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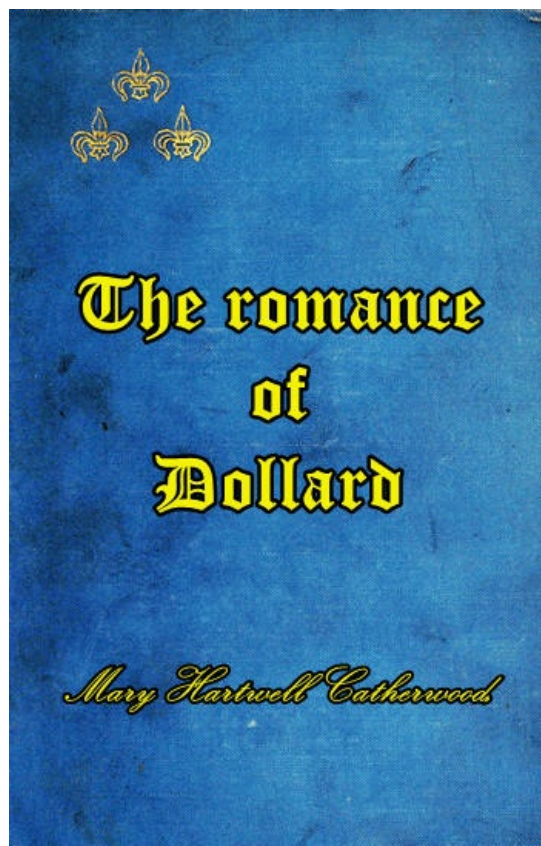
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Dollard and His Command Taking the Oath.

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THE ROMANCE OF DOLLARD

BY
MARY HARTWELL CATHERWOOD

ILLUSTRATED



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NEWLY REVISED.

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[iii]

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PREFACE.

BY FRANCIS PARKMAN.

THE exploit which forms the basis of the following story is one of the most notable feats of arms in American annals, and it is as real as it is romantic.

The chief personages of the tale—except, always, the heroine—were actual men and women two and a quarter centuries ago, and Adam Dollard was no whit less a hero than he is represented by the writer, though it is true that as regards his position, his past career, and, above all, his love affairs, romance supplies some information which history denies us. The brave Huron Annahotaha also is historical. Even Jouaneaux, the servant of the hospital nuns, was once a living man, whose curious story is faithfully set forth; and Sisters Brésoles, Maçé, and Maillet were genuine Sisters of the old Hôtel-Dieu at Montreal, with traits much like those assigned to them in the story.

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The author is a pioneer in what may be called a new departure in American fiction. Fenimore Cooper, in his fresh and manly way, sometimes touches Canadian subjects and introduces us to French soldiers and bush-rangers; but he knew Canada only from the outside, having no means of making its acquaintance from within, and it is only from within that its quality as material for romance can be appreciated. The hard and practical features of English colonization seem to frown down every excursion of fancy as pitilessly as puritanism itself did in its day. A feudal society, on the other hand, with its contrasted lights and shadows, its rivalries and passions, is the natural theme of romance; and when to lord and vassal is joined a dominant hierarchy with its patient martyrs and its spiritual despots, side by side with savage chiefs and warriors jostling the representatives of the most gorgeous civilization of modern times,—the whole strange scene set in an environment of primeval forests,—the spectacle is as striking as it is unique.

The realism of our time has its place and function; but an eternal analysis of the familiar and commonplace is cloying after a while, and one turns with relief and refreshment to such fare as that set before us in Mrs. Catherwood's animated story.

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FRANCIS PARKMAN.

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PREFACE.

BY THE AUTHOR.

THE province of Canada, or New France, under the reign of Louis XIV., presented the same panorama of lakes, mountains, rivers, rapids, that it does to-day; but it was then a background for heroes, and the French population which has become concentrated in the larger province of Quebec was then thinly dripped along the river borders. Such figures as Samuel de Champlain, the Chevalier La Salle, impetuous Louis de Buade, Count of Frontenac, are seen against that dim past; and the names of men who lived, fought, and suffered for that province are stamped on streams, lakes, streets, and towns.

All localities have their romance, their unseen or possible life, which is hinted to the maker of stories alone. But Canada is teeming with such suggestions—its picturesque French dwellers in remote valleys are to-day a hundred or two hundred years behind the rush of the age.

Adam Daulac, Sieur des Ormeaux, stands distinct against the background of two centuries and a quarter ago. His name and the names of his companions may yet be seen on the parish register of Villemarie—so its founders called Montreal. His exploit and its success are matters of history, as well authenticated as any event of our late civil war. While the story of Thermopylæ continues to be loved by men, the story of Dollard cannot die. It is that picture of stalwart heroism which all nations admire. It is the possible greatness of man—set in this instance in blue Canadian distances, with the somber and everlasting Laurentines for its witnesses. The phase is medieval, is clothed in the garb of religious chivalry; but the spirit is a part of the universal man.

MARY HARTWELL CATHERWOOD.


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THE ROMANCE OF DOLLARD.

I.

A SHIP FROM FRANCE.

N April of the year 1660, on a morning when no rain drizzled above the humid rock of Quebec, two young men walked along the single street by the river. The houses of this Lower Town were a row of small buildings with stone gables, their cedar-shingled roofs curving upward at the eaves in Norman fashion. High in north air swelled the mighty natural fortress of rock, feebly crowned by the little fort of St. Louis displaying the lilies of France. Farther away the cathedral set its cross against the sky. And where now a tangle of streets, bisected by the city wall, climb steeply from Lower to Upper Town, then a rough path straggled.

The St. Lawrence, blue with Atlantic tide-water, spread like a sea betwixt its north shore and the high palisades of Fort Levi on the opposite bank. Sailboats and skiffs were ranged in a row at the water's edge. And where now the steamers of all nations may be seen resting at anchor, on that day one solitary ship from France discharged her cargo and was viewed with lingering interest by every colonist in Quebec. She had arrived the previous day, the first vessel of spring, and bore marks of rough weather during her voyage.

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Even merchants' wives had gathered from their shops in Lower Town, and stood near the river's edge, watching the ship unload, their hands rolled in their aprons and their square head-covers flaring in the wind.

"How many did she bring over this time?" cried a woman to her neighbor in the teeth of the breeze.

"A hundred and fifty, my husband told me," the neighbor replied in the same nipped and provincialized French. And she produced one hand from her apron to bridge it over her eyes that she might more unreservedly absorb the ship. "Ah, to think these cables held her to French soil but two months ago! Whenever I hear the Iroquois are about Montreal or Ste. Anne's, my heart leaps out of my breast towards France."

"It is better here for us," returned the other, "who are common people. So another demoiselle was shipped with this load. The king is our father. But look you! even daughters of the nobles are glad to come to New France."

"And have you heard," the second exclaimed, "that she is of the house of Laval-Montmorency and cousin of the vicar-apostolic?"

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"The cousin of our holy bishop? Then she comes to found some sisterhood for the comfort of Quebec. And that will be a thorn to Montreal."

"No, she comes to be the bride of the governor-general. We shall soon see her the Vicomtesse d'Argenson, spreading her pretintailles as she goes in to mass. Well would I like a look through her caskets at new court fashions. These Laval-Montmorencys are princes in France. V'là, soldiers!" the woman exclaimed, with that facile play of gesture which seems to expand all Canadian speech, as she indicated the two men from Montreal.

"Yes, every seigniory will be sending out its men to the wife market. If I could not marry without traveling three thousand miles for a husband, and then going to live with him in one of the river côtes, I would be a nun."

"Still, there must be wives for all these bachelors," the other woman argued. "And his Majesty bears the expense. The poor seasick girls, they looked so glad to come ashore!"

These chatting voices, blown by the east wind, dropped disjointed words on the passers' ears, but the passers were themselves busy in talk.

Both were young men, but the younger was evidently his elder's

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feudal master. He was muscular and tall, with hazel eyes, and dark hair which clustered. His high features were cut in clear, sharp lines. He had the enthusiast's front, a face full of action, fire, and vision-seeing. He wore the dress of a French officer and carried his sword by his side.

"I think we have come in good time, Jacques," he said to his man, who stumped stolidly along at his left hand.

Jacques was a faithful-looking fellow, short and strong, with stiff black hair and somber black eyes. His lower garments looked home-spun, the breeches clasping a huge coarse stocking at the knee, while remnants of military glory clothed his upper person. Jacques was plainly a soldier settler, and if his spear had not become a pruning-hook it was because he had Indians yet to fight. His hereditary lord in France, his late commander and his present seignior under whom he held his grant of land, was walking with him up the rock of Quebec.

This Jacques was not the roaring, noisy type of soldier who usually came in droves to be married when Louis' ship-load of girls arrived. Besides, the painstaking creature had now a weight upon his soul. He answered:

"Yes, m'sieur. She will hardly be anchored twenty-four hours."

"In four hours we must turn our backs on Quebec with your new wife aboard, and with the stream against us this time."

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"Yes, m'sieur. But if none of them will have me, or they all turn out unfit?"

His seignior laughed.

"From a hundred and fifty sizes, colors, and dispositions you can surely pick yourself one mate, my man."

"But the honesty of them," demurred Jacques, "and their obedience after you are at the trouble of getting them home; though girls from Rouen were always good girls. I have not made this long voyage to pick a Rouen wife, to go back again empty of hand. M'sieur, it is certainly your affair as much as mine; and if you see me open my mouth to gaze at a rouged woman who will eat up our provender and bring us no profit, give me a punch with your scabbard. What I want is a good hearty peasant girl from Rouen, who can milk, and hoe, and cut hay, and help grind in the mill, and wait on Mademoiselle de Granville without taking fright."

"And one whom I can bless as my joint heir with you, my Jacques," said the young commandant, turning a pleasant face over his subaltern. "Ultimately you will be my heirs, when Renée is done with St. Bernard and the other islands of the seigniory. Therefore—yes—I want a very good girl indeed, from Rouen, to perpetuate a line of my father's peasantry on Adam Dollard's estate in New France."

"Yes, m'sieur," responded Jacques dejectedly as he plodded upward.

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It grieved him that a light leg and a high bright face like Dollard's were sworn to certain destruction. His pride in the house of Des Ormeaux was great, but his love for the last male of its line was greater. This Adam Daulac, popularly called Dollard, was too mighty a spirit for him to wrestle with; so all his dissent was silent. When he recalled the cavalier's gay beginning in France, he could not join it to the serious purpose of the same man in New France.


Jacques climbed with his face towards the ground, but Dollard gazed over the St. Lawrence's upper flood where misty headlands were touched with spring grayness. The river, like an elongated sea, wound out of distances. There had been an early thaw that year, and no drowned fragments of ice toppled about in the current.

So vast a reach of sight was like the beginning of one of St. John's visions.

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II.

LAVAL.

 HE convent of the Ursulines had received and infolded the lambs sent out by Louis XIV. to help stock his wilderness. This convent, though substantially built of stone, was too small for all the purposes of the importation, and a larger structure, not far from it, had been prepared as a bazar in which to sort and arrange the ship-load.

The good nuns, while they waited on their crowd of miscellaneous guests, took no notice of that profane building; and only their superior, Mother Mary of the Incarnation, accompanied and marshaled future brides to the marriage market.

Squads began to cross the court soon after matins. The girls were rested by one night's sleep upon land, the balsam odor of pines, and the clear air on Quebec heights. They must begin taking husbands at once. The spring sowing was near. Time and the chemistry of nature wait on no woman's caprices. And in general there was little coyness among these girls. They had come to New France to settle themselves, and naturally wished to make a good bargain of it. Some faces wore the stamp of vice, but these were the exceptions. A stolid herd of peasantry, varying in shape and complexion but little, were there to mother posterity in Canada. Some delicate outlines and auburn tresses offset the monotony of somber black eyes and stout waists. Clucking all the way across the court her gentle instructions and repressions, Mother Mary led squad after squad.

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There were hilarious girls, girls staring with large interest at the oddities of this new world while they remarked in provincial French, and girls folding their hands about their crucifixes and looking down. The coquettish had arrayed themselves coquettishly, and the sober had folded their shoulder-collars quite high about their throats.

"But," dropped Mother Mary into the ear of Madame Bourdon, who stood at the mouth of the matrimonial pen, receiving and placing each squad, "these are mixed goods!" To which frolicsome remark from a strict devotee Madame Bourdon replied with assenting shrug.

The minds of both, however, quite separated the goods on display from one item of the cargo then standing in the convent parlor before the real bishop of Canada. This item was a slim young girl, very high-bred in appearance, richly plain in apparel. She held a long, dull-colored cloak around her with hands so soft and white of flesh that one's eye traced over and over the flexible curve of wrist and finger. Her eyes were darkly brown, yet they had a tendency towards topaz lights which gave them moments of absolute yellowness; while her hair had a dazzling white quality that the powders of a later period could not impart. Bits of it straying from her high roll of curls suggested a nimbus around the forehead. Her lower face was full, the lips most delicately round. Courage and tears stood forth in her face and encountered the bishop.

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François Xavier de Laval-Montmorency, then vicar-apostolic of the province, with the power rather than name of bishop, was a tall noble, priestly through entire length of rusty cassock and height of intellectual temples. He regarded the girl with bloodless patience. He had a large nose, which drooped towards a mouth cut in human granite; his lean, fine hands, wasted by self-abasement and voluntary privations, were smaller than a woman's. Though not yet forty, he looked old, and his little black skull-cup aged him more. The clear Montmorency eye had in him gained, from asceticism and rigid devotion, a brightness which penetrated.

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His young relative's presence and distress annoyed him. For her soul's salvation, he would have borne unstinted agony; for any human happiness she craved, he was not prepared to lift a little finger.

"Monseigneur," the girl began their interview, "I have come to New France."

"Strangely escorted," said Laval.

"The reverend father cannot be thinking of Madame Bourdon: Madame Bourdon was the best of duennas on the voyage."

Laval shook his chin, and for reply rested a glance upon his cousin's attendant as a type of the company she had kept on shipboard. The attendant was a sedate and pretty young girl, whose black hair looked pinched so tightly in her cap as to draw her eyebrows up, while modesty hung upon her lashes and drew her lids down. The result was an unusual expanse of veined eyelid.

"If you mean Louise Bibelot," the young lady responded, "she is my foster-sister. Her mother nursed me. Louise bears papers from the curé of her parish to strangers, but she should hardly need such passports to the head of our house."

"In brief, daughter," said Laval, passing to the point, "what brings you to this savage country—fit enough to be the arena of young men, or of those who lay self upon the altar of the Church, but most unfit for females tenderly brought up to enjoy the pleasures of the world?"

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"Has my bringing-up been so tender, monseigneur? I have passed nearly all my years an orphan in a convent."

"But what brings you to New France?"

"I came to appeal against your successor in the estates."

"My successor in the estates has nothing to do with you."

"He has to marry me, monseigneur."

"Well, and has he not made a suitable marriage for you?"

Her face burned hotly.

"I do not wish him to make any marriage for me. I refused all the suitors he selected, and that is what determined him to marry me to the last one."

"You are deeply prejudiced against marriage?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Against any marriage?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"This must be why you come with the king's girls to the marriage market."

Her face burned in deeper flames.

"The court of Louis," pursued Laval, "would furnish a better mate for you than any wild coureur de bois on the St. Lawrence."

"I have not come to any marriage market," she stammered.

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"You are in the marriage market, Mademoiselle Laval. His Majesty, in his care for New France, sends out these girls to mate with soldiers and peasants here. It is good, and will confirm the true faith upon the soil. What I cannot understand is your presence among them."

Her face sank upon her breast.

"I did not know what to do."

"So, being at a loss, you took shipping to the ends of the earth?"

"Other women of good families have come out here."

"As holy missionaries: as good women should come. Do you intend leading such a life of self-sacrifice? Is that your purpose?" said Laval, penetrating her with his glance.

Her angelic beauty, drowned in red shame, could not move him. "Rash" and "forward" were the terms to be applied to her. She had no defense except the murmur:

"I thought of devoting myself to a holy life. Everybody was then willing to help me escape the marriage."

"Were there, then, no convents in France able to bound your zeal? Did you feel pushed to make this perilous voyage and to take up the hard life of saintly women here?"



“You are deeply prejudiced against marriage?”

“I am myself a Laval-Montmorency,” said mademoiselle, rearing her neck in her last stronghold. “The Bishop of Petræa^[1] may not have inherited all the heroism of the present generation.”

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He smiled slowly; his mouth was not facile at relaxing.

“In your convent they failed to curb the tongue. This step that you have taken is, I fear, a very rash one, my daughter.”

“Monseigneur, I am a young girl without parents, but with fortune enough to make suitors troublesome. How can I take none but wise steps? I want to be let alone to think my thoughts, and that was not permitted me in France.”

“We will have further talk to-morrow and next week,” concluded the bishop. “We will see how your resolution holds out. At this hour I go to the governor’s council. Receive my benediction.”

He abruptly lifted his hands and placed them above her bowed head for an instant’s articulation of Latin, then left the room. As long as his elastic, quick tread could be heard, Mademoiselle Laval stood still. It died away. She turned around and faced her companion with a long breath.

“That is over! Louise, do you think after fifteen years of convent life I shall cease to have blood in me?”

“Not at all, Mademoiselle Claire,” responded Louise literally. “As long as we live we have blood.”

“He is terrible.”

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“He is such a holy man, mademoiselle; how can he help being terrible? You know Madame Bourdon told us he ate rotten meat to mortify his flesh, and his servant has orders never to make his bed or pick the fleas out of it. I myself have no vocation to be holy, mademoiselle. I so much like being comfortable and clean.”

Claire sat down upon the only bench which furnished ease to this convent parlor. Louise was leaning against the stone wall near her. Such luxuries as came out from France at that date were not for nuns or missionary priests, though the Church was then laying deep foundations in vast grants of land which have enriched it.

“I do not love the dirty side of holiness myself,” said Claire. “They must pick the fleas out of my bed if I endow this convent. And I do not like trotting, fussy nuns who tell tales of each other and interfere with one. But, O Louise! how I could adore a saint—a saint

who would lead me in some high act which I could perform!"

"The best thing next to a live saint," remarked Louise, "is a dead saint's bone which will heal maladies. But, mademoiselle,—the Virgin forgive me!—I would rather see my own mother this day than any saint, alive or dead."

"The good Marguerite! How strange it must seem to her that you and I have been driven this long journey—if the dead know anything about us."

"She would be glad I was in the ship to wait upon you, mademoiselle. And I must have done poorly for myself in Rouen. Our curé said great matches were made out here."

"Now, tell me, Louise, have you the courage for this?"

"I am here and must do my duty, mademoiselle."

"But can you marry a strange man this evening or to-morrow morning and go off with him to his strange home, to bear whatever he may inflict on you?"

"My mother told me," imparted Louise, gazing at the floor, where lay two or three rugs made by the nuns themselves, "that the worst thing about a man is his relatives. And if he lives by himself in the woods, these drawbacks will be away."

"You have no terror of the man himself?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. I can hardly tell at sight whether a man is inclined to be thrifty or not. It would be cruel to come so far and then fare worse than at Rouen. But since my mother is not here to make the marriage, I must do the best I can."

"Hé, Louise! Never will you see me bending my neck to the yoke!"

"It is not necessary for you to marry, mademoiselle. You are not poor Louise Bibelot."

"I meant nothing of the kind. We played together, my child. Why should you accuse me of a taunt?—me who have so little command of my own fortune that I cannot lay down a dozen gold pieces to your dower. No! I have passed the ordeal of meeting the bishop. My spirits rise. I am glad to dip in this new experience. Do you know that if they send me back it cannot be for many months? One who comes to this colony may only return by permission of the king. The bishop himself would be powerless there. And now I shall hear no more about husbands!"

"Louise Bibelot," summoned Mother Mary, appearing at the door, "come now to the hall. Mademoiselle Laval will dispense with thee. The young men are going about making their selections. Come and get thee a good honest husband."

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III.

THE KING'S DEMOISELLE.

BETRAYING in her face some disposition to pry into the customs of the New World, Claire inquired:

"What is this marriage market like, reverend mother?"

"It is too much like an unholy fair," answered Mother Mary of the Incarnation, with mild severity. "The gallants stalk about and gaze when they should be closing contracts. The girls clatter with their tongues; they seem not to know what a charm lies in silence."

Mademoiselle Laval stood up and closed her cloak.

"With your permission, reverend mother, I will walk through the fair with you."

"Not *you*, mademoiselle!"

"Why not?"

"You are not here to select a husband. The holy cloister is thy shelter. Common soldiers and peasant farmers are not the sights for thee to meet."

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"Reverend mother, I must inure myself to the rough aspect of things in New France, for it is probable I am tossed here to stay. You and Madame Bourdon gaze upon these evil things, and my poor Louise is exposed to them."

"I do not say they are evil. I only say they are not befitting thee."

"Dear and reverend mother," urged Claire, with a cajoling lift of the chin and a cooing of the voice which had been effective with other abbesses, "when the nausea was so great on shipboard and poor Louise nursed me so well, I did not think to turn my back on her in her most trying ordeal."

"We will say nothing more, mademoiselle," replied Mother Mary, shaking her black-bound head. "Without orders from his reverence the vicar, I should never think of taking thee into the marriage market." She went directly away with Louise Bibelot.

As Louise left the door she cast back a keen look of distress at her mistress. It was merely her protest against the snapping of the last shred which bound her to France. But Claire received it as the appeal of dependent to superior; and more, as the appeal of maid to maid. She unlatched a swinging pane no larger than her hand, hinged like a diminutive door in glass of the window overlooking the court. The glass was poor and distorted, and this appeared a loophole which the sisters provided for themselves through the scale-armor Canadian winters set upon their casement.

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"Poor child!" murmured Claire to the back of Louise Bibelot's square cap as Louise trotted beside the gliding nun. She did not estimate the amount of impetus which Louise's look gave to other impulses that may have been lurking in her mind. She arose and rebelled with the usual swiftness of her erratic nature.

Scarcely had nun and bride-elect disappeared within the bazar when Claire Laval entered behind them. Mother Mary unconsciously escorted her betwixt rows of suitors and haggling damsels. Louise was to be placed in the upper hall among select young women.

Benches were provided on which the girls sat, some laughing and whispering, others block-like as sphinxes, except that they moved their dark eyes among the offering husbands. Sturdy peasant girls they were, and all of them in demand, for they could work like oxen. If there was uniformity of appearance among them, the men presented contrast enough.

Stout coureurs de bois were there, half-renegades, who had made the woods their home and the Indian their foster-brother; who had shirked the toils of agriculture and depended on rod and gun: loving lazy wigwam life and the dense balmy twilight of summer woods which steeped them in pale green air; loving the winter trapping, the forbidden beaver-skin, the tracking of moose; loving to surprise the secrets of the pines, to catch ground-hog or sable at lunch on cast-off moose-horns; loving to stand above their knees in boiling trout-streams to lure those angels of the water with well-cast hook as they lay dreaming in palpitating colors.

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Ever thus was the provincial government luring back to domestic life and agriculture the coureurs de bois themselves. They were paid

bounties and made tenants on seigniories if they would take wives of the king's girls and return to colonial civilization. Most of these young men retained marks of their wild life in Indian trinket, caribou moccasin, deerskin leggin, or eagle feathers fastened to their hats; not to speak of those marks of brief Indian marriages left on their memories.

The habitant, or censitaire, the true cultivator of the soil, was a very different type. Groups from lower seigniories, from Cap Rouge and even from Three Rivers, shuffled about selecting partners. They had none of the audacity of their renegade brethren, and their decoration was less pronounced, yet they appeared to please the girls from France.

The most successful wooers among these two or three hundred wife-seekers, however, were soldiers holding grants under their former officers. They pushed ahead of the slow habitant, and held their rights above the rights of any bush-ranger. Their minds were made up at a glance, and their proposals followed with military directness. So prompt and brief were their measures that couples were formed in a line for a march to the altar. Thirty at a time were paired and mustered upon the world by notary and priest.

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The notary had his small table, his ink-horn and quills, his books, papers, and assistant scrivener, in an angle of the lower hall. To find the priest it was necessary to open a door into a temporary chapel created in one of those closet-like offshoots which people of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries dignified by the name of rooms. Here fifteen pairs at a time were packed, their breath making a perceptible cloud in the chill, stone-inclosed air as the long ceremony proceeded.

Madame Bourdon rustled from upper to lower hall, repeating instructions to her charges. They were not forced to accept any offer which did not please them. They might question a suitor. And in some cases their questioning seemed exhaustive; for though a sacred propriety radiated throughout the bazar from nun and matron, here and there a young man sat on a bench beside a damsel, holding her hand and pressing it and his suit.

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The sun penetrated dust and cobweb on narrow high windows, finding through one a stone fire-place and wasting the light of several logs which lay piled in stages of roseate coals and sap-sobbing wood-rind.

Madame Bourdon encountered Claire with surprise; but as she followed Mother Mary, it was evident that the abbess sanctioned her presence, so nothing was to be said on the subject. In all that buzz and trampling the abbess could not hear her demoiselle's silken step, and she was herself a woman who never turned gazing about, but kept her modest eyes cast down as she advanced.

