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THE SPAN O' LIFE

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A Tale of Louisbourg & Quebec

By WILLIAM McLENNAN
and J. N. McILWRAITH
Illustrations by F. de Myrbach

The span o' Life's nae lang eneugh,
Nor deep eneugh the sea,
Nor braid eneugh this weary warld
To part my Love frae me

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PREFACE

The reader familiar with the amusing memoirs of the Chevalier Johnstone will recognise in how far Maxwell was suggested thereby; if he be equally familiar with the detail of Canadian history of the period he will have little difficulty in discovering the originals of Sarennes and some of the secondary characters, and, in the Epilogue, the legend of the death of the celebrated missionary, le R. P. Jean Baptiste de la Brosse. But while the experience of some actual man or woman has suggested a type to be portrayed, it is only as a type, and with no intention of representing the individual in the character of the story. Nor is the attempt to set forth the respective attitude of the Canadian and the old-country Frenchman to be read as a personal expression of the authors', but as their conception of an unfortunate condition between colonist and official that obtained as fully in Canada as it did between the same classes in the English colonies.

Long habit has made the English names of many places and positions so familiar to many in Canada that to adhere to the French form in all instances would be as unnatural as to Anglicise all names throughout—which will explain the lack of uniformity in this particular.

The authors have pleasure in acknowledging their indebtedness to M. l'Abbé Casgrain, of Quebec, for valuable personal assistance in determining local detail, and to Mtre. Joseph

Edmond Roy, N.P., of Lévis, for information on the period and the use of his version of the death of the père de la Brosse from his interesting monograph, “Tadoussac.”

W. McL. and J. N. McI.

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"*Better the world should know you at a sinner than God as a hypocrite.*"—Old Proverb.

THE SPAN O' LIFE

CHAPTER I

"AFTER HIGH FLOODS COME LOW EBBS"

Every one knows of my connection with the ill-starred Rebellion of Prince Charles, and for this it was that I found myself, a few months after the disaster of Culloden, lying close in an obscure lodging in Greek Street, Soho, London.

Surely a rash proceeding, you may say, this adventuring into the lion's den! But such has not been my experience: in an escalado, he who hugs closest the enemy's wall has often a better chance than he who lies at a distance. And so I, Hugh Maxwell of Kirkconnel, Chevalier of the Order of St. Louis, Captain en seconde in Berwick's Foot in the service of His Most Christian Majesty, and late Aide-de-Camp to General Lord George Murray in the misdirected affair of His Royal Highness Charles, Prince of Wales and Regent for his illustrious father, "Jacobus Tertius, Rex Angliae, Hiberniae, et Franciae, Dei Gratia"—Heaven save the mark!—found it safer and more to my taste to walk abroad in London under the nose of the usurping but victorious Hanoverian than to continue skulking under the broader heavens of the Highlands.

I will not deny there were moments when I would rather have been enjoying the clearer atmosphere of France (for it is easier to put a brave face on such dangers once they are safely overcome than bear them with an unruffled fortitude at the time); but there I was, with just enough money to discharge my most pressing necessities, with the precious Cause for which I had sacrificed my hopes of advancement in my own regiment blown to the four corners of the Highlands—more remote and unknown up to this time than the four corners of the earth, though to all appearance about to undergo such a scouring when I left them that they would be uninhabitable for any one who was not born with the Broad Arrow printed on his back.

I was lodging in the attic of a disreputable pot-house, kept by one of those scurvy Scots who traded on his reputed disloyalty as a lure to entice unfortunate gentlemen in similar plight to myself under his roof, and then job them off to the government at so much a head; but this I only knew of a certainty later.

It was not long, however, before I was relieved from my penury at least, for my cousin, Lady Jane Drummond, who since my childhood had stood towards me in the relation of a mother, hearing from me of my position, raised me above all anxiety in that respect.

I cannot help reflecting here on the inopportuneness with which Providence is sometimes pleased to bestow its gifts; the starving wretch, houseless in the streets, has an appetite and

a digestion which, in this regard, make him the envy of the epicure, dowered with a wealth useless in its most cherished application. And though ingratitude has never been one of my faults, was it possible not to feel some resentment at the comparative uselessness of a blessing which fell at a time when I was debarred from any greater satisfaction than paying my mean obligations or helping some more needy unfortunate, while forced to look on those pleasures incidental to a gentleman's existence with the unsatisfied eye of forbidden indulgence?

The banker, Mr. Drummond of Charing Cross, who was an old family friend, and through whom I had received my remittance, could or would give me no definite information of the movements of my cousin, Lady Jane, or of her probable arrival at London, so I had nothing to do but await further news and occupy my time as best I might.

On my arrival I had laid aside all the outward marks of a gentleman, dressing myself in imitation of—say a scrivener's clerk—and, save for that bearing which is incorporate with one of my condition and becomes a second nature, not to be disguised by any outward cloak, I might fairly well pass for my exemplar.

It was along in the month of July, when having become habituated to my situation I was accustomed to move about with greater freedom, that being in Fleet Street, I made one of the crowd to gaze at the horrid spectacle of the heads of the unfortunate Messieurs Towneley and Fletcher displayed on Temple Bar, whose cruel fate I had only escaped by my firm resolution in withstanding the unreasonable demands of the Duke of Perth to remain behind in their company in Carlisle.

“Your Grace, though I am willing to shed the last drop of my blood for Prince Charles,” I had answered, with great firmness, “I will never allow myself to be marked out as a victim for certain destruction,” and I held to my place in the retreat.

At such times the least error in judgment is certain to be attended by a train of inevitable disaster, and apart from my own personal escape, for which I am duly thankful, it was a satisfaction to me that his Grace later on most handsomely acknowledged himself to have been in the wrong.

But to return: I was plunged in these sombre reflections when I heard a cry near me, a cry that has never appealed to my support in vain—that of a lady in distress. I turned at once, and there, in full view of my sympathising eyes, was as fair an object as I ever looked upon. An unfortunate lady, overcome by the sights and sounds about her, had fallen back on the shoulder of her maid, who supported her bravely; her black silken hood had been displaced, and her rich amber-coloured hair in some disorder framed her lovely face. Another moment and I was beside them, shifting the unconscious lady to my left arm, to the great relief of the maid, who at once recognised my quality in spite of my disguise.

“Spy 'em close, my beauty! Spy 'em close! Only a penny!” shouted a ruffian, holding a perspective-glass before the unhappy lady. “A rebel wench, lads, and must see her lover close!” But I cut his ribaldry short with a blow in the face, and with my foot pushed off a wretched hag busily engaged in trying to find the pocket of my poor charge, and made immediate move to withdraw her from the crowd.

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“‘A REBEL WENCH, LADS, AND MUST SEE HER LOVER CLOSE!’”

But my efforts were met with a storm of curses and howls from the scum about us, and matters were fast growing serious, when a most genteelly dressed man pushed in beside us,

and, with sword in hand, soon cleared a way, which I threaded with a determined countenance. A moment or two concluded the affair, and we were safe.

The lady recovered with surprising spirit, and turning to the new-comer, cried: “Oh, Gaston! It was horrible beyond words!” and she clasped his arm with both her shapely hands.

We hurried on without further speech, looking for a hackney-coach; and when this was found and hailed, the lady turned, and holding out her hand to me, said: “Sir, forgive the discomposure which prevented my sooner acknowledgment of your services. What would have become of me without your aid? I cannot say half what I feel;” and the lovely creature's eyes filled as she spake.

“My dear young lady,” I said, bending over and kissing her hand, “you could say nothing that would heighten the happiness I have had in being of service to you;” and in order not to add to her generous embarrassment I handed her into the coach, whereupon our common rescuer giving a direction to the man, which I did not overhear, she and her maid drove off. Then, not to be behind so fair an original, I turned and complimented the stranger upon his timely succour.

“Sir,” said he, in French, “I perceive, from some sufficient reason, which I can readily divine, it is convenient for you to appear in disguise.”

“Truly, monsieur,” I returned, “I did not hope that a disguise would protect me from a discerning eye such as yours, but it suffices for the crowd. I am certain, though, that I confide in a gentleman when I say I am Hugh Maxwell of Kirkconnel, late captain in Berwick's Foot, and am entitled to qualify myself as Chevalier.”

“And I, Chevalier,” he replied, with equal frankness, “am the Vicomte Gaston de Trincardel, at present on a diplomatic mission towards the Court.”

Being equally satisfied with each other's condition, we repaired to his lodgings in St. James's Street, where we fell into familiar conversation, in the course of which the Vicomte said,

“I suppose I am correct in my belief that you have been engaged in the affair of Charles Edward?”

“Unfortunately, yes.”

“Is there any reliable intelligence of his whereabouts?”

“To be absolutely frank with you, my dear Vicomte, it is a matter of the most perfect indifference to me where he is, or what becomes of him.”

“Heavens!” he exclaimed. “I cannot understand such a feeling.”

“Had you seen as much of him as I did, even when he was trying to appear at his best as Fitzjames; had you been a daily spectator of the inconceivable folly with which every chance was mismanaged, every opportunity let slip; of the childish prejudice with which every true friend was estranged, and of the silly vanity which daily demanded new incense during the whole of this miserable affair—you might understand without difficulty,” I returned, with some little heat.

“But, Chevalier,” he inquired, soothingly, “may I ask why you followed his fortunes?”

“From that, Vicomte, which I doubt not has ever guided your own course in life, from the one motive that has alone influenced me—principle. My people followed the fortunes of his grandfather after the Boyne, and on both sides of my house, Maxwells and Geraldines, our name has been synonymous with loyalty to the Stuart cause abroad as well as at home.”

“I know your name and its equivalent, Chevalier. May I ask to which branch you belong?”

“I scarce know how to qualify my standing,” I answered, laughing; “we have been proscribed rebels so long that I have lost touch with those things men most value in regard to family. Just as I am a Chevalier without so much as a steed whereon to mount my knightship, so am I a Maxwell of Kirkconnel without title to a rood of ground or a kinsman within measurable distance; and my father before me held naught he could call his own save his honour, my lady mother, and my unworthy self. No! if there be a Spanish branch, I swear I'll lay claim to that, for 'tis Spain assuredly that must hold my flocks and herds, not to name my chateaux.”

“Chevalier,” he began, earnestly, “I shall esteem it a favour—”

“Not for the world, my dear Vicomte! Money is the one anxiety which seldom causes me a second thought. My habit of life is simple, and my only ambition my profession. But to go back to the happy chance of our meeting, may I inquire, without indiscretion, the name of the young lady whom you rescued?”

“Oh, come, come! Honour where honour is due. I am no more responsible for the rescue than yourself. The young lady is a Miss Grey, living with her aunt in temporary lodgings in Essex Street, off the Strand.”

“I have a suspicion, sir, that the name may be as temporary as her lodging, and that I am fortunate in applying to one who can give me reliable information.”

To this, however, the Vicomte only bowed somewhat stiffly, and being unwilling that any contretemps should arise to mar so promising an acquaintance—though the Lord only knows what umbrage any one could take from my remark—I made my adieux, the Vicomte most obligingly offering me his services should I wish to pass over to France. But of these I could not as yet avail myself, as it was necessary I should know of Lady Jane's intentions more definitely; so, with my acknowledgments, the interview ended.

CHAPTER II

I DISCOVER A NEW INTEREST IN LIFE

On my way back to Soho I turned over matters with interest. I had but little difficulty in placing the Vicomte; he was one of those clear, simple souls, very charming at times in woman, but less acceptable in the man of the world.

No one can admire purity of mind in a woman more than myself, but I have no hesitation in stating that at times I find it positively disconcerting when displayed in too obvious a degree by a man. In woman, it is to be desired above all things, and woman is so far superior to man in the manipulation of the more delicate qualities, that she seldom errs in her concealments, and when she reveals, she does so at the most opportune moment, and so effectively that, though it be no more than a glimpse, it suffices.

And these reflections brought me naturally to Miss Grey; indeed, in fancy I had never been away from her since we met. The Vicomte's manner absolutely confirmed me in my belief that the name was assumed.

Now if a man does not wish to tell you the truth, and the occasion be important, he has just one of two alternatives: the one, is to tell a lie with such assurance and bearing that it carries conviction with it; but, egad! if he won't do that, then the only other is to run you through.

The Vicomte not having been ready for either, I was so far in his confidence that I knew “Miss Grey” was an assumed name; and I shrewdly suspected, from the familiarity of her manner with him, that their mutual relation might be closer than he cared to admit—a suspicion I resolved to put to the touch. Accordingly, the next day I made as careful a toilet as my cursed disguise would admit of, and took my way to Essex Street.

Giving my name to the man at the door, for the lodgings were genteel beyond the ordinary, which advanced me in my surmise as to the fair one's condition, I was ushered into a drawing-room which would have been much better for a little more light than was permitted to enter through the drawn curtains.

In a few moments the door opened and an elderly lady entered, whom I conjectured to be the aunt.

“Madam,” I said, bowing low, “it was my good fortune to be of some slight service to your niece yesterday, and I have ventured to call and inquire if the shock has proved at all serious. My name, madam, is—”

“Tut, tut, boy! None of your airs and graces with me! Your name is Hughie Maxwell, and many's the time I've skelped you into good manners. Come here and kiss your old cousin, you scamp!” And without waiting for me to comply with her invitation, she threw her arms about me and discomposed me sadly enough with an unexpected outburst of weeping.

When she had recovered somewhat we settled down to explanations; questionings from her and answers from me, until at length she was satisfied on all my movements. Then came my turn, and I began with a definite object in view, but carefully guarding my advances, when she cut my finessing short:

“Now, Hughie, stop your fiddle-faddle, and ask me who 'my niece' is. You stupid blockhead, don't you know your curiosity is peeking out at every corner of your eyes? 'My niece' is Margaret Nairn.”

“A relation of Lord Nairne?”

“No one would count her so save a Highlander; they are from the far North, not the Perth people; but don't interrupt! Her mother and I were school-mates and friends somewhat more than a hundred years ago. I have had the girl with me in Edinburgh and Paris, and when I found she was doomed to be buried alive with her father in their lonely old house in the Highlands, and neither woman nor protector about, I took her, the child of my oldest friend, to my care, and at no time have I been more thankful than now, when the whole country is set by the ears. We are in London masquerading as 'Mistress Grey and her niece,' as her only brother, Archie, an officer in the French service, is mixed up in this unfortunate affair, and it is probably only a matter of time until he gets into trouble and will need every effort I may be able to put forth in his behalf. No, you have not come across him, for he was on some secret mission; and it is possible he may not have set foot in Scotland at all. We can but wait and see. Now that your curiosity is satisfied, doubtless you are longing to see the young lady herself; but let me warn you, Master Hughie, I will have none of your philandering. Margaret is as dear to me as if she were my own daughter born, and I may as well tell you at

once I have plans for her future with which I will brook no interference."

"May I ask, cousin, if your plans include M. de Trincardel?"

"My certes! But it is like your impudence to know my mind quicker than I tell it. Yes, since you must know, a marriage is arranged between them, and I have pledged myself for Margaret's fitting establishment. There it is all, in two words; and now I am going for the young lady herself. See that you congratulate her."

Do not imagine that her conditions cost me a second thought, nor the declaration of her future intentions a pang. My cousin was a woman, and as such was privileged to change her mind as often as she chose, and I was still young enough not to be worried by the thought that some day I might not be the one called upon to step into her comfortable shoes. As for the Vicomte, he must play for his own hand. So I awaited with impatience the appearance of my fair supplanter.

She was much younger than I had supposed, not more than sixteen; but if I had been mistaken in her age, I had not over-estimated her beauty. Her hair was really the same rich amber-colour that had awakened my admiration; her forehead was broad and low; her eyes between hazel and gray, with clear, well-marked brows; her nose straight and regular; and her mouth, though not small, was beautifully shaped, with the least droop at the corners, which made her expression winsome in the extreme. Her face was a little angular as yet, but the lines were good, and her slightly pointed chin was broken by the merest shadow of a dimple. She was taller than most women, and if her figure had not rounded out to its full proportion, her bearing was noble and her carriage graceful.

Difficult as it is for me to give even this cold inventory of her charms, the sweet witchery of her manner, the fall of her voice, the winning grace that shone in her every look, are beyond my poor powers of description. I felt them to my very heart, which lay in surrender at her feet long before I realized it was even in danger.

Our friendship began without the usual preliminaries of acquaintance. My sacrifices in the Prince's cause were known to her through Lady Jane; indeed, when I saw her noble enthusiasm, it fired me till I half forgot my disappointments, and was once more so fierce a Jacobite that I satisfied even her sweeping enthusiasm.

If anything further was needed to heighten our mutual interest, it was forthcoming in the discovery that I had been aide-de-camp to Lord George Murray, whom she rightly enough regarded as the mainspring of the enterprise, and to whom she may, in Highland fashion, have been in some degree akin.

Naught would satisfy her but that I should tell the story of my adventures, should describe the Prince a thousand times—which I did with every variation I could think of to engage her admiration—should relate every incident and conversation with Lord George, which I did the more willingly that I loved him from my heart, and it required but little effort to speak of a man who had played his part so gallantly.

With Lady Jane as moved as Margaret herself, we sat till late, and, like Othello, I told to the most sympathising ears in the world the story of my life. They forgot the hour, the place, and all but the moving recital; and I saw only the glistening eyes, sometimes wide with horror, sometimes welling over with tears, and sometimes sparkling with humour, until, like the Moor, I could almost persuade myself that

> "She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,
> And I lov'd her that she did pity them."

"Come, come, Hughie! We'll have no more of this! The child will never close her eyes this night, and you should be ashamed, making an exhibition of an old fool of a woman!" suddenly cried Lady Jane, rising and wiping her eyes when I had finished telling of the death of young Glengarry at Falkirk. And half laughing, half crying, she kissed me and pushed me out of the room, before I had opportunity to take a fitting farewell of Margaret, Pearl of all Women.

"If the Vicomte can make any running that will count against this, I'll be much surprised," I thought to myself as I picked my way home under a warm drizzle through the dirty, ill-lighted streets. But outward discomforts mattered not a whit to me, for I had eaten of the fruit of the gods, and that night I journeyed in the sunlight of the Pays-du-Tendre, bearing in my heart the idol to which my soul did homage, as I hummed over the song of some dead and forgotten but valiant-hearted lady of my own house:

> "When day was deid I met my Dear
> On fair Kirkconnel Lea,
> Though fause een spied, I knew no fear,
> His love was over me.
> He kissed me fu' upon the mou',
> He looked me in the ee,
> An' whispered low, 'Nor life nor death
> Shall part my Love frae me!'
>
> "The span o' Life's nae lang eneugh,
> Nor deep eneugh the sea,

Nor braid eneugh this weary warld
To part my Love frae me!

“Though mony an' mony a day hath died
On fair Kirkconnel Lea
Sin' I stood by my True Love's side
An' melted 'neath his ee,
Yet ilka wind that fans my cheek
Kissed his in Germanie,
An' bids me bide; for what shall make
To part my Love frae me?

“The span o' Life's nae lang eneugh,
Nor deep eneugh the sea,
Nor braid eneugh this weary warld
To part my Love frae me!”

Do I need to relate the story of the next day, or of each one which succeeded? Dear as it is to me, clearly as every fond remembrance stands out before me, it might but weary a reader to whom I cannot possibly convey even a conception of the sweet witchery of my Margaret's engaging manner. Mine, though I might never possess her, for I was too sincerely attached to Lady Jane to think of standing in the way of her plans should she finally determine against me; mine most of all, when I saw how eagerly the dear girl turned to me whenever I appeared.

The Vicomte often formed one of our party, and it was with some distress that I saw he was inclined to interfere with the friendship so happily begun. I have a natural inclination against giving pain; there is already so much in this world which we cannot prevent, it seems cruel to add to it intentionally, and it was not without regret that I saw my innocent endeavours towards the entertainment of Margaret caused him grave uneasiness. Still, as a man of breeding he could not admit that his position in her affections was endangered, and so kept on his way, though his evident disturbance told against the effectiveness of his advances towards her, and at times rendered his attack on me singularly unskilful. *Exempli gratia:* Margaret was so visibly moved one day by the effect of my singing, for I then possessed a voice justly admired by those best qualified to judge, that he was indiscreet enough to remark on my choice of a song, which was Jacobite to an extreme.

“Chevalier, only an artist could act a part so thoroughly.”

It was embarrassing, but I was saved all necessity of a reply by Margaret's generous outburst:

“Oh, Gaston, for shame! You can never understand what it means to have lost all for your Prince!”

A somewhat more forceful rejoinder than I should have been able to make, seeing I had so unguardedly revealed my sentiments on this very subject to him at our first meeting. Therefore I at once accepted her defence in the same spirit as it was given; indeed, I had almost forgotten I had any rancour against the unfortunate Charles, so completely was I dominated by her enthusiasm.

“Let me sing you another,” I exclaimed, “written when our hopes were still high.”

“Yes, yes,” she cried, eagerly, clapping her hands. “Let us forget it has all passed.”

And I sang:

“In far Touraine I'd watched each lagging day
Drag on to weary night,
I'd broke my heart when homing birds
Winged o'er me in their flight;
But a Blackbird came one golden eve
And rested on the wing,
And these were the heartsome words I heard
The bonnie Blackbird sing:

“'Go bid your love bind in her hair
The blue of Scotland's Kings,
Go bid her don her bravest gown
And all her gauds and rings,
And bid her shine all maids above
As she can shine alone;
For the news was whispered in the night,
And the night hath told the day,
And the cry hath gone across the land
From Lochaber to the Tay!
From Lochaber far beyond the Tay
The glorious news hath flown—
So bid her don her best array,
For the King shall have his own
Once more!
The King shall have his own!”

“Beyond the Tweed I know each bonnie bird
  That lilts the greenwood through,
I know each note from the mavis sweet
  To the crooning cushie-doo;
But I ne'er had heard a song that gar'd
  My very heart-strings ring
Till I heard that eve in far Touraine
  The bonnie Blackbird sing:

“'Go bid your love bind in her hair
  The blue of Scotland's Kings,
Go bid her don her bravest gown
  And all her gauds and rings,
And bid her shine all maids above,
  As she can shine alone;—
For the news was whispered in the night,
  And the night hath told the day,
And the cry hath gone across the land
  From Lochaber to the Tay!
From Lochaber far beyond the Tay
  The glorious news hath flown—
So bid her don her best array,
  For the King shall have his own
    Once more!
The King shall have his own!'”

Lady Jane was in tears, and my Margaret was little better, though smiling at me from the spinet, while the Vicomte sat the only composed one in the room—I being affected, as I always am when I hear a fine effort, whether by myself or another—when Mr. Colvill, who was Lady Jane's man of business, entered to us, and without any preamble began:

“Mr. Maxwell, I have certain information that your lodgings will be searched to-night, and I have a suspicion that you are the person sought for.”

My poor Margaret cried out and nearly swooned with terror, but Lady Jane was herself at once. “Give over your nonsense, Peggy, this instant! Hughie is not a mewling baby to be frightened, with a warning before him! Colvill, you have acted with the discretion I should have expected in you, and I thank you in my cousin's name and my own. Hughie, do you find out some new place at once; I marked a little sempstress who has a shop in Wych Street only the other day, and I would apply there if you know of no other. Do not go back to your old lodgings on any account. When I hear where you are, I will supply you with everything needful.”

The Vicomte very obligingly offered me the shelter of his roof for the night, but I answered I could not think of exposing him, when on diplomatic business, to the charge of sheltering a rebel, and was pleased to have so handsome an excuse to cover my unwillingness to lie under an obligation towards him.

In a moment the whole aspect of our little party was changed, and I took my way to seek for a new shelter, leaving anxious hearts behind me.

CHAPTER III

“THE DEAD AND THE ABSENT ARE ALWAYS WRONG”

I myself was not greatly disturbed over the turn things had taken, for I had begun to be suspicious of my thrifty Scot in Greek Street, and, as I had left behind me neither papers nor effects which could compromise myself or others when he laid his dirty claws upon them, I turned my back on him without regret.

The hour was late to enter upon a search for new lodgings without arousing suspicion, and this determined me to try the sempstress indicated by Lady Jane.

I found the street without difficulty, and, what was better, without questioning, and soon discovered the little shop with a welcome gleam of light shewing through the closed shutters. The street was empty, so I advanced, and, after knocking discreetly, tried the door, which, to my surprise, I found open, and so entered.

In a low chair behind the counter sate a solitary woman, sewing by the indifferent light of a shaded candle. She looked at me keenly and long, but without alarm.

“Madam,” said I, closing the door behind me and slipping in the bolt, “have no fear. My name is Captain Geraldine.”

“That is a lie,” she said, calmly, raising her face so the full light of the candle should fall upon it.

"'THAT IS A LIE!' SHE SAID, CALMLY, RAISING HER FACE"

Great heavens! It was that of my wife!

I sank down on a settle near the wall and stared at her, absolutely speechless with surprise and horror, while she continued her sewing without a second look, though I could mark her hands were trembling so she could hardly direct her needle.

“Good God! Lucy! Is it really you?” I cried, scarce believing the evidence of my senses.

“I am she whom you name.”

“And you know me?”

“I know that you are Hugh Maxwell,” she answered, in the same steady voice.

“And you know that I am your husband.”

“I have no husband. My husband is dead.”

“Lucy, do not break my heart! I am not a scoundrel! Do you think for a moment I could abandon the girl who trusted and married me? I had the most positive intelligence of your death. Lucy, Lucy, for God's sake speak, and do not torture me beyond endurance. Tell me what has happened.”

But the trembling hands went on with their task, though she neither raised her head nor spake. My brain was in a whirl, and I did not know what to think or how to act, so I preserved at least an outward quiet for a time, trying to imagine her position.

I was but eighteen when I had married her, a tradesman's daughter, but my uncertain allowance, as well as the certain wrath of my family, prevented me acknowledging her as my wife, and no one except her mother knew of our union.

As I sate trying to find some light, I heard the cry of a lusty child: “Mother! Mother!” At this her face contracted as with sudden pain, and saying only, “Wait where you are,” she left the shop.

I noticed she had still the same quick, light way of moving, “like a bird,” I used to tell her in the old days: it was but the dull, ungenerous colour and shape of her stuff gown that hid the dainty figure I had known, and only some different manner of dressing her hair that prevented the old trick of the little curls that would come out about her ears and forehead.

While she was away I thought it all out, and my heart melted with pity for the poor soul, forced to these years of loneliness, to this daily struggle for the support of herself and her child—our child—and, more than all else, to the torturing thought that the love which had been the sum of her existence was false. What should I do? Could I be in doubt for a moment? I would make up to her, by the devotion of a heart rich in feeling, all the sorrows of the past.

Here she entered again, but now collected and herself as at first. I rose and advanced to meet her, but she waved me off, and took up her sewing again in her former position.

“Lucy,” I said, standing over her, “does not the voice of our child—for I cannot doubt it is our child—plead for me? Listen a moment. When I returned from that ill-starred Russian voyage, I flew at once to join you. You had been in my heart during all my absence, and my return home was to be crowned with your love. But, to my consternation, I found strangers occupying the old rooms, and the woman told me with every circumstance of harrowing

detail the story of your death by typhus, and that your mother followed you to the grave scarce a day later. Heartbroken as I was, I never sought for further confirmation than the nameless graves she pointed out to me by your parish church. She told me, too, your effects were burned by order of the overseers, and I took it for granted she had stolen anything of value that might have been left. When I found at my banker's that a lieutenancy in Berwick's was awaiting my application, I only too eagerly seized the opportunity of escaping from a country where I should be constantly reminded of my ruined past, and since that day I have never set foot in London till the present. Oh, Lucy! Lucy! I see it all now. The birth of our child was approaching. You, poor soul, were an unacknowledged wife; I was wandering, a shipwrecked stranger beyond all means of communication, and you fled from the finger of shame that cruel hands would hare pointed at you. Why that hag should have gone to such lengths to deceive me I cannot even guess. But now, my dear love, my dearest wife, it is at an end! I have a position—at least I am a captain, with fair chance of promotion—I no longer have a family to consider, and once I get out of this present trap I will acknowledge you before the whole world, and we will wipe out the cruel past as if it had never existed."

"I have no past," she said, quietly.

"Then, Lucy darling, as truly as I am your husband I will make you a future."

"I have no husband," she answered, in the same quiet tone: "my husband died the day my boy was born."

"But, Lucy, my wife, you have love?"

"Not such love as you mean. My love, such as it is here, is for my boy. All else is for something beyond."

"But, Lucy, have you nothing left for me? Surely you do not doubt my word?"

"No," she answered, slowly. "You have never deceived me that I know of. Until to-night I believed you had left me, but I know now, it is I who have left you. There never can be anything between us."

"Why, Lucy? Tell me why! Do not sit there holding yourself as if you were apart from me and mine."

"You have just said the very words which explain it all," she answered. "I am indeed 'apart from you and yours.' Your explanation now makes clear why you did not seek me out on your return, and I accept it fully. But think you for a moment that this wipes out all I have suffered through these years? Can you explain away, by any other statement, save that I was 'apart from you and yours.' the cruel wrong you did when you left me, a helpless girl without experience, in a position where I was utterly defenceless against evil tongues in the hour of my trial; so that what should have been my glory was turned into a load of disgrace which crushed me and killed my mother? To say you intended to return is no answer, no defence. You knew all about a world of which I was ignorant, and you should have shielded me by your knowledge.

"Do not think I am unhuman, I am simply unfeeling on the side to which you would appeal. I have lived too long alone, I have suffered too much alone, to look to any human creature for such help or such comfort as you would bring. I know you were honest, I know you were loving and tender, but that has all passed for me. You do not come into my life at any point; I can look on you without a throb of my heart either in love or in hate—"

"But, Lucy, I am not changed. I am the same Hugh Maxwell you knew."

"You are Hugh Maxwell—but there is no question of likeness, of being the same, for there is no Lucy. She is as really dead to you to-day as you thought when you mourned her six years ago. The 'Mistress Routh' who speaks now is a widow, by God's grace a member of the Society of Methodists, and you need never seek through her to find any trace of the girl you knew. She is dead, dead, dead, and may the Lord have mercy on her soul!"

It was like standing before a closed grave.

Against this all my prayers, my tears, my entreaties, availed nothing, until at last I ceased in very despair at the firmness of this unmovable woman, whom I had left a pretty, wilful, changeable girl a few years before.

The candle had long since burned itself out, and the gray of the morning was beginning to struggle in at every opening when I gave up the contest.

"Mistress Routh," said I, smiling at the odd address, "I have been overlong in coming to my business. I am a proscribed rebel with a price set on my head, and I seek a new lodging, my old one being unsafe. I was directed here almost by chance. Can you give me such room as you can spare? There is but little or no danger in harbouring me, for I am reported to be in Scotland with the Prince, 'the Young Pretender,' if you like it so. I will be as circumspect in my movements as possible. Above all, I will never shew by word or sign that I knew you before, even when we are alone, nor will I betray your secret to our boy. You are free to refuse me, and should you do so, I will seek shelter elsewhere; but whether I go or stay, I give you my word of honour as a gentleman that your secret rests where it lies in my heart

until such time as you see fit to proclaim it yourself. Will you, then, consent to let me have a room under your roof until such time as I can get over to France?”

After a little she said: “Yes; I can take your word. But remember, from this night you are a stranger to me. You will pay as a stranger, and come and go as a stranger.”

And so this unnatural treaty was ratified. My hostess made such preparation for my comfort as I would allow, and when alone I sate on my couch trying to put my thoughts in order.

It was only then that Margaret came back to me. During my long struggle with my poor wife no thought of another had entered my mind, my whole endeavour being directed towards making such amends for the cruelties of an undeserved fate as were possible; but now, when alone, the realisation of what it meant in my relation towards Margaret overwhelmed me. All unwittingly I had been playing the part of a low scoundrel towards the fairest, purest soul in the whole world; I had been living in a Fool's Paradise, drinking the sweetest draught that ever intoxicated a human soul, and now, without an instant's warning, the cup was dashed from my lips.

Poor Margaret! Poor Lucy! Poor Hugh! My heart was aching for them all.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH I MAKE ACQUAINTANCE WITH ONE NEAR TO ME

I stretched myself out at length, with my cloak over me, and dozed uneasily until awakened by a soft knocking at the door, which was slowly pushed open, and a brown head made its appearance in the room.

“Come in!” I cried, and there entered to me as handsome a boy of six as ever delighted a man's eyes.

I would have given the world to take him to my heart, but I was on parole. So we stared at each other, and I can only hope he was as well satisfied with his inspection as I was with mine.

“Does your mother know of your coming?” I asked, for I was determined to take no unfair advantage.

“She told me I could come,” he answered, without any backwardness, yet with modesty.

“Good. Well, what do you think?”

“Why do you sleep in your clothes?”

“‘WHY DO YOU SLEEP IN YOUR CLOTHES?’”

“Oh, a soldier often sleeps in his clothes.”

“But I don't think you're a soldier.”

“Why?”

“Where is your sword?”

“I'll get that by-and-by.”

“If I was a soldier I'd sleep with my sword.”

“Well, you'd find it a mighty uncomfortable bedfellow,” I answered, laughing. At which he laughed too, and we were fast becoming friends.

“Will you be a soldier?” I went on.

“I don't know. What's your name?”

“One moment, my young diplomat. Do you never answer a question but by asking another? Surely you're not a Scotchman?”

“I don't know.”

“Well, what do you think you are?”

“I think I'm a Methodist.”

“So you are. But that may be much the same thing, for aught I know. My name's Captain Geraldine. Now tell me yours.”

“Christopher. Can you sing?”

“I can sing, my boy, like a mavis, like a bird-of-paradise. Would you like to taste my quality?” and without more ado I sang to him.

> “The span o' Life's nae lang eneugh,
> Nor deep eneugh the sea,
> Nor braid eneugh this weary warld
> To part my Love frae me.”

“I like that,” he said, gravely, when I had made an end. “You sing well.”

“So I have been informed, sir; and I am most sensible of your confirmation of the favourable verdict, which is flattering beyond my poor deserts.”

But he did not find this at all to his taste, and I was sorry to see my untimely nonsense caused him to shrink somewhat from me, which hurt me to a degree I could not have believed possible.

But my embarrassment was relieved by his mother's voice calling us from the foot of the stairs, and hand in hand we went down together.

I looked at my hostess with much curiosity, and found her quiet and serene, though the traces of the anxiety of overnight were visible in her pale face and tired eyes.

“Good-morning, Mistress Routh.”

“Good-morning, Captain Geraldine. I see my boy has taken to you; it is a good sign.”

The words were like balm to me, and I looked at her searchingly to see expected signs of relenting, but I recognised only too clearly it was the kindly civility of an entire stranger, and I felt more strongly than at any moment before that the door of the past was irrevocably closed between us.

I sate down at the table, but she remained standing, and folding her hands, repeated a long grace. It was so utterly strange, so utterly foreign to all I had ever known of her, that it deepened the impression tenfold that I belonged to a world apart from hers. In a sense it shocked my feeling of what was proper. Her Protestantism had never been any barrier in our life together, for I have known too many different ways to happiness not to believe there may be more than one to heaven. I have known too many devout Protestants to have a shadow of doubt as to their sincerity; but I have always been a believer in the established order of things, and for a woman to take any part in matters religious, beyond teaching her children their hymns and prayers, was foreign to my experience.

We ate our breakfast to the accompaniment of the boy's chatter, and if there were any embarrassment, I am free to confess it was on my side alone. I could perfectly understand her courage and resolution of the night before, but this wonderful acting was simply marvellous; it was, as far as I knew, no more possible to the Lucy I had known than talking Castilian; but, upon my soul, I never admired her more in my life. This, however, I took good care not to shew in word or gesture: if she had so utterly renounced all vanities and pomps, why should she have the incense of admiration? She would probably consider it an offering to idols.

“Mistress Routh, if my presence will not discommode you, I purpose to lie quiet for a day or two, until I can get such clothes as may serve both as a change of character and a more fitting appearance for myself. Do you happen to know of so rare a bird as a periwig-maker who can keep his counsel? If I could have such an one attend me here, I could at least do away with this lanky hair and fit myself to a decent wig; then I could venture out under cover of a cloak, and find a tailor to complete the transformation. But I take it you may know but little of these manlike fripperies.”

“I do know a man who may be trusted, who, though a member of our Society, is forced to gain his living by like vanities,” she returned.

“Madam,” said I, “you evidently do not estimate the quality of vanity at its proper value. Now I hold it in reality to be the eighth of the Cardinal Virtues. I have known it to keep men from being slovenly through their regard for the outward respect of others, and cleanliness comes very near to godliness. I have known it to keep men out of low company through their desire to catch a reflected glory from their superiors, and company is an informant of character. I have even known it to make men open-handed through a dislike to appear niggardly in public, and—” But I saw a look of such evident distress on the face before me that I checked my flight in very pity. A man with any sensibility will find himself constantly curbed by his regard for the feelings of others.

When Mistress Routh's assistant appeared I took the opportunity of sending a note to Lady Jane, telling of my whereabouts, and that I would present myself in a day or two when I had effected sufficient change in my appearance.

This I was enabled to do by the help of the wig-maker—who was clever enough with what he put outside other men's heads, though I could not think so highly of what he had got into his own—and by a liberal supply of gold pieces to my tailor.

I was now dressed with some approach to my ideas of what was fitting, and my own satisfaction was only equalled by that of little Christopher.

“Ah, Kit, my boy,” I admonished him, for I felt it incumbent on me to contribute somewhat to the general morality of such a household, “I am no more Captain Geraldine in these fine feathers than I was in the scurvy black of the lawyer's clerk.”

“But you feel more like Captain Geraldine,” the boy said, pertinently enough.

“I do, my boy, I do, for I am still subject to the vanities of the flesh.”

“Don't say that!” the boy cried, half angrily—“that is like they talk at meeting,” and I felt ashamed I should have let slip anything before the child that could hurt his sense of my bearing towards what his mother respected, though I was puzzled to rightly estimate his own expression.

“I won't, my lad, but listen!” and I gave my sword a flourish and began the rattling air,

> “Dans les gardes françaises
> J'avais un amoureux—”

and then I suddenly reflected I had no right to sing these ribald songs before the boy, even though he might not understand a word, and again I was ashamed, so fell a-story-telling, and I told him tales that made even his favourites of Agag and Sisera seem pale, and the singing was forgotten.

Though these constant talks with Kit, who would scarce be kept a moment from my side, were entertaining enough, and my heart warmed more and more to him as I saw his strong young feeling blossom out, I could not help the time dragging most wearisomely. The evenings were intolerable, and I felt the atmosphere absolutely suffocating at times. Mistress Routh was so completely Mistress Routh I soon realised that the Lucy in her was of a truth not only dead but buried out of my sight forever. Now if I have a failing, it is of too keen an enjoyment of the present, rather than an indulgence in unavailing regrets for the past, so that in a little I began to speculate if the Hugh Maxwell who was the Hugh Maxwell of this buried Lucy had not vanished also. Certainly I was not the Hugh Maxwell she knew. She said so herself; she showed only too plainly I had neither plot nor lot in her present life; and, after all, the life that is lived is the life that is dead. So I accepted what I had done my best to refuse, and turned again to the only life that was open before me—I went to Lady Jane's that very evening.

CHAPTER V

I ASSIST AT AN INTERVIEW WITH A GREAT MAN

I found the household in Essex Street in a state of perturbation which was soon explained. News had come that Margaret's brother Archibald had been arrested, as Lady Jane had foreseen, and was now confined in Fort William. Margaret, though distressed greatly, was such an ardent Jacobite that I verily believe she would rather have seen her brother in some danger of losing his head than have had him out of the business altogether.

She was neither so distressed nor elated, however, that she was oblivious to my altered appearance, and I could see Lady Jane herself was well pleased that her Hughie should cut somewhat of a figure in the eyes of her protégée. She had a natural desire to justify her affections.

But I simply mark this in passing; the real business in hand was to devise some means for young Nairn's safety. This was the less serious inasmuch as he certainly had never been in arms for the Prince, and had been prudent enough to destroy all evidence of his secret mission—in fact, his letter informed us that the one man capable of giving evidence against

him was withheld by circumstances so disgraceful to himself there was no danger of any direct testimony on this point.

The position could not be more favourable, and it was only a question of the most judicious plan of succour.

The Vicomte, though desirous of alleviating Margaret's anxiety, was debarred by his position from taking any active part, a circumstance of which I was not backward in taking advantage; for though the late distressing revelation—I refer to my meeting with Mistress Routh—prevented my making any personal advances towards Margaret, common humanity prompted me to my utmost efforts for her relief.

Finally it was determined that Lady Jane should obtain a private interview with the Duke of Newcastle, and, accompanied by Margaret, make a personal appeal, which, from Lady Jane's connections, we flattered ourselves had some hopes of success.

“Cousin,” I said, “I have a proposal. Let me go with you. I am quite unknown, my accent at least is not that of a Scotchman, so I shall not in any way imperil your success, and I have had some small experience with my superiors which may not be without its use.”

“Well, Hughie, I may not have the same admiration as yourself for your accent, but I have the firmest belief in your confidence: that will not betray you in any strait. And I am as firm a believer in having a man about; they are bothersome creatures often, but have their uses at times. At all events, I feel safer in their company; they bring out the best in me. Yes, on the whole, I think you had better come.”

The following week, through the services of the Vicomte, we were enabled to arrange for a meeting with the Duke at his house, and accordingly one morning we took our way by coach to Lincoln's Inn Fields.

We were ushered into his presence with marvellously little ceremony, and found him seated at a desk covered with a litter of papers before a blazing fire, for it was early in January.

He did not pay the slightest attention to the announcement of our names, beyond raising his head and saying rapidly, without even returning our salutation, “Yes, yes, yes; be seated, be seated,” with such a hurried, stuttering stammer that I felt reassured at once, though I could see both my companions were somewhat overawed now they were in the presence of the Great Man.

As he kept shuffling over his papers, now reading a few words from one, then throwing it down, and mixing a dozen others up in hopeless confusion, now writing a bit, and then frowning and waving his pen, I felt still more assured, for it all went to show he was only an ordinary human creature under all his titles and dignities, and was no more free from little affectations than any other mortal might be.

At length he ceased his pretence of work, for it was nothing else, and took notice of us.

“Ladies, I ask your pardon—your pardon. Yes, yes, let me see, you have some appointment with me. Eh, what was it again? Oh, I remember, you are Lady Enderby. Yes, yes—”

“No, your Grace; I am Lady Jane Drummond; this is my ward, Miss Margaret Nairn, and this my cousin, Captain Geraldine; our business is to implore your Grace's assistance towards the release of her brother, Captain Nairn, arrested in error, and now confined in Fort William.”

“Awkward, eh? Mistakes like that might be very awkward—very awkward indeed. No doubt he is one of these pestilent rebels—eh?”

“Indeed, your Grace, he has never drawn sword in the matter at all; and what is more, he is an officer in the French service, holding his full commission therein.”

“Oh, I have no doubt he is the most innocent creature in the world! but will you explain, madam, what he was doing in Scotland just when the rebels happened to be in full swing—eh?”

“Indeed, your Grace, he never put foot in Scotland until this unhappy business was ended at Culloden.”

“That's a pity, now, a great pity. As the vulgar say, he came 'just a day too late for the fair.' Had he only come in time, his Majesty might have had one rebel less to deal with, and—”

But he was cut short by poor Margaret, who, unable to stand the torture any longer, wailed out: “Oh, your Grace, do not say that! My father was buried only a few months before my brother was arrested, and he is the only one near to me now left.”

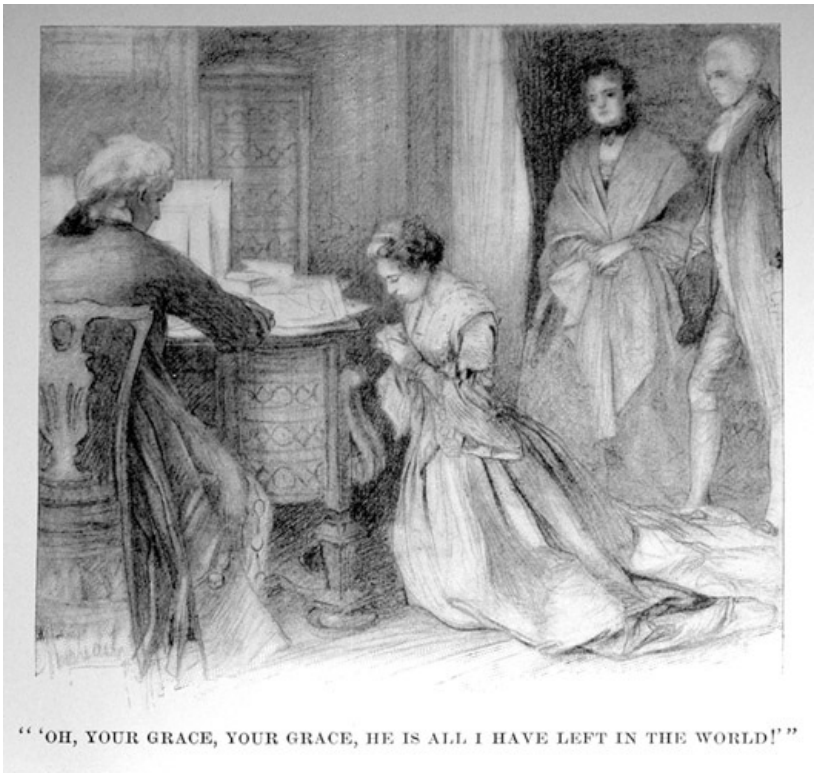
Even the abominable flippancy of the man before us was arrested by the sight of the anguish of this dear soul, and with some approach to sensibility he said:

“There, there, my dear! We cannot mend matters now.” And for some minutes he heard and questioned Lady Jane with some shew of decency, but evidently with an effort, for it was not long before he broke out again: “How much simpler it would all be if you did not interfere, madam!”

This angered her beyond control, and she replied: “Your Grace may have no feeling for the sorrow that breaks the hearts of others, but this is only a case for common justice.”

“You, you, you have a keen sense of justice, madam,” he stammered, much nettled. “You are not wanting in courage, either; 'tis a pity you could not have turned your talents to some account.”

Poor Margaret, seeing the turn things were taking, now advanced, and throwing herself at his feet, poured forth her heart to him in entreaties with the tears running down her lovely face. At first he seemed much moved, and shifted himself in his chair most uncomfortably, fairly squirming like a worm on a pin; but, to my disappointment, I soon saw he was coming back to his usual humour, even as she was entreating—“Oh, your Grace, your Grace, he is all I have left in the world! I have been a motherless girl since I can remember; I have been away from my father, at school for years; and my brother whom I played with, the one person whom I have prayed for more than all others, is now in danger of his life”—and she ended in a burst of sobs.



“ ‘OH, YOUR GRACE, YOUR GRACE, HE IS ALL I HAVE LEFT IN THE WORLD!’ ”

For answer he merely yawned, and said, turning to me, “What did you say your name was—eh?”

“Geraldine, your Grace.”

“Oh! No particular family, I suppose?”

“No, your Grace, of no family in particular,” I answered.

“He! he! he!” cackled his Grace. “Oh, I can see farther than I get credit for! You, you, you'll remedy that some day—eh? Miss—Miss— What did you say your name was?”

“Nairn, your Grace,” answered poor Margaret, still sobbing, while Lady Jane stood glowering behind her. My gorge rose at his heartlessness.

“Nairn. Umph! That's an evil-smelling name these days for any such petition,” he grumbled.

Then suddenly turning to face me, “Now I suppose you had nothing to do with this barelegged rebellion?” he went on, to my dismay, but answered it himself with a self-satisfied chuckle: “But no, of course not. You never would have come here if you had. No, no! No man of sense would.”

“I should think not!” snorted Lady Jane, fairly beside herself.

“Quite right, madam, quite right. You are a woman, of perspicacity,” answered his lordship, without a ruffle. Then he turned to me again:

“And pray what did bring you here, sir?”

“Your Grace, it was at my earnest recommendation these ladies were moved to appear in person to lay their case before the most powerful nobleman in the Three Kingdoms. They come here, your Grace, not to plead, but to explain. Their explanation is now made, and they are satisfied it is in the hands of one who is ever ready to listen to the suit of innocence, whose whole life is a guarantee for the exercise of justice, and whose finger need but be lifted to relieve the unfortunate from unmerited disgrace.”

To my surprise, he did not seem so taken with my effort as I had hoped. Even as I was speaking he had thrown himself back in his chair, and sate resting his elbows on the arms, staring at me over his finger-tips in the most disconcerting fashion without moving a muscle of his face. I was positively afraid to venture a word more under the spell of that equivocal gaze.

“Yes, yes, yes,” he broke out, suddenly, drawing himself close up to his desk and seizing a pen, with which he began making slow notes on the paper before him.

“What did you say the young man's name was?” he muttered. “Oh, yes, Nairn—Archibald Nairn. Yes. Fort William—eh? French officer in active service. And you can give me your word he was not in arms— eh?”

“I can, your Grace, without hesitation.”

The moment I had spoken I saw my mistake. So did his Grace, who wheeled round on me like a flash.

“Then, sir, I take it you are in a position to know!”

My blood fairly ran cold, for I saw only too clearly his folly of manner was but a cloak, and that now it was quite as much a question of myself as of Nairn.

“I am, your Grace,” I answered, in my most assured tones.

“Perhaps you are able to produce a muster-roll of the rebel forces—eh, Captain Fitzgerald? That would be highly satisfactory in more ways than one.”

“Surely, your Grace, this is no laughing matter. Your Grace has my word of honour that Captain Nairn was not in Scotland until after Culloden was fought—”

“—And lost—Captain Fitzgerald? Surely that is not the way for a loyal subject to put it.”

“I cannot cross swords with your Grace,” I returned, with a low bow to cover my trepidation; “even if our positions did not make it an impossibility, it would be too unequal a contest.”

The flattery was gross, and only my apprehensions could excuse its clumsiness, but to my intense relief it availed, and he turned to his desk again, while I held my breath expectant of his next attack. But none came. He muttered and mumbled to himself, while we stood stock-still, scarce venturing to look at each other, for the fate of Nairn was hanging in the balance, and a straw might turn it either way. At length he picked up his pen and wrote rapidly for a few moments; then carefully sanding the paper he read it over slowly, still muttering and shaking his head; but at last, turning to Margaret, who all this time had remained on her knees, he handed it to her, saying:

“There, miss; take it, take it. Get married; get your brother married; but for Heaven's sake don't bring up any little rebels! And Captain Fitzgerald,” he added, meaningly, “don't imagine I can't see as far as other men! No thanks! No! I hate thanks, and tears—and—and —Good-morning, ladies, good-morning!” whereupon he rose and shuffled over in front of the fire, where he stood rubbing his hands, leaving us to bow ourselves out to a full view of his back, which, upon my soul, was a fairer landscape than his face—but with Margaret holding fast the order for her brother's release.

CHAPTER VI

HOW I TAKE TO THE ROAD AGAIN, AND OF THE COMPANY I FALL IN WITH

I fully expected an outburst from Lady Jane the moment we were in the coach, but all she said was:

“Such a man! I have known women silly and vain; I have known women cruel and brainless; but such a combination of the qualities I never expected to meet in man; it makes me blush for the vices of my sex!”

“Do not scold him, dear, do not scold him!” cried Margaret, joyously. “My heart is too full of thankfulness to hear a word against him.”

“My dear Mistress—Margaret,” said I, “I would not for the world dash your joy, but there is still much to do, for I doubt if even the King could give a pardon off-hand in this fashion. Remember, England is not France.”

“Oh, do not say it is useless!” she cried, in sudden alarm.

“Not useless, certainly. I doubt, however, if the presentation of that scrap of paper before the gates of Fort William would reward you with anything more than the most bitter of disappointments and a broken heart. It was an easy way enough for his Grace to rid himself of our importunities, but we'll make it more effective than he guesses. Now is the time for the Vicomte to play his part. He is in a position where, with many anxious to do him favours, he can readily place this in the proper channel where it will go through the necessary hands, of which we know nothing, and could not reach if we did; he can so place it without reflection on his position, without suspicion of his motive, and I'm certain you can count

upon his best efforts in your service.”

“Come, come, Hughie!” broke in Lady Jane; “you needn't be trying to take credit to yourself for what Gaston is only too ready to do. That your flattering and ready tongue stood us in good stead with this silly noddy I'll not dispute, but I can readily see as clearly as he says he can; and though your suggestion is good, it should end there. Let Gaston make his offers himself.”

So I laughed, and at once abandoned that line of approach. Lady Jane might not always have control of her temper, but she knew every move a man might make, even before he realised it himself, as in the present instance; possibly this was the reason she was so tolerant of my sex.

However, I had but little time for such reflections. The more I thought over the end of our interview with the Duke the less I liked it, and on comparing impressions with Lady Jane on our arrival at Essex Street, she quite agreed that I was in a ticklish position. London was then infested with spies, most of whom had a keen scent for what the failure of our late enterprise had now fixed as treason, and despite my precaution in keeping out of questionable resorts and company, I knew that in my case 'twas little more difficult to smoke the Jacobite, than the gentleman, in whatever disguise I might assume.

“Hughie, I'm not one for silly alarms,” said Lady Jane, “but I mistrust that doddering old pantaloon, and 'you must build a high wall to keep out fear.' You've done all you can here, and I doubt but you've got yourself in a rare coil in the doing of it. Now to undo it as best we may.”

“I'll not deny that things look 'unchancy,' as we say in the North, Cousin Jane; but, for the life of me, I don't see how they are to be bettered by anything I can do now.”

“My heart! But men are slow to see ahead! We will be away out of this the moment we are assured of this young callant's safety, in a week or so at most, I hope. I will take ship from Harwich, and you shall journey with us as my servant, my courier.”

“Do you think that is absolutely necessary, cousin?”

“Hughie, Hughie, how long will you continue to walk with Vanity?”

“Just so long as I must lie down with Adversity, cousin. Cannot you understand it is humiliating for a man of my condition to go masquerading about the country as a lackey?”

“Not so readily as I can understand the awkwardness of being laid by the heels, Master Hughie. Now don't have any more nonsense! Do you start off this very night for Huntingdon, and lie at the Bell Inn there, until you hear from me. It will not be for more than a week. Let me see, yes, 'Simpkin' will be a good name for you.”

“Do I look like Simpkin?” I returned, indignantly.

“My certes, no! You look more like the Grand Turk at the moment,” she answered, laughing. “But you must conceal your rank, my lord, by your modesty and 'Mr. Simpkin,' until I can offer it a more effective covering in a suit of bottle-green livery.”

“I trust your ladyship will not require any reference as to character?”

“It is written on your face, sir. There! I will countersign it for you,” whereat she put her two hands on my cheeks and kissed me.

“'Pon my soul, Cousin Jane, I don't wonder the men raved over you!” I said, in admiration.

“No, poor things, it doesn't take much to set them off at the best of times. But do not begin your flatteries, Hughie; even age is no warrant for common-sense when it meets with old gratifications. Be off, now, and get back here for supper, ready for your travels.”

I hurried off to my old lodgings, and soon made such preparation for my journey as was necessary.

When I parted from Mistress Routh I said: “I have learned during the time spent under your roof how irrevocable your resolve is, and have accepted it as absolutely as yourself, but now that I am going away from England, which I shall probably never set foot in again, and it is still more probable that we may never meet, I have one promise to exact which you cannot refuse. It is presumable my way in life will be in some degree successful, and that my son may some day need such aid as I may be able to give him; he is yours while you live, but promise me when your time comes you will tell him who his father is. Because you have chosen a different way of life from mine, do not be tempted to allow the boy to go to strangers when you know he has a heart waiting to love and cherish him. I have never done a dishonourable action in my life, so far as I can judge, and, if only for his sake, I will always try and keep my conscience free to make the same affirmation. A message to Mr. Drummond, the banker, in Charing Cross, will always find me. Can you refuse?”

