I had received this ugly wound I was intending to go to Port Glasgow, which is a few miles this side of Chedabucto Bay and Cape Canseau, hoping to meet one of the fishing-vessels from the Banks on their return to New England, as some of them stop there. In that way I hoped to get the news to Boston. I have friends in that vicinity, whom I wished to warn. It is necessary, also, that every settlement of English in New Scotland should be warned. Oh, that I should be so helpless in the midst of all this trouble! I am even helpless to protect my own."

"Were there no crosses to bear, there would be no hearts to feel, man, no hearts to feel," said the Woodranger, impressively. "I judge you desire us to bear this news to Port Glasgow?"

"Yes," he replied, eagerly. "To do that, and see a friend of mine who dwells on the shore of Le Bras d'Or, in the heart of Isle Royal. I do not wish you to underrate the undertaking. You must pass through the country of the Dark Abbé's most

powerful allies. Your most direct way will be up Minas Basin to Cobequid Bay, and across the Subenacadie region. This river is the great highway of the Micmacs in coming from Chebucto to the region of the Gaspereau. I need not tell you all this, as you are a man acquainted with the secrets of the woods, but the most learned are those who are the most willing to listen to another's counsel."

"It be true, sir, it be true. I am not adverse to minding another's counsel. And my stick floats beside yours."

"That means you will undertake this stupendous journey?" asked Briant, earnestly.

"I do not prevaricate the truth, sir. Rob and I are bound to perambulate back to our own camp-ground as 'arly as may be. I can see it will be well for us to return on one of the fishing-boats, as it will be our quickest way to get where we seem needed."

"I don't wish to be any hindrance in your way," said Briant, "and if you think better you can go ahead, as soon as the storm abates. No boat can live in such a gale in Cobequid. While the boys mend the boat, come up to the house with me, and eat and rest for a time. You must have food, and after your long and —"

"In all consistency you can ne'er know what you are saying, sir. It may be food we do need, but that we can pick up as we go on. As to the other, I

ne'er can tell. There'll be plenty o' rest for us all, by and by, but somebody has got to be astir while the war-cry o' the Micmac and the Abnaki wakes the homes o' New England. Nay, sir, go to thy shelter as soon as may be; let the lads mend the boat; and while this is being done I will see that no red scout passes toward *Main-à-Dieu* by this water."

The others quickly saw the wisdom of the Woodranger's suggestion, and without further delay Rob and Jean assisted the Acadian ranger from the boat. In doing this they were obliged to accept the assistance of the forester, for Briant found it, at first, impossible to help himself.

"I shall be better when I have stirred a bit," he said, hopefully. Upon reaching the land, he did manage to walk between Rob and Jean, and when the Woodranger had seen them fairly started he headed his canoe toward the point of pines jutting out into the mouth of the estuary, and he was not seen again that forenoon.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SIGNAL OF DANGER.

THE storm subsided as rapidly as it had arisen, so that by the noon hour there were signs of clearing weather. Rob and Jean had worked industriously upon the boat, but with poor results. It was an old affair, and the materials they had were inadequate to properly repair it.

"It cannot be made safe," declared Jean. "I wish we had another canoe like mine."

This thought had been in Rob's mind half the forenoon, and he had also remembered that the Woodranger had a canoe with him which would be ample provision for their purpose. But out of respect to the feelings of his friend, he had said nothing of this to the Basque, though he had concluded to broach the matter to the forester as soon as he should reappear. He was not likely to have to wait much longer for this opportunity, for even as Jean spoke, a canoe, containing a single occupant, was coming swiftly up the bay. A minute later both recognised the approaching person as him whom they most desired to see.

"What news, Woodranger?" asked Rob, as the forester reached them.

"No news are sometimes the best o' news, lad," as he stepped from his light craft. "The reds nor painted whites have ne'er put in a feather. How soon they may do it, now the storm has stopped kicking the bay like an ol' inemy, it would not be discreet for me to say. I opine they'll move soon. I jedge the boat is not ready?"

"The boat is not seaworthy, Woodranger," replied Rob. "At least, we cannot make it so with what we have to work with."

"I s'pected as much, I swan I did, lad. Are all to go—I mean the woman and leetle gal?"

"It will not do for them to remain here. What we need is another canoe, Woodranger."

"I trust you'll think it no great claim o' mine when I say that I see it, lad. Mebbe it'll be a great indiscretion, — mind you, I say it may, — but here is my canoe, stout and well-seasoned. The bay be getting good-natured, and there be personal p'int's why we should be moving soon. Mebbe it could be arranged to carry all on both," he added, in a low tone, and apparently addressing himself more tian his companions. Rob wisely remained silent, but Jean was prompted to say:

"With your canoe, monsieur, we can make the Subenacadie in fine shape. You and I, Rob, can

take Monsieur Briant in our canoe and go ahead, while the others can follow us. You see I am better acquainted with the route," seeing that this plan instantly brought a look of displeasure upon the sun-bronzed countenance of the woodsman, who began to look anxiously down the bay.

"I must go," he exclaimed, bluntly. "No good sentinel leaves his post without committing a blameful indiscretion. I hope you'll forgive me, Rob. 'Tain't often the ol' man shirks his duty, but I thought a moment off wouldn't be a grievous wrong; but I see my conceit made my judgment weak. Forget an ol' man's weakness, and I'll ne'er be a deserter ag'in."

With these words, to the surprise of Jean Vallie and the confusion of Rob Rogers, the Woodranger stepped into his canoe, and sped off down the bay. Understanding better the real motive for this singular action on the part of his friend, Rob was the first to recover his presence of mind. Quickly pushing Jean's canoe away from the bank, without a word to the Basque, he caught up the paddle, and sent the light craft after the Woodranger. Rob made such a vigorous pursuit that, before the forester had covered half of the distance to the Basin, he came alongside of the other. With a look of pain rather than surprise on his features, the Woodranger said:

"Forgive me, lad; it was a blameful indiscretion

o' mine. Mebbe I let my consarn over the delay in getting ahead blind me to my duty. I have heerd o' sich things, and it may be an ol' man —"

"It was not that, Woodranger," interrupted Rob. "No Injun could have passed in this short time. But every moment is precious to us now. But what I wanted to say, Woodranger, was in regard to the boat. It is not fit to go on with. Even if it held together, in the small streams which we must follow the canoes would be much better. Is not that so, Woodranger?"

"Ay, lad; you are ol' in woodcraft beyond your years. I had trail'd that thought, lad, I had, when that blamed ijit fired his shot into the bresh haphazard like. Mebbe I fluttered too quick, lad, but, alack! now's me, what be I saying? You have some plan, lad?"

"I have come to get yours, Woodranger. We've no time to delay over simple differences. There are many lives at stake, Woodranger."

"Ay, many lives, lad, and that what is dearer yet, though *you* may not know. Alack! hear me running on like a foolish brook babbling o' what in all consistency I cannot know. But it am true, lad, that an ol' man's head grows light, while his feet grow heavy. Now that you have brought me to my shallow wits, I will untie the knots I had in my string. In the first place, it is not a discreet act to leave this run exposed

to the inemy, to slip past at their fancy. While I remain here, promising not to desart my post ag'in, how long will it take you to fetch the wounded Scotchman and his boy down here in your canoe?"

"Not over half an hour, Woodranger."

"I opined as much. If you'll do it, lad, I will then take them in my canoe, and with the boy to help me somewhat, if I need, — and I noticed he was a lusty chap, — I will lead the way up to the Subenacadie, and if the garrison be passed enter the Stewiacke. You can follow with the others."

"The very best plan we can carry out, Woodranger, and I will get Briant and Alex here as quick as possible."

"I know it, lad. But there be one p'int more to settle — a personal p'int. You'll be discreet in not fetching your canoe too near mine? Durst understand, lad, I'll be on hand to succour you in case o' need, but not for you to come indiscreetly near. You understand my sign, lad?"

"I do, Woodranger, and I will remember your wishes. You can trust me."

"I know it, lad."

The next moment Rob was returning up the estuary to where Jean Vallie was impatiently awaiting him, and, upon reaching the Basque, the two lost no time in hastening to the home of Louis Beauchamp, where they found the fugitives anx-

iously looking for them. The plan was quickly accepted by them, and inside of thirty minutes from the time he had left him Rob was back beside the Woodranger, accompanied by Briant and Alex. It required the united efforts of all to assist the former from one canoe into the other, and then he lay in the bottom of the birchen skiff quite helpless.

"I shall make for the Subenacadie, lad, and I know that you'll follow with due discretion. Remember the whistle o' the catbird."

A minute later the Woodranger was paddling briskly up Minas Basin toward Cobequid Bay, Alex lending his assistance, while his father looked back toward Noel Inlet, not without many misgivings over the fate of those he had left behind.

"You'd chide me for telling you to keep a good lookout for the inemy," said the Woodranger, as the passage was begun over the choppy tide, for, though the storm had cleared away, the bay was still greatly disturbed. At times the canoe was tossed furiously on the crest of some foam-flecked wave, and it must have upset under the management of a less experienced hand than that of the forester.

"I will keep my eyes open," replied Briant, "both fore and aft. I do not see any sign of them now. Have you reason for thinking any of them have passed us?"

"The inemy from Grand Pré are behind us ; there may be others ahead. I'm not gifted with the wisdom to tell."

Nothing more was said, while the little party moved swiftly on toward the Subenacadie, the Woodranger plying his paddle with an arm that never seemed to tire. Twice Briant had caught sight of a canoe in their wake, which he had been confident was that of their friends. Nothing had been seen of the French or their Indian allies. They had now entered Cobequid Bay, and were drawing near the Subenacadie River. The Woodranger, who had been paddling somewhat leisurely for some time, now ceased his efforts, saying to Alex :

"Rest, lad ; you have shown amazing strength for one of thy years. It may be an act o' indiscretion to enter the river afore sundown, seeing we are then going to be environed by woods where some sneaking Micmac spy may be lurking. The sun be a good hand's span above the tree-tops. Hast seen the other canoe, friend Briant, of late?"

"Not for half an hour, Woodranger. It might be well for us to drift along slowly until they *can* come up. Making the Subenacadie will be running the gauntlet of the reds from Chebucto. Were the reds arming, up your way, Woodranger?"

"Not when Rob and I come away, but how soon

the tarm o' peace will break there I can ne'er tell. The silence will not be overlong."

"I suppose you are anxious to get back to your family and friends?"

The bearded lips of the Woodranger parted with a motion of silent mirth, though his features showed little, if any, of the spirit of pleasure.

"I trust I am always with friends," he said. "As to my family, I do not think I prevaricate the great truth—mind you I say this, knowing what no one else can know—I have no family, unless a heart that can feel for all mankind can be considered a family."

"Would there were more like you in this world!" said Briant, fervently clasping the forester's hand in a warm hold, though the effort cost him great pain from his wound. "I have been thinking over what you said to me this morning,— 'Were there no crosses to bear there would be no hearts to feel.' Truer words were never spoken. Like myself, I am sure you came from old Scotland."

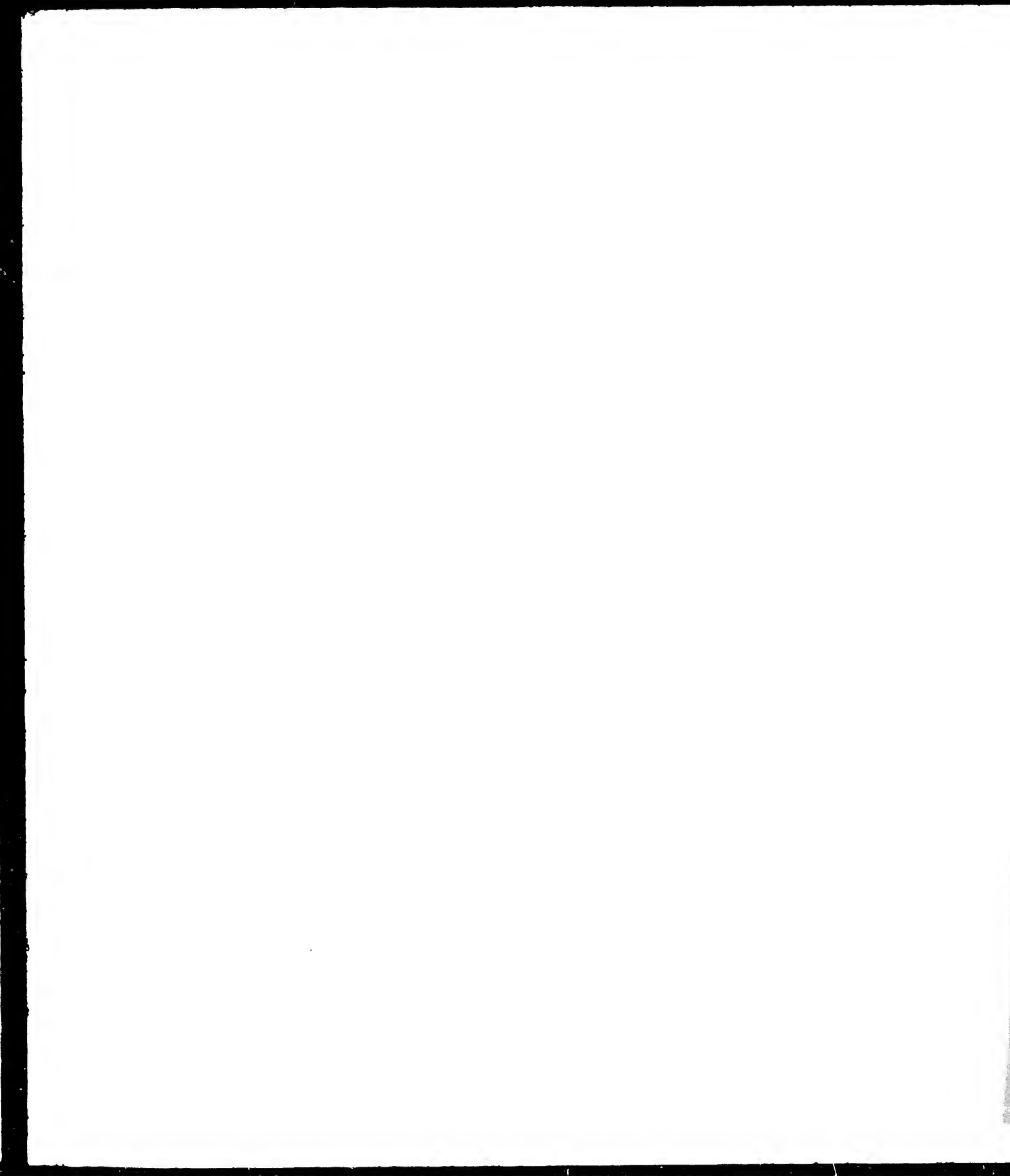
"No—no!" exclaimed the Woodranger, fixing his gaze on the shore ahead. "It may be some of my kin did. Now that you have called my attention to it, I do remember something of the kind. If you'll forgive an ol' man's weakness, I'm minded to ask how long you have been in this country?"

"Mary and I came when Alex was a small boy,

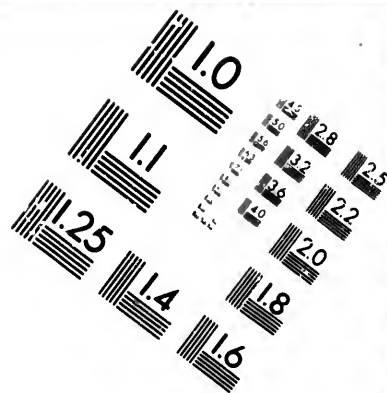
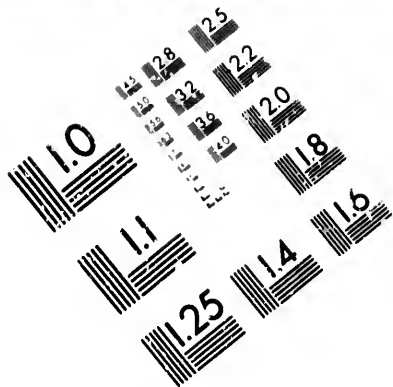
and before Mab was born. I need not tell you that there were troublesome days at home.

"After having been driven out of England and defeated in Ireland, James the Second turned to the Highlanders of Scotland for help. The deposed king sent trusty messengers among them, carrying the fiery cross from glen to glen and clan to clan, according to the practice of the chiefs of the race when they wished to arouse their followers to battle. These hardy allies waged a distressing warfare for two years, but finally William of Orange was everywhere victorious, and the chiefs of the various clans gladly signed papers of fealty to the new power.

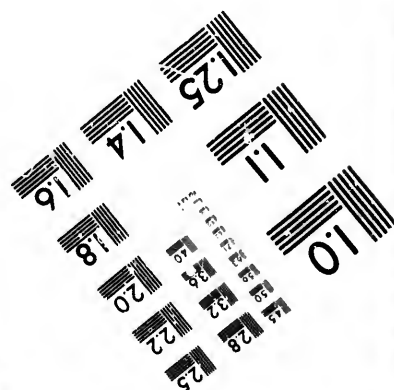
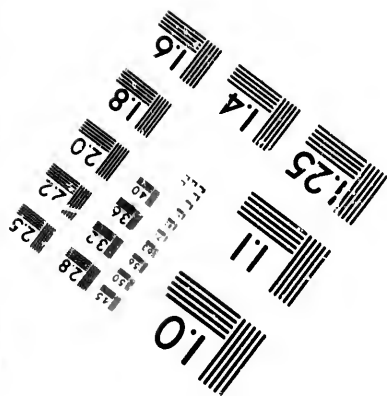
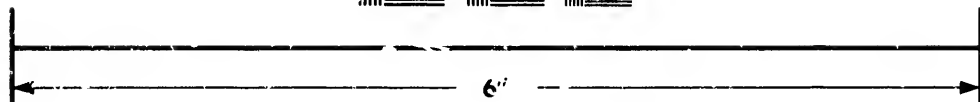
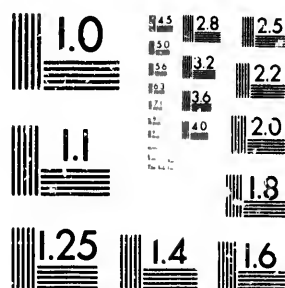
"There was one exception to this rule, the stalwart chieftain of Glencoe, Robert MacDonald. He hesitated until on the morning of the last day allowed for the signing of the paper, when he set forth to fulfil its conditions. Unfortunately for the proud chief, he reached the town to find the proper official away, and the officer in charge claimed that he had no authority to administer the oath. It was the last hour of grace, but in his disappointment the old Highlander set out across the snow-covered mountain in midwinter to find the sheriff of Inverary. This officer gladly administered the obligation to MacDonald, but it was then a week after the appointed time. The situation was misrepresented to the king, and an order was sent back for the







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extermination of the clan. But forgive me, I have wandered from my subject, and this cannot interest you."

"Yes -- yes! go on. Tell me all you can of the MacDonalds," said the Woodranger, his gaze still fixed on the shore-line.

"The officers of the king showed their vile natures by the method they adopted to entrap the unsuspecting Highlanders. Seeking them under the guise of friendship, no sooner had they feasted at their board than they turned upon their entertainers and slew them like sheep, though they made a brave defence. The majority of the Scots fell fighting for their homes and loved ones, and not until they were forced to do so did the survivors flee to the mountains with their wives and children. The inhuman victors then burned the houses, drove away the stock, leaving the wounded to die, and the fugitives in the mountain fastness to perish of cold and hunger. It was the darkest day Glencoe ever knew. Among the few who escaped was a youth of twenty named Robert MacDonald, the only son of the old chief, and his young wife."

"What became of them?" asked the Woodranger, as the other paused in his pathetic tale.

"I cannot tell you in full, sir. Other troubles overtook young MacDonald. He was as headstrong as his father, and his sufferings seemed to develop

the worst part of his nature. He had two children, a son and a daughter. The first had something of his father's spirit, I judge, though I never met him. The daughter married a young man named Archie McNeil. Some trouble arose between the brothers-in-law, and they quarrelled. One was killed and the other fled the country. Alick, who was killed, left a young widow and a little child, both of whom lived with his father. I never wanted to be hard on the old man, and I am willing to believe him crazed by his grief. He took a great dislike for Mary, Alick's widow, and finally, in a fit of passion, drove her out of the house. It was a bitter, stormy night, and the poor outcast wandered in a bewildered way several miles from home, and at last fell exhausted by the roadside.

"I chanced to be abroad that evening, and on my way stumbled over the unfortunate woman. Seeing that she was nearly dead, I bore her in my arms to my home, where she was given the best care my mother was capable of bestowing. Toward morning she revived somewhat, so we had hopes of her life; but it was months and months before she was able to be about. As soon as she could recall her frightful experiences, she related what had befallen her, and also that she had left behind her a little girl, asleep in her couch, at the time she had been driven out into the storm. She besought me to

go to the home of the MacDonalds, whom I knew by report, and find out if the child was well and safe. She intended to go home as soon as she was able.

"I reached the place to find that the MacDonalds had gone away, and no one knew whither, though it was thought to America. I need not dwell upon what followed. Mary's grief was very hard to bear, but I soon grew to care for her, and did all in my power to lighten her burdens. At last she and I were married, and when my mother died my wife and I, with our son Alex, came to this country. I hope I have not tired you with a story that was longer than I had intended, and filled with much which darkens rather than lightens the heart."

"It is ne'er what we remember o' pleasure, but what we disremember o' sorrow, that lightens the heart, man, that lightens the heart," said the Woodranger, in his impressive manner. "But here we are at the mouth of the Subenacadie, unless my memory deceives. The sun has set, and it will be fully an hour before the moon comes into sight. The shades o' that hour will be the best cover we shall have, and it behooves us to get a goodish start up the stream during the time. If I mistake not, yon is the canoe o' our friends. Rob seems to be stirring himself purty lively. Mebbe I see the cause," he added, scanning more closely the expanse of water behind

them. "If my ol' eyes do not deceive me, there is another canoe trailing along behind Rob."

"I can see one quite plainly," declared Alex. "Do you suppose the Indians are so close after them?"

"In all consistency it be the reds, or, what is worse, the painted French. It be leetle more'n was expected. Rob has a goodish pull on 'em. It may lock like running away from friends, but as I count the knots we can do no better'n to run up the stream. They won't overtake him short o' the stream, and if we want to avoid an ambushment it'll be well to push on toward the Stewiacke."

The Woodranger said this last more to himself than his companions, and as he finished speaking he resumed his paddling, steering the canoe into the current of the river, which was quite wide where it emptied into the bay. Soon, however, the stream grew narrower, and the overhanging growth on either bank fell over into the water. In a short time they were moving under the deep shadows of the forest, where it was too dark to distinguish an object at any distance. At the request of the Woodranger, Alex stopped paddling, watching with his father the surrounding scene, while the forester sent the canoe silently, but swiftly, up the stream.

They must have proceeded three miles in this noiseless manner, and the river had narrowed so that

its banks ran within a few yards of each other, when the Woodranger abruptly checked their advance, and bent his head forward in a listening attitude. Briant was about to ask him the cause of this sudden stop, when a clear, guttural cry familiar to him reached his ears.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

A HAND - TO - HAND ENCOUNTER.

"HONK!" the outcry of a wild goose, was all that had been heard by Alex, whose hearing was strained to catch some more startling alarm, and he was about to ask his father what cause there was for concern, when the latter asked of the Woodranger:

"Think they are coming this way?"

