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TRAIL OF THE SWORD

By Gilbert Parker

EPOCH THE FOURTH

CHAPTER XIX

WHICH TELLS OF A BROTHER'S BLOOD CRYING FROM THE GROUND

Two men stood leaning against a great gun aloft on the heights of Quebec. The air of an October morning fluttered the lace at their breasts and lifted the long brown hair of the younger man from his shoulders. His companion was tall, alert, bronzed, grey-headed, with an eagle eye and a glance of authority. He laid his hand on the shoulder of the younger man and said: "I am glad you have come, Iberville, for I need you, as I need all your brave family—I could spare not one."

"You honour me, sir," was the reply; "and, believe me, there is none in Quebec but thanks God that their governor is here before Phips rounds Isle Orleans yonder."

"You did nobly while I was away there in Montreal waiting for the New Yorkers to take it—if they could. They were a sorry rabble, for they rushed on La Prairie, that meagre place,—massacred and turned tail."

"That's strange, sir, for they are brave men, stupid though they be.
I have fought them."

"Well, well, as that may be! We will give them chance for bravery. Our forts are strong from the Sault au Matelot round to Champigny's palace, the trenches and embankments are well ended, and if they give me but two days more I will hold the place against twice their thirty-four sail and twenty-five hundred men."

"For how long, your excellency?"

Count Frontenac nodded. "Spoken like a soldier. There's the vital point. By the mass, just so long as food lasts! But here we are with near two thousand men, and all the people from the villages, besides Callieres's seven or eight hundred, should they arrive in time—and, pray God they may, for there will be work to do. If they come at us in front here and behind from the Saint Charles, shielding their men as they cross the river, we shall have none too many; but we must hold it."

The governor drew himself up proudly. He had sniffed the air of battle for over fifty years with all manner of enemies, and his heart was in the thing. Never had there been in Quebec a more moving sight than when he arrived from Montreal the evening before, and climbed Mountain Street on his way to the chateau. Women and children pressed round him, blessing him; priests, as he passed, lifted hands in benediction; men cheered and cried for joy; in every house there was thanksgiving that the imperious old veteran had come in time.

Prevost the town mayor, Champigny the Intendant, Sainte-Helene, Maricourt, and Longueil, had worked with the skill of soldiers who knew their duty, and it was incredible what had been done since the alarm had come to Prevost that Phips had entered the St. Lawrence and was anchored at Tadousac.

"And how came you to be here, Iberville?" queried the governor pleasantly. "We scarce expected you."

"The promptings of the saints and the happy kindness of King Louis, who will send my ship here after me. I boarded the first merchantman with its nose to the sea, and landed here soon after you left for Montreal."

"So? Good! See you, see you, Iberville: what of the lady Puritan's marriage with the fire-eating Englishman?"

The governor smiled as he spoke, not looking at Iberville. His glance was upon the batteries in lower town. He had inquired carelessly, for he did not think the question serious at this distance of time. Getting no answer, he turned smartly upon Iberville, surprised, and he was struck by the sudden hardness in the sun-browned face and the flashing eyes. Years had deepened the power of face and form.

"Your excellency will remember," he answered, in a low, cold tone, "that
I once was counselled to marry the sword."

The governor laid his hand upon Iberville's shoulder. "Pardon me," he said. "I was not wise or kind. But—I warrant the sword will be your best wife in the end."

"I have a favour to ask, your excellency."

"You might ask many, my Iberville. If all gentlemen here, clerics and laymen, asked as few as you, my life would be peaceful. Your services have been great, one way and another. Ask, and I almost promise now.

"'Tis this. Six months ago you had a prisoner here, captured on the New England border. After he was exchanged you found that he had sent a plan of the fortifications to the Government of Massachusetts. He passed in the name of George Escott. Do you remember?"

"Very well indeed."

"Suppose he were taken prisoner again?"

"I should try him."

"And shoot him, if guilty?"

"Or hang him."

"His name was not Escott. It was Gering—Captain George Gering."

The governor looked hard at Iberville for a moment, and a grim smile played upon his lips. "H'm! How do you guess that?"

"From Perrot, who knows him well."

"Why did Perrot not tell me?"

"Perrot and Sainte-Helene had been up at Sault Sainte Marie. They did not arrive until the day he was exchanged, nor did not know till then. There was no grave reason for speaking, and they said nothing."

"And what imports this?"

"I have no doubt that Mr. Gering is with Sir William Phips below at Tadousac. If he is taken let him be at my disposal."

The governor pursed his lips, then flashed a deep, inquiring glance at his companion. "The new mistress turned against the old, Iberville!" he said. "Gering is her husband, eh? Well, I will trust you: it shall be as you wish—a matter for us two alone."

At that moment Sainte-Helene and Maricourt appeared and presently, in the waning light, they all went down towards the convent of the Ursulines, and made their way round the rock, past the three gates to the palace of the Intendant, and so on to the St. Charles River.

Next morning word was brought that Phips was coming steadily up, and would probably arrive that day. All was bustle in the town, and prayers and work went on without ceasing. Late in the afternoon the watchers from the rock of Quebec saw the ships of the New England fleet slowly rounding the point of the Island of Orleans.

To the eyes of Sir William Phips and his men the great fortress, crowned with walls, towers, and guns, rising three hundred feet above the water, the white banner flaunting from the chateau and the citadel, the batteries, the sentinels upon the walls—were suggestive of stern work. Presently there drew away from Phips's fleet a boat carrying a subaltern with a flag of truce, who was taken blindfold to the Chateau St. Louis. Frontenac's final words to the youth were these: "Bid your master do his best, and I will do mine."

Disguised as a river-man, Iberville himself, with others, rowed the subaltern back almost to the side of the admiral's ship, for by the freak of some peasants the boat which had brought him had been set adrift. As they rowed from the ship back towards the shore, Iberville, looking up, saw, standing on the deck, Phips and George Gering. He had come for this. He stood up in his boat and took off his cap. His long clustering curls fell loose on his shoulders, and he waved a hand with a nonchalant courtesy. Gering sprang forward. "Iberville!" he cried, and drew his pistol.

Iberville saw the motion, but did not stir. He called up, however, in a clear, distinct voice: "Breaker of parole, keep your truce!"

"He is right," said Gering quietly; "quite right." Gering was now hot for instant landing and attack. Had Phips acted upon his advice the record of the next few days might have been reversed. But the disease of counsel, deliberation, and prayer had entered into the soul of the sailor and treasure-hunter, now Sir William Phips, governor of Massachusetts. He delayed too long: the tide turned; there could be no landing that night.

