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THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY

BEING THE MEMOIRS OF CAPTAIN ROBERT MORAY, SOMETIME AN OFFICER IN THE VIRGINIA REGIMENT, AND AFTERWARDS OF AMHERST'S REGIMENT

By Gilbert Parker

To the Memory of Madge Henley.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE IMPERIAL EDITION

It was in the winter of 1892, when on a visit to French Canada, that I made up my mind I would write the volume which the public knows as 'The Seats of the Mighty,' but I did not begin the composition until early in 1894. It was finished by the beginning of February, 1895, and began to appear in 'The Atlantic Monthly' in March of that year. It was not my first attempt at historical fiction, because I had written 'The Trail of the Sword' in the year 1893, but it was the first effort on an ambitious scale, and the writing of it was attended with as much searching of heart as enthusiasm. I had long been saturated by the early history of French Canada, as perhaps 'The Trail of the Sword' bore witness, and particularly of the period of the Conquest, and I longed for a subject which would, in effect, compel me to write; for I have strong views upon this business of compulsion in the mind of the writer. Unless a thing has seized a man, has obsessed him, and he feels that it excludes all other temptations to his talent or his genius, his book will not convince. Before all else he must himself be overpowered by the insistence of his subject, then intoxicated with his idea, and, being still possessed, become master of his material while remaining the slave of his subject. I believe that every book which has taken hold of the public has represented a kind of self-hypnotism on the part of the writer. I am further convinced that the book which absorbs the author, which possesses him as he writes it, has the effect of isolating him into an atmosphere which is not sleep, and which is not absolute wakefulness, but a place between the two, where the working world is indistinct and the mind is swept along a flood submerging the self-conscious but not drowning into unconsciousness.

Such, at any rate, is my own experience. I am convinced that the books of mine which have had so many friends as this book, 'The Seats of the Mighty', has had in the English-speaking world were written in just such conditions of temperamental isolation or absorption. First the subject, which must of itself have driving power, then the main character, which becomes a law working out its own destiny; and the subject in my own work has always been translatable into a phrase. Nearly every one of my books has always been reducible to its title.

For years I had wished to write an historical novel of the conquest of Canada or the settlement of the United Empire loyalists and the subsequent War of 1812, but the central idea and the central character had not come to me; and without both and the driving power of a big idea and of a big character, a book did not seem to me possible. The human thing with the grip of real life was necessary. At last, as pointed out in the prefatory note of the first edition, published in the spring of 1896 by Messrs. D. Appleton & Co., of New York, and Messrs. Methuen & Co., of London, I ran across a tiny little volume in the library of Mr. George M. Fairchild, Jr., of Quebec, called the Memoirs of Major Robert Stobo. It was published by John S. Davidson, of Market Street, Pittsburgh, with an introduction by an editor who signed himself "N. B.C."

The Memoirs proper contained about seventeen thousand words, the remaining three thousand words being made up of abstracts and appendices collected by the editor. The narrative was written in a very ornate and grandiloquent style, but the hero of the memoirs was so evidently a man of remarkable character, enterprise and adventure, that I saw in the few scattered bones of the story which he unfolded the skeleton of an ample historical romance. There was necessary to offset this buoyant and courageous Scotsman, adventurous and experienced, a character of the race which captured him and held him in leash till just before the taking of Quebec. I therefore found in the character of Doltaire—which was the character of Voltaire spelled with a big D—purely a creature of the imagination, one who, as the son of a peasant woman and Louis XV, should be an effective offset to Major Stobo. There was no hint of Doltaire in the Memoirs. There could not be, nor of the plot on which the story was based, because it was all imagination. Likewise, there was no mention of Alixe Duvarney in the Memoirs, nor of Bigot or Madame Cournal and all the others. They too, when not characters of the imagination, were lifted out of the history of the time; but the first germ of the story came from 'The Memoirs of Robert Stobo', and when 'The Seats of the Mighty' was first published in 'The Atlantic Monthly' the subtitle contained these words: "Being the Memoirs of Captain Robert Stobo, sometime an officer in the Virginia Regiment, and afterwards of Amherst's Regiment."

When the book was published, however, I changed the name of Robert Stobo to Robert Moray, because I felt I had no right to saddle Robert Stobo's name with all the incidents and experiences and strange enterprises which the novel contained. I did not know then that perhaps it might be considered an honour by Robert Stobo's descendants to have his name retained. I could not foresee the extraordinary popularity of 'The Seats of the Mighty', but with what I thought was a sense of honour I eliminated his name and changed it to Robert Moray. 'The Seats of the Mighty' goes on, I am happy to say, with an ever-increasing number of friends. It has a position perhaps not wholly deserved, but it has crystallised some elements in the life of the continent of America, the history of France and England, and of the British Empire which may serve here and there to inspire the love of things done for the sake

of a nation rather than for the welfare of an individual.

I began this introduction by saying that the book was started in the summer of 1894. That was at a little place called Mablethorpe in Lincolnshire, on the east coast of England. For several months I worked in absolute seclusion in that out-of-the-way spot which had not then become a Mecca for trippers, and on the wonderful sands, stretching for miles upon miles coastwise and here and there as much as a mile out to the sea, I tried to live over again the days of Wolfe and Montcalm. Appropriately enough the book was begun in a hotel at Mablethorpe called "The Book in Hand." The name was got, I believe, from the fact that, in a far-off day, a ship was wrecked upon the coast at Mablethorpe, and the only person saved was the captain, who came ashore with a Bible in his hands. During the writing now and again a friend would come to me from London or elsewhere, and there would be a day off, full of literary tattle, but immediately my friends were gone I was lost again in the atmosphere of the middle of the eighteenth century.

I stayed at Mablethorpe until the late autumn, and then I went to Harrogate, exchanging the sea for the moors, and there, still living the open-air life, I remained for several months until I had finished the book. The writing of it knew no interruption and was happily set. It was a thing apart, and not a single untoward invasion of other interests affected its course.

The title of the book was for long a trouble to me. Months went by before I could find what I wanted. Scores of titles occurred to me, but each was rejected. At last, one day when I was being visited by Mr. Grant Richards, since then a London publisher, but at that time a writer, who had come to interview me for 'Great Thoughts', I told him of my difficulties regarding the title. I was saying that I felt the title should be, as it were, the kernel of a book. I said: "You see, it is a struggle of one simple girl against principalities and powers; it is the final conquest of the good over the great. In other words, the book will be an illustration of the text, 'He has put down the mighty from their seats, and has exalted the humble and meek.'" Then, like a flash, the title came 'The Seats of the Mighty'.

Since the phrase has gone into the language and was from the very first a popular title, it seems strange that the literary director of the American firm that published the book should take strong exception to it on the ground that it was grandiloquent. I like to think that I was firm, and that I declined to change the title.

I need say no more save that the book was dramatised by myself, and produced, first at Washington by Herbert (now Sir Herbert) Beerbohm Tree in the winter of 1897 and 1898, and in the spring of 1898 it opened his new theatre in London.