The instant that Claire entered this lower hall she recoiled, feeling degraded in the results of her disobedience. She shaded her face. But the pride and stubbornness of her blood held her to her ground, though from mouth to mouth flew a whispered sentence, and she heard it, comprehending how current tattle was misrepresenting her in New France.

"The king's demoiselle! V'là! See you? There she goes to choose her husband—the king's demoiselle!"

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IV.

THE HUSBAND.



HÂTEAU of St. Louis though the government building of Canada was called, it had none of the substantial strength of Jesuit and Ursuline possessions; but was a low, wooden structure, roofed with shingles, and formed one side of the fort. Galleries, or pillared porches, with which Latin stock love to surround themselves in any climate, were built at the front, whence the governor could look down many sheer feet at the cabins of Lower Town.

Dollard paused before entering the Château of St. Louis to say to Jacques Goffinet:

"Will you not push your business now while I attend to mine, Jacques? Yonder is the building you want to enter. Go and examine the cargo, and I will be there to help you single out your bale."

"M'sieur, unless these are orders, I will wait here for you. I am not in a hurry to trot myself before a hundred and fifty women."

"But hurry you must," said Dollard, laughing. "I have no time to spare Quebec, and you know the consequences if we give our Indians a chance to get as drunk as they can."

"Dispatch is the word, Sieur des Ormeaux. I'll attack the first woman in the hall if you but stand by to give the word of command."

"Very well, then. But you will remember, not a breath of my sworn purpose to any of the varlets within here."

Jacques pulled off his cap, and holding it in air stood in the mute attitude of taking an oath. Dollard flung his fingers backward, dismissing the subject.

They entered the Château of St. Louis, where Jacques waited in an anteroom among noisy valets and men-at-arms. He was put to question by the governor's joking, card-playing servants as soon as they understood that he was from Montreal; but he said little, and sat in lowering suspense until Dollard came out of the council-chamber.

What Dollard's brief business was with the governor of Canada has never been set down. That it held importance either for himself or for the enterprise he had in hand is evident from his making a perilous journey in the midst of Indian alarms; but that he made no mention of this enterprise to the governor is also evident, from the fact that it was completed before Quebec had even known of it. His garrison at Montreal and the sub-governor Maisonneuve may have known why he made this voyage, which he accomplished in the astonishing space of ten days, both output and return. This century separates Montreal and Quebec by a single night's steaming. But voyagers then going up-stream sometimes hovered two weeks on the way. Dollard had for his oarsmen four stout Huron Indians, full of river skill, knowing the St. Lawrence like a brother. He returned through the anteroom, his visionary face unchanged by high company, and with Jacques at his heels walked briskly across Quebec Heights.

Spread gloriously before him was St. Lawrence's lower flood, parted by the island of Orleans. The rock palisades of Levi looked purple even under the forenoon sunlight. He could have turned his head over his left shoulder and caught a glimpse of those slopes of Abraham where the French were to lose Canada after he had given himself to her welfare. Not looking over his shoulder, but straight ahead, he encountered the mightiest priest in New France, stout Dollier de Casson, head of the order of St. Sulpice in Montreal. His rosy face shone full of good-will. There shone, also, the record of hardy, desperate mission work, jovial famine, and high forgetfulness of Dollier de Casson. His cassock sat on him like a Roman toga, masculine in every line. He took Dollard's hand and floated him in a flood-tide of good feeling while they spoke together an instant.

"You here, commandant? Where are the Iroquois?"

"Not yet at Quebec."

"But there have been alarms. The people around Ste. Anne's^[2] are said to be starting to the fort."

"Jacques," exclaimed Dollard, "you must hasten this affair of your

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marriage. We are here too long."

"The sun is scarce an hour higher than when we landed," muttered Jacques.

"Doesn't the king ship enough maids to Montreal?" inquired the priest, smiling at Jacques's downcast figure. "It is a strain on loyalty when a bachelor has to travel so far to wive himself, to say nothing of putting a scandal upon our own town, to the glorifying of Quebec."

"I came with my seignior," muttered the censitaire, "and this ship-load was promised from Rouen."

"My bride is my sword," said Dollard. "The poor lad may perhaps find one as sharp. Anyhow, he must grab his Sabine and be gone."

"Come, my son," rallied Father de Casson, dropping a hand on the subaltern's shoulder, "marriage is an honorable state, and the risks of it are surely no worse than we take daily with the Iroquois. Pluck up heart, pick thee a fine, stout, black-eyed maid, and if the king's priest have his hands over-full to make that haste which the commandant desires, bring her to the cathedral presently, and there will I join ye. And thus will Montreal Sulpitians steal one church service out of the hands of Quebec Jesuits!"

"Are you returning directly up river, father?" inquired Dollard over Jacques's mumble.

"Yes, my son; but this day only so far as the remote edge of one of our parishes, lying this side of Three Rivers."

"Why not go in our company? It will be safer."

"Much safer," said Dollier de Casson. "I have only my servant who rows the boat."

"I know you are a company of men in yourself, father."

"Military escort is a luxury we priests esteem when we can get it, my son. Do you leave at once?"

"As soon as Jacques's business is over. We shall find you, then, in Notre Dame?"

"In Notre Dame."

Dollier de Casson made the sign of benediction, and let them pass.

When Dollard strode into the lower bazar it was boiling in turmoil around two wrangling men who had laid claim on one maid. The most placid girls from the remotest benches left their seats to tiptoe and look over each other's shoulders at the demure prize, who, though she kept her eyes upon the floor and tried to withdraw her wrists from both suitors, laughed slyly.

"It is that Madeleine," the outer girls who were not quarreled over whispered to each other with shrugs. But all the men in delight urged on the fray, uttering partisan cries, "She is thine, brave Picot!" "Keep to thy rights, my little Jean Debois!" to the distress of Madame Bourdon. She spread her hands before the combatants, she commanded them to be at peace and hear her, but they would not have her for their Solomon.

"I made my proposals, madame," cried one. "I but stepped to the notary's table an instant, when comes this renegade from the woods and snatches my bride. Madame, he hath no second pair of leather breeches. Is he a fit man to espouse a wife? The king must needs support his family. Ah, let me get at thee with my fist, thou hound of Indian camps!"

"Come on, peasant," swelled the *coureur de bois*. "I'll show thee how to ruffle at thy master. Mademoiselle has taken me for her husband. She but engaged thee as a servant."

The two men sprang at each other, but were restrained by their delighted companions.

"Holy saints!" gasped Madame Bourdon, "must the governor be sent for to silence these rioters? My good men, there are a hundred and fifty girls to choose from."

"I have chosen this one," hissed red Picot.

"I have chosen this one," scowled black Jean Debois.

"Now thou seest," said Madame Bourdon, presenting her homily to the spectators, "the evil of levity in girls."

"Mademoiselle," urged Picot at the right ear of the culprit, who still smilingly gazed down her cheeks, "I have the most excellent grant in New France. There is the mill of the seignior. And our priest comes much oftener than is the case in up-river cotes."

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"Mademoiselle," whispered the coureur de bois at her other ear, "thou hast the prettiest face in the hall. Wilt thou deck that clod-turner's hut with it when a man of spirit woos thee? The choice is simply this: to yoke thee to an ox, or mate with a trader who can bring wealth out of the woods when the ground fails."

"And an Indian wife from every village," blazed Picot.

"Even there thou couldst never find thee one!" retorted Jean Debois. They menaced each other again.

"Choose now between these two men," said Madame Bourdon, sternly. "Must the garrison of the fort be brought hither to arrest them?"

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The girl lifted her eyes as a young soldier hurriedly entered the outer door, carrying a parcel. He wore several long pistols, and was deeply scarred across the nose. Pushing through to the object of dispute, he shook some merchandise out of his bundle and threw it into her hands as she met him.

"This is my husband," the bashful maid said to Madame Bourdon; "I promised him before the others spoke, and he had but gone to the merchant's."

The soldier stared at the beaten suitors; he led his bride to the notary.

All around the hall laughter rising to a shout drove Picot and Jean Debois out of the door through which the soldier had come in, the wood-ranger bearing himself in retreat with even less bravado than the habitant.

"Was there ever such improvidence as among our settlers!" sighed Madame Bourdon, feeling her unvented disapproval take other channels as she gazed after the couple seeking marriage. "They spend their last coin for finery that they may deck out their wedding, and begin life on the king's bounty. But who could expect a jilt and trifler to counsel her husband to any kind of prudence?"



"Choose now between these two men," said Madame Bourdon, sternly.

Dollard presented his man's credentials to Madame Bourdon, and

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she heard with satisfaction of their haste. It was evident that the best of the cargo would be demanded by this suitor; so she led them up one of those pinched and twisted staircases in which early builders on this continent seemed to take delight. Above this uneasy ascent were the outer vestibule, where bride traffic went on as briskly as below, and an inner sanctum, the counterpart of the first flagged hall, to which the cream of the French importation had risen.

"Here are excellent girls," said Madame Bourdon, spreading her hands to include the collection. "They bring the best of papers from the curés of their own parishes."

In this hall the cobwebby dimness, the log-fire, and the waiting figures seemed to repeat what the seekers had glanced through below; though there was less noise, and the suitors seemed more anxious.

"Here's your fate, Jacques," whispered Dollard, indicating the fattest maid of the inclosure, who sat in peaceful slumber with a purr like a contented cat.

Jacques, carrying his cap in both hands, craned around Dollard.

"No, m'sieur. She's a fine creature to look at, but a man must not wed for his eyes alone. His stomach craves a wife that will not doze by his fire and let the soup burn."

"Here, then, my child, behold the other extreme. What activity must be embodied in that nymph watching us from the corner!"

"Holy saints, m'sieur! There be not eels enough in the St. Lawrence to fill her ribs and cover her hulk. I have a low-spirited turn, m'sieur, but not to the length of putting up a death's-head in my kitchen. A man's feelings go against bones."

"These girls here have been instructed," said Madame Bourdon at the ear of the suitor. "These girls are not canaille from the streets of Paris."

"Do they come from Rouen, madame?" inquired Jacques.

"Some of them came from Rouen. See! Here is a girl from Rouen at this end of the room."

"Now, m'sieur," whispered Dollard's vassal, squeezing his cap in agitated hands, "I shall have to make my proposals. I see the girl. Will you have the goodness to tell me how I must begin?"

"First, hold up your head as if about to salute your military superior."

"M'sieur, it would never do to call a woman your military superior."

"Then say to her, 'Mademoiselle, you are the most beautiful woman in the world.'"

Again Jacques shook his head.

"Pardon, m'sieur. You have had experience, but you never had to marry one of them and take the consequences of your fair talk. I wish to be cautious. Perhaps if I allow her the first shot in this business she may yield me the last word hereafter."

So, following Madame Bourdon's beckoning hand, he made his shamefaced way towards Louise Bibelot. Mother Mary stood beside the log-fire some distance away, in the act of administering dignified rebuke to a girl in a long mantle, who, with her back turned to the hall, heard the abbess in silence. When the abbess moved away in stately dudgeon, the girl kept her place as if in reverie, her fair, unusual hand stretched towards the fire.

"Here, Louise Bibelot," said the good shepherdess of the king's flock, "comes Jacques Goffinet to seek a wife—Jacques Goffinet, recommended by Monsieur Daulac, the Sieur des Ormeaux, commandant of the fort at Montreal, and seignior of the islands about St. Bernard."

Louise made her reverence to Madame Bourdon and the suitor, and Jacques held his cap in tense fists. He thought regretfully of Turkish battle-fields which he had escaped. Louise swept him in one black-eyed look terminating on her folded hands, and he repented ever coming to New France at all.

The pair were left to court. Around them arose murmur and tinkle of voices, the tread of passing feet, and the bolder noise of the lower hall, to which Madame Bourdon hastened back that she might repress a too-frolic Cupid.

Jacques noted Louise's trim apparel, her nicely kept hair and excellent red lips. But she asserted no claim to the first word, and

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after five leaden minutes he began to fear she did not want to talk to him at all. This would be a calamity, and, moreover, a waste of the commandant's time. It seemed that Jacques must himself put forth the first word, and he suffered in the act of creating something to say. But out of this chaotic darkness a luminous thought streamed across his brain like the silent flash of the northern aurora.

"Mademoiselle, you like cabbage, is it not so?"

"Yes, monsieur," responded Louise, without lifting her eyes.

"Cabbage is a very good vegetable.—My seignior is in somewhat of a hurry. We must be married and start back to Montreal directly. Do you wish to be married?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"I, in fact, wish it myself. When you go as a soldier you don't want a wife. But when you settle down en censive, then, mademoiselle, it is convenient to have a woman to work and help dig."

"Have you a house and farm, monsieur?" murmured Louise.

Jacques spread his hands, the cap pendant from one of them.

"I have the island of St. Bernard under my seignior, mademoiselle. It is a vast estate, almost a league in extent. The house is a mansion of stone, mademoiselle, strong as a fort, and equal to some castles in Rouen. You come from Rouen, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And there is Mademoiselle de Granville, my lord's half-sister, but nobody else to wait upon. For Sieur des Ormeaux, when not at his fortress, may go on expeditions. We never yet took refuge at Montreal from the Indians, so strong is St. Bernard. The house is of rock cemented together and built against a rock. Do you ever drink brandy, mademoiselle?"

"*I*, monsieur! Never in my life!"

"That must be a good thing in a woman," commented Jacques, with a nod of satisfaction.

"Are you at all thriftless or lazy, monsieur?" the demure girl took her turn to inquire.

"No, mademoiselle; I make my clothes do year after year. And had you seen the frozen fish and eels, the venison, the cabbage, beets, and onions I stored in our cellar for winter, you would not ask if I am lazy."

Louise smiled her bashful approval upon him, and said in explanation:

"I should not like a thriftless, lazy husband."

"Mademoiselle, we are cut out of the same caribou-skin, and match like a pair of moccasins. Shall we go to the notary?"

"If you wish, monsieur."

"You accept me as your husband?"

"If you please, monsieur."

"Then let us get married. I forget your name."

"Louise Bibelot."

"My name is Jacques Goffinet. When we are married we can get better acquainted."

Flushed with success, Jacques turned to display a signal of victory to his seignior, and was astounded to see Dollard standing by the fire-place in earnest conversation with a beautiful girl. It was evident that no further countenance and support could be expected from Dollard. So Jacques took his bride in tow as a tug may now be seen guiding some yacht of goodly proportions through a crowded harbor, and set out to find the notary.

When Dollard fell into an easy posture to enjoy his man's courtship, he cast a preliminary glance about the hall, that other amusing things might not escape him. At once his attitude became tense, his ears buzzed, and the blood rose like wine to his head. The woman of his constant thoughts was warming her hand at the fire. He could not be mistaken; there was nothing else like the glory of her youthful white hair in either hemisphere; and without an instant's hesitation he brought himself before her, bowing, hat in hand, until his plume lay on the floor.

The demoiselle made a like stately obeisance.

Dumb, then, they stood, just as the peasant couple had done; but in this case too bounteous speech choked itself. It seemed to both

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that their hearts beat aloud. Dollard felt himself vibrate from head to foot with the action of his blood-valves. The pair looked up and stammered to cover such noise within, speaking together, and instantly begged each other's pardon, then looked down and were silent again.

"How is it possible," said Dollard, carefully modulating his voice, "that I see you here, Mademoiselle Laval!"

"The Sieur des Ormeaux takes me for a king's girl! How is it possible I see *you* here, monsieur?"

"I came to keep my man in countenance, while he picked himself a wife. This instant is a drop from Paradise!"

"Monsieur is easily satisfied if he can call such surroundings a paradise," said Claire, smiling at the grim hall.

"Mademoiselle, when did you come from France?"

"Yesterday we arrived, Sieur des Ormeaux."

"Then you came in the king's ship?"

"Without a doubt."

"This is wonderful! I thought you three thousand miles away from me."

"Did you honor me with a thought at the other extremity of that distance?" she asked carelessly, pushing towards the fire with the point of her foot a bit of bark which its own steam had burst off a log.

"Claire!" he said, pressing his hand on his eyes.

"Monsieur, the abbess is near," the young lady responded in tremor.

"You are not here to be a nun?"

"Why not?"

"But are you?"

"Monsieur, you have penetration. That is said to be my errand."

"But why do you come to New France?"

"That is what the bishop said. I hope we may choose our convents, we poor nuns."

"O Claire! I cannot endure this," Dollard sobbed in his throat. It was a hoarse note of masculine anguish, but the girl observed him with radiant eyes.

"I never was a man fit to touch the tip of your white finger. Mademoiselle, have you forgotten those messages that I sent you by my cousin when she was with you at the convent?"

"It was very improper, Sieur des Ormeaux. Yes, indeed, I have forgotten every one of them."

"You have not thought of me, and I have lived on thoughts of you. I hoped to ennoble myself in your eyes—and you are thrown in my way to turn me mad at the last instant!"

"Forgive my misfortune which throws me in your way, monsieur," she said sedately. "I am driven here a fugitive."

"From what?" Dollard's hand caught the hilt of his sword.

"From something very unpleasant. In fact, from marriage."

His face cleared, and he laughed aloud with satisfaction.

"Do you hate marriage?"

"I detest it."

"You came to live under the bishop's protection?"

"His penance and discipline, you mean."

"This is a rude country for you. How often have I presumed to plan your life and mine together, arranging the minutest points of our perfect happiness! I have loved you and been yours since the first moment I saw you. And how I have followed your abbess's carriage when it contained you! I was to distinguish myself in military service, and become able to demand your hand of your guardian. But that takes so long! There was a rumor that you were to be married. Angel! I could throw myself on the floor with my cheek against your foot!"

"O Sieur des Ormeaux! do not say that. It is a surprise to find you in this country, though it is very natural that you should be here. I must now go back to the convent."

"Wait. Do not go for a moment. Let me speak to you. Remember how long I have done without seeing you."

"Oh, I only came in a moment because I was curious."

"Then stay a moment because you are merciful."

"But I must go back to the convent, *Sieur des Ormeaux*," she urged, her throat swelling, her face filling with blood. "Because——"

"Because what?"

"Because I must go back to the convent. It is the best place for me, *monsieur*. And you will soon forget."

The two poor things stood trembling, though *Dollard's* face gathered splendor.

"*Claire*, you are mine. You know that you are mine! This is love! O saints!"

He threw himself on his knees before her without a thought of any spectator, his sword clanking against the flags of the hearth.

"*Monsieur*——"

"Say 'My husband!'"

"My husband," she did whisper; and at that word he rose up and took her in his arms.

JACQUES HAS SCRUPLES.



ALL other business in the hall was suspended. Perhaps the fire and success of Dollard's courtship kindled envy in ruder breasts; but in Mother Mary's it kindled that beacon which a vestal keeps ready against the inroads of the cloister's despoilers.

Pallid and stately she placed herself before the pair. And during this conference she made dabs forward with her head, as a poor hen may be seen to do when the hawk has stolen her chicken.

"We did not understand, monsieur, that the commandant of Montreal sought a wife."

"Reverend mother," said Dollard, shielding the side of Claire's face with his hand as he held her head against him, "I never dared seek such a blessing as this. The saints have given it to me."

"But mademoiselle is not here to be married, monsieur."

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"I understand that, reverend mother."

"And do you understand that she is the cousin of the Bishop of New France?"

"All Mademoiselle Laval's history is known to me. I have adored her a lifetime."

"And was it to meet this young seignior, mademoiselle, that you insisted on coming into the wife market?"

"Reverend mother," replied Dollard, himself glowing as he felt Claire's face burn under his hand, "blame the saints, not us. We have been flung together from the ends of the earth. It is a blessed miracle."

Mother Mary made a dab with her head which meant, "Do not be deceived, my son."

Dollard understood a movement Claire made, and gave her his arm to lead her away.

"And the demoiselle takes this young commandant for her husband?"

"I do, reverend mother," the demoiselle replied, lifting up a countenance set in the family cast of stern stubbornness.

"It will be my duty to send an instant message to the bishop."

"The bishop may still be found at the council. I have just been with him," said Dollard. "Let your messenger make haste, reverend mother, for I leave Quebec directly."

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"Then there is no need of haste. The Sieur des Ormeaux can present his suit to the bishop next time he comes to Quebec."

"I shall never come to Quebec again, reverend mother."

Claire looked above the level of her own eyes to understand this riddle.

Dollard was scarcely twenty-five years old. His crystal love, so strong that it had him in possession, shone through a face set in lines of despair.

"Surely you can come again in a week?"

"My darling, it may take nearly that long to reach Montreal. How little you know of distances in this savage country!"

"Monsieur, I will send for the bishop," said Mother Mary of the Incarnation.

As her black robe moved away, the other people in the hall, seeing nothing further to gaze at, resumed their wooing and bargaining.

"What did you mean when you said you shall never come to Quebec again?" inquired Claire.

Dollard penetrated her with his look.

"Will you marry me this moment?"

"Monsieur, how can I marry you this moment?"

"By going to the notary, who has a table downstairs, and afterward to Father de Casson, who, fortunately, is waiting for me in the cathedral now. I see what will happen if I wait to demand you in marriage of the bishop. There will be delays and obstacles, if not a flat refusal."

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"The commandant truly takes me for a king's girl," she said, her

teeth showing in laughter, though her black eyelashes started into crescent-like prominence on whitening cheeks.

"Have you I will, however I take you; the whole world shall not prevent that now. And listen: suppose I had taken vows,—wait!—honorable vows. It will surely be as well with you after my pledges are fulfilled as it was before we met here. This hard convent life in New France, you cannot endure that. You will be the lady of my poor seigniory, and perhaps I may add some glory to the name. My Claire, do you love me?"

"Sieur des Ormeaux, is not that enough to admit in one day?"

"No, it is not. When was a day ever granted to us before? If we lose this point of time, the dead wall of separation will rise again, and I shall be robbed of you forever."

"But why can you not come back again?"

"Because the bounds are set for me. Yet, if I could come again, would I prosper any better? Claire, if my suit is even listened to, there will be messages to the king, and to the Montmorency in France, and a year's or two years' delay. As for me, I shall be dead long before then. We can go to the notary this moment. We can go to the cathedral to Father de Casson. We can go forthwith to my boat and start up the St. Lawrence. O my love!"—Dollard's voice was searching and deep in pleading,—“can you not stoop to this haste for me? I shall carry you into hardship, but carry you like the cross. While we stand here the abbess sends for the bishop; the bishop comes and says, ‘Go back, fair cousin, into the convent; and you, Dollard, whoever you may be, get yourself off to Montreal.’ I could not then urge you against your kinsman's authority. But now the word is unspoken. Shall we stand here and wait until it is spoken?"

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"I see no reason why we should, monsieur," she replied, pink as a flower.

"Then you will consent to be married at once?"

"There is, I believe, but one staircase," said Claire. "It would not be pleasant to meet the bishop or Mother Mary of the Incarnation as we go down."

"Let us make haste, therefore," he deduced from her evasive reply; and haste they made, so that several pairs were kept waiting by the notarial table while the commandant was served.

The cathedral of Notre Dame in Quebec stood, and still stands, on the opposite side of the square. It was a massive pile of masonry, compared to the cabins of Lower Town, and held its cross far up in their northern sky. Within were holy dimness and silence, broken only by the footfalls of occasionally coming and going devotees. Though not yet rich in altars and shrines, paintings, and glittering crystal and metal, the young cathedral had its worthy relics, and its humble offerings of tinsel and ribbon-tied paper flowers. The merchant people from Lower Town, and peasants from adjacent river cotes and Laval's great seigniory, came here to bathe their souls in thoughts of heaven, and to kneel on the pavement beside governor or high dame.

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At this hour of morning only two persons sat in the church as if waiting for some kind of service.

There were three nuns, indeed, kneeling in a row before the chancel rail, their three small red noses just appearing beyond their black veils—noses expressing quiet sanctity. And a confessional was perhaps occupied.

But the pair who waited were neither nuns nor penitents. They had taken the usual moisture from the font of holy water, wherein many devout fingers had deposited considerable sediment. They had bowed towards the altar and told their prayers from station to station, and were now anxious to be joined in matrimony lest Dollard should arrive and cut off all chance of collecting the governor's bounty by his impatient haste.

Still, as no priest appeared, Jacques and Louise sat in repose with their eyes cast down. The feverish activity of this new world would never touch their veins or quicken the blood of any of their descendants. How many generations before them had been calmed into this pastoral peace on sun-soaked lands! Years of dwelling among pines and mountains and azure lakes, of skimming on snowshoes over boundless winter whiteness, of shooting rapids, and of standing on peaks, would all fail to over-exhilarate blood so kindly bovine and unhurried in its action.

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The penitent came out of the confessional closet and stalked away—an Algonquin Indian, with some slight smell of rum about him and a rebuked expression of countenance. A fringe or thread of his blanket trailed on the pavement as he went. Then Dollier de Casson, who never omitted confessing any sinner that appealed to him, strode out of the confessional himself on gigantic soles, though with the soft tread which nature and training impart to a priest. He saw the waiting couple, and as serenely as he would have prepared for such an office in some river cabin, he took his stole out of a large inner pocket of his cassock and invested himself in it.