"'Yon prevication, and if there ain't French at their heels I'll ne'er prate o' what I've shown I do not know. The critters are coming down the river, and we must get into ambushment."

The keen eyes of the forester had taken in at one survey their situation, and before he concluded his speech he sent the light canoe forward into a little cove formed by a bend in the stream. Briant lifted the overhanging fringe of water-bushes so that they glided under the growth, which fell back into its former position, concealing them in their retreat. The spot seemed especially designed for their purpose, and they could not have been better provided had they searched the river its entire length. Catch-

ing hold of a small tree growing on the bank, the Woodranger held the canoe motionless against the land.

At this moment Alex was somewhat frightened by the shrill cry of a catbird, seeming to issue from the bushes in front of him. Two cries uttered in rapid succession were given, and then, after a short pause, a third, more prolonged, rang out clear on the still night air, and then he knew it was the Woodranger, signalling to Rob. In a brief time, while they listened with breathless interest for an answer, a single cry came from the distance below them. Then the Woodranger gave reply by two cries, which brought in response three sharp notes, and nothing more was heard.

"Rob understands, and will put in under kiver," whispered the Woodranger. "He has not as good a corner as we, but I'll resk Rob. Hark! here come our friends."

He parted the dense bushes in front of them, so that the three were able to peer out upon the open course of the stream. The moon had not yet risen, and, though the sky was thickly set with stars, the shadows of the forest made it too dark to distinguish an ordinary object on the narrow expanse of water running in front of them. But the snow-white figures of a flock of wild geese swimming swiftly with the current were seen clearly against the dark

background. The Woodranger counted sixteen of the creatures moving in perfect order under the leadership of an old fellow of prodigious size, whose head was held high in the air, while he kept a close survey of his surroundings. The others followed in regular order, spreading out right and left so as to form a V-shaped column with the wedge-like point foremost. Not a sound broke the silence of the forest scene from the time the leader came into view until the last had vanished in the gloom.

The passage of the geese was a pretty sight to Alex, but he had anticipated from the manner of the Woodranger and his father some sequel to this flight which he did not understand; but when several minutes had passed in silence without bringing any solution, he grew impatient. It required no little effort to remain quiet such a length of time, but a warning gesture from the forester at last gave him reason to think the suspense was nearly over. The sight which he saw the next moment nearly brought a cry of dismay from his lips, in spite of the control which he had over himself.

All at once, without warning, a canoe party had darted into view from out of the gloom overhanging the stream above them. They counted thirteen in the party, the chief a uniformed French officer, with eight soldiers and four Indians in their war-paint and feathers. Though the gaze of the leader was turned

alternately in every direction, he did not discover the presence of the three in the canoe lying so near that it might have been touched with one of the paddles. It is needless to say that our friends did not even breathe during the brief interval of the passage of the enemy, which was made as silently as that of the fleeing geese. For a time it seemed to Alex that they could not escape discovery, and he sat spellbound for some time after the enemy had passed out of sight.

"Do you think another load is on the way?" asked Briant, finally, speaking in a cautious whisper.

The Woodranger shook his head.

"I'm a bit nervous about Rob," he said. "The lad wasn't favoured with so good a place of ambushment as we. I've a mind to perambulate back. There may be a scrimmage before it is over."

"You can go if you think best," said Briant. "Alex and I will keep our eyes and ears open. The French are surely on the war-path, and that party must be bound to Grand Pré, or the Fundy coast."

The Woodranger had laid aside his paddle, and picked up his gun. As Briant finished speaking, he stepped silently out upon the bank of the Subenacadie, and while Alex and his father watched him he disappeared noiselessly among the shadows of the forest, leaving them to await anxiously his return.

At the time Rob Rogers had been apprised of danger by the signal of the Woodranger, he and his companions were less than a quarter of a mile behind the other canoe, so rapidly had he and Jean moved since the pursuit of the Micmacs had been begun, well down on Cobequid Bay. Nothing had been seen or heard of this war-party since entering the Subenacadie, but it was believed that they were not far behind. Thus this new alarm showed them that again they had enemies in front as well as in the rear.

Accordingly a halt was made, and a hurried consultation held. The Woodranger must have made a close examination of the banks of the river, for he was correct in assuming that Rob's party would not have a good place of concealment near at hand. Though the forest overhung the stream, there was no safe place where they could run in the canoe and wait the passage of the enemy, as their friends ahead had done. But they had more time in which to act, and when Rob proposed that they land on the right bank of the river, and secrete themselves back in the woods, the plan was quickly accepted by Jean, and the canoe was headed in that direction. Owing to the close proximity of the enemy, the utmost caution was necessary in their movements, but the landing was effected in silence. Jean lifted Mab in his arms and did not put her down until he was three or four

rods from the river. Rob assisted Mrs. Briant from the canoe, and they followed the others, as rapidly as possible. A dense barrier of undergrowth was soon reached, which promised to be a good place of concealment, and Mrs. Briant and Mab were told to remain there until Rob and Jean could secrete the canoe. This was done by lifting the light craft from the water and depositing it carefully in the midst of a network of running juniper. The two then returned to their anxious companions.

All this had taken place so quickly that the retreating geese had not reached that vicinity, though they were close down to the spot. If the place of concealment was all that could be expected, the view of the stream was cut off. Wishing to know just what might take place on the Subenacadie, Rob resolved to do a little reconnoitring. Saying as much to Jean, he stealthily left the ambush, and crept forward in the direction of the stream.

He came in sight of the silvery band of water winding through the forest, at the very moment when the white chief of the train of geese swept past, followed by his feathered legion, every head erect and watchful of the surroundings.

"They are followed by an enemy," thought Rob, but he had barely come to this conclusion, when his attention was turned from the fugitive geese to an object of more startling importance to him. Though

not a sound had reached his ears, he saw the creeping juniper a little to his right open, and the head of an Indian was thrust into sight!

A low, guttural exclamation quickly followed, and the brown countenance disappeared at once amid the tangle of juniper. The red man had discovered the white youth, and also knew that he himself had been seen. It was a critical situation for Rob Rogers, who had no way of knowing if this Indian were alone or accompanied by companions. But it was characteristic of him to act promptly in whatever position he might find himself. It was this trait which, more than anything else, enabled him to pass through so many hairbreadth escapes in his adventurous life. There might be a score of savage Micmacs within hail, but it was this one in front of him whom he must first meet. This one must not be allowed to give an alarm, for even if he were alone he would attract the attention of the party that Rob believed was coming down the stream at that moment. He had his gun with him, but he did not dare to risk a shot, as the report of the weapon would be an alarm he did not wish to make. Thus, dropping the firearm, he snatched his stout knife from its sheath, and sprang straight at the concealed Indian before the latter could make an attack on him.

Although taken by surprise, the red man, attacked just as he had opened his mouth to utter the war-

whoop of his race, defiantly met his daring assailant, and the two closed in a struggle which meant life or death. From the very onset it became an equal tussle for the mastery. If Rob was tall and strong of limb, the Micmac warrior was his equal. Crouching in the midst of the thicket, he had sprung to his feet at the moment of Rob's attack, and the bushes springing back slapped the boy ranger in the face, so that he was for an instant bewildered. But he rallied swiftly, and seized the Indian about the throat with his left hand, while he dealt him a furious blow with the knife in his other hand. The blade glanced slightly, sufficient to save the red man's life, and the weapon was dashed from Rob's hold and fell to the ground.

As his clutch tightened upon the throat of his enemy, the other caught him in the same manner, and in a moment the couple were holding each other at arm's length, each concentrating his great strength to strangle his antagonist. The Micmac had caught upon Rob's wrist with his free hand, in a vain attempt to wrest the awful grasp that was suffocating him. With his free hand, Rob had seized upon the body of his enemy.

So far not a sound had broken the silence of their surroundings, and in this position the two stood for what seemed a long time. Unconscious of this tragic scene being enacted so close at hand, the canoe party under the command of the French officer drifted

down the Subenacadie past the place, and away toward Cobequid Bay. Rob was standing so that he faced the river, and he caught a gleam of the war-party as it sped past, but the next instant he put them from his mind, as he sought anew to master his foe. His eyes seemed starting from their sockets, and he could only breathe by short gasps that were full of agony. The red man's clutch seemed to be a grip of iron, while his tenacity of life was even greater, for Rob had concentrated all of his great strength to crush out the life of the other.

At that moment Rob felt his foe sinking slightly back, and even that little compliance to his pressure gave him hope. Rallying, he pushed the other backward with all the strength he could command. The result was a glad surprise to him, for the Micmac suddenly lost his footing, and, slipping on the bank of the stream, dropped face downward in the water. Unnoticed by either of them, he had been standing on the brink of the river. Expecting the red man would renew the fight, Rob quickly picked up his knife, and prepared for a defence, though weak and blinded from his recent encounter. But the Micmac did not move after he fell, and the excitement passing, Rob felt his own strength leaving him, and he slipped down upon the ground, where for the time he lay powerless.

Rob could not tell how long he had lain there in

that semi-unconscious condition before the cry of the Woodranger's mocking-bird rang in his ears. He rallied sufficiently to reply, but did not attempt to regain his feet. He was sure his throat was swollen to prodigious size, and it was only with great difficulty that he could answer his friend. The latter was already near at hand, and a little later he stepped silently into the clearing in front of our hero.

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CHAPTER XIX.

CHALLENGED BY THE ENEMY.

ROB had recovered himself enough to speak in a low tone to the Woodranger, at the same time rising to his feet, and confronting his friend. The latter instantly understood that something unusual had transpired, and he said:

"Now's me, there be an alarm in your appearance, though no word has reached my ol' ears. Is't because I've been unmindful o' my duty?"

"No, Woodranger," replied Rob, speaking in the same cautious tone the other had used. "It was but a trifle, though the red held me hard for a time. Let me see if I can find my gun."

The Woodranger asked no further question, and when Rob had recovered his firearm, he led his companion to the bank of the river, where both gazed on the motionless form of the Micmac, who was still lying face downward in the water. The forester understood what had taken place, though he made no reference to it when he spoke:

"The inemy has passed down the stream, and is

getting well along to Cobequid. Is this red varmint all you have seen o' the painted heathens?"

"It is, Woodranger; but he was creeping through the brush like a wolf. How many others are skulking round I cannot say. The woods may be full of them, though I think this one was a spy sent out to see what he could find."

"Which be a discreet consideration. He found a load he will ne'er take back to his kind. I jedge the others be safe."

"A few rods away, Woodranger. Are we to keep on up the river?"

"Sart'in. I jedge the way be toler'ble clear for us to the Stewiacke, though that don't mean that we are to go blindfolded. Until we pass the garrison at the mouth of the Stewiacke, mebbe we'd better keep cluser together. Mind you, I depend much on your discretion as to *how* near, and how dark the way may be."

"I understand, Woodranger. While you are getting back to your canoe I will get my companions into this one, and overtake you. The moon will soon be flooding the woods with its light."

"That be true, lad. And we must reach the Stewiacke afore her lamp gets too high; leastways, that is our most discretionary course."

Without stopping for Rob's reply, the forester started off through the growth as silently as he had

come, while our hero, still suffering from his struggle with the Micmac, rejoined his companions in their concealment. Nothing had occurred to alarm them, and, without dreaming of the fearful ordeal through which Rob had passed, they followed him in silence back to the bank of the river. As the canoe had been left a little below the place of encounter, none of them saw the body of the Indian.

Jean and Rob then carefully placed the canoe back upon the water, and, holding it where the others could step in, Mrs. Briant and Mab soon seated themselves near the middle. Rob then took a position in the bow, while Jean stationed himself in the stern. As they paddled out into the middle of the stream the moon appeared on the distant horizon, though only a few struggling beams penetrated their surroundings.

Mab started slightly as the dismal bark of a wolf came from the far distance on their right. The cry possessed a lingering intonation, so that it hung for what seemed a long time upon the solitude of the primeval forest. But it received no response, and, finding it was the only sound to break the deep silence of vast woods, the little party all breathed easier, as they moved forward on their lonely journey.

"Did you learn anything of the Woodranger's meaning in giving his alarm?" asked Jean Vallie,

when they had got fairly started again. It was a trait of the true woodsman never to appear curious, or show undue concern over what might really affect his personal safety. From the same training, Rob had refrained from giving his experience until now. In a few words he explained what he had seen and done sufficient for his companions to understand the situation, though they did not dream how near he had been to meeting his death at the hands of the Micmac. Jean was much pleased with what he learned, saying:

"This war-party going down the river will meet the others, and if I do not make a mistake it will work to our good. The French will report the stream clear, not having seen us, and the Le Noir gang may think that we went up the Cobequid instead of coming up the Subenacadie. You know we took extra caution to make it appear we were going to do so."

"What you say seems very probable," said Rob. "At any rate, we think we have reason to be hopeful of making the Stewiacke without encountering the French or Micmacs, unless we run into another war-party coming this way. At any rate, they shall not catch us napping."

In the meantime, the Woodranger had returned to his companions, to find both Alex and his father anxiously awaiting his coming. Without further delay,

the canoe was pushed out from under its cover, and in a minute the three were again ascending the river. As before, Briant acted as a lookout, keeping a sharp watch ahead for the enemy, while occasionally watching for the appearance of the canoe behind them. The latter soon overtaking them, the trip up the river was continued mile after mile without any cause for alarm, until they began to draw near the little garrison known as Fort Alliance, and which constituted a sort of half-way station for the French and Indians passing back and forth between Chebucto and the Bay of Fundy, with the intermediate places on the way. The Subenacadie rises near Grand Lake at the foot of the mountains, and that lake is connected with Chebucto Bay by a continuous chain of lakelets, thus making an ideal waterway for the Micmacs in their raids north; for the trails of the Indians between distant points always followed such streams and bodies of water as lay between the objective places. While the red man was capable of prodigious journeys on foot, he seldom walked when he could go by canoe.

Briant and Jean Vallie were familiar with the situation of the fort at the junction of the Subenacadie and the Stewiacke, and finally Briant motioned for a pause.

"The fort stands on the left bank of the stream, and is less than a quarter of a mile ahead. Had we better attempt to pass it as we are going?"

"How many men are likely to be at the place?" asked the Woodranger, the entire conversation carried on in a whisper.

"A dozen, I should say. I never knew of more than that number there at a time. There is generally a guard on duty near the Subenacadie, but never any on the Stewiacke. As soon as we have gone up that stream a quarter of a mile we shall be clear of the enemy."

"I opine it is not a long tramp across the land from this stream to the other," said the Woodranger.

"The Stewiacke can be reached by going less than a mile from here, and without going nearer than half a mile to the fort. If it were not for this wound of mine we might easily cross in that way."

"Mebbe it will be better for some o' us to go that way, as the smaller the party to pass the garrison, the easier. Being a man versed in the country, it may be well for you to set the stick. I'm not above being l'arnt a leetle common sense, or 'yon' taking advice."

"Jean, being able to speak their language, and in fact being one of them in appearance, might be the best fitted to undertake getting one of the canoes past the place. I think he could take Mary and me, and perhaps Mab, in one canoe, and run the gauntlet of the French. Jean is a shrewd fellow, and as brave as a lion."

"All o' which shows sound discretion on your part. Mebbe the boy could go along with you, while Rob and I will creep up so as to be on hand in case of a scrimmage. You can count on Rob every time. Seeing you past, — rind you, I say presuming you have passed the allies o' the painted heathens, — the lad and I will take the canoe 'cross to the other string o' water. Having come to this agreement, it may be discreet for us to act with promptness. Here comes Rob, and while you double up your load I'll perambulate round a bit."

The Woodranger left the canoe, as he had suggested, and Mrs. Briant and Mab were assisted in, followed by Alex, whom it was thought best to take with them. Jean then took charge, assuring the others that he would contrive to pass the fort somehow. Rob took the remaining canoe toward the bank. Stepping out into the shallow water before the craft had touched bottom, he lifted the canoe out upon the land. Then he waited for the return of the Woodranger, who had vanished into the forest.

The Subenacadie was still a stream of considerable width, though above the fork of the Stewiacke it suddenly narrowed. Jean steered his course along the middle, no longer moving as noiselessly as possible, but assuming a carelessness he was far from feeling. This was done to give his approach the appearance of a party feeling safe from attack by

those occupying the country. He even began to sing one of the popular boat songs of the St. Lawrence, his deep, melodious voice filling the night air with its rich music :

“ Derrière chez nous ya't — un étang,
Fringue ! Fringue sur l'aviron !
Trois beaux canards s'en vont baignant,
Fringue ! Fringue sur la rivière !
Fringue ! Fringue sur l'aviron !

“ Avec son grand fusil d'argent,
Fringue ! Fringue sur l'aviron !
Visa le noir, tua le blanc.
Fringue ! Fringue sur la rivière
Fringue ! Fringue sur l'aviron.

“ Trois beaux canards s'en vont baignant !
Fringue ! Fringue sur l'aviron !
Le fils du roi s'en va chassant.
Fringue ! Fringue sur la rivière !
Fringue ! — ”

“ Silence, you noisy knave ! ” suddenly broke in upon the song of Jean Vallie, as he plied his paddles in unison with Alex along the winding Subenacadie, in close proximity to the lone fortress in the wilderness.

“ Silence, yourself, ” cried the Basque, defiantly, “ till I have finished my merry song.

“ Le fils du roi s'en va chassant,
Fringue ! Fringue sur l'av— ”

"Stop!" fairly roared the unseen challenger, in a ringing French voice. "Silence, or I'll put a bullet through your thick head."

By this time Jean had run the canoe in near enough to the bank to discover the faint outlines of a man standing back a short distance, holding in a threatening manner a long-barrel musket. Back of this single foeman rose the dark walls of Fort Alliance.

"Your pardon, monsieur," Jean hastened to say, in a tone of great civility. "I did not mean to disturb your slumber with my foolish song, but I forgot, and was dreaming that I was back in old Quebec, and that I was a youth again. What cheer here in the wilderness?"

"Who are you prowling through the country as if the sound of a musket was unknown to you?"

"A peaceful traveller, monsieur, on his way to Chebucto with his family."

"One of the accursed Neutrals!" exclaimed the soldier, for such he was.

"Not if I know my father's spirit," cried Jean, quickly. "The wrong of years demands justice, but I must first see my family safe at my journey's end."

"Then you are bound to Chebucto?"

"Pray where else does the Subenacadie lead?"

"True enough. If you are not a Neutral, then what are you?"

"A Gunbearer!" replied Jean, boldly, resuming his passage up the stream, as if his answer had been sufficient.

"Hold!" cried the sentry, swiftly raising his gun so its long barrel was pointed ominously at the little party of fugitives; "you have not given the password and my orders are to let none pass here without it, be he friend or foe."

Jean Vallie realised that the critical moment of their flight had come, and that to fail in his reply meant disaster to them. While he hesitated for an instant, Briant whispered:

"Try 'Main-à-Dieu.'"

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CHAPTER XX.

TALES OF THE GREENWOOD.

"MAIN-A-DIEU!" said Jean Vallie, beginning to move forward again without waiting for a reply from the soldier, who muttered something he did not hear, but allowed him to keep on. The shrewd Basque made no attempt to display any caution until the mouth of the Stewiacke was reached, when he began to move with all the silence possible. The canoe was headed up this smaller stream, both he and Alex sending the light boat along against the current with strong, noiseless strokes. For a brief while Briant, whose ears were strained to catch any sound, heard confused cries from the direction of the fort, but if any pursuit was made, nothing came of it.

The Stewiacke was a stream considerably smaller than the Subenacadie, and our party soon found that their progress must necessarily be slower and more tedious. After going what he judged to be a quarter of a mile, Jean ceased his rowing and motioned for Alex to do the same.

"We might as well rest here a few minutes for

the others," he said. "I think you will be glad of a breathing-spell, Alex, for it has been a long, steady pull."

"Do you think the danger is past?" asked Mrs. Briant, anxiously.

"The worst of it, madam. Of course we have got to keep our eyes open, but each dip of the paddle widens the distance between us and our enemies until we have made the St. Mary's River, when again we shall be running into the lion's jaws."

"Here come Woodranger and the boy," said Briant, in a tone of gladness. "Any news of alarm?" he asked of the forester.

"The French do show consarn, and a couple o' soldiers have gone up the Subenacadie. Mebbe you'll consider it only a word o' discretion: if I 'vise that we move ahead with as leetle delay as possible. I opine we shall have to move slower arter this. While the rest o' you be changing our loads so they will be the same as afore, I'll scout back a bit. There is no telling who may be hanging on your heels."

Ten minutes later the entire party was moving slowly and cautiously up the Stewiacke, the Woodranger, Briant, and Alex in the foremost canoe, while the others followed close behind. Not a word was uttered until the forest was touched with the rosy beams of another day, and their pathway no longer

lay under the darkness of the overhanging woods, when the Woodranger suddenly stopped rowing, and, motioning silence to his companions, pointed ahead.

If alarmed at first, this fear swiftly fled, as Alex and his father saw a pair of sheldrake ducks dart from a thicket on the bank of the stream and, swimming rapidly across the water, disappear the next moment somewhere in the water-rushes beyond. As brief as was the view of them, they presented a pretty picture of wildwood life.

"The sheldrake duck," commented the Woodranger, as they vanished in the bushes; "and you may rest assured that no human being is nigh, unless he has crept upon these birds unawares, as we have done. I think it'll be discreet to stop a bit and rest. It's ag'in human natur' to move alwus, especially if sich be woman natur'."

As he ceased speaking the Woodranger stepped out into the shallow water, and Alex followed his example. The forester then lifted Briant up in his arms and laid him carefully down upon the ground not far from the bank of the river. The canoe was next raised from the water, and placed bottom up in a spot where it would get the most sunlight, so that it might dry while they waited here. Next to his gun, the true woodsman cared for the canoe which bore him on his long journeys. Whenever it could be avoided one of them was never allowed to touch

the bottom of a stream, and as soon as a halt was made these light crafts were lifted out of the water and placed, as the Woodranger had his, upside down, so that they would not only cause the water to run off, but that they might dry so as to be as light as possible when the journey was resumed.

By this time the other canoe had reached the landing-place, and the forester went back into the forest a short distance to prepare a spot for camping and to rest for a few hours. First gathering some boughs, he covered these with a deep layer of leaves, so that he soon had comfortable couches for Mr. Briant, who sadly needed the rest, and for Mrs. Briant and Mab.

"It is natur' to sleep, for sleep means rest," he said to Alex, who had lent his assistance in preparing this place for comfort. "I opine it will be best for the females to sleep awhile. And I hope you won't feel I have committed an indiscretion if I 'vise you to catch a bit o' sleep, too. There be a long jarncy ahead o' us. Here come the others, and mebbe I'll take a short perambulation to see that no inemy be lurking nigh. You can say as much to Rob, who knows how to treat an ol' man's whims."

His tall figure was vanishing in the distance as the rest of the fugitives reached the place, Briant assisted hither by Rob and Jean. This stop was appreciated by the Briant family, all of whom, excepting Alex, were well worn by the fatigues of the

perilous flight. Both Rob and Jean urged them to lie down and sleep, as soon as they had eaten of the bacon and barley bread that they had taken with them. Half an hour later this advice had been acted upon so far that two, at least, of the party, Mrs. Briant and Mab, were fast asleep. Briant was resting as comfortably as possible, while even Jean did not deny himself repose on the leaf-carpeted earth. Finally, Rob Rogers, wondering where the Woodranger could be, stole down to the bank of the Stewiacke, followed a moment after by the alert Alex. At that moment the Woodranger was seen coming from the forest.