“No; it is only justice. Your claim comes after mine. I promise I will not die without telling the boy who you are.”

For herself she resolutely refused to take a shilling more than was due for my lodging, but I

succeeded in forcing her acceptance of a matter of twenty pounds, the last of my own money, not Lady Jane's, to be used for the boy. She stood beside me silent and unmoved while I kissed him in his sleep, and when I parted from her she said, “Good-bye, Captain Geraldine,” with a composure I fain would have assumed myself, but it was impossible.

The supper at Lady Jane's was gay enough, even the Vicomte contributing his modicum of entertainment, no doubt stimulated thereto by the thought of my near departure, and surely, when a man may give pleasure by his goings as well as by his comings, he is in a position to be envied. I sang Jacobite songs that evening with an expression that would have carried conviction to the Duke of Cumberland himself, and when I took my departure with the Vicomte after midnight, I left a veritable hot-bed of sedition behind.

My companion, though outwardly civil, took my little pleasantries with so ill a grace that I was in a measure prepared for his words at our parting before the coach-office.

“Chevalier, you are a man of many charming parts; I trust you will long be spared to exercise them in quarters where they may fail to give offence to any one.”

“My dear Vicomte,” I replied, “Providence has bestowed on me only my poor talents, but has not granted me the power to provide appreciation in others. Still, if you should feel at any time that I am answerable for your personal short-comings, do not, I pray, let any false delicacy stand in your way. I should be complimented in sustaining such an argument.” At which he only bowed in his stateliest manner, and wishing me a safe journey, bent his steps towards St. James's Street.

I must confess such a quarrel would have been infinitely to my taste, but unfortunately there would have been no satisfaction to me, even had I pushed it to a successful issue. My way towards Margaret was stopped by a much more serious obstacle than any man who ever drew sword. Did the Vicomte but know this, possibly my connection with Lady Jane might not have appeared to him so radical a reason for keeping the peace between us. With these thoughts and others germane to them I whiled away the time until the coach was ready, and at the dead hour of two in the morning we rolled out of London on our way to Huntingdon, where we arrived at eight the following evening.

I put up at the Bell, which was comfortable enough, and made shift to employ my time through the long week before me in some manner that would reasonably account for my stay in a dull country town which offered no attractions to a man of fashion.

At length my letters reached me, and my gorge rose at the address:

Mr. Simpkin,
Lying at the Bell Inn,
Huntingdon.

Now it had never cost me a second thought to travel as a pedlar when making my escape from Scotland, but this wishy-washy nonentity of a name annoyed me beyond measure. Think you, did ever “Mr. Simpkin” salute at Fontenoy, or make a leg at Marly? I doubt it. Nor is it strange that a man, with no more vanity than myself, should find some little vexation at the perversity of Lady Jane in fastening this ridicule upon me. That it was intentional I could not doubt from her letter, for she rallied me upon it at every turn she could drag in. However, I had the consolation that I was to join her forthwith at Harwich, and my journey across the country over bad roads with a pair of wretched nags gave me more material discomforts to rail at, and by these means I brought myself to a frame of mind that I could at least imagine Lady Jane's enjoyment of her childish jest.

When I reached Newmarket, I found, to my disgust, it was impossible to go forward again that night, but was on the road bright and early the next morning; however, it was evening before I was set down at a decent-looking inn beside an arm of the sea, across which I saw the spires of Harwich twinkling a welcome to me in the setting sun.

Having settled with the post-boys, I desired the land-lord to attend me within.

“I see you have boats there, which is fortunate, for I wish to be set across the water at once,” I said, on his entry.

“That is impossible, your honour; it is too late.”

“Nonsense, my man. There is for a bottle of your best, and enough to make up to you my not remaining overnight. I must set off at once!”

“But, your honour, it can't be done. No boat is allowed to cross after sunset. The frigate lying there is for no other purpose than to prevent it. 'Tis on account of the smuggling.”

“Don't talk such rank nonsense to me, sir. Do I look like a smuggler?”

“No, your honour, you do not, so far as I can judge.”

“Then come, my man, I must be put across.”

“Oh, sir, 'tis of no use; I should be a ruined man,” cried the poor-spirited creature, almost snivelling.

Seeing this, I tried him on a new tack. “You scoundrel!” said I, laying my hand on my sword and advancing towards him threateningly, “if you fail to have me on my way before half an hour is over, I'll pink the soul out of you.”

“Oh Lord, sir, have a care what you do!” he shrieked in terror, and before I could intercept him he had thrown open the door into the adjoining room, where three officers sat at their wine before the fire.

“Captain Galway! Your honour! I am undone for upholding the law! Save me! Save me!”

“Damn you for a whining hound! What do you mean by rushing in like this?” roared the officer addressed, who I marked wore a naval uniform.

During the babel of explanations which followed from the terrified creature, I was by no means easy in my mind, for I could not but think the frigate was stationed there for a purpose that touched me more nearly than smuggling, and certainly King's officers were not the company I should have chosen. But hesitation would have been the height of folly. I advanced assuredly, and addressing the company, said:

“Gentlemen, your pardon, for I am afraid that I am really more to blame than this poor man, who it appears was only preventing an unintentional breach of the law on my part. The truth is, I am most anxious to cross over to Harwich to-night, and had no thought to meet with any obstacle in my design, least of all that I should be taken for a smuggler.”

There was a laugh at this, and he whom the inn-keeper had addressed as Captain Galway said, roundly enough:

“Thank God, sir, his Majesty's officers have still something above the excise to look after!”

“Then, sir,” I replied, though his words confirmed me in my suspicion, “I have but this moment paid for a bottle of our host's best; we can discuss it with your leave, and it may serve as footing for my interruption.”

There were bows on all sides at this, and my gentleman introduced himself as Captain Galway, commanding the *Triumphant*, now riding at anchor in the bay, and his friends as Major Greenway and Captain Hargreaves, of the 32d Regiment. In turn I introduced myself as Mr. Johnstone, for I was determined to have done with Mr. Simpkin, come what might.

“Ah!” drawled Captain Hargreaves, “one of the Johnsons of Worcester?”

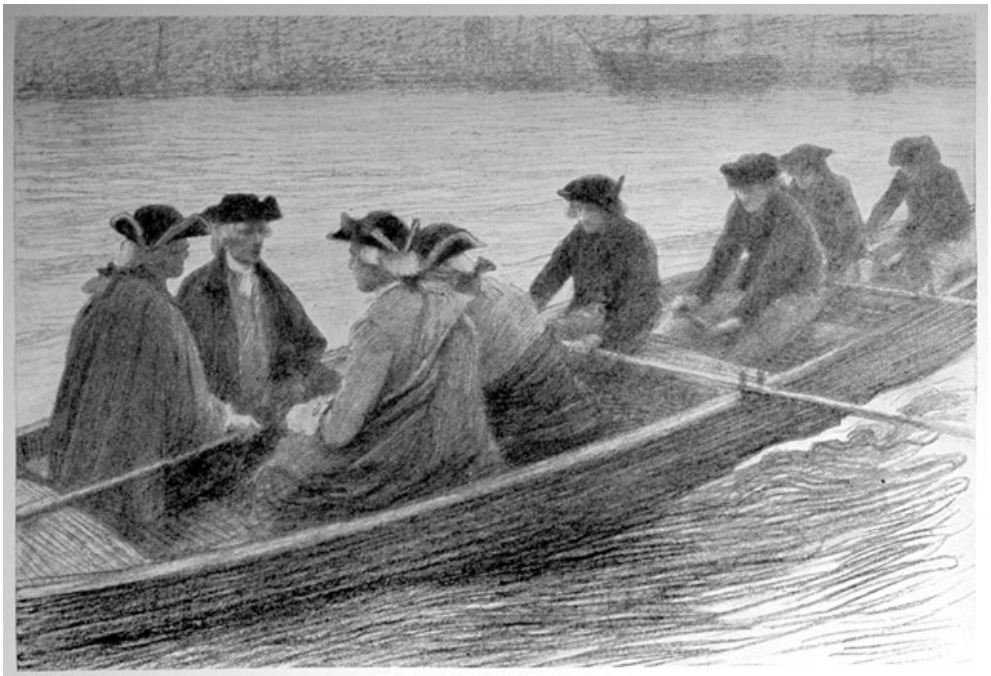
“No,” I answered, shortly; “mine is the Border family, but I come direct from London.”

Much to my relief, our host now made his appearance with the wine, and put an end to this uncomfortable questioning. His sample proved excellent; so good that I doubted if even the smuggling story might not have some foundation, and so exact was it to Captain Galway's palate that before we had made an end of the second bottle he swore by all his gods, whose seats appeared to be chiefly in those parts which served for his most important corporate functions, that I should be put across the water though he had to do it himself.

So far everything seemed to run exactly to my liking; but when at his invitation I took my place in the stern-sheets of his boat, it was not without uneasiness I observed Captain Hargreaves draw him aside and whisper to him earnestly, and on his taking his place I saw his humour was altered.

He ordered his men to give way in a voice that suggested the clap of a prison door, and his first words to me were scarce reassuring:

“You are from the Border, you say, Mr. Johnstone? Possibly from the northern side?”



"HE ORDERED HIS MEN TO GIVE WAY IN A VOICE THAT SUGGESTED THE CLAP OF A PRISON DOOR"

"Yes," I answered, seeing what was before me, and cursing the ill luck that had drawn me into such a trap, but determined to put a bold face on it. "Yes, I am from Kirksmuir, beyond Lanark."

"Then you may know my midshipman here, Mr. Lockhart, of Carnwath?" and he indicated a lad about eighteen beside me.

My heart sank within me, for this very boy's elder brother had unfortunately been drawn into this unhappy rebellion, and with him I had been intimate. I had been a constant guest at his father's house, and it was impossible to tell what this youngster might have heard.

"Mr. Lockhart's family is honourably known, sir, throughout our country, and I doubt not he can speak equally well of my own," I returned, in my best manner, and fortunately for me the lad was either so bashful, or so busily employed in racking his brain to puzzle out what family mine was, that he could make no reply, and I went on, with my most careless air:

"Surely, Captain Galway, it is unnecessary to keep so far down with the tide as it sets. I would not take you out of your way for the world."

"Oh, nonsense!" he cried, with a poor attempt at heartiness. "You shall come on board. We too seldom meet with one of your quality to part so easily. You must make your excuses to your friends. Say you were kept a prisoner." And he laughed loudly at his wit.

Good heavens! how I despised the man who could make a jest of a fellow-creature in such a strait! Had I been a swimmer, I would have taken the chance of a plunge over the side; but in my case that would have been little short of suicide.

"Come, sir, come! You make a poor return for my offer of hospitality," he continued, banteringly; "you are not at all the same man I took you for at the inn."

"Pardon me," I returned, quickly, for his last remark spurred me to my utmost effort, "you gentlemen who go down to the sea in ships forget that we landsmen find even the wobble of a boat discommoding. No man is the same with an uneasy stomach."

"Next thing to an uneasy conscience—eh, Mr. Johnstone?"

"Worse, sir, far worse. You may forget the one at times, but the other is never at rest."

"Oh, well, we are for a time now, at all events!" he cried, with a ring of triumph in his voice, as we slowed up alongside the great ship, and the sailors made us fast by the ladder.

"After you, sir," said my tormentor, as he pointed upward, and, willy-nilly, I mounted the shaking steps with the horrid thought that perhaps it was the last ladder I should mount save one that would lead to a platform whence I would make my last bow to a howling mob at Tyburn.

"It is fast growing dark, sir; we will not stand on ceremony," said the captain, leading to the cabin.

"Do not, I pray," I answered, with some firmness, for now I was only anxious for the last act of the ghastly farce to end; the suspense was growing intolerable.

When wine and glasses were placed before us, the captain filled them both and raised his.

“'Pon my soul, Mr. Johnstone, I am sorry to lose so good a companion, but we must not put your landsman's endurance to too hard a proof. I wish you a safe arrival with all my heart! My men will put you ashore at once.”

I was so fluttered by the unexpected turn and the honest heartiness he threw into his words that I could scarce reply, but in some way I made my acknowledgments. In a few moments I was over the side and speeding towards the Harwich shore with all the force of six oars pulled by six impatient men, and I'll wager none among them was so impatient as the passenger they carried.

CHAPTER VII

HOW I COME TO TAKE A GREAT RESOLVE

I rewarded the men handsomely enough to call forth their approval, and made my compliments so fully to Mr. Lockhart, with so many messages to his family, that I left him more puzzled than ever as to who Mr. Johnstone of Kirksmuir might be; and then picking up my portmanteau, made as though I would enter the town.

Once the boat was safely out of sight, I looked about for a quiet spot, and proceeded to effect a transformation in my outward appearance more in keeping with my new rôle of courier. Removing my wig, I smoothed my hair back, and fastened it with a plain riband. I undid my sword, and snapping the blade, put the hilt, which was handsomely mounted in silver, to one side, and then stripping the lace and silver braid off my hat, I bound wig and blade together and flung them into the sea. From my portmanteau I took a pair of stout black hose which I drew over the more modish ones I wore, removed the buckles from my shoes, and placing them with the sword-hilt in the portmanteau, muffled myself carefully in my cloak, and, taking up my burden, trudged towards the town.

I found the inn where Lady Jane and Margaret lodged without difficulty, and on my inquiry for them the land-lord said:

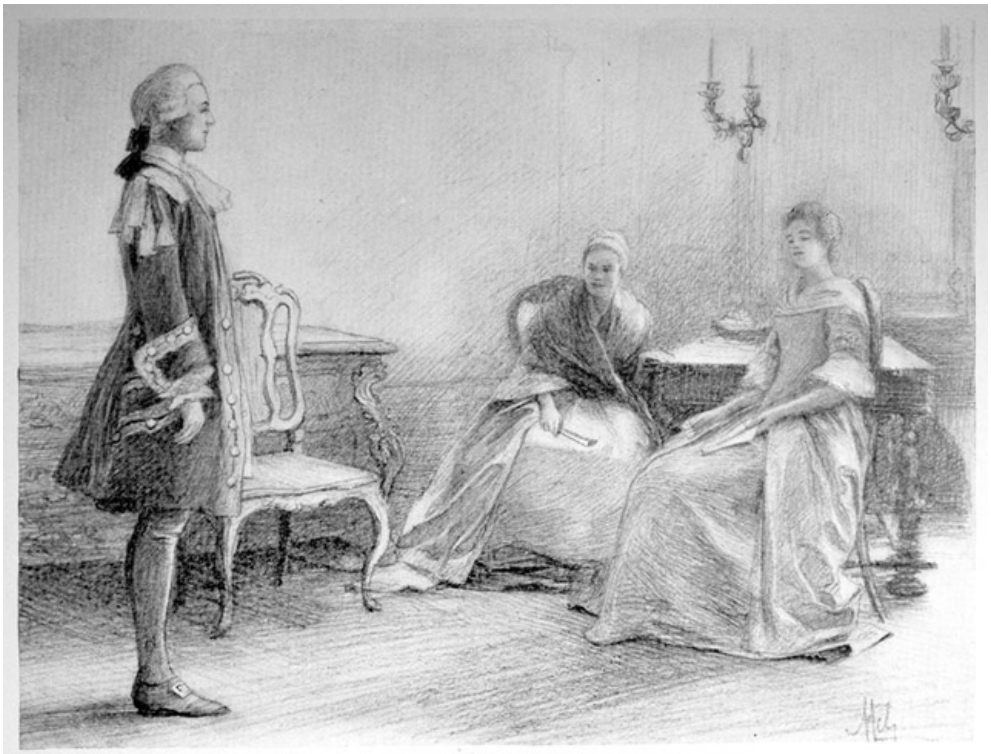
“If you are the servant my lady has been expecting, let me tell you you have been within an ace of losing your place, for you are a day late, and but for the wind she would have sailed this morning. You are to go to your room at once, and then you wait on her, and I, for one, don't envy you your reception! Take your things and come this way.”

The thought of being so near friends banished any petty annoyance I might have felt at this treatment; indeed I could but so admire Lady Jane's cleverness that I entered into the jest, and inquired what manner of person my new mistress might be.

“Masterful, masterful. 'Tis a God's mercy she was not born a man, or it might have been ill holding with her!” the honest creature returned, with much decision, and I at once placed him as a man of fair judgment.

In my room I found the suit of bottle-green livery Lady Jane had promised laid out for me, so I soon made my transformation complete, and presented myself at the door my guide had pointed out.

My cousin's voice, in answer to my discreet signal on the panel, bade me enter, and my welcome was a merry one. How I made them laugh over my appearance! With what satisfaction did I turn the tables on Lady Jane by the landlord's estimate of her character, when she attempted to resume her quizzing over “Mr. Simpkin”! But it was when I came to the relation of my adventure with Captain Galway that I met a veritable triumph. To Lady Jane it afforded a new mark for her wit, and she professed to be vastly amused at my groundless alarm; but to Margaret, who was much distressed by Lady Jane's levity, 'twas all tragedy of the most serious description.



"HOW I MADE THEM LAUGH OVER MY APPEARANCE!"

The measures taken for her brother's safety had proved entirely effectual, and it was clear that Margaret credited me solely with his release, which was now assured, though I honestly believe the Duke's signature would have been only so much worthless paper had I not suggested the Vicomte's services. Be this as it may, I did not hold I was bound to combat with her sense of gratitude, for Heaven knows I have so often suffered under an over-sufficiency of undeserved censure that a little overflowing of approbation was most welcome.

We hoped to be off early the next morning, but, alas, on our awakening the wind was as unfavourable as before, and there were no signs of a change. It was an anxious day for all of us. It was clear enough the Duke of Newcastle had suspected me, and though it was possible he did not realise my importance, it was quite probable he would have Lady Jane's following closely watched for the presence of Captain "Fitzgerald," as he chose to style me. The proximity of the *Triumphant* and her over-hospitable commander, with his prying friend Mr. Hargreaves, was never out of my mind, and it was with no small uneasiness I learned the Governor of the town had been unceasing in his attentions to the two ladies. True, this may have meant nothing but pure civility, but the purest civility may prove as embarrassing as the commonest intrusion when one has anything to conceal. Confound the man! He pressed his ill-timed courtesies upon us twenty times a day, and I could not but grow apprehensive when I marked the scarce-concealed curiosity with which he regarded me. Had I been a slave in a barracoon, my points could not have been gone over more carefully; and had I been both deaf and dumb, my qualities could not have been discussed with more openness. Never before had I realised that even a lackey might resent hearing himself discussed like an animal at a fair, and Lady Jane took a perverse delight in provoking the Governor's critiques when I was within earshot. Our morning walk in his garden will serve as an ensample.

"Has your fellow any experience of travel," the Governor would ask, stopping in his walk and eyeing me as if he were at a court-martial, "or is he as useless as the rest of his kind?"

"I've no doubt hell prove stupid enough when we get where we really need him," she would answer, coolly, bending over some favourite flower. "'Tis really shameful the lying recommendation one's friends give servants nowadays."

"He looks stupid enough to prove honest," growled the Governor, "but if he were put through a few weeks' drill, with my sergeant's cane behind those fat calves of his, 'twould smarten him up a bit."

"What lovely Gueldre roses!" exclaimed Margaret, enthusiastically, and straightway fell to praising one flower after another with such rapidity and success that even Lady Jane's ingenuity could find no opportunity to lead the Governor back to the torture again.

However, I had my revenge, for Lady Jane herself was unpleasantly startled that same day as we sate at dinner in our room, and the Governor chose to pay us another visit without warning.

There was a frantic scurry for a few moments as we removed all traces of my place, and his Excellency must have had a suspicious train of thought running through his head as he

waited for me to unlock the door. This I did with unmoved countenance, and Lady Jane made the excuse of being somewhat en déshabillé, as the room was over-warm with the fire, and it passed without further remark, though I could see he eyed me from time to time as I stood behind her chair. I waited on them, I flatter myself, quite as perfectly as the most highly trained servant—for the table is a point to which I have always devoted much attention, and my knowledge stood me in good stead now.

Whatever his suspicions were, he did not dare to make them known; Lady Jane was a person of too recognised a position not to make it highly inconvenient for any one who might interfere with her without due justification; and the next day we sailed without hinderance.

Upon our arrival at the Hague, the first letter we received was one from the Vicomte to Margaret, assuring her of her brother's safety, and informing her it was commonly reported in London that Prince Charles had escaped to the continent in the train of Lady Jane Drummond, so we knew to a certainty the Governor had mistaken me for the Prince, and informed the Court of his suspicions.

Whether the mistake was flattering to me or not, I cannot fairly judge. So far as the Prince stood morally or intellectually, he was beneath my contempt, but physically, my impression is that he was handsome—at least he had a fine carriage and bearing. It is most difficult to judge any man in his position; all my training and education, and that of my ancestors for generations before me, had been such that I have scarce been able to look on a king save with a feeling close akin to reverence. So with these reservations I allow the dubious compliment to pass. But whatever I might think, there was no doubt but the circumstance had raised me many degrees in Margaret's estimation. And this also I owed to the unwitting services of the Vicomte, who had successively helped me on to nearly every advance in her affections.

From the Hague we journeyed by easy stages to Paris, where Lady Jane found suitable lodgings for herself and Margaret in the rue Dauphine, while I found a humble one, better fitted to my purse, in the rue du Petit-Bourbon.

I at once made application to join my old regiment, but to my chagrin I was only put off from month to month, and, insisting on an answer, I was curtly informed there was no captaincy vacant, and I must remain satisfied with the small pension the king was pleased to give me as officer in the Scottish expedition, or accept a subaltern's position.

When the Vicomte arrived, by the end of May, he resumed his position in the Royal Guard, and his evening visits to Lady Jane, or rather to Margaret. About the middle of the summer he succeeded in obtaining an authentic copy of the Act of Indemnity, which was studied with the greatest interest by us all. The terms were fair, even generous, but I was not astonished to find my name among those excluded from its favour. It mattered little to me that I was henceforward a marked man, with a price on my head, doomed to perpetual banishment; for, being in no sense an Englishman, and a Scot only by descent, exclusion from the Three Kingdoms meant little to me; blood and training had made me an alien in feeling, and fate had ever thrown me and mine on the side of the unfortunate; Maxwells and Geraldines, we had always been on the losing side; it had become second nature. But with Margaret it was far different. Her generous soul was in arms at once; my exclusion from the Act had raised me to the niche of a hero in her temple, and again it was the Vicomte who had contributed to this elevation.

Margaret now began to grow anxious again concerning her brother. Why did he not join us? Could any new complication have arisen to cause his re-arrest? These and a thousand other disturbing speculations troubled her unceasingly, until they were put beyond all doubt by a letter, which fell upon us like a bomb:

> “*January* 19, 1748.
>
> “My dearest Peggy,—I have resolved on a step which I can scarce expect you to approve, perhaps not even to understand at present, though I have every hope that some day you will do both.
>
> “My situation briefly is this: I have no hope whatever of another effectual attempt on the part of the Prince, and I have set my face against foreign service. Still, I was bred to the sword, and so must bide by it. As I have neither the means nor the inclination for an idle existence, and it has pleased the King to grant me my pardon without exacting any terms, I am resolved to offer him my sword and duty without reserve.
>
> “Let no one persuade you into thinking that I am playing a part, or have been won over by new friends or promises. I have won myself over from empty plots and idle dreams to an honourable career, and I have put the past from me without a regret, save that my decision will cause you pain, my dear and only sister.
>
> “Whether you write me in anger or write not at all, you cannot in any way lessen the affection in which I will always cherish you.
>
> “Your loving brother,

“Archd. Nairn.”

“A most sensible determination,” I thought, “and does much credit both to his sense of honour and his judgment,” but I need hardly say I took care not to air my appreciations of his course before Lady Jane, and still less before Mistress Margaret, who was little short of distracted.

The poor girl had swooned on receiving the news, and for two days was utterly overwhelmed by what she held to be the disgrace of his desertion.

The Vicomte was singularly unfortunate in his attempt at consolation.

“Marguerite, mon amie,” he said one evening, before us all, “your brother should lose no claim to your esteem. Remember, the cause of the Prince Charles is lost beyond all redemption. Your brother is under the greatest of all obligations to his legal King; he owes him his life. If my humble opinion be of value, I conceive he has acted strictly within the laws which govern the conscience of a gentleman and a man of honour.”

“Gaston! How dare you? I am not a child; I am a woman loyal to my heart's core! I know nothing of your fine distinctions which constitute 'a gentleman and a man of honour,' But I do know the feeling which made men charge almost single-handed on the English line at Culloden. I know, too, the feeling which made the humblest Highland mother give up the child of her heart, and wish she had twenty more, to die for her King and her Prince. Better—far, far better that my brother had died unpardoned but loyal! He died for me the day his hand signed that traitorous compact. God pity me! I have neither father, mother, nor brother left. I have naught but you,” she cried, as she buried her face on Lady Jane's shoulder, and shook with the storm of grief that swept over her. Lady Jane motioned us to leave, and we withdrew sorrowfully enough.

It was weeks before the poor girl recovered her old liveliness; but she could not combat against the natural elasticity of youth, though the struggle left its trace in a sudden maturity quite unlooked for. Her relation towards the Vicomte became visibly colder; and he, simple soul, instead of being spurred to greater effort, went blundering on in his direct childlike way, with but small effect, though warmly reinforced by Lady Jane.

All this time His Royal Highness Prince Charles was making no slight stir in Paris. He was in deep disgrace with the King, whom he treated with the most studied discourtesy. An unwelcome and dangerous intruder, he paid not the slightest attention to the repeated requests that he should leave the capital; he kept open house in his hotel on the Quai des Théatins, and appeared nightly at the Opera despite every consideration of good taste and breeding. And yet one-half Paris looked on and applauded, blaming the King for his inhospitality to this hero of a hundred flights.

I did my own prospects of advancement no small harm by allowing myself to accompany Margaret and Lady Jane to one of his levees, where he bestowed much fulsome flattery on me, though he took good care it should reflect on himself, for he never could pass over an occasion to shine before a woman—one of the weakest vanities that ever inflated the soul of man.

The Vicomte was much chagrined over our going, and inclined to lay the blame upon me.

“M. de Kirkconnel,” said he, addressing Margaret, “should know that such a proceeding is extremely injudicious when the Prince stands in such ambiguous relations towards the Court; especially when aware of my position towards you and my official duty in the present difficult negotiations with the Prince.”

“'M. de Kirkconnel,' as you style him,” retorted Margaret, with great spirit, “has only done his duty, M. le Vicomte, as 'a gentleman and a man of honour,' in accompanying two ladies to pay their respects to the son of their King—whatever may be his relations towards a time-serving government.”

“Tut, tut, Margaret!” broke in Lady Jane, “none of your hoity-toity airs? Gaston is perfectly right. I blame myself for not having thought of his position in the matter. We'll keep ourselves outside these delicate questions, for which women have too hot heads, until wiser ones settle them, one way or another.”

That Lady Jane was much displeased was evidenced by the strenuous efforts to procure me a captaincy which she put on foot again with renewed vigour, and, to tell the truth, I was not sorry, for I was beginning to find no little embarrassment in Margaret's unconscious revelation of her feelings towards me, and I was heartily sorry for the Vicomte as well.

Nothing came of Lady Jane's efforts, and now we all began to live a life of much discomfort. That the Vicomte disliked me was patent, and yet he would make no effective efforts to better his own position with Margaret; that Lady Jane was troubled at my presence was writ large on her expressive countenance, and yet she could not bear me to leave unless fittingly provided; and that Margaret, our Pearl of Great Price, was as cold to the Vicomte as she was affectionate to me I could not greatly, and all this to our common disquiet. The Vicomte sighed for possession, Lady Jane for the fulfilment of her plans, and I for the end of a situation that had become wellnigh impossible.

At length the explosion came.

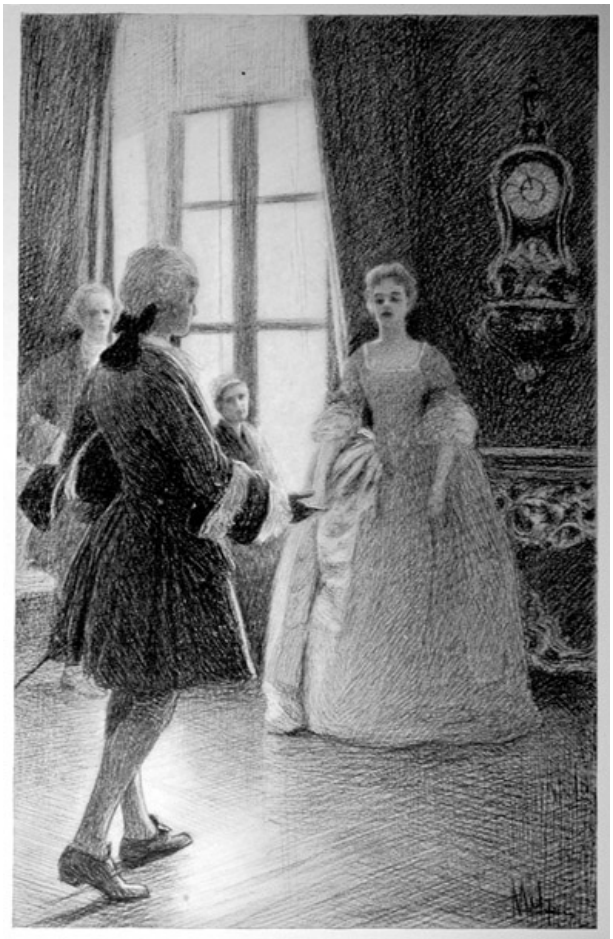
It was an open secret that the Prince would be removed by force, as he had obstinately refused to listen to either proposals, entreaties, or commands, and in short was courting disgrace, for Heaven only knows what, unless perchance he hoped to rise only by his failures and reverses. At all events, preparations were made without concealment for his arrest on the evening of the 10th of December, as he drove to the Opera, and the Vicomte, from his position in the Household Troops, had charge of the arrangements.

Margaret had heard the rumour that very day, and had sent the Vicomte peremptory word to come to the rue Dauphine; but no doubt it was his duties, certainly not any hesitation at facing the interview, which prevented his complying with her command.

The next day, when he presented himself, the news of the arrest was all over Paris, with every absurd exaggeration of detail.

He entered admirably composed, though knowing a painful scene was before him, and after saluting Lady Jane, he advanced towards Margaret, holding out his hand.

She stood erect, her face white with emotion.



"SHE STOOD ERECT, HER FACE WHITE WITH EMOTION"

“One moment, M. le Vicomte, until I see whether I can touch that hand again or not. Is it true that it was laid on my Prince?”

“No, mademoiselle, it was not.”

“Who, then, arrested him?”

“M. de Vaudreuil, mademoiselle.”

“And you? What did you do?”

“I stood there, mademoiselle, and saw that M. de Vaudreuil carried out his instructions.”

“His instructions? Who gave them

“I did, mademoiselle.”

“What! To arrest the Prince?”

“Certainly, mademoiselle.”

“And you think this was the part of 'a gentleman and a man of honour?'”

“Certainly, mademoiselle. It was my duty.”

I own that from the bottom of my heart I admired him. It was clear what was coming, yet he

never faltered, never wavered, nor made any attempt at appeal or explanation. It was like the man. I envied him his courage.

“Did you never think for one moment of me? Of my devotion to him and his cause? Did not my regard, my affection even, weigh for one moment with you?” she went on, excitedly.

“Marguerite, Marguerite! This is cruel! This is unjust! I worship you as I have never worshipped woman, and at this moment you are breaking my heart!”

“You have broken mine,” she answered, coldly, and turning, walked slowly out of the room.

He stood with his face like marble.

Then Lady Jane rose, and laying her hand on his shoulder, said: “Gaston, I never thought more of you in my life, and the mother who bore you may well be proud of such a son. Margaret is but a child; when she thinks over what has happened, she will see matters in their true light. Girls' hearts do not break so easily. My own would have flown in pieces a thousand times if it had followed my imaginations,” she said, gayly; and then more tenderly, “Be patient with her, Gaston; she is only a child.”

But he shook his head sadly without reply.

“My dear Vicomte,” I said, “I know you have cause to look on me with no friendly eye; but believe me, I can echo every word my cousin has spoken. I can only admire and hope for such courage myself; and that I may prove the sincerity of my profession, I will withdraw entirely from a scene where I am only a disturbance. I have no thought, no hope of winning Margaret for myself. I will volunteer for service in Canada at once, and at least shall not have the regret of standing in the way of one I honour so highly.”

To all of which he said little, but that little so direct and feeling that we stepped out into the rue Dauphine together, more nearly friends than we had ever been.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW I MAKE BOTH FRIENDS AND ENEMIES IN NEW FRANCE

My resolution was immediate, but it was a different matter carrying it into effect. After many applications, and even entreaties, the most favourable opening I could obtain was the offer of an ensign's commission. It was almost beyond even my self-abnegation to accept such degradation. Only by the thought of Margaret, and the consoling comfort that I was making the sacrifice entirely for her sake, joined with the absolute promise of the minister that I should not long remain in such a subordinate position, could I bring myself to the point of acceptance.

Meantime the Vicomte had not in any degree taken a proper advantage of my disinterestedness; for, instead of winning back the affections of his adored one by direct and oft-repeated attack, he withdrew himself entirely from her company, and plunged into a course of the most reckless dissipation, making Paris ring with the tales of his extravagance and folly. Then suddenly, to every one's astonishment, he threw up his commission, and disappeared so effectually, that not even his intimates knew what had come to him. Those at the rue Dauphine were as ignorant as the rest of the world, and though his withdrawal was unquestionably a relief to Margaret, it was a source of deep mortification and sorrow to Lady Jane. However, neither letters nor inquiries were of any avail, and the most rigorous search only elicited the fact that no one knew what had become of the Vicomte Gaston de Trincardel, beyond that he had voluntarily disappeared without any adequate motive being assigned.

At length the time came for me to embark for my miserable command.

Margaret made but little effort to conceal her grief. “It is dreadful, dreadful, this parting!” she cried. “One after another I am losing those to whom I am most attached—first my brother, then Gaston, and now you. I am, indeed, 'a stranger in a strange land,' and if aught happens to Lady Jane, think what will become of me? But I am not thinking of myself alone,” she added, quickly. “Believe me, my greatest sorrow is that you, who have sacrificed so much for your loyalty, who have met with such reverses, such pitiful ill return for all your devotion to your King, are now doomed to an exile worse than before—to the acceptance of a rank that is an insult to your condition, to banishment in a savage country far from all those you love—and you accept it all without a murmur. Now I know, for you have taught me, the definition of 'a gentleman and a man of honour.'”

With this recognition, so worthy of her generous nature, she looked at me so proudly that I would have given anything to kneel at her feet and confess it was only the fact of being “a gentleman and a man of honour” which prevented me answering the love that glowed from every feature of her sweet face and throbbed in every pulse of her ardent young body with the burning words that trembled on my sealed lips.

“Oh, Margaret, sweet Margaret! I cannot say what I would. I dare hardly think what I would. Everything is against me!”

“Not everything,” she answered, quickly—“not everything, unless I am nothing! I am with you heart and soul! No, you cannot speak, because you have no position, and perhaps no future. But I can! Oh, Hugh, Hugh! I care nothing about it being unmaidenly; I cannot mind such matters when my heart is breaking. I love you with all my soul and with all my life. I will think of you every hour you are away from me, and pray for you every hour until God brings you back. Oh, Hugh, tell me-tell me you love me!”

“No, miss! Master Hughie shall do nothing of the sort!” interrupted Lady Jane, who had come in unmarked. “Any man who wishes to do any love-making, so far as Margaret Nairn is concerned, must first do so through me.

“There, there! Peggy, my pet—my wee girlie. You may kiss him once for your poor heart's comfort; and then, my lambie, leave my boy to me; I am the only mother he has. There, dearie, go now,” she said, tenderly, when I had kissed her as one might kiss a saint; and without a word Margaret left the room with my cousin, and it and my heart were empty.

Lady Jane was generous, as was her wont: all that money could do to make my departure easy was done; and most of all, she comforted me as a mother might comfort a son—indeed, as she had said to Margaret, she was the only mother I had ever known.

Again she told me plainly that I must not cherish any hopes upon her death beyond such humble provision as she might spare. “Margaret is my daughter, Hughie; and if you are the man I take you for, you would not deprive her of whatever money may bring.”

“Cousin,” said I, “I am going away for her sake, for her peace of mind alone; and if I am content to bury myself alive for this now, think you I'll regret any other good that can come to her? I love her with my whole heart and soul, and the greatest bitterness I have to bear is that I am prevented from declaring my feelings towards her before I go. She has spoken words to me that call for all the response in a man's soul, and I go away with my mouth closed like a clown.”

“Tut, tut, Hughie! Now you are letting your vanity get the upperhand of you. You are bemoaning yourself because you have not cut a better figure in her eyes. But just one word for your cold comfort. There never was a young girl in her position yet—bless all their lovely, trusting hearts—who would not make a hero of the man she loved, had he the garb of a Merry Andrew and the manners of a Calmuck. Don't fash yourself over imaginary woes when you've real ones in sight, plain enough, my poor boy. But now leave this profitless heart-break and let us plan for the future.”

Our talk lasted late into the night, and by daybreak I was on my way to La Rochelle.

And now began the most miserable period of my life, the details of which I have no intention of inflicting on my reader. A wretched sea-voyage was a fitting introduction to my place of banishment—Louisbourg, a pretentious and costly fortification, but miserably situate and falling to decay for want of the most necessary repair. There it was, shut in on the one hand by the monotonous sea, wild and threatening with its ice, and snow, and storm in winter, sad and depressing with its mournful fog in summer—and on the other by an unbroken wilderness of rock and firs—that I ate out my heart in bitterness year after year; my only alleviation being the rare letters which I received from Margaret, but which I scarce could answer, though my reticence only brought forth a fuller expression of the unwavering affection of her generous soul.

Dear as this indulgence in a cherished affection was to me, I brought myself to renounce it, for I held I was bound to this for more than one reason. Now that I had entirely broken with my past, I recognised that perhaps I should have done so sooner. Was it not folly to suppose that a girl such as Margaret would not follow her generous fancy when propinquity was added to inclination? Alas! that such admirable decisions are only so readily consented to when the occasion for delinquency is no longer possible!

Then, too, my position towards Lady Jane was a delicate one. She had clearly indicated to me her intentions as to the disposal of her fortune. A hopeful or even a contented correspondence was impossible to one in my situation, and to enter into any truthful detail of the misery of my surroundings might well appear, even in her kindly judgment, but an implied appeal to her generosity.

For this it was that I gradually cut down my letters year by year, until I entirely ceased from all intercourse, and lived my lonely life as best I might.

For fellow-exiles, I had near an hundred discontented gentlemen, ruling over a homesick soldiery, two or three unfortunate gentlewomen, a few greedy and dishonest officials, and a handful of wretched townspeople, whose prosperity was never fostered in time of peace nor their safety considered in time of war.

At last, through the friendship of the Comte de Raimond, Governor of the Island, I obtained a tardy promotion to the rank of lieutenant in the Regiment of Artois, under M. de St. Julhien, and the appointment as King's Interpreter, on which I was heartily congratulated by my comrades, who had long pitied my undeserved ill fortune.

Until then I had made but little effort to better my condition, but my advancement, as well as the increase in my pay, aroused me. I took fresh heart in and my appearance, and began to

mix somewhat in such society as our forlorn situation afforded.

In Madame de Drucour, wife of our Commandant, I found a grande dame de par le monde, who commanded the admiration and respect of all our officers and the devotion of the soldiery and townspeople.

In Madame Prévost, the most charming little Canadian, wife of the Commissary—a creature with the carriage of a lackey and the soul of a dry-salter—I discovered a heart full of tender sympathy, dying of ennui. Her husband's unpopularity was such that but few of the officers would enter his doors, and indeed he was so fierce a Cerberus in regard to his unfortunate wife, that he made any attempt at alleviation of her unhappy condition wellnigh impossible. However, through my acquaintance with a M. de Sarennes, a Canadian partisan officer, who stood high in his favour, he saw fit to allow my visits, and I willingly put up with his want of breeding to offer such attention as I might to his prisoner, for so in truth she was.

Sarennes was attractive enough, in so far as his outward appearance went, but, like most of his countrymen—that is, the Canadians—was wanting in all those externals which are essential to a gentleman. He was courageous, but a braggart; he was well born, but had no breeding; he was open and friendly, but, I feared, truculent; and his sense of honour was not above the universal dishonesty which disgraced and wrecked his unfortunate country.

I had suspected his intimacy with Prévost had some less honourable foundation than a pitying admiration for his unfortunate wife, and I was confirmed in this by his proposal in my quarters one evening that I should hand over to him some blanks, signed by St. Julhien, on the Commissary, for stores, etc., which I was to requisition as required.

“May I ask to what use you intend to put them?” I said, more to sound him than for information, for this was one of the most favoured forms of peculation in the colonies.

“Oh, none that you will ever know of, Chevalier; and I should think an addition to your inadequate pay would not come amiss,” he added, artfully, without even an effort to veil his knavery.

The whole disgraceful, pettifogging scheme disgusted me; but, because he was a much younger man than I, and I believed might be in Prévost's power, I refrained from my natural indignation, and passing over the personal affront, I spake to him with all the consideration of a friend. I shewed him the path which he was treading, and pointed out the inevitable disgrace which must attend such a course, and most of all, the wretched meanness of so contemptible a crime. But, to my astonishment, he was inclined to excuse and cloak his wrong-doing.

“Sir,” said I, “nothing is further from my liking than an artificial morality, but I would avoid even the appearance of being cheaply vicious. Do not weigh out the largest possible measure of dishonesty to the smallest possible quantum of correction. If you must depart from that path of virtue towards which we should all direct our best endeavours, do so in a manner that will at least command the admiration of gentlemen and the leniency of a Divine Being, who may consider the frailty of the natural man, but never the tortuous conclusions of his compromising intellect.”

He was apparently sensible of my kindly advice, but I soon discovered that he not only disregarded it, but was endeavouring to do me an ill turn with the Commissary by directing his warped and jealous suspicions towards my innocent attentions to his wife.

The word “innocent” I use advisedly, and lest the reader have any doubt now or hereafter as to my intention touching the fair Madame Provost, let me assure him I can lay my hand on my heart and aver I never at any time held any warmer feeling towards her than the sympathy of an exile towards a prisoner.

That her stupidly jealous husband, fired by the insinuations of Sarennes, should distort mere civilities into serious intentions, and bear himself with such a ridiculous assumption of jaundiced suspicion that a cause for his uneasiness was readily invented by a scandal-loving garrison, was no doing of mine. Madame Prévost, with all her charm, had neither experience nor knowledge in such affairs; she was simply a woman profoundly unhappy and profoundly ignorant of the world. Could I have honestly offered her my affections as well as my sympathies, I might have done so, and had them as honestly returned; but no woman had ever awakened a throb in my heart since I bade farewell to one in the rue Dauphine in Paris. She still remained at once my hope and my despair; and, so long as she lived, other women were as dead to me. I lay claim to no great fortitude, to no heroic self-denial—it is seldom a man has attained the results of virtue with as little conscious effort as I was called upon to exercise.

But the mere knowledge of the integrity of my motives was not sufficient to protect them from the idle gossip of the town, and this inconvenience led to an abrupt termination of our intercourse in the following manner:

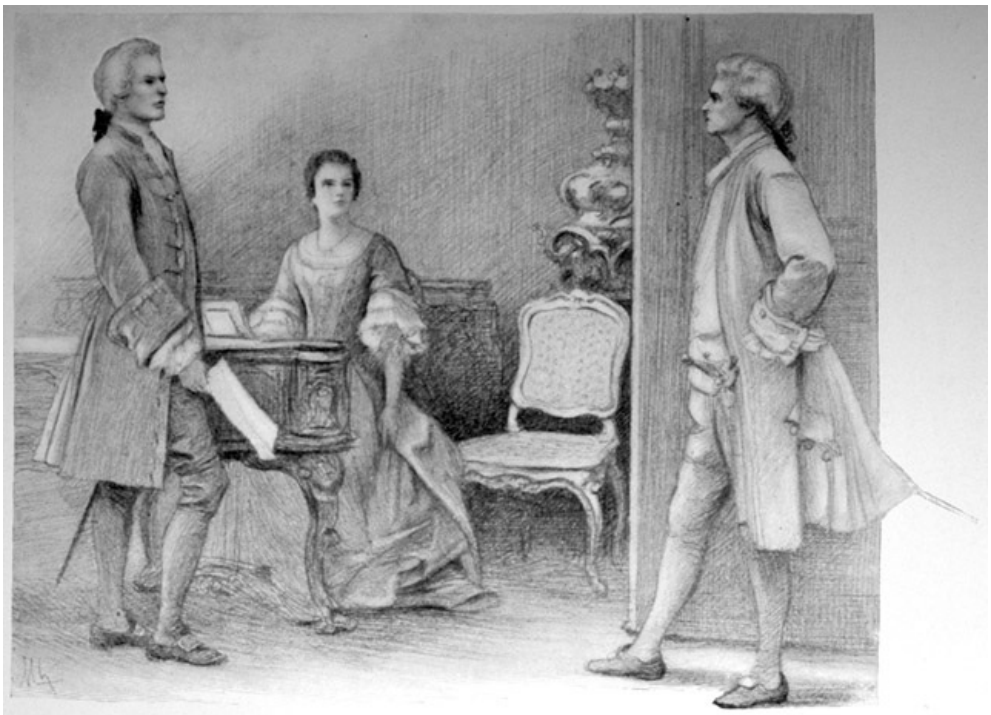
One afternoon, when amusing myself and Mme. Prévost by singing snatches of old songs, I had ended a favourite of hers with a telling accompaniment and the effective words,

> “J'ai perdu mon coeur volage,
> Mon honneur, mon avantage,

De moi ne me parle plus,”

when I was surprised by a burst of pretended applause, and turned to find M. Prévost facing me with a malicious air.

“Believe me, M. le Lieutenant, you have my sincerest sympathy,” he cried, with mock emphasis.



“‘M. LE LIEUTENANT, YOU HAVE MY SINCEREST SYMPATHY!’”

“Upon what, sir?”

“Upon the loss of that inestimable jewel, your honour.”

“Pardon me, monsieur; that is merely the license of the verse—a dangerous thing to translate into plain prose.”

“I do not seize the distinction, monsieur.”

“You are probably not qualified to judge of either one or the other, M. Prévost.”

“Possibly not, M. le Lieutenant, but I am qualified to judge of the persons I will admit within my doors; and, 'in plain prose,' I would wish you to understand you are no longer one of them.”

“M. le Commissaire, your meaning is as plain as is your manner; nothing could be more unqualified, and I regret my inability to answer it in the same fashion,” I returned, not without a certain appreciation of his handling of the situation.

“Madame,” I said to his lady, who had preserved an admirable composure throughout this passage at arms, “I owe you a thousand thanks for your kindness, and a thousand regrets should I be the cause of any misunderstanding between you and your husband;” whereupon I raised her hand, and kissing it ceremoniously, I effected a not undignified retreat.

So the summer of '57 dragged on, when one warm afternoon in September—it was the 25th of the month—I wandered down to the landing-place to see the arrival of a ship from France that had slipped through the feeble blockade attempted by the English. I lazily watched the captain and others disembark with an uninterested eye until among them I caught sight of a lad of about fifteen years, whose dress and countenance were certainly English. As he came up with the others I advanced, and laying my hand on his shoulder, said,

“You are not French, my lad?”

“Oh no, sir,” he answered, looking full at me with an open, engaging smile; “I am English.”

“I thought so. What is your name?”

“Christopher Routh.”

“Good God! Kit! I am Captain Geraldine!”

CHAPTER IX

“JOY AND SORROW ARE NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOURS”

As I had not been in the habit of asking favours of my superiors, permission was readily given that the English lad should be allowed to share my quarters with me.

I set my servant to work arranging for his comfort, and we sate in my little garden, I dying with curiosity to hear what lucky chance had blown him hither.

“Where is your mother, Kit?” I asked.

At this his eyes filled and his lips trembled, and for some moments he could not reply, during which I was unable to suppress a selfish hope that perchance my time of probation had ended.

“Mother is lost,” he answered, at last. “But let me start fair.” I was pleased to mark the boy spake with an easy address, for I hate the taint of servility above all things. “Ever since I had grown up I have been begging her to let me get to sea, and at length she yielded, in part to my entreaties, and in part to the wishes of some members of The Society who had settled in Boston, in the Province of Massachusetts, and agreed to come out to them. For me, anything answered that would give me my wish, and I did not see that it mattered whether she was among Methodists in England, or among Methodists in America.”

“You are right, my lad; I imagine they would make the world much of a likeness wherever they might be.”

He answered nothing to my observation, but went on:

“At length all our preparations were complete, and we left in June last in a wretched old craft, called the *African Chief*, so ill found that she was dismasted and disabled in the first gale we met with.

“We were captured, or rather rescued, three days later by this very ship I have just come in, and the hulk was rerigged and sent back to France a prize, with her unfortunate crew and passengers as prisoners. From this fate my mother and I were preserved through the kindness of a French lady, who took compassion on mother as the only woman on board, and offered to take her as her waiting-woman, and I was allowed to accompany her. Anything was better than the certainty of a prison in France.”

“What was the lady's name, Kit? I may know her.”

“'Pon my word, sir, I am ashamed to say I don't know myself. There were no others of her condition on board, and she was addressed by every one simply as 'Madame.' and I never thought of asking my mother.”

“Never mind; go on.”

“We were treated with every kindness, and Madame showed every conceivable consideration for my poor mother, while I made friends with all on board, and soon learned enough French to find my way about ship. Madame and my poor mother found the length of the voyage tedious to a degree, but I loved every hour of it. We unfortunately ran short of water, as our casks had so strained during a heavy gale we encountered they lost all or most of their contents. Besides this mischief, the gale drove us so far out of our course to the north, that our captain determined to run into the Baie des Chaleurs for a fresh supply of water.

“This we did, and there found it in abundance; and after the boats had begun to pass backward and forward, and we were convinced there was no danger, Madame and mother were allowed to have their wish and leave the ship for a ramble on shore. At first they stayed within sight, but gradually gaining courage, they strayed away unnoticed by any of us for some time. When they were missed, an instant search was made, and we started through the woods hallooing and firing our pieces, but without result; at length some of the sailors, who had been in those parts before, discovered a place where they said Indians had lately camped. We soon found further traces that confirmed this, and at last a small gray tippet which I knew to be mother's, and we were no longer in doubt.

“I was wild to keep at the search, but the others persuaded me it was useless to do so, that these savages wandered over the whole country, and would certainly carry their prisoners to some post where they would claim a reward, especially if they thought they were English, which might well be the case; and in any event there was no danger of their lives, as these savages never illtreat white women, except in attack. Anxious as I was, I could not but agree that they were right, and so said no more; but now I am content to remain here, as I have a better chance of hearing news than if exchanged for some French prisoner, as we were hoping all the way out.”

Although I had not the same confidence as the boy, I encouraged him in his hopefulness, and in turn told him of my own doings since I had left their roof in London.

My whole existence now took on a different aspect; my duties were in no degree onerous; and Kit, the dear boy, so won every heart that he was looked upon as a guest of the whole garrison, rather than a prisoner. No restrictions were placed upon his movements, and we roamed over the whole country with our fowling-pieces or angles, and many a fine string of trout did we present to Madame de Drucour and other friends.

We explored the country from Louisbourg to Miré, and there we fell in with Sarennes and his following, with whom Kit was delighted beyond measure; and indeed there was much in the Canadian to attract those who did not look beyond the externals. He fairly enchanted the boy with his tales of savage life, his exhibition of his wild followers, and his skill in woodcraft and the chase, and I soon felt that Kit was revolving some plan for discovering the whereabouts of his mother through his aid.

This was the one flaw in my happiness. If I had not wished for her death, I had at least hoped never to hear of her again, and indeed there seemed but little likelihood of it in this remote quarter, but every inquiry on the part of Kit gave me fresh uneasiness. This he was quick to perceive, but as I had never given him an inkling of the reason, he put my holding to him down to the liking of a solitary exile for one of his own kind.

Sarennes, too, saw my fondness for the lad, and took a pleasure in attracting him from me on every possible excuse; but it was not until a dinner given by M. de Drucour at the New Year that I saw how far his petty cruelty could go.

With an air of assumed geniality he said to the Commandant: “M. de Drucour, before I start on my expedition to-morrow, I am tempted to ask for a volunteer in the English lad Christopher. He is anxious to go, and I shall be pleased to have him.”

“But, monsieur, you can hardly have him without me, for I am responsible to M. de Drucour for his safe-keeping,” I broke in, with a chilling fear at my heart that my one treasure in the world would be imperilled in such treacherous hands.

“M. de Maxwell seems over-fond of this prisoner,” sneered M. Prévost, who was an unwelcome guest, but could not well be left out on an official occasion. “A too-lenient jailer may be even more dangerous than his prisoner at times,” he went on; and I saw that further discussion might only precipitate matters, when I stood in so delicate a position; for a soldier in foreign service, no matter what his merit, is ever a ready object of suspicion.

However, M. de Drucour turned matters by addressing me in his usual courteous and friendly manner: “With these rumours of war in the spring, have you had no inspiration for your Muse, Chevalier?”

“I have a song, if you will not hold the end a reflection on our surroundings,” I replied. “However, remember that it is not I, but my sword, that sings, and, I am afraid, only strikes a note common to us all.”

I regret I cannot give the graceful French couplets into which Madame de Drucour had obligingly turned my verses, and so cleverly preserved all the fire and strength of my original, which must now serve as it was written.

“In Spanish hands I've bent and swung
  With Spanish grace and skill;
I've scoured Lepanto of the Turk,
  And Spain of Boabdil;
I've clanged throughout the Low Countrie;
  I've held the Spanish Main;—
Ferrara made and fashioned me,
  In Cordova, In Spain.

“In Scottish hands I've saved the pride
  That else had starved at home,
When under Bourbon's banner wide
  We swept through Holy Rome;
In private fight I've cleared the slight
  That Beauty's brow would stain;—
Ferrara made and fashioned me,
  In Cordova, in Spain.

“At Killiecrankie with Dundee
  I've struck for James the King;
The blood-red waters of the Boyne
  Have heard my metal ring;
Again with Mar at Sherriff-muir
  I've raised the olden strain;—
Ferrara made and fashioned me,
  In Cordova, in Spain.

“Along the line at Fontenoy
  I've flashed in wild parade,
When on the English columns fell
  The strength of Clare's Brigade;
I've stood for Bonnie Charles until
  Culloden's fatal plain;—
Ferrara made and fashioned me,
  In Cordova, in Spain.

“But now in exiled hands I rust
  Beside the salt sea's marge,
And though I dream of trumpet call,
  Of rally, and of charge,

Of screaming fife, and throbbing drum,
  As troops defile in train,—
I wake to hear the wailing moan
  Of the imprisoning Main—
    Dead is all Glory!
    Dead all Fame!
Will never sound that song again—
  That great, world-wakening refrain?—
Ferrara made and fashioned me,
  In Cordova, in Spain."

There was a spontaneous outburst of applause as I ended, for I had seldom made a better effort, and my closing lines but echoed a sentiment common to us all—that is, of all of us who were soldiers. Such a creature as Prévost could never have a generous impulse stir the weighing-machine which served him in lieu of a soul; and Sarennes was spoiled for nobler aims by the debasing influence of la petite guerre, dear to all Canadians. So M. Prévost saw fit to refrain from all applause; and Sarennes, foolish boy, for boy he was, in spite of his thirty years, was ill-bred enough to follow his example.

