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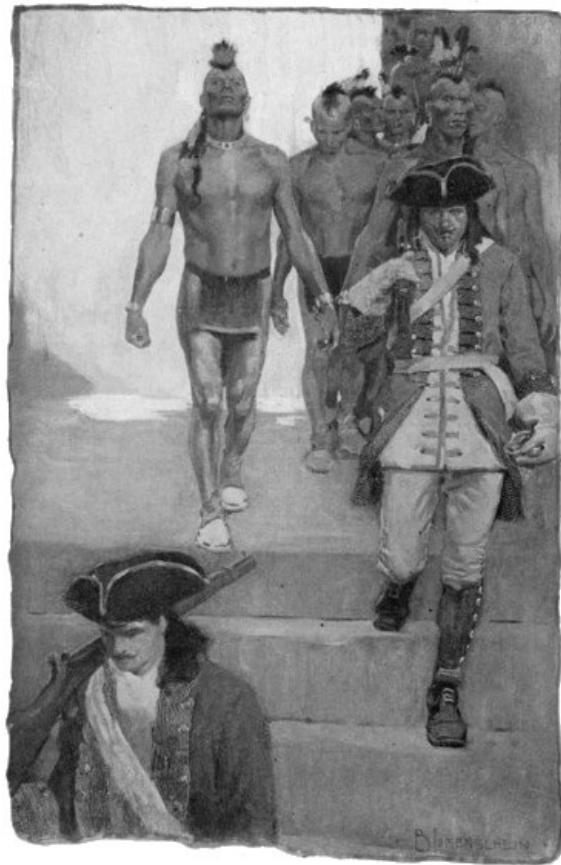
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THE ROAD TO FRONTENAC



"Half way down the steps was a double file of Indians chained two and two."

THE ROAD TO FRONTENAC

BY
SAMUEL MERWIN



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The Road to Frontenac.

CHAPTER I

CAPTAIN MENARD HAS A LAZY DAY.

Captain Daniel Menard leaned against the parapet at the outer edge of the citadel balcony. The sun was high, the air clear and still. Beneath him, at the foot of the cliff, nestled the Lower Town, a strip of shops and houses, hemmed in by the palisades and the lower battery. The St. Lawrence flowed by, hardly stirred by the light breeze. Out in the channel, beyond the merchantmen, lay three ships of war, *Le Fourgon*, *Le Profond*, and *La Perle*, each with a cluster of supply boats at her side; and the stir and rattle of tackle and chain coming faintly over the water from *Le Fourgon* told that she would sail for France on the morrow, if God should choose to send the wind.

Looking almost straight down, Menard could see the long flight of steps that climbed from the settlement on the water front to the nobler city on the heights. Halfway down the steps was a double file of Indians, chained two and two, and guarded by a dozen regulars from his own company. He watched them until they reached the bottom and disappeared behind the row of buildings that ended on the wharf in Patron's trading store. In a moment they reappeared, and marched across the wharf, toward the two boats from *Le Fourgon* that awaited them. Even from the height, Menard could see that the soldiers had a stiff task to control their prisoners. After one of the boats, laden deep, had shoved off, there was a struggle, and the crowd of idlers that had gathered scattered suddenly. Two Indians had broken away, and were running across the wharf, with a little knot of soldiers close on their heels. One of the soldiers, leaping forward, brought the stock of his musket down on the head of the nearer Indian. The fugitive went down, dragging with him his companion, who tugged desperately at the chain. A soldier drew his knife, and cut off the dead Indian's arm close to the iron wristlet, breaking the bone with his foot. Then they led back the captive and tumbled him into the boat, with the hand of his comrade dangling at the end of the chain. The incident had excited the soldiers, and they kicked and pounded the prisoners. A crowd gathered about the body on the wharf, the bolder ones snatching at his beads and wampum belt.

Menard raised his eyes to the lands across the river and to the white cloud-puffs above. After months of camp and canoe, sleeping in snow and rain, and by day paddling, poling, and wading,—never a new face among the grumbling soldiers or the stolid prisoners,—after this, Quebec stood for luxury and the pleasant demoralization of good living. He liked the noise of passing feet, the hail of goodwill from door to door, the plodding shopkeepers and artisans, the comfortable priests in brown and gray.

The sound of oars brought his eyes again to the river. The two boats with their loads of redskins were passing the merchantmen that lay between the men-of-war and the city. On the wharf, awaiting a second trip, was a huddled group of prisoners. Menard's face clouded as he watched them. Men of his experience were wondering what effect this new plan of the Governor's would have upon the Iroquois. Capturing a hunting party by treachery and shipping them off to the King's galleys was a bold stroke,—too bold, perhaps. Governor Frontenac would never have done this; he knew the Iroquois temper too well. Governor la Barre, for all his bluster, would not have dared. It was certain that this new governor, Denonville, was not a coward; but as Menard reflected, going back over his own fifteen years of frontier life, he knew that this policy of brute force would be sorely tested by the tact and intrigue of the Five Nations. His own part in the capture little disturbed him. He had obeyed orders. He had brought the band to the citadel at Quebec without losing a man (saving the poor devil who had strangled himself with his own thongs at La Galette).

To such men as Menard, whose lives were woven closely into the fabric of New France, the present condition was clear. Many an evening he had spent with Major d'Orvilliers, at Fort Frontenac, in talking over the recent years of history into which their two names and their two lives had gone so deeply. Until his recall to France in 1682, Governor Frontenac had been for ten years building up in the Iroquois heart a fear and awe of Onontio, the Great Father, at Quebec. D'Orvilliers knew that period the better, for Menard had not come over (from the little town of his birth, in Picardy) until Frontenac's policy was well established. But Menard had lived hard and rapidly during his first years in the province, and he was a stern-faced young soldier when he stood on the wharf, hat in hand and sword to chin, watching New France's greatest governor sitting erect in the boat that bore him away from his own. Menard had been initiated by a long captivity among the Onondagas, and had won his first commission by gallant action under the Governor's eye.

In those days no insult went unpunished; no tribe failed twice in its obligations. The circle of French influence was firmly extended around the haunts of the Iroquois in New York and along the Ohio. From Frontenac, on Lake Ontario, north to Hudson's Bay, was French land. To the westward, along the Ottawa River, and skirting the north shore of Lake Huron to Michillimackinac and Green Bay, were the strong French allies, the Hurons, Ottawas, Nipissings, Kiskagons, Sacs, Foxes, and Mascoutins. Down at the lower end of Lake Michigan,

at the Chicagou and St. Joseph portages, were the Miamis; and farther still, the Illinois, whom the Sieur de la Salle and Henri de Tonty had drawn close under the arm of New France.

This chain of allies, with Du Luth's fort at Detroit and a partial control over Niagara, had given New France nearly all the fur trade of the Great Lakes. The English Governor Dongan, of New York, dared not to fight openly for it, but he armed the Iroquois and set them against the French. Menard had laughed when the word came, in 1684, from Father de Lamberville, whose influence worked so far toward keeping the Iroquois quiet, that Dongan had pompously set up the arms of his king in each Iroquois village, even dating them back a year to make his claim the more secure. Every old soldier knew that more than decrees and coats of arms were needed to win the Five Nations.

When La Barre succeeded Frontenac, lacking the tact and firmness which had established Frontenac's name among foes and allies alike, he fell back upon bluster (to say nothing of the common talk in Quebec that he had set out to build up his private fortune by the fur trade). Learning that, by his grant of Fort Frontenac, La Salle was entitled to a third of the trade that passed through it, he seized the fort. He weakened La Salle's communications so greatly that La Salle and Tonty could not make good their promises of French protection to the Illinois. This made it possible for the Iroquois, unhindered, to lay waste the Illinois country. By equally shortsighted methods, La Barre so weakened the ties that bound the northern allies, and so increased the arrogance of the Iroquois, that when Governor Denonville took up the task, most of the allies, always looking to the stronger party, were on the point of going over to the Iroquois. This would give the fur trade to the English, and ruin New France. Governor Dongan seized the moment to promise better bargains for the peltry than the French could offer. It remained for the new governor to make a demonstration which would establish firmly the drooping prestige of New France.

Now the spring of 1687 was just ending. Since February it had been spread abroad, from the gulf seignories to Fort Frontenac, that preparations were making for a great campaign against the Iroquois. Champigny, the new Intendant, had scoured the country for supplies, and now was building bateaux and buying canoes. Regulars and militia were drilling into the semblance of an army, and palisades and defences were everywhere built or strengthened, that the home guard might keep the province secure during the long absence of the troops. Menard wondered, as he snapped bits of stone off the parapet, and watched the last boatload of galley slaves embarking at the wharf, whether the Governor's plans would carry. He would undoubtedly act with precision, he would follow every detail of campaigning to the delight of the tacticians, he would make a great splash,—and then? How about the wily chiefs of the Senecas and Onondagas and Mohawks? They had hoodwinked La Barre into signing the meanest treaty that ever disgraced New France. Would Denonville, too, blind himself to the truth that shrewd minds may work behind painted faces?

But above all else, Menard was a soldier. He snapped another bit of stone, and gave up the problem. He would fight at the Governor's orders, retreat at the Governor's command,—to the Governor would belong the credit or the blame. Of only one thing was he sure,—his own half hundred men should fight as they had always fought, and should hold their posts to the end. There ended his responsibility. And did not the good Fathers say that God was watching over New France?

Meantime the breath of summer was in the air. The spring campaign was over for Menard. So he rested both elbows on the parapet, and wondered how long the leaves had been out in Picardy. Over beyond the ships and the river were waves of the newest green, instead of the deep, rich colour and the bloom of full life he had left behind at Fort Frontenac but two weeks back. The long journey down the St. Lawrence had seemed almost a descent into winter. On the way to Quebec every day and every league had brought fewer blossoms. Even Montreal, sixty leagues to the south, had her summer before Quebec.

On the wharf below him the crowd were still plucking the dead Indian. Menard could hear their laughter and shouts. Their figures were small in the distance, their actions grotesque. One man was dancing, brandishing some part of the Indian's costume. Menard could not distinguish the object in his hand. A priest crossed the wharf and elbowed into the crowd. For the moment he was lost in the rabble, but shortly the shouting quieted and the lightheaded fellows crowded into a close group. Probably the priest was addressing them. Soon the fringe of the crowd thinned, then the others walked quietly away. When at last the priest was left alone by the mutilated Indian, he knelt, and for a space was motionless.

The idleness of reaction was on Menard. He leaned on the parapet, hardly stirring, while the priest went on his way across the square and began toiling up the steps. When he was halfway up, Menard recognized him for Claude de Casson, an old Jesuit of the Iroquois mission at Sault St. Francis Xavier, near Montreal. Menard strolled through the citadel to the square, and, meeting the Father, walked with him.

"Well, Father Claude, you are a long way from your flock."

"Yes, Captain Menard, I came with the relations. I have been"—Father Claude was blown from his climb, and he paused, wiping the sweat from his lean face—"I have been grieved by a spectacle in the Lower Town. Some wretches had killed an Onondaga with the brutality of his own tribe, and were robbing him. Are such acts permitted to-day in Quebec, M'sieu?"

"He was a prisoner escaping from the soldiers. It must be a full year since I last saw you, Father. I hope you bring a good record to the College."

"The best since our founding, M'sieu."

"Is there no word in the relations from the New York missions?"

"Yes, M'sieu. Brother de Lamberville brings glorious word from the Mohawks. Twenty-three complete conversions."

"You say he brings this word?" Menard's brows came together. "Then he has come up to Montreal?"

"Yes."

"It is true, then, that the Iroquois have word of our plans?"

"It would seem so. He said that a war party which started weeks ago for the Illinois country had been recalled. A messenger was sent out but a few days before he came away."

Menard slowly shook his head.

"This word should go to the Commandant," he said. "How about your Indians at the Mission, Father Claude? They have not French hearts."

"Ah, but I am certain, M'sieu, they would not break faith with us."

"You can trust them?"

"They are Christians, M'sieu."

"Yes, but they are Iroquois. Have none of them gone away since this news reached Quebec?"

"None, save one poor wretch whose drunkenness long ago caused us to give up hope, though I--"

"What became of him? Where did he go?"

"He wandered away in a drunken fit."

"And you have not heard from him since?"

"No, M'sieu. He was Teganouan, an Onondaga."

"You would do well, Father, if I may suggest, to take what news you may have to the Commandant. You and I know the importance of trifles at such a time as this. How long do you remain in Quebec?"

"A few days only, unless there should be work for me here."

"Do you return then to Montreal?"

"I cannot say until I have made my report and delivered the relations. Brother de Lamberville thinks it important that word should go to all those who are now labouring in the Iroquois villages. If they remain after the campaign is fairly started, their lives may be in danger."

"You think it necessary to go yourself?"

"What else, M'sieu? This is not the time to trust too freely an Indian runner. And a layman might never get through alive. My habit would be the best safeguard."

"I suppose you are right. If I should not see you again, I must ask you to convey my respect to your colleagues at the Mission. I shall probably be here until the campaign is fairly started; perhaps longer. Already I am tasting the luxury of idleness."

"A dangerous luxury, M'sieu. If I might be permitted to advise--"

"Yes, yes, Father,--I know, I know. But what is the use? You are a priest, I am a soldier. Yours is penance, mine is fighting; yours is praying, mine is singing,--every man to his own. And when you priests have got your pagans converted, we soldiers will clean up the mess with our muskets. And now, Father, good day, and may God be with you."

The priest's face was unmoved as he looked after the retreating figure. He had watched Menard grow from a roistering lieutenant into a rigid captain, and he knew his temper too well to mind the flicks of banter. But before the soldier had passed from earshot, he called after him.

Menard turned back. "What now, good Father? A mass for my soul, or a last absolution before I plunge into my term of dissolute idleness?"

"Neither, my son," replied the priest, smiling. "Is any of your idleness to be shared with another?"

"Certainly, Father."

"I am bringing a picture to the College."

"I have no money, Father. I should be a sorry patron."

"No, no, M'sieu; it is not a patron I seek. It is the advice of one who has seen and judged the master work of Paris. The painting has been shown to none as yet."

"But you have seen it?"

"Yes, yes, I have seen it. Come with me, M'sieu; it is at my room."

They walked together to the cell, six feet long by five wide, where Father Claude slept when in Quebec. It was bare of all save a hard cot. A bale, packed in rough cloth and tied with rope, lay on the bed. Father Claude opened the bundle, while Menard leaned against the wall, and drew

out his few personal belongings and his portable altar before he reached the flat, square package at the bottom. There was a touch of colour in his cheeks and a nervousness in the movement of his hands as he untied the flaxen strings, stripped off the cloth, and held the picture up to Menard's view.

It was a full-length portrait in oil of a young Indian woman, holding a small cross in her right hand, and gazing at it with bent head. Her left hand was spread upon her breast. She wore a calico chemise reaching below her knees, and leggings, and moccasins. A heavy robe was thrown over the top of her head, falling on the sides and back to within a foot of the ground. In the middle background was a stream, with four Indians in a canoe. A tiny stone chapel stood on the bank at the extreme right.

Father Claude's hand trembled as he supported the canvas upon the cot, and his eyes wavered from Menard to the picture, and back again.

"It is not altogether completed," he said, nervously. "Of course the detail will be worked out more fully, and the cross should be given a warmer radiance. Perhaps a light showing through the windows of the chapel--"

"Who is it?" asked Menard.

"It is Catherine Outasoren, the Lily of the Onondagas," replied the priest; "the noblest woman that ever rose from the depths of Indian superstition."

Menard's eyes rested on an obscure signature in a lower corner, "C. de C."

"You certainly have reason to be proud of the work. But may I ask about the perspective? Should the maiden appear larger than the chapel?"

The priest gazed at the painting with an unsettled expression.

"Yes," he said, "perhaps you are right, M'sieu. At any rate I will give the matter thought and prayer."

"And the Indians," Menard questioned, "in the canoe; are they coming toward the chapel or going away from it? It seems to me that any doubt on that point should be removed."

"Ah," said the priest; "that very doubt is allegorical. It typifies the workings of the human mind when first confronted by the truth. When the seeker first beholds the light, as shown through the devotion of such a woman as Catherine Outasoren, there arises in his mind--"

"Very true, very true! But I never yet have seen a canoe-load of Indians in doubt whether they were moving forward or backward."

Father Claude held the canvas at arm's length and gazed long at it.

"Tell me, M'sieu," he said at last, "do you think it deserving of a place in the College?"

"I do not see why not."

"And you think I would be justified in laying a request before the Superior?"

Menard shrugged his shoulders.

"That is your decision, Father."

"I never can fully thank you, my son, for your kindness in looking on my humble work. I will not decide to-day. First I must add foliage in the foreground. And I will give it my earnest prayer."

Menard said farewell and went out, leaving the priest gazing at the picture. He strolled back toward the citadel, stopping now and then to greet an old friend or a chance acquaintance. When he arrived at the headquarters in the citadel he found Danton, a brown-haired young lieutenant of engineers, gazing at a heap of plans and other papers on the table.

"Well, Captain Menard," was his greeting, "I'd give half of last year's pay, if I ever get it, to feel as lazy as you look."

"You are lazy enough," growled Menard.

"That begs the question. It is not how lazy a man is, but how lazy he gets a chance to be."

"If you'd been through what I have this spring, you'd deserve a rest."

"You must have had a stirring time," said the Lieutenant. "Major Provost has promised to let me go out with the line when the campaign starts. I've not had a brush since I came over."

Menard gave him a quizzical smile before he replied, "You'll get brushes enough."

"By the way, the Major wants to see you."

"Does he?" said Menard.

He lighted his short pipe with a coal from the fire and walked out.

Menard did not go at once to see Major Provost, the Commandant. He had already handed in his report at the citadel. It was probable that this was some new work for him. He had just settled his mind to the prospect of a rest, the first since that mad holiday, seven years before, when word had come that his lieutenant's commission was on the way. That was at Three Rivers. He wanted to idle, to waste a few weeks for the sheer delight of extravagance, but his blood did not flow more quickly at the wish. He was an older man by a score of years--or was it only seven?

He lingered on the square. The black-eyed children, mostly dirty and ragged (for the maids whom the King had sent over by shiploads to his colonists had not developed into the most diligent and neat housewives) tumbled about his feet. He allowed himself to be drawn into their play. They had no awe of his uniform, for it was worn and frayed. He had not yet taken the trouble to get out his fresher coat and breeches and boots. He thought of this, and was again amused. It was another sign of age. The time had been when his first care after arriving in Quebec was to don his rich house uniform and polished scabbard, and step gaily to the Major's house to sun himself in the welcome of the Major's pretty wife, who had known his uncle, the *Sieur de Vauban*, at *La Rochelle*. Now he was back in Quebec from months on the frontier, he was summoned to the Major's house, and yet he stayed and laughed at the children. For the Major's wife was older, too, and the vivacity of her youth was thinning out and uncovering the needle-like tongue beneath. A slim little urchin was squirming between his boots, with a pursuing rabble close behind, and the Captain had to take hold of a young tree to keep his feet. He turned and started in pursuit of the children, but caught sight of two Ursuline sisters entering the square, and straightened himself. After all, a captain is a captain, even though the intoxication of spring be in him, and his heart struggling to clamber back into the land of youth. He walked on across the square and down the street to the Major's house.

Major Provost welcomed Menard heartily, and led him to his office. "We'll have our business first," he said, "and get it done with."

Menard settled back in the carved oak chair which had for generations been a member of the Major's family. The light mood had left him. Now he was the soldier, brusque in manner, with lines about his mouth which, to certain men, gave his face a hard expression.

"First let me ask you, Menard, what are your plans?"

"For the present?"

"Yes."

"I have none."

"Your personal affairs, I mean. Have you any matters to hold your attention here for the next few weeks?"

"None."

Major Provost fingered his quill.

"I don't know, of course, how your own feelings stand, Menard. You've been worked hard for three years, and I suppose you want rest. But somebody must go to *Fort Frontenac*, and the Governor thinks you are the man."

Menard made a gesture of impatience.

"There are a dozen men here with little to do."

"I know it. But this matter is of some importance, and it may call for delicate work before you are through with it. It isn't much in itself,--merely to bear orders to *d'Orvilliers*,--but the Governor thinks that the right man may be able to do strong work before the campaign opens. You probably know that we are to move against the *Senecas* alone, and that we must treat with the other nations to keep them from aiding the *Senecas*. No one can say just how this can be done. Even *Father de Lamberville* has come back, you know, from the *Mohawks*; but the Governor thinks that if we send a good man, he may be able to see a way, once he gets on the ground, and can advise with *d'Orvilliers*. Now, you are a good man, Menard; and you can influence the *Indians* if anyone can."

"You are a little vague, Major."

"You will go to *Frontenac* in advance of the army to prepare the way. *La Durantaye* and *Du Luth* are already at *Detroit*, awaiting orders, with close to two hundred Frenchmen and four hundred *Indians*. And *Tonty* should have joined them before now with several hundred *Illinois*."

"I don't believe he'll bring many *Illinois*. They must have known of the *Iroquois* war party that started toward their villages. They will stay to defend their own country. They may not know that the *Iroquois* party was recalled."

"Recalled?" said the Major.

"Yes. *Father de Casson* has the news from *Father de Lamberville*. You see what that means. The *Iroquois* have been warned."

"I was afraid of it. These new governors, Menard--each has to learn his lesson from the beginning of the book. Why will they not take counsel from the men who know the *Indians*? This campaign has been heralded as broadly as a trading fair."

"When should I start?" asked Menard, abruptly.

"At once--within a few days." Major Provost looked at the other's set face. "I am sorry about this, Menard. But you understand, I am sure. Perhaps I had better give you an idea of our plans. You know, of course, that we have three ships fitting out at Frontenac. Already our force is being got together at St. Helen's Island, by Montreal. Champigny is engaging canoemen and working out a transport and supply system between Montreal and Frontenac. The force will proceed to Frontenac, and embark from there in the ships, bateaux, and canoes."

"Is the rendezvous at Niagara?"

"No, at La Famine, on the southern shore of Lake Ontario."

Menard nodded. He knew the place; for by nearly starving there, years before, with the others of Governor la Barre's ill-starred expedition, he had contributed to giving the spot a name.

"La Durantaye and Du Luth, with Tonty, are to meet us there. You will instruct them to move on to Niagara, and there await further orders. We shall sail around the east end of the lake and along the south shore."

"The Iroquois will follow your movements."

"We intend that they shall. They will not know where our final landing place will be, and will have to keep their forces well in hand. And it will prevent them from uniting to attack Niagara."

"What then?"

"We will leave a strong guard at La Famine with the stores, and strike inland for the Seneca villages."

"And now what part am I to play in this?"

Major Provost leaned back in his chair.

"You, Menard, are to represent the Governor. You will move in advance of the troops. At Frontenac it will be your duty to see first that the way is clear to getting the two divisions to the meeting place at La Famine, and to see that d'Orvilliers has the fort ready for the troops, with extra cabins and stockades. Then the Governor wishes you and d'Orvilliers to go over all the information the scouts bring in. If you can decide upon any course which will hold back the other tribes from aiding the Senecas, act upon it at once, without orders. In other words, you have full liberty to follow your judgment. That ought to be responsibility enough."

Menard stretched his arms. "All right, Major. But when my day comes to taste the delights of Quebec, I hope I may not be too old to enjoy it."

"The Governor honours you, Menard, with this undertaking."

"He honoured De Sévigné with a majority and turned him loose in Quebec."

"Too bad, Menard, too bad," the Major laughed. "Now I, who ask nothing better than a brisk campaign, must rot here in Quebec until I die."

"Are you not to go?"

"No. I am to stay behind and brighten my lonely moments drilling the rabble of a home guard. Do you think you will need an escort?"

"No; the river from here to Frontenac is in use every day. I shall want canoemen. Two will be enough."

"Very well. Let me know what supplies you need. You mistake, man, in grumbling at the work. You are building up a reputation that never could live at short range. Stay away long enough and you will be a more popular man than the Governor. I envy you, on my honour, I do."

"One thing more, Major. This galley affair; what do you think of it?"

"You mean the capture at Frontenac? You should know better than I, Menard. You brought the prisoners down."

"There is no doubt in my mind, Major, nor in d'Orvilliers's! We obeyed orders." Menard looked up expressively. "You know the Iroquois. You know how they will take it. The worst fault was La Grange's. He captured the party--and it was not a war party--by deliberate treachery. D'Orvilliers had intrusted to him the Governor's orders that Indians must be got for the King's galleys. As you know, d'Orvilliers and I both protested. I did not bring them here until the Governor commanded it."

"Well, we can't help that now, Menard."

"That is not the question. You ask me to keep the Onondagas out of this fight, after we have taken a hundred of their warriors in this way."

"I know it, Menard; I know it. But the Governor's orders--Well, I have nothing to say. You can only do your best."

They went to the reception room, where Madame de Provost awaited them. Menard was made to stay and dine, in order that Madame could draw from him a long account of his latest adventures on the frontier. Madame de Provost, though she had lived a dozen years in the province, had never been farther from Quebec than the Seignory of the Marquis de St. Denis, half a dozen leagues below the city. The stories that came to her ears of massacres and battles, of settlers butchered in the fields, and of the dashing adventures of La Salle and Du Luth, were

to her no more than wild tales from a far-away land. So she chattered through the long dinner; and for the first time since he had reached the city, Menard wished himself back on Lake Ontario, where there were no women.

Menard returned to the citadel early in the evening. Lieutenant Danton was drawing plans for a redoubt, but he leaned back as Menard entered.

"I began to think you were not coming back, Captain," he said. "I'm told the Major says that you are the only man in New France who could have got that trading agreement from the Onondagas last year. How did you do it?"

"How does a man usually do what he is told to do?" Menard sat on a corner of the long table and looked lazily at the boy.

"That wasn't the kind of treaty our Governors make; you know it wasn't."

"You were not here under Frontenac."

"No. I wish I had been. He must have been a great orator. My father has told me about the long council at Montreal. He said that Frontenac out-talked the greatest of the Mohawk orators. Did you learn it from him?"

"My boy, when you are through with your pretty pictures," Menard motioned toward the plans, "and have got out into the real work; when you've spent months in Iroquois lodges; when you've been burned and shot and starved,—then it will be a pity if you haven't learned to be a soldier. What is this little thing you are drawing?"

Danton flushed. "You may laugh at the engineers," he said, "but where would King Louis be now if—"

"Tut, my boy, tut!"

"That is very well—"

Menard laughed. "How old are you, Danton?" he asked.

"Twenty-two."

"Very good. You have got on well. I dare say you've learned a deal out of your books. Now we have you out here in the provinces, where the hard work is done. Well send you back in a few years a real man. And then you'll step smartly among the pretty officers of the King, and when one speaks of New France you'll lift your brows and say: 'New France? Ah, yes. That is in America. I was there once. Rather a primitive life—no court, no army.' Ah, ha, my boy—no, never mind. Come up to my quarters and have a sip of real old Burgundy."

"Are you ever serious, Menard?" asked Danton, sitting on the Captain's cot and smacking his lips over the liquor.

Menard smiled. "I'm afraid I shall have to play at composure for an hour," he said. "I must see Father Claude. Settle yourself here, if you like."

Menard hurried away, for it was growing late. He found the Jesuit meditating in his cell.

"Ah, Captain Menard, I am glad to see you so soon again."

Menard sat on the narrow bed and stretched out his legs as far as he could in the cramped space.

"How soon will your duties be over here, Father?"

"There seems to be no reason for me to stay. I have delivered the relations, and no further work has come to hand."

"Then it may be that you can help me, Father."

"You know, my son, that I will."

"Very well. I have been ordered to Fort Frontenac in advance of the troops. I am to bear orders to d'Orvilliers and to Du Luth and La Durantaye. It is possible that there may be some delicate work to be done among the Indians. You know the Iroquois, Father, and our two heads together should be stronger than mine alone. I want you to go with me."

The priest's eyes lighted.

"It may be that I can get permission at Montreal."

"You will go, then?"

"Gladly. It is to be no one else—we two—"

"We shall have canoemen. To my mind, the fewer the better."

"Still, Captain, you cannot depend on the canoemen. Would it not be well to have one other man? You might need a messenger."

Menard thought for a moment.

"True, Father. And if I am to have a man, he had best be an officer; yes, a man who could execute orders. I'll take Danton. You will be ready for a start, Father, probably to-morrow?"

"At any time, my son."

"Good night."

There was little work to be done in preparing for the journey (Major Provost would attend to the supplies and to engaging the canoemen), and Menard still was in the lazy mood. He stood for a while at the edge of the cliff and looked down at the wharf. It was dark, and he could not see whether the body of the Indian had been removed. The incident of the afternoon had been gathering importance to his mind the longer he thought of it. Five years earlier Menard had been captured by the Onondagas during a fight near Fort Frontenac. They had taken him to one of their villages, south of Lake Ontario, and for days had tortured him and starved him. They had drawn out cords from his arms and legs and thrust sticks between them and the flesh. His back was still covered with scars from the burning slivers which they had stuck through the skin. They had torn the nails from his left hand with their teeth. Then Otreouati, the Big Throat, the chief who had led his followers to believe in Frontenac, came back from a parley with another tribe, and taking a liking to the tall young soldier who bore the torture without flinching, he adopted him into his own family. Menard had lived with the Indians, a captive only in name, and had earned the name of the Big Buffalo by his skill in the hunt. At last, when they had released him, it was under a compact of friendship, that had never since been broken. It had stood many tests. Even during open campaigns they had singled him out from the other Frenchmen as their brother. He wondered whether they knew of his part in stocking the King's galleys. Probably they did.

It was late when Menard took a last sweeping look at the river and walked up to the citadel. His day of idleness was over. After all, it had not been altogether a wasted day. But it was the longest holiday he was likely to have for months to come. Having made up his mind to accept the facts, he stretched out on his bed and went to sleep.

Danton took the news that he was to be a member of the party with enthusiasm. Menard had hardly finished telling him when he swept the tiresome plans and specifications into a heap at the end of the table, and rushed out to get a musket (for a sword would have no place in the work before them). The start was to be made at noon, but Danton was on the ground so early as almost to lower his dignity in the eyes of the bronzed canoemen. He wore his bravest uniform, with polished belt and buttons and new lace at the neck. His broad hat had a long curling feather. He wore the new musket slung rakishly over his shoulder.

About the middle of the forenoon, as Menard was looking over his orders, memorizing them in case of accident to the papers, he was found by Major Provost's orderly, who said that the Commandant wished to see him at once.

The Major was busy with the engineers in another room, but he left them.

"Menard," he said abruptly, "I've got to ask you to do me a favour. If I could see any way out of it--"

"I will do anything I can."

"Thank you. I suppose you know the Marquis de St. Denis?"

"Slightly."

"Well, I shan't take time to give you the whole story. St. Denis has the seignory six leagues to the east. You may know that he went into debt to invest in La Salle's colonizing scheme in Louisiana. St. Denis was in France at the time, and had great faith in La Salle. Of course, now that La Salle has not been heard from, and the debts are all past due without even a rumour of success to make them good--you can imagine the rest. The seignory has been seized. St. Denis has nothing."

"Has he a family?" asked Menard.

"A daughter. His wife is dead. He came here after you left last night, and again this morning. We are old friends, and I have been trying to help him. He is going to sail to-day on *Le Fourgon* for Paris to see what he can save from the wreck. My house is crowded with the officers who are here planning the campaign; but St. Denis has a cousin living at Frontenac, Captain la Grange, and we've got to get Valerie there somehow. Do you think it will be safe?"

"It's a hard trip, you know; but it's safe enough."

"I shan't forget your kindness, Menard. The girl is a spirited little thing, and she takes it hard. Madame has set her heart on getting her to La Grange. I don't know all the details myself."

"I think we can arrange it, Major. We start in an hour."

"She will be there. You are a splendid fellow, Menard. Good-bye."

Menard's face was less amiable once he was away from the house. He knew from experience the disagreeable task that lay before him. But there was nothing to be said, so he went to his quarters and took a last look at the orders. Then taking off his coat and his rough shirt, he placed the papers carefully in a buckskin bag, which he hung about his neck.

Everything was ready at the wharf. The long canoe lay waiting, a *voyageur* at each end. The bales were stowed carefully in the centre. Father de Casson met Menard at the upper end of the dock. He had come down by way of the winding road, for his bundle was heavy, and he knew no way but to carry it himself. Menard good-naturedly gave him a hand as they crossed the dock. When they had set it down, and Menard straightened up, his eyes twinkled, for young Danton, in his finery, was nervously walking back and forth at the edge of the dock, looking fixedly into the canoe, apparently inspecting the bales. His shoulders were unused to the musket, and by a quick turn he had brought the muzzle under the rim of his hat, setting it on the side of his head.

His face was red.

Sitting on a bundle, a rod away, was a girl, perhaps eighteen or nineteen years old, wearing a simple travelling dress. Her hands were clasped tightly in her lap, and she gazed steadily out over the water with an air that would have been haughty save for the slight upward tip of her nose.



"Sitting on a bundle was, a girl, perhaps eighteen or nineteen years old."

Menard's eyes sobered, and he handed his musket to one of the canoemen. Then he crossed over to where the maiden was sitting.

"Mademoiselle St. Denis?"

The girl looked up at him. Her eyes seemed to take in the dinginess of his uniform. She inclined her head.

"I am Captain Menard. Major Provost tells me that I am to have the honour of escorting you to Fort Frontenac. With your permission we will start. Father Claude de Casson is to go with us, and Lieutenant Danton."

The bundle was placed in the canoe. Menard helped the girl to a seat near the middle: from the way she stepped in and took her seat he saw that she had been on the river before. Danton, with his Parisian airs, had to be helped in carefully. Then they were off, each of the four men swinging a paddle, though Danton managed his awkwardly at first.

CHAPTER III.

MADemoisELLE EATS HER BREAKFAST.

The sun hung low over the western woods when Menard, at the close of the second day, headed the canoe shoreward. The great river swept by with hardly a surface motion, dimpling and rippling under the last touch of the day breeze. Menard's eyes rested on Father Claude, as the canoe drew into the shadow of the trees. The priest, stiff from the hours of sitting and kneeling, had taken up a paddle and was handling it deftly. He had rolled his sleeves up to the elbow, showing a thin forearm with wire-like muscles. The two *voyageurs*, at bow and stern, were proving to be quiet enough fellows. Guerin, the younger, wore a boyish, half-confiding look. His fellow, Perrot, was an older man.

Menard felt, when he thought of Danton, a sense of pride in his own right judgment. The boy was taking hold with a strong, if unguided, hand. Already the feather was gone from his hat, the lace from his throat. Two days in the canoe and a night on the ground had stained and wrinkled his uniform,—a condition of which, with his quick adaptability, he was already beginning to feel

proud. He had flushed often, during the first day, under the shrewd glances of the *voyageurs*, who read the inexperience in his bright clothes and white hands. Menard knew, from the way his shoulders followed the swing of his arms, that the steady paddling was laming him sadly. He would allow Danton five days more; at the week's end he must be a man, else the experiment had failed.

The canoe scraped bottom under a wild growth of brush and outreaching trees. The forest was stirring with the rustle and call of birds, with the breath of the leaves and the far-away crackle and plunge of larger animals through the undergrowth. A chipmunk, with inquisitive eyes, sat on the root of a knotted oak, but he whisked away when Menard and the canoemen stepped into the shallow water. Overhead, showing little fear of the canoe and of the strangely clad animals within it, scampered a family of red squirrels, now nibbling a nut from the winter's store, now running and jumping from tree to tree, until only by the shaking of the twigs and the leaf-clusters could one follow their movements.

The maid leaned an elbow on the bale which Danton had placed at her back, and rested her cheek on her hand. They were under the drooping branches of an elm that stood holding to the edge of the bank. Well out over the water sat one of the squirrels, his tail sweeping above his head, nibbling an acorn, and looking with hasty little glances at the canoe. She watched him, and memories came into her eyes. There had been squirrels on her father's seignory who would take nuts from her hand, burying them slyly under the bushes, and hurrying back for more.

Danton came wading to the side of the canoe to help her to the bank, but she took his hand only to steady herself while rising. Stepping over the bracing-strips between the gunwales, she caught a swaying branch, and swung herself lightly ashore. Back from the water the ground rose into a low hill, covered with oak and elm and ragged hickory trees. Here, for a space, there was little undergrowth, and save under the heaviest of the trees the ground was green with short, coarse grass. Danton took a hatchet from the canoe, and trimmed a fir tree, heaping armfuls of green boughs at the foot of an oak near the top of the slope. Over these he threw a blanket. The maid came slowly up the hill, in response to his call, and with a weary little smile of thanks she sank upon the fragrant couch. She rested against the tree trunk, gazing through the nearer foliage at the rushing river.

For the two days she had been like this,--silent, shy, with sad eyes. And Danton,--who could no more have avoided the company of such a maid than he could have left off eating or breathing or laughing,--Danton, for all his short Paris life (which should, Heaven knows, have given him a front with the maids), could do nothing but hang about, eager for a smile or a word, yet too young to know that he could better serve his case by leaving her with her thoughts, and with the boundless woods and the great lonely spaces of the river. Menard saw the comedy--as indeed, who of the party did not--and was amused. A few moments later he glanced again toward the oak. He was sharpening a knife, and could seem not to be observing. Danton was sitting a few yards from the maid, with the awkward air of a youth who doubts his welcome. She still looked out over the water. Menard saw that her face was white and drooping. He knew that she had not slept; for twice during the preceding night, as he lay in his blanket, he had heard from under the overturned canoe, where she lay, the low sound of her sobbing.

Menard walked slowly down the slope, testing the knife-edge with his thumb, his short pipe between his teeth. He sheathed his knife, lowered his pipe, and called:--

"Guerin." The two men, who were bringing wood to the fire, looked up. "Where has the Father gone?"

Guerin pointed around the base of the hill. "He went to the woods, M'sieu."

"With a bundle," added Perrot.

Menard walked around the hill, and after a little searching found the priest, kneeling, in a clearing, before the portrait of Catharine Outasoren, which he had set against a tree. His brushes and paints were spread on the ground before him. He did not hear Menard approach.

"Oh," said the captain, "you brought the picture!"

The priest looked up over his shoulder, with a startled manner.

"I myself have stripped down to the lightest necessaries," said Menard, with a significant glance at the portrait.

The priest lowered his brush, and sat looking at the picture with troubled eyes. "I had no place for it," he said at last, hesitatingly.

"They didn't take it at the College, eh?"

Father Claude flushed.

"They were very kind. They felt that perhaps it was not entirely completed, and that--"

"You will leave it at Montreal, then, at the Mission?"

"Yes,--I suppose so. Yes, I shall plan to leave it there."

Menard leaned against a tree, and pressed the tobacco down in his pipe.

"I have been doing some thinking in the last few minutes, Father. I've decided to make my first call on you for assistance."

"Very well, Captain."

"It is about the maid. Have you noticed?"

"She seems of a sober mind."

"Don't you see why? It is her father's losses, and this journey. She is taking it very hard. She is afraid, Father, all the time; and she neither sleeps nor eats."

"It is naturally hard for such a child as she is to take this journey. She has had no experience,-- she does not comprehend the easy customs and the hard travelling of the frontier. I think that in time--"

Menard was puffing impatiently.

"Father," he said, "do you remember when Major Gordeau was killed, and I was detailed to bring his wife and daughter down to Three Rivers? It was much like this. They fretted and could not sleep, and the coarse fare of the road was beneath their appetites. Do you remember? And when it came to taking the rapids, with the same days of hard work that lie before us now, they were too weak, and they sickened, the mother first, then the daughter. When I think of that, Father, of the last week of that journey, and of how I swore never again to take a woman in my care on the river, I--well, there is no use in going over it. If this goes on, we shall not get to Frontenac in time, that is all. And I cannot afford to take such a chance."

The priest looked grave. The long struggle against the rapids from Montreal to La Gallette had tried the hardihood of more than one strong man.

"It is probable, my son, that the sense of your responsibility makes you a little over-cautious. She is a strong enough child, I should say. Still, perhaps the food is not what she has been accustomed to. I have noticed that she eats little."

"Perrot is too fond of grease," Menard said. "I must tell him to use less grease."

"If she should be taken sick, we could leave her with someone at Montreal."

"Leave her at Montreal!" exclaimed Menard. "When she breaks down, it will be in the rapids. And then I must either go on alone, or wait with you until she is strong enough to be carried. In any case it means confusion and delay. And I must not be delayed."

"What have you in mind to do?"

"We must find a way to brighten her spirits. It is homesickness that worries her, and sorrow for her father, and dread of what is before and around her. I'll warrant she has never been away from her home before. We must get her confidence,--devise ways to cheer her, brighten her."

"I can reason with her, and--"

"This is not the time for reasoning, Father. What we must do is to make her stop thinking, stop looking backward and forward. And there is Danton; he can help. He is of an age with her, and should succeed where you and I might fail."

"He has not awaited the suggestion, Captain."

"Yes, I know. But he must,--well, Father, it has all been said. The maid is on our hands, and must be got to Frontenac. That is all. And there is nothing for it but to rely on Danton to help."

The priest looked at his brushes, and hesitated. "I am not certain," he said, "she is very young. And Lieutenant Danton,--I have heard, while at Quebec,--"

Menard laughed.

"He is a boy, Father. These tales may be true enough. Why not? They would fit as well any idle lieutenant in Quebec, who is lucky enough to have an eye, and a pair of shoulders, and a bit of the King's gold in his purse. This maid is the daughter of a gentleman, Father; she is none of your Lower Town jades. And Danton may be young and foolish,--as may we all have been,--but he is a gentleman born."

"Very well," replied the priest, looking with regret at the failing light, and beginning to gather his brushes. "I will counsel her, but I fear it will do little good. If the maid is sick at heart, and we attempt to guide her thoughts, we may but drive the trouble deeper in. It is the same with some of the Indian maidens, when they have left the tribe for the Mission. Now and again there comes a time, even with piety to strengthen them,--and this maid has little,--when the yearning seems to grow too strong to be cured. Sometimes they go back. One died. It was at Sault St. Francis in the year of the--"

"Yes, yes," Menard broke in. "We have only one fact to remember; there must be no delay in carrying out the Governor's orders. We cannot change our plans because of this maid."

"We must not let her understand, M'sieu."

Menard had been standing, with a shoulder against the tree, alternately puffing at his pipe and lowering it, scowling meanwhile at the ground. Now he suddenly raised his head and chuckled.

"It will be many a year since I have played the beau, Father. It may be that I have forgotten the rôle." He spread out his hands and looked at the twisted fingers. "But I can try, like a soldier. And there are three of us, Father Claude, there are three of us."

He turned to go back to the camp, but the priest touched him.

"My son,--perhaps, before you return, you would look again at my unworthy portrait. I--about the matter of the canoe--"

"Oh," said Menard, "you've taken it out."

"Yes; it seemed best, considering the danger that others might feel the same doubts which troubled you."

"I wouldn't do that. The canoe was all right, once the direction were decided on."

"Above all else, the true portrait should convey to the mind of the observer the impression that a single, an unmistakable purpose underlies the work. When one considers--"

"Very true, Father, very true," said Menard abruptly, looking about at the beginning of the twilight. "And now we had better get back. The supper will be ready."

Menard strode away toward the camp. Father Claude watched him for a time through the trees, then turned again to the picture. Finally he got together his materials, and carrying them in a fold of his gown, with the picture in his left hand, he followed Menard.

The maid was leaning back against the tree, looking up at the sky, where the first red of the afterglow was spreading. She did not hear Menard; and he paused, a few yards away, to look at the clear whiteness of her skin and the full curve of her throat. Her figure and air, her habits of gesture and step, and carriage of the head, were those of the free-hearted maid of the seignory. They told of an outdoor life, of a good horse, and a light canoe, and the inbred love of trees and sky and running water. Here was none of the stiffness, the more than Parisian manner, of the maidens of Quebec. To stand there and look at her, unconscious as she was, pleased Menard.