During this pause Dollard came hastily into the cathedral with a muffled lady on his arm. He took her at once to Father de Casson, and beckoned Jacques to follow them to the altar.

Jacques followed with Louise, his face waxing in anxiety, until a heavy heart brought down his knees with a bump behind Dollard and that unknown dame. [54]

“How is this, my son?” inquired Father de Casson of Dollard as he rested his eyes on the commandant’s bride.

“Father, let the service go on at once, and I will make all due explanation when there is more time. The civil marriage is completed.”

Father de Casson took his book to administer the sacrament of marriage to these two pairs, when Jacques, walking on his knees, brought himself behind Dollard’s ear.

“Father,” he whispered to the priest, the hisses of his suppressed voice scattering through the place, “I have on my mind what must first be said to my master.”

“When did ye all confess last?” inquired Dollier de Casson.

“Father,” urged Dollard, “believe me, we are all prepared for the sacrament of marriage.”

“But, m’sieur,” anxiously hissed Jacques at his ear, “I did not know you were going to take a wife too.”

“Suppose you didn’t know,” exclaimed Dollard, turning towards him in impatience; “what is it to you?”

“You will have to change your will, m’sieur.” [55]

“Certainly I will have to change my will; but you shall not be injured.”

“That’s not it, m’sieur,” persisted Jacques. “Whatever is right to you will be right to me. But here’s this girl. I’ve nearly promised her the seignior, and what will she say when she’s cut out of it?”

“Get back to your place and let the service go on,” said Dollard, half rising in menace.

“But I ought to take her out and explain this to her first,” insisted Jacques. “Then if she chooses to go into the marriage she can blame no one but herself.”

“Will you get back to your place and cease your interruption,” whispered Dollard, with fierceness, “or must I take you by the neck and toss you out of the cathedral?”


“No, m’sieur, I’ll not interrupt it. I’ll marry her. But what she will do with me afterwards is the load upon my mind.”

So, rubbing his knees on the pavement, Jacques returned like a crab to his immovable bride, and dejectedly bore his part in the service. Yet before this ordeal of marriage was over, the pastoral peace had returned to his countenance, and solemn relief appeared in his eyes. As Louise Bibelot became transmuted into Louise Goffinet, he said within himself:

“Now, if she be well contented with the commandant’s change of mind, all will go right. But if she turns rebellious at these new orders, threatening to desert, and wanting the entire earth with the seignior thrown in, there’ll be only one thing for me to do. I’ll whip her!” [56]

VI.

A RIVER CÔTE.

 HE four Huron Indians, cut off abruptly from the luxury of a Lower Town drinking-shop, sat in sulky readiness with their grasp upon the oars. Dollard was at the stern of the boat beside Claire, whom he had wrapped in bear-skins, because at high noon the April air was chill upon the river.

Dollier de Casson had likewise taken to his canoe with his servant and pack of sacred utensils, and this small craft rested against the larger one to resist the current's dragging. Dollard's rope yet held to the shore. His impatient eyes watched Quebec Heights for the appearance of Jacques and Louise.

Water lapping the two boats brought them together with faint jars and grindings of the edges. Dollier de Casson, sitting thus facing the contraband bride, beheld her with increasing interest. [58]

Jacques and Louise, carrying the bride's caskets and impedimenta of their own, finally appeared on Quebec's slopes, descending with deliberation to the landing.

They had no breath to spend in chat, but Jacques realized with voiceless approval that Louise carried manfully her portion of the freight.

He rolled his keg into the boat, slipped the boxes aboard, and helped Louise to a bench in front of himself; then, untying the rope, he sprung in.

The Hurons bent to their oars and the boat shot out into the river, Dollier de Casson's canoe-man following. Above water murmur and rhythmic splash of oars Dollard then called his vassal to account, addressing him over the Indians' swaying shoulders.

"What have you been doing this hour by the sun, Jacques Goffinet?"

"Hour, m'sieur? I have trotted myself into a sweat since we left the cathedral, and thrown away all my bounty the king pays a bachelor on his marriage, except this keg of salt meat and eleven crowns in money. That because of your hot haste, m'sieur. I lose an ox, a cow, a pair of fine hogs, and such chickens as never crowed on St. Bernard, and yet I have been an hour, have I?—May the saints never let ruin and poverty tread on my heels so fast another hour while I live!" [59]

Claire held out to Dollard, from her furs, a square watch having a mirror set in its back, saying:

"You see, we waited scarcely twenty-five minutes."

Dollard laughed, but called again to his vassal:

"A cow, an ox, a load of swine, and a flock of chickens! And having freighted the boat with these, where did you intend to carry the lady of St. Bernard, your seignior, your wife, yourself, and the rowers, my excellent Jacques? Were we to be turned out as guests to the bishop?"

"Saints forbid, m'sieur," Jacques called back sincerely. "The bishop and the abbess stood by while my wife brought madame's caskets from the convent, and they smiled so 'twould make a man's teeth chatter. I am not skilled in the looks of holy folks, but I said to my wife as we came away, 'These Quebec Jesuits, they begrudge the light of day to Montreal.' So it would be cold cheer you got of bishop or abbess, m'sieur."

Dollard and the fur-wrapped bride looked up at Quebec promontory which they were rounding, heights of sheer rock stretching up and holding the citadel in mid-heaven. The Indians steadily flung the boat up-stream.

Claire turned over in her mind that mute contempt which Mother Mary evidently felt for what she would call a girl's fickleness. Her ungracious leave-taking of the upright and duty-loving abbess was a pain to her. As to the bishop, she could not regret that his first benediction had been final. Resentment still heated her against both those strict devotees. She was yet young enough to expect perfect happiness, for the children of man live much before they learn to absorb the few flawless joys which owe their perfection to briefness. [60]

One such moment Claire had when her soldier leaned over her in

silence.

"We are going farther from France. Are you homesick, dear?"

"No; I am simply in a rage at the bishop of New France and the abbess of the Ursulines."

"There they go behind the rock of Quebec, entirely separated from us. Have you regrets that you bore such a wedding for my sake?"

"Sieur des Ormeaux, I have but a single fault to find with you."

"What is that?" Dollard anxiously inquired.

"The edge of your hat is too narrow."

"Why, it is the usual head-cover of a French officer of my rank; but I will throw it into the river."

"O, monsieur! that would be worse than ever. If you despise me for seizing on you as I did——"

"O Claire!"

"What will you think when I own my depravity now? The abbess might well smile. She doubtless knows I will say this to you. Are those yellow-feathered men watching us?"

"Not at all. They watch the St. Lawrence."

"Louise's back is turned. But your servant?"

"Can he do anything but stare at Louise?"

"I forgot the priest."

"His boat is many lengths behind."

"Sieur des Ormeaux, this is a lovely voyage. But do you remember climbing the convent wall and dropping into the garden once where your cousin and I sat with our needlework?"

"Once? Say many times. I spent much of my life on that convent wall. You saw me once."

"You fell on one knee, monsieur, and seized my work and kissed it. That silk mess; I often looked at it afterward. Men have very queer tastes, have they not? It is a shocking thing when a girl has just flown the convent and her own family, but, O Sieur des Ormeaux! I want to kiss you!"

A sail-boat, perhaps venturing down from Three Rivers, cut past them in the distance. Other craft disappeared. No stealthy canoe shot from cover of rock or headland. As Claire half closed her eyes and leaned against the rest provided for her, she thought she saw a heron rise from shallows at the water's edge, trailing its legs in flight. Catbirds and blue jays could be seen like darting specks, describing lineless curves against the sky or shore.

Sometimes Dollier de Casson's boat lagged, or again it shot close behind Dollard's. The first stop was made on a flat rocky island where there was a spring of clear water. Louise and Jacques spread out as a bridal repast such provisions as Dollard had hurriedly bought in Quebec, with dried eels and cured fish from the St. Bernard cellar. The pause was a brief one. And no tale of this island was dropped in Claire's ear, or of another island nearer the St. Lawrence's mouth: how two hundred Micmac Indians camped there for the night, beaching their canoes and hiding their wives and children in a recess of the rocks; how the Iroquois surprised and blotted them all out. That dreaded war-cry, "Kohe—Kohe!" might well be living in the air along the river yet.

Before reëntering the boat Claire went to the spring for a last cup of water, taking Louise with her.

"And what did the bishop say?" she seized this chance to inquire.

"Mademoiselle—madame, he did nothing but look, as my husband said. We were all four surprised, the bishop, the abbess, my husband, and I."

"Did the abbess accept my purse I bade you leave for the convent?"

"Madame, I left it lying on the floor where she dropped it. She has no doubt picked it up and counted the coins out to charity by this. The whole marriage seems a miracle, with my mother helping the blessed saints."

"Were you, then, pleased, my child?"

"Mademoiselle, I was stupid with delight. For you will now be my mistress and have me to wait on you the rest of our lives. Had *you* no terrors at coming away with a strange man, mademoiselle?"

"Strange man, tongue of pertness! when the Sieur des Ormeaux has been my lover these many years."

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"Was he, indeed, one of those troublesome wooers who drove you out of France? You said this morning you would never be yoked in marriage, and long before the sun goes down you are a bride! Ah, madame, the air of this country must be favorable to women!"

Again the boats pushed up-river, following the afternoon westward.

They had passed Cap Rouge, a cluster of cabins, the seignior's substantial stone hut forming one side of the fort-like palisades. The strip farms extended in long ribbons back from the shore. Their black stubble of stumps, mowed by ax and fire, crouched like the pitiful impotence of man at the flanks of unmeasured forest.

Before nightfall the voyagers came near a low beach where sand and gravel insensibly changed to flat clearing, and a côte of three or four families huddled together.

Wild red-legged children came shouting to the water's edge before Dollier de Casson's canoe was beached, and some women equally sylvan gathered shyly among the stumps to welcome him.

As the priest stepped from his boat he waved a hand in farewell to the other voyagers, and Dollard stood up, lifting his hat.

The sacrament of marriage, so easy of attainment in New France at that time, had evidently been dispensed with in the first hut this spiritual father entered. His man carried in his sacred luggage, and the temporary chapel was soon set up in a corner unoccupied. The children hovered near in delight, gazing at tall candles and gilt ornaments, for even in that age of poverty the pomps of the Roman Church were carried into settlers' cabins throughout New France. Dollier de Casson had for his confessional closet a canopy of black cloth stretched over two supports. The penitent crept under this merciful wing, and the priest, seated on a stool, could examine the soul as a modern photographer examines his camera; except that he used ear instead of eye.

The interior of a peasant censitaire's dwelling changes little from generation to generation. One may still see the crucifix over the principal bed, joints of cured meat hanging from rafters, and the artillery of the house resting there on hooks. A rough-built loom crowded inmates whom it clothed. And against the wall of the entrance side dangled a vial of holy water as a safeguard against lightning.

Dollier de Casson stood up to admonish his little flock, gathered from all the huts of the côte, into silence before him. The men took off their rough caps and put them under their arms, standing in a disordered group together. Though respectful and obedient, they did not crowd their spiritual father with such wild eagerness as the women, who, on any seat found or carried in, sat hungrily, hushing around their knees the nipped French dialect of their children.

"What is this, Antonio Brunette?" exclaimed Father de Casson after he had cast his eyes among them. "Could you not wait my coming, when you well knew I purposed marrying you this time? You intend to have the wedding and the christening together."

"Father," expostulated the swart youth, avoiding the priest to gaze sheepishly at his betrothed's cowering distress, "Pierre's daughter is past sixteen, and we would have been married if you had been here. You know the king lays a fine on any father who lets his daughter pass sixteen without binding her in marriage. And Pierre is a very poor man."

"Therefore, to help Pierre evade his Majesty's fine, you must break the laws of Heaven, must you, my son? Hearty penance shall ye both do before I minister to you the sacrament of marriage. My children, the evil one prowls constantly along the banks of this river, while your poor confessors can only reach you at intervals of months. Heed my admonitions. Where is Pierre's wife?"

Down went Pierre's face between his hands into his cap.

"Dead," he articulated from its hollow. "Without absolution. And the little baby on her arm, it went with her, baptized by ourselves."

"God have pity on you, my children," said Dollier de Casson. "I will say masses over her grave, and it is well with the little unblemished soul. How many children have you, Pierre?"

"Seventeen, father."

"Twenty-six, he should say, father," a woman near the priest declared. "For the widow of Jean Ba'ti' Morin has nine."

"And why should Pierre count as his own the flock of Jean Ba'ti' Morin's widow?"

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"Because he is to marry her, father, when Antonio Brunette marries his oldest girl."

"If I come not oftener," remarked the priest, "you will all be changed about and newly related to each other so that I shall not know how to name ye. I will read the service for the dead over your first wife, Pierre, before I marry you to your second. It is indeed better to be dwelling in love than in discord. Have you had any disagreements?"

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"No, father; but Jean Ba'ti's oldest boy has taken to the woods and is off among the Indians, leaving his mother to farm alone with only six little lads to help her."

"Another coureur de bois," said the priest in displeasure.

"Therefore, father," opportunely put in Jean Ba'ti's widow, "I having no man at all, and Pierre having no woman at all, we thought to wed."

"Think now of your sins," said Father de Casson, "from oldest to youngest. After penance and absolution and examination in the faith ye shall have mass."

The solemn performance of these religious duties began and proceeded until dusk obliterated all faces in the dimly lighted cabin. Stump roots were piled up in the fire-place, and Pierre's daughter, between her prayers, put on the evening meal to cook.

If a child tittered at going under the confessional tent, its mother gave it a rear prod with admonishing hand. In that humble darkness Father de Casson's ear received the whispers of all these plodding souls, and his tongue checked their evil and nourished their good. The cabin became a chapel full of kneeling figures telling beads.

This portion of his duty finished, Dollier de Casson postponed the catechizing, and made Pierre take a lighted stick of pine and show him that ridge whereunder mother and baby lay. There was always danger of surprise by the Iroquois. The men and women who followed in irregular procession through the vast dimness of northern twilight kept on their guard against moving stumps or any sudden uprising like the rush of quails from some covert. In rapid tones the priest repeated the service for the dead; then called his followers from their knees to return to the house to celebrate the weddings of Pierre and Pierre's daughter.

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After this rite, supper was served in Pierre's house, the other families dispersing to their own tables—cabbage-soup, fat pork, and coarse bread made from pounded grain; for this côte was too poor to have a mill. These were special luxuries for Father de Casson, for the usual censitaire supper consisted of bread and eels. The missionary priest, accustomed with equal patience to fasting or eating, spread his hands above unsavory steam and blessed the meal. Silently, while he spoke, the door opened and a slim dark girl entered the house.

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VII.

A HALF-BREED.

SHE stood erect and silent against the closed door until Dollier de Casson, before he had taken his first mouthful, spoke to her.

"Peace be with you, Massawippa."

"Peace be also with you, father."

Her voice was contralto without gutturals.

"You come in good time, my daughter. It is long since I examined you in the faith and absolved you."

"Think of my soul later, father; I come from the chief."

"Where is the chief?"

"Étienne Annahotaha sends for you," she replied grandly. "I am to show you the way."

Dollier de Casson did not ask why Étienne Annahotaha sent for the priest instead of coming to the priest himself. The Huron chief disdained his wife's relatives with savage frankness.

"Very good, my daughter. In the morning, then, we will set out."

"Annahotaha begs that you will come at once, father."

"Hath he such urgent need of a priest?"

"He leaves his present camp early to-morrow, and he himself will tell you his urgent business."

The girl's eyes moved slightly over this huge French family, holding them unfit to hear many words concerning her father.

"Very good, my daughter. As soon as I have finished my repast I shall be ready."

Pierre muttered objections. His first wife's grave was blessed, and his second wife was now comfortably his, but he grudged gospel privileges to that interloper Annahotaha, who had married his sister and made a white squaw of her, poor unsettled woman, paddling her from the island of Orleans to the lower Ottawa and back until she died.

All seats being occupied, Massawippa still stood by the entrance. Her uncle Pierre did point her to a place beside the table, but she shook her head.

Father de Casson was placed by himself at the table end, Pierre's mob of children and step-children thronging below, the little ones standing wedged together, some with chins barely level with the board. Though scarcely more than fourteen years old, Massawippa looked well grown and tall. No civilized awkwardness of limb, or uncertainty of action when she moved, hampered her. Notwithstanding her cheek-bones were high and her mouth wide, she was full of vigorous young beauty. Her temples were round, and clasped as if by jet-black birdwings in hair which divided its weight betwixt two braids and measured half the length of her body.



“Peace be with you, Massawippa.”

Scarcely tolerant was the eye she kept on these French habitants her kinsfolks. She was princess; they were merely inferior white stock from whom her mother had sprung.

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In personal appointments she was exquisite compared with the French women of the cabin. Her rich and glowing cheeks, her small dark ears and throat and hands, had reached a state of polish through unusual care. Her raiment appeared to be culled from the best fashions of both races. She wore the soft Indian moccasin, stitched with feather-work, and the woolen French stocking. All beaver skins in New France nominally belonged to the government; but this half-breed girl wore a pliant slim gown, chestnut-colored and silky, of beaver skin, reaching nearly to her ankles. It was girdled around the waist and collared around the top by bands of white wampum glittering like scales. A small light blanket of wool dyed a very dull red was twisted around her and hung over one arm.

A bud of a woman though still a child, full of the gentle dignity of the Hurons, who of all the great tribes along the St. Lawrence had lent themselves most kindly to Christian teaching, and undulled by her French peasant blood, Massawippa was comforting to eyes wearied by oily dark faces.

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Dollier de Casson, gentleman and soldier before he became priest, always treated her with the deference she was inclined to exact as due her station.

Most Canadian half-breeds were the children of French fathers who had turned coureurs de bois and of Indian women briefly espoused by them. But the Huron chief had wedded Massawippa's mother by priest and Latin service. The inmates of Pierre's house regarded this girl as a misfortune that held them in awe. Her patent of nobility was dirt to them, yet by virtue of it she trod on air above their heads; and she was always so strangely clean and strangely handsome, this high young dame of the woods.

Pierre's new wife, the corners of her mouth settling, regarded Massawippa with disfavor. The families in that cote knew well at whose door Jean Ba'ti's widow laid the defection of her son.

One of Pierre's little boys, creeping sidewise towards Massawippa, leaned against the door and looked up, courting her smile. He was very dirty, his cheeks new sodden with pork-fat being the most acceptable points of his surface. She did not encourage his advances, but met his look sedately.

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“Thou know'st not what I know, Massawippa,” said he. “Thou

know'st not who's married."

She remained silent, pride magnifying the natural indifference of her time of life to such news.

"The father Pierre is married. Dost guess he married our Angèle?" tempted the little boy, whose ideas of the extent of intermarriage surpassed even the generous views of his elders in the côte. "No! Antonio Brunette married our Angèle. Four people are married. It made me laugh. The widow of Jean Ba'ti' Morin, she wedded Father Pierre, and you must tell La Mouche. Are you also married to La Mouche, Massawippa?"

Her aquiline face blazed with instant wrath, and Pierre's little boy fell back from her as if scorched. Her hiss followed him.

"I do not myself speak to La Mouche!"

La Mouche's mother was naturally the most interested witness of this falcon-like stoop of Massawippa's, and as a mother she experienced deeper sense of injury.

VIII.

THE HURON.



LIGHT rain was blistering the river and thickening an already dark landscape when Dollier de Casson, followed by his man carrying what might be called his religious tool-chest, crossed the clearing with Massawippa.

The child walked before them, her blanket drawn well up over her head and her moccasins taking no print afterwards visible from any soft earth they trod. The laden and much-enduring servant stumbled across roots, but labored on through sleek and treacherous wet spots with the zeal of a missionary servant.

Dollier de Casson gave him breathing periods by carrying the chapel himself. Thus had these two men helped each other in winter when the earth was banked in white, the river a glittering solid, and one's breath came to him fluid ice and went from him an eruption of steam, as they toiled to parish or distant fort on snow-shoes. Thus did Jesuit and Sulpitian priests keep their religion alive on the St. Lawrence.

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Within the first pine covert three Hurons were waiting, evidently Massawippa's escort. She now walked beside Dollier de Casson and they stalked ahead, threading a silent way through the darkness.

Spruce and white birch were all the trees that stood out distinctly to the senses, others massing anonymously in the void of night and their spring nakedness. The evergreen with prickling fingers brushed the passers' faces; while the white birches in flecked shrouds crowded rank on rank like many lofty ghosts diverse of girth, and by their whiteness threw a gleam upon the eyeball.

Following the head Huron, Dollier de Casson's company trod straight over soft logs where the foot sunk in half-rotten moss, and over that rustling, elastic cushion of dead leaves, histories of uncounted summers which padded the floor of the forests. Through roofing limbs the rain found it less easy to pelt them. They wound about rocks and climbed ascents, until Annahotaha's camp-fire suddenly blinked beneath them and they could stand overlooking it.

He had pitched his bark tent in a small amphitheater sloping down to a tributary of the St. Lawrence. The camp-fire, hissing as slant lines of the shower struck it, threw light over the little river's stung surface, on low shrubs and rocks, on the oblong lodge,^[3] and the figures of some three dozen Indians squatting blanketed beside it, or walking about throwing long shadows over the brightened area.

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Étienne Annahotaha sat just within the shelter of his lodge, and here he received the priest, standing almost as tall as Dollier de Casson, who bent his head to avoid the tent.

This shelter was, indeed, altogether for Massawippa; the chief preferred lying on the ground with his braves; but she was child of a mother long used to roofs, and was, besides, a being whom he would set up and guard as a sacred image. There was no woman in the camp.

When Dollier de Casson and Annahotaha sat silently down together, Massawippa crept up behind her father and rested her cheek against his back. He allowed this mute caress and gazed with stern gravity at the fire.

His soul was in labor, and the priest good-humoredly waited until it should bring forth its care. No religious instruction could be imparted to the camp while Annahotaha held his speech unspoken. Rain hissed softly through listening trees, paused to let damp boughs drip, and renewed itself with a rush. Evident vapor arose from the Indians beside the fire.

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"The father's boat was seen upon the river," began Annahotaha. "I have sent for the father to tell him the thoughts which come up in my breast and give me no peace. I am a tree of rough bark, but I bear a flower branch. I go to the burning and my branch of flowers will not be cut off from me. I am an old bear, but how shall I make the Iroquois feel my claws if my cub be beside me? The lodge of her mother's people is not fit to hold her. Continually her mother comes to me in dreams saying, 'What have you done with the child?' Shall I

hang my branch of flowers in the lodges of my people? Behold the remnant of the Hurons!" He leaped to his feet with energetic passion, and flung his pointed finger at the steaming braves by the fire. They gave an instant's attention to his voice, and went on toasting themselves as before. "We are trodden underfoot like leaves. The French, our white brothers, promise us protection, and our feeble ones are dragged to the stake and scalped before their eyes. We perish from the earth. Soon not a Huron will make the smoke of his lodge go up beside the great river. But before these Iroquois utterly tread our bones under the turf they shall feel the rage of Annahotaha. The last Hurons shall heap them up in destruction!"

He sat down and rested his savage face on his fists.

Massawippa resumed her attitude of satisfied tenderness; and shade by shade his wrath lifted until the father and not the chief again looked through the red of his mask-like face. [78]

"If Annahotaha is leading a war party against the Iroquois," began Dollier de Casson—

"Speak not of that. The old bear knows his own track; but no way for the tender feet of his cub."

—"he will pass through Montreal," continued the priest. "Now, if Annahotaha wishes to keep his gift of Heaven from contaminations of the world, why should he not lay her on the sacred altar? Place her with the sisters of St. Joseph, those good nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu."

The chief, expectant and acquiescent, kept yet a wily side-glance on his casked guide. Honest Dollier de Casson brought his fist with a gentle spat upon his palm as he proceeded.

"No Indian woman ever hath joined the pious labors of our good nuns. You Hurons clamor without ceasing for protection to white brothers who can scarcely keep their own scalps on their heads, but the burdens and self-denials of our holy religion ye shirk. I speak truth to the chief of the Hurons. You even leave your farms and civilized life on the island of Orleans, and take to the woods."

"We are dragged scalped from our farms," interjected Annahotaha's guttural voice.

"My son, the power of Heaven is over all. We gasp and bleed together; but, see you, we still live. Miracles are continually worked for us. They confound even the dark hearts of the Iroquois." [79]

Annahotaha smiled, perhaps with some reflection of Quebec distrust in Montreal miracles.

"Hast thou not heard," insisted Father de Casson with that severe credulity which afflicted the best men of the time, "about Jean Saint-Père—slain by the Iroquois and beheaded, and his head carried off—speaking to them in warnings and upbraidings? Yea, the scalped skull ceased not threatening them with the vengeance of Heaven, in plain, well-spoken Iroquois." Annahotaha sounded some guttural which the priest could not receive as assent.

"Blessed is a country, my son, when such notable miracles are done in it. For, see you, there was Father le Maître, who had his head likewise cut off by these children of evil, but without making the stain of blood on his handkerchief which received it. And there were his features stamped on the cloth so that any one might behold them. This miracle of Father le Maître hath scarcely ceased to ring in Montreal, for it is a late thing. I counsel the chief of the Hurons to give his child to the Church. The saints will then be around her in life, and in death they will gather her to themselves."