"Any sign, Woodranger?" asked Rob.

"Only the sign o' peace, lad. I have taken a goodish perambulation o' the woods and I feel better for it. The rest are discreet in seeking comfort in their own way."

"Why is it you never rest, Woodranger?" asked Alex. "Don't you ever get tired?"

"Tired, lad? Mebbe I get the wrong drift o' your idee. If by being tired you mean tired of setting on my haunches, like a fat goose that cannot waddle on 'count its own weight, then I should appreciate the truth did I say 'Nay.' If by getting tired you mean tired o' the free use o' those limbs given me by a wise Creator as a means of recreation, then I should break the divine law by answering 'Ay.'

Durst think I ne'er rest, when for a long hour I've been breshing the cobwebs from the briar and juniper with feet that were given me for use, and legs that weary from inaction and not from motion?

"The value o' a pair o' good legs — and all legs would be good if properly trained — be not known to him who squats on some means o' conveyance and complains o' the slight natur' has put on him when he acts at variance with her intentions. Legs were made to carry the body and not as a roosting-place. There be no rest like a smart perambulation o' the woods, and no mender o' tiredness like the breath o' the pine forest scented with the birch and maple. I *was* tired, lad, with my legs doubled up like a broken stick in that bit o' birch bark; I be rested now arter my brisk walk in the fresh morning."

"By the way, Woodranger," said Alex, "there is a question I wish to ask you about those geese. How did you know the French officer and his crew were behind them, when we stopped on the Suben-acadie?"

"I l'arned that in the book o' natur', lad, long ere you ever see'd a goose," replied the Woodranger, with a smile. "I don't mind l'arning it to you, seeing you're a likely lad who keeps his eyes and ears open. The goose be a wary creetur', and he ne'er prowls abroad blind to his own danger. His scent is keen, his ear clear, his eye bright. The wind was

right last evening for him to scent an inemy coming down the stream, while he could not have scented our approach. Mebbe that flock had put in for quarters till morning, when their chief discovered the approach o' 'em whom he knew was an inemy, when he marshalled his troop and marched 'em down the river for the open bay, where they would be able to escape. Minded you how regular the ol' fellow marched his men?"

"Yes; but I always supposed the goose was the most stupid and foolish of all bird-kind."

"That is 'cause you have been taught from the book o' man and not natur's own. It be true that the tame goose does sometimes 'pear stupid, but, if he is, his wild kin is far from it. In p'int o' fact, no bird be more gitted in the knack o' seeing, and not one has a better idee o' location and distance. Then, too, he is a great talker and planner o' his doings, which to me speaks o' a high sense o' the fitness o' things, and shows that he has power o' reason.

"I claim no great knack at trailing sich ideas o' them that speak not in my tongue, but the language o' the wild goose is easy to read. I remember one fall, as I was hunting up north, that a flock o' wild geese came trooping over my head, and as I was standing on a high bluff I was brought purty nigh to 'em, though I was kivered from 'em. I had heerd

the gang a-talking among 'emselves, for all the world as a party o' men might do. They was headed south, with the ol' chief at his proper place. For some reason which I ne'er understood, jest as he got over my head he sheered short off to the west, and sung out to his followers to do the same. But this didn't seem to suit one o' his lieutenants, who answered him purty pert and kept on toward the south. At this some followed the rebel, while others took arter the ol' chief. I noticed they were all young birds that kept straight ahead.

"Seeing his order had been disobeyed, the ol' chief wheeled about, shouting and screaming for all the world as a leader of men might do, who was in the same fix. He rushed in ahead of the new leader, and one o' the sharpest scimmages with the tongue followed that I ever heerd. I can't say that the ol' goose took vain language, as men are too prone to do when in anger, but I do know he told that rebellious goose what he thought o' him. Then he fired his hot shot at the others, who one by one began to head toward the west. This went on until the rebel was left alone with his scolding commander. O' course I can ne'er give you the expressions that couple uttered, but I ne'er heerd dialogue 'tween human beings that showed plainer the passions o' the breast o' man or beast. They showed rage at being defied, stubbornness at being commanded to do what

one did not want to do, and a determination not to give up on both sides.

"But the ol' chief, who had no doubt led his train on 'em long trips for many years, finally conquered. Arter giving the other a last scolding, he took his place at the head, and the entire body sailed away to the westward. For some time after they had got started I could hear their furious scolding and fault-finding. With all this confusion, their ranks were unbroken as soon as they had got started ag'in. And as the wild geese fly, so do they swim or march, always in perfect order."

"I did not know that geese ever marched," said Alex. "I have noticed that they generally fly in wedge-shaped columns."

"It be not to your discredit, lad, that you have ne'er seen geese marching, and they have small credit for sich doings. But the truth is the goose knows the value o' a pair o' good legs as well as strong wings. Further north wild geese do much o' their perambulation on foot, often marching many miles together. In doing this they always have a leader, who gives out his orders with as good judgment as an officer o' a body o' soldiers. They generally march ten abreast, and whenever there is a chance to feed they fall out of line, at a signal from their chief, but not at any other time. At a word from him, they resume their places, each goose being

keerful to get back into his ol' position. If they should come to a body o' water, they'd swim acrost as they marched, ten geese wide. I've known a flock to march twelve miles in a day."

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CHAPTER XXI.

RUNNING THE RAPIDS.

"HARK! unless my ol' ears deceive me, I hear the roar o' rapids ahead."

As the words indicate, the speaker was the Woodranger, though the time and the scene has changed since last we met him in company with Rob Rogers and Alex Briant on the bank of the Stewiacke. It is now the evening of the succeeding night, and the fugitives are no longer following the devious windings of the tributary of the Subenacadie, but are moving cautiously down the west branch of the St. Mary's River, which empties its waters into the bay by that name above the town of Sherbrooke. It had been the original plan of Mr. Briant to strike across the country so as to reach one of the streams running into Northumberland Straits, and thence down the river and up the straits to a small settlement of Scots on Barney River. But his condition would not admit of making such a long overland journey, and when the Stewiacke had been followed to its source, it was as much as he could do to bear the

trip of a few miles to the head waters of the St. Mary's, though borne on a rude litter by his companions. Two trips had been necessitated on the part of the Woodranger and Rob, but this had been accomplished, and the little party, still divided, had started down the latter river with rising courage as the end of the tedious journey began to draw near. At a small settlement of English near the mouth of this stream, it was believed the fugitives would meet with a cordial welcome and protection.

As the Woodranger uttered his announcement of the sound of falls in the river not far distant, he steered the canoe in toward the right bank, where he and Alex held it up against the current, while the three—Briant still being one of their number—listened for a proof of his statement. The moon was still far below the horizon, and the sky cloudy, so that it was too dark to see distinctly, but the steady roar of rushing water was borne to their ears.

"It sounds as if there were falls of several feet in height," said Briant, "though I did not know that the St. Mary had any cataracts which could not be made by canoe."

"The sound is too broken to be made by a single fall," declared the Woodranger. "I jedge there be rapids, and not far away, though it be indiscreet in me to say what in all consistency I can ne'er know. I wonder where Rob is."

As the Woodranger concluded his speech, he gave expression to one of the signals so well understood by him and Rob, and then bent his head to catch the reply, which came with more promptness than he had expected. It not only told him that the others were following them in safety, but that they were not far behind.

"Mebbe we'd better climb down the brook a leetle, and sort o' s'arch out the way. Rob will follow with proper discretion. Alack! how narvous I be getting o'er what in all consistency can ne'er be o'ermuch! I s'pose it be the weakness which comes with one's years."

Saying this, which was spoken more to himself than his companions, the Woodranger turned the prow of the canoe back into the middle of the stream, and the passage down the St. Mary's was resumed. Since leaving the Subenacadie they had penetrated into a region of dense growth comprising pine, spruce, birch, beech, and maple, a tract of country which has since been not inaptly designated as "Edenland." On the summer night the aroma of the resinous woods lay heavy on the fragrant air, while the only sound that broke the silence was the constant roar of the stream, which grew louder and deeper in volume as they sped on. At places the stream spread out into little coves, where the water was calm and the light sufficient for the canocists to

catch a passing gleam of their surroundings. These places were invariably succeeded by a narrowing of the stream and swiftness of the current, which made it necessary for the Woodranger and Alex to exercise their utmost strength to keep the slight boat right side up and clear of the rocky heads thrust forbiddingly above the foaming waters. At these points where the light was needed most, the trees overhung the banks, until their branches interlocked, and the dangerous course was made as dark as possible under a starless sky.

The roar of the rapids was now becoming terrific, telling them that they were close down to the series of cataracts, which every indication showed were impassable in the light skiff under them. Accordingly, the Woodranger watched for the next favourable place for landing the canoe, and soon ran the boat in toward the bank. Springing out into the shallow water, he pulled the light craft up under the overhanging foliage, where he held it, saying to his companions :

"We shall have to make this a carrying-place, and if you'll keep a lookout for the others, lad, I'll get your father ashore."

This had to be shouted in a loud tone, and, while Alex signified his readiness to obey, the forester prepared to carry out his intentions. While they were doing this, Rob and Jean Vallie were having the

same struggle experienced by the others to keep their canoe from being dashed upon the rocks. This they accomplished successfully until they were nearly down to the stopping-place of their companions, when a peculiar accident occurred which completely baffled their efforts, and gave our hero more than he could do.

In passing one of the narrows in the stream, the canoe was sent in close to the right bank, though Jean managed to save it from being hurled against the rocky barrier. But the boat lurched so that Mrs. Briant and Mab would have been thrown out into the raging water but for a superhuman effort on their part and that of Rob. At this critical moment, when so much was depending on the exertions of Jean, he felt a furious blow upon the side of his neck, and the next instant he was lifted, as if by a gigantic hand, into mid-air, and sent flying through space.

Though it was too dark to see what had taken place, Rob was quickly aware of some disaster to his companion, since the canoe, no longer guided by his paddle, swiftly spun around stern foremost. This was done with such a force and velocity that it seemed a miracle none of the three left in the birchen boat was sent head-first into the rushing water.

Mrs. Briant and Mab both screamed in their fright, and Rob, anticipating what lay in their pathway from

the deafening thunder of falling water, attempted to retrieve something of what they had lost. But, caught in the rapid current, it was all he could do to keep the canoe from being dashed on the rocks, to say nothing of checking its mad career. In the midst of his futile struggles the cries of Alex Briant rang in his ears :

“Hold on — the rapids — the rapids!”

The Woodranger caught a passing glance of the runaway canoe as it swept past and went out of sight, careening over until the gunwales lipped the water. Leaving Alex to remain with his father, he ran down the river bank in the hope of being of some assistance to the castaways.

As the canoe sped forward on its wild career, carried on with frightful velocity into perils of which Rob was in entire ignorance, except for that fearful warning from the roaring waters, he first tried to check the furious advance by the vigorous use of his paddle. But he soon found that at the most he could only guide the course of the runaway craft, and trust to his strong arm and the strength of the frail boat to carry him and his companions to the foot of the descent. He knew that the canoe had been well built, and that its very lightness was likely to stand it in good stead now.

Still, the rugged banks of the rapid stream were set with rocky angles, and huge boulders were scat-

tered along the watery course. Rob saw little of his surroundings, as he was carried on with increasing velocity, but he saw enough to know the peril that encompassed him, and that his only hope lay in keeping the canoe in the middle of the stream. The roar of rushing water was now terrific, but he realised that it was not rising any higher in volume. This fact proved to him that there was no cataract ahead. There being no high falls, it was not impossible that he might shoot the rapids without disaster.

With this thought giving him courage, the first stage of the wild journey was passed, and he had managed to steer clear of the rocky barriers on either hand. He no longer thought of trying even to check the speed with which the boat was drawn downward by the current with the velocity of an arrow.

Suddenly a louder uproar of the stormy current rang in his ears, and a cloud of spray was flung into his face. The dark outlines of a huge rock rising from the middle of the stream stood out for a moment in the foreground of foaming waters, and he struggled with all his strength to turn the canoe aside into the right branch of the divided current. But no arm could avail against such a power. The canoe spun half-way around in spite of him. Then it was driven against the stony obstruction, and, held there by the force of the current, remained motion-

less for the time. But her side had been stove in, and the water poured through upon the occupants.

Realising that the canoe was lost, Rob thought next of saving the lives of those with him. With that presence of mind which was a part of his nature, he flung his paddle toward the shore, and, picking up his gun, sent that after it, following this with Jean's musket. He then shouted to Mrs. Briant to cling to the rock, while he clasped Mab in one arm and climbed upon the boulder. Accomplishing this feat, he was in season to assist Mrs. Briant to a spot beside him.

Lightened of its burden, the canoe heeled around into the current. Tossed for a moment on the stormy surface of the stream, in another instant it was swept down into the whirlpool of waters, to be seen no more, carrying with it all they had possessed, except the weapons.

Mab was crying in Rob's arms, so he placed her in the clasp of her mother. Then he shouted to them to have courage. The reply of the brave woman was drowned by the sound of the rapids.

Rob was trying to get a better idea of their situation, in the hope of finding some way to reach the bank of the river, when the voice of the Woodranger came faintly to his ears above the roar of the water. His reply was answered by another cry from his friend, who soon after appeared on the bank opposite

him. The width of the stream proved less than had been expected, and fifteen minutes later the three on the rock had gained the river bank beside the Woodranger, who listened to Rob's account of their dangerous passage of the rapids with more surprise than he was accustomed to display.

"It be a miracle none o' you were lost, and I count that to the strong arm o' Rob. The birch be gone, but let us not repine, for there be the other remaining. That reminds me o' 'em I left so unceremoniously with it. Mebbe we'd better perambulate back and see how it be with 'em."

"And find Jean, if he is dead or alive," said Rob. "I can't understand what happened to him. It seemed just as if a mighty hand had reached down and taken him from the canoe."

Their hearts were filled with thanksgiving over their escape, although they felt great anxiety over the unknown fate of the faithful Basque, as they started back up the bank of the St. Mary's, after having found the firearms Rob had flung ashore. These were uninjured, greatly to their delight.

CHAPTER XXII.

A RIDE ON A MOOSE.

THE Woodranger led the way in silence to where he had left Alex and his father, and found them anxiously awaiting the appearance of their friends.

"Have all escaped?" asked Mr. Briant, as soon as he became aware of the presence of the others, though he could not distinguish them in the darkness.

"If we 'cept Jean, that be the truth. In all consistency we shall soon know the sort o' amazement he has fallen into. Mebbe Rob and I won't be gone long."

Leaving the reunited family to exchange congratulations and express their sympathy with each other, the Woodranger and Rob advanced up the bank of the stream in search of the missing man. While Rob felt quite confident that Jean had not fallen into the river, it seemed very probable that he had, and at that moment his mangled body might be tossed at the mercy of the rapids far below them. Still, he and the Woodranger pursued their search with dili-

gence, and in the midst of it they were glad to hear a cry which they recognised as coming from Jean.

A minute later they found the Basque sitting bolt upright on the bank of the stream, rubbing his head and giving expression to exclamations of mingled surprise and pain. Jean was not seriously injured, but he was so confused and bewildered by his adventure that it was some time before he could even stand on his feet. In answer to Rob's inquiry, all the explanation he could give of the affair was that he had received a terrific blow on the side of his head and neck, and that he seemed to have been suddenly lifted from the canoe and flung backward into the forest, where he had fallen with such force as to be rendered unconscious for awhile. In their haste to get started again on their journey, none of them made a thorough examination of the scene to ascertain just what had befallen Jean, but all agreed that he had been struck by some tree bowed over the stream, and that the force of the blow had not only carried him from the canoe, but landed him on the bank of the river. As long as he had escaped with his life, it did not matter just how it had been done. It was sufficient that the generous Jean had not suffered any more serious harm, though it would be several days before the pain of the blow would cease.

Upon returning to Mr. Briant and his family, a

short consultation was held, the conclusion reached being that there was but one course for them to pursue. They must go on with the one remaining canoe, after having carried it below the rapids. From that place it was decided best for the fugitives to keep on toward their destination without the Woodranger and Rob, both of whom felt that it was their duty to hasten on toward Main-à-Dieu with as little loss of time as possible. If the Woodranger had personal reasons for suggesting a division of the party so quickly, none but Rob mistrusted it, and he wisely remained silent. He saw clearly the need of greater haste in reaching the threatened settlement, and was not adverse to agreeing to what his companion suggested.

Having decided upon their course of action, no further time was lost in carrying out the plan. First of all the remaining canoe, with such portables as they had taken in it, must be transferred to the river below the rapids, and as Jean, who still felt unable to lend his assistance, volunteered to remain with the Briants, Rob and the Woodranger went on the first trip down the forest.

Jean was not one to bewail his fate, and while his head felt pretty sore, his heart was as light as ever, and he declared that he would be strong enough to move with the rest as soon as their friends should return.

"That was a short ride compared to one I took on the back of a moose when I was a youngster, and that clip on the head was nothing compared to the blow I received then. Want to hear the story, eh, Mademoiselle Mabel? Perhaps it will keep the time from hanging heavily on our hands while we wait for the New Englanders to return. But, upon my word, it had quite escaped my memory till this foolish little matter recalled it.

"As I began by saying I was a youngster when the adventure I am going to describe took place, I will explain further that I had joined the fortunes of a party of moose-hunters who had set out from near Port Royal to hunt deer on the Perot, which was at that time a great stamping-ground for the animals. It was in the dead of winter, and the snow lay two or three feet deep on the ground. But we didn't mind the snow with our snow-shoes, which were long and narrow like the ones made by the Micmacs, a framework of ash wood woven across with deer-thongs, and strips of the same stout material to hold them on.

"The second night found us camped on the Perot, the snow scraped away to the ground for a circle a dozen feet in diameter, and ourselves as comfortable as possible in our fur robes and the cheery fire made of moose wood.¹ Our guide, who was a half-Indian,

¹ Maple.

a shrewd, cautious fellow, had discovered signs of deer that afternoon, and he assured us the herd was led by an old moose of great size. In my youth and inexperience, I expressed my disappointment at not following up the trail instead of settling down to camp an hour before sunset. But Injun Joe shook his head, saying:

“‘Mebbe moose come to us while wait; better’n running after him. Murrer see.’

“I had to learn then that moose do not wander so very far from their feeding-grounds, unless driven off by enemies or forced to change their base on account of a scarcity of herbage. When the snow becomes very deep, or a crust forms on it so it is hard to move about, the moose belonging to the herd unite in tramping down the snow for a considerable distance, sometimes making an area a mile in circuit, so the weaker portion of their number can browse at will upon the young trees. These places are called deer-yards, and it is one of the prettiest sights I ever saw to witness a herd of these innocent creatures skipping about for their breakfast, nibbling first at one tree and then another, the old moose looking on at some conspicuous place like a sentry on duty, sniffing the air every now and then in anticipation of danger.

“Well, anxious as I was to be on hand in the chase which we expected the following morning, I slept

soundly after the previous day's tramp until I was awakened by a shake from Injun Joe. Starting up, I looked around as if expecting to see the old moose and his family right before me. Although I didn't see any such sight, I was soon apprised by Joe of the fact that the whole herd was browsing less than half a mile to the south of us. Early as it was, he had been on a little trip of discovery, and had just got back.

"It had been thawing for two or three days, and, as the night had been pretty cold, the snow had formed a crust which promised to bear our weights, so no one stopped to put on his snow-shoes. Looking carefully to the priming of our firearms, we all rushed away toward our prey, each foolishly anxious to get the first shot. When we had gone about a quarter of a mile our guide suddenly stopped, holding up his left hand as a signal for us to do the same.

"We hadn't more than come to a halt before we sighted the old moose and his followers fleeing across the range to our south. The sight fired our blood, and, like a party of half-wild boys, we bounded ahead eager to get within gunshot. At sight of us the moose headed farther away, though he was not in season to escape being the target of every gun in that company of hunters. But if he was hit, not a shot took effect enough to check in the least his flight.

"In the excitement of the occasion I heard Injun Joe cry out that the moose would try to reach one of the valleys on our right, and that we had better head in that direction if we wished to get another shot. The fact that he had started on that course, more than his words, caused me to change toward the west, though the majority of our party kept on toward the south. I saw or heard nothing more of them until I had passed through one of the most thrilling experiences of my life.

"I soon found that I was nowhere in a race with Injun Joe, though I had often boasted of my ability as a runner. He seemed to skim over the snow like a bird. But I did the best I could, and, without trying to keep in his footsteps, sheered more to my left, in the hope I should be fortunate enough to cut off the fleeing moose ahead of him! Though I am now familiar with every foot of that country, it was new to me then, and in the midst of my headlong pursuit I suddenly found myself on the brink of a sheer descent of nearly twenty feet.

"I tried to stop myself the moment I realised my predicament, but I was going at such a furious gait that, in spite of all I could do, I was carried over the edge of the rock into the depths below. In the brief interval, when I had seemed suspended on the brow of the cliff, I caught sight of the tree-tops below, and coming through the scattering growth I

had a glimpse of the herd, with the old moose in the lead.

"After a suffocating sensation lasting for a few seconds, I found my descent abruptly broken, and myself astride of a moving object. It must have been more instinct than anything else that caused me to hold fast to the first thing my hands touched, while I was borne on at a pace which put to shame my powers of locomotion.

"I had been carried a considerable distance before I recovered enough to know that I was taking the strangest ride I had ever known. My steed was the moose, flying at the head of his train, and I barely kept from being thrown by clinging to his big ears!

"When I had recovered sufficient to realise my position, I saw that the old monarch of the woods was more startled than I, though I felt that my position was extremely dangerous. Besides the danger of falling off and being trampled under the feet of him and his followers, I was likely to be struck by the branches of the trees and hurled senseless to the ground.

"An old bull-moose is generally a tough customer to grapple with, and I always prefer to have them at good gunshot, with a weapon that I can depend on. But there I was, and, when the first shock of my fall was over, I began to calculate on my chances of escaping with my life. I had dropped my gun when

I had gone headlong over the cliff, but I did have with me a keen-bladed knife that I carried in those days. The moose was making such tremendous leaps, as he bounded ahead, that I hardly dared to loosen my hold enough to use the knife. With terrific snorts of mingled rage and terror, his head laid back so his huge antlers almost hit against me, he bounded madly forward. I had been told that so great is the endurance of a moose that he can run for a hundred miles without stopping. My hair fairly stood on end as I thought of a hundred-mile race like that! Presently I became aware of one thing which afforded me considerable consolation. The crust on the snow was decidedly against him; he broke through at every step, and the sharp edges of the flint-like surface must be cutting deep gashes into his legs.