"Mademoiselle," he said, coming nearer, "will you join us at supper?"

The maid looked at him with a slow blush (she was not yet accustomed to the sight of these men to enter into the routine of her life). Menard reached to help her, but she rose easily.

"Lieutenant Danton is not here?"

"No, M'sieu, he walked away."

They sat about a log. Danton had not strayed far, for he joined them shortly, wearing a sulky expression. Menard looked about the group. The maid was silent. Father Claude was beginning at once on the food before him. The twilight was growing deeper, and Guerin dragged a log to the fire, throwing it on the pile with a shower of sparks, and half a hundred shooting tongues of flame. The Captain looked again at Danton, and saw that the boy's glance shifted uneasily about the group. Altogether it was an unfortunate start for his plan. But it was clear that no other would break the ice, so he drew a long breath, and plunged doggedly into the story of his first fight on the St. Lawrence.

It was a brave story of ambuscade and battle; and it was full of the dark of night and the red flash of muskets and the stealth and treachery of the Iroquois soul. When he reached the tale of the captured Mohawk, who sat against a tree with a ball in his lungs, to the last refusing the sacrament, and dying like a chief with the death song on his lips, Danton was leaning forward, breathless and eager, hanging on his words. The maid's eyes, too, were moist. Then they talked on, Danton asking boyish questions, and Father Claude starting over and again on a narrative of the wonderful conversion of the Huron drunkard, Heroukiki, who, in his zeal,--and here Menard always swept in with a new story, which left the priest adrift in the eddies of the conversation. At last, when they rose, and the dusk was settling over the trees, the maid was laughing with gentle good fellowship.

While they were eating, the *voyageurs* had brought the canoe a short way up the bank, resting it, bottom up, on large stones brought from the shore. Underneath was a soft cot of balsam; over the canoe were blankets, hanging on both sides to the ground. Then Mademoiselle said good-night, with a moment's lingering on the word, and a wistful note in her voice that brought perhaps more sympathy than had the sad eyes of the morning. For after all she was only a girl, and hers was a brave little heart.

The three men lay on the slope with hardly a word, looking at the river, now shining like silver through the trees. This new turn in the life of the party was not as yet to be taken familiarly. Father Claude withdrew early to his meditations. Menard stretched out on his back, his hands behind his head, gazing lazily at the leaves overhead, now hanging motionless from the twigs.

Danton was sitting up, looking about, and running the young reeds through his fingers.

"Danton," Menard said, after a long silence, "I suppose you know that we have something of a problem on our hands."

Danton looked over the river.

"What have you thought about Mademoiselle?"

"I don't understand."

"Father Claude and I have been talking this evening about her. I have thought that she does not look any too strong for a hard journey of a hundred and more leagues."

"She has little colour," said Danton, cautiously.

"It seems to me, Danton, that you can help us."

"How?"

"What seems to you the cause of the trouble?"

"With Mademoiselle? She takes little impression from the kindness of those about her."

"Oh, come, Danton. You know better. Even a boy of your age should see deeper than that. You think she slights you; very likely she does. What of that? You are not here to be drawn into a boy-and-girl quarrel with a maid who chances to share our canoe. You are here as my aid, to make the shortest time possible between Quebec and Frontenac. If she were to fall sick, we should be delayed. Therefore she must not fall sick."

Danton had plucked a weed, and now was pulling it to pieces, bit by bit.

"What do you want me to do?"

"Stop this moping, this hanging about. Take hold of the matter. Devise talks, diversions; fill her idle moments; I care not what you do,—within limits, my boy, within limits."

"Oh," said Danton, "then you really want me to?"

"Certainly. I am too old myself."

Danton rose, and walked a few steps away and back.

"But she will have none of me, Menard. It is, 'No, with thanks,' or, worse, a shake of the head. If I offer to help, if I try to talk, if I—oh, it is always the same. I am tired of it."

Menard smiled in the dark.

"Is that your reply to an order from your superior officer, Danton?"

The boy stood silent for a moment, then he said, "I beg your pardon, Captain." And with a curious effort at stiffness he wandered off among the trees, and was soon out of Menard's sight.

Menard walked slowly down to the fire, opened his pack, and spreading out his blanket, rolled himself in it with his feet close to the red embers. For a long time he lay awake. This episode took him back nearly a decade, to a time when he, like Danton, would have lost his poise at a glance from the nearest pair of eyes. That the maid should so interest him was in itself amusing. Had she been older or younger, had she been any but the timid, honest little woman that she was, he would have left her, without a second thought, in the care of the Commandant at Montreal, to be escorted through the rapids by some later party. But he had fixed his mind on getting her to Frontenac, and the question was settled. His last thought that night was of her quiet laughter and her friendly, hesitating "good-night."

He was awakened in the half light before the sunrise by a step on the twigs. At a little distance through the trees was the maid, walking down toward the water. She slipped easily between the briars, holding her skirt close. From a spring, not a hundred yards up the hillside, a brook came tumbling to the river, picking its way under and over the stones and the fallen trees, and trickling over the bank with a low murmur. The maid stopped by a pool, and kneeling on a flat rock, dipped her hands.

The others were asleep. A rod away lay Danton, a sprawling heap in his blanket. Menard rose, tossed his blanket upon his bundle, and walked slowly down toward the maid.

"Mademoiselle, you rise with the birds."

She looked around, and laughed gently. He saw that she had frankly accepted the first little change in their relations.

"I like to be with the birds, M'sieu."

Menard had no small talk. He was thinking of her evident lack of sleep.

"It is the best hour for the river, Mademoiselle." The colours of the dawn were beginning to creep up beyond the eastern bank, sending a lance of red and gold into a low cloud bank, and a spread of soft crimson close after. "Perhaps you are fond of the fish?"

The maid was kneeling to pick a cluster of yellow flower cups. She looked up and nodded, with a smile.

"We fished at home, M'sieu."

"We will go," said Menard, abruptly. "I will bring down the canoe."

He threw the blankets to one side, and stooping under the long canoe, carried it on his shoulders to the water. A line and hook were in his bundle; the bait was ready at a turn of the grass and weeds.

"We are two adventurers," he said lightly, as he tossed the line into the canoe, and held out one of the paddles. "You should do your share of the morning's work, Mademoiselle."

She laughed again, and took the paddle. They pushed off; the maid kneeling at the bow, Menard in the stern. He guided the canoe against the current. The water lay flat under the still air, reflecting the gloomy trees on the banks, and the deepening colours of the sky. He fell into a lazy, swinging stroke, watching the maid. Her arms and shoulders moved easily, with the grace of one who had tumbled about a canoe from early childhood.

"Ready, Mademoiselle?" He was heading for a deep pool near a line of rushes. The maid, laying down her paddle, reached back for the line, and put on the bait with her own fingers.

Menard held the canoe steady against the current, which was there but a slow movement, while she lowered the hook over the bow. They sat without a word for some minutes. Once he spoke, in a bantering voice, and she motioned to him to be quiet. Her brows were drawn down close together.

It was but a short time before she felt a jerk at the line. Her arms straightened out, and she pressed her lips tightly together. "Quick!" she said. "Go ahead!"

"Can you hold it?" he asked, as he dipped his paddle.

She nodded. "I wish the line were longer. It will be hard to give him any room." She wound the cord around her wrist. "Will the line hold, M'sieu?"

"I think so. See if you can pull in."

She leaned back, and pulled steadily, then shook her head. "Not very much. Perhaps, if you can get into the shallow water--"

Menard slowly worked the canoe through an opening in the rushes. There was a thrashing about and plunging not two rods away. Once the fish leaped clear of the water in a curve of clashing silver.

"It's a salmon," he said. "A small one."

The maid held hard, but the colour had gone from her face. The canoe drew nearer to the shore.

"Hold fast," said Menard. He gave a last sweep of the paddle, and crept forward to the bow. Kneeling behind the maid, he reached over her shoulder, and took the line below her hand.

"Careful, M'sieu; it may break."

"We must risk it." He pulled slowly in until the fish was close under the gunwale. "Now can you hold?"

"Yes." She shook a straying lock of hair from her eyes, and took another turn of the cord around her wrist.

"Steady," he said. He drew his knife, leaned over the gunwale, and stabbed at the fighting fish until his blade sank in just below the gills, and he could lift it aboard.

The maid laughed nervously, and rested her hands upon the two gunwales. Her breath was gone, and there was a red mark around her wrist where the cord had been. The canoe had drifted into the rushes, and Menard went back to his paddle, and worked out again into the channel.

"And now, Mademoiselle," he said, "we shall have a breakfast of our own. You need not paddle. I will take her down."

Her breath was coming back. She laughed, and sat comfortably in the bow, facing Menard, and letting her eyes follow the steady swing and catch of his paddle. When they reached the camp, the *voyageurs* were astir, but Danton and the priest still slept. The first red glare of the sun was levelled at them over the eastern trees.

Menard made a fire under an arch of flat stones, and trimming a strip of oak wood with his hatchet, he laid the cleaned fish upon it and kept it on the fire until it was brown and crisp. The maid sat by, her eyes alert and her cheeks flushed.

Danton was awake before the fish was cooked, and he stood about with a pretence of not observing them. The maid was fairly aroused. She drew him into the talk, and laughed and bantered with the two men as prettily as they could have wished from a Quebec belle.

All during the morning Danton was silent. At noon, when the halt was made for the midday lunch, he was still puzzling over the apparent understanding between Mademoiselle and the Captain. Before the journey was taken up, he stood for a moment near Menard, on the river bank.

"Captain," he said, "you asked me last night to--"

"Well?"

"It may be that I have misunderstood you. Of course, if Mademoiselle--if you--" He caught himself.

Menard smiled; then he read the earnestness beneath the boy's confusion, and sobered.

"Mademoiselle and I went fishing, Danton. Result,--Mademoiselle eats her first meal. If you can do as much you shall have my thanks. And now remember that you are a lieutenant in the King's service."

CHAPTER IV.

THE LONG ARROW.

Menard allowed a halt of but a few hours at Three Rivers. The settlement held little of interest, for all the resident troops and most of the farmers and *engagés* had gone up the river to join the army which was assembling at Montreal. The close of the first week out of Quebec saw the party well on the second half of the journey to Montreal. As they went on, Menard's thoughts were

drawn more deeply into the work that lay ahead, and in spite of his efforts at lightness, the work of keeping up the maid's spirits fell mostly to Danton (though Father Claude did what he could). As matters gradually became adjusted, Danton's cheery, hearty manner began to tell; and now that there was little choice of company, the maid turned to him for her diversion.

On the morning of the second day after leaving Three Rivers, the two *voyageurs* were carrying the canoe to the water when Guerin slipped on a wet log, throwing the canoe to the ground, and tearing a wide rent in the bark. Menard was impatient at this carelessness. The knowledge that the Three Rivers detachment had already gone on to Montreal had decided him to move more rapidly, and he had given orders that they should start each day in the first light of the dawn. This was a chill morning. A low, heavy fog lay on the river, thinning, at a yard above the water, into a light mist which veiled what colour may have been in the east.

While Guerin and Perrot were patching the canoe under Menard's eye, Danton found some dry logs under the brush, and built up the dying fire, which was in a rocky hollow, not visible from the river. Then he and the maid sat on the rocks above it, where they could get the warmth, and yet could see the river. Menard and his men, though only a few rods away, were but blurred forms as they moved about the canoe, gumming the new seams.

The maid, save for an occasional heavy hour in the late evenings, had settled into a cheerful frame of mind. The novelty, and the many exciting moments of the journey, as well as the kindness of the three men, kept her thoughts occupied. Danton, once he had shaken off his sulky fits, was good company. They sat side by side on the rock, looking down at the struggling fire, or at the figures moving about the canoe, or out into the white mystery of the river, talking easily in low tones of themselves and their lives and hopes.

The mist, instead of rising, seemed to settle closer to the water, as the broad daylight came across the upper air. The maid and Danton fell into silence as the picture brightened. Danton was less sensitive than she to the whims of nature, and tiring of the scene, he was gazing down into the fire when the maid, without a word, touched his arm. He looked up at her; then, seeing that her eyes were fixed on the river, followed her gaze. Not more than a score of yards from the shore, moving silently through the mist, were the heads of three Indians. Their profiles stood out clearly against the white background; their shoulders seemed to dissolve into the fog. They passed slowly on up the stream, looking straight ahead, without a twitch of the eyelids, like a vision from the happy hunting-ground.

Danton slipped down from the rock, and stepped lightly to Menard, pointing out the three heads just as they were fading into the whiteness about them. Menard motioned to Guerin and Perrot to get the newly patched canoe into the water, took three muskets, and in a moment pushed off, leaving Danton with the maid and the priest, who had retired a short distance for his morning prayers. For a minute the heads of the three white men were in sight above the fog, then they too were swallowed up.

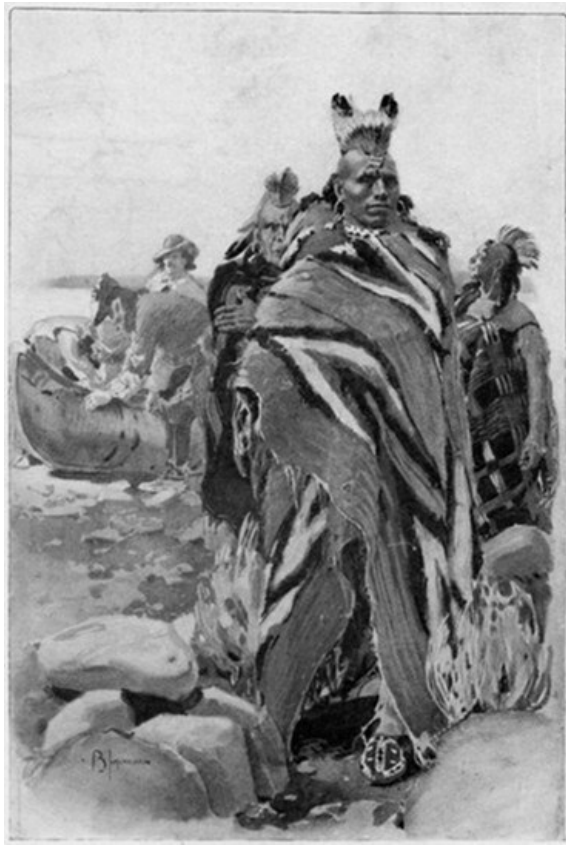
"I wonder what Menard thinks about them?" said Danton, going back toward the maid.

She was still looking at the mist, and did not hear him, so he took a seat at the foot of the rock and rubbed the hammer of his musket, which had been rusted by the damp. After a time the maid looked toward him.

"What does it mean?" she asked.

"I don't know," Danton replied. "They were going up-stream in a canoe, I suppose. Probably he thinks they can give us some information."

In a few minutes, during which the mist was clearing under the rays of the sun, the two canoes together came around a wooded point and beached. The Indians walked silently to the fire. They appeared not to see Danton and the maid. Menard paused to look over his canoe. It was leaking badly, and before joining the group at the fire, he set the canoemen at work making a new patch.



"The Indians walked silently to the fire."

"Danton," he said, in a low tone, when he reached the fire, "find the Father."

Danton hurried away, and Menard turned to the largest of the three Indians, who wore the brightest blanket, and had a peculiar wampum collar, decorated in mosaic-like beadwork.

"You are travellers, like ourselves," he said, in the Iroquois tongue. "We cannot let you pass without a word of greeting. I see that you are of the Onondagas, my brothers. It may be that you are from the Mission at the Sault St. Francis Xavier?"

The Indian bowed. "We go from Three Rivers to Montreal."

"I, too, am taking my party to Montreal." Menard thought it wise to withhold the further facts of his journey. "Have you brothers at Three Rivers?"

"No," replied the Indian. "We have been sent with a paper from the Superior at Sault St. Francis Xavier to the good fathers at Three Rivers. Now we are on our return to the Mission."

"Have my brothers eaten?" Menard motioned toward the fire. "It is still early in the day."

The three bowed. "We are travelling fast," said the spokesman, "for the Superior awaits our return. We ate before the light. It will soon be time for us to go on our journey."

Menard saw Father Claude and Danton approaching, and waited for them. The face of the large Indian seemed like some other face that had had a place in his memory. It was not unlikely that he had known this warrior during his captivity, when half a thousand braves had been to him as brothers. The Indian was apparently of middle age, and had lines of dignity and authority in his face that made it hard to accept him as a subdued resident at the Mission. But Menard knew that no sign of doubt or suspicion must appear in his face, so he waited for the priest. The Indians sat with their knees drawn up and their blankets wrapped about them, looking stolidly at the fire.

Father Claude came quietly into the group, and with a smile extended his hand to the smallest of the three, an older man, with a wrinkled face. "I did not look for you here, Teganouan. Have you gone back to the Mission?"

Teganouan returned the smile, and bowed.

"My brother has told the white man of our errand?"

"Yes," said Menard, "they have been sent to Three Rivers by the Superior, and are now returning. I have told them that we, too, are going to Montreal."

The priest took the hint. "We shall meet you and your brothers again, Teganouan. They are newcomers at the Mission, I believe. They had not come when I left."

"No, Father. They have but last week become Christians. The Long Arrow" (inclining his head toward the large Indian) "has lost a son, and through his suffering was led to take the faith."

The Long Arrow, who had seemed to lose interest in the conversation as soon as he had finished speaking, here rose.

"My brothers and the good Father will give us their blessing? The end of the journey is yet three

days away. I had hoped that we might be permitted to accept the protection of the son of Onontio,"--he looked at Menard,--"but I see that his canoe will not be ready for the journey before the sun is high." He looked gravely from Menard to the priest, then walked to the shore, followed by the others. They pushed off, and shortly disappeared around the point of land.

Menard gave them no attention, but as soon as they were gone from sight, he turned to the priest.

"Well, Father, what do you make of that?"

Father Claude shook his head.

"Nothing, as yet, M'sieu. Do you know who the large man is?"

"No; but I seem to remember him. And what is more to the point, he certainly remembers me."

"Are you sure?"

"He recognized me on the river. He came back with me so willingly because he wanted to know more about us. That was plain. It would be well, Father, to enquire at the Mission. We should know more of them and their errand at Three Rivers."

Menard called Danton, and walked with him a little way into the wood.

"Danton," he said, "you are going through this journey with us, and I intend that you shall know about such matters as this meeting with the Onondagas."

"Oh, they were Onondagas?"

"Yes. They claim to be Mission Indians, but neither the Father nor I altogether believe them." In a few sentences Menard outlined the conversation. "Now, Danton, this may or may not be an important incident. I want you to know the necessity for keeping our own counsel in all such matters, dropping no careless words, and letting no emotions show. I wish you would make a point of learning the Iroquois language. Father Claude will help you. You are to act as my right-hand man, and you may as well begin now to learn to draw your own conclusions from an Indian's words."

Danton took eagerly to the lessons with Father Claude, for they seemed another definite step toward the excitement that surely, to his mind, lay in wait ahead. The studying began on that afternoon, while they were toiling up against the stream.

In the evening, when the dusk was coming down, and the little camp was ready for the night, Menard came up from the heap of stores, where the *voyageurs* had already stretched out, and found the maid sitting alone by the fire. Danton, in his rush of interest in the new study, had drawn Father Claude aside for another lesson.

"Mademoiselle is lonely?" asked Menard, sitting beside her.

"No, no, M'sieu. I have too many thoughts for that."

"What interesting thoughts they must be."

"They are, M'sieu. They are all about the Indians this morning. Tell me, M'sieu,--they called you Onontio. What does it mean?"

"They called me the son of Onontio, because of my uniform. Onontio, the Great Mountain, is their name for the Governor; and the Governor's soldiers are to them his sons."

"They speak a strange language. It is not the same as that of the Ottawas, who once worked for my father."

"Did you know their tongue?"

"A few words, and some of the signs. This,"--raising her hand, with the first finger extended, and slowly moving her arm in a half circle from horizon to horizon,--"this meant a sun,--one day."

Menard looked at her for a moment in silence. He enjoyed her enthusiasm.

"Why don't you learn Iroquois? You would enjoy it. It is a beautiful tongue,--the language of metaphor and poetry."

"I should like to," she replied, looking with a faint smile at Danton and the priest, who were sitting under a beech tree, mumbling in low tones.

"You shall join the class, Mademoiselle. You shall begin to-morrow. It was thoughtless of Danton to take the Father's instruction to himself alone."

"And then, M'sieu, I will know what the Indians say when they sit up stiffly in their blankets, and talk down in their throats. They have such dignity. It is hard not to believe them when they look straight at one."

"Don't you believe them?"

"The three this morning,--they did not tell the truth."

"Didn't they?"

"Why, I understood that you did not believe them."

"And where did Mademoiselle learn that? Did she follow the conversation?"

"No; but Lieutenant Danton--"

"He told you?"

She nodded. Menard frowned.

"He shouldn't have done that."

The maid looked surprised at his remark, and the smile left her face. "Of course, M'sieu," she said, a little stiffly, "whatever is not meant for my ears--"

Menard was still frowning, and he failed to notice her change in manner. He abruptly gave the conversation a new turn, but seeing after a short time that the maid had lost interest in his sallies, he rose, and called to the priest.

"Father, you are to have a new pupil. Mademoiselle also will study the language of the Iroquois. If you are quick enough with your pupils, we shall soon be able to hold a conversation each night about the fire. Perhaps, if you would forego your exclusive air, Mademoiselle would begin at once."

Danton, without waiting for the priest to start, came hurriedly over and sat by the maid.

"You must pardon me," he said, "I did not think,--I did not know that you would be interested. It is so dry."

The maid smiled at the fire.

"You did not ask," she replied, "and I could not offer myself to the class."

"It will be splendid," said Danton. "We shall learn the language of the trees and the grass and the rivers and the birds. And the message of the wampum belt, too, we shall know. You see,"--looking up at Menard,--"already I am catching the meanings."

Menard smiled, and then went down the bank, leaving the three to bend their heads together over the mysteries of the Iroquois rules of gender, written out by Father Claude on a strip of bark. It was nearly an hour later, after the maid had crept to her couch beneath the canoe, and Perrot and Guerin had sprawled upon the bales and were snoring in rival keys, that Danton came lightly down the slope humming a drinking song. He saw Menard, and dropped to the ground beside him, with a low laugh.

"Mademoiselle will lead my wits a chase, Menard. Already she is deep in the spirit of the new work."

"Be careful, my boy, that she leads no more than your wits a chase."

Danton laughed again.

"I don't believe there is great danger. What a voice she has! I did not know it at first, when she was frightened and spoke only in the lower tones. Now when she speaks or laughs it is like--"

"Like what?"

"There is no fit simile in our tongue, light as it is. It may be that in the Iroquois I shall find the words. It should be something about the singing brooks or the voice of the leaves at night."

The lad was in such buoyant spirits that Menard had to harden himself for the rebuke which he must give. With the Indian tribes Menard had the tact, the control of a situation, that would have graced a council of great chiefs; but in matters of discipline, the blunter faculties and language of the white men seemed to give his wit no play. Now, as nearly always, he spoke abruptly.

"Have you forgotten our talk of this morning, Danton?"

"No," replied the boy, looking up in surprise.

The night had none of the dampness that had left a white veil over the morning just gone. The moon was half hidden behind the western trees. The sky, for all the dark, was blue and deep, set with thousands of stars, each looking down at its mate in the shining water.

"I spoke of the importance of keeping our own counsel."

Danton began to feel what was coming. He looked down at the ground without replying.

"To-night Mademoiselle has repeated a part of our conversation."

"Mademoiselle,--why, she is one of our party. She knows about us,--who we are, what we are going for--"

"Then you have told her, Danton?"

"How could she help knowing? We are taking her to Frontenac."

"Father Claude has not told her why we go to Frontenac--nor have I."

"But Major Provost is her friend--"

"He would never have told her."

"But she seemed to know about it."

"Then you have talked it over with her?"

"Why, no,--that is, in speaking of our journey we said something of the meaning of the expedition. It could hardly be expected that we,--I fail to see, Captain, what it is you are accusing me of."

"You have not been accused yet, Danton. Let me ask you a question. Why did you enter the King's army?"

Danton hesitated, and started once or twice to frame answer, but made no reply.

"Did you wish a gay uniform, to please the maids, to--"

"You are unfair, M'sieu."

"No, I wish to know. We will say, if you like, that you have hoped to be a soldier,--a soldier of whom the King may one day have cause to be proud."

Danton flushed, and bowed his head.

"I offered you the chance to go on this mission, Danton, because I believed in you. I believed that you had the making of a soldier. This is not a child's errand, this of ours. It is the work of strong men. This morning I told you of my talk with the three Onondagas because I have planned to take you into my confidence, and to give you the chance to make a name for yourself. I made a point of the importance of keeping such things to yourself."

"But Mademoiselle, M'sieu, she is different--"

"Look at the facts, Danton. I told you this morning: within twelve hours you have passed on your information. How do I know that you would not have let it slip to others if you had had the chance? You forget that Mademoiselle is a woman, and the first and last duty of a soldier is to tell no secrets to a woman."

"You speak wrongly of Mademoiselle. It is cowardly to talk thus."

Menard paused to get control of his temper.

"Cowardly, Danton? Is that the word you apply to your commander?"

"Your pardon, M'sieu! A thousand pardons! It escaped me--"

"We will pass it by. I want you to understand this matter. Mademoiselle will spend a night in Montreal. We shall leave her with other women. A stray word, which to her might mean nothing, might be enough to give the wrong persons a hint of the meaning of our journey. A moment's nervousness might slip the bridle from her tongue. All New France is not so loyal that we can afford to drop a chance secret here and there. As to this maid, she is only a child, and by giving her our secrets, you are forcing her to bear a burden which we should bear alone. These Indians this morning were spies, I am inclined to believe, scouting along the river for information of the coming campaign. The only way that we can feel secure is by letting no word escape our lips, no matter how trivial. I tell you this, not so much for this occasion as for a suggestion for the future."

"Very well, M'sieu. You will please accept my complete apologies."

"I shall have to add, Danton, that if any further mistake of this kind occurs I shall be forced to dismiss you from my service. Now that I have said this, I want you to understand that I don't expect it to happen. I have believed in you, Danton, and I stand ready to be a friend to you."

Menard held out his hand. Danton clasped it nervously, mumbling a second apology. For a few moments longer they sat there, Menard trying to set Danton at ease, but the boy was flushed, and he spoke only half coherently. He soon excused himself and wandered off among the trees and the thick bushes.

During the next day Danton was in one of his sullen moods. He worked feverishly, and, with the maid, kept Father Claude occupied for the greater part of the time, as they paddled on, with conversation, and with discussion of the Iroquois words. The maid felt the change from the easy relations in the party, and seemed a little depressed, but she threw herself into the studying. Often during the day she would take up a paddle, and join in the stroke. At first Menard protested, but she laughed, and said that it was a "rest" after sitting so long.

They were delayed on the following day by a second accident to the canoe, so that they were a full day late in reaching Montreal. They moved slowly up the channel, past the islands and the green banks with their little log-houses or, occasionally, larger dwellings built after the French manner. St. Helen's Island, nearly opposite the city, had a straggling cluster of hastily built bark houses, and a larger group of tents where the regulars were encamped, awaiting the arrival of Governor Denonville with the troops from Quebec.

Menard stopped at the island, guiding the canoe to the bank where a long row of canoes and bateaux lay close to the water.

"You might get out and walk around," he said to the others. "I shall be gone only a few moments."

Father Claude sat on the bank, lost in meditation. Danton and the maid walked together slowly up and down, beyond earshot from the priest. Since Menard's rebuke, both the lad and the maid had shown a slight trace of resentment. It did not come out in their conversation, but rather in their silences, and in the occasions which they took to sit and walk apart from the others. It was as if a certain common ground of interest had come to them. The maid, for all her shyness and even temper, was not accustomed to such cool authority as Menard was developing. The priest was keeping an eye on the fast-growing acquaintanceship, and already had it vaguely in mind to call it to the attention of Menard, who was getting too deeply into the spirit and the details of his work to give much heed.

Menard was soon back.

"Push off," he said. "The Major is not here. We shall have to look for him in the city."

They headed across the stream. The city lay before them, on its gentle slope, with the mountain rising behind like an untiring sentry. It was early in the afternoon, and on the river were many canoes and small boats, filled with soldiers, friendly Indians, or *voyageurs*, moving back and forth between the island and the city. They passed close to many of the bateaux, heaped high with provision and ammunition bales, and more than once the lounging soldiers rose and saluted Menard.

At the city wharf he turned to Danton.

"We shall have to get a larger canoe, Danton, and a stronger. Will you see to it, please? We shall have two more in our party from now on. Make sure that the canoe is in the best of condition. Also I wish you would see to getting the rope and the other things we may need in working through the rapids. Then spend your time as you like. We shall start early in the morning."

Menard and Father Claude together went with the maid to the Superior, who arranged for her to pass the night with the sisters. Then Menard left the priest to make his final arrangements at the Mission, and went himself to see the Commandant, to whom he outlined the bare facts of his journey to Frontenac.

"The thing that most concerns you," he said finally, "is a meeting I had a few days ago with three Indians down the river. One called himself the Long Arrow, and another was Teganouan, who, Father de Casson tells me, recently left the Mission at the Sault St. Francis Xavier. They claim to be Mission Indians. It will be well to watch out for them, and to have an eye on the Richelieu, and the other routes, to make sure that they don't slip away to the south with information."

"Very well," replied the Commandant. "I imagine that we can stop them. Do you feel safe about taking this maid up the river just now?"

"Oh, yes. Our men are scattered along the route, are they not?" Menard asked.

"Quite a number are out establishing Champigny's transport system."

"I don't look for any trouble. But I should like authority for one or two extra men."

"Take anything you wish, Menard. I will get word over to the island at once, giving you all the authority you need."

CHAPTER V.

DANTON BREAKS OUT.

When Menard reached the wharf, early on the following morning, he found Father Claude waiting for him. The new canoe lay on the wharf, and beside it was a heap of stores. Perrot and the two new *engagés* sat on the edge of the wharf. The sun had just risen over the trees on St. Helen's Island, and the air was clear and cool.

"Well, Perrot," said Menard, as he unslung his musket and horn, "is everything ready?"

"Everything, M'sieu."

"Where is Guerin?"

"I have not seen him, M'sieu."

Menard turned to the priest.

"Good-morning, Father. You are on time, I see; and that is more than we can say for Danton. Where is the boy?"

"He has gone for Mademoiselle St. Denis, Captain. He was here before the sunrise, checking up the stores."

"Learning to work, is he? That is a good sign. And how about yourself? Did you pick up anything yesterday?"

"Yes," replied the priest. "I enquired at the Mission about Teganouan and his companions."

"Well?"

"Nothing is known of them. Teganouan had been one of the worst drunkards among the Onondagas, and his conversion, a year ago, was thought to be one of our greatest victories for the faith. His penances were among the most complete and purging ever--"

"And the others?"

"Just before I left the Mission for Quebec, Teganouan went on an errand to the city and fell among some of our fellow-countrymen who were having a drinking bout. For a few days after

that he wavered, and fell again. Once afterward he was seen in company with two low fellows, *coureurs de bois*, who have since been confined under suspicion of communicating with the enemy."

"He has returned to the Mission, then?"

"No, he disappeared some time ago. They do not know the Long Arrow. I described him to Brother de Lamberville--"

"Oh, he is here now?"

"Yes. It seems, further, that all the other workers among the Iroquois have had word and are returning. That much of my labour is removed."

"How do they get this word?" said Menard, impatiently. "That is the old question. It is enough to make one wonder if there are any secrets kept from the enemy's country."

"No one seems to know, M'sieu. The Superior told me last night that they had not been sent for, so it would seem that the information must have reached them through the Indians."

"The folly of these new governors!" Menard strode back and forth. "Oh, it makes one sigh for old Frontenac. He never walked blindfolded into such a trap as this. But go on. You were speaking of Father de Lamberville."

"It was only that I described the Long Arrow to Brother de Lamberville. He seemed to remember such a wampum collar as the Long Arrow wore. He could not recall exactly."

"Then we may as well forget the incident. It seems that we are to know nothing of it. Here is Danton."

The lieutenant and the maid were walking rapidly down to the wharf. Mademoiselle was in a gay mood after her few hours of enjoyment among the comforts of a city.

"Good-morning," she called, waving her hand.

"Good-morning," said Menard, shortly. He did not look a second time, to see her smile fade, for Guerin had not appeared, and he was rapidly losing patience. He walked up and down the wharf for a few moments, while Danton found a seat for the maid and the two talked together.

"Perrot," he said, "do you know where Guerin was last evening?"

"Yes, M'sieu. He was at the inn."

"What was he doing? Drinking?"

"A little, M'sieu."

"Go up there, on the run. If you don't find him there, come right back, for we can't wait much longer for anyone."

Perrot ran up the street and disappeared. In a few moments he came in sight, striding down between the row of houses, holding Guerin firmly by one arm. The young fellow was hanging back, and stumbling in limp fashion. He was evidently drunk. Danton, who had joined Menard when the two men appeared, said, "Heavens, he must have started early!"

Some distance behind Perrot and Guerin came a ragged crowd of woodsmen, singing, jeering, and shouting, and bearing broad traces of a sleepless night.

Menard stood waiting with a look of disgust. When they came upon the wharf Guerin laughed, and tried to get out a flippant apology for his tardiness; but Menard seized him before the words were off his lips, and dragging him across the wharf threw him into the water. Then he turned to Perrot, and said, "Pull him out."

The two new men stood uneasily near, with startled faces. Behind them the maid was sitting, a frightened look in her eyes. Danton had risen.

"Clear away from here!" Menard called to the drunken rabble, who had collected a few rods away, and were now hesitating between laughter and fright. They stood looking at each other and at Menard, then they slunk away.

In all an hour had gone before they were ready to start. Guerin was weak and shivering from his plunge, but Menard ordered him into the canoe. The incident drew a cloud over the maid's spirits, and altogether depressed the party, so that not until afternoon did they get into conversation. By that time they were past the Lachine Rapids and the Sault St. Louis, where the men made a portage, and Danton led the maid along the bank through the tangled brush and briars. When at last they were ready to push on across Lake St. Louis the maid's skirt was torn in a dozen places, and a thorn had got into her hand, which Danton carefully removed with the point of his knife, wincing and flushing with her at each twinge of pain. During the rest of the day, they had an Iroquois lesson, and by the end of the afternoon when the sun was low, and Menard headed for the shore of Isle Perrot, the maid was bright again, laughing over Danton's blunders in the new language.

They spent the next day on the island, for what with wind and rain the lake was impassable for their canoe. The men built a hut of brush and bark which sheltered the party from the driving rain. Menard's mood lightened at the prospect of a rest, and he started a long conversation in Iroquois which soon had even Father Claude laughing in his silent way. The rain lessened in the afternoon, but the wind was still running high. Menard and the *engagés* went out early in the afternoon and repacked all the supplies, in order that the weight might be distributed more

evenly in the canoe. With this and other work he was occupied until late in the afternoon. Father Claude took the occasion for a solitary walk, and for meditation. When Menard entered the hut he found the maid sitting with her head resting against one of the supporting trees. She wore a disturbed, unsettled expression. Danton evidently had been sitting or standing near her, for when Menard entered, stooping, he was moving across the hut in a hesitating, conscious manner. The Captain looked at them curiously.

"I'm afraid we'll have to take away a part of your house to pay for your supper," he said. "Everything is wet outside that might do for firewood. Lend a hand, Danton." He gathered logs and sticks from the floor and walls, and carried them out. Danton, after a quick look toward the maid (which, of course, Menard saw), did the same.

The Captain was the first to reenter the hut. The maid had not moved, and her eyes were puzzled and wearied, but she tried to smile.

"Has it stopped raining?" she asked.

Menard gave her an amused glance, and pointed to a sparkling beam of sunlight that came slanting in through an opening in the wall, and buried itself in a little pool of light on the trampled ground. She looked at it, flushed, and turned her eyes away. He stood for a moment, half minded to ask the question that was on his tongue, but finally held it back. In a moment Danton came back, looking suspiciously at each of them as he stooped to gather another armful of wood.

Menard was thoughtful during the evening meal. Afterward he slipped his arm through Father Claude's, and led him for a short walk, giving him an account of the incident. "I didn't say anything at the time," he concluded, "partly because I thought I might be mistaken, and partly because it would have been the worst thing I could do. I begin to see--I should have foreseen it before I spoke to him about the girl--that we have trouble ahead, Father, with these precious children. I confess I don't know just what to do about it. We must think it over. Anyway, you had better talk to her. She would tell you what she wouldn't tell me. If he's annoying her, we must know it."

Father Claude was troubled.

"The maid is in our care," he said, "and also in that of Lieutenant Danton. It would seem that he--"

"There's no use in expecting him to take any responsibility, Father."

"Yes, I suppose you are right. He is a child."

"Will you go to the maid, Father, and get straight at the truth? You see that I cannot meddle with her thoughts without danger of being misinterpreted. It is you who must be her adviser."

The priest acquiesced, and they returned to the camp, to find the maid still sitting alone, with a troubled face, and Danton puttering about the fire with a show of keeping himself occupied. They ate in silence, in spite of Menard's efforts to arouse them. After the meal they hung about, each hesitating to wander away, and yet seeing no pleasure in gathering about the fire. Menard saw that Father Claude had it in mind to speak to the maid, so he got Danton away on a pretext of looking over the stores. But he said nothing of the episode that was in all their minds, preferring to await the priest's report.

After the maid had gone to her couch beneath the canoe, and Danton had wandered into the wilderness that was all about them, Father Claude joined Menard at the fire.

"Well, Father, what word?"

"Softly, M'sieu. It is not likely that she sleeps as yet."

"Well?"

"I have talked long with her, but she is of a stubborn mind."

"How is that?"

"She was angry at first. She spoke hastily, and asked me in short terms to leave her in solitude. And then, after a time, when she began to see that it was her welfare and our duty which I had in mind, and not an idle curiosity, she was moved."

"Did she speak then?"

"No, M'sieu, she wept, and insisted that there was no trouble on her mind,--it was merely the thought of her home and her father that had cast her down."

"And so she has pride," mused Menard. "Could you gather any new opinions, Father? Do you think that they may already have come to some understanding?"

"I hardly think so, M'sieu. But may I suggest that it would be well to be firm with Lieutenant Danton? He is young, and the maid is in our trust,"

"True, Father. I will account for him."

There seemed to be nothing further to do at the moment, so the priest went to his blanket, and Menard drew a bundle under his head and went to sleep, after a glance about the camp to see that the sentry was on watch. Now that Montreal lay behind, and the unsettled forest before, with only a thin line of Frenchmen stretched along the river between them and Fort Frontenac, he had divided the night into watches, and each of the four *engagés* stood his turn.

The following day was all but half gone before the wind had dropped to a rate that made the passage of the lake advisable. Menard ordered the noon meal for an hour earlier than usual, and shortly afterward they set out across the upper end of Lake St. Louis to the foot of the cascades. Before the last bundle had been carried up the portage to Buisson Pointe, the dusk was settling over the woods across the river, and over the rising ground on Isle Perrot at the mouth of the Ottawa.

During the next day they passed on up the stream to the Coteau des Cedres. Menard and Father Claude were both accustomed to take the rapid without carrying, or even unloading, but Danton looked at the swirling water with doubt in his eyes. When the maid, leaning back in the canoe while the men halted at the bank to make fast for the passage, saw the torrent that tumbled and pitched merrily down toward them, she laughed. To hold a sober mood for long was not in her buoyant nature, and she welcomed a dash of excitement as a relief from the strained relations of the two days just gone.

"M'sieu," she called to Menard, with a sparkle in her eyes. "Oh, M'sieu, may I stay in the canoe?"

Danton turned quickly at the sound of her voice, and a look, half of pain, half of surprise, came over his face as he saw her eagerness. Menard looked at her in doubt.

"It may be a wet passage, Mademoiselle."

"And why not, M'sieu? Have I not been wet before? See, I will protect myself." She drew the bundles closely about her feet, and threw a blanket across her knees. "Now I can brave the stream, Captain. Or,"--her gay tone dropped, and she looked demurely at him,--"perhaps it is that I am too heavy, that I should carry myself up the bank. I will obey my orders, Captain." But as she spoke she tucked the blanket closer about her, and stole another glance at Menard.

He smiled. He was thinking of Madame Gordeau and her fragile daughter, who had shuddered with fear at a mere glimpse of the first rapid. "Very well," he said, "Mademoiselle shall stay in the canoe."

"But it is not safe"--broke in Danton, stepping forward. Then, conscious of the blunder, he turned away, and took up the rope.

"Lay hold, boys," said Menard.

Perrot and one of the new men waded into the water, and laid hold of the gunwales on each side of the bow. Menard himself took the stern. He called to Danton, who stood awkwardly upon the bank, "Take the rope with the men."

Guerin made the rope fast and set out ahead, with the other men and Danton close behind. Father Claude rolled up his robe and joined them.

"Wait," called Menard, as the rope straightened. "Mademoiselle, I am sorry to disturb you, but if you will sit farther back you will have less trouble from the spray." He waded along the side, and helped her to move nearer the stern, placing the bundles and the blanket about her as before. Then he shouted, "All right," and they started into the foaming water.

They toiled slowly up the incline, catching at rocks to steady their course, and often struggling for a foothold. Once Menard ordered a halt at a large rock, and all rested for a moment.

When they started again, the men at the bow of the canoe had some trouble in holding it steady, for their feet were on a stretch of smooth rock, and Menard called Danton back to help them. The boy worked his way along the rope, and reached the bow.

"Come around behind Perrot," said Menard.

Danton reached around Perrot's body, and caught hold of the gunwale. At that moment his foot slipped, and he fell, dragging the side of the canoe down with him. The men at the bow did their best to prevent a capsizing, but succeeded only in keeping half the bundles in the canoe. The others, the muskets, and the maid went into the river.

Menard moved forward as rapidly as he could against the current. The maid was unable at once to get her feet, used as she was to the water, and was swept down against him. He caught her, and, steadying himself with one hand, by the water-logged canoe, raised her head and held her while she struggled for a footing and shook the water from her eyes. Before she was wholly herself, Danton came plunging toward them.

"Give her to me!" he said huskily. "I've drowned her! My God, let me have her!"

"Stop," said Menard, sternly. "Take the men, and go after those bales--quick!"

Danton looked stupidly at him and at the maid, who was wiping the water from her face with one hand, and holding tightly to the Captain. Then he followed Perrot, who had already, with the two new men and Father Claude, commenced to get together the bales, most of which had sunk, and were moving slowly along the bottom. Menard still had his arm about the girl's shoulders. He helped her to the shore.

"Keep moving, Mademoiselle,--don't sit down. In a moment we shall have a fire. Father Claude," he called, "bring the canoe ashore." Then to the maid, "There are yet some dry blankets, thank God."

Mademoiselle was herself now, and she protested. "But it is only water, M'sieu. Let me go on with you, beyond the rapids."

Menard merely shook his head. The canoe was soon on the bank, and emptied of water. The other men were beginning to come in with soaked bundles and dripping muskets. Each bale was opened, and the contents spread out to dry, while Guerin was set to work at drying the muskets with a cloth. Perrot and Danton built a rough shelter for the maid, enclosing a small fire, and gave her some dry blankets. Then each man dried himself as best he could.

This accident threw Danton into a fit of gloominess from which nothing seemed to arouse him. He was careless of his duty, and equally careless to the reprimands that followed. This went on for two days, during which the maid seemed at one moment to avoid him, and at another to watch for his coming. In the evening of the second day following, the party camped at Pointe à Baudet, on Lake St. Francis. The supper was eaten in a silence more oppressive than usual, for neither Menard nor Father Claude could overcome the influence of Danton's heavy face and the maid's troubled eyes. After the supper the two strolled away, and sat just out of earshot on a mossy knoll. For hours they talked there, their voices low, save once or twice when Danton's rose. They seemed to have lost all count of time, all heed of appearances. Menard and the priest made an effort at first to appear unobservant, but later, seeing that their movements were beyond the sight of those unheeding eyes, they took to watching and speculating on the course of the conversation. The night came on, and the dark closed over them. Still the murmur of those low voices floated across the camp.