Annahotaha sat as if turning over in his mind this proposal, which he had secretly foreseen and wished. [80]

"The father has spoken," he finally pronounced; and silence closed this conference, as silence had preceded it.

Afterwards Dollier de Casson set up his chapel beside a sheltering rock and prepared to shrive the Huron camp, beginning with Massawippa. Her he confessed apart, in the inclosure of the lodge, probing as many of her nature's youthful and tortuous avenues as the wisdom of man could penetrate. She raised no objection to that plan of life her father and her confessor both proposed for her; but the priest could not afterwards distinctly recall that she accepted it.

When Father de Casson called the congregation of Indians to approach his temporary chapel, one of the restless braves who had sauntered from sputtering fire to dripping tree skulked crouching in

the shadow of Massawippa's tent. He had a reason for avoiding the priest as well as one for seeking her.

When the others were taken up with their devotions he crept to the tent-flap, and firelight shone broadly on his dark side-countenance, separating him in race from the Hurons. He was a Frenchman. But his stiff black hair was close shorn except one bristling tuft, his oily skin had been touched with paint, and he wore the full war-dress of his foster tribe.

"Massawippa," whispered this proselyte, raising the lodge-flap, "I have something here for you."

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The girl was telling her beads with a soft mutter in the little penances her priest had imposed upon her. He could see but her blurred figure in her dim shrine.

"Massawippa! La Mouche brings you a baked fish," he whispered in the provincial French.

Her undisturbed voice continued its muttered orisons.

"Massawippa!" repeated the youth, speaking this time in Huron, his tone entreating piteously. "La Mouche brings you a baked fish. It comes but now from the fire."

Her voice ceased with an indrawing of the breath, and she hissed at La Mouche.

"Return it then to the fire and thyself with it, thou French log!" she uttered in a screaming whisper in Huron, and hissed at him again as her humble lover dropped the lodge-flap.

The candles shone mellowly from the sheltered altar upon kneeling Indians, but La Mouche slunk off into the darkness.

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IX.

THE LADY OF ST. BERNARD.

FIVE evenings later a boat was beached on one of the islands above Montreal lying near the south shore of the St. Lawrence. While this island presented rocky points, it had fertile slopes basking in the glow which followed a blue and vaporous April day, and trees in that state of gray greenness which shoots into leaf at the first hot shining.

The principal object on the island was a stone house standing inclosed by strong palisades above the ascent from the beach. It appeared to be built against a mass of perpendicular rock that towered over it on the west side. This was, in fact, the strongest seigniorial mansion west of the Richelieu. There was, in addition, a small stone mill for grinding grain, apart from it on the brink of the river.

Northward, the St. Lawrence spread towards the horizon in that distension of its waters called Lake St. Louis. [83]

Out of the palisade door came a censitaire and his wife, who, having hurried to St. Bernard for protection at an alarm of Indians, staid to guard the seigniori house during Jacques Goffinet's absence with Dollard.

"This is St. Bernard," said Dollard, leading Claire up the slope. "Sometimes fog-covered, sometimes wind-swept, green as only islands can be, and stone-girdled as the St. Lawrence islands are. A cluster up-river belongs to the seigniori, but this is your fortress."

"And yours," she added.

"It will seem very rude to you."

"After my life of convent luxury, monsieur?"

"After the old civilization of France. But I believe this can be made quite comfortable."

"It looks delicious and grim," said the bride. "Tragic things might happen here if there be a tragic side to life, which I cannot now believe. Yet a few months ago I said there was no happiness!"

Dollard turned his uneasy glance from her to the seigniori house.

"There is scarcely such another private stronghold in the province."

"Did you build it?"

"Not I. Poor Dollard brought little here but his sword. One of my superior officers abandoned it in my favor, and took a less exposed seigniori near the Richelieu. I wish the inside appointments better befitted you. It was a grand chateau to me until I now compare it with its chateleine." [84]

"Never mind, monsieur. When you demand my fortune from France, you can make your chateau as grand as you desire. I hope you will get some good of my fortune, for I never have done so. Seriously, monsieur, if no house were here, and there were only that great rock to shelter us, I should feel myself a queen if you brought me to it, so great is my lot."

"You can say this to poor Adam Dollard, an obscure soldier of the province?"

"In these few days," replied the girl, laughing, and she threw the light of her topaz eyes half towards him, "the way they call your name in this new country has become to me like a title."

"You shall have more than a title," burst out Dollard. "Heaven helping me, you shall yet have a name that will not die!"

They passed through the gate of the palisade, Jacques and Louise following with the loads of the expedition. To insure its safety the boat was afterwards dragged within the palisade.

The censitaire in charge, with his wife at his shoulder, stood grinning at Jacques's approach.

"Thou got'st thyself a wife, hé, my pretty Jacques?" [85]

"That did I, bonhomme Papillon. And a good wife, and a stout wife, and a handsome. Thou 'lt want to go to Quebec market thyself when the Indians carry off Joan."

"Let me see him go to the Quebec market!" cried Joan, shaking her knuckled fist under his ear.

"It would trouble thee little to lose sight of him, Joan. But his

coming back with such freight—it is *that* would fire thee hotter than Iroquois torches. Alas, my children,” Jacques said, letting down his load inside the gate, “I bring much, but I leave much behind. If I am to hold this seigniory while my commandant is away, and feed ye both and my new wife, to say naught of Mademoiselle de Granville and our great lady, I need the cattle and swine and fowls which our king gave me for dower and my seignior made me throw over my shoulder.”

“But I thought,” said Louise, in dismay, “that thou had’st such stores of vegetables and other provisions here.”

“Have no fear, my spouse. Thou shalt see how this garrison is provisioned. But what prudent man can drop without a sigh the moiety of his wife’s fortune? Here are Papillon and Joan, who hold the next island under our seignior. And here, timid Joan, is thy soldierly new neighbor Louise Goffinet, who squealed not in the dangers of the river.”

“Wert thou afraid?” Joan asked Louise, kindly.

“I was until I saw Madame des Ormeaux was not. And the Indians have a wonderful skill.”

“Did the commandant also marry her at the wife market?” pressed Joan, walking by Louise’s side behind the men. “She is surely the fairest woman in New France. I could have crawled before her when she gave me a smile.”

“My mother nursed her,” said Louise, with pride.

“Did she so! And is our lady some great dame from the king’s court, who heard of the commandant at Montreal?”

“Thou hast woman wit. It is exactly as thou sayest,” bragged Jacques, turning towards the mummied face of Papillon’s simple wife. “She is cousin to our holy bishop himself; and even that great man she left grinning and biting his nails, for he and the abbess they would make a nun of her. Thou dost not know the mightiness of her family. My Louise can charm thee with all that. But this lady was a princess in France, and voyaged here by the king’s ship, being vilely sickened and tossed about; and all for my commandant. Is not the Sieur des Ormeaux known in France?” Jacques snapped his fingers high in air.

The lowest floor of the seigniory house was the rock on which it was based. Here and within the stockade were such domestic animals as belonged to the island. A sheep rubbed against Louise, passing out as she passed in.

She looked around the darkened strong walls, unpierced by even a loop-hole, at the stores of provender for dumb and human inmates. Jacques had underestimated his wealth in collected food. His magazine seemed still overflowing when it was spring and seed-time, and the dearth of winter nearly past.

A stone staircase twisted itself in giving ascent to the next floor. Here were sleeping-cells for the seignior’s servants, and a huge kitchen having pillars of cemented rock across its center, and a fire-place like a cave. Lancelike windows gave it light, and in the walls were loop-holes which had been stopped with stone to keep out the Canadian winter.

A broader stairway of tough and well-dried wood in one corner led up to the seignior’s apartment above, which was divided into several rooms. The largest one, the saloon of the mansion, had also its cavern fire-place where pieces of wood were smoldering. A brass candelabrum stood on the mantel. Rugs of fawn skin beautifully spotted, and of bear skin relieved the dark unpolished floor. The walls of all the rooms were finished with a coarse plaster glittering with river sand. Some slender-legged chairs, a high-backed cushioned bench, a couch covered by moth-eaten tapestry, and a round black table furnished this drawing-room. Some cast-off pieces of armor hung over the mantel, and an embroidery frame stood at one side of the hearth.

There was but one window, and it swung outward on hinges, the sash being fitted with small square panes.

When Claire appeared from the private chamber where she had been taken to refresh herself with Louise to attend on her, Dollard came down the room, took her by the hands, and led her to this window. He pushed the sash open quite out of their way, and thus set the landscape in a deep frame of stone wall.

The two young lovers still met each other with shyness and reserve. From the hour of his impetuous marriage Dollard had

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watched his wife with passionate solicitude. But that day when his boat approached Montreal he had it brought to the dock and went ashore by himself, spending what Claire considered the best hours of the afternoon at the fort and on the streets, coming back flushed and repressed.

She felt the energetic pulses still beating in his face as he touched her forehead.

"You see now the way we came," said Dollard, indicating the St. Lawrence sweeping towards the east.

"A lovely way it was," said Claire. The river's breath came to them fresh and clean, leaving a touch of dampness on the skin. Already the wooded south shore was clothing itself in purple, but northward the expanse of water still held to what it had received from sunset. "That was very different from the voyage on shipboard."

"Are you not tired?"

"I was tired only once—at Montreal," hinted Claire, gazing at the extremity of the island.

"Again I beg you to pardon that. I had been nearly ten days away from my command and there were serious matters to attend to. Put it out of your mind and let us be very happy this evening."

"And every following evening. That goes without saying."

"I must report at my fortress at daybreak to-morrow."

"You should have left my caskets at Montreal, monsieur," exclaimed Claire. "I could do without them here one night."

"You want to turn your back on poor St. Bernard immediately?"

"Monsieur, you do not mean to separate yourself from me?" she inquired lightly, keeping control of her trembling voice.

"I brought you here to take possession of my land," said Dollard.

"I have taken possession. The keys of the house of course I do not want. They shall in all courtesy be left with the resident châtelaine, your sister. Monsieur, where is your sister?"

Dollard glanced over his shoulder at the embroidery frame.

"She has been here or is coming. I have hardly prepared you for poor Renée. She lives in delusions of her own, and pays little regard to the courtesies of the outside world. My excellent Jacques waits on her as on a child."

"Doubtless I thought too little about her," Claire said, visibly shrinking. "She may object to me."

"She will not even see you unless I put you before her eyes."

"What ails your sister, monsieur? Is she a religious devotee?"

"Not strictly that. She is a nurser of delusions. I cannot remember when she was otherwise, though we have lived little together, for poor Renée is but my half-sister. Her father was a De Granville. You will not feel afraid of her when you have seen her; she is not unkind. She has her own chambers at the rock side of the house and lives there weeks together. I see her embroidery frame is set out, and that means we may expect her presence."

While he was speaking, Mademoiselle de Granville had opened a door at the end of the room.

Claire, with well-opened eyes, pressed backward against her husband, so moldered-looking a creature was this lady gliding on silent feet—not unlike some specter of the Des Ormeaux who had followed their last chevalier under the New World's glaring skies. She wore a brocaded gown, the remnant of a court costume of some former reign, and her face was covered with a black silk mask. Though masks were then in common use, the eyes which looked through this one were like the eyes of a sleep-walker. She sat down by the embroidery frame as if alone in the room, but instead of a web of needlework she began to fasten in the frame one end of a priest's stole much in need of mending.

Dollard led his wife to this silent figure.

"My dear Renée," he said, taking hold of the stole and thereby establishing a nerve of communication, "let me present my beautiful wife."

The figure looked up, unsurprised but attentive.

"She was Mademoiselle Laval-Montmorency."

With deference the figure rose off its slim-legged chair and made a deep courtesy, Claire acknowledging it with one equally deep.

"Mademoiselle," petitioned the bride, "I hope my sudden coming

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causes you no trouble, though we return to the fort soon."

The mask gazed at her but said nothing.

"Are you never lonely here upon this island?" pursued Claire.

The mask's steady gaze made her shiver.

"She does not talk," Dollard explained. He drew his wife away from the silent woman and suggested, "Let us walk up and down until some supper is served, to get rid of the boat's cramping."

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Mademoiselle de Granville sat down and continued to arrange her darning.

Whenever they were quite at the room's end Claire drew a free breath, but always in passing the masked presence she shrunk bodily against Dollard, for the room was narrow. He, with tense nerves and far-looking eyes, failed to notice this. The eccentricities of any man's female relatives appeal to his blindest side. Custom has used him to them, and his own blood speaks their apology.

The river air blew into the open window. There were no sounds except the footsteps of Dollard and Claire, and a stirring of the household below which was hint of sound only, so thick were the walls and floors.

In due time Jacques came up, bearing the supper. His seignior when at St. Bernard ate in the kitchen. But this was a descent unbecoming a grand bride. While Jacques was preparing the round table, Claire stole another look towards the mask which must now be removed. But by some sudden and noiseless process known to recluse women Mademoiselle de Granville had already taken herself and her embroidery frame out of the room.

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THE SEIGNIORY KITCHEN.



ABOUT 1 o'clock of the night Jacques rose from his sleeping-cell, as he was in the habit of doing, to put more wood on the kitchen fire.

The window slits let in some moonlight of a bluish quality, but the larger part of this wide space lay in shadow until Jacques sent over it the ruddiness of a revived fire. Out of uncertainty came the doors of the sleeping-cells, the rafters and dried herbs which hung from them, heavy table and benches and stools, cooking-vessels, guns, bags of stored grain, and the figures of the four Hurons, two at each side of the hearth, stretched out in their blankets with their heels to the fire—and Jacques himself, disordered from sleep and imperfectly thrust into lower garments. He lingered stupidly looking at the magician fire while it rose and crackled and cast long oblique shadows with the cemented posts.

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Dollard descended the stairway from his apartment, pressing down his sword-hilt to keep the scabbard from clanking on each step. He was entirely dressed in his uniform. As he approached the fire and Jacques turned towards him, his face looked bloodless, his features standing high, the forehead well reared back.

"I am glad you are awake," he said to Jacques, half aloud. "Are the others asleep?" indicating those cells occupied by Louise and the Papillon family. There was no questioning the deep slumber which inclosed his Indians.

"Yes, m'sieur."

"Have you packed the provisions I directed you to pack?"

"Yes, m'sieur. M'sieur, you do not leave at this hour?"

"At once."

"But, m'sieur, the Lachine is hard enough to run in daytime."

"There is broad moonlight. Are you sure you understand everything?"

"M'sieur, I hope I do. Have you told madame?"

Dollard wheeled and flung his clinched hands above his head as men do on receiving gunshot wounds.

"O saints! I cannot tell her! I am a wretch, Jacques. She has been happy; I have not caused her a moment's suffering. Let her sleep till morning. Tell her then merely that I have gone to my fortress; that I would not expose her to the dangers of the route by night. It will soon be over now. Sometime she can forgive this cruelty if a deed goes after it to make her proud. She has proud blood, my boy; she loves honor. Oh, what a raving madman I was to marry her, my beloved! I thought it could do *her* no harm—that it could not shake *my* purpose! O my Claire! O my poor New France! Torn this way, I deserve shame with death—no martyr's crown—no touch of glory to lighten my darkness for ever and ever!"

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"M'sieur," whimpered Jacques, crouching and wiping nose and eyes with his palms, "don't say that! My little master, my pretty, my dear boy! These women have the trick of tripping a man up when he sets his foot to any enterprise."

"Hear me," said Dollard, grasping him on each side of the collar. "She is the last of the Des Ormeaux to you. Serve her faithfully as you serve the queen of heaven. If she wants to go back to France, go with her. Before this I bequeathed you St. Bernard. Now I am leaving you a priceless charge. Your wife shall obey and follow her to the ends of the earth. To-day I altered my will in Montreal and gave her my last coin, gave her my seigniory, I gave her *you*! Do you refuse to obey my last commands? Do you disallow my rights in you?"

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Jacques's puckered face unflinchingly turned upward and met the stare of his master.

"M'sieur, I will follow my lady's whims and do your commands to the hour of my death."

Dollard, like a mastiff, shook him.

"Is there any treachery in you, Jacques Goffinet, free follower of the house of Des Ormeaux? If there is, out with it now, or my dead eyes will pry through you hereafter."

"M'sieur," answered Jacques, lifting his hand and making the sign of the cross, "I am true man to my core. I do love to pile good stuff together and call land mine, but thou knowest I love a bit of cloth from one of thy old garments better than all the seigniories in New France."

Dollard let go Jacques's collar and extended his arms around the stumpy man's neck.

"My good old Jacques! My good old Jacques!"

"How proud I have always been of thee!" choked Jacques.

"I have told her to depend on you, Jacques. The will I brought home in my breast and placed among her caskets. She will provide for Louise and you, and she will provide for poor Renée, also. Kick the Indians and wake them up. There is not another moment to spare."

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The Indians were roused, and stood up taciturn and ready for action, drawing their blankets around themselves. These Hurons, vagrants from Annahotaha's tribe, were hangers-on about the fortress at Montreal. Jacques gave them each a careful dram, and lighted at the fire a dipped candle. With this feeble light he penetrated the darkness of the cellar floor, leading the party down its tortuous staircase.

Dollard, who had stood with his hand on the door-latch, was the last to leave the upper room. His questions followed Jacques around the turns of the stairs.

"You are well provisioned, Jacques?"

"Yes, m'sieur."

"At daybreak you will remember to have Papillon help you bring in an abundant supply of water?"

"Yes, m'sieur."

"Bar the doors when you see any one approaching and keep watch on all sides every day."

"Yes, m'sieur."

Jacques jammed his candle-end into a crack of the rock floor, undid the fastenings, and with a jerk let the moonlight in on their semi-darkness.

They went out to the palisade gate, the Indians dragged the boat carefully to its launching, and Jacques stored in it Dollard's provisions.

"Good-bye, my man," said Dollard.

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"M'sieur," said Jacques, "I have always obeyed you. There is but one thing in my heart against you, and I will cleanse myself of that now."

"Quickly, then." The young man had one foot in the boat.

"It is the same old hard spot. Thou wouldst rule me out of this expedition. A man that loves thee as I love thee!"

"Jacques, if I had reasons before on Renée's account, what reasons have I not now?"

"Bless thee, my master Adam Daulac!"

"Bless thee, my Jacques!"

The boat shot off, and Jacques went in and fastened the gate and the door.

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XI.

MADemoisELLE DE GRANVILLE'S BROTHER.

Soon after 1 o'clock Claire awoke and sat upright in her dim room. Her alarm at the absence of Dollard was swallowed instantly by greater alarm at the presence of some one else.

This small chamber, like the saloon, was lighted by one square window, and male housekeeping at St. Bernard, combined with the quality of glass manufactured for colonial use at that date, veiled generous moonlight which would have thrown up sharply every object in the severe place.

Claire's garments, folded and laid upon a stool, were motionless to her expanding eyes; so were her boxes where Louise had placed them. All the luggage which a young lady of rank then carried with her to the ends of the earth could be lifted upstairs in the arms of a stout maid. Unstirring was the small black velvet cap which Claire had chosen from her belongings to wear during the voyage. It was stuck against the wall like a dim blot of ink. But nothing else visible seemed quite so motionless and unstirring as the figure by the bed. It was Mademoiselle de Granville. Except that her personality was oppressive, she seemed a lifeless lump without breath or sight, until Claire's tenses pupils adapted to duskieness found eyes in the mask, eyes stiffly gazing.

The bride's voice sunk in her throat, but she forced it to husky action.

"What do you want?"

Automatically, holding its elbows to its sides, the figure lifted one forearm and pointed to Claire's garments.

"Do you require me to put them on?"

It continued to point.

"Be so kind as to withdraw, then, and I will put them on."

It continued to point, without change of attitude or sound of human breath.

The girl crept out of her couch at that corner farthest from the figure, rolled up and pinned her white curls as best she could, and assimilated the garments from the stool, keeping her eye braced repellantly against the automaton pointing at her. She finished by drawing her mantle over her dress, and the velvet cap over her hair.

"Now I am ready, if you are determined I shall go somewhere with you."

The figure turned itself about and opened the door into the saloon. Claire followed, keeping far behind those silent feet, and thus they walked through that grim room over which touches of beauty had never been thrown by a woman's keeping.

Claire followed into another chamber and was shut in darkness. It was the rock side of the house, without moonlighted windows. Mademoiselle de Granville had left her, and she stood confused, forgetting which way she should turn to the door-latch of release. The absence of Dollard now rushed back over her, and helped the dark to heap her with terrors. The sanest people have felt sparks of madness flash across the brain. One such flash created for her a trap in the floor to swallow her to the depths of the island.

Directly her surroundings were lighted by a door opening to an inner room. A priest stood there in black cassock, his face smooth and dark, his eyes dark and attentive. He was not tonsured, but with hair clustering high upon his head he looked like Dollard grown to sudden middle age, his fire burnt to ashes, his shoulders bowed by penances, his soul dried as a fern might be dried betwixt the wooden lids of his breviary. Behind him stood an altar, two tall candles burning upon it, and above the altar hung a crucifix. She took note of nothing else in the room.

"Pardon me, father; I am lost in the house. Mademoiselle de Granville brought me here and has left me."

"Yes." His voice had depth and volume, and was like Dollard's voice grown older. "She brought you at my request."

"At *your* request, father? Where is Mademoiselle de Granville?"

"In that closet," he replied, showing a door at the corner of his chapel room. "My poor lifeless sister is at her devotions."

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"I see my way now. With your permission I will go back," said Claire. This unwholesome priest like a demon presentation of Dollard made her shudder.

"Stop, Mademoiselle Laval."

"I am Madame des Ormeaux; as you should know, being inmate of this house and evidently my husband's brother."

"Mademoiselle de Granville has but one brother," said the priest.

"The Sieur des Ormeaux is her brother."

"There is no Sieur des Ormeaux." He smiled in making the assertion, his lips parting indulgently.

"I mean Dollard, commandant of the fort of Montreal."

"There is no Dollard, commandant of the fort of Montreal. I am the Abbé de Granville."

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Claire silently observed him, gathering her convictions. The priest leaned towards her, rubbing his hands.

"This misguided soldier, sometimes called Dollard, he is but a bad dream of mine, my poor child. So keen is your beauty that it still pierces the recollection. In my last dream my conscience tells me I worked some harm to you. Return to your family, mademoiselle, and forgive me. I have become myself again, and these holy tokens recall me to my duty and my vows."

"I know who you are," said Claire. "You are Mademoiselle de Granville."

"I am the Abbé de Granville. Look at me." He took a candle from the altar and held it near his face. So masculine was the countenance that it staggered conviction. The razor had left sleekness there. The tone of flesh was man-like. "I am Dollard," he said. "I am a priest. There can be, of course, no marriage between us. I sent for you to ask your pardon, and to send you from St. Bernard."

This gross and stupid cruelty had on Claire merely the effect of steeping her in color. Her face and throat blushed.

"You are Mademoiselle de Granville," she repeated.

The priest, as if weary of enforcing his explanations, waved his fingers with a gesture of dismissal in Dollard's own manner.

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"I am the Abbé de Granville. But we will discuss the subject no further. I must be at my prayers. A trustworthy witness shall confirm what I have told you."

He opened the closet door, carrying the candle with him. His tread had body and sound, though his feet were shod in sandals.

Claire moved guardedly after him. He crossed the closet and entered a long passage so narrow that two persons could scarcely walk abreast in it, nor did she covet the privilege of stepping it thus with her conductor.

As she crossed the closet her rapid eye searched it for the chrysalis of Mademoiselle de Granville. The candle was already in the passage beyond, but distinct enough lay that brocaded figure prostrate on the floor beneath a crucifix, but the mask faced Claire.

She moved on behind Abbé de Granville as with masculine tread of foot he strode the length of the passage and opened a door leading out on the stairway.

"Here, Jacques," he called in his mellow tones, "tell this demoiselle about me; and tell her the truth, or it shall be the worse for you."

Claire, standing on the upper stairs, could see Jacques with his back to the fire and his mouth opened in consternation at this unpriestly threat. His candle was yet smoking, so lately had it been divorced from its flame.



“I know who you are.”

Abbé de Granville closed the passage door and bolted it.

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She went down into the kitchen and Jacques brought her a seat, placed her before the middle hearth, and stationed himself at the corner in an attitude of entire dejection. The other inmates rested in unbroken sleep. The cell occupied by Papillon and his wife resounded with a low guttural duet.

“Where is Sieur des Ormeaux, Jacques?” inquired the lady of St. Bernard.

Writhing betwixt two dilemmas, Dollard’s follower cunningly seized upon the less painful one, and nodded up the stairway.

“He’s been out again, has he?”

“Do you mean the priest?”

“Monsieur the abbé.”

“Jacques, who is he?”

“The Abbé de Granville,” replied Jacques with a shrug, first of one shoulder and then the other, as if the sides of his person took turns in rejecting this statement. “And he sends you to me for the truth, madame. Is not that the craziest part of the play when he knows what I will tell you? There is no limiting a woman, madame, when she takes to whims.”