PREFATORY NOTE TO FIRST EDITION

This tale would never have been written had it not been for the kindness of my distinguished friend Dr. John George Bourinot, C.M.G., of Ottawa, whose studies in parliamentary procedure, the English and Canadian Constitutions, and the history and development of Canada have been of singular benefit to the Dominion and to the Empire. Through Dr. Bourinot's good offices I came to know Mr. James Lemoine, of Quebec, the gifted antiquarian, and President of the Royal Society of Canada. Mr. Lemoine placed in my hands certain historical facts suggestive of romance. Subsequently, Mr. George M. Fairchild, Jr., of Cap Rouge, Quebec, whose library contains a valuable collection of antique Canadian books, maps, and prints, gave me generous assistance and counsel, allowing me "the run" of all his charts, prints, histories, and memoirs. Many of these prints, and a rare and authentic map of Wolfe's operations against Quebec are now reproduced in this novel, and may be considered accurate illustrations of places, people, and events. By the insertion of these faithful historical elements it is hoped to give more vividness to the atmosphere of the time, and to strengthen the verisimilitude of a piece of fiction which is not, I believe, out of harmony with fact.

Gilbert Parker

PRELUDE

To Sir Edward Seaforth, Bart., of Sangley Hope in Derbyshire, and Seaforth House in Hanover Square.

Dear Ned: You will have them written, or I shall be pestered to my grave! Is that the voice of a friend of so long standing? And yet it seems but yesterday since we had good hours in Virginia together, or met among the ruins of Quebec. My memoirs—these only will content you? And to flatter or cajole me,

you tell me Mr. Pitt still urges on the matter. In truth, when he touched first upon this, I thought it but the courtesy of a great and generous man. But indeed I am proud that he is curious to know more of my long captivity at Quebec, of Monsieur Doltaire and all his dealings with me, and the motions he made to serve La Pompadour on one hand, and, on the other, to win from me that most perfect of ladies, Mademoiselle Alixe Duvarney.

Our bright conquest of Quebec is now heroic memory, and honour and fame and reward have been parcelled out. So I shall but briefly, in these memoirs (ay, they shall be written, and with a good heart), travel the trail of history, or discourse upon campaigns and sieges, diplomacies and treaties. I shall keep close to my own story; for that, it would seem, yourself and the illustrious minister of the King most wish to hear. Yet you will find figuring in it great men like our flaming hero General Wolfe, and also General Montcalm, who, I shall ever keep on saying, might have held Quebec against us, had he not been balked by the vain Governor, the Marquis de Vaudreuil; together with such notorious men as the Intendant Bigot, civil governor of New France, and such noble gentlemen as the Seigneur Duvarney, father of Alixe.

I shall never view again the citadel on those tall heights where I was detained so barbarously, nor the gracious Manor House at Beauport, sacred to me because of her who dwelt therein—how long ago, how long! Of all the pictures that flash before my mind when I think on those times, one is most with me: that of the fine guest-room in the Manor House, where I see moving the benign maid whose life and deeds alone can make this story worth telling. And with one scene therein, and it the most momentous in all my days, I shall begin my tale.

I beg you convey to Mr. Pitt my most obedient compliments, and say that I take his polite wish as my command.

With every token of my regard, I am, dear Ned, affectionately your friend,

Robert Moray

I

AN ESCORT TO THE CITADEL

When Monsieur Doltaire entered the salon, and, dropping lazily into a chair beside Madame Duvarney and her daughter, drawled out, "England's Braddock—fool and general—has gone to heaven, Captain Moray, and your papers send you there also," I did not shift a jot, but looked over at him gravely—for, God knows, I was startled—and I said,

"The General is dead?"

I did not dare to ask, Is he defeated? though from Doltaire's look I was sure it was so, and a sickness crept through me, for at the moment that seemed the end of our cause. But I made as if I had not heard his words about my papers.

"Dead as a last years courtier, shifted from the scene," he replied; "and having little now to do, we'll go play with the rat in our trap."

I would not have dared look towards Alixe, standing beside her mother then, for the song in my blood was pitched too high, were it not that a little sound broke from her. At that, I glanced, and saw that her face was still and quiet, but her eyes were shining, and her whole body seemed listening. I dared not give my glance meaning, though I wished to do so. She had served me much, had been a good friend to me, since I was brought a hostage to Quebec from Fort Necessity. There, at that little post on the Ohio, France threw down the gauntlet, and gave us the great Seven Years War. And though it may be thought I speak rashly, the lever to spring that trouble had been within my grasp. Had France sat still while Austria and Prussia quarreled, that long fighting had never been. The game of war had lain with the Grande Marquise—or La Pompadour, as she was called—and later it may be seen how I, unwillingly, moved her to set it going.

Answering Monsieur Doltaire, I said stoutly, "I am sure he made a good fight; he had gallant men."

"Truly gallant," he returned—"your own Virginians among others" (I bowed); "but he was a blunderer, as were you also, monsieur, or you had not sent him plans of our forts and letters of such candour. They have gone to France, my captain."

Madame Duvarney seemed to stiffen in her chair, for what did this mean but that I was a spy? and the young lady behind them now put her handkerchief to her mouth as if to stop a word. To make light of the charges against myself was the only thing, and yet I had little heart to do so. There was that between Monsieur Doltaire and myself—a matter I shall come to by-and-bye—which well might make me apprehensive.

"My sketch and my gossip with my friends," said I, "can have little interest in France."

"My faith, the Grande Marquise will find a relish for them," he said pointedly at me. He, the natural son of King Louis, had played the part between La Pompadour and myself in the grave matter of which I spoke. "She loves deciding knotty points of morality," he added.

"She has had chance and will enough," said I boldly, "but what point of morality is here?"

"The most vital—to you," he rejoined, flicking his handkerchief a little, and drawling so that I could have stopped his mouth with my hand. "Shall a hostage on parole make sketches of a fort and send them to his friends, who in turn pass them on to a foolish general?"

"When one party to an Article of War brutally breaks his sworn promise, shall the other be held to his?" I asked quietly.

I was glad that, at this moment, the Seigneur Duvarney entered, for I could feel the air now growing colder about Madame his wife. He, at least, was a good friend; but as I glanced at him, I saw his face was troubled and his manner distant. He looked at Monsieur Doltaire a moment steadily, stooped to his wife's hand, and then offered me his own without a word; which done, he went to where his daughter stood. She kissed him, and, as she did so, whispered something in his ear, to which he nodded assent. I knew afterwards that she had asked him to keep me to dinner with them.

Presently turning to Monsieur Doltaire, he said inquiringly, "You have a squad of men outside my house, Doltaire?"

Doltaire nodded in a languid way, and answered, "An escort—for Captain Moray—to the citadel."

I knew now, as he had said, that I was in the trap; that he had begun the long sport which came near to giving me the white shroud of death, as it turned white the hair upon my head ere I was thirty-two. Do I not know, the indignities, the miseries I suffered, I owed mostly to him, and that at the last he nearly robbed England of her greatest pride, the taking of New France?—For chance sometimes lets humble men like me balance the scales of fate; and I was humble enough in rank, if in spirit always something above my place.

I was standing as he spoke these words, and I turned to him and said, "Monsieur, I am at your service."

"I have sometimes wished," he said instantly, and with a courteous if ironical gesture, "that you were in my service—that is, the King's."

I bowed as to a compliment, for I would not see the insolence, and I retorted, "Would I could offer you a company in my Virginia regiment!"

"Delightful! delightful!" he rejoined. "I should make as good a Briton as you a Frenchman, every whit."

I suppose he would have kept leading to such silly play, had I not turned to Madame Duvarney and said, "I am most sorry that this mishap falls here; but it is not of my doing, and in colder comfort, Madame, I shall recall the good hours spent in your home."

I think I said it with a general courtesy, yet, feeling the eyes of the young lady on me, perhaps a little extra warmth came into my voice, and worked upon Madame, or it may be she was glad of my removal from contact with her daughter; but kindness showed in her face, and she replied gently, "I am sure it is only for a few days till we see you again."