Father Claude, with a troubled mind, went down to the water, and walked slowly up and down. Menard saw to the final preparations for the night, and posted the first sentry. Then he joined the priest.

"Father?"

"Yes."

"I think it is time to speak."

"I fear it is, M'sieu."

"I must leave it in your hands."

"Shall I go now?"

"Yes."

Without further words, Father Claude walked up the bank, crackling through the bushes. From this spot the voices were inaudible, and for a few moments there was no sound. Then Menard could hear some one moving heavily through the undergrowth, going farther and farther into the stillness, and he knew that it was Danton. He sat on the bank with his back against a tree, and waited for a long hour. At last he dropped asleep.

He was awakened by Father Claude. The priest dropped to the ground beside him. His training had given Menard the faculty of awaking instantly into full grasp of a situation.

"Well," he said. "Where is the maid?"

"She has gone to her couch, but not to sleep, I fear. It has come, M'sieu."

"What has come?"

"Danton has lost his senses. He asks her to marry him, to flee with him. It is a difficult case. She has had no such experience before, and knows not how to receive him. She seems to have no love for him, beyond the pleasure his flattery has given her. She believes all he says. One thing I know, aside from all questions of expediency, of care for our trust, this must not go on."

"Not for the present, at least. She may do what she will, once we have taken her safely to Frontenac."

"No, M'sieu; not even then. We must stop it at once."

"Oh, of course," said Menard; "so far as we are concerned, we have no choice. You need not bother longer to-night. I will wait for the boy. I am sorry for him."

"I should have more pity, if I knew less of his past."

"Tush, Father! He is not a bad fellow, as they go. To be sure he does not rise any too well to new responsibilities, but he will grow into it. It is better an honest infatuation with the daughter of a gentleman than a dishonest one with an Indian maid. And you know our officers, Father. God knows, they are all bad enough; and yet they are loyal fellows."

"Ah, M'sieu, I fear you will be too lenient with him. Believe me, we have not a minute to waste in stopping the affair."

"Have no fear, Father. Good-night."

"Good-night."

Menard lay on the bank, gazing at the sparkling water, and listening to the slow step of the sentry and to the deeper sounds of the forest. Another hour crept by, and still Danton had not returned. Menard walked about the camp to make sure that he was not already rolled in his blanket; then he went to the sentry, who was leaning against a tree a few rods away.

"Colin," he said, "have you seen Lieutenant Danton?"

"Yes, M'sieu. He is up there." Colin pointed through the trees that fringed the river. "I heard a noise some time ago, and went up to see. He is lying under a beech tree, if he has not moved,-- and I should have heard him if he had. It may be that he is asleep."

Menard nodded, and walked slowly along the bank, bending aside the briars that caught at his clothes and his hands.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIGHT AT LA GALLETTE.

Danton was lying on the ground, but he was not asleep. He looked up, at the sound of Menard's footsteps, and then, recognizing him, lowered his eyes again. The Captain hesitated, standing over the prostrate figure.

"Danton," he said finally, "I want you to tell me the truth."

The boy made no reply, and Menard, after waiting for a moment, sat upon a log.

"I have decided to do rather an unusual thing, Danton," he said slowly, "in offering to talk it over with you as a friend, and not as an officer. In one thing you must understand me: Mademoiselle St. Denis has been intrusted to my care, and until she has safely reached those who have a right to share the direction of her actions, I can allow nothing of this sort to go on. You must understand that. If you will talk with me frankly, and try to control yourself for the present, it may be that I can be of service to you later on."

There was a long silence. Finally, Danton spoke, without raising his head.

"Is there need of this, M'sieu? Is it not enough that she--that Mademoiselle dismisses me?"

"Oh," said Menard, "that is it?"

"Yes."

"You are sure of yourself, Danton? sure that you have not made a mistake?"

"A mistake?" The boy looked up wildly. "I was--shall I tell you, M'sieu?--I left the camp to-night with the thought that I should never go back."

Menard looked at him curiously.

"What did you plan to do?"

"I didn't know,--I don't know now. Back to Montreal, perhaps to the Iroquois. I don't care where."

"You did not bring your musket. It would hardly be safe."

"Safe!" There was weary contempt in the boy's voice. He sat up, and made an effort to steady himself, leaning back upon his hands. "I should not say this. It was what I thought at first. I am past it now; I can think better. It was only your coming,--when I first saw you, it came rushing back, and I wanted to--oh, what is the use? You do not know. You cannot understand."

"And now?"

"Now, Captain, I ask for a release. Let me go back to Montreal."

"How would you go? You have no canoe."

"I will walk."

Menard shook his head.

"I am sorry," he said, "but it is too late. In the first place, you would never reach the city. There are scouting bands of Iroquois all along the river."

"So much the better, M'sieu, so--"

"Wait. That is only one reason. I cannot spare you. I have realized within the last day that I should have brought more men. The Iroquois know of our campaign; they are watching us. A small party like this is to their liking. I will tell you, Danton, we may have a close rub before we get to Frontenac. I wish I could help you, but I cannot. What reason could I give for sending you alone down the river to Montreal? You forget, boy, that we are not on our own pleasure; we are on the King's errand. For you to go now would be to take away one of our six fighting men,--to imperil Mademoiselle. And that, I think," he looked keenly at Danton, "is not what you would wish to do."

The boy's face was by turns set and working. He looked at Menard as if to speak, but got nothing out. At last he sprang to his feet, and paced back and forth between the trees.

"What can I do?" he said half to himself. "I can't stay! I can't see her every day, and hear her voice, and sit with her at every meal. Why do you call yourself my friend, Menard? Why don't you help? Why don't you say something--?"

"There are some things, Danton, that a man must fight out alone."

Danton turned away, and stood looking over the river. Menard sat on the log and waited. The moments slipped by, and still they said nothing. They could hear the stirring of Colin, back at

the camp, and the rustle of the low night breeze. They could almost hear the great silent rush of the river.

"Danton."

The boy half turned his head.

"You will stay here and play the man. You will go on with your duties; though, if the old arrangement be too hard, I will be your master in the Iroquois study, leaving Mademoiselle to Father Claude. And now you must return to the camp and get what sleep you can. Heaven knows we may have little enough between here and Frontenac. Come."

He got up, and walked to the camp, without looking around. Danton lingered until the Captain's tall figure was blending with the shadows of the forest, then he went after.

During the following day they got as far as the group of islands at the head of Lake St. Francis. Wherever possible Menard was now selecting islands or narrow points for the camp, where, in case of a night attack, defence would be a simple problem for his few men. Also, each night, he had the men spread a circle of cut boughs around the camp at a little distance, so that none could approach without some slight noise. Another night saw the party at the foot of Petit Chesneaux, just above Pointe Maligne.

While Perrot was preparing the supper, and Danton, with the *voyageurs*, was unpacking the bales, Menard took his musket and strode off into the forest. There was seldom a morning now that the maid did not have for her breakfast a morsel of game which the Captain's musket had brought down.



NOTE.--By this picture-writing the Long Arrow (of the clan of the Beaver) tells the Beaver (of the same clan) that he has taken up the hatchet against the party in the canoe, and he asks the Beaver to assist him. The parallel zigzag lines under the long arrow tell that he is travelling by the river, and the two straight lines under these that he has two warriors with him. The attack is to be made in either three or four sleeps, or days, as indicated by the three finished huts and one unfinished.

The Beaver has seen this sign, as shown by his signature at the bottom. The seventeen slanting lines under the foot mean that he has seventeen warriors and they are travelling on foot, southward, as shown by the fact that the lines slope toward the sun.

That the figures in the canoe are French is shown by their hats. The priest has no paddle, the maid is represented with long hair.

maid's listless manner.

They were passing a small island the next morning, when Perrot gave a shout and stopped paddling.

"What is it?" asked Menard, sharply.

Perrot pointed across a spit of land. In the other channel they could see a bateau just disappearing behind a clump of trees. It was headed down-stream. Menard swung the canoe about, and they skirted the foot of the island. Instead of a single bateau there were some half dozen, drifting light down the river, with a score of *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* under the command of a bronzed lieutenant, Du Peron, a sergeant, and a corporal. The lieutenant recognized Menard, and both parties landed while the two officers exchanged news.

"Can you spare me a few men?" Menard asked, when they had drawn apart from the others.

The lieutenant's eye roamed over the group on the beach, where the men of both parties were

In half an hour he returned, and sought Father Claude; and after a few low words the two set off. Menard led the way through thicket and timber growth, over a low hill, and down into a hollow, where a well-defined Indian trail crossed a brook. Here was a large sugar maple tree standing in a narrow opening in the thicket. Menard struck a light, and held up a torch so that the priest could make out a blaze-mark on the tree.

"See," said Menard. "It is on the old trail. I saw it by the merest chance."

Father Claude bent forward, with his eyes close to the inscription that had been painted on the white inner bark, with charcoal and bear's grease.

"Can you read it?" asked Menard, holding the torch high.

The priest nodded. Both of these men knew the Indian writing nearly as well as their own French.

"He does not know of the two men you got at Montreal, M'sieu. He tells of only six in our canoe."

"No? But that matters little. The Beaver has hurried after him with nearly a score. They can give us trouble enough. What do you make of the huts? Do they mean three days or four?"

"It looks to me," said the priest slowly, "that he was interrupted in drawing the fourth."

"Well,"--Menard threw his torch into the brook, and turned away into the dusk of the thicket,--"we know enough. The fight will be somewhere near the head of the rapids. Perhaps they will wait until we get on into the islands."

"And meantime," said the priest, as they crackled through the undergrowth, "we shall say nothing of this to Lieutenant Danton or the maid?"

"Nothing," Menard replied.

In three days more they had passed Rapide Flat, after toiling laboriously by the Long Sault. They were a sober enough party now, oppressed with Danton's dogged attention to duty and with the

mingling.

"How many do you want? I'm running shorthanded. We have all we can manage with these bateaux."

"There's a war party of twenty on my trail," said Menard. "If I had my own men with me I should feel safe, but I have my doubts about these fellows. I haven't room for more than two."

"What's the trouble?--that La Grange affair?"

Menard nodded.

"I heard that they had a price on your head. There's been a good deal of talk about it at Frontenac. A converted Mohawk has been scouting for us, and he says that the Onondagas blame you for that whole galley business."

"I know," said Menard, grimly. "You could hardly expect them to get the truth of it."

"It was bad work, Menard, bad work. The worst thing La Grange did was to butcher the women and children. He was drunk at the time, and the worst of it was over before d'Orvilliers got wind of it. Do you know who is leading this war party?"

"The Long Arrow."

"Oh, yes. A big fellow, with a rather noticeable wampum collar. He came to Frontenac as a Mission Indian, but got away before we suspected anything. Our scout told me that his son was in the party that was taken to the galleys. He's been scouting along the river ever since. Likely as not he followed you down to Quebec. How many men have you now?"

"Five, and Father Claude."

"He could shoot at a pinch, I suppose. I'll let you have the best two I have, but--" Du Peron shrugged his shoulders--"you know the sort that are assigned for this transport work. They're a bad lot at best. But they can shoot, and they hate the Iroquois, so you're all right if you can keep them sober. That will make nine, with yourself,--it should be enough."

"It will be enough. How is the transport moving?"

"Splendidly. Whatever we may say about the new Governor, our Intendant knows his business. I judge from the way he is stocking up Frontenac, that we are to use it as the base for a big campaign."

"I suppose so. You will report, will you, at Montreal, that we were safe at Rapide Flat? And if you find a *coureur* going down to Quebec, I wish you would send word to Provost that Mademoiselle St. Denis is well and in good spirits."

The lieutenant looked curiously at the maid, who was walking with Father Claude near the canoe. Then the two officers shook hands, and in a few moments were going their ways, Menard with two villainous *voyageurs* added to his crew. That afternoon he passed the last rapid, and beached the canoe at La Galette, thankful that nothing intervened between them and Fort Frontenac but a reach of still water and the twining channels of the Thousand Islands, where it would call for the sharpest eyes ever set in an Iroquois head to follow his movements.

They ate an early supper, and immediately afterward Father Claude slipped away. The maid looked after him a little wistfully, then she wandered to the bank, and found a mossy seat where she could watch the long rapid, with its driving, foaming current that dashed over the ledges and leaped madly around the jagged rocks. Menard set his men at work preparing the camp against attack. When this was well under way he called Danton, who was lying by the fire, and spent an hour with him conversing in Iroquois. By that time the twilight was creeping down the river. Menard left the boy to form a speech in accord with Iroquois tradition, and went on a tour of inspection about the camp. The new men had swung thoroughly into the spirit of their work; one of them was already on guard a short way back in the woods. The other men were grouped in a cleared place, telling stories and singing.

Father Claude came hurriedly toward the fire, looking for Menard. His eyes glowed with enthusiasm.

"M'sieu," he said, in an eager voice, "come. I have found it."

"What?"

"It has come to me,--about the canoe."

Menard looked puzzled, but the priest caught his arm, and led him away.

"It came while we ate supper. The whole truth, the secret of the allegory, flashed upon me. I have worked hard, and now it is done. Instead of leaving out the canoe, I have put it back, and have placed in it six warriors, three paddling toward the chapel, and three away from it. Over them hovers an angel,--a mere suggestion, a faint, shining face, a diaphanous form, and outspread hands. Thus we symbolize the conflict in the savage mind at the first entrance of the Holy Word into their lives, with the blessed assurance over all that the Faith must triumph in the end."

At the last words, he stopped and drew Menard around to face the portrait of the Lily of the Onondagas, which was leaning against a stump.

"Is it too dark, M'sieu? See, I will bring it closer." He lifted the picture, and held it close to Menard's eyes. He was trembling with the excitement of his inspiration.

The Captain stepped back.

"I should like to know, Father, where you have had this picture."

"It was in my bundle. I have"--for the first time he saw the sternness in Menard's face, and his voice faltered.

"You did not leave it at Montreal?"

Father Claude slowly lowered the canvas to the ground. The light had gone out of his eyes, and his face was white. Then suddenly his thin form straightened. "I had forgotten. It was M'sieu's order. See,"--he suddenly lifted the picture over his head and whirled to the stump,--"it shall go no farther. We will leave it here for the wolves and the crows and the pagan redmen."

He dashed it down with all his strength, but Menard sprang forward, and caught it on his outstretched arm. "No, Father," he said; "we will take it with us."

The priest smiled wearily, and lowered the picture to the ground; but when Menard said, "You have broken it," he raised it hastily, and examined it. One corner of the wooden frame was loosened, but the canvas was not injured.

"I can mend it," he said.

Then they walked to the camp together, without talking; and Menard helped him repair the frame, and pack the picture carefully.

"How is it that it was not ruined in the capsizing at Coteau des Cedres?" Menard asked.

"It was preserved by a miracle, M'sieu. This bundle did not leave the canoe."

The *voyageurs*, still lounging in the clearing, were laughing and talking noisily. The Captain, after he had prepared the maid's couch, and bade her good-night, called to them to be quiet. For a time the noise ceased, but a little later, as he was spreading his blanket on the ground, it began again, and one of the transport men sang the opening strain of a ribald song. Menard strode over to the group so quickly that he took them by surprise. Colin was slipping something behind him, but he could not escape Menard's eye. In a moment he was sprawling on his face, and a brandy flask was brought to light. Menard dashed it against a tree, and turned to the frightened men.

"Go to your blankets, every man of you. There are Iroquois on this river. You have already made enough noise to draw them from half a league away. The next man that is caught drinking will be flogged." He thought of the maid lying under her frail shelter, for whose life he was responsible. "If it occurs twice, he will be shot. Perrot, I want you to join the sentry. From now on we shall have two men on guard all night. See that there is no mistake about this. At the slightest noise, you will call me."

The men slunk to their blankets, and soon the camp was still.

The river sang as it rushed down its zigzag channel through the rocks,--a song that seemed a part of the night, and yet was distinct from the creeping, rustling, dropping, all-pervading life and stir of the forest. Every leaf, every twig and root, every lump of sod and rock-held pool of stagnant water, had its own miniature world, where living things were fighting the battle of life. In the far distance, perhaps, an owl hooted; or near at hand a flying squirrel alighted on a bending elm-twig. Deer and moose followed their beaten tracks to the streams that had been theirs before ever Frenchman pierced the forest; beaver dove into their huts above the dams their own sharp teeth had made; moles nosed under the rich soil, and left a winding track behind; frogs croaked and bellowed from some backset of the river,--and all blended, not, perhaps, so much into a sound, as into a sense of movement,--an even murmur in a low key, to which the lighter note of the water was apart and distinct.

To a man trained as Menard had been, this was companionship. He was never alone in the forest, never without his millions of friends, who, though they seldom came into his thoughts, were yet a part of him, of his sense of life and strength. And through all these noises, even to the roar of Niagara itself, he could sleep like a child, when the slightest sound of a moccasined foot on a dry leaf would have aroused him at the instant to full activity. To-night he lay awake for a long time. With every day that he drew nearer the frontier came graver doubts of the feasibility of the plan which had been intrusted to him. The wretched business of La Grange's treachery and the stocking of the King's galleys had probably alienated the Onondagas for all time. Their presence on the St. Lawrence pointed to this. He felt safe enough, personally, for the very imprudence of the Governor's campaign, which had made it known so early to all the Iroquois, was an element in his favour. The Iroquois, unlike many of the roaming western tribes, had their settled villages, with lodges and fields of grain to defend from invasion. One secret of the campaign had been well kept; no one save the Governor's staff and Menard knew that the blow was to fall on the Senecas alone. And Menard was certain enough in his knowledge of Iroquois character to believe that each tribe, from the Mohawks on the east to the Senecas on the west, would call in its warriors, and concentrate to defend its villages. Therefore there could be no strong force on the St. Lawrence, where the French could so easily cut it off. As for the Long Arrow and his band, eight good fighting men and a stout-hearted priest could attend to them.

No, the danger would begin after the maid was safe at Frontenac, and he and Danton and Father Claude must set out to win the confidence of the Onondagas. The Oneidas and Mohawks must not be slighted; but the Onondagas and Cayugas, being the nearest to the Senecas, and between them and the other nations, would likely prove to be the key to the situation.

The night was black when he awoke. Clouds had spread over the sky, hiding all but a strip in the west where a low line of stars peeped out. This strip was widening rapidly as the night breeze carried the clouds eastward. At a little distance some of the men were whispering together and laughing softly. A hand was feeling his arm, and a voice whispered,—

“Quick, M’sieu; something has happened!”

“Is that you, Colin?”

“Yes. Guerin was on guard with me, and he fell. I thought I heard an arrow, but could not be sure. I looked for him after I heard him fall, but could not find him in the dark.”

Menard sprang to his feet, with his musket, which had lain at his side every night since leaving Montreal.

“Where was Guerin, Colin?”

“Straight back from the river, a few rods. He had spoken but a moment before. It must have told them where to shoot.”

“Call the men, and draw them close in a circle.” Menard felt his way toward the fire, where a few red embers showed dimly, and roused Danton with a light touch and a whispered caution to be silent. Already he could hear the low stir of the *engagés* as they slipped nearer the fire. He walked slowly toward the river, with one hand stretched out in front, to find the canoe. It was closer than he supposed, and he stumbled over it, knocking one end off its support. The maid awoke with a gasp.

“Mademoiselle, silence!” he whispered, kneeling beside her. “I fear we are attacked. You must come with me.” He had to say it twice before she could fully understand, and just then an arrow sang over them, and struck a tree with a low *thut*. He suddenly rose and shouted, “Together, boys! They will be on us in a moment. Close in at the bank, and save your powder. Perrot, come here and help me with the canoe.”

There was a burst of yells from the dark in answer to his call, and a few shots flashed. Danton was rallying the men, and calling to them to fall back, where they could take cover among the rocks and trees of the bank.

The maid was silent, but she reached out her hand, and Menard, catching her wrist, helped her to her feet, and fairly carried her down the slope of the bank, laying her behind the tangled roots of a great oak. Already the sky was clearer, and the trees and men were beginning to take dim shape. The river rushed by, a deeper black than sky and woods, with a few ghostly bits of white where the foam of the rapids began.

“Stay here,” he whispered. “Don’t move or speak. I shall not be far.”

She clung to his hand in a dazed manner, but he gently drew his away, and left her crouching on the ground.

The men were calling to one another as they dodged back from tree to tree toward the river, shooting only when a flash from the woods showed the position of an Indian. Some of them were laughing, and as Menard reached the canoe Perrot broke into a jeering song. It was clear that the attacking party was not strong. Probably they had not taken into account the double guard, relying on the death of the sentry to clear the way for a surprise.

“Perrot!” called the Captain. “Why don’t you come here?”

The song stopped. There was a heavy noise as the *voyageur* came plunging through the bushes, drawing a shower of arrows and musket balls.

“Careful, Perrot, careful.”

“They can’t hit me,” said Perrot, laughing. He stumbled against the Captain, stepped back, and fell over the canoe, rolling and kicking. Menard sprang toward him and jerked him up. He smelled strongly of brandy.

Menard swore under his breath.

“Pick up your musket. Take hold of that canoe,—quick!”

Perrot was frightened by his stern words, and he succeeded in holding up an end of the canoe, while Menard pushed him down the slope to the water’s edge. They rushed back, and in a few trips got down most of the stores. By this time Perrot was sobering somewhat, and with the Captain he took his place in the line. The men were shooting more frequently now, and by their loose talk showed increasing recklessness. Calling to Danton, Menard finally made them understand his order to fall back. Before they reached the bank, Colin dropped, with a ball through the head, and was dragged back by Danton.

They dropped behind logs and trees at the top of the slope. It began to look as if the redmen were to get no closer, in spite of the drunken condition of all but one or two of the men. Though the night was now much brighter, they were in the shadow, and neither the Captain nor Danton observed that the brandy which the transport men had supplied was passing steadily from hand to hand. They could not know that the boy Guerin lay on his back amid the attacking Onondagas, an arrow sticking upright in his breast, one hand lying across his musket, the other clasping a flask.

The maid had not moved. She could be easily seen now in the clearer light, and Menard went to her, feeling the need of giving her some work to occupy her mind during the strain of the fight.

"Mademoiselle," he whispered.

She looked up. He could see that she was shivering.

"I must ask you to help me. We must get the canoe into the water. They will soon tire of the assault and withdraw; then it will be safe to take to the canoe. They cannot hurt you. We are protected by the bank."

He helped her to rise, and she bravely threw her weight on the canoe, which Menard could so easily have lifted alone, and stood at the edge of the beach, passing him the bundles, which he, wading out, placed aboard. But suddenly he stopped, with an exclamation, peering into the canoe.

The maid, dreading each moment some new danger, asked in a dry voice, "What is it, M'sieu?"

For reply he seized the bundles, one at a time, and tossed them ashore, hauling the canoe after, and running his hand along the bark.

The maid stepped to his side. There was a gaping hole in the side of the canoe. She drew her breath in quickly, and looked up at him.

"It was Perrot," he muttered, "that fool Perrot." He stood looking at it, as if in doubt what to do. Up on the bank the men, Danton and Father Claude among them, were popping away at the rustling bushes. Suddenly he turned and gazed down at the maid's upturned face. "Mademoiselle," he said, "I do not think there is danger, but whatever happens you must keep close to me, or to Danton and Father Claude. It may be that there will be moments when we cannot stop and explain to you as I am doing now, but you must trust us, and believe that all will come out well. The other men are not themselves to-night--"

He stopped. It was odd that he should so talk to a maid while his men were fighting for their lives; but the Menard who had the safety of this slender girl in his hands was not the Menard of a hundred battles gone by. So he lingered, not knowing why, save that he hoped for some word from her lips of confidence in those who wished to protect her. And, as he waited, she smiled with trembling lips, and said:--

"It will come out well, M'sieu. I--I am not afraid."

Then Menard went up the bank with a bound, and finding one man already in a stupor, and another struggling for a flask, which Father Claude was trying to take away from him, he laid about him with his hard fists, and shortly had the drunkards as near to their senses as they were destined to be during the short space they had yet to live.

CHAPTER VII.

A COMPLIMENT FOR MENARD.

Colin and Guerin were dead, and one of the transport men lay in a drunken sleep, so that including Menard, Danton, and Father Claude there were six men in the little half circle that clung to the edge of the bank, shooting into the brush wherever a twig stirred or a musket flashed. "There are not many of them," said Menard to Danton, as they lay on their sides reloading. He listened to the whoops and barks in an interval between shots. "Not a score, all told."

"Will they come closer?"

"No. You won't catch an Iroquois risking his neck in an assault. They'll try to pick us off; but if we continue as strong as we are now, they are likely to draw off and try some other devilment, or wait for a better chance."

Danton crept back to his log for another shot. Now that the sky was nearly free of clouds, and the river was sparkling in the starlight, the Frenchmen could not raise their heads to shoot without exposing a dim silhouette to the aim of an Indian musket. Father Claude, who was loading and firing a long *arquebuse à croc*, had risen above this difficulty by heaping a pile of stones. Kneeling on the slope, a pace below the others, and resting the crutch of his piece in a hollow close to the stones, he could shoot through a crevice with little chance of harm, beyond a bruised shoulder.

The maid came timidly up the bank, and touched Menard's arm.

"What is it, Mademoiselle? You must not come here. It is not safe."

"I want to speak to you, M'sieu. If I could have your knife--for one moment--"

"What do you want of a knife, child? It is best that you--" There was a fusillade from the brush, and his voice was lost in the uproar. "You must wait below, on the beach. They cannot get to you."

"It is the canoe, M'sieu. The cloth about the bales is stout,--I can sew it over the hole."

Menard looked at her as she crouched by his side; her hair fallen about her face and shoulders; her hands, grimy with the clay of the bank, clinging to a wandering root. She was still trembling with excitement, but her eyes were bright and eager. Without a word he drew his knife from its sheath, and held it out. She took it, and was down the slope with a light spring, while the Captain poked the muzzle of his musket through the leaves. As he drew it back, after firing, he caught a glimpse of Danton's face, turned toward him with a curious expression. The boy laughed nervously, and wiped the sweat from his blackened forehead. "They don't give us much rest, Captain, do they?" Menard's reply was jerked out with the strokes of his ramrod: "They will--before long--and we can--take to the canoe. We're letting them have all they want." He peered through the leaves, and fired quickly. A long shriek came from the darkness. Menard laughed. "There's one more gone, Danton."

The fight went on slowly, wretchedly, shot for shot, Danton himself dragging up a bale of ammunition and serving it to the men. The maid, unaided, had overturned the canoe where it lay, and with quickened breath was pressing her needle through the tough bark. Danton lost the flint from his musket, and crept down the bank to set a new one. Suddenly he exclaimed, "There goes Perrot!"

The old *voyageur* had, in a fit of recklessness, raised his head for a long look about the woods. Now he was rolling slowly down the slope toward the canoe and the maid, clutching weakly at roots and bushes as he passed. There was a dark spot on his forehead. Menard sprang after, and felt of his wrists; the pulse was fluttering out. He looked up, to see the maid dipping up water with her hollowed hands, and waved her back.

"It is no use, Mademoiselle. Is the canoe ready? We may need it soon."

She stood motionless, slowly shaking her head, and letting the water spill from her hands a drop at a time.

"Go back there. Do what you can with it." He hurried up the bank and fell into his place.

"Do you see what they are doing?" asked Danton.

"Playing the devil. Anything else?"

The lieutenant pointed to an arrow that was sticking in a tree beside him, slanting downward. "They are climbing trees. Listen. You can hear them talking, and calling down. I've fired, but I don't get them."

Menard listened closely, and shot for the sound, but with no result.

"We've got to stop this, Danton. I don't understand it. It isn't like the Iroquois to keep at it after a repulse. Tell Father Claude; he is shooting too low." Menard glanced along the line at his men. The drunken transport man lay silent at his post; beyond him were his mate and one of the Montreal men, both of them reckless and frightened by turns, shooting aimlessly into the dark. The arrows were rattling down about them now. One grazed Father Claude's back as he stooped to take aim, and straightened him up with a jerk. A moment later a bullet sang close past Menard's head. He looked for the maid; she was sitting by the canoe, sewing, giving no heed to the arrows.

The Montreal man groaned softly, and flattened out, with an arrow slanting into the small of his back; which so unmanned the only other conscious *engagé* that he sank by him, sobbing, and trying to pull out the arrow with his hands. Menard sprang up.

"My God, Danton! Father Claude! This is massacre. Run for the canoe. My turn, eh?"

"What is it?" asked Danton. "Did they get you?"

For reply, Menard tore an arrow from the flesh of his forearm and dashed down the bank, musket in hand. The maid was tugging at the canoe, struggling to move it toward the water. She did not look up to see the yellow, crimson, and green painted figures rise from the reeds that fringed the water but a few yards away; she did not hear the rush of moccasined feet on the gravel. Before she could turn, she was seized and thrown to the ground, surrounded by the Indians, who were facing about hastily to meet Menard. The Captain came among them with a whirl of his musket that sent one warrior to the ground and dropped another, half stunned, across the canoe. Danton was at his heels, and Father Claude, fighting like demons with muskets and knives.

"Quick, Mademoiselle!" Menard lifted her as he spoke, and swung her behind him; and then the three were facing the group of howling, jumping figures, which was increased rapidly by those who had followed the Frenchmen down the bank. "Come back here, Father. Protect the maid! They dare not attack you, if you drop your musket! Loose your hold, Mademoiselle." He caught roughly at the slender arms that held about his waist, parrying a knife stroke with his other hand. "They will kill you if you cling to me. Now, Danton! Never mind your arm. I have one in the hand. Fight for the maid and France!" Menard was shouting for sheer lust and frenzy of battle, "What is the matter with the devils? Why don't they shoot? God, Danton, they're coming at us with clubs!" He called out in the Iroquois tongue: "Come at us, cowards! Make an end of it! Where are your bows? your muskets? Where is the valour of the Onondagas--of my brothers?"

The last words brought forth a chorus of jeers and yells. The two officers stood side by side at the water's edge. Behind them, knee-deep in the water, was Father Claude, holding the maid in his arms. The Indians seemed to draw together, still with that evident effort to take their game alive, for two tall chiefs were rushing about, cautioning the warriors. Then, of a sudden, the

whole body came forward with a rush, and Menard, Danton, Father Claude, and the maid went down; the three men fighting and splashing until they lay, bound with thongs, on the beach.

Menard turned his head and saw that Danton lay close to him.

"Mademoiselle?" he said. "What have they done with her?"

"She is here." The reply was in Father Claude's voice. It came from the farther side of Danton.

"Is she hurt?"

"No. But they have bound her and me."

"Bound you!" The Captain tried to sit up, but could not. "They would not do that, Father. It is a mistake."

A warrior, carrying a musket under his arm, walked slowly around the prisoners, making signs to them to be silent. The others had withdrawn to the shadow of the bank; the sound of their voices came indistinctly across the strip of shore. Indifferent to the pain in his arm, Menard struggled at his thongs, and called to them in Iroquois: "Who of my brothers has bound the holy Father? What new fear strikes the breasts of the sons of the night-wind that they must subdue with force the gentle spirit of their Father, who has given his years for his children? Is it not enough that you have broken the faith with your brother, the child of your own village, the son of your bravest chief? Need you other prey than myself?"

The guard stood over Menard, and lifted his musket. Menard laughed.

"Strike me, brave warrior. Show that your heart is still as fond as on the day I carried your torn body on my shoulder to the safety of your lodge. Ah, you remember? You have not forgotten the Big Buffalo? Then, why do you hesitate? The man who has courage to seize a Father of the Church, surely can strike his brother. This is not the brave Tegakwita I have known."

Father Claude broke in on Menard, whose voice was savage in its defiance.

"Have patience, M'sieu. I will speak." He lifted his voice. "Teganouan! Father Claude awaits you." There was no reply from the knot of warriors at the bank, and the priest called again. Finally a chief came across and looked stolidly at the prisoners.

"My Father called?" he said.

"Your Father is grieved, Long Arrow, that you would bind him like a soldier taken in war." The priest's voice was gentle. "Is this the custom of the Onondagas? It was not so when I served you with Father de Lamberville."

"My Father fought against his children."

"You would have slain me, Long Arrow, had I not."

The Indian walked slowly back to his braves, and for some moments there was a consultation. Then the other chief came to them, and, without a word, himself cut the thongs that bound the priest's wrists and ankles. There was no look of recognition in his eyes as he passed Menard, though they had been together on many a long hunt. He was the Beaver.

As the Captain lay on his back, looking first at the kneeling Indian, then at the sky overhead, he was thinking of the Long Arrow, again with a half-memory of some other occasion when they had met. Then, slowly, it came to him. It was at the last council to decide on his release from captivity, five years before. The Long Arrow had come from a distant village to urge the death of the prisoner. He had argued eloquently that to release Menard would be to send forth an ungrateful son who would one day strike at the hand that had befriended him.

Father Claude was on his feet, chafing his wrists and talking with the Beaver. The Long Arrow joined them, and for a few moments the chiefs reasoned together in low, dignified tones. Then, at a word from the Beaver, and a grunt of disgust from the Long Arrow, Father Claude, with quick fingers, set the maid free, and took her head upon his knee.

"Have they hurt her, Father?" asked Menard, in French.

"No, M'sieu, I think not. It is the excitement. The child sadly needs rest."

"Will they release you? It is not far to Frontenac. It may be that you can reach there with Mademoiselle."

"No, my son." The priest paused to dip up some water, and to stroke the maid's forehead and wrists. "They have some design which has not been made clear to me. They have promised not to bind me or to injure what belongs to me among the supplies. But the Beaver threatens to kill us if we try to escape, Mademoiselle and I."

"Why do they hold you?"

"To let no word go out concerning your capture. I fear, M'sieu--"

"Well?"

The priest lowered his eyes to the maid, who still lay fainting, and said no more. A long hour went by, with only a commonplace word now and then between the prisoners. The maid revived, and sat against the canoe, gazing over the water that swept softly by. Danton lay silent, saying nothing. Once a groan slipped past the Captain's lips at a twitch of his wounded arm, and Father Claude, immediately cheered by the prospect of a moment's occupation, cleaned the wound with cool water, and bandaged it with a strip from his robe.

Preparations were making for a start. A half-dozen braves set out, running down the beach; and shortly returned by way of the river with two canoes. The others had opened the bales of supplies (excepting Father Claude's bundle, which he kept by him), and divided the food and ammunition among themselves. The two chiefs came to the prisoners, and seated themselves on the gravel. The Long Arrow began talking.

"My brother, the Big Buffalo, is surprised that he should be taken a prisoner to the villages of the Onondagas. He thinks of the days when he shared with us our hunts, our lodges, our food, our trophies; when he lived a free life with his brothers, and parted from them with sadness in his voice. He had a grateful heart for the Onondagas then. When he left our lodges he placed his hand upon the hearts of our chiefs, he swore by his strange gods to keep the pledge of friendship to his brothers of the forest. Moons have come and gone many times since he left our villages. The snow has fallen for five seasons between him and us, to chill his heart against those who have befriended him. Twice has he been in battle when we might have taken him a prisoner, but the hearts of our braves were warm toward him, and they could not lift their arms. When there have been those who have urged that the hatchet be taken up against him, many others have come forward to say, 'No; he will yet prove our friend and our brother.'"

Menard lay without moving, looking up at the stars. Danton, by his side, and the maid, sitting beyond, were watching him anxiously. Father Claude stood erect, with folded arms.

"And now," continued the chief, "now that Onontio, the greatest of war chiefs, thinks that he is strong, and can with a blow destroy our villages and drive us from the lands our gods and your gods have said to be ours by right, as it was our fathers',--now there is no longer need for the friendship of the Onondagas, whose whole nation is fewer than the fighting braves of the great Onontio. The war-song is sung in every white village. The great canoes take food and powder up our river, for those who would destroy us."

Menard was still looking upward. "My brother," he said, speaking slowly, "was once a young brave. When he was called before his great chief, and commanded to go out and fight to save his village and his brothers and sisters, did he say to his chief: 'No, my father, I will no longer obey your commands. I will no longer strive to become a famous warrior of your nation. I will go away into the deep forest,--alone, without a lodge, without a nation, to be despised alike by my brothers and my foes?' Or did he go as he was bid, obeying, like a brave warrior, the commands of those who have a right to command? Does not the Long Arrow know that Onontio is the greatest of chiefs, second only to the Great-Chief-Across-the-Water, the father of red men and white men? If Onontio's red sons are disobedient, and he commands me to chastise them, shall I say to my father, 'I cannot obey your will, I will become an outcast, without a village or a nation?' The Long Arrow is a wise man. He knows that the duty of all is to obey the father at Quebec."

"The Big Buffalo speaks with wisdom. But it may be he forgets that our braves have passed him by in the battles of every season since he left our villages. He forgets that he met a band of peaceful hunters from our nation, who went into his great stone house because they believed that his white brothers, if not himself, would keep the word of friendship. He forgets that they were made to drink of the white man's fire water, and were chained together to become slaves of the great kind Chief-Across-the-Water, who loves his children, and would make them mighty in his land. Is this the father he would have us obey? Truly, he speaks with an idle tongue."

Menard lay silent. His part in La Grange's treachery, and in carrying out later the Governor's orders, would be hard to explain. To lay the blame on La Grange would not help his case, at least until he could consult with Father Claude, and be prepared to speak deliberately.

"My brother does not reply?"

"He will ask a question," replied Menard. "What is the will of the chiefs to do with the sons of Onontio?"

"The Big Buffalo has seen the punishment given by the Onondagas to those who have broken their faith."

"I understand. And of course we shall be taken to your villages before this death shall come?"

The Long Arrow bowed.

"Very well," said Menard, in his slow voice. "As the Long Arrow, brave as he is, is but a messenger, obeying the will of the nation, I will withhold my word until I shall be brought before your chiefs in council. I shall have much to say to them; it need be said only once. I shall be pleased to tell my truths to the Big Throat, whose eyes can see beyond the limits of his lodge; who knows that the hand of Onontio is a firm and strong hand. He shall know from my lips how kind Onontio wishes to be to his ungrateful children--" He paused. The Indians must not know yet that the Governor's campaign was to be directed only against the Senecas. The mention of the Big Throat would, he knew, be a shaft tipped with jealousy in the breast of the Long Arrow. The Big Throat, Otreouati, was the widest famed orator and chief of the Onondagas; and it was he who had adopted Menard as his son. Above all, the Long Arrow would not dare to do away with so important a prisoner before he could be brought before the council.

The maid was leaning forward, following their words intently. "Oh, M'sieu," she said, "I cannot understand it all. What will they do with you?"

Menard hesitated, and replied in French without turning his head: "They will take us to their villages below Lake Ontario. They will not harm you, under Father Claude's protection. And then it is likely that we may be rescued before they can get off the river."

"But yourself, M'sieu? They are angry with you. What will they do?"

"Lieutenant Danton and I must look out for ourselves. I shall hope that we may find a way out."

The Long Arrow was looking closely at them, evidently resenting a woman's voice in the talk. At the silence, he spoke in the same low voice, but Menard and Father Claude read the emotion underneath.

"It may be that the Big Buffalo has never had a son to brighten his days as his life reaches the downward years. It may be that he has not watched the papoose become a fleet youth, and the youth a tireless hunter. He may not have waited for the day when the young hunter should take his seat at the council and speak with those who will hear none but wise men. I had such a son. He went on the hunt with a band that never returned to the village." His voice rose above the pitch customary to a chief. It was almost cold in its intensity. "I found his body, my brother, the body of my son, at this place, killed by the white men, who talked to us of the love of their gods and their Chief-Across-the-Water. Here it was I found him, who died before he would become the slave of a white man; and here I have captured the man who killed him. It is well that we have not killed my brother to-night. It is better that we should take him alive before the council of the Onondagas, who once were proud in their hearts that he was of their own nation."

The maid's eyes, shining with tears, were fixed on the Indian's face. She had caught up with her hand the flying masses of her hair and braided them hastily; but still there were locks astray, touched by the light of the starlit sky. Menard turned his head, and watched her during the long silence. Danton was watching her too. He had not understood the chief's story, but it was clear from her face that she had caught it all. It was Father Claude who finally spoke. His voice was gentle, but it had the air of authority which his long experience had taught him was necessary in dealing with the Indians.

"The Big Buffalo has said wisely. He will speak only to the great chiefs of the nation, who will understand what may be beyond the minds of others. The heart of the Long Arrow is sad, his spirit cast down, and he does not see now what to-morrow he may,—that the hand of the Big Buffalo is not stained with the blood of his son. We will go to your village, and tell your chiefs many things they cannot yet know. For the Big Buffalo and his young brother, I shall ask only the justice which the Onondagas know best how to give. For myself and my sister, I am not afraid. We will follow your course, to come back when the chiefs shall order it."

The two Indians exchanged a few signs, rose, and went to the scattered group of braves, who were feasting on the white men's stores. In a moment these had thrown the bundles together, and were getting the canoes into the water. Two warriors cut Danton's thongs and raised him to his feet. He rubbed his wrists, where the thongs had broken the skin, and stepped about to get the stiffness from his ankles. Then he bent down to set Menard loose, but was thrown roughly back.

"What's this? What's the matter? Do you understand this, Menard?"

"I think so," replied the Captain, quietly.

"What is it?"

"A little compliment to me, that is all."

Danton stood looking at him in surprise, until he was hustled to the nearest canoe and ordered to take a paddle. He looked back and saw four warriors lift Menard, still bound hand and foot, and carry him to the other canoe, laying him in the bottom beneath the bracing-strips. Father Claude, too, was given a paddle. Then they glided away over the still water, into a mysterious channel that wound from one shadow-bound stretch to another, past islands that developed faintly from the blackness ahead and faded into the blackness behind. The lean arms of the Indians swung with a tireless rhythm, and their paddles slipped to and fro in the water with never a sound, save now and then a low splash.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAID MAKES NEW FRIENDS.

The prisoners were allowed some freedom in the Onondaga village. They were not bound, and they could wander about within call of the low hut which had been assigned to them. This laxity misled Danton into supposing that escape was practicable.

"See," he said to Menard, "no one is watching. Once the dark has come we can slip away, all of us."

Menard shook his head.

"Do you see the two warriors sitting by the hut yonder,—and the group playing platter among the trees behind us? Did you suppose they were idling?"

"They seem to sleep often."

"You could not do it. We shall hope to get away safely; but it will not be like that."

Danton was not convinced. He said nothing further, but late on that first night he made the attempt alone. The others were asleep, and suspected nothing until the morning. Then Father Claude, who came and went freely among the Indians, brought word that he had been caught a league to the north. The Indians bound him, and tied him to stakes in a strongly guarded hut. This much the priest learned from Tegakwita, the warrior who had guarded them on the night of their capture. After Menard's appeal to his gratitude he had shown a willingness to be friendly, and, though he dared do little openly, he had given the captives many a comfort on the hard journey southward.

Later in the morning Menard and Mademoiselle St. Denis were sitting at the door of their hut. The irregular street was quiet, excepting for here and there a group of naked children playing, or a squaw passing with a load of firewood on her back. An Indian girl came in from the woods toward them. She was of light, strong figure, with a full face and long hair, which was held back from her face by bright ribbons. Her dress showed more than one sign of Mission life. She was cleaner than most of the Indians, and was not unattractive. She came to them without hesitation.

"I am Tegakwita's sister. My name is Mary; the Fathers at the Mission gave it to me."

Menard hardly gave her a glance, but Mademoiselle was interested.

"That is not your Indian name?" she asked.

"Yes,--Mary."

"Did you never have another?"

"My other name is forgotten."

"These Mission girls like to ape our ways," said Menard, in French.