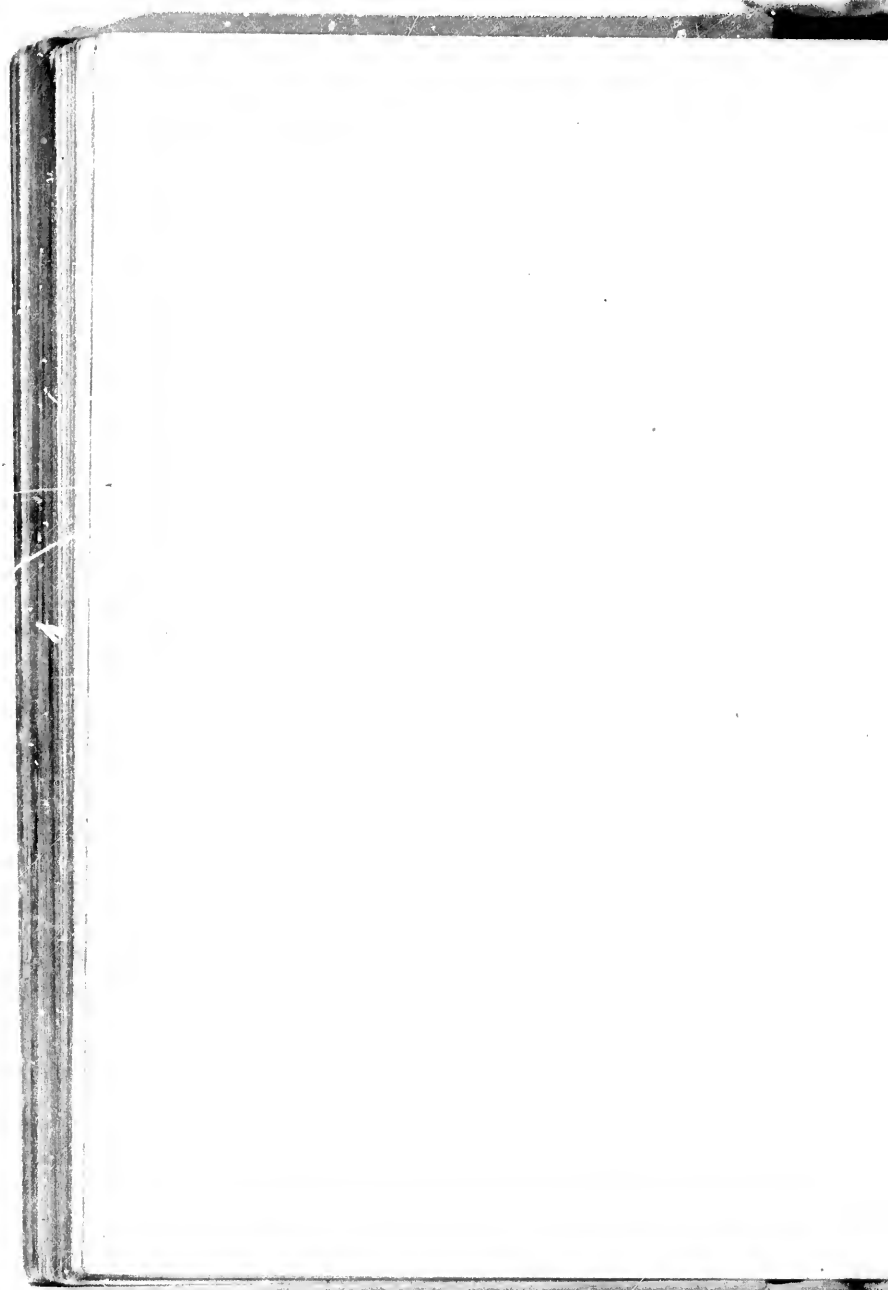
"After going a distance that I afterward found to be nearly half a dozen miles, we came in sight of a thick wood, where I could see the branches of the trees grew low, and were in many places held down by loads of frozen snow. I honestly think the old moose hailed this cover with delight, for he actually quickened his gait at sight of the deep woods. He must have known from experience that he would find the crust softer and thinner there, while who knows but that he anticipated ridding himself of his unnatural burden by means of the friendly trees?"

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"I LET GO OF ONE EAR AND GRASPED MY KNIFE."



"I knew that my career would meet with a speedy end unless I did something to save myself. So I let go of one ear and grasped my knife with my other hand. I thought just back of the fore shoulder would be the best place for me to strike, and I gave all the energy I could to the stroke, burying the blade up to the handle. The red blood spurted up into my face, and the big creature trembled and reeled for a moment, but rallied with a furious snort, and sped on at a wilder pace than before. The next instant I was dealt a terrific blow, and while the air seemed filled with dancing stars I was sent into the snow a dozen feet away, where I lay unconscious.

"When I returned to consciousness Injun Joe was bending over me, and my head seemed swollen to twice its natural size. The blow I got to-night was nothing compared to it. But after awhile I managed to sit up, and a few minutes later the rest of the party came along. I learned then that the other moose had escaped, though the old fellow who had given me such a ride lay dead a short distance away. My thrust had proved fatal, though it had not been dealt quick enough to save me that blow from the trees. Still, the fact that I had really bagged my game, while none of the rest had been successful in even getting one of the cows, did much toward mending my hurt, and in half an hour I was helping in the work of taking off the moose's skin. He was

one of the biggest moose I ever saw, and his antlers were the envy of the entire party. With the loss of their leader, the herd fell easy victims to us, so that we went home loaded with meat."

"Here come Rob and the Woodranger," declared Alex.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ARM OF GOLD.

THE Woodranger and Rob reported that, about a mile below, the river again became passable for a canoe, and it was the belief of the party that no further rapids would be found. Jean had so far recovered from his accident that he was able to assist in carrying Mr. Briant, and a few minutes later the entire party was moving silently down through the deep woods, whose dim forest aisles had perhaps never before been entered by a white man. Little Mab kept close to her mother, while it was not thought prudent for any of the party to get separated from the others, as wild beasts were liable to be met at any time, while it was not improbable that Indians might be prowling in that vicinity.

The portage, however, was made without adventure or mishap, and when the Woodranger had seen the Briant family safely in the canoe, with Jean Vallie and Alex at the paddles, he looked first down the stream, and then longingly away into the trackless forest stretching away to the eastward.

"Mebbe there is no fitter place for our trails to fork than here," he said, slowly, "seeing it must come sooner or later. I opine you'll make your jarney in goodish shape. Rob and I will perambulate down to Main-à-Dieu;" and before the others could reply his tall form was vanishing in the darkness of the forest.

Before Rob could follow his friend, Briant called him to his side, and, clasping his hand, said :

"May you be successful in getting to Main-à-Dieu, and if we never meet again I want you to take with you my blessing. I am sorry the Woodranger did not stop to hear my thanks. He seems like an odd sort of a man, but I know his heart is in the right place. You have both done me a great service, and I shall never forget it. I hope we shall meet again, and under more hopeful circumstances. Stay; do not leave till you have heard what I wish to say. Your friend will stop for you before he goes very far. I can give you information that will be of value to you in this long trip to Main à-Dieu. You have nearly, if not quite, a hundred miles before you. I am very well acquainted with L'Isle Royale, and know your best route.

"After reaching St. George's Channel, which separates New Scotland from L'Isle Royale, you will do best to steer for that inland sea, Le Bras d'Or. Thence you had better go by water to the old French

road leading to St. Louisburg, leaving that road at Miray River if you think best. You can get a canoe with which to cross Le Bras d'Or of a friend of mine named James Bruce, if you tell him that I sent you. I need not warn you to be constantly on your guard, for you are too good a woodsman to need such advice. Your entire journey lies through the enemy's country, though there are a few Scotch and English people scattered over the island. I wish you God-speed."

As he finished speaking, the Acadian ranger pressed Rob's hand with renewed fervour, and then released it, while the others, one by one, bade him farewell. Mrs. Briant murmured her thanks, and wished him and the Woodranger a safe journey, and Jean Vallie, honest fellow that he was, wrung our hero's hand in silence.

"I hope we shall meet again," said Alex, a simple wish which was to be answered in future years, but under circumstances of which neither of them then dreamed. A minute later the heavily loaded canoe was gliding rapidly down the current of the St. Mary's while Rob was hastening in the footsteps of the Woodranger.

"You tarried with 'em," said the latter, as he overtook him a few rods from the river. "Didst the Acadian let drop a hint or inkling o' the best trail leading to Main-à-Dieu?"

"He did, Woodranger," and, as they moved on their way, he repeated what Briant had said.

"That be discreet talk, lad," declared the Woodranger, as Rob concluded, "and I can see a vein o' wisdom running through it like a bar o' moonlight on a night in the black woods. I will ne'er dissemble, lad, o'er the fact that it does these ol' legs good to get on foot ag'in. This perambulating by the birch be convenient at times, I'll ne'er prevaricate; but if I'm always glad to take to the canoe, when there be personal p'int in the case, I'm always jess as glad to get back on 'arth ag'in. Arter all, there's nothing for a long perambulation like a pair o' good legs, and no man can have good legs onless he makes 'em 'arn their sinews. Nay, lad, the best legs in the woods would ne'er have the sinews o' a pine stick if they were always curled up in a blanket like a worm in the hot sand. But hear my ol' tongue running like a brook in the spring-time, when we have so much that is 'arnest work ahead."

With these words the Woodranger relapsed into silence, and he and Rob kept on mile after mile with steps that showed no signs of weariness. So a after leaving their companions they reached the road, little more than a bridle-path then, running parallel with the St. Mary's. Following this until morning, they came to the road from Sherbrooke to Pictou, which was an oft-travelled route between Chebucto and the

latter town, situated on the bay by the same name. It was common saying in those days that "all roads led to Pictou," which showed the importance of that settlement.

Advancing carefully, they soon crossed the east branch of the St. Mary's, and, leaving the main road to Pictou, moved along the path to Chebucto Bay. In the deep woods of that region, having seen no signs of an enemy, the two ventured to stop, and, shooting some birds, built a fire and cooked the meat, which they ate with some of the barley bread that they still carried in their pouches. When they had eaten their plain dinner, the Woodranger stretched himself at full length upon the ground under the cover of the forest, and was soon asleep. Rob knew how much his companion needed this rest, and as he had fared somewhat better, he remained awake to keep watch.

Though they saw no signs of the enemy, French or Indian, they were in a country whose rivers had often run red with the blood of innocent victims slain by the Micmacs in their raids against the settlements of the adventurous whites who had sought to build them homes here. Many of these cruel attacks, it is true, had taken place before New Scotland, or L'Acadie, as it was then called, had passed under British dominion. But, losing this part of their domains, the French had immediately strengthened

their position in the island of Cape Breton,¹ or L'Isle Royale, as they preferred to know it. This was in such close proximity to the region about Chebucto Bay, which was the great resort of the fishing-vessels of New England, passing to and from the fishing-grounds of the St. Lawrence, that it remained to a great extent the battle-ground of the races.

The Woodranger slept two hours, with the peacefulness of a child, when he awoke greatly refreshed, and declared that they must resume their perilous march. It was not the nature of the woodsman to inquire into the reasons of a companion for doing or not doing a certain work, and he did not ask if Rob had slept well, or if he had slept at all. He really knew that he hadn't, but in his heart he was none the less grateful for the sacrifice of his friend. In the end Rob knew he would not lose by it.

While it might be interesting to follow the journey of Rob and the Woodranger in its details, I must refrain from doing so. At Manchester, situated near the mouth of an inlet of Chebucto Bay, they were fortunate enough to run across a man from New England who gladly took them down the bay and up the channel, then known to the French as "Le Pas-

¹ So named by its first settlers, who had come from Bretagne, France, in the early part of the sixteenth century, in honour of their homeland, and first applied to one of the points of land. It is thought to be the oldest French name on the American continent.

sage Frontenac," and to the English as the "Gut of Canseau." The last name has survived the other, and the stormy strait of about forty miles in length and an average of a mile in width is known to-day by that designation.

At a town called Caribacau their new friend was obliged to leave them, and turn back toward his home. The Woodranger and Rob were in L'Isle Royale,' whose greatest length was one hundred and fifty miles, and whose greatest width was eighty miles. Its population consisted of from three to four hundred Indians, some descendants of the original Bretons, mostly fishermen, a sprinkling of Irish farmers, French Acadians, some Scots, and a few English.

The Woodranger and Rob had thought it best to follow the main road leading east, and touching first at the west shore of Le Bras d'Or, and thence along its southern shore to Sydney, the capital of the island, situated on a harbour by that name. Their wish was to find James Bruce, recommended by Briant, and from whom they hoped to get a canoe, in order to save time and distance by traversing the inland sea just mentioned, and which was fifty miles long.

It was after sunset when they left the Gut of Canseau, so that it was nearly midnight when they caught sight of the silver gleam of water through the

¹ Cape Breton became a county of Nova Scotia in 1820.

tree-tops ahead, and realised that at last they had reached that oft-mentioned *Le Bras d'Or*, whose poetical name signifies in English "The Arm of Gold."

"I ne'er consider it a wanton pleasure to look on yon sheet o' water, arter the goodish perambulation we've taken to find it. It be a fair pool, which the moonlight gives a charm not — Look yon, lad! If there be not a sight more to our cousarn than this bit o' water, I ne'er'll trust these ol' eyes ag'in."

They had paused near the edge of the forest overhanging the shore of the lake, and, as their keen visions swept the expanse of water, both saw at the same moment a little fleet of canoes dart out from the shadows on the northern shore and steer toward the south. Four of these light barques were to be counted, and each held as many as six occupants.

The sight was sufficient to hold them close watchers, while the little fleet continued to draw nearer.

The moon was high enough in the sky for them to see the party quite plainly a minute after the Woodranger had finished his speech, and the discovery that they made was explained by the whispered words of Rob :

"Injuns on the war-path!"

"Aye, Injuns and painted French," replied the forester. "Which be the worst heathen it be not for me to say. Think you they are going to land, lad?"

"Looks like it, Woodranger. Yes, see! they are putting in toward yonder cove. Can this be the Main-à-Dieu band?"

"Not the Grand Pré herd, though it do look so they've come a goodish way. Mebbe they're to meet others here, and then go on to Main-à-Dieu. If sich be the fact, which I'm discreet to say is only an ol' man's whim, there be a bit o' an amazement for us to hearken into."

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN "AMAZEMENT" FOR FOUR.

"LET's get down nearer to where they're going to land," whispered Rob, "and perhaps we can get a fair look at them. I believe I can see captives among them."

They acted upon Rob's suggestion, and began to advance cautiously toward that point in the growth which promised to become the landing-place of the canoe party. As the shore of Le Bras d'Or was set with a thick fringe of water-bushes and vines, there was little danger of the scouts being detected by the allied forces, if they acted with their customary caution. A medley of cries and outbreaks of merriment soon reached the ears of the Woodranger and Rob, which caused the former to say, in a low tone :

"I jedge they be in good spirits, which says that they have been successful in whatever they went arter. They be putting in for the land. I opine there be a French settlement hereabouts, and they be bent on a stop here to loose sich jubilations as have

risen from their wanton destruction o' human life and property."

So well did the speaker and his companion manage their stealthy approach that, when the foremost canoe was running into the shallow water of the sandy beach, they were already lying in the matted bushes less than four rods away. Without dreaming of the watchers, so near by that they saw every move made by them, the leaders of the war-party sprang out into the water, and pulled their boat after them, until it rested on the sand. Though three of this division of the band wore the feathered plumes of the Micmacs, both the Woodranger and Rob knew they were white men in the disguise of Indians.

The second canoe was filled with Indians, which fact, as well as the bloody nature of their enterprise, was attested to by a couple of scalp-locks hanging from the girdles of two of them. This sight set the warm blood of Rob Rogers coursing swiftly through his veins, and he seized on the arm of his companion with a grasp which betrayed his deep emotion. In reply, the Woodranger laid his hand on that of his young and more fiery companion, whispering, as he pointed with his other hand toward the third canoe:

"If we be not in season to succour some, we be in time to join in the amazement o' others."

Rob now saw two captives in this boat, whose crew was about equally divided between French and

Indians. Behind this war-canoe came the fourth and last one, carrying four Micmacs. He counted twenty in the party besides the two captives. One of these was a boy of about twelve years, but the other was not seen plain enough to tell if he were older or younger.

The landing of the entire party, which was quickly effected, was watched with keen interest by the Woodranger and Rob. A short consultation then followed, after which the officer in charge of the allied forces led the way up from the water's edge, followed by all but two of his squad, who remained on guard over the captives and the canoes. The path pursued by the war-party ran within four yards of the concealed scouts, so that they not only witnessed every movement plainly, but overheard all that was said. From the fragments of conversation carried on they understood that the party had just returned from a raid on an English settlement in the North District, which had not been as successful as they had anticipated. They were now expecting another party to join them in an expedition up Le Bras d'Or, which the Woodranger and Rob quickly concluded to mean against Main-à-Dieu.

With what interest they watched the departure of the enemy on a five minutes' visit to the settlement at the upper edge of the forest may be imagined. The moment they were beyond hearing, though not yet out of sight, the Woodranger said :

"What do you think o' that, lad? Be there an amazement for us?"

The couple left on guard at the water's edge, both of whom were evidently French, were marching slowly back and forth with their weapons ready for instant use.

"Isn't there some way we can capture those fellows?" asked Rob, replying in a whisper. "One of those canoes is just what we need to get across the lake in."

"That be a fact, lad. But there be a personal p'int in the matter. It'd be a wanton waste o' caution for us to shoot the varmints. Not that I 'low they're any too good for a lead physic. 'Em as consorts with the painted heathens, who exult in the slaying o' inmercent lives, deserve the treatment belonging to sich. Nay, lad, the use o' the gun be 'yon' consideration, 'cept it be the last knot in the string. Still, I'm sot on having one o' 'em canoes."

"I am with you, Woodranger. Nothing would suit me better than to make off with one of them, and leave the others so they couldn't be used to follow us."

"I swan, lad, that be my own mind, let it be discretionary or not. I have a hankering that way, I do. If I sh'd crawl forward, so as to get behind them, you might get their 'tention fixed this way.

"Mebbe it could be done, lad. I opine it could with proper discretion."

Rob agreed with his companion, and, knowing the short time in which they had to act, the idea was accepted without hesitation. The men on the beach, like a couple of sentinels, were slowly marching back and forth, but at no time did both of them turn the same way, so that nothing within their range of vision could escape their watchfulness. The main body had now disappeared in the growth above, and the Woodranger, without longer delay, began to advance across the path they had so recently followed, leaving Rob to watch and wait for the proper time to act himself.

In one respect the Woodranger was favoured, as the border of thick bushes continued for a long distance along the shore of the lake. On the other hand, the beach was fifty feet or more in width, and in the clear moonlight it seemed impossible for him to get very near the wary couple without being discovered by them.

Minute after minute passed, and the only sound that broke the silence of the midnight hour was the ceaseless lapping of the water. Rob was beginning to look for the return of the war-party, while he listened in vain for the Woodranger's signal. It did not need this to tell him that his friend was moving with all the speed consistent with safety, but he

began to fear there would not be time to carry out their plan. The unsuspecting sentinels showed that they were beginning to think it time for their companions to rejoin them, as a glance in that direction now and then showed. The moon shone clear from a cloudless sky, so that it was as light as day along the beach. It was only the boldest stratagem that could enable them to succeed.

In the midst of these thoughts the Woodranger's signal aroused Rob from his tiresome inactivity. In a moment he was ready to carry out his part of the work, and his first move was to make a slight noise by shaking the bushes just ahead of him. As slight as the movement was, the sentinels instantly turned sharply in that direction, and a low exclamation of warning from one reached Rob's ears. At that moment he discovered a figure leaving the growth just beyond the two men. It was the Woodranger.

Rob followed up his first alarm by a low groan, apparently made by some one in great distress. Scarcely had he given this utterance before the fire-arms of the two sentries were brought to their shoulders, and the long weapons were level in that direction, while the foremost of the alarmed men cried out in a sharp voice :

"Dare to move at the peril of your life !"

This was uttered in French, which Rob understood, and he replied with another groan, silently

retreating the next moment. Thus the firearms of his enemies were pointed at the thicket a little ahead of him. While this was taking place the Woodranger began to swiftly approach the couple whose attention was fixed in front. But the forester was three or four rods distant from the nearest watchman, and Rob knew that, unless he held the attention of him and his companion in that direction, the chance of success without a hand-to-hand combat would be lost. But the men, through their fear and lack of caution, hastened the crisis, while they threw away their chance of escape.

"Advance into sight!" called out the spokesman, "or we will fire on you where you are."

Rob gave another groan, and again retreated a few feet. Without further warning, the two men fired simultaneously at the mysterious creature in the thicket. Ordinary prudence should have suggested to them that one shot would have been better, and one would thus have been prepared to meet whatever might follow. This mistake they learned when it was too late to remedy it.

The Woodranger had already passed over half the distance to him whom he had selected for his first attack, and the reports of the firearms had not died away before his strong grasp was upon the man's throat with a force that effectually stopped his cry of alarm.

Meanwhile, Rob had not been inactive. The weapons of the French soldiers had been single-barrelled guns, and the moment they had discharged the pieces he sprang from his covert, and, clubbing his own stout firearm, ran toward the other sentry. This man, frightened by his sudden appearance, instead of offering resistance, turned and flew toward the forest at the top of his speed.

Knowing that shots would bring the absent squad back to the place, Rob ran to the assistance of the Woodranger. But all that was required of him was to find a piece of cord, which he did in one of the canoes. With this the soldier was quickly bound hand and foot. This had been barely accomplished before loud cries from the distance told that the others of the war-party had been aroused, and were coming to the scene.

"The heathens be coming!" exclaimed the Woodranger. "It be discreet for us to get away from here as soon as may be. But it be discreeter for us to raffle their canoes."

Whipping out the long hunting-knife he carried, the forester ran to the nearest canoe, and a moment later it was placed beyond future usefulness.

"This be wanton work," soliloquised the destroyer, "but who scrimmages with heathens can ne'er be o'erparticular in his methods. If there be a saving blame it need stand for the poor captives."

With less regard for what he was doing, Rob scuttled the second canoe, and in less time than it has taken to describe it only one of the four canoes remained in a condition fit for use. This one contained the two captives, who had looked upon the preceding scene with considerable terror, unable to understand whether it was to work them good or ill. The Woodranger and Rob now pushed this out into the water, and sprang in as the war-party appeared at the edge of the forest.

Seizing the paddles, the fugitives sent the light craft flying out over the water, as renewed yells from the enemy told that they had been discovered, and their intentions understood. If there were any doubts about this last, they were quickly undeceived by the volley which the next moment was sent after them. But the canoe was in rapid motion, and the marksmen fired with such haste that not a bullet took effect. It is true some of them whistled uncomfortably near, but they did not even receive a scratch, and, confident now of escape, they continued to ply the paddles with the efficacy which comes from long training.

The soldiers rushed headlong to the shore, to find that they had been baffled in their pursuit. They expressed their rage in a furious yell, which was just as effective as the random shots they sent after the fugitives. Glancing back, our friends saw them danc-

ing madly on the beach, and when their forms began to grow indistinct, they began to paddle with more deliberation, until finally the Woodranger said :

"I opine the creetur's'll ne'er take the trouble to follow, seeing there be slight chance for 'em to do it without wetting their precious skins, and that'd take the paint off. I've heerd painted folks be afeerd o' water. But who have we with us?"

It soon proved that the captives, who had remained silent through the exciting scenes just passed, were both young boys, the oldest not over twelve, and the other three or four years younger. Both showed signs of great grief, and now they looked upon their rescuers with tears in their eyes.

"Please, sir," said the oldest, "I don't know who you are, but I beg of you not to hurt brother or me."

"Mebbe we be a bit rugged in our ways, but we be fr'nds," declared the Woodranger. "If the red and painted inemy be looking for means to get o'er this goodish pool o' water, there be leetle to worry you. It be no leetle amazement that you've seen, jedging by 'em strings, but I'll soon set you free, as youth should be."