Yet I think in her heart she knew my life was perilled: those were rough and hasty times, when the axe or the rope was the surest way to deal with troubles. Three years before, at Fort Necessity, I had handed my sword to my lieutenant, bidding him make healthy use of it, and, travelling to Quebec on parole, had come in and out of this house with great freedom. Yet since Alixe had grown towards womanhood there had been strong change in Madame's manner.

"The days, however few, will be too long until I tax your courtesy again," I said. "I bid you adieu,

Madame."

"Nay, not so," spoke up my host; "not one step: dinner is nearly served, and you must both dine with us. Nay, but I insist," he added, as he saw me shake my head. "Monsieur Doltaire will grant you this courtesy, and me the great kindness. Eh, Doltaire?"

Doltaire rose, glancing from Madame to her daughter. Madame was smiling, as if begging his consent; for, profligate though he was, his position, and more than all, his personal distinction, made him a welcome guest at most homes in Quebec. Alixe met his look without a yes or no in her eyes—so young, yet having such control and wisdom, as I have had reason beyond all men to know. Something, however, in the temper of the scene had filled her with a kind of glow, which added to her beauty and gave her dignity. The spirit of her look caught the admiration of this expatriated courtier, and I knew that a deeper cause than all our past conflicts—and they were great—would now, or soon, set him fatally against me.

"I shall be happy to wait Captain Moray's pleasure," he said presently, "and to serve my own by sitting at your table. I was to have dined with the Intendant this afternoon, but a messenger shall tell him duty stays me.... If you will excuse me!" he added, going to the door to find a man of his company. He looked back for an instant, as if it struck him I might seek escape, for he believed in no man's truth; but he only said, "I may fetch my men to your kitchen, Duvarney? 'Tis raw outside."

"Surely. I shall see they have some comfort," was the reply.

Doltaire then left the room, and Duvarney came to me. "This is a bad business, Moray," he said sadly. "There is some mistake, is there not?"

I looked him fair in the face. "There is a mistake," I answered. "I am no spy, and I do not fear that I shall lose my life, my honour, or my friends by offensive acts of mine."

"I believe you," he responded, "as I have believed since you came, though there has been gabble of your doings. I do not forget you bought my life back from those wild Mohawks five years ago. You have my hand in trouble or out of it."

Upon my soul, I could have fallen on his neck, for the blow to our cause and the shadow on my own fate oppressed me for the moment.

At this point the ladies left the room to make some little toilette before dinner, and as they passed me the sleeve of Alixe's dress touched my arm. I caught her fingers for an instant, and to this day I can feel that warm, rich current of life coursing from finger-tips to heart. She did not look at me at all, but passed on after her mother. Never till that moment had there been any open show of heart between us. When I first came to Quebec (I own it to my shame) I was inclined to use her youthful friendship for private and patriotic ends; but that soon passed, and then I wished her companionship for true love of her. Also, I had been held back because when I first knew her she seemed but a child. Yet how quickly and how wisely did she grow out of her childhood! She had a playful wit, and her talents were far beyond her years. It amazed me often to hear her sum up a thing in some pregnant sentence which, when you came to think, was the one word to be said. She had such a deep look out of her blue eyes that you scarcely glanced from them to see the warm sweet colour of her face, the fair broad forehead, the brown hair, the delicate richness of her lips, which ever were full of humour and of seriousness—both running together, as you may see a laughing brook steal into the quiet of a river.

Duvarney and I were thus alone for a moment, and he straightway dropped a hand upon my shoulder. "Let me advise you," he said, "be friendly with Doltaire. He has great influence at the Court and elsewhere. He can make your bed hard or soft at the citadel."

I smiled at him, and replied, "I shall sleep no less sound because of Monsieur Doltaire."

"You are bitter in your trouble," said he.

I made haste to answer, "No, no, my own troubles do not weigh so heavy—but our General's death!"

"You are a patriot, my friend," he added warmly. "I could well have been content with our success against your English army without this deep danger to your person."

I put out my hand to him, but I did not speak, for just then Doltaire entered. He was smiling at something in his thought.

"The fortunes are with the Intendant always," said he. "When things are at their worst, and the King's storehouse, the dear La Friponne, is to be ripped by our rebel peasants like a sawdust doll, here comes this gay news of our success on the Ohio; and in that Braddock's death the whining beggars will forget

their empty bellies, and bless where they meant to curse. What fools, to be sure! They had better loot La Friponne. Lord, how we love fighting, we French! And 'tis so much easier to dance, or drink, or love." He stretched out his shapely legs as he sat musing.

Duvarney shrugged a shoulder, smiling. "But you, Doltaire—there's no man out of France that fights more."

He lifted an eyebrow. "One must be in the fashion; besides, it does need some skill to fight. The others—to dance, drink, love: blind men's games!" He smiled cynically into the distance.

I have never known a man who interested me so much—never one so original, so varied, and so uncommon in his nature. I marvelled at the pith and depth of his observations; for though I agreed not with him once in ten times, I loved his great reflective cleverness and his fine penetration—singular gifts in a man of action. But action to him was a playtime; he had that irresponsibility of the Court from which he came, its scornful endurance of defeat or misery, its flippant look upon the world, its scoundrel view of women. Then he and Duvarney talked, and I sat thinking. Perhaps the passion of a cause grows in you as you suffer for it, and I had suffered, and suffered most by a bitter inaction. Governor Dinwiddie, Mr. Washington (alas that, as I write the fragment chapters of my life, among the hills where Montrose my ancestor fought, George leads the colonists against the realm of England!), and the rest were suffering, but they were fighting too. Brought to their knees, they could rise again to battle; and I thought then, How more glorious to be with my gentlemen in blue from Virginia, holding back death from the General, and at last falling myself, than to spend good years a hostage at Quebec, knowing that Canada was for our taking, yet doing nothing to advance the hour!

In the thick of these thoughts I was not conscious of what the two were saying, but at last I caught Madame Cournal's name; by which I guessed Monsieur Doltaire was talking of her amours, of which the chief and final was with Bigot the Intendant, to whom the King had given all civil government, all power over commerce and finance in the country. The rivalry between the Governor and the Intendant was keen and vital at this time, though it changed later, as I will show. At her name I looked up and caught Monsieur Doltaire's eye.

He read my thoughts. "You have had blithe hours here, monsieur," he said—"you know the way to probe us; but of all the ladies who could be most useful to you, you left out the greatest. There you erred. I say it as a friend, not as an officer, there you erred. From Madame Cournal to Bigot, from Bigot to Vaudreuil the Governor, from the Governor to France. But now—"

He paused, for Madame Duvarney and her daughter had come, and we all rose.

The ladies had heard enough to know Doltaire's meaning. "But now—Captain Moray dines with us," said Madame Duvarney quietly and meaningly.

"Yet I dine with Madame Cournal," rejoined Doltaire, smiling.

"One may use more option with enemies and prisoners," she said keenly, and the shot ought to have struck home. In so small a place it was not easy to draw lines close and fine, and it was in the power of the Intendant, backed by his confederates, to ruin almost any family in the province if he chose; and that he chose at times I knew well, as did my hostess. Yet she was a woman of courage and nobility of thought, and I knew well where her daughter got her good flavor of mind.

I could see something devilish in the smile at Doltaire's lip's, but his look was wandering between Alixe and me, and he replied urbanely, "I have ambition yet—to connive at captivity"; and then he looked full and meaningly at her.