The girl looked curiously at them, then she untied a fold of her skirt, and showed a heap of strawberries. "For the white man's squaw," she said.

Mademoiselle blushed and laughed. "Thank you," she replied, holding out her hands. The girl gave her the berries, and turned away. Menard looked up as a thought came to him.

"Wait, Mary. Do you know where the young white chief is?"

"Yes. He tried to run away. He cannot run away from our warriors."

"Are you afraid to go to him?"

"My brother, Tegakwita, is guarding him. I am not afraid."

Menard went to a young birch tree that stood near the hut, peeled off a strip of bark, and wrote on it:--

"If you try to escape again you will endanger my plans. Keep your patience, and I can save you."

"Will you take him some berries, and give him this charm with them?"

She took the note, rolled it up with a nod, and went away. Menard saw the question in Mademoiselle's eyes, and said: "It was a warning to be cool. Our hope is in getting the good-will of the chiefs."

"Will they--will they hurt him, M'sieu?"

"I hope not. At least we are still alive and safe; and years ago, Mademoiselle, I learned how much that means."

The maid looked into the trees without replying. Her face had lost much of its fulness, and only the heavy tan concealed the worn outlines. But her eyes were still bright, and her spirit, now that the first shock had passed, was firm.

Father Claude returned, after a time, with a heavy face. He drew Menard into the hut, and told him what he had gathered: that the Long Arrow and his followers were planning a final vengeance against Captain Menard. All the braves knew of it; everywhere they were talking of it, and preparing for the feasting and dancing.

"They will wait until after the fighting, won't they?"

"No, M'sieu. It is planned to begin soon, within a day or two."

"Have you inquired for the Big Throat?"

"He is five leagues away, at the next village. We can hardly hope for help from him, I fear. All the tribes are preparing to join in fighting our troops."

Menard paused to think.

"It looks bad, Father." He walked up and down the hut. "The Governor's column must have followed up the river within a few days of us. Then much time was lost in getting us down here." He turned almost fiercely to the priest. "Why, the campaign may have opened already. Word may come to-morrow from the Senecas calling out the Onondagas and Cayugas. Do you know what that means? It means that I have failed,--for the first time in my life, Father,--miserably failed. There must be some way out. If I could only get word to the Big Throat. I'm certain I could talk him over. I have done it before."

Father Claude had never before seen despair in Menard's eyes.

"You speak well, M'sieu. There must be some way. God is with us."

The Captain was again pacing the beaten floor. Finally he came to the priest, and took his arm. "I don't know what it is that gives me courage, Father, but at my age a man isn't ready to give up. They may kill me, if they like, but not before I've carried out my orders. The Onondagas must not join the Senecas."

"How"--began the priest.

Menard shook his head. "I don't know yet,--but we can do it." He went out of doors, as if the sunlight could help him, and during the rest of the day and evening he roamed about or lay motionless under the trees. The maid watched him until dark, but kept silent; for Father Claude had told her, and she, too, believed that he would find a way.

Late in the evening Father Claude began to feel disturbed. Menard was still somewhere off among the trees. He had come in for his handful of grain, at the supper hour, but with hardly a word. The Father had never succeeded, save on that one occasion when Danton was the subject, in carrying on a long conversation with the maid; and now after a few sorry attempts he went out of doors. He thought of going to the Captain, to cheer his soul and prepare his mind for whatever fate awaited him, but his better judgment held him back.

The village had no surface excitement to suggest coming butchery and war. The children were either asleep or playing in the open. Warriors walked slowly about, wrapped closely in blankets, though the night was warm. The gnats and mosquitoes were humming lazily, the trees barely stirring, and the voices of gossiping squaws or merry youths blended into a low drone. There was the smell in the air of wood and leaves burning, from a hundred smouldering fires. Father Claude stood for a long time gazing at the row of huts, and wondering that such an air of peace and happiness could hover over a den of brute savages, who were even at the moment planning to torture to his death one of the bravest sons of New France.

While he meditated, he was half conscious of voices near at hand. He gave it no attention until his quick ear caught a French word. He started, and hurried to the hut, pausing in the door. By the dim light of the fire, that burned each night in the centre of the floor, he could see Mademoiselle standing against the wall, with hands clasped and lips parted. Nearer, with his back to the door, stood an Indian.

The maid saw the Father, but did not speak. He came forward into the hut, and gently touched the Indian's arm.

"What is it?" he asked in Iroquois.

The Indian stood, without a reply, until the silence grew heavy. Mademoiselle had straightened up, and was watching with fascinated eyes. Then, slowly, the warrior turned, and beneath buckskin and feathers, dirt and smeared colours, the priest recognized Danton. He turned sadly to the maid.

"I do not understand," he said.

She put her hands before her eyes. "I cannot talk to him," she said, in a broken voice. "Why does he come? Why must I--" Then she collected herself, and came forward. Pity and dignity were in her voice. "I am sorry, Lieutenant Danton. I am very sorry."

The boy choked, and Father Claude drew him, unresisting, outside the hut.

"How did you come here, Danton? Tell me."

Danton looked at him defiantly.

"What does this mean? Where did you get these clothes?"

"It matters not where I got them. It is my affair."

"Who gave you these clothes?"

"It is enough that I have friends, if those whom I thought friends will not aid me."

The priest was pained by the boy's rough words.

"I am sorry for this, my son,--for this strange disorder. Did you not receive a message from your Captain?"

Danton hesitated. "Yes," he said at last. "I received a message,--an order to lie quiet, and let these red beasts burn me to death. Menard is a fool. Does he not know that they will kill him? Does he not know that this is his only chance to escape? He is a fool, I say."

"You forget, my son."

"Well, if I do? Must I stay here for the torture because my Captain commands? Why do you hold me here? Let me go. They will be after me."

"Wait, Danton. What have you said to Mademoiselle?"

The boy looked at him, and for a moment could not speak.

"Do you, too, throw that at me, Father? It was all I could do. I thought she cared for her life more than for--for Menard. No, let me go on. I have risked everything to come for her, and she--she--I did not know it would be like this."

"But what do you plan?" The priest's voice was more gentle. "Where are you going? You cannot get to Frontenac alone."

"I don't know," replied Danton wearily, turning away. "I don't care now. I may as well go to the devil."

Without a word of farewell he walked boldly off through the trees, drawing his blanket about his shoulders. Father Claude stood watching him, half in mind to call Menard, then hesitating. Already the boy was committed: he had broken his bonds, and to make any effort to hold him meant certain death for him. Perhaps it was better that he should take the only chance left to him. The hut was silent. He looked within, and saw the maid still standing by the wall. Her eyes were on him, but she said nothing, and he turned away. He walked slowly up and down under the great elms that arched far up over his head. At last he looked about for the Captain, and finding him some little way back in the woods, told him the story.

Menard's face had aged during the day. His eyes had a dull firmness in place of the old flash. He heard the account without a word, and, at the close, when the priest looked at him questioningly for a reply, he shook his head sadly. His experiment with Danton had failed.

"He didn't tell you who had helped him?"

"No, M'sieu. It is very strange."

"Yes," said Menard, "it is."

The night passed without further incident. Early in the morning, Father Claude went out to find Tegakwita, and learn what news had come in during the night of the French column. Runners were employed in passing daily between the different villages, keeping each tribe fully informed.

Menard sat before the hut. The clearing showed more life than on the preceding day. Bands of warriors, hunting and scouting parties, were coming in at short intervals, scattering to their shelters or hurrying to the long building in the centre of the village. The growing boys and younger warriors ran about, calling to one another in eager, excited voices. As the morning wore along, grave chiefs and braves, wrapped in their blankets, walked by on their way to the council house.

The maid, after Father Claude had gone, watched the Captain for a long time through the open door. The conversation with the Long Arrow, on the night of their capture, had been burned into her memory; and now, as she looked at Menard's drawn face and weary eyes, the picture came to her again of the Long Arrow sitting by the river in the dim light of the stars,—and of the white man who had fought for her, lying before him, gazing upward and speaking with a calm voice to the stern chief who wished to kill him. Then, in spite of the excitement, the danger, and exhaustion of the fight, it had seemed that the Captain could not long be held by this savage. His stern manner, his command, had given her a confidence which had, until this moment, strengthened her. But now, of a sudden, she saw in his eyes the look of a man who sees no way ahead. This quarrel with the Long Arrow was no matter of open warfare, even of race against race; it was an eye for an eye, the demand of a crazed father for the life of the slayer of his son. That she could do nothing, that she must sit feebly while he went to his death, came to her with a dead sense of pain.

With a restless spirit she went out of doors, passing him with a little smile; but he did not look up. A group of passing youths stopped and jeered at him, but he did not give them a glance. She shrank back against the building until they had gone on.

"Do not mind them, Mademoiselle," said Menard, quietly. "They will not harm you."

She hesitated by his side, half in mind to speak to him, to tell him that she knew his trouble, and had faith in him, but his bowed head was forbidding in its solitude. All about the hut, under the spreading trees, was a stretch of coarse green sod, dotted with tiny yellow flowers and black-centred daisies. She wandered over the grass, gathering them until her hands were full. Two red boys came by, and paused to cry at her, taunting her as if she, too, were to meet the fate of a war captive. The thought made her shudder, but then, on an impulse, she called to them in their own language. They looked at each other in surprise. She walked toward them, laying down the flowers, and holding out her hand. A little later, when Menard looked up, he saw her sitting beneath a gnarled oak, a boy on either side eagerly watching her. She was talking and laughing with them, and teaching them to make a screeching pipe with grass-blades held between the thumbs. He envied her her elastic spirits.

"You have made two friends," he called in French.

She looked up and nodded, laughing. "They are learning to make the music of the white brothers."

The boys' faces had sobered at the sound of his voice. They looked at him doubtfully, and then at each other. He got up and walked slowly toward them.

"I will make friends, too, Mademoiselle," he said, smiling. "We have none too many here."

Before he had taken a dozen steps, the boys arose. He held out his hands, saying, "Your father would be friends with his children." But they began to retreat, a step at a time.

"Come, my children," said the maid, smiling at the words as she uttered them. "The white father is good. He will not hurt you."

They kept stepping backward until he had reached the maid's side; then, with a shout of defiance, they scampered away. In the distance they stopped, and soon were the centre of a group of children whom they taught to blow on the grass-blades, with many a half-frightened

glance toward Menard and the maid.

"There," he said, at length, "you may see the advantage of a reputation."

She looked at him, and, moved by the pathos underlying the words, could not, for the moment, reply.

"I once had a home in this village," he added. "It stood over there, in the bare spot near the beech tree." His eyes rested on the spot for a moment, then he turned back to the hut.

"M'sieu," she said shyly.

The little heap of flowers lay where she had dropped them; and, taking them up, she arranged them hastily and held them out. "Won't you take them?"

He looked at her, a little surprised, then held out his hand.

"Why,--thank you. I don't know what I can do with them."

They walked back together.

"You must wear some of the daisies, Mademoiselle. They will look well."

She looked down at her torn, stained dress, and laughed softly; but took the white cluster he gave her, and thrust the stems through a tattered bit of lace on her breast.

Menard was plainly relieved by the incident. He had been worn near to despair, facing a difficulty which seemed every moment farther from a solution; and now he turned to her fresh, light mood as to a refuge.

"We must put these in water, Mademoiselle, or they will soon lose their bloom."

"If we had a cup--?"

"A cup? A woodsman would laugh at your question. There is the spring, here is the birch; what more could you have?"

"You mean--?"

"We will make a cup,--if you will hold the flowers. They are beautiful, Mademoiselle. No nation has such hills and lakes and flowers as the Iroquois. The Hurons boast of their lake country,--and the Sacs and Foxes, too, though they have a duller eye for the picturesque. See--the valley yonder--" He pointed through a rift in the foliage to the league-long glimpse of green, bound in by the gentle hills that rose beyond--"even to the tired old soldier there is nothing more beautiful, more peaceful."

He peeled a long strip of bark from the birch tree, and rolled it into a cup. "Your needle and thread, Mademoiselle,--if they have not taken them."

"No; I have everything here."

She got her needle, and under his direction stitched the edges of the bark.

"But it will leak, M'sieu."

He laughed. "The tree is the Indian's friend, Mademoiselle. Now it is a pine tree that we need. The guards will tell me of one."

He walked over to the little group of warriors still at their game of platter,--the one never-ceasing recreation of the Onondagas, at which they would one day gamble away blankets, furs, homes, even squaws, only to win them back on the next. They looked at him suspiciously when he questioned them; but he was now as light of heart as on the day, a few weeks earlier, when he had leaned on the balcony of the citadel at Quebec, idly watching the river. He smiled at them, and after a parley the maid saw one tall brave point to a tree a few yards farther in the wood. They followed him closely with their eyes until he was back within the space allowed him.

"Now, Mademoiselle, we can gum the seams,--see? It is so easy. The cold water will harden it."

They went together to the spring and filled the cup, first drinking each a draught. He rolled a large stone to the hut door, and set the cup on it.

"Oh, Mademoiselle, it will not stand. I am not a good workman, I fear. But then, it is not often in a woodsman's life that he keeps flowers at his door. We must have some smaller stones to prop it up."

"I will get them, M'sieu." In spite of his protests she ran out to the path and brought some pebbles. "Now we have decorated our home." She sat upon the ground, leaning against the log wall, and smiling up at him. "Sit down, M'sieu. I am tired of being solemn, we have been solemn so long."

Already the heaviness was coming back on the Captain. He wondered, as he looked at her, if she knew how serious their situation was. It hardly seemed that she could understand it, her gay mood was so genuine. She glanced up again, and at the sight of the settling lines about his mouth and the fading sparkle in his eyes, her own eyes, while the smile still hovered, grew moist.

"I am sorry," she said softly,--"very, very sorry."

He sat near by, and fingered the flowers in the birch cup. They were both silent. Finally she spoke.

"M'sieu."

He looked down.

"It may be that you think that--that I do not understand. It is not that, M'sieu. But when I think about it, and the sadness comes, I know, some way, that it is going to come out all right. We are prisoners, but other people have been prisoners, too. I have heard of many of them from Father Dumont. He himself has suffered among the Oneidas. I--I cannot believe it, even when it seems the darkest."

"I hope you are right, Mademoiselle. I, too, have felt that there must be a way. And at the worst, they will not dare to hurt Father Claude and--you." And under his breath he added, "Thank God."

"They will not dare to hurt you, M'sieu. They must not do it." She rose and stood before him. "When I think of that,--that you, who have done so much that I might be safe, are in danger, I feel that it would be cowardly for me to go away without you. You would not have left me, on the river. I know you would have died without a thought. And I--if anything should happen, M'sieu; if Father Claude and I should be set free, and--without you--I could never put it from my thoughts. I should always feel that I--that you--no no, M'sieu. They cannot do it."

She shook away a tear, and looked at him with an honest, fearless gaze. It was the outpouring of a grateful heart, true because she herself was true, because she could not accept his care and sacrifice without a thought of what she owed him.

"You forget," he said gently, "that it was not your fault. They could have caught me as easily if you had not been there. It is a soldier's chance, Mademoiselle. He must take what life brings, with no complaint. It is the young man's mistake to be restless, impatient. For the rest of us, why, it is our life."

"But, M'sieu, you are not discouraged? You have not given up?"

"No, I have not given up." He rose and looked into her eyes. "I have come through before; I may again. If I am not to get through, I shall fight them till I drop. And then, I pray God, I may die like a soldier."

He turned away and went into the hut. He was in the hardest moment of his trial. It was the inability to fight, the lack of freedom, of weapons, the sense of helplessness, that had come nearer to demoralizing Menard than a hundred battles. He had been trusted with the life of a maid, and, more important still, with the Governor's orders. He was, it seemed, to fail.

The maid stood looking after him. She heard him drop to the ground within. Then she roamed aimlessly about, near the building.

Father Claude came up the path, walking slowly and wearily, and entered the hut. A moment later Menard appeared in the doorway and called:--

"Mademoiselle." As she approached, he said gravely, "I should like it if you will come in with us. It is right that you should have a voice in our councils."

She followed him in, wondering.

"Father Claude has news," Menard said.

The priest told them all that he had been able to learn. Runners had been coming in during the night at intervals of a few hours. They brought word of the landing of the French column at La Famine. The troops had started inland toward the Seneca villages. The Senecas were planning an ambush, and meanwhile had sent frantic messages to the other tribes for aid. The Cayuga chiefs were already on the way to meet in council with the Onondagas. The chance that the attack might be aimed only at the Senecas, to punish them for their depredations of the year before, had given rise to a peace sentiment among the more prudent Onondagas and Cayugas, who feared the destruction of their fields and villages. Up to the present, none had known where the French would strike. But, nevertheless, said the priest, the general opinion was favourable to taking up the quarrel with the Senecas.

Further, the French were leaving a rearguard of four hundred men in a hastily built stockade at La Famine, and the more loose-tongued warriors were already talking of an attack on this force, cutting the Governor's communications, and then turning on him from the rear, leaving it to the Senecas to engage him in front.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WORD OF AN ONONDAGA.

For a long time after Father Claude had finished speaking, the three sat talking over the situation. Even the maid had suggestions. But when all had been said, when the chances of a rescue by the French, or of getting a hearing before the council, even of a wild dash for liberty, had been gone over and over, their voices died away, and the silence was eloquent. D'Orvilliers would know that only capture could have prevented them from reaching the fort; but even

supposing him to believe that they were held by the Onondagas, he had neither the men nor the authority to fight through the Cayuga lakes and hills to reach them. As for the Governor's column, it would have its hands full before marching ten leagues from La Famine. Had Menard been alone, he would have made the attempt to escape, knowing from the start that the chance was near to nothing, but glad of the opportunity at least to die fighting. But with Mademoiselle to delay their progress, and to suffer his fate if captured, it was different. As matters stood, she was likely to be released with Father Claude, as soon as he should be disposed of. And so his mind had settled on staying, and dying, if he must, alone.

"I have not known whether to tell all," said Father Claude, after the silence. "And yet it would seem that Mademoiselle may as well know the truth now as later."

"You have not told me?" she said, with reproach in her voice. "Must I always be a child to you, Father? If God has seen it best to place me here, am I not to help bear the burden?"

"Mademoiselle is right, Father. Hold nothing back. Three stout hearts are better than two."

The priest looked gravely at the fire.

"The word has gone out," he said. "The Long Arrow, by his energy and his eloquence, but most of all because he had the courage to capture the Big Buffalo in the enemy's country with but a score of braves, now controls the village. To-morrow night the great council will begin. The war chiefs of all the Cayuga and Onondaga and Oneida and Mohawk villages will meet here and decide whether to take up the hatchet against the white men. The Long Arrow well knows that his power will last only until the greater chiefs come, and he will have his revenge before his day wanes."

"When?" asked the Captain.

"To-morrow morning, M'sieu. The feasting and dancing will begin to-night."

The maid was looking at the priest. "I do not understand," she said. "What will he do?"

"He means me, Mademoiselle," said the Captain, quietly.

"Not--" she said, "not--"

"Yes," he replied. "They will bring us no food to-night. In the morning they will come for me."

"Oh, M'sieu, they cannot! They--" She gazed at him, not heeding the tears that suddenly came to her eyes and fell down upon her cheeks; and, as she looked, she understood what was in his mind. "Why do you not escape, M'sieu? There is yet time,--to-night! You are thinking of me, and I--I--Oh, I have been selfish--I did not know! We will stay here, Father Claude and I. You need not think of us; they will not harm us--you told me that yourself, M'sieu. I should be in your way, but alone--it is so easy." She would have gone on, but Menard held up his hand.

"No," he said, shaking his head, "no."

Her lips moved, but she saw the expression in his eyes, and the words died. She turned to Father Claude, but he did not look up.

"I do not know," said Menard, slowly, "whether the heart of the Big Throat is still warm toward me. He was once as my father."

"He will not be here in time," Father Claude said. "He does not start from his village until the sun is dropping on the morrow."

The maid could not take her eyes from Menard's face. Now that the final word had come, now that all the doubts of the unsettled day, now only half gone, had settled into a fact to be faced, he was himself again, the quiet, resolute soldier. Only the set, almost hard lines about the mouth told of his suffering.

"If we had a friend here," he was saying, quietly enough, "it may be that Tegakwita--But no, of course not. I had forgotten about Danton--"

"Tegakwita has lost standing in the tribe for allowing Lieutenant Danton to escape. He is very bitter, We can ask nothing from him."

"No, I suppose not."

The cool air of these two men, the manner in which they could face the prospect, coupled with her own sense of weakness, weighed hard upon the maid's heart. She felt that she must cry out, must in some manner give way to her feelings. She rose and hurried into the open air. The broad sunlight was still sifting down through the leaves and lying upon the green earth in bright patches. The robins were singing, and many strange birds, whose calls she did not know, but who piped gently, musically, so in harmony with the soft landscape that their notes seemed a part of it. It was all unreal, this quiet, sunlit world, where the birds were free as the air which bore their songs, while the brave Captain--she could not face the thought.

The birch cup was still on the stone by the door. She lifted out the flowers with their dripping stems, and rearranged them carefully, placing a large yellow daisy in the centre.

An Indian was approaching up the path. He had thrown aside his blanket, and he strode rapidly, clad in close-fitting jacket and leggings of deerskin, with knife and hatchet slung at his waist. He came straight to the hut and entered, brushing by her without a glance. Just as he passed she recognized him. He was Tegakwita. Her fear of these stern warriors had suddenly gone, and she followed him into the doorway to hear his errand. Menard greeted him with a nod; Father Claude, too, was silent.

"The White Chief, the Big Buffalo, has a grateful heart," said the Indian, in cutting tones. She was glad that she could understand him. She took a flower from the bunch at her breast, and stood motionless in the low doorway, pulling the petals apart, one by one and watching the little group within. The priest and the Captain were sitting on the ground, Menard with his hands clasped easily about his knees. Tegakwita stood erect, with his back to the door. "He feels the love of a brother for those who would make sacrifices for him," he went on. "It was many years ago that he saved Tegakwita from the perils of the hunt. Tegakwita has not forgotten. When the White Chief became a captive, he had not forgotten. He has lost his brave name as a warrior because he believed in the White Chief. He has lost--" his voice grew tremulous with the emotion that lay underneath the words--"He has lost his sister, whom he sent to be a sister to the white man and his squaw."

"My brother speaks strangely," said Menard, looking up at him half suspiciously.

"Yes, it is strange." His voice was louder, and in his excitement he dropped the indirect form of speech that, in the case of an older warrior, would have concealed his feelings. "It is strange that you should send my sister, who came to you in trust, to release the white brave. It is strange you should rob me of her whom my father placed by my side."

Menard and Father Claude looked at each other. The Indian watched them narrowly.

"My son is mistaken," said Father Claude, quietly. "His sister has wandered away. It may be that she has even now returned."

"No, my Father. The white brave has stolen her."

Menard got up, and spoke with feeling.

"Tegakwita does not understand. The white brave was foolish. He is a young warrior. He does not know the use of patience. He first escaped against my orders. The word I sent by your sister was a command to be patient. He went alone, my brother. He has gone forever from my camp. It cannot be that she--"

"The Big Buffalo speaks lies. Who came to cut the white brave's bonds? Who stole the hunting coat, the leggings of Tegakwita, that her lover might go free? Who has dishonoured herself, her brother, the father that--" Words failed him, and he stood facing them with blazing eyes.

Menard glanced at the maid, but she had passed the point where a shock could sway her, and now stood quietly at the door, waiting to hear what more the warrior would say. But he stood motionless. Father Claude touched his arm.

"If this is true, Tegakwita, the Big Buffalo must not be held to blame. He has spoken truly. To talk in these words to the man who has been your brother, is the act of a dog. You have forgotten that the Big Buffalo never speaks lies."

The Indian gave no heed to his words. He took a step forward, and raised his hand to his knife. Menard smiled contemptuously, and spread out his hands; he had no weapon. But Tegakwita had a second thought, and dropped his hand.

"Tegakwita, too, never speaks lies," he said. "He will come back before the sun has come again."

He walked rapidly out, crowding roughly past the maid.

Menard leaned against the wall. "Poor boy!" he said, "poor boy!"

The maid came slowly in, and sat on the rude bench which leaned against the logs near the door. The strain of the day was drawing out all the strength, the womanhood, that lay behind her buoyant youth. Already the tan was fading from her face, here in the hut and under the protecting elms; and the whiteness of her skin gave her, instead of a worn appearance, the look of an older woman,--firmer, with greater dignity. Her eyes had a deeper, fuller understanding.

"I suppose that there is nothing, M'sieu--nothing that we can do?"

Menard shook his head. "No; nothing."

"And the Indian,--he says that he will come back?"

"Yes. I don't know what he means. It doesn't matter."

"No, I suppose it doesn't."

They were silent for a moment. The maid leaned forward. "What was that, M'sieu?"

"Loungers, on the path."

"No, they are coming here."

Menard rose, but she stepped to the door. "Let me go, M'sieu. Ah, I see them. It is my little friends." She went out, and they could hear her laughing with the two children, and trying to coax them toward the door.

"Danton will never get away," said the Captain, in a low tone to the priest.

"I fear not, M'sieu."

"He has lost his head, poor boy. I thought him of better stuff. And the girl--Ah, if he had only gone alone! I could forgive his rashness, Father, his disobedience, if only he could go down with a clear name."

"There is still doubt," said the priest, cautiously. "We know only what Tegakwita said."

"I'm afraid," Menard replied, shaking his head, "I'm afraid it's true. You said he wore the hunting clothes. Some one freed him. And the girl is gone. I wish--Well, there is no use. I hoped for something better, that is all."

Just outside the door the maid was talking gaily with the two children, who now and then raised their piping voices. Then it was evident that they were going away, for she was calling after them. She came into the hut, smiling, and carrying a small willow basket full of corn.

"See," she said, "even now it is something to have made a friend. We shall not go hungry to-day, after all. Will you partake, Father? And M'sieu?"

She paused before the Captain. He had stepped forward, and was staring at her.

"Where are they?" he asked.

"The children? They are wandering along the path."

"Quick, Mademoiselle! Call them back."

She hesitated, in surprise; then set the basket on the ground and obeyed. Menard paced the floor until she returned.

"They are outside, M'sieu, too frightened to come near."

"Give me that birch cup, outside the door." He was speaking in quick, low tones. "They must not see me. It would frighten them."

She brought him the cup, and he emptied the flowers on the floor, tearing open the seams, and drying the wet white bark on his sleeve. He snatched a charred coal from the heap of ashes in the centre of the floor, and wrote rapidly in a strange mixture of words and signs, "A piece of thread, Mademoiselle. And look again--see that they have not gone."

"They are waiting, M'sieu."

He rolled the bark tightly, and tied it with the thread which she brought from her bundle.

"We must have a present. Father Claude, you have your bale. Find something quickly,--something that will please them. No, wait--Mademoiselle, have you a mirror? They would run fifty leagues for a mirror."

She nodded, rummaged through her bundle, and brought out a small glass.

"Take this, Mademoiselle. Tell them to give this letter to the Big Throat, at the next village. They will know the way. He must have it before the day is over. No harm can come to them. If anyone would punish them, the Big Throat will protect them. You must make them do it. They cannot fail."

Her face flushed, and her eyes snapped as she caught his nervous eagerness. Even Father Claude had risen, and was watching him with kindling eyes. She took the roll and the mirror, and ran out the door. In a moment, Menard, pacing the floor, could hear her merry laugh, and the shrill-voiced delight of the children over their new toy. He caught the priest's hand.

"Father, we shall yet be free. Who could fail with such a lieutenant as that maid. How she laughs. One would think she had never a care."

At last she came back, and sank, with a nervous, irresponsible little laugh, on the bench. And then, for the moment, they all three laughed together.

In the silence that followed, Father Claude moved toward the door.

"I must go out again, M'sieu. It may be that there is further word."

"Very well, Father. And open your ears for news of the poor boy."

The priest bowed, and went out. Menard stood in the door watching him, as he walked boldly along the path. After a little he turned. The maid was looking at him, still flushed and smiling.

"Well, Mademoiselle, we can take hope again."

"You are so brave, M'sieu."

He smiled at her impulsiveness, and looked at her, hardly conscious that he was causing her to blush and lower her eyes.

"And so I am brave, Mademoiselle? It may be that Major Provost and Major d'Orvilliers will not feel so."

"But they must, M'sieu."

"Do you know what they will say? They will speak with sorrow of Captain Menard, the trusted, in whose hands Governor Denonville placed the most important commission ever given to a captain in New France. They will regret that their old friend was not equal to the test; that he--ah, do not interrupt, Mademoiselle; it is true--that his failure lost a campaign for New France. You heard Father Claude; you know what these Indians plan to do."

"You must not speak so, M'sieu. It is wicked. He would be a coward who could blame you. It was not your fault that you were captured. When I return I shall go to them and tell them how you fought, and how you faced them like--like a hero. When I return--" She stopped, as if the word were strange.

"Aye, Mademoiselle, and God grant that you may return soon. But your good heart leads you wrong. It was my fault that I did not bring a force strong enough to protect myself,--and you. To

fight is not a soldier's first duty. It is to be discreet; he must know when not to fight as well as when to draw his sword; he must know how many men are needed to defend his cause. No; I was overconfident, and I lost. And there we must leave it. Nothing more can be said."

He stood moodily over the heap of ashes. When he looked at her again, she had risen.

"The flowers, M'sieu," she said, "you--you threw them away."

He glanced down. They lay at his feet. Silently he knelt and gathered them.

"Will you help me, Mademoiselle? We will make another cup. And these two large daisies,--did you see how they rested side by side on the ground when I would have trampled on them? You will take one and I the other; and when this day shall be far in the past, it may be that you will remember it, and how we two were here together, waiting for the stroke that should change life for us."

He held it out, and she, with lowered eyes, reached to take it from his hand, but suddenly checked the motion and turned to the door.

"Will you take it, Mademoiselle?"

She did not move; and he stood, the soldier, helpless, waiting for a word. He had forgotten everything,--the low, smoke-blackened hut, the responsibility that lay on his shoulders, the danger of the moment,--everything but the slender maid who stood before him, who would not take the flower from his hand. Then he stepped to her side, and, taking away the other flowers from the lace beneath her throat, he placed the single daisy in their stead. Her eyes were nearly closed, and she seemed hardly to know that he was there.

"And it may be," he whispered softly, "that we, like the flowers, shall be spared."

She turned slowly away, and sank upon the bench. Menard, with a strange, new lightness in his heart, went out into the sunlight.

The day wore on. The warm sunbeams, that slipped down through the foliage, lengthened and reached farther and farther to the east. The bright spots of light crept across the grass, climbed the side of the hut and the tree-trunks, lingered on the upreaching twigs, and died away in the blue sky. The evening star shot out its white spears, glowing and radiant, long before the light had gone, or the purple and golden afterglow had faded into twilight. Menard's mind went back to another day, just such a glorious, shining June day as this had been, when he had sat not a hundred yards from this spot, waiting, as now, for the end. He looked at his fingers. They were scarred and knotted; one drunken, frenzied squaw had mangled them with her teeth. He had wondered then how a man could endure such torture as had come to him, and still could live and think, could even struggle back to health. The depression had gone from him now; his mind was more alert than since the night of the capture. Whether it was the bare chance of help from the Big Throat, or the gentle sadness in the face of the maid as she bowed her head to the single daisy on her breast,--something had entered into his nerves and heart, something hopeful and strong. He wondered, as Father Claude came up the path, slowly, laboriously, why the priest should be so saddened. After all, the world was green and bright, and life, even a few hours of it, was sweet.

"What news, Father?"

The priest shook his head. "Little, M'sieu."

"Has the feast begun?"

"Not yet. They are assembling before the Long House."

"Are they drinking?"

"Yes."

There was no need for talk, and so the two men sat before the hut, with only an idle word now and then, until the dark came down. The quiet of the village was broken now by the shouts of drinking warriors, with a chanting undertone that rose and swelled slowly into the song that would continue, both men knew, until the break of day, or until none was left with sober tongue to carry the wavering air. A great fire had been lighted, and they could see the glare and the sparks beyond a cluster of trees and huts. Later, straggling braves appeared, wandering about, bottle or flask in hand, crazed by the raw brandy with which the English and Dutch of New York and Orange and the French of the province alike saw fit to keep the Indians supplied.

A group of the warriors came from the dance, and staggered toward the hut of the captives. They were armed with knives and hatchets. One had an arquebuse, which he fired at the trees as often as the uncertain hands of all of them could load it. He caught sight of the white men sitting in the shadow, and came toward them, his fellows at his heels.

"Move nearer the door," whispered Menard. "They must not get in."

The two edged along the ground without rising, until they sat with their backs in the open doorway. The Indians hung about, a few yards away, jeering and shouting. The one with the arquebuse evidently wished to shoot, but the others were holding his arms, and reasoning in thick voices. No construction of the Iroquois traditions could make it right to kill a prisoner who was held for the torture.

The white men watched them quietly. Menard heard a rustle, and the sound of a quick breath behind him, and he said, without taking his eyes from the Indians:--

"Step back, Mademoiselle, behind the wall. You must not stand here."

The warrior broke away from the hands that held him, staggering a rod across the grass before he could recover his balance. The others went after him, but he quickly rested the piece and fired. The ball went over their heads through the doorway, striking with a low noise against the rear wall. Menard rose, jerking away from the priest's restraining hand.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "you are not hurt?"

"No, M'sieu."

"Thank God!" He stood glaring at the huddled band of warriors, who were trying to reload the arquebuse; then he bounded forward, broke into the group with a force that sent two to the ground, snatched the weapon, and, with a quick motion, drew out the flint. He threw the gun on the ground, and walked back to his seat.

Two of the guards came running forward. They had not been drinking, and one of them ordered the loafers away. This did not strike them amiss. They started off, trying to reload as they walked, evidently not missing the flint.

The maid came again to the doorway, and asked timidly:--

"Is there danger for you, M'sieu? Will they come back?"

"No. It is merely a lot of drunken youths. They have probably forgotten by now. Can you sleep, Mademoiselle?--have you tried?"

"No, I--I fear that I could not."

"It would be well to make the effort," he said gently, looking over his shoulder at her as she leaned against the doorpost. "We do not know what may happen. At any rate, even if you escape, you will need all your strength on the morrow. A fallen captain may not command, Mademoiselle, but--"

"If it is your command, M'sieu, I will try. Good night."

There was a long stillness, broken only by the distant noises of the dance.

"You, too, will sleep, M'sieu?" said Father Claude. "I will watch."

"No, no, Father."

"I beg it of you. At the least you will let me divide the night with you?"

"We shall see, we shall see. There is much to be said before either of us closes his eyes. Hello, here is a runner."

An Indian was loping up the path. He turned in toward the hut.

"Quiet," said the priest. "It is Tegakwita."

The warrior had run a long way. He was breathing deeply, and the sweat stood out on his face and caught the shine of the firelight.

"My brother has been far," said Menard, rising.

"The White Chief is not surprised? He heard the word of Tegakwita, that he would return before another sun. He has indeed been far. He has followed the track of the forest wolf that stole the child of the Onondagas. He has found the bold, the brave white warrior, who stole away in the night, robbing Tegakwita of what is dearer to him than the beating of his heart."

The maid stood again in the doorway, resting a hand on the post, and leaning forward with startled eyes.

"He has found--he has found him--" she faltered.

The Indian did not look at her. He drew something from the breast of his shirt, and threw it on the ground at Menard's feet. Then, with broken-hearted dignity, he strode away and disappeared in the night.

Father Claude stooped, and picked up the object. Dimly in the firelight they could see it,--two warm human scalps, the one of brown hair knotted to the other of black. Menard took them in his hand.

"Poor boy!" he said, over and over. "Poor boy!"

He looked toward the door, but the maid had gone inside.

CHAPTER X.

A NIGHT COUNCIL.

The night crept by, as had the day, wearily.

The two men sat in the doorway or walked slowly back and forth across the front of the hut,

saying little. The Captain was calling to mind every incident of their capture, and of the original trouble between La Grange and the hunting party. He went over the conversation with Major Provost at Quebec word by word, until he felt sure in his authority as the Governor's representative; although the written orders in the leather bag that hung from his neck were concerned only with his duties in preparing Fort Frontenac for the advancing column,—duties that he had not fulfilled.

A plan was forming in his mind which would make strong demands on the good faith of Major Provost and the Governor. He knew, as every old soldier knows, that governments and rulers are thankless, that even written authority is none too binding, if to make it good should inconvenience those who so easily give it. He knew further that if he should succeed now in staying the Onondagas and Cayugas by pledges which, perchance, it might not please Governor Denonville to observe, the last frail ties that held the Iroquois to the French would be broken, and England would reign from the Hudson to the river of the Illinois. And he sighed, as he had sighed many times before, for the old days under Frontenac, under the only Governor of New France who could hold these slippery redskins to their obligations.

"Father," he said finally, "I begin to see a way."

"The Big Throat?"

"He must help, though to tell the truth I fear that he will be of little service. He may come in time to give us a stay; but, chief though he is, he will hardly dare overrule the Long Arrow on a matter so personal as this."

"What is the Long Arrow's family--the Beaver?"

"Yes."

"But, M'sieu, that is the least of the eight families. If it were the Tortoise or the Bear against us, we should have greater cause for fear."

"True, Father, but to each family belongs its own quarrels, its own revenge. If the Big Throat should interfere too deeply, it would anger the other small families, who might fear the same treatment at some other time. And with Beaver, Snipe, Deer, and Potato united against us,—well, it is a simple enough problem."

They were walking by the door, and Menard, as he spoke, sat on the stone which he had rolled there in the afternoon. The priest stood before him.

"I hope we may succeed, my son. I have seen this anger before, and it has always ended in the one way."

"Of course," the Captain replied, "it does depend on the Big Throat. He must reach here in time."

"God grant that he may!"

"In that case, Father, I look for a delay. Unless his heart has hardened rapidly, he still thinks of me. Together we will go to him, and ask a hearing in the war council."

"Oratory will not release us, I fear, M'sieu."

"We shall not ask to be released, Father. Don't you understand? It is more than that we shall demand,—it is peace with New France, the safety of the column—"

The priest's eyes lighted. "Do you think, M'sieu--"

"We can do it. They have not heard all the truth. They do not want a long war which will kill their braves and destroy their homes and their corn. It is this attack on the Senecas that has drawn them out."

"You will tell them that the Governor fights only the Senecas?"

"More than that. The La Grange affair has stirred them up. It has weakened their faith in the Governor,—it has as good as undone all the work of twenty years past. Our only hope is to reestablish that faith."

"I hope that we may," said the priest, slowly. "But they have reached a state now where words alone will hardly suffice. I have tried it, M'sieu. Since we came, I have talked and reasoned with them."

"Well, Father, I am going to try it. The question is, will the Governor make good what I shall have to promise? It may be that he will. If not,—then my life will not be worth a box of tinder if I stray a league from Quebec without a guard." He looked down at the daisy on his coat. "But the maid will be safe, Father. She will be safe."

"I do not believe that they would harm her, even as it is."

"No, I trust not—I trust not. But we are here, and she is here; and not until I know that her journey is over will my eyes close easily at night."

"But your plan, M'sieu,—you have not told me."

"Ah, I thought you understood. Did you know about the capture at Frontenac when it happened? No? It was like this. The Governor sent word, with the orders that came up to the fort in May, that at the first sign of trouble or disturbance with the Indians there, d'Orvilliers should seize a few score of them and send them down the river in chains. It would be an example, he said. I was awaiting orders,—I had just returned from the Huron Country and Michillimackinac,—and

d'Orvilliers called me to his rooms and showed me the order. 'Now,' he said, 'who in the devil is meddling at Quebec?' I did not know; I do not know yet. But there was the order. He turned it over to La Grange, with instructions to wait until some offence should give him an excuse."

"I know the rest, M'sieu."

"Yes, yes. You have heard a dozen times,--how La Grange was drinking, and how he lied to a peaceful hunting party, and drugged them, and brained one poor devil with his own sword. And what could we do, Father? Right or wrong, the capture was made. It was too late to release them, for the harm was done. If d'Orvilliers had refused to carry out his orders and send them to Quebec, it would have cost him his commission."

"And you, M'sieu?"

"I was the only officer on detached service at the Fort. D'Orvilliers could not look me in the face when he ordered me to take them."

"You will tell them this?"

"This? Yes, and more. I will pledge the honour of New France that La Grange shall suffer. The man who has betrayed the Onondagas must be punished before we can have their good faith. Don't you understand?"

Father Claude walked away a few steps, and then back, his hands clasped before him.

"Don't you understand, Father? If a wrong has been done an Iroquois, it is revenge that will appease him. Very well. Captain la Grange has wronged them; let them have their revenge."

"Is that the right view, M'sieu?"

"Not for us, Father,--for you and me. To us it is simple justice. But justice,--that is not the word with which to reach an Indian."

"But it may be that Captain la Grange is in favour at Quebec. What then?"

"You do not seem to understand me yet, Father." Menard spoke slowly and calmly. "This is not my quarrel. I can take what my life brings, and thank your God, the while, that I have life at all. But if by one foolish act the Iroquois are to be lost to France, while I have the word on my tongue that will set all right, am I,--well, would you have me such a soldier?"

The priest was looking through the leaves at the firelight. For once he seemed to have nothing to offer.

"It will not be easy, Father; but when was a soldier's work easy? First I must make these Indians believe me,--and you know how hard that will be. Then I must convince Governor Denonville that this is his only course; and that will be still harder. Or, if they will not release me, you will be my messenger, Father, and take the word. I will stay here until La Grange has got his dues."

"Let us suppose," said the priest,--"let us suppose that you did not do this, that you did not take this course against Captain la Grange which will leave him a marked man to the Iroquois, even if the Governor should do nothing."

"Then," said Menard, "the rear-guard at La Famine will be butchered, and the army of New France will be cut to pieces. That is all."

"You are sure of this?"

"It points that way, Father."

"Then let us take another case. Suppose that you succeed at the council, that you are released. Then if the Governor should disclaim responsibility, should--"

"Then, Father, I will go to La Grange and make him fight me. I mean to pledge my word to these chiefs. You know what that means."

"Yes," replied the priest, "yes." He seemed puzzled and unsettled by some thought that held his mind. He walked slowly about, looking at the ground. Menard, too, was restless. He rose from the stone and tossed away the pebbles that had supported the cup, one at a time.

"They are singing again," he said, listening to the droning chant that came indistinctly through the dark. "One would think they would long ago have been too drunk to stand. How some of these recruits the King sends over to us would envy them their stomachs."

The priest made no reply. He did not understand the impulse that led the Captain to speak irrelevantly at such a moment.

"I suppose the doctors are dancing now," Menard continued. "It may be that they will come here. If they do, we shall have a night of it."

"We will hope not, M'sieu."

"If they should, Father,--well, it is hard to know just what to do."

"You were thinking--?"

"Oh, I was wondering. If they come here, and let their wild talk run away with them, it might be well to fight them off until morning. Maybe we could do it."

"Yes, it might seem best."

"But if--if the Big Throat should not come, or should have changed, then it would have been better that I had submitted."

"You are thinking of me, my son. You must not. I will not leave you to go without a struggle. I can fight, if needs be, as well as you. I will do my part."

"It is not that, Father. But if we fight, and the Big Throat does not come,--there is the maid. They would not spare her then."

The priest looked at the Captain, and in the dim, uncertain light he saw something of the thought that lay behind those wearied eyes.

"True," he said; "true."

Menard walked up and down, a half-dozen steps forward, a half-dozen back, without a glance at the priest, who watched him closely. Suddenly he turned, and the words that were in his mind slipped unguarded from his tongue, low and stern:--

"If they come, Father,--if they harm her,--God! if they even wake her, I will kill them."

Father Claude looked at him, but said nothing. They walked together up and down; then, as if weary, they sat again by the door.

"There are some things which I could not talk over with you," said the priest, finally. "It was best that I should not. And now I hardly know what is the right thing for me to do, or to say."