Just after sundown there was a great noise, and the ringing of bells and sound of singing came over the water to the idle fleet.

"What does it mean?" asked Phips of a French prisoner captured at Tadousac.

"Ma foi! That you lose the game," was the reply. "Callieres, the governor of Montreal, with his Canadians, and Nicholas Perrot with his coureurs du bois have arrived. You have too much delay, monsieur."

In Quebec, when this contingent arrived, the people went wild. And Perrot was never prouder than when, in Mountain Street, Iberville, after three years' absence, threw his arms round him and kissed him on each cheek.

It was in the dark hour before daybreak that Iberville and Perrot met for their first talk after the long separation. What had occurred on the day of Jessica's marriage Perrot had, with the Abbe de Casson's help, written to Iberville. But they had had no words together. Now, in a room of the citadel which looked out on the darkness of the river and the deeper gloom of the Levis shore, they sat and talked, a single candle burning, their weapons laid on the table between them.

They said little at first, but sat in the window looking down on the town and the river. At last Iberville spoke. "Tell me it all as you remember it, Perrot." Perrot, usually swift of speech when once started, was very slow now. He felt the weight of every word, and he had rather have told of the scalping of a hundred men than of his last meeting with Jessica. When he had finished, Iberville said: "She kept the letter, you say?"

Perrot nodded, and drew the ring from a pouch which he carried. "I have kept it safe," he said, and held it out. Iberville took it and turned it over in his hand, with an enigmatical smile. "I will hand it to her myself," he said, half beneath his breath.

"You do not give her up, monsieur?"

Iberville laughed. Then he leaned forward, and found Perrot's eyes in the half darkness. "Perrot, she kept the letter, she would have kept the ring if she could. Listen: Monsieur Gering has held to his word; he has come to seek me this time. He knows that while I live the woman is not his, though she bears his name. She married him—Why? It is no matter —he was there, I was not. There were her father, her friends! I was a Frenchman, a Catholic—a thousand things! And a woman will yield her hand while her heart remains in her own keeping. Well, he has come. Now, one way or another, he must be mine. We have great accounts to settle, and I want it done between him and me. If he remains in the ship we must board it. With our one little craft there in the St. Charles we will sail out, grapple the admiral's ship, and play a great game: one against thirty-four. It has been done before. Capture the admiral's ship and we can play the devil with the rest of them. If not, we can die. Or, if Gering lands and fights, he also must be ours. Sainte-Helene and Maricourt know him, and they with myself, Clermont, and Saint Denis, are to lead and resist attacks by land—Frontenac has promised that: so he must be ours one way or another. He must be captured, tried as a spy, and then he is mine—is mine!"

"Tried as a spy—ah, I see! You would disgrace? Well, but even then he is not yours."

Iberville got to his feet. "Don't try to think it out, Perrot. It will come to you in good time. I can trust you—you are with me in all?"

"Have I ever failed you?"

"Never. You will not hesitate to go against the admiral's ship? Think, what an adventure! Remember Adam Dollard and the Long Sault!"

What man in Canada did not remember that handful of men, going out with an antique courage to hold back the Iroquois, and save the colony, and die? Perrot grasped Iberville's hand, and said: "Where you go, I go. Where I go, my men will follow."

Their pact was made. They sat there in silence till the grey light of morning crept slowly in. Still they did not lie down to rest; they were waiting for De Casson. He came before a ray of sunshine had pierced the leaden light. Tall, massive, proudly built, his white hair a rim about his forehead, his deep eyes watchful and piercing, he looked a soldier in disguise, as indeed he was to-day as much a soldier as when he fought under Turenne forty years before.

The three comrades were together again.

Iberville told his plans. The abbe lifted his fingers in admonition once or twice, but his eyes flashed as Iberville spoke of an attempt to capture the admiral on his own ship. When Iberville had finished, he said in a low voice:

"Pierre, must it still be so—that the woman shall prompt you to these things?"

"I have spoken of no woman, abbe."

"Yet you have spoken." He sighed and raised his hand. "The man—the men—down there would destroy our country. They are our enemies, and we do well to slay. But remember, Pierre—'What God hath joined let no man put asunder!' To fight him as an enemy of your country—well; to fight him that you may put asunder is not well."

A look, half-pained, half-amused, crossed Iberville's face.

"And yet heretics—heretics, abbe"

"Marriage is no heresy."

"H'm-they say different at Versailles."

"Since De Montespan went, and De Maintenon rules?"

Iberville laughed. "Well, well, perhaps not."

They sat silent for a time, but presently Iberville rose, went to a cupboard, drew forth some wine and meat, and put the coffee on the fire. Then, with a gesture as of remembrance, he went to a box, drew forth his own violin, and placed it in the priest's hands. It seemed strange that, in the midst of such great events, the loss or keeping of an empire, these men should thus devote the few hours granted them for sleep; but they did according to their natures. The priest took the instrument and tuned it softly. Iberville blew out the candle. There was only the light of the fire, with the gleam of the slow-coming dawn. Once again, even as years before in the little house at Montreal, De Casson played—now with a martial air. At last he struck the chords of a song which had been a favourite with the Carignan-Salieres regiment.

Instantly Iberville and Perrot responded, and there rang out from three strong throats the words:

"There was a king of Normandy,
And he rode forth to war,
Gai faluron falurette!
He had five hundred men-no more!
Gai faluron donde!

"There was a king of Normandy,
Came back from war again;
He brought a maid, O, fair was she!
And twice five hundred men—
Gai faluron falurette!
Gai faluron donde!"

They were still singing when soldiers came by the window in the first warm light of sunrise. These caught it up, singing it as they marched on. It was taken up again by other companies, and by the time Iberville presented himself to Count Frontenac, not long after, there was hardly a citizen, soldier, or woodsman, but was singing it.

The weather and water were blustering all that day, and Phips did not move, save for a small attempt —repulsed—by a handful of men to examine the landing. The next morning, however, the attack began. Twelve hundred men were landed at Beauport, in the mud and low water, under one Major Walley. With him was Gering, keen for action—he had persuaded Phips to allow him to fight on land.

To meet the English, Iberville, Sainte-Helene, and Perrot issued forth with three hundred sharpshooters and a band of Huron Indians. In the skirmish that followed, Iberville and Perrot pressed with a handful of men forward very close to the ranks of the English. In the charge which the New Englander ordered, Iberville and Perrot saw Gering, and they tried hard to reach him. But the movement between made it impossible without running too great risk. For hours the fierce skirmishing went on, but in the evening the French withdrew and the New Englanders made their way towards the St. Charles, where vessels were to meet them, and protect them as they crossed the river and attacked the town in the rear —help that never came. For Phips, impatient, spent his day in a terrible cannonading, which did no great damage to the town—or the cliff. It was a game of thunder, nothing worse, and Walley and Gering with their men were neglected.