I can see her now, her hand on the high back of a great oak chair, the lace of her white sleeve falling away, and her soft arm showing, her eyes on his without wavering. They did not drop, nor turn aside; they held straight on, calm, strong—and understanding. By that look I saw she read him; she, who had seen so little of the world, felt what he was, and met his invading interest firmly, yet sadly; for I knew long after that a smother was at her heart then, foreshadowings of dangers that would try her as few women are tried. Thank God that good women are born with greater souls for trial than men; that, given once an anchor for their hearts, they hold until the cables break.

When we were about to enter the dining-room, I saw, to my joy, Madame incline towards Doltaire, and I knew that Alixe was for myself—though her mother wished it little, I am sure. As she took my arm, her finger-tips plunged softly into the velvet of my sleeve, giving me a thrill of courage. I felt my spirits rise, and I set myself to carry things off gaily, to have this last hour with her clear of gloom, for it seemed easy to think that we should meet no more.

As we passed into the dining-room, I said, as I had said the first time I went to dinner in her father's

house, "Shall we be flippant, or grave?"

I guessed that it would touch her. She raised her eyes to mine and answered, "We are grave; let us seem flippant."

In those days I had a store of spirits. I was seldom dismayed, for life had been such a rough-and-tumble game that I held to cheerfulness and humour as a hillsman to his broadsword, knowing it the greatest of weapons with a foe, and the very stone and mortar of friendship. So we were gay, touching lightly on events around us, laughing at gossip of the doorways (I in my poor French), casting small stones at whatever drew our notice, not forgetting a throw or two at Chateau Bigot, the Intendant's country house at Charlesbourg, five miles away, where base plots were hatched, reputations soiled, and all clean things dishonoured. But Alixe, the sweetest soul France ever gave the world, could not know all I knew; guessing only at heavy carousals, cards, song, and raillery, with far-off hints of feet lighter than fit in cavalry boots dancing among the glasses on the table. I was never before so charmed with her swift intelligence, for I never had great nimbleness of thought, nor power to make nice play with the tongue.

"You have been three years with us," suddenly said her father, passing me the wine. "How time has flown! How much has happened!"

"Madame Cournal's husband has made three million francs," said Doltaire, with dry irony and truth.

Duvarney shrugged a shoulder, stiffened; for, oblique as the suggestion was, he did not care to have his daughter hear it.

"And Vaudreuil has sent bees buzzing to Versailles about Bigot and Company," added the impish satirist.

Madame Duvarney responded with a look of interest, and the Seigneur's eyes steadied to his plate. All at once by that I saw the Seigneur had known of the Governor's action, and maybe had counseled with him, siding against Bigot. If that were so—as it proved to be—he was in a nest of scorpions; for who among them would spare him: Marin, Cournal, Rigaud, the Intendant himself? Such as he were thwarted right and left in this career of knavery and public evils.

"And our people have turned beggars; poor and starved, they beg at the door of the King's storehouse—it is well called La Friponne," said Madame Duvarney, with some heat; for she was ever liberal to the poor, and she had seen manor after manor robbed, and peasant farmers made to sell their corn for a song, to be sold to them again at famine prices by La Friponne. Even now Quebec was full of pilgrim poor begging against the hard winter, and execrating their spoilers.

Doltaire was too fond of digging at the heart of things not to admit she spoke truth.

"La Pompadour et La Friponne!
Qu'est que cela, mon petit homme?"
"Les deux terribles, ma chere mignonne,
Mais, c'est cela—
La Pompadour et La Friponne!"

He said this with cool drollery and point, in the patois of the native, so that he set us all laughing, in spite of our mutual apprehensions.

Then he continued, "And the King has sent a chorus to the play, with eyes for the preposterous make-believe, and more, no purse to fill."

We all knew he meant himself, and we knew also that so far as money went he spoke true; that though hand-in-glove with Bigot, he was poor, save for what he made at the gaming-table and got from France. There was the thing that might have clinched me to him, had matters been other than they were; for all my life I have loathed the sordid soul, and I would rather, in these my ripe years, eat with a highwayman who takes his life in his hands than with the civilian who robs his king and the king's poor, and has no better trick than false accounts, nor better friend than the pettifogging knave. Doltaire had no burning love for France, and little faith in anything; for he was of those Versailles water-flies who recked not if the world blackened to cinders when their lights went out. As will be seen by-and-bye, he had come here to seek me, and to serve the Grande Marquise.

More speech like this followed, and amid it all, with the flower of the world beside me at this table, I remembered my mother's words before I bade her good-bye and set sail from Glasgow for Virginia.

"Keep it in mind, Robert," she said, "that an honest love is the thing to hold you honest with yourself. 'Tis to be lived for, and fought for, and died for. Ay, be honest in your loves. Be true."

And there I took an oath, my hand clenched beneath the table, that Alixe should be my wife if better days came; when I was done with citadel and trial and captivity, if that might be.

The evening was well forward when Doltaire, rising from his seat in the drawing-room, bowed to me, and said, "If it pleases you, monsieur?"

I rose also, and prepared to go. There was little talk, yet we all kept up a play of cheerfulness. When I came to take the Seigneur's hand, Doltaire was a distance off, talking to Madame. "Moray," said the Seigneur quickly and quietly, "trials portend for both of us." He nodded towards Doltaire.

"But we shall come safe through," said I.

"Be of good courage, and adieu," he answered, as Doltaire turned towards us.

My last words were to Alixe. The great moment of my life was come. If I could but say one thing to her out of earshot, I would stake all on the hazard. She was standing beside a cabinet, very still, a strange glow in her eyes, a new, fine firmness at the lips. I felt I dared not look as I would; I feared there was no chance now to speak what I would. But I came slowly up the room with her mother. As we did so, Doltaire exclaimed and started to the window, and the Seigneur and Madame followed. A red light was showing on the panes.

I caught Alixe's eye, and held it, coming quickly to her. All backs were on us. I took her hand and pressed it to my lips suddenly. She gave a little gasp, and I saw her bosom heave.

"I am going from prison to prison," said I, "and I leave a loved jailer behind."

She understood. "Your jailer goes also," she answered, with a sad smile.

"I love you! I love you!" I urged.

She was very pale. "Oh, Robert!" she whispered timidly; and then, "I will be brave, I will help you, and I will not forget. God guard you."

That was all, for Doltaire turned to me then and said, "They've made of La Friponne a torch to light you to the citadel, monsieur."

A moment afterwards we were outside in the keen October air, a squad of soldiers attending, our faces towards the citadel heights. I looked back, doffing my cap. The Seigneur and Madame stood at the door, but my eyes were for a window where stood Alixe. The reflection of the far-off fire bathed the glass, and her face had a glow, the eyes shining through, intent and most serious. Yet how brave she was, for she lifted her handkerchief, shook it a little, and smiled.

As though the salute were meant for him, Doltaire bowed twice impressively, and then we stepped forward, the great fire over against the Heights lighting us and hurrying us on.

We scarcely spoke as we went, though Doltaire hummed now and then the air La Pompadour et La Friponne. As we came nearer I said, "Are you sure it is La Friponne, monsieur?"

"It is not," he said, pointing. "See!"

The sky was full of shaking sparks, and a smell of burning grain came down the wind.

"One of the granaries, then," I added, "not La Friponne itself?"

To this he nodded assent, and we pushed on.

II

THE MASTER OF THE KING'S MAGAZINE

"What fools," said Doltaire presently, "to burn the bread and oven too! If only they were less honest in a world of rogues, poor moles!"

Coming nearer, we saw that La Friponne itself was safe, but one warehouse was doomed and another threatened. The streets were full of people, and thousands of excited peasants, laborers, and sailors

were shouting, "Down with the palace! Down with Bigot!"