“Then it really was Mademoiselle de Granville playing priest?”

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“Madame, she befools me sometimes until I know not whether to think her man or woman. So secret is this half-sister of my master’s, and so jealous of her pretty abbé, it unsettles a plain soldier. A fine big robust priest he is, and you would take her for a ghost in petticoats. It goes against my conscience, so that I have come nigh to mention it in confession, all this mumming and male-attiring, and even calling for hot shaving-water! Yet she seems an excellent devoted soul when no one crosses her, and for days at a time will be Mademoiselle de Granville, as gentle and timid as a sheep. Besides, women take pleasure in putting on raiment of different kinds, and when you come to look at a priest’s cassock, it is not so far from being a petticoat that I need to raise a scandal against St. Bernard and my commandant’s sister on account of it. M’sieur he minds

none of her pranks, and she hath had her humor since I was set to keep guard over her; and if it be a mad humor, it harms no one but herself.”^[4]

Claire’s glance rested on the coarse floor where many nailed shoes had left their prints in the grain.

“Such a monomaniac cannot be a pleasant housemate.”

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“No, madame; the poor lady is not charming. And she will have the biggest of candles for her altar. But then she must amuse herself. I was, indeed, speechless when I saw her turn you out on the stairway. She does not like a woman about, especially a pretty woman, and doubtless she will dismiss my Louise many times. But, madame, let me entreat you to return to sleep and have no fear. I will even lock the doors of her chambers. She will disturb you no more.”

Claire listened aside to some outer sound, and then exclaimed:

“You did not tell me where the commandant is, Jacques. He has not gone back to his fortress, without me?”

Jacques’s face fell into creases of anguish.

“Madame, he said you were to sleep undisturbed till morning.”

“He should have obtained Mademoiselle de Granville’s consent to that. This is not answering a question I have already repeated to you.”

“Madame, he has taken the Indians and gone in his boat. Soldiers must do all sorts of things, especially commandants. He would not expose you to the dangers of the route by night.”

“Listen!” Her expression changed.

Jacques gladly listened.

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“I was sure I heard some noise before! You see you are mistaken. He is not yet gone.”

Mellow relief, powerful as sunshine, softened the swarthy pallor of Jacques’s face. He caught his candle from the chimney shelf and jammed its charred wick against a glowing coral knot in the log.

“Madame, that’s m’sieur at the gate. I know his stroke and his call. I’ll bring him up.”

No man can surely say, with all his ancestry at his back and his unproved nature within, what he can or cannot do in certain crises of his life.

“What is it, m’sieur?” exclaimed Jacques as he let Dollard through the gate.

“We went scarce a quarter of a league. I came back because I cannot leave her without telling her; it was a cowardly act!” exclaimed Dollard, darting into the house. “She must go with me to Montreal.”

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XII.

DOLLARD'S CONFESSION.

IF Dollard was surprised at finding Claire standing by the fire dressed for her journey, he gave himself no time for uttering it, but directed Jacques to bring down madame's boxes and to wake Louise.

"One casket will be enough, Jacques," countermanded madame; "the one which has been opened. If there is such haste, the others can be sent hereafter. As for my poor Louise, I will not have her waked; this is but her second night's sleep on land. Some one can be found in Montreal to attend me, and I shall see her again soon."

Jacques shuffled down from his master's apartment, carrying the luggage on his shoulder and his candle in one hand. Dollard waited for him, to say aside:

"In three weeks come to Montreal and ask for your lady at the governor's house. Subject yourself to her orders thenceforward."

"Yes, m'sieur," grunted Jacques.

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Again his candle on the twisted staircase caused great shadows to stalk through the cellar gloom—Claire's shadow stretching forward a magnified head at its dense future; Dollard's shadow towering so high as to be bent at right angles and flattened on the joists above. Once more were the bars put up, this time shutting two inmates out of the seignior house.

Dollard hurried his wife into the boat. One Indian held the boat to the beach, another stored the luggage, and immediately they dropped into their places and took the oars, and the boat was off.

It was a silent night and very little breeze flowed along the surface of the water. The moon seemed lost walking so far down the west sky. She struck a path of gold crosswise of Lake St. Louis, and it grew with the progress of the boat, still traveling downriver and twinkling like a moving pavement of burnished disks.

Going with the current, the Hurons had little need to labor, and the gush of their oars came at longer intervals than during the up-stream voyage.

Dollard had wrapped Claire well. He held the furs around her with one arm. By that ghostly daylight which the moon makes she could follow every line and contour of his face. He examined every visible point on the river's surface, and turned an acute ear for shore sounds. Before he began to speak, the disturbance of his spirit reached her, and quite drove all mention of Mademoiselle de Granville from her lips.

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Having satisfied himself that no other craft haunted the river, Dollard turned his eyes upon Claire's, and spoke to her ear so that his voice was lost two feet away.

"Claire, the Iroquois are the curse of this province. Let me tell you what they have done. They are a confederation of five Indian nations: their settlements are south of the great Lake Ontario, but they spread themselves all along the St. Lawrence, murder settlers, make forays into Montreal and Quebec; they have almost exterminated the Christian Hurons, and when they offer us truces they do it only to throw us off our guard. The history of this colony is a history of a hand-to-hand struggle against the Iroquois."

"If they are so strong," whispered Claire, "how have the settlements lived at all?"

"Partly because their mode of warfare is peculiar, and consists in overrunning, harassing, and burning certain points and then retiring to the woods again, and partly because they needed the French. We are useful to them in furnishing certain supplies for which they trade. But they also trade with the Dutch colony on the Hudson River. Only lately have they made up their minds to sweep over this province and destroy it."

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"How do you know this?"

"I know that at this time two bands of these savages, each hundreds strong, are moving to meet each other somewhere on the Ottawa River. We have heard rumors, and some prisoners have been brought in and made to confess, and the mere fact that no skulking parties haunt us shows that they are massing."

Dollard drew a deep breath.

"I shall not dread this danger, being with you," said Claire.

"This is what I must tell you. Claire, there was a man in Montreal who thought the sacking of New France could be prevented if a few determined men would go out and meet these savages on the way, as aggressors, instead of fighting simply on the defensive, as we have done so long. This man found sixteen other young men of his own mind, and they all took a sacred oath to devote themselves to this purpose."

"Sixteen!" breathed the shuddering girl. "Only sixteen against a thousand Indians?"

"Sixteen are enough if they be fit for the enterprise. One point of rock will break any number of waves. These sixteen men and their leader then obtained the governor's consent to their enterprise, and they will kneel in the chapel of the Hôtel-Dieu and receive absolution at daybreak this morning."

"Their leader is Adam Dollard!" Claire's whispered cry broke out. [113]

"Their leader is Adam Dollard," he echoed.

She uttered no other sound, but rose up in the boat.

Dollard caught her in his arms, and set her upon his knees. They held each other in an embrace like the rigid lock of death, the smiling, pale night seeming full of crashing and grinding noises, and of chaos like mountains falling.

Length after length the boat shot on, dumb heart-beat after dumb heart-beat, mile after mile. It began to shiver uneasily. Alert to what was before them, and indifferent to their freight of stone in the boat's end, the Hurons slipped to their knees, each unshipped his oars and took one of the dripping pair for a paddle, fixed his roused eyes on the twisting current, and prepared for the rapids of Lachine. Like an arrow just when the bowstring twangs came the boat at a rock, to be paddled as cleanly aside as if that hissing mass had been a shadow. Right, left, ahead the rapids boiled up; slight shocks ran through the thin-skinned craft as it dodged, shied, leaped, half whirled and half reversed, tumultuously tumbled or shot as if going down a flume. While it lasted the danger seemed endless. But those skilled paddlers played through it with grins of delight folding creases in their leather faces, nor did they settle down dogged and dull Indians again until the boat shot freely out of the rapids upon tame moonlighted ripples once more. [114]

After the Lachine, Dollard lifted his head and said to Claire:

"We start on our expedition as soon as mass is done this morning. It goes without saying that I was pledged to this when I went to Quebec. I cannot go back from it now."

"There is no thought of your going back from it now," Claire spoke to him. "But, Dollard, is there hope of any man's returning alive from this expedition?"

"We are sworn to give no quarter and to take none."

The Indians, pointing their boat towards Montreal, were now pulling with long easy strokes. A little rocky island rose between voyagers and settling moon.

"O Claire! I loved you so! that is all my excuse. I meant not to bring such anguish upon you."

"Dollard, I forbid you to regret your marriage. I myself have no regrets."

"I knew not what I was doing." His words dropped with effort. She could feel his throat strongly sobbing.

"Don't fret, my Dollard." Claire smoothed down those laboring veins with her satin palm. "We are, indeed, young to die. I thought we should live years together. But this marriage gave us nearly a week of paradise. And that is more happiness, I am experienced enough to believe, than many wedded couples have in a lifetime." [115]

"Claire, the family of the Governor Maisonneuve will receive you and treat you with all courtesy; first for your own sake, and in a small degree for mine. I have set down in my will that you are to have all my rude belongings, and Jacques is sworn your trusty servant."

"Dollard, hear what I have to say," she exclaimed, pressing his temples between her hands. "You meant to leave me behind you at St. Bernard. You forget that the blood of man-warriors, the blood of Anne de Montmorency, Constable of France, runs in my veins. Doubt not that I shall go with you on this expedition. Do you think I have no courage because I am afraid of mice and lightning?"

"I knew not that you were afraid of mice and lightning, my Claire."

"Am I to be the wife of Dollard and have sixteen young men thrust between him and myself, all accounted worthy of martyrdom above me?"

"Daughter of a Montmorency!" burst out Dollard with passion; "better than any man on earth! I do you homage—I prostrate myself—I adore you! Yet must I profane your ears with this: no woman can go with the expedition without bringing discredit on it."

"Not even your wife?"

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"Not even my wife. After absolution in the chapel this morning we are set apart, consecrated to the purpose before us."

Claire dropped her face and said:

"I comprehend." He held her upon his breast the brief remainder of their journey, prostrated as she had not been by the shock of his confession.

Mount Royal stood dome-like on Montreal island, a huge shadow glooming out of the north-west upon the little village. After shifting about from a river point of view, those structures composing the town finally settled in their order: the fort, the rough stone seminary of St. Sulpice, the Hôtel-Dieu, the wooden houses standing in a single long row, and eastward the great fortified mill surrounded by a wall. The village itself had neither wall nor palisade.

Surrounding dark fields absorbed light and gave back no glint of dew or sprinkling green blade, for the seed-sowing was not yet finished. Black bears squatting or standing about the fields at length revealed themselves as charred stumps and half trees.

"You have not told me the route your expedition goes," whispered Claire.

"We go in that direction—up the Ottawa River." Dollard swept out his arm indicating the west.

"There is one thing. Do not place me in the governor's charge. How can I be a guest, when I would lie night and day before some shrine? Are there no convents in Montreal? A convent is my allotted shelter."

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"There are only the nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu," he murmured back. "They, also, would receive you into kind protection; but, my Claire, they are poor. Montreal is not Quebec. Our nuns lived at first in one room. Now they have the hospital; but it is a wooden building, exposed by its situation."

"Let me go to the nuns," she insisted. "And there is one other thing. Do not tell them who I am. Say nothing about me, that I may have no inquiries to answer concerning our marriage and his lordship the bishop."

"Our nuns of St. Joseph and the Sulpitians of Montreal bear not too much love for the bishop," said Dollard. "But every wish you have is my wish. I will say nothing to the nuns, and you may tell them only what you will."

A strong pallor toning up to yellow had been growing from the east to the detriment of the moon. Now a pencil line of pink lay across the horizon, and the general dewiness of objects became apparent. The mountain turned from shadow into perpendicular earth and half-budded trees. Some people were stirring in Montreal, and a dog ran towards the river barking as the boat touched the wharf.

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XIII.

THE CHAPEL OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU.

JOUANEUX, the retainer of the hospital nuns, though used to rising early to feed their pigs and chickens, this time cast his wary glance into the garden while it was yet night. The garden held now no tall growths of mustard, in which the Iroquois had been known to lurk until daylight for victims, but Jouaneux felt it necessary that he should scan the inclosure himself before any nun chanced to step into it.

The Sisterhood's dependent animals were quartered under the same roof with themselves, according to Canadian custom. Jouaneux scattered provender before the cocks were fairly roused to their matin duty of crowing; and the sleepy swine, lifting the tips of their circular noses, grunted inquiringly at him without scrambling up through the dusk.

Scandal might have attached itself even to these nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu for maintaining so youthful a servitor as Jouaneux, had not the entire settlement of Montreal known his cause for gratitude towards them and the honest bond which held him devoted to their goodness.

He was not the stumpy type of French peasant, but stood tall and lithe, was rosy-faced, and had bright hair like a Saxon's. A constant smile parted Jouaneux's lips and tilted up his nose. He looked always on the point of telling good news. Catastrophe and pain had not erased the up-curves of this expression. So he stood smiling at the pigs while Indian-fighters were gathering from all quarters of Montreal towards the hospital chapel.

"Jouaneux!" spoke a woman's well-modulated voice from an inner door.

"Yes, honored Superior," he responded with alacrity, turning to Sister Judith de Brésoles, head of the Sisterhood of St. Joseph, to whom he accorded always this exaggerated term of respect. She carried a taper in her hand, its slender white flame casting up the beauty of her stern spiritualized features.

Bound at all times to the duty of the moment, whether that duty was to boil herbs for dinner, to ring the tocsin at an Indian alarm, or to receive the wounded and the dying, Sister Brésoles conferred briefly with her servitor.

"Jouaneux, is the chapel in complete readiness?"

"Yes, honored Superior; everything is ready."

"The Commandant Dollard has arrived, and he brought his young relative with him to place her in our care."

"His sister who lives on his seigniory?"

"Certainly. Could it be any other? His sister Mademoiselle Dollard, therefore—"

"Pardon, honored Superior,"—the tip of his nose shifted with expressive twitches, and he had the air of imparting something joyful,—"Mademoiselle de Granville. She is but half-sister to Monsieur Dollard."

"The minutest relationships of remote families are not hid from you, Jouaneux," commented Sister Brésoles. "But I have to mention to you that the parlor fire must be lighted now and every morning for Mademoiselle de Granville, if she choose to sit there."

"It shall be done, honored Superior."

"And that is all I had to tell you, I believe," concluded Sister Judith, turning immediately to the next duty on her list.

Early as it was, the population of Montreal was pressing into the palisade gate of the Hôtel-Dieu. Matrons led their children, who mopped sleep from their eyes with little dark fists and stood on tiptoe to look between moving figures for the Indian-fighters. Some women had pale and tear-sodden cheeks, but most faces showed that rapturous enthusiasm which heroic undertaking rouses in the human breast. Unlike many meetings of a religious character, this one attracted men in majority: the seignior, the gentilhomme, the soldier from the fort, the working-smith or armorer.

When Sister Brésoles received Claire she had given her directly into the hands of a white, gentle little nun, the frame-work of whose

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countenance was bare and expressive. She took the girl's hand between her sympathetic and work-worn tiny palms.

They stood in the refectory, the dawn-light just jotting their outlines to each other.

"I am Sister Macé, dear mademoiselle," said the little nun. "Do you wish me to sit by you in the chapel?"

"I cannot sit in the chapel, Sister."

"Then let me take you to our parlor. My Sister Brésoles will have a fire lighted there. On these mornings the air from the river comes in chill."

"No, Sister," said Claire, her eyes closed. "Thank you. Be not too kind to me. I wish to retain command of myself."

Sister Macé let a tear slip down each cheek hollow and took one hand away from Claire's to tweak her dot-like nose and catch the tears on a corner of her veil. The Sisters of St. Joseph were poorly clad, but the very fragrance of cleanness stirred in Sister Macé's robe. She glanced about for something which might comfort Claire by way of the stomach; for stomach comfort had gained importance to these gently bred nuns after their Canadian winters on frozen bread.

"Sister," said Claire, "is there any hiding-place about the walls of the chapel where I can thrust myself so that no weakness of mine may be seen, and behold the ceremonies?"

"There is the rood-loft," replied Sister Macé. "And if you go directly to it before the chapel is opened for the service, nobody would dream you were there."

"Let us go directly," said Claire.

Directly they went. Sister Macé paused but to close with care the chapel door behind them. The chapel was dark and they groped across it and up the stairway, Sister Macé talking low and breathlessly on the ascent.

"Ah, mademoiselle, what a blessed and safe retreat is the rood-loft! How many times have my Sister Maillet and I flown to that sacred corner and prostrated ourselves before the Holy Sacrament while the yells of the Iroquois rung in our very ears! We expected every instant to be seized, and to feel the scalps torn from our heads. I have not the fortitude to bear these things as hath my Sister Brésoles,—this way, mademoiselle; give me your hand,—but I can appreciate noble courage; and, mademoiselle, I look with awe upon these young men about to take their vows."

The sacrament and its appendages had been removed from Sister Macé's retreat to the altar below. There was a low balustrade at the front of this narrow gallery which would conceal people humble enough to flatten themselves beside it, and here the woman bereft and the woman her sympathizer did lie on the floor and look down from the rood-loft. Before many moments an acolyte came in with his taper and lighted all the candles on the altar. Out of dusk the rough little room, with its few sacred daubs and its waxen images, sprung into mellow beauty.

Claire watched all that passed, sometimes dropping her face to the floor, and sometimes trembling from head to foot, but letting no sound betray her. She saw the settlement of Montreal crowd into the inclosure as soon as the chapel door was opened, and a Sulpitian priest stand forth by the altar. She saw the seventeen men file into space reserved for them before the altar and kneel there four abreast, Dollard at their head kneeling alone.

The chapel was very silent, French vivacity, which shapes itself into animated fervor on religious occasions, being repressed by this spectacle.

Claire knew the sub-governor Maisonneuve by his surroundings and attendants before Sister Macé breathed him into her ear.

"And that man who now comes forward," the nun added as secretly—"that is Charles Le Moyne, as brave a man as any in the province, and rich and worthy, moreover. His seigniory is opposite Montreal on the south-east shore."

Charles Le Moyne, addressing himself to the kneeling men, spoke out for his colleagues and brethren of the settlement who could not leave their farms until the spring crops were all planted. He urged the seventeen to wait until he and his friends could join the expedition. He would promise they should not be delayed long.

Claire watched Dollard lift his smiling face and shake his head with decision, against which urging was powerless.

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She witnessed the oath which they took neither to give quarter to nor accept quarter from the Iroquois. She witnessed their consecration and the ceremonial of mass. The kneeling men were young, few of them being older than Dollard.^[5] They represented the colony, from soldier and gentilhomme down to the lower ranks of handicraftsmen. Whatever their ancestry had been, a baptism of glory descended upon all those faces alike. Their backs were towards the crowded chapel, but the women in the rood-loft could see this unconscious light, and as Claire looked at Dollard she shuddered from head to foot, feeling that her whole silent body was one selfish scream, "He is forgetting me!"

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Lighted altar, lifted host, bowed people, and even the knightly splendor of Dollard's face, all passed from Claire's knowledge.

"It is now over, dear mademoiselle," whispered Sister Macé, sighing. "Do you see?—the men are standing up to march out four abreast, headed by the commandant. Ah, how the people will crowd them and shake their hands! Are you not looking, my child? O St. Joseph! patron of little ones, she is in a dead faint. Mademoiselle!" Sister Macé began to rub Claire's temples and hands and to pant with anxiety, so that the rood-loft must have been betrayed had not the chapel been emptying itself of a crowd running eagerly after other objects.

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"Let me be," spoke Claire, hoarsely. "I am only dying to the world."

Sister Macé wept again. She patted Claire's wrist with her small fingers. The girl's bloodless face and tight-shut eyes were made more pallid by early daylight, for the candles were being put out upon the altar. Sister Macé in her solicitude forgot all about the people pouring through the palisade gate and following their heroes to the river-landing.

"Oh, how strong is the love of brother and sister!" half soliloquized this gentle nun. "These ties so sweeten life; but when the call of Heaven comes, how hard they rend asunder!"

The trampling below hastened itself, ebbed away, entirely ceasing upon the flags of the Hôtel-Dieu and becoming a clatter along the wharf.

"Is the chapel vacant now, Sister?" her charge breathed at her ear.

"The last person has left it, dear mademoiselle."

"Presently I will go down to lie on that spot where he knelt before the altar."

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"Shall I assist you down, dear mademoiselle?" said Sister Macé with the solicitude of a sparrow trying to lift a wounded robin.

"No, Sister. But of your charity do this for me in my weakness. Go down and stand by the place. I have not known if any foot pressed it, and I will not have it profaned."

Sister Macé, therefore, who respected all requests, and who herself had lain stretched on that cold stone pavement doing her religious penances, descended the stairs and stood near the altar; while her charge followed, holding by railing or sinking upon step, until she reached the square of stone where Dollard had knelt.

As a mother pounces upon her child in idolatrous abandon, so Claire fell upon that chill spot and encircled it with her arms, sobbing:

"Doubt not that I shall find you again, my Dollard, my Dollard! Once before I prayed mightily to Heaven for a blessing, and I got my blessing."

While she lay there, cheer after cheer rose from the river-landing, wild enthusiasm bursting out again as soon as the last round had died away. The canoes had put out on their expedition. Those who watched them with the longest watching would finally turn aside to other things. But the woman on the chapel floor lay stretched there for twenty-four hours.

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XIV.

MASSAWIPPA.



ALL that pleasant afternoon, while a spring sun warmed seeds in the ground and trees visibly unfurled green pennons, Montrealists stood in groups looking solemnly up-river where the expedition canoes had disappeared, or flinging their hands in excited talk. "They talked too much," says one of their chroniclers. For the expedition was to be kept secret, particularly from all passing Indians.

There was no wind to cut away tremulous heat simmering at the base of the mountain. Grass could be smelled, with the delicious odor of the earth in which it was quickening. On such a day the soul of man accomplishes its yearly metempsychosis, and finds itself in a body beating with new life.

Jouaneaux carried his happy countenance from group to group along the single street of Montreal, standing with respectful attention when his superiors talked, or chiming in with authority when his equals held parley instead of pushing their business.

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Before night a small fleet of Indian canoes came up the river and landed on the wharf of Montreal forty warriors and a very young girl. The chief, leading the girl by the hand, stalked proudly westward along the street, his feathers dancing, his muscular legs and moccasined feet having the flying step of Mercury. His braves trod in line behind him.

"All Hurons," remarked Jouaneaux to his crony, a lime-burner.

"And should be seeding their island of Orleans at this season," said the lime-burner, "if Quebec set them any example but to quarrel and take to the woods."

"That chief can be nobody but Annahotaha," said Jouaneaux. "Now where dost thou say he stole that brown beauty of a little Sister?"

"He stole her," responded the lime-burner, "from a full-blooded French girl below Three Rivers, that some Quebec Jesuit mixed up with him in marriage. My cousin lives in the same côte, and little liking hath she for this half-breed who scorns her mother's people and calls herself a princess."

"Good hater art thou of Quebec Jesuits," said Jouaneaux, spreading his approving smile beyond dots of white teeth around large margins of pink gums. "But Quebec Jesuits have done worse work than mixing the blood of this princess. What a little Sister of St. Joseph she would make!" he exclaimed, stretching his neck after the girl and disclosing the healthy depths of his mouth.

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"You never look at a woman but to take her measure for the Sisterhood of St. Joseph," laughed the lime-burner.

"And to what better life could she be measured?" demanded the nuns' retainer, instantly aggressive, "or what better Sisterhood?"

"There be no better women," yielded the lime-burner.

All night Sister Brésoles and Sister Macé in turns kneeled beside the prostrate woman in the chapel. She was not disturbed by offers of food or consolation, for they respected her posture and her vigil. The young novices, of whom there were a few, had duties set for them elsewhere. All night a taper burned upon the altar and a nun knelt by it, her shadow wavering long and brown; and the woman's body, with its arms stretched out on the stones, stirred only at intervals when the hands grasped and wrung each other in renewed prayer.

Before matins Sister Brésoles left her support of this afflicted spirit to devote herself to the revival of the body, by concocting a broth for which she is yet celebrated in Church annals on account of the Divine assistance she received in its preparation. The very odor should rouse Claire from her long fast and cause her to eat and rise, bearing her burdens.

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During Sister Brésoles's absence another figure came in and bowed before the altar.

Conscious of physical disturbance, Claire turned her vacant look towards it, as she had done each time the nuns changed vigils.

This was no serene Sister of St. Joseph, but a dark young girl also flattening herself on the pavement, and writhing about in rages of pain.

"My child, what ails *you*?" whispered Claire, compassion making alive the depths of her eyes.

But the girl, without heeding her, ground a few prayers between convulsive teeth, and then beat her head upon the stones.

By degrees the silence and self-restraint of a woman not greatly her elder, lying in trouble as abject as her own, had its quieting effect on her. Tears, scantily distilled in her, ran the length of her eyelid rims and fell in occasional drops on the floor.

Their cheeks resting on a level, the two unhappy creatures looked at each other across a stone flag.

"Has your father or your brother gone with Dollard?" whispered Claire.

"Madame, my father goes to fight the Iroquois."

"I thought it."