The fight with the ships began again at daybreak. Iberville, seeing that Walley would not attack, joined Sainte-Helene and Maricourt at the battery, and one of Iberville's shots brought down the admiral's flagstaff, with its cross of St. George. It drifted towards the shore, and Maurice Joval went out in a canoe under a galling fire and brought it up to Frontenac.

Iberville and Sainte-Helene concentrated themselves on the Six Friends— the admiral's ship. In vain Phips's gunners tried to dislodge them and their guns. They sent ball after ball into her hull and through her rigging; they tore away her mainmast, shattered her mizzenmast, and handled her as viciously as only expert gunners could. The New Englander replied bravely, but Quebec was not destined to be taken by bombardment, and Iberville saw the Six Friends drift, a shattered remnant, out of his line of fire.

It was the beginning of the end. One by one the thirty-four craft drew away, and Walley and Gering were left with their men, unaided in the siege. There was one moment when the cannonading was greatest and the skirmishers seemed withdrawn, that Gering, furious with the delay, almost prevailed upon the cautious Walley to dash across the river and make a desperate charge up the hill, and in at the back door of the town. But Walley was, after all, a merchant and not a soldier, and would not do it. Gering fretted on his chain, sure that Iberville was with the guns against the ships, and would return to harass his New Englanders soon. That evening it turned bitter cold, and without the ammunition promised by Phips, with little or no food and useless field-pieces, their lot was hard.

But Gering had his way the next morning. Walley set out to the Six Friends to represent his case to the admiral. Gering saw how the men chafed, and he sounded a few of them. Their wills were with him they had come to fight, and fight they would, if they could but get the chance. With a miraculous swiftness the whispered word went through the lines. Gering could not command them to it, but if the men went forward he must go with them. The ships in front were silent. Quebec was now interested in these men near the St. Charles River.

As Iberville stood with Frontenac near the palace of the Intendant, watching, he saw the enemy suddenly hurry forward. In an instant he was dashing down to join his brothers, Sainte-Helene, Longueil, and Perrot; and at the head of a body of men they pushed on to get over the ford and hold it, while Frontenac, leading three battalions of troops, got away more slowly. There were but a few hundred men with Iberville, arrayed against Gering's many hundreds; but the French were bush-fighters and the New Englanders were only stout sailors and ploughmen. Yet Gering had no reason to be ashamed of his men that day; they charged bravely, but their enemies were hid to deadly advantage behind trees and thickets, the best sharpshooters of the province.

Perrot had had his orders from Iberville: Iberville himself was, if possible, to engage Gering in a hand-to-hand fight; Perrot, on the other hand, was to cut Gering off from his men and bring him in a prisoner. More than once both had Gering within range of their muskets, but they held their hands, nor indeed did Gering himself, who once also had a chance of bringing Iberville down, act on his opportunity. Gering's men were badly exposed, and he sent them hard at the thickets, clearing the outposts at some heavy loss. His men were now scattered, and he shifted his position so as to bring him nearer the spot where Sainte-Helene and Longueil were pushing forward fresh outposts. He saw the activity of the two brothers, but did not recognise them, and sent a handful of men to dislodge them. Both Sainte-Helene and Longueil exposed themselves for a moment, as they made for an advantageous thicket. Gering saw his opportunity, took a musket from a soldier, and fired. Sainte-Helene fell mortally wounded. Longueil sprang forward with a cry of rage, but a spent ball struck him.

Iberville, at a distance, saw the affair. With a smothered oath he snatched a musket from Maurice Joval, took steady aim and fired. The distance was too great, the wind too strong; he only carried away an epaulet. But Perrot, who was not far from the fallen brothers, suddenly made a dash within easy range of the rifles of the British, and cut Gering and two of his companions off from the main body. It was done so suddenly that Gering found himself between two fires. His companions drew close to him, prepared to sell their lives dearly, but Perrot called to them to surrender. Gering saw the fruitlessness of resistance and, to save his companions' lives, yielded.

The siege of Quebec was over. The British contented themselves with holding their position till Walley returned bearing the admiral's orders to embark again for the fleet. And so in due time they did —in rain, cold, and gloom.

In a few days Sir William Phips, having patched up his shattered ships, sailed away, with the knowledge that the capture of Quebec was not so easy as finding a lost treasure. He had tried in vain to effect Gering's release.

When Gering surrendered, Perrot took his sword with a grim coolness and said: "Come, monsieur, and see what you think your stay with us may be like."

In a moment he was stopped beside the dead body of Sainte-Helene. "Your musket did this," said Perrot, pointing down. "Do you know him?"

Gering stooped over and looked. "My God-Sainte-Helene!" he cried.

Perrot crossed himself and mumbled a prayer. Then he took from his bosom a scarf and drew it over the face of the dead man. He turned to Longueil.

"And here, monsieur, is another brother of Monsieur Iberville," he said.

Longueil was insensible but not dangerously wounded. Perrot gave a signal and the two brothers were lifted and carried down towards the ford, followed by Perrot and Gering. On their way they met

Iberville.

All the brother, the comrade, in Iberville spoke first. He felt Longueil's hand and touched his pulse, then turned, as though he had not seen Gering, to the dead body of Sainte-Helene. Motioning to the men to put it down, he stooped and took Perrot's scarf from the dead face. It was yet warm, and the handsome features wore a smile. Iberville looked for a moment with a strange, cold quietness. He laid his hand upon the brow, touched the cheek, gave a great sigh, and made the sacred gesture over the body; then taking his own handkerchief he spread it over the face. Presently he motioned for the bodies to be carried on.

Perrot whispered to him, and now he turned and look at Gering with a malignant steadiness.

"You have had the great honour, sir," he said, "to kill one of the bravest gentlemen of France. More than once to-day myself and my friend here"—pointing to Perrot "could have killed you. Why did we not? Think you, that you might kill my brother, whose shoe-latchet were too high for you? Monsieur, the sum mounts up." His voice was full of bitterness and hatred. "Why did we spare you?" he repeated, and paused.

Gering could understand Iberville's quiet, vicious anger. He would rather have lost a hand than have killed Sainte-Helene, who had, on board the Maid of Provence, treated him with great courtesy. He only shook his head now.