We came upon the scene at the most critical moment. None of the Governor's soldiers were in sight, but up the Heights we could hear the steady tramp of General Montcalm's infantry as they came on. Where were Bigot's men? There was a handful—one company—drawn up before La Friponne, idly leaning on their muskets, seeing the great granary burn, and watching La Friponne threatened by the mad crowd and the fire. There was not a soldier before the Intendant's palace, not a light in any window.

"What is this weird trick of Bigot's?" said Doltaire, musing.

The Governor, we knew, had been out of the city that day. But where was Bigot? At a word from Doltaire we pushed forward towards the palace, the soldiers keeping me in their midst. We were not a hundred feet from the great steps when two gates at the right suddenly swung open, and a carriage rolled out swiftly and dashed down into the crowd. I recognized the coachman first—Bigot's, an old one-eyed soldier of surpassing nerve, and devoted to his master. The crowd parted right and left. Suddenly the carriage stopped, and Bigot stood up, folding his arms, and glancing round with a disdainful smile without speaking a word. He carried a paper in one hand.

Here were at least two thousand armed and unarmed peasants, sick with misery and oppression, in the presence of their undefended tyrant. One shot, one blow of a stone, one stroke of a knife—to the end of a shameless pillage. But no hand was raised to do the deed. The roar of voices subsided—he waited for it—and silence was broken only by the crackle of the burning building, the tramp of Montcalm's soldiers in Mountain Street, and the tolling of the cathedral bell. I thought it strange that almost as Bigot came out the wild clanging gave place to a cheerful peal.

After standing for a moment, looking round him, his eye resting on Doltaire and myself (we were but a little distance from him), Bigot said in a loud voice: "What do you want with me? Do you think I may be moved by threats? Do you punish me by burning your own food, which, when the English are at our doors, is your only hope? Fools! How easily could I turn my cannon and my men upon you! You think to frighten me. Who do you think I am?—a Bostonnais or an Englishman? You—revolutionists! T'sh! You are wild dogs without a leader. You want one that you can trust; you want no coward, but one who fears you not at your wildest. Well, I will be your leader. I do not fear you, and I do not love you, for how have you deserved my love? By ingratitude and aspersion? Who has the King's favour? Francois Bigot. Who has the ear of the Grande Marquise? Francois Bigot. Who stands firm while others tremble lest their power pass to-morrow? Francois Bigot. Who else dare invite revolution, this danger"—his hand sweeping to the flames—"who but Francois Bigot?" He paused for a moment, and looking up to the leader of Montcalm's soldiers on the Heights, waved him back; then he continued:

"And to-day, when I am ready to give you great news, you play the mad dog's game; you destroy what I had meant to give you in our hour of danger, when those English came. I made you suffer a little, that you might live then. Only to-day, because of our great and glorious victory—"

He paused again. The peal of bells became louder. Far up on the Heights we heard the calling of bugles and the beating of drums; and now I saw the whole large plan, the deep dramatic scheme. He had withheld the news of the victory that he might announce it when it would most turn to his own glory. Perhaps he had not counted on the burning of the warehouse, but this would tell now in his favour. He was not a large man, but he drew himself up with dignity, and continued in a contemptuous tone:

"Because of our splendid victory, I designed to tell you all my plans, and, pitying your trouble, divide among you at the smallest price, that all might pay, the corn which now goes to feed the stars."

At that moment some one from the Heights above called out shrilly, "What lie is in that paper, Francois Bigot?"

I looked up, as did the crowd. A woman stood upon a point of the great rock, a red robe hanging on her, her hair free over her shoulders, her finger pointing at the Intendant. Bigot only glanced up, then smoothed out the paper.

He said to the people in a clear but less steady voice, for I could see that the woman had disturbed him, "Go pray to be forgiven for your insolence and folly. His most Christian Majesty is triumphant upon the Ohio. The English have been killed in thousands, and their General with them. Do you not hear the joy-bells in the Church of Our Lady of the Victories? and more—listen!"

There burst from the Heights on the other side a cannon shot, and then another and another. There was a great commotion, and many ran to Bigot's carriage, reached in to touch his hand, and called down blessings on him.

"See that you save the other granaries," he urged, adding, with a sneer, "and forget not to bless La Friponne in your prayers!"

It was a clever piece of acting. Presently from the Heights above came the woman's voice again, so piercing that the crowd turned to her.

"Francois Bigot is a liar and a traitor!" she cried. "Beware of Francois Bigot! God has cast him out."

A dark look came upon Bigot's face; but presently he turned, and gave a sign to some one near the palace. The doors of the courtyard flew open, and out came squad after squad of soldiers. In a moment, they, with the people, were busy carrying water to pour upon the side of the endangered warehouse. Fortunately the wind was with them, else it and the palace also would have been burned that night.

The Intendant still stood in his carriage watching and listening to the cheers of the people. At last he beckoned to Doltaire and to me. We both went over.

"Doltaire, we looked for you at dinner," he said. "Was Captain Moray"—nodding towards me—"lost among the petticoats? He knows the trick of cup and saucer. Between the sip and click he sucked in secrets from our garrison—a spy where had been a soldier, as we thought. You once wore a sword, Captain Moray—eh?"

"If the Governor would grant me leave, I would not only wear, but use one, your excellency knows well where," said I.

"Large speaking, Captain Moray. They do that in Virginia, I am told."

"In Gascony there's quiet, your excellency."

Doltaire laughed outright, for it was said that Bigot, in his coltish days, had a shrewish Gascon wife, whom he took leave to send to heaven before her time. I saw the Intendant's mouth twitch angrily.

"Come," he said, "you have a tongue; we'll see if you have a stomach. You've languished with the girls; you shall have your chance to drink with Francois Bigot. Now, if you dare, when we have drunk to the first cockcrow, should you be still on your feet, you'll fight some one among us, first giving ample cause."

"I hope, your excellency," I replied, with a touch of vanity, "I have still some stomach and a wrist. I will drink to cockcrow, if you will. And if my sword prove the stronger, what?"

"There's the point," he said. "Your Englishman loves not fighting for fighting's sake, Doltaire; he must have bonbons for it. Well, see: if your sword and stomach prove the stronger, you shall go your ways to where you will. Voila!"

If I could but have seen a bare portion of the craftiness of this pair of devils artisans! They both had ends to serve in working ill to me, and neither was content that I should be shut away in the citadel, and no more. There was a deeper game playing. I give them their due: the trap was skillful, and in those times, with great things at stake, strategy took the place of open fighting here and there. For Bigot I was to be a weapon against another; for Doltaire, against myself.

What a gull they must have thought me! I might have known that, with my lost papers on the way to France, they must hold me tight here till I had been tried, nor permit me to escape. But I was sick of doing nothing, thinking with horror on a long winter in the citadel, and I caught at the least straw of freedom.

"Captain Moray will like to spend a couple of hours at his lodgings before he joins us at the palace," the Intendant said, and with a nod to me he turned to his coachman. The horses wheeled, and in a moment the great doors opened, and he had passed inside to applause, though here and there among the crowd was heard a hiss, for the Scarlet Woman had made an impression. The Intendant's men essayed to trace these noises, but found no one. Looking again to the Heights, I saw that the woman had gone. Doltaire noted my glance and the inquiry in my face, and he said:

"Some bad fighting hours with the Intendant at Chateau Bigot, and then a fever, bringing a kind of madness: so the story creeps about, as told by Bigot's enemies."