"What troubles you?"

"When you are cooler, it will come to you. For to-night,--until our last moment of choice,--I must ask one favour, M'sieu. You will not decide on this course until it comes to the end. You will think of other ways; you will--"

"What else have I been doing, Father? There is no other way."

"But you will not decide yet?"

"No. We need not, to-night."

The priest seemed relieved.

"M'sieu," came in a low voice from the darkness within the hut, "may I not sit with you?"

"You are awake, Mademoiselle? You have not been sleeping?"

"No, I could not. I--I have not heard you, M'sieu,--I have not listened. But I wanted to very much. I have only my thoughts, and they are not the best of company to-night."

"Come." Menard rose and got one of the priest's blankets, folding it and laying it on the ground against the wall. "I fear that we may be no better than the thoughts; but such as we are, we are at the service of Mademoiselle."

She sat by them, and leaned back, letting her hands fall into her lap. Menard was half in the shadow, and he could let his eyes linger on her face. It was a sad face now, worn by the haunting fears that the night had brought,--fears that had not held their substance in the sunlight; but the eyes were still bright. Even at this moment she had not forgotten to catch up the masses of hair that were struggling to be free; and there was a touch of neatness about her torn dress that the hardships of the journey and the dirt and discomforts of an Indian shelter had not been able to take away. They all three sat without talking, watching the sparks from the fire and the tips of flame that now and then reached above the huts.

"How strange their song is, M'sieu."

"Yes. They will keep it up all night. If we were nearer, you would see that as soon as a brave is exhausted with the dancing and singing, another will rush in to take his place. Sometimes they fall fainting, and do not recover for hours."

"I saw a dance once, at home. The Ottawas--there were but a few of them--had a war-dance. It seemed to be just for amusement."

"They enjoy it. It is not uncommon for them to dance for a day when there is no hunt to occupy them."

Father Claude had been silent. Now he rose and walked slowly away, leaving them to talk together. They could see him moving about with bowed head.

"The Father is sad, M'sieu."

"Yes. But it is not for himself."

"Does he fear now? Does he not think that the Big Throat will come?"

"I think he will come."

The maid looked down at her clasped hands. Menard watched her,--the firelight was dancing on her face and hair,--and again the danger seemed to slip away, the chant and the fire to be a part of some mad dream that had carried him in a second from Quebec to this deep-shadowed spot, and had set this maid before him.

"You are wearing the daisy, Mademoiselle."

She looked up, half-startled at the change in his voice. Then her eyes dropped again.

"See," he continued, "so am I. Is it not strange that we should be here, you and I. And yet, when I first saw you, I thought--"

"You thought, M'sieu?"

Menard laughed gently. "I could not tell you, without telling you what I think now, and that would--be--"

He spoke half playfully, and waited; but she did not reply.

"I do not know what it is that has come to me. It is not like me. Or it may be that the soldier, all these years, has not been me. Would it not be strange if I were but now to find myself,--or if you were to find me, Mademoiselle? If it is true, if this is what I have waited so long to find, it would be many years before I could repay you for bringing it to me,--it would be a long lifetime."

Again he waited, and still she was silent. Then he talked on, as madly now as on the night of their capture, when he had fought, shouting, musket and knife in hand, at the water's edge. But this was another madness.

"It is such a simple thing. Until you came out here under the trees my mind was racked with the troubles about us. But now you are here, and I do not care,--no, not if this were to be my last night, if to-morrow they should--" She made a nervous gesture, but he went on.

"You see it is you, Mademoiselle, who come into my life, and then all the rest goes out."

"Don't," she said brokenly. "Don't."

Father Claude came slowly toward them.

"My child," he said, "if you are not too wearied, I wish to talk with you."

She rose with an air of relief and joined him. Menard watched them, puzzled. He could hear the priest speaking in low, even tones; and then the maid's voice, deep with emotion. Finally they came back, and she went hurriedly into the hut without a glance at the soldier, who had risen and stood by the door.

"Come, M'sieu, let us walk."

Menard looked at him in surprise, but walked with him.

"It is about the speech to the council--and Captain la Grange. It may be that you are right, M'sieu."

"Right? I do not understand."

"It was but a moment ago that we talked of it."

"Yes, I have not forgotten. But what do you mean now?"

"You promised me to wait before deciding. It may be that I was wrong. If you are to make the speech, you will need to prepare it carefully. There is none too much time."

"Yes," said Menard. Then suddenly he stopped and took the priest's arm. "I did not think, Father; I did not understand. What a fool I am!"

"No, no, M'sieu."

"You have talked with her. He is her cousin, and yet it did not come to me. It will pain her."

"Yes," said Father Claude, slowly, "it will pain her. But I have been thinking. I fear that you are right. It has passed beyond the simple matter of our own lives; now it is New France that must be thought of. You have said that it was Captain la Grange's treachery that first angered the Onondagas. We must lay this before them. If his punishment will satisfy them, will save the rear-guard, why then, my son, it is our duty."

They paced back and forth in silence. Menard's heavy breathing and his quick glances toward the hut told the priest something of the struggle that was going on in his mind. Suddenly he said:--

"I will go to her, Father. I will tell her. I cannot pledge myself to this act if--if she--"

"No, M'sieu, you must not; I have told her. She understands. And she has begged me to ask you not to speak with her. She has a brave heart, but she cannot see you now."

"She asked you,--" said the Captain, slowly. "She asked you--I cannot think. I do not know what to say."

The priest quietly walked back to the stone by the door, and left the soldier to fight out the battle alone. It was half an hour before he came back and stood before Father Claude.

"Well, M'sieu?"

Menard spoke shortly, "Yes, Father, you are right."

That was all, but it told the priest that the matter had been finally settled. He had seen the look in the Captain's eyes when the truth had come to him; and he knew now what he had not dreamed before, that the soldier's heart had gone out to this maid, and now he must set his hand against one of her own blood. The Father knew that he would do it, would fight La Grange to the end. A word was trembling on his tongue, but as he looked at the seamed face before him, he could not bring himself to add a deeper sorrow to that already stamped there.

"You must help me with the speech, Father. My wits are not at their best, I fear."

"Willingly, M'sieu. And the presents,--we must think of that."

"True. We have not the wampum collars. It must be something of great value that will take their place. You know how much tradition means to these people. Of course I have nothing. But you--you have your bale. And Mademoiselle--together you should find something."

"I fear that I have little. My blankets and my altar they would not value. One moment--" He stepped to the door, and spoke softly, "Mademoiselle."

"Yes, Father." She stood in the doorway, wearily. It was plain that she had been weeping, but she was not ashamed.

"We shall need your help, Mademoiselle. Anything in your bale that would please the chiefs must be used."

She was puzzled.

"It is the custom," continued the priest, "at every council. To the Indians a promise is not given, a statement is not true, a treaty is not binding, unless there is a present for each clause. We have much at stake, and we must give what we have."

"Certainly, Father."

She stepped back into the darkness, and they could hear her dragging the bundle. Menard sprang to help.

"Mademoiselle, where are you?"

"Here, M'sieu."

He walked toward the sound with his hands spread before him. One hand rested on her shoulder, where she stooped over the bale. She did not shrink from his touch. For a moment he stood, struggling with a mad impulse to take her slender figure in his arms, to hold her where a thousand Indians could not harm her save by taking his own strong life; to tell her what made this moment more to him than all the stern years of the past. It may be that she understood, for she was motionless, almost breathless. But in a moment he was himself.

"I will take it," he said.

He stooped, took up the bundle, and carried it outside. She followed to the doorway.

"You will look, Mademoiselle."

She nodded, and knelt by the bundle, while the two men waited.

"There is little here, M'sieu. I brought only what was necessary. Here is a comb. Would that please them?"

She reached back to them, holding out a high tortoise-shell comb. They took it and examined it.

"It is beautiful," said Menard.

"Yes; my mother gave it to me."

"Perhaps, Mademoiselle,--perhaps there is something else, something that would do as well."

"How many should you have, M'sieu?"

"Five, I had planned. There will be five words in the speech."

"Words?" she repeated.

"To the Iroquois each argument is a 'word.'"

"I have almost nothing else, not even clothing of value. Wait--here is a small coat of seal."

"And you, Father?" asked Menard.

"I have a book with highly coloured pictures, M'sieu,--'The Ceremonies of the Mass applied to the Passion of Our Lord.'"

"Splendid! Have you nothing else?"

"I fear not."

Menard turned to the maid, who was still on her knees by the open bundle, looking up at them.

"I am afraid that we must take your coat and the comb," he said. "I am sorry."

She answered in a low tone, but firmly: "You know, M'sieu, that it would hurt me to do nothing. It hurts me to do so little."

"Thank you, Mademoiselle. Well, Father, we must use our wits. It may be that four words will be enough, but I cannot use fewer. We have but three presents."

"Yes," replied the priest, "yes." He walked slowly by them, and about in a circle, repeating the word. The maid leaned back and watched him, wondering. He paused before the Captain and seemed about to speak. Then abruptly he went into the hut, and they could hear him moving within. Menard and the maid looked at each other, the soldier smiling quietly. He understood.

Father Claude came out holding the portrait of Catharine, the Lily of the Onondagas, in his hands.

"It may be that this could be used for the fourth present," he said.

Menard took it without a word, and laid it on the ground by the fur coat. The maid looked at it curiously.

"Oh, it is a picture," she said.

"Yes, Mademoiselle," the Captain replied. "It is the portrait of an Onondaga maiden who is to them, and to the French, almost a saint. They will prize this above all else."

The maid raised it, and looked at the strangely clad figure. Father Claude quietly walked away, but Menard went after and gripped his hand.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BIG THROAT SPEAKS.

The light of the rising sun struggled through the mist that lay on the Onondaga Valley. The trees came slowly out of the gray air, like ships approaching through a fog. As the sun rose higher, each leaf glistened with dew. The grass was wet and shining.

Menard had seized a few hours of sleep. He awoke with the first beam of yellow light, and rose from his bed on the packed, beaten ground before the door. Father Claude was sitting on a log, at a short distance, with bowed head. The Captain stretched his stiff limbs, and walked slowly about until the priest looked up.

"Good morning, Father."

"Good morning, M'sieu."

"It was a selfish thought that led me to choose the earlier watch. These last hours are the best for sleeping."

"No, I have rested well."

"And Mademoiselle?"

"I have heard no sound. I think that she still sleeps."

"Softly, then. There has been no disturbance?"

"None. The singing has died down during the last hour. There, you can hear it, M'sieu."

"Yes. But it is only a few voices. It must be that the others are sleeping off the liquor. They will soon awaken."

"Listen."

A musket was fired, and another.

"That is the signal."

The song, which one group after another had taken up all through the night, rose again and grew in volume as one at a time the sleepers aroused and joined the dance. The only sign of the fire was a pillar of thin smoke that rolled straight upward in the still air.

"Father," said Menard, "are the guards about?"

"I have not seen them. I suppose they are wandering within call."

"Then, quickly, before we are seen, help me with this log."

"I do not understand, M'sieu."

"Into the hut with it, and the others, there. If a chance does come,--well, it may be that we shall yet be reduced to holding the hut. These will serve to barricade the door."

They were not disturbed while they rolled the short logs within and piled them at one side of the door, where they could not be seen from the path.

"Quietly, Father," whispered the Captain. He knew that the maid lay sleeping, back among the shadows. "And the presents,--you have packed them away?"

"In my bundle, M'sieu. They will not be harmed."

They returned to the open air, and looked about anxiously for signs of a movement toward the hut; but the irregular street was silent. Here and there, from the opening in the roof of some low building of bark and logs, rose a light smoke.

"They are all at the dance," said Menard. His memory supplied the picture: the great fire, now sunk to heaps of gray ashes, spread over the ground by the feet of those younger braves who had wished to show their hardihood by treading barefoot on the embers; the circle of grunting figures, leaning forward, hatchet and musket in hand, moving slowly around the fire with a shuffling, hopping step; the outer circle of sitting or lying figures, men, women, and children, drunken, wanton, quarrelsome, dreaming of the blood that should be let before the sun had gone; and at one side the little group of old men, beating their drums of wood and skin with a rhythm that never slackened.

The song grew louder, and broke at short intervals into shouts and cries, punctuated with musket-shots.

"They are coming, M'sieu."

The head of the line, still stepping in the slow movement of the dance, appeared at some

distance up the path. The Long Arrow was in front, in full war-paint, and wearing the collar of wampum beads. Beside him was the Beaver. The line advanced, two and two, steadily toward the lodge of the white men.

Menard leaned against the door-post and watched them. His figure was relaxed, his face composed.

"Here are the doctors, Father."

A group of medicine men, wildly clad in skins of beasts and reptiles, with the heads of animals on their shoulders, came running along beside the line, leaping high in the air, and howling.

Menard turned to the priest. "Father, which shall it be,--shall we fight?"

"I do not know, M'sieu. We have no weapons, and it may be, yet, that the Big Throat--"

"Yes, I know."

"And there is the maid, M'sieu."

For the first time since the sunrise the quiet expression left the Captain's face. He was silent for a moment. Then he said:--

"I will go, Father. You must protect her. If anything--if they should dare to touch her, you will--?"

"I will fight them, M'sieu."

"Thank you." Menard held out his hand. They gripped in silence, and turned again toward the Indians, who were now but a hundred yards away.

"They will stop in a moment," said Menard, "and form for the gantlet. Yes,--see, the Long Arrow holds up his hands." He stood irresolute, looking at the fantastic picture; then he stepped back into the hut.

The maid lay in her blanket on the bench. He stood over her, looking at the peaceful face that rested on her outstretched arm. He took her hand, and said gently:--

"Mademoiselle."

She stirred, and slowly opened her eyes; she did not seem surprised that he should be there clasping tightly her slender hand. He wondered if he had been in her dreams.

"Good-bye, Mademoiselle."

"You--you are going, M'sieu?"

"Yes."

She looked up at him with half-dazed eyes. She was not yet fully awake.

"You must not fear," he said. "They cannot hurt you. You will soon be safe at--at Frontenac."

She was beginning to understand. Then all at once the light came into her eyes, and she clung to his arm, which was still wet with the dew.

"You are not going? They will not take you? Oh, M'sieu, I cannot--you must not!"

She would have said more, but he bent down and kissed her forehead. Then, with his free hand he unclasped her fingers and went away. At the door he turned. She was sitting on the bench, gazing after him with a look that he never forgot. For all of the unhappiness, the agony, that came to him from those eyes, it was with a lighter heart that he faced the warriors who rushed to seize him.

Every brave, woman, and child that the village could supply was in the double line that stretched away from a point on the path not a hundred yards distant to the long council house, which stood on a slight rise of ground. They were armed with muskets, clubs, knives,--with any instrument which could bruise or, mutilate the soldier as he passed, and yet leave life in him for the harder trials to follow. Five warriors, muskets in hand, had come to the hut. They sprang at Menard as he stepped out through the doorway, striking him roughly and holding his elbows behind his back.

A shout went up from the waiting lines, and muskets and clubs were waved in the air. The Captain stepped forward briskly with head erect, scorning to glance at the braves who walked on either side. He knew that they would not kill him in the gantlet; they would save him for the fire. He had passed through this once, he could do it again, conscious that every moment brought nearer the chance of a rescue by the Big Throat. Perhaps twenty paces had been covered, and his guardians were prodding him and trying to force him into a run, when he heard a shout from the priest, and then the sounds of a struggle at the hut. He turned his head, but a rude hand knocked it back. Again he heard the priest's voice, and this time, with it, a woman's scream.

The Captain hesitated for a second. The warriors prodded him again, and before they could raise their arms he had jerked loose, snatched a musket from one, and swinging it around his head, sent the two to the ground, one with a cracked skull. Before those in the lines could fairly see what had happened, he was running toward the hut with two captured muskets and a knife. In front of the hut the three other Indians were struggling with Father Claude, who was fighting in a frenzy, and the maid. She was hanging back, and one redskin had crushed her two wrists together in his hand and was dragging her.

Menard was on them with a leap. They did not see him until a musket whirled about their ears, and one man fell, rolling, at the maid's feet.

"Back into the hut!" he said roughly, and she obeyed. As he turned to aid the priest he called after her, "Pile up the logs, quick!"

She understood, and with the strength that came with the moment, she dragged the logs to the door.

Menard crushed down the two remaining Indians as he would have crushed wild beasts, without a glance toward the mob that was running at him, without a thought for the gash in his arm, made first by an arrow at La Galette and now reopened by a knife thrust. The Father, too, was wounded, but still he could fight. There was but a second more. The Captain threw the four muskets into the hut, and after them the powder-horns and bullet-pouches which he had barely time to strip from the dead men. Then he crowded the priest through the opening above the logs, and came tumbling after. Another second saw the logs piled close against the door, while a shower of bullets and arrows rattled against them.

"Take a musket, Father. Now, fire together! Quick, the others! Can you load these, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes." She reached for them, and poured the powder down the barrels.

"Not too much, Mademoiselle. We may run short."

"Yes, M'sieu."

To miss a mark in that solid mob would have been difficult. The first four shots brought down three men, and sent another limping away with a bleeding foot.

"Keep it up, Father! Don't wait an instant. Fast, Mademoiselle, fast! Ah, there's one more. See, they are falling back. Take the other wall, Father. See that they do not come from the rear."

The priest ran about the hut, peering through the chinks.

"I see nothing," he called.

"You had better stay there, then. Keep a close watch."

The maid laid two loaded muskets at the Captain's side.

"Can we hold them off, M'sieu?"

His eye was pressed to an opening, and he did not turn.

"I fear not, Mademoiselle. A few minutes more may settle it. But we can give them a fight."

"If they come again, will you let me shoot, M'sieu?"

He turned in surprise, and looked at her slight figure.

"You, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes; I can help. I have shot before."

He laughed, with the excitement of the moment, and nodded. Then they were silent. She knelt by his side and looked through another opening. The women and children had retreated well up the path. The warriors were crowded together, just out of range, talking and shouting excitedly. A moment later a number of these slipped to the rear and ran off between the huts.

"What does that mean, M'sieu? Will they come around behind?"

"Yes. Watch out, Father. You will hear from them soon."

"Very well, M'sieu. It will be hard. There are trees and bushes here for cover."

Menard shrugged his shoulders, and made no reply. Time was all he wished.

"If the Big Throat started with the first light, he should be here before another hour," he said to the maid, who was watching the Indians.

"Yes," she replied.

"Is there any corn in the basket, Mademoiselle?"

"I think so. I had forgotten."

"We shall need it. Wait; I will look."

He got the basket, and brought it to her.

"There is no time for cooking, but you had better eat what you can. And keep a close watch."

"Here, M'sieu." She spread her skirt, and he poured out half of the corn.

"You give me too much. You must not."

He laughed, and crossed to the priest, saying over his shoulder:--

"Mademoiselle is our new recruit. And the recruit must not complain of her food. I cannot allow it."

The moments passed with no sign of action along the line of redskins on the path. They were quieter since the flanking party had started. To Menard it was evident that a plan had been settled upon. In a like position, a dozen Frenchmen would have stormed the hut, knowing that only two or three could fall before they were under the shelter of the walls; but even a large

force of Indians was unwilling to take the chance.

"Father," called the Captain, "it may be better for you to take the doorway. Mademoiselle and I will watch the forest."

"Very well, M'sieu."

The exchange was made rapidly.

"Will you look out at the sides, as well?" Menard said to her. "Keep moving about, and using all the openings. There are too many chances for approach here."

"If I see one, shall I shoot, M'sieu?"

He smiled. "You had better tell me first."

She stepped briskly about, peering through the chinks with an alert eye. Menard found it hard to keep his own watch, so eager were his eyes to watch her. But he turned resolutely toward the woods.

"M'sieu!" she whispered. They had been silent for a long time. "To the left in the bushes! It looks like a head."

"Can you make sure?"

"Yes. It is a head. May I shoot?"

Menard nodded without looking. She rested her musket in the opening between two logs, and fired quickly.

"Did you hit him?"

"Yes, I think so."

She was breathless with excitement, but she reloaded at once. A moment later Menard fired, and then the priest.

"On all sides, eh?" the Captain muttered. He called to the others: "Waste no powder. Shoot only when you are sure of hitting. They will fall back again. Two dead Indians will discourage the wildest charge."

The firing went on at intervals, but still the warriors kept at it, creeping up from bush to bush and tree to tree. Menard's face grew more serious as the time went by. He began to realize that the Long Arrow was desperate, that he was determined on vengeance before the other chiefs could come. It had been a typical savage thought that had led him to bring Menard to this village, where he had once lived, rather than to the one in which the chief held greater permanent authority; the scheme was too complete and too near its end for delay or failure to be considered. Still the attacking party drew nearer, swelled every moment by a new group. Then Menard saw their object. They would soon be near enough to dash in close to the wall, where their very nearness would disable the white men's muskets.

"Work fast!" he said suddenly. "They must not get nearer!"

"Yes," panted the maid. Her shoulder was bruised by the heavy musket, her arms ached with the quick ramming and lifting, but she loaded and fired as rapidly as she could.

"Father," called the Captain. "Quick! come here. They are too many for me!"

The priest ran across the floor, half blinded by the smoke, cocking his musket as he came. "Where, M'sieu?"

"There--at the oak! They are preparing for a rush!"

He fired, at the last word, and one warrior sprawled on his face. The priest followed.

"That will check them. Now back to the door!"

Father Claude turned. The light was dim and the smoke heavy. His eyes smarted and blurred, so that he heard, rather than saw, the logs come crashing back into the hut. Menard heard it also; and together the two men dashed forward. They met the rush of Indians with blows that could not be stayed, but there was a score pushing behind the few who had entered. Slowly, the two backed across the hut. The stock of Menard's musket broke short off against the head of the Beaver. His foot struck another, and he snatched it up and fought on.

"Mademoiselle," he called, "where are you?"

"Here, M'sieu!"

The voice was behind him. Then he felt a weight on his shoulder. The wearied maid, for want of another rest for her musket, fired past his face straight into the dark mass of Indians. She tried to reload, but Menard was swept back against her. With one arm he caught and held her tight against him, swinging the musket with his free hand. She clung to him, hardly breathing. They reached the rear wall. One tall warrior bounded forward and struck the musket from his hand. That was the end of the struggle. They were torn apart, and dragged roughly out into the blinding sunlight.

Among the Iroquois, the torture was a religious rite, which nothing, once it was begun, could hasten. It may have been that the younger warriors would have rushed upon the captives to kill them; but if so, their elders held them back. The long lines formed again, and the doctors ran about the little group before the hut door, leaping and singing. Menard lay on his face, held down by three warriors. He tried to turn his head to see what had been done with the maid, but

could not. He would have called to her, but to make a sound now would be to his captors an admission of weakness.

A great clamour came from the lines. Menard wondered at the delay. He heard a movement a few yards away. Warriors were grunting, and feet shuffled on the ground. He heard the priest say, in a calm voice, "Courage, Mademoiselle"; and for a moment he struggled desperately. Then, realizing his mistake, he lay quiet. When at last he was jerked to his feet, he saw that the priest and the maid had been forced to take the two first places in the line. The maid was struggling in the grasp of two braves, one of whom made her hold a war club by closing his own hand over hers. Menard understood; his friends were to strike the first blows.

The guards tried to drag him forward, but he went firmly with them, smiling scornfully. There was a delay, as the line was reached, for the maid could not be made to hold the club. Another man dropped out of the line to aid the two who held her.

"Strike me, Mademoiselle," said Menard. "It is best."

She shook her head. Father Claude spoke:--

"M'sieu is right."

It was then that she first looked at the Captain. When she saw the straight figure and the set face, a sense of her own weakness came to her, and she, too, straightened. Menard stepped forward; and raising the club she let it fall lightly on his shoulders. A shout went up.

"Hard, Mademoiselle, hard," he said. "You must."

She pressed her lips together, closed her eyes, and swung the club with all her strength. Then her muscles gave way, and she sank to the ground, not daring to look after the Captain as he passed on between the two rows of savages. She heard the shouts and the wild cries, but dimly, as if they came from far away. The confusion grew worse, and then died down. From screaming the voices dropped into excited argument. She did not know what it meant,--not until Father Claude bent over her and spoke gently.

"What is it?" she whispered, not looking up. "What have they done?"

"Nothing. The Big Throat has come."

She raised her eyes helplessly.

"He has come?"

"Yes. I must go back. Take heart, Mademoiselle."

He hurried away and slipped through the crowd that had gathered about Menard and the chief. She sat in a little heap on the ground, not daring to feel relieved, wondering what would come next. She could not see the Captain, but as the other voices dropped lower and lower, she could catch now and then a note of his voice. In a few moments, the warriors who were pressing close on the outskirts of the crowd were pushed aside, and he came out. She looked at him, then at the ground, shuddering, for there was blood on his forehead. Even when he stood over her she could not look up or speak.

"There is hope now, Mademoiselle. He is here."

"Yes--Father Claude told me. Is--are you to be released?"

"Hardly that, but we shall at least have a little time. And I hope to get a hearing at the council."

"He will let you?"

"I have not asked him yet." He sat beside her, wearily. "There will be time for that. He is talking now with the Long Arrow and the old warriors. He is not fond of the Long Arrow." In the excitement he had not seen that she was limp and exhausted, but now he spoke quickly, "They have hurt you, Mademoiselle?"

"No, I am not hurt. But you--your head--"

"Only a bruise." He drew his sleeve across his forehead. "I had rather a bad one in the arm."

He rolled up his sleeve in a matter-of-fact way. Her eyes filled.

"Oh, M'sieu, you did not tell me. I can help you. Wait, I will be back."

She rose, and started toward the spring, but he sprang to her side.

"You must not trouble. It is not bad. There will be time for this."

"No. Come with me if you will."

She ran with nervous steps; and he strode after. At the side of the bubbling pool she knelt, and looked up impatiently.

"It will not do to let this go, M'sieu. Can you roll your sleeve higher?"

He tried, but the heavy cloth was stiff.

"If you will take off the coat--"

He unlaced it at the breast, and drew it off. She took his wrist, and plunged his arm into the pool, washing it with quick, gentle fingers, drying it on his coat. Then she leaned back, half perplexed, and looked around.

"What is it?"

"A cloth. No,"--as he reached for his coat;--"that is too rough. Here, M'sieu,--" she tore a strip from her skirt, and wrapped it around the forearm. "Hold it with your other hand, just a moment."

She hurried to the hut, and returning with needle and thread, stitched the bandage. Then she helped him on with his coat, and they walked slowly to the hut.

"Where is Father Claude?" she asked.

He pointed to a thicket beyond the hut. There, kneeling by the body of a dying Indian, was the priest, praying silently. He had baptized the warrior with dew from the leaves at his side, and now was claiming his soul for the greater King in whose service his own life had been spent.

The Captain sat beside the maid, their backs to the logs, and watched the shifting groups of warriors. He told her of the arrival of the Big Throat, and of the confusion that resulted. Then for a time they were silent, waiting for the impromptu council to reach a conclusion. The warriors finally began to drift away, though the younger and more curious ones still hung about. A group of braves came slowly toward the hut.

"That is the Big Throat in front," said Menard. "The broad-shouldered warrior beside him is the Talking Eagle, the best-known chief of the clan of the Bear. They are almost here. We had better stand. Are you too tired?"

"No, indeed."

Father Claude had seen the group approaching, and he joined Menard. The Big Throat stood motionless and looked at the Captain.

"My brother, the Big Buffalo, has asked to speak with the Big Throat," he said at length.

Menard bowed, but did not reply.

"He asks for his release,--and for the holy man and the squaw?"

"The Big Buffalo asks nothing save what the chiefs of the Onondagas would give to a chief taken in battle. The Long Arrow has lied to the Big Buffalo. He has soiled his hands with the blood of women and holy Fathers. The Big Buffalo was told by Onontio, whom all must obey, to come to the Onondagas and give them his word. The Long Arrow was impatient. He would not let him journey in peace. He wished to injure him; to let his blood. Now the Big Buffalo is here. He asks that he may be heard at the council, to give the chief the word of Onontio. That is all."

The Big Throat's face was inscrutable. He looked at Menard without a word until the silence grew tense, and the maid caught her breath. Then he said, with the cool, diplomatic tone that concealed whatever kindness or justice may have prompted the words:--

"The Big Buffalo shall be heard at the council to-night. The chiefs of the Onondagas never are deaf to the words of Onontio."

CHAPTER XII.

THE LONG HOUSE.

The council-house was a hundred paces or more in length. The frame was of tall hickory saplings planted in the ground in two rows, with the tops bent over and lashed together in the form of an arch. The building was not more than fifteen yards wide. The lower part of the outer wall was of logs, the upper part and the roof of bark. Instead of a chimney there was a narrow opening in the roof, extending the length of the building.

A row of smouldering fires reached nearly from end to end of the house. The smoke struggled upward, but failing, for the greater part, to find the outlet overhead, remained inside to clog the air and dim the eyes. The chiefs sat in a long ellipse in the central part of the house, some sitting erect with legs crossed, others half reclining, while a few lay sprawling, their chins resting on their hands. The Big Throat sat with the powerful chiefs of the nation at one end. The lesser sachems, including the Long Arrow, sat each before his own band of followers. The second circle was made up of the older and better-known warriors. Behind these, pressing close to catch every word of the argument, were braves, youths, women, and children, mixed together indiscriminately. A low platform extended the length of the building against the wall on each side, and this held another crowding, elbowing, whispering mass of redskins. Every chief and warrior, as well as most of the women, held each a pipe between his teeth, and puffed out clouds of smoke into the thick air.

The maid's eyes smarted and blurred in the smoke. It reached her throat, and she coughed.

"Lie down, Mademoiselle," said Menard. "Breathe close to the ground and it will not be so bad."

She hesitated, looking at the Big Throat, who sat with arms folded, proud and dignified. Then she smiled, and lay almost flat on the ground, breathing in the current of less impure air that passed beneath the smoke. They had been placed in the inner circle, next to the chiefs of the

nations, where Menard's words would have the weight that, to the mind of the Big Throat, was due to a representative of the French Governor, even in time of war. Father Claude, sitting on the left of the maid, was looking quietly into the fire. He had committed the case into the hands of Providence, and he was certain that the right words would be given to the Captain.

It was nearing the close of the afternoon. A beam of sunlight slipped in at one end of the roof-opening, and slanted downward, clearing a shining way through the smoke. A Cayuga chief was speaking.

"The corn is ripening in the fields about the Onondaga village. As I came down the hills of the west to-day I saw the green tops waving in the wind, and I was glad, for I knew that my brothers would feast in plenty, that their Manitous have been kind. The Cayugas, too, have great fields of corn, and the Senecas. Their women have worked faithfully that the land might be plentiful.

"But a storm is breaking over the cornfields of the Senecas. It is a great cloud that has come down from the north, with the flash of fire and the roar of thunder, and with hailstones of lead that will leave no stalk standing. My brothers know the strength of the north wind. They have not forgotten other storms that would have laid waste the villages of the Senecas and the Mohawks. And they have not forgotten their Manitous, who have whispered to them when the clouds appeared in the northern sky, 'Rise up, Mohawks and Oneidas and Onondagas and Cayugas and Senecas, and stand firmly against this storm, and your homes and your fields shall not be destroyed.'"

The house was silent with interest. The maid raised her head and watched the stolid faces of the chiefs in the inner circle. Not an expression changed from beginning to end of the speech. Beyond, she could see other, younger faces, some eager, some bitter, some defiant, some smiling, and all showing the flush of excitement,--but these grim old chiefs had long schooled their faces to hide their thoughts. They held their blankets close, and puffed deliberately at their pipes with hardly a movement of the lips.

The Cayuga went on:--

"Messengers have come to the Cayugas from their brothers, the Senecas, telling of the storm that is rushing on them. The Cayugas know the hearts of the Five Nations. When the Mohawks have risen to defend their homes, the hearts of the Cayugas have been warm, and they have taken up the hatchet with their brothers. When the Onondagas have gone on the war-path, Senecas and Cayugas have gone with them, and the trouble of one has been the trouble of all."

"The good White Father is no longer the war chief of the white men. The Great Mountain, who knew the voice of the forest, who spoke with the tongue of the redman, has been called back to his Great-Chief-Across-the-Water. His word was the word of kindness, and when he spoke our hearts were warm. But another mountain is now the war chief, a mountain that spits fire and lead, that speaks with a double tongue. The Five Nations have never turned from a foe. The enemy of the Senecas has been the enemy of the Mohawks. If the storm strikes the fields of the Senecas, their brothers will not turn away and stop their ears and say they do not hear the thunder, for they remember the storms of other seasons, and they know that the hail that destroys one field will destroy other fields. And so this is the word of the Cayugas:--Let all the warriors of the Five Nations take up the hatchet; let them go on the war-path to tell this white chief with the double tongue that the Five Nations are one nation; that they are bolder than thunder, swifter than fire, stronger than lead."

The maid found it hard, with her imperfect knowledge of the language, to follow his metaphors. She had partly risen, heedless of the smoke, and was leaning forward with her eyes fixed on the stern face of the speaker. Menard bent down, and half smiled at her excitement.

"What is it?" she whispered. "He is for war?"

"Yes; he naturally would be." There was a stir about the house, as the speech ended, and they could speak softly without drawing notice. "The Cayugas are nearer to the Senecas than the other nations, and they fear that they too may suffer."

"Then you do not think they all feel with him?"

"No; the Oneidas and Mohawks, and even the Onondagas, are too far to the east to feel in danger. They know how hard it would be for the Governor to move far from his base in this country. It may be that the younger warriors will be for fighting, but the older heads will think of the corn."

"Will the Big Throat speak?"

"Yes; but not like these others. He talks simply and forcibly. That is the way when a chief's reputation is made. The Big Throat won his name, as a younger brave, by his wonderful oratory."

"And you, M'sieu,--you will be heard?"

"Yes; I think so. We must not talk any more now. They will not like it."

The Cayuga was followed by a wrinkled old chief of the Oneidas, called the Hundred Skins. He stepped forward and stood near the fire, his blanket drawn close about his shoulders, where the red light could play on his face. A whisper ran around the outer circle, for it was known that he stood for peace.

"My Cayuga brother has spoken wisely," he began, in a low but distinct voice. He looked slowly about the house to command attention. "The Oneidas have not forgotten the storms of other

seasons; they have not forgotten the times of starving, when neither the Manitous of the redman nor the God of the white man came to help. The grain stood brown in the fields; the leaves hung dead from the trees; there was no wind to cool the fever that carried away old men and young men, squaws and children. And when the wind came, and the cold and snow of the winter, there was no food in the lodges of the Five Nations. My brothers have heard that the corn is rising to a man's height--they have seen it to-day in the fields of the Onondagas. They know that this corn must be cared for like the children of their lodges, if they wish food to eat when the winter comes and the fields are dead. They know what it will cost them to take the war-path.

"Twelve moons have not gone since the chiefs of the Senecas rose in this house and called on the warriors of the Five Nations to take up the hatchet against the white men of the north. The skins of the beaver were talking in their ears. They saw great canoes on the white man's rivers loaded with skins, and their hands itched and their hearts turned inward. Then the wise chiefs of the Oneidas and Cayugas and Onondagas and Mohawks spoke well. They were not on the war-path; the hatchet was deep in the ground, and young trees were growing over it. Then the Oneidas said that the White Chief would not forget if the Senecas heeded their itching hands and listened to the bad medicine of the beaver skins in their ears. But the Senecas were not wise, and they took up the hatchet.

"This is the word of the Oneidas to the chiefs of the Long House:--The Seneca has put his foot in the trap. Then shall the Oneida and Onondaga and Cayuga and Mohawk rush after, that they too may put in their feet where they can get away only by gnawing off the bone? Shall the wise chiefs of the Long House run into fight like the dogs of their village? The Oneidas say no! The Senecas took up the hatchet; let them bury it where they can. And when the winter comes, the Oneidas will send them corn that they may not have another time of starving."

Menard was watching the Oneida with eyes that fairly snapped. The low voice stopped, and another murmur ran around the outer circles. The Hundred Skins had spoken boldly, and the Cayuga young men looked stern. The chief stepped slowly back and resumed his seat, and then, not before, did Menard's face relax. He looked about cautiously to see if he was observed, then settled back and gazed stolidly into the fire. The old Oneida had played directly into his hand; by letting slip the motive for the Seneca raid of the winter before, he had strengthened the one weak point in the speech Menard meant to make.

The next speaker was one of the younger war chiefs of the Onondagas. He made an effort to speak with the calmness of the older men, but there was now and then a flash in his eye and an ill-controlled vigour in his voice that told Menard and the priest how strong was the war party of this village. The Onondaga plunged into his speech without the customary deliberation.

"Our brothers, the Senecas, have sent to us for aid. We have been called to the Long House to hear the voice of the Senecas,--not from the lips of their chiefs, for they have fields and villages to guard against the white man, and they are not here to stand before the council and ask what an Iroquois never refuses. The Cayuga has spoken with the voice of the Seneca. Shall the chiefs and warriors of the Long House say to the Cayuga, 'Go back to your village and send messengers to the Senecas to tell them that their brothers of the Long House have corn and squaws and children that are more to them than the battles of their brothers--tell the Senecas that the Oneidas must eat and cannot fight'? There is corn in the fields of the Oneidas. But there is food for all the Five Nations in the great house on the Lake."

The speaker paused to let his words sink in. Menard whispered to the maid, in reply to an inquiring look. "He means the Governor's base of supplies at La Famine."

The Onondaga's voice began to rise.

"When the Oneida thinks of his corn, is he afraid to leave it to his squaws? Does he hesitate because he thinks the white warriors are strong enough to turn on him and drive him from his villages? This is not the speech that young warriors are taught to expect from the Long House. When has the Long House been guided by fear? No. If the Oneida is hungry, let him eat from the stores of the white man, at the house on the Lake. The Cayugas and Onondagas will draw their belts tighter, that the Oneida may be filled."

The young chief looked defiantly around. There was a murmur from the outer circle, but the chiefs were grave and silent. The Hundred Skins gazed meditatively into the fire as if he had not heard, slowly puffing at his pipe. The taunt of cowardice had sprung out in the heat of youth; his dignity demanded that he ignore it. The speech had its effect on the Cayugas and the young men, but the older heads were steady.

Other chiefs rose, talked, and resumed their places, giving all views of the situation and of the relations between the Iroquois and the French,--but still little expression showed on the inner circle of faces. The maid after a time grew more accustomed to the smoke, and sat up. She was puzzled by the conflicting arguments and the lack of enthusiasm. Fully two hours had passed, and there was no sign of an agreement. The eager spectators, in the outer rows, gradually settled down.

During a lull between two speeches, Menard spoke to the maid, who was beginning to show traces of weariness.

"It may be a long sitting, Mademoiselle. We must make the best of it."

"Yes." She smiled. "I am a little tired. It has been a hard day."

"Too hard, poor child. But I hope to see you safe very soon now. I am relying on the Big Throat. He, with a few of the older chiefs, sees farther than these hot-heads. He knows that France

must conquer in the end, and is wise enough to make terms whenever he can."

"But can he, M'sieu? Will they obey him?"

"Not obey, exactly; he will not command them. Indians have no discipline such as ours. The chiefs rely on their judgment and influence. But they have followed the guidance of the Big Throat for too many years to leave it now."

Another chief rose to speak. The sun had gone, and the long building was growing dark rapidly. A number of squaws came through the circle, throwing wood on the fires. The new flames shot up, and threw a flickering light on the copper faces, many of which still wore the paint of the morning. The smoke lay over them in wavering films, now and again half hiding some sullen face until it seemed to fade away into the darkness.

At last the whole situation lay clear before the council. Some speakers were for war, some for peace, others for aiding the Senecas as a matter of principle. The house was divided.

There was a silence, and the pipes glowed in the dusk; then the Long Arrow rose. The listless spectators stirred and leaned forward. The maid, too, was moved, feeling that at last the moment of decision was near. She was surprised to see that he had none of the savage excitement of the morning. He was as quiet and tactful in speech as the Big Throat himself.

Slowly the Long Arrow drew his blanket close about him and began to speak. The house grew very still, for the whole tribe knew that he had, in his anger of the morning, disputed the authority of the Big Throat. There had been hot words, and the great chief had rebuked him contemptuously within the hearing of half a hundred warriors. Now he was to stand before the council, and not a man in that wide circle but wondered how much he would dare to say.

He seemed not to observe the curious glances. Simply and quietly he began the narrative of the capture of the hunting party at Fort Frontenac. At the first words Menard turned to Father Claude with a meaning look. The maid saw it, and her lips framed a question.

"It is better than I hoped," Menard whispered. "He is bringing it up himself."

"Not two moons have waned," the Long Arrow was saying, "since five score brave young warriors left our village for the hunt. They left the hatchet buried under the trees. They took no war-paint. The Great Mountain had said that there was peace between the redman and the white man; he had asked the Onondagas to hunt on the banks of the Great River; he had told them that his white sons at the Stone House would take them as brothers into their lodges. When the Great Mountain said this, through the mouths of the holy Fathers, he lied."

The words came out in the same low, even tone in which he had begun speaking, but they sank deep. The house was hushed; even the stirring of the children on the benches died away.

"The Great Mountain has lied to his children,"--Menard's keen ears caught the bitter, if covered, sarcasm in the last two words; they had been Governor Frontenac's favourite term in addressing the Iroquois--"and his children know his voice no longer. There is corn in the fields? Let it grow or rot. There are squaws and children in our lodges? Let them live or die. It is not the Senecas who ask our aid; it is the voice of a hundred sons and brothers and youths and squaws calling from far beyond the great water,--calling from chains, calling from fever, calling from the Happy Hunting Ground, where they have gone without guns or corn or blankets, where they lie with nothing to comfort them." The Long Arrow stood erect, with head thrown back and eyes fixed on the opposite wall. "Our sons and brothers went like children to the Stone House of the white man. Their hands were stretched before them, their muskets hung empty from their shoulders, their bowstrings were loosened; the calumet was in their hands. But the sons of Onontio lied as their fathers had taught them. They took the calumet; they called the Onondagas into their great lodge; and in the sleep of the white man's fire-water they chained them. Five score Onondagas have gone to be slaves to the Great-Chief-Across-the-Water, who loves his children and is kind to them, and would take them all under his arm where no storm can harm them. My brothers of the Long House have heard the promises of Onontio, and they have seen the fork in his tongue. And so they choose this time to speak of corn and squaws and children." The keen, closely set eyes slowly lowered and swept around the circle. "Is this the time to speak of corn? Our Manitou has sent this Great Mountain into our country. He has placed him in our hands so that we may strike, so that we may tell the white man with our muskets that our Manitou is stern and just, and that no Iroquois will listen to the idle words of a double tongue."

He paused, readjusted his blanket, and then stood motionless, that all might digest his words. Then, after a long wait, he went on:--

"There are children to-day in our lodges who can remember the Big Buffalo, who can remember our adopted son who shared our fires and food, who shared our hunts, who lived with us as freely as an Onondaga. We saw him every day, and we forgot that his heart was as white as his skin, for his tongue was the tongue of an Onondaga. We forgot that the white man has two tongues. It has not been long, my brothers,--not long enough for an Onondaga to forget. But the Big Buffalo is a mangy dog. He forgot the brothers of his lodge. He it was who took the Onondaga hunters and carried them away to be slaves. But the Manitou did not forget. He has put this Big Buffalo into our hands, that we may give him what should be given to the dog who forgets his master."

Again the Long Arrow paused.

"No; this is not the time to speak of corn. It is not the Senecas who call us, it is our brothers and their squaws and children. The Iroquois have been the greatest warriors of the world. They have

driven the Hurons to the far northern forests; the Illinois to the Father of Waters, two moons' travel to the west; the Delawares to the waters of the south. They have told the white man to stay within his boundaries, and he has stayed. They have been kind to the white man; they have welcomed the holy Fathers into their villages. But now the Great Mountain makes slaves of the Onondagas. He brings his warriors across the Great Lake to punish the Senecas and destroy their lodges. Shall the Long House of the Five Nations turn a white face to this Great Mountain? Shall the Long House call out in a shaking voice, 'See, Onontio, there are no heads on our arrows, no flints in our muskets! our hatchets are dull, our knives nicked and rusted! come, Onontio, and strike us, that we may know you are our master and our father'?"