"Well, I will tell you," said Iberville. "We have spared you to try you for a spy. And after—after! His laugh was not pleasant to hear.

"A spy? It is false!" cried Gering.

"You will remember—monsieur, that once before you gave me the lie!"

Gering made a proud gesture of defiance, but answered nothing. That night he was lodged in the citadel.

CHAPTER XX

A TRAP IS SET

Gering was tried before Governor Frontenac and the full council. It was certain that he, while a prisoner at Quebec, had sent to Boston plans of the town, the condition of the defences, the stores, the general armament and the approaches, for the letter was intercepted.

Gering's defence was straightforward. He held that he had sent the letter at a time when he was a prisoner simply, which was justifiable; not when a prisoner on parole, which was shameless. The temper of the court was against him. Most important was the enmity of the Jesuits, whose hatred of Puritanism cried out for sacrifice. They had seen the work of the saints in every turn of the late siege, and they believed that the Lord had delivered the man into their hands. In secret ways their influence was strong upon many of the council, particularly those who were not soldiers. A soldier can appreciate bravery, and Gering had been courageous. But he had killed one of the most beloved of Canadian officers, the gallant Sainte-Helene! Frontenac, who foresaw an end of which the council could not know, summed up, not unfairly, against Gering.

Gering's defence was able, proud, and sometimes passionate. Once or twice his words stung his judges like whips across their faces. He showed no fear; he asked no mercy. He held that he was a prisoner of war, and entitled to be treated as such. So strong, indeed, was his pleading, so well did his stout courage stand by him, that had Count Frontenac balanced in his favour he might have been quit of the charge of spying. But before the trial Iberville had had solitary talk with Frontenac, in which a request was repeated and a promise renewed.

Gering was condemned to die. It was perhaps the bravest moment of a brave life.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have heard your sentence, but, careless of military honour as you are, you will not dare put me to death. Do not think because we have failed this once that we shall not succeed again. I tell you, that if, instead of raw Boston sailors, ploughmen and merchant captains, and fishing craft and trading vessels, I had three English war-ships and one thousand men, I would level your town

from the citadel to the altar of St. Joseph's. I do not fear to die, nor that I shall die by your will. But, if so, 'twill be with English loathing of injustice."

His speech was little like to mollify his judges, and at his reference to St. Joseph's a red spot showed upon many cheeks, while to the charge against their military honour, Frontenac's eyes lighted ominously. But the governor merely said: "You have a raw temper, sir. We will chasten you with bread and water; and it were well for you, even by your strange religion, to qualify for passage from this world."

Gering was taken back to prison. As he travelled the streets he needed all his fortitude, for his fiery speech had gone abroad, distorted from its meaning, and the common folk railed at him. As chastening, it was good exercise; but when now and again the name of Sainte-Helene rang towards him, a cloud passed over his face; that touched him in a tender corner.

He had not met Iberville since his capture, but now, on entering the prison, he saw his enemy not a dozen paces from the door, pale and stern. Neither made a sign, but with a bitter sigh Gering entered. It was curious how their fortunes had see-sawed, the one against the other, for twelve years.

Left alone in his cell with his straw and bread and water, he looked round mechanically. It was yet after noon. All at once it came to him that this was not the cell which he had left that day. He got up and began to examine it. Like every healthy prisoner, he thought upon means and chances of escape.

It did not seem a regular cell for prisoners, for there was a second door. This was in one corner and very narrow, the walls not coming to a right angle, but having another little strip of wall between. He tried to settle its position by tracing in his mind the way he had come through the prison. Iberville or Perrot could have done so instinctively, but he was not woodsman enough. He thought, however, that the doorway led to a staircase, like most doors of the kind in old buildings. There was the window. It was small and high up from the floor, and even could he loosen the bars, it were not possible to squeeze through. Besides, there was the yard to cross and the outer wall to scale. And that achieved, with the town still full of armed men, he would have a perilous run. He tried the door: it was stoutly fastened; the bolts were on the other side; the key-hole was filled. Here was sufficient exasperation. He had secreted a small knife on his person, and he now sat down, turned it over in his hand, looked up at the window and the smooth wall below it, at the mocking door, then smiled at his own poor condition and gave himself to cheerless meditation.

He was concerned most for his wife. It was not in him to give up till the inevitable was on him and he could not yet believe that Count Frontenac would carry out the sentence. At the sudden thought of the rope—so ignominious, so hateful—he shuddered. But the shame of it was for his wife, who had dissipated a certain selfish and envious strain in him. Jessica had drawn from him the Puritanism which had made him self- conscious, envious, insular.

CHAPTER XXI

AN UNTOWARD MESSENGER

A few days after this, Jessica, at her home in Boston,—in the room where she had promised her father to be George Gering's wife,—sat watching the sea. Its slow swinging music came up to her through the October air. Not far from her sat an old man, his hands clasping a chair-arm, a book in his lap, his chin sunk on his breast. The figure, drooping helplessly, had still a distinguished look, an air of honourable pride. Presently he raised his head, his drowsy eyes lighted as they rested on her, and he said: "The fleet has not returned, my dear? Quebec is not yet taken?"

"No, father," she replied, "not yet."

"Phips is a great man—a great man!" he said, chuckling. "Ah, the treasure!"

Jessica did not reply. Her fingers went up to her eyes; they seemed to cool the hot lids.

"Ay, ay, it was good," he added, in a quavering voice, "and I gave you your dowry!"

Now there was a gentle, soft laugh of delight and pride, and he reached out a hand towards her. She responded with a little laugh which was not unlike his, but there was something more: that old sweet sprightliness of her youth, shot through with a haunting modulation,—almost pensiveness, but her face

was self-possessed. She drew near, pressed the old man's hand, and spoke softly. Presently she saw that he was asleep.

She sat for some time, not stirring. At last she was about to rise and take him to his room, but hearing noises in the street she stepped to the window. There were men below, and this made her apprehensive. She hurried over, kissed the old man, passed from the room, and met her old servant Hulm in the passage, who stretched out her hand in distress.

"What is it, Hulm?" she asked, a chill at her heart. "Oh, how can I tell you!" was the answer. "Our fleet was beaten, and—and my master is a prisoner." The wife saw that this was not all. "Tell me everything, Hulm," she said trembling, yet ready for the worst.

"Oh, my dear, dear mistress, I cannot!"

"Hulm, you see that I am calm," she answered. "You are only paining me."

"They are to try him for his life!" She caught her mistress by the waist, but Jessica recovered instantly. She was very quiet, very pale, yet the plumbless grief of her eyes brought tears to Hulm's face. She stood for a moment in deep thought.