Just at this point I felt a man hustle me as he passed. One of the soldiers made a thrust at him, and he turned round. I caught his eye, and it flashed something to me. It was Voban the barber, who had shaved me every day for months when I first came, while my arm was stiff from a wound got fighting the French on the Ohio. It was quite a year since I had met him, and I was struck by the change in his

face. It had grown much older; its roundness was gone. We had had many a talk together; he helping me with French, I listening to the tales of his early life in France, and to the later tale of a humble love, and of the home which he was fitting up for his Mathilde, a peasant girl of much beauty, I was told, but whom I had never seen. I remembered at that moment, as he stood in the crowd looking at me, the piles of linen which he had bought at Ste. Anne de Beaupre, and the silver pitcher which his grandfather had got from the Duc de Valois for an act of merit. Many a time we had discussed the pitcher and the deed, and fingered the linen, now talking in French, now in English; for in France, years before, he had been a valet to an English officer at King Louis's court. But my surprise had been great when I learned that this English gentleman was no other than the best friend I ever had, next to my parents and my grandfather. Voban was bound to Sir John Godric by as strong ties of affection as I. What was more, by a secret letter I had sent to George Washington, who was then as good a Briton as myself, I had been able to have my barber's young brother, a prisoner of war, set free.

I felt that he had something to say to me. But he turned away and disappeared among the crowd. I might have had some clue if I had known that he had been crouched behind the Intendant's carriage while I was being bidden to the supper. I did not guess then that there was anything between him and the Scarlet Woman who railed at Bigot.

In a little while I was at my lodgings, soldiers posted at my door and one in my room. Doltaire gone to his own quarters promising to call for me within two hours. There was little for me to do but to put in a bag the fewest necessaries, to roll up my heavy cloak, to stow safely my pipes and two goodly packets of tobacco, which were to be my chiefest solace for many a long day, and to write some letters—one to Governor Dinwiddie, one to George Washington, and one to my partner in Virginia, telling them my fresh misfortunes, and begging them to send me money, which, however useless in my captivity, would be important in my fight for life and freedom. I did not write intimately of my state, for I was not sure my letters would ever pass outside Quebec. There were only two men I could trust to do the thing. One was a fellow-countryman, Clark, a ship-carpenter, who, to save his neck and to spare his wife and child, had turned Catholic, but who hated all Frenchmen barbarously at heart, remembering two of his bairns butchered before his eyes. The other was Voban. I knew that though Voban might not act, he would not betray me. But how to reach either of them? It was clear that I must bide my chances.

One other letter I wrote, brief but vital, in which I begged the sweetest girl in the world not to have uneasiness because of me; that I trusted to my star and to my innocence to convince my judges; and begging her, if she could, to send me a line at the citadel. I told her I knew well how hard it would be, for her mother and her father would not now look upon my love with favour. But I trusted all to time and Providence.

I sealed my letters, put them in my pocket, and sat down to smoke and think while I waited for Doltaire. To the soldier on duty, whom I did not notice at first, I now offered a pipe and a glass of wine, which he accepted rather gruffly, but enjoyed, if I might judge by his devotion to them.

By-and-bye, without any relevancy at all, he said abruptly, "If a little sooner she had come—aho!"

For a moment I could not think what he meant; but soon I saw.

"The palace would have been burnt if the girl in scarlet had come sooner—eh?" I asked. "She would have urged the people on?"

"And Bigot burnt, too, maybe," he answered.

"Fire and death—eh?"

I offered him another pipeful of tobacco. He looked doubtful, but accepted.

"Aho! And that Voban, he would have had his hand in," he growled.

I began to get more light.

"She was shut up at Chateau Bigot—hand of iron and lock of steel—who knows the rest! But Voban was for always," he added presently.

The thing was clear. The Scarlet Woman was Mathilde. So here was the end of Voban's little romance—of the fine linen from Ste. Anne de Beaupre and the silver pitcher for the wedding wine. I saw, or felt, that in Voban I might find now a confederate, if I put my hard case on Bigot's shoulders.

"I can't see why she stayed with Bigot," I said tentatively.

"Break the dog's leg, it can't go hunting bones—mais, non! Holy, how stupid are you English!"

"Why doesn't the Intendant lock her up now? She's dangerous to him. You remember what she said?"

"Tonnerre, you shall see to-morrow," he answered; "now all the sheep go bleating with the bell. Bigot—Bigot—Bigot—there is nothing but Bigot! But, pish! Vaudreuil the Governor is the great man, and Montcalm, aho! son of Mahomet! You shall see. Now they dance to Bigot's whistling; he will lock her safe enough to-morrow, 'less some one steps in to help her. Before to-night she never spoke of him before the world—but a poor daft thing, going about all sad and wild. She missed her chance to-night—aho!"

"Why are you not with Montcalm's soldiers?" I asked. "You like him better."

"I was with him, but my time was out, and I left him for Bigot. Pish! I left him for Bigot, for the militia!" He raised his thumb to his nose, and spread out his fingers. Again light dawned on me. He was still with the Governor in all fact, though soldiering for Bigot—a sort of watch upon the Intendant.

I saw my chance. If I could but induce this fellow to fetch me Voban! There was yet an hour before I was to go to the intendance.

I called up what looks of candour were possible to me, and told him bluntly that I wished Voban to bear a letter for me to the Seigneur Duvarney's. At that he cocked his ear and shook his bushy head, fiercely stroking his mustaches.

I knew that I should stake something if I said it was a letter for Mademoiselle Duvarney, but I knew also that if he was still the Governor's man in Bigot's pay he would understand the Seigneur's relations with the Governor. And a woman in the case with a soldier—that would count for something. So I said it was for her. Besides, I had no other resource but to make a friend among my enemies, if I could, while yet there was a chance.

It was like a load lifted from me when I saw his mouth and eyes open wide in a big soundless laugh, which came to an end with a voiceless aho! I gave him another tumbler of wine. Before he took it, he made a wide mouth at me again, and slapped his leg. After drinking, he said, "Poom—what good? They're going to hang you for a spy."

"That rope's not ready yet," I answered. "I'll tie a pretty knot in another string first, I trust."

"Damned if you haven't spirit!" said he. "That Seigneur Duvarney, I know him; and I know his son the ensign—whung, what saltpetre is he! And the ma'm'selle—excellent, excellent; and a face, such a face, and a seat like leeches in the saddle. And you a British officer mewed up to kick your heels till gallows day! So droll, my dear!"

"But will you fetch Voban?" I asked.

"To trim your hair against the supper to-night—eh, like that?"

As he spoke he puffed out his red cheeks with wide boylike eyes, burst his lips in another soundless laugh, and laid a finger beside his nose. His marvellous innocence of look and his peasant openness hid, I saw, great shrewdness and intelligence—an admirable man for Vaudreuil's purpose, as admirable for mine. I knew well that if I had tried to bribe him he would have scouted me, or if I had made a motion for escape he would have shot me off-hand. But a lady—that appealed to him; and that she was the Seigneur Duvarney's daughter did the rest.

"Yes, yes," said I, "one must be well appointed in soul and body when one sups with his Excellency and Monsieur Doltaire."

"Limed inside and chalked outside," he retorted gleefully. "But M'sieu' Doltaire needs no lime, for he has no soul. No, by Sainte Helois! The good God didn't make him. The devil laughed, and that laugh grew into M'sieu' Doltaire. But brave!—no kicking pulse is in his body."

"You will send for Voban—now?" I asked softly.

He was leaning against the door as he spoke. He reached and put the tumbler on a shelf, then turned and opened the door, his face all altered to a grimness.