The boys were both bound hand and foot with ligatures of deer-thongs, which the Woodranger quickly cut away with his knife, while the captives showed their delight by expressions of thankfulness. It was soon learned that their names were Charles

and James Hanaford. The first told the story of their captivity, which was that so often repeated on the frontier. The allied forces of French and Indians had suddenly appeared at a small settlement of English and Irish settlers to the north of Le Bras d'Or, and the inhabitants were either put to death or driven from their homes. The boys did not think many had been killed, as an alarm had preceded the attack of the enemies, and the people had started to flee. This fact seemed borne out by the fact that the Woodranger and Rob had seen such a small number of scalps. The parents of the boys had been among the fugitives, and in the flight Charles and James had become separated from them, and had fallen into the hands of their captors. The horrors of that trip across Le Bras d'Or, expecting to meet a most terrible death, had worked upon them so that even now it was impossible for them to speak of it without bursting into tears. But the Woodranger spoke kindly to them, and they soon became calmer.

"Your tale goes to show," he said, finally, "that the uprising o' these varmints is general. But you are safe for the time, lads, and let us trust that your parents are having no greater amazement than worrying o'er you. We'll get you home in proper shape in proper time. And while we push ahead we'll set the stick with the current o' our best jedgment."

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE WARRIOR PINE.

"Now's me, lad, one can ne'er run away from his enemy by running away with his own strength. It be ag'in natur' to ply the paddle overlong, and it has been a goodish bit o' a pull since we left 'em red and painted heathens a-staring at our heels," and the for-ester laughed in his silent way, his bronzed countenance wreathed in smiles, though his lips uttered no sound.

The rising sun was shooting long, golden arrows of light across Le Bras d'Or, as the Woodranger gave expression to the above speech, and he and Rob rested on their paddles, after having placed several miles of water between them and their outwitted enemies. They had followed quite closely to the southern shore of the inland sea, and now their canoe was soon carried by the tide near enough for them to obtain a good view of the forest, which extended farther than they could see. Flooded by the clear, chaste light of early morning, the primeval woods looked uncommonly beautiful. The "virgin

forest" pictured by the romancer is not found as often as it is described, the truth being that as a rule the original forest, with its mass of dying trees and decaying vegetables, its network of reeking vines and bowed saplings, was anything but a delight to him who tried to penetrate its fastness. But the tall, straight trunks of the pines forming this tract of growth stood far apart like rustic columns holding aloft a leafy canopy of deathless green. This beauty was enhanced by the park-like regularity of these ancient monarchs of the forest, that had stifled all undergrowth, and now formed almost perfect rows reaching farther than one could see. Rob, who had spent most of his youthful years in roaming the wildwoods, was quick to notice this, and he expressed his pleasure at the sight to his companion, than whom no one was better fitted to appreciate it.

"Alack, lad, so you minded the happy company, did you? I was thinking o' 'em as so many people, though not o' my own race. In my boyhood I remember o' being tol' o' a race o' hardy people living in a cold country, and whose ancestors were great warriors and seamen. They were tall, stalwart men, who o'er mastered whomever they met, and they went fur from home, as fur as ol' New England, which they called Vineland. On 'count o' their daring and warlike natur's they were called vikings. I like to think o' the pine as the viking o' the forest. The

pine may be a bit o'erbearing, and ne'er social to the other clans o' the forest, but so was the viking.

"The red, who lived nearer to natur' than the white man, held a very pretty conceit, which went on to say that the pines were the descendants o' an Indian warrior. A long time ago, when the morning light had more o' the rose, and the sunset lasted for hours, there dwelt a tribe of mighty reds afar in the northland. In 'em days the hunting-grounds were overrun with game, and no hunter e'er came back from the trail with nothing to show for his day's perambulation. How the eye o' the later-day red kindles as he pictures that golden era, afore a blight crept o'er the chase and a rival race with pale skin and weepens o' war akin to the fire o' the sky stepped in to break the charm.

"Among these red men was a warrior taller than any o' his kin, and as proud as he was tall. What nettled his comrades most was the fact that he made no boast he could not keep, for it is not so much what one says as what he does that makes a bitterness o' heart. There was no chase in which he did not lead, and in their raids ag'inst their inemies he always fetched home the most scalp-locks.

"The others stood this like true reds till he come to tech their hearts by trying to win from them the fairest maid in the lodgment. She was a princess, or something o' the kind, and at first favoured

another brave. Then she claimed that the big warrior had bewitched her, and that she feared him more than she loved him. In this strait the other lovers went to an ol' dealer in Indian wisdom. He tried his charms on the big warrior, but he failed in 'em all. His excuse was that the forests loved and protected so great a hunter, and that he could do nothing with the tall warrior 'less he could be got into open kentry. In 'em days there was leetle open kentry, and as the tall trailer was ne'er known to find 'em places where danger lurked to him, it looked so the shorter fellers had a big hunk to bite off.

"By'm bye a big running match was planned, as I s'pect, to outwit the tall warrior. It was 'ranged so the running course lay with the eends on opposite sides o' an opening, and the runners would have to cross the clearing or take a longer trail through the woods.

"If the tall chap see the trap laid for him, he didn't act so, for he was detarmined to win the race, and he run, as the rest did, the short way. This give the ol' root and harb diviner a chance to try his trick on the brave, and he bawled out that he be turned into a bush. But the warrior showed that he was not the sort o' a red to be shifted into bush-wood, and where he stopped in the midst o' his run riz a tree the like o' which the red men had ne'er seen. It was a pine of mighty body, straight as a

gun-barrel, with a crest that held concourse with the clouds. The tall warrior had been cheated of his bride, but what he lost o' the fleeting visions o' a life that is like a leaf falling in the forest he gained in an age that bordered upon immortality. Many generations o' the dusky hunters sped their 'arthly race, while the pine stood as a reminder o' him who had led their ancestors in the chase.

"And the pine became a favoured resort for many people. Many a red lover, 'tis said, plighted his vows under its protecting arms. Once a maid, fleeing from a lover whom she did not wish to wed, stood by the pine as she stopped to rest in her flight. Then, seeing her wooer coming, with her father guiding him in the pursuit, she cried out in despair, begging of the tree to help her in her sore strait. She had barely spoken her words, when she was frightened to hear a voice beside her say :

"' Be my wife, sweet maid, and you'll have no more to fear.'

"The voice seemed to come from the pine, but, unable to understand, she knew not what to say or do. Then the same soothing tone continued :

"' It is I, the pine, speaking, fair maid. All these years have I stood here waiting for some one to speak to me that the spell over me might be broken. I'm blest that it is you who have spoken at last. Be mine and ours will be the happiest life on 'arth.'

“With her ill-favoured lover and father now clus to her, the maid had leetle time to consider the unexpected proposition, and, knowing that no fate could be worse than to marry the grizzled warrior whom her parent favoured, she did not hesitate to accept the offer o’ the tree. Then the pine seemed to clasp her in his arms, and her pursuers s’arched in vain for her. As time passed on without giving him any sort o’ an inkling o’ her end, her father mourned her as dead, and the gray-headed chief had to seek another bride.

“Those who came after them see other pines growing up around the solitary monarch, until a forest o’ the noble trees kivered hillside and valley. Hunters crossing the sacred ground jess at sunset claimed to see a beautiful maid in company with a tall, handsome warrior under the tree, but that both vanished into the pine as they drew nearer. The reds to this day hold to the pretty conceit that the pines are descended from this couple o’ human beings.

“Now’s me, durst heed how near we are creeping in toward the shore, as if these very pines were drawing us like a magnet. It may be well for us to stand away a bit from the land, ne’er forgetting that we are in the inemy’s country. Mebbe my tale has been overlong to these lads with heavy hearts, but no sorrow is lightened by repining o’er it. So cheer

up, lads, the day be fair, the water clear, and the birch light. We shall make the ol' French road in good time, and onc't there, I see no other more proper trail for us to follow than for Rob and I to turn back to back. One o' us will see that you reach a haven o' safety, where you can get an inkling o' your kin, while the other goes on to Main-à-Dieu. How floats the stick with you, Rob?"

"I agree to any plan you have to offer, Woodranger. We should not do our duty if we failed now to warn the poor settlers of Main-à-Dieu. We have come too far to abandon them now."

"In all consistency your words be true. My heart would cry out ag'in leaving the children here in their sore strait, and one can carry the news to Main-à-Dieu. Which shall it be?"

"It makes no difference to me, Woodranger. I will do either."

"Spoken jess like you, lad. Mebbe, as I have a leetle—mind you I say but a leetle—better inkling o' the kentry, that I had better perambulate off with the children. I will set the canoe toward Little Bras d'Or, as soon as we have reached the French road running from the shore o' this body o' water straight as a bee-line to Fort St. Louisburg, where, I understand, this fleet o' French warships now crossing the sea will first stop.

"You'll ne'er need the birch arter striking the

kentry at the head o' this lake, but I can best make my perambulation by water to the north settlements. You'd chide me for saying that the minnit your foot teches land you're surrounded by the inemy, that you be in the heart o' the inemy's kentry, for you've l'arned your lesson in natur's book, and I know you're to be counted on. One o' us must get to Main-à-Dieu."

"I will do it, Woodranger, if it costs me my life."

"I know it, lad, I do. But, alack! now's me, as if our duty ended there, when there's to be another knot tied in our string o' amazements. Lad, I have another word to add."

"I am listening, Woodranger. Remember there is nothing you can ask that I will not and cannot do."

To another, unacquainted with this couple, the last statement of Rob Rogers might have seemed like boasting. But his companion knew it simply expressed the determination of a heart that never failed, of a courage of conviction and a fertility of resource to surmount any obstacle that might appear. Prompt to think and to act in all that he undertook, Robert Rogers was never daunted at any odds against him, and seldom, if ever, allowed defeat to come to him.

"I knew it, lad," the Woodranger continued, in his simple, straightforward way. "I need not wind

back on the trail to remind you o' the situation in New England, and the duty that belongs to us to do. The innercent people must be 'roused to the danger o' the sleep that lays on the white settlements. This must be done afore the war-whoop o' the painted heathen 'wakes the homes o' New England. But how I do double on the trail when the p'int be straight ahead. The skein I wish to unravel be this: When you've spread the news to Main-a-Dieu, do not begin to look round for me, but get back to New England as soon as may be. Mebbe Captain Vaughan would be as good a person as you could see first; but see who you can as soon as may be. I claim no great knack at sich an amazement, but that seems to me the main p'int to reach."

"You will do the same, Woodranger?"

"Sartin, lad, sartin, alwus reckoning that the leaf does not fall afore the frost strikes it."

The Woodranger had already resumed paddling, and Rob following his example, the canoe moved over the water at a rapid rate. Nothing further was said by them in regard to their future plans, but so well did they understand each other that there was scarcely any need of this. In the many years that they had passed together as scouts and hunters they were often obliged to separate, and it might be months before they would meet again. One singular

fact connected with this long association was the prevailing custom of never fixing upon any date or place of meeting, and yet they seldom failed to come together at some logical point in their adventures.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

ROB SAYS HE IS A GUNBEARER.

MENTION has been made of the French road running from the head of Le Bras d'Or to the settlement of Louisburg on the shore of the harbour by that name. Though this way, since denominated as the "Old French Road," has become noted from later associations, it was even then the most famous highway on the island. This was partly due to its having been a common Indian trail from the sea to the great lake, but chiefly to the fact of its being the principal route from the interior country to the growing fortress of Louisburg. Upon ceding Nova Scotia to the British in 1713, the French, as has been said, began to strengthen themselves on Breton Island, and in 1720 Louisburg was founded as a military and naval station. Fortifications were immediately begun, which required twenty-five years to complete, at a cost of 30,000,000 livres, a prodigious sum for those days. At this time the works were practically completed, the fortress, with walls thirty

feet high and forty thick, being surrounded by a moat eighty feet wide. These extensive fortifications, styled the "Gibraltar of America," covered two and a half acres, and commanded one of the finest harbours on the coast, gained by an entrance half a mile in width.

Knowing that he was penetrating into the very heart of the enemy's country, Robert Rogers advanced with more than ordinary caution along this oft-frequented highway. Twice the warning sounds of the hoof-strokes of horses driven at a headlong rate of speed caused him to seek concealment in the neighbouring thickets, and while thus secreted he saw a body of French soldiers pass at one time, while on the other occasion the party was led by a priest in his dark robes, with three Indians, who seemed to be a sort of body-guard for him.

His narrow escape from meeting these parties, and the knowledge that he was likely to meet others on foot at any moment, showed our hero that, at his most convenient opportunity, he had better abandon the public road for the trackless forest. But this was the most direct route, as the Woodranger had described it, and he resolved to follow the road until he reached the River Miray, where he hoped to be fortunate enough to obtain a canoe. He was the more anxious to continue this course for the reason that it was necessary to pursue the nearest and

easiest route in order to reach Main-à-Dieu in season to save the doomed inhabitants.

The sun had gone down behind a bank of clouds on the west, and the pine forest was throwing its deep shadows across the old military road. Rob was beginning to wonder how much farther he must go before reaching the river, when a wild, piercing shriek rang on the air, which a moment before had borne an oppressive stillness. The cry was one of fear rather than pain, and the tone was that of a man. It was swiftly followed by a second, more prolonged, and then was heard the heavy tread of some one rushing furiously up the road.

If Rob had thought of escaping a meeting with this stranger, he was given scanty time to conceal himself before the man came into sight. It was too dark to distinguish his features, but his white face showed uncommon terror, while his long hair was flying out behind his head.

Quickly raising his gun, our hero ordered him to stop. The unexpected appearance of some one in his pathway, and the sight of the firearm with its single eye staring him in the face, following so swiftly on his previous cause for fright, gave the fugitive a shock that caused him to sink to the ground, moaning:

"Howly mither! it's dead an' kilt I am intoirely without so much es sayin' me prayahs."

"What is the trouble?" demanded Rob, who had hard work to keep from laughing at the man's display of hopelessness.

"Begorra! it's a dead man sp'akin' to yees," replied the other, whose nationality was betrayed by his speech.

"Well, dead or alive, get up," said Rob.

"Och, save me! it's spacheless I am in me limbs, or a liar's Phin O'Regan."

"There seems to be life enough left in your tongue. I want to know what all this rumpus means?"

"Suah, an' all th' rumpus there be wuz made by a dead man, or I'm not who I wuz an' he's not me. Me head stood on me feet and me heart stopped its b'atin' at the soight! An' afore I see'd y'it I wuz a dizen rods away."

Finding that Rob did not mean him harm, the Irishman began to collect his scattered wits, and, by the time he had finished his sentence, he had risen to his knees. His face was still pale, and his teeth fairly chattered as he uttered his incoherent speech.

"I see no cause for alarm," declared Rob.

"That's cos you ain't see'd what I see'd. There's a dead man hangin' down in that buildin' alive, or Phin O'Regan's eyes air doomb!"

He had now risen to his feet, and, catching upon Rob's arm, was pointing down the road from the

direction whence he had just come. No unusual sight met the gaze of Rob, but, determined to solve the cause of the Irishman's fright, he said :

"Come with me and show me what you mean."

"Not while Phin O'Regan knows hisself," but as Rob started down the road he followed him, keeping close to the young ranger. A turn in the road a couple of rods below suddenly brought them in sight of an old block-house or garrison standing in an opening in the forest. It bore a deserted appearance, and as the two stopped, the only sound falling on their hearing was the sharp chirrup of some insect lurking in the grass by the wayside. The building was a two-storied structure built of logs, with two openings in the end toward them, which had evidently served the purpose of a window for each story. There were several loopholes to be seen in the wall. On the side which confronted the road was an open doorway.

"Tell me what you saw there," said Rob, shaking the Irishman vigorously. "I am going to know it once what all this fooling means. Spit it out, or it will be the worse for you."

"I ain't done any hurt," sputtered the Irishman. "I wuz a-roadin' along the walk, when that buildin' wint forinst into me, an' I looked an' I see a did man a-langin' by a rope frum th' roofers. Be me soul in purgatory, this is th' thruth, hull and nothin' —"

"Why didn't you say so before?" broke in Kob, who felt that he was losing far too much time over a matter that did not concern him. But the man's words had given him to understand that some one had been foully dealt with, and without longer delay he resolved to solve the mystery. Regardless of the fact that some trap might be laid for him, a condition which did not seem at all probable to him, he started toward the lonely block-house, Phin O'Regan calling him back.

"Not fer me sowl w'u'd I enter there at all, at all." Perhaps, however, he was afraid to remain alone, for he followed upon the heels of Rob, who boldly entered the old garrison. It was too dark within for him to discover any object at first, but upon glancing up toward the second story, he saw, dangling in the starlight that struggled in through the opening in the wall, a human form. It was a man's figure, and he was evidently suspended from the roof overhead.

He did not wonder so much at the terror of the Irishman, who was now cowering behind him, for the uncanny sight at first sent a chill through his frame. But quickly recovering his usual command over himself, Rob stepped forward under the aperture which led to the upper floor, when he got a better view of the drooping figure. Now that he had got nearer, he had discovered an unnaturalness about the form

which caused him to laugh, while Phin O'Regan continued to mutter over his exclamations of terror.

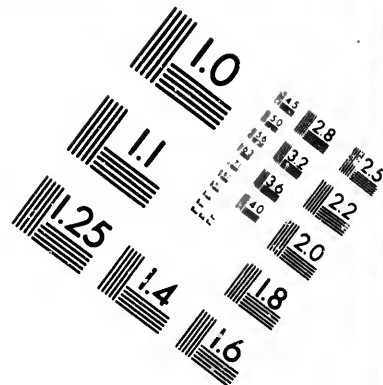
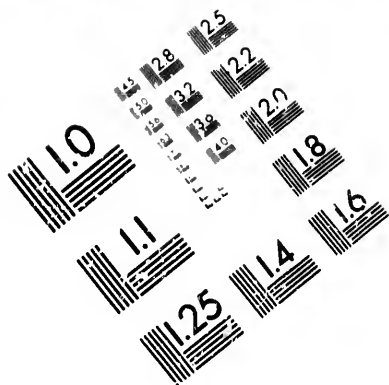
Several small sticks, fastened upon the wall one above another, formed a sort of rude ladder by which to reach the second story, and without further hesitation Rob ascended, hand over hand. At the top he was convinced of what he had felt confident when on the floor below. The limp figure was nothing more than the dummy of a man, that had been made up and left hanging there. The clothes were those of a British officer, and, though Rob had no reason for knowing then, he afterward learned that it was the effigy of the English governor of New Scotland, whom some of his enemies had thus treated as an expression of their hatred for him.

Rob quickly cut the rope holding the figure, and the object fell at his feet. He was about to push it down the opening to the lower floor when the sound of hoof-strokes suddenly fell on his ears, and a cry of alarm rang from Phin O'Regan. This was succeeded by a gunshot, and a medley of cries rang out, while a body of horsemen halted at the door. It was a critical situation for Rob, who anticipated meeting none but enemies in that vicinity.

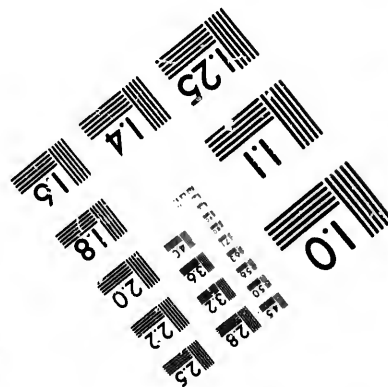
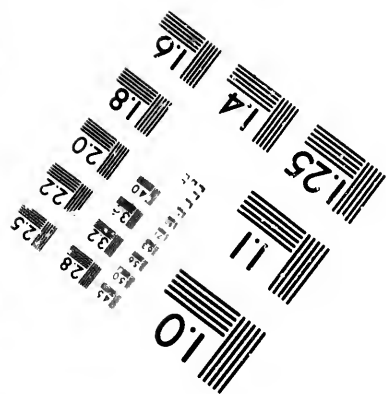
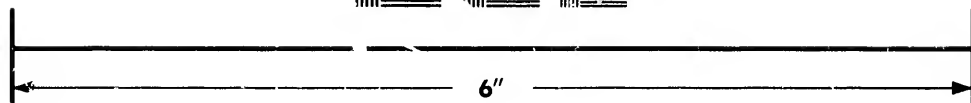
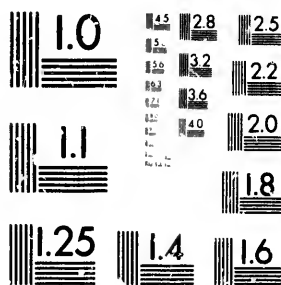
A moment later the room below was thronged with men, whom he quickly judged to be French soldiers. If he had any doubts of this they were dispelled by the stern command of their leader, who exclaimed :







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"Who are you, stranger, who dares to be prowling round here?"

This was spoken in French, and not believing that the speaker had really seen him, Rob's first thought was to remain silent. He had heard the heavy steps of Phin O'Regan in his flight, and believed some of the horsemen had gone in pursuit of the Irishman. Just how many of the squad were about the old garrison he had no way of telling, but he judged there were not less than half a dozen. But it seemed more prudent for him to answer, and he believed that some way of escape would open to him. He had been among the French of Canada and had picked up a smattering of their tongue, so he replied to the challenge of the officer, who was showing his impatience by beginning to approach the side of the building under the rude stairway:

"A friend."

"Where from?"

"The Subenacadie."

"A Neutral?"

This question was more difficult to answer, but Rob resolved to put on a bold front, and said:

"No."

"What are you then?"

Rob did not fail to detect the eagerness with which this question was asked, and he was confident that so far he had passed a satisfactory examination.

If not a Neutral, whom the French despised, he must either avow himself a friend of the English or proclaim himself what he was in a certain respect, though not just as he would have the other infer. He replied without hesitation and with apparent frankness :

“A Gunbearer!”

“Good!” exclaimed the man below. “In that case you need not hesitate to join us. If you have come from the Subenacadie, you must be able to give us some word of the expedition to Main-à-Dieu. There is an air of silence about the whole affair which makes me distrust its leaders. Come down here at once.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW ROB CARRIED THE NEWS TO MAIN - A - DIEU.

DURING this brief conversation Rob had glanced about him, with the hope of seeing some way of escape, for he had no real intention of placing himself willingly in the power of the man below him. He had no reason to believe he could deceive him long, once he appeared before him. While it might answer a very good purpose, as far as a delay in action was concerned, to claim to be a Gunbearer, yet, as soon as he should dare to show himself among the soldiers, they would quickly discover that he did not belong to their side. To fall into their hands meant the fate of a spy to him.

Before he had replied to the last query his plan of action had formed itself in his mind, and, as the command of the officer was spoken, he pushed the effigy at his feet out into the opening, so that the feet and ankles hung over the other's head and could be plainly seen in spite of the darkness of the building. As the body did not immediately follow the lower

limbs, and these remained motionless, the commander demanded :

"Why don't you come along? We can't fool here with you all night."

Upon receiving no reply, and finding that the figure still remained motionless, he repeated his question, adding this time that he would give him just one minute in which to come down, or he would order a volley of shot to be poured into him. Still the feet hung there motionless, and finally the exasperated officer ordered that three of his party fire at the person above them. In a moment three reports, ringing out as one, filled the building with the sharp sound, while the bullets of the marksmen whistled into the opening overhead. One of the feet was seen to swing back and forth for a moment, and then it again became still. Not a sound had preceded or followed the volley.