"Is your brother Aaron in Boston, Hulm?" she asked presently.

"He is below, dear mistress."

"Ask him to step to the dining-room. And that done, please go to my father. And, Hulm, dear creature, you can aid me better if you do not weep."

She then passed down a side staircase and entered the dining-room. A moment afterwards Aaron Hulm came in.

"Aaron," she said, as he stood confused before her misery, "know you the way to Quebec?"

"Indeed, madame, very well. Madame, I am sorry—"

"Let us not dwell upon it, Aaron. Can you get a few men together to go there?"

"Within an hour."

"Very well, I shall be ready."

"You, madame—ready? You do not think of going?"

"Yes, I am going."

"But, madame, it is not safe. The Abenaquis and Iroquois are not friendly, and—"

"Is this friendly? Is it like a good friend, Aaron Hulm? Did I not nurse your mother when—"

He dropped on one knee, took her hand and kissed it. "Madame," he said loyally, "I will do anything you ask; I feared only for your safety."

An hour afterwards she came into the room where her father still slept. Stooping, she kissed his forehead, and fondled his thin grey hair. Then she spoke to Hulm.

"Tell him," she said, "that I will come back soon: that my husband needs me, and that I have gone to him. Tell him that we will both come back— both, Hulm, you understand!"

"Dear mistress, I understand." But the poor soul made a gesture of despair.

"It is even as I say. We will both come back," was the quiet reply. "Something as truthful as God Himself tells me so. Take care of my dear father—I know you will; keep from him the bad news, and comfort him."

Then with an affectionate farewell she went to her room, knelt down and prayed. When she rose she said to herself: "I am thankful now that I have no child."

In ten minutes a little company of people, led by Aaron Hulm, started away from Boston, making for a block-house fifteen miles distant, where they were to sleep.

The journey was perilous, and more than once it seemed as if they could not reach Quebec alive, but no member of the party was more cheerful than Jessica. Her bravery and spirit never faltered before

the others, though sometimes at night, when lying awake, she had a wild wish to cry out or to end her troubles in the fast-flowing Richelieu. But this was only at night. In the daytime action eased the strain, and at last she was rewarded by seeing from the point of Levis, the citadel of Quebec.

They were questioned and kept in check for a time, but at length Aaron and herself were let cross the river. It was her first sight of Quebec, and its massive, impregnable form struck a chill to her heart: it suggested great sternness behind it. They were passed on unmolested towards the Chateau St. Louis. The anxious wife wished to see Count Frontenac himself and then to find Iberville. Enemy of her country though he was, she would appeal to him. As she climbed the steep steps of Mountain Street, worn with hard travel, she turned faint. But the eyes of curious folk were on her, and she drew herself up bravely.

She was admitted almost at once to the governor. He was at dinner when she came. When her message was brought to him, his brows twitched with surprise and perplexity. He called Maurice Joval, and ordered that she be shown to his study and tendered every courtesy. A few moments later he entered the room. Wonder and admiration crossed his face. He had not thought to see so beautiful a woman. Himself an old courtier, he knew women, and he could understand how Iberville had been fascinated. She had arranged her toilette at Levis, and there were few traces of the long, hard journey, save that her hands and face were tanned. The eloquence of her eyes, the sorrowful, distant smile which now was natural to her, worked upon the old soldier before she spoke a word. And after she had spoken, had pleaded her husband's cause, and appealed to the nobleman's chivalry, Frontenac was moved. But his face was troubled. He drew out his watch and studied it.

Presently he went to the door and called Maurice Joval. There was whispering, and then the young man went away.

"Madame, you have spoken of Monsieur Iberville," said the governor.
"Years ago he spoke to me of you."

Her eyes dropped, and then they raised steadily, clearly. "I am sure, sir," she said, "that Monsieur Iberville would tell you that my husband could never be dishonourable. They have been enemies, but noble enemies."

"Yet, Monsieur Iberville might be prejudiced," rejoined the governor.
"A brother's life has weight."

"A brother's life!" she broke in fearfully. "Madame, your husband killed Iberville's brother."

She swayed. The governor's arm was as quick to her waist as a gallant's of twenty-five: not his to resist the despair of so noble a creature. He was sorry for her; but he knew that if all had gone as had been planned by Iberville, within a half-hour this woman would be a widow.

With some women, perhaps, he would not have hesitated: he would have argued that the prize was to the victor, and that, Gering gone, Jessica would amiably drift upon Iberville. But it came to him that she was not as many other women. He looked at his watch again, and she mistook the action.

"Oh, your excellency," she said, "do not grudge these moments to one pleading for a life-for justice."

"You mistake, madame," he said; "I was not grudging the time—for myself."

At that moment Maurice Joval entered and whispered to the governor.
Frontenac rose.

"Madame," he said, "your husband has escaped." A cry broke from her.
"Escaped! escaped!"

She saw a strange look in the governor's eyes.

"But you have not told me all," she urged; "there is more. Oh, your excellency, speak!"

"Only this, madame: he may be retaken and—"

"And then? What then?" she cried.

"Upon what happens then," he as drily as regretfully added, "I shall have no power."

But to the quick searching prayer, the proud eloquence of the woman, the governor, bound though he was to secresy, could not be adamant.

"There is but one thing I can do for you," he said at last. "You know

Father Dollier de Casson?"

To her assent, he added: "Then go to him. Ask no questions. If anything can be done, he may do it for you; that he will I do not know."

She could not solve the riddle, but she must work it out. There was the one great fact: her husband had escaped.

"You will do all you can do, your excellency?" she said.

"Indeed, madame, I have done all I can," he said. With impulse she caught his hand and kissed it. A minute afterwards she was gone with Maurice Joval, who had orders to bring her to the abbe's house—that, and no more.

The governor, left alone, looked at the hand that she had kissed and said: "Well, well, I am but a fool still. Yet—a woman in a million!" He took out his watch. "Too late," he added. "Poor lady!"

A few minutes afterwards Jessica met the abbe on his own doorstep. Maurice Joval disappeared, and the priest and the woman were alone together. She told him what had just happened.

"There is some mystery," she said, pain in her voice. "Tell me, has my husband been retaken?"

"Madame, he has."

"Is he in danger?"

The priest hesitated, then presently inclined his head in assent.

"Once before I talked with you," she said, "and you spoke good things. You are a priest of God. I know that you can help me, or Count Frontenac would not have sent me to you. Oh, will you take me to my husband?"