"Attend here, Labrouk!" he called; and on the soldier coming, he blurted out in scorn, "Here's this English captain can't go to supper without Voban's shears to snip him. Go fetch him, for I'd rather hear a calf in a barn-yard than this whing-whanging for 'M'sieu' Voban!'"

He mocked my accent in the last two words, so that the soldier grinned, and at once started away. Then he shut the door, and turned to me again, and said more seriously, "How long have we before Monsieur comes?"—meaning Doltaire.

"At least an hour," said I.

"Good," he rejoined, and then he smoked while I sat thinking.

It was near an hour before we heard footsteps outside; then came a knock, and Voban was shown in.

"Quick, m'sieu'," he said. "M'sieu' is almost at our heels."

"This letter," said I, "to Mademoiselle Duvarney," and I handed four: hers, and those to Governor Dinwiddie, to Mr. Washington, and to my partner.

He quickly put them in his coat, nodding. The soldier—I have not yet mentioned his name—Gabord, did not know that more than one passed into Voban's hands.

"Off with your coat, m'sieu'," said Voban, whipping out his shears, tossing his cap aside, and rolling down his apron. "M'sieu' is here."

I had off my coat, was in a chair in a twinkling, and he was clipping softly at me as Doltaire's hand turned the handle of the door.

"Beware—to-night!" Voban whispered.

"Come to me in the prison," said I. "Remember your brother!"

His lips twitched. "M'sieu', I will if I can." This he said in my ear as Doltaire entered and came forward.

"Upon my life!" Doltaire broke out. "These English gallants! They go to prison curled and musked by Voban. VOBAN—a name from the court of the King, and it garnishes a barber. Who called you, Voban?"

"My mother, with the cure's help, m'sieu'."

Doltairé paused, with a pinch of snuff at his nose, and replied lazily, "I did not say 'Who called you VOBAN?' Voban, but who called you here, Voban?"

I spoke up testily then of purpose: "What would you have, monsieur? The citadel has better butchers than barbers. I sent for him."

He shrugged his shoulders and came over to Voban. "Turn round, my Voban," he said. "Voban—and such a figure! a knee, a back like that!"

Then, while my heart stood still, he put forth a finger and touched the barber on the chest. If he should touch the letters! I was ready to seize them—but would that save them? Twice, thrice, the finger prodded Voban's breast, as if to add an emphasis to his words. "In Quebec you are misplaced, Monsieur le Voban. Once a wasp got into a honeycomb and died."

I knew he was hinting at the barber's resentment of the poor Mathilde's fate. Something strange and devilish leapt into the man's eyes, and he broke out bitterly,

"A honey-bee got into a nest of wasps—and died."

I thought of the Scarlet Woman on the hill.

Voban looked for a moment as if he might do some wild thing. His spirit, his devilry, pleased Doltaire, and he laughed. "Who would have thought our Voban had such wit? The trade of barber is double-edged. Razors should be in fashion at Versailles."

Then he sat down, while Voban made a pretty show of touching off my person. A few minutes passed so, in which the pealing of bells, the shouting of the people, the beating of drums, and the calling of bugles came to us clearly.

A half hour afterwards, on our way to the Intendant's palace, we heard the Benedictus chanted in the Church of the Recollets as we passed—hundreds kneeling outside, and responding to the chant sung within:

"That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hands of all that hate us."

At the corner of a building which we passed, a little away from the crowd, I saw a solitary cloaked figure. The words of the chant, following us, I could hear distinctly:

"That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve Him without fear."

And then, from the shadowed corner came in a high, melancholy voice the words:

"To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Looking closer, I saw it was Mathilde.

Doltaire smiled as I turned and begged a moment's time to speak to her.

"To pray with the lost angel and sup with the Intendant, all in one night—a liberal taste, monsieur; but who shall stay the good Samaritan!"

They stood a little distance away, and I went over to her and said, "Mademoiselle—Mathilde, do you not know me?"

Her abstracted eye fired up, as there ran to her brain some little sprite out of the House of Memory and told her who I was.

"There were two lovers in the world," she said: "the Mother of God forgot them, and the devil came. I am the Scarlet Woman," she went on; "I made this red robe from the curtains of Hell—"

Poor soul! My own trouble seemed then as a speck among the stars to hers. I took her hand and held it, saying again, "Do you not know me? Think, Mathilde!"

I was not sure that she had ever seen me, to know me, but I thought it possible; for, as a hostage, I had been much noticed in Quebec, and Voban had, no doubt, pointed me out to her. Light leapt from her black eye, and then she said, putting her finger on her lips, "Tell all the lovers to hide. I have seen a hundred Francois Bigots."

I looked at her, saying nothing—I knew not what to say. Presently her eye steadied to mine, and her intellect rallied. "You are a prisoner, too," she said; "but they will not kill you: they will keep you till the ring of fire grows in your head, and then you will make your scarlet robe, and go out, but you will never find It—never. God hid first, and then It hides.... It hides, that which you lost—It hides, and you can not find It again. You go hunting, hunting, but you can not find It."

My heart was pinched with pain. I understood her. She did not know her lover now at all. If Alixe and her mother at the Manor could but care for her, I thought. But alas! what could I do? It were useless to ask her to go to the Manor; she would not understand.

Perhaps there come to the disordered mind flashes of insight, illuminations and divinations, greater than are given to the sane, for she suddenly said in a whisper, touching me with a nervous finger, "I will go and tell her where to hide. They shall not find her. I know the woodpath to the Manor. Hush! she shall own all I have—except the scarlet robe. She showed me where the May-apples grew. Go,"—she pushed me gently away—"go to your prison, and pray to God. But you can not kill Francois Bigot, he is a devil." Then she thrust into my hands a little wooden cross, which she took from many others at her girdle. "If you wear that, the ring of fire will not grow," she said. "I will go by the woodpath, and give her one, too. She shall live with me: I will spread the cedar branches and stir the fire. She shall be safe. Hush! Go, go softly, for their wicked eyes are everywhere, the were-wolves!"

She put her fingers on my lips for an instant, and then, turning, stole softly away towards the St. Charles River.

Doltaire's mockery brought me back to myself.

"So much for the beads of the addled; now for the bowls of sinful man," said he.

III

THE WAGER AND THE SWORD

As I entered the Intendant's palace with Doltaire I had a singular feeling of elation. My spirits rose unaccountably, and I felt as though it were a fete night, and the day's duty over, the hour of play was

come. I must needs have felt ashamed of it then, and now, were I not sure it was some unbidden operation of the senses. Maybe a merciful Spirit sees how, left alone, we should have stumbled and lost ourselves in our own gloom, and so gives us a new temper fitted to our needs. I remember that at the great door I turned back and smiled upon the ruined granary, and sniffed the air laden with the scent of burnt corn—the peoples bread; that I saw old men and women who could not be moved by news of victory, shaking with cold, even beside this vast furnace, and peevishly babbling of their hunger, and I did not say, "Poor souls!" that for a time the power to feel my own misfortunes seemed gone, and a hard, light indifference came on me.