"M. Prévost, surely you are over-critical when you do not applaud," said M. de St. Julhien, banteringly. "Remember we are not in the rue St. Honoré, though I would trust this voice even there."

"You have more faith in that, then, than he has in his sword. He puts it in Spanish and Scotch hands. Why not in French?" snapped out the little centipede, virulently.

"Possibly there are some French hands in which he would not trust it," retorted M. de Julhien, to our great delight.

"Do your words bear that construction?" asked the nettled Commissary, turning on me.

"Possibly, too, M. de Maxwell may think it is not to be trusted in some Canadian hands," broke in Sarennes, with a hectoring air.

"Now, gentlemen," I returned, "you are coming too fast with your questions. As for you, M. de Sarennes, I once offered you some good advice which you did not see fit to follow, and now, even at the risk of having it similarly disregarded, I will proffer more; which is, not to expose yourself to punishment for the impertinences of others. As for your question, when I have had some more satisfactory experience of Canadians, I shall know better how to answer it."

"And has not your experience of me been satisfactory, monsieur?" said he, pluming up again.

"You are perfectly qualified to answer that question, yourself," I replied, looking "blank requisitions" at him so pointedly that he simply reddened to the roots of his black hair and held his tongue, to the amazement of all who had hoped for some further amusement.

"As for your question, M. Prévost," I continued, rounding on him, "I made no reflection on Frenchmen in general. They are my comrades, my brothers-in-arms!" I said, playing to the company at large, by whom my sentiment was greeted with a burst of applause. "As to Frenchmen in particular, I have known some who were so dangerous with the pen that I would indeed hesitate to trust them with the sword." Now, as Prévost was hated and dreaded for nothing more than his lying reports to the Minister at home, and as no man in any position at the table had escaped his venom, my sally was again greeted not only with applause, but also with a roar of stentorian laughter.

The whole affair ended in nothing more serious than the hot words and laughter, for Sarennes, though a braggart, was not evil-tempered, at least towards me. For Prévost I cared not a maravedi, and would have spitted him liked a smoked herring at any time with the greatest pleasure. My chief disappointment was that I had not succeeded in my attempt to obtain a refusal of Sarennes's request for Kit's company, an attempt I dared not renew, and was forced to give a reluctant consent when it was referred to me.

My heart was big with foreboding the last evening we spent together, and it required an effort almost beyond my powers to refrain from taking him into my arms and telling him he was my son. I almost persuaded myself that my life was so wretched, so lonely, so hopeless, that I would be justified in so doing. But for some reason or other I did not, why, I cannot pretend to say, and I saw him march proudly off at daybreak the next morning with my secret still untold. I wondered if any one would be equally faithful to me.

Such a weary month of January I never passed, for no one knew the danger of these miserable, skulking little war parties better than I; and to add to this there was my distrust of Sarennes eating at my heart every time I tried to make little of my fears.

What wonder was it, when the door of my room opened after a quiet knock, one stormy afternoon, and the dark face of the Canadian appeared, that I sprang to my feet and demanded, savagely: "Where is he? What have you done with him?"

"He was taken," he answered, quietly, "and I am here to answer for him."

There was such a dignity in his bearing, such a sensibility in his look, that I was melted at once, and my murderous suspicion put to flight.

“A thousand pardons, monsieur, for my rudeness. I have been anxious day and night for the boy. Tell me what has happened.”

He told the story simply, and I could not doubt that he told it truly. It was the ordinary incident, common to these wretched marauding parties, an attempted surprise, a couple of men lost, my poor boy wounded and captured before the baffled coureurs de bois could attempt a rescue.

When Sarennes left me with some words of sympathy, I was suffering only what hundreds of fathers have suffered before me. That it was common was no alleviation to my pain.

CHAPTER X

“HE WHO SOWS HATRED SHALL GATHER RUE”

Sarennes had taken himself off again to gather fresh laurels in ambuscade and retreat, the alternatives which compose the whole science of la petite guerre, and I had but little to remind me of my loss save the constant ache at my heart when I was alone, a position I strove by every means possible to avoid.

That Sarennes was desirous of making some reparation for his injury towards me, was proved by a letter from him dated in March, and written from his mother's house at Beaulieu:

> “Chevalier,—There is an Englishwoman staying here who claims to be your wife. What do you wish me to do in the matter? I am ready to oblige you in any way.
>
> “Sarennes.”

I have never made any pretension to a fortitude other than that which any honourable gentleman of my standing might claim. I was still sore under this last stroke of undeserved misfortune which had so cruelly deprived me of Kit, and I could not but look on his mother as at least the indirect cause of my loss. Under these feelings I delivered the following to the Indian runner:

> “Monsieur,—If you have any regard for me, keep the lady claiming to be my wife at such distance that I may never set eyes on her again. Should she be in want, I will gladly reimburse you for any expenditure you may make on her account.
>
> “Le Chev. Maxwell.”

We now come to events on which the antiquary and the student might demand a larger attention and notice than I shall devote to them. I have been too prominent an actor in the drama of the downfall of New France to write on the subject with that calmness and impartiality with which I try to view all matters; and I leave it to the gentleman who has passed his lifetime at his desk, undisturbed by any greater explosion than that of wifely indignation at his late hours and waste of otherwise valuable ink and paper, to relate the battles he has never seen and weigh the interests he cannot understand.

In January we had positive intelligence that the English would make a descent in force at the earliest possible moment in the spring. On the first day of June we saw from our ramparts the sails of their fleet spreading over the horizon, and by the eighth they attempted their descent by land.

We made such defence as seemed possible at the time, but, like all unsuccessful efforts, it has been severely criticised since, chiefly by “the gentleman at his desk.”

As we lay in position at our post at La Cormorandière, hourly expecting the landing of the enemy, it was reported by our surgeon-general, M. Guérin, that we were utterly without provision of lint, brandy, and other necessities for the wounded. A messenger was instantly despatched with a requisition to the Commissary, but he returned with a message from Prévost saying, “There are none of these articles in the King's magazines; if the English force our intrenchments, it will be their business to take care of the wounded; if, on the other hand, we are successful, we shall have time enough to attend to them.”

Our colonel, M. de St. Julhien, read this heartless reply aloud, amid the deepest execrations on the part of our officers, and then turning to me, said, “Here, Chevalier, I understand there is no love lost between you and this creature. I commission you to see that these requirements are fulfilled by the morning.” And he sate down and wrote an order on the Commissary to “deliver to the Chevalier Maxwell such stores as he may demand for the use of the Company d'Artois.”

Armed with this authority, I set forth at once, and arriving at the town about eight o'clock, made my way to the Commissary's house and demanded him with scant ceremony.

He appeared with but little delay, and I caught sight of the bright face of Madame, alight with curiosity, behind him, though he clapped the door to sharply enough.

“Well, Monsieur le Lieutenant”—he took a petty spite in disregarding my title of Chevalier —“what brings you here away from your post?”

“Only the definite intention, M. le Commissaire, of seeing that you obey orders. I require stores for my colonel; there is his order, and if you try any of your devil's tricks with me, sir, I will make no more of running you through than I would a rat.”

He turned as white as a piece of dried plaster.

“Come, sir, none of your shuffling. I want an answer at once.”

“You'll get no answer from me, sir, other than I have sent. I have no stores; the magazines are empty.”

“I know you to be a thief, M. le Commissaire, and it is no great stretch of imagination to believe you a liar. Show me your vaults.”

“Very well, very well. We shall see who is right. We shall see who is a liar,” and he started off with alacrity.

“Wait, sir! Where are you going?”

“Only into the next room to get my keys.”

“Very well; I'll go with you,” and I followed him into the next room.

Here we found Madame on tiptoe with excitement and curiosity.

“Where are you going? What is the matter?” she asked, quickly.

“None of your business!” roared her husband, with his usual brutality.

“Only into the vault to look for stores.” I answered, throwing as much feeling into the commonplace answer as was possible.

Prévost provided himself with a lanthorn and led the way through the passage and down the steps leading to the cellars, muttering and scolding to himself, for he dared not make a complaint to which I might reply, until we reached the outer door. This he unlocked, and I discovered a long passage, evidently underground, for the air struck me as damp and chill as we traversed it, to the entrance of the principal vault, which he opened.

“There! See for yourself if I have not told the truth. It is as empty as death!” and as he spake he held the lanthorn high.

Bat this did not satisfy me. I was determined to take nothing for granted until I had personally proved the truth of his protestations.

“Give me the light,” I said, taking it from him as I entered.

“Willingly.” he replied; but I had not taken a dozen steps before I heard a clang, the quick turn of a key, and found I was a prisoner, trapped like a rat by the man I most hated and despised.

At first I was inclined to laugh, for the turn was not without its cleverness, but the inclination was quickly stifled as I realized what such a situation might mean to one in my position.

A foreign officer failing to be at his post when about to meet his own countrymen face to face, would be a default open to such construction as filled me with dismay—a construction which the wretch who had trapped me would use every means to convert into the blackest of certainties. When the first feeling of dismay had passed I made a careful examination of my prison, but the result brought no encouragement. The vault, which was an outer one, was only provided with two heavy doors, the one by which I had entered, and the other doubtless leading to another vault. There was not a sign of any window or opening, and the walls were covered with a white coating of fungus. In one corner was some useless household lumber, and against the wall stood a wooden coffer like those in well-to-do farmers' houses at home; save for these odds and ends, the place was indeed empty; in so far, at least, my gentleman had not lied.

I placed my lanthorn on the floor, and seating myself on the chest, tried to form some plan of action. There was no use in attempting to attract attention by raising an outcry, for I was certainly underground, cut off by the long passage from the house. If I made a fire the smoke could not escape, and I should only gain suffocation for my pains. There was absolutely no escape that I could further by my unaided effort. Dreadful as this thought was, I was tortured by others infinitely worse; by phantasms that the future might well convert into horrid realities.

With a too-ready imagination I framed the crafty charges which my enemy would prefer against me. No sense of shame would prevent him from distorting my innocent relations towards his wife into a treacherous attempt upon his honour; he would no doubt trump up

some suggestive story of my presence in his house. My unsupported statement of my imprisonment must stand against his specious tale—the word of the accused against that of the injured husband, and he an official with powerful backing. The ridiculous trap into which I had so stupidly fallen would be difficult to explain without derision at any time, but now it was a time of actual war, when any infraction of duty would be punished with the severest penalty; nothing short of death would be a sufficient excuse for my failure to return to my post.

I pictured myself, an alien—for a foreigner is always an alien no matter what his merit or service may be—fighting for life against the malevolence of a virulent enemy, contending too against that monstrous perversion of justice which so often sways a court-martial — composed as it is of men little qualified by training for impartial judgment—towards the severest interpretation where an officer without influence is concerned, to win a cheap applause from outsiders and inferiors.

My blood ran cold at the thought. I stared at the lanthorn until my eyes ached, and, when I looked elsewhere, the image of the flame only faded to give place to another scene in the drama that tried my fortitude almost beyond endurance: It was early dawn outside the Brouillon Bastion, chilling sheets of fog swept in from over the dull waters, and there, with back against the ramparts, stood a coatless figure, with pinioned arms and bandaged eyes, facing a file of soldiers—the dreadful waiting in the dark, the whispered commands, the sudden movement of the men, and then—I jumped to my feet trembling in every limb, and with shaking hand wiped the gathered perspiration from my forehead, but could not wipe away the vision of the men staring at the motionless figure lying face downward on the trampled grass, dishonoured, never to be spoken of, until the Great Day, when all the injustices of the ages shall be righted and made clear.

I again seized the lanthorn and re-examined every stone and corner with feverish hope, only to have despair triumph over it more completely than before. Then came a season of mad revolt. It was too horrible! too impossible! that I, Hugh Maxwell, a gentleman, who had lived delicately, who had shone in society which the world courted, who had loved fair women, had talked, and smiled, and sung to them, could in a few short hours be lying a mangled corpse in this obscure corner of the world, could die the death of a dog, of a traitor, the most shameful that can come to a man of honour. I was filled with a vast pity for myself, so mighty and overwhelming that tears filled my eyes as for another, for I saw myself apart, as it were, as distinctly as I saw that pitiful figure before the ramparts; then the childishness of it flashed across me and I laughed aloud; but my laughter was no more real than my tears, for neither brought relief, and the weary round began again.

How many hours this continued I do not know, but my attention was suddenly arrested by a sound at the door, and I made out a jingle of keys. Quickly blowing out the light, I drew my sword and prepared to force an exit, no matter what the odds. But scarce had the door moved when I caught a low whisper. “The chest against the wall! Quick!” Then followed the voice of Madame Prévost raised in dismay: “Mon Dieu, Charles! My candle has gone out! Hurry, bring a light!”

The moment's delay sufficed; I gained the chest and squeezed myself in, letting the lid down over me.

In a moment and before my heart ceased beating I heard her clear accents again. “There, Charles! There, Antoine! Take it up and carry it to my room.” And I felt the chest slowly lifted, and the men staggered out, complaining loudly of its weight.

Up the stairs we travelled, uncomfortably for me; then on a level again along the passage; and I was laughing to myself at the probable outcome of my adventure, when I heard,

“Where in the name of all the devils are you lugging that thing?”

It was the Commissary!

“To my room. I want to put my furs away,” came the soft answer from madame.

“Blague! Put it down!” And I was jarred on the stone flags.

Then came a pause, and I was speculating on the best mode of attack for a man in my ridiculous position, when the chest was lifted at one end and again dropped heavily.

Then came the same voice, but with a tone of triumph to it:

“Well, do as you like; but there is a lot of old rubbish in it. Take it first, and empty it over the Princess's Bastion!” And once more the chest was slowly lifted.

A pretty situation surely, and clever on the part of M. the Commissary again. A tumble down on those rocks or into the moat would be equally effective, and would not require such explanations as if my body were found in the King's vaults; but my gentleman reckoned without his host.

My scheme was as simple as his own. Hardly had we got clear of the house before my mind was made up. When I judged we were at the open space between the end of the barricaded street and the ramparts I uttered a terrifying yell and flapped the lid. It was enough. The

chest went crashing to the ground, and I crawled out, bruised but otherwise unhurt, and my valiant porters were out of sight.

"I CRAWLED OUT BRUISED, BUT OTHERWISE UNHURT"

Without delay I made my way to M. Bois de la Mothe, in charge of the fleet, and stated the case, carefully suppressing, however, all mention of my personal adventure, and by morning was in possession of the desired stores, extracted from the Commissary by a peremptory threat to put him in irons and send him to France if they were not forth-coming.

Long before our preparations could be made for leaving the town, the sound of musketry reached us from La Cormorandière, and we knew the landing was attempted. I was all impatience to be off, but our scanty stores could not be risked if the attempt were successful; so with the others I anxiously awaited the result. But, alas! our stoutest hopes were dashed by the sight of white uniforms straggling over the crest of the hill in full flight, and, instead of a hospital train, I was soon heading a sortie to support the retreat of our troops, with the cannon thundering over our heads to cover their entry into the threatened town.

CHAPTER XI

"A FRIEND AT ONE'S BACK IS A SAFE BRIDGE"

One after another our positions were abandoned or driven in, until the plan of defence by our outlying works entirely failed, and we were forced to fall back on the sorry defences of the town itself.

Our ships did little or no effective service, and though we succeeded in closing the mouth of the harbour and were comparatively safe on that side, the English crept closer and closer, until they hemmed us in between their ever-contracting lines and the sea.

On the evening of the 8th of July the colonel of the regiment of Bourgogne called for volunteers, and leaving the town by night, six hundred strong, we hurled ourselves upon the enemy's southern line, only to be driven back with heavy enough losses on each side, and at daybreak to see the English General, Wolfe, in a more advanced position.

Among the prisoners we carried in with us was a young officer of the 78th, a Highland regiment.

My services as interpreter were not required, as he spake French perfectly, so it was not until after his interview with M. de Drucour that I met him in company with my colonel.

"Chevalier, a countryman of your own, an unwilling guest on our poor hospitality. Captain Nairn, the Chevalier de Kirkconnel."

We bowed, but I supplemented the courtesy by extending my hand, for I was in no doubt for a moment as to his identity, his likeness to his sister Margaret being remarkable.

"Captain Nairn is well known to me," I said, laughing. "I could even name him more intimately."

"Indeed, and what might that be?" he returned, on his guard.

“Archie.”

“God bless my soul! Who are you, sir? I haven't heard that name for ten years!” he exclaimed, in the greatest surprise.

“I can go even further. I can name a certain mission which ended in Fort William.”

“Sir,” he answered, with grave dignity, “I dislike mystifications. Who told you these things?”

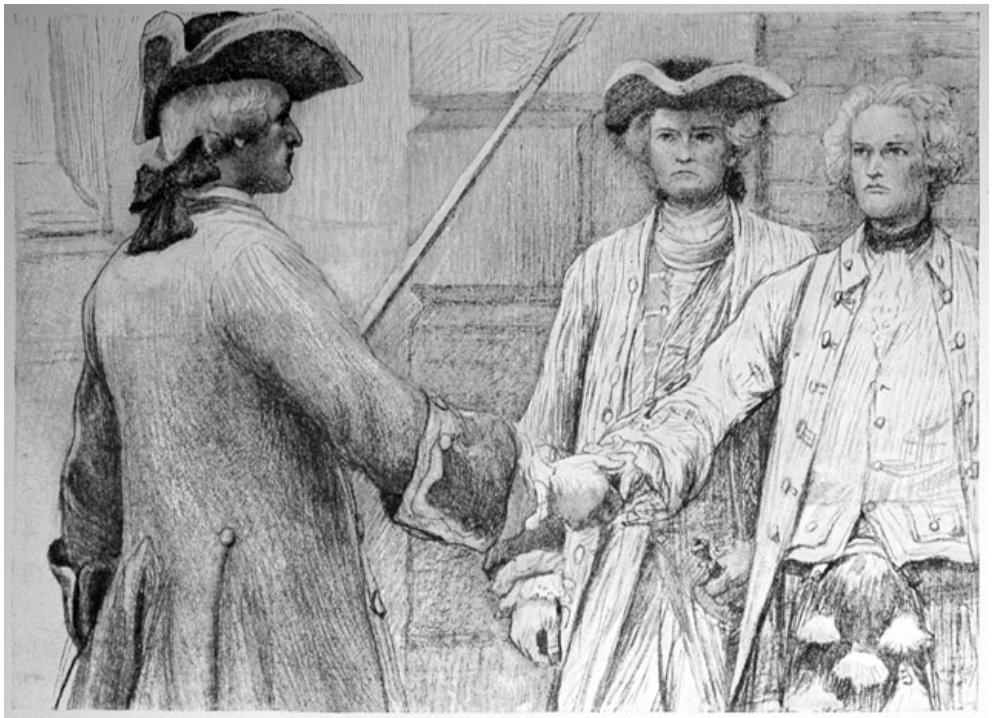
“One Maxwell.”

“Have a care, sir; you are naming one to whom I am under deep obligation.”

“I am naming one, Captain Nairn, who will be as pleased to be of service to you now as then.”

At this his face fairly flamed with pleasure, and he caught my hand in both his.

“Chevalier, I know you now. Maxwell of Kirkconnel! There is no man I would rather meet in this world than yourself.”



“‘CHEVALIER, I KNOW YOU NOW’”

“I cannot make out a word of your jargon,” broke in M. de St. Julhien, “but you seem to understand each other. Barbarians, va! You are best left in charge of each other. You are on parole, remember, Captain Nairn—and you are on your honour as host, remember, Chevalier. Do not disgrace our reputation for hospitality. If your cellar be low, I have a bottle or two uncracked,” he cried, as he bowed and walked off, and we took our way to my quarters.

My heart was bursting for news of my dear Margaret, but these were the last tidings I could ask of a brother whose sister had cast him off. In ordinary courtesy I had to abandon my personal gratification and feign a lively interest in his adventures.

These, however, I have no intention of inflicting upon my reader. I have refrained from telling much of interest in connection with myself through a reticence which is, perhaps, blamable; and Captain Nairn, although relating a tale which bore every impress of truth, was bald in his manner, lacking that lively sensibility which is the charm of all cultivated narration, and, being unable to view any occurrence save from a personal stand, was utterly lacking in any sense of humour.

At length I felt I was justified in asking for tidings of her, who for me, stood first among all women.

“You are aware, Captain Nairn, that when with my cousin Lady Jane Drummond in London and Paris I saw much of your sister Margaret. I know of the unhappy resolution she took, on hearing of your acceptance of service under King George, but may I hope that it is dissipated ere now, and that you can give me news of her, for these hostilities have prevented all correspondence for near a year past?”

“No,” he answered, gravely; “my poor sister has never brought herself to forgive me, and I have never had word from her direct since I informed her of my resolve. I heard before sailing that Lady Jane had died early last year, leaving her well provided, and I should not be surprised to learn that she had taken the veil, as there was some disappointment in connection with the Vicomte de Trincardel, whom, I believe, she was to have married.”

And with this I had to be content, for Nairn was not a man of many words, and in any event his acquaintance with his sister, whom he had not seen since a child, was slight compared with mine.

Meantime the besieging line crept closer and closer about us. Building after building went crashing down, or was swept heavenward in a tower of flame; our weakened ramparts crumbled day and night before the never-ceasing storm of shot and shell breaking on them, and the very earth trembled under the incessant thunder of the bombardment.

Our one hope lay in the appearance of Sarennes, who had been ordered to our relief with a sufficient force of Canadians and Indians. Not that the latter are by any means the formidable foe generally imagined, but the terror of their name was great in European ears, and any diversion on the part of so dreaded an ally would give us instant relief. This was the hope that supported us; our gallant fellows stood by their guns on their crumbling ramparts, and as they fell beside them more than one man said: “Our turn next. Wait till they see the savages!”

“Courage, my children! We only need Sarennes to show himself,” Drucour repeated, as an incentive when he marked our fire slacken.

“There is another signal for M. de Sarennes!” cried his intrepid lady, undauntedly, as she daily fired her three cannon with her own brave hands, and day by day men and officers uncovered and cheered her as she passed.

Within the crowded casemates by the King's Bastion, the only place of safety now left, terrified women and children wept and prayed, and wounded men cried and raved for the delayed succour; every time the enemy's fire slackened for an instant—it was Sarennes who had attacked them in rear; every time the thunder redoubled in the vaulted chambers—it was our support of Sarennes's attempt; but as day after day came and went without relief, the weeping, prayers, crying, and ravings were hushed into a dull despair, and on the ramparts and in the casemates men cursed at the very mention of that name which had so long been their sole support.

One night in the middle of July, Nairn, in discussing the probable length of our resistance, said to me:

“Chevalier, What will you do when this is at an end?”

Although it was a question which had been perplexing me constantly, I answered, carelessly enough, “If this bombardment keep up, the chances are that I shall not be called upon to settle so important a point.”

“Chances enough,” he responded, gravely; “it is never the number of men who fall, but the number who escape, at which I am astonished. But that is not the point. I have been thinking much, and am much troubled about your future.”

“So am I, for that matter, though I have never found that I have advanced it a hair's-breadth by losing a night's sleep over it. No, no, Captain Nairn, the best thing that can happen to me is to do the grande culbute.”

“Chevalier, I am not only under heavy personal obligation towards you, but the memory of your friendship for me and mine ties me closer to you than you know. I stand high in the esteem of my general, who in turn can command attention to any request. You have approved of my own conduct in accepting service; let me open the way for you to the same honourable career. You have abundantly paid your debt to France; give your arm to your own people. Surely there come times when you dream of 'home.'”

“Captain Nairn,” I answered, “believe me, I can pay you no higher compliment than in saying I receive your words without offence. I am sensible, deeply sensible of the kindness, may I say the affection, which prompts your offer; but 'my people' are wanderers on the face of the earth; my lot is that of the soldier of fortune. 'Home,' Nairn! Though I have never set my foot on my own soil save as an outlaw and a rebel, my heart at times grows faint for it, and the turn of an old song sets my brain aching and my eyes longing, but my only inheritance has been the loyalty which has robbed me of it all. That I am on the losing side is my misfortune; that I have inspired your respect and affection is my reward. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, but do not mention the subject again if you love me.”

One personal gratification the siege brought to me was the renewal of my intercourse with the fair Madame Prévost. Now that I had her truculent husband under my thumb, for I held exposure over him like the sword of Damocles, I was free to see as much of her as I chose.

People eat and sleep, breathe and hope, though danger may lie down with them by night and draw their curtains with the day; at such times the most marked difference is that life goes with a faster foot, so that my intimacy with my charming rescuer grew at a pace altogether disproportionate to the hours.

On the evening of the 24th of July, when capitulation was unavoidable, when our fire was so weak that it was more like funeral guns than a defence, and our one anxiety was to obtain honourable terms, Madame Prévost came to me in a sad state of distraction.

“Chevalier,” she said, “it is hopeless! No matter what the commandant may resolve, we are betrayed. Prévost will force them to accept any terms, no matter how great the humiliation. It is nothing to him so long as he escapes; but it is death to me. I have been despised all these years on account of my connection with him; I have suffered tortures of shame daily through the siege, and now all will be crowned with this height of infamy. I cannot bear it! I cannot look upon it!” And the poor distracted creature fell to sobbing and weeping as if her very heart would break.

When she had recovered somewhat she revealed her design, which was that, should Prévost succeed in forcing the commandant to the disgraceful surrender we all feared, she and I would escape together.

I was much moved by her generous offer, for generous it was beyond a doubt. I have known too much of women not to recognise when full credit should be given to their virtues, and if Madame Prévost had a second thought beyond escaping from the disgrace of the capitulation, then I know nothing of the sex.

“My dearest madame,” I answered, warmly, “'tis quite out of the question.”

“Why? I have seen old Gourdeau, the pilot; his two sons have a boat at my service. They know every hole and corner of the harbour, and will do anything for me.”

“The boat is not the question, my dear madame; it is yourself I am thinking of.”

“Well, I am ready. I will have everything in readiness, if the capitulation be not signed by nightfall, it will be by the morning, and the moment it is determined on, you are free. We can easily pass out by the wicket near the Brouillon Bastion, and the Gourdeau will be at their post. I have thought of everything.”

“Pardon me, madame; you have thought of everything save yourself. Have you thought of what the world will say to your flight with me? It will only credit you with motives of which I know you have never dreamed.”

“Oh, mon Dieu, monsieur I this is cruel of you!” she cried, much distressed. “I was thinking as much of you as of myself.”

“You were, I am sure, thinking more of me than of yourself, and for this I speak plainly, madame. I am overcome with your generosity, but my appreciation of it is too high to allow you, an honourable woman, to wreck your good name for my sake. I cannot go among the English, where you might be unrecognised, but where I am still a proscribed rebel; you cannot go among your own people to Quebec, where you would but suffer a martyrdom for your courage and sacrifice. No, no, my dear madame, believe me, it is not to be thought of!”

Here she began to cry again, somewhat to my relief, for I saw that her resolution was giving way.

“Oh, mon ami! I have been nothing but a silly fool of a woman all my life! Since my husband married me out of a convent, no man has spoken to me but to flatter, or to make love, until you came. You are the only one who has treated me as an equal, and because of this, I would do anything for you. I care nothing for what the world says!”

“Probably not, madame, because you have no idea what extremely cruel things it can say,” I returned, for enthusiasm is a bad beginning for argument. “But suppose I were willing. I have only my sword to depend upon, and you know how much that is worth nowadays! If I turned it into a spit, I could not even provide a capon to roast upon it. But long before we came to that pass we would infallibly be captured or starved, for a woman cannot put up with the hardships of such a venture. I had some months of it in Scotland after the Forty-five, and I know what it means. To lodge à la belle étoile, and to dine with Duke Humphrey, as we English put it, may be the highest romance, but I assure you the quarters are draughty in the one, and the table bare with the other.”

As I spake her face brightened, and by the time I made an end she took both my hands and said, determinedly: “Then, mon ami, you shall go alone. I will have everything in readiness, and I do it for you with all my heart—the more so that your refusal makes it better worth the doing,” she added, with an attempt at a laugh, and then turned and ran off, that she might not discover her feelings further.

It was a surprising outcome, and much as I regretted the seemingly ungracious part I was forced to play, I could not but rejoice at the opportunity offered of escaping from English hands, particularly those of such regiments as Lee's, Lascelles's, or Warburton's, my old opponents in Scotland. There was no difficulty in carrying out the simple plan, for, in providing the boat and the men, Madame Prévost had overcome the one obstacle. Hostilities would be suspended, vigilance would be relaxed, and if the capitulation were not signed before nightfall, it would be an easy matter to gain the harbour, and under cover of the night to pass the enemy's batteries and make some unguarded point on the coast beyond their lines before day.

It fell out much as we had anticipated. M. de Drucour demanded the same terms as those extended to the English at Port Mahon, in Minorca. These were refused, and he resolved, with our unanimous consent, to abide by the assault. But Prévost was at work, and so

artfully did he play on our commandant that by eleven o'clock the same night, July 25, 1758, the terms of the harsh capitulation were accepted.

At midnight, the capitulation being signed, I passed out by the Brouillon Bastion, found the men with their shallop in readiness, and, stepping in, said, in answer to their query:

“All the papers are signed; the English enter in the morning.”

“'Dieu seul devine les sots,'” quoted old Gourdeau, sadly. “Shove off!”

Part II

MARGARET'S STORY

“Le coeur mène ou il va.” — Old Proverb.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE BAIE DES CHALEURS

Never, never shall I forget the elation which filled my heart as I stepped ashore with Lucy that September day in the Baie des Chaleurs, in Canada. After weeks of unrest, my feet once more were on the sure, unchanging earth, in the land that held what was more than all else to me, “my dear and only love,” my Hugh.

As we strolled along the clear, hard sands beyond the sound of the men toiling at the water-casks, I felt tempted to cry: “Lucy, Lucy, can you not see my happiness? I am no Madame de St. Just, but Margaret Nairn, the happiest woman in all the world, because my feet press the same ground that bears my love.” This, poor Lucy, with her cramped Methodistical ways, would have held savoured only of lightness, or worse; she could never understand the longing that had worn at my heart all these years, and, most of all, she could never conceive of a love such as that of my Hugh. Crowning all my joy came back the words of his dear, dear song—

> “The span o' Life's nae lang eneugh,
> Nor deep eneugh the sea,
> Nor braid eneugh this weary warld
> To part my Love frae me.”

No, nothing should part us now. Poverty and pride had kept him silent when my heart was yearning for him; but now, poverty did not exist, for I was here to make him restitution, and the pride was all mine now, in claiming a love that belonged to me alone. Love was King, and

> “The King shall have his own
> Once more!
> The King shall have his own!”

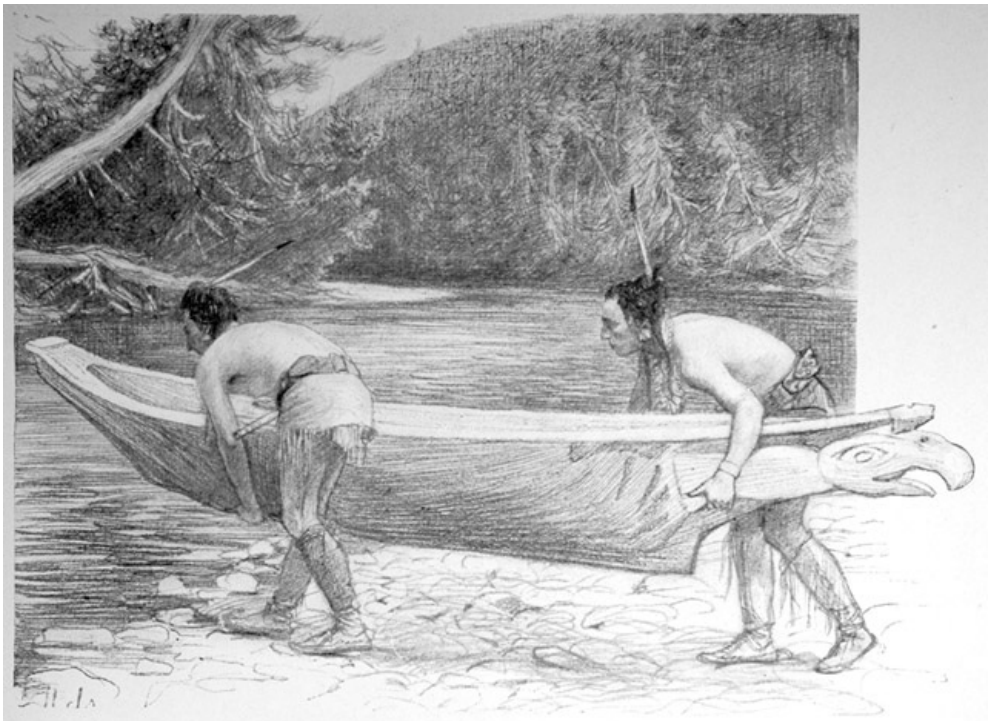
I sang, mimicking his manly tone as best I might, to the great astonishment of Lucy.

Delighted as we were merely to feel the sands beneath our feet, the soft, fresh green of the forest which edged them close attracted us, and we timidly made our way under the first scattered trees. Then seeing no wild animals, of which we were greatly in dread, and hearing the reassuring voices of the seamen, we ventured in far enough to gain the thick, sweet-smelling carpet of pine needles, and at length seated ourselves by a little stream, but near enough the sands to see the waters of the bay glinting between the trees.

“Oh, Lucy, Lucy, I am so happy!” I said, in the fulness of my heart, giving her my hand, for I looked on her more as a companion than a waiting-woman; but before she could reply a hand was clapped over my mouth, and I saw Lucy struggling in the arms of a savage. An overwhelming terror crushed all life and sense out of me, and I swooned away.

When I recovered I found I was being carried swiftly by two savages, one at my shoulders and another at my feet, but my terror was so great upon me that I dared not make a sound. How long, or how far we went I could not even conjecture. I saw the trees passing before my upturned eyes as in some horrid dream, but it was not until I began to catch glimpses of the sky through the thinning branches, and my captors halted in an open space, setting me on my feet, that my senses came back in some degree.

We were beside the water again, dark and empty. The Indians immediately brought forth three of their light canoes, which they had cunningly concealed among the bushes, and laid them gently on the stream. No one molested me, nor, indeed, paid any special attention to me as I sate and watched them.



"AND LAID THEM GENTLY ON THE STREAM"

The pictures in such works as La Hontain and others I had seen were unreal, and I could not recognise their models in the men about me. They were painted, it is true, but in a manner more grotesque than affrighting; their hair was black and lanky, plastered close to their heads, but with one or two long, plaited braids escaping, ornamented with beads. Their only clothing consisted of leather leggings more or less tattered, and the belts for their weapons, which crossed their naked bodies; each one was shod with soft moccasins neatly ornamented, and I could not but admire the ease and agility of their movements. Strangely enough, I was no longer possessed by my former terrors, my only anxiety being for Lucy; but I could not doubt she was in safety, as the Indians were evidently expecting the arrival of the rest of the band.

Before long we heard sounds of their approach, and my poor Lucy appeared. “Oh, my dear, dear mistress!” she cried, “I was afraid I should never see you again!” and the faithful creature clasped me in her arms and kissed me as if I had been a child. Once she was convinced of my safety, she straight recovered her serenity, for it was more than composure. Her absolute faith and trust that we were in the hand of God—of “Our Heavenly Father,” as she always said—was so complete that I leaned upon her strength and was comforted.

All was now ready for the embarkation, but, to our dismay, we were directed to different canoes. No force was used. Indeed, my captor, who appeared to be the leader, or chief, for he wore somewhat more of their tawdry finery than the others, and his face was decorated by a broad band of white below the eyes, seemed anxious to add to my comfort, directing me how to dispose of myself in the bottom of the canoe. But once separated from Lucy, I lost the courage with which she had inspired me, and I trembled at the rough, guttural voices of the savages, who talked their loudest, filling me with the greater apprehension, as it betokened they held themselves beyond pursuit or discovery.

But Lucy, dear courageous soul that she was, divined my fears, and sent back her message of reassurance to me in one of her people's hymns, which I had learned to love on board the ship:

> “Thou very present Aid
> In suffering and distress,
> The mind which still on Thee is stayed
> Is kept in perfect peace.”

At length, when the clear September day began to fade, we landed, and Lucy and I were again together. No one seemed to pay any special regard to us, but though we had apparent liberty, I felt sure that any attempt at escape would be futile; indeed, the black forest about us held more terrors, to our minds, than even our captivity.

It was not long before the savages had kindled a fire, and the work of clearing away the brush and making a camp was begun. In spite of our fears, we could not but admire the readiness of those at work, while the chief, with the principal warriors, lay about smoking, and staring at us with their fixed eyes.

In a little space a fish was broiled on the hot stones, and a portion of it laid before us, cleanly enough, on sweet-smelling bark freshly peeled from one of the great birch-trees near by. It was flat for the want of salt, but we were too hungry to be over-nice, and our spirits revived with the comfort of our meal. Then, wearied out, I laid my head on Lucy's lap and

fell fast asleep.

I was awakened by the sound of voices raised in discussion, and, to my amazement, I saw in the light of the fire a man in the garb of a priest. Instead of a hat he wore a tight-fitting cap, his soutane was rusty and patched in many places, and his feet were shod with moccasins like the Indians. To my dismay, instead of the accents which I expected, he was speaking to the chief in the same guttural tongue as his own; yet his very gown was a protection, and I rose and went to him without hesitation.

“Oh, father! You have been sent in answer to our prayers. Thank God, we are safe!”

He started at the sound of my voice, and stared at me for what seemed a long time without a word. “Yes, you are safe,” he said, at length, but in halting English; “these Indians will do you no harm. They will carry you to some post farther south, whence word will be sent to your friends among the English, and you will be ransomed. Yes, you are safe.”

“O, mon père,” I implored, breaking into French, for I saw that was his tongue, “do not speak so! You will not leave us with them! For the sake of the mother who bore you, listen to me!” and I threw myself on my knees and stretched out my hands to him, but he drew back as if my touch would have hurt him. “Do not forsake us; take us with you! We are women, and are helpless. I do not desire to reach any English post. I have no friends among the English. Do not abandon us to these men; we are both women, and I am a lady.”

“I see that,” he said, more softly. “Where do you wish to go?”

“To Louisbourg, mon père; our ship was bound there when we were carried off.”

“Had you any friends on board the ship?”

“My woman had her son.”

“Have you a husband, or a brother, in Louisbourg?”

My face flamed scarlet at the unexpected question, but I answered that I had not, without further explanation.

“Then you cannot go to Louisbourg. It is quite impossible,” he declared, with authority. “Louisbourg is no place for women at any time, least of all now. The important matter is to set you free from these savages, but you may rest without alarm to-night, and I will decide what is to be done before morning.”

He spake these last words wearily, like a man who had received a hurt, which moved my heart towards him in quick pity, and I waited to see if he would speak again, but he only raised his hand and blessed me.

Lucy received my report with her usual quiet; even the tidings that we were not to go to Louisbourg did not disturb her. “He knows better than we, and he will be guided in all his decisions.”

Despite the assurances of our safety, we neither of us closed our eyes that night. Apart from the anxiety as to our destination, the strangeness of our situation, the crackling of the fire, and the uncanny noises of the forest kept us at such a tension that sleep was impossible, and we were awake before any of our captors were astir.

I looked eagerly for the priest, and saw him kneeling at a little distance, absorbed in his morning devotions. Thereupon we withdrew quietly to the river, and soon returned, greatly refreshed, to find the whole camp afoot, and the priest awaiting us at the water's edge. Going directly to him, I asked, “Mon père, what have you decided?”

“That you go with me,” he said, quietly. And I turned to Lucy, but she had already caught the joyous message of our deliverance from my face.

CHAPTER XIII

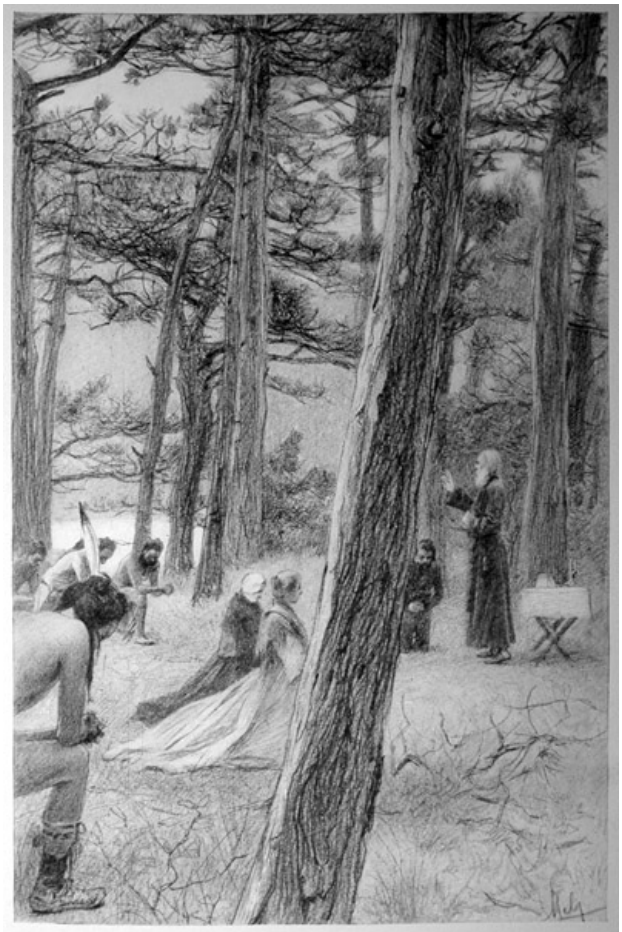
LE PÈRE JEAN, MISSIONARY TO THE INDIANS

Though the priest spake with confidence, I judged he had no small difficulty in persuading the savages to part with us, for there was much discussion and apparently grumbling on the part of the chief; but at length the obstacle, whatever it was, was overcome, and the priest announced we were free to depart.

“My canoe is small for four people, and would be too heavy when we begin the ascent of the Matapediac,” he said, “but I will borrow another from the savages, with two men to paddle. Explain to your woman that she is to go with my servant André in the one, and you will follow in the other with me. She need have no fear; André is to be trusted in all things.”

These matters being settled, we were made spectators to surely the strangest sight my eyes had ever looked upon. André brought forth a small folding-table, and the priest, still in his rusty soutane, recited the holy office of the mass to the kneeling savages under the shade of the great pines, and only the ripple of the water broke the pauses in the service. To my astonishment, the Indians recited the Venite, but this was the extent of their knowledge,

apart from the Pater-Noster, the Confiteor, and some of the responses.



"THE PRIEST RECITED THE HOLY OFFICE OF THE MASS"

When the service was ended we breakfasted heartily, and, as soon as the priest's preparations were made, we embarked with, oh, such different hearts from yesterday!

Now that our anxiety was at rest, I had time to observe the priest more closely. Though his figure was slight, it moved to the dip of his paddle like that of a man vigorous in all exercise; his long, thin hands were full of strength; and his face, though worn, and burned to almost as dark a colour as that of an Indian, was that of a man who must have been handsome in his youth. At his age I could not even guess, beyond that he looked old with his scanty beard and long white hair, which fell almost to his shoulders. We sat face to face as he paddled in the stern of the canoe, and I marvelled at the wild grandeur of the river and forest, which I had barely marked before.

"It is beautiful—yes, very beautiful," he said, presently, noticing my admiration; "but it wears another face in winter; then it is even terrible."

"Have you been long among these people, mon père?"

"So long, that I know their tongue like our own; I know their faults and virtues, which are also like our own, but more simple, more direct; so long, that sometimes I forget I ever knew anything different. But come, my daughter, I can tell my story at any time, while you cannot have a better opportunity than the present to tell me yours, which I must know if I am to be of service to you. The man behind you cannot understand a word of French, so you may speak freely."

Though I foresaw some explanation on my part would be necessary, I had so far hardly looked upon the man before me as other than our rescuer, one of our own blood and habit and tongue; but now it was the priest, and, more than that, my equal, for he invited my confidence not by right of his office but by right of his equality, for gentle I divined him to be; and at his demand I was sore confused, for I knew that questionings must follow which had been spared me on shipboard.

"My father," I said, after a moment's hesitation, "I do not know that you will understand my story, but I am sure that as a gentleman you will believe it, and as a priest you will respect my confidence."

"I know many secrets; I have listened to many stories, my daughter; yours will be none the less sacred that it comes of your own free will, and not on account of my office."

Once I began, it was a relief. Since Lady Jane's death I had not spoken freely to a human soul, and before I had gone far, I knew I spake to one who understood.

When I told him of my guardian's death, of my utter loneliness, of my longing to be near him

who stood nearer to me than all else in the world, I caught the murmur, “Poor child! poor child!” as he bent over his dipping paddle, and these low words of sympathy unsealed the last door of my heart, and I told him all without reserve: How Lady Jane had diverted her inheritance from her natural heir, Hugh, because he was withheld from writing to her by a sense of delicacy which would have been felt by few; how she had taken such offence at this during her illness that, unknown to me, she had altered her will in my favour, depriving him even of her former provision; how the same delicacy which had prevented him approaching his wealthy kinswoman separated him from me, her heir; how his first separation from Lady Jane had been a voluntary renunciation of his own interest, to ensure what he supposed would be my happiness; how he had, for my sake, performed a hundred sacrifices, which in happier days had been the delight of Lady Jane, his cousin; how all these things so worked on me that, knowing my love would neither speak nor come to me, I had thrown aside all other considerations save that I was bound to make restitution to one so unjustly wronged, and who had so suffered for my sake. For this I had broken through every barrier convention had set up, and, sure in his affection, I had come forth alone under an assumed name; “for I am no Madame de St. Just, mon père, but Margaret Nairn, and he whom I love is Hugh Maxwell, in garrison at Louisbourg.

“I know, mon père, that many will point the finger of shame at me; will say I am without decorum and without pride. But, my father, I had been living without the love for which my soul had hungered all these years, until the want became so strong that it swept away all the petty rules of life and humbled my pride in the dust. I came because I could not stay, and now my one prayer is to find him.”

When I finished, he was silent for a long time. “My child,” he said, at last, “that you have greatly dared, I need not tell you. But you know nothing of the pain, the misconstruction, the evil report to which you have exposed yourself.

“These 'petty rules,' as you style the barriers which society has established, are the safeguards of men and women in all their relations, and these you have chosen to disregard. For this sin against the social law you will suffer as surely as you would for any infraction of that law which, because it is higher, we call divine. You have only begun to realise it, because you have now met with one of those disarrangements we name 'accident.' Your plan, had it not been for this, would have carried you safely to Louisbourg, where you were to have met and married M. de Maxwell; but now your whole design is overthrown; Louisbourg is an impossibility; you are going in an opposite direction. Again, up to the present you have only met with your inferiors, to whom you owed no explanation of your position, but now the first man you meet happens to belong to your own class, and your isolation is no longer possible. Being a woman of high courage and principle, you have revealed to him your position in all its helplessness. But are you prepared to do the like when you meet the next person to whom an explanation is due? Can you again say, 'I am Margaret Nairn come out to meet my lover'?”

“Oh, my father, my father!” I cried, with a bewildering shame at my heart, and tears which I could not repress filling my eyes. “How could I foresee this? Everything seemed so plain. I was no longer a young girl, but a woman grown, with all a woman's strength of love, when the death of Lady Jane left me without a soul to whom I could turn, save him to whom I had given my first and only love. I had been denied all its expression at the time I most longed for it; I was deprived of its support when I most needed it, through the mistaken sense of honour which drove into exile the gentlest and most devoted of men. He was not one to push his own interest at any time, and now that I am burdened with this undesired fortune, his pride would fasten the door between us. It seemed to me—I thought—that I could come to him and say, 'See, I bring back what was yours by right.' Then, I had no doubts, no hesitations; but now, they crowd in upon me when I am alone, and at times I cannot keep my heart from sinking. I am not afraid, but I am in a dark place, and I know not where to turn for light.”

“Go to Her who has known sorrow above all women, my daughter. Each of us will think this over in such light as we may find, and will decide as we may be guided. Meantime do not waste your strength or courage in unavailing regrets or reproaches. Remember this poor woman with you has her own trial and anxiety. Give her your sympathy and your help. Much may come to us through our own effort, if it be for another.”

When we made our camp that night, Lucy and I, much to our delight, were allowed to take a share in the preparation of the meal, and afterwards we sate before the blazing fire, while the priest told us of his life among the roving Indians, of their strange customs and stranger beliefs, of their patient endurance in times of want, of their despair when disease made its appearance in their lodges, and of the ruin wrought among them by the white man's traffic in strong waters. “For the Indian it is no question of French or English; whichever conquers, he must go—nay, is passing even now—with only such feeble hands as mine to point the way of his going.” And there were tears in his voice as he spake.

Before we parted for the night I asked by what name we might address him.

“Le père Jean,” he answered.

“That is not difficult to remember,” I said, smiling.

“Which is important, my daughter, for it has to serve me from Gaspé to Michilimacinac. There is but little danger of confusion in the names of missionaries,” he added, sadly; “the labourers are few.”

When we left him I was glad to find that even Lucy's strict views were not proof against his simple goodness. I had feared the very fact of his priestly office would have prejudiced her, for I knew her sect made little of much the older religions held sacred; but in speaking of him afterwards she simply said:

“The Lord is wiser than we. He knows what vessels to choose for His service.”

We were so tired, and there was such a sense of security in our new keeping, that we were asleep before we knew; but during the night I fell into a strange dream, which so distressed me that I awoke, with tears streaming down my face. What it was, I could not clearly gather, but with the awakening came my sorrow afresh, and I lay staring up into the blackness with wide-open eyes.

Presently I heard Lucy's soft whisper, “Dear heart, what is the matter?”

“Lucy, why are you awake?”

“Christopher,” she answered. “I know my boy is in sore trouble on my account, and, alas, he has not my faith to support him.”

“Lucy,” I whispered, after a pause, “I have been selfish. In my own trouble I have not remembered yours.”

“Why should you, mistress?” she said, simply. “You have been good to me, beyond what one in my condition has any right to expect. My trouble can have no claim, when you are burdened, perhaps even beyond your strength.”

It was strange she should remember the difference between us at such a time. To me, we were simply two women suffering a common sorrow in our severance from those most dear to us, and I longed to take her in my arms and tell her all my pain. Had she been a mere servant, I might have done so, if only for the comfort of crying together; but she was too near my own class, and yet not quite of it, to permit me to take this solace. So we talked quietly for a space, and then fell once more to sleep.

CHAPTER XIV

I AM DIRECTED INTO A NEW PATH

The following morning, when we resumed our quiet way in the canoe, le pére Jean asked, “Well, my daughter, did any light come to you through the darkness?”

“No, my father, but I have found a little quiet.”

“That is much. Now I shall ask you to listen to me patiently, for I may say much with which you will not agree, but you will trust me that I only say that which I know to be best. We have every reason to believe a serious descent will be made on Louisbourg in the spring, so that, apart from any other reason, your presence in a town which will in all probability suffer a bombardment, would be unwise and undesirable in the last degree. You have no idea of what war actually means; it is a horror that would haunt you to your dying day.”

“But, my father, in that case I should at least be by his side. That in itself would mean everything to us both.”

“That is a point I had not intended to touch on, my daughter. I know the world. I know that men, banished to such exile as that in which M. de Maxwell has lived, change much with the years. Think how you have changed yourself, in happier surroundings than he has known. Think what new connections he may have formed. Did you never think that he—”

“Oh, my father, what would you tell me? Do you know M. de Maxwell?”

“I have never been in Louisbourg,” he answered, somewhat coldly, as if my earnestness had hurt him.

“But you do not mean that he may be married?”

“He may be. It would surely not be unnatural.”

“It might not in another man, but in him it would be impossible. He is not as other men.”

“May I inquire, my daughter, if he ever asked you in marriage?”

“No, my father; I told you how he was situate. Besides, my guardian then wished me to marry another.”

“And you would not?”

“I did not,” I answered, with some little hauteur, for I held this was beside the matter, and a subject on which even he had no right to question me.

“Well, that can make but little difference now,” he said, after a short pause. “What does make the difference is that Louisbourg is an impossibility for you at the present. Your best course is to go on to Quebec. I shall give you letters to M. de Montcalm, who is so old and intimate a friend that I may ask him any favour. He will see that you have passage in the first fitting vessel for France. In order that you may not be subject to embarrassing surmises, I hold your best plan is to continue to style yourself Mme. de St. Just; in fact, that has now become a necessity. Once in France, you can, with the influence at your command—for I will see that M. de Montcalm furthers your desire—procure the recall of M. de Maxwell in the spring, and so realise the dream which has now led you so far astray.

“Do not think I am blaming you overmuch,” he added, quickly; “you have been led astray because you could not see as the world sees. Your heart and motive were pure, were generous, but none the less are you subject to those rules which govern so rigorously the class to which you belong, whose very existence depends on their observance. In a romance, the world would no doubt have wept over your perplexities; but in real life, it would crush you, because you have sinned against the only code it acknowledges. Your purity and faithfulness would count for nothing. Believe me, my child, I know it and its ways.”

So it was decided; and at once I began to plan with new hope for the desire of my heart; and such was the change it wrought in me that the whole world took on a new interest to my eyes.

For the first time I realised the grandeur of the river into which we had now fully entered; the sullen sweep of black water in the depths, the dance of silver over the shallows, the race of waves down the rapids between its ever-changing banks, now like imprisoning walls with great sombre pines, now open and radiant with the gold and scarlet of the maples, marshalled in order by the white lances of the slender birches.

At times Lucy and I were allowed to walk along the reaches of level sand to relieve the strain on the paddlers, where the river ran swift and strong, and when we at length gained the great stretch of the lake called Matapediac, like the river, my heart was full of the beauty and charm about me.

> “The span o' Life's nae lang eneugh,
> Nor deep eneugh the sea,
> Nor braid eneugh this weary warld,
> To part my Love frae me,” ...

I sang in my heart, for was it not all so wonderful, so beyond all planning, this way of Love? It might be long, it might be wearying, but it would lead aright in the end.

When the head of the lake was reached, the canoes were lifted from the water; that of the strange Indians was left behind, but ours they raised on their shoulders, and, André carrying the scanty baggage of the priest, we set off on a long carry, or portage, as they call it. This occupied two days, as the path was difficult, and we found a sad encumbrance in our skirts, which suffered much in the traverse. We took the water again at a tiny stream, and finally gained another, called the Metis, leading to the St. Lawrence, our highway for Quebec. At the Metis the strange Indians left us and returned to join their fellows.

Late one afternoon le père Jean ran the canoe inshore, and, nothing loath, we left her in charge of André, to follow the priest up the high bank and take our way on foot under the great pines.

A low breeze was moving almost silently among the trees, bringing an unwonted freshness we could verily taste. Soon we marked the screen of undergrowth, which hid the sun, grow thinner and thinner, until his rays came shining low through a halo of golden leaves, with gleams like to glancing water. Breathless, we hurried on until we swept aside the last veil and found ourselves on the open cliff, overlooking mile beyond mile of dancing water, which the setting sun covered with a trail of glory breaking in ripples on a beach of golden sand, that stretched below the cliff on which we stood.

“Oh, the sea! the sea!” I cried, sinking to the ground, overwhelmed by the flood of feeling which broke upon me. It was the promise of a new world of light and safety, after the black, swift river and the sombre forest from which we had escaped.

“No, my daughter, not the sea; la Grande Rivière, the St. Lawrence!” said le père Jean, almost reverently. “Do you wonder these poor Indians worship it?”

“Oh, it is blessed! blessed! It means home! It is like to heaven!” I whispered, and then I fell a-crying with very happiness.

Presently Lucy touched me on the shoulder. “See! there is André!” And below we saw the Indian paddling out into the open. He went cutting through the golden water until he was some distance from the shore, when he stood upright, gently rocking as he balanced, gazing up the river. Suddenly he crouched down, again and made all haste towards us, crying, as he came within call: “Mon père! Dufour! Dufour! Gabriel Dufour!”