"Madame, I have just been making a vow."

"So have I."

"I will follow my father wherever he is going, come life or come death, and nobody shall prevent me."

Claire rose upon her knees.

Sister Brésoles opened the chapel door, carrying in a bowl of soup as she would have carried it to a soldier whose wounds refused to allow his being lifted.

The patient was in evident thanksgiving. Daylight had just begun to glimmer in. Claire's face shone with the passionate white triumph which religious ascetics of that day looked forward to as the crowning result of their vigils. Flushed with reactionary hope, she rose to her feet as if the pavement had left no stiffness in her muscles, and met the nun.

"St. Joseph and all the Holy Family give you peace, mademoiselle."

"Peace hath been granted me, Sister. My prayer is answered."

"Great is the power of the Holy Family. But after your long vigil you will need this strengthening broth which I have made for you."

"Sister, you are kind. Let me take it to your refectory. I know the place. And may this young girl attend me?"

"I will carry it myself, mademoiselle," said Sister Judith, "to our rude parlor, if you will follow me up the stairs. The refectory is somewhat chilly, and in the parlor we have a fire kindled. And you may bathe your face and hands before eating your soup."

Up a stairway Claire groped behind the nun, and came into a barn-like huge room, scant of comforts except an open fire, which Jouaneaux had but finished preparing entirely for her. The cells of the nuns were built along one side of this room, and from the cells they now emerged going devoutly to matins.

"Touching the half-breed girl of whom you spoke," said Sister Brésoles, lingering to put a basin of water and coarse clean towel within reach of her guest, "she shall come to you as soon as she hath finished her morning devotions. Her father is chief of the Hurons, and hath placed her here as a novice. We have many girls come," added Sister Brésoles with a light sigh, "but few remain to bear the hardships of life in a frontier convent."

"Girls are ungrateful creatures," said Claire, "bent on their own purposes, and greedy of what to them seems happiness. I am myself so. And if I do or say what must offend you, forgive me, Sister."

She unfastened her necklace and held it up—a slender rope braided of three strings of seed pearls and fastened by a ruby.

"This is a red sapphire, Sister, and has been more than a hundred years in the house of—"

She suppressed "Laval-Montmorency," and pressed her necklace upon the nun's refusing palm.

"Why do you offer me this, mademoiselle?"

"Because from this day gems and I part company forever. That is the only hereditary ornament I brought with me into New France. Enrich some shrine with it if you have no need to turn it into money for your convent."

"Our convent is very poor, mademoiselle," replied Sister Brésoles, divided between acceptance and refusal. "But we want no

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rich gifts from those who make their retirement with us. Also, the commandant, your brother, left with us more value than our poor hospitality can return to you."

"Yet be intreated, Sister," urged Claire. "I want it to be well placed, but no more about my throat."

Sister Brésoles, with gentle thanks, therefore,—“It shall still do honor to your house in works of charity, mademoiselle,”—accepted the gift and went directly to matins.

When Claire had washed her face and hands and tightened the loose puffs of her hair, she took her bowl of soup and sat before the fire, eating it with the hearty appetite of a woman risen from despair to resolution.

The odor of a convent, how natural it was to her!—that smell of stale incense intertwined with the scentless breath of excessive cleanliness. Through the poor joints of the house she could hear matin-chanting arise from the chapel. Daylight grew stronger and ruddier, and a light fog from the river showed opal changes.

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On moccasined feet, and so deft of hand that Claire heard her neither open nor close the door, the half-breed girl came to the hearth. A brown and a white favor in woman beauty were then set in strong contrast. Both girls were slenderly shaped, virginal and immature lines still predominating. Claire was transparently clear of skin, her hair was silken white like dandelion down, and the brown color of her eyes, not deeply tinged with pigment, showed like shadow on water; while the half-breed burned in rich pomegranate dyes, set in black and fawn tints. They looked an instant at each other in different mood from their first gaze across the flagstone.

"Your father is an Indian chief, the Sister tells me," said Claire.

"My father is Étienne Annahotaha, chief of the Hurons."

"And what is your name?"

"Massawippa."

"Massawippa, the Virgin sent you into the chapel to answer my prayer."

The half-breed, standing in young dignity, threw a dark-eyed side-glance at this perfect lily of French civilization. She was not yet prepared to be used as an answer to the prayers of any French woman.

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"Did you know that an expedition started yesterday to the Ottawa River?" inquired Claire.

Massawippa shook her head.

"But your father, also—he is going to fight the Iroquois?"

"I know not where they are, but I shall find out," said Massawippa.

"I know," said Claire. "The Iroquois are coming down the Ottawa."

"From their winter trapping," the girl assented with a nod.

"Your father, therefore, will follow Dollard's expedition."

"My father has but forty-three men," Massawippa said gloomily.

"Child," said Claire, "Dollard has only sixteen!"

"And, madame, the Iroquois are like leaves for number. But I did not mean our Hurons are forty-three strong. Mituvemeg,^[6] the Algonquin, meets my father here."

"Do you know this country? Have you lived much in the woods?"

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"Yes, madame."

"Have you ever been up the Ottawa River?"

"Yes, madame. The very last summer my father took me up the Ottawa beyond Two Mountains Lake."

"Two Mountains Lake?"

"Yes, madame; a widening of the river, just as Lake St. Louis is a widening of the St. Lawrence."

"Could we go up this river in a boat, you and I?"

Massawippa looked steadily at Claire, searching her for cowardice or treachery. The Laval-Montmorency smiled back.

"Twenty-four hours, Massawippa, I lay on the chapel pavement, praying the Virgin to send me guide or open some way for me to follow the French expedition up that Ottawa River. You threw yourself beside me and answered my prayer by your own vow. We are bound to the same destination."

The half-breed girl looked with actual solicitude at the tender

white beauty of her fellow-plotter.

"Madame, it will be very hard for you. You and I could not, in a boat, pass the rapids of Ste. Anne at the head of this island; they test the skill of our best Huron paddlers."

"Can we then go by land?"

"We shall have to cross one arm of the Ottawa to the mainland. Montreal is on an island, madame. Two or three leagues of travel would bring us to that shore near the mouth of the Ottawa."

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Sister Macé, unobtrusive as dawn, opened the door and stole softly in from matins, breaking up the conference. She called Massawippa to learn how pallets must be aired and cells made tidy. The half-breed girl saw all this care with contempt, having for years cast out of mind her bed of leaves and blankets as soon as she arose from it.

Claire went with unpromising novice and easy teacher to breakfast in the refectory, and afterwards by herself to confession—a confession with its mental reservation as to her plans; but the rite was one which her religion imposed upon her under the circumstances. She had been even less candid towards the nuns in allowing them to receive and address her as Dollard's sister. The prostration of grief and reaction of intense resolve benumbed her, indeed, to externals. But in that day of pious deception, when the churchmen themselves were full of evasive methods, a daughter of conventual training may have been less sensitive to false appearances than women of Claire's high nature bred in a later age. She saw no more of Massawippa until nightfall, but lay in the cell assigned to her, resting with shut eyes, and allowing no thought to wander to the men paddling towards that lonely river.

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All day the season grew; shower chased sun and sun dried shower, and in the afternoon Jouaneaux told Sister Brésoles that he had weeded the garden of a growth which would surprise her.

At dusk, however, he brought the usual small log up to the parlor, and with it news which exceeded his tale of weeding.

Sister Brésoles was folding her tired hands in meditation there, and Massawippa, sullen and lofty from her first day's probation, curled on the floor in a corner full of shadows.

"Honored Superior," said Jouaneaux after placing his log, "who, say'st thou, did boldly walk up to the governor to-day?"

"Perhaps yourself, Jouaneaux. You were ever bold enough."

"I was there, honored Superior, about a little matter of garden seeds, and I stood by and hearkened, as it behooved the garrison of a convent to do; for there comes me in this chief of the Hurons, Annahotaha, swelling like—"

Jouaneaux suppressed "cockereel about to crow." His wandering glance caught Massawippa sitting in her blanket. The Sisters of St. Joseph were at that time too poor to furnish any distinguishing garments to their novices; and so insecure were these recruits from the world that any uniform would have been thrown away upon them. With the facility of Frenchmen, Jouaneaux substituted,

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—"like a mighty warrior, as he is known to be. And he asks the governor, does Annahotaha, for a letter to Dollard; and before he leaves the presence he gets his letter."

Sister Brésoles raised a finger, being mindful of two pairs of listening ears, and two souls just sinking to the peace of resignation.

"Honored Superior," exclaimed Jouaneaux, in haste to set bulwarks around his statement, "you may ask Father Dollier de Casson if this be not so, for he had just landed from the river parishes, and was with the governor. V'là," said Jouaneaux, spreading an explanatory hand, "if Annahotaha and his braves join Dollard without any parchment of authority, what share will Dollard allow them in the enterprise? Being a shrewd chief and a man of affairs, Annahotaha knew he must bear commission."

"Come down to the refectory and take thy supper and discharge thy news there," Sister Brésoles exclaimed, starting up and swiftly leaving the room.

Jouaneaux obeyed her, keeping his punctilious foot far behind the soft rush of her garments.

He dared not wink at the nun, even under cover of dusk and to add zest to his further recital; but he winked at the wall separating him from Massawippa and said slyly on the stairs:

"Afterwards, however, honored Superior, I heard the governor

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tell Father de Casson that he wrote it down to Dollard to accept or refuse Annahotaha, as he saw fit."

As soon as the door was closed Claire came running out of her cell and met Massawippa at the hearth, silently clapping her hands in swift rapture as a humming-bird beats its wings.

"Now thou see'st how the Virgin answers prayer, Massawippa!"

The half-breed, sedately eager, said:

"We must cross the arm of the Ottawa and follow their course up that river. Madame, I have troubled my mind much about a boat. For if we got over the Ottawa arm and followed the right-hand shore, have you thought how possible it is that they may fix their camp on the opposite side?"

"Can we not take a boat with us from Montreal?"

"And carry it two or three leagues across the country? For I cannot paddle up the Ste. Anne^[7] current. But if we could get one here it would draw suspicion on us and we might be followed. I see but one way. We must depend upon that walking woman above Carillon; and if she be dead, and they camp on the other side, we must raft across the Ottawa. But if we must first make a raft to cross at the mouth, how much time will be lost!"

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"Massawippa, we have vowed to follow this expedition, and with such good hap as Heaven sends us we shall follow it. May we not start to-morrow?"

"Madame, before we start there are things to prepare. We must eat on the way."

"What food shall we carry?"

"Bread and smoked eels would keep us alive. I can perhaps buy these with my wampum girdle," suggested Massawippa, who held the noble young dame beside her to be as dowerless as a Huron princess, and thought it no shame so to be.

"Why need you do that?" inquired Claire. "I have two or three gold louis left of the few I brought from France."

"Gold, madame! Gold is so scarce in this land we might attract too much attention by paying for our supplies with it."

"I have nothing else, so we must hazard it. And what must we take beside food and raiment?"

"Madame, we cannot carry any garments."

"But, Massawippa, I cannot go to Dollard all travel-stained and ragged!"

"If we find him, madame, he will not think of your dress. Is he wedded to you?"

Claire's head sunk down in replying.

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"He is wedded to glory. Men care more for glory than they care for us, Massawippa."

"Madame," said the younger, her mouth settling to wistfulness, "the more they care for glory the more we love them. My father is great. If he was a common Indian little could I honor him, whatever penance the priest laid upon me."

"Yes, Dollard is my husband. He is my Dollard," said Claire.

"The nuns call you mademoiselle."

"I have not told them."

"They might see!" asserted Massawippa, slightly. "Do women lie in deadly anguish before the altar for brothers?" she demanded, speaking as decidedly from her inexperience as any young person of a later century, "or for detestable young men who wish to be accepted as lovers?"

"Assuredly not," said Claire, smiling.

"But fathers, they are a different matter. And in your case, madame, husbands. We shall need other things besides bread and eels. For example, two knives."

"To cut our bread with?" inquired Claire.

"No; to cut our enemies with!" Massawippa replied, with preoccupied eye which noted little the shudder of the European.

"O Massawippa! they may be engaged with the Iroquois even now. Dollard has been gone two days."

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"Have no fear of that, madame. There will be no fighting until Annahotaha reaches the expedition," assumed the chief's daughter with a high air most laughable to her superior. And after keen meditation she added: "We might start to-morrow daybreak if we

but had our supplies ready.”

“Massawippa,” exclaimed Claire, “how do you barter with merchants? Can we not send for them and buy our provisions at once?”

“Madame, send for the merchants? You make me laugh! Very cautiously will I have to slip from this place to that; and perhaps I cannot then buy all we need, especially with gold louis. They may, however, think *coureurs de bois* have come to town. And now at dusk is a better time than in broad daylight.”

Claire went in haste to her casket, which stood in the nuns’ parlor, and selected from it things which she might not have the chance of removing later. These she put in her cell, and came back to Massawippa with her hand freighted.

“How much, madame?” the half-breed inquired as pieces were turned with a clink upon her own palm.

“All. Three louis.”

“Take one back, then. Two will be too many, though one might not be enough. Madame, that Frenchman who feeds the nuns’ pigs and tends this fire, he will let me out; and what I buy I will hide outside the *Hôtel-Dieu*.”

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THE WOOING OF JOUANEAUX.

IN consequence of Massawippa's plan the Frenchman who fed the nuns' pigs guarded in dolor his palisade gate at about 10 o'clock of the evening.

The hospital had these bristling high pickets set all about its premises as a defense against sudden attacks, and its faithful retainer felt that he was courting its destruction in keeping its bolts undone so late. There was, besides, the anticipative terror of a nun's stepping forth to demand of his hands the new novice. Cold dew of suspense stood on his face; and he could only hope that Sister Maillet, who usually had charge of the last novice, believed her to be folded safely in her cell by Sister Brésoles, and that Sister Brésoles believed her to be thus folded by Sister Maillet. When at last the cat footsteps of Massawippa passed through the palisade gate she requited his sufferings with scarce a nod of thanks, though she hesitated with some show of interest to see him fasten both gate and convent door. Indignation possessed him while he shot the bolts, and freed itself through jerks of the head.

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But instead of going to her cell, Massawippa entered the chapel; and Jouaneaux, feeling himself still responsible for her, followed and closed the door behind him.

A solitary light burned on the altar. The girl knelt a long time in her devotions.

Jouaneaux knelt also, near the door, and after a pater and an ave it may be supposed that he begged St. Joseph to intercede for a poor sinner who felt beset and impelled to meddle with novices.

Having finished her prayers, Massawippa began to ascend the stairway to the rood-loft.

"Where are you going?" whispered Jouaneaux, following her in wrath.

She turned around and held to the rail of the stair, while he stood at the foot, she guarding her voice also in reply.

"I am going up here to sleep, lest I wake the Sisters. The floor is no harder than their pallets, and the night is not cold."

"And in the morning my honored Superior calls me to account for you."

"No one has missed me. I shall be up early."

"How do you know you are not missed? Some one may this moment open that chapel door."

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"Go away and quit hissing at me then," suggested Massawippa, contracting her brows.

Jouaneaux, drawn by a power irresistible, fell into the error of vain natures, and set himself to lecture the creator of his infatuation.

"I want to talk to you. I want to give you some good advice. Sit down on that step," he demanded.

Massawippa settled down, and rested her chin on her dark soft knuckles. Sparks of amusement burned in the deeps of her eyes. Accustomed to having men of inferior rank around her, she was satisfied that he kept his distance and sat three steps below her, literally beneath her feet. Her beaver gown cased her in rich creases.

Seeing her thus plastic, Jouaneaux's severity ran off his cheeks in a smile. He forgot her abuse of the privilege he had stolen for her. His genial nose tilted up, and as overture to his good advice, showing all his gums, he whispered:

"What a pretty little Sister of St. Joseph you will make!"

Massawippa stirred, and with her dull-red blanket arranged a rest for her head against the balustrade.

"What do you think of me?" he inquired.

After reticent pause of a length to embarrass a modest questioner, Massawippa admitted:

"You are not so black and oily as La Mouche."

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"Who is La Mouche?"

"He is my father's adopted nephew."

"Does he want to wed you?"

"He dare not name such a thing to me!"

"That is excellent," commended Jouaneaux. "You have the true spirit of a novice. You must never think of marriage with any man." He gloated upon her, his entire chest sighing.

The scandal of the situation, should any nun open the chapel door, was a danger which made this interview the most delightful sin of his life. But the two Sisters most given to vigils had watched all the previous night, and he counted upon nature's revenge to leave him unmolested.

The taper burned upon the altar, and there were the sacred images keeping guard, chastening both speakers always to a reverent murmur of the voice which rose no louder, and which to a devout ear at the door might have suggested, in that period of miracles, some gentle colloquy between the waxen St. Joseph and his waxen spouse. Massawippa, childishly innocent, and Jouaneaux, nearly as innocent himself, would scarcely be such objects of veneration, though their converse might prove equally harmless.

"Is this the good advice you wished to give me?" inquired Massawippa.

"It is the beginning of it," replied Jouaneaux.

"I do not intend to wed. There is no man fit to wed me," said the half-breed girl in high sincerity, leveling her gaze above his bright poll.

"Look you here, now!" exclaimed the Frenchman. "I am good enough for you, if I would marry you. For while your fathers were ranging the woods, mine were decent tillers of the soil, keeping their skins white and minding the priest. Where could you get a finer husband than I would make you? But I shall never marry. The Queen of France would be no temptation to me. There you sit, enough to turn the head of our blessed St. Joseph, for you turned my head the moment I looked upon you; but I don't want you."

"I will bid you good-night," said Massawippa, drawing her blanket.

"At the proper time, little Sister; when I speak my mind free of its load. I must live a bachelor, it is true; but if I were a free man I would have you to-morrow, though you scratched me with your wild hands."

"I am not for your bolts and bars," returned Massawippa, scornfully.

"If we were settled in the house I made upon my land," said Jouaneaux, tempting himself with the impossible while he leaned back smiling, "little need you complain of bolts and bars. My case is this: I had a grant of land on the western shore of this island of Montreal."

"Not where the Ottawa comes in?" questioned Massawippa, impaling him with interest.

"That was the exact spot." Jouaneaux widened his mouth pinkly as he became retrospective. "And never wouldst thou guess what turned me from that freeholding to a holy life. I may say that I lead a holy life, for are not vows laid upon me as strait as on the Sulpitian fathers? And straiter; I am under writings to the nuns to serve them to the day of my death, and they be under writings to me to maintain my sickness and old age. It is likely my skeleton barn still stands where I set it up to hold my produce. Down I falls from the ridge of it headlong to the ground, and here in the Hôtel-Dieu I lay for many a month like a rag, the Sisters tending me. It was then I said to myself, 'Jouaneaux, these be angels of pity and patience, yet they soil their hands feeding pigs and bearing up such as thou.' Though I am equal to most of my betters, little Sister, I always held it well to be humble-minded. The result is, I give up my land, I bind myself to serve the saints in this Hôtel-Dieu, and therefore I cannot marry."

Jouaneaux collapsed upon himself with a groaning sigh.

"Then your house and your barn were left to ruin?" questioned Massawippa, passing without sympathy his nuptial restrictions.

"My house!" said Jouaneaux, looking up with reviving spirit. "Little Sister, you would walk over the roof of my house and not perceive it."

"In midwinter?"

"No, now, when young grass springs. I could endure to risk my

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store of crops where the Iroquois might set torch to them, but this pretty fellow, this outer man of me, I took no risks with him. I chooses me a stump, a nice hollow stump."

"And squeezed into it like a bear?"

"Jouaneaux is a fox, little Sister. Call your clumsy La Mouche the bear. No: I burrows me out a house beneath the stump; a good house, a sizable hole. Over there is my fire-place, and the stump furnishes me a chimney. Any Iroquois seeing my stump smoking would merely say to himself, 'It is afire.' Let a canoe spring out on the river or a cry ring in the forest—down went Jouaneaux into his house, and, as you may say, pulled the earth over his head. I also kept my canoe dragged within there, for there was no telling what might happen to it elsewhere."

Massawippa regarded him with animation. "You had also a boat?"

"Indeed, yes!" the nuns' man affirmed, kindled higher by such interest. "A good birch craft it was, and large enough for two people." Another groaning sigh paid tribute to this lost instrument of happiness.

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"But your house may be all crumbled in now."

"Not that house, little Sister. Look you! it had ceiling and walls of timbers well fastened together and covered with cement. Was not that a snug house? It will endure like rock, and some day I must go and see it once more."

"Perhaps you could not find it now."

Jouaneaux laughed.

"My house! I could walk straight to it, little Sister, and lay my hand on the chimney. That chimney stump, it standeth near the river, the central one in a row of five. Many other rows of five there be in the field, but none, to my eye, exactly like this."

Massawippa rose suddenly and dived like a swallow up the stairway. So much keener was her ear than Jouaneaux's that she was out of sight before he realized the probability of an interruption.

A hand was on the chapel latch, and he turned himself on the step as Sister Judith Brésoles entered, her night taper in her hand. When she discovered him, instead of screaming, she stood and fixed a stern gaze on him, her mouth compressed and her brows holding an upright wrinkle betwixt them. Her servitor stood up in his most pious and depressed attitude.

"Jouaneaux, what are you doing here?"

"Honored Superior, I have been sitting half an hour or so meditating before the sacred images."

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"Where is the novice Massawippa?"

"That is what troubles my conscience, honored Superior." Beneath his childlike distress Jouaneaux was silently blessing St. Joseph that it was not Sister Macé with her tendency to resort to the rood-loft. "Here is the case I stand in: the little Sister you call Massawippa, she came begging me for a breath of air by the river before I fastened the bolts to-night."

"You turned that child upon the street!" exclaimed Sister Brésoles. "I cannot find her in any cell or anywhere about the Hôtel-Dieu. You have exceeded your authority, Jouaneaux. It is a frightful thing you have done!"

"Honored Superior, she will be back in the morning. Those half-Indians are not like French girls; they have the bird in them. This one will hop over all evil hap."

"I would ring the tocsin," said Sister Brésoles, "if alarming the town would recall her. Without doubt, though," she sighed, "the girl has returned to her father."


"Honored Superior, if she comes not back to matins as clean and fresh as a brier-rose, turn me out of the Hôtel-Dieu."

"Get you to bed, Jouaneaux, and, let me tell you, you must meddle no more with novices. These young creatures are ever a weight on one's heart."

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"Especially this one," lamented Jouaneaux, as, leaving the chapel behind Sister Brésoles, he rolled his eyes in one last gaze at the rood-loft.

FIRST USE OF A KNIFE.

 HE capeline, or small black velvet cap, which Claire had worn on her journeys about New France sheltered her head from the highest and softest of April morning skies. Though so early and humid that mists were still curling and changing form around the mountain and in all the distances, it promised to be a fine day.

Massawippa led the way across the clearing, leaning a little to one side as a sail-boat does when it flies on the wind, her moccasined feet just touching the little billows of ploughed ground; and Claire followed eagerly, though she carried her draperies clutched in her hands. The rising sun would shine on their backs, but before the sun rose they were where he must grope for them among great trees.

One short pause had been made at the outset while Massawippa brought, from some recess known to herself among rocks or stumps in the direction of the mountain, a hempen sack filled with her supplies. She carried this, and a package of what Claire had made up as necessaries from her box in the Hôtel-Dieu, as if two such loads were wings placed under the arms of a half-Huron maid to help her feet skim ploughed ground.

When they had left the clearing and were well behind a massed shelter of forest trunks, Claire was moist and pink with haste and exertion, and here Massawippa paused.

They were, after all, but young girls starting on an excursion with the morning sky for a companion, and they laughed together as they sat down upon a low rock.

"When I closed the door of the parlor," said Claire with very pink lips, "I thought I heard some one stirring in the cells. But we have not been followed, and I trust not seen."

"They were rousing for matins," said the half-Huron. "No, they think I ran away last night; and you, madame, they do not expect to matins. We are taking one risk which I dread, but it must be taken."

"You mean leaving the palisade and entrance doors unfastened? My heart smote me for those good nuns. Is the risk very great? We have seen no danger abroad."

"Not that. No, madame. Their man, that stupid, who ranks himself with Sulpitian fathers, he is always astir early among his bolts and his pigs. It is his suspicion I dread. For he knows I slept in the chapel last night, and he told me of his house, and in that house we must sleep to-night. Perhaps he dare not tell the Sisters, and in that case he dare not follow to search his house for us. We have also his stupidity to count on. Young men are not wise."

Present discomfort, which puts coming risks farther into the future in most minds, made Claire thrust out her pointed satin feet and look at them dubiously.

"What would Dollard think of these, Massawippa? I have one other pair of heeled shoes in that packet, but they will scarcely hold out for such journeying."

"Madame, that is why I stopped here," said Massawippa, opening her sack. "It was necessary for us to kneel in the chapel and ask the Holy Family's aid before we set out; but we have no time to spend here. Let me get you ready."

"Am I not ready?" inquired Claire, giving her companion a rosy laugh.

"No, madame; your feet must be moccasined and your dress cut off."