The Long Arrow's voice had risen only slightly, but now it dropped; he went on, in a tone that was keen as a knife, but so low that those at the farther end of the house leaned forward and sat motionless.

"It has been said to-day to the Long House that we shall close our ears to the thunder of the Great Mountain, that we should think of our corn and our squaws, and leave the Senecas to fight their own battles. But the Long House will not do this. The Long House will not give up the liberty that has been the pride of the Iroquois since first the rivers ran to the lake, and the moss grew on the trees, and the wind waved the tops of the long grass. The Great Mountain has come to take this liberty. He shall not have it. No; he shall lose his own--we will leave his bones to dry where the Seneca dogs run loose. The Big Buffalo shall die to tell the white man that the Iroquois never forgets; the Great Mountain shall die to tell the white man that the Iroquois is free."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VOICE OF THE GREAT MOUNTAIN.

There was no lack of interest now in the council. The weariness left the maid's eyes as she followed the speeches that came in rapid succession. There was still the disagreement, the confusion of a dozen different views and demands; but the speech of the Long Arrow had pointed the discussion, it had set up an opinion to be either defended or attacked.

"Will the Big Throat speak now?" asked Mademoiselle, leaning close to Menard.

"I hardly think so. I don't know what will come next."

"When will you speak, M'sieu?"

"Not until word from the Big Throat. It would be a breach of courtesy."

One warrior, a member of the Beaver family, and probably a blood relative of the Beaver who had been killed in the fight of the morning, took advantage of the pause to speak savagely for war and vengeance. He counted those who had fallen since the sun rose, and appealed to their families to destroy the man who had killed them. He was not a chief, but his fiery speech aroused a murmur of approval from scattered groups of the spectators. This sympathy from those about him, with the anger which was steadily fed by his own hot words, gradually drove from his mind the observance of etiquette which was so large a part of an important council. Still speaking, he left his place, and walking slowly between two of the fires and across the circle, paused before Menard.

"The dog whom we fed and grew has turned against its masters, as the dogs of your own lodges, my brothers, will bite the hand that pats their heads. It has hung about outside of the Great Lodge to kill the hunter who sees no danger ahead. And now, when this dog is caught, and tied at your door, would not my brothers bring him to the end of all evil beasts?" As he finished, he made a gesture of bitter contempt and kicked Menard.

A shout went up, and voices clamoured, protesting, denouncing, exulting. The Captain's eyes flashed fire. It was not for a second that he hesitated. Weakness, to an Indian, is the last, the greatest fault. If he should take this insult, it would end forever not only his own chance of escape, with the maid and the priest, but all hope of safety for the Governor's column. He sprang to his feet before the Indian, whose arm was still stretched out in the gesture, and with two quick blows knocked him clear of his feet, and then kicked him into the fire.

A dozen hands dragged the warrior from the fire and stamped out a blaze that had started in the fringe of one legging. Every man in the house was on his feet, shouting and screaming. Menard stood with his hands at his side, smiling, with the same look of scorn he had worn in the morning when they led him to the torture. Father Claude drew closer to the maid, and the two sat without moving. Then above the uproar rose the voice of the Big Throat; and slowly the noise died away. The chief stepped to the centre of the circle, but before he could speak Menard had reached his side, and motioned to him to be silent.

"My brothers," he said, looking straight at the fallen warrior, who was scrambling to his feet,--"my brothers, the Big Buffalo is sorry that the Onondagas have among them a fool who thinks himself a warrior. The Big Buffalo is not here to fight fools. He is here to talk to chiefs.

He is glad that the fool speaks only for himself and not for the brave men of the Long House." He walked deliberately back and resumed his seat by the maid.



"Menard stood ... smiling with the same look of scorn he had worn ... when they led him to the torture."

"Courage, Mademoiselle," he said close to her ear. "It is all right."

"What will they do, M'sieu?"

"Nothing. I have won. Wait--the Big Throat is speaking."

One by one the warriors fell back to their seats. Some were muttering, some were smiling; but all were subdued. The Big Throat's voice was calm and firm.

"The Big Buffalo has spoken well. The word of a fool is not the word of the Long House. The White Chief comes to give us the voice of Onontio, and we will listen."

He turned toward Menard, and then resumed his seat.

The Captain rose, and looked about the circle. The chiefs were motionless. Even the Long Arrow, now that his outburst was past, closed his lips over the stem of his pipe and gazed at the smoke. Father Claude drew forward the bundle and opened it, the maid helping. Some of the boys behind them crowded closer to see the presents.

Menard spoke slowly and quietly. The rustling and whispering in the outer circle died away, so that every word was distinct.

"When the Five Nations have given their word to another nation, it has not been necessary to sign a paper; it has not been necessary to keep a record. The Long Arrow has said that the Iroquois do not forget. He is right. The words that have gone out from the councils have never been forgotten. I see here, in this council, the faces of warriors who have grown old in serving their people, of chiefs who are bent and wrinkled with the cares of many generations. I see in the eyes of my brothers that they have not forgotten the Onontio, who went away to his greater chief only five seasons ago. They have seen this Onontio in war and peace. They have listened to his silver tongue in the council. They have called themselves his children, and have known that he was a wise and kind father. They remember the promises they made him. But the Senecas did not remember. The Seneca has no ears; he has a hole in his head, and the words of his father have passed through. The Senecas promised Onontio that they would not take the white man's beaver. But when the English came to their lodges and whispered in their ears, the hole was stopped. The English whispered of brandy and guns and powder and hatchets and knives. They told the Senecas that these things should be given to them if they would steal the beaver. The English are cowards--they sent the Senecas to do what they were afraid to do. And then the hole in the Seneca's head was stopped--the Seneca who had forgotten the words of Onontio remembered the words of the English.

"My brothers of the Long House had not forgotten the promises they had given Onontio. When the Seneca chiefs called for aid in stealing the beaver, my brothers were wise and said no. The Onondagas and Cayugas and Oneidas and Mohawks were loyal--they kept their promise, and Onontio has not forgotten; he will not forget.

"This is what the Great Mountain would say to you, my brothers: You have been faithful to your word, and he is pleased. He knows that the Onondagas are his children. And he knows why the Senecas left their villages and fields to plunder his white children. It was for the skins of the beaver, which the white braves had taken from their own forests and would bring in their canoes down the Ottawa to trade at the white man's villages. He knows, my brothers, that the Senecas had tired of their promises, and now would steal the beaver and sell it to the English. What comes to the boy when he climbs the tree to steal the honey which the bees have gathered and taken to their home? Is he not stung and bitten until he cries that he will not disturb the bees again? The Senecas have tried to take that which is to the white man as the honey is to the

bee; and they too must be stung and bitten until they have learned that the Great Mountain will always protect those who deserve his aid. He has sent you a comb from the shell of the great sea-tortoise, more precious than a thousand wampum shells, to tell you that as the sea-monster pursues its enemies, so will he pursue those who cannot keep their promises--who lie to him."

Father Claude handed him the comb, and he laid it before the Big Throat. It was evident that he had been closely followed, and he started on his second word with more vigour.

"Your chiefs have spoken to-day of the storm cloud that has swept down from the north; your runners have told you that it is not a cloud, but an army, that has come up the great river and across the lake of Frontenac to the country of the Senecas. Do my brothers know what a great army follows their White Father when he sets out to punish his children? More than twenty score of trained warriors are in this war party, and every warrior carries a musket; to-night they are marching on the Seneca villages. They will destroy those villages as a brave would destroy a nest of hornets in his lodge. Not one lodge will be left standing, not one stalk of corn.

"The Oneidas and Onondagas and Cayugas talk of their cornfields. But even the Cayugas need have no fear. For Onontio is a wise and just father; he punishes only those that offend him. The Senecas have broken their promises, and the Senecas must be punished, but the other nations are still the children of the Great Mountain, and his hand is over them. The Big Buffalo has come from the Great Mountain to tell you that he will not harm the Cayugas; their fields and lodges are safe."

There was a stir at this, and then quiet, as the spectators settled back to hear the rest of Menard's speech. Here was a captive who spoke as boldly as their own chiefs, who commanded their attention as a present bearer from the White Chief. And they knew, all of them, from the way in which he was choosing his words, coolly ignoring the more important subjects until he should be ready to deal with them, that he spoke with authority. He knew his auditors, and he let them see that he knew them.

"The Senecas have listened to the English. What do they expect from them? Do they think that the English wish to help them? Do they look for wealth and support from the English? My brothers of the Long House know better. They have seen the English hide from the anger of the Great Mountain. They have seen the iron hand of New France reach out across the northern country, and along the shores of the great lakes, and down the Father of Waters in the far west, while the English were clinging to their little strip of land on the edge of the sea. My brothers know who is strong and who is weak. Never have the fields of the Five Nations been so rich and so large. No wars have disturbed them. They have grown and prospered. Do the Senecas think it is the English who have made them great? No--the Senecas are not fools. They know that the Great Mountain has driven away their enemies and given them peace and plenty. My brothers of the Long House remembered this when the Senecas came to them and asked for aid in stealing the beaver. They stopped their ears; they knew that Onontio was their father, and that they must be faithful to him if they wished to have plenty in their lodges.

"Onontio is a patient father. Let the Senecas repent, and he will forgive them. Let them bury the hatchet, and he will forgive them. Let them be satisfied with peace and honest trade, and he will buy their furs, and give them fair payment. And then their cornfields shall grow so large that a fleet runner cannot pass around them in half a moon. They shall have no more famine. Their pouches shall be full of powder, their muskets new and bright. Their women shall have warm clothing and many beads. Nowhere shall there be such prosperous nations as here among the Iroquois. If the Senecas have broken their pledges and have not repented, they must be punished. But the Cayugas and Onondagas and Oneidas and Mohawks have not broken their pledges. The Great Mountain has sent the Big Buffalo to tell them that he has seen that they are loyal, and he is pleased. He knows that they are wise. If the Onondagas have a grievance, he will not forget it, and if they ask for vengeance he will hear them. The Great Mountain knows that the Onondagas are his children, that they will not make war upon their father. He sends this coat of seal fur that the hearts of the Cayugas and Onondagas and Oneidas and Mohawks may be kept warm, and to tell them that he loves them and will protect them."

The maid's eyes sparkled with excitement.

"I wish they would speak, or laugh, or do something," she whispered to Father Claude, "Are they not interested? They hardly seem to hear him."

The priest looked at her gravely.

"Yes," he replied, "they are listening."

The time had come to speak of La Grange. The Captain had been steadily leading up to this moment. He had tried to show the Indians that they had no complaint, no cause for war, unless it was the one incident at Fort Frontenac. He knew that the chiefs not only understood his argument, but that they were quietly waiting for him to approach this real cause of trouble, and were probably curious to see how he would meet it. The mind of the Iroquois, when in the council, separated from the heat and emotion of the dance, the hunt, the war-path, was remarkably keen. Menard felt sure that if he could present his case logically and firmly, it would appeal to most of the chief and older warriors. Then the maid came into his thoughts, and he knew, though he did not look down, that she was gazing up at him and waiting. He hesitated for a moment longer. The chiefs, too, were waiting. The Long House was hushed:--three hundred faces were looking at him through the twisting, curling smoke that blurred the scene into an unreal picture. Yes, the time had come to speak of La Grange; and he spoke the first words hurriedly, stepping half-unconsciously farther from the maid.

There was a part of the true story of the capture which he did not tell,—the Governor's part. For the rest, it was all there, every word about La Grange and his treacherous act coming out almost brutally.

"Your speakers have told you of the hunting party that was taken into the stone house, and put into chains, and sent away to be slaves to the Chief-Across-the-Water. There is a chief at the stone house whom you have seen fighting bravely in many a battle. He is a bold warrior; none is so quick or so tireless as Captain la Grange. But he has a devil in his heart. The bad medicine of white man and redman, the fire-water, is always close to him, ready to whisper to him and guide him. It was not the father at Quebec that broke the faith with the Onondagas. It was not the Big Buffalo. If the Big Buffalo could so forget his brothers of the Onondaga lodges, he would not have come back to the Long House to tell them of the sorrow of the Great Mountain. My brothers have seen the Big Buffalo in war and peace—they know that he would not do this.

"The devil was in Captain la Grange's heart. He captured my brothers. He told the Great Mountain that it was a war party, that he had taken them prisoners fairly. He lied to the Great Mountain. When the Great Mountain asked the Big Buffalo to bring the prisoners to his great village on the river, the Big Buffalo could not say, 'No, I am no longer your son!' When the Great Mountain commands, the Big Buffalo obeys. With sorrow in his heart he did as his father told him."

Menard was struggling to put the maid out of his thoughts, to keep in view only the safety of the column and the welfare of New France. And as the words came rapidly to his lips and fell upon the ears of that silent audience, he began to feel that they believed him.

"My brothers," he said, with more feeling than they knew, "it is five seasons since I left your village for the land of the white man. In that time you have had no thought that I was not indeed your brother, the son of your chief. You have known other Frenchmen. Father Claude, who sits by my side; Father Jean de Lamberville, who has given his many years to save you for the great white man's Manitou; Major d'Orvilliers, who has never failed to give food and shelter to the starving hunter at his great stone house,—I could name a hundred others. You know that these are honest, that what they promise will be done. But in every village is a fool, in every family is one who is weak and cannot earn a name on the hunt. You have a warrior in this house who today raised his hand against a visitor in the great council. My brothers,—it is with sadness that I say it,—not all the white men are true warriors. You are wise chiefs and brave warriors; you know that because one man is a dog, it is not so with all his nation. The Great Mountain sends me to you, and I speak in his voice. I tell you that Captain la Grange is a dog, that he has broken the faith of the white man and the redman, that the father at Quebec and the Great-Chief-Across-the-Water, who are so quick to punish their red children, will also punish the white. The white men are good. They love the Onondagas. And if any white man breaks the faith, he shall be punished."

His voice had risen, and he was speaking in a glow that seemed to drop a spark into each listening heart. He knew now that they believed. He turned abruptly for the present. Father Claude was so absorbed in following the speech, and in watching the maid, who sat with flushed cheeks and lowered eyes, that he was not ready, and Menard stooped and took the book. He could not avoid seeing the maid, when he looked down; and the priest felt a sudden pain in his own heart to see the look of utter weariness that came into the Captain's eyes.

Menard turned the leaves of the book for a moment, as if to collect himself, and then held it open so that the Indians could see the bright pictures. There was a craning of necks in the outer circles.

"In these picture writings is told the story of the 'Ceremonies of the Mass applied to the Passion of Our Lord,'" he said slowly. "And our Lord is your Great Spirit. It brings you a message; it tells you that the white man is a good man, who punishes his own son as sternly as his red child."

The present pleased the Big Throat. He would not let his curiosity appear in the council, but he dropped the book so that it fell open, seemingly by accident, and his eyes strayed to it now and then during the last word of the speech. Menard did not hesitate again.

"I have told my Onondaga brothers that this white dog shall be punished," he said. "When this word is given in your council in the voice of Onontio, it is a word that cannot be broken. Wind is not strong enough, thunder is not loud enough, waves are not fierce enough, snows are not cold enough, powder is not swift enough to break it." The words came swiftly from his lips. Calm old chiefs leaned forward that they might catch every syllable. Eyes were brighter with interest. The Long Arrow, thinking of his son and fearing lest the man who killed him should slip from his grasp, grew troubled and more stern. At last Menard turned, and taking the portrait from the priest's hands held it up, slowly turning it so that all could see it in the uncertain firelight. At first they were puzzled and surprised; then a murmur of recognition ran from lip to lip.

"You know this maid," Menard was saying, "this maid who to all who love the Iroquois, to all who love the church, the Great Spirit, is a saint. Her spirit has been for many moons in the happy hunting ground. The snow has lain cold and heavy on her grave. The night bird has sung her beauty in the empty forest. Catherine Outasoren has come back from the land where the corn is always growing, where the snows can never fall; she has come back to bear you the word of the Great Mountain. She has come to tell you that the dog who broke the oath of the white man to the Onondagas must suffer. This is the pledge of the Great Mountain."

He stopped abruptly, and stood looking with flashing eyes at the circle of chiefs. There was silence for a moment, then a murmur that rapidly rose and swelled into the loud chatter of many

voices. Menard laid the portrait at the feet of the Big Throat, and took his seat at the side of the maid,--but he did not look at her nor she at him. Father Claude sat patiently waiting.

There was low talk among the chiefs. Then a warrior came and led the captives out of doors, through a long passage that opened between two rows of crowding Indians. The night was clear, and the air was sweet to their nostrils. They walked slowly down the path. A group of young braves kept within a few rods.

"It must be late," said Menard, in a weak effort to break the silence.

"Yes," replied Father Claude.

"I suppose we had better go back to our hut?"

"Yes," said the priest again. But the maid was silent.

They sat on the grass plot before the door, none of them having any words that fitted the moment. Menard brought out a blanket and spread it on the ground, that the maid need not touch the dew-laden grass.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHERE THE DEAD SIT.

"They need not starve us," said Menard, trying to speak lightly. "I am hungry."

The others made no reply.

"I will see what chance we have for a supper."

He got up and walked along the path looking for the guards. In a short time he returned.

"They will bring us something. The sentiment is not so strong against us now, I think."

"They change quickly," said Father Claude.

"Yes. It is the Big Throat."

"And yourself, M'sieu," the maid said impulsively. "You have done it, too."

"I cannot tell. We do not know what the council may decide. It may be morning before they will come to an agreement. The Long Arrow will fight to the last."

"And the other, M'sieu,--the one who attacked you,--he too will fight?"

"He is nothing. When an Iroquois shows himself a coward his influence is gone forever. It may be even that they will give him a new name because of this."

"There are times when a small accident or a careless word will change the mind of a nation," said Father Claude. "When we left the council they were not unfriendly to us. But in an hour it may be that they will renew the torture. Until their hearts have been touched by the Faith there are but two motives behind the most of their actions, expediency and revenge. But I think we may hope. Brother de Lamberville has told of many cases of torture where the right appeal has brought a complete change."

So they talked on, none having anything to say, and yet each dreading the silences that came so easily and hung over them so heavily. They could see the council-house some distance up the path. Its outlines were lost in the shadows of the trees, but through the crevices in the bark and logs came thin lines of light, and a glow shone through the long roof opening upon the smoke that hung in the still air above it. Sometimes they could hear indistinctly the voice of a speaker; but the words could not be distinguished. At other times there was a low buzz of voices. The children and women who had not been able to get into the building could be seen moving about outside shutting off a strip of light here and there.

Two braves came with some corn and smoked meat. Menard set it down on a corner of the blanket.

"You will eat, Mademoiselle?"

She shook her head. "I am not hungry. Thank you, M'sieu."

"If I may ask it,--if I may insist,--it is really necessary, Mademoiselle."

She reached out, with a weary little gesture, and took some of the corn.

"And you too, Father."

They ate in silence, and later went together to the spring for a cool drink.

"We ought to make an effort to sleep," Menard said; and added, "if we can. Father, you had better lie down. In a few hours, if there is no word, I will wake you."

"You will not forget, M'sieu? You will not let me sleep too long."

"No." The Captain smiled. "No, Father; you shall take your turn at guard duty."

The priest said good-night, and went to a knoll not far from the door. The maid had settled back against the logs of the hut, and was gazing at the trees. Menard sat in silence for a few moments.

"Mademoiselle," he said at length, "I know that it will be hard for you to rest until we have heard; but--" he hesitated, but she did not help him, and he had to go on,--"I wish you would try."

"It would be of no use, M'sieu."

"I know,--I know. But we have much to keep in mind. It has been very hard. Any one of us is likely to break. And you have not been so used to this life as the Father and I."

"I know it," she said, still looking at the elm branches that bent almost to the ground before them, "but when I lie down, and close my eyes, and let my mind go, it seems as if I could not stand it. It is not bad now; I can be very cool now. You see, M'sieu?" She turned toward him with the trace of a smile. "But when I let go--perhaps you do not know how it is; the thoughts that come, and the dreams,--when I am awake and yet not awake,--and the feeling that it is not worth while, this struggle, even to what it may bring if we succeed. It makes the night a torture, and the dread of another day is even worse. It is better to stay awake; it is better even to break. Anything is better."

Menard looked down between his knees at the ground. He did not understand what it was that lay behind her words. He started to speak, then stopped. After a little he found himself saying words that came to his lips with no effort; in fact, he did not seem able to check them.

"It is not right that I should be here near you. I gave up that right to-night. I gave it up yesterday. I have been proud, during these years of fighting, that I was a soldier. I had thought, too, that I was a man. It was hardly a week ago that I rebuked that poor boy for what I have since done myself. I promised Major Provost that I would take you safely to Frontenac. That I have failed is only a little thing. I have said to you--no, you must not stop me. We have gone already beyond that point. We understand now. I have tried to be to you more than--than I had a right to be while you were in my care. Danton did not know; Father Claude does not know. You know, because I have told you. I have shown you in a hundred ways."

"No," she said, in a choking voice. "It is my fault. I allowed you."

He shook his head.

"That is nothing. It is not what you have done. It is not even what you think. It is what I shall think and know all my life,--that I have done the wrong thing. There are some of us, Mademoiselle, who have no home, no ties of family, no love, except for the work in which we are slowly building up a good name and a firm place. That is what I was. Do you know what it is that makes up the life of such a man? It is the little things, the acts of every day and every week; and they must be honest and loyal, or he will fail. I might have stayed in Paris, I might even have found a place in Quebec where I could wear a bright uniform, and be close in the Governor's favour. I chose the other course. I have given a dozen years to the harder work, only to fall within the week from all that I had hoped,--had thought myself to be. And now, as I speak to you, I know that I have lost; that if you should smile at me, should put your hand in mine, everything that I have been working for would be nothing to me. You would be the only thing in the world."

She sat motionless. He did not go on, and yet each moment seemed to bring them closer in understanding. After a little while she said huskily:--

"You cared--you cared like that?"

She was not looking toward him, and she could not see him slowly bow his head; but there was an answer in his silence.

"You cared--when you made the speech--"

"Yes."

She looked at the stalwart, bowed figure. She was beginning to understand what he had done, that in his pledge to the chiefs he had triumphed over a love greater than she had supposed a man could bear for a woman.

"A soldier cannot always choose his way," he was saying. "I have never chosen mine. It was the orders of my superior that brought us here, that brought this suffering to you. If it were not for these orders, the Onondagas would be my friends, and because of that, your friends. It has always been like this; I have built up that others might tear down. I thought for a few hours that something else was to come to me. I should have known better. It was when you took the daisy--" she raised her hand and touched the withered flower. "I did not reason. I knew I was breaking my trust, and I did not care. After all, perhaps even that was the best thing. It gave me strength and hope to carry on the fight. It was you, then,--not New France. Now the dream is over, and again it is New France. It must be that."

"Yes," she said, "it must be."

"I have had wild thoughts. I have meant to ask you to let me hope, once this is over and you safe at Frontenac. I could not believe that what comes so easily to other men is never to come to me. I cannot ask that now."

She looked at him, and a sudden glow came into her eyes.

"Why not?" she whispered, as if frightened.

"Why not," he repeated, for an instant meeting her gaze. Then he rose and stood before her. "Because I have given an oath to bring Captain la Grange to punishment. You heard me. But you did not hear what I promised to Father Claude. I have sworn that what the Governor may refuse to do, I shall do myself. I have set my hand against your family."

"You could not help it, M'sieu,--you could not help it," she said. But the light was going out of her eyes. It had been a moment of weakness for both of them. She looked up at him, standing erect in the faint light, and the sight of his square, broad shoulders seemed to give her strength. He was the strong one; he had always been the strong one. She rose and leaned back against the logs. She found that she could face him bravely.

"He is your cousin," he had just said in a dry voice.

"Yes, he is my cousin."

Menard was steadily recovering himself.

"We will not give all up. You know that I love you,--I hope that you love me." He hesitated for an instant, but she gave no sign. "We will keep the two flowers. We will always think of this day, and yesterday. I have no duty now but to get you safe to Frontenac; until you are there I must not speak again. As for the rest of it, we can only wait, and trust that some day there may be some light."

She looked at him sadly.

"You do not know? Father Claude has not told you?"

Something in her voice brought him a step nearer.

"You know that Captain la Grange is my cousin?"

"Yes."

"You did not know that I am to be his wife?"

They stood face to face, looking deep into each other's eyes, while a long minute dragged by, and the rustling night sounds and the call of the crickets came to their ears.

"No," he said, "I did not know. May I keep the flower, Mademoiselle?"

She bowed her head. She could not speak.

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

He walked away. She saw him stop at the knoll where the priest lay asleep on a bed of boughs, and stand for a moment gazing down at him. Then he went into the shadows. From the crackling of the twigs she knew that he was walking about among the trees. She sank to the ground and listened to the crickets. A frog bellowed in the valley; perhaps he had been calling before--she did not know.

She fell asleep, with her cheek resting against a mossy log. She did not know when Menard came back and stood for a long time looking at her. He did not awaken Father Claude until long after the time for changing the watch.

When he did, he walked up and down on the path, holding the priest's arm, and trying to speak. They had rounded the large maple three times before he said:--

"You did not tell me, Father."

"What, my son?"

The Captain stopped, and drawing the priest around, pointed toward the maid as she slept.

"You did not tell me--why we are taking her to Frontenac."

"No. She asked it. We spoke of it only once, that night on the river. She was confused, and she asked me not to speak. She does not know him. She has not seen him since she was a child."

Menard said nothing. He was gripping the priest's arm, and gazing at the sleeping maid.

"It was her father," added Father Claude.

Menard's hand relaxed.

"Good-night, Father." He walked slowly toward the bed on the knoll. And Father Claude called softly after him:--

"Good-night, M'sieu. Good-night."

Menard lay awake. He could see the priest sitting by the door. He wondered if the maid were sleeping. A late breeze came across the valley, arousing the leaves and carrying a soft whisper from tree to tree, until all the forest voices were joined. Lying on his side he could see indistinctly the council-house. There were still the lighted cracks; the Long House was still in session. Their decision did not now seem so vital a matter. The thought of the maid--that he was taking her to be the wife of another, and that other La Grange--had taken the place of all other thoughts.

Later still came the buzz of many voices. Dark forms were moving about the council-house. Menard raised himself to his elbow, and waited until he saw a group approaching on the path,

then he joined Father Claude.

The Big Throat led the little band of chiefs to the hut. They stood, half a score of them, in a semicircle, their blankets drawn close, their faces, so far as could be seen in the dim light, stern and impassive. Menard and the priest stood erect and waited.

"It has pleased the Great Mountain that his voice should be heard in the Long House of the Iroquois," said the Big Throat, in a low, calm voice. "His voice is gentle as the breeze and yet as strong as the wind. The Great Mountain has before promised many things to the Iroquois. Some of the promises he has broken, some he has kept. But the Onondagas know that there is no man who keeps all his promises. They once thought they knew such a man, but they were mistaken. White men, Indians,—all speak at night with a strong voice, in the morning with a weak voice. Each draws his words sometimes off the top of his mind, where the truth and the strong words do not lie. The Onondagas are not children. They know the friend from the enemy. And they know, though he may sometimes fail them, that the Great Mountain is their friend, their father."

Menard bowed slowly, facing the chief with self-control as firm as his own.

"They know," the Big Throat continued, "that the Indian has not always kept the faith with the white man. And then it is that the Great Mountain has been a kind father. If he thinks it right that our brothers, the Senecas, should meet with punishment for breaking the peace promised to the white man by the Long House, the Onondagas are not the children to say to their father, 'We care not if our brother has done wrong; we will cut off the hand that holds the whip of punishment.' The Onondagas are men. They say to the father, 'We care not who it is that has done wrong. Though he be our next of blood, let him be punished.' This is the word of the council to the Big Buffalo who speaks with his father's voice."

Well as he knew the Iroquois temperament, Menard could not keep an expression of admiration from his eyes. He knew what this speech meant,—that the Big Throat alone saw far into the future, saw that in the conflict between red and white, the redman must inevitably lose unless he crept close under the arm that was raised to strike him. It was no sense of justice that prompted the Big Throat's words; it was the vision of one of the shrewdest statesmen, white or red, who had yet played a part in the struggles for possession of the New World. Greatest of all, only a master could have convinced that hot-blooded council that peace was the safest course. The chief went on:—

"The Big Buffalo has spoken well to the council. He has told the chiefs that he has not been a traitor to the brothers who have for so long believed that his words were true words. The Big Buffalo is a pine tree that took root in the lands of the Onondagas many winters ago. From these lands and these waters, and the sun and winds that give life to the corn and the trees of the Onondagas, he drew his sap and his strength. Can we then believe that this pine tree which we planted and which has grown tall and mighty before our eyes, is not a pine tree at all? When a quick-tongued young brave, who has not known the young tree as we have, comes to the council and says that this Big Buffalo, this pine tree, is not a pine but an elm with slippery bark, are we to believe him? Are we to drop from our minds what our hearts and eyes have long known, to forget what we have believed? My brothers of the Long House say no. They know that the pine tree is a pine tree. It may be that in the haze of the distance pine and elm look alike to young eyes; but what a chief has seen, he has seen; what he has known, he has known. The Big Buffalo speaks the truth to his Onondaga brothers, and with another sun he shall be free to go to his white brothers."

"The Big Throat has a faithful heart," said Menard, quietly. "He knows that the voice of Onontio is the voice of right and strength."

"The chiefs of the Onondagas and Cayugas will sit quietly before their houses with their eyes turned toward the lands beyond the great lake, waiting for the whisper that shall come with the speed of the winds over forests and waters to tell them that the white man has kept his promise. When the dog who robbed our villages of a hundred brave warriors has been slain, then shall they know that the Big Buffalo is what they have believed him to be, their brother."

"And the maid and the holy Father?"

"They are free. The chiefs are sorry that a foolish brave has captured the white man's squaw."

Menard and Father Claude bowed again, and the chiefs turned and strode away. The priest smiled gently after them.

"And now, M'sieu, we may rest quietly."

"Yes. You lie down, Father; it will not be necessary to watch now, and anyway I am not likely to sleep much." He walked back to the bed on the knoll, leaving the priest to stretch out across the doorway.

The elder bushes and briars crowded close to the little clearing behind the hut, and Menard, lying on his side with his face close to the ground, watched the clusters of leaves as they gently rustled. He rolled half over and stared up at the bits of sky that showed through the trees. It seemed as if the great world were a new thing, as if these trees and bushes and reaches of tufted grass were a part of a new life. Before, they had played their part in his rugged life without asking for recognition; but to-night they came into his thoughts with their sympathy, and he wondered that all this great world of summer green and winter white, and of blue and green and lead-coloured water could for so long have influenced him without consciousness on his part. But his life had left little time for such thoughts; to-night he was unstrung.

Over the noise of the leaves and the trickle of the spring sounded a rustle. It was not loud, but it was a new sound, and his eyes sought the bushes. The noise came, and stopped; came, and stopped. Evidently someone was creeping slowly toward the hut; but the sound was on the farther side of him, so that he could reach the maid's side before whoever was approaching could cross the clearing.

For a time the noise died altogether. Then, after a space, his eyes, sweeping back and forth along the edge of the brush, rested on a bright bit of metal that for an instant caught the light of the sky, probably a weapon or a head ornament. Menard was motionless. Finally an Indian stepped softly out and stood beside a tree. When he began to move forward the Captain recognized Tegakwita, and he spoke his name.

The Indian came rapidly over the grass with his finger at his lips.

"Do not speak loud," he whispered. "Do not wake the holy Father."

"Why do you come creeping upon my house at night, like a robber?"

"Tegakwita is sad for his sister. His heart will not let him go among men about the village; it will not let his feet walk on the common path."

"Why do you come?"

"Tegakwita seeks the Big Buffalo."

"It cannot be for an honest reason. You lay behind the bush. You saw me here and thought me asleep, but you did not approach honestly. You crept through the shadows like a Huron."

"Tegakwita's night eyes are not his day eyes. He could not see who the sleeping man was. When he heard the voice, he came quickly."

Menard looked at the musket that rested in the Indian's hand, at the hatchet and knife that hung from his belt.

"You are heavily armed, Tegakwita. Is it for the war-path or the hunt? Do Onondaga warriors carry their weapons from house to house in their own village?"

The Indian made a little gesture of impatience.

"Tegakwita has no house. His house has been dishonoured. He lives under the trees, and carries his house with him. All that he has is in his hand or his belt. The Big Buffalo speaks strangely."

Menard said nothing for a moment. He looked up, with a keen gaze, at the erect figure of the Indian. Finally he said:--

"Sit down, Tegakwita. Tell me why you came."

"No. Tegakwita cannot rest himself until his sister has reached the Happy Hunting-Ground."

"Very well, do as you like. But waste no more time. What is it?"

"The Big Buffalo has been an Onondaga. He knows the city in the valley where the dead sit in their graves. It is there that my sister lies, by an open grave, waiting for the farewell word of him who alone is left to say farewell to her. Tegakwita's Onondaga brothers will not gather at the grave of a girl who has given up her nation for a white dog. But he can ask the Big Buffalo, who brought the white dog to our village, to come to the side of the grave."

"Your memory is bad, Tegakwita. It was not I who brought the white brave. It was you who brought him, his two hands tied with thongs."

The Indian stood, without replying, looking down at him with brilliant, staring eyes.

Menard spoke again.

"You want me to go with you. You slip through the bushes like a snake, with your musket and your knife and your hatchet, to ask me to go with you to the grave of your sister. Do I speak rightly, Tegakwita?"

"The Big Buffalo has understood."

Menard slowly rose and looked into the Indian's eyes.

"I have no weapons, Tegakwita. The chiefs who have set me free have not yet returned the musket which was taken from me. It is dangerous to go at night through the forest without a weapon. Give me your hatchet and I will go with you."

Tegakwita's lip curled almost imperceptibly.

"The White Chief is afraid of the night?"

Menard, too, looked scornful. He coolly waited.

"The Big Buffalo cannot face the dead without a hatchet in his hand?" said Tegakwita.

Menard suddenly sprang forward and snatched the hatchet from the Indian's belt. It was a surprise, and the struggle was brief. Tegakwita was thrown a step backward. He hesitated between struggling for the hatchet and striking with the musket; before he had fully recovered and dropped the musket, Menard had leaped back and stood facing him with the hatchet in his right hand.

"Now I will go with you to the city of the dead, Tegakwita."

The Indian's breath was coming quickly, and he stood with clenched fists, taken aback by the

Captain's quickness.

"Come, I am ready. Pick up your musket."

As Tegakwita stooped, Menard glanced toward the hut. The priest lay asleep before the door. It was better to get this madman away than to leave him free to prowling about the hut.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BAD DOCTOR.

At the edge of the thicket they stopped and stood face to face, each waiting for the other to pass ahead. Tegakwita slightly bowed, with an unconscious imitation of the Frenchmen he had seen at Fort Frontenac and Montreal.

"Pass on," said Menard, sternly. "You know the trail, Tegakwita; I do not. It is you who must lead the way."

The Indian was sullen, but he yielded, plunging forward between the bushes, and now and then, in the shadow of some tree, glancing furtively over his shoulder. His manner, the suspicion that showed plainly in the nervous movements of his head, in every motion as he glided through thicket, glade, or strip of forest, told Menard that he had chosen well to take the second place. His fingers closed firmly about the handle of the hatchet. That he could throw at twenty paces to the centre of a sapling, no one knew better than Tegakwita.

The city of the dead lay in a hollow at ten minutes' walk from the village. Generations ago the trees had been cleared, and no bush or sapling had been allowed a foothold on this ground. The elms and oaks and maples threw their shadows across the broad circle, and each breath of wind set them dancing over the mounds where many an hundred skeletons crouched side by side, under the grass-grown heaps of earth, their rusted knives and hatchets and their mouldy blankets by their sides. No man came here, save when a new heap of yellow earth lay fresh-turned in the sun, and a long line of dancing, wailing redmen, led by their howling doctors, followed some body that had come to claim its seat among the skeletons.

Tegakwita paused at the edge of the clearing, and looked around with that furtive quickness. Menard came slowly to his side.

"You will take your weapons to the grave?" asked Menard, very quietly, but with a suggestion that the other understood.

"Yes. Tegakwita has no place for his weapons. He must carry them where he goes."

"We can leave them here. The leaves will hide them. I will put the hatchet under this log." He made a motion of dropping the hatchet, closely watching the Indian; then he straightened, for Tegakwita's right hand held the musket, and his left rested lightly on his belt, not a span from his long knife.

"The White Chief knows the danger of leaving weapons to tempt the young braves. He finds it easy to take the chance with Tegakwita's hatchet."

"Very well," said Menard, sternly. "Lead the way."

They walked slowly between the mounds. Menard looked carefully about, but in the uncertain light he could see no sign of a new opening in any of them. When they had passed the centre he stopped, and said quietly:--

"Tegakwita."

The Indian turned.

"Where is the grave?"

"It is beyond, close to the great oak."

"Ah!"

They went on. The great oak was in a dense, deep-shadowed place, at the edge of the circle. A little to one side, close to the crowding thicket, was a small, new mound. Looking now at Tegakwita, Menard could see that his front was stained with the soil. Probably he had spent the day working on the mound for his sister. While Menard stood at one side, he went to a bush that encroached a yard on the sacred ground and drew out a number of presents, with necessary articles and provisions to stay the soul on its long journey to the Happy Hunting-Ground. It was at the end of Menard's tongue to repeat Tegakwita's remark about hiding the weapons, but he held back and stood silently waiting.

"Come," said the Indian.

He parted the bushes, drew away a heavy covering of boughs, and there, wrapped in Tegakwita's finest blanket, lay the body of the Indian girl. Menard stood over it, looking down with a sense of pity he had never before felt for an Indian. He could not see her face, for it was

pressed to the ground, but the clotted scalp showed indistinctly in the shadow. He suddenly raised, his eyes to Tegakwita, who stood opposite.

"What have you done with the white brave?" he said in fierce, low tones. "What have you done with him?"

Tegakwita raised one arm and swept it about in a quarter circle.

"Ask the vultures that come when a man falls, ask the beasts that wait for everyone, ask the dogs of the village. They can tell you, not I."

Menard's hands closed tightly, and a wild desire came to him to step across the body and choke the man who had killed Danton; but in a moment he was himself. He had nothing to gain by violence. And after all, the Indian had done no more than was, in his eyes, right. He bent down; and together they carried the body to the grave, close at hand. Tegakwita placed her sitting upright in the hole he had dug. By her side he placed the pots and dishes and knives which she had used in preparing the food they two had eaten. He set the provisions before her and in her lap; and drawing a twist of tobacco from his bosom, he laid it at her feet to win her the favour and kindness of his own Manitou on her journey. After each gift he stood erect, looking up at the sky with his arms stretched out above his head; and at these moments his simple dignity impressed Menard. But there were other moments, when, in stooping, Tegakwita would glance about with nervous, shifting eyes, as if fearing some interruption. His musket was always in his hand or by his side. Menard took it that he still feared the hatchet.

Then at last the ceremony was done, and the Indian with his bare hands threw the earth over the hole in the mound. Still looking nervously from bush to bush, his hands began to move more slowly; then he paused, and sat by the mound, looking up with a hesitancy that recognized the need of an explanation for the delay.

"Tegakwita's arms are weary."

"Are they?" said Menard, dryly.

"Tegakwita has not slept for many suns."

"Neither have I."

The Indian started as a rustle came from the forest. Menard watched him curiously. The whole proceeding was too unusual to be easily understood. Tegakwita's nervous manner, his request that the Captain accompany him to the mound, the weapons that never left his side,—these might be the signs of a mind driven to madness by his sister's act; but Menard did not recollect, from his own observation of the Iroquois character, that love for a sister was a marked trait among the able-bodied braves. Perhaps it was delay that he sought. At this thought Menard quietly moved farther from the undergrowth. Tegakwita's quick eyes followed the movement.

"Come," said the Captain, "the night is nearly gone. I cannot wait longer."

"Tegakwita has worked hard. His heart is sick, his body lame. Will the Big Buffalo help his Onondaga brother?"

"Yes."

The Indian rose with too prompt relief.

"Your muscles need only the promise of help to give them back their spring, Tegakwita."

"The White Chief speaks with a biting tongue."

"You have been speaking with a lying tongue. You think I do not know why you have brought me here; you think I do not understand the evil thoughts that fill your mind. You are a coward, Tegakwita. But you will not succeed to-night."

The ill-concealed fright that came into the Indian's face and manner told Menard that he was not wide of the mark. He began to understand. Tegakwita wished to get him at work and off his guard,—the rest would be simple. And as Menard well knew, more than one brave of the Onondagas, who had known him both as friend and enemy, would shrink when the moment came to attack the Big Buffalo single-handed, even though taking him at a disadvantage. Now Tegakwita was hesitating, and struggling to keep his eyes from the thicket.

"Yes, I will help you. We will close this matter now, and go back to the village where your cowardly hands will be tied by fear of your chiefs. Drop your musket."

"The Big Buffalo speaks in anger. Does he think to disarm Tegakwita that he may kill him?"

"Lay your musket on the ground before us. Then I will drop the hatchet."

Tegakwita stepped around the grave, and leaning the musket across a stone stood by it. Menard's voice was full of contempt.

"You need not fear. The Big Buffalo keeps his word." He tossed the hatchet over the grave, and stood unarmed. "Drop your knife."

Tegakwita hesitated. Menard took a step forward, and the knife fell to the ground.

"Come. We will work side by side." He was surprised at Tegakwita's slinking manner. He wondered if this Indian could by some strange accident have been given a temperament so fine that sorrow could unman him. To the Iroquois, gifted as they were with reasoning power, life held little sentiment. Curiously enough, as Menard stood in the light of the young moon watching the warrior come slowly around the grave, which still showed above the earth the

head and shoulders of the dead girl, he found himself calling up the rare instances he had known of a real affection between Indians.

Tegakwita stood by him, and without a word they stooped and set to work, side by side, scraping the earth with their fingers over the body. Tegakwita found a dozen little ways to delay. Menard steadily lost patience.

"Tegakwita has forgotten," said the Indian, standing up; "he has not offered the present to his sister's Oki."

"Well?" said Menard, roughly.

Tegakwita's voice trembled, as if he knew that he was pressing the white man too far.

"The grave must be opened. It will not take long."

It came to Menard in a flash. The many delays, the anxious glances toward the thicket,--these meant that others were coming. Something delayed them; Tegakwita must hold the Big Buffalo till they arrived. With never a word Menard sprang over the grave; but the Indian was quicker, and his hand was the first on the musket. Then they fought, each struggling to free his hands from the other's grasp, rolling over and over,--now half erect, tramping on the soft mound, now wrestling on the harder ground below. At last Menard, as they whirled and tumbled past the weapons, snatched the knife. Tegakwita caught his wrist, and then it was nigh to stabbing his own thigh as they fought for it. Once he twisted his hand and savagely buried the blade in the Indian's side. Tegakwita caught his breath and rallied, and the blood of the one was on them both. At last a quick wrench bent the Indian's wrist back until it almost snapped,--Menard thought that it had,--and the stained blade went home once, and again, and again, until the arms that had clung madly about the white man slipped off, and lay weakly on the ground.

Menard was exhausted. The dirt and blood were in his hair and eyes and ears. He was rising stiffly to his knees when the rush of Indians came from the bushes. He could not see them clearly,--could hardly hear them,--though he fought until a musket-stock swung against his head and stretched him on the ground.