“This is fortunate, most fortunate,” exclaimed the priest. “It will save us many a weary mile, and perhaps weeks of waiting. Gabriel is a pilot, with one of the best boats on the river, and your way to Quebec is now easy. It could not have fallen out better.”

“'One of those disarrangements we name Accident,' mon père?” I said.

“No, my daughter; when we are schooled sufficiently to read aright, we name it 'Providence,'” he returned, gravely.

We took our places in the canoe once more, and with deep, long strokes she was forced through the current across the mouth of the stream. We disembarked on the farther side, and all made our way out to the end of the low point, which stretched far into the wide river. My disappointment was great when I could make out nothing of the object to which André triumphantly pointed, but this the priest pronounced, without hesitation, to be the pilot's boat.

“André, dry wood,” he commanded; and to us he added, “You can help, if you will.”

We ran back to where a fringe of bleached drift-wood marked the line of the highest tides, and returned with our arms laden with the dry, tindery stuff. Carefully selecting the smallest pieces, the Indian skilfully built a little pile, but so small I wondered at his purpose. The priest, kneeling by it, soon had it alight, and kept adding to it constantly, while André ran off again to return with a supply of green brush; by this time a heap of glowing coals was ready, and on this the Indian carefully laid his green branches, one after another. In a few minutes a strong, thick smoke arose, and went curling out in a long thin line over the now quiet waters of the river.

Meantime le père Jean had a second pile of wood in readiness, and at his word André quickly smothered up the first with sand, and, after waiting for the smoke to drift completely away, soon had a second thread trailing out after the first. This was repeated again, and the fire extinguished as before.

“There, my daughter! that is the manner in which we sometimes send a message in this country, and the answer will be the appearance of Maître Gabriel himself by the morning.”

We then withdrew to the shelter of the wood, for the smoothest sand makes but a sorry bed, and made our camp for the night.

After our meal, le père Jean bade André pile more drift-wood on our fire, and, producing the little journal in which he kept the brief record of his labours, as required by his Order, he fell to writing.

“Here,” he said, when he had finished, handing me the folded paper, “is your letter to my good friend M. de Montcalm. It is not over-long, as paper is much too precious to waste in compliments; I have used so much, as it is, in fully explaining your position, so that you may not be exposed to embarrassing inquiries; in demanding his fullest assistance, so that you may be under the lightest personal obligation, that I have left no space to set forth your future movements; these you must yourself lay before him, and so spare me the sacrifice of another page of my precious journal.”

The next morning, as the priest had foretold, we were awakened by André's announcement of the pilot's arrival, and before long, Gabriel Dufour was presented in due form. He was a stout, thick-set man, much reddened by exposure, with his dark hair gathered into a well-oiled pigtail, comfortably dressed in grey, home-spun jacket and breeches, with bright blue stockings, and a short canvas apron, like to the fishermen in France.

He at once expressed himself ready to take us to Quebec.

“What day have you chosen for your return, Gabriel?” asked le père Jean.

“Qui choisit, prend le pire, mon père. All days are alike for me. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, I find much the same as Thursday, Friday, Saturday. I can start to-day, to-morrow, or the day after that, as madame may say.”

“Then I shall speak for madame, and say to-day,” returned the priest; and added, in his quiet way: “I bid you beware of Master Gabriel's fair words, madame. To quote from his favourite proverb, 'il est né dimanche, il aime besogne faite,' he will promise you anything.”

“'Ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut,' mon père,” he answered, laughing. “Well, I am ready at once, if madame can support the poverty of my poor cabin.”

“Ah, Maitre Gabriel, if you knew how much your care will mean to us, you would make no apologies.”

“Come, come, Gabriel! No more proverbs, no more delays,” exclaimed le père Jean, and, as the pilot hurried off to his shallop, he took both my hands in his.

“My child, remember God goes with you by land and water, by day and night, and He will surely bring you to the goal which He alone can see,” and then he raised his hand, and I knelt while he blessed us both.

CHAPTER XV

THE MARQUIS DE MONTCALM-GOZON DE ST. VÉRAN

In Maître Gabriel I found a type I could readily understand; he was very shrewd, very curious, with a passion for questioning, but so honest and childlike that he took no offence at any rebuff. He was a thorough sailor, a martinet to his little crew, vain of his skill and boastful of his courage, and confident of the showing he and his fellow-Canadians would make against “les goddams,” should they venture to appear.

He insisted on hearing the story of our capture in detail, and seemed much more amused at the address of the Indians than distressed at our misfortune.

“They were good fellows, after all, madame. If it had not been for them, you would not have fallen into the hands of le père Jean. But, bedame! I cannot understand why he should send you to Quebec when he knew you were bound for Louisbourg. A priest, no doubt, knows much, but I can tell you, madame, if you came to me and whispered 'Louisbourg,' it would not be by way of Quebec I should send you. If you have any reason to be there, there is no time like the present, for the English are on their way thither even now; and if they are frightened away by our ships, they will be back in the spring; take my word for it!”

“But, Gabriel, le père Jean spake as if nothing was to be feared from any attempt they might make at present.”

“Perhaps not, but they may try it, all the same. They have been in Halifax for months past, and only sailed in August. I do not think it will come to anything myself, but by the spring all the music will be on hand, and the dancing before Louisbourg will begin in earnest. But pardon, madame; I forgot you had friends there, or I would not have let my tongue run on so.”

“No, no, Gabriel; I wish to hear all you have learned. Why is it impossible to go to Louisbourg?”

“Bedame! I never said it was impossible to go to Louisbourg, madame; mais, 'qui se tient à Paris, ne sera jamais pape,' and your face is not in the right direction. If you would be there, madame, I would engage to find you a way in the teeth of all 'les goddams' who ever chewed rosbif. But I forget; we are going to Quebec,” he ended, slyly, evidently desirous that I should talk.

This, however, I would not do, but he had given me matter enough to keep me awake by night and set me anxiously dreaming by day.

Why had the priest been so determined to keep me from Louisbourg? Now that I thought it over, I saw that I had never urged my wish at all. I had allowed my whole purpose to be swept aside at his first firm refusal to consider my request. And all this time Hugh was in danger, while I had turned my back upon him. If not in danger now, he certainly would be in the spring, and all my effort, with those weary miles of sea again between us, would be unavailing for his recall. Indeed, he would probably refuse to leave his post if it were threatened by an enemy. Why had I consented? Why was I even now lengthening the heart-breaking distance between us with every coward mile I travelled? Why had I not pleaded with le père Jean, instead of obeying blindly, like a child? He had not known the real danger, perhaps, or his advice would have been different.

Could I have spoken freely with Lucy, I might have gained some comfort; but, alas! my lips were sealed towards her. How could I expect her to understand even if I could speak? My distress she would readily comprehend, but she could not possibly know anything of such a love as Hugh's; so I was forced to take the sympathy of her silent companionship, making her such return as I might.

Gabriel, I grew almost afraid of; he questioned me so cunningly, without seeming to do so, that I was in constant dread lest I should betray my secret and declare the desire which was consuming me. It was a relief when I could turn his curiosity and lead him to talk of his own life and the places we passed; for the wilderness of hills of the North Shore, to which we had crossed, was broken here and there by settlements, as at Les Eboulements, where the tiny church and village nestled by the water's edge at the foot of mountains rising and rolling back to purple heights behind. We were here shut out from the main river by the wooded shores of the Isle aux Coudres, which Gabriel regarded with peculiar pride, as somewhere on its farther side stood his white-washed cottage, where his wife kept her lonely guard during his long absences, and spent sleepless watches on wild nights in autumn, entreating the protection of St. Joseph and Our Lady of Good Help for her man, fighting for life somewhere on the dangerous waters.

“She must be very strong with her prayers, ma bonne femme, for every time I have come safe home—eh, madame?”

It was a pleasure to me to confirm him in his belief.

The next morning we passed the wide mouth of the Gouffre at la Baie St. Paul, but fortunately without experiencing its formidable wind, and early in the afternoon we saw rising before us the purple mass of Cap Tourmente. We stood well out here to escape the strong current; in the distance before us lay the green point of the island of Orleans, and behind it, to the north, Gabriel pointed out the beautifully rising slopes of the Côte de Beaupré, with the pride of a man who is in love with his country.

But soon his attention became fixed on a boat of better appearance than any we had as yet seen, standing in for the main shore.

“No fishing-boat that!” he exclaimed. “It must be some of the officers down from Quebec.” He altered our course so that we stood in to intercept her. His excitement grew as we approached. “I am right,” he shouted. “She is the yacht from Quebec. I must go on board. They will wish to hear what news I carry from below.”

As soon as we were within a reasonable distance he made some signal with his sail and, both boats staying their way, he launched his shallop over the side, and quickly rowed to the stranger. We watched him with keen interest, especially as we saw there were officers on board. Before long he was on his way back to us, and, as soon as he was within speaking distance, he called in the greatest excitement:

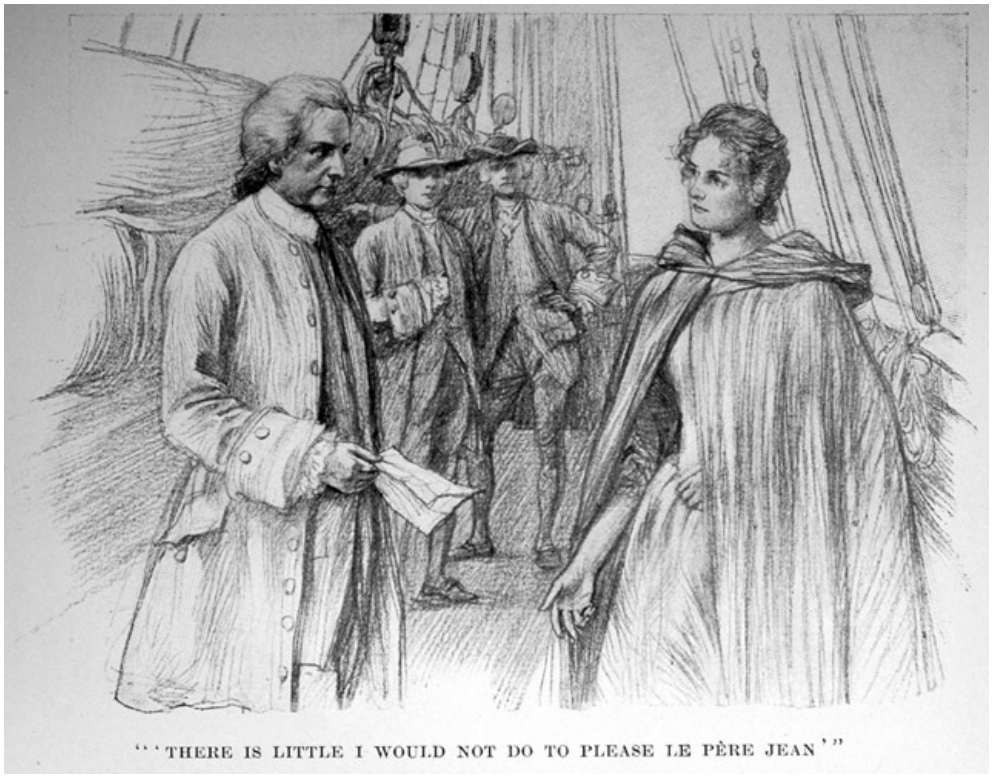
“Oh, madame! On board there is his Excellency, M. de Montcalm. He wishes to see you. Pardon, madame, pardon if I say hurry. Do not keep him waiting.”

It was indeed a startling summons, and the last I was expecting, but I accepted it without hesitation, and, making such slight preparation as was possible, Gabriel helped me carefully into the tossing boat; and put such heart into his rowing that in a few moments we were safely alongside the yacht, and a strong hand was held down to me. “Courage, madame! hold firmly and step slowly,” and, as the shallop lifted, I stepped lightly on the deck, where I was surrounded by a group of gentlemen.

“Madame,” said one of them, bowing, “I am Monsieur de Montcalm, and, believe me, my best endeavours are entirely at your service. We have heard something of your adventure from our good Maître Gabriel here.”

“Monsieur le marquis, it is to your friend le père Jean we owe our safety, and he has added to my obligation by commending me to your care in this letter,” said, handing him the precious billet.

“Any lady in your position, madame, would command my service of right, but such a recommendation makes it obligatory; there is little I would not do to please my friend le père Jean.”



“‘THERE IS LITTLE I WOULD NOT DO TO PLEASE LE PÈRE JEAN’”

As he glanced over the note, I had opportunity to observe him more closely. I had often heard of him from Gaston in the old days, for they had been friends from boyhood, and had done much campaigning together in Germany and elsewhere. He looked worn, like a man who had grown old before his time, but I could trace the likeness to the warm-hearted, hot-headed young officer whom I had so often pictured, in his large eyes, which had lost nothing of their youthful fire, and in his smile, which had the charm that does not disappear with years.

“Madame de St. Just,” he said, when he had finished reading, “I can spare you the necessity of even asking my help, and must not lay you under any obligation greater than this little voyage from your boat to mine, to which you would not have been subject had I known of your relation to my friend le père Jean. He tells me your intention was to have gone to Louisbourg. If that be still your desire, madame, I can at least spare you the journey to Quebec, and can promise you an easy passage to Louisbourg as soon as the snow makes good travelling, for, in Canada, summer is no time for a long journey across country. But let

us be seated and talk this matter over quietly," and he waved his hand towards the stern of the yacht, where some of the officers hastened to arrange their cloaks into comfortable seats.

My heart was in the strangest commotion as I saw the drift of circumstance that was sweeping me onward, without effort on my part, towards the end I most desired; I had not spoken, and here was the arbiter of my fate putting into words all that I dared not ask. I resolved not even to think, but to leave the issue in his hands.

"Had you ever met le père Jean before, madame?" he resumed.

"No, monsieur. How could I? But I cannot help feeling I have met you. I was wont to hear your name very often when a young girl?"

"Indeed? And to whom did I owe that favour?"

"To your friend, the Vicomte de Trincardel."

He stared at me as if in great amazement, and when he spake his tone was that of a man deeply puzzled.

"You know the Vicomte de Trincardel?"

"Assuredly, monsieur—that is, I did know him. He was a frequent visitor at my guardian's both in Paris and London," and then I stupidly fell to blushing like a school-girl.

"Strange, very strange," he muttered, in an absent manner.

"No, monsieur, not strange," I answered, for I could not bear he should misunderstand; "my family name is Nairn, and my guardian was the late Lady Jane Drummond."

"Oh, pardon me, madame; it was only the odd chance of my meeting with you that I marvelled at. But it is a narrow world, after all, for a few years ago, when in Italy, I heard of your brother from the Cardinal York: he spake of him in terms of the warmest affection."

"Hélas! monsieur, my brother is dead to me. He has deserted the cause to which I and mine have been faithful; he now holds a commission in the English army."

"Again I must ask for pardon; but to come back to your plans. Now as to Louisbourg, there is no danger, madame, either on the journey or when you reach there, provided you leave again before spring. You can be safely back in Quebec before the snows go, and on your way to France by the first ship, long ere any serious danger threatens. I am taking for granted, however, that you will hardly choose to remain in this enchanting colony longer than may be necessary. Would it meet your wish, if you were to return by the spring?"

"Oh, perfectly, perfectly, monsieur!" I exclaimed, overjoyed to answer a question which presented no difficulties and opened out a way before me.

"Then, madame, I would recommend the following plan: instead of going on to Quebec, by which you will lose little, save a glimpse at a society which is not without its charm, you should go back across the river and down as far as Beaulieu, where you will find Mme. de Sarennes and her charming daughter Angélique. I shall give you letters which will ensure you a welcome and a shelter for such time as you may have to remain under her care. Her son Charles, who is a noted figure in the colony, will be up and down between Louisbourg and Quebec during the winter, and I will see that he takes charge of you and conducts you safely on your journey.

"And now, madame, it is very probable that you are but ill supplied with money, if indeed you have any. Pardon my frankness, but I am old enough to be your father, and I know the awkwardness of such a position. If I be correct, I am sure you will not deny me the pleasure of helping you."

"Monsieur, your kindness needs no excuse; but, with a thousand thanks, let me assure you I am well, even abundantly supplied, as I had nearly all my money sewn in my clothes before leaving, and I do not foresee any want of that kind, even though my stay be longer than now appears probable. But I shall be most grateful for your letter to Mme. de Sarennes, and it shall be my endeavour not to prove a burthen on her hospitality."

"M. de Bougainville," he said, beckoning to one of his officers, "will you come and tell Mme. de St. Just something of this charming country, while I write some letters?" So saying, he introduced his aide to me, and stepped into the cabin, leaving me to the amusing society of his officers. The moments passed quickly until the Marquis reappeared bearing two letters.

"Do not disappear, gentlemen, unless it be to seek a glass of wine in which to wish madame 'bon voyage.'

"This, madame," he said, handing me one of the letters, "is to Mme. de Sarennes; but with it I have taken care to enclose that of le père Jean, for our good Canadians, as you will find, attach more value to the simple word of a priest—and in this instance I will not say they are wrong—than to the command of any lay authority. His letter will spare you all explanations with the mother, and this other will serve as an order for that gallant coureur de bois, her son, when he puts in an appearance, in the event of his visiting Beaulieu before I see him in

Quebec. Let me assure you, further, that you have only to command my services, should you need them, either before or after you may reach Louisbourg. The Chevalier de Drucour, I am persuaded, will be only too ready to do me a service, should I ask it either on my behalf or on that of another. I shall esteem it, if you will consider yourself as under my protection."

"But, monsieur, what claim have I to all this kindness?" I asked, overwhelmed at the possibilities I saw before me.

"You are the friend of my friend; I would do anything for his sake," he answered, simply, disdaining any of those compliments which would so readily suggest themselves to a man of less nice breeding.

"I am sorry we cannot offer you any fitting hospitality here," he said, as he rose. Then, turning towards the others, he added: "Gentlemen, I am apologising for our scanty larder, which prevents our detaining Mme. de St. Just for supper. M. de Bougainville, as a mathematician, might have seen to a less exact but more generous provision."

"His head was among the stars," explained a jovial-looking officer, in a rueful tone, "and we less-exalted mortals are the losers, alas!"

"But surely we have somewhat to drink to the success of madame's journey?" said M. de Montcalm, in mock alarm.

"Assuredly, mon général! I at least was not star-gazing when I laid in the Bordeaux. I can even provide a glass of Frontignan for madame," responded a little bright-eyed officer.

"Bravo, Joannès!" laughed the general. "Frontignan! That brings back the whole South, madame; its very name makes me homesick. Homesickness makes us all young, makes us all little children again. Ma foi! I believe that is why the Spaniard pretended the Fountain of Youth was to be found in the New World. I defy any one to remain here and not have perpetual youth, if my theory be correct."

"But at least madame did not come to seek it," responded M. de Bougainville, gallantly, "and we are keeping her standing."

Thereupon they touched my glass, in order, each with a prettily turned wish for my good fortunes, and I tasted the sweet wine of Frontignan in return to the toast they drank together. No wishes could have been more welcome, and the little friendly ceremony meant much to me; indeed my heart was very full when M. de Montcalm bent over and kissed my hand as he helped me into the shallop and we pulled off into the dusk. Did I need anything further to set my uneasy mind at rest, I found it in the quiet words of Lucy when I told her of the outcome of my visit.

"Oh, my dear mistress," she exclaimed, in a voice full of feeling, "He hath made our path straight to our feet!"

CHAPTER XVI

AT BEAULIEU

Gabriel altered his course with the satisfaction of a man confirmed in his superior judgment. "'II y a remède à tout, fors à la mort,' madame, and this has come at the last hour," he cried, in great satisfaction. "I suppose le père Jean would say you were going to Louisbourg all the time, only it would look to an ordinary sinner like a precious long way round," and he chuckled at his jest as he bustled about, filling every one with somewhat of his brimming content.

Favoured by the tide and a strong wind, we made a good run during the night, and when we awoke we were again coasting along the peaceful reaches of the South Shore with its frequent settlements and clearings—a pleasant change after the wilderness of the North.

Early in the afternoon, Gabriel pointed to a long point stretching out into the river.

"That is the Beacon Point of Beaulieu, madame. A beacon is piled there, ready for firing, winter and summer. The entrance to the river is just on this side, and on the other is the great bay where the porpoise fishery takes place. The manor cannot be seen from the river; it is safe and snug from the storms, a little inland."

Before long we entered the mouth of the little river, to the right of which stretched a broad expanse of tidal meadow, dotted with small platforms, each supporting its load of coarse salt hay, safe above the reach of the highest tides; to the left was the dense pine wood covering the Beacon Point. Fields and woods wore the sombre colours, the browns and purples of autumn, though here and there a sturdy maple still hung out its banner of yellow or red, lighting up the dark greens of the unchanging pines. As we advanced, the windings of the river disclosed stretches of bare meadow and empty fields, for the harvest had long been gathered. The whole was set in a background of low, purple hills. But soon we caught a new interest, as a windmill, and then a long wooden house, having a high-pitched roof, broken by a row of pointed dormer-windows, with a detached tower at each end, came into view.

"There, madame, that is the manor!" Gabriel announced with evident pride, to which I made

suitable return, for despite its humble form, like a substantial farm-house, its great length and the two towers gave to it an appearance which removed it out of the common.

Our boat was made fast to a little landing-place, and we disembarked; but, to my surprise, no one appeared to welcome or to question us. Gabriel led the way up to the house through a garden, which must have been a model of neatness in summer-time, but was now stripped and blackened by the early frosts. Though the door of the house stood hospitably open to us, no answer came to our echoing knock.

Going round to the back proved equally fruitless, but I espied two women working in a field at a short distance, and, bidding Gabriel await me, I took my way towards them. I found them engaged with spade and fork digging up reddish-looking roots, which they piled in little heaps.

“I bring letters to Mme. de Sarennes,” I said, addressing the younger woman, who seemed confused, but whose face I could barely see for the great bonnet which covered her head like a cowl, “but I find no one in the house. Can you tell me what to do?”

“If madame will return and find a seat in the house, I shall bring some one,” she answered, prettily enough, and, dropping her fork, she ran towards the house.

“What are those things you are digging up?” I asked the elder woman.

“Potatoes, madame.”

“But do the people eat them?” I inquired, for I knew they were not used in France.

“'Only the Bostonnais and cattle,' we used to say, madame, but now the Intendant has ordered them to be planted and eaten by all.”

“And they will obey?”

“'Le miel n'est pas pour les ânes,' madame; those who do not, will go hungry,” she answered, laughing.

I was interested in the news, as well as in the calm philosophy with which the innovation was accepted, and after a few more questions I returned to the front of the house.

The room into which the entrance gave—for it was more of a room than a hall—was large and low, with a ceiling painted white, supported by heavy beams; it was carpeted and furnished with much comfort—much more than one would find in a similar house either in Scotland or France.

In a short time a young lady entered, her dark olive face well set off by her brown hair, becomingly though simply dressed, with a light girlish figure showing to advantage in her flowered gown.

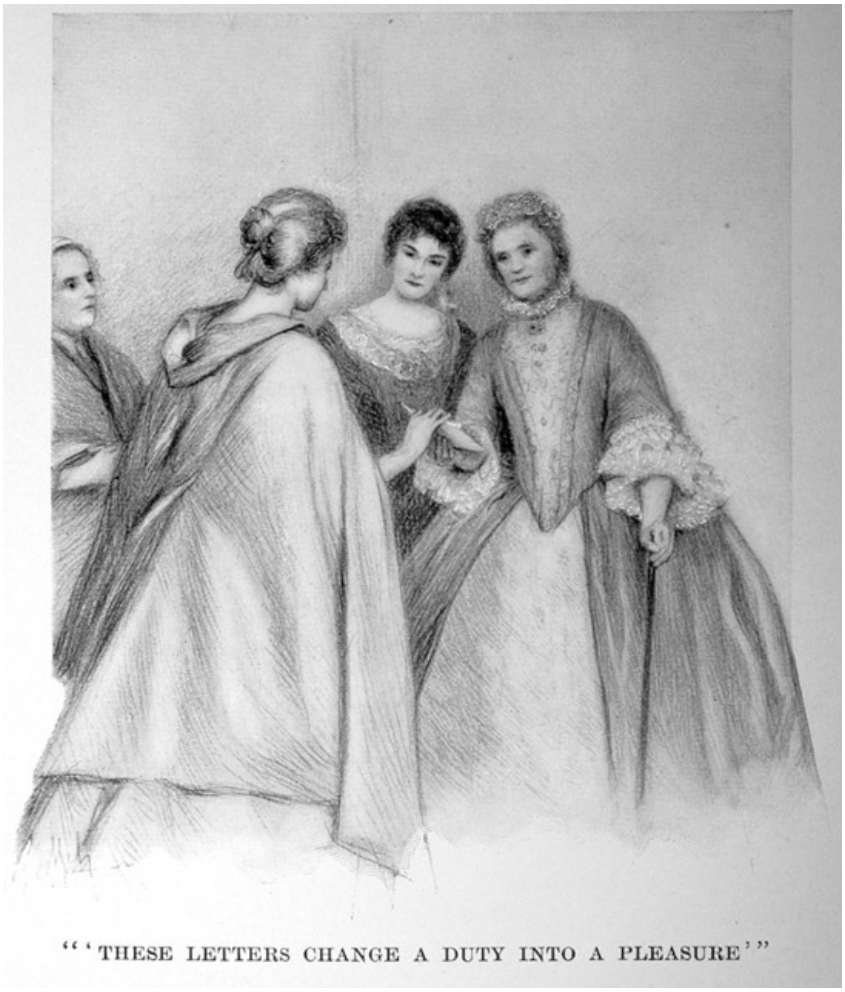
“I am Mlle. de Sarennes, madame, and I regret that you should have been kept waiting.” She began gravely enough, but catching some wonderment in my face, she continued, laughing merrily: “Oh, 'tis of no use; I can never masquerade! I am Queen of the Fields, madame, and you surprised me a moment ago, sceptre in hand,” whereupon she made me a grand courtesy, nearly sinking to the floor.

“And I am Mme. de St. Just,” I answered, joining in her girlish fun, “a poor rescued prisoner seeking for shelter; and this is my waiting-woman and very good friend, Lucy Routh. I come to you with letters from M. de Montcalm, trusting our presence may not prove a burthen to you.”

“But here is my mother,” said the young girl, quickly. “Not a word to her of how you discovered me; she will never acknowledge that such a thing as field-work is necessary, though there is not a man left to share it, except myself. We hide it from her as we would a sin.”

At the words a gray-haired lady supporting herself on a cane entered. In a few moments all explanations were made, and I received from her a welcome scarcely less warm than that of her daughter, but with the difference, that it was only given after she had carefully read the letter of the Marquis de Montcalm and its enclosure.

“Your own presence would command my hospitality in any case, madame; but these letters, and especially that of le père Jean, change a duty into a pleasure; it is much to have gained the friendship of such a man. I fear, though, you will have to put up with our poor company for some time, as my son has but left for his post in Acadie, and I do not look for his return until the snows come; but we will do all we can to make you happy until such time as you can leave to join your friends.”



"'THESE LETTERS CHANGE A DUTY INTO A PLEASURE'"

Nothing could be more charming than her address, even though it bore a trace of condescendence; but that was merely the reflection of an older school of manners, to which I had been well accustomed in Lady Jane.

As soon as we had settled these matters, I agreed with Gabriel that he should go on to Quebec, there to obtain some necessaries of which I stood in much need, as did poor Lucy.

"You do not expect to find shops there, surely!" laughed mademoiselle. "But my friend Mme, de Lanaudière will gladly undertake the buying of the material, and we will make such shift for the fitting as is possible here."

So we were installed as guests, and on the morrow Gabriel was despatched on his important errand; before he returned we had taken our places as members of the little household.

Mlle. de Sarennes—Angélique, as she insisted on my calling her—would not consent to my helping in the fields, so Lucy and I took charge in the house, where Lucy did marvels in the kitchen, even to eliciting approbation from Mme. de Sarennes, which Angélique assured us was praise indeed, for her mother was a housekeeper of the school which did not acknowledge that excellence of performance called for anything beyond a refraining from criticism. How could I be other than content? I was surrounded by a daily round of interest, almost of affection, and, most precious of all, by a gentle courtesy which accepted me as a guest without question or curiosity as to my past. Le père Jean had answered for me, and that was enough.

When Gabriel returned I paid him for his services, though it was only when I had assured the honest fellow I was amply able to do so that he consented to receive anything from me. When he was leaving me he charged me with great earnestness:

"Madame, should you need me at any time, either by day or night, all you have to do is to light the beacon. If by night, let it burn brightly; if by day, do as you saw le père Jean, and go on repeating it, until you see the answering smoke from the Island, or my sail."

"But, my good Gabriel, I am not likely to trouble you, as when I go from here it will be by land, and in a different direction."

"'Qui dit averti, dit muni,' madame; no one can tell what may happen, and it may do no harm to know you have one near at hand who would be proud if you called on him for help."

I was greatly touched by his thoughtfulness, a frank offer coming direct from the heart of a brave man to a woman whom he fears may some day be in need of his service.

"Gabriel, is every one kind in Canada? I do not know why I should meet with such care."

"We are all saints, no doubt, madame; but that is not the reason!" he returned, gaily, and set

off for his boat.

After his departure our life together went on without interruption. By the end of November the whole country was covered with snow, which we hailed with delight, for it meant the speedy arrival of M. de Sarennes, and then—Louisbourg! I had often seen snow as a child at home in Scotland, but there it meant storm and desolation, and, alas! only too frequently suffering and death to man and beast; while here it came as a beauty and a blessing, welcomed by all. Angélique took us over miles of snow-covered fields and through woods that had a charm of softness unknown in summer-time, until we could manage our snow-shoes without mishap.

“You must harden your muscles and exercise your lungs for the journey you have before you,” she declared, “and not shame my training when you take the high-road with Charles.”

Like her mother, she was never tired of talking of M. de Sarennes. He was their only pride, and never was son or brother more precious than was their Charles to them, so I looked forward with keen satisfaction to the day I should start under his care.

They hoped for him by the New-Year, and we all busied ourselves in preparation for the little feast which we agreed should be delayed, if necessary, to welcome his return.

On the last night of the year we sate together about the fire, Angélique laughing and chattering incessantly; her mother sitting with her spinning-wheel, her wedding-gift from the Marquis de Beauharnois—a dainty construction of mahogany tipped with ivory and silver—whirring peacefully, as with skilful fingers she guided the fine flax from her spindle; Lucy at a little distance knitting methodically; and I expectant, excited by Angélique's unrest.

“Ah, Marguerite, what a shame Charles must tack on that odious 'madame,' every time he addresses you!” exclaimed Angélique, merrily. “Had I my way, I'd banish the 'madame,' as I would banish every one who has a claim on you, and keep you all for our very own. What nonsense! to have other people in the world when we want you so much! Stay with us! I'll marry you myself; I'm sure I'm worth all the men in the world put together!”

“Be sensible, my daughter! be sensible,” interrupted Mme. de Sarennes, in her unruffled voice. “I cannot think how you find such nonsense amusing.”

“Now, maman, be fair! Do you know any man in the whole world, except Charles, you like better than me? There! There! I told you! And my mother has the very best taste in the world—eh, 'Mademoiselle' Marguerite?” And the madcap jumped up, and running over to her mother, embraced her in spite of her remonstrances.

In the midst of this turmoil a soft knock was heard, and we all sprang to our feet.

“Come in! Come in!” called Angélique, running to the door; but it opened before she could reach it, and there, in the bright light, stood an Indian holding his snow-shoes in his hand.

As soon as I saw him I could not repress a cry of terror, for he was the very chief from whom le père Jean had rescued me.

“Do not be alarmed, Marguerite. He is Luntook, my son's man. He always brings word of my son's return.”

The Indian explained to Angélique, in his broken French, that his master had but sent him to announce his coming, and paid not the slightest attention either to Lucy or myself. As soon as he had answered Angélique's eager questionings, he took himself off again, and we began our preparations.

“He will be here in an hour!” sang Angélique, as she danced about the room like a mad thing. Fresh wood was piled on the fire; the table was set with the best linen and silver, and loaded with every delicacy we had prepared; candles were placed in each window, of which the heavy wooden shutters were thrown back, and soon the whole house was a blaze of light.

Into all this entered the long-expected guest, who, after tenderly embracing his mother, was caught in a whirl of kisses and questionings showered on him by Angélique. Suddenly she released him, crying: “But stop, Charles! you make me forget myself. Here is Mme. de St. Just, for whose sake, most of all, we have been waiting for you.”

While I acknowledged his salutation, Angélique rattled on: “She has waited for you all this time to take her to Louisbourg, she and her waiting-woman. Where is Lucie? Oh, she has gone—frightened by the Indian, no doubt. She—I mean Marguerite—is so glad you have come. When do you go back?”

“Not to-night, at all events, ma belle. I'm sure even madame would not ask that. In any case not until I've tasted some of these good things. We can boast no such table at Miré.”

With much laughter we gradually settled down. When M. de Sarennes had doffed his outer wrappings and appeared in a close-fitting suit of some dark blue stuff, I thought I had seldom seen a handsomer type of man, and did not wonder at the pride his womenkind displayed. He was very tall, had a dark olive face like his sister, great flashing eyes, and black hair that rolled handsomely off his well-shaped forehead; and I could easily imagine

that more usual clothing would transform him into a prince among his fellows.

Before taking his place at table he left us for a little to see after his men, who were provided for in the kitchen. When he returned, he said:

“Luntook, my Indian, tells me that it was he who carried you off, madame. He had taken you for English women, and even now can scarce be persuaded he was mistaken, though he gave you up to le père Jean.”

“We are English women, monsieur.”

“And you would go to Louisbourg?” he asked, I thought sharply, with a flash of his great eyes.

“Yes, monsieur,” I said, quietly.

But he said nothing further, beyond assuring me that the Indian was thoroughly trustworthy, and I need be in no fear of him.

Thereupon we sate down to table, and as her brother ate, Angélique related to him our story, or, rather, a merry burlesque of our adventures, at which he laughed heartily.

“Well, madame, I have news for your waiting-woman, at least; though why she should run away when she must be dying to hear it, is more than I can imagine. Tell her that her son arrived safely at Louisbourg, where he was soon a hot favourite with every one in the garrison, and most of all with the Chevalier de Maxwell.” Here he paused to raise his glass, looking hard at me the while. To my distress, the tell-tale blood leaped to my face at the unexpected mention of that dear name. “Being a stirring lad and much attached to me,” he continued, without apparently noticing my confusion, “he begged to be allowed to join me on an expedition. We were surprised by the English, and he was slightly wounded—oh, nothing, I assure you, madame, a mere scratch!—and carried off a prisoner, but no doubt is even now as great a favourite with them as he was with us. Should they come to look us up in the spring, I doubt not he will be found in their ranks. At all events, he is with his friends, and is safe.”

So rejoiced was I to hear this news for Lucy's sake, that I excused myself and withdrew to my room, where I found the dear, patient soul on her knees, awaiting whatever tidings I might bring.

“Oh, my dear mistress,” she said, quietly, when I had told her all, “I have prayed and hoped, but at times my poor faith would almost fail me; and even now, when trembling at what I might have to bear, His message comes, that all is well with the child.”

CHAPTER XVII

I FIND MYSELF IN A FALSE POSITION

The rest of the week passed quickly, in one sense, though every hour of it dragged for me. I was burning with impatience to hear M. de Sarennes speak some word of his intended departure, and yet could not bring myself to put the ungracious question, when I saw the dear pleasure his stay meant to his mother. Never had I seen more tender, respectful attention than that with which he surrounded her. He would sit by her for hours listening to her tales of his father, or relating his own adventures and successes against the English.

“Have a care, my son,” she would say, with an anxiety, not unmixed with pride; “they will not forget these things. They may try to work us evil for them some day.”

“No fear, ma mère! not while I am by to defend you,” he would answer, with a protecting love that redeemed his confidence from bravado.

He accompanied Angélique and me on all our walks, explaining to us the simpler mysteries of his wonderful woodcraft, and keenly enjoying our ready admiration. But my mind was uneasy. With the assuredness of a man accustomed to facile conquest, he pressed his attentions upon me in a manner to which I was unaccustomed, greatly to my embarrassment.

No woman of my day could, in ordinary circumstances, be at a loss to interpret any attentions she might receive. In our world, gallantry was a science well understood; as exact as war, its every move had its meaning; its rules were rigidly defined, and no one ever thought of transgressing them; so there reigned a freedom which made society a pleasure, and the intercourse with men was exactly what one chose it should be.

But now, I was brought face to face with a man who, whatever might be his birth, had neither breeding nor education; who was accustomed to see his desire and attain it, if possible; who could not understand that freedom was a compliment to his quality, not an acknowledgment of his personality; and who, in consequence, misinterpreted mere courtesies in a sense humiliating to the bestower.

Our life was necessarily so intimate, my need of his good-will so great, and my regard for his mother and sister so warm, that I was bound to conceal my annoyance; but at length he

forced me to a declaration, when, hoping that frankness might avail me better than evasion, I spake so plainly that I left him in no doubt as to the manner in which I received his attentions. He resented it with all the bitterness of a man unaccustomed to rebuke, and my heart failed me as I thought of the weeks I must pass in his company.

This made me the more anxious to push matters to a conclusion, and my opportunity came one afternoon, when Angélique snapped the end of her snow-shoe, and was forced to return, leaving us to finish our walk together.

We moved on in silence for some time before I could summon up courage to venture the question on which I felt so much depended.

“Have you decided on your return to Louisbourg, monsieur?”

“I must first go to Quebec and report to M. de Montcalm,” he began, in an ordinary voice, and then, to my surprise, he suddenly broke into invective. “We have a new order here now; everything must be reported in a quarter where nothing is known of the needs of the country, or the character of the service. If those idiots in Paris would only mind matters in their own country and leave Canada to those who know it best, if they would send us troops and not generals, if they would send us money and not priests, we should do better. What can you expect of men who think of nothing but parade and their own precious dignity? Who never speak of a Canadian but with derision? But I forgot. Madame is too recently from Paris herself to take an interest in such matters; to her, doubtless, we are all 'colonists,' and M. de Montcalm is Pope and King.”

He stopped and faced me at his last words, and though not unprepared for some outburst, I was appalled at the fierceness of his tone and the bitterness he threw into his charge. Before I could reply, he went on:

“My sister has handed me the orders which M. le Marquis de Montcalm et de St. Véran, has been pleased to lay on my mother and myself concerning you, but she tells me nothing of your friends in Louisbourg. May I ask whom you would join there?”

“M. de Sarennes, your mother and sister have treated me with a consideration beyond words. They have subjected me to no questionings, to no inquiries, beyond what I have chosen to reveal myself, and surely I can look for the same courtesy from you.”

“O, madame, madame—I am no courtier from Versailles. Your M. de Montcalm will probably tell you I am a mere 'coureur de bois,' and, if that be the case, you must lay it to my condition if I ask again: Who is it you go to meet in Louisbourg? Is it, by chance, Mme. de St. Julhien?”

I remembered the Chevalier de St. Julhien was Hugh's colonel, and eagerly caught at the opening, for I had begun to be seriously frightened.

“Yes, monsieur, since you must know, it is Mme. de St. Julhien.”

“Oh, ho! ho! Nom de Ciel! But that is a good one!” He roared like a peasant, and I almost screamed in terror. “That is a good one! I have been in and out of Louisbourg for the last ten years and more, and I have yet to hear of a Mme. de St. Julhien. Come, come, ma belle! I'll wager my head you are no more Mme. de St. Just, than I am. You have been playing a pretty comedy to these simple spectators, who were too scrupulous to venture a question. It took the barbarous coureur de bois to see through the paint! There! There! Don't look so frightened. I can guess, readily enough, what brings a pretty woman to the walls of a garrison town.”

Oh, the shame, the miserable shame and degradation which overwhelmed me at the brutal insinuations of this well-born clown! And, to crown it all, he stepped close beside me, and before I had a suspicion of his intent, he threw his arms about my waist and kissed me.

“You wretch! you cowardly hound!” I cried, beside myself at this last insult. “How dare you treat me thus? I will appeal to M. de Montcalm, and you shall rue this day beyond any you have ever lived. I will appeal to your mother—”

“O, là, là, là, my charming little Mme. Je-Ne-Sais-Quoi, you can complain to M. de Montcalm when you see him. As for my mother, I hardly imagine you will dare to tell her anything which will not excuse my action. But come, madame, we are not getting on with our conversation at all. Believe me, I am not a bad fellow at bottom. Tell me who it is you are really going to meet in Louisbourg, and we shall see if it be not possible to further your plans.”

“Let me go, M. de Sarennes, let me go!” I implored.

“Now, madame, let us talk sensibly. Consider how awkward it may be if I have to pursue these inquiries before others. In any event, I can guess fairly well. Let us see: Madame is an Englishwoman; is well born, wealthy, and, if she will not resent my saying so, is of a certain age. Good! Monsieur is an Englishman; well born, poor, and also of a suitable age. Good! Monsieur is unfortunate in his present position; is practically in exile. Madame comes overseas alone, save for a chance waiting-woman she picks up. Why? Surely not for the delights of travel. Monsieur's name is Le Chevalier Maxwell de Kirkconnel. Madame's name

is—Ma foi! I haven't the slightest idea what it is. There! madame, have I not drawn the outline of the comedy cleverly enough, for a mere coureur de bois, a mere Canadian?”

“Let me go, monsieur, let me go!”

“Tell me first, are you not Madame de Maxwell?”

“Yes, yes,” I cried, in desperation, eager to seize any chance of escape.

“Then, madame, believe me, you were very foolish not to say so at once. I guessed it the very first night I saw you. Now I know the Chevalier intimately; in fact, I am under obligation to him for much good advice; but I will confess he has never seen fit to impart to me the fact of his marriage, which will be a surprise to many.”

“O, monsieur, I beg of you that you will never mention it,” I cried, in an agony of shame and self-reproach.

“Never, madame; believe me, it was too disappointing a piece of news in my own case, for me to have any desire to place others in the like unhappy position. But allow me first to apologise for frightening you; pardon me that I cannot look upon it as an insult; and now that I have made the amende honorable, I will go back and answer your first question. I shall start for Quebec in two days; I shall be back in a week, and then leave for Louisbourg at once, if you feel you can trust yourself with me.”

I was so completely in his power that I mastered up all my courage, and replied, bravely enough: “M. de Sarennes, I cannot but believe I am safe in the charge of one whom I know as so loving a son, so fond a brother. I trust you, too, as the friend of M. de Maxwell; and I trust you, most of all, because you have learned my secret, and, being a gentleman, I believe you will not betray it.”

“I don't know how far I accept the compliment, but at all events, madame, I shall say nothing of your affairs. Remember, though, it rests chiefly with you to prevent suspicion. You must keep the same free intercourse with me, and never allow my mother or sister to gather by word, or sign, that the nature of our conference to-day has been otherwise than pleasant. Now that we have come to an understanding, no doubt some news of Louisbourg will be welcome.”

As he spake we turned back towards the manor; his whole bearing so changed in a moment that it was hard to believe the bright, pleasant-spoken man by my side was the same creature of rough, brutal instincts and feelings who had tortured and alarmed me so cruelly. Little by little I recovered my composure, as he told of the life in the fortress, of the probable investment by the English in the spring—if they could then muster a sufficient fleet—of M. de Drucour, of M. Prévost, and, best of all, of Hugh, though he tried to disturb my peace by hinting at some understanding between him and Madame Prévost.

“It all depends on you now, madame,” he said, significantly, as he held the door open for me to enter, and fortunately I had firmness enough to control myself through the long evening and until I could gain my room.

There I broke down utterly, as I knelt beside my bed, unable to rise, or to control the sobs which shook my whole body.

Lucy was beside me in a moment.

“Dear heart! Dear heart! Let me help you,” she murmured, raising me to my feet, and beginning to undress me like a child, crooning over me and quieting me with tender touches and gentle words.

“Oh, Lucy, speak to me, say something to comfort me. I am the most unhappy woman alive.”

“My dear, dear mistress, no one can be so unhappy that our Father cannot comfort her. This is the time of all others when He is nearest to you. You have but to stretch forth your hand to touch His robe; you have but to open your heart to have Him come in and fill it with the Peace which passeth understanding. I am an ignorant woman, but I have this knowledge. I went through a sorrow, and what I believed to be a disgrace, helpless and alone, and knew of no comfort till He sent me His.

“I do not know your sorrow, I might not understand it if you told me, but beside this bed is standing One who knew what it was to be alone more than any other, and He is saying to you, 'Come, and I will give you rest.'”

“Dear Lucy, you are such a comfort to me. I do not understand these things in the way you do. I have never heard them so spoken of; but oh! I feel so safe while you speak!”

“Now, mistress, I will sing to you”—and she sang her sweet songs of comfort in trouble, of deliverance in danger, of love awaiting us, until my sorrow was stilled and I fell asleep.

M. de Sarennes kept his word in so far as further annoyance was concerned, but he displayed a familiarity towards me which called forth laughing comments from Angélique, and kept me constantly on the rack. At the end of the week he left on his mission to Quebec, promising to return within ten days, and charging us to prepare for our long journey.

I was at my wits' end to know what to do. I could not refuse to go with him, no matter what my distrust. I could not make any explanation to his mother or sister which would not expose me to a position I shuddered even to contemplate. Would Charles, their idol, behave towards any woman worthy of respect as he had behaved to me? I was completely in his power; no matter what he had done or might do, he had but to appear and say, “Come!” and I must follow, no matter how my heart might fail me.

All too late I realised what I had brought upon myself by my cowardly evasion of le père Jean's commands. I had deceived myself, or rather, I had pretended to be led by outward chance, instead of honestly following our compact, and now, I was reaping my reward. That this man was in love with me I could not doubt, but it was a love that made me sick to my very soul when I thought of it. Yet, he was a gentleman, by birth at least; he was answerable to the Marquis for my safe-keeping; and no matter what uneasiness or unquiet I might suffer on the journey, he would not dare to offer me any indignity with Lucy by me and Hugh awaiting me at its end.

With this I was forced to be content, and busied myself with Angélique and Lucy in our preparations. Angélique chattered merrily, regretting she could not take the journey with us; her brother knew the woods as others knew the town; he could tell every track, whether of bird or beast; he was so cunning that no storm surprised him, and so tender he would care for us like children.

“No one is so good to women as Charles! He never gets out of patience with me or maman. Let me tell you, you are a lucky girl, 'Mademoiselle' Marguerite, to have such a beau cavalier for your escort. Really, I am jealous of your opportunity; my brother is nearly as fine a man as I am, and I am sure any woman would be proud of my attentions.” Thus she ran on, while I listened, heart-sick at the thought of being in the power of that brother, whom I knew far, far better than she.

But my fortitude was not put to any test, for, on the very evening of M. de Sarennes's return, Lucy fell ill of some violent fever, and by the morning it was clear that our departure was an impossibility.

“Never mind, madame,” said M. de Sarennes, evidently not ill pleased; “I can as well go to my post at Miramichi. I have business there which will detain me about a month; no doubt by that time you will be ready to start.”

“Will you take a letter for Louisbourg?” I asked.

He laughed. “You are like all Paris-bred folk, madame! Miramichi is a good hundred leagues from Louisbourg as the crow flies, and more than twice that as a man can travel. No, no, madame! You must keep your letter until you can deliver it in person.”

He made a pretence of laughing heartily at my discomfiture, and Angélique innocently joined in, thinking the jest to be my ignorance of the country, while my heart was bursting with indignation that he should thus make a mock of my helplessness, for he knew well what it meant to me that Hugh should be ignorant of my whereabouts.

CHAPTER XVIII

I AM RESCUED FROM A GREAT DANGER

Lucy's illness proved so serious that all thought of Louisbourg had to be abandoned during the long weeks she lay between life and death. Now it was that I realised the full dreariness of winter. The snow-covered fields and woods had a stillness and emptiness that weighed upon me; my eyes grew weary of the dead whiteness; and that the earth should again be green, and warm, and living, seemed to call for something little short of a miracle. By the water-side it was worse: the drift-ice was piled along the shore in the wildest confusion, magnified and distorted by great banks and fantastic wreaths of snow. Beyond this was the black, open water, bearing the floating ice backward and forward with the changing tides, never at rest, grinding ceaselessly against the frozen barrier between it and the shore, and heralding a coming change of weather with strange, hollow explosions and moanings. The shortness of the days, the desolation of the sweeping storms which imprisoned us, the unbroken isolation, and the disappointment of long delay told heavily on my spirits, which might have failed me had it not been for the constant care demanded by Lucy.

Before she gained strength to be about once more, the feeling of spring was in the air, crows were calling to one another, here and there a rounded hill-top showed a dun, sodden patch under the strengthening sun, and a trickling and gurgling told that, underneath the snow, the waters were gathering to free the rivers and send their burthen of ice sweeping into the St. Lawrence.

M. de Sarennes had come and gone with promises of return. He won my gratitude by his forbearance to me as well as by his unlooked-for gentleness towards poor Lucy, whose heart he filled with admiration by kindly words of her boy, and assurances of his safety.

She, poor thing, had not recovered her full mental condition with her strength, and was possessed of an idea that Christopher was at Quebec, and that she should be on her way

there to meet him. This idea I did my utmost to dissipate, but M. de Sarennes, possibly to quiet or please her, had let fall something which she had taken as an assurance that the English troops were there, and her son with them, and however successfully I might persuade her at the moment of the truth, she would as regularly come back to her delusion when alone.

Distressing as this was as an indication of her condition, it was the more disturbing to me as it was the last blow to my hopes for Louisbourg. It would be sheer madness to trust myself to M. de Sarennes without her protection; a protection which had vanished now, in the complete ascendency he had gained over her by his ready acquiescence in her imaginings, and I could not but feel he was skilfully withdrawing her affections from me.

However, he was called away to his post so suddenly that I was spared the difficulty of a decision, and I had almost determined that I would go on to Quebec and place myself under the care of M. de Montcalm, when, towards the end of May, he returned, unexpected by any of us, even by his mother, who, it was patent, was much disturbed; but her unwavering belief in his superior judgment kept her silent. “He is my son, and knows his duty better than we,” was her only reply to Angélique's questionings at any time, and it did not fail her now. It was touching to mark her effort to carry things off, to cover his preoccupation, and, distraught though he was, he remitted nothing of his attentions towards her, and so each comforted and shielded the other. I felt like an intruder, and when Angélique proposed a visit to the porpoise-fishery for the afternoon, I eagerly accepted the chance of escape.

We wandered off towards the beach, and by it made our way round to the great bay where the porpoise-fishing once took place.

“Look at the bones of the old days, and you can imagine what it meant to us,” said Angélique, pointing to the line of great ribs, and skulls, and skeletons which made a grotesque barrier to the highest tides, almost completely round the wide semicircle of the bay. “We fought for this many a long year, both with men and at law, and now, alas, we have neither men nor law to work it for us. The porpoise can swim in and out of the broken park unharmed. There, just as that fellow is doing now I Look at him!” As she spoke, a huge white mass rose slowly above the water within the bounds of the fishery, and then came forward with a rush in pursuit of the smelts and capelans, shooting up showers of spray, which broke into rainbows in the brilliant sunlight.

“It is like everything else, going to rack and ruin; with the people starving in the sight of plenty, because this wretched war must drag on,” sighed Angélique. “The men feel nothing of it; they have all the fighting and glory, while we sit at home helpless, good for nothing.”

“Don't say that, ma belle!” called out her brother, cheerily; and we turned to find him behind us. “Do you think we could have the heart to keep it up, if it were not for the thought of you? But there, you are tired and out of sorts, little one. Go back to the mother, and I will take madame round by the end of the bay and back by the sucrerie.”

It was impossible for me to object, and Angélique left us, while we took our way along the sands. M. de Sarennes seemed to have thrown aside his former cares, and rattled on in his natural way, noting and explaining everything which might interest me, and had I not known him better, I might have been misled by his openness; but all the time I kept asking myself: “When will he speak? What will he say?” So that it was a relief when, as we turned away from the shore into the woods, he suddenly dropped his former tone, and addressed me without pretence:

“Well, madame, are you as anxious as before to get to Louisbourg?”

“No; I have decided not to go. It is too late.”

“Why too late? Are you fearful M. de Maxwell may have wearied waiting for you?”

“Monsieur, your words are an insult! If this be all you have to say to me, I beg you will let me return to the house.”

“Not so fast, madame. I have a question or two yet which require to be answered, unless you prefer I should put them before my mother and sister. No? Then will you tell me who this boy Christophe really is? From his first appearance below there I was much puzzled why M. de Maxwell should have taken so unusual an interest in him. He was as jealous of the boy's liking for me as a doting mother could be, and was more distressed over his capture than many a father would have been over the loss of his son.”

“Monsieur,” I answered, trying to conceal my alarm, “M. de Maxwell lodged for some time in London in the house of this boy's mother, my waiting-woman, Lucy Routh. Surely his meeting again with the lad he knew as a child will explain his interest.”

“Indeed? And may I ask when it was that he lodged with this convenient waiting-woman?” he said, with a sneer that set my blood boiling.

“It was ten years ago, monsieur. Why do you ask me these questions?”

“Because I wish to try a small problem in calculation. I was rude enough to hazard a guess at your age the first time we came to an understanding. Perhaps it was ungallant, but still, it

remains. I said then, you were 'of a certain age,' but now, to be exact, we will say you are twenty-seven, perhaps twenty-six. This boy in whom such a paternal interest was displayed must be fifteen or sixteen. No, that will not adjust itself. Forgive my thinking out loud."

"Monsieur, this is intolerable! What is it you wish to know?"

"Simply if M. de Maxwell was acquainted with this paragon of waiting-women before he lodged with her ten years ago?"

"You coward! Why do you not put such a question to M. de Maxwell himself?"

"It might prove embarrassing, madame. Almost as embarrassing as if I had obeyed the orders of your friend M. le Marquis de Montcalm, and brought you to M. le Chevalier de Maxwell, as you desired."

"I am completely at a loss to know what you mean," I said, boldly, but my heart sank at his words.

"Simply this, madame," and he handed me an open letter.

> "MONSIEUR" [I read],—"If you have any regard for me, keep the lady claiming to be my wife at such a distance that I may never set eyes on her again. Should she be in want, I will gladly reimburse you for any expenditure you may make on her account.
>
> "LE CHEVR DE MAXWELL."

It was almost like a blow, and for a moment I stood numb and bewildered; but the realisation of my danger, from the man who stood there smiling at my degradation, was a spur to me, and I neither fainted nor cried aloud.

"A pitiable situation, truly! Believe me, my dear madame, my heart bleeds for you."

"You are a liar, as well as a coward, monsieur. I know not what you have said or written to M. de Maxwell, but neither he nor any man can ever cast me off. I am not his wife!"

"Thank God for that!" he cried, in so different a voice that I looked at him in surprise. "Thank God for that! Marguerite, I love you with my whole heart, and body, and life. I know I am nothing but a rough coureur de bois, in spite of my birth. I have been cruel to you. I have tortured you. Forgive me, forgive me! I knew of no other way to woo you. Teach me to be gentle, and I will be gentle for your sake. But, God in heaven! do not ask me to give you up! I cannot live without you. I have lost my soul to you. I have lost everything, for I should not be beside you even now!"

"No, you should not!" rang out a clear voice, and le père Jean stepped into the path before us. "Man never spake truer words, Sarennes. I have followed you night and day to bring you back to your duty. You are waited for every hour at Louisbourg, for the Indians will not move without you."

He spake rapidly, like one accustomed to command, and at the same time held forth his hand to me, as one might to a child, and I seized it in both mine, and stepped close to his side.