If Count Frontenac had had a struggle, here was a greater. First, the man was a priest in the days when the Huguenots were scattering to the four ends of the earth. The woman and her husband were heretics, and what better were they than thousands of others? Then, Sainte-Helene had been the soldier-priest's pupil. Last of all, there was Iberville, over whom this woman had cast a charm perilous to his soul's salvation. He loved Iberville as his own son. The priest in him decided against the woman; the soldier in him was with Iberville in this event—for a soldier's revenge was its mainspring. But beneath all was a kindly soul which intolerance could not warp, and this at last responded.

His first words gave her a touch of hope. "Madame," he said, "I know not that aught can be done, but come."

CHAPTER XXII

FROM TIGER'S CLAW TO LION'S MOUTH

Every nation has its traitors, and there was an English renegade soldier at Quebec. At Iberville's suggestion he was made one of the guards of the prison. It was he that, pretending to let Gering win his confidence, at last aided him to escape through the narrow corner-door of his cell.

Gering got free of the citadel—miraculously, as he thought; and, striking off from the road, began to make his way by a roundabout to the St. Charles River, where at some lonely spot he might find a boat. No alarm had been given, and as time passed his chances seemed growing, when suddenly there sprang from the grass round him armed men, who closed in, and at the points of swords and rapiers seized him. Scarcely a word was spoken by his captors, and he did not know who they were, until, after a long detour, he was brought inside a manor-house, and there, in the light of flaring candles, faced Perrot and Iberville. It was Perrot who had seized him.

"Monsieur," said Perrot, saluting, "be sure this is a closer prison than that on the heights." This said, he wheeled and left the room.

The two gentlemen were left alone. Gering folded his arms and stood defiant.

"Monsieur," said Iberville, in a low voice, "we are fortunate to meet so at last."

"I do not understand you," was the reply.

"Then let me speak of that which was unfortunate. Once you called me a fool and a liar. We fought and were interrupted. We met again, with the same ending, and I was wounded by the man Bucklaw. Before the wound was healed I had to leave for Quebec. Years passed, you know well how. We met in the Spaniards' country, where you killed my servant; and again at Fort Rupert, you remember. At the fort you surrendered before we had a chance to fight. Again, we were on the hunt for treasure. You got it; and almost in your own harbour I found you, and fought you and a greater ship with you, and ran you down. As your ship sank you sprang from it to my own ship—a splendid leap. Then you were my guest, and we could not fight; all—all unfortunate."

He paused. Gering was cool; he saw Iberville's purpose, and he was ready to respond to it.

"And then?" asked Gering. "Your charge is long—is it finished?"

A hard light came into Iberville's eyes.

"And then, monsieur, you did me the honour to come to my own country. We did not meet in the fighting, and you killed my brother." Iberville crossed himself. "Then"—his voice was hard and bitter —"you were captured; no longer a prisoner of war, but one who had broken his parole. You were thrown into prison, were tried and condemned to death. There remained two things: that you should be left to hang, or an escape—that we should meet here and now."

"You chose the better way, monsieur."

"I treat you with consideration, I hope, monsieur." Gering waved his hand in acknowledgment, and said: "What weapons do you choose?"

Iberville quietly laid on the table a number of swords. "If I should survive this duel, monsieur," questioned Gering, "shall I be free?"

"Monsieur, escape will be unnecessary."

"Before we engage, let me say that I regret your brother's death."

"Monsieur, I hope to deepen that regret," answered Iberville quietly.
Then they took up their swords.

CHAPTER XXIII

AT THE GATES OF MISFORTUNE

Meanwhile the abbe and Jessica were making their way swiftly towards the manor-house. They scarcely spoke as they went, but in Jessica's mind was a vague horror. Lights sparkled on the crescent shore of Beauport, and the torches of fishermen flared upon the St. Charles. She looked back once towards the heights of Quebec and saw the fires of many homes—they scorched her eyes. She asked no questions. The priest beside her was silent, not looking at her at all. At last he turned and said:

"Madame, whatever has happened, whatever may happen, I trust you will be brave."

"Monsieur l'Abbe" she answered, "I have travelled from Boston here—can you doubt it?"

The priest sighed. "May the hope that gave you strength remain, madame!"

A little longer and then they stood within a garden thick with plants and trees. As they passed through it, Jessica was vaguely aware of the rich fragrance of fallen leaves and the sound of waves washing the foot of the cliffs.

The abbe gave a low call, and almost instantly Perrot stood before them. Jessica recognised him. With a little cry she stepped to him quickly and placed her hand upon his arm. She did not seem conscious that he was her husband's enemy: her husband's life was in danger, and it must be saved at any cost. "Monsieur," she said, "where is my husband? You know. Tell me."

Perrot put her hand from his arm gently, and looked at the priest in doubt and surprise.

The abbe said not a word, but stood gazing off into the night.

"Will you not tell me of my husband?" she repeated. "He is within that house?" She pointed to the manor-house. "He is in danger, I will go to him."

She made as if to go to the door, but he stepped before her.

"Madame," he said, "you cannot enter."

Just then the moon shot from behind a cloud, and all their faces could be seen. There was a flame in Jessica's eyes which Perrot could not stand, and he turned away. She was too much the woman to plead weakly.

"Tell me," she said, "whose house this is." "Madame, it is Monsieur
Iberville's."

She could not check a gasp, but both the priest and the woodsman saw how intrepid was the struggle in her, and they both pitied.

"Now I understand! Oh, now I understand!" she cried. "A plot was laid. He was let escape that he might be cornered here—one single man against a whole country. Oh, cowards, cowards!"

"Pardon me, madame," said Perrot, bristling up, "not cowards. Your husband has a chance for his life. You know Monsieur Iberville—he is a man all honour. More than once he might have had your husband's life, but he gave it to him."

Her foot tapped the ground impatiently, her hands clasped before her. "Go on, oh, go on!" she said. "What is it? why is he here? Have you no pity, no heart?" She turned towards the priest. "You are a man of God. You said once that you would help me make peace between my husband and Monsieur Iberville, but you join here with his enemies."

"Madame, believe me, you are wrong. I have done all I could: I have brought you here."

"Yes, yes; forgive me," she replied. She turned to Perrot again. "It is with you, then. You helped to save my life once—what right have you to destroy it now? You and Monsieur Iberville gave me the world when it were easy to have lost it; now when the world is everything to me because my husband lives in it, you would take his life and break mine."

Suddenly a thought flashed into her mind. Her eyes brightened, her hand trembled towards Perrot, and touched him. "Once I gave you something, monsieur, which I had worn on my own bosom. That little gift—of a grateful girl, tell me, have you it still?"