The younger girl took from the sack a pair of new moccasins and knelt on one knee before Claire—not as a menial would kneel, but as a commanding junior who has undertaken maternal duty. She flung aside the civilized foot-beautifiers of Louis' reign and substituted Indian shoes, lacing them securely with fine thongs.

"These are the best I had, madame, and I carried them out of the Hôtel-Dieu under my blanket and hid them with our provisions last night."

"What a sensible, kind child you are, Massawippa! But while you were doing this for me I took no thought of any special comfort for

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you.”

“They will bear the journey.”

Massawippa rose and took from her store two sheathed knives with cross-hilts—not of the finest workmanship, but of good temper: their pointed blades glittered as she displayed them. She showed her pupil how to place one, sheathed, at a ready angle within her bodice, and then took up the other like a naked sword.

“Now stand on the rock, madame, and let me cut your dress short.”

“Oh, no!” pleaded Claire for her draperies. “You do not understand, Massawippa. This is simply the dress which women of my rank wear in France, and because I am going into the woods must I be shorn to my knees like a man?”

Retreating a step she stretched before her the skirt of dark glacé satin with its Grecian border of embroidery at the foot, and in doing so let fall from her arm the overskirt, which trailed its similar border upon the ground behind her.

“Madame,” argued Massawippa, suspending the knife, “we have a road of danger before us. That shining stuff hanging behind you will catch on bushes, and weary you, and will soon be ragged though you nurse it on your arm all the way.”

“Cut that off, therefore,” said Claire, turning. “I am not so childish as to love the pall we hang over our gowns and elbows. But the skirt is not too long if it be lifted by a girdle below the waist. Cut me out a rope of satin, Massawippa.”

The hiss of a thick and rich fabric yielding to the knife could be heard behind her back. Massawippa presently lifted the plenteous fleece thus shorn, and pared away the border while the elder girl held it. Together they tied the border about Claire’s middle for a support, and over this pulled the top of her skirt in a pouting ruff.

It was now sunrise. Having thus finished equipping themselves they took up each a load, Claire bearing her packet on the arm her surplus drapery had burdened, and when Massawippa had thrust both cast-off shoes and satin under a side of the rock they hurried on.

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XVII.

JOUANEUX'S HOUSE.



HE sun had almost described his arc before Claire and Massawippa reached the extremity of the island. Massawippa could have walked two leagues in half the day, but wisely did she forecast that the young Frenchwoman would be like a liberated canary, obliged to grow into uncaged use of herself by little flights and pauses. Besides, Jouaneux's house would give them safe asylum until they crossed the river.

"That must be his barn," said Massawippa, pointing to a pile of hewed timbers, too far up the bank and too recently handled by man to be drift. They lay in angular positions, scarce an upright log marking the site of the little structure Jouaneux had tried to erect for his granary.

Two slim figures casting long shadows eastward on the clearing, the girls stood trying to discern in those tumultuous waters where the Ottawa came in or where the St. Lawrence's own current wrestled around islands. The north shore looked far off, thick clothed with forests. Massawippa held her blanket out to canopy her eyes, anxiously examining the trackless way by which they must cross.

"But the first thing is to find Jouaneux's house," she said, turning to Claire.

"I was thinking of that," Claire answered, "and counting the stumps in rows of five. All this land is covered with stumps, Massawippa."

"He said the row of five nearest the water."

"Did he tell you how to enter?"

"That I had no time to learn. But, madame, if a man went in and out of this underground house, surely you and I can do the same. Here be five stumps—the row nearest the river."

They went to the central stump. It had a nest of decayed yellow wood within, crumbled down by the tooth of the air, but probing could not make it hollow.

"Perhaps he deceived you about his house," said Claire.

Massawippa met her apprehension with dark seriousness.

"It would be the worst about the boat," she replied. "I counted on that boat all day, so that I have not thought what to do without it."



“Massawippa held her blanket out to canopy her eyes.”

They moved along the bank, passing irregular groups of stumps, until one standing by itself, much smoke-stained, as if it had leaked through all its fibers, drew their notice. It was deeply charred and hollow. Claire took up a pebble and dropped it into the stump. It rattled down some unseen hopper and clinked smartly on a surface below. This was Jouaneaux’s chimney.

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“He himself forgot where it was!” sneered Massawippa.

“Or some one has occupied the house since,” suggested Claire, “and taken the other stumps away.”

This was matter for apprehension.

“But stumps are not easily moved, madame. They crumble away or are burned into their roots. Let us find the door.”

Massawippa dropped on her knees, and it happened that the first spot of turf she struck with a stone reverberated. Claire stooped also, and like two large children playing at mud pies they scraped the loam with sticks and found a rusty iron handle. The door rose by the tugging of four determined arms and left a square dark hole in the ground.^[8]

“Wait,” said Claire, as Massawippa thrust her head within it. “Poison vapors sometimes lie in such vaults. And let us see if anything is down there.”

Massawippa took flint and steel from her sack, and Claire gingerly held the bit of scorched linen which these were to ignite. The tinder being set on fire, Massawippa lighted a candle and carefully put out her bit of linen. They fastened a rope to the candle and let it down into the cell.

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The flame burned up steadily, revealing pavement and walls of gray cement, a tiny hearth and flue of river stones, a flight of slab steps descending from the door, and a small birch canoe, in which Jouaneaux had probably slept.

Massawippa went down and set the candle securely on the hearth. Claire waited until Massawippa had returned and filled both cups at the river. Then they descended into Jouaneaux’s house and carefully shut the door.

“Oh!” Claire exclaimed as this lid cut off the sunlit world above her head, “do you suppose we can easily open it again from within?”

"Yes, madame; as easily as the Iroquois could raise it from without. Jouaneaux was skillful for a Frenchman. But he relied on secrecy, for there are no fastenings to his door. A fox he called himself."

"It would be charming," said Claire, "if we could carry this pit with us on our way."

Drift-bark and small sticks, half charred, were piled against the chimney-back. To these Massawippa set a light, blowing and cheering it until it rose to cheer her and helped the candle illuminate their retreat.

"Sit on the bottom of this boat, madame," said Massawippa, folding her blanket and placing it there. "Let us eat now, instead of nibbling bits of bread."

Claire took up one of the cups and drank reluctantly of river water, saying, "I am so thirsty! While you are taking out the loaves and the meat, show me all you have in the sack, Massawippa."

Massawippa therefore sat on the floor with the sack's mouth spread in her lap, and Claire leaned forward from her seat on the boat.

"There were the cups and the candle and one rope and the tinder that we have taken out," said Massawippa. She did not explain that she despised the promiscuous use of pewter cups, and would not use one in common with the Queen of France.

Out of the bag, jostled by every step of the day's journey, came unsorted a loaf of bread, some cured eels, a second rope,—"I brought ropes for rafts," observed Massawippa,—a lump of salt, a piece of loaf sugar,—"For you, madame,"—more bread, more eels, another length of rope,—"I dared not buy all we needed at one place or at two places," explained Massawippa,—the tinder-box, a hatchet, and, last, half a louis in coin, which Massawippa now returned to Claire.

"Be my purse-bearer still," said Claire, pushing it back. "If there be things we need to buy in the wilderness, you will know how to select them."

"We will keep it for the walking woman above Carillon," said the half-breed girl, sagely; and she put it in the careful bank of her tinder-box, bestowing this in the safest part of her dress.

They ate a hearty supper of eels and bread, and breaking the sugar in bits nibbled it afterwards, talking and looking at the coals on Jouaneaux's hearth.

Massawippa put their candle out. Their low voices echoed from the sides of the underground house and made a booming in their heads, but all sound of the river's wash so near them, or of the organ murmur of the forest trees, was shut away.

They cast stealthy occasional looks up at the trapdoor, but neither said to the other that she dreaded to see a painted face peering there, or even apprehended the nuns' man.

While night and day were yet blended they turned the canoe over, and propped it in a secure position with the help of the paddle. Claire brought her cloak out of her packet, and this they made their cushion in the canoe.

The half-breed took the European's head upon her childish shoulder, wrapping the older dependent well with her own blanket. Of all her experiences Claire thought this the strangest—that she should be resting like a sister on the breast of a little Indian maid in an underground chamber of the wilderness.

"If it were not for you, madame," spoke Massawippa, "I would put this canoe to soak in the water to-night. We must lose time to do it to-morrow. It has lain so long out of water it will scarcely be safe for us to venture across in."

"Massawippa, I thought we could take this boat and go directly up the Ottawa in it."

"Madame, you know nothing about the current. And at Carillon, above Two Mountains Lake, there is a place so swift that I could not paddle against it. We should have to carry around hard places. And there is the danger of meeting the Iroquois or being overtaken by some."

"For Dollard said there were hundreds coming up from the south," whispered Claire. "We must, indeed, hide ourselves from all canoes passing on the river. I took no thought of that."

"It will be best to go direct to the walking woman and get a boat

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of her. We have only to keep the river in sight to find the expedition. If they camp on the other shore, either below or above Carillon, we will have to go to Carillon for a boat. The Chaudière rapids will be hard for them to pass, madame."

"Who is this walking woman you speak of, Massawippa?"

"I do not know, madame. The Hurons say she is an Indian woman, and some French have claimed her for a saint of the Holy Church. She makes good birch canoes, which are prized by those who can get them. She is under a vow never to sit or lie down, and they say she goes constantly from Mount Calvary to Carillon, for at Carillon she lives or walks about working at her boats. On Mount Calvary are seven holy chapels built of stone, and the walking woman tends these chapels, but she is too humble to live near them. And even the Iroquois dare not touch her."

"Did you ever see her?"

"I saw her walking along the side of the mountain, bent over upon a stick like a very old woman. How tired she must be! for last summer it was told along the Ottawa that she had been years upon her feet."

"Were you afraid of her?"

"No, madame. I am not afraid of any holy person who lives in the woods."

"But did you ever see her face, Massawippa? What did she cover herself with?" inquired Claire, uncomfortably thinking of the recluse on St. Bernard.

"Far up the mountain I saw her face like a dot. She was covered, head and all, in a blanket the color of gray rock. And that is all I know about her, madame."

"Yet you count on getting a boat from her?"

"If she be a holy woman, madame, and sees us in trouble, will she not help us?"

The rosiness of glowing embers tinted the walls of Jouaneaux's house, and perfectly the smoke sought its flue.

Lying quite still in weariness, and holding each other for warmth and comfort, the two young creatures felt such thoughts rise and rush to speech as semi-darkness fosters when we are on the edge of great perils.

"Madame," said Massawippa, "do you understand how it will seem to be dead?"

"I was just thinking of it, Massawippa, and that we shall soon know. There is no imagining such a change; yet it may be no stranger than stripping off a glove of kid-skin and leaving the naked hand, which is, after all, the natural hand. Do you think it possible that anything has happened to the expedition yet? They are three days out from Montreal."

"They cannot be far up the Ottawa, madame. No, I think they have not met the Iroquois."

After such sleep as makes the whole night but a pause between two sentences, they opened their eyes to behold a hint of daylight glimmering down their stump chimney, and Claire exclaimed:

"Child, did you bear the weight of my head all night?"

"I don't know, madame," replied Massawippa, laughing. "This canoe floated us wondrously in sleep. If it but carry us on the Ottawa as well, we shall pass over without trouble."

They drew it up the steps of Jouaneaux's house before eating their breakfast, and carried it between them to the river. Massawippa fastened one of her ropes to it and knotted the other end around a tree. She crept down to the water's edge pushing the canoe, filled it with small rocks, and sunk it. They left their craft thus until late afternoon, while they staid cautiously underground, feeding the little fire with slab chips from Jouaneaux's barn, and exchanging low-voiced chat.

Such close contact in a common peril and endeavor was not without its effect on both of them. Claire from superior had changed to pupil, and seemed developing hardihood without losing her soft refinements. Massawippa, mature for her years, and exactly nice, as became a princess, in all her personal habits, had from the moment of meeting this European dropped her taciturn Indian speech. She unconsciously imitated while she protected a creature so much finer than herself.

Venturing forth when shadows were stretching from the west

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across that angry mass of waters, they emptied their canoe from its wetting and wiped it out with the hempen sack. But Massawippa still shook her head at it.

"Madame, I am afraid this canoe will not carry us well. Can you swim?"

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"No, Massawippa; I never learned to do anything useful," replied Claire.

"We might make a raft of those barn timbers. But, madame, the canoe would take us swiftly, and the raft is clumsy in such swirls and cross-waters as these. You must take one of the cups in your hand and dip out the water while I paddle. Shall we wait until tomorrow?"

"Oh, no!" urged Claire. "We have lost one day for it. If the canoe will carry us at all, Massawippa, I believe it will carry us now."

They accordingly put their supplies back into the bag, but Massawippa cautiously wound all the ropes around her waist and secured them like a girdle. She brought the paddle from Jouaneaux's house, and perhaps with regret closed for the last time its trapdoor above it.

Woods, rocks, islands, and water were steeped in a wonderful amber light. The two girls sat down close by the river edge and ate a supper before embarking. Then Massawippa launched the canoe and carefully placed herself and Claire over the keel.

"Unfasten your cloak and let it fall from your shoulders, madame. You see my blanket lies on the sack. We must have nothing to drag us under in case of mischance."

So, dipping with skillful rapidity, she ventured out across the current.

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They fared well until far on in their undertaking. Immediately the little craft oozed as if its entire skin had grown leaky; but Claire bailed with desperate swiftness; the paddle dipped from side to side, flashing in the sun, which now lay level with the rivers.

Massawippa felt the canoe settling, turned it towards the nearest island, and tore the water with her speed.

"Madame!" she cried, her cry merging into one with Claire's "O Massawippa, we are going down!"

They were close to the island's ribbed side when a bubbling and roaring confusion overtook Claire's ears, and she was drenched, strangled, and still gulping in her death until all sensation passed away.

Life returned through hearing; her head was filled with humming noises, she was giving back the water which had been forced upon her, and lying across a rock supported by Massawippa. In the midst of her chill misery she noted that shadow was settling on the river, and all the cheerful ruddiness of western light was gone.

"Madame, are you able to get up the rocks now?" anxiously spoke Massawippa. "We must hide on this island to-night."

"How did we reach it?" Claire gasped.

"I swam, and dragged you."

"Then here had been the end of my expedition but for you, Massawippa."

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"There was the end of our supplies. All gone, madame, except the ropes I put around my waist, and they would have drowned me with their weight if the island had not been almost under our feet. It is well we ate and filled ourselves, for the saints alone know where we shall get breakfast."

Claire turned her face on the rock.

"My packet of linen and clean comforts, Massawippa!" she regretted.

"The cloak and the blanket were of more account, madame. The Frenchman's boat played us a fine trick. But we are here. And we have still our knives and tinder."

Before the long northern twilight had double-dyed itself into night, they crept up the island's rocky side, explored its small circumference, and found near the western edge a dry hollow, the socket of an uprooted tree. Into this Massawippa piled all the loose leaves she could find, and cut some branches full of tender foliage from the trees to shelter them. Had her tinder been dry, she dared not make a light to be seen from the river.

Drenched and heavy through all their garments, they nestled closely down together and shivered in the chill breath of night. An

emaciated moon lent them enough cadaverous light to make them apprehensive of noises on the rushing water. Sometimes they dozed, sometimes they whispered to each other, sometimes they startled each other by involuntary shivers. But measured by patient breath, by moments of endurance succeeding one another in what then seemed endless duration, this second night of their journey passed away, and nothing upon the island or upon the two rivers terrified them.

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Just at the pearl-blue time of dawn canoes grew on the southward sweep of the St. Lawrence.

Claire touched Massawippa, and Massawippa nodded. They dared scarcely breathe, but watched along the level of the sward, careful not to rear a feature above the dull leaves.

Nearer and nearer came the canoes. A splash of unskillful paddling grew distinct; familiar outlines projected familiar faces.

"Oh, it is Dollard!" Claire's whisper was a strangled scream. "There are the men of the French expedition! There is my—"

"Hush!" whispered Massawippa. "Madame, do you want them to see us, and turn and send us back to Montreal?"

"O my Dollard!" Claire clasped her own hand over her mouth while she sobbed. "Drowned and wretched and homesick for you, must I see you pass me by, never turning a glance this way?"

"Hush, madame," begged Massawippa, adding her hand to Claire's. "Sound goes like a bird over water."

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"This is our one chance to reach him," struggled Claire. "Oh, the woods, and the rivers, and the Iroquois—they are all coming between us again!"

"It is no chance at all, madame. I know what my father would do."

"O my Dollard!" groaned Claire in the dead leaves. "Oh, do not let him go by! Must he flit and flit from me—must I follow him so through space forever when we are dead?"

Almost like dream-men, wreathed slowly about by mists, their alternating paddles making no sound which could be caught by the woman on the island living so keenly in her ears, the expedition passed into the mouth of the Ottawa. When they could be seen no more, Claire lay in dejection like death.

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THE WALKING HERMIT.

“THEY have been these five^[9] days getting past Ste. Anne,” remarked Massawippa. “I could not have paddled against that current with the best of canoes. My father will soon follow; we dare scarcely stir until my father passes. He would see us if we did more than breathe; the Huron knows all things around him. And if he finds us, he will put us back into safety, after all our trouble.”

Claire was weeping on her damp arms, and lay quite as still as the younger woman could wish, while daylight, sunlight, and winged life grew around them.

Hour after hour passed. Annahotaha’s canoes did not appear. Still the half-Huron stoic watched southward, lying with her cheek on the leaves, clasping her eyelids almost shut to protect her patient sight from the glare on the water. [177]

“Madame, are you hungry?”

“In my heart I am,” said Claire.

“That is because we were so drenched. My father will soon pass; and when we have food and dry skins our courage will come up again. There is only one way to reach the north shore. If my father would go by, I could cut limbs for the raft.”

Claire gave listless attention.

“We must cut branches as large as we can with our knives, the hatchet being gone, and we shall be drenched again; but the river’s arm shall not hold us back.”

When the sun stood overhead without having brought Annahotaha, Claire could endure her stiff discomfort no longer.

“Lie still, madame,” begged Massawippa.

“My child,” returned Claire, fretfully, “I do not care if the Iroquois see me and scalp me.”

“And me also?”

“No, not you.”

“Have a little more patience, madame, for I do see specks like wild ducks riding yonder. They may be the Huron canoes.”

The little more patience, wrung like a last tax from exhaustion, was measured out, and not vainly. [178]

The specks like wild ducks rode nearer, shaping themselves into Huron canoes.

In rigid calm the half-breed girl watched them approach, fly past with regular and beautiful motion of the paddles, and make their entrance into the Ottawa. Her eyes shone across the leaves, but Annahotaha, sweeping all the horizon with a sight formed and trained to keenest use, caught no sign of ambush or human life on the islands.

When the fleet was far off, his young daughter rose up and unsheathed her knife to cut raftwood.

“My father is a great man,” was the only weakness she allowed herself, and in this her gratified pride was restricted to a mere statement of fact.

The raft, made of many large branches bound securely together, occupied them some time. On this frail and uneasy flooring the half-breed placed her companion. Claire was instructed to hold to it though the water should rise around her waist.

The space betwixt island and north shore was a very dangerous passage for them. Massawippa swam and propelled the raft with the current, fighting for it midway, while Claire clung in desperation and begged the brown face turned up to her from the water to let her go and to swim out alone. [179]

When they finally stood on the north bank, streams of water running down their persons, Massawippa’s black hair shining as it clung to her cheeks, and their raft escaping from their reach, they felt that a great gulf of experience divided them from the island and Jouaneaux’s house.

“This time we lose our ropes,” said the half-breed girl. “My hands were too numb. And now we have nothing left but our knives and tinder.”

To Claire the rest of the day was a heavy dream. Giddy from fasting and exposure, with swimming eyes she saw the landscape. Sometimes Massawippa walked with an arm around her waist, sometimes held low boughs out of her way, introducing her to the deeper depths of Canadian forest. They did not talk, but reserved their strength for plodding; and thus they edged along the curves and windings of the Ottawa. Claire took no thought of Massawippa's destination for the night; they were making progress if they followed beside the track of the expedition.

Before dark she noticed that the land ascended, and afterwards they left the river below, for a glooming pile of mountain was to be climbed. Perhaps no wearier feet ever toiled up that steep during all the following years, though the mountain was piously named Calvary and its top held sacred as a shrine, to be visited by many a pilgrim.^[10]

Sometimes the two girls hugged this rugged ascent, lying against it, and paused for breath. The rush and purr of the river went on below, and all the wilderness night sounds were magnified by their negations—the night silences.

At the summit of the mountain, starlight made indistinctly visible a number of low stone structures, each having a rough cross above its door. These were the seven chapels Massawippa had told about. Whether they stood in regular design or were dotted about on the plateau, Claire scarcely used her heavy eyes to discern. She was comforted by Massawippa's whisper that they must sleep in the first chapel, and by the sound of heavy hinges grating, as if the door yielded unwillingly an entrance to such benighted pilgrims.

The tomb-like inclosure was quite as chill as the mountain air outside. They stood on uneven stone flooring, and listened for any breathing beside their own.

"Let me feel all around the walls and about the altar, madame," whispered Massawippa.

"Let me continue with you, then," whispered back Claire. "Have you been in this place before?"

"I have been in all the chapels, madame."

Claire held to Massawippa's beaver gown and stepped grotesquely in her tracks as the half-breed moved forward with stretched, exploring fingers. When this blind progress brought them to the diminutive altar, they failed not to kneel before it and whisper some tired orisons.

After one round of the chapel they groped back to the altar, assured that no foe lurked with them.

The chancel rail felt like the smooth rind of a tree. Within the rail Massawippa said a wooden platform was built, on which it could be no sin against Heaven for such forlorn beings to sleep.

Their clothes were now nearly dry; but footsore and weak with hunger, Claire sunk upon this refuge, disregarding dust which had settled there in silence and dimness all the days of the past winter. Exhaustion made her first posture the right one. Scarcely breathing, she would have sunk at once to stupor, but Massawippa hissed joyful whispers through the dark.

"Madame!"

"What is it?"

"Madame, I have been feeling the top of the altar."

"Do no sacrilege, Massawippa."

"But last summer the walking woman put bread and roasted birds on the altars for an offering. She has put some here to-day. Take this."

Claire encountered a groping hand full of something which touch received as food. Without further parley she sat up and ate. The very gentle sounds of mastication which even dainty women may make when crisp morsels tempt the hound of starvation that is within them could be heard in the dark. Claire's less active animal nature was first silenced, and in compunction she spoke.

"If the hermit put these things on the altar for an offering, we are robbing a shrine."

"She was willing for any pilgrim to carry them away, madame. The *coureurs de bois* visit these chapels and eat her birds. She is alive, madame! She is not dead! We shall find her at Carillon and get our canoe of her; and the saints be praised for so helping us!"

They finished their meal and stretched themselves upon the

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platform. Not a delicious scrap which could be eaten was left, but Massawippa piously dropped the bones outside the chancel rail.

"We are in sanctuary," said Claire, her eyes pressed by the weight of darkness. Venturing with checked voice, the sweeter for such suppression and necessity of utterance, she sung above their heads into the low arching hollow a vesper hymn in monk's Latin; after which they slept as they had slept in Jouaneaux's house, and awoke to find the walking woman gazing over the rail at them.

She was so old that her many wrinkles seemed carved in hard wood. Her features were unmistakably Indian; but from the gray blanket loosely draping her, and even from her inner wrappings of soft furs, came the smell of wholesome herbs. She held a long flask in one hand, evidently a bottle lost or thrown away by some passing ranger, and she extended it to Claire, her eyes twinkling pleasantly.

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Being relieved of it she turned and tapped with her staff—for her moccasins were silent—slowly around the chapel, mechanically keeping herself in motion. She was so different from fanatics who bind themselves in by walls that in watching her Claire forgot the flask.

Massawippa uncorked it.

"This is a drink she brews, madame. I have heard in my father's camp that she brews it to keep herself strong and tireless."

Claire tasted and Massawippa drank the liquid, with unwonted disregard of a common bottle mouth. It was too tepid to be refreshing, but left a wild and spicy tang, delicious as the cleansed sensation of returning health.

"Good mother," said Claire as she gave the hermit's flask back, "have you seen white men in canoes on the river?"

The walking woman leaned lower on her staff with keen attention. Massawippa repeated Claire's words in Huron, and added much inquiry of her own. The walking woman moved back and forth beside the rail, making gestures with her staff and uttering gutturals, until she ended by beckoning to them and leading them out of the chapel.

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Massawippa interpreted her as saying that she had seen the white men and the Hurons following them, and had heard a voice in the woods speak out, "Great deeds will now be done." She would take care of all whom the saints sheltered behind their altar, but she chid Massawippa for prying into mysteries when the girl asked if she had foreseen their coming. They were to go with her to Carillon and get a canoe.

She had breakfast for them down the mountain north of the chapels.

The world is full of resurrections of the body. It was nothing for two young creatures to rise up from their hard bed and plunge heartily into the dew and gladness of morning—the first morning of May.

But the miracle of life is that coming of a person who instantly unlocks all our resources, among which we have groped forlorn and disinherited. Friend or lover, he enriches us with what was before our own, yet what we never should have gathered without the solvent of his touch.