At the first sound of the priest's voice M. de Sarennes's whole aspect changed; his face took on a hard, obstinate look, and he scowled as if he would have struck the man before him, but he answered him not a word.

"Go!" again commanded the priest. "Go back to Louisbourg! You need no word of mine to urge you; if you do, I will tell you the Cross of St. Louis awaits you there."

"What care I for your Cross of St. Louis? I am not a French popinjay to be dazzled by your gewgaws from Versailles."

"Then go because your honour calls!"

"Who are you to prate about honour? What does a priest know about honour? Keep to your pater-nosters and aves!" he cried, with an insulting laugh.

"You clown!" cried the priest, trembling with indignation. "My ancestors carried their own banner to the Sepulchre of Our Lord, when yours were hewers of wood and drawers of water! But, forgive me," he added, almost in the same breath, "this is beside the question. M. de Sarennes, you are a soldier, and as such your honour is dear to you; there are hundreds of men, aye, and there are women too, whose honour and safety in a few weeks, perhaps sooner, will depend on your succour. You know your help is absolutely necessary in the event of the place being invested. M. de Montcalm expects you to be at your post; M. de Vaudreuil has himself given you his orders; your Indians will follow no other than yourself, and are only waiting for you to lead them. No one knows better than yourself with what suspicion they will look on your disappearance. Your name will be on every lip in Louisbourg, and every eye will hourly watch for your coming. You carry the safety of the fortress, perhaps of the country, in your keeping."

"What you say is no doubt true, mon père. But it rests with you whether I go or not," he

returned, in a quiet voice, without a trace of the passion which had swayed him a moment since.

“How? In what way can it rest with me? I have given you my message, your orders.”

“Yes, mon père, but I require more; I wish for your blessing.”

“You shall have that, my son, my blessing and my constant prayers.”

“That is well, mon père, but I require more; I would have your blessing for another also.”

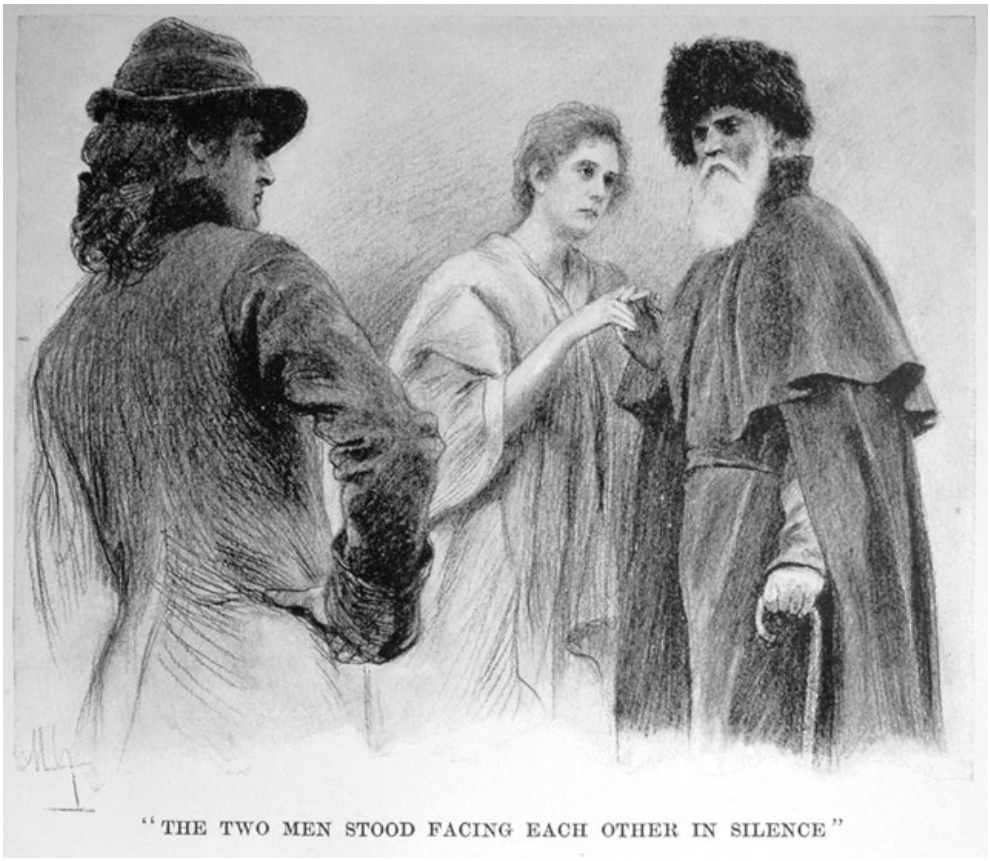
“For whom?”

“For this lady, mon père. If you wish me to leave for Louisbourg, you will marry me first,” he said, with a laugh.

“Madame de St. Just.”

“No, not 'Madame de St. Just!' But she will then have the right to style herself 'Madame de Sarennes.' Don't attempt any heroics!” he went on, raising his voice angrily, while I shrank close to the priest in terror. “I know all about this pretended Madame de St. Just, perhaps even better than do you. If I choose to give her an honourable name, it is my own affair. Don't prate to me about honour! I am here because it does not weigh with me for the moment. Don't talk to me of the safety of the country; it is in your hands. I tell you plainly I will not go otherwise. Marry me to-day, and I will start to-night; if not, then any blame there may be will lie not on my head, but on yours. Now, monsieur, you have my answer.”

The two men stood facing each other for a moment in silence.



“THE TWO MEN STOOD FACING EACH OTHER IN SILENCE”

Then the priest turned to me: “Will you marry this man, my daughter?”

“Oh, mon père!” I cried, shuddering, and holding closer to him.

He stepped in front of me and faced the Canadian. “Go!” he commanded. “Go! You may succour Louisbourg or not, as you will, but before I would raise my hand in such a sacrilege as you have dared to insult your God in proffering, I would see it withered to the bone. I will try to believe you led astray by your evil passions, that you are not sane for the moment; and if God see fit to leave you in your present evil possession, He will have punished you more fearfully than any curse of mine can do. Go, and may God pity you! Come, my daughter,” he said to me.

Holding my hand in his strong, assuring grasp, he led me beside him, safe in his protecting presence. Before we gained the open path he stopped, and, motioning me to be seated on a log, he remained standing. The moment he withdrew his hand the distance between us seemed immeasurable; all his protection, all his comradeship were withdrawn with his grasp, and he stood before me as the priest and judge only.

“I have no wish to add to your trouble,” he began, slowly, and almost unwillingly, I thought, “but for your own safety I must make it clear to you, beyond further question or casuistry, what your position now is, and to what your disobedience has led. For yourself, you are in a

position sevenfold worse than you were before; you have carried the harmless deception I authorised to a point that has placed you in a most dangerous and humiliating situation. Sarennes has become infatuated with you to an extent which threatens ruin to himself, disgrace to those nearest him, and, perhaps, disaster to greater and more important interests. Nay, do not rise or speak. I know you would disclaim any part in the matter, but unfortunately your intention does not alter facts; it is your presence here that is at fault. Beyond this you are personally in extreme peril; you must realise that this man knows nothing of the restrictions which should govern his conduct towards you. Blinded as he is by his passion, he will not hesitate a moment to carry you off, if need be, and his conscience will never suffer a moment's pang, provided he find a priest to patter the words of the marriage-service over you, if, indeed, he even hold such a concession to your feelings necessary. The presence of his mother and sister is no real protection, and even his absence is no assurance of safety, for he can readily find means to carry out his purpose without appearing on the scene himself. You had better stay within-doors, or at least within sight of the house, until the immediate danger is past. I will not go with you farther now, as I have no wish to offer more explanations than may be absolutely necessary, and I must follow this unhappy man, if haply I yet may turn him to his duty. Do you go on to the house, and when I return, perhaps on the morrow, I will see what can be done."

"Oh, mon père, mon père, forgive me before I go!" I cried, kneeling at his feet.

"There is no question of my forgiveness," he answered, coldly. "You must learn that wrong-doing need not be personal to produce evil. There is no question of me or thee in the matter at all. It is much greater, much more serious than any personal feeling, and the results may swell out of all proportion, that you can see, to your action. All that can be done now is to remedy it in so far as in us lies. Go, my daughter, go and ask for guidance, the one thing needful, far above any mere human forgiveness. But do not go thinking you have forfeited either my sympathy or my help. I owe both to you, as to every helpless creature God sends into my path; and, believe me, no one could appeal more strongly to my poor protection than do you. Go, my daughter, and may God keep and comfort you!"

I found my way back, dazed and confounded, and could only with the greatest effort command myself sufficiently to return some coherent answer to Angélique's inquiry as to her brother; but she covered my confusion with her own liveliness.

"Never marry a soldier, 'mademoiselle!'" she exclaimed. "They worry one's life out with their eternal comings and goings. As likely as not Charles is off again, and will never come near us to say farewell; but that is a bagatelle. The real trouble is that my mother is an old woman; she realises keenly that any day Charles may say good-bye for the last time, and to spare her the pain of parting, he has more than once slipped off quietly like this. Never was a man so tender of women as my brother Charles! But you are pale; you look tired out. It is often so in spring-time in this country. What you should do is to get to bed at once, and have Lucie bring you a tisane when you are ready for sleep. Go, that is wise."

It was such a relief to be alone, to lie broken and wretched, but safe and by myself, in my own chamber, that for the moment this sufficed me; then sleep came to me, and when I awoke, quieted and refreshed, the house was still, and Lucy lay sleeping in her cot near by.

With the waking, came back the whole dreadful scene through which I had just passed, and in my ears rang the warnings of le père Jean touching my safety. Alas! I realised the danger only too vividly, and I trembled in the darkness at the pictures I could not help forming in my mind. There seemed no outlet and no end to my misery. Even the thought of facing the mother, who saw naught but the chivalrous soldier in her son, and the sister, who so firmly believed in the tenderness and magnanimity of her brother, was a torture to me. In Lucy it would be impossible as well as dishonourable to confide, and, with the priest gone, I stood alone against a danger the very existence of which would be a degradation to reveal.

Suddenly I remembered Gabriel and the promise which I had dismissed so lightly at the time of its making, and at once a way of escape opened before me.

I did not hesitate a moment; slipping noiselessly out of bed, I dressed myself, and taking my heavy cloak and shoes in my hand, I stole out of my room and into the kitchen, where I felt for the box with the steel and flint beside the fireplace, and then opening the door, I stood alone in the quiet night.

I was country-born, if not country-bred, which served me in good stead now; for the night had not the terrors for me I had feared, and I marvelled at my courage as I went on. I had only one anxiety in mind, and that was lest the beacon should not be in a fit state for firing. Thinking of nothing else, I hurried down the path by the Little River until I reached the Beacon Point, where, to my relief, I found the pile of wood dry and undisturbed.

I knelt beside it; but at first my hands trembled so I could not strike a spark; however, the very effort steadied me, and, gathering some small twigs, in a few minutes I had my tinder alight, the twigs caught, with them I lighted others, and when I rose to my feet the flame was curling up through the skilfully piled branches, and in a few moments a straight pillar of fire went leaping up into the night.

"A STRAIGHT PILLAR OF FIRE WENT LEAPING UP INTO THE NIGHT"

CHAPTER XIX

ON THE ISLE AUX COUDRES

Now that the beacon was fairly alight my purpose was accomplished, and I was free to return to the house; but the night was warm, there was no sound save the lapping of the rising tide, or the short quick puff of some slowly turning porpoise from out the darkness beyond, and I stood there for what I suppose was a long time, held by the spell of the perfect quiet. At length I roused myself, and began to retrace my steps, but as I gained the line of the pine wood I turned aside and stood a moment for a last look at the friendly beacon flaring up into the darkness. The loud crackle of the wood seemed like joyous cries of encouragement, and the strong ruddy flame filled me with a fresh confidence. On the morrow, if Gabriel should appear, I would announce our departure for Quebec, and once there would place myself under the protection of M. de Montcalm until...

“Oh, Heaven!” I almost screamed, for I heard footsteps hurriedly approaching, and had only time to withdraw more completely into the shadow of the trees when Luntook, the Indian, came running down the path, and in an instant scattered the fire on all sides, hurling the blazing brands over the cliff and covering up the embers until not a spark remained.

When the fire was completely extinguished he looked about him slowly, while I cowered there in mortal terror, believing he would immediately search for and certainly discover me; but, to my surprise, he walked silently past my shelter and kept his way along the path.

I was simply paralysed with fear. I could not have screamed or made a move had my life depended on it; the very presence of the man struck terror to my soul, for he seemed the personification of all the possibility of evil in his master. He it was, I well knew, who would carry out any violence which might be determined against me, and the fact of his remaining about the place when his master was supposed to have left, filled me with alarm. I was persuaded I was to be carried off, perhaps on the morrow, and the priest's warning came back to me with renewed insistence.

My burden of fear so grew upon me that I dared not remain within the shadow of the wood, for every sound in its depths shook me with a new terror, and every moment I imagined I could feel the Indian stealing nearer me in the darkness. I dared not look behind me, I dared hardly move forward, but my dread of the wood was greater than that of the open beach, and I somehow managed to clamber down the cliff and took shelter behind a great bowlder, where I could hear the soothing ripple of the water and feel the soft wind against my face. It brought a sense of being removed from the land and men; I was more alone, but I felt safer.

The chill of the night struck through me to the bone, and I was burdened with its length; it

seemed as if time were standing still. But at last I was roused by the hoarse call of birds passing high overhead, and saw the sky was paling in the east. Slowly, slowly the gray dawn came, trees began to detach themselves and stand out against the sky, rocks took a vague form against the sands, the wicker lines of the fishery grew distinct in the receding waters, while white wreaths of mist rose smoke-like from the Little River.

Slowly, slowly grew the glory in the east, and when at length the first beams of the sun struck strong and clear across the bay, making a shining pathway to my very feet, it seemed so actually a Heaven-sent way of escape that, trembling in every limb, I rose and staggered forward as if it were possible to tread it; and then, recovering my distracted senses, I fell to crying like a child.

The tears brought relief, and I began to bestir myself, to move about quickly, until I could feel my stiffened limbs again, and recovered some sense of warmth. I did not dare to leave the open security of the beach until the sun was higher, when I wandered out to the extreme end of the sands, looking anxiously for some answer to my signal from the Isle aux Coudres, but the opposite shore, was hidden by a close bank of white cloud, broken only by the rounded tops of the mountains above Les Eboulements. Presently the cloud began to lift and scatter, and I could make out the island lying low and dun against the higher main-land. But no answering smoke broke the clear morning air; indeed, it seemed impossible that my signal, which had not burned for an hour at most, could be seen at such a distance. I turned away with an empty heart, when I caught sight of a boat standing up close inshore, her sails filled with the freshening morning breeze.

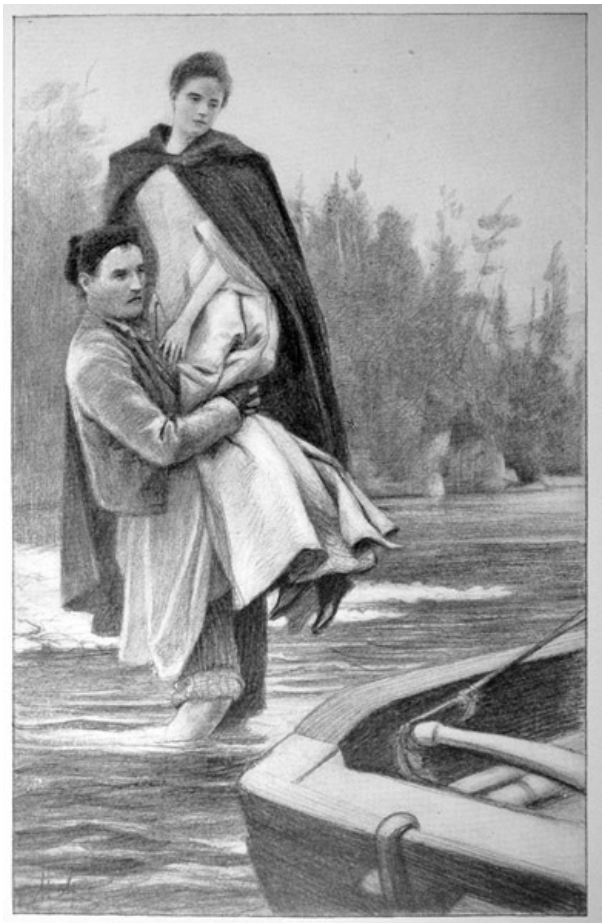
The mere presence of a means of escape changed everything in a moment. I was filled with a new courage, and climbing to the top of the outermost bowlder, I drew the long white scarf from my neck and waved it to and fro above my head. To my intense joy, I was answered by the boat hauling round, and lowering and raising the point of one of her sails—the same signal I had seen Gabriel make to M. de Montcalm off Cap Tourmente. It was Gabriel himself! his signal assured me of it; and at the sight the morning took on a new glory, for the terror and bitterness of the night had passed as I watched the boat as my deliverance hastening towards me.

As she came on, I made out Gabriel distinctly, and before long the boat was lying motionless, Gabriel had his shallop over the side, and a moment later was splashing through the shallow water, and bowing as though he had parted from me only yesterday.

“'Bon chien chasse de race,' madame. I was cruising about, as I always am, ready for the first ship which appears, when I saw the light; and though it did not burn long enough for a signal, I thought it well to look it up; and now, madame, I am at your orders, as I promised. I was sure you would want me some day.”

“Oh, Gabriel, I do want you! I never stood in greater need. Take me on board, and I will tell you.”

He showed no surprise at my demand, but merely repeating his favourite proverb, “ce que femme vent, Dieu le veut,” lifted me in his arms like a child, and carried me through mud and water, and set me in his shallop, when a few strokes brought as alongside the boat, and I was in safety on her deck. Then the sails were once more set, and we stood away from the shore and up the river.



"HE CARRIED ME THROUGH MUD AND WATER, AND SET ME IN HIS SHALLOP"

He did not question me, nor, indeed, would he allow me to speak, until he had provided a hot drink of some sweetened spirit, which brought back the glow to my blood, and then he set about preparing breakfast, keeping up an incessant chatter the while, until he had me laughing at his flow of talk.

“Aha! That is better!” he exclaimed, joyfully. “Now, madame, what are your orders?”

“Can you take me to Quebec?”

“I can—but—” and his face lengthened.

“But what?”

“Well, madame, to be truthful, I am expecting the first ships every day now; they are late as it is; and if I am off the ground, why, then the bread must drop into some one else's basket! That is all.”

“I can pay you well for what you may lose in this way.”

“It is not only the money, madame, 'l'argent est rond et çà roule,' but I have always brought up the first ship since I was twenty, and that was not last Sunday, as one may guess. Yet, if madame says so, I am at her orders.”

“I do not know what to say, Gabriel. I will not return to Beaulieu, and though I want to reach Quebec, I am unwilling you should miss your ship; but I certainly cannot remain on board here while you are with her.”

“Bedame! I have a plan, if it will answer. We are at no distance from the Island, my good wife is alone, as usual, and, if I do not ask too much, could you not put up with her for a week or two at most until I pick up my ship, and then the trick is done? Our house is clean, my wife is the best of managers, and will do everything to make you comfortable.”

“That will answer admirably, Gabriel.”

“Good! Madame, I can also return to Beaulieu and fetch your woman and such things as you may desire.”

For the first time I remembered Lucy, and was filled with remorse at the thought of my desertion of her. What could I do? To send word back to Beaulieu now would be to betray my retreat; and what explanation could I offer to my kindly hosts?

Gabriel, with ready tact, saw my distress.

“Pardon, madame; I am not asking questions; I am not even thinking them. You shall come and go as you like with me and mine, and no one shall dare to do aught but obey you. If my

plan does not suit, say so freely, madame, and we will go on to Quebec without another thought, and the King's ship must wait, or go on with such bungler as she may find."

"No, no, Gabriel; I will not have it so. I can remain on the Island for a week as well as not, and, in fact, will do nothing else. That is settled. And, Gabriel, because you are a brave and loyal man I shall trust you further—I do not wish any one to know where I am while on the Island, unless I can get word to le père Jean."

"Oh, as for that, you are going to meet him; for he is due on the Island even now. He always comes about this time to see what is left of us after the winter."

"Then I am quite satisfied. Now tell me, have you any news from Louisbourg?"

"Nothing, madame; no ship has come up yet; but it will not be long before we hear now."

"Then I shall expect to hear when you return for me."

"You will, madame; depend upon it, I will bring you news. And now, if I may offer a counsel, which I am sure is wise, I would say, madame, that you should lie down and try to sleep."

The advice was as welcome as it was wise, and it was not long ere I carried it out.

When I awoke, it was well on in the afternoon, and we were close inshore.

"Yes, madame, it is the Island. There is my house—the one with the flag-staff. See, my good woman has the signal flying for me. I can never come within reach without her scenting me out."

There was a fine pride in his words, and his house was worthy of it. A clean, honest, white face it presented, framed in young hop-vines carefully trained up the low curving roof, and set in a garden which already gave promise of much bloom. His wife, a plump, comely woman, waited for us at the landing-place.

"Ma bonne amie!" said Gabriel, embracing her. "Madame de St. Just has crossed with me from Beaulieu to await le père Jean here, and will stay with you until he comes."

"Your servant, madame," she answered, with a neat courtesy. "If my good man had let me know you were coming, I would have been better prepared."

"'Qui n'a, ne peut,' ma bonne femme. You will do your best, and madame will not ask for more. Had she known of her coming herself, she would have travelled with her servant, as she is used; but she comes alone, because she has great need, and I assured her you would be proud to do all you can for her sake."

"So I will, madame; do not let my husband make you believe I am not more than pleased to have you in my poor house. You do us too much honour in asking it. Come, madame, let me shew you the way."

The house lost nothing of its charm on a nearer approach, and its interior spake volumes for its keeper's cleanliness—not a common quality in the country, as I discovered later. The furniture was of the simplest description, but the well-scrubbed floor was covered with bright-coloured strips of home-made carpeting—"les catalogues," as she called it—and in one corner stood the pride of the family, the great bed—a huge construction, covered with a marvellous quilt of patchwork, and hung with spotless valance and curtains.

Gabriel was to set off by the next tide, and left only after charging his Amelia with numberless instructions as to my care and comfort.

"Oh, these men!" laughed the good-natured woman. "They think the world can't turn round without their advice!"

I was too tired and too safe not to sleep well, and when the smiling face of Madame Dufour appeared at my bedside in the morning, it was to inform me that le père Jean's canoe was already in sight, and he would be at the Island in less than an hour.

Eager as I was to see him, I could not but dread the meeting and what he might say of my desertion, though I begged my hostess to meet him and tell him I was awaiting his leisure.

"Oh, mon père, I did not know what to do!" I cried, when we were alone.

"Thank God you are safe and in good hands," he returned, warmly. "How was it you came to take this step?"

Thereupon I told him of my attempt to signal for Gabriel, of the appearance of Luntook, of my terror, and of my sudden resolve on the pilot's appearance. "It was only when I felt myself safe, mon père, that I remembered what my action might mean to others; and now I am miserable at the thought of the anxiety I have caused. What can be done?"

"I cannot blame you, my daughter; you have been brought face to face with dangers you know nothing of, in surroundings which are strange to you; it is well for your own sake you should be removed from the constant dread of their recurrence. I guessed at your destination, for on landing the same morning you left, André and I saw the beacon had been lighted, and a very little looking about convinced us of what had happened, for we not only

found your scarf, but Gabriel's marks in the sand were plain directions."

"But, mon père, what of them at the house?"

"It is a time of war, my daughter," he returned, smiling. "More than one person is moving about the country in a mysterious way; much greater freedom is allowed; and when I explained to Mme. de Sarennes that you were in my care, and it was necessary you should be absent for a time, she was satisfied with my word, and bade your woman make up a packet of necessaries for you, which André will bring presently. You cannot do better than remain where you are until I can arrange for your woman to meet you and go on to Quebec together. I soon shall know what opportunity offers for a passage to France, which will be somewhat uncertain now, as the English who wintered at Halifax are at sea again; but there is time enough to decide; the whole summer is before us."

And all this without a word, without a look of reproach; how my heart went out to him for his forbearance!

At length I asked the question which was always with me: "Mon père, is there any news?"

"From Louisbourg? Nothing that is hopeful. A more formidable fleet than ever before has left England; we cannot expect any succour from France; and Louisbourg is probably invested by this time, if the enemy have made good their landing. Before another month the matter will be pushed to an issue, and it will be against us, unless the place can be relieved."

Where the expected relief was to come from I did not dare to ask, as I could not doubt but that M. de Sarennes was an important factor in the plan.

Le père Jean had manifold duties to perform during his short stay; impatient couples were married, children were baptised, and many an anxious heart relieved of the burthen which it had borne alone through the long imprisonment of the winter. He did not suffer me to remain idle either, for he gathered the children about him, and showed me how to instruct them in the elements of our faith.

"Here is your work," he said, smiling. "You have your education and sympathy on the one hand, and on the other are these little black and brown heads—Bergerons, Tremblays, Gauthiers, and so on—to be filled with some measure of the grace which God intended for each of them. It will be a comfort to me to think of them in your hands while I am sent on my Master's business, often into paths not of my own choosing. Do not on any account be tempted to leave here until I come or send for you. Even if M. de Sarennes should appear, be under no apprehension, for all you need do is to tell Mme. Dufour, and it will be a delight to her to balk his plans, as there is no love lost between these Islanders and the people of the main-land."

"I will do my best, mon père. When may I look for your return?"

"I cannot tell, perhaps in a month or so; but do not let that disturb you; for, even if I am prevented, I will surely send you word what to do. Seek your quiet in your daily task, and your comfort in prayer."

So he took his way, leaving me in such content as was possible. Had I dared I would have questioned him about the letter, but I could not bring myself to acknowledge this humiliation, even to him. I felt it so keenly, that I no longer wondered my tormentor had felt himself free to make any proposal, when it was but to one whom he believed to be the discarded wife of another, and I found a new misery in vain imaginings of what had been written to call forth so heartless a reply. I would comfort myself at one moment by thinking it was not intended for me, only to be met by the alternative of Hugh being married to another. Turn which way I might, I could frame no explanation which brought any comfort. If the letter were for me, then had no man ever betrayed love more cruelly; if for another, then I had thrown away my life.

My work with the children was the greatest boon which could have been granted me; it kept me sane and healthy, and my heart went out to the little ignorant souls so full of life and affection. It was no task; it was a welcome labour of love; and the children saw and felt it as such; on their side, their little feet were never too weary nor their little hands too tired to respond to any service I might ask of them.

But despite their love and the unfailing kindness of Mme. Dufour, it was impossible to escape from my pain. My daily refuge was the altar of the little church, where night and morn, often in company of some other lonely woman anxious for the safety of son or husband far at sea, I laid bare my soul in an agony of supplication for the safety of the one dear to me above all others; and I found support, too, in the thought of the devoted priest pursuing his lonely way, consecrating his life and effort for others, most of whom made no return, for they knew not the greatness of his sacrifice.

The rumours that reached us during the next two months brought no assuagement to our fears, and when le père Jean came, towards the middle of August, men, women, and children gathered on the beach to welcome him. His white, worn face and wearied bearing told his message before he spake a word, and my heart failed me at the sight.

With his unfailing consideration, he turned to me the moment he saw my distress. "Le

Chevalier de Maxwell is safe; he escaped the night the capitulation was signed," he whispered, and then turned with his news towards the anxious people.

Like one afar off I heard him tell of the long siege, of the hardships endured, the courage displayed, the surrender of the ruined fortress, and the removal of the garrison to the ships of war; but in the selfishness of love my heart was too full of gratitude to have understanding for aught else.

When the story was ended, and the eager questioners answered, he turned to me again, and, inviting me to follow, we took our way towards the church.

"You are anxious to hear more," he said, gently. "Let me tell you all I know. M. de Maxwell left the town only after the capitulation was reluctantly agreed to by M. de Drucour, who, with all his officers, had protested against it, and would willingly have held out even beyond hope. He ran the gantlet of the batteries the whole length of the harbour in safety; he was at Miramichi only two days before I arrived there, and took command of some Canadians in charge of a number of English prisoners to lead them to Quebec. So you may comfort yourself with the thought of his safety, and that your prayers have been answered."

"What will happen now, mon père?"

"That is impossible to say; except that the English will certainly push every advantage they have gained, and, unless substantial help comes from without, the outlook is desperate."

"Did no help come to Louisbourg, mon père?"

"None," he answered; and the one word sank into my heart like a knell. He parted from me at the church door, and I wandered down to the beach alone.

The loss of Louisbourg, as even I could see, might mean the loss of Canada, and, in the priest's eyes at least, its loss was due not so much to the weakness of the garrison as to the failure of the relief, and this relief could have come only by the man who had withstood his commands, holding out a shameful condition as the price of his obedience. Whether le père Jean was right or wrong I could not judge, but I surely knew he could but lay the source of this dishonour to the wilful act of the woman he had rescued and befriended in her hour of need.

The news of the gallant defence of Carillon went far to offset the disaster of Louisbourg, but not to allay our anxiety, and September was a trying month for us all; but Gabriel visited us twice, and was unshaken in his confidence.

"Time enough to cry out when we are beaten, madame. We have held them back at Carillon, and will do so again, if need be; they have been beaten in the Upper Country before this, and they will be clever indeed if they can come up the river."

"They did so once before, Gabriel."

"'Une fois n'est pas coutume,' madame; pilots cannot be picked up like pease."

I expected word from le père Jean every day, and awaited it with conflicting feelings. I was most anxious to know the truth about Hugh, and yet to meet him was past my desire, if he were really married. Should that prove the case, then I would use my utmost effort to return to France without his knowing I had ever been in the country. Should he discover it, then I must bear the humiliation as best I might; but I could not bring myself to go away, and perhaps wreck my future as well as his, through a misunderstanding. I felt I had gone too far, had suffered too much, to throw it all away when the truth was within my reach.

In the beginning of October Gabriel came with the expected letter from le père Jean. Mme. de Sarennes and Angélique had gone on to Quebec to spend the winter there, and I was expected to join them whenever it might be convenient. I took affectionate farewells of my good friend, Mme. Dufour, and the infant population of the parish, and set forth with Gabriel. We made a grand run of it, and were in full view of the town before the sun had quite set. I had seen no place, except perhaps Edinburgh, with which I could compare it, and Quebec gained in the comparison. Gabriel saw my admiration, and was delighted.

"Look at it well, madame; it is the gate of the finest country le bon Dieu ever created, and we hold the key! No man need have a faint heart when he can look on Quebec. See the little fort there on the top of the Cape! It was made to signal a King's ships only. See the Château where it stands! It looks like the Governor himself. See the steeples of the Cathedral, of the Jesuits, of the Recollets! See the convents and the hospitals! It is like the Holy City of God! And then talk, if one can, of it falling into the hands of 'les goddams' and 'les Bostonnais.' Bah! It is impossible! If not, what is the use of going to church on Sunday?"

Truly he had every excuse for his pride; and when I looked on the majestic river, barred by the mighty cliff with its glittering crown of roofs and spires overlooking the beautiful sweep of the St. Charles, I felt that his outburst was more of a declaration than a boast.

I disembarked with a light heart, and, guided by Gabriel, climbed the steep ascent to the Haute Ville, at the head of which stood the Sarennes house, there to receive a welcome from Mme. de Sarennes and Angélique, for which none but a daughter and a sister might look.

CHAPTER XX

AT QUEBEC

When our first greetings were over, I asked eagerly for Lucy.

“She is not with us at the moment, my dear,” said Mme. de Sarennes; “but we look for news of her soon now.”

“Where is she?” I asked, dreading to discover the hand of M. de Sarennes in the matter.

“When you left with le père Jean, she was much distressed, for she had not the same reliance on his assurance of your safety as we, and at first insisted that you would never have willingly gone without her, but after a while she seemed to be content. I did not know, until Angélique told me later, that she was possessed with the idea of her son being in Quebec, or I might have persuaded her of its folly. But I knew nothing of it, and thought she was quite content to await your return, when we were astonished by her disappearance. She left a note behind, which, however, did not tell us anything beyond the word Quebec, as it was, of course, in English. Angélique, fetch the note; it is in my red box. We had search made for her as soon as possible, and heard of her along the road as far as Beaumont, but there all trace was lost. Here is the note, my dear,” she said, as Angélique entered.

The poor little letter was not addressed, and was written in a trembling hand.

> “I am going to Quebec to find my son” [I read]. “M. de Sarennes tells me he is there, and I need not stay from him now my mistress is gone. I am thankful to every one who was kind to me, and I will pray for each one every night. LUCY.”

“It is as I thought,” said Mme. de Sarennes. “Poor soul, I am more distressed at the thought of her unrest than for her safety, for our people are very good, particularly to any one they see is not of strong mind. She had some money, Angélique tells me. I have sent her description to the different convents, where they are likely to know of any one in want; and in a small place like this it will not be long before we hear of her.”

“But I am greatly distressed, madame, that you should have had this anxiety, in addition to what I have caused.”

“If we had not cared for her, we should have had no anxiety; and as for yourself, my dear, you must not think we were troubled when le père Jean told us you were under his direction; and now that you have come back to us in safety, your long absence is atoned for. I did not know I could have missed any one so much who was outside of my own family.”

This unexpected tenderness from one I had respected rather than loved, for I had stood somewhat in awe of the usually unresponsive old lady, touched me more than I can tell, and gave me a sense of home and protection which I had long missed, and it was a pain to think I was forced to hide the true reason of my flight from her loyal heart.

The Sarennes house made one of a tower-like group of dwellings forming a little island, as it were, at the head of the Côte de la Montagne, round which swept the streets to zigzag down the long, steep hill, and join, after many turnings, at its foot. Fronting it stood the bishop's palace, a modest enough edifice, and from my window at the back I could look on the house of Philibert, popularly known as “Le Chien d'Or,” from the curious carving over the door, hinting at some tragedy of patient waiting and revenge.

Immediately above was a bright little cul-de-sac, dignified by the name of la rue du Parloir—the theatre of many of the social doings of Quebec; behind this, on the one side, rose the simple apse of the Cathedral, and on the other the white walls and glistening roofs of the Seminary.

It was not long before I learned the gossip of the town from Angélique, who had already made her first triumphs in society, in which she rejoiced so frankly that I felt like a girl again as she chattered of her pleasures.

“It might not seem much to you, Marguerite, after Paris, but to me it is splendid, and we have all sorts of men here.”

“No doubt, chérie. And you find them all charming?”

“Well, they all try to please me, even the bad ones.”

“You have bad ones too, ma mie?”

“Indeed we have, Marguerite, as bad as you ever saw in Paris. You needn't laugh.”

“Heaven forbid! I never found them amusing in Paris, or else where.”

“Oh, but I do! There is M. Bigot, the Intendant. He is wicked, if you like! He is ugly too; but his manner!—it is simply enchanting. He dresses to perfection; and when he plays with a lady, he loses to her like a nobleman. I don't care what they say about him, c'est un galant homme! and the place would be very dull without him.”

“But he is not the only man, Angélique?”

“Dear no! And he wouldn't be so bad, I am sure, if it were not for that odious Mme. Péan; I am sure she is dreadful, and so pretty too! But there are other men; there is M. de Bougainville, who is young, and has le bel air, but is too serious. M. Poulariez, tall and gallant-looking—he is colonel of the Royal Rouissillon; there is Major Joannès—he remembers you on the yacht—he is the little officer who provided the wine for the toasts; then there is M. de Roquemaure and M. de la Rochebeaucourt, and, best of all, there is M. de Maxwell—M. le Chevalier de Maxwell de Kirkconnel—he is a countryman of your own, Marguerite;” and she paused and looked at me as if awaiting an answer.

“Yes, and what of him?” I asked, with a good shew of composure.

“Simply that he is the only man I have ever seen that I could fall in love with. That shocks you, I suppose? Well, don't be afraid. I am not nearly so bold as I pretend, and I don't mean a word of it. I am simply telling you how much I like him; besides, he is old enough to be my grandfather. Do you know why I like him?”

“No, chérie. Why?”

“Because when Mme. de Lanaudière, Mme. de Beaubassin, and others, were being good to me by patting me on the head and bidding me behave like a nice little girl, as it were, M. de Maxwell treated me as if I were the greatest lady in the room. He would leave the best dressed among them all to cross the floor openly and speak with me, and because he did so others followed, and I am in request. He is only 'Chevalier,' you know; but he could not have more weight here were he Duke or Prince.”

“And he is proud of the distinction, I suppose?”

“Perhaps so, but he does not shew it; but all this is nothing to his singing.”

“Tell me of that.”

“Only the other night, at Mme. de Lanaudière's, he sang so that even the players stopped in their game to listen. I know nothing of music, but I could have cried before he ended; and when he had sung again, as every one wished, Mme. de Lanaudière cried, before us all; 'Chevalier, you must not sing again or we cannot call our hearts our own!' And every one laughed and clapped their hands. That is what I call a triumph!”

“Yes, Angélique, I know. One of the dearest things I can remember is a loved voice singing.”

Only those who have known the hunger of the heart can realise the sweet comfort these innocent words brought to me. They pictured the Hugh I had carried all these years in my heart. How readily I could conceive the gentle consideration and the charm which won the gratitude of this simple girl as they had won my own!

As we settled down to our regular life, Angélique's one distress was that I would not go with her into the society she so dearly loved. She could not understand my refusal, and even her mother thought it would be well that I should shew myself, if merely to establish my position and put an end to the annoying questionings which began to circulate concerning my station and intentions. But on this point I was firm, and the only concession I would make was to send a note to M. de Montcalm, begging he would pay me the honour of a visit.

He came on the morrow, and his respect and courtesy towards me went far to establish my position in the eyes of Mme. de Sarennes, for he treated me with all the consideration one would shew towards an equal.

He informed me that his aide, M. de Bougainville, would sail for France almost immediately —we were then at the beginning of November—and if I would brave the discomforts of so late a passage, he would place me under his care; but Mme. de Sarennes protested so firmly against my undertaking such a voyage that I was spared a decision.

In truth I did not know what to do. My pride urged me to go; but my love, in spite of what had passed, drew me closer and closer to Quebec. I could not go without learning the truth, and yet I could not bring myself to meet Hugh at the moment, which I should have to do if I accepted M. de Montcalm's offer; so I allowed matters to shape themselves without my interference.

“Peace may be proclaimed this winter, and if so, Mme. de St. Just can go without danger in the spring. Besides, she cannot go until she knows of the safety of one she is interested in,” said Mme. de Sarennes, decidedly; and her reminder of my duty towards Lucy ended the discussion.

“Then, madame,” said M. de Montcalm, turning to me, “if you are to stay with us you must renounce your retirement, and give us your support in our little society. We are too few to spare any possible addition to it, the more so that if peace be not proclaimed before spring everything is likely to come to an end, so far as we are concerned.”

“Mon Dieu, Marquis! Do not speak so lightly of disaster,” interrupted Mme. de Sarennes, severely.

“Ma foi, madame! What is the use of shutting our eyes to the inevitable? We are hemmed in

right and left, and the next move will be directed on us here. It needs no prophet to foretell that."

"But is there not Carillon?"

"There is also the river."

"They can never come up the river! See what befell them before! I remember well how their fleet was destroyed under their Admiral Walker."

"Nothing happens but the impossible, madame; and we are no longer in an age that hopes for miracles."

"Monsieur, it pains me to hear you speak thus. God is not less powerful now than He was fifty years ago."

"I sincerely trust not, madame; but his Majesty will hardly acquit me if I rely on a chance tempest or a difficult channel. It is only the question of a pilot."

"And think you, monsieur, a Canadian would ever consent to pilot an enemy up our river?"

"Madame, I cannot doubt that even a Canadian will act as other men, if he have a pistol at the back of his head. No, no, madame; believe me, the river is our danger, and I would that M. de Vaudreuil might see it as I do."

"M. de Vaudreuil is a God-fearing man, monsieur."

"So much the better for him, madame; but, unfortunately, I am responsible for military matters," he answered, with a bitterness which made me most uncomfortable.

He saw my distress and added, quickly: "But such affairs should not be discussed before ladies; I forget myself. Mme. de Sarennes, I have every respect for your opinion, and it is only my anxiety for our common cause which urges me to exaggerate what may after all be merely possible dangers."

"Now, Mme. de St. Just, to return to our society. We are dull now, and shall be until the last ships leave; but we will have balls and routs later on, and perhaps may even offer you a novelty in the shape of a winter pique-nique, a fête champêtre in four feet of snow."

"That, I am sure, must be delightful," I answered, pleased that the conversation had taken a different turn; "but I am afraid I have little interest in amusement as yet."

"We have cards, madame, if you are ever tempted to woo the fickle goddess."

"M. de Montcalm," asked Mme. de Sarennes, in her severest manner, "do you intend to put an end to scandalous play this winter?"

"Eh, mon Dieu, madame! I must do something, I suppose. It is indeed a scandal that officers should ruin themselves, and I assure you I have had many a bad quarter of an hour over it. It cannot be forbidden altogether, for they must amuse themselves in some manner."

"They exist without it in Montreal."

"Possibly; but M. de Vaudreuil is there. We cannot hope to aspire to all his virtues." And to my dismay I saw we were once more nearing dangerous ground.

To turn the conversation again, I asked for news of the English at Louisbourg.

"Some are still there, some in garrison at Beauséjour, some in New York and Boston, and others returned to England; but we will doubtless have an opportunity of inspecting most of them here next spring, unless, as Mme. de Sarennes suggests, peace be declared in the meantime."

This was as bad as ever, but led to nothing more than a momentary stiffness, which Angélique's entrance dissipated, and made a merry ending to a visit not without its difficulties.

Before the Marquis left, he said to me: "You may not have heard, madame, but your brother, who is an officer in Fraser's, a Highland regiment, was captured in the first engagement, and was a prisoner in Louisbourg up to the capitulation. If you wish, I can obtain more definite news of him through M. de Maxwell, one of our officers who was in garrison there at the time."

Nothing could have been more unlooked-for, and for a moment I was overwhelmed at the thought of this innocent betrayal of my presence to Hugh. I could hardly find courage to reply, and it was fortunate that my answer served as a cover to my confusion.

"M. de Montcalm, I have never heard from or written to my brother since he accepted his English commission," I said, in a trembling voice.

"Pardon, madame; I had forgotten when I spoke."

"Just as we forget, monsieur, that our Marguerite is not one of us by birth as she is in heart," cried Angélique, enthusiastically, slipping her arm about me.

This shewed me more than any other happening how precarious my position was, for though neither Angélique, nor her mother, nor M. de Montcalm, would now mention my identity, any of them might already have spoken of my brother. M. de Sarennes knew my secret, and Hugh might discover it at any moment.

When the Marquis left, Mme. de Sarennes no longer made an effort to contain her indignation.

“They are all alike!” she burst forth. “They make not the slightest effort to understand us, nor to do aught but amuse themselves. You are quite right, Marguerite, to refuse to have any part in their gaieties! I shall never urge you again. To talk of balls and routs and gaming as necessities, when the people are starving within our very walls!

“What wonder is it our husbands and brothers and sons say these fainéants care naught what becomes of the country or the people, so long as they gain some little distinction which may entitle them to an early return and an empty decoration! They have neither pity, nor faith, nor the slightest interest in the cause for which they are fighting.

“If M. de Vaudreuil, whom they pretend to despise, were permitted to take the field himself, with a few thousand good Canadians behind him, we would hear a different story. Think you if my son had been permitted to reach Louisbourg it would have fallen? No, a thousand times no! And it is the same elsewhere. Who repulsed the English charge at Carillon? The Canadians. Who brings every important piece of news of the enemy? Some despised Canadian. Who know how to fight and how to handle themselves in the woods? Canadians, and only Canadians! And these are the men they affect to despise! And it is Canadian wives and sisters and daughters—more shame to them!—who lay themselves out to amuse and to be talked about by these same disdainful gentry!

“Go to your room, mademoiselle!” she ended, turning on Angélique. “I will hear nothing of your doings among a clique I despise from top to bottom;” and the indignant old lady stopped, worn out for very lack of breath, while Angélique made a little laughing grimace at me and fled.

The indictment was severe, but there was much truth in it at the same time. The condition of the people was pitiable in the extreme. Provisions were at ruinous prices, the wretched paper money was almost worthless, and even the officers were beggared by their necessary expenses. At the opening of the New Year the Intendance was invaded by a crowd of desperate women clamouring for relief, and the address of M. Bigot in ridding himself of his unwelcome visitors was laughed at as a joke. Worse than this, no attempt was made to lessen or even hide the gaieties that went on, play was as high and as ruinous as ever, and the town was all agog over the report of a ball to be given with unusual splendour by the Intendant on Twelfth-Night. It was true that he made a daily distribution of food at his doors, that he spake pleasant and reassuring words to the suffering people, that he even permitted the respectably dressed among them to enter and view his guests from the gallery of his ball-room, but this did but serve to intensify the bitterness and indignation of those who stood apart from him and his following. It would be unjust to brand M. de Montcalm, and perhaps others, as willing participants in these excesses; on account of their position, their presence at all formal entertainments was a necessity, and certainly the town offered no distraction of any other nature whatsoever.

Our inquiries had so far failed in discovering any trace of Lucy's whereabouts, and yet I felt certain she was in or about Quebec, and as she had acquired enough French to make her wants known, and was provided with money sufficient to meet them, we held it likely she was in some family, but probably seldom stirred abroad for fear she might be recognised and prevented from keeping her patient watch.

At length the great event of the winter came on—the ball at the Intendance on Twelfth-Night. Angélique was all impatience for the evening, and, when dressed, her excitement added to the charm of her girlish beauty.

“I wish you would come, Marguerite!” she exclaimed, longingly.

“I would like to, chérie, if only to see you.”

“And to see M. de Maxwell too. I should like you to see him. I assure you one does not see such a man every day. He has such brown eyes; they do not sparkle, but they are deep. He has lovely hands, as well cared for as a woman's, but strong and masterful, I am sure. He has a fine foot and a well-turned leg. That is nearly all—except his smile; he smiles, and you think he is smiling for you alone—and when he speaks, you are sure of it! Such a low, sweet voice! You are always certain he is never thinking of any one else when you are listening to it. And he dresses—plainly, perhaps—but it is perfection for him. But there—I must run; Denis has been at the door for an hour,” and, kissing me affectionately, she hurried off.

It was well for me she did so, for I could not have listened to her light-hearted babble longer without betraying myself. When I closed the door behind her, and had spent half an hour with Mme. de Sarennes, I regained my room overwhelmed by the storm of emotions raised within me. “Oh, why cannot I see him, I, of all women in the world?” I cried, aloud, and the words set free my tears to relieve me. As I regained control of myself I caught sight of Angélique's pretty fan, on my table, forgotten in her hurry; and the moment I saw it a plan

flashed before me, and I determined to see with my own eyes what I had so long pictured in my heart.

Bathing my face until every trace of my outburst was removed, I dressed myself, and taking a large blue cloak with a hood, which might be worn by either a lady or her servant, I picked up the fan and stole quietly out into the street.

It was a beautiful, soft night, without a moon, and I went down by the rue St. Jean and the Palace Hill without interruption, and, passing beyond the walls, went straight to the Intendance, which was all aglow with light, and surrounded by a gaping crowd.

Quickly passing through the people, and saying to the grenadier on guard at the gate, “For Mademoiselle de Sarennes,” I was admitted to the court-yard, and passed the lackeys at the entrance with the same password.

Singling out one who looked civil, I drew him aside.

“I bring this fan for Mademoiselle de Sarennes, but I wish, now that I am here, to have a look at the ball. Is there any place where I can go besides the gallery?”

“Perfectly, mademoiselle; I can shew you just the place. You were lucky in coming to me. Do you know me?”

“No,” I answered, willing to flatter him; “but you look as if you would know what I want.”

“Aha!” he exclaimed, pluming himself. “You were right, perfectly right. You have only to follow me,” and he led the way down the corridor, and, unlocking a door, he motioned me to enter. I drew back as a rush of music and voices and the warm air of the ball-room swept out.

“Do not be afraid,” he whispered, “this is curtained off. You can stay here for an hour if you like, no one will come through before then; only, when you leave, be sure and turn the key again, and bring it to me.”

I thanked him, and he left, closing the door noiselessly behind him; and then approaching the curtains, I carefully parted them, and looked out on the ball-room.

CHAPTER XXI

I AWAKE FROM MY DREAM

It was a scene that would have done credit to a much larger centre than Quebec. It is true the walls were bare of any fitting decoration, the windows too small to break them with any effect, the chandeliers mean in size, and the sconces but makeshifts; still, the room was imposing in its proportions and the company brilliant.

I recognised the Intendant without difficulty. He was a small man, delicately formed, and wore his dark red hair with but little powder. He was most handsomely dressed, his carriage was dignified and easy, and the charm of which Angélique had spoken was at once apparent; I quite understood how one might forget the plain, sickly face, marked by the traces of excess, for it was frank and open, and one could not but acknowledge its strength.

I saw, too, M. Poulariez, looking very handsome in his new white uniform of the Royal Rouissillon; the Major Joannès, and others whom Angélique had described, or we had seen from our windows on their way to one or other of the three divinities of the rue du Parloir. They were all there, vying with each other, Mme. de Lanaudière, Mme. de Beaubassin, and Mme. Péan, and though their dresses were doubtless far behind the mode, they were all three noticeable women, and dressed with discretion.

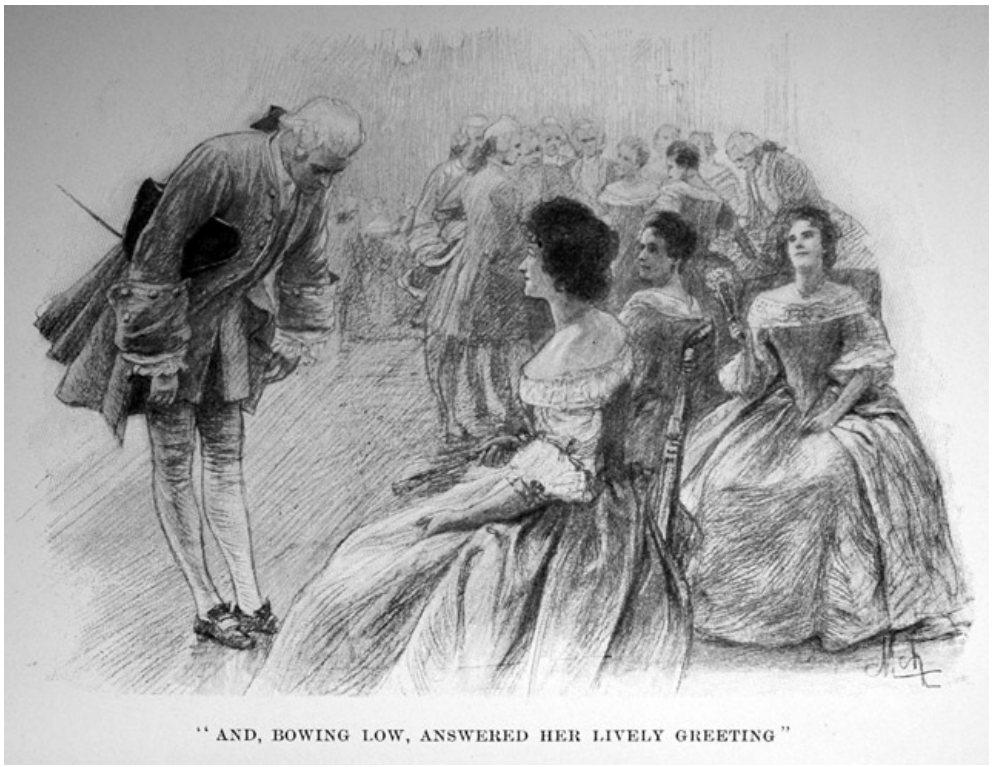
At the opposite end were the musicians, whose efforts were surprisingly good; and in a long gallery down one side stood the onlookers, crowding it to its utmost capacity. Angélique sate the centre of an animated group at no great distance from where I was hidden, and her evident delight in the merry trifling that went on about her made a charming picture; but he whom I sought was not one of the little court before her, and I scanned the room eagerly. For the first time I realised that he might be changed; that I had changed much myself—for ten years is a long time out of one's life—and with a pang I thought of Angélique's girlish freshness, and wished I could have remained eighteen for his sake.

At last! My heart leaped within me, and my eyes swam so I could hardly see, for there was Hugh, the one and only love of my life! “Oh, Hugh! Hugh! my darling!” I murmured, forgetful of all, save that my dreamings had come true, and my eyes had been granted their desire.

He was coming slowly down the room, making his way gracefully through the crowd, bowing and occasionally speaking to other guests as he passed. It pained me to see how thin and worn his face had grown; but, if anything, it was handsomer than ever, though, like that of most of the officers, it was too brown from constant exposure. How could Angélique call him old? For his figure was as light and graceful as I ever pictured it, and his bearing as perfect as of yore. He was not in uniform, but was fittingly dressed in a puce-coloured coat, relieved with narrow silver braid, and his white satin waistcoat and small-clothes were ornamented

in the same manner.

He came directly up to where Angélique sate, and, bowing low, answered her lively greeting with his winning smile, and I could almost catch the soft tones of his voice where I stood.



"AND, BOWING LOW, ANSWERED HER LIVELY GREETING"

Presently she rose, and dismissing her court with a laughing bow, they moved down the room together, and as they did so my love followed them, sweeping all doubts aside, and I fell to defending him against myself with all my soul. I had never read that letter aright. Should I not have remembered that such a man could never hurt a woman? It was an impossibility for him to have written me direct; and had he not, through the very hands of my enemy, sent me effective warning not to intrust myself to his treacherous guidance? —"Keep the lady claiming to be my wife at such, a distance that I may never set eyes on her again." Could anything be plainer or better conceived? If he had denied being married, his letter could have carried no message for me, and would have placed me in even a worse position. It was through my own pride and stupidity that I had blundered into denying the marriage, and so had thrown myself into the power of Sarennes.

"Good-evening, mademoiselle," whispered a voice; and I faced about, trembling with sudden terror, to find M. de Sarennes close behind me.

"Good-evening, mademoiselle," he repeated, smiling at my dismay. "You did not expect to see me?"

"I did not know you were in Quebec," I gasped, trying hard to recover my self-control.

"Nor did any one else, save your friend M. de Montcalm; I arrived an hour ago."

"How did you know I was here?" I asked, to gain time.

"I guessed whither you had been drawn when I did not find you at the house, and a crown to the right lackey brought me here. And now, with your permission, we will finish that conversation your friend the Jesuit interrupted more than six months ago. No, you dare not cry out; and see, I have the key. You are more alone with me here than in the woods at Beaulieu," and he smiled with an air of triumph that made me desperate.

"It is useless to attempt to frighten me, monsieur," I said, boldly. "I am among friends."

"Indeed? And you count this Chevalier de Maxwell among them?"

"I do; for now I understand the letter he sent."

"May I ask in what way?"

"In the way of a warning not to trust myself to a man in whom he had no confidence."

"Ah! He has explained this to you himself?"

"No, monsieur; it was my own fault I did not see it at the time."

"Will you answer me one question truthfully? Have you seen M. de Maxwell? You will not answer? Then your silence speaks for you. Now if this letter had been sent with the meaning you pretend to put upon it, do you not think M. de Maxwell would have sought you out in a little place like Quebec, where he has no other occupation on his hands than to win enough at pharaon to dress himself for such duties as these?" he said, contemptuously, as he waved

his hand towards the ball-room; and with the sneering words my defence of a few moments before was in the dust. “You have seen him here,” he went on, when he marked the effect of his words. “Does he look like a man who is eating his heart out; or like one who is free of a burthen and trying to enjoy the present? Marguerite, listen to me! For your sake I have braved disgrace and perhaps ruin; for your sake I would go through it again—”

“How dare you speak to me thus, monsieur!” I interrupted. “You insult me beyond endurance when you dare to say I ever inspired any man to be a traitor and a coward.”