Perrot drew from his doublet the medallion she had given him, and fingered it uncertainly.

"Then you value it," she added. "You value my gift, and yet when my husband is a prisoner, to what perilous ends God only knows, you deny me to him. I will not plead; I ask as my right; I have come from Count Frontenac; he sent me to this good priest here. Were my husband in the citadel now I should be admitted. He is here with the man who, you know, once said he loved me. My husband is wickedly held a prisoner; I ask for entrance to him."

Pleading, apprehension, seemed gone from her; she stood superior to her fear and sorrow. The priest reached a hand persuasively towards Perrot, and he was about to speak, but Perrot, coming close to the troubled wife, said: "The door is locked; they are there alone. I cannot let you in, but come with me. You have a voice—it may be heard. Come."

Presently all three were admitted into the dim hallway.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN WHICH THE SWORD IS SHEATHED

How had it gone with Iberville and Gering?

The room was large, scantily, though comfortably, furnished. For a moment after they took up their swords they eyed each other calmly. Iberville presently smiled: he was recalling that night, years ago, when by the light of the old Dutch lantern they had fallen upon each other, swordsmen, even in those days, of more than usual merit. They had practised greatly since. Iberville was the taller of the two, Gering the stouter. Iberville's eye was slow, calculating, penetrating; Gering's was swift, strangely vigilant. Iberville's hand was large, compact, and supple; Gering's small and firm.

They drew and fell on guard. Each at first played warily. They were keen to know how much of skill was likely to enter into this duel, for each meant that it should be deadly. In the true swordsman there is found that curious sixth sense, which is a combination of touch, sight, apprehension, divination. They had scarcely made half a dozen passes before each knew that he was pitted against a master of the art —an art partly lost in an age which better loves the talk of swords than the handling of them. But the advantage was with Iberville, not merely because of more practice,—Gering made up for that by a fine certainty of nerve,—but because he had a prescient quality of mind, joined to the calculation of the perfect gamester.

From the first Iberville played a waiting game. He knew Gering's impulsive nature, and he wished to draw him on, to irritate him, as only one swordsman can irritate another. Gering suddenly led off with a disengage from the carte line into tierce, and, as he expected, met the short parry and riposte. Gering tried by many means to draw Iberville's attack, and, failing to do so, played more rapidly than he ought, which was what Iberville wished.

Presently Iberville's chance came. In the carelessness of annoyance, Gering left part of his sword arm uncovered, while he was meditating a complex attack, and he paid the penalty by getting a sharp prick from Iberville's sword-point. The warning came to Gering in time. When they crossed swords again, Iberville, whether by chance or by momentary want of skill, parried Gering's disengage from tierce to carte on to his own left shoulder.

Both had now got a taste of blood, and there is nothing like that to put the lust of combat into a man. For a moment or two the fight went on with no special feat, but so hearty became the action that Iberville, seeing Gering flag a little,—due somewhat to loss of blood, suddenly opened such a rapid attack on the advance that it was all Gering could do to parry, without thought of riposte, the successive lunges of the swift blade. As he retreated, Gering felt, as he broke ground, that he was nearing the wall, and, even as he parried, incautiously threw a half- glance over his shoulder to see how near. Iberville saw his chance, his finger was shaping a fatal lunge, when there suddenly came from the hallway a woman's voice. So weird was it that both swordsmen drew back, and once more Gering's life was waiting in the hazard.

Strange to say, Iberville recognised the voice first. He was angered with himself now that he had paused upon the lunge and saved Gering. Suddenly there rioted in him the disappointed vengeance of years. He had lost her once by sparing this man's life. Should he lose her again? His sword flashed upward.

At that moment Gering recognised his wife's voice, and he turned pale.
"My wife!" he exclaimed.

They closed again. Gering was now as cold as he had before been ardent, and he played with malicious strength and persistency. His nerves seemed of iron. But there had come to Iberville the sardonic joy of one who plays for the final hazard, knowing that he shall win. There was one great move he had reserved for the last. With the woman's voice at the door beseeching, her fingers trembling upon the panel, they could not prolong the fight. Therefore, at the moment when Gering was pressing Iberville hard, the Frenchman suddenly, with a trick of the Italian school, threw his left leg en arriere and made a lunge, which ordinarily would have spitted his enemy, but at the critical moment one word came ringing clearly through the locked door. It was his own name, not Iberville, but—"Pierre! Pierre!"

He had never heard the voice speak that name. It put out his judgment, and instead of his sword passing through Gering's body it only grazed his ribs.

Perhaps there was in him some ancient touch of superstition, some sense of fatalism, which now made him rise to his feet and throw his sword upon the table.

"Monsieur," he said cynically, "again we are unfortunate."

Then he went to the door, unlocked it, and threw it open upon Jessica.
She came in upon them trembling, pale, yet glowing with her anxiety.

Instantly Iberville was all courtesy. One could not have guessed that he had just been engaged in a deadly conflict. As his wife entered, Gering put his sword aside. Iberville closed the door, and the three

stood looking at each other for a moment. Jessica did not throw herself into her husband's arms. The position was too painful, too tragic, for even the great emotion in her heart. Behind Iberville's courtesy she read the deadly mischief. But she had a power born for imminent circumstances, and her mind was made up as to her course. It had been made up when, at the critical moment, she had called out Iberville's Christian name. She rightly judged that this had saved her husband's life, for she guessed that Iberville was the better swordsman.

She placed her hands with slight resistance on the arms of her husband, who was about to clasp her to his breast, and said: "I am glad to find you, George." That was all.

He also had heard that cry, "Pierre," and he felt shamed that his life was spared because of it—he knew well why the sword had not gone through his body. She felt less humiliation, because, as it seemed to her, she had a right to ask of Iberville what no other woman could ask for her husband.

A moment after, at Iberville's request, they were all seated. Iberville had pretended not to notice the fingers which had fluttered towards him. As yet nothing had been said about the duel, as if by tacit consent. So far as Jessica was concerned it might never have happened. As for the men, the swords were there, wet with the blood they had drawn, but they made no sign. Iberville put meat and wine and fruit upon the table, and pressed Jessica to take refreshment. She responded, for it was in keeping with her purpose. Presently Iberville said, as he poured a glass of wine for her: "Had you been expected, madame, there were better entertainment."

"Your entertainment, monsieur," she replied, "has two sides,"—she glanced at the swords,—"and this is the better."

"If it pleases you, madame."

"I dare not say," she returned, "that my coming was either pleasant or expected."

He raised his glass towards her: "Madame, I am proud to pledge you once more. I recall the first time that we met."