Thoroughly mystified over the affair, the officer ordered two of his men to ascend to the second story while the rest kept a watch over the place, with the command to fire at the least movement of the mysterious person in concealment. At that moment an alarm came from outside the building, and confusion and excitement followed.

In the meantime, Robert Rogers had carried into effect his daring plan of escape. After pushing the effigy over the edge of the opening overhanging the

lower story, he had sped with light steps toward the opposite end of the building, where there was another window. The second demand of the officer reached his ears, as he let himself out through the opening, and swung himself down toward the ground. The descent was not over twelve feet, and he dropped to the earth uninjured.

He had expected to continue his flight on foot, hoping to escape under cover of the darkness of the forest, but he now made a discovery which afforded him a thrill of pleasure. The soldiers had left their horses under charge of a couple of orderlies at the corner of the old garrison house. So, with his customary rapidity and daring, Rob stepped to the nearest animal, quietly took the rein from the hand of the soldier, and vaulted into the saddle.

So quickly and unexpectedly was this done that the orderly stood gazing after the retreating horseman until he had ridden out of sight, before he realised what had taken place. Even then he was in doubt as to whether it had been a friend or enemy who had mounted the horse before his very eyes and dashed furiously down the road. His companion, not he, gave the alarm, and, amid the confusing exclamations and attempts to place the blame, the fugitive must have been nearly two miles away before a pursuit was undertaken.

Rob soon found that he was riding a good horse,

and as he flew along the road toward Louisburg he was in a very pleasant state of mind.

"With this horse I shall soon be able to reach *Main-à-Dieu*," he thought, "and so a good result will come of my adventure. I wonder what has become of poor Phin. He was the worst specimen of a scared Irishman I ever ran across. I don't know whether to blame him or thank him for that little 'amazement,' as the Woodranger would call it. He always said I had great ability to run into trouble, and I am not sure but he is right. Helloa! I wonder which way I had better go."

He had crossed the River Miray soon after leaving the old garrison, and now he had come to a byway turning off from the Louisburg road on his left.

"*Main-à-Dieu* must be to the east," he thought. "It will not do for me to keep on much nearer Louisburg. Ay, I am going to risk it. If this path comes to an end in the woods, I will leave the horse and push ahead on foot." Soon after he had entered this unfrequented pathway, the troopers dashed past the fork in the ways at a swinging pace, thinking the fugitive was still riding toward Louisburg.

The hoof strokes of his horse being muffled by the loose earth of the path, Rob urged the animal ahead as fast as the condition of the route would permit. His fear that the way might prove nothing more than a bridle-path leading into the woods gradu-

ally left him, as he kept on mile after mile without seeing any sign of this being the case. Finally, when the moon was visible for a short time on the eastern horizon, and then disappeared behind the clouds that had now enveloped the entire sky, he suddenly found himself upon another highway. He saw that it had the appearance of being much travelled, so he became more cautious in his advance. It was really the road from Louisburg to Sydney, the capital of Breton Island.

For the second time Rob felt some hesitation about the proper course for him to pursue. He was confident that Louisburg was some miles to his right, and that the general direction of his destination lay ahead. But this route led through a dense wilderness, where it would be impossible for a horse to penetrate, and exceedingly slow for a man to force his way. A road had been described as branching from the Sydney route near the right bank of the Miray River. This stream was to his left, and ran to his north, as he faced the east. Having come to this conclusion, he quickly decided upon his course.

Wheeling his horse about, he headed him up the Sydney road, and never slackened his speed until the long bridge spanning the broad Miray was in sight. He had seen a little cluster of farmhouses on the road at one place, and just beyond this had passed three foot-travellers. He was hailed by one of these, and

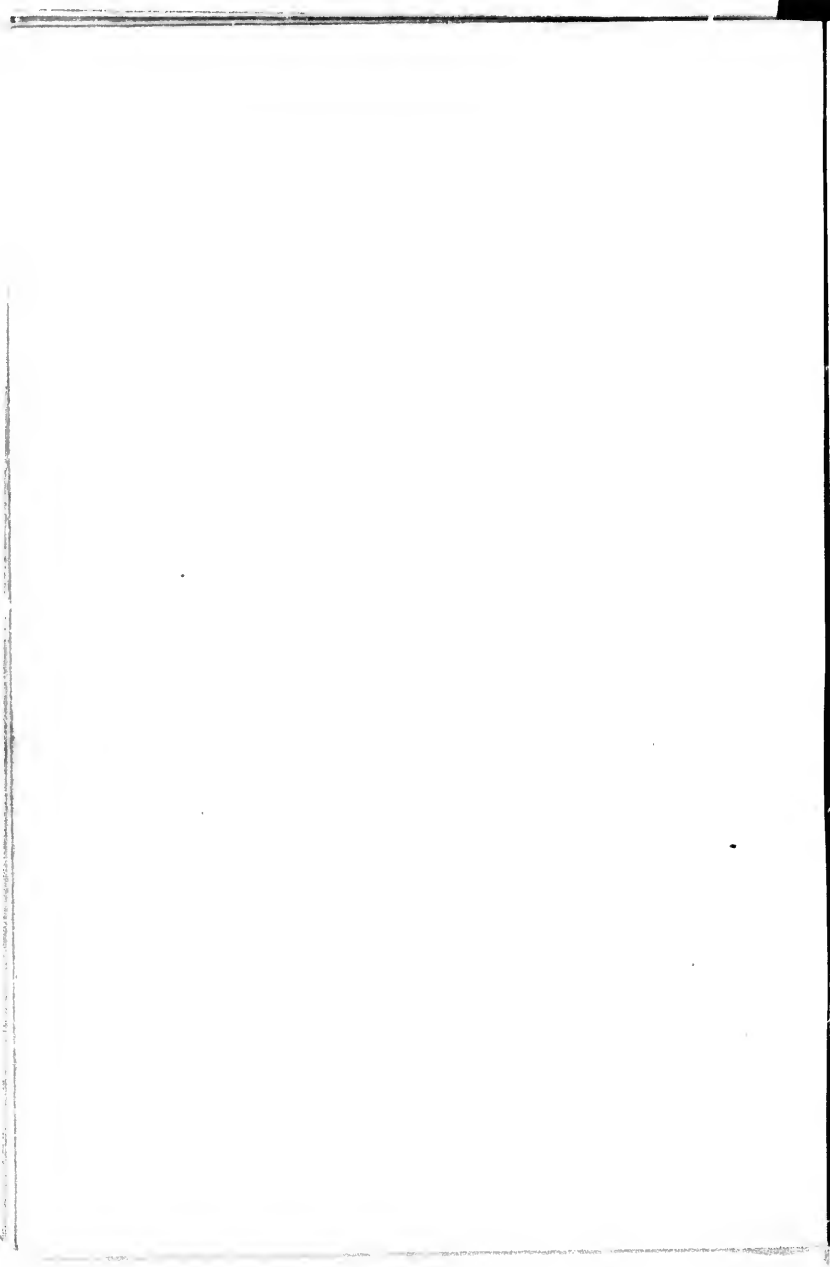
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"THE OCCUPANT OF THE DWELLING . . . SOON APPEARED
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he heard dire threats hurled after him, as he sped on. Beyond these incidents nothing had occurred to awaken his suspicion. He now turned to the right, following the road to Main-à-Dieu, and entered on the last stage of his journey.

The night hung over the little fishing hamlet of Main-à-Dieu with dark threatenings of rain, as Rob Rogers rode along its single street. No one was astir, and only one faint light glimmered like a feeble star in the darkness. With a feeling of rejoicing that his tremendous journey — one of the most remarkable made in the history of the colonies — was completed in time, he urged his now weary horse toward this place. A minute later he was calling to the occupant of the dwelling, who soon appeared at the door, candle in hand. The flickering blaze was quickly extinguished by the sea-breeze, and standing in darkness, wondering to whom he was speaking, the man inquired what this midnight summons meant.

First inquiring if this was the settlement he wished to reach, Rob then explained the peril menacing the town, while the other listened with horror.

"My wife is sick," he said. "What can we do? Are you sure they will come to-night?"

"They are due at this hour," replied Rob. "A friend and I have come from Grand Pré to warn you. Stir yourself, sir, if you value your life."

"My wife is very sick, and —"

Rob did not stop to hear any more, but, leaving the man standing in the doorway peering after him, he rode on to the next house. Here he was successful in making the inmates understand the peril hanging over them and the necessity of immediate action.

"Your news does not surprise me very much," said one of them, "for I have felt that the French were planning an uprising. It is not safe for a New England man to remain here. By Jove! I have hit upon a plan, and I believe it is the best thing we can do. There is a fishing-vessel just above here that put in this afternoon from the Banks. It is bound to Boston, and the best thing we can do is to take passage in her to New England. I, for one, have little to keep me here, and we are all sure to lose our homes sooner or later."

Rob agreed with this man, and inside of ten minutes the others of the settlement had been aroused, and the situation explained to them. The majority quickly consented to the flight, believing it was inevitable. The rest, finding their companions were in earnest, accepted the scheme so far, at least, as seeking safety on board of the ship until the affair should be over.

Boats were readily found, a messenger sent to the ship, while preparations were made for the wholesale removal. There was something wild and strange in this midnight flight, and the feelings of the fugitives

were those of sadness at leaving their homes in this manner, and of hatred toward their enemies. The ship's commander lent such assistance as he and his crew could, so that inside of an hour from the time Robert Rogers had ridden into Main-à-Dieu every house occupied by an English settler was empty. This was done with a quietness that did not awaken the French portion of the population to what was taking place.

Mindful of his promise to the Woodranger, Rob had decided to accompany the rest on this voyage to New England, that he might carry the news of the plans of the French government to depopulate the country of the English. When the last boat load was moving down the harbour, and no sign of the allied raiders had yet been seen, there were those among the fugitives who began to think their step had been taken too hastily, and that the young stranger had brought them false news. But Rob was not long under suspicion, for so narrow was the escape that the vessel had not been reached before the war-cry of the enemies was heard. Then, as the ship stood boldly down the harbour, the anxious watchers saw a sheet of fire shoot into the dark space of night. This was quickly followed by others, until every English home in Main-à-Dieu was wrapped in flames. With what mingled sensations the fugitives witnessed this stirring spectacle may be imagined,

knowing how narrowly they had saved their lives through the timely warning of the boy ranger, who stood slightly apart from the others, wondering, as he saw the fires leap up at the different places, where his friend, the Woodranger, was at that moment, and wishing that he was with him.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE LOUISBURG EXPEDITION.

"ZOUNDS, man! was it you speaking of myself? The words were in my thoughts, but they seemed to slip from your tongue." The speaker, turning sharply about with his usual brusque manner, began to pace the floor excitedly. He was none other than Captain William Vaughan, in whose interest Rob Rogers and the Woodranger had gone to Acadia, as has been described. He was a son of Lieut.-Governor Vaughan, and was at that time actively engaged in founding a settlement at Damariscotta, now Nobleboro, Maine. He was also concerned in the fisheries off the Banks, so it will be seen that he was prominent in the affairs of the day. Moreover, he was a man of ready judgment, strong convictions, and swift and determined in his action.

His speech was directed to our old friend, the Woodranger, whom last we saw in the company of the two Hanaford boys, taking them to a place of safety. In that he was entirely successful, and, after seeing them safe in the arms of their overjoyed par-

ents, he took passage on a ship that happened to be in a near-by port, and had thus been able to reach this little frontier post of Captain Vaughan's in the early part of September. He had not seen or heard anything of Rob, except to learn that the inhabitants of *Main-à-Dieu* had taken flight for New England. He had believed that Rob would join them, and thus he had sought Captain Vaughan with all the promptness possible to report the result of the visit of himself and Rob Rogers to New Scotland.

Captain Vaughan listened with surprise to the forster's story, often interrupting him with questions and ejaculations. Still, he was not greatly shocked over the opening of hostilities by the French, until the *Woodranger* had come to tell of the proposed scheme to capture the whole of New England and New York. Upon hearing this, he rose to his feet, and began to pace the floor, smiting his hands together and uttering strong exclamations.

"Now's me," declared the *Woodranger*, without heeding the increasing excitement of his companion, "there be ne'er so discreet a judge as him who speaks from personal p'int. It be true I was inside o' the works o' *Louisburg* onc't, but that was some time since, and the 'fair was that backward in being built that it may have changed much since, so my knack at reading sign be not perfect. But the

stream that runs straight is easy to follow, and it be a straight p'int for me to see that, so long as war is on and that Frinch stronghold is permitted to stand as a rendezvous for the Frinch and painted heathens, so long will New England be under the fire o' a big-sized amazement. If an inemy stood in front o' me, I'd consider it my bounden duty to drive him from his ambushment, though he be bigger'n I. Man's duty may not always be p'inted with discretion."

It was then Captain Vaughan struck his fists together with greater force, and he uttered the speech which opens this chapter. Though he had not seen Louisburg, the French fortress, he was quite familiar with it from second-hand descriptions. Many of his fishermen had seen it, and remarked upon its bold position and its value as an outlying post. The more minute description of the Woodranger had suggested to him the daring project hinted at by the astute forester, to whom, notwithstanding his peculiar view of prudence, nothing was really improbable or impossible. But he might have mentioned this same idea to almost any other man in New England than Captain Vaughan, and been laughed at for his pains, or been treated with silent contempt. This resolute soldier showed how readily he fell in with the scheme by beginning to lay out at once a plan of procedure.

"Let me see what method had better be fol-

lowed," said Captain Vaughan, speaking as much to himself as his companion. "You are a man versed in warfare, Woodranger. What suggestion have you to offer?"

"Mebbe it be a knack given me to pick up the tracks o' the bear and the painter, or the trail o' the red. Aye, I do not previcate the truth, and I trust I ne'er may be thought to be boasting, when I say that I may have mastered some o' natur's secrets, seeing natur's book be open to all, but in this warfare o' plain shooting, where it is luck and not knack that wins, I am not adept. I can ne'er dissemble, in an, it be wanton slaying o' human lives. And yet, seeing you have called my attention to it, — mind you, I ne'er wish to trail o'er another man's judgment, — a goodish force o' troops might be taken by sl'ps within a short distance o' the works, and then set ashore, to creep 'pon the inemy and ketch 'em napping, like squirrels in their winter quarters."

"Winter quarters!" cried Captain Vaughan. "Man alive! that gives me an idea. The snow must fall to a great depth in that region?"

"It do, 'yon' prevication."

"And in the winter is often piled into high drifts?"

"That be true. I do not disremember how a fri'nd and I once perambulated o'er the snow that lay in big windrows —"

"As high as tree-tops in places, no doubt?"

"I disremember o' seeing sich high ones, though they do—"

"You say the walls of the fortifications of Louisburg are not over thirty feet high. What an easy matter it would be for a body of foot-soldiers to be marched right over the works by climbing one of those big snow-drifts, which must fairly bank up the breastworks. Zounds, man! the way to save New England is to carry war into the enemy's country. Louisburg must and shall be ours!"

His impulsive nature, filled with the thought of this daring undertaking, the equal of which was not matched in the long and sanguinary wars of early New England, Captain Vaughan immediately put aside all further consideration of matters of a personal nature.

"We must act in this affair immediately," he said.

"As you say, New England must be warned of her danger, and while you are doing that I will set on foot plans to capture this French stronghold. This very scheme of the government of France to slaughter us all will prove a powerful incentive to rise against the enemy which stops at nothing to carry out its infamous ends. But you are alone, Woodranger. Where is young Rogers, who went away with you?"

"I opine the lad will speak for himself, William,

seeing he has followed me here," and he had barely finished speaking before the door opened and Robert Rogers stood before them.

"You are ahead of me, Woodranger," extending a hand, which was fervently clasped first by the Woodranger and then Captain Vaughan. "I got along as soon as I could. I had hard work to get Captain Sweetser to put in here for me."

"He is going to Boston?"

"Yes."

"I am glad to see you, Rob," declared Captain Vaughan. "The Woodranger and I are planning a tremendous scheme to circumvent the French, and we want the help of just such fellows as you."

"I am sure several will go from the valley of the Merrimack. In fact, I am sure we can form a company of Rangers under Captain John Goffe, who will do good work."

"Good! I know of no better man than Goffe. I am sure we can depend on Samuel Moore, of Portsmouth, to head a company. Oh, New Hampshire will do her part. I will see Governor Wentworth as soon as possible. The matter has got to be pushed right along. I have a ship which will take us to Portsmouth without delay, and we have got to act promptly. Remember also that secrecy counts in this game. Our enemy must not get an inkling of what is afoot."

Having come to this unanimous conclusion to act in the matter, the three prepared for immediate departure to Portsmouth, which journey was made in safety. At that place Rob and the Woodranger bade adieu to the genial Captain Vaughan, and sought their home in the Merrimack valley, where they were accorded a glad welcome. But the news they brought of the depredations of the French and their Indian allies caused alarm among the pioneers of this vicinity, who realised that they were in imminent peril of their lives. Rob's parents lived just above the Falls of Namaske, which was the home of the Starks, while Captain Goffe and others lived a little below, so he remained a few days with them before taking part in the active scenes which followed.

The work of carrying out the plan of the expedition to Louisburg, though considered of little importance by the earlier historians, has been told quite fully, and the daring and hazard of the enterprise described in detail. Captain Vaughan did not rest until he had placed the matter before the officials in control of the provinces at the time. The disclosure of the plot of the French, together with the account of their fiendish and cold-blooded actions, aroused the English colonists to a fighting pitch. They felt that these indignities must be met squarely and promptly, or the worst would come. The suffer-

ers at Annapolis-Royal had been largely Massachusetts men, and that province on October 19th declared war against the French and the Indians, who had so largely assisted the former, and a bounty was offered for scalps and prisoners. Great insecurity was felt all along the line of the frontier, and many settlements were broken up thus early in the scene, the inhabitants seeking places of less danger.

Captain Vaughan, with the friends whom he enlisted in the undertaking, persisted in his purpose with remarkable faith and courage. He appealed to Governor Wentworth for assistance, but was told that Governor Shirley, of Massachusetts, should take the first step. The latter was willing to do this, and he wrote the British Ministry, showing the importance of capturing Louisburg, on account of the menace it constantly gave the New England fishermen, the safe and convenient place of refuge for the French privateers then harassing the seas, and the general importance of the stronghold to France.

But the scheme, on the whole, was considered visionary and impracticable, and the matter dragged all through the fall and early part of the winter. The New Hampshire Assembly declined to act in the affair, until Captain Vaughan, through his personal activity and influence, succeeded in obtaining, by a majority of one, a vote to perform its part in the proposed expedition. Without waiting to hear from the

Ministry across the ocean, Governor Shirley sent out letters urging the matter, and money being voted by the Assemblies of the provinces to carry on the expense and men called upon to enlist, the expedition became a foregone conclusion. William Pepperell, Esq., of Kittery, Maine, was given the command of the sea and land forces, though he had had no greater military experience than the command of a regiment of militia. But he proved amply fitted for the leadership. It must be remembered that New England had no regular soldiers at that time, that this expedition was being made entirely on its own responsibility, without waiting for assistance from the old country, which made the affair the more remarkable. On the other hand, had they waited for royal sanction, a British regular would have been placed in command, and, judging by other experiences, he would have made a miserable failure of the whole undertaking. So it was doubtless best just as it occurred.

Other conditions were working for the benefit of the daring colonists, though this was not understood at the time. For one thing, Governor Duquesnel, of Breton Island, died while these arrangements were being made, and he was succeeded in office by Duchambon, who was poorly fitted to take the position. The fleet of the French that was expected to destroy all of New England did not leave France at all, since, like most of the French plots, the plan had been dis-

closed prematurely. The very opening of the war in the colonies was of itself one of the worst blunders on their parts. Not only did the fleet of war fail to appear, but even the store ships for the province failed to reach the port of Louisburg. Leaving home late in the season, and winter coming on uncommonly early that year, these vessels were compelled to steer south and seek refuge in the West Indies. As a result of the shortage of provisions, the prisoners that had been taken at Canseau in May were sent to Boston. From them much valuable information of the situation and condition of Louisburg was obtained. Their accounts strengthened decidedly Captain Vaughan's idea.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GUNBEARERS OF SILVER RIVER.

"I AM looking for the victor of this match ; show him to me that I may trail his plumes in the sand !" exclaimed a loud voice, breaking in upon the medley of joyous cries and outbursts of merriment with a suddenness and chill which hushed every sound, while the half-hundred people gathered within sight of the Falls of the Merrimack glanced up to see a horseman looking down upon them. The hoof-strokes of a horse had been heard the moment before, but no one had thought the matter worthy of attention. Now the entire aspect of the situation seemed abruptly changed.

The occasion was a festive gathering of the pioneers in that vicinity to witness a wrestling match between the champions of the settlement, and to celebrate the success of the harvest season, for it was in the glorious month of October. The gold and silver, bronze and brown, of the frost artist lay on the maple and sumac, the oak and ash, while the

green of the pine had taken on its autumn tint. Naturally, the crowd was made up largely of the younger element of the population, though there was a generous sprinkling of heads that vied with the silver of the forest under the touch of the frosts of years. Among these was the well-known and beloved Archie Stark, still hale, hearty, and overflowing with the sunlight of his generous nature. He was the father of John and William Stark, then boys in their teens, but destined to soon win for themselves names of wide renown.

Close by Mr. Stark, leaning heavily on a stout oaken staff, which like his own stalwart figure was bent and gnarled, stood that Highland relic of old Scotland, Robert MacDonald, his thin, silvery locks falling about his shoulders, except when the wanton autumn breeze played among them. Beside this stern, rugged form, the December of that beautiful scene, with fair hands outstretched over a young man kneeling at her feet, every outline of figure and every movement one of perfect grace and beauty, stood the May of that forest picture. She was his granddaughter, Rilma, the child of his only son, and she was in the act of placing upon the uncovered head of the youth before her the crown of wild flowers and evergreen for the victor of the day's tournament. The newcomer must have realised the intention of this fair Queen of the Forest, for he

hastened to cry out, before any one could offer him greeting :

"Hold! I dispute his right to wear that crown. I challenge him to a bout with me, and if he be not a sneaking brand he will accept."

As he finished speaking, the stranger, for no person in all the assembly recognised him, threw himself from his horse, drew his tall, athletic figure up to its full height, and glanced scornfully over the crowd, saying by actions if not in words :

"See! I am the conquering hero!"

A murmur of mingled surprise and chagrin ran over the throng, and for a moment the gaze of all turned to see what effect these taunting words would have upon the young victor of the match. Without hesitation he arose to his feet, and, as he stood erect, an involuntary cry of wonder, if not dismay, came from the bearded lips of the unknown rival, for, tall as he was, — six feet in height if an inch, — this young champion of Namaske was fully two inches his superior, and he had never gazed on a nobler, more manly figure. His full, smooth face was of great beauty, while his dark eyes flashed like fire as he met his gaze.

"Who are you who breaks upon the good cheer of a party of boyish pleasure-seekers with such rude speech?" demanded the young man, in a clear, ringing voice.

"One who has come fifty miles to show you what it is to wrestle, if he can find one here who dares to try him a bout."

The expressions of the crowd showed that this speech was not received with a spirit of good-will, and among the low mutterings some one was heard to say :

"Let's ride the fool into the river, boys!"

The young champion checked further utterance of this kind by a wave of his hand, though he did not instantly reply to the stranger, who mistook his hesitation for fear, and exclaimed :

"It is just as I expected, and I have taken my long journey in vain."