“By God!” he muttered, “have a care lest I strike you! There are some things I cannot stand, even from you.”

“Strike! I would rather that than anything else from you.”

He glared at me fiercely for a moment, then suddenly changing, he whispered, entreatingly: “Marguerite, do not tempt me thus. Do not bring out all that is worst in me. You know I love you.”

“I will not have your love; it is hateful to me.”

“Why should my love be hateful? It is not different from that of other men! It is as strong—so strong that I cannot master it. It is as tender, if you will but answer it. It is not to be despised, for I have never offered it to another; and as for myself, God made me as I am.”

“I will not have your love, M. de Sarennes. I will not answer it, and you degrade it when you would force it on me. Go, and leave me in peace!”

“Marguerite, you know nothing of my love. It counts neither insult nor rejection. If you will have it in no other way, let me at least serve you. Let me take up your quarrel.”

“What do you mean?”

“This Maxwell. Say so, and I will hunt him down, and never leave him until you are revenged.”

“Are you mad, monsieur?”

“No, mademoiselle, I am not mad! But are you shameless?”

Trembling with indignation, I drew my cloak about me, and sweeping aside the curtain, I stepped out on the floor of the lighted ball-room. As I passed, the curtain caught my hood, and, to my annoyance, it fell back from my head. The full glare of the light was dazzling, and I was bewildered and confused, but I kept my eyes fixed on the doorway and walked swiftly towards it. No one spake to me, or uttered any exclamation of surprise. Two gentlemen stepped apart as I advanced to allow me free passage, and I had just gained the entrance when I came face to face with the Marquis de Montcalm.

Without the slightest hesitation he bowed, and at once stepped back into the corridor with me.

“Ah, madame, you should have been on the floor, and not in the gallery. This ball promises to be amusing, and you are running away before it has fairly begun.” Seeing I was too embarrassed to reply, he continued with perfect savoir-faire a conversation made up of nothings, leading me down the long corridor away from curious eyes as he did so, until I was able to say, with decency:

“Monsieur, a thousand thanks for your timely attention, but I must return. I have been over-long already.”

At this moment M. de Sarennes approached from the opposite direction, and bowing, as if he had met me for the first time that evening, said, after saluting the Marquis, “My mother grows anxious at your stay, madame, and has deputed me to be your escort.”

But he counted too far on my cowardice, and had no knowledge of how far a woman will trust an honourable man. The Marquis, never doubting his good faith, had already fallen back a step, when I turned to him and said, quietly,

“Monsieur, it is quite impossible for me to accept this gentleman's offer, but I shall be grateful if you will provide me with a different escort.”

“There is not the slightest difficulty in that. M. de Sarennes, I must ask you to remain in attendance here, as I will not have another opportunity of seeing you before you start for Montreal in the morning. I will join you within presently;” and he dismissed the angry man with a formal little bow, as if unconscious of anything unusual. Beckoning to a servant, he ordered him to find M. Joannès, and bid him meet us at the entrance.

“I am heartily glad, madame,” he said, when we were alone, “that you had the confidence to appeal to me. I shall take means to keep M. de Sarennes so busily employed that he will have no further opportunity of annoying you.”

“I am very grateful, monsieur, and would never have troubled you could I have seen any other way of escape.”

“'Tutto è bene che riesce bene,' which is the extent of my Italian, madame; but here is M. Joannès. M. Joannès,” he continued, to the merry little officer, “you have already had the pleasure of meeting Mme. de St. Just; you now can render her a service.”

“I am sure madame has confidence in me; she saw how I had provided the wine when it was essential we should wish her bon voyage off Cap Tourmente.”

“Good! The present service only differs in kind. Will you order my cariole, and see her safely to Mme. de Sarennes's?”

“With all the pleasure in the world, mon général,” and he bowed and hurried off to order the sleigh. In a few moments we whirled out of the court-yard and were driving rapidly up Palace Hill.

M. Joannès chattered incessantly, which was the very spur I most needed. His open friendliness and my sure confidence in the protection of M. de Montcalm gave me a feeling of safety against any attempt on the part of M. de Sarennes that was perfectly reassuring, and I slept that night without a fear, in spite of what I had gone through, until awakened by Angélique as the day was breaking.

“Oh, Marguerite, for shame! To think of your being at the ball and never letting me know!” she cried, to my consternation; but added, immediately: “I'm glad you went, though. Didn't we all look fine?”

“Very fine, and I admired you most of all the women, chérie.”

“Flatterer! You made a fine stir yourself when you crossed the floor. I wish I had seen you, and I would have captured you, then and there! Did you not know you could have gone round by the passage?”

“That is the way I came; but when I wished to go, the door was locked,” I answered, boldly, as I saw she suspected nothing.

“I guessed who it was the moment they spoke of your hair; but I told no one, not even M. de Maxwell. Did you see him? He wore a brown coat laced with silver, and we were at your end of the room, I suppose, while you were there.”

“Yes, chérie, I saw him when he first came to you.”

“And am I not right? Has he not le bel air?”

“He certainly has.”

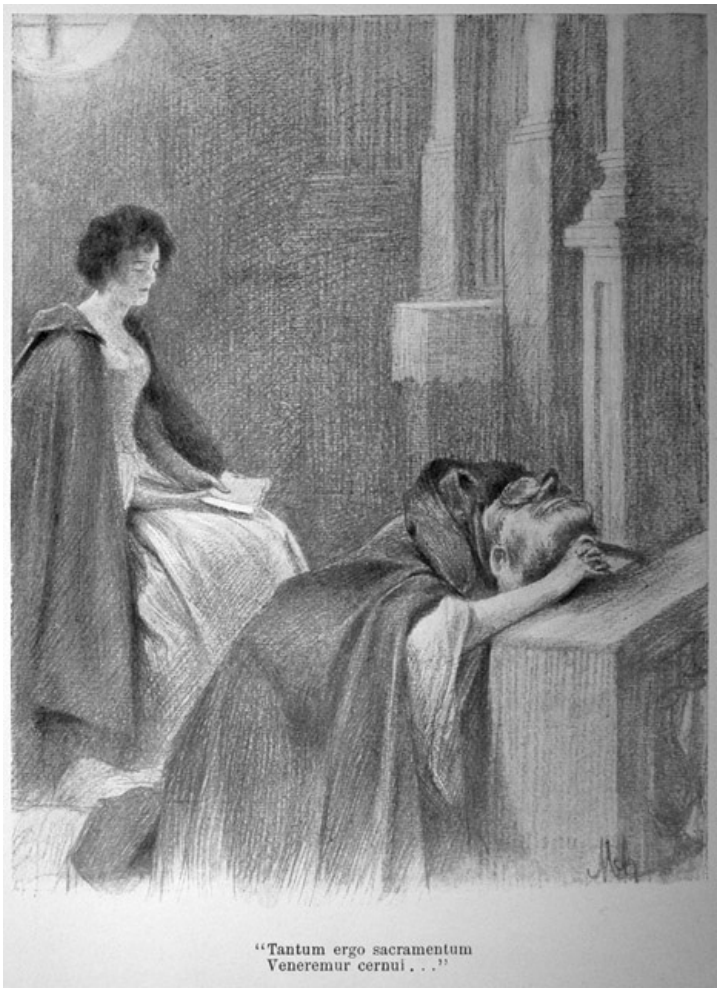
“But who else in the world do you think was there? You will never guess. Charles! He was on his way to Montreal, and came to the ball only to see me in my finery, he said. Not every brother would do that, let me tell you! and he is off the first thing this morning without ever coming to the house. Now I must be off to bed; I couldn't help waking you to tell you my news;” and she kissed me and went to dream of her pleasures.

The following afternoon we went to the Jesuits for benediction—to me the sweetest service of the day. It was already growing dark as we entered. Within, the narrow windows broke the blackness of the walls with their slits of dull gray, and the worshippers sate or knelt in the twilight, a shadowy throng, over which the twinkling flood of light from countless tapers on the altar broke in yellow softness.

The peaceful, tender service was in perfect harmony with the quiet of the evening, and I felt my heart filled with a great comfort; when suddenly from the loft behind us, where the musicians stood, floated out the familiar words,

> Tantum ergo sacramentum
> Veneremur cernui...

and I sank trembling to my knees, for the voice to me was as the voice of an angel—it was Hugh's! I covered my face with my hands and wept silent, blessed tears of joy, while the beautiful hymn thrilled through my very soul.



"Tantum ergo sacramentum
Veneremur cernui . . ."

"It is M. de Maxwell," whispered Angélique; but I could make no answer.

As I walked home with Angélique, her enthusiastic praise of Hugh stirred in me no spark of resentment, much less of jealousy; her satisfaction that I should have seen and admired was so honest and open, and the glimpse I had caught of his bearing towards her was so reassuring, that I was undisturbed. In spite of the truculent suggestions of M. de Sarennes, and even in the face of my own doubts and fears and pride, I was so won back to the old dreamings, so reawakened to the old longings, that I felt nothing less than his own words could ever satisfy me that I had been mistaken. After all, I could not see that I ran any serious risk in meeting him; in such a place as Quebec it was likely to happen at any moment; and surely it were better to take place when I was prepared. At the worst, my position as Mme. de St. Just would still serve to stand between us, and I felt assured I could rely on his forbearance.

However, I was not suffered to come to any conclusion, for Mme. de Sarennes met us as we entered, with tidings that drove everything else out of my head for the moment.

"Marguerite, I have news for you. La mère de Ste. Hélène sends word, saying an Englishwoman has been brought to the Hôtel-Dieu, and from the description I believe her to be Lucie. Do you both go at once and ascertain."

We hurried off in great excitement, and an interview with the Superior satisfied us that the patient was indeed my poor Lucy. She had been found that very morning, wandering in a benumbed and dazed condition on the road by the St. Charles, by a habitant coming with his load to early market, and as he had business at the Hôtel-Dieu, he had carried her there and given her in charge of the nuns. She was much exhausted by cold and fasting, but sleep and food had restored her to consciousness, and, on finding she was English, they had at once sent us word.

"If you wish, you may see her now, madame," said the Superior. "And if we are right, it will serve to reassure her, for she is much troubled at being detained here."

Thanking her, I took my way in charge of a sister, and quietly entered the sick-room. The first glance at the frail face on the pillow told me our search had ended, and there was instant recognition in the eyes that met mine. I was by her bedside in a moment.

"Oh, my dear mistress!" she sobbed. "It was wicked of me to desert you, but I did not understand where you had gone."

"No, no, Lucy; I am the one to be forgiven. I should never have left you; but now we are together again, and when you are well nothing shall part us."

"Will you stay with me now? I am afraid here! It is all so strange, and I am not well," she

ended, pitifully.

“Yes, Lucy, I will stay. But first I must ask permission, and send word to Mme. de Sarennes.”

“Will you say to her that I am sorry?”

“Yes, dear; but no one is blaming you.”

“You are all good,” she said, with a sigh of content; and I ran off to obtain a ready approval of my stay from both the Superior and Angélique, who promised to return on the morrow.

My presence was all that was needed to quiet Lucy, and she passed a restful night, to awaken so greatly improved that she readily talked of her wanderings. It was much as I had suspected; M. de Sarennes had wilfully encouraged and deceived her, feeding her delusion at every opportunity, even giving her directions for her road, in the evident intent of getting her out of the way, to have a freer hand in his designs. It was a relief to find that every one had treated her with kindness, and that she had found a shelter in St. Roch, with a widow, who was thankful for the trifle she paid for her lodging. Once she reached Quebec she was quite content, for she had only to wait until Christopher might appear. She gave no reason why she was wandering out by the St. Charles, and I did not question her; but no doubt she had really been ill for days, and was not fully conscious of her action.

Mme. de Sarennes came with Angélique in the morning, and it was touching to see how lively an interest this quiet Lucy had awakened in both their hearts.

“You are in good hands, my dear,” said the old lady, graciously. “Show your gratitude by getting well and coming back to us.”

“I will do my best, madame. God has been very good to me,” she answered, in halting French; whereupon Mme. de Sarennes patted her cheek, and left to speak with her friend the Superior.

As she was going, Angélique beckoned me into the corridor, and whispered: “I was thinking last night that we might ask M. de Maxwell to come and give her news of her boy when he was in Louisbourg. You know Charles told us he was much with him there, and I am sure my mother can obtain leave from the Superior. What do you think?”

“I think it would do her more good than anything else in the world, We will ask her.”

“Lucie,” asked Angélique, “would you like me to bring a gentleman who was in Louisbourg, and who can give you news of Christophe when he was there?”

“Oh yes, mademoiselle; I should love it above all things,” she answered, with a flush of joy over her pale face.

“Very well; we will come to-morrow.”

There was every reason, for Lucy's sake, why Hugh should come, and in my heart I longed to see him again before I determined on my own course of action. It was a pleasing thought, too, that I should see him comforting one to whom it would mean so much.

The morrow was a long day for both of us, and at four o'clock, just as it was growing dusk, I sate by her bed, listening anxiously to every footfall in the corridor, until at last I caught Angélique's light step, followed by a firmer tread, which I recognised at once.

It would be hard to tell whether Lucy or I was the more excited.

“Be calm, Lucy,” I whispered, laying a trembling hand on hers; and I drew my chair up to the head of the bed, so that I was completely hidden by its white curtain.

“Lucie,” said Angélique, on entering, “I have brought my friend. Shall he come in?”

“Yes, mademoiselle,” answered Lucy, in an expectant voice.

I heard Angélique go towards the door, and then heard Hugh enter. I caught the arms of my chair tightly as he approached the bed, when, to my amazement, I felt that Lucy had raised herself, and the next instant she cried, in a voice strained in agony:

“Hugh Maxwell! What have you done with our son?”

CHAPTER XXII

I AM TORTURED BY MYSELF AND OTHERS

In some manner I controlled myself, and in the confusion which followed Lucy's wild cry I opened the door beside me and stepped noiselessly into the adjoining room.

I sank down into a chair, benumbed in body and bewildered in mind. Everything was in a whirl of confusion, and through it I heard the heart-breaking cry that was no hallucination of madness, no fancy of a disordered mind, but an arraignment straight from the heart of a woman who perhaps had suffered beyond what I was suffering now.

What was happening behind those closed doors? Once the mad impulse flashed across me to

enter and learn the worst, but I shrank appalled at the thought of exposing myself to further humiliation. In my seeking for some escape, I even questioned if I had heard aright; it seemed impossible that there should not be some explanation, that there was not some horrible mistake, and a fierce anger swept over me at the injustice of it all.

Had I wasted the love of my youth—the love of my life—on a man whom I had endowed with every noble quality of which I could conceive to find that he was only of the same common clay as others whose advances I had ignored because I had set him so high?

In my anger I put him beneath all others, because, as a silly girl, I had been blinded by my own delusions, and, as a foolish woman, I had gone on dreaming the dreams of a girl. The thought, too, of Lucy having been so close to me all these months, and of how nearly I had confided in her, stung me like a blow.

And this was the end! I had wasted every affection of my nature in blind worship of the idol which now lay shattered at the first blow. I had wandered with reckless feet far from the path in which all prudent women tread, to find myself in a wilderness alone and without a refuge. My secret was in the keeping of Sarennes, who would sooner or later betray it, when he thought by so doing he could bend me to his will.

Why had I never looked at this with the same eyes, the same brain I had used in other matters? In other matters I had conducted myself as a reasonable woman should; but in this, the weightiest affair in my life, had I wandered, without sane thought, without any guide save impulses so unreasoning that they could scarce have even swayed my judgment in other things.

Then, my anger having passed, I saw the whole incredible folly of my life, and alone and in bitter misery I trod the Valley of Humiliation, until with wearied soul and softened heart I knelt and prayed for deliverance.

When I returned to the house the effort to meet and talk with others did much to restore me to myself. Angélique, I could see, was greatly excited, and it was a pain to think that what to me was a bitter degradation and the wreck of all my hopes could possibly be looked upon by a young and innocent girl as a piece of curious surmisal, perhaps to be laughed over and speculated upon, without a thought of the misery it entailed.

In my room that night I reasoned out my whole position calmly from the beginning, and with a chilling fear I saw myself confronted by a new humiliation.

Had I not in my infatuation misconstrued every little kindness on the part of Hugh, every expression of sympathy and of ordinary courtesy, nay, every smile, and look, and word, into a language which existed only in my credulous imagination? Had he ever spoken a single word of love to me? Had he not even refused to answer my girlish appeal to him at our parting? Was it, then, possible that I was not only in a false position now, but that I had throughout been playing that most contemptible of all rôles—the infatuated woman who imagines herself beloved by one indifferent to her? I was overwhelmed with shame at the thought, still, turn it as I might, I could not see that it admitted of any other conclusion.

Yet ignominious as it all was, it must be faced, for it was impossible that I should go on lamenting or living in the misery of constant self-reproach. If I had had the courage to defy the world in my Quixote endeavour to right the supposed wrongs of another, should I not put forth some measure of the same courage to protect myself? Because I had met with a disaster humbling to my self-respect and pride, surely I was not forced to proclaim my own defeat to the world, and thus add ridicule to humiliation. Cost what it might, I determined to put forth every endeavour to prevent Hugh even suspecting the true motive of my presence in Canada until the time should come when I might return in safety.

It cost me an effort to return to Lucy. I had almost a dislike to see her again, but my pride came to my support, and, when I went, I saw I had exaggerated the difficulty, for I found a different creature awaiting me. Whatever suffering I had gone through, it was clear this poor soul had gained some great relief, and my selfishness was not proof against her content. She had forgotten that I had been beside her when Hugh had entered. The greatness of his revelation, whatever it had been, had swept away all smaller things, and she lay there with a new light in her face, but as quiet and self-contained as before. Had she spoken, I could not have borne it.

My courage in respect to Hugh was not immediately put to the proof, as he had been ordered off to Montreal, there to join M. de Lévis as aide-de-camp, and I had both time and freedom for decision.

Much to Angélique's delight, I now accompanied her to all the balls and junketings that went on, for I had nothing further to fear, and, alas, nothing to hope. M. de Montcalm and the others received me with warm welcome, and made a small ovation over my appearance.

I suffered, however, as is often the case with a newcomer in a small society, from the stupid jealousy of some of the women, who resented my appearance as an intruder, and who more than once started reports as to my position, which were rendered the more persistent on account of the open championship of M. de Montcalm.

At first I thought little of this petty annoyance, but was not prepared for the length to which

some were willing to carry it.

Late one afternoon Angélique burst in upon me in a storm of indignation:

“Marguerite, I am ashamed of my countrywomen! There has been a scene this afternoon at Mme. de Beaubassin's which went beyond all limits of decency. Neither your position as a stranger nor mine as your friend was respected. It is horrible what animals women can be when once they begin! Let me tell you what has happened, and see if I am wrong!

“Mme. de Beaubassin, who cannot bear that any one should have any attraction for the Marquis save herself, made some malicious remark about you before M. Poulariez.

“'O, de grâce! madame,' he exclaimed; 'surely you are going too far!'

“'Can you answer for her, then, monsieur?' she returned, wickedly. 'Perhaps you can tell me who la belle Écossaise really is?

“'I will answer for her,' broke in the little Joannès, whom I love, because he is so dreadfully in earnest over everything—'I will answer for her! I lost four hundred good crowns at pharaon last night, but I will wager four hundred more with any lady in the room, or I will cross swords with any gentleman in Quebec, for the fair fame of Mme. de St. Just at any moment. I know that she is intimate with one of the oldest friends of M. de Montcalm, that he knows her family, and I know that she is one of the most charming creatures I ever set eyes on!' Marguerite, I could have kissed him, he was so gallant!

“'Then, M. Joannès, since you are so fully informed, perhaps you will explain the whereabouts of Monsieur de St. Just! Perhaps you will tell us why the lady was so anxious to get into Louisbourg before the siege! Perhaps you know why she went to the ball on Twelfth-Night in disguise! Perhaps it is clear to you why, after refusing to meet any of us, she now goes everywhere, and seeks the confidence of M. de Montcalm and other high officers when the plans for the coming campaign are under discussion! That she is a Scotchwoman she states, but I have not remarked that she is intimate with her countryman, M. de Maxwell, of whose loyalty no one has any doubt.'

“'Neither have I any doubt that Mme. de St. Just has her own reasons for choosing her acquaintance, madame,' answered M. Joannès, with the same spirit. 'But I do not see that anything is to be gained by continuing this conversation; the main thing is that I know Mme. de St. Just to be a lady of both family and position.'

“'Do you happen to know that her brother is a captain in the English army?'

“'I have known it for mouths past, madame. What of it'

“'And that he was a prisoner in Louisbourg?'

“'Certainly; no secret has been made of it,' he answered, as cool as a boy at his catechism.

“She seemed much put but at this rebuff, but turned towards the others and went on, angrily:

“'Of course a woman has no right to an opinion in the face of such an authority as M. Joannès, but I am sure so patriotic a brother will be interested in such a sister's letters, and that the authentic news she may send from Quebec cannot fail to be of interest to his superiors. It may be the part of an affectionate sister, ambitious for her brother's advancement, but hardly that of a friend to be encouraged by us. There! That is what I believe; and if you others are too blind to see behind a pretty face and a disconsolate manner, so much the worse for us all.'

“Marguerite, my dear, there wasn't a man in the room who didn't protest against her ungenerous suspicions. I was proud of them all! But none of the women said a word, and the spiteful little creature stuck to her ground, vowing she would speak to the Marquis, so that he, at least, should not be unwarned.

“I waited until she was done, for I was determined to hear the end, and then I said:

“'Mme. de Beaubassin, I have not spoken because I am only a girl, and neither my mother's hospitality, nor my mother's guest, requires any defence from me; I trust both implicitly. Our thanks and those of Mme. de St. Just, our friend, are due to every gentleman in the room. I was under some obligation to you, madame, for your attentions to me in the past, but you have more than cancelled them now, and I will not enter your door again until you have apologised to us all.'

“'My dear child,' she said, with her hateful smile, 'you are young, but time will correct that, as well as your breeding and your judgment; until then I shall miss your society, but will pray for your enlightenment.'

“Did you ever hear anything so abominable! M. Poulariez gave me his hand, and the dear little Joannès followed us to the door, whispering:

“'Brava! Brava, mademoiselle! It was excellent! You could not have said better!'

“Now what will you do, Marguerite?”

“There is nothing to do, chérie; such things must die of themselves.”

“But she said you were a spy, in so many words.”

“You do not think so?”

“Oh, Marguerite!” she cried, as she jumped up and strained me to her, covering me with kisses.

“Well, neither does your mother, nor M. de Montcalm, nor any of the gentlemen who defended me this afternoon. My only regret is that I should be the cause of annoyance to such friends.”

Though I spake bravely enough, I could not but feel the effect of such a report, nor fail to recognise there was oftentimes a galling restraint on my appearance, which was only aggravated by the too evident efforts of my champions towards its dissipation.

But all such social jealousies and plottings were scattered by the approach of spring, when an unending activity pervaded all classes throughout the colony. The arrival of the first ships was looked for with anxiety, as they would bring the message of peace, or renewed hostilities, which to me meant either escape or a continuance of my difficulties.

It was M. Joannès who brought me the news:

“Well, madame, it seems it is to be war! But instead of money, they have sent us some scanty provisions; and instead of a regiment, some raw recruits to drag out this weary farce, already too long.”

“I am sorry you do not look at it more hopefully, monsieur.”

“How can I? Think what has happened since last spring. Louisbourg, Frontenac, Duquesne, all lost; famine in our towns; misery in the country; an insane jealousy on the part of the officials which thwarts every move we suggest; corruption to an extent that is almost beyond belief, and on every side of us an active, strong, and enthusiastic enemy. That is the only quarter where we look for fair play!” he ended, with the laugh of a boy who sees his sport before him.

It was impossible that I should plan for return before we saw what move the English might make by sea, so I abandoned all thought of it, and settled down to await the outcome.

At the beginning of June volunteers gathered from the upper parishes, and with the militia and troops from Montreal, crossed over the St. Charles to take their places in the camp where M. de Lévis had already projected his works. Day after day we watched the men toiling, and presently our lines of defence began to creep slowly out along the shores of Beauport.

That Hugh was there I knew, but I kept myself from thinking by my daily attendance on Lucy, whose unfailing hope saw its fulfilment almost within touch when I told her of the certain coming of the English. Gay parties of chattering women were made up to go out to the camp and encourage the workers, but my heart ached too wearily even at my own distance to wish for any nearer approach.

I stood with Angélique one evening in the garden of the Hôtel-Dieu, and even here the engineers had erected a battery overhanging the steep cliff. Looking up towards the left, we could see the bridge of boats, at the far end of which a hive of busy workers toiled at a fortification, called a hornwork, while immediately below us others were building a boom to be floated across the wide mouth of the St. Charles to protect the bridge, and from this point on, down the banks of the St. Lawrence, lay our main defences.

There the white coats of the regulars mingled with the blue and grey of the Canadians and volunteers. Indians stalked or squatted about, taking no part in a labour they could not understand; officers moved to and fro, directing and encouraging the men, and from the manor of Beauport floated the General's flag, marking his headquarters.

Before this restless, toiling mass swept the great empty river, changing its colour with every change of sky which floated over it, while behind stretched the beautiful valley of the St. Charles, its gentle upward sweep of woods broken only by the green fields and white walls of Charlesbourg until it met the range of blue and purple hills which guards it to the north. At a point opposite where we were standing the nearer mountains opened out and shewed a succession of golden hills which seemed, in the tender evening light, as the gates of some heavenly country where all was peace, and the rumour of war could never enter.

At length all preparations were complete, and we waited impatiently for the drama to begin.

Towards the end of June the first English ships were reported, and on the evening of the twenty-second an excited group of ladies gathered on the Battery of the Hôtel-Dieu, and through a storm which swept down over the hills, amid the flashing of lightning and to the roar of thunder, we watched their fleet silently file into view in the South Channel, and come to anchor under shelter of the Isle of Orleans. In the chapel the nuns were singing:

“Soutenez, grande Reine,
Notre pauvre pays:

Il est votre domaine.
  Faites fleurir nos lis.

“L'Anglois sur nos frontières
  Porte ses étendards.
Exaucez nos prières,
  Protegez nos remparts.”

And as if in answer, one by one, our watch-fires were kindled, until they twinkled in a long unbroken line from the St. Charles to Montmorenci.

The long siege had begun. Such an array of ships was never before seen from the walls of Quebec. There were the flag-ships of Admirals Saunders, Holmes, and Durell; twenty-three ships of the line, besides frigates, transports, and a flock of smaller craft nestled under shelter of the Island; all these crowded with ten or twelve thousand troops under General Wolfe and his brigadiers, Monckton, Townshend, and Murray, fresh from triumph, and determined on a desperate effort for new conquest.

Face to face with them stretched our long line of defenders, as resolute and as confident—regulars, militia, Indians, and volunteers, and in the ranks of the latter the grandfather stood by the grandson; had the wives and daughters been permitted, many of them, I doubt not, would have held a musket beside those dearest to them.

On land and on water, there was constant change and movement; the stately vessels moved slowly up and down, small boats plied backward and forward, troops were landed where unopposed; on our side of the river every eye was vigilant, guessing what each new move might portend. No one could look upon it without a swifter-beating heart. Before us swept all “the pomp and circumstance of war” without any of its horror—as yet—and the panorama in which it was displayed added to its dignity and importance.

We became accustomed to the distant boom of heavy guns, and watched the constant movement of the combatants with much excited comment and foolish security.

It was Gabriel who first brought us face to face with the reality. We were surprised by his appearance at the house about the middle of July; he looked twenty years older; all his former jauntiness of manner had disappeared, and so dejected was his bearing I could scarce believe it was the same man I had known.

“Mesdames,” he said, “my respects to you all, though I come as a bearer of bad tidings.”

“No one expects compliments in time of war, Gabriel. Tell me it is not my son, and you may speak freely,” said the brave old lady, with a blanched face.

“Thank God, it is not! He came into camp only yesterday, with a hundred good men behind him, so worn out that they are fitter for the hospital than the field, but good food and rest will set them right again in a week. Ah, madame,” he cried, with a sparkle of his old air, “but he has tickled them rarely! Bedame! his name will not smell sweet in their nostrils for many a long day!”

“Then tell us your news, Gabriel; anything else is easily borne.”

“'Un fou fait toujours commencement,' madame, and I know not how to begin. But the English began with M. de Sarennes, and they found him so little to their taste that they have ended by burning the manor at Beaulieu level with the ground, and not a barn nor out-building is left on the domaine.”

“If their sons could give such cause for reprisal, there is not a woman in Canada who would not be proud to suffer a like revenge,” responded the old lady, with unfaltering voice.

“Do not fear, madame, our day will come; and when it comes we will all have our scores to wipe out. I know that I have mine!”

“Surely they have not stooped to burn your cottage?”

“No; it is safe; and so is my Amelia. My quarrel is on my own account. They tricked me on board their fleet by flying our colours, and carried me here.”

“Do not dare to stand here and tell me that you piloted them!” cried the old lady, with the utmost scorn.

“No, madame, I did not.”

“Then you may go on,” she said, sternly.

“I did not; but it makes little difference, madame.”

“It makes every difference whether we are traitors or not! Go on.”

“Well, madame, when I found I was trapped I made all the stir I could. I blustered and swore, and, Heaven forgive me! I lied to them as I had never lied before. I boasted like a Bostonnais, and when they commanded me to take charge in the Traverse, I said no, though I had a pistol behind my head and my Amelia before my eyes all the time. But they did not blow my brains out—they only laughed at me. Madame, it is dreadful to be ready to die, and

find they only laugh," and the tears streamed down his rugged cheeks as he spake.

"My good Gabriel, we are proud of you! Go on!"

"It was of no use; they had their boats out with flags to mark the channel, and an old devil they called Killick swept me aside as one might a dirty rag, and took command, calling out his directions to the boats and edging the ship along without a mistake, though I prayed with all my soul he might ground her. He was a sorcerer, madame, for he took the ship up as if he had done nothing else all his life. When they were through, they jeered at me in their damnable English, and treated me with a kindness that was harder than blows; and then, to add to my shame, they sent me on shore with the women last week, as if they feared me just as little, which was worst of all."

"Never mind, Gabriel. You did all that a brave man could—and the siege is not over yet!"

"That is true, madame," he cried, brightening under her kindly words, "and, saving your honour, 'le mulet garde longuement un coup de pied à son maître,' as we say. That is my comfort."

"Will you join M. de Sarennes, Gabriel?" asked Mme. de Sarennes. "I would like to think he had so good a man beside him."

"No, madame; I have orders to go on board the vessels at Sillery. I will be of more use there than on shore."

"Good. You will remember Beaulieu when your turn comes with the English!"

"I will, madame, and if le bon Dieu ever allows me that kick, rest assured it shall be a good one!" and he left us laughing, much comforted in his trouble.

Though never out of the sight and sound of war, we had so far suffered but little in the city itself. We watched with curiosity the English intrenching themselves on the opposite heights of the Pointe de Lévy, and there was much speculation among us as to their object. That the city would be bombarded was scouted as ridiculous; but one midnight towards the end of June we were awakened by the heavy booming of artillery, and rushed to our windows to see the heights of the Lévy shore flashing with the explosions from the cannon, and the hill beneath us filled with a panting, terror-stricken crowd, laden with every conceivable description of household goods, clambering up past us to gain some corner of safety, while the flames from a shattered warehouse in the Basse Ville threw an ominous glare over the blackness of the river. War in its most terrifying guise was at our very doors, and had it not been for the heroic calmness of Mme. de Sarennes, we should probably have joined the distracted crowd in the streets. While affrighted women and children, and even men, rushed past in the wildness of their terror, filling the night with the clamour of despair, and exposing themselves to still greater dangers in their efforts to escape, she gathered her little household about her and set fear at defiance.

Dressed with her usual care, she sate in the drawing-room with all the candles lighted, the shutters closed, and the curtains tightly drawn. There was not a trace more colour than usual in her fine, high-bred face, nor a quiver to her slender hands, nor a tremor in her voice as she repeated some familiar psalm, or led us in the prayers we offered unceasingly throughout the long night. Her calmness, superior to the alarm without, dominated over the more ignorant—she put away danger from before them—as her unshaken confidence in a high protection inspired the more courageous.

But, for faint and stout hearted alike, it was a fearful night. For hours the great guns played without ceasing; at the nearer explosions the very rock on which the house was founded seemed loosened, and the effort to control ourselves and not leap to our feet with the terrified servants became such a strain on Angélique and myself that we dared not let our eyes meet, for fear of an outburst of tears.

Some time during the night, at an unusual uproar in the street, Mme. de Sarennes sent one of the men-servants to the upper windows to discover its cause. In a few moments he returned with horror-stricken face—"O mon Dieu, madame! the Cathedral is on fire! We are lost!" At which, a wail of despair broke from us all. Angélique's head dropped on her mother's lap. "O ma mère! It was God's own house!" she sobbed.

Her mother's white hand softly stroked her hair with reassuring firmness, while she whispered words of comfort. Then to every awe-struck heart about her she said, with confidence, "It was the house of God Himself, and He has not spared it, while His hand has been over our roof, and He is holding each one of us safe in His keeping"; and we took fresh courage at her words.

Gradually the fire slackened, and at length ceased. The morning came, and we were still safe and untouched, amid the surrounding ruin.

Soon after daybreak we heard a knock at the door, and the Town-Major, M. Joannès, was ushered in.

He looked upon us with astonishment in his tired eyes.

"Mme. de Sarennes, no one suspected you of being here! All the inhabitants fled from the

face of the town when the fire opened. Pardon me, but you must move at once."

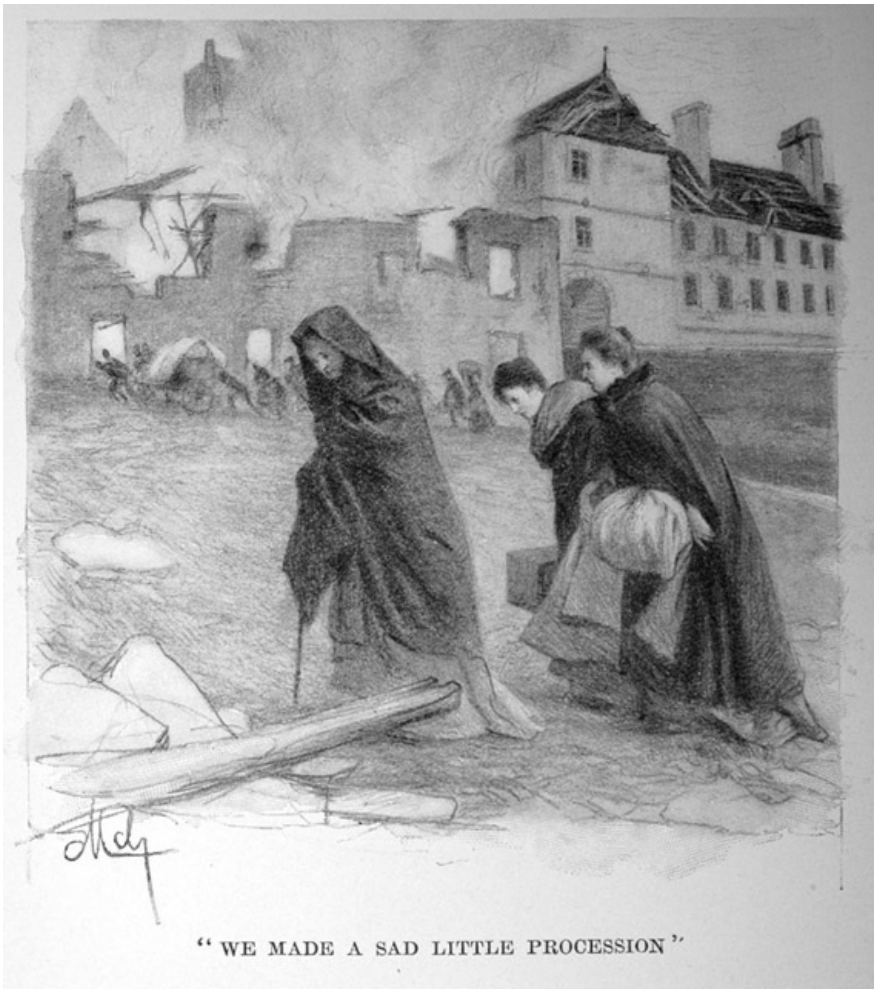
"We have only been waiting for orders, monsieur. Where are we to go?"

"To the Hôtel-Dieu for the present, madame; but it is quite possible that will soon be unsafe, now they have our range. With your permission, I will send some men at once to move what can be carried and stored in some safer place; for you cannot expect the house to stand through another fire."

"It has served its purpose, monsieur; we have no right to larger regrets than have others. Come, my children, let us go."

With a last look round the room that had seen so much of her life within its walls, she passed out, and bidding us gather our lighter valuables and some clothing, withdrew for a few moments to her own room, and then rejoined us in the hallway.

We made a sad little procession as we threaded our way through the ruined streets, between the smoking and crumbling walls of the homes we had looked upon but yesterday, bright with all the assuring signs of comfortable, secure life, past the wrecked Cathedral, and between piles of household goods heaped in ruinous confusion in the Place. This was now crowded with anxious, pale-faced people, hollow-eyed and aged with the terror of actual war, seeking out their little valuables, some with shrill-voiced complaint and contention, others with a hopeless, silent mien that went to our hearts, and yet others with an air of gayety and the tricks and buffooneries of school children.



"WE MADE A SAD LITTLE PROCESSION"

We were thankful to escape out of the hubbub and distraction of the streets to the quiet within the walls of the Hôtel-Dieu; but, alas! the next night the bombardment recommenced, and it was apparent we could not long hope for safety, as the English fire became more exact and far-reaching.

The white-robed nuns moved about their duties with calm resignation, though often the trembling lips or the involuntary start told of the strain it cost to control the natural alarm which shook the heart when some nearer crash foretold approaching disaster.

Lucy lay calm and unmoved; every day that brought the English nearer, was bringing her nearer to Kit. The thunder of the bombardment was to her like the knocking on the gate which shut her in from her one object in life, and that it was being shattered meant only deliverance. When orders came to remove to the General Hospital, without the walls of the town and beyond all immediate danger, she was more disturbed than at any time during the siege.

The Hospital stood in the valley of the St. Charles, somewhat less than a mile from the town, with the river sweeping in a great bend on the one side, and the steep Heights, at the end of

which the town stood, rising on the other. We were cut off from any view of the St. Lawrence, but the sight of the bridge of boats, with its hornwork, across the tongue of land enclosed by the sweep of the river, and the walls of the town crowning the Heights, kept us in touch with the struggle going on between us and the English, who still held the St. Lawrence, with its opposite shore.

The convent itself was a pile of grey stone buildings forming a quadrangle with wings, begun by the Recollect fathers nearly a century before. It was in two of their curious little cells that Mme. de Sarennes, Angélique, and I were lodged. The chapel opened out of the square entry —it scarce could be dignified as a hall—on which the principal doorway gave, and to the right of this was the long, low-ceilinged room, lighted by many-paned windows down one side, which now served as a common meeting-place for the nuns of the three congregations and their numerous guests.

Here all who were willing and able to work placed themselves under the direction of the Superior, for the nuns had more than they could well attend to, with the invalids of the Hôtel-Dieu added to their own, as well as the wounded, who now began to come in.

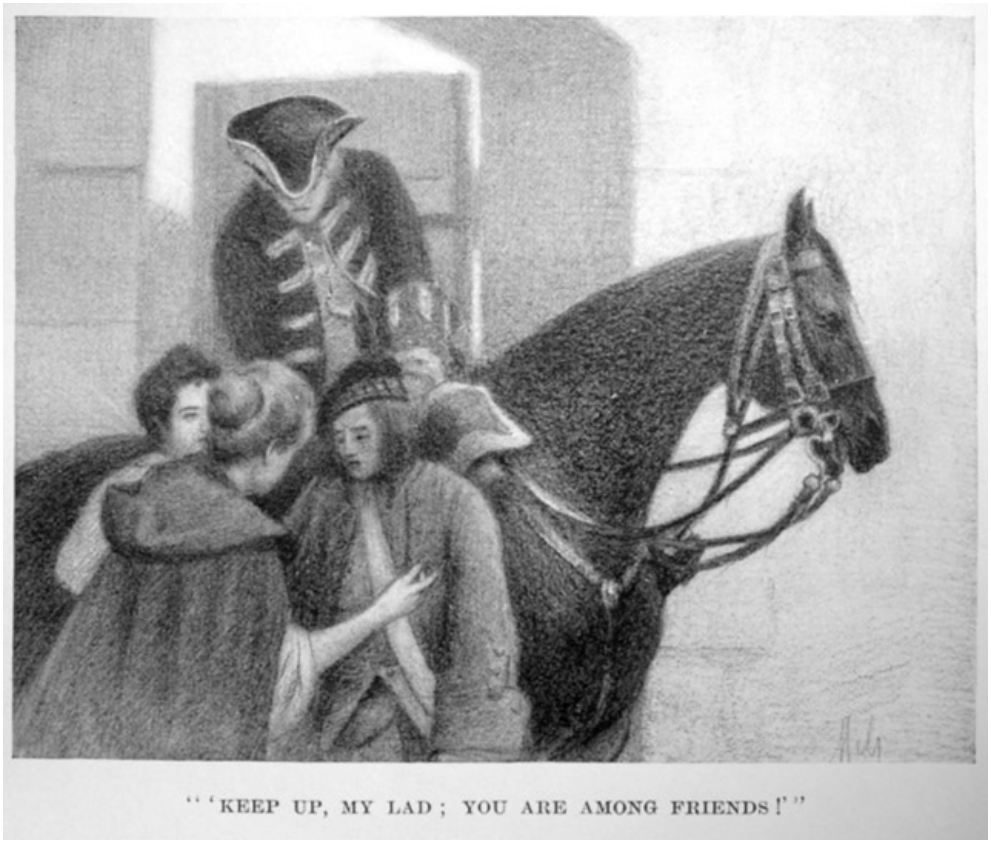
On the last day of July we heard heavy firing towards Montmorenci, beginning about mid-day, and towards five o'clock it increased to a continuous dull roar. It was dark before the first messenger reached us, and our hearts were lifted by the tidings he bore. It was victory, perhaps complete and final; the English had left hundreds of dead behind them, and our loss was nothing.

Scarce an hour after this the wounded began to arrive, and being but a novice to such sights, I was glad when the Superior, noticing my pale face, called Angélique to bid us go out into the court-yard and get a breath of fresh air. It was a welcome relief to us both, and we were walking up and down, eagerly discussing the news, when an officer rode in at the gate, supporting a wounded man before him.

“It is M. de Maxwell!” cried Angélique, joyfully, and my impulse was to turn and fly, but he had already recognised Angélique, and called to her without ceremony:

“Mademoiselle de Sarennes, will you and your companion support this lad into the Hospital? He is not seriously wounded, only weak from the loss of blood,” and as though counting on our help without question, he let the boy slip tenderly to the ground, and I was forced to step forward with Angélique to his support.

Bending down from his horse, he held the boy as he directed us how to aid him, and then whispered encouragingly: “Keep up, my lad; you are among friends! Make your best effort before these ladies!”



“‘KEEP UP, MY LAD; YOU ARE AMONG FRIENDS!’”

He certainly had no suspicion of who I was, for when he was satisfied that we were equal to our task he turned his horse, and crying, “A thousand thanks, mesdames. Good-night!” he rode slowly back through the gates.

The lad was in Highland uniform, and I spake to him in Gaelic, thinking to enhearten him, but he made no reply as he staggered forward between us towards the door.

Once within, we summoned aid, and, as the lad sank into a chair, the light fell full on his upturned face, and I saw it was that of Christopher Routh. Hugh had gone far to redeem himself in my eyes.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE HEIGHTS OF QUEBEC

Christopher was at once examined by M. Arnoux, the surgeon, who obligingly came at Angélique's request, and before long he met us to report that his patient was in no danger; his wound was dressed, and a night's sleep would go far to put him on his feet again. He could be seen without even fatigue on the morrow. I left word with the sister in charge that she should tell him I was in the convent, and would come to him about eleven.

I had no hesitation in telling Lucy the news; indeed, the suspense of every day that passed was wearing her frail body away so rapidly that, had not God seen fit to send His answer to her prayer at this very time, she would have passed beyond its comfort. As it was, the news acted on her like some generous wine, strengthening without exciting her, her only request being that Christopher should not be brought to her until he was quite able for the exertion.

When I entered Christopher's room he was already sitting up in bed, his eyes fairly dancing with delight.

“Oh, Madame de St. Just! Think of my being brought here, to find you and my mother under the same roof, and that it was Captain Maxwell who brought me! He saved me when I was down with an Indian over me, and did not get me off without standing some hard knocks himself. He carried me into the French lines, and as soon as the affair was over, rode with me before him all this distance, keeping my heart up the time by saying, 'Kit, my boy, I am taking you to your mother,' and I so near swooning with this stupid arm I could scarce hear him. You know I was with him in Louisbourg, and when I was a child in London he lodged with us, as he was in hiding on account of the Scotch rising and calling himself Captain Geraldine. But tell me of my mother, madame. Can I not see her now?”

I told him as discreetly as I could of poor Lucy's condition, and he bore up astonishingly well. What seemed to trouble him greatly was the thought that he had never dreamed of the possibility of her being ill. “Even though she was a prisoner I never feared she would be hardly treated; no one could so cruel to my mother, she is so gentle!” the poor lad continued. “I knew you were with her, and I never thought of the other danger at all. I was so happy when I fell into English hands and was allowed to enlist in Boston, and in Fraser's Highlanders, too, not in a Colony regiment; and when we found there was no danger of peace being proclaimed, and that we were for Quebec, we were all mad with joy to have another crack at the French. Oh, pardon me, madame; I forgot you were on their side,” he cried, with a sudden confusion; “and I never doubted for a moment I should find her here.”

The next day the surgeon pronounced him out of all possible danger, and added, significantly, “If his mother is to see him, it is best it should be at once.” Thereupon I obtained the necessary permission, and never have I seen greater joy in a face than in Lucy's, when I ushered Christopher into her room.

That same evening, as I sate beside her, though she lay quiet and composed, I noticed a grave change had come over her, and calling one of the sisters who had had much experience, she at once said the end was near.

With the permission of the Superior I went for Christopher, and led him, white and awe—struck, to the bedside of his mother. She asked that I would not leave—“if it be not a trouble to you, madame,” the poor thing pleaded, pitifully—and I remained beside them.

“Christopher,” she said, with an effort, “I made a promise years ago that when this hour came I would tell you the truth about yourself. Our name is not Routh, but Maxwell; you are the son of the Captain Maxwell who saved you—and brought you back to me. You remember him as the 'Captain Geraldine' who lodged with us in London? He had married me six years before, when we were but little more than boy and girl, and when you were born he was wandering a shipwrecked man in Russia, seeking eagerly some means of return to us, though I was persuaded he had deserted me. When he returned, and was willing to acknowledge me as his wife, I was hardened into a heartless woman, believing myself separated, by what I ignorantly called God's grace, from him and the world to which he belonged. In my pride I refused to let him come into our lives, though he implored me to let him make such restitution as was in his power. He behaved as few men would have done; for the sake of the old love, he bore with me and accepted my conditions—that he would never mention our marriage, and would never come between you and me. He let you go away from his side in Louisbourg, though his heart was yearning for you; because his honour, a quality which I pretended not to understand, forbade him to forget his promise to me. He was always good to me, far beyond my deserts, and my hope, now that my eyes are opened, is that you, Christopher, will remember my debt to him.

“Try and be gentle, my boy. Be true to him. He has had a sad, lonely life, but you may make it up to him yet. When you see him, tell him from me... tell Hugh...”—but here I silently withdrew, leaving the mother to whisper her last message of contrition to the boy kneeling

beside her bed.

Pitiful as was poor Lucy's story, I could gather but little comfort from it. It seemed to me that in marrying out of his own class Hugh had committed so grave a fault that whatever followed in the way of misunderstanding was but to be expected. He had been kind, forbearing, larger-minded than she had known; she had not even realised the sense of honour which had made her a wife and not a mistress. It had gone the way of all mistakes, and produced nothing but bitterness and regret. From it I could gather no excuse, no justification of his conduct towards me; he had allowed my affection to grow up and centre in him without a warning I could understand of the heart-break which confronted me, and I could not see that his obligation towards her who had cast his love aside was more sacred than to her to whom it was all in all.

We laid Lucy to rest in the garden of the Hospital—without the rites of the Church, it is true, but not without both prayers and tears, and then took up the daily round of duty once more.

Christopher, being no longer a patient, was ordered off to the town as a prisoner, but I sent with him a note to M. Joannès which secured him generous treatment. Through the month of August the wounded continued to come in, and though our troops were starving as they stood behind their lines of defence, they were one and all hopeful of the result. The bombardment from the Lévy shore continued until the town was little more than a heap of ruins, and night after night the sky was red with the glare of burning buildings. Part of the enemy's fleet had passed the city and threatened to cut off all supplies from the upper parishes. There were ugly rumours, too, of the Canadians deserting, for the tidings of the loss of Carillon and Niagara had gone far to dishearten them. On the other hand, we had authentic news of the desperate illness of the English general, Wolfe, and even though M. de Lévis was forced to march to the support of Montreal, the unfaltering courage of M. de Montcalm so inspired our troops that they held on successfully, praying for relief or the coming of winter.

About the beginning of September Angélique came to me greatly excited.

“Oh, Marguerite, Charles is here! He is very ill. Will you come and see him?”

“Is he wounded?”

“No. But he has suffered incredible hardships in Acadie, and he is ill—so ill that he cannot be in his place in the field. Come, he has just been asking my mother for you. Come!”

“Impossible, chérie; M. Arnoux is depending on my supply of lint for a patient,” I replied, and so escaped for the moment. But with the persistency of innocence she returned to her demand as we sate with her mother that evening.

“Marguerite, Charles has been asking for you again this afternoon. Will you see him the first thing in the morning?”

“I do not know, chérie; neither your mother nor the Superior has given her permission as yet,” I answered, much troubled at her insistence.

“Oh, Marguerite, this is ungenerous of you!” cried the warm-hearted girl. “Think, how ready Charles was to serve you when you wished to go to Louisbourg! This is no time to stand on trifles.”

“Angélique take care you are not ungenerous yourself,” said Mme. de Sarennes, much to my relief. “Charles must not be childish in his demands. There is no reason why Marguerite should visit him until he is up and prepared to receive her fittingly, for there is no reason why war should banish every rule of decorum.” And with these decided words the difficulty was dismissed, though not at all to Angélique's satisfaction.

At daybreak on the 13th of September we were awakened by the sound of guns above the city, and hastened to the attic windows; but drift of passing showers hid the valley from us, while the Heights loomed grey and shrouded above. There was nothing to enlighten us, and in company with our fears we descended to wait uneasily for tidings.

I grew so anxious and depressed in the half-lighted halls that I could not remain below, and returned towards our room. But just as I approached the door some one came hurriedly along the corridor, and to my dismay I recognised M. de Sarennes.

“Stay one moment, mademoiselle; I must speak with you.” His voice was trembling, and even in the struggling light I could see his dark face was drawn and haggard, though his black eyes burned with a fiercer light than before.

“It is useless, M. de Sarennes; I can hear nothing you have to say. Remember your mother and sister are here within call, and you will only cause them pain if you force me to summon aid, which I will certainly do. Have some pity for them if you have none for me.”

“Answer me but one question. Do you love this Maxwell?”

“M. de Sarennes, I will tell you nothing. You have no right to question me.”

“My God, Marguerite! have I not done everything for you?”

“You have done me every injury in your power. You have never spoken to me that you have not tortured me so I cannot look on you without fear and loathing.”

At my words he stepped close to me, but before either could utter a sound, a shrill cry came from above:

“O mon Dieu! mon Dieu! The English are on the Heights.”

Doors were thrown open, and in an instant the corridors were filled with white faces, and hurrying feet were flying towards the stairways.

“Nonsense!” cried a reassuring voice when we gained the upper windows. “Those are our troops! See, they are crossing the bridge!”

“No. Here! Here! See! Just opposite us, over the edge of the hill.” And as we crowded to the side whence the cry came our hearts sank as we saw a little patch of red against the morning sky.

“Bah! They are only a handful. See how our men are crossing the St. Charles! There! They are coming out of the St. John's Gate now!”

“Mes soeurs, we will descend to the chapel,” said the calm voice of la mère de Ste. Claude, and at her words the obedient nuns recovered their usual air of quiet and flocked after her, as did many of the others; but Angélique and I remained.

We could plainly see our troops defiling out of the town in a seemingly unending line, and could distinguish their officers riding to and fro giving orders; but the little point of red remained immovable, and we could not tell whether it was an army or a single detachment.

Regulars, Canadians, and Indians continued to pour across the bridge of boats, and to cross through the town from the Palais to the St. John's Gate, whence they issued, and moved off towards the left, hidden from us by the rising ground.

We stood there hour after hour, forgetful of fatigue and hunger in our anxiety. We could hear the faint reports of musketry and the dull growl of cannon, but could not tell whence they came. Soon we discovered scattered figures stealing along under the shelter of the hill towards the point of red, and as they drew nearer could distinguish the blue and grey of our Canadians and the head-dresses of Indians. At length spurts of smoke began to leap from the bushes all along the crest of the hill opposite us, extending far beyond the point where the red had been, and, from the sensible increase in the firing, we judged the battle had begun.

But about ten o'clock we heard such a general discharge of cannon and musketry, and marked such instantaneous movement along the line of skirmishers, that we knew what we had taken for the battle was but child's play. Suddenly the confused noise and firing were dominated by one sharp roar like to the clap of a thunder-bolt, followed by a second, and then by a long rolling fire. To this succeeded cheers, different from any we had heard before, above which I caught the shrill skirl of the bagpipes, while a great cloud of smoke slowly rose and drifted to and fro in the heavy air.

Out of this, on a sudden, burst a screaming mob of men in mad, death-driven disorder, some sweeping towards the St. John's Gate, while others plunged down over the side of the hill to gain the bridge of boats. After them, in as wild pursuit, came the enemy, foremost of whom were the Highlanders, with flying tartans, shouting their slogan as they leaped and clambered recklessly down the hill-side, slashing at the fugitives with their claymores, while the pipes screamed in maddening encouragement above.