When he recovered they were standing about him, half a score of them, waiting to see if he still had life. He raised a bruised arm to wipe his eyes, but a rough hand caught it and drew a thong tightly about his wrists. Slowly his senses awakened, and he could see indistinctly the silent forms,--some standing motionless, others walking slowly about. It was strange. His aching head had not the wit to meet with the situation. Then they jerked him to his feet, and with a stout brave at each elbow and others crowding about on every side, he was dragged off through the bushes.

For a long time the silent party pushed forward. They were soon clear of the forest, passing through rich wild meadows that lifted the scent of clover, the fresher for the dew that lay wet underfoot. There were other thickets and other forests, and many a reach of meadow, all rolling up and down over the gentle hills. Menard tried to gather his wits, but his head reeled; and the struggle to keep his feet moving steadily onward was enough to hold his mind. He knew that he should watch the trail closely, to know where they were taking him, but he was not equal to the effort. At last the dawn came, gray and depressing, creeping with deadly slowness on the trail of the retreating night. The sky was dull and heavy, and a mist clung about the party, leaving little beads of moisture on deerskin coats and fringed leggings and long, brown musket barrels. The branches drooped from the trees, blurred by the mist and the half dark into strange shapes along the trail.

The day was broad awake when Menard gave way. His muscles had been tried to the limit of his endurance during these many desperate days and sleepless nights that he had thought to be over. He fell loosely forward. For a space they dragged him, but the burden was heavy, and the chief ordered a rest. The band of warriors scattered about to sleep under the trees, leaving a young brave to watch the Big Buffalo, who slept motionless where they had dropped him in the long grass close at hand. On every side were hills, shielding them from the view of any chance straggler from the Onondaga villages, unless he should clamber down the short slopes and search for them in the mist. A stream tumbled by, not a dozen yards from Menard and his yawning guardian.

When he awoke, the mist had thinned, but the sky showed no blue. Beneath the gray stretch that reached from hill crest to hill crest, light foaming clouds scudded across from east to west, though there was little wind near the ground. The Captain listened for a time to the noise of the stream before looking about. He changed his position, and rheumatic pains shot through his joints. For the second time in his life he realized that he was growing old; and with this thought came another. What sort of a soldier was he if he could not pass through such an experience without paying the old man's penalty. To be sure his head was battered and bruised, and scattered over his shoulders and arms and hips were a dozen small wounds to draw in the damp from the grass, but he did not think of these. In his weak, half-awake state, he was discouraged, with the feeling that the best of his life was past. And the thought that he, a worn old soldier, could have dreamed what he had dreamed of the maid and her love sank down on his heart like a weight. But this thought served another purpose: to think of the maid was to think of her danger; and this was to be the alert soldier again, with a plan for every difficulty as long as he had life in his body. And so, before the mood could drag him down, he was himself again.

Most of the Indians were asleep, sprawling about under the trees near the water. The warrior guarding Menard appeared to be little more than a youth. He sat with his knees drawn up and his head bowed, his blanket pulled close around him, and his oily black hair tangled about his

eyes. Menard lay on his back looking at the Indian through half-closed eyes.

"Well," he said in a low, distinct voice, "you have me now, haven't you?"

The Indian gave him a quick glance, but made no reply.

"It is all right, my brother. Do not turn your eyes to me, and nothing will be seen. I can speak quietly. A nod of your head will tell me if anyone comes near. Do you understand?"

Again the little eyes squinted through the hanging locks of hair.

"You do understand? Very well. You know who I am? I am the Big Buffalo. I killed half a score of your bravest warriors in their own village. Do you think these thongs can hold the Big Buffalo, who never has been held by thongs, who is the hardest fighter and the boldest hunter of all the lands from the Mohawk to the Great River of the Illinois? Listen, I will tell you how many canoes of furs the Big Buffalo has in the north country; I will tell you--"

The Indian's head nodded almost imperceptibly. A yawning brave was walking slowly along the bank of the stream, gathering wood for a fire. He passed to a point a few rods below the prisoner, then came back and disappeared among the trees.

"I will tell you," said Menard, keeping his voice at such a low pitch that the guard had to bend his head slightly toward him, "of the great bales of beaver that are held safe in the stores of the Big Buffalo. Does my brother understand? Does he see that these bales are for him, that he will be as rich as the greatest chief among all the chiefs of the Long House? No brave shall have such a musket,--with a long, straight barrel that will send a ball to the shoulder of a buffalo farther than the flight of three arrows. His blanket shall be the brightest in Onondaga; his many clothes, his knives, his hatchets, his collars of wampum shall have no equal. He can buy the prettiest wives in the nation. Does my brother understand?"

The fire had been lighted, and a row of wild hens turned slowly on wooden spits over the flames. One by one the warriors were rousing and stirring about among the trees. There were shouts and calls, and the grumbling talk of the cooks as they held the long spits and turned their faces away from the smoke, which rose but slowly in the damp, heavy air. Menard lay with his eyes closed, as if asleep; even his lips hardly moved as he talked.

"My brother must think quickly, for the time is short. All that I promise he will have, if he will be a friend to the Big Buffalo. And every Onondaga knows that the word of the Big Buffalo is a word that has never been broken. My brother will be a friend. He will watch close, and to-night, when the dark has come, he will let his knife touch the thongs that hold the White Chief captive."

The Indian's face was without expression. Menard watched him closely, but could not tell whether his offer was taking effect. What he had no means of knowing was that since the battle at the hut, and the short fight in the council-house, the younger braves had centred their superstitions on him. It was thought that his body was occupied by some bad spirit that gave him the strength of five men, and that he had been sent to their village by a devil to lure the warriors into the hands of the French. These were not the open views that would have been heard at a council; they were the fears of the untried warriors, who had not the vision to understand the diplomacy of the chiefs, nor the position in the village to give them a public hearing. They had talked together in low tones, feeding the common fear, until a few words from the Long Arrow had aroused them into action. And so this guard was between two emotions: the one a lust for wealth and position in the tribe, common to every Indian and in most cases a stronger motive than any of the nobler sentiments; the other an unreasoning fear of this "bad doctor," the fear that to aid him or to accept furs from him would poison the ears of his own Oki, and destroy his chance of a name and wealth during his life, and of a long, glorious hunt after death.

"My brother shall come with me to the land of the white men, where there is no trouble,--where he shall have a great lodge like the white chiefs, with coloured pictures in gold frames, and slaves to prepare his food. He shall be a great chief among white men and redmen, and his stores shall be filled to the doors with furs of beaver and seal."

Menard's voice was so low and deliberate that the Indian did not question his statements. He was tempted more strongly than he had ever been tempted before, but with the desire grew the fear of the consequences. As for the Captain, he was clutching desperately at this slender chance that lay to his hand.

"I have given my brother his choice of greater power than was ever before offered to a youth who has yet to win his name. The stroke of a knife will do it. No one shall know, for the Big Buffalo can be trusted. My brother has it before him to be a red chief or a white chief, as he may wish. The warriors are near,--the day grows bright; he must speak quickly."

There was a call from the group by the fire, and the young Indian gave a little start, and slowly rising, walked away, yielding his place as guard to an older man. Menard rolled over and pressed his face to the ground as if weary; he could then watch the youth through the grass as he moved to the fire, but in a moment he lost sight of him. The new guard was a stern-faced brave, and his appearance promised no help; so the Captain, having done all that could be done at the moment, tried to get another sleep, struggling to put thoughts of the maid from his mind. Perhaps, after all, she was safe at the village.

Meantime the youth, after a long struggle with the temptings of the bad doctor, yielded to his superstition, and sought the Long Arrow, who lay on the green bank of the stream. In a few

moments the story was told, and the chief, with a calm face but with twinkling eyes, came to the prisoner and stood looking down at him.

"The White Chief is glad to be with his Onondaga brothers?" he said in his quiet voice.

Menard slowly raised his eyes, and looked coolly at the chief without replying.

"The tongue of the Big Buffalo is weary perhaps? It has moved so many times to tell the Onondaga what is not true, that now it asks for rest. The Long Arrow is kind. He will not seek to move it again. For another sleep it shall lie at rest; then it may be that our braves shall find a way to stir it."

Menard rolled over, with an expression of contempt, and closed his eyes.

"The Long Arrow was sorry that his white brother was disappointed at the torture. Perhaps he will have better fortune after he has slept again. Already have the fires been lighted that shall warm the heart of the White Chief. And he shall have friends to brighten him. His squaw, too, shall feel the glow of the roaring fire, and the gentle hands of the Onondaga warriors, who do not forget the deaths of their own blood."

Menard lay still.

"Another sleep, my brother, and the great White Chief who speaks with the voice of Onontio shall be with his friends. He shall hear the sweet voice of his young squaw through the smoke that shall be her garment. He shall hear the prayers of his holy Father by his side, and shall know that his spirit is safe with the Great Spirit who is not strong enough to give him his life when the Long Arrow takes it away."

There was still a mad hope that the chief spoke lies, that the maid and Father Claude were safe. True or false, the Long Arrow would surely talk thus; for the Iroquois were as skilled in the torments of the mind as of the body. He was conscious that the keen voice was going on, but he did not follow what it said. Again he was going over and over in his mind all the chances of escape. It might be that the youth had been moved by his offer. But at that moment he heard the Long Arrow saying:--

" ... Even before his death the Big Buffalo must lie as he has always lied. His tongue knows not the truth. He thinks to deceive our young braves with talk of his furs and his lodges and his power in the land of the white men. But our warriors know the truth. They know that the Big Buffalo has no store of furs, no great lodges,--that he lives in the woods with only a stolen musket, where he can by his lies capture the peaceful hunters of the Onondagas to make them the slaves of his Chief-Across-the-Water."

CHAPTER XVI.

AT THE LONG LAKE.

Menard again dropped to sleep. When the day had nearly reached its middle, he was aroused by two warriors, who pulled him roughly to his feet. The band had evidently been astir for some moments. A few braves were extinguishing the fire with clumps of sod, while the others packed in their blankets what had been left from the morning meal, or looked to the spots of rust which the damp had brought to knives and muskets. The Long Arrow came over to inspect the thongs that held Menard's wrists; he had not forgotten his attack on his guards on the morning of the torture. And with a precaution that brought a half smile to the prisoner's face, he posted a stout warrior on each side, in addition to those before and behind. Then they set out over the hills, wading through a great tumbling meadow where their feet sank deep into the green and yellow and white that June had spread over the open lands of the Iroquois. Overhead the sky, though still clouded, was breaking, giving little glimpses of clear blue.

As they neared the crest of the first hill, the Captain looked back over his shoulder. The sun had at last broken through to the earth, and a great band of yellow light was moving swiftly across the valley. Before it, all the ground was sombre in its dark green and its heavy moisture; behind lay a stretch of golden sunshine, rounding over the farther hills in great billows of grass and flowers and clustering trees, glistening with dew and glowing with the young health of the summer. Up the hillside came the sunlight; and then in a moment it had passed them, and the air was warm and sweet.

Menard looked at the sun and then back across the valley to get his direction. He saw that the party was moving a little to the south of west. This line of march should take them through the Cayuga country,--a natural move on the part of the Long Arrow, for the Cayugas were closer to the scene of the fighting than the Onondagas, and therefore would be less likely to interfere with the persecution of a Frenchman, particularly before their chiefs should return from the council.

Late in the afternoon they came to a slow-moving stream, the outlet of an inland lake. By the basin-shape of the end of the lake, he recognized it as one that lay directly between Onondaga

and the Long Lake of the Cayugas. On the bank of the little river, under the matted foliage, the chief signalled a halt, and the warriors threw themselves on the ground. Menard lay at the foot of a beech whose roots dipped in the water, and for the hundredth time since the sun had risen he cast about for some chance at escape. The thongs about his wrists were tied by skilful hands. He tried to reach the knot with his fingers, but could not. His guards were alert to every motion; they lay on either side, and he could not lift his eyes without meeting the sullen glance of one or the other. He was about ready to submit, trusting to his wits to seize the first opportunity that should come; for after all, to worry would strain his nerves, and now, if at any time, his nerves and his strength were needed. When at last he reached this point of view, he lay back on the weed-grown earth and went to sleep.

An hour later he was aroused for another start. Night came while they were on the way, but they pushed steadily forward, and within a few hours they reached the Long Lake. Instead of stopping, however, the Long Arrow headed to the south along the bank of the lake. For a space it was hard going through the interwoven bushes and briars that tore even Menard's tough skin. The moon was in the sky, and here and there he caught glimpses of the lake lying still and bright. They saw no signs of life save for the flitting bats, and the owls that called weirdly through the reaches of the forest. After another hour they found a trail which led them down close to the water, and at last to a half-cleared space, rank and wild with weed and thistle, and with rotting heaps where lay the trunks of trees, felled a generation earlier. Scattered about the outer edge of the clearing, close to the circle of trees, were a few bark huts, with roofs sagging and doors agape. One or two were rivalled in height by the weeds that choked their windows. As Menard stood between his guards under the last tree on the trail, looking at the deserted village where the frightened bats rose and wheeled, and the moonlight streamed on broken roofs, he began to understand. The Long Arrow had found a place where he could carry out his vengeance undisturbed.

Other forms had risen from the weeds to greet the party. Looking more closely, Menard saw that a group of Indians were dragging logs for a fire. Evidently this was a rendezvous for two or more bands. He tried to count the dim forms, and found them somewhat less than a score in all. Perhaps the Long Arrow had found it not easy to raise a large party to defy the will of the council concerning the White Chief; but he had enough, and already the brandy was beginning to flow,—the first stage of the orgie which should take up the rest of the night, and perhaps the day to follow. The Long Arrow and his party at once joined in the drinking. Confident that they would not this time be interrupted, they would probably use all deliberation in preparing for the torture.

A rough meal was soon ready, and all fell to. Nothing was set apart for the prisoner; though had he been weak they would have fed him to stay him for the torture. One of his guardians, in mock pity, threw him a bone to which a little meat clung. He asked that his hands be loosed, or at least tied in front of his body, but his request brought jeers from the little group about him. Seeing that there was no hope of aid, he rolled over and gnawed the bone where it lay on the ground. The warriors laughed again, and one kicked it away; but Menard crawled after it, and this time was not disturbed. A little later, two other Indians came from the fire, and after a talk with his guards, ordered him to his feet and led him to one of the huts. The door was of rude boards, hung on wooden hinges, and now held in place by a short log. One brave kicked away the log, and Menard was thrown inside with such force that he fell headlong.

Through an opening in the roof came a wide beam of moonlight. He looked up, and at first thought he was alone; then he saw two figures crouching against the rear wall. His own face and head were so covered with dust and blood that he could not have been recognized for a white man.

"Who are you?" he said in Iroquois.

"Captain!" came in a startled voice that he knew for Father Claude's; and a little gasp of relief from the other figure brought a thrill of joy. He tried to raise himself, but in an instant they had come to him and were laughing and sobbing and speaking his name. While Father Claude seized his shoulders to lift him, the maid fell on her knees, and with her teeth tried to cut the thongs.

"Wait, Father," she said in a mumbled voice, without pausing in her work; "wait a moment."

Menard could feel her warm tears dropping on his hands.

"You must not, Mademoiselle," said the priest. "You must let me."

She shook her head, and worked faster, until the thongs fell away and she could rub with her own torn hands the Captain's wrists.

"Now he may arise, Father. See—see what they have done to him."

Menard laughed. All the weight that had pressed on his heart had lifted at the sound of her voice and the touch of her hands. The laugh lingered until he was on his feet, and the three stood close together in the patch of moonlight and looked each into the other's eyes—not speaking, because there was no word so complete as the relief that had come to them all; a relief so great, and a bond so strong that during all the time they should live thereafter, through other days and other times, even across the seas in lands where much should be about them to draw a mist over the past, the moment would always be close in their memories,—it would stand out above all other deeds and other moments. Then the Captain held out his hands, and they each took one in a long clasp that told them all to hope, that stirred a new, daring thought in each heart. Father Claude at last turned away with shining eyes. The maid stood looking up at this soldier whom she trusted, and a little sigh passed her lips. Then she too turned, and to

cover her thoughts she hummed a gay air that Menard had heard the trumpeters play at Quebec.

"Tell us, M'sieu," she said abruptly, "what is it? How did it happen?"

"It is the Long Arrow."

"So we thought," said Father Claude; "but he was not with the party that brought us here, and we could not know. They came while we were sleeping, and bound our mouths so that we could not scream. I was at fault, I--"

"No, Father. You cannot say that. I left you. I should have been at your side."

"Will you tell us about it, M'sieu?" asked the maid. She was leaning against the bark wall, looking at the two men.

Menard dropped to the ground, and in a quiet voice gave them the story of his capture. The priest rested near him on the broken-down bench that slanted against one wall. As the story grew, the maid came over and sat at the Captain's feet where she could watch his face as he talked. When he reached the account of the fight at the grave, he paused and looked at her upturned face. Then he went on, but he did not take up the tale where he had dropped it. He could not tell her of Tegakwita's end. As he went on to the fight with the Long Arrow's band and the flight through the hill country, he thought that she had missed nothing; but when he had finished she said:--

"And Tegakwita, M'sieu? Did he come with them?"

"No," Menard replied; "he did not come. I killed him."

He had not meant to let the words come out so brutally. And now, as he saw the frightened look, almost of horror, come into her eyes, he suffered in a way that would not have been possible before he had known this maid. He read her thoughts,--that she herself was the cause of a double tragedy,--and it for the moment unmanned him. When he could look at her again, she was more nearly herself.

"Go on, M'sieu. There is more?"

"No. There is no more, except that I am here with you. But of yourselves? You have told me nothing."

"We have told you all there is to tell," said Father Claude. "We were taken while we slept. They have come rapidly, but otherwise they have not been unkind."

"You have had food?"

"Yes."

"We must think now," Menard said abruptly; "we must put our wits together. It is late in the night, and we should be free before dawn. Have you thought of any way?"

"Yes," replied the priest, slowly, "we have thought of one. Teganouan is with our party. At the first he tried to keep out of sight, but of course he could not, once we were on the way. He was a long time at the Mission of St. Francis, and I at one time hoped that he would prove a true believer. It was drink that led him away from us,--an old weakness with him. This morning, when he passed me, I knew that he was ashamed. I dared not speak to him; but since then, whenever my eyes have met his, I have seen that look of understanding."

"I fear you will not see it to-night," said the Captain. "They are drinking."

"Ah, but he is not. He is guarding the hut. Come, M'sieu, it may be that we can see him now."

Menard rose, and with the priest peered through the cracks at the rear of the hut. After a moment they saw him, standing in the shadow of a tree.

"You are sure it is he, Father?"

"Ah, M'sieu, I should know him."

Menard rested his hand on a strip of rotting bark in the wall. The priest saw the movement.

"Yes," he said cautiously, "it would be very simple. But you will be cautious, M'sieu. Of course, I do not know--I cannot tell surely--and yet it must be that Teganouan still has a warm heart. It cannot be that he has forgotten the many months of my kindness."

While they stood there, hesitating between a dozen hasty plans, a light step sounded, and in an instant their eyes were at the opening. A second Indian had joined the guard, and was talking with him in a low voice. Father Claude gripped the Captain's arm.

"See, M'sieu,--the wampum collar,--it is the Long Arrow."

Menard laid his finger on his lips. The two Indians were not a dozen yards away. The chief swayed unsteadily as he talked, and once his voice rose. He carried a bottle, and paused now and then to drink from it.

"Teganouan is holding back," whispered Menard. "See, the Long Arrow has taken his arm--they are coming--is the door fast?"

"We cannot make it fast, M'sieu. It opens outward."

Menard sprang across to the door and ran his hands over it, but found no projection that could be used to hold it closed. He stood for a moment, puzzling; then his face hardened, and he fell

back to where the priest and the maid stood side by side.

"They will get in, M'sieu?"

"Yes. It is better."

They did not speak again. The moccasined feet made no noise on the cleared ground, and it seemed a long time before they could hear the log fall from the door. There were voices outside. At last the door swung open, and the Long Arrow, bottle in hand, came clumsily into the hut and stood unsteadily in the square of moonlight. He looked about as if he could not see them. Teganouan had come in behind him; and the door swung to, creaking.

"The White Chief is the brother of the Long Arrow," said the chief, speaking slowly and with an effort to make his words distinct. "He loves the Onondagas. Deep in his mind are the thoughts of the young white brave who lived in our villages and hunted with our braves and called the mighty Big Throat his father. He never forgets what the Onondagas have done for him. He has a grateful heart." The effort of speaking was confusing to the chief. He paused, as if to collect his ideas, and looked stupidly at the three silent figures before him. "... grateful heart," he repeated. "The Long Arrow has a grateful heart, too. He remembers the kind words of the white men who come to his village and tell him of the love of the Great Mountain. He never forgets that the Big Buffalo is his brother--he never forgets. When the Big Buffalo took his son from the hunting party of the Onondagas he did not forget."

Menard did not listen further. He was looking about the hut with quick, shifting eyes, now at the chief in the moonlight, now at Teganouan, who stood at one side in the shadow, now at the door. Could Teganouan be trusted to help them? He glanced sharply at the warrior, who was looking at his chief with an alert, cunning expression. His musket lay carelessly in the hollow of his arm, his knife and hatchet hung at his waist. The chief had only his knife; in his hand was the bottle, which he held loosely, now and then spilling a few drops of the liquor.

"The Long Arrow nev'r f'rgets,"--the chief's tongue was getting the better of him. "His house is lonely, where the fire burns alone and the young warr'r who once laid 's blanket,--laid 's blanket by the fire, no long'r 's there to warm the heart of the Long Arrow. But now his loneliness is gone. Now when he comes from the hunt to 's house he'll find a new fire, a bright fire, and a new squaw to warm 's heart--warm 's heart." He swayed a little as he spoke, and Teganouan took a short step forward; but the chief drew himself up and came slowly across the patch of moonlight. His eyes were unnaturally bright, and they rolled uncertainly from one to another of the little group before him. His coarse black hair was matted and tangled, and the eagle feathers that at the council had stood erect from his head now drooped, straggling, to one side.

The maid had understood. The two men drew close to her on each side, and her hand rested, trembling, on Menard's arm. All three were thinking fast. One scream, the sound of a struggle or even of loud voices, would bring upon them the whole drunken band. As the chief approached, the maid could feel the muscles harden on the Captain's arm.

"Long Arrow's lonely--his fire's not bright when he comes from hunt--" Here and there in his talk a few words were distinguishable as he stood lurching before them. He reached out in a maudlin effort to touch the maid's white face. She drew in her breath quickly and stepped back; then Menard had sprung forward, and she covered her eyes with her hands.

There was a light scuffle, but no other sound. A strong smell of brandy filled the hut. Slowly she lifted her head, and let her hands drop to her sides. The Long Arrow lay sprawling at her feet, his head gashed and bleeding, and covered with broken glass and dripping liquor. The priest had kneeled beside him, and over his bowed head she saw Teganouan, startled, defiant, his musket halfway to his shoulder, his eyes fixed on the door. Her eyes followed his gaze. There stood the Captain, his back to the door, the broken neck of the bottle firmly gripped in his hand.

She stepped forward, too struck with horror to remain silent.

"Oh, M'sieu!" she said brokenly, stretching out her hands.

He motioned to her to be quiet, and she sank down on the bench.

"Father," he said.

The priest looked up questioningly. There was a long moment of silence, and the shouts and calls of the half-drunken revellers without sounded strangely loud. Then, as the priest gazed at the set, hard face of the Captain, and at the motionless Indian, he understood of a sudden all the wild plan that was forming in the Captain's mind. He rose slowly to his feet, and stood facing Teganouan, with the light streaming down upon his gentle face.

"The sun has gone to sleep many times, Teganouan, since you left the great white house of the church at St. Francis. You have heard the counsel of evil men, who think only of the knife and the hatchet and the musket, who have no dream but to slay their brothers." He was speaking slowly and in a kindly voice, as a father might speak to a son who has wandered from the right. "Have you forgotten the talk of the holy Fathers, when they told you the words of the Book of the Great Spirit, who is to all your Manitous and Okis as the sun is to the stars. Have you forgotten the many moons that passed while you lived in the great white house,--when you gave your promise, the promise of an Onondaga, that you would be a friend to the white man, that you would believe the words of the Great Spirit and live a peaceful life? Have you forgotten, Teganouan, the evil days when your enemy, the fire-water, took possession of your heart and led you away from the white house into the lodges of them that do wrong,--how when the good

spirit returned to you and you came back to the arms of the Faith, you were received as a son and a brother? The holy Fathers did not say, 'This warrior has done that which he should not do. Let him be punished. We have no place for the wrongdoer.' No; they did not say this. They said, 'The lost is found. He that wandered from the fold has returned.' And they welcomed the lost one, and bade him repent and lead a right life. Have you forgotten, Teganouan?"

The Indian had slowly lowered his musket.

"Teganouan has not forgotten," he replied. "He has a grateful heart toward the holy Fathers of the great white house. When he was sick, they brought him their good doctor and told him to live. He believed that the white men were his brothers, that they would do to him as the Fathers had promised. But when Teganouan came to the white men, and asked to be made like they were, he left behind in his village a brother and a sister and a father who said that he was a traitor, who said that he was false to the trust of his blood and his nation, that he was not of their blood."

"And did he believe them? Did he not know, better than they could, that the faith of the white man is also the faith of the redman; that the love of the white man includes all who breathe and speak and hunt and trade and move upon the earth?"

"Teganouan has not forgotten. He heard the words of the Fathers, and he believed that they were true; but when the white Captain took from the Onondagas five score of their bravest warriors and called them slaves, when he took the brother of Teganouan, borne by the same mother and fed by the same hand, to be a slave of the mighty Chief-Across-the-Water, could he remember what the holy Fathers had said,—that all men were brothers?"

"Teganouan has heard what the White Chief, the Big Buffalo, has said, that the evil man who was treacherous to the Onondagas shall be punished?"

"Teganouan understands. But the evil man is far from the vengeance of the white man. The White Chief is here in our lodges."

Menard left the door and came to the priest's side. The jagged piece of glass, his only weapon, he threw to the ground.

"Teganouan," he said slowly and firmly, looking into the Indian's eyes, "you heard the great council at the Long House of the Five Nations. You heard the decision of the chiefs and warriors, that they whom Onontio had sent to bring a message of peace should be set free. You have broken the pledge made by your council. You have attacked us and made us prisoners, and brought us here where we may be tortured and killed and none may know. But when the Great Mountain finds that the Big Buffalo has not come back, when he sends his white soldier to the villages of the Onondagas and asks what they have done to him who brought his voice, what will you say? When the chiefs say, 'We set him free,' and look about to find the warrior who has dared to disobey the Long House, what will you say? When the young boys and the drunkards with loose tongues have told the story of the death of the Long Arrow, what will you say? Then you will be glad to flee to the white house of the holy Fathers, knowing that they will protect you and save you when the braves of your own blood shall pursue you."

Teganouan's eyelids had drooped, and now he was looking at the ground, where the chief lay.

"You will come with me, Teganouan. You will fly with us over the Long Lake, and through the forests and down the mighty rivers and over the inland sea, and there you shall be safe; and you shall see with your own eyes the punishment that the Great Mountain will give to the evil man who has been false to the Onondagas."

He held out his hand, and silently waited. The priest's head was raised, and his lips moved slowly in prayer. The maid sat rigid, her hands tightly gripping the edge of the bench. Though he knew that every moment brought nearer the chance of discovery, that the lives of them all hung on a thread as slender as a hair, the Captain stood without the twitching of a muscle, without a sign of fear or haste in his grave, worn face.

The Indian's eyes wavered. He looked at the fallen chief, at the priest, at Menard; then he took the offered hand. No further word was needed. Menard did not know the thought that lay behind the cunning face; it was enough that the Indian had given his word.

"Quick, we must hide him," said the Captain, looking swiftly about the hut. "We must disturb you, Mademoiselle--"

In a moment the three men had lifted the body of the Long Arrow and laid it away under the low bench. Teganouan scraped a few handfuls of earth from a corner and spread it over the spot where the chief had been.

"How far is it to the lake, Teganouan?"

"But a few rods."

"And the forest is thick?"

"Yes."

"We must cross the lake. Is there a canoe here?"

The Indian shook his head. Menard stood thinking for an instant.

"If you are thinking of me, M'sieu, I think I can swim with you," said the maid, timidly.

"There is no other way, Mademoiselle. I am sorry. But we will make it as easy as we can."

He stepped to the rear wall, and with a blow of his fist would have broken an opening through the rotted bank, but the Indian caught his arm.

"It is not necessary. See." He set rapidly to work, and in a few silent moments he had unlaced the thread-like root that held the sheet of bark in place, and lowered it to the ground. He raised himself by the cross-pole that marked the top of the wall, and slipped through the opening. A few quick glances through the trees, and he turned and beckoned. Menard followed, with the knife of the Long Arrow between his teeth; and with Father Claude's help the maid got through to where he could catch her and lower her to the ground.

The Indian made a cautious gesture and crept slowly through the yielding bushes. One by one they followed, the Captain lingering until the maid was close to him and he could whisper to her to keep her courage. They paused at the bank of the lake. The water lay sparkling in the moonlight. Menard looked grimly out; this light added to the danger. He found a short log close at hand and carried it to the water.

"Come, Mademoiselle," he whispered, "and Father Claude. This will support you. Teganouan and I will swim. Keep low in the water, and do not splash or speak. The slightest noise will travel far across the lake."

Slowly they waded out, dropping into the water before it was waist deep. Teganouan's powder-horn and musket lay on the log, and the maid herself steadied it so that they should not be lost.

CHAPTER XVII.

NORTHWARD.

Weak and chilled from the long swim through the cold water they dragged themselves across the narrow beach to the bushes that hung over the bank. Menard and Father Claude supported the maid, who was trembling and clinging to them. At the bank she sank to the ground.

"It is hard, Mademoiselle, but we must not stop. It is better to be weary than to rest in this condition. It would mean sickness."

"Yes," she said; "I know. In a moment I can go on." She looked up and tried to smile. "It is so cold, M'sieu."

Menard turned to Teganouan.

"How far is it to the villages of the Cayugas?"

"Not far. Half a sleep."

"Is there a trail?"

"The trail is far. It passes the end of the Long Lake." He raised his head and looked at the stars, then pointed to the southwest. "The nearest village lies there. If we go through the forest toward the setting sun, we shall meet the trail."

"You think it will be wise to go to the Cayugas, M'sieu?" asked Father Claude.

"I think so. The chiefs must have returned before this time, or at least by the morrow." He dropped into the Iroquois tongue. "Is not this so, Teganouan? Would the chiefs of the Cayugas linger among the Onondagas after the close of the council?"

"The Cayuga warriors await the word of the Long House. They know that their chiefs would hasten to bring it back to them."

"Yes. It must be so, Father. And we can trust them to aid us. Perhaps they will give us a canoe. Teganouan must tell them he is our guide, sent by the Big Throat and the chiefs of the Onondagas to take us safely to Frontenac."

The maid was struggling to keep awake, but her lids were heavy. Menard came to her and stood, hesitating. She knew that he was there; she could hear the rustle of his wet clothes, and his heavy breathing, but she did not look up.

"Come," he said, lightly touching her shoulder, "we cannot wait here. We must go."

She did not reply, and he hesitated again. Then he stooped and lifted her in his arms.

"You will go ahead, Teganouan," he said, "and you, too, if you will, Father Claude. Choose an easy trail if you can, and be careful that no twig flies back."

They set out slowly through the forest. The priest and the Indian laboriously broke a way, and Menard followed, holding the maid tenderly, and now and then, in some lighter spot where a beam of moonlight fell through the foliage, looking down at her gentle, weary face. She was sleeping; and he prayed that no sad dreams might come to steal her rest. His arms ached and his knees gave under him, but he had hardly a thought for himself. At last, after a long, silent march, the priest stopped, and said, supporting himself with one thin hand against a tree:--

"You are weary, M'sieu. You must let me take Mademoiselle."

"No, Father, no. I have been thinking. I am afraid it is not right that she should sleep now. Even though she fail in the effort, exercise of her muscles is all that will prevent sickness. And yet I cannot,"--he looked again at her face as it rested against his shoulder,--"I cannot awaken her now."

The Father saw the sorrow in the Captain's eyes, and understood.

"I will take her, M'sieu."

Carefully Menard placed her in Father Claude's arms and turned away.

"Teganouan," he said, trying to recover his self-possession, "should we not be near the trail?"

"Yes, more than half the way."

"Can we reach it more quickly by heading a little to the north?"

"We would reach the trail, yes; but the way would be longer."

"Never mind; once on the trail it will be easier than in this forest. Turn to the north, Teganouan."

He could hear the maid's voice, protesting sleepily, and Father Claude talking quietly to her. He looked around. The priest said in a low tone:--

"Come, M'sieu, it is hard to awaken her."

"We must frighten her, then."

He caught her shoulders and shook her roughly. Slowly her eyes opened, and then the two men dragged her forward. At first she thought herself back among the Onondagas, and she begged them not to take her away, hanging back and forcing them almost to carry her. It cut Menard to the heart, but he pushed steadily forward. Later she yielded, and with a dazed expression obeyed. Once or twice she stumbled, and would have fallen but for the strong hands that held her. Father Claude rested his hand on her forehead as they walked, and Menard gave him an anxious, questioning glance. The priest shook his head.

"No," he said, "there is no fever. I trust that it is nothing worse than exhaustion."

Menard went on with relief in his eyes.

In less than half an hour after reaching the trail, they came upon the outlying huts of the village. Over the hills to the east the dawn was breaking, and all the sleeping birds and beasts and creeping things of the forest were stirring into life and movement. Teganouan went ahead of the party and soon roused a member of the Cayuga branch of his clan, the family of the Bear. Through the yawning services of this warrior they were guided to an unused hut. Teganouan searched farther, and returned with a heap of blankets for the maid, who had dropped to the ground before the hut. Menard carried her within and made her as comfortable as possible, then withdrew and closed the door.

"Have the chiefs returned from the council at the village of the Onondagas?" he asked of the warrior, who stood at one side watching them with curiosity in his gaze.

The Cayuga bowed.

"Will my brother carry a message from the White Chief, the Big Buffalo, to his chiefs? Will he tell them, as soon as the sun has risen, that the Big Buffalo has come to talk with them?"

The warrior bowed and walked away.

"We are safe now, I think, Father. We must get what little sleep we can between now and sunrise."

"Should not one of us watch, M'sieu?"

"We are not fit for it. We have hard work before us, and many a chance yet to run."

"Teganouan will watch," said the Indian.

Menard's face showed surprise, but Father Claude whispered, "He has learned at the mission to understand our language."

They lay on the ground before the hut, in their wet clothes, and in a moment were asleep. Teganouan built a fire close at hand, and sat by it without a motion, excepting the alert shifting glances of his bead-like eyes, until, when the colours in the east had faded into blue and the sun was well above the trees, he saw the chiefs of the village coming slowly toward him between the huts, a crowd of young men following behind them, and a snarling pack of dogs running before. He aroused Menard and Father Claude.

The chiefs sat in a circle about the fire, the two white men among them. The other Indians sat and stood in a wider circle, just within earshot, and waited inquisitively for the White Chief to state his errand.

"My brothers, the white men, have asked to speak with the chiefs of the Cayugas," said the spokesman, a wrinkled old warrior, whom Menard recognized as one of the speakers at the Long House.

"The Big Buffalo is on his way to the stone house of Onontio. He is far from the trail. His muskets and his knives and hatchets were taken from him by the Onondagas and were not returned to him. He asks that the chiefs of the Cayugas permit him to use one of their many canoes, that he may hasten to carry to Onontio the word of the Long House."

"The White Chief comes to the Cayugas, who live two sleeps away from their brothers, the Onondagas, to ask for aid. Have the Onondagas then refused him? Why is my brother so far from the trail?"

"The chiefs of the Cayugas sat in the Long House; they heard the words of the great council, that the Big Buffalo and the holy Father and the white maiden should be set free. They know that what is decided in the council is the law of the nation, that no warrior shall break it."

The little circle was silent with attention, but none of the chiefs replied.

"It was still in the dark of the night when the Big Throat came to the lodge of the Big Buffalo, and gave him the pledge of the council that he should be free with the next sun. The Big Buffalo once learned to believe the pledge of the Iroquois. When the mighty Big Throat said that he was free, he believed. He did not set a guard to sit with wakeful eyes through the night in fear that the pledge was not true. No, the Big Buffalo is a warrior and a chief; he is not a woman. He trusted his red brothers, and rested his head to sleep. Then in the dark came a chief, a dog of a traitor, and took away his white brother and his white sister while their eyes were still heavy with sleep, and carried them far over the hills to the lake of the Cayugas. Here they hid like serpents in the long grass, and thought that they would kill them. But the Big Buffalo is a warrior. Without a knife or a musket or a hatchet he killed the Long Arrow and came across the Long Lake. He knew that the Cayugas were his brothers, that they would not break the pledge of the Long House."

The grave faces of the Indians showed no surprise, save for a slight movement of the eyes on the part of one or two of the younger men, when the Long Arrow was mentioned. Most of them had lighted their pipes before sitting down, and now they puffed in silence.

"The White Chief speaks strangely," the spokesman said at last. "He tells the Cayugas that their brothers, the Onondagas, have broken the pledge of the council."

"Yes."

"He asks for aid?"

"No," said Menard, "he does not ask for aid. He asks that the Iroquois nation restore to him what the dogs of the Long Arrow have taken away. He has spoken to the Long House in the voice of the Great Mountain. He has the right of a free man, of a chief honoured by the council, to go freely and in peace. What if those who do not respect the law of the council shall rob him of his rights? Must he go on his knees to the chiefs? Must he ask that he be allowed to live? Must he go far back on his trail to seek aid of the Onondagas, because the Cayugas will not hold to the law?"

One of the great lessons learned during Menard's work under Governor Frontenac had been that the man who once permits himself to be lowered in the eyes of the Indians has forever lost his prestige. Now he sat before the chiefs of a great village, weak from the strain of the long days and nights of distress and wakefulness and hunger, his clothing still wet and bedraggled, with no weapon but a knife, no canoe, not to speak of presents,—with none of the equipment which to the Indian mind suggested authority,—and yet made his demands in the stern voice of a conqueror. He knew that these Indians cared not at all whether the word of the council to him had been broken or kept, unless he could so impress them with his authority that they would fear punishment for the offence.

"The Big Buffalo is a mighty warrior," said the spokesman. "His hard hands are greater than the muskets and hatchets of the Cayugas. He fights with the strength of the winter wind; no man can stand where his hand falls. He speaks wisely to the Cayugas. They are sorry that their brothers, the Onondagas, have so soon forgotten the word of the great council. Let the Big Buffalo rest his arms. The warriors of the Cayugas shall be proud to offer him food."

They all rose, and after a few grunted words of friendship, filed away to go over the matter in private council. Menard saw that they were puzzled; perhaps they did not believe that he had killed the Long Arrow. He turned to Teganouan, who had been sitting a few yards away.

"Teganouan, will you go among the braves of the village and tell them that the Big Buffalo is a strong fighter, that he killed the Long Arrow with his hands? It may be that they have not believed."

This was the kind of strategy Teganouan understood. He walked slowly away, puffing at his pipe, to mingle among the people of the village and boast in bold metaphors the prowess of his White Chief.

"They will give us a canoe," said Father Claude.

"Yes, they must. Now, let us sleep again."

They dropped to the ground, and Menard looked warningly at the circle of young boys who came as close as they dared to see this strange white man, and to hear him talk in the unpronounceable language. Father Claude's eyes were first to close. The Captain was about to join him in slumber when a low voice came from the door.

"M'sieu."

He started up and saw the maid holding the door ajar and leaning against it, her pale face, framed in a tangle of soft hair, showing traces of the wearing troubles of the days just passed.

"Ah, Mademoiselle, you must not waken. You must sleep long, and rest, and grow bright and young again."

She smiled, and looked at him timidly.

"I have been dreaming, M'sieu," she said, and her eyes dropped, "such an unpleasant dream. It was after we had crossed the lake--We did cross it, M'sieu, did we not? That, too, was not a dream? No--see, my hair is wet."

"No," he said, "that was not a dream."

"We were on the land, and I was so tired, and you talked to me--something good--I cannot remember what it was, but I know that you were good. And I thought that I--that I said words that hurt you, unkind words. And when I wished and tried to speak as I felt, only the other words would come. That was a dream, M'sieu, was it not? It has been troubling me. You have been so kind, and I could not sleep thinking that--that--"

"Yes," he said, "that was a dream."

She looked at him with relief, but as she looked she seemed to become more fully awake to what they were saying. Her eyes lowered again, and the red came over her face.

"I am glad," she said, so low that he hardly heard.

"And now you will rest, Mademoiselle?"

She smiled softly, and drew back within the hut, closing the heavy door. And Menard turned away, unmindful of the wide-eyed boys who were staring from a safe distance at him and at the door where the strange woman had appeared. He sat with his back against the logs of the hut, and looked at the ants that hurried about over the trampled ground.

The sun was high when he was aroused by Teganouan, who had spent the greater part of the morning among the people of the village.

"Have you any word, Teganouan?"

"Yes. The warriors have learned of the strength of the Big Buffalo, and his name frightens them. They bow to the great chief who has killed the Long Arrow without a hatchet. They say that the Onondagas should be punished for their treachery."

"Good."

"Teganouan has been talking long with a runner of the Seneca nation."

"Ah, he brings word of the fight?"

"Yes. The Senecas have suffered under the iron hand of the Great Mountain. A great army takes up the hatchet when he goes on the war-path, more than all the Senecas and Cayugas and Onondagas together when every brave who can hold in his hand a bow or a musket has come to fight with his brothers. There were white warriors so many that the runner could not have counted them with all the sticks in the Long House. There were men of the woods in the skins and beads of the redmen; there were Hurons and Ottawas and Nipissings, and even the cowardly Illinois and the Kaskaskias and the Miamis from the land where the Great River flows past the Rock Demons. The Senecas fought with the strength of the she-bear, but their warriors were killed, their corn was trampled and cut, their lodges were burned."

"Did the Great Mountain pursue them?"

"He has gone back to his stone house across the great lake, leaving the land black and smoking. The Senecas have come to the western villages of the Cayugas."

"There are none in this village?"

"No. But the chiefs have sent blankets to their brothers, and as much corn as a hundred braves could carry over the trail. They have taken from their own houses to give to the Senecas."

A few moments later two young men came with baskets of sagamity and smoked meat. Menard received it, and rising, knocked gently at the door.

"Yes, M'sieu,--I am not sleeping."

He hesitated, and she came to the door and opened it.

"Ah, you have food, M'sieu! I am glad. I have been so hungry."

"Come, Father," said the Captain, and they entered and sat on the long bench, eating the smoky, greasy meat as eagerly as if it had been cooked for the Governor's table. Their spirits rose as the baskets emptied, and they found that they could laugh and joke about their ravenous hunger.

The chiefs returned shortly after, and came stooping into the hut in the free Indian fashion. The old chief spoke:--

"The Big Buffalo has honoured the lodges of the Cayugas; he has made the village proud to offer him their corn and meat. It would make their hearts glad if he would linger about their fires, with the holy Father and the squaw, that they might tell their brothers of the great warrior who dwelt in their village. But the White Chief bears the word of the Long House. He goes to the stone house to tell his white brothers, who fight with the thunder, that the Cayugas and the Onondagas are friends of the white men, that they have given a pledge which binds them as close as could the stoutest ropes of deerskin. And so with sad hearts they come to say farewell to the Big Buffalo, and to wish that no dog may howl while he sleeps, that no wind may blow against his canoe, that no rains may fall until he rests with his brothers at the great stone house beyond the lake."

"The Big Buffalo thanks the mighty chiefs of the Cayugas," replied Menard. "He is glad that they are his friends. And when his mouth is close to the ear of the Great Mountain, he will tell him that his Cayuga sons are loyal to their Father."

The chief had lighted a long pipe. After two deliberate puffs, the first upward toward the roof of the hut, the second toward the ground, he handed it to Menard, who followed his example, and passed it to the chief next in importance. As it went slowly from hand to hand about the circle, the Captain turned to the maid, who sat at his side.