"Now's me," said the well-known voice of the Woodranger, who, unobserved by the others, had appeared upon the scene, accompanied by Rob Rogers, simultaneously with the coming of this blustering stranger, "he be showing his weak p'int in vaunting o' his strength. I've always noticed, lad," addressing the young champion, "that the red who yelled the loudest when he went into scrimmage got the fewest scalps."

"I do not believe he can throw me, Woodranger, but is he worth the bother?"

"The leetle animal sometimes makes the most noise, and these be times when noisy braggarts be in the way."

"Sand his back for him, Norman, or I will do it for you. I will give you just three minutes in which to do it, and then I have got something of importance to say to you," said Robert Rogers.

Those who were near enough to catch this whispered conversation gave a low cheer of encouragement, which the newcomer mistook to mean admiration for him, and he said, in a loud tone :

"I hope that fine wreath won't get wilted before it is placed on my head where it belongs."

"It will be," replied the young wrestler, whom Rob had called Norman, and whose full name was Norman McNiell, an honoured name in the history of those days. "How will you try a bout with me?"

"Catch as catch can," replied the other; "best two in three, with no stop between the bouts."

"That just suits me," replied Norman McNiell, stepping forward still bareheaded, while his friends cheered loudly. "Select your ground, sir, and give the word."

The stranger, handing the reins of his horse to a bystander, advanced at a swift pace, and, without uttering a word, seized upon Norman with the evident purpose of flinging him to the ground before he should be prepared for the attack. He did succeed in lifting the young champion fairly from his feet, which showed that he possessed great strength, but he missed his calculation when he thought to

outdo the young McNeil. The moment the latter's feet touched the ground again, understanding now the trick of the other, he stooped slightly, caught him in such a manner as to bring him midway upon his left hip, and, swinging his body half-way around, fairly lifted him up and then dropped him upon the earth with a force that made him quiver from head to feet.

A prolonged cheer rang from the spectators at this summary treatment of the boaster, which filled his ears as he staggered to his feet. Maddened by this as much as at his defeat, the bully renewed his attack on Norman, who was better prepared to meet him this time. Bending forward slightly, he seemed, to the excited spectators, to catch the stranger upon his shoulders, though it all took place so quickly that no one saw clearly just how it was done. At any rate, when Norman straightened his tall, powerful form, the other was lifted upward, his long legs were flying in the air for a moment, and then he was flung into the sand with a force which caused him to remain motionless, while the exultant shouts of the onlookers rang far and wide up and down the valley of the Merrimack. One and all were quick to declare it the handsomest feat done in that vicinity for many a day.

The crestfallen stranger finally rose sadly, slowly to his feet, which act was a signal for renewed cheer-

ing, mingled with cutting sarcasm for the defeated wrestler. Without replying, except by dark scowls and muttered exclamations, the disappointed man seized the rein of his horse, sprang into the saddle, and amid the jeers of the spectators rode away, his identity unknown to this day.

"I will hear what you have to say, Rob," declared Norman, without showing any discomfiture over his recent struggle.

"If Master Rogers will pardon me," said Rilma MacDonald, "I will crown the hero first, and now that he has won this last victory his honour is all the more deserving."

Rob bowed consent, and amid a hushed scene the fair maid placed on the head of the victor the wreath of honour, which act was the signal for a round of cheers, following which the entire crowd joined hands, Rob and the Woodranger alone excepted, and danced around the central figures of this happy occasion.

"Let hearts be merry while they may," declared the Woodranger, "all too soon will another cry wake the valley, and then there'll be time enough for the weeping that follows the laughter and the silence that follows the war-whoop o' the painted heathen. I wish we'd waited another day afore we brought this message o' war, I swan I do, lad."

The leaders of the throng, knowing that something

of importance was about to be imparted, the merry-making soon subsided, and a graver aspect came over the scene. The little episode with the stranger was forgotten, as Norman McNeil and others gathered about Rob Rogers and the Woodranger. The last moved silently apart from the midst of the crowd, standing with his bearded chin resting on the muzzle of his gun, while his whole being seemed to be absorbed in meditation, apparently lost to the keen sense of excitement reigning about him. Rob was doing the talking, except for the exclamations of deep feeling and of assent to what he was saying.

"The French will never give us rest until this quarrel between her and Great Britain has been settled," he declared. "And so long as there is an Indian on the borders of New England ready to listen to the promises of the French, so long must New England suffer at their hands. We must strike them as we would a rattlesnake. We shall never have a better opportunity to deal our first blow than by taking Louisburg. Not many of you may know of the importance of this post, and therefore will hesitate about joining Captain Vaughan in this expedition, but as for me, I start to-morrow!"

A faint cheer greeted the boy ranger at this fearless declaration, which meant far more than any of them dreamed. In a moment he continued:

"Down in Acadia there are two classes of people

in whose hands rests the welfare of that fair country. One of them is the Neutral; the other the Gunbearer. Which is the greater enemy to us I cannot tell you, but, when a French officer at the head of his squad demanded which I was, I told him to his teeth that I was a Gunbearer. Boys, I am not going to eat those words! Who among you will go with me to Louisburg?"

"On the day of the shooting match,' when we placed our bullets together in the bull's-eye of the stove," spoke up Norman McNeil, gently breaking from the restraining hold of Rilma, "I told you I should be glad to go with you when it came to trailing the red enemy. If the time has come, Rob, I am ready to keep my promise."

"I knew you were true, Norman. The time has come. I told the Frenchman I was a Gunbearer, though I did not think it necessary to tell him for whom I bore that gun. Now I am going down to Louisburg to show him just what I meant. As long as I have the power to draw bead, and there is an enemy left, I shall help defend the homes of New England."

"Ay," responded Norman, clasping his hand, "and I will stand beside you."

He would have said more, but his speech was drowned by the lusty cheer of the brave hearts

¹ See "The Woodranger."

present. As this subsided, a young man of nearly the same height as Norman stepped forth from the throng and joined the twain.

"Three cheers for the volunteers!" exclaimed one of the spectators, and the others repeated the cry until it rang up and down the valley.

At this juncture Rilma caught up the evergreen which had been left in fashioning the crown for Norman, and, beginning to weave it into shape with deft fingers, said :

"There is more than one hero here to-day, and every one who declares himself a defender of our homes and the homes of Acadia shall wear a wreath."

Again a cheer rang out, and it had barely finished before Rilma had placed on the head of Rob a wreath similar to that worn by his companion. Other fair maidens now came to her assistance, and in a brief time four more wreaths were made, and one of them was then placed on the head of the other volunteer.

"Come, Woodranger!" said Rilma, looking more beautiful than ever in her excitement, "I know without asking that you are going with the boys. Let me crown you as their noble chief."

He started at the sound of her voice, as if suddenly awakened from a sleep. Then, glancing timidly over the crowd, without looking toward her, replied :

"Forgive the ol' man if he failed to ketch the

sense o' your pretty speech. That he'll ne'er desert the lads I do not think that I previcate the truth in saying, but as a simple companion, — as a father might his sons, — but ne'er as their chief. If there be need o' a chief, which I have ne'er the discretion to say, let it be Rob. There be wisdom in his head 'yon' his years, and strength in his limbs that the years rob an ol' man of."

Those who were standing near wondered at the forester's emotion, and there were those present who claimed that the tears were coursing down his bearded cheeks. Be that as it may he began to move silently away from the spot, and a minute later disappeared down the bank of the river. His abrupt departure was scarcely noticed in the dramatic scene being enacted near the centre of the group of spectators, where Rilma stood, like a fairy queen, bestowing her favours on the gallant youths who were so ready to follow their duty in the scenes of warfare.

"I agree to what Woodranger has said, and name Robert Rogers as chief of the Gunbearers of — of — of Silver River, our own fair Merrimack which pleased the red men so! Who will wear next the wreath of the Gunbearers of Silver River?"

"I will, if you please, Rilma," said a comely youth of two or three and twenty, stepping modestly from out of the crowd, his countenance suffused with blushes, for, brave at heart as he was, he was timid in

the presence of her he loved. She showed some slight embarrassment at first, but quickly recovered her self-control, saying, in a low tone :

"I was afraid, Edward, you would not come forward."

"I am not a coward, dearest," he replied, in the same low tone, "and I thought only of the separation from you."

This short dialogue, carried on in an undertone, was swallowed up by the cheering, which seemed contagious on that occasion. Immediately following Edward Hyland came three more to wear the wreath, all from a neighbouring township called Londonderry, and by names Adam Gault, Robert Kennedy, and Andrew Logan. He who was already noted as a woodsman, and who was to become more famous as a leader of the scouts of the frontier, John Goffe, next came forward amid the cheering of the spectators.

"There are two wreaths more," said the forest queen. "Who will wear them?"

"I wish I was big enough," exclaimed a boyish voice at her elbow. Turning about, she discovered by her side a well-known boy by the name of John Stark, who was to become more noted than any of the others in the Indian wars to follow, and in the war for independence.

"You shall have one, Johnny," replied Rilma, "even if you cannot go, for I know you will do your

duty by and by," placing a wreath on his head as she spoke, little dreaming then how well her prophecy was to be fulfilled within a few years.

"I will wear the other one, if you please, my fairy queen," said a mellow voice from the outskirts of the crowd, and immediately a tall, handsome young man of thirty pushed his way forward through the throng of people. "I do not see how any of you young men can stand idle here at the pleading of so fair a sponsor."

"Do you mean that you will go to Louisburg, Doctor Thornton?" asked Rilma, who for the first time showed hesitation.

"Methinks a man must be a weakling who would not go into the very fire of death crowned by so fair a goddess," he replied, gallantly, as she laid the last wreath with trembling hands on the brown curls of the uncovered head of the noblest patriot in that band of brave sons of the frontier, while renewed cheering made the welkin ring.

Under the exciting spirit of the changed situation, which had seemed to transform the festival into a council of war, the members of the assembly soon began to seek their homes, though it would be many days — ay, years — before they would cease to discuss the ominous turn in the affairs of the colonists.

¹ Matthew Thornton, who was afterward one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE HERO OF LOUISBURG.

As they had heard nothing from the fugitive Briants, both Rob and the Woodranger were anxious to start for Breton, in the hope that they might learn something of the unfortunate family. This was partly their reason for starting on foot at once for Portsmouth, from which port they expected to find passage by vessel to their destination. So that couple, accompanied by Norman McNiell and Edward Hyland, started within a few days, while their companions promised to follow them as soon as they should be needed.

Upon reaching Portsmouth, our four met Captain Vaughan, who was very much pleased with the encouraging news they brought, and afforded them great satisfaction by announcing that a ship was then in the harbour, which would take them to Canseau without delay. On the day set for sailing, however, it was decided best by the owners to abandon the voyage until the Louisburg affair had been settled.

The disappointment was felt by our party very keenly, but the excitement of the proposed expedition was now becoming intense, and a departure expected at an early date. Though this did not come as soon as had been hoped by some, the day for sailing came at last, when the armed sloop, convoying the transports, led the way gaily down the harbour to the strains of music more sacred than martial. So impatient were the New Hampshire men, numbering about five hundred men, that they would not brook the delay necessary to join the Massachusetts volunteers at Boston, as Governor Shirley originally planned, but actually sailed two days ahead of the others, with the agreement to meet them at Canseau.

The Gunbearers of Silver River, with the exception of Dr. Matthew Thornton, who went as surgeon, were placed under the command of Captain Thomas Waldron, a descendant of the famous Major Waldron who had been slain in the Dover massacre in 1689. Colonel Samuel Moore was in command of the regiment, while Nathan Meserve was lieutenant-colonel. The little war-fleet sailed from Portsmouth, March 23, 1745, or, by the new reckoning, on April 4.

As has been remarked, a strong religious feeling moved the colonists in their attack upon the French stronghold, which its builders had aptly styled the "Dunkirk of America," and nowhere did that expedition partake more of the character of a crusade

than with this body of troops from New Hampshire. A few days previous to its departure, a large meeting was held at an old garrison on the River Piscataqua, when Captain Waldron's company was presented with a new banner made by the women of New Hampshire, and inscribed with the motto :

" Nil Desperandum, Christo Duce."

This meant, in plain English, "Despair of nothing, Christ being our leader." The Rev. George Whitefield, then the foremost preacher in New England, had suggested this inscription, and blessed the flag and the expedition. Edward Hyland was unanimously chosen as colour-bearer, and you may be assured he accepted the honour with pardonable pride, determined that it should be borne faithfully as long as it was in his hands.

The voyage to Canseau, though made at a critical season, was performed without mishap, but the New Hampshire force had to remain idle two days before the arrival of the Massachusetts contingent, consisting of a fleet of forty-one vessels and three thousand men.

During the stop at Canseau the little fleet was visited by a New England man stopping on this coast. That is, it should be said that this man's visit was involuntary, as he was picked up half a mile from the shore, clinging to a log on which he

had drifted away from the land in an escape from a party of Indians. Though he bore unpleasant tidings, he was gladly met by the Woodranger and Rob, who inquired if he had ever seen or heard of Wallace Briant and his family, whom they had parted with as they were on their way to the vicinity of this man's home. He had met them, and reported that Briant had so far recovered from his wounds as to start to return to Grand Pré. But he had made a mistake in doing that, as he was soon overtaken and captured by a party of French and Indians, led by the Dark Abbé. He and his family had been taken to Quebec as prisoners, where this man believed they were at that time, if their lives had been spared. The Woodranger was greatly affected by this intelligence, and, had it not been for Rob and the others, would have left the expedition to Louisburg then and there.

It does not come within the scope of our tale to narrate the particulars of the siege of Louisburg, except for the account of an incident connected with it, which afforded a pathetic interest to our little band of Gunbearers of Silver River. Governor Shirley had prepared a very minute plan of action, even going so far as to appoint the hour when the vessels should meet to make a combined attack on the fortress. But he had failed to take into account the uncertainty of the weather at that season of the

year, and the dangers environing the coast of Cape Breton. The fleet was obliged to wait at Cansau three weeks before the ice was sufficiently cleared for it to proceed. This delay enabled a new commander to appear upon the scene. He was Admiral Warren, of the British fleet at West India, who had declined to act under the request of Governor Shirley, but who had later received orders from England to proceed with the New England force. He held a consultation with General Pepperell, and soon after the advance toward Louisburg was resumed.

Though so long delayed on their way, the French were not aware of the coming of the fleet and army until the transports appeared off Chaparouge Bay. Thus the New England troops effected a landing without any stubborn resistance from the enemy; who retreated to the fortified town, burning all of the outstanding houses for fear they might serve as cover for the English. They also sunk some vessels in the harbour, expecting to hinder the entrance of the fleet. It has already been mentioned that the fortifications consisted of stone ramparts, from thirty to forty feet in height, and that the whole were surrounded by a wide ditch of eighty feet, except for an opening of two hundred yards in width near the sea, which place of entrance and exit was guarded by a line of pickets. The entrance to the harbour was overlooked by a battery of thirty cannons planted on

a small island, and a grand or royal battery of twenty-eight cannons, 42-pounders and two 18-pounders, defended the lower end of the harbour. A prominent object by day, whose red eye at night looked ominously out over the waters, was a lighthouse standing on a high cliff nearly opposite the battery on the island. The main fortress of the powerful military and naval station had six bastions and eight batteries, with embrasures for one hundred and forty-eight cannons, but only about one-third of these were mounted. Without displaying its real strength from within, this stronghold presented an outward appearance that would have seemed to daunt even the bold spirits bent upon its destruction.

After a brief consultation between the leaders of the combined sea and land forces, it was decided to attempt an entrance into the town by the west gate, over a drawbridge protected by a circular battery mounting sixteen guns of 14-pound shot. The command of this body of soldiers was entrusted to Capt. William Vaughan, who had refused a regular commission, but who was induced to act under the rank and pay of a lieutenant-colonel. He chose for his followers in this hazardous undertaking a detachment of New Hampshire troops, among whom were the Gunbearers of Silver River.

Effecting a landing as speedily as possible, Colonel Vaughan led his resolute men through a narrow belt

of woods within sight of the city, he and his followers giving expression to three rousing cheers as they marched on. Reaching the northeast quarter of the harbour by night, the troops captured some warehouses containing naval stores, setting fire to the buildings. The wind drove the smoke into the grand battery in such volumes that the French became alarmed, believing that it was all over with them, and, spiking the guns and cutting the bel-yards from the flag-staff, retreated to the city. A deep silence then fell upon the scene, lasting until morning.

Making a tour of inspection as soon as it was daylight, Colonel Vaughan, accompanied by a squad of thirteen men, crept up the hill overlooking the battery, until they discovered the true situation of the deserted works. The smokeless chimneys of the barracks, and the staff minus its flag, quickly caught the attention of the little band, whose leader said :

“How easy we might capture the battery if an entrance could be effected without too much delay or exposure.”

“Me do it,” spoke up an Indian from one of the Massachusetts tribes, who was among the scouts.

“Then go ahead,” declared Colonel Vaughan, without stopping to ask how. The red man instantly began to crawl cautiously forward toward the works.

"Now's me," declared the Woodranger, "the red do show an amazing lack o' discretion not common with his race. There may be an ambushment ahint 'em guns. The French are deceitful."

"But see! the fellow is crawling toward one of the embrasures," said Rob Rogers, who lay beside the forester, and was watching as earnestly as his companions the movements of the daring Indian. The latter was seen to reach one of the embrasures, and a moment later he had disappeared inside the battery. Fortunately, the place was entirely deserted, and, opening the gate for his companions, Colonel Vaughan and his little squad stood inside the works within half an hour, having captured the place without bloodshed. In his exultation Colonel Vaughan then sent the following message by the trusty Indian to General Pepperell:

"May it please your Honour to be informed that, by the grace of God, and the courage of thirteen men, I entered the royal battery about nine o'clock, and am waiting for a reinforcement and a flag."

"What a pity so good a staff should be without its colours, and we without aught to show of our victory," said Rob Rogers, his young, enthusiastic heart fired with the spirit of the conquest. "Here, Dunham, your coat with its red lining is just what we want. Lend it to me," and himself taking it from the shoulders of his companion, the adventur-

ous young Gunbearer climbed the staff, hand over hand, and a minute later he had nailed the impromptu colours to its top, amid the cheers of his companions.

But this daring act so aroused the French that a hundred men were immediately sent from the city to dislodge the bold besiegers. This party could reach the place only by boat, and, knowing that it would not do to allow the enemy to effect a landing, Colonel Vaughan quickly led his handful of gallant followers to the beach, where they prevented the French from reaching the land, notwithstanding the fact that they were exposed to constant fire from the city. In the midst of the sanguine fight, when it began to look as if the doughty little band was having more than its match, reinforcements arrived on the scene, and the French were obliged to give up. A few minutes later the flag of the New England forces was flying from the staff, proclaiming the victory of the gallant thirteen under the intrepid projector of the siege.

This took place on May 2d, and, encouraged by this success, the English drilled out the guns which had been spiked by the enemy before their desertion of the place, and these weapons, mostly 42-pounders, were turned upon the city with good effect, several of the shots falling within the citadel. Duchambon refusing to surrender, the besiegers decided to

strengthen the position of the land forces. Five fascine batteries were erected, mounted with sixteen pieces of cannon and several mortars. By means of these the western gate was destroyed, and considerable impression made on the circular battery.

All this, done within sight of the enemy, had not been accomplished without hard and dangerous work. For fourteen successive nights the troops were employed in dragging cannon from the landing through a morass, where an ox could not go. This had to be done on sledges, by the men with straps on their shoulders and sinking to their knees in the mud. Bareheaded, barefooted, their clothes in tatters, and poorly fed, the plucky troops toiled on night after night, until they had accomplished their purpose, and then stood ready to undertake the most hazardous and disastrous part of the long and laborious siege.

An order was issued to attack the island battery, and four hundred volunteers from different regiments were selected for the hazardous undertaking. A large share of this force was made up of New Hampshire men, and among these were five of the Gunbearers of Silver River: their young chief, Robert Rogers, the Woodranger, John Goffe, Norman McNeil, and, last but not least, the brave young ensign, Edward Hyland. Of them all, the Woodranger had alone shown hesitation in undertaking this part

of the siege. It was not his nature to fall in line easily as a soldier under command, but rather to follow the bent of his own inclination. He had been valuable as a scout, and no man was more respected than he. With Rob he had seen the island battery as no other man had, and noted the strong position of the French force entrenched within.

"It may be the natural o'erdiscretion o' an ol' man who sees but the weakness o' his own arms and the strength o' his inemy's. Now's me, I fear this move will prove a wanton waste o' human life. The ambushment o' the French be well laid, and they hol' us at their marcy."

"Tut — tut, Woodranger!" exclaimed Edward Hyland, in a merry tone. "I am going to plant this flag inside those works before we are done, or it shall be my shroud."

"The lad be true grit," said the forester, looking in the opposite direction and out over the water where lay the ships of Admiral Warren. Before any reply could be made, the command to advance was passed along the line, and the first charge was made. It was like rushing into a storm of leaden hail, and the brave volunteers were obliged to retreat. But the column was formed for a second attack without loss of time, and again it dashed against the works of the enemy with a courage that nothing could daunt.

For the second time the brave men from New England were repulsed, but not disheartened. Their leader again rallied them, and not only for the third, but for the fourth time, did they charge upon the enemy, to meet with the inevitable defeat, though falling back in remarkably good order. Even the intrepid Vaughan hesitated before attempting what he began to see was well-nigh impossible to accomplish, when the youthful bearer of the regiment's colours sprang forward, and shaking the flag, already riddled with bullets, high over his head, shouted :

"Who falters now? Dare to follow the old flag, and the victory is ours!"

Every volunteer instantly caught the spirit of the brave speaker, and the sight of his heroic dash to the front and the banner that seemed to urge them on to victory fired the overtried troops with new zeal. As the gallant ensign leaped forward, the tall figure of the Woodranger was seen to leave the ranks and advance close beside him. Equal to any emergency, the indomitable Vaughan shouted the order :

"Forward — charge! Let every man do his duty, and the battery must fall."

Nothing like that desperate charge was seen in all that forty-nine days of fighting before Louisburg. The French seemed to have reserved their leaden hail for the brave volunteers who sprang forward in the path of the inspired colour-bearer. They had

not crossed half of the open space lying between them and the works of the enemy before the front ranks were thinned to an alarming extent. Still the stentorian tone of their leader urged them on, and still the flag of the Gunbearers waved in the air, the life of its ensign spared as if by a miracle.

The first fire of the French spent, and the riven ranks of the besiegers filled by those in the rear, it looked for a time as if the raw recruits, fighting against such terrible odds, were bound to win. But the entrenched forces had been so judiciously fortified that, though they did not equal in number the others, all of the conditions were in their favour. Without looking back to see the awful rout being made behind him, Edward Hyland shook aloft his flag and shouted a defiance to the enemy just as another volley of bullets whistled about him. With the cry unfinished, he sank upon the ground, the flag falling over his bleeding form.

The Woodranger was still beside him, his gun smoking from its latest fire, as he saw his young friend fall. His bronze countenance for a moment became white, and then the order to retreat rang above the shots and medley of cries. Realising that the tide of battle had turned against them, the for-ester, unwilling to leave his fallen friend lying there, lifted his unconscious form in his arms, and beat a rapid retreat. As if out of respect to him and his

lifeless companion, the firing on the part of the enemy suddenly ceased. Well it might, for so disastrous had been its furious volleys that nearly one-half of the gallant besiegers lay dead or wounded on the scene of the ill-fated charge.