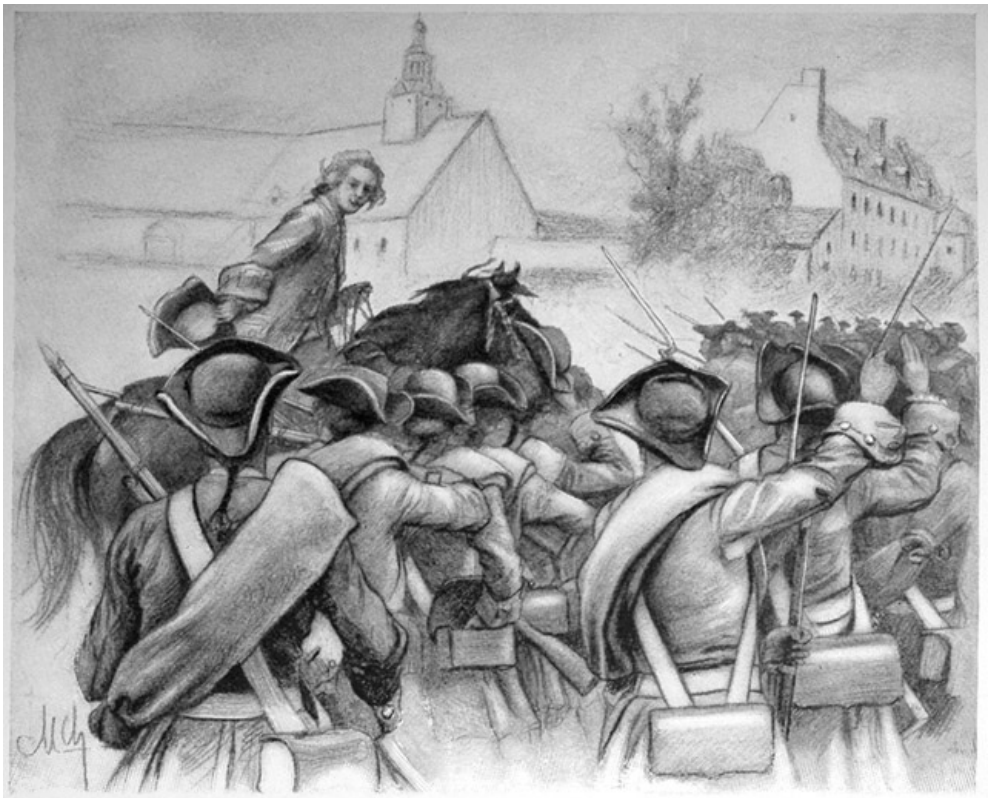
The disaster was so unexpected, so instantaneous, that we could not comprehend it, and stood there in silent awe absorbed in the dreadful tragedy before us.

“O ciel! Marguerite! See, there is M. de Maxwell! On the Côte Ste. Geneviève!” cried Angélique, in a hoarse, strained voice, pointing as she spake.

The Côte Ste. Geneviève, a long and dangerous descent from the Heights, beginning near the town, down to the level on which the Hospital stood, was exposed in all its length not only to the fire of the enemy above, but also to that of a number of Canadians, who, though driven down and across it, had rallied at its base and were disputing the descent of the Highlanders and other of the English.

Down this rode Hugh. He was mounted on a powerful black horse and came on at perilous speed. But the pursuers had marked him also, and just as he gained the middle of the descent the hill-side above him blazed out in a sweeping volley, and down he went on the neck of his horse. An involuntary cry burst from us both, but even as it sped he was erect again, and with hat in hand came spurring on, waving and cheering to the brave fellows below. In another moment he was in their midst, where, dismounting, he seemed to give the needed orders for their guidance. Unofficered and undirected, they had stubbornly disputed every inch of ground when all others had given way, and now, under a few words of encouragement from a gallant man, to our amazement, we saw them actually attempt to scale the hill, firing upwards as they climbed. They were not regulars; they made no pretence to the science of war; they had been despised and belittled probably by every officer in the service for their manner of fighting; yet now in the hour of need they alone

stood firm between the flying army and destruction.



"WITH HAT IN HAND CAME SPURRING ON"

As soon as he saw them steadied in their advance, Hugh mounted and rode off towards another group busied in an attempt to drag a heavy gun from some soft ground where it was deeply bogged, and then on again towards the bridge of boats, the only way of escape for the defeated troops.

"O mon Dieu! They will never cross! The bridge is blocked!" cried a despairing voice, and we trembled together as we watched the rabble gathering in a mad rush towards the narrow passage, mixed in hideous confusion, with the exception of the Royal Roussillon, which stood as firm as if on parade.

The struggle still went on along the foot of the hill, where the Canadians manfully held their ground; but, to our dismay, we saw that some fresh disaster had happened at the bridge.

"O mon Dieu! They are cutting it! The whole army will be lost!" But there was more efficient aid at hand than our useless cries. Even as we despaired we saw Hugh with other officers struggle through the mob, and, sword in hand, beat back the terror-stricken crowd until they gained the head of the bridge, when the Royal Roussillon moved into position, and soon the straggling columns took form and passed rapidly over beyond the shelter of the hornwork.

The pursuit was checked, as far as we could see, by the unaided efforts of the Canadians; the English halted, reformed, and slowly withdrew; the last of our troops recrossed the St. Charles; and in the twilight we saw our colours still flying on the ramparts of Quebec.

There was nothing more for us to see, perhaps nothing more to hope, and broken in body and in spirit we wearily descended the stairways, and traversed the long corridors in silence until we reached the main hall on the ground-floor.

The room was barely lighted by a few candles at one end, and was filled to overflowing by the nuns of the three orders, mingled with those who had shared their generous hospitality —old and feeble gentlemen whose fighting days had long passed; grey-haired gentlewomen, patient and resigned, others in the full bloom of youth, and young girls and children, pale and anxious-eyed; while in the circle of light beneath the great black crucifix on the white wall stood the commanding figure of la mère de Ste. Claude, and with her la mère de Ste. Hélène of the Hôtel-Dieu, and la mère de la Nativité of the Ursulines.

All were listening with breathless attention to the words that fell from the venerable Bishop of Quebec, Monseignieur de Pontbriand, whose quiet bearing and measured tones carried assurance to many a fainting heart.

"My children," he was saying, as we entered, "do not forget, in our day of disaster, that we are not left helpless. Let us for our comfort say together those words, which we learned to lisp as children, but perhaps only to understand to-night." And, as he raised his hand, the people knelt, and with voices that gained confidence as the familiar words fell from his lips, they repeated the "Qui habitat" in unison: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

"'HE THAT DWELLETH IN THE SECRET PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH'"

The common danger, the common worship, drew us together. Each succeeding verse, with its divine assurance of safety and protection, brought to us a quiet and a confidence which renewed our strength.

But even as all hearts were lifted there came a commanding knock at the outer door opposite the chapel, which was immediately repeated, and la mère Ste. Claude signed it should be opened.

Angélique and I, being at the threshold of the hall, hastened to obey, and found ourselves in the presence of a general officer, behind whom was a detachment of soldiers in Highland uniform. The officer stepped into the hall as one who takes possession, and demanded the Superior, in accurate French.

She came forward followed by the principal nuns and ladies.

"Have no fear, mesdames," he said, bowing low with much elegance of manner; "I am General Townshend. You will suffer no harm; but we must take possession of your convent, for your protection as well as our own."

"You are victors, monsieur, and can command," she said, bitterly.

"We are victors, madame," he returned, gravely, "but we have bought our honours dearly. Our general lies dead on the plain above."

"C'est sur le champ d'honneur, monsieur," she instantly responded, in a tone of much feeling.

"A thousand thanks for your sympathy, madame; we will use every diligence to preserve it. Captain Nairn will take charge here, and will give you assurance of safety and protection from insult. In return, you will kindly offer such shelter to the wounded as is possible, and furnish him with every information as to the number of rooms available, for I must ask for all accommodation in your power."

He introduced Captain Nairn and withdrew at once, followed by the assurances of the Superior that everything would be done for the comfort of the wounded.

It was with a curious feeling that I looked on my brother, for I could not doubt that it was he, though I had not seen him since we were children. Despite the disorder of his dress and his evident fatigue, he was a handsome man, though not much taller than myself. His address was natural and easy, and certainly his French was perfect; I had but a moment to gather this, for we were at once dismissed from our attendance by the Superior, who remained alone to arrange with our new masters.

"O, ciel! Marguerite! is that your brother?" whispered Angélique, excitedly.

“Yes, chérie, I have no doubt it is,” I answered, sadly.

“I should not sigh over such a misfortune,” she cried, gayly. “You are cold-blooded creatures, you Scotch! Why, I should have been weeping on his neck long ago, no matter what had happened! He has eyes like yours.”

CHAPTER XXIV

RECONCILIATION

We found Mme. de Sarennes awaiting us in her room, with a generous bouillon warming over a lamp. “Hunger and faintness will not add to your courage, my daughters; sit down and eat. We shall have need of all our strength for the morrow,” she said, cheerfully. We were eager to discuss the events of the day, but she would not listen to a word. “You must be good soldiers now and obey orders; eat first, and then to bed. Angélique, do you set an example and go at once.”

“La cérémonie faite, chacun s'en fut coucher,” repeated Angélique, sleepily, as she kissed us and went. Then I turned to her mother.

“Mme. de Sarennes, I am in a difficulty. May I ask your help?”

“Marguerite, ma chérie, I am afraid I am thought a stern woman; but you know how dear those I love are to me, and I have learned to love you. You may speak to me as you would have spoken to your own mother,” she said, with a tenderness that went to my heart.

I arose and seated myself beside her, and with my hand in hers I told her of my home, of my life with Lady Jane, and my devotion to the cause of the Prince; of my pride in my only brother, and of what I considered his desertion, which led to my girlish renunciation and my estrangement from him. “He is the Captain Nairn who came with General Townshend to-night. What shall I do, madame?”

“You must go to him on the morrow, my child, without hesitation. Such a tie is too sacred to be thrown away lightly.” Here she paused, and laying her hand on my arm, said, in tones of the deepest feeling, “Marguerite, when you are an old woman like me, I pray you may never have to look back with regret on an opportunity for reconciliation cast aside.” She spake with such intense emotion that I could not doubt I had unwittingly stirred some painful memory of her past, but in a moment she recovered, and said, tenderly: “Remember, you both lay on the same breast; you looked into the same mother's eyes. Think of the pain it would cause her to know that there is anything in her children's hearts towards each other, save the love with which she filled them. But I need not say more; I see your intent in your face. Remember, too, we need all the interest we can command with our new guests. Now get some rest, my child; you are worn out.”

When I awakened in the morning I found the whole community astir, for all night long the wounded had been brought in, until every bed and corner was occupied, and even the barns, sheds, and outhouses were filled to overflowing.

French and English lay side by side, helpless and patient. As I crossed the hall I noticed a big Highland sergeant lying on a stretcher, waiting until some place was found for him, with the sweat standing in great beads on his forehead. He muttered some kind of a prayer in Gaelic as I passed, and at the sound of the once familiar tongue I stopped, and, bending over him, wiped away the perspiration, and spake to him in his own language. He stared at me in the utmost astonishment, and then swore a great oath, and the tears filled his eyes.

I at last found a soldier who was not on duty, and by him sent a message to Captain Nairn that a lady desired speech with him when he was at liberty.

He returned with word that the Captain fixed eleven o'clock, and at that hour I awaited in the parlour. As I waited I wondered that I had ever made any question of meeting him; I could even see that his choice of life had its defence, from a man's point of view. A soldier is first of all a soldier, and waiting the heaviest of his duties; though he is ready to suffer incredibly for his cause when it is active, it is the women who keep the personal attachments alive through the weary days when everything but hope is dead.

I spake at once on his entrance.

“Archie, I am your sister Margaret.”

“My dearest Peggy!” was all he said, but he caught me in his strong arms and nearly crushed the breath out of me. He petted and fondled me, calling me by every dear name of childhood, until my heart was nigh to bursting with this treasure of love lavished upon me when I least expected it.

I was brought back to the present when he questioned me on the reason of my being in Canada, and though it cost me a bitter struggle with my pride, I told him the whole story of my folly. I could not spare myself when he took me so on trust.

“And you say that Maxwell was married all this time?” he asked, sternly.

“Yes, but—”

“There are no 'buts'!” he interrupted, fiercely. “I will kill him on sight!”

“Archie, my brother, think what you say! I do not know that he deceived me, and I do know I deceived myself.

“I can't help that! If he had not been there, you never would have made the mistake. The only pity is I was not on the ground at the time.”

“But, Archie, think of me. Think what an open scandal will mean. No one but you and me, and one other,” I added—remembering le père Jean—“knows anything of this now.”

“And what do we care about other people, Peggy? We Nairns are not used to asking leave for our actions; and so long as you yourself are not ashamed, I do not give a rotten nut for the rest of the world. It is no question of the personal feeling at all; it is the principle! I have no personal quarrel with Maxwell; on the contrary, I like him. He was a brother to me in Louisbourg; but, thank God! I can sink my likings and dislikings, when it comes to a case such as this. No, no, Peggy; you'd best leave things in my hands.”

“No, Archie, I will not! There has been heart-break and misery enough over this as it is, without adding more.”

“But this will wipe it all out. Cannot you understand?” he said, with a touch of impatience.

“Archie, cannot you understand that, however clearly I regret my own folly, I cannot in a moment stamp out the feeling in which I have lived all these years?”

“You don't tell me you care for the fellow yet, Peggy?” he cried, in a tone of genuine astonishment.

“I am afraid I do.”

“God bless my soul! That is beyond me.”

“You are not a woman, Archie.”

“No, thank God I am not,” he answered, without the vestige of a smile. “Of all the wearisome things in the world, I can imagine nothing worse than being a woman.”

“And yet there are a good many who have to put up with this weariness.”

“The Lord help them! But we must not fall to quarrelling at our first meeting; that would be altogether too much like boy and girl again. Peggy, do you remember how we used to fight over the plovers' nests?” and he laughed merrily at the thought. “Don't be put out by a little thing like this. I'll not kill the gentleman behind a hedge or in the dark; he shall have nothing to complain of, rest assured. But I have sad news for your friends, Margaret. M. de Montcalm died at daybreak this morning.”

“Oh, Archie! We did not even know that he was wounded.”

“Nor did we until late last night, for he was seen on his horse during the retreat. He was a fine soldier.”

“He was more than that, Archie. He was a man of honour and the soul of his army—and he was very good to me,” I sobbed, breaking down at the remembrance of his chivalrous protection.

To my surprise, Archie put his arm about me. “Cry on, Peggy, my lamb,” he said, in the soft endearment of the Gaelic. And the soldier who had so readily decided on the death of a man a moment since, now melted at the sight of a woman's grief, and offered her that best of all consolation, sympathy. Nothing else could so quickly have revealed to me the wrong I had been guilty of in holding aloof from this strong affection that had held fast in simple, unwavering loyalty to the love of childhood. To him I had always remained the Peggy of the old home; in his generous heart the thought of any necessity for reconciliation had no place, for he held himself as the head of the family, from whom protection for the weaker must necessarily flow.

“By-the-way, Peggy,” he said, suddenly, “it was you, no doubt, who spake to one of my men in Gaelic this morning. That was Neil, son of Angus Dubh, the tacksman on the old place, one of my best sergeants. You did as much for him as the surgeon, and when I tell him who you are he will think you an angel from heaven. Come when you can and say a word to our poor fellows; they are wearying for home like children, now they are past fighting for a bit.”

Days of unceasing work now followed for all who would assist in nursing and the innumerable little duties necessitated by the presence of so large a body of invalids, and, to their honour, even the most frivolous of the women took their share uncomplainingly, making no distinction between friend and foe. The most conflicting rumours reached us as to the movements of our army, and of the intentions of M. de Ramesay, governor of the city, but we fortunately had little leisure for speculation, and our doubts were ended by the formal capitulation, on the eighteenth of the month.

After the troops had taken possession and quiet was restored, permission was given to us to

enter the town, should we so desire. It must have been a welcome relief to la mère de Ste. Claude when her numerous guests took their departure. The nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu and the Ursulines returned to their respective convents, and in that of the latter Mme. de Sarennes secured rooms for the winter.

It was pitiful to see the condition of the town, for the destruction by the bombardment had been almost complete. The Lower Town no longer existed, and scarce a building remained along the front of the Upper. Angélique and I wandered towards the familiar rue du Parloir, to find but a line of crumbling walls, blackened and roofless; before it our little isle of houses, as well as the Bishop's Palace, lay a mass of ruin, and behind it stood the wrecked Cathedral. Every building that could serve as a mark had suffered in some measure, and the chapel of our convent was the only sacred place left in this city of churches where worship could be celebrated. Here mass and vespers alternated with the services of the Episcopalian and Presbyterian divines, and I am certain none suffered from the near fellowship of the other.

A detachment of Archie's regiment, the Fraser Highlanders, was quartered on us for the winter, and with them the community shared their diminished hospitality; they, in turn, lent us their services in collecting firewood and in drawing water, and it was surprising to mark the good-will that was shown on both sides. Not only were they granted full permission to smoke in the quarters assigned to them, but the nuns, taking compassion on their unsuitable, and, in their eyes, almost indecent, dress, fell to work at knitting for them long stockings of the heaviest wool, which occasioned loud laughter and much sly jesting among the men, and on our side Angélique provoked some of the younger nuns to such merriment by her sallies on the subject that they thereby incurred the disapprobation of their more serious-minded elders.

For this attention General Murray sent to the Superior a most gracious acknowledgment of his gratitude towards the community, but it remained for the men themselves to cap the climax.

Every morning it was the practice of the Superior to make a round of the convent, including those portions set apart for the Highlanders, and on this duty I was in the habit of accompanying her, as the men took a great pleasure in my Gaelic; and it was an acceptable service to me to cultivate their good-will towards the community by this simple favour. I knew many of them by name, and indeed some of them could claim kinship with me, notably Neil, the sergeant, whom I have already mentioned, a fine specimen of our people, standing well over six feet in his buckled shoes.

One morning, as we entered the hall set aside for the men, we heard a sharp command from the sergeant, and to our surprise we found the men not only drawn up in line to meet us—which was a voluntary mark of respect they paid the Superior—but now, there stood every man in full dress, with cocked and feathered bonnet on his head, claymore by his side, and firelock in his hand, and every pair of sturdy legs encased in the long grey stockings knitted by the nuns.

The sergeant gravely stepped forward, and, saluting the Superior, addressed her in his most correct English:

“Reverend madam, I am put forward on account of my rank, and not for my poor abilities, to thank the ladies who would think so much of us poor fellows as to be doing us this kindness this day. As long as we live, yes, and long after we are dead, moreover, you may be sure that Fraser's will always remember this; and when we will be telling even to our grandchildren of Quebec and what we did there, we will not forget to speak of your name and of the names of the ladies under your command. And, madam, our solemn hope is that you will never have more cause to blush at our bare knees, saving your presence, than we will have to blush at your kindness, madam.”

Then turning quickly to me, he whispered, in Gaelic: “Speak to her, Miss Margaret, and tell her what we would say. It is God's own truth I am speaking when I say that we are thankful, even though some will be wondering what put such a notion into the poor ladies' heads.” Whereupon he wheeled about and roared out his command to the men, as if to check the grin that was spreading over his own honest face from appearing on any other. There was an instantaneous movement at his command, and the Superior received the full honours of a grand salute.

She was greatly pleased, as indeed she might be, for the poor fellows had shown their gratitude in the most honourable fashion they knew, and she begged me to return her thanks and the assurances of her interest in them all, which I did in terms that, however they might have violated her ideas of rhetoric, were best understood by the men before me:

“Neil, son of Angus, remember,” I concluded, “and remember, too, every one who hears me, that though these good sisters do not understand us nor our ways, they have knitted their hearts' kindness into every stitch that has gone into those stockings, and there is not a man of you who has a mother, or a sister, or a wife, at home, who, if she knew what had been done for you this day, but would be down on her knees praying for these good women. In the mean time, see you don't forget to do it yourselves!”

When I finished they were nearer crying than saluting, and I am not sure that I was far from

it myself; for, as I spake, the once familiar hills and glens, the humble dwellings, the quiet-faced women, the yellow-haired children, all that meant home to these brave fellows, came before me like in a dream, and I found myself longing for something I thought I had parted with forever.

The winter proved unusually severe, and the suffering of the troops and the few people of condition who remained was excessive, but there was no disorder to speak of, and the hardships were borne uncomplainingly. From time to time we had news of our army encamped on the Jacques Cartier, not only by the legitimate channel of the foraging and reconnoitring parties, but even by means of some who carried on a business of trafficking between the two camps, the greed of gain triumphing over war and famine, and even over ordinary patriotism. It was reported that M. de Lévis had said he would eat his Christmas dinner in Quebec under his own flag; but he was not given to such empty boasts, that I had ever heard, and the day passed unmarked for us save by the services in our chapel.

Towards the end of January, Archie came to me with a letter. “There, Peggy, this, I take it, should go into your hands, as it is addressed to your care. It is fortunate that Maxwell governs himself like a gentleman in some things, for if he had attempted to send his letter by any underhand means it might have placed you in an unpleasant position, and even exposed me to suspicion. Listen to this—I wish I could write like the fellow:

> “CAMP ON THE JACQUES CARTIER,
> 22 *Jan'y*, 1760.
>
> Sir,—I have the honour to be known to your Excellency's brother, Lord Elibank, and though Fate had thrown me on the side opposed to your command, I venture to beg your courtesy in remitting the enclosed letter to the care of Mme. de St. Just, at present in your lines. I have left it unsealed, should you deem it your duty to peruse it, but I give you my word of honour it contains nothing but the most private matters affecting one in whom Mme. de St. Just is interested. Should your regulations, however, forbid such a favour, I beg that you will burn it yourself, and I will none the less hold myself to be,
>
> Sir,
> Your very obliged and humble servant,
> Hugh Maxwell of Kirkconnel.
>
> To the Hon'ble James Murray,
> Commanding in Quebec.'

“I give you my word, Peggy, the general would allow such a letter to pass did it contain all the treason between here and Mozambique. He bids me give it you with his compliments, and assure you that not only is it unread, but that should you wish to answer it under the same restriction as to news, he will enclose your reply the first time he has occasion to communicate with the French general.”

The letter was addressed to “Mistress Lucy Routh, in the care of Mme. de St. Just,” and much as I shrank from opening it, I did so, as it might contain matters which concerned their son. And so it proved. The letter read:

> “22 *Jan'y* 1760.
>
> Dear Lucy,—I send this, trusting to the courtesy of General Murray that it may reach your hands safely. I was so suddenly called away that there was much left unsaid when we parted, and there has been no time for personal matters since. In the event of anything happening to me, I wish you to impress on Christopher that Mr. Drummond, the banker of Charing Cross, holds in trust a small sum deposited there for me by my cousin, the late Lady Jane Drummond. I have placed my will in the hands of M. de Vaudreuil, and whichever way things fall out, this will serve as a receipt, and insure its delivery. I would be glad to know of your well-being.
>
> Hugh Maxwell.”

I sent for Christopher, who was not with us but stationed at the General Hospital with others of his regiment, and made known the matter to him, and through the general he sent to his father his acknowledgments and the news of Lucy's death.

I was pleased at the consideration of which the letter was proof, and it was a satisfaction to hear Archie's acknowledgment of Hugh's charm; but beyond this the letter awoke in me no farther feeling, and I was surprised to find I could look at his writing and read his words with so little emotion. The truth is, I was living in a new world; the discovery of my brother's love, the revelation of Mme. de Sarennes's affection towards me, had gone far to fill the hunger and emptiness of my life, and the old spell which had so long dominated every thought and aspiration was no longer paramount. Then, too, the long strain of feverish hope and unrest, the disappointments and dangers, through which I had passed, had rendered me peculiarly sensible to the charm of the quiet convent life by which I was surrounded. Therein I found work into which I threw myself with ardour, and was encouraged by the Superior

towards that way of peace upon which the convent doors gave entrance. Could I once determine to cut myself free from the unrest and struggle of the world, I felt that before me opened a life of usefulness which promised amends for all suffering and atonement for all error. My life had so far been lived for myself alone, and I saw about me women who had attained happiness through a complete sacrifice of self. Could I only be sure I had the strength, was not the same reward held out to me?

CHAPTER XXV

A FORLORN HOPE

Absorbed though I was in my work, I could not but mark what was passing between Angélique and Archie—how unconsciously my single-hearted brother was following her in that path in which the feeblest maid can lead the strongest of his sex.

Her imagination had been fired by the romance of his finding me, and the story of his early adventures found in her a skilful listener, who could extract every detail from his somewhat unwilling lips. His endeavours to catch her nimble wit as it flew, and the expression of awakening wonder on his face when he suspected her of nonsense, would many a time send us into peals of laughter. Even Mme. de Sarennes was interested, though she frankly professed nothing beyond an armed neutrality towards our hosts.

So the winter dragged on. There was much suffering among the people, much anxiety and constant alarms for those in command; but each heart loved or hoped, waited or wearied, as in time of peace, and every one looked forward with impatience or anxiety towards the coming of spring, which would bring the dénouement.

By April everything was astir once more. The familiar intercourse of the long winter was interrupted, officers and men went about their duties so earnestly we could not but feel that all relations were suspended until the result should be determined. Soon news came of the movements of our army about Montreal and elsewhere, and the English garrison was marched out for daily exercise and duty on the plains, and as far as Ste. Foye.

At length it was clear that some movement was imminent. Orders were issued that the inhabitants were to leave the city—that is, all the common people—and word was sent to the Ursulines and the other communities that they were free to leave, did they so choose, otherwise they must remain through the siege, should the city be invested, and must share the fortunes of the garrison. La mère de la Nativité, our Superior, decided at once that her community should remain, and Mme. de Sarennes said the same for our little party.

Angélique and I stood in la rue St. Jean, and our hearts were stirred by the wailings and lamentations of the people leaving the town in long procession.

“Courage!” cried Angélique, to a despairing woman. “We will welcome you all back again. You will come in with our army!”

> “Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre
> Ne sait quand reviendra,”

trolled out a lusty fellow, with a laugh.

“Tais-toi, v'limeux!” cried the woman, angrily.

> “il reviendra-z-à Pâques,
> Ou à la Trinité,”

he continued, unconcernedly, and the crowd catching at his humour, joined in the lilting refrain, and involuntarily quickened their steps to the “mironton, ton, taine” of the old war song, at which Angélique clapped her hands in delight, and was rewarded with a shout of admiration.

“They would have done better to have fed that fellow,” she said, decidedly, as we turned away; “he will do some fighting, depend upon it.”

“You are confident, Angélique?”

“Certainly, chérie; the town cannot be defended. We know that, and if General Murray goes out, as he is sure to, he will but march to his fate, as did our poor marquis.”

On the 22d of April we were up before daybreak, and saw the garrison march out with their cannon under a leaden sky and a cold drizzling rain. I went about my tasks weighed down by a sickening anxiety, for though I had renounced Hugh, it was impossible to banish him at all times from my thoughts, and I could not but remember that, in addition to the ordinary chances of battle, he had among his enemies a sworn foe in my brother, and among his friends a treacherous enemy in Sarennes. Against these dangers, at least, I could pray for him with an undivided heart.

Noise of firing came to us through the day, which we spent in Perpetual Adoration, but at evening the troops re-entered the town and the battle was still unfought.

On the morrow they were again assembled, and again we watched them march through the

sodden streets.

We had not long to wait for news of the combat; every gust of wind swept down on us the faint crackle of musketry and the deep boom of cannon; it seemed interminable, but before the afternoon was well advanced the first stragglers had reached the gates. They were followed later by a mad, ungovernable mob of English troops, and soon the streets were choked with men, shrieking, crying, and swearing at their defeat. Their officers, with swords drawn, rode among them, threatening and striking, entreating and commanding to deaf ears, for the men were like wild beasts, and could not be controlled. It was not fear; it was like to a frenzy of rage and shame at their rout. They broke into taverns and even private houses, and presently the madness of drink added to the pandemonium. The wounded were with the greatest difficulty carried through the streets, and before evening our convent and every other refuge was crowded to the utmost.

It was a strange position for all of us; the wounded were our nominal enemies, it is true, but we had been living with them on terms of the kindliest intimacy for a long winter, and there was no stimulus of duty needed to make the nuns put forth every effort for their relief. To me they were more than generous enemies—they were countrymen and kinsmen for whom I was bound to work with a whole heart.

I was interrupted in my task by the appearance of Christopher. “Madam, I have come to tell you that your brother, the Captain, is safe.”

“Is he wounded?” I asked, with swift anxiety.

“Yes, madam, but our surgeon says a fine clean cut; and I believe him too, for he went off to sleep the moment it was dressed, more tired than hurt. He is in his own room, where you may look at him if you will promise not to speak,” he said, with an air of the greatest importance. “I gave Miss Angélique his clothes to attend to as she asked, for she was there when he was brought in, and waited until she heard the surgeon say there was no danger. She would have liked to watch, too, but I was put in charge.”

Christopher cautiously opened the door and allowed me to peep in, and my heart was lightened at the sight of Archie sleeping quietly, his brown curls hidden beneath a mass of bandages, but his face composed and natural.

“Thank you, Christopher,” I said. “You are a brave lad.”

“There were lots more better than me,” he said, modestly, “but we didn't have a chance, for all that.”

“Tell me something of what happened.”

“I don't know what happened after it began. I only saw the back of the man in front of me, and was too busy with my piece to think of anything else, until I saw my Captain in trouble, and then my hands were full, for the rest of the day. After I hear some of the old powder-eaters talk, madam, I'll be able to make up a fine story for you,” he said, with a bright laugh that to me sounded like an echo.

I hastened to our room, and there found Angélique in a state of exultation.

“Victory, Marguerite! As I told you! Our troops are on the Heights and hold the General Hospital, and the English are trapped in these crazy walls!” But in an instant she calmed herself and said, earnestly, “Now is the time for you to save us all!”

“I save you all? What do you mean?”

“Mean, Marguerite? Listen to those cries and the fighting. Do you know what they mean? They mean that the men, the whole garrison on which the English depend, is mad with drink and defeat—and Lévis scarce a mile away with his victorious army! Just one word to him, Marguerite, and we are saved; he will be in the town before the morning.”

“Yes, but how can it be sent? What can I do?”

“Carry it to him!”

“Angélique, are you mad? How could I carry it?”

“There is your answer,” she cried, pointing to Archie's uniform. “You will put these things on, and you can pass the gate without a question. Come, undress at once.”

“Oh, Angélique, I cannot! Let me go as I am and I will not hesitate, but—”

“For shame, Marguerite!” cried the high-spirited girl. “For shame! to think of yourself and such school-girl prudery at such a time! But forgive me, chérie; I did not quite mean that. I know what you feel. But do you think I would hesitate had I your height and could I speak English? No, a thousand times no! Marguerite, it must be done! You are the only woman—the only person, man or woman—in Quebec who can do it.”

“Angélique,” I cried, in an agony of distress, “think of my own people here; it would be almost like betraying them.”

“Well, think of them, but think of them as soldiers of King George against whom you were

praying night and day, not so many years ago, as you have said yourself.”

“But there is my brother!”

“He is safe in bed down-stairs; and when he is a prisoner, Marguerite, I give you my word of honour I will go to M. de Lévis and claim him for myself, like a squaw;” and she laughed merrily.

“How can you laugh, Angélique? Don't you see what it means to me?”

“Don't you see what it means to us, Marguerite? You know how we have hoped and suffered. You have lived among us and shared everything we had to give, joy and sorrow alike. Do you owe nothing to us? You were defended by him who lies in his grave below when a jealous woman would have branded you as a spy. Do you owe nothing to the Marquis de Montcalm? Do you owe nothing to those others who stood between you and her malice?”

“Angélique, do you think you need remind me of these things?”

“Forgive me, chérie, if I am ungracious enough to urge the claim of benefits bestowed. This is no time for pretty speeches. I would urge anything to decide you.”

“It is not that. If I could go as I am, and simply risk capture, or even death, I would not hesitate.”

“You cannot go as you are! A woman could not even pass through the streets to-night; but no one will look twice at a uniform.”

“But I cannot. Think what it will mean to me if I am discovered; think what it will mean even if I succeed.”

“Marguerite, Marguerite, you must forget what you are! You must forget what you can do, and what you cannot do! Forget everything, save that these tidings must reach M. de Lévis to-night, and that you are the only one who can carry them. There! Begin to undress at once! Quick! Quick! Any further delay may render all useless.”

Might this not be the reparation for any share I had had in the failure of Sarennes to return to succour Louisbourg? If I accepted it and proved successful, would not I carry into my new vocation something more than the failure of a life that had sought but its own ends? If I failed, would not I have attempted at least something for those who had so generously befriended me? Was not my shrinking from the ordeal of the disguise but a harking back to those little conventions which I had resolved to cast aside forever? Could I make a better use of my life than to lay it down, if need be, in such a cause?

Reasoning thus, I caught something of the intensity of purpose which dominated Angélique, and with fingers as eager as her own I prepared myself for my venture.

“What if I am stopped and spoken to in the town?”

“Don't be stopped,” she laughed, “and you mustn't speak unless your life depends on it. Carry your sword in your hand, so it won't trip you up, square your shoulders, and try to swagger like a man. Once outside the walls, you run no danger at all. Keep on the Ste. Foye Road, and you are sure to fall in with our people and be captured in due form. Then say, 'Gentlemen, I am a most important prisoner; take me at once to M. le général!' et v'là! the trick is done! Nothing easier; if I had only learned to speak your barbarous language, and were a little taller, I would be in your shoes to-night, and wouldn't change places with the best lady in Versailles!”

Chattering and laughing thus in her excitement, she shortened up straps and adjusted buckles with as many jests as though dressing me for a masquerade.

"SHE SHORTENED UP STRAPS AND ADJUSTED BUCKLES"

"There!" she cried, as she coiled up my hair tightly, "we must do without the wig, but the bonnet will cover a multitude of sins. You are as pretty a looking fellow as the heart of woman could desire. Nothing is wanting now but a brave carriage! Walk up and down like this, till I see," and she did her best to imitate a martial stride. "Courage, chérie! you are pale as a ghost. Courage! and remember every heart true to France will pray for you, whether you win or lose. You are carrying the fate of the colony in your hands to-night. Let me kiss you, chérie. Again. Bah! I'm only crying because I can't go in your stead. Come, I will let you out."

When the side door of the convent shut behind me and I found myself alone in the darkness of the narrow street, my courage wellnigh failed me, and with shame in my heart I realised I was trembling so I could hardly put one foot in front of the other. But the rain dashed into my face by the high wind revived me, and with an effort I went on. As I made my way down past the Jesuits my courage gradually returned, and resolutely thinking of my mission alone, I banished my fears to such extent that I was enabled to grasp my sword firmly, and step forward with some show of assurance.

As I turned into rue St. Jean a drunken soldier struck terror into me again by shouting out a convivial salutation in Gaelic, but his more sober comrades silenced him with low curses at his imprudence, and I went on, unmolested.

There were not so many in the streets as I had expected, and with this one exception no one noticed me; but as I drew near to the St. John's Gate I made out a crowd of men busily engaged in barricading it, and for a moment I stood still in bewildered helplessness. I had so resolved on leaving the town by this means that when I found it closed against me it seemed as if my whole plan had failed. With my heart beating so I could hardly see to direct my steps, I turned back along the way I had come, and it was not until I drew near the Palace Hill I remembered there were other exits. Gaining fresh courage, I turned down and made my way to the Palace Gate, when, for the first time, it struck me that a password must be given, and of it I was ignorant. I did not even know the forms necessary to pass the men, and if an officer were present I must be discovered at once; but it was now too late to draw back, as I was in full view of the guard.

It was a strange time to remember such things, but the first line of poor Lucy's hymn kept ringing in my head, and I advanced, saying over and over to myself, like a charm:

> "Thou very present Aid
> In suffering and distress."

When I was almost face to face with the guard I made out it was composed of sailors, and just as I expected to hear the words which meant discovery and disgrace, one said to the other in a tone of authority: "The Seventy-eighth. It's all right!" and without challenging me

they presented arms. Had I even known the password I could not have pronounced it, for my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth; but seeing my intent, the man who had spoken stepped before me and opened the wicket. I raised my hand in acknowledgment, and passed through.

I was without the walls.

Part III

MAXWELL'S STORY

"*Adieu, paniers, vendange sont faite.*" — Old Proverb.

CHAPTER XXVI

I CLOSE ONE ACCOUNT AND OPEN ANOTHER

Portentous as were its results, I have never been able to look upon the battle of the 13th of September as adding anything of value to military knowledge. From a technical view it never attained the dignity of battle at any point, and only exceeded a skirmish in the heavy losses and the deaths of the leading generals on each side.

The recognition of their efforts, and of those who so ably replaced them by their respective governments and contemporaries, read as a sorry commentary on the popular distribution of honours.

Wolfe, almost a tyro, at one bound won immortality and immediate applause from his countrymen; Montcalm, almost a veteran, though mourned by those about him, was persistently vilified, even after death, by the very man who should have been his most loyal supporter; I do not hesitate to name M. de Vaudreuil—and I am not aware of even a head-stone having been raised to his memory.

On the other hand, his successor, the Chevalier de Lévis, met with fitting reward and honourable advancement in his profession, and the titles of Duke and Marshal of France are now borne with dignity by one whose natural nobility of soul renders him eminently worthy of such honours.

To complete the contrast, the Honourable James Murray, who succeeded Wolfe, held an unprotected city in an enemy's country throughout a distressing winter, handled his slender troops with contagious enthusiasm, fought and lost a desperate battle like a gallant soldier; later on he governed a conquered people with a consummate tact, and still serves his country with distinction—to meet with no other reward, that I ever heard of, than the approbation of his conscience and the admiration of all honest men.

In writing thus openly I must disclaim any intention of carping, for I would scorn to deprive either of the illustrious dead of a single laurel in the crown so nobly won, but the very generosity of contemporary admiration has a tendency to work injustice towards the survivors.

I know personally, for I afterwards had abundant opportunity of judging, with what stoutness of heart did that admirable soldier, General Murray, support his misgivings, when he saw the last English frigate sail from Quebec in the late autumn of '59, bearing his more fortunate comrades to the reward of their gallantry, while he and his little garrison were left in a ruined town to face all the chances of war, to which were added the unknown dangers of a dreaded winter season.

On our side we made our headquarters in Montreal, where the military were busy enough, while the officials and other unemployed classes—priests, women, and school-boys—beguiled their inaction, and cheated themselves into hopefulness by the most chimerical and fantastical projects for the retaking of Quebec that ever deluded the human mind.

The truth is, we were as miserable a lot of devils on both sides as one could well imagine. In Quebec, the English were half-starved, half-frozen, wholly without pay, and without reliable information. In Montreal, we had enough to eat, we were as gay as the clergy, M. de Vaudreuil, and our miserable plight would permit; we were without pay, it is true, but to that we had been long accustomed; but we had the most exact information as to what went on in Quebec, thanks to friends within its walls, while our non-fighting orders, ever at the height of certainty or the depth of despair, had so befooled themselves with their infallible schemes of conquest, that they looked forward to the spring campaign with a confidence almost pitiable in the eyes of thinking men.

Early in April, M. de Lévis gathered together his motley army; the remnants of the brigades of Béarn La Reine, La Sarre, Royal Roussillon, Berri, and La Marine, less than four thousand in all, with about three thousand militia and volunteers, and, supported by a few miserable cannon, marched forth to sit down before Quebec.

We were disappointed in our first plan of attack, but on the 28th of April, 1760, we had the good fortune to meet Murray face to face almost on the very ground where Wolfe and

Montcalm had fought in the previous September.

Murray's force was somewhat smaller than ours, but more than equalled it in quality, being all regular troops, besides which he had somewhat the advantage of position; but, falling into the same error as Montcalm, he abandoned this to begin the attack, and the same result followed.

The battle of Ste. Foye will always command the respect of men of discretion without regard to the side which may engage their sympathies.

There we met a foe as brave as the heart of soldier could desire who for hours disputed every foot of ground with us, and the one error of the action on our part was rectified with a precision so admirable that it but heightened the honours of the day. Before I record this, I must note a personal incident.

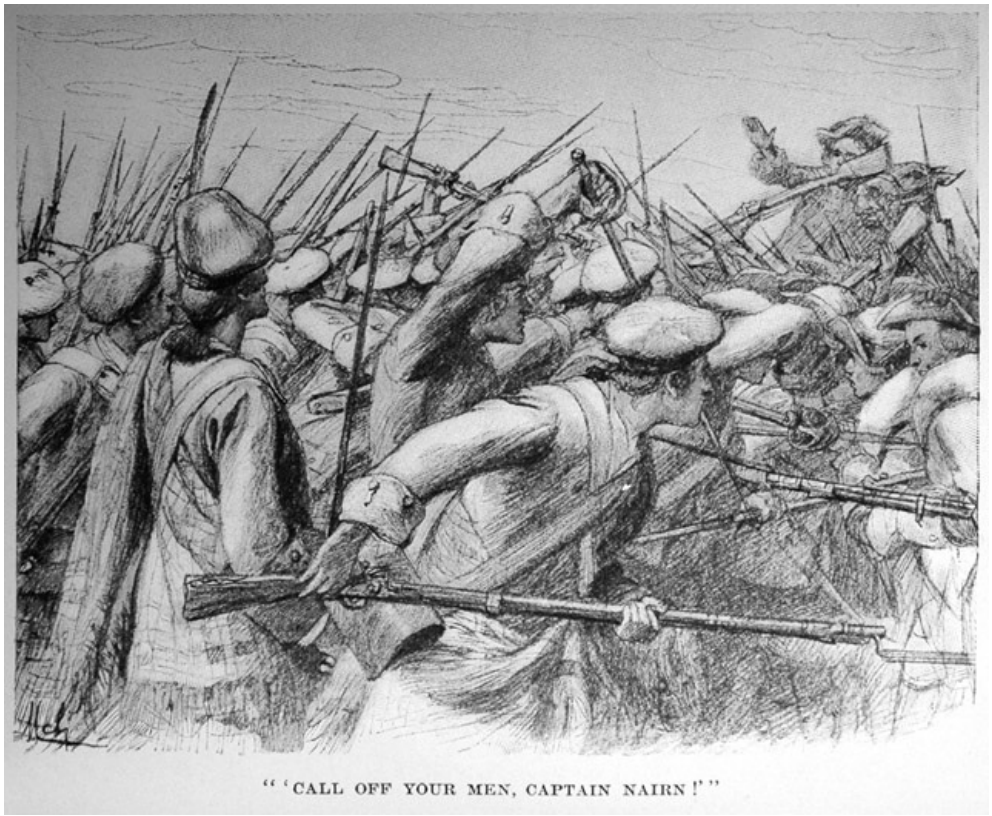
Immediately in front of our left, where the regiments of Béarn and La Sarre were stationed, stood a mill and its dependencies, belonging, I believe, to one called Dumont, and though its possession was not of the slightest strategical importance, by one of those strange chances of battle it became the centre of the most obstinate fighting on both sides. Our grenadiers took possession of it, and held it until driven out at the point of dirk and claymore by the Highlanders, who in turn were dislodged after a desperate hand-to-hand struggle, whereupon the whole contest recommenced. M. de Lévis, annoyed by the useless waste of men and the danger of expending such effort and attention on so misleading an object, sent me with orders to have our men withdrawn.

When I arrived the struggle was again at its height, both sides were fighting with the simple ferocity of savages, unmindful of every rule of war. There was neither direction nor command; it was man against man in a mad, unmeaning struggle for the pleasure of mastery.

“Pardon, monsieur,” I said to the Chevalier d'Aiguebelle, who commanded the grenadiers, “but M. de Lévis sends positive orders that you must withdraw your men. You are distracting the attention of the whole left.”

Then catching sight of the officer in command of Fraser's I rode forward and saluted. As he answered my salute I saw it was my once prisoner, Nairn.

“Call off your men, Captain Nairn!” I shouted. “This is simply murder! I have given orders for ours to withdraw. There is no loss of honour on either side.”



“‘CALL OFF YOUR MEN, CAPTAIN NAIRN!’”

Without a moment's hesitation he rushed among them, commanding and striking up swords right and left, while we did the same. When our object was attained, he turned to me and said:

“Hark you, sir! I am ready enough to join in avoiding useless slaughter, but I have an account to square with you, for which there shall be no calling off when we meet. Remember that!”

I laughed and saluted, mightily intrigued at what his meaning might be, and then rode off to attend on the General.

Meantime the fighting along the line had been severe, and the enemy's artillery had told on us with such effect that at last our centre wavered and began to give way. Supported by a wood, our left stood firm within about twenty paces of the foe, when a flurried adjutant ran along the line with orders to make a half-turn to the right and retire to some houses in the rear.

M. Malartic, major of La Sarre, stood aghast; it virtually meant retreat, and retreat in such a position invited certain destruction. He hurried over to M. de Barroute, a captain of Béarn, which stood next to the right, and repeated the order. They agreed at once a mistake had been made, and an ominous murmur arose from the men as the news was whispered from one to another. On this M. Dalquier, their colonel, as fine and experienced an officer as ever drew sword, rode up, and, inquiring of their difficulty, swept it aside by crying, “I will take it upon me to disobey the order. Fix bayonets, mes enfants!” The command was executed in an instant; then, rising in his stirrups, he swung his sword above his head and roared in a voice that could be heard all along the line, “Charge!”

The effect was indescribable; there was one quick, sharp shout of “Vive le Roi!” and the men went on like so many demons.

“Look at La Sarre!” cried Poulariez, with the Royal Roussillon on the right, as we marked the sudden confusion and then the charge. “The English have advanced too far! Ride to the Canadians, Maxwell! Half-wheel to the left, and we fall on their flank!”

It was the deciding-point of the battle. The English line was thrown into complete disorder, and thence forward there was nothing but hand-to-hand fighting of the fiercest description, which lasted until it ended in the utter rout of the enemy.

At one point I saw M. de Boucherville, who carried the flag of the Montreal troops, go down in a mêlée, but the colours were saved by the determined gallantry of M. de Sarennes, who carried them off amid a storm of cheers.

“Bravo, Sarennes!” I called to him as he rode past a moment later. “Your lady-love should have seen that!”

“Go to the devil!” he roared back at me, with the voice and gesture of the boor he really was at bottom, but my hands were too full either to wonder at his insult or demand an explanation.

I will make no attempt to follow the detail of the action; it is enough to say the honours rested with us. We stood victorious over the same foe that had defeated us on the same ground six months before. We had regained the Heights, regained the General Hospital, and it remained to be seen how soon we might sweep over its ruined ramparts into Quebec and hold it once more for King Louis.

As I entered the Hospital towards evening to report to M. de Lévis, one of the sisters addressed me: “Pardon, monsieur, but are you the Chevalier de Maxwell?”

“Yes, ma soeur.”

“M. Dalquier wishes to speak with you. He lies here.”

I found that fine old soldier lying on a bed faint from a wound he had received at the very moment he made his decisive charge, but which had not prevented him holding his place for some time later. He smiled bravely as he held out his hand to me.

“These confounded surgeons will not allow me to speak in person, but I wish you, Chevalier, to thank the General for me. Did you hear about it? No? Then, listen. Just after our charge was made, and we had formed again, he rode up. 'Here is the devil to pay,' I said to myself, and was framing my defence in short order, when, 'M. Dalquier,' he said, so that all about could hear, 'the King owes you his thanks for not making that half-turn. Hold your position for five minutes, and I will answer for the battle.' Did you ever hear anything like it? Think of a general making such an acknowledgment, and before my men, too! Mort Dieu, Chevalier! Tell him I would rather have this to remember than wear the Cross of St. Louis. Go!” And he turned away his face, to hide the tears that spake of his overwhelming satisfaction.

“I will see him as soon as I can find a moment,” said M. de Lévis, when I repeated my message, almost as moved as the old soldier. “Now, Chevalier, as soon as it falls dark, do you go over the ground alone, and as close to the town as possible, to see what dispositions we are to make for our trenches. Mark what Murray has attempted in the way of defences or outworks. Let me, or M. de Pontleroy, hear from you to-night, no matter how late the hour. But get some refreshment before you set out,” he added, thoughtful as ever of the wants of others.

I sate down for a few moments' rest, and ate something the good nuns provided, and then borrowing a cloak to serve as a protection against the drizzling rain which had again set in, I sallied forth.

When I reached the Heights it was puzzlingly dark, though the hour was early, and I had the utmost difficulty in finding my way. Corpses of men and horses hindered me, more than once the wounded appealed to me for help, but I went on unheeding, trying to determine my

exact whereabouts, in order to begin my task. I had approached near enough the town to see the lights, and could even catch sounds from the no doubt terrified population, but paid no attention to anything save my object in hand.

Suddenly a voice shouted in the darkness, “Halte là!” to which I promptly replied:

“Etat-major, aide de M. de Lévis.”

“Damn your Etat-major!” was the astonishing reply. “Why don't you say 'Mistaire Maxwelle'?” in an undescribable attempt at an English pronunciation of my name.

“Come, come, Sarennes,” I said, for I recognised the tall Canadian, “have you not got over your ill-humour yet? You nearly insulted me to-day in the field.”

“I intended to. Do you wish me to repeat my words, or do you not know when you are insulted, unless you are struck?”

“Are you mad, or only drunk, Sarennes? Get back to camp, man, and sleep off your fit. We cannot afford to quarrel after such a day as this.”

“No! you cannot afford to fight at any time. Do you think I am a woman like her whom you deceived, to be tricked by your lying tongue?”

“Stop, sir!” I commanded. “I am on duty, but my duty must wait until I have read you a lesson, which, I regret, you will not live to profit by.”

We could hardly see each other, and it was utterly impossible to follow the sword-play save by feel; it was not a duel at all; it was death, sure and swift, for one or perhaps both of us in the dark.

Sure and swift it was. I lost touch of his blade, and as he lunged desperately, I avoided his stroke by dropping on my left hand, and straightening my sword-arm *en seconde*, ran him clean through the body as he came forward, his blade passing harmlessly over me. It was a desperate chance to take, but the stakes were high.

I knelt beside the fallen man and spake to him, but he could not answer, and in common humanity I rose and hurried off to find some help.

I had not gone fifty yards before I almost ran up against a man cautiously making his way over the field. To my astonishment, I saw he was an officer of Fraser's Highlanders, and commanding him to halt, I advanced, pistol in hand, and recognized Nairn.

“You are my prisoner, sir,” I declared, covering him as I spake, and then, the drollery of the situation coming over me, I dropped my arm and said, “It seems I am in for settling accounts to-night, Captain Nairn. You were good enough to remind me of some indebtedness on the field to-day, though what it was I am at a loss to determine. Perhaps it was my refusal of your handsome offer to me in Louisbourg that I should turn traitor. No? 'Pon my soul, you are strangely quiet in private for a gentleman who was so insistent in company!

“Come, draw the sword which you flourished to so little purpose to-day, and you will find I can pay in the only coin a soldier should demand or take.

“What! Not ready yet? Would you have me produce my commission as an officer, or establish my right to arms, before you can cross swords with me? By God, sir! I will stand no more of your precious fooling. Do you think you are going to roar out at me in public like some scurvy shopkeeper, and then stand like a stock-fish when I do you the honour to ask your pleasure? Draw, sir, draw, before I am forced to strike you like a coward!”

To my amazement, instead of answering my words as they deserved, he threw up his hands with a weak cry and covered his face.

"HE THREW UP HIS HANDS WITH A WEAK CRY AND COVERED HIS FACE"

Supposing him to be wounded, I melted in a moment, and, stepping forward, held out my hand to him.

"Come, sir, come! You are unnerved. Tell me, are you hit?"

As I spake I still advanced to support him, and was surprised beyond measure when the supposed officer retreated before me and cried, in a voice of intense womanish entreaty, "No, no; do not touch me!"

I burst out laughing. "'Pon my soul, madam! you came near being somewhat late, with your embargo, and you have betrayed me into an exhibition of the vilest humour, for which I most humbly apologise."

She seemed somewhat uncertain how to take my drolling, whereupon I changed my tone, and asked, with every appearance of curiosity, "May I inquire how I can be of service to you?"

"Am I within the French lines?"

"No; you are on what may still be considered debatable ground. But I cannot give information to a lady whose masquerade is at least suspicious."

"I only ask, sir, to be taken within your lines. Will you do this for me?"

"I doubt it, madam, unless you can show me you have good right to be there. You are not a Frenchwoman."

"No, I am not, but I carry important information for your General."

"Pardon me, madam, but the General is fully occupied," I said, in my most repelling manner.

"Sir, I have come thus far at great risk to myself, and my news is of the utmost importance. Let me go on alone, if you will not take me in yourself."

"Madam, I have not the honour to be known to you, but, believe me, my advice is of the best when I tell you that your way is open to the town again. Take it, madam, and think nothing more of this escapade, but that you were fortunate to have fallen in with one who could advise so soundly."

"This is no escapade, sir; it has been a matter of life or death to me, and it is almost as much to your General," she said, with such earnestness that I could not doubt her intentions.

"Then, madam, if you are determined, I will take you. You cannot possibly go on alone; there are too many Indians engaged in their usual pastime of looking after white scalps. But first I must seek for help for a wounded officer, and then must complete my work. Follow me

closely, but give me your word you will not attempt any tricks," I said; for I have never been prepossessed in favour of adventurous damsels, and I misdoubted the value of her alleged information.

"That will not answer. I must go on at once! I cannot wait."

"It seems to me you are hardly in a position to choose, madam," I replied, amused at her decision.

She hesitated a moment, and then said, desperately:

"Do you know who I am, Hugh Maxwell? I am Margaret Nairn!"

Had the solid ground opened beneath my feet I could not have been more confounded.

"Margaret!" I cried, when I could find my voice. "Margaret—here? I cannot understand. Speak to me again!"

"Yes, Hugh, I am Margaret—Margaret Nairn. I am Mme. de St. Just."

"You have been here all along and never let me know? I cannot understand."

"Do not try to understand now. Hugh! I beseech you to take me on trust and help me to go on."

But as she spake I caught sight of a moving light.

"Do not speak another word. Some one is coming. Crouch down here until I see who it is."

Advancing cautiously, I discovered the light came from a lanthorn, by the aid of which a priest was examining the bodies, hoping, no doubt, to discover some unfortunate who needed his ministrations. He would serve me for Sarennes.

"Mon père," I said, advancing, "may I beg your assistance for a wounded officer?"

"Willingly. Lead me to him. Who is he?

"M. de Sarennes."

"Ah, I know him well."

I directed him to where Sarennes lay, and then returned to Margaret.

"I must wait until I see if anything can be done here before we go. Come with me for a moment."

The priest took no notice of us as we knelt beside the dying man, and Margaret, exclaiming with pity as she saw him, lifted his head and supported it in her lap.

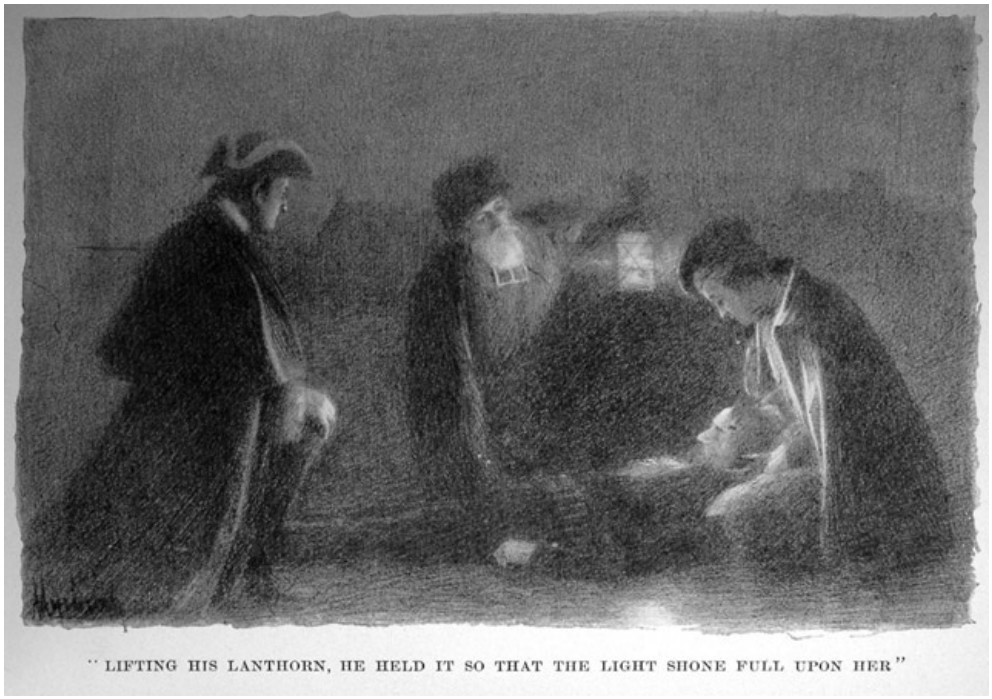
Sarennes opened his eyes and looked up into her face. He tried to speak, but no sound came from his moving lips.