Her reply was instant. "You came, an ambassador of peace to the governor of New York. Monsieur, I come an ambassador of peace to you."

"Yes, I remember. You asked me then what was the greatest, bravest thing
I ever did. You ever had a buoyant spirit, madame."

"Monsieur," she rejoined, with feeling, "will you let me answer that question for you now? The bravest and greatest thing you ever did was to give a woman back her happiness."

"Have I done so?"

"In your heart, yes, I believe. A little while ago my husband's life and freedom were in your hands—you will place them in mine now, will you not?"

Iberville did not reply directly. He twisted his wineglass round, sipped from it pleasantly, and said: "Pardon me, madame, how were you admitted here?"

She told him.

"Singular, singular!" he replied; "I never knew Perrot fail me before. But you have eloquence, madame, and he knew, no doubt, that you would always be welcome to my home."

There was that in his voice which sent the blood stinging through Gering's veins. He half came to his feet, but his wife's warning, pleading glance brought him to his chair again.

"Monsieur, tell me," she said, "will you give my husband his freedom?"

"Madame, his life is the State's."

"But he is in your hands now. Will you not set him free? You know that the charge against him is false—false. He is no spy. Oh, monsieur, you and he have been enemies, but you know that he could not do a dishonourable thing."

"Madame, my charges against him are true."

"I know what they are," she said earnestly, "but this strife is not worthy of you, and it is shaming me. Monsieur, you know I speak truly.

"You called me Pierre a little while ago," he said; "will you not now?"

His voice was deliberate, every word hanging in its utterance. He had a courteous smile, an apparent abandon of manner, but there was devilry behind all, for here, for the first time, he saw this woman, fought for and lost, in his presence with her husband, begging that husband's life of him. Why had she called him Pierre? Was it because she knew it would touch a tender corner of his heart? Should that be so—well, he would wait.

"Will you listen to me?" she asked, in a low gentle voice.

"I love to hear you speak," was his reply, and he looked into her eyes as he had boldly looked years before, but his gaze made hers drop. There was revealed to her all that was in his mind.

"Then, hear me now," she said slowly. "There was a motherless young girl. She had as fresh and cheerful a heart as any in the world. She had not many playmates, but there was one young lad who shared her sports and pleasant hours, who was her good friend. Years passed; she was nearing womanhood, the young man was still her friend, but in his mind there had come something deeper. A young stranger also came, handsome, brave, and brilliant. He was such a man as any girl could like and any man admire. The girl liked him, and she admired him. The two young men quarreled; they fought; and the girl parted them. Again they would have fought, but this time the girl's 'life was in danger. The stranger was wounded in saving her. She owed him a debt—such a debt as only a woman can feel; because a woman loves a noble deed more than she loves her life—a good woman."

She paused, and for an instant something shook in her throat. Her husband looked at her with a deep wonder. And although Iberville's eyes played with his glass of wine, they were fascinated by her face, and his ear was strangely charmed by her voice.

"Will you go on?" he said.

"The three parted. The girl never forgot the stranger. What might have happened if he had always been near her, who can tell—who can tell? Again in later years the two men met, the stranger the aggressor—without due cause."

"Pardon me, madame, the deepest cause," said Iberville meaningly.

She pretended not to understand, and continued: "The girl, believing that what she was expected to do would be best for her, promised her hand in marriage. At this time the stranger came. She saw him but for a day, for an hour, then he passed away. Time went on again, and the two men met in battle—men now, not boys; once more the stranger was the victor. She married the defeated man. Perhaps she did not love him as much as he loved her, but she knew that the other love, the love of the stranger, was impossible—impossible. She came to care for her husband more and more—she came to love him. She might have loved the stranger—who can tell? But a woman's heart cannot be seized as a ship or a town. Believe me, monsieur, I speak the truth. Years again passed: her husband's life was in the stranger's hand. Through great danger she travelled to plead for her husband's life. Monsieur, she does not plead for an unworthy cause. She pleads for justice, in the name of honourable warfare, for the sake of all good manhood. Will—will you refuse her?"

She paused. Gering's eyes were glistening. Her honesty, fine eloquence, and simple sincerity, showed her to him in a new, strong light. Upon Iberville, the greater of the two, it had a greater effect. He sat still for a moment, looking at the woman with the profound gaze of one moved to the soul. Then he got to his feet slowly, opened the door, and quietly calling Perrot, whispered to him. Perrot threw up his hands in surprise, and hurried away.

Then Iberville shut the door, and came back. Neither man had made any show of caring for their wounds. Still silent, Iberville drew forth linen and laid it upon the table. Then he went to the window, and as he looked through the parted curtains out upon the water—the room hung over the edge of the cliff-he bound his own shoulder. Gering had lost blood, but weak as he was he carried himself well. For full half an hour Iberville stood motionless while the wife bound her husband's wounds.

At length the door opened and Perrot entered. Iberville did not hear him at first, and Perrot came over to him. "All is ready, monsieur," he said.

Iberville, nodding, came to the table where stood the husband and wife, and Perrot left the room. He picked up a sword and laid it beside Gering, then waved his hand towards the door.

"You are free to go, monsieur," he said. "You will have escort to your country. Go now—pray, go quickly."

He feared he might suddenly repent of his action, and going to the door, he held it open for them to pass. Gering picked up the sword, found the belt and sheath, and stepped to the doorway with his wife. Here he paused as if he would speak to Iberville: he was ready now for final peace. But Iberville's eyes looked resolutely away, and Gering sighed and passed into the hallway. Now the wife stood beside Iberville. She looked at him steadily, but at first he would not meet her eye. Presently, however, he did so.

"Good-bye," she said brokenly, "I shall always remember—always."

His reply was bitter. "Good-bye, madame: I shall forget."

She made a sad little gesture and passed on, but presently turned, as if she could not bear that kind of parting, and stretched out her hands to him.

"Monsieur—Pierre!" she cried, in a weak, choking voice.

With hot frank impulse he caught both her hands in his and kissed them.
"I shall—remember," he said, with great gentleness.

Then they passed from the hallway, and he was alone. He stood looking at the closed door, but after a moment went to the table, sat down, and threw his head forward in his arms.

An hour afterwards, when Count Frontenac entered upon him, he was still in the same position. Frontenac touched him on the arm, and he rose. The governor did not speak, but caught him by the shoulders with both hands, and held him so for a moment, looking kindly at him. Iberville picked up his sword from the table and said calmly:

"Once, sir, you made it a choice between the woman and the sword."

Then he raised the sword and solemnly pressed his lips against the hilt-cross.

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