Norman McNiel had received a severe flesh-wound, but unmindful of that, he rushed forward to assist the forester in carrying his burden, though the latter paid no need to him as he strode to the rear and laid the unfortunate young man down on the sand, the flag for which he had fallen still wrapped about him. Dropping upon his knees, the Woodranger began a hasty examination of the wounds of the other.

"Is he dead?" asked Norman, anxiously, while a circle of battle-marked friends gathered about the place. It seemed a long time before the Woodranger replied, and then his voice was so husky that he could be scarcely heard:

"The lad has kept his faith. He's gone 'yon' the reach o' the inemy. It be sad news to impart to the waiting lass. Why could not they have taken the ol' man? I see it was coming—I see it was coming, and why did I 'low sich a blameful indiscretion?"

Never had his friends seen the Woodranger so stricken with sorrow. He refused to leave the side of the inanimate form, ever and anon breaking out

into speeches of reproach for himself in allowing what he seemed to think he might have prevented. Though the hope of capturing the battery was not abandoned, it was evident that some other tactics would have to be adopted.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

AN ASTONISHING DISCOVERY.

A RESpite on the part of the New England troops followed their futile attempt to capture the island battery, while a wave of sorrow ran over the survivors for the fate of their fallen comrades. Desolate Louisburg is to-day the resting-place of the bones of those gallant volunteers. Among the rest sleeps Ensign Edward Hyland, who was afterward breveted captain for meritorious conduct. His loss was keenly felt by all of the little band who had come from the valley of the Merrimack, but the blow fell heaviest on the Woodranger, who said, as they stood over the lifeless form for the last time :

"Aweel, now's me, it be a wanton way o' natur' that I, an ol' gnarled oak scaired by the storms o' years, be standing blindly at the border o' the Dark Woods, while the young and vigorous maple, with leaves no bigger'n rabbit's ears, has been felled by the lightning's bolt. To him varsed in the ways o' the wildwood, the trails o' man and creetur' be easy to follow, but neither the master o' books nor

the seeker after nature's secrets can read the sign o' the gray woodsman whose foot makes no print in the leaves o' time, and who slays with a bow that has no twang. Nay, lads, do not think me murmuring. In all consistency I must agree that it is best for him to go now. There be fewer to weep for him than there would be if he had lived to widen his circle o' friends; but for an ol' man like me there'll be fewer to weep by and by. On the great neutral ground Edward has reached, he is safe; can we say as much for the living?"

If the desperate charges against the island battery had proved fruitless, they yet served to stimulate the colonists to greater endeavours. Some advantage must be gained, and that speedily if they wished to capture the works. On the 11th of June a circular battery was erected on the mainland to the northeast, and from this vantage the guns of the French were finally silenced without much loss of life.

Meanwhile, the sea force under Admiral Warren had succeeded in capturing a French supply-ship, which had a discouraging effect on Duchambon. Although so strongly entrenched, a feeling of discontent existed among his men, so that he was in constant dread of an outbreak or desertion if he should allow his soldiers to go outside the fortifications. Then, the New England troops had managed to move about in a way which gave the impression that

they were of greater number than was really the case. Thus, worried by troubles within his ranks, and believing that the English troops were fully able to carry on the siege indefinitely, on the 17th of June, after he had been besieged forty-nine days by the indomitable raw recruits from New England, the commander of Louisburg surrendered.

Great rejoicing reigned among the colonists as soon as the French stronghold had capitulated, and their wild dreams had been realised. But it was learned at once that few, if any, of the troops would be allowed to return home until relief had come to hold the city. The Woodranger, however, had not enlisted as a volunteer, so no objection could be made against his departure whenever he chose. He sought Rob and Norman as soon as the news of the capitulation of Louisburg had reached them, saying:

"I should previcate the truth did I not say that a heavy load lays on my heart like a bank o' snow. There be two trails to follow where there be but one pair o' feet. I see in the path o' the setting sun a maid waiting and watching for a lover who ne'er will return to lighten with the joy o' a kind word the heart that be heavy. I can ne'er dissemble, lads, it would be like a father breaking the news to his only child to be the bearer o' sich a message. Mebbe, lad," addressing Norman, "you'll speak to her of this. You have the fluency o' speech which comes

from books. They cannot keep you here overlong, and the heart does not break that is waiting. You will take this message to her, lad, and say to her from me that the wood that bends makes no plaint o' suffering!"

"I will, Woodranger, though it is a sad duty. Rilma is to me all that a sister can be."

"I know it, lad. The errant is safe with you. That leaves me but one trail to follow."

"And that is to find the Briants?" said Rob.

"If they be spared this long, lad, which it be not discreet for me to say."

"I wish I could go with you, Woodranger," said Rob, "but I can't."

"I understand, lad, I do. If the trail be not overlong or too deep kivered we shall meet ag'in," and pressing their hands, unable to say more, he started on his long and uncertain search, while they joined the troops in their first visit to the walled city. When Colonel Vaughan and the others came to gaze on the fortifications of the French stronghold, and understood as they had not before the real strength of Louisburg, they were amazed at their success.

"Zounds, boys!" exclaimed the impetuous Vaughan, "here is a memento for us to take back to Portsmouth, as a reminder that we have seen and conquered Louisburg," pointing to a bell whose

brazen tongue had often rung from the fortified chapel of the walled city.¹

The terms of capitulation consented to by Governor Duchambon gave to General Pepperell the custody of nineteen hundred prisoners of war. The city at this time contained about five thousand inhabitants, besides the armed forces, and general consternation reigned among them. But order was soon brought out of chaos, when a most astonishing bit of news reached Rob and Norman. This was nothing less than the fact that among the prisoners held by the French was the Briant family!

Obtaining special permission to visit them as soon as they could, our friends found the others nearly overjoyed at meeting them.

"This seems like a special deliverance at the hand of Providence," declared Mr. Briant, as he wrung the hand of Rob and then of Norman. "I had given up all hope of ever escaping. We have been here for four months. But where is the Woodranger?"

When Rob had explained to him the search upon which the forester had departed, the Acadian ranger said:

"We have much to thank him for, and I shall lose no time in going in quest of him. You and the children will be quite safe here, Mary. I hope it

¹This bell is now heard at the St. John's Church, Portsmouth, N. H.

will not be long before we shall be able to return to our home in Acadia. Yes, after parting with you on the St. Mary's we reached Sherbrooke in safety, thanks to Jean Vallie. The noble fellow returned to his home as soon as he had seen us safely quartered, and we have not heard from him since. Perhaps we should have been better off to have remained there, but we were warned that the Dark Abbé had learned of our retreat, so we thought best to flee again. We tried to get to Barney River, but the Micmacs ran across us, and, after a fierce fight, for my wound had got better, we were captured and brought here. My wound is perfectly healed now, and I am anxious to rub off some of the rust coming of this long inactivity. So I shall find the Woodranger at once."

Considerable was told of the terror and anxiety hanging over the city during the long siege, and Alex declared it was worse than flying from the Indians up the Subenacadie. But, except for the sadness felt over the untimely fate of Edward Hyland, the little group felt very thankful for their safe passage through the trying scenes of the past few months. With hearty good wishes for a speedy return on the part of the others, Wallace Briant set out to find the Woodranger, and bring him back to Louisburg, never dreaming but the task would be an easy one.

Both Rob and Norman missed the genial companionship of the Woodranger more than they cared to acknowledge, while, as week after week passed without bringing any tidings of Mr. Briant, all began to grow anxious. The scouts had entered the very heart of the enemy's country, and it was feared that they had lost their lives, though the young soldiers shared this feeling less than Mrs. Briant and Alex.

One day, as our heroes were talking with Alex and his mother, a few words in the conversation caused Norman to inquire more into the particulars of their past lives, when he made a most astonishing discovery.

"Do you mean, Alex, that you have a sister named Rilma? and that your father and mother came here from among the Scotch-Irish people of the north of Ireland? and that your grandfather's name was Robert MacDonald?"

Norman showed so much excitement that the others were at a loss to account for it, but Mrs. Briant repeated in about the same words the story of her past life that Mr. Briant had told the Woodranger in the canoe, while they were fleeing up Cobequid Bay.

"It is the most wonderful thing I ever knew!" exclaimed Norman, when she had finished. "Rilma is living with her grandfather near my home on the

Merrimack. She is my cousin, though I have always called her sister. She seems like it --"

Mrs. Briant, in her excitement, did not allow him to complete his sentence, and an animated series of questions and cross-questions followed, at the conclusion of which Mrs. Briant said :

"I am sure you are right, and I do not know what to say or think. It seems too good to be true, and yet it must be. I have mourned my darling as dead all these years, and now I shall clasp her again in my arms. It seems providential, and I cannot wait for the time when I can go and see my long-lost child. I wish Wallace were here."

From that time forward the return of Mr. Briant was looked for more anxiously than before, and when, at the end of two months, Rob and Norman were given permission to leave Louisburg, this feeling became intense. They did not wish to leave without knowing his fate, and it seemed an impossible task to find him. But Rob was all ready to start on the quest, when, to the great joy of all, Mr. Briant returned. But he bore no tidings of the Woodranger.

"I am ashamed to say it," he said, "but I have been far and wide without finding him. Once, in the region of the Subenacadie, I got on track of some one whose description tallied with his, but I soon lost further trace of him."

"The Woodranger will look out for himself," said

Rob, "but while the rest of you go directly home, I think I will follow in his footsteps. I cannot resist the temptation, though I may not find him. I will get home before the snow flies."

Mr. Briant shared with Mrs. Briant the joy of what had been learned concerning her lost child, and he was as anxious as any of them to go to the Merrimack, though they might be obliged to return to Acadia as soon as the war was over. So the others bade adieu to Rob, who went toward Grand Pré, while they took passage on a ship for Portsmouth, and from there made a tedious journey to the little settlement at Namaske Falls. It is easy to picture to the mind's eye the happiness of such a meeting as that was in the humble home of Robert MacDonald. Whatever wrongs he may have done under the influence of his bitter surroundings, in the years gone by, they were forgotten now, and he wept with the others tears of joy.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FIGHT AT THE FORGE.

EARLY in the following winter Rob Rogers returned to his home, but, to the disappointment of many, he brought no tidings of the missing forester. It was generally believed that he had been killed by some of the French or Indians, and his loss was felt keenly.

Even Rob could not think differently, and the Woodranger had no more sincere mourner than the boy rangers, who now began active duties in ranging and scouting in the northern woods.

The war could be said to be fairly on, and from west to east the colonists, English and French, were everywhere watchful and aggressive. An expedition to seize Fort Frederick at Crown Point, which lay in the route from Albany to Montreal, as planned by the commander of the British and provincial troops, prompted to do it by the success of the expedition to Louisburg. The French prepared in earnest to carry out the scheme, which had been so prematurely announced, of desolating New England at one great swoop of sea and land forces. To act a part in

conjunction with the expected armament from France, in the early part of the summer of 1746, regular troops, militia, and Indians to the number of two thousand, were sent from Quebec into the Acadian country.

If the first report of the coming of the French armada had proved a false alarm, it was likely to become real enough now. In spite of the watchfulness of the British, the largest and most powerful war fleet that had ever started to cross the Atlantic stole out of the harbour of Brest and steered away toward New France. The fleet consisted of over seventy sails, eleven being ships of the line, twenty frigates, five were bomb ships, while the balance were tenders and transports. They carried over three thousand soldiers. The entire forces of land and sea were placed under the command of Duke d'Anville, a nobleman of experience in warfare, and his orders were to recover Louisburg and Annapolis-Royal, which he was to garrison, thence capture Boston, and raid the whole coast of America to the West Indies.

It was not for the proud duke to carry out his ambitious scheme, as he was to meet with an enemy which his army could not overpower. His fleet was met by stormy weather soon after starting, so that its destination was not reached before the autumn gales set in. These disabled many of his ships, and scattered the vessels in every direction. One was

burned, and two sent back, only to be captured by the English. After an anxious and perilous passage, lasting a hundred days, the commander reached Chebucto (now Halifax) with but one ship of the line and a transport. He found three transports already there, and a frigate arrived the following day. Believing these were all there were left of his powerful armada, which had created such expectations in France, the admiral fell a victim to grief and disappointment, his death hastened, some say, by poison. In the afternoon of the day that Duke d'Anville died, Vice-Admiral Destournelle reached Chebucto with three ships of the line. The fleet was so decimated that he deemed it inadvisable to attempt any attack on the English. This decision overruled by his subordinates, in a delirium of despondency, when he imagined himself a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, he killed himself with his sword.

Though the French officer next in command had decided to move upon Annapolis in conjunction with the soldiers sent from Quebec, it was necessary to wait until the men could recuperate before starting to meet the others in the rendezvous at Minas, now Horton. During this delay a disease broke out among the troops, spreading with frightful effect. It was soon caught by the Indians, and before its ravages had been stopped nearly one-third of the whole tribe of Micmacs had died. The Indians of

North America were very susceptible to contagious diseases, as all savages are, and their numbers were often decimated at a fearful rate by some disorder.

The delay at Chebucto was suddenly ended by the capture of an English vessel bound from Boston to Louisburg, and carrying, among other papers seized, a letter disclosing a plan of general attack on the French by a British fleet, then on the way across the ocean, and the New England men. Alarmed at this, the French commander decided to move at once, but his action proved ill-advised, for off the coast of Cape Sable the fleet, consisting now of forty sail, was disabled and scattered by a storm, so that the poor remnant of the proud armada that was to reduce New England was glad to return to France in disappointment and sorrow.

But if rid of the "flower of the French army," New England stood in constant dread of the allied enemies, white and red, who menaced the safety of the entire frontier. Thus a thousand men volunteered to go to New Scotland, or Nova Scotia, and make a bold stand. These troops started by ships, to meet with many misfortunes. Nearly a third of those from Rhode Island were shipwrecked off Martha's Vineyard. New Hampshire's contingent of two hundred succeeded in reaching the coast off Annapolis-Royal in the month of January. Believing that no others had been able to get so far, and the

weather becoming more inclement, they went to St. Johns, New Brunswick, and thence returned home.

Among these troops were Robert Rogers and Norman McNeil, who went ashore while the ship lay off Nova Scotia, and, in the faint hope of getting on the track of the Woodranger, decided to make an overland journey to Grand Pré. A kind providence seemed to have directed their footsteps, for on the fourth day they fell in with a body of Massachusetts troops, who were the volunteers from that province, and had succeeded in gaining the Bay of Fundy, where it was found impracticable to proceed farther on the vessel. Accordingly, the hardy troops had left the vessel, to undertake one of the worst marches that could be imagined, shaping their course for the meadows of the Gaspereau.

The weather continued cold throughout midwinter that year, and snow fell to such depths that it lay in mighty drifts on the marshes, and in the forests it was more than four feet deep, light and fluffy, so that the men who led the train had to wade through it almost to their breasts. When it was too late they found their mistake in not taking snow-shoes, but, taking turns in breaking the way, they marched bravely ahead, the spruce and hemlock bowed beneath the burden of the storms forming long, ghost-like walks, where the footfall gave back no sound, and the sun failed to penetrate.

Rob and Norman fared no better than the others. In fact, they took their turns with the Massachusetts men, until the end of the wintry march of eight days, when one and all were gladdened by the sight of the snow-white meadows of Grand Pré.

It was snowing on the evening that the toil-worn men reached their destination, and, seeking the most sheltered spot they could find, they went into quarters along a lane running to the west of the village. Others sought a place of shelter near the beech woods extending toward the well-known smithy of Basil le Noir, the gunmaker of Acadia.

Rob and Norman were with this division, and, though they could not blame the tired fellows, they were surprised at the indifference shown by the party to taking any precautionary steps for self-protection, knowing as they did that, if they were in the country of the Acadian neutrals, they also were in the land of the Dark Abbé and his followers. It is true a guard was fixed, but as the evening wore on, and a furious wind swept the open country and filled their faces with the white, fluffy mass, one by one these poor fellows crept under the hasty shelter raised for the protection of their more fortunate companions.

Rob laid down to rest, but not to sleep. He was too careful a woodsman to be caught off his watch. Seeing that the soldiers had left their posts, he

rose to his feet, and began to march back and forth with his gun on his shoulder. It was nearly midnight then, and the wind was howling bitterly over the tree tops and down through the orchards of Grand Pré. Not a light came from the half-buried cottages, and it seemed as if every object, human or inanimate, was fast asleep, save the wind and the snow. The young Gunbearer was thinking of the evening a year and a half before, when he and the Woodranger had met with such stirring adventure in that vicinity, when a tall, snow-white figure appeared just beyond him.

"Halt!" he commanded, bringing his gun to bear upon the newcomer. "Who are you?"

"That be a discreet p'int to settle," replied a well-known voice, and in a moment Rob forgot everything else in his joy at meeting an old friend.

"The Woodranger!" he exclaimed, joyously. "Where in the world have you come from?" and he grasped the other's hand with a grip of fervent friendship.

"That be not amazement to unravel now, lad, though it does these ol' eyes good to rest on thy form, which has grown taller and stouter since I went away. I do not previcate the truth, lad, when I say that I have perambulated a goodish distance to get in here ahead o' the French and the plumed heathens, who have beat me, arter all. Let every

New England man be aroused, for the inemy is upon him. They have tramped all the way from Chignecto, and are six hundred or more in number."

This startling news brought an exclamation of surprise from Rob, who quickly said :

"Do you think they will attack us soon, Woodranger?"

"In less'n ten minutes, lad, or I ne'er know what in all consistency be mine to foretell. Where be the guard?"

"There is none, Woodranger. We are in bad shape for a fight."

"Secing the inemy have worn snow-shoes, they be ne'er overmuch fagged. They have just got all the inhabitants o' this place clus down by the water, so as to get 'em out'n harm's way. It may be they've shown a discretionary spirit, I can ne'er tell. This be the plan o' the blacksmith, who will help lead the Micmacs."

The camp was quickly roused, and Norman was beside Rob in a moment. Then, a runner was sent post-haste to warn the others under the command of Colonel Noble. He had barely started before a musket-shot was heard in the direction of the lane.

"They have opened the battle," said Rob, "and it will be a hot fight."

The first attack was made on the main body in the lane, and the poor fellows were slaughtered like

so many deer suddenly driven from their retreat. The drifting snow blurred the sight and filled the air, while the shrieks of the wind drowned at times the war-cries of the enemy, and the surprised soldiers fought blindly, hopelessly, vainly, from the first. The party in the woods was about to dash to the assistance of their comrades, when they found themselves grappling hand to hand with overwhelming numbers. Led by Rob Rogers, the majority of these broke through the line and retreated toward the lane, in the hope of joining with their friends. But the night was so dark and stormy that they floundered about unable to find their way. They had now come to a house and barn, and Rob quickly set fire to the latter. It was well filled, and by the bright light of the burning building the scattered soldiers were enabled to rally, and, uniting, made such a determined stand that the enemy was driven back for the time. In order to obtain a better position, a retreat was made, and, guided by the Woodranger, the New Englanders made a firm resistance at the smithy of Basil le Noir. The allied forces made three desperate attempts to drive out the little party, one of them led by Basil le Noir, who lost his life in the attack.

During the intervals between the attacks of the French Rob learned that the Woodranger had been on a lengthy "perambulation" of the north country, and that he had given up searching for the Briants,

having come to the conclusion that they had been killed. He showed more surprise than usual when he was told of their safety, and as Rob described the reunion of the family with the daughter so long lost the eyes of the forester kindled with pleasure, and he said:

"Then the truth be known, lad. It is better so — better as it is. I swan I haven't felt so chipper since I was a lad. It may be an ol' man's weak p'int, but the ol' man's heart be lighter, and he can perambulate the long trail with ne'er desire to look back. It be good, lad, when one can look straight ahead and disremember the crooks and quirls in the trail behind."

"Yes, Woodranger, and it will add to their happiness when you return. You have been spoken of often."

"Be that the truth, lad? And they remembered the ol' man? I mean as they might a simple friend and companion. Tell me if that be the truth, 'yon' prevication, lad?"

"It is, Woodranger. They remember you as a dear and faithful friend, one who risked his life for them, and they will hail your coming with great joy."

"It be better for me to carry that sweet thought in my heart than all else. I can ne'er previcate the truth, nor dissemble to you, lad. There be an un-

rest o'er me. It may be an ol' man's weakness, but as sich I'm prone to let it master me. I opine I will perambulate the forest awhile longer. If I am gone overlong, lads," speaking now both to Rob and Norman, "and the years flow on like a swift-running river that ne'er flows backward, memory will bridge the stream o' time, and our meeting and our parting here will seem but yesterday. Nay, lads, dissent not. It be better I follow this whim. Sometime you may see it as I do. Now you cannot."

The yellow light of a winter morning lay on the snow, crimsoned here and there with the life-blood of the victims of that night's bitter fight, while occasional dark spots marked the half-buried bodies of the slain. As the Woodranger ceased speaking, a French officer, bearing a flag of truce, was seen to be approaching the smithy. The firing down by the lane had died into an ominous silence. It was quickly agreed by the little band by the forge that they could do no better than to listen to the proposal of the enemy, and thus they awaited his coming with anxious interest.

The result of the conference was an acceptance of the best terms of capitulation they could make. The conditions of their surrender were that they should march off toward Annapolis with arms shouldered, drums beating, and colours flying, as they advanced between two lines of the enemy. They

were to be allowed six days' provisions, a pound of powder, and a suitable supply of bullets to each man. On their part, each man pledged himself not to bear arms for six months against the French in that region of Acadia. They learned then that none of Colonel Noble's gallant followers had escaped.

As they were about to march forth, Rob and Norman looked around for the Woodranger, when, to their surprise, he was not to be seen. During the suspense of the debate with the officer of truce he had slipped out through the window of the smithy unobserved by any one, and, by crawling through the snow, had passed the enemy. Both were keenly disappointed, but they felt that their friend had acted as his judgment had dictated, and that he would escape his enemies.

The fight at the forge ended the experiences of Rob and Norman in Acadia, for, upon reaching Annapolis-Royal, they started for the Merrimack valley, which they reached early in the spring. The inhabitants in that vicinity were now being harassed by French and Indian bands, so that both of them went into active service on the western frontier, bearing a gallant part in the perilous scenes. England paid but little heed to her colonies during this war, and the year 1747 passed without any important action being performed. The treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle followed on October 18, 1748, and the hard-

fought victory of Louisburg was treated as only a piece of valuable property, since they traded Louisburg for Madras in the East Indies, and it remained in French possession for eight years. Then an English fleet and army that might be termed the "flower of the British forces" assailed the citadel of Cape Breton, and Louisburg fell, never to rise again. Her fort was dismantled, fortifications destroyed, and to-day only their ruins mark the spot of the remarkable victory of the New Englanders in 1745.

At the close of the war the Briant family bade good-bye to their friends and relatives at Namaacke, to return to their home in Acadia, where they lived in comparative peace until the great banishment in 1755. The treaty of 1748 left the boundaries of the French and English territory in America as unsettled as ever, and our heroes of the Merrimack valley were constantly called upon to defend the frontier, none in the sanguinary struggle doing better work than the Gunbearers of Silver River, and chief among these was Robert Rogers.

Of course the Woodranger reappeared upon the scene of action, and the peculiar incidents connected with his return, the stirring part performed by John Stark, I hope to describe in my next WOODRANGER TALE, entitled "The Hero of the Hills."

THE END.

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