> "Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine,
> Et lux perpetua luceat ei,"

prayed the priest, and even as we responded the unhappy spirit took its flight. Margaret bowed her head, and her tears fell on the dead face in her lap.

Most of us have been in circumstances where the killing of a man was a necessity, and have suffered no qualms of conscience thereat. I certainly had no compunctions on the outcome of my meeting with M. de Sarennes, and yet, at the sight of Margaret's tears, the natural feelings triumphed over the intellectual, and I joined fervently in the prayers of the priest.

He now appeared to notice Margaret for the first time, and lifting his lanthorn, he held it so that the light shone full upon her; as she raised her head in surprise, I could see he recognised her.



"LIFTING HIS LANTHORN, HE HELD IT SO THAT THE LIGHT SHONE FULL UPON HER"

"Marguerite!" he cried, in a voice of reproach.

"Why do you speak to me thus, mon père? Why do you speak thus?" she repeated, with alarm in her accents.

"Marguerite, is it possible you do not know me?"

"Know you? Why do you ask? Why do you call me by my name? You are le père Jean."

"I am le père Jean—but I was Gaston de Trincardel!"

"What!" she cried, almost with terror, as she sprang to her feet.

"I am Gaston de Trincardel," he repeated, unmoved.

"Oh, why do you tell me this? At such a time..." she moaned, and I stepped to her side, for her cry went to my heart.

"I tell you this because I must try to bring you to your senses. Why are you here in disguise? A shameful disguise," he repeated, scornfully. "Whose hand slew this man before us?"

"Mine!" I interrupted, for I could not stand by and see her meet his attack alone.

"Why are you here beside one who may be little better than a murderer?" he continued to her, without heeding me in the least.

"Sir, you are free to put any construction on my act you choose, as I cannot make you answer for your words," I interrupted again.

"One from whom I have striven with all my power as a priest to keep you?" he went on, still ignoring me. "Since that has failed, I must try and appeal to your gratitude towards her who was your protector when you were but a girl. In some sense I stand as her representative, and I charge you by her memory to renounce this last folly which has led you here."

"Stop, Gaston!" she cried. "Every word you say would be an insult did it come from another. But I have too high a reverence for you as a priest, the remembrance of your unfailing charity is too strong, to answer except by an explanation. Never mind appearances! I am here in this disguise because it afforded the only possible escape from the town, and my object is to carry word to M. de Lévis that everything within the walls is in the most complete disorder, the garrison is mad with drink, and he has but to march on the town at once to effect its capture."

"Are you dreaming?—the town helpless?"

"Yes, it is his, if he can but advance without delay."

"Then, forgive me! I was wrong—a hundred times wrong!"

"Just one moment. My meeting with M. de Maxwell is as much by chance as your meeting with me," she added, with a decision which I thought perhaps unnecessary.

"Forgive me, Marguerite," he repeated, in his usual tone; "and you too, Chevalier. I wronged you both. Now to make amends. Will you lead us to the General?" he said, turning to me.

"Come," I said, and we each held out a hand to Margaret.

"Stand!" thundered a voice in English at two paces from us. "You are all covered!"

CHAPTER XXVII

I FIND A KEY TO MY DILEMMA

“We are your prisoners!” I answered, instantly, for the slightest hesitation on such occasions may lead to the most serious results. Explanations can be made subsequently, but a bullet from an over-zealous musket can never be recalled.

In an instant they were beside us, a sergeant and six men, all Highlanders. I was about to speak again, but before I could do so Margaret stepped up to the sergeant, and taking him by the sleeve whispered a few words in his ear. He thereupon gave some instructions in Gaelic to his men, who closed round me and the priest, and, moving off a few paces with her, they spake earnestly together for a little. What she said I do not know, but in a moment he faced about, and picking up the lanthorn, examined me in turn.

“Your name and rank, sir?” he said to me.

“Hugh Maxwell, captain.”

“God bless me, sir! But this is not the first time I have heard your name, nor seen you, if you'll excuse my saying it,” he said, most earnestly.

“Like enough. What is your name?”

“Neil Murray, sir.”

“And a very good name it is; but I cannot say I recall it.”

“But you will remember the march to Derby, sir, and Lord George?” he asked, eagerly.

“I am never likely to forget it. Were you there?”

“Where else would I be when my grandfather was own cousin to his?”

“Then I suppose there's no treason now in shaking hands over so old a story, Neil?” I said, extending my hand, which he grasped heartily, and relations were established between us.

He then turned to the priest. “Your name, your reverence?”

“Le pére Jean, missionary.”

“Well, gentlemen, it cannot be helped. You must both follow us into the town.”

He gave his orders briefly, and blowing out the lanthorn, took Margaret by the arm, supporting her as one might a wounded man, and so we set off. It was evident the quick-witted sergeant possessed that invaluable qualification of the successful soldier, the readiness to carry out as well as to devise a plan; for in handling the lanthorn he had never once allowed the light to fall on Margaret, and by his happy pretence of her being wounded, he avoided the awkward necessity of handing over the command to her as his superior. That he would do his best to shelter her from any scrutiny or questioning was evident, and I was too thankful for the result to puzzle over the probable means by which it was attained. As like as not, by the very simple expedient of telling the truth—a wonderfully efficacious measure at times, when you know your man.

A quick, hard scramble brought us down to the level of the Palais; we passed the Intendance, black and deserted, and so on towards the foot of the Côte du Palais. When we reached the gate the sergeant halted us; the sign and countersign were given, whereupon the wicket was opened.

Passing his arm about Margaret, who leaned upon him heavily, the sergeant skilfully interposed himself between her and the officer in charge, and gave his report: “Neil Murray, sergeant, 78th, six men, two prisoners, and one of our own, wounded,” and on we marched up the slippery hill without a moment's unnecessary delay.

As soon as we were beyond sight of the gate our pace was slackened, and, now that all immediate danger of discovery for Margaret was at an end, I fell to wondering at the extraordinary chance which again brought me face to face with her who had proved the turning-point in my life. Little by little I pieced out the puzzle, and the more I brought it together, the more I wondered, but in a vague, disjointed fashion, that led to no solution. My confused thoughts were interrupted by our party halting in front of the Convent of the Ursulines, where, to my relief, I saw the sergeant lead Margaret round towards the side entrance.

“May I ask where you are taking us?” I said, when we again began our march, putting the question more to set my mind working again than out of curiosity.

“Where else would we be going but to the General?”

“And where has he found quarters in this stone heap? You have made a fine mess of things with your battering,” I said, for the evidence of their fire on the town was surprising.

“Have we not!” he exclaimed, with true soldierly pride. “But there will be a corner or two,

here and there, that was out of our reach. It was a God's mercy for ourselves that we didn't have our will of the whole town, or there's many a poor fellow would have made a bad winter of it."

"I dare say you found it bad enough as it was, eh, Neil?"

"You may say that, sir! There's been a deal to put up with for both high and low. But here we will be at the General's."

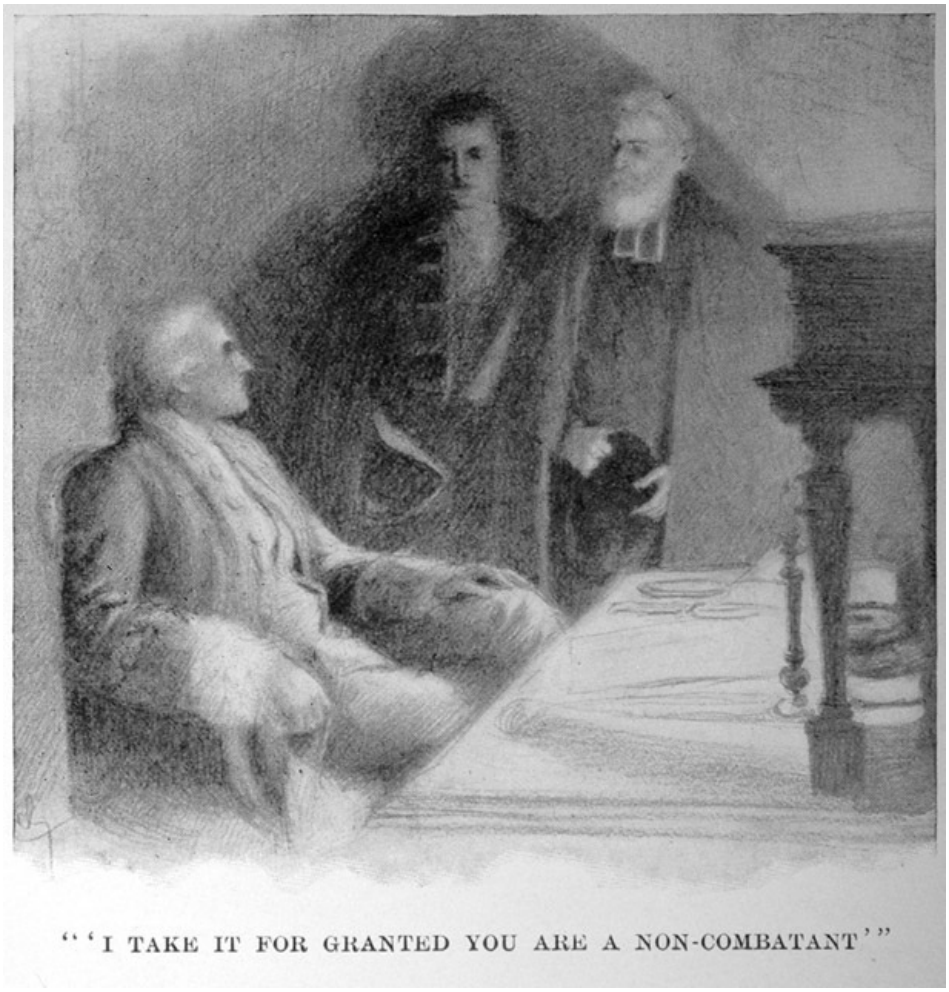
As he spake we drew up before a house in the rue St. Louis, and were ushered into an anteroom, where we were left under guard, while our conductor departed to make his report.

I was not permitted to speak with my fellow-prisoner, and so went back to my wonderings. It was Margaret—that is, Mme. de St. Just—who had befriended Lucy on shipboard, and protected her since. What a marvellous happening, that these two women, of all others in the world, should have thus been thrown together! That she now knew of my relation towards Lucy I could not doubt; and though I had preferred it might have come about otherwise, I bitterly reflected that an estimate of my character was no longer of supreme importance to her, now she was a married woman. Though I had been doing my utmost all these years of exile to school myself to a frame of mind in which I might look upon her as unapproachable for me, now that I found an insurmountable barrier existed, not of my own raising, with the inconsistence of mankind, I straight rebelled against it. What a climax to every irony of fate! To find myself free, and she, whom I had so hopelessly loved, another's. Yet what did the priest mean when he said he had been trying to keep me from her? I looked across the room at his impassive face, and felt I would give much for five minutes alone with him. Then an explanation would be forthcoming in some shape.

From this coil I was aroused by the entrance of an officer to summon us into the presence of the General, and for the first time I considered my personal situation. Not that I had anything to fear, for, in those days, war was a profession, and an officer was treated as a gentleman by his opponent once active hostilities ceased, or were even suspended; but the consequence of my capture would certainly mean for me the loss of any advantage I might otherwise have gained from our success. Now my name would figure in no despatches, unless as "missing," a bitter disappointment, when I had so slowly and painfully gained something of a position. But I had no time to reason it out before we had crossed the threshold of the General's room.

He was a clear-featured, bright-eyed man of thirty-five or forty, visibly harassed with the hard fortune of the day, but he did not allow his preoccupation to affect his bearing towards us.

"Reverend sir," he said, addressing the priest, "I take it for granted you are a non-combatant, but as it has fallen to your lot to be brought within our lines, you must perforce remain a prisoner. If you will satisfy me as to your name and position, I shall judge if I can grant you the less galling restrictions of parole."



"'I TAKE IT FOR GRANTED YOU ARE A NON-COMBATANT'"

The priest smiled. "I appreciate the reasonableness of the condition, your Excellency. My full name is Jean Marie Gaston de Caldeguès, Vicomte de Trincardel, but for years I have borne none other than 'le père Jean, missionary to the Indians.'"

"That is perfectly satisfactory, sir. I shall be pleased to allow you parole within the walls, only restricting you from approaching those parts of the town where our defences are now placed. I shall give you an order for quarters at the Ursulines, though doubtless the good ladies would readily receive you even without my introduction." As he spake he accompanied the priest to the door, where he gave his instructions to an aide in waiting.

He then turned to me and extended his hand. "Chevalier, we have already had the pleasure of some slight correspondence."

"I have to thank your Excellency for as great a courtesy as one man can shew towards another. When I wrote, I ventured to mention my acquaintance with your Excellency's brother, Lord Elibank, not that I relied on anything else than your Excellency's natural sensibility for the acceptance of my request, but that I might in that manner help to establish my identity."

"Believe me, Chevalier," he returned, with emphasis, "that was totally unnecessary. I was quite aware that you were in Canada. A man does not easily slip out of sight so long as he remains among his own class."

"Your Excellency overwhelms me; such a recognition goes far to make up for the years of disappointment I have endured."

"Then let us speak plainly, without further compliments on either side," he said, smiling gravely.

"Nothing could please me better, your Excellency."

"It will not even be necessary to keep up the 'Excellency.' I shall call you Kirkconnel, after the good homely Scots' fashion, if you have not forgotten."

"Forgotten! That is one of the curses of my Scotch blood. I cannot forget!"

"Then there is hope for you yet, Kirkconnel! For you have something behind you worth remembering."

"I cannot say it oppresses me with any great sense of obligation, for I would find some difficulty in naming it at the moment."

"Tut, tut, man!" he exclaimed, heartily. "Don't tell me that a man who played his part as well as you in '45 need mourn over it."

“We're getting out towards the thin ice now, are we not, General?”

“Not for me; though I dare say some members of my house might have to guard their steps more carefully. But to go on: you followed what you and your forbears held to be The Cause, and to which you held your honour pledged, and you saw it through to the bitter end. Then, instead of mixing yourself up in a miserable farrago of pot-house plots and chamber-mysteries which have only served to turn some honest men into rogues, you have acted like a soldier, and done only a soldier's work. And, best of all, you have succeeded. You have much that is worth remembering, Kirkconnel!”

“Your Excellency is most kind.”

“I prefer to be plain. Why not drop this whole business?”

“How can I? You would not urge me to come over because I happen to be a prisoner to-day? I may be exchanged to-morrow.”

“That you shall not, I'll answer for it! I have no intention to give M. de Lévis the assistance of even one more artillery officer, if I can help it. No, no! I shall keep you fast while I can, but 'tis only in the event of my holding the winning cards in this affair that I would urge you to send in your submission and take your place beside us, your natural comrades, where you belong. What chance of promotion, or even of recognition, will you run, if M. de Lévis has to leave Canada in our hands?”

“None whatever. I have never deceived myself for a moment on that point.”

“Then be sensible, and, like a sensible man, make a sensible move when the time comes!” he exclaimed, with the greatest good feeling.

“I am afraid I am too old a fool to be sensible at any time on such a subject. But I thank your Excellency from the bottom of my heart,” I returned, as warmly.

“Nonsense, man! I would not have spoken had I not been taken with you. But there! I am not a recruiting officer,” he said, with a laugh. “Think well over what I have said; I am not pressing for an answer.” Thereupon he turned the subject, and we fell into a conversation over the events of the past summer and winter. I answered such questions as I could in regard to our present position, for there was no advantage to be gained by undue concealment, and his consideration spared me any embarrassment.

When our interview ended he thanked me very handsomely, and regretted he could not offer me the hospitality of his own roof, but provided for me in the Ursulines, granting me the same parole as the priest.

“You will find among your countrymen an odd rebel here and there, Kirkconnel; but I rely on you to stir up no fresh treason with 'White Cockades,' or 'Bonnie Charlies,' or any other of the old shibboleths.”

“Have no anxieties on that score, your Excellency; I have had too rude an awakening ever to fall a-dreaming again. 'The burnt child.'” And I bowed, and left in company with the officer told off to see to my reception.

The General's unlooked-for sympathy had gone far to restore me to my natural bearing for the moment. It is flattering to any man to be received by his military superior as a social equal, and Heaven forbid that I should pretend to a susceptibility less than the ordinary. I was greatly pleased, therefore, by his recognition, and to my admiration of his soldierly qualities was now added a warm appreciation of his interest in me and my fortunes. But no personal gratification could long blind me to the misery of my real position. Chance, inclination, and, I think I may honestly add, principle, had kept my affections disengaged and, my heart whole, without any reasonable expectation of ever realising my life's desire, and now I had stumbled upon it, only to find it inexorably withheld from me, and every avenue to its attainment closed. Could I have gone on to the end without actually meeting with Margaret, I could have borne it with the silent endurance which had supported me so far, and had, in large measure, become a habit; but now every regret, every passionate longing, every haunting memory which time had lulled into seeming slumber, awoke to wring my heart at the very moment when I believed the bitterness to have passed forever.

The first to welcome me at the convent was my son Kit. Heavens! how tall and well-looking the boy had grown, and with what feeling did I take him in my arms. He returned my embrace with equal affection, and when we settled down, spake of his mother's death with much natural feeling.

Poor Lucy! She had had a narrow life of it with the exception of the year we had lived together. What a light-hearted, merry little soul she then was! She had no education in the general sense, but was possessed of so lively a sympathy that she entered into all that appealed to me with an enjoyment and an appreciation that no mere learning could have supplied. She may have lacked the bearing and carriage of a great lady, but what stateliness of manner can rival the pretty softnesses of a gentle girl wholly in love. She was not strictly beautiful, but she had the charm of constant liveliness, and her unfailing content and merriment more than made up for any irregularity in feature. This was the woman I had left, and I have already told what she was when I returned. It was not so much her nature that

was at fault, poor thing! as the atrophy of soul resulting from an ungenerous form of religion.

I cannot but think it safer for both man and woman to continue in those religions which have received the sanction of authority, than take up with any new ventures, no matter what superior offers of salvation they may hold out. And the first step towards this dangerous ground I believe to be that pernicious habit of idle speculation on subjects too sacred for open discussion, which might well be left to their ordained guardians, and not to the curious guessings of simple and unsophisticated minds.

Kit had much information to give touching others in whom I was interested. Of Mme. de St. Just he spake, as I would have expected, with the warmest admiration and gratitude; but after he had informed me that she was an inmate of the same convent in which we were, I turned the conversation towards her brother, who, I learned, was wounded sufficiently to be under the surgeon's care, and was pleased to gather that Master Kit had made a respectable showing for himself in the rescue of his Captain. That Mademoiselle de Sarennes was much concerned in Nairn's condition I was glad to hear, as such an interest could not fail to be of service when she should learn of her brother's fate, of which I took care to make no mention, as I had no desire to figure as the bearer of what must, to her, prove painful tidings.

“Your Captain is fortunate to engage the sympathies of so fair an enemy,” was my only remark.

“Why, father, we do not look on them as enemies at all!” he returned, with the ingenuousness of his years.

“Look you here, Master Kit, I cannot have you calling me 'father'; it has altogether too responsible a sound, and I do not wish to begin and bring you to book for matters which may, later on, call for a parent's judgment. Call me 'Chevalier,' if you like, it is more companionable, and it is as comrades you and I must live, unless you wish to have me interfering with you in a manner you might naturally enough resent later on. I love you heartily my boy, and it is love, not authority, I wish to be the bond between us. What do you say yourself?”

“It can never be anything less than that, sir; you know how I was drawn to you that very first morning, when I entered your room in Wych Street; you were the finest gentleman I had ever seen.”

“Well, you have seen better since, Kit.”

“None better to me, sir.” And he added, hurriedly, as if to cover his emotion, “Will you come over to us, now that we are victorious?”

“Oh, Kit, Kit, you are a true Englishman! Victorious! Why, great Heavens! We beat you fifty times over, only to-day! Not that it will make any great matter in the long run, perhaps, for it is no question of a single battle for either Lévis or Murray, it is the arrival of the first ships which will decide this affair. Wait until they come up, and then it will be time enough to talk of victory.”

The lad's face fell. “I mean for ourselves,” he said, wistfully; “this can't go on with us on different sides.”

“That is a serious matter for the principals, no doubt, Kit; but we need not worry over it, for I am not likely to be exchanged, the way things now are.”

“But when it is decided?”

“Your way, Kit?”

“I mean *if* it is decided our way,” he corrected. “You will come back?”

“Come back to what? You forget I am still a proscribed rebel with a price on my head.”

“But that is long past.”

“So Dr. Archie Cameron thought, but they hanged him like a dog not so many years ago, and I do not know that he was deeper in the affair than I. That I am not a very ardent rebel, I will confess; but I have grown too old in rebellion to shift my character readily. Besides, I fancy I am more of a Frenchman than an Englishman, or even a Scotchman; and the worst of such a transmogrification is, that one grows used to it, and change becomes wellnigh impossible. But you have chosen wisely, my boy. I wouldn't have you different for the world!”

“It is not for myself I speak. I am thinking of you, sir.”

“God bless you, Kit! I would rather have those words from you than a free pardon. And now good-night, or rather, good-day. You have your duties before you, and I must get some sleep;” and I embraced the generous boy with a full heart.

The next afternoon I set out to look over the town and mark the effect of the English fire during the bombardment, and could not but admire how destructive it had been, nor withhold my approval of the efforts the garrison had put forth during the past winter to repair the results of their own handiwork.

As I wandered round the Cape I caught sight of le père Jean leaning against the parapet of la batterie du Clergé, gloomily surveying the dismal prospect of a river full of drifting ice and a desolate and half-frozen country beyond.

He turned as I approached, and greeted me with a return of the manner that was once habitual with him. “I was glad to hear you found friends last night, Chevalier.”

“Thank you, yes. I found friends both new and old,” I answered, glancing at him curiously.

But he had turned towards the river again, and waved his hand outward. “This is all emblematic of our fortress, I fear —dissolution,” he said, wearily.

“One might descant on the promise of spring and the renewal of hope, but in reality I gather as little from the prospect as you do,” I returned. And side by side we leaned over the parapet, and continued to indulge our cheerless speculations in silence.

“Chevalier,” said the priest, suddenly, but in his usual tone, and without changing his position, “perhaps I owe you a more formal apology than was possible last night; but when I found that Mademoiselle Nairn—”

“Mme. de St. Just,” I corrected.

“It is scarce worth while to keep up that fiction between us,” he said, as if waiving the most ordinary form in the world, and in some manner I checked the cry of astonishment that was on my lips, and remained silent while he continued. “When I found Mademoiselle Nairn in your company, I too hastily assumed that it was by design on your part.”

I was so bewildered by this unconscious revelation that I could make no reply; but, fortunately, he did not mark my agitation, and went on as though speaking to himself: “Right or wrong, I have been the means of keeping her from you thus far; and if I have sinned in so doing, I must bear the consequence.”

As he spake he turned and faced me, but by this I had recovered command of myself, and saw that his thin face was flushed and drawn with suffering. “Let me go on,” he said, with decision. “I owe an explanation to myself as well as to you.”

Just what he said I cannot clearly recall. The revelation he had made was so astounding, had so completely changed the whole complexion of my outlook, that my brain could scarce apprehend the import of his words. I only realised that Margaret was no longer beyond my reach. The rest mattered not one whit.

When he ceased speaking, I briefly exposed what had been my position throughout, without reserve or argument, leaving it to him to draw his own conclusion.

“Chevalier,” cried the priest, heartily, as I ended, “I feel that any apology would be frivolous in the face of what you have told me, but I can assure you no man was ever more satisfied to find himself in the wrong than I.”

“I take that as more than any apology,” I returned, as sincerely. “But to return to Sarennes. What use did he make of my letter?”

“He attempted such a use that the outcome of your meeting with him is fully justified.”

“It was justified as it was!” I objected. “I do not fight on trifles. Do you mean, he tried to persuade Margaret that it referred to her?”

“He did. And though I was enabled to save her from personal danger, I could do nothing to relieve the distress he had wrought by these means.”

“The hound! It would have been a satisfaction to have known this when I met him.”

“Remember, though, it is entirely owing to the loyalty of his mother and sister that her position here has been possible.”

“That is true; but I see as clearly, that her reception by them was only possible through your answering for her. I owe you everything.”

“You owe me much,” he said, quietly, as if to himself. And at the simple words of self-abnegation my heart ached at the thought of the pain I had involuntarily caused.

“I am sorry for any family that holds so black a sheep as Sarennes,” I said, to break the awkward pause that followed.

“His family need know nothing, beyond that he died on the field of battle, a much more desirable fate than he was likely to meet with in France, had he lived; for, believe me, information has gone forward that will insure the trial and, I trust, the punishment of every peculator who has helped to ruin this miserable colony, no matter which way the present crisis may turn.”

“Now that we have confidence in each other, may I ask why you never let me know of your presence in Canada?”

“To be frank, I had no desire to awaken old associations. So far as I knew the past was a

book that had been read and done with. Nothing was to be gained by reopening it under the same conditions, and I had no reason to suppose they could be altered. Remember it is only now my eyes have been opened, and I see the error of my warped and ignorant judgment. We have travelled a long road, Chevalier, to meet in friendship, and I am glad we can so meet at last. I always regret when my feeling towards an honourable man cannot go beyond mere liking."

"Gaston," I cried, "I never received so handsome a compliment in all my life!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

I MAKE A FALSE MOVE

I can make no pretence to marshal the train of thought that swept through my brain when the priest took his way and left me to myself. Engrossed as I was with my own affairs, I could not but speculate on the curious chance that had driven him into a life of renunciation and me to one of exile at the same time and for the same cause, and that now brought us together before the woman we both loved. I use the word advisedly and without any reflection on his integrity; but it would be an insult to my intelligence could I look on his face, worn by suffering and emotion, and mark the tone of his voice, and, most confirmatory of all, the jealous care with which he avoided any mention of her name, and not acknowledge the presence there of the gentlest passion that ever refined the soul of man. He had found abundant opportunity for self-denial and sacrifice in the career he had chosen, but I doubted if he had found either peace or entire resignation. During his interview with General Murray, and especially during his familiar talk with me, I had caught a dozen reflections of his old bearing and manner, and I could not believe he had laid aside all human longings and emotions, however he might refuse to recognise them, when he doffed the outward habit of his class for the soutane and shovel hat of the Jesuit. It were childish to think so.

Thus occupied I sate heedless of the hours that went by, until chilled by the change of the day to evening. As I moved slowly towards my quarters, the only result of the hours of solitary thought that remained by me, was that Margaret was unmarried, and that she had come out to meet with me and for this alone.

That same evening I paid my respects to the Superior, la mère do la Nativité, a well-bred woman, who should have graced the world rather than a convent, and to her I proffered my request that I might be allowed to wait upon Mme. de St. Just.

"Most certainly, monsieur, if it be her desire. She is a guest to whom we owe much. If you will permit, I will send and inquire."

In a few moments the sister sent returned with word that Mme. de St. Just would see the Chevalier de Maxwell at eleven the next morning.

"Very well, monsieur, you may then meet her here in the parlour," added the Superior, pleasantly, and I bowed my thanks and withdrew.

I spent the night in great unrest, inventing imaginary difficulties when I overthrew those which really existed, picturing the expected interview in a thousand forms, framing and reframing every appeal I should make, and so wore out the night in a fever of consuming anticipation.

I was thankful I had been captured while on staff duty; for I had ever made it a practice to dress myself with the most scrupulous attention when going into action, so that death himself might not find me unprepared—and, thanks to this, I was now enabled to make a fitting appearance.

The feeling that I was outwardly prepared went far to reassure me, and when the time came for my meeting I had banished my uneasy apprehensions of the night, and recovered my habitual confidence. My sole anxiety was, lest I should fail in conveying an adequate impression of my appreciation of her sacrifice and undertaking for my sake, but when I saw her every doubting fled.

I do not know how she was dressed, beyond that it served but to heighten her queenly beauty; which, rare as I remembered it, had now grown and developed beyond all my faint conceptions. Her amber hair had deepened into the richest auburn, its colour was undisguised by powder, and its abundance undistorted by the art of the hair-dresser. Her eyes were steady, and clear, and truthful; every line of her face had rounded out the promise of her youth, and her shape and carriage were divine. She moved like a goddess.

"Margaret," I said, as I advanced towards her, forgetting all the openings I had so carefully rehearsed, "I can scarce believe I am awake. It seems incredible I should speak face to face with you here."

"It is indeed a strange meeting," she returned. The words were nothing, but they were spoken in a tone of perfect quiet and control, without any trace of the emotion that broke my voice and dissipated my self-possession.

“It is a meeting for which I have dreamed, but tried not to hope,” I said, with much feeling.

“And I had lived for nothing else,” she returned, with unfaltering voice and the same absence of emotion.

“Then, Margaret, it has come at last!” I cried, joyously, the temporary cloud passing as she spake.

“No, it has not!” she said, with the coldest decision, and, with that incongruity of thought which springs upon us at the most inopportune moments, I wondered if every woman for whom I cared was to change her whole nature, the moment I left her side. I remembered Lucy, and now here was Margaret, whom I had known as the embodiment of impulsive affection, fencing with a coolness that enforced my admiration. I saw she had fully prepared herself, and instantly I resolved to change my ground.

“Margaret,” I said, falling back on the most unstudied tones at my command, “it was only yesterday I learned from Gaston the true reason of your presence here. We have both suffered too cruelly from the accidents of the past to risk any misunderstanding now for the want of perfect openness between us.”

“That is what I desire above all things in the world,” she answered.

“Then let us begin at the beginning. Why was it you never let me know of your plan?”

“I do not hold that any explanation is due on my part,” she replied, still in the same tone of self-possession. “Remember I did not seek this interview, and I do not see that you have any right to question me on matters which concern only myself.”

“Great heavens; Margaret! Can anything concern you and not touch me?”

“Once I believed it could not. I am older now.”

“How can you speak thus coldly?” I cried, shocked at her incredible calm. “If there is anything I can do or say, for Heaven's sake, demand it. You cannot know what torture it is for me to see you like this. I have dreamed of you, longed for you, despaired of you through all these years, and I have a right to a different treatment. Is it on account of Lucy?”

“Partly,” she answered, somewhat moved. “Why did you never tell me of her?”

“How could I?”

“There was nothing dishonourable about it.”

“A thing does not need to be dishonourable to be ruinous. The dishonour would have been in my speaking when I was pledged to silence.”

“Was it more honourable, think you, to allow a young girl to live in a world of mock affection, and to expose her to what I have gone through?”

“But did I ever by word or sign make the slightest move to engage your affections, after I discovered the truth?”

“Pardon me, if I say that question could only serve to embarrass a child. I will answer it by another. Does a man need to speak to declare his love?”

“No, by heavens, he does not, Margaret!” I cried, throwing all defence to the winds. “It speaks in every tone of his voice, in every glance of his eye, and I would be a hypocrite beneath contempt were I to pretend I did not always love you. I loved you from the moment I first saw you, a girl, before Temple Bar, and I will love you, God help me, till I die!”

“If this be the case, then, had I not a higher claim on you than any woman living? Were you not bound to protect me against my ignorance of such a barrier?”

“Absence, and I had hoped forgetfulness, would prove your best protection,” I replied, with happy inspiration.

“The implication is skilful,” she said, quietly, without a trace of the emotion I expected from my allusion, “but no mistake on my part can serve to lessen your want of good faith towards me. Do you think a woman would have considered any point of personal honour where the life of one dearest to her hung on her sacrifice?”

“It is quite beyond my poor powers to judge of what a woman might do.” I replied, with a sudden rash indiscretion. “I find I have but little knowledge of women or the motives which sway them.”

“Then there is but little to be gained by continuing this conversation,” she returned, with a stately bow, and swept out of the room, leaving me to curse the folly that had betrayed me into so false a move. And with this bitter morsel for reflection I sought my solitary room.

Nothing in the world, short of actual dishonour, can cause a man of sensibility keener suffering than the knowledge that he has made a fool of himself. This I had done to the top of my bent. Why had I not apprehended the effective point of attack from the outset, and, instead of attempting any defence, thrown myself on her compassion and generosity? Why

had I not...? But it were futile to reiterate the charges I brought against my own folly.

What was the support on which she relied? If her brother—then I regretted from the bottom of my heart I had missed the occasion of squaring that account of which he had spoken. If a man at all, it was he; for the woman who had so discomfited me was heart-whole I could swear; a defiant modesty rang in every note of her voice. Possibly the convent, that fallacious sanctuary for disappointment. But if I knew anything of her sex, she was the last to whom such a retreat could bring satisfaction. Heavens! It was a coil involved enough to drive a man wellnigh distracted.

Dinner, and the intercourse it entailed, did much to restore me to my ordinary bearing, and when Kit sought me in the afternoon, with a polite request from his Captain that I would wait upon him when at leisure, I had quite recovered. Nothing could have fallen out more to my liking; I was anxious to discover his cause of quarrel with me, and, if possible, to arrive at some solution of Margaret's attitude. So I followed Kit to his room at once.

Nairn I found a trifle pale, with a well-bandaged head, but his welcome was open and unconstrained, and his greeting met me at the threshold. As I advanced to return it, I caught the flutter of a dress out of the opposite door, which informed me that his sufferings were not without certain consolations.

I took the hand extended to me with the same heartiness as it was offered.

“Will you accept a broken man's apology for a whole man's insult, Chevalier? I have promised my sister that I would make you this reparation, and I am heartily glad we can return to our old footing of Louisbourg.”

“Readily, Nairn. I have seen your sister this morning, and I cannot blame your action. I might have done the same myself. Let us say no more about it.”

“With all my heart! Well, Chevalier, the fortune of war has reversed our personal positions from Louisbourg, but I do not see that the end is much more certain now than then.”

“Much the same,” I answered; “the result altogether depends on the first ships.”

“And I suppose you abide by it as before?”

“I must, Nairn. We need not reopen that subject.”

“I only mention it, because I am anxious about the future of your boy, Christopher. I congratulate you on finding such a son. Will you understand me, if I say I trust you have not thought of influencing him to leave our service, though I could not blame you wishing him beside you.”

“Nairn, I owe you my thanks for having broached the subject. I have been too dependent on my own exertions all my life to make me a good beggar, even for my son. When in Louisbourg you expressed yourself as under some obligation towards me. Will you discharge it by using your best endeavours for his advancement? He is too good metal to waste as a common soldier.”

“He is that! And if you allow him to remain, I pledge my word he shall not continue as such. It may sound presumptions in a mere captain to promise so confidently, but if we come out of this successfully, promotions will follow. He has been most favourably marked by the General, and also by our Colonel.”

“Let me see; he is a son of old Lovat, is he not?”

“That he is, and in more ways than one.”

“If he be like his sainted father, he will have a longer memory for his own interests than those of his friends.”

“This is rank treason, Chevalier. I won't listen to another word of it,” said Nairn, laughing. “But I am depending on the General, he never forgets any one, I can tell you, too,” he added, eagerly, “he is a stickler for birth, and he will appreciate the fact of Christopher being your son.”

“That is a rare advantage!” I said, banteringly.

“Of course it is! Would you not value a good horse the more if you knew his pedigree?” he answered, without the ghost of a smile.

“Oh, come, come, Nairn! You must not attempt flattery, it has too overwhelming an effect. But, tell me—in what manner did you meet with your sister again?” I ventured boldly, knowing there was nothing to be gained by a subtler policy with him.

“Simple enough. She was in the General Hospital when I was placed in command there, and very pleased I was to find her,” he answered, as though the meeting were the most ordinary affair in the world, his tone clearly indicating that he had concluded the matter, and did not intend to reopen it.

“I should apologise for having frightened her away as I came in,” I continued, feeling for another opening; but he feigned ignorance of my move, and explained in the most natural

manner—“Oh, that was not my sister, but a very good friend of hers, to whom we are both indebted for many kindnesses.”

“Ah, that is much. I trust she appreciates your gratitude in your allowing her to nurse you?”

“Not at all; I do not think she looks upon it in that way. I believe there are some women who love the bother of looking after you. I try to give her as little trouble as I can,” he ended, with a catch in his voice.

“Nairn, you are a gentleman! Forgive my humbugging.”

“I didn't know you were, or I shouldn't have been so simple as to answer you. Do you know, I've often wished I could tell when a man is in earnest. I'm no good at guessing what his intent may be unless he has a sword in his hand; and as for a woman, I can never tell at all.”

“You're no worse off than the best of us, in that respect, Nairn. Some day I trust some good woman will engage you in dead earnest, and then the quicker you surrender at discretion the better. And for your sake, I hope the day will come soon.”

“I don't know, I'm sure,” he answered, in so woe-begone a tone that I left him, convinced his enemy had already been making serious advances, and that his defence was likely to be as feeble as his most ardent well-wisher could desire.

I discovered my ex-Jacobite sergeant to be as matter-of-fact as his captain. He would discuss military matters freely enough, but on the subject of our night's adventure I could not get him to advance a word. *Exempli gratia* “Neil, how is the officer you assisted on the field the other night?”

“Indeed, Captain, you must go away in and ask for yourself.”

“You are not uneasy as to his hurt proving dangerous?”

“Not half as dangerous as undigested catechising, sir, saving your presence, and meaning no offence.”

And in the face of so diplomatic a rebuke I would abandon the subject and fall back on the safer ground of mines and countermines, carcasses and grenadoes.

I made no attempt to see Margaret, for I felt I would be foolish to risk another rebuff, which might be final, and that my best play was a waiting game. My reflections had been bitter; possibly hers would be generous.

The garrison was fully occupied, for M. de Lévis had made such advances to invest the town as to call for constant watchfulness. His fire throughout had necessarily been light, as he was wretchedly supplied with artillery, but he succeeded in blowing up one of the magazines the very first night, and there were the usual number of casualties. General Murray, on his part, attempted one sortie, but as it was unsuccessful, and the officer in command captured, he thereafter held himself strictly on the defensive. No general attack was attempted on our side, and wisely too; for even the capture of the town would avail nothing, if the first reinforcements by sea were not ours.

I passed my time making further acquaintance with Kit, whose eager affection went far to relieve my melancholy, in a few visits of courtesy to various officers, and in renewing my friendship with Gaston and with Nairn.

Each day, as I visited the latter towards eleven o'clock, I was treated to the same disappearing flutter of what I did not doubt was the same petticoat, until at length I became piqued.

“Nairn,” I declared, “I must either give up visiting you, or you must persuade that timid lady-in-waiting that I am not to be run away from with impunity. Either she must remain in her place to-morrow, or I cease disturbing her.”

“Indeed, that is what I have been doing my best to persuade her, but she is somewhat shy until a little matter of difference between us is settled.”

“What, Nairn! Is it possible you have already met the fair one strong in fight, of whom I prophesied?”

“Yes, I suppose so,” he said, with a happy laugh. “I may as well tell you. She is Mademoiselle de Sarennes. The only thing that troubles me is, that she wishes to leave the matter to chance.”

“I congratulate you on the lady, first of all, sir. And now, what are the chances?”

He moved uneasily. “Just a woman's fancy, I suppose; but she wishes it to depend on the arrival of the ships.”

“What! Are those fateful ships to carry the decisions of Cupid as well as Mars? What part are they to play in your affairs?”

“Part enough. If a French ship arrives first, she marries me; if an English, then I marry her.”

“Good heavens, Nairn! What an anxiety to have hanging over you! Have you provided against the possible appearance of a Spaniard?”

“None of your nonsense, Chevalier!” he exclaimed, hotly. “This is no jesting matter for me. Cannot you take anything seriously? I conceive it to make all the difference in the world, whether the man take the woman, or the woman the man. I hate turning things upside-down, and, if I marry at all, I must do so in a decent, orderly way, like my fathers before me.”

“That is all very well, but shouldn't you allow the lady some choice, especially if you should turn out to be a prisoner, as will certainly be the case should a French ship appear first?”

“But why not let me exercise the choice? I have my feelings as well as a woman,” he returned, stubbornly.

“That is conceivable, or you would never have advanced as far as your present difficulty. But I think this is a matter which can be arranged with a little diplomacy.”

“Then there's little hope for it if the diplomacy rests with me, for I've no more of it about me than a brass carronade.”

“Never mind. You can safely depend for that upon the lady. In the mean time, pray present her with my compliments and congratulations on so ingenious a shifting of responsibility, and remind her that I expect to pay her my respects on the morrow.”

But on the morrow I did not keep my appointment. About ten o'clock that morning, as I was with General Murray, chatting over the fire in his quarters in the rue St. Louis, we were interrupted by an aide, who entered in great excitement.

“Your Excellency, a ship is in sight from the lookout!”

“Good heavens, Kirkconnel! This decides it!” exclaimed the General, rising, and generously extending to me his hand. “God bless you, whichever it be!” he added, heartily, and we parted.

In all haste I made my way to the Chateau and gained such point of vantage as was possible. I eagerly scanned every foot of the river, but there was nothing I could make out, though from the excitement of the little knot at the signalling-point above it was evident they could sight her.

In an incredibly short time every available foothold was occupied. Men, women, and children, soldiers and sailors, sick and sound, flocked to the ramparts to strain their eyes for the reported sail.

Suddenly a cheer arose from the crowd, and all hearts leaped in response. No—it was but a sailor climbing the flag-staff on the Cape to bend new cordage for the colours, and presently they were unrolled and spread out on the sharp May wind. With every moment the crowd increased; the wounded even left their beds at the news, and painfully crawled to have the sooner tidings.

At length her top-sails shone white over the bare trees of St. Joseph. Inch by inch they grew, until the vessel swam clear of the point. A frigate! A man-of-war! And, at the sight, the crowd, French and English alike, set up a shout, though as yet neither knew the message she would soon send flying from her halyards.

On she came, and, the first burst of excitement stilled, we hung on her every movement in a silence that was almost painful. At length a gasp ran through the crowd. Against her white sails a black spot could be distinctly seen running swiftly up to the masthead. No sooner did it touch it than it broke, and the white field barred by the red cross of St. George streamed forth to our waiting eyes.

A perfect scream of shouts and cheers answered the declaration. Men swore and blasphemed in their joy, some shrieked and laughed in hysterical excitement, while others broke down and wept like children at the sight of their deliverance.

Before long the frigate's sides were swathed in smoke, and her guns thundered their proud salute against the swarming cliff, while frantic groups ran through the town shouting the news, until, from the line of defences opposite the Heights, the artillery boomed forth in one long, continuous roar its message of exultation and defiance to the gallant Lévis and his men, to whom it meant irretrievable failure and despair.

I felt a hand on my shoulder, and turned to meet the pale face of Gaston.

“This is the end!” he said, with tears in his eyes.

CHAPTER XXIX

I PUT MY FORTUNE TO THE TOUCH

On that 9th of May which saw the *Lowestaffe* anchor in Quebec to practically settle the fortunes of France and England in the New World, as I walked back along the rue St. Louis

arm in arm with Gaston, neither of us speaking a word, I determined that now the time had come to put my fortune to the touch; and as soon as possible I sent word to Margaret, praying I might be granted an interview, and in a state of anxiety, not far removed from panic, I awaited her answer.

She would see me at once, and I repaired to the parlour where to me she entered, pale and dignified, the nobility of her soul shewing forth in every movement of her body, and its beauty in every line of her face.

“Margaret,” I cried, “forgive me, if I have forced myself upon you, but I have no courage to endure longer. You have heard that all hope for the French arms is now virtually at an end, and I must know what lies before me.”

“That must rest with you,” she answered, in the same calm tone which had so upset me in our last meeting.

“Then, Margaret, I am here to plead my own cause,” I answered, firmly, determined not to be swayed by any passing mood, “and I plead *in formâ pauperis*, for I have no one to rely on save myself, and no hope save in you.”

“You must not count upon me,” she returned, calmly. “I cannot acknowledge that you have any claim upon me.”

“I have the claim which comes from your own affection, Margaret. You loved me once, and in the strength of that love I stand to-day. In the name of that love I ask you to hear me.”

“That is a thing of the past. You have no right to presume upon it now.”

“Is it presumption for one who has lived in such loneliness as I, to hold to the one bright day of his life? There is no past for the heart.”

“I will not argue the point,” she answered, coldly; “but there is a past I have shut out of mine.”

“You may try to persuade yourself you have, Margaret, but it will come back when you think it most banished. I know of what I speak, for when I thought I had buried a past that was torture to me to recall, it has awakened me to nights of hopeless regrets and empty longings; it has stood beside me, unsummoned, when most alone, and has started into life at some chance word or token, when in company. The more you try to live it down, the more you create a haunting memory to fill your hours with bitterness.”

“Then I will meet it with other strength than my own. I have resolved to enter the Community.”

“So I feared. What do you hope to gain by so doing?”

“I will gain work, and rest—and peace.”

“No, Margaret, you will not gain peace. Listen to me. I know you better than you know yourself! You will find work, you may find rest, of a kind, but what peace will come to you even though you are shut in safe from the chance evils of life, when you think of one who has loved as faithfully, but without the same hope as yourself, wandering, a broken man, because you refused him admittance to the happiness you alone could offer.”

“Do you think it fair to try me by such an appeal? You know I can never be indifferent to your fate. You know I have thought for you even above myself,” she said, with a tremor in her voice she could not entirely suppress.

I saw my advantage, and seized it eagerly. “Then, Margaret, listen! Listen while I plead for myself. What have I to look forward to, if I lose you? Behind me are the best years of my life, wasted in this wilderness because I had hoped to secure your happiness by my exile. To-day I have seen every hope of my advancement vanish; that I can take as one of the chances of war—but what have I left if I lose you now? You are the whole world to me, and all it can offer is nothing, if it does not include you. Margaret, my love! Call back the day when, if I could have spoken, love waited in your heart to answer. Give me a single hour of that past now! a moment of the old love in which to plead for your life as well as my own.”

Her colour came and went as I spake; she had visibly lost that control which had so far baffled me, and when she answered, it was with the familiar name she had not uttered, save when she had been surprised into it on our first meeting.

“Oh, Hugh, do not try me. You know not what I have gone through, and now I am near to God.”

“Margaret, my darling, you will be nearer God when you are beside the man to whom He would confide you. You know I love you with all my soul! How can you look for happiness apart from him whom you have loved so long, and whom you love even now!” I ended, determined to risk the utmost. “Come to me, Margaret! Come to me! We will face life together, and together there will be no room for further doubtings, for further mistakes! I cannot shape my love into words. It is all my life, all my being, and yet it is a poor thing to offer you.”

“Oh, Hugh, I know not which way to turn.”

“Turn to me, Margaret! Turn to me! If ever a man needed a good woman's love, I need yours now. Everything is falling about me. I may have no right to ask, but I cannot help it. My need is greater than my strength. Am I to go forth into exile again without you-Margaret?”

“Hugh, my only love!” she cried, in a voice vibrant with tenderness; and with the words she extended to me her trembling, upturned hands. In my eyes it seemed as though they held all the priceless treasure of her enduring love.

For a few days longer the cannon continued to grumble backward and forward between wall and trench, until the arrival of the *Vanguard*, *Diana*, and *Lawrence* placed matters beyond a peradventure. Thereupon M. de Lévis promptly disbanded his Canadians, and during the night of the 16th, under a searching fire from the ramparts, he withdrew from his lines, and fell back upon Deschambault.

The siege was at an end. Within the town officers and men rejoiced in their escape from incessant duty, and welcomed the plenty which succeeded the semi-starvation of the winter; the towns-people, as is always the case, were ready to accept any rule which would guarantee to them security and peace, while the surrounding parishes were gladdened by the return of their volunteers, seeing therein a promise of the renewal of the quiet for which they longed. The gates were thrown open, and once more the country-folk thronged within the walls to offer their scanty provisions, and to bargain with the “kilties” and “red-coats” with a confidence that spake well for the humanising influences of war. General Murray received M. Malartic, who had been left in charge of the wounded in the General Hospital, and other of our officers at his table in friendly hospitality, and ordinary life took up its interrupted course.

But with much rejoicing on the one hand came sadness on the other. The news of the death of Sarennes was now received in due course by his mother and sister, but was borne with surprising spirit, especially by the former, who comforted herself with the thought that the last of his house had found death in a profession which his fathers had distinguished by their name, while his sister had both youth and love to support her.

Kit was jubilant over his promotion as ensign, which had happened even sooner than his captain had foretold; he was received by his superiors and equals with flattering congratulations, and the men looked without jealousy on his advancement. To me it was gratifying to find he valued it not so much for the position, as for the recognition of his proper standing as a gentleman's son.

Nairn was happy in his escape from the humiliation of being asked in marriage, and impatiently counted the days of mourning until he could make his demand on Mademoiselle de Sarennes “selon tous les règles de la bienséance.” That he was in love, even to the point of blindness, was amply proved by his astonishment that there were others in the like case as himself.

“Captain Nairn,” I said to him, in Margaret's presence, the day before his departure for Montreal with the troops, “as you are the head of your family, I have the honour to demand of you the hand of your sister in marriage.”

“God bless my soul, Peggy!” he exclaimed, with the utmost honesty. “I had never thought of you as marrying. I had planned that you would always live with me.”

“Suppose, Nairn, that Mme. de Sarennes had said the same of Angélique?”

“But that is different. You see, Peggy is...” But here he fell into a sadden confusion, and then, correcting himself, cried, with much vehemence: “No, she isn't! Peggy, you are the dearest girl in the whole world! You deserve all the world can give you. You take her, Chevalier, with the best wishes of a brother, whose greatest misfortune has been not to have known her better.”

And so matters were settled. Nairn marched with the troops to take his share in what I have always looked upon as the most admirable of Murray's achievements, a campaign politic, rather than military; at once to overawe and reassure the inhabitants, and, this accomplished, to converge on Montreal with Amherst and Haviland.

The situation in which Lévis found himself was impossible, and it only remained for Vaudreuil to accept the terms of capitulation which were offered. From his point of view they were no doubt honourable, but in his anxiety to save the goods and chattels of a parcel of shopkeepers, he saw fit to sacrifice the honour of those troops, who, for six arduous campaigns, had stood between him and his fate. Thus, on the 8th of September, 1760, Canada passed forever into the hands of the English; who thus held America from Florida to Hudson Bay, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. But these events will no doubt be more fully related by “the gentleman at his desk—” and I will return.

Soon after the arrival of the victorious troops with their prisoners from Montreal, a double marriage was celebrated in the chapel of the Ursulines, General Murray standing for Margaret, while M. de Lévis rendered the same courtesy to Angélique, and the officiating priest was le père Jean.

At two we sat down to dinner in the General's quarters, surrounded by friends old and new; for those who had withstood each other so stoutly in the field now vied only in expressions of personal admiration and esteem. Poulariez, Malartic, and le petit Joannès sat side by side with Fraser, Burton, and Rollo, while the two generals shared the honours of the feast with Margaret and Angélique.

M. de Lévis did me the honour to request that I would supplement his encomium on our hosts by a few words in English, which I did with poor enough effect; but on being called upon on all sides for a song, I retrieved my halting prose with the following, which I had set to the old air of “Dalmeny”:

“Though unrelenting fate hath cast
  In camps opposed our lot,
Though we have faced each other oft
  And Scot hath drawn on Scot,
I cannot hold that Chance, or Time,
  Or waste of sundering sea.
Can part the banished hearts that meet
  At one in their Ain Countrie.

“We've sprung from every mile that lies
  'Twixt Tweed-side and Ardshiel,
To wake the corners of the world
  With clash of Scottish steel.
We've kept our faith to King and Prince
  And held it ample fee,
If life or death might keep our name
  Alive in our Ain Countrie.

“We've ridden far for name and fame.
  We've never stooped for gold.
We've led the flying columns back
  With victory in our hold.
We've won undying name and fame!
  Yet all o' it I'd gie
To see the red sun set at hame,
  At hame, in my Ain Countrie.”

The enthusiasm of our generous hosts over my effort formed a fitting close to the festivity, and the refrain of “Our Ain Countrie” was carried forth from the room to pass from lip to lip until the whole garrison was wild over it, and many a homesick fellow found sad consolation in my poor effusion of an idle hour. Such a gratification is the highest which a man of taste can receive, and it is to be regretted that more men of genius do not direct their efforts to such pleasing ends.

With our friends Poulariez, Joannès, and others in command of the Royal Roussillon, we were provided for in the *Duke*, Captain Renwick, where Kit, Angélique, with her husband, and a score of English officers assembled to bid us farewell, so that our leaving resembled more a party of pleasure than the embarkment of a defeated army.

But as we dropped down the stream and stood watching the great rock of Quebec, with its fringe of batteries, and the English flag flying where ours had so proudly held its place for many a day, a sadness fell upon us all.

Margaret and I stood somewhat apart from the others.

“Hugh, dear, cannot you find some cause for thankfulness?” she said, softly.

“Oh yes; like Bougainville, I can at least quote the Psalmist: 'In exitu Israel de-AEgypto, domus Jacob de populo barbaro.'”

“Oh, Hugh, do not say that! It has been a blessed land to us. Listen, dear, to what has been my comfort all these years,” and with her beauteous face filled with the exaltation of her love she repeated:

“The span o' Life's nae lang eneugh,
  Nor deep eneugh the sea,
Nor braid eneugh this weary warld,
  To part my Love frae me.”

"'The span o' Life's nae lang eneugh,
Nor deep eneugh the sea,
Nor braid eneugh this weary warld,
To part my Love frae me.'"

Epilogue

The desolate point known as Tadoussac, at the mouth of the river Saguenay, in Canada, is the place of exile of a few officials who guard the interests of the fur trade.

Their quarters, a few storehouses, and the little church with its modest presbytère, form an outpost to the civilised world. During the summer season the wandering Indians flock down in their canoes, build their temporary huts, and a constant bustle of trade and barter sets in. Furs are examined, valued, and exchanged for guns, ammunition, clothing, and other luxuries of savage existence. The arrival of the few ships necessary to this primitive commerce makes the only other break in the monotonous existence of the little colony. At the approach of winter the Indiana scatter, and the officials and the solitary priest are prisoners until the spring once more opens for them the doors of the outside world.

Here it was, on the evening of the 11th of April, 1782, that the priest sate with his companions in the house of the principal official.

At nine o'clock he rose and said good-night to his hosts in his usual manner, but suddenly his whole appearance changed. Drawing back, he raised his hand, and said, in tones of deepest earnestness:

“My friends, it is not only 'good-night,' it is 'good-bye.' Good-bye for all time, for you will never see me again alive. To-night at twelve I shall be called hence.”

The little company were shocked beyond expression. The priest stood before them tall, commanding, his figure full of life and vigour, his eye bright and unfaltering, but his face lighted with a mysterious solemnity that forbade questioning.

“At midnight the bell of the chapel will sound. You may come then, but do not touch my body. To-morrow you will seek M. Compain, the curé of the Isle aux Coudres, and he will prepare my body for burial.”

He withdrew, leaving the company in affrighted silence; ten, eleven struck, and at midnight the bell of the chapel began to toll. They arose, awe-stricken, and took their way to the little church.

By the dim light before the sanctuary they caught sight of the robe of the priest. He was lying on the ground motionless, his face covered by his hands as if in prayer on the first steps of the altar.

That same night the bells of all the churches along the river, at la Mal Baie, at Les Eboulements, at the Isle aux Coudres, at la Baie St. Paul, and up through every parish to Quebec, rang without the touch of mortal hands, and soon the wondering faithful knew that the passing soul for which they rang was that of la père Jean, the missionary to the Indians, once known as Jean Marie Gaston de Caldeguès, Vicomte de Trincardel.

“Happy the people who still believe these sweet and holy legends.”

THE END

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