In some degree the walking woman came like such a prophet to Claire. As she brushed down the mountain-side with Massawippa, followed by woman and clinking staff, all things seemed easy to do. The healing of the woods flowed over her anxiety, and like an urchin she pried under moss and within logs for an instant's peep at life swarming there. Never before had she felt turned loose to Nature, with the bounds of her past fallen away, and the freedom which at first abashed her now became like the lifting of wings. Sweet smells of wood mold and damp greenery came from this ancient forest like the long-preserved essence of primeval gladness. It did not have its summer density of leafage, but the rocks were always there, heaving their placid backs from the soil in the majesty of everlasting quiet.


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The walking woman lifted her stick and struck upon their rocky path, which answered with a hollow booming, as if drums were beaten underground. She gave Claire a wrinkled smile.

"The rocks do the same far to the eastward," said Massawippa. "It is the earth's heart which answers—we walk so close to it here. And, madame, I never saw any snakes in this fair land."

XIX.

THE HEROES OF THE LONG SAUT.^[11]

T was morning by the Long Saut, that length of boiling rapids which had barred the French expedition's farther progress up the Ottawa. The seventeen Frenchmen, four Algonquins, and forty Hurons were encamped together in an open space on the west bank of the river. Their kettles were slung for breakfast, the fires blinking pinkly in luminous morning air; their morning hymn had not long ceased to echo from the forest around the clearing. Three times the previous day these men had prayed their prayers together in three languages.

Their position at the foot of the rapids was well taken. The Iroquois must pass them. In the clearing stood a dilapidated fort, a mere stockade of sapling trunks, built the autumn before by an Algonquin war party; but Dollard's party counted upon it as their pivot for action, though with strange disregard of their own defense they had not yet strengthened it by earthworks.

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Dollard stood near the brink of the river watching the rapids. His scouts had already encountered some canoes full of Iroquois coming down the Ottawa, and in a skirmish two of the enemy escaped. The main body, hastened by these refugees, must soon reach the Long Saut, unless they were determined utterly to reject and avoid the encounter, which it was scarcely in the nature of Iroquois to do.

No canoes yet appeared on the rapids, but against the river's southward sweep rode a new little craft holding two women. Having crossed the current below and hugged the western shore, this canoe shot out before Dollard's eyes as suddenly as an electric lancet unsheathed by clouds.

He blanched to his lips, and made a repellent gesture with both hands as if he could put back the woman of his love out of danger as swiftly and unaccountably as she put herself into it. But his only reasonable course was to drag up the canoe when Massawippa beached it.

The half-breed girl leaped out like a fawn and ran up the slope. Annahotaha came striding down to meet her, and as she caught him around the body he lifted his knife as if the impulse which drove the arm of Virginius had been reborn in a savage of the New World. Massawippa showed her white teeth in rapturous smiling. So absolute was her trust in him that she waited thus whatever act his superior wisdom must dictate. That unflinching smile brought out its answer on his countenance. A copper glow seemed to fuse his features into grotesquely passionate tenderness. He turned his back towards his braves and hugged the child to his breast, smoothing her wings of black hair and uttering guttural murmurs which probably expressed that superlative nonsense mothers talk in the privacy of civilized nurseries.

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But Claire, pink as a rose from sun and wind, her head covered by a parchment bonnet of birch bark instead of the cap she lost at the island, her satin tatters carefully drawn together with fibers from porcupine quills and loosened from the girdle to flow around her worn moccasins, and radiant as in her loveliest moments, stretched her hands for Dollard's help.

He lifted her out of the canoe and placed her upon the ground; he knelt before her and kissed both of her hands.

"Good-morning, monsieur!" said Claire, triumphantly. "You left no command against my following the expedition."

That palpitating presence which we call life seemed to project itself beyond their faces and to meet. Her pinkness and triumph were instantly gone in the whiter heat of spiritual passion. She began to sob, and Dollard stood up strongly holding her in his arms.

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"The paving-stone where you knelt—how I kissed it—how I kissed it!"

"I have not a word, Claire; not one word," said Dollard. "I am blind and dumb and glad."

"Oh, do be blind to my rags and scratches! I would have crept on my hands and face to you, monsieur, my saint! But now I am not crying."

"How did you reach us unharmed?"

"We saw no Iroquois. Have you yet seen them?"

"Not yet."

"But there was the river. Massawippa dragged me through that. Your face looks thin, my Dollard."

"I have suffered. I did not know heaven was to descend upon me."

The Frenchmen and Indians, a stone's-throw away, unable, indeed, to penetrate this singular encounter of the commandant's, gave it scarcely a moment's attention, but turned their eager gaze up the rapids. Dollard looked also, as suggestion became certainty.

He hurried Claire to the palisade, calling his men to arm.

Upon the rapids appeared a wonderful sight. Bounding down the broken and tumultuous water came the Iroquois in canoes which seemed unnumbered. They flung themselves ashore and at the fort like a wave, and like a wave they were sent trickling back from the shock of their reception.

Massawippa sat down by Claire in the small inclosure during this first brush with the enemy.

There was no time for either Frenchmen or Indians to look with astonished eyes at these girls, so soon were all united in common peril and bonds of endurance. Men purified by the devotion of such an undertaking could accept the voluntary presence of women as they might accept the unscared alighting of birds in the midst of them.

The Iroquois next tried to parley, in order to take the allies unawares. But all their efforts were met with volleys of ammunition. So they drew off from the palisade and began to cut small trees and build a fort for themselves within the shelter of the woods, this being the Iroquois plan of besieging an enemy.

Dollard had stored all his supplies and tools within his palisade. He now set to work with his men to strengthen the position. They drove stakes inside the inclosure and filled the space between outer and inner pickets with earth and stones as high as their heads, leaving twenty loop-holes. Three men were appointed to each loop-hole.

Before the French had finished intrenching themselves the Iroquois broke up all their canoes, lighted pieces at the fires, and ran to pile them against the palisade, but were again driven back. How many attacks were made Claire did not know, for volley followed volley until the crack of muskets seemed continuous, but the Iroquois attained to a focus of howling when the principal chief of the Senecas, one of the Five Nations, fell among their dead.

Morning and noon passed in this tumult of musketry and human outcry. In the unsullied May weather such gunpowder clouds must have been strange sights to nesting birds and other shy creatures of the woods.

Claire and Massawippa looked into the supplies of the fort and set out food, but the water was soon exhausted. Dusk came. Starlight came. The first rough day of this continuous battle was over, but not the battle. For the Iroquois gave the allies no rest, harassing them through that and every succeeding night.

It was after 12 o'clock before Dollard could take Claire's hands and talk with her a few unoccupied minutes. When women intrude upon men's great labors they risk destroying their own tender ideals, but this daughter of a hundred soldiers had watched her husband all day in raptures of pride. To be near him in the little arena of his sacrifice was worth her heart-chilling vigil, worth her toilsome journey, fully worth the supreme price she must yet pay.

Earth from the breastworks, distributed by thuds of occasional Iroquois bullets, spattered impartially both Claire and Dollard. They had no privacy. Guttural Huron and Algonquin murmurs and the nervous intonation of French voices would have broken into all ordinary conversation. But looking deeply at each other, and unconsciously breathing in the same cadences, they had their moment of talk as if standing on a peak together. There was a lonesome bird in the woods uttering three or four falling notes, which could be heard at intervals when not drowned by any rising din of the Iroquois.

"They sent a canoe down river this afternoon," said Dollard, "evidently for their reinforcements from below."

"How long do you think we can hold out?" inquired Claire.

"Until we have broken their force. We must do that."

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"I was on an island at the mouth of the Ottawa when you passed, my commandant. That was purgatory to me."

"Since you reached us," said Dollard, "I have accepted you without question and without remorse. I am stupefied. I love you. But, Claire, to what a death I have brought you!"

"It is a death befitting well the daughter of the stout-hearted Constable of France. But do not leave me again, Dollard!"

"The Iroquois shall not touch you alive, Claire," he promised.

"I am ready shriven," she said, smiling. "Except of one fault. That will I now confess,—a fault committed against the delicacy of women,—and I hated the abbess and the bishop because they detected me in it. I came to New France for love of you, my soldier. Could I help following you from world to world?"

"O Claire!" trembled Dollard, taking his hat off and standing uncovered before her.

"But you should not have known this until we were old—until you had seen me Madame des Ormeaux many years, dignified and very, very discreet, so that no breath could discredit me save this mine own confession."

During four days the Iroquois constantly harassed the fort while waiting for their reënforcements, enraged more each day at their own losses and at the handful of French and Indians who stood in the way of their great raid upon New France. Hungry, thirsty, and giddy from loss of sleep, the allies in the fort stood at their loopholes and poured out destruction. Their supplies were gone, excepting dry hominy, which they could not swallow without water.

Some of the young Frenchmen made a rush to the river, protected by the guns of the fort, and brought all the water they could thus carry. They also dug within the palisade and reached a little clayey moisture which helped to cool their mouths.

Among the Iroquois were renegade Hurons who had been adopted by the Five Nations. During these four days of trial the renegades shouted to their brethren in the fort to come over and surrender to the Iroquois. Seven or eight hundred more warriors were hurrying from the mouth of the Richelieu River, and not a blackened coal was to be left where the fort and the Frenchmen stood.

"Come over," tempted these Hurons. "The Iroquois will receive you as brothers. Will you stay there and die for the sake of a few Frenchmen?"

First one, then two more, then three at a time, the famished braves of Annahotaha slipped over the intrenchment and deserted, in spite of his rage and exhortations.

On the fifth day, an hour before dawn, a hand of auroral light spread its fingers across the sky from west to east. Betwixt these finger-rays were dark spaces having no stars, but through the pulsing medium of every gigantic finger the constellations glittered. Many signs were seen in the heavens during the colonial years of New France, but nothing like the blessed hand stretched over the Long Saut.

That day rapids and forests appeared to rock with the vibration of savage yells, for soon after daylight the expected force arrived.

La Mouche had sulked some time at the loop-hole where he was stationed with Annahotaha. Massawippa's back was towards him during all this period of distress. She never saw that he was thirsty and that his cracked lips bled. If she was solicitous for anybody except the stalwart chief, it was for that white wife of Dollard, who stood always near Dollard when not doing what could be done for the wounded.

La Mouche had no stomach for dying an unrewarded death. Dogged hatred of his false position and of his tardy suit had grown large within him. He therefore left his loop-hole while Annahotaha's gun was emptied, leaped on top of the palisade, and stretched his dark face back an instant to interrogate Massawippa's quick eye. A motion of her head might yet bring him back. But did she think that he meant to be killed like a dog to whom the bone of a good word has never been thrown?

"My father!" shouted the girl, pointing with a finger which pierced La Mouche's soul. "Shoot that coward; shoot him down!"

Annahotaha seized the long pistol from his side and discharged it at his deserting nephew. But La Mouche in the same instant dropped outside and ran over to the Iroquois.

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There remained now only the Frenchmen, Annahotaha, and the four Algonquins.

Playfully, as a cat reaches out to cuff its mouse, the army of Iroquois now approached the fort. They gamboled from side to side and uttered screeches. But the loop-holes were yet all manned by men who would not die of fatigue and physical privation, and the fire which sprung from those loop-holes astounded the enemy. Guns of large caliber carried scraps of iron and lead, and mowed like artillery.

Three days more, says the chronicle, did this fort by the Long Saut hold out. Who can tell all the story of those days? and who can hear all the story of such endurance? When acclamation cheers a man's blood and a great cloud of witnesses encompasses him, heroic courage is made easy. But here were a few doomed men in the wilderness, whose fate and whose action might be misrepresented by a surviving foe—silent fighters against odds, thinking, "This anguish and sacrifice of mine are lost on the void, and perhaps taken no account of by any intelligence, except that myself knows it, and myself demands it of me."

This is the courage which brings a man's soul up above his body like a tall flame out of an altar, and makes us credit the tale of our lineage tracing thus backward: "Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God."



"Dollard held Claire with his left arm and fought with his sword."

The fort could not be taken by surprise; it could not be taken by massed sallies. The Iroquois wrangled among themselves. Some were for raising the siege and going back to their own country. Their best braves lay in heaps. But others scouted the eternal disgrace of leaving unpunished so pitiful a foe.

Finally they made themselves great shields of split logs, broad as a door, and crept forward under cover of these to hew away the palisades. Mad for revenge, they used their utmost skill and caution.

It was at this time that Dollard, among his reeling and praying men—men yet able to smile with powder-blackened faces through the loop-holes—took a large musketoon, filled it with explosives, and plugged it ready to throw among the enemy. His arms had not remaining strength to fling it clear of the palisade's jagged top. It

fell back and exploded in the fort, and amidst the frightful confusion the Iroquois made their first breach, to find it defended; and yet another breach, and yet another, overflowing the inclosure with all their swarms.

Smoke-clouds curled around the bride who had trod that sward and borne her part in the suffering. Half blinded by the explosion, Dollard held Claire with his left arm and fought with his sword. As firm and white as a marble face, the face of the Laval-Montmorency met her foes. The blood of man-warriors, even of Anne, the great and warlike Constable of France, throbbed steadfastly in the arm which grasped her husband and the heart which stood by his until they were swept down by the same volley of musketry, and lay as one body among the dead. Perhaps to Claire and Dollard it was but sudden release from thirst, hunger, exhaustion, and victorious howling. For La Mouche found Massawippa pointing as if she saw through the earthwork. The half-breed's eyes glowed with expansive brightness, as a spark does just before it expires. Her childish contours were beautiful, and unbroken by pain.

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"Father," said Massawippa with effort,—the chief was dead, having saved her from the Iroquois with the last stroke of his hand,—“do you see madame—and the commandant—walking there under—birches?” Her face smiled as she died, and remained set in its smile.

There are people who steadily live the lives they hate, whose common speech misrepresents their thought, who walk the world fettered. Is it better with these than with winged souls?

Fire and smoke of a great burning rose up and blinded the day beside the Long Saut. It was a mighty funeral pile. The tender grass all around, licked by flame, gave juices of the earth to that sacrifice. The wine of young lives, the spices and treasures of courageous hearts, went freely to it, and for more than two hundred and twenty-five years love and gratitude have consecrated the spot.

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POSTERITY.



HREE weeks after Dollard's departure Jacques Goffinet took the boat and one Huron Indian whom Dollard had sent back with the boat and set off to Montreal to obey his master's final order.

No appearances on the river had caused alarm at St. Bernard. While record has not been made of the route taken by the Iroquois brought from the Richelieu, it is evident that they passed north of Montreal island, avoiding settlements.

Montreal was waiting in silence and anxiety for news of the expedition.

The first person whom Jacques encountered was the nuns' man Jouaneaux, watching the St. Lawrence with uneasy expectation in his eyes.

When they had exchanged greetings as men do when each thinks only of the information he can get from the other, Jouaneaux said:

"You come from river?"

"From St. Bernard island," replied Jacques. "What news of the expedition?"

But Jouaneaux had widened his mouth receptively.

"You are then from the commandant Dollard's seigniory?"

"The commandant is my seignior," said Jacques.

Jouaneaux laid hold of his sleeve.

"Did Mademoiselle de Granville return to St. Bernard and take the little half-breed Sister with her?"

"Mademoiselle de Granville, my commandant's sister, is at St. Bernard; yes," replied Jacques, arrested and stupefied by such inquiries.

"Look you here, my good friend," exclaimed Jouaneaux. "I speak for the nuns of St. Joseph of the Hôtel-Dieu, where your master put his sister for protection before he set out. Was not her fire built to suit her? We are poor, but our hospitality is free, and we love not to have it flung back in our faces. Still, I say nothing of mademoiselle. She hath her seigniory to look after, and she was not a novice."

"My master left my lady at the governor's house," asserted Jacques.

"But," continued Jouaneaux, "this I will say: ill did she requite us in that she carried off the novice Massawippa, whose father, the Huron chief, had put her in the Hôtel-Dieu to take vows."

"I will go to the governor," threatened Jacques, feeling himself baited.

"And what will it profit thee to go to the governor? The governor is a just man, and he hath the good of the Hôtel-Dieu at heart."

"I know nothing about your Hôtel-Dieu," said Jacques, having forebodings at his heart.

"But where is our novice?" persisted Jouaneaux, following him.

"I know nothing about your novice."

At the governor's house, by scant questions on his part and much speech on Jouaneaux's, he learned that Dollard was yet unheard from, that Claire had been left at the hospital, and for some unspoken reason, which Jacques silently accepted as good since it was the commandant's reason, she had been received as the commandant's sister; and finally that she had disappeared with a young novice, the daughter of Annahotaha, soon after the expedition left, and no one in Montreal knew anything else about her.

Distressed to muteness by such tidings, Jacques went back to his boat, still followed by Jouaneaux, and pushed off up the river with the malediction of St. Joseph invoked upon him.

As his Huron rowed back along Lake St. Louis they saw a canoe drifting, and cautiously approaching it they found that it held a wounded brave in the war-dress of the Hurons. He lay panting in his little craft, feverish and helpless, and they towed him to the island and carried him up into the seigniory kitchen.

The May sun shone and bees buzzed past the windows; all the landscape and the pleasant world seemed to contradict the

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existence of such a blot on nature as a blood-streaked man.

The family gathered fearfully about La Mouche as he lay upon a bear-skin brought down from the saloon for him by Joan.

Jacques gave him brandy and Louise bathed his wounds. They used such surgery as they knew, and La Mouche told them all the story of the Long Saut except his desertion. None of five deserters who escaped from the Iroquois, and from the tortures to which the Iroquois put all the deserters after burning the fort, could tell the truth about their own action until long after.

Jacques turned away from this renegade and threw both arms around one of the cemented pillars. Louise fell on her knees beside him, and the broad hall was filled with wailings. There were consolations which Louise remembered when her religion and her stolid sense of duty began reconciling her to the eternal absence of Claire and Dollard. She stood up and took her apron to wipe her good man's eyes, saying without greediness and merely as seizing on a tangible fact:

"Thou hast the island of St. Bernard left thee."

"But he that is gone," sobbed Jacques, "he was to me more than the whole earth."

The four other Hurons who escaped carried all the details of the battle, except their own desertion, to Montreal. But the Iroquois were not so reticent, and in time this remnant of Hurons was brought to admit that Annahotaha alone of the tribe stood by the Frenchmen to the last.

As for the Iroquois, they slunk back to their own country utterly defeated and confounded. They had no further desire to fight such an enemy. Says the historian,^[12] "If seventeen Frenchmen, four Algonquins, and one Huron, behind a picket fence, could hold seven hundred warriors at bay so long, what might they expect from many such fighting behind walls of stone?" The colony of New France was redeemed out of their hands. After the struggle at the Long Saut it enjoyed such a period of rest and peace as the Iroquois had not permitted it for years.

When La Mouche recovered from his wounds he crept away to his cote down the river, and with little regret the people on St. Bernard heard of him no more.

Jacques and Louise remained in possession of St. Bernard, and on that island their stout-legged children played, or learned contented thrift, or followed their father in his sowing; their delight being the real priest who came with his glowing altar to teach them religion, and their terror the pretended priest in the top apartment of their house. For Mademoiselle de Granville lived many years, so indulged in her humors that the story went among neighboring seigniories that she had an insane brother whom she imprisoned on St. Bernard out of tenderness towards him, instead of sending him to some asylum in France.^[13]

Rather because her memory was a spot of tenderness within themselves always on the point of bleeding, than because of their ignorant dread of law's intermeddling, Jacques and Louise never told about Dollard's bride. The marriage had taken place in Quebec. Dollier de Casson, who celebrated it, made no record of the fact in connection with his account of Dollard's exploit. The jealousies and bickerings then rising high between Quebec and Montreal clouded or misrepresented or suppressed many a transaction. And honest Dollier de Casson, who no doubt learned by priestly methods the fate of the bride, may have seen fit to withhold the luster of her devotion from the name of Laval, since the bishop pressed no inquiries after his impulsive young relative. News stretched slowly to and from France then. Her name dropped out of all records, except the notarial one of her marriage, and a faint old clew which an obscure scribe has left embodying a scarcely credited tale told by the Huron deserters. Without monument, what was once her beautiful body has become grass, flowers, clear air, beside the hoarse rapids. She died, as many a woman has died, silently crowning the deed done by a man, and in her finer immortality can perhaps smile at being forgotten, since it is not by him.

But Dollard has been the darling of his people for more than two and a quarter centuries.

On every midsummer-day, when the festival of St. John the Baptist is kept with pageant, music, banners, and long processions; when thousands choke the streets, and triumphal arch after

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triumphal arch lifts masses of flowers to the June sun; when invention has taxed itself to carry beautiful living pictures before the multitude—then there is always a tableau to commemorate the heroes of the Long Saut. If young children or if strangers ask, “Who was Dollard?” any Frenchman is ready to answer:

“He was a man of courageous heart,^[14] he saved Canada from the Iroquois.”

The dullest soul is stirred to passionate acclamation as the chevalier and his sixteen men go by.

And when we tell our stories, shall we tell them only of the commonplace, the gay, the debonair life of this world? Shall the heroes be forgotten?

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THE END.

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] Another of Laval's titles.
- [2] Ste. Anne de Beaupré, twenty miles east of Quebec. "The favorite saint appears to be Ste. Anne, whose name appears constantly on the banks of the St. Lawrence." [J. G. Bourinot.]
- [3] On a small scale the typical Iroquois-Huron dwelling. The tribal lodges, made to hold many fires and many families, were fifty or more yards in length by twelve or fifteen in width, framed of sapling poles closely covered with sheets of bark.
- [4] The legend of Mademoiselle de Granville dates from the year 1698. It seemed but a slight anachronism to place this singular though unimportant figure in the year 1660.
- [5] The following list may be found in the parish register of Villemarie, June 3, 1660:
1. Adam Dollard (Sieur des Ormeaux), commandant, age de 25 ans.
 2. Jacques Brassier, âgé de 25 ans.
 3. Jean Tavernier, dit la Hochehère, armurier, âgé de 28 ans.
 4. Nicolas Tellemont, serrurier, âgé de 25 ans.
 5. Laurent Hebert, dit la Rivière, 27 ans.
 6. Alonié de Lestres, chaudronnier, 31 ans.
 7. Nicolas Josselin, 25 ans.
 8. Robert Jurée, 24 ans.
 9. Jacques Boisseau, dit Cognac, 23 ans.
 10. Louis Martin, 21 ans.
 11. Christophe Augier, dit Desjardins, 26 ans.
 12. Étienne Robin, dit Desforges, 27 ans.
 13. Jean Valets, 27 ans.
 14. René Doussin (Sieur de Sainte-Cécile), soldat de garnison, 30 ans.
 15. Jean Lecomte, 20 ans.
 16. Simon Grenet, 25 ans.
 17. François Crusson, dit Pilote, 24 ans.
- Also cited in "Histoire de la Colonie Française," II., 414, 416:
"À ces dix-sept héros chrétiens, on doit joindre le brave Annahotaha, chef des Hurons, comme aussi Metiwemeg, capitaine Algonquin, avec les trois autres braves de sa nation, qui tous demeurent fidèles et mourirent au champ d'honneur; enfin les trois Français qui périrent au début de l'expédition, Nicolas du Val, serviteur au fort, Mathurin Soulard, charpentier du fort, et Blaise Juillet, dit Argnon, habitant."
- Of the ambush in which these last-mentioned three men were slain, and the subsequent volunteering of others in their places, this romance does not treat.
- [6] "They stopped by the way at Three Rivers, where they found a band of Christian Algonquins under a chief named Mituwemeg. Annahotaha challenged him to a trial of courage, and it was agreed that they should meet at Montreal.... Thither, accordingly, they repaired, the Algonquin with three followers, the Huron with thirty-nine."—*Francis Parkman*.
- [7] Ste. Anne de Bellevue, an old village at the junction of the Ottawa and the St. Lawrence, "always a rendezvous of the voyageurs and coureurs de bois up the Ottawa."
- "The waters of the Ottawa are about three inches higher than the waters of Lake St. Louis (in the St. Lawrence), and are therefore precipitated through the two channels running around Île Perot with considerable force, forming a succession of short rapids."—*From Report of Public Works, 1866*.
- [8] While Jouaneaux's house had historic existence, its elaboration, of course, had not.
- [9] "Furent arrêtés huit jours au bout de l'île de Montreal, dans un endroit très-rapide qu'ils avaient à traverser", says the French chronicler. But for romancer's purposes, the liberty is taken of shortening the time.
- [10] "The large mountain was named Le Calvaire by the piety of the first settlers. At its summit were seven chapels,—memorials of the mystic seven of St. John's vision,—the scene of many a pilgrimage. Gallant cavalier and high-born lady from their

fastness at Villemarie toiled side by side up the same weary height.”—*Picturesque Canada*.

- [11] Pronounced “So.” The Abbé Faillon with exactness locates the engagement at the foot of the Long Saut rapids, “à huit ou dix lieues au-dessus de l’île de Montreal, et au-dessous du saut dit de la Chaudière.”
- [12] Francis Parkman.
- [13] Le Moine.
- [14] “Dollard, un homme de cœur,” says Abbé Faillon.

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