"Do they mean it, M'sieu?" she whispered.

For an instant a twinkle came into his eye; she saw it, and smiled.

"Careful," he whispered.

Before she could check the smile, a bronze hand reached across to her with the pipe. She started back and looked down at it.

"You must smoke it," Menard whispered. "It is a great honour. They have admitted you to their council."

"Oh, M'sieu--I can't--" she took the pipe and held it awkwardly; then, with an effort, raised it to her mouth. It made her cough, and she gave it quickly to the Captain.

The Indians rose gravely and filed out of the hut.

"Come, Mademoiselle, we are to go."

The smoke had brought tears to her eyes, and she was hesitating, laughing in spite of herself.

"Oh, M'sieu, will--will it make me sick?"

He smiled, with a touch of the old light humour.

"I think not. We must go, or they will wonder."

They found the chiefs waiting before the hut, Father Claude and Teganouan among them. As soon as they had appeared, the whole party set out through the village and over a trail through the woods to the eastward. The ill-kept dogs played about them, and plunged, barking, through the brush on either side. Behind, at a little distance, came the children and hangers-on of the village, jostling one another to keep at the head where they could see the white strangers.

When they reached the bank of the lake, they found two canoes drawn up on the narrow strip of gravel, and a half-dozen well-armed braves waiting close at hand. The chief paused and pointed toward the canoes.

"The Cayugas are proud that the White Chief will sail in their canoes to the land of the white men. The bravest warriors of a mighty village will go with them to see that no Onondaga arrow flies into their camp by night."

He signalled to a brave, who brought forward a musket and laid it, with powder-horn and bullet-pouch, at the Captain's feet.

"This musket is to tell the Big Buffalo that no wild beast shall disturb his feast, and that meat in plenty shall hang from the smoking-pole in his lodge."

The canoes were carried into the water and they embarked,--Menard, the maid, and two braves in one, Father Claude and four braves in the other. They swung out into the lake, the wiry arms and shoulders of the canoemen knotting with each stroke of the paddles; and the crowd of Indians stood on the shore gazing after until they had passed from view beyond a wooded point.

A few hours should take them to the head of the lake. They had reached perhaps half the distance, when Menard saw that two of his canoemen had exchanged glances and were looking toward the shore. He glanced along the fringe of trees and bushes, a few hundred yards distant, until his eyes rested on three empty canoes. He called to Father Claude's canoe, and both, at his order, headed for the shore. As they drew near, half a score of Indians came from the brush.

"Why," said the maid, "there are some of the men who brought us to the lake."

"Yes," replied Menard, "it is the Long Arrow's band."

He leaped out of the canoe before it touched the beach, and walked sternly up to the group of warriors. He knew why they were there. It was what he had expected. When they had discovered the death of the Long Arrow there had been rage and consternation. Disputes had followed, the band had divided, and a part had crossed the lake to hunt the trail of the Big Buffalo. He folded his arms and gave them a long, contemptuous look.

"Why do the Onondagas seek the trail of the Big Buffalo? Do they think to overtake him? Do they think that all their hands together are strong enough to hold him? Did they think that they could lie to the White Chief, could play the traitor, and go unpunished?"

Only one or two of the Onondagas had their muskets in their hands. They all showed fright, and one was edging toward the wood. The Cayugas in the canoes, at a word from Father Claude, had raised their muskets. Menard saw the movement from the corner of his eye, and for the moment doubted the wisdom of the action. It was a question whether the Cayugas could actually be brought to fire on their Onondaga brothers. Still, this band had defied the law of the council, and might, in the eyes of the Indians, bring down another war upon the nation by their act. While he spoke, the Captain had been deciding on a course. He now walked boldly up to the man who was nearest the bushes, and snatched away his musket. There was a stir and a

murmur, but without heeding, he took also the only other musket in the party, and stepped between the Indians and the forest.

"Stand where you are, or I will kill you. One man"--he pointed to a youth--"will go into the forest and bring your muskets to the canoes."

They hesitated, but Menard held his piece ready to fire, and the Cayugas did the same. At last the youth went sullenly into the bushes and brought out an armful of muskets.

"Count them, Father," Menard called in French.

The priest did so, and then ran his eye over the party on the beach.

"There are two missing, M'sieu."

Menard turned to the youth, who, though he had not understood the words, caught their spirit and hurried back for the missing weapons. Then the Captain walked coolly past them, and took his place in the canoe. For a long time, as they paddled up the lake, they could see the Onondagas moving about the beach, and could hear their angry voices.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ONLY WAY.

When at last the canoe slipped from the confines of river and hills and forest out upon the great Lake Ontario, where the green water stretched flat, east and north and west to the horizon, the Cayuga warriors said farewell and turned again to their own lands. It was at noon of a bright day. The water lay close to the white beach, with hardly a ripple to mar the long black scallops of weed and drift which the last storm had left on the sand. The sky was fair and the air sweet.

In the one canoe which the Cayugas had left to them, the little party headed to the east, now skimming close to the silent beach, now cutting a straight path across some bay from point to point, out over the depths where lay the sturgeon and the pickerel and trout and whitefish. The gulls swooped at them; then, frightened, soared away in wide, rushing circles, dropping here and there for an overbold minnow. The afternoon went by with hardly the passing of a word. Each of them, the Captain, the maid, the priest, looked over the burnished water, now a fair green or blue sheet, now a space of striped yellow and green and purple, newly marked by every phase of sun and cloud; and to each it meant that the journey was done. Here was solitude, with none of the stir of the forest to bring companionship; but as they looked out to the cloud-puffs that dipped behind the water at the world's end, they knew that far yonder were other men whose skins were white, for all of beard and tan, whose tongue was the tongue of Montreal, of Quebec, of Paris,--and neither tree nor rock nor mountain lay between. The water that bore them onward was the water that washed the beach at Frontenac. Days might pass and find them still on the road; but they would be glorious days, with the sun overhead and the breeze at their backs, and at evening the wonder of the western sky to make the water golden with promise. As they swung their paddles, the maid with them, their eyes were full of dreams,--all save Teganouan. His eyes were keen and cunning, and when they looked to the north it was not with thoughts of home. It may be that he was dreaming of the deed which might yet win back his lost name as an Onondaga warrior.

The sun hung over the lake when at last the canoe touched the beach. They ate their simple meal almost in silence, and then sat near the fire watching the afterglow that did not fade from the west until the night was dark and the moon high over the dim line that marked the eastern end of the lake. The sense of relief that had come to them with the first sight of the lake was fading now. They were thinking of Frontenac, and of what might await them there,--the priest soberly, the maid bravely, the Captain grimly. Later, when the maid had said good-night, and Father Claude had wandered down the beach to the water's edge, Menard dragged a new log to the fire and threw it on, sending up the flame and sparks high above the willows of the bank. He stretched out and looked into the flames.

Teganouan, who had been lying on the sand, heard a rustle far off in the forest and raised his head. He heard it again, and rose, standing motionless; then he took his musket and came toward the fire. The Captain lay at full length, his chin on his hands. He was awake, for his eyes were open, but he did not look up. The Indian hesitated, and stood a few yards away looking at the silent figure, as if uncertain whether to speak. Finally he stepped back and disappeared among the willows.

Half an hour went by. Father Claude came up the beach, walking slowly.

"It is growing late, M'sieu, for travellers."

Menard glanced up, but did not reply. The priest was looking about the camp.

"Where is Teganouan, M'sieu? Did you give him permission to go away?"

"No; he is here,--he was here." Menard rose. "You are right, he has gone. Has he taken his musket?"

"I think so. I do not see it."

"He left it leaning against the log. No; it is not there. Wait,--do you hear?"

They stood listening; and both caught the faint sound of a body moving between the bushes that grew on the higher ground, close to the line of willows. Menard took up his musket and held it ready, for they had not left the country of the Iroquois.

"Here he comes," whispered Father Claude. "Yes, it is Teganouan."

The Indian was running toward them. He dropped his musket, and began rapidly to throw great handfuls of sand upon the fire. The two white men sprang to aid him, without asking an explanation. In a moment the beach was lighted only by the moon. Then Menard said:--

"What is it, Teganouan?"

"Teganouan heard a step in the forest. He went nearer, and there were more. They are on the war-path, for they come cautiously and slowly."

"Father, will you keep by the maid? We must not disturb her now. You had better heap up the sand about the canoe so that no stray ball can reach her."

The priest hurried down the beach, and Menard and the Indian slipped into the willows, Menard toward the east, Teganouan toward the west, where they could watch the forest and the beach on all sides. The sound of an approaching party was now more distinct. There would be a long silence, then the crackle of a twig or the rustle of dead leaves; and Menard knew that the sound was made by moccasined feet. He was surprised that the invaders took so little caution; either they were confident of finding the camp asleep, or they were in such force as to have no fear. While he lay behind a scrub willow conjecturing, Father Claude came creeping up behind him.

"I will watch with you, M'sieu. It will make our line longer."

"Is she safe?"

"Yes. I have heaped the sand high around the canoe, even on the side toward the water."

"Good. You had better move off a little nearer the lake, and keep a sharp eye out. It may be that they are coming by water as well, though I doubt it. The lake is very light. I will take the centre. You have no musket?"

"No; but my eyes are good."

"If you need me, I shall be close to the bushes, a dozen yards farther inland."

They separated, and Menard took up his new position. Apparently the movement had stopped. For a long time no sound came, and then, as Menard was on the point of moving forward, a branch cracked sharply not twenty rods away. He called in French:--

"Who are you?"

For a moment there was silence, then a rush of feet in his direction. He could hear a number of men bounding through the bushes. He cocked his gun and levelled it, shouting this time in Iroquois:--

"Stand, or I will fire!"

"I know that voice! Drop your musket!" came in a merry French voice, and in another moment a sturdy figure, half in uniform and half in buckskin, bearded beyond recognition, had come crashing down the slope, throwing his arms around the Captain's neck so wildly that the two went down and rolled on the sand. Before Menard could struggle to his feet, three soldiers had followed, and stood laughing, forgetting all discipline, and one was saying over and over to the other:--

"It is Captain Menard! Don't you know him? It is Captain Menard!"

"You don't know me, Menard, I can see that. I wish I could take the beard off, but I can't. What have you done with my men?"

Now Menard knew; it was Du Peron.

"I left them at La Gallette," he said.

"I haven't seen them--oh, killed?"

Menard nodded.

"Come down the beach and tell me about it. What condition are you in? Have you anybody with you?" Before Menard could answer, he said to one of the soldiers:--

"Go back and tell the sergeant to bring up the canoes."

They walked down the beach, and the other soldiers set about building a new fire.

"Perhaps I'd better begin on you," Menard said. "What are you doing here? And what in the devil do you mean by coming up through the woods like a Mohawk on the war-path?"

The Lieutenant laughed.

"My story isn't a long one. I'm cleaning up our base of supplies at La Famine. We've got a small guard there. The main part of the rear-guard is back at Frontenac."

"Where is the column?"

"Gone to Niagara, Denonville and all, to build a fort. They'll give it to De Troyes, I imagine. It's a

sort of triumphal procession through the enemy's country, after rooting up the Seneca villages and fields and stockades until you can't find an able-bodied redskin this side of the Cayugas. Oh, I didn't answer your other question. What do you think of these?" He held out a foot, shod in a moccasin. "You'd never know the King's troops now, Menard. We're wearing anything we can pick up. I've got a dozen canoes a quarter of a league down the lake. I saw your fire, and thought it best to reconnoitre before bringing the canoes past." He read the question in Menard's glance. "We are not taking out much time for sleep, I can tell you. It's all day and all night until we get La Famine cleared up. There is only a handful of men there, and we're expecting every day that the Cayugas and Onondagas will sweep down on them."

"They won't bother you," said Menard.

"Maybe not, but we must be careful. For my part, I look for trouble. The nations stand pretty closely by each other, you know."

"They won't bother you now."

"How do you know?"

"What did I come down here for?"

"They didn't tell me. Oh, you had a mission to the other nations? But that can't be,--you were captured."

Menard lay on his side, and watched the flames go roaring upward as the soldiers piled up the logs.

"I could tell you some things, Du Peron," he said slowly. "I suppose you didn't know,--for that matter you couldn't know,--but when the column was marching on the Senecas, and our rear-guard of four hundred men--"

"Four hundred and forty."

"The same thing. You can't expect the Cayugas to count so sharply as that. At that time the Cayugas and Onondagas held a council to discuss the question of sending a thousand warriors to cut off the rear-guard and the Governor's communications."

The Lieutenant slowly whistled.

"How did they know so much about it, Menard?"

"How could they help it? Our good Governor had posted his plans on every tree. You can see what would have happened."

"Why, with the Senecas on his front it would have been--" He paused, and whistled again.

"Well,--you see. But they didn't do it."

"Why not?"

"Because I spoke at that council."

"You spoke--but you were a prisoner, weren't you?"

"Yes."

The Lieutenant sat staring into the fire. Slowly it came to him what it was that the Captain had accomplished.

"Why, Menard," he said, "New France won't be able to hold you, when this gets out. How you must have gone at them. You'll be a major in a week. You're the luckiest man this side of Versailles."

"No, I'm not. And I won't be a major. I'm not on the Governor's pocket list. But I don't care about that. That isn't the reason I did it."

"Why did you do it then?"

"I--That's the question I've been asking myself for several days, Du Peron."

The Lieutenant was too thoroughly aroused to note the change in the Captain's tone.

"You don't see it right now, Menard. Wait till you've reached the city, and got into some clothes and a good bed, and can shake hands with d'Orvilliers and Provost and the general staff,--maybe with the Governor himself. Then you'll feel different. You're down now. I know how it feels. You're all tired out, and you've got the Onondaga dirt rubbed on so thick that you're lost in it. You wait a few weeks."

"Did the Governor have much trouble with the Senecas?"

"Oh, he had to fight for it. He was--My God, Menard, what about the girl? I was so shaken up at meeting you like this that it got away from me. The column had hardly got to the fort on their way up from Montreal before everyone was asking for you. La Grange had a letter from her father saying that she was with you, and he's been in a bad way. He says that he was to have married her, and that you've got away with her. It serves him right, the beast. One night, at La Famine, he was drunk, and he came around to all of us reading that letter at the top of his voice and swearing to kill you the moment he sees you. He's been talking a good deal about that."

"She is here, asleep."

"Thank God."

"Where is La Grange now?"

"He's over at Frontenac. He got into trouble before we left La Famine. He's drinking hard now, you know. He had command of a company that was working on the stockades, and he made such a muss of it that his sergeant had to take hold and handle it to get the work done at all. You can imagine what bad feeling that made in his company. Played the devil with his discipline. Well, he took it like a child. But that night, when he got a little loose on his legs, he hunted up the sergeant and made him fight. The fellow wouldn't until La Grange came at him with his sword, but then he cracked his head with a musket."

"Hurt him?"

"Yes. They took him up to Frontenac. He's in the hospital now, but it's pretty generally understood that d'Orvilliers won't let him go out until the Governor gets back from Niagara. He's well enough already, they say. It's hard on the sergeant, too; no one blames him."

Du Peron looked around and saw Teganouan lying near.

"Who's this Indian?" he asked in a low tone.

"He is with me. A mission Indian."

"Does he know French? Has he understood us?"

"I don't know. I suppose so. Here is Father Claude de Casson. You remember him, don't you?"

"Yes, indeed."

The Lieutenant rose to greet the priest, and then the three sat together.

"You asked me about the fight, didn't you, Menard? I don't seem able to hold to a subject very long to-night. We struck out from La Famine on the morning of the twelfth of July. You know the trail that leads south from La Famine? We followed that."

Menard smiled at the leaping fire.

"Don't laugh, Menard; that was no worse than what we've done from the start. The Governor never thought but what we'd surprise them as much on that road as on another. And after all, we won, though it did look bad for a while. There was a time, at the beginning of the fight,--well, I'm getting ahead of myself again. We were in fairly good order. Callières had the advance with the Montreal troops. He threw out La Durantaye, with Tonty and Du Luth,--the *coureurs de bois*, you know,--to feel the way. La Durantaye had the mission Indians, from Sault St. Louis and the Montreal Mountain, on his left, and the Ottawas and Mackinac tribes on his right."

"How did the Ottawas behave?"

"Wretchedly. They ran at the first fire. I'll come to that. The others weren't so bad, but there was no holding them. They spread through the forest, away out of reach. Perrot had the command, but he could only follow after and knock one down now and then."

"The Governor took command of the main force?"

"Yes. And he carried his bale like the worst of us; I'll say that for him. It was hot, and we all drooped a bit before night. And he made a good fight, too, if you can forgive him that bungling march. When we bivouacked, some of Du Luth's boys scouted ahead. They got in by sunrise. They'd been to the main village of the Senecas on the hill beyond the marsh,--you know it, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And they saw nothing but a few women and a pack of dogs. The Governor was up early,--he's not used to sleeping out doors in the mosquito country,--sitting on a log at the side of the trail, talking with Granville and Berthier. I wasn't five yards behind them, trying to scrape the mud off my boots--you know how that mud sticks, Menard. Well, when the scouts came in with their story, the Governor stood up. 'Take my order to La Durantaye,' he said, 'that he is to move on with all caution, that the surprise may be complete. He will push forward, following the trail. You,' he said, to a few aides who stood by, 'will see that the command is aroused as silently as possible.' Well, I didn't know whether to laugh at the Governor or pity myself and the boys. Any man but the crowd of seigniors that he had about him would have foreseen what was coming. I knew that the devils were waiting for us, probably at one of the ravines where the trail runs through that group of hills just this side of the marsh. You know the place,--every one of us knows it. But what could we say? I'd have given a month's pay to have been within ear-shot of La Durantaye when he got the order. La Valterie told me about it afterward. 'What's this?' he says, 'follow the trail? I'll go to the devil first. There's a better place for my bones than this pest-ridden country.' He calls to Du Luth: 'Hear this, Du Luth. We're to "push forward, following the trail."' I can fairly hear him say it, with his eyes looking right through the young aide. 'Not I,' says Du Luth, 'I'm going around the hills and come into the village over the long oak ridge!' 'You can't do it. I have the Governor's order.' And then Du Luth drew himself up, La Valterie says, and looked the aide (who wasn't used to this kind of a soldier, and wished himself back under the Governor's petticoats) up and down till the fellow got red as a Lower Town girl. 'Tell your commanding officer,' says Du Luth, in his big voice, 'that the advance will "push forward, following the trail,"--and may God have mercy on our poor souls!'

"Well, Menard, they did it, nine hundred of them. And we came on, a quarter of a league after, with sixteen hundred more. We got into the first defile, and through it, with never a sound. Then I was sure of trouble in the second, but long after the advance had had time to get through, everything was still. There was still the third defile, just before you reach the marsh, and my

head was spinning, waiting for the first shot and wondering where we were to catch it and how many of us were to get out alive. And then, all at once it came. You see the Senecas, three hundred of them at least, were in the brush up on the right slope of the third defile; and as many more were in the elder thickets and swamp grass ahead and to the left. They let the whole advance get through,--fooled every man of Du Luth's scouts,--and then came at them from all sides. We heard the noise--I never heard a worse--and started up on the run; and then there was the strangest mess I ever got into. They had surprised the advance, right enough,--we could see Du Luth and Tonty running about knocking men down and bellowing out orders to hold their force together,--but you see the Senecas never dreamed that a larger force was coming on behind, and we struck them like a whirlwind. Well, for nearly an hour we didn't know what was going on. Our Indians and the Senecas were so mixed together that we dared not shoot to kill. Our own boys, even the regulars, lost their heads and fell into the tangle. It was all yelling and whooping and banging and running around, with the smoke so thick that you couldn't find the trail or the hills or the swamp. I was crowded up to my arms in water and mud for the last part of the time. Once the smoke lifted a little, and I saw what I thought to be a mission Indian, not five yards away, in the same fix. I called to him to help me, and he turned out to be a Seneca chief. Our muskets were wet,--at least mine was, and I saw that he dropped his when he started for me,--so we had it out with knives."

"Did he get at you?"

"Once. A rib stopped it--no harm done. Well, I was tired, but I got out and dodged around through the smoke to find out where our boys were, but they were mixed up worse than ever. I was just in time to save a *coureur* from killing one of our Indians with his own hatchet. Most of the regulars scattered as soon as they lost sight of their officers. And Berthier,--I found him lying under a log all gone to pieces with fright.

"I didn't know how it was to come out until at last the firing eased a little, and the smoke thinned out. Then we found that the devils had slipped away, all but a few who had wandered so far into our lines--if you could call them lines--that they couldn't get out. They carried most of their killed, though we picked up a few on the edge of the marsh. It took all the rest of the day to pull things together and find out how we stood."

"Heavy loss?"

"No. I don't know how many, but beyond a hundred or so of cuts and flesh-wounds like mine we seemed to have a full force. We went on in the morning, after a puffed-out speech by the Governor, and before night reached the village. The Senecas had already burned a part of it, but we finished it, and spent close to ten days cutting their corn and destroying the fort on the big hill, a league or more to the east. Then we came back to La Famine, and the Governor took the whole column to Niagara,--to complete the parade, I suppose."

The story told, they sat by the fire, silent at first, then talking as the mood prompted, until the flames had died and the red embers were fading to gray. Father Claude had stretched out and was sleeping.

"I must look about my camp," Du Peron said at length. "Good-night."

"Good-night," said Menard; and alone he sat there until the last spark had left the scattered heap of charred wood.

The night was cold and clear. The lake stretched out to a misty somewhere, touching the edge of the sky. He rose and walked toward the water. A figure, muffled in a blanket stood on the dark, firm sand close to the breaking ripples. He thought it was one of Du Peron's sentries, but a doubt drew him nearer. Then the blanket was thrown aside, and he recognized, in the moonlight, the slender figure of the maid. She was gazing out toward the pole-star and the dim clouds that lay motionless beneath it. The splash of the lake and the call of the locusts and tree-toads on the bank behind them were the only sounds. He went slowly forward and stood by her side. She looked up into his eyes, then turned to the lake. She had dropped the blanket to the sand, and he placed it again about her shoulders.

"I am not cold," she said.

"I am afraid, Mademoiselle. The air is chill."

They stood for a long time without speaking, while the northern clouds sank slowly beneath the horizon, their tops gleaming white in the moonlight. Once a sharp command rang through the night, and muskets rattled.

"What is that?" she whispered, touching his arm.

"They are changing the guard."

"You will not need to watch to-night, M'sieu?"

"No; not again. We shall have an escort to Frontenac." He paused; then added in uncertain voice, "but perhaps--if Mademoiselle--"

She looked up at him. He went on:

"I will watch to-night, and to-morrow night, and once again--then there will be no need: we shall be at Frontenac. Yes, I will watch; I will myself keep guard, that Mademoiselle may sleep safely and deep, as she slept at the Long Lake and in the forests of the Cayugas. And perhaps, while she is sleeping, and the lake lies still, I may dream again as I did then--I will carry on our story to the end, and then--"

He could not say more; he could not look at her. Even at the rustle of her skirt, as she sank to the beach and sat gazing up at him, he did not turn. He was looking dully at the last bright cloud tip, sinking slowly from his sight.

"Frontenac lies there," he said. "I told them I should bring you there. It has been a longer road than we thought,--it has been a harder road,--and they have said that I broke my trust. Perhaps they were not wrong--I would have broken it--once. But we shall be there in three days. I will keep my promise to the chiefs; and we--we shall not meet again. It will be better. But I shall keep watch, to-night and twice again. That will be all."

He looked down, and at sight of the mute figure his face softened.

"Forgive me--I should not have spoken. It has been a mad dream--the waking is hard. When I saw you standing here to-night, I knew that I had no right to come--and still I came. I have called myself a soldier"--his voice was weary--"see, this is what is done to soldiers such as I." One frayed strip of an epaulet yet hung from his shoulder. He tore it off and threw it out into the lake. A little splash, and it was gone. "Good-night, Mademoiselle,--good-night."

He turned away. The maid leaned forward and called. Her voice would not come. She called again and again. Then he heard, for he stood motionless.

"M'sieu!"

He came back slowly, and stood waiting. She was leaning back on her hands. Her hair had fallen over her face, and she shook it back, gazing up and trying to speak.

"You said--you said, the end--"

He hesitated, as if he dared not meet his thoughts.

"You said--See," she fumbled hastily at her bosom, "see, I have kept it."

She was holding something up to him. In the dim light he could not make it out. He took it and held it up. It was the dried stem and the crumbling blossom of a daisy. For a moment he kept it there, then, while he looked, he reached into his pocket and drew out the other.

"Yes," he said, "yes--" His voice trembled; his hand shook. Her hair had fallen again, and she was trying to fasten it back. He looked at her, almost fiercely, but now her eyes were hidden. "We will go to Frontenac," he said; "we will go to Frontenac, you and I. But they shall not get you." He caught the hands that were braiding her hair, and held them in his rough grip. "It is too late. Let them break my sword, if they will, still they shall not get you."

Her head dropped upon his hands, and for the second time since those days at Onondaga, he felt her tears. For a moment they were motionless; he erect, looking out to the pole-star and over the water that stretched far away to the stone fort, she sobbing and clinging to his scarred hands. Then a desperate look came into his eyes, and he dropped on one knee and caught her shoulders and held her tightly, close against him.

"See," he said, with the old mad ring in his voice, "see what a soldier I am! See how I keep my trust! But now--but now it is too late for them all. I am still a soldier, and I can fight, Valerie. And God will be good to us. God grant that we are doing right. There is no other way."

"No," she whispered after him; "there is no other way."

CHAPTER XIX.

FRONTENAC.

The sun was dropping behind the western forests. From the lodges and cabins of the friendly Indians about the fort rose a hundred thin columns of smoke. Long rows of bateaux and canoes lined the beach below the log palisade; and others drew near the shore, laden with fish. There was a stir and bustle about the square within the stone bastions; orderlies hurried from quarters to barracks, bugles sounded, and groups of ragged soldiers sat about, polishing muskets and belts, and setting new flints. Men of the commissary department were carrying boxes and bales from the fort to a cleared space on the beach.

Menard walked across the square and knocked at the door of Major d'Orvilliers's little house. Many an eye had followed him as he hurried by, aroused to curiosity by his tattered uniform, rusted musket, and boot-tops rudely stitched to deerskin moccasins.

"Major d'Orvilliers is busy," said the orderly at the door.

"Tell him it is Captain Menard."

In a moment the Major himself appeared in the doorway.

"Come in, Menard. I am to start in an hour or so to meet Governor Denonville, but there is always time for you. I'll start a little late, if necessary."

"The Governor comes from Niagara?"

"Yes. He is two or three days' journey up the lake. I am to escort him back."

They had reached the office in the rear of the house, and the Major brushed a heap of documents and drawings from a chair.

"Sit down, Menard. You have a long story, I take it. You look as if you'd been to the Illinois and back."

"You knew of my capture?"

"Yes. We had about given you up. And the girl,--Mademoiselle St. Denis--"

"She is here."

"Here--at Frontenac?"

"Yes; in Father de Casson's care."

"Thank God! But how did you do it? How did you get her here, and yourself?"

Menard rose and paced up and down the room. As he walked, he told the story of the capture at La Galette, of the days in the Onondaga village, of the council and the escape. When he had finished, there was a long silence, while the Major sat with contracted brows.

"You've done a big thing, Menard," he said at last, "one of the biggest things that has been done in New France. But have you thought of the Governor--of how he will take it?"

"Yes."

"It may not be easy. Denonville doesn't know the Iroquois as you and I do. He is elated now about his victory,--he thinks he has settled the question of white supremacy. If I were to tell him to-morrow that he has only made a bitter enemy of the Senecas, and that they will not rest until they wipe out this defeat, do you suppose he would believe it? You have given a pledge to the Iroquois that is entirely outside of the Governor's view of military precedent. To tell the truth, Menard, I don't believe he will like it."

"Why not?"

"He doesn't know the strength of the Five Nations. He thinks they would all flee before our regulars just as the Senecas did. Worse than that, he doesn't know the Indian temperament. I'm afraid you can't make him understand that to satisfy their hunger for revenge will serve better than a score of orations and treaties."

"You think he won't touch La Grange?"

"I am almost certain of it."

"Then it rests with me."

"What do you mean?"

"I gave another pledge, d'Orvilliers. If the Governor won't do this--I shall have to do it myself."

Save for a moment's hesitation Menard's voice was cool and even; but he had stopped walking and was looking closely at the commandant.

D'Orvilliers was gazing at the floor.

"What do you mean by that?" he said slowly, and then suddenly he got up. "My God, Menard, you don't mean that you would--"

"Yes."

"That can't be! I can't allow it."

"It may not be necessary. I hope you are mistaken about the Governor."

"I hope I am--but no; he won't help you. He's not in the mood for paying debts to a weakened enemy. And--Menard, sit down. I must talk plainly to you. I can't go on covering things up now. I don't believe you see the matter clearly. If it were a plain question of your mission to the Onondagas--if it were--Well, I want you to tell me in what relation you stand to Mademoiselle St. Denis."

The Captain was standing by the chair. He rested his arms on the high back, and looked over them at d'Orvilliers.

"She is to be my wife," he said.

D'Orvilliers leaned back and slowly shook his head.

"My dear fellow," he said, "when your story goes to Quebec, when the Château learns that you have promised the punishment of La Grange in the name of France, and then of this,--of Mademoiselle and her relations to yourself and to La Grange,--do you know what they will do?"

Menard was silent.

"They will laugh--first, and then--"

"I know," said the Captain, "I have thought of all that."

"You have told all this in your report?"

"Yes."

"So you would go on with it?"

"Yes; I am going on with it. There is nothing else I can do. I couldn't have offered to give myself up; they already had me. The fault was La Grange's. What I did was the only thing that could have been done to save the column; if you will think it over, you will see that. I know what I did,--I know I was right; and if my superiors, when I have given my report, choose to see it in another way, I have nothing to say. If they give me my liberty, in the army or out of it, I will find La Grange. If not, I will wait."

"Why not give that up, at least, Menard?"

"If I give that up, we shall have a war with the Iroquois that will shake New France as she has never been shaken before."

D'Orvilliers started to speak, but checked the words. Menard slung his musket behind his shoulders.

"Wait, Menard. I don't know what to say. I must have time to think. If you wish, I will not give notice of your arrival to the Governor. I will leave the matter of reporting in your hands." He rose, and fingered the papers on the table. "You see how it will look--there is the maid--La Grange seeks your life, you seek his--"

Menard drew himself up, his hat in his hand.

"It shall be pushed to the end, Major. You know me; you know Captain la Grange. There will be excitement, perhaps,--you may find it hard to avoid taking one side or the other. I must ask which side is to be yours."

D'Orvilliers winced, and for a moment stood biting his lip; then he stepped forward and took both Menard's hands.

"You shouldn't have asked that," he said. "God bless you, Menard! God bless you!"

Menard paused in the door, and turned.

"Shall I need a pass to enter the hospital?"

"Oh, you can't go there. La Grange is there."

"Yes; I will report to him. He shall not say that I have left it to hearsay."

"But he will attack you!"

"No; I will not fight him until I have an answer from the Governor."

"You can't get in now until morning."

"Very well, good-night."

"You will be careful, Menard?"

The Captain nodded and left the room. Wishing to settle his thoughts, he passed through the palisade gate and walked down the beach. The commissary men were loading the canoes, threescore of them, that were to carry the garrison on its westward journey. Already the twilight was deepening, and the lanterns of the officers were dimmed by the glow from a hundred Indian camp-fires.

From within the fort came a long bugle-call. There was a distant rattling of arms and shouting of commands, then the tramp of feet, and the indistinct line came swinging through the sally-port. They halted at the water's edge, broke ranks, and took to the canoes, paddling easily away along the shore until they had faded into shadows. A score of Indians stood watching them, stolidly smoking stone pipes and holding their blankets close around them.

It was an hour later when the Captain returned to the fort and started across the enclosure toward the hut which had been assigned to him. Save for a few Indians and a sentry who paced before the barracks, the fort seemed deserted. It was nearly dark now, and the lanterns at the sally-port and in front of barrack and hospital glimmered faintly. Menard had reached his own door, when he heard a voice calling, and turned. A dim figure was running across the square toward the sentry. There was a moment of breathless talk,--Menard could not catch the words,--then the sentry shouted. It occurred to Menard that he was now the senior officer at the fort, and he waited. A corporal led up his guard, halted, and again there was hurried talking. Menard started back toward them, but before he reached the spot all were running toward the hospital, and a dozen others of the home guard had gathered before the barracks and were talking and asking excited questions.

Menard crossed to the hospital. Two privates barred the door, and he was forced to wait until a young Lieutenant of the regulars appeared. The lanterns over the door threw a dim light on the Captain as he stood on the low step.

"What is it?" asked the Lieutenant. "You wished to see me?"

"I am Captain Menard. What is the trouble?"

The Lieutenant looked doubtfully at the dingy, bearded figure, then he motioned the soldiers aside.

"It is Captain la Grange," he said, when Menard had entered; "he has been killed."

The Lieutenant spoke in a matter-of-fact tone, but his eyes were shining and he was breathing rapidly. Menard looked at him for a moment without a word, then he stepped to the door of a back room and looked in. Three flickering candles stood on a low table, and another on a chair at the head of the narrow bed. The light wavered over the log and plaster walls. A surgeon was

bending over the bed, his assistant waiting at his elbow with instruments; the two shut off the upper part of the bed from Menard's view. The Lieutenant stood behind the Captain, looking over his shoulder; both were motionless. There was no sound save a low word at intervals between the two surgeons, and the creak of a bore-worm that sounded distinctly from a log in the wall.

Menard turned away and walked back to the outer door, the Lieutenant with him. There they stood, silent, as men are who have been brought suddenly face to face with death. At last the Lieutenant began to speak in a subdued voice.

"We only know that it was an Indian. He has been scalped."

"Oh!" muttered Menard.

"I think he is still breathing,--he was just before you came,--but there is no hope for him. He was stabbed in a dozen places. It was some time before we knew--the Indian came in by the window, and must have found him asleep. There was no struggle."

They stood again without speaking, and again the Lieutenant broke the silence.

"It is too bad. He was a good fellow." He paused, as if searching for a kind word for Captain la Grange. "He was the best shot at the fort when he--when--"

"Yes," said Menard. He too wished to speak no harsh word. "Is there anything I can do?"

"I think not. There is a strong guard about the fort, but I think the Indian had escaped before we learned of it. I will see you before we take further steps."

"Very well. I shall be at my quarters. Good-night."

"Good-night."

Menard walked slowly back across the enclosure. At the door of his hut he paused, and for a long time he stood there, looking up at the quiet sky. His mind was scattered for the moment; he could not think clearly.

He opened his door and stepped over the log threshold, letting the door close after him of its own weight. The hut was dark, with but a square of dim light at the window. He fumbled for the candle and struck a light.

There was a low rustle from the corner. Menard whirled around and peered into the shadows. The candle was blowing; he caught it up and shielded it with his hand. A figure was crouching in the corner, half hidden behind a cloak that hung there. The Captain sprang forward holding the candle high, tore down the cloak, and discovered Teganouan, the Onondaga, bending over feeling for his hatchet which lay on the floor at his feet. Menard caught his shoulders, and dragging him out of reach of the hatchet, threw him full length on the floor. The candle dropped and rolled on the floor, but before it could go out, Menard snatched it up.

Slowly Teganouan rose to his feet.

"Teganouan comes in a strange manner to the lodge of the white warrior," said Menard, scornfully. "He steals in like a Huron thief, and hides in dark corners."

The Indian looked at him defiantly, but did not answer.

"My Onondaga brother does not wish to show himself in the light. Perhaps there is some trouble on his mind. Perhaps he is governed by an evil Oki who loves the darkness." While Menard was speaking he was moving quietly toward the door. The Indian saw, but beyond turning slowly so as always to face his captor, made no movement. His face, except for the blazing eyes, was inscrutable. In a moment Menard stood between him and the door. "Perhaps it is best that I should call for the warriors of the fort. They will be glad to find here the slayer of their brother." His hand was on the latch.

"The Big Buffalo will not call to his brothers." The Indian's voice was calm. Menard looked closely at him. "He has not thought yet. When he has thought, he will understand."

"Teganouan speaks like a child."

"If Teganouan is a child, can the Big Buffalo tell why he came to the white man's lodge?"

"Because he has slain a great white warrior, he must hide his face like the outcast dog." Menard pointed to the scalp that hung at his waist. "He has slain a great warrior while the hatchet lies buried in the ground. He has broken the law of the white man and the redman. And so he must hide his face."

"Why did not Teganouan run to the woods? Why did he come to the lodge of the Big Buffalo?"

Menard looked steadily at him. He began to understand. The shrewd old warrior had chosen the one hiding-place where no searching party would look. Perhaps he had hoped for aid from the Captain, remembering his pledge to bring punishment on La Grange. If so, he should learn his mistake.

"Teganouan's words are idle." Menard moved the latch.

"The Big Buffalo will not open the door. Teganouan has not delivered his message. He is not an enemy to the Big Buffalo. He is his friend. He has come to this lodge, caring nothing for the safety of his life, that he might give his message. The Big Buffalo will not open the door. He will wait to hear the words of Teganouan; and then he may call to his brother warriors if he still thinks it would be wise."

Menard waited.

"Speak quickly, Teganouan."

"Teganouan's words are like the wind. He has brought them many leagues,--from the lodges of the Onondagas,--that he may speak them now. He has brought them from the Long House of the Five Nations, where the fires burn brightly by day and by night, where the greatest chiefs of many thousand warriors are met to hear the Voice of the Great Mountain, the father of white men and redmen. The Great Mountain has a strong voice. It is louder than cannon; it wounds deeper than the musket of the white brave. It tells the Onondagas and Cayugas and Oneidas and Mohawks that they must not give aid to their brothers, the Senecas, who have fallen, whose corn and forts and lodges are burned to ashes and scattered on the winds. It tells the Onondagas that the Great Mountain is a kind father, that he loves them like his own children, and will punish the man who wrongs them, let him be white or red. It tells the Onondagas that the white captain, who has robbed a hundred Onondaga lodges of their bravest hunters, shall be struck by the strong arm of the Great Mountain, shall be blown to pieces by the Voice that thunders from the great water where the seal are found to the farthest village of the Five Nations. And the chiefs hear the Voice; they listen with ears that are always open to the counsel of Onontio. They take his promises into their hearts and believe them. They know that he will strike down the dog of a white captain. They refuse aid to their dying brothers, the Senecas, because they know that the strong arm of Onontio is over them, that it will give them peace."

He paused, gazing with bright eyes at Menard. There was no reply, and he continued:--

"The Great Mountain has kept his word. The Onondagas shall know, in their council, that Onontio's promise has been kept, that the white brave, who lied to their hunters and sent them in chains across the big water, has gone to a hunting-ground where his musket will not help him, where the buffalo shall trample him and tear his flesh with their horns. Then the Onondagas shall know that the Big Buffalo spoke the truth to the Long House. And this word shall be carried to the Onondagas by Teganouan. He will go to the council with the scalp in his hand telling them that the white children of Onontio are their brothers. Teganouan sees the Big Buffalo stand with his strong hand at the door. He knows that the Big Buffalo could call his warriors to seize Teganouan, and bind him, and bid him stand before the white men's muskets. But Teganouan is not a child. He sees with the eye of the old warrior who has fought a battle for every sun in the year, who has known the white man as well as the redman. When the Big Buffalo stood in the Long House, Teganouan believed him; Teganouan knew that his words were true. And now the heart of Teganouan is warm with trust. He knows that the Big Buffalo is a wise warrior and that he has an honest heart."

There was a pause, and Menard, his hand still on the latch, stood motionless. He knew what the Indian meant. He had done no more than Menard himself had promised the council, in the name of Governor Denonville, should be done. The lodges of the allies near the fort sheltered many an Iroquois spy; whatever might follow would be known in every Iroquois village before the week had passed. To hold Teganouan for trial would mean war.

There was the tramp of feet on the beaten ground without, and a clear voice said:--

"Wait a moment, I must report to Captain Menard."

Menard raised the latch an inch, then looked sharply at Teganouan. The Indian stood quietly, leaning a little forward, waiting for the decision. The Captain was on the point of speaking, but no word came from his parted lips. The voices were now just outside the door. With a long breath Menard's fingers relaxed, and the latch slipped back into place. Then he motioned toward the wall ladder that reached up into the darkness of the loft.

Teganouan turned, picked up the hatchet and thrust it into his belt, took one quick glance about the room to make sure that no telltale article remained, and slipped up the ladder. There was a loud knock on the door, and Menard opened it. The Lieutenant came in.

"We have no word yet, Captain," he said. "Every building in the fort has been searched. I have so few men that I could not divide them until this was done, but I am just now sending out searching parties through the Indian village and the forest. None of the canoes are missing. Have I your approval?"

"Yes."

"You--you have been here since you left the hospital?"

"Yes."

"I think, then, that he must have had time to slip out before we knew of it. There are many Indians here who would help him; but a few of them can be trusted, I think, to join the search. Major d'Orvilliers left me with only a handful of men. It will be difficult to accomplish much until he returns. I will post a sentry at the sally-port; we shall have to leave the bastions without a guard. I think it will be safe, for the time."

"Very well, Lieutenant."

The Lieutenant saluted and hurried away. Menard closed the door, and turned to the table, where were scattered the sheets on which he had been writing his report. He collected them and read the report carefully. He removed one leaf, and rolling it up, lighted it at the candle, and held it until it was burned to a cinder. Then he read the other sheets again. The report now told of his capture, of a part of the council at the Long House, and of the escape; but no word was there concerning Captain la Grange. Another hand had disposed of that question. Menard

sighed as he laid it down, but soon the lines on his face relaxed. It was not the first time in the history of New France that a report had told but half the truth; and, after all, the column had been saved.

He sharpened a quill with his sheath-knife, and began to copy the report, making further corrections here and there. Something more than an hour had passed before the work was finished. He rolled up the document and tied it with a thong of deerskin.

It was still early in the evening, but the fort was as silent as at midnight. Menard opened the door and walked out a little way. The lamps were all burning, but no soldiers were to be seen. The barrack windows were dark. He stepped back into the house, closed the door, and said in a low voice:--

"Teganouan."

There was a stir in the loft. In a moment the Indian came down the ladder and stood waiting.

"Teganouan, you heard what the Lieutenant said?"

"Teganouan has ears."

"Very well. I am going to blow out the candle."

The room was dark. The door creaked softly, and a breath of air blew in upon the Captain as he stood by the table. He felt over the table for his tinder-box and struck a light. The door was slowly closing; Teganouan had gone.

Another sun was setting. A single drum was beating loudly as the little garrison drew up outside the sally-port and presented arms. The allies and the mission Indians were crowding down upon the beach, silent, inquisitive,—puffing at their short pipes. For half a league, from the flat, white beach out over the rose-tinted water stretched an irregular black line of canoes and bateaux, all bristling with muskets. The Governor had come. He could be seen kneeling, all sunburned and ragged but with erect head, in the first canoe. His canoemen checked their swing, for the beach was close at hand, and then backed water. The bow scraped, and a dozen hands were outstretched in aid, but Governor Denonville stepped briskly out into the ankle-deep water and carried his own pack ashore. A cheer went up from the little line at the sally-port. Du Luth's *voyageurs* and *coureur de bois* caught it up, and then it swept far out over the water and was echoed back from the forest.

In the doorway of a hut near the Recollet Chapel stood Menard and Valérie. They watched canoe after canoe glide up and empty its load of soldiers, not speaking as they watched, but thinking each the same thought. At last, when the straggling line was pouring into the fort, and the bugles were screaming, and the drum rolling, Valérie slipped her hand through the Captain's arm and looked up into his face.

"It was you who brought them here," she said; and then, after a pause, she laughed a breathless little laugh. "It was you," she repeated.

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