For it is true I came into the great dining-hall, and looked upon the long loaded table, with its hundred candles, its flagons and pitchers of wine, and on the faces of so many idle, careless gentlemen bid to a carouse, with a manner, I believe, as reckless and jaunty as their own. And I kept it up, though I saw it was not what they had looked for. I did not at once know who was there, but presently, at a distance from me, I saw the face of Juste Duvarney, the brother of my sweet Alixe, a man of but twenty or so, who had a name for wildness, for no badness that I ever heard of, and for a fiery temper. He was in the service of the Governor, an ensign. He had been little at home since I had come to Quebec, having been employed up to the past year in the service of the Governor of Montreal. We bowed, but he made no motion to come to me, and the Intendant engaged me almost at once in gossip of the town; suddenly, however, diverging upon some questions of public tactics and civic government. He much surprised me, for though I knew him brave and able, I had never thought of him save as the adroit politician and servant of the King, the tyrant and the libertine. I might have known by that very scene a few hours before that he had a wide, deep knowledge of human nature, and despised it; unlike Doltaire, who had a keener mind, was more refined even in wickedness, and, knowing the world, laughed at it more than he despised it, which was the sign of the greater mind. And indeed, in spite of all the causes I had to hate Doltaire, it is but just to say he had by nature all the great gifts—misused and disordered as they were. He was the product of his age; having no real moral sense, living life wantonly, making his own law of right or wrong. As a lad, I was taught to think the evil person carried evil in his face, repelling the healthy mind. But long ago I found that this was error. I had no reason to admire Doltaire, and yet to this hour his handsome face, with its shadows and shifting lights, haunts me, charms me. The thought came to me as I talked with the Intendant, and I looked round the room. Some present were of coarse calibre—bushranging sons of seigneurs and petty nobles, dashing and profane, and something barbarous; but most had gifts of person and speech, and all seemed capable.

My spirits continued high. I sprang alertly to meet wit and gossip, my mind ran nimbly here and there, I filled the role of honoured guest. But when came the table and wine, a change befell me. From the first drop I drank, my spirits suffered a decline. On one side the Intendant rallied me, on the other Doltaire. I ate on, drank on; but while smiling by the force of will, I grew graver little by little. Yet it was a gravity which had no apparent motive, for I was not thinking of my troubles, not even of the night's stake and the possible end of it all; simply a sort of gray colour of the mind, a stillness in the nerves, a general seriousness of the senses. I drank, and the wine did not affect me, as voices got loud and louder, and glasses rang, and spurs rattled on shuffling heels, and a scabbard clanged on a chair. I seemed to feel and know it all in some far-off way, but I was not touched by the spirit of it, was not a part of it. I watched the reddened cheeks and loose scorching mouths around me with a sort of distant curiosity, and the ribald jests flung right and left struck me not at all acutely. It was as if I were reading a Book of Bacchus. I drank on evenly, not doggedly, and answered jest for jest without a hot breath of drunkenness. I looked several times at Juste Duvarney, who sat not far away, on the other side of the table, behind a grand piece of silver filled with October roses. He was drinking hard, and Doltaire, sitting beside him, kept him at it. At last the silver piece was shifted, and he and I could see each other fairly. Now and then Doltaire spoke across to me, but somehow no word passed between Duvarney and myself.

Suddenly, as if by magic—I know it was preconcerted—the talk turned on the events of the evening and on the defeat of the British. Then, too, as strangely I began to be myself again, amid a sense of my position grew upon me. I had been withdrawn from all real feeling and living for hours, but I believe that same suspension was my salvation. For with every man present deeply gone in liquor round me—every man save Doltaire—I was sane and steady, and settling into a state of great alertness, determined on escape, if that could be, and bent on turning every chance to serve my purposes.

Now and again I caught my own name mentioned with a sneer, then with remarks of surprise, then with insolent laughter. I saw it all. Before dinner some of the revellers had been told of the new charge against me, and, by instruction, had kept it till the inflammable moment. Then, when the why and wherefore of my being at this supper were in the hazard, the stake, as a wicked jest of Bigot's, was mentioned. I could see the flame grow inch by inch, fed by the Intendant and Doltaire, whose hateful final move I was yet to see. For one instant I had a sort of fear, for I was sure they meant I should not leave the room alive; but anon I felt a river of fiery anger flow through me, rousing me, making me

loathe the faces of them all. Yet not all, for in one pale face, with dark, brilliant eyes, I saw the looks of my flower of the world: the colour of her hair in his, the clearness of the brow, the poise of the head—how handsome he was!—the light, springing step, like a deer on the sod of June. I call to mind when I first saw him. He was sitting in a window of the Manor, just after he had come from Montreal, playing a violin which had once belonged to De Casson, the famous priest whose athletic power and sweet spirit endeared him to New France. His fresh cheek was bent to the brown, delicate wood, and he was playing to his sister the air of the undying chanson, "Je vais mourir pour ma belle reine." I loved the look of his face, like that of a young Apollo, open, sweet, and bold, all his body having the epic strength of life. I wished that I might have him near me as a comrade, for out of my hard experience I could teach him much, and out of his youth he could soften my blunt nature, by comradeship making flexuous the hard and ungenial.

I went on talking to the Intendant, while some of the guests rose and scattered about the rooms, at tables, to play picquet, the jesting on our cause and the scorn of myself abating not at all. I would not have it thought that anything was openly coarse or brutal; it was all by innuendo, and brow-lifting, and maddening, allusive phrases such as it is thought fit for gentlefolk to use instead of open charge. There was insult in a smile, contempt in the turn of a shoulder, challenge in the flicking of a handkerchief. With great pleasure I could have wrung their noses one by one, and afterwards have met them tossing sword-points in the same order. I wonder now that I did not tell them so, for I was ever hasty; but my brain was clear that night, and I held myself in proper check, letting each move come from my enemies. There was no reason why I should have been at this wild feast at all, I a prisoner, accused falsely of being a spy, save because of some plot by which I was to have fresh suffering and some one else be benefited—though how that could be I could not guess at first.

But soon I understood everything. Presently I heard a young gentleman say to Duvarney over my shoulder:

"Eating comfits and holding yarn—that was his doing at your manor when Doltaire came hunting him."

"He has dined at your table, Lancy," broke out Duvarney hotly.

"But never with our ladies," was the biting answer.

"Should prisoners make conditions?" was the sharp, insolent retort.

The insult was conspicuous, and trouble might have followed, but that Doltaire came between them, shifting the attack.

"Prisoners, my dear Duvarney," said he, "are most delicate and exacting; they must be fed on wine and milk. It is an easy life, and hearts grow soft for them. As thus— Indeed, it is most sad: so young and gallant; in speech, too, so confiding! And if we babble all our doings to him, think you he takes it seriously? No, no—so gay and thoughtless, there is a thoroughfare from ear to ear, and all's lost on the other side. Poor simple gentleman, he is a claimant on our courtesy, a knight without a sword, a guest without the power to leave us—he shall make conditions, he shall have his caprice. La, la! my dear Duvarney and my Lancy!"

He spoke in a clear, provoking tone, putting a hand upon the shoulder of each young gentleman as he talked, his eyes wandering over me idly, and beyond me. I saw that he was now sharpening the sickle to his office. His next words made this more plain to me:

"And if a lady gives a farewell sign to one she favours for the moment, shall not the prisoner take it as his own?" (I knew he was recalling Alixe's farewell gesture to me at the manor.) "Who shall gainsay our peacock? Shall the guinea cock? The golden crumb was thrown to the guinea cock, but that's no matter. The peacock clatters of the crumb." At that he spoke an instant in Duvarney's ear. I saw the lad's face flush, and he looked at me angrily.

Then I knew his object: to provoke a quarrel between this young gentleman and myself, which might lead to evil ends; and the Intendant's share in the conspiracy was to revenge himself upon the Seigneur for his close friendship with the Governor. If Juste Duvarney were killed in the duel which they foresaw, so far as Doltaire was concerned I was out of the counting in the young lady's sight. In any case my life was of no account, for I was sure my death was already determined on. Yet it seemed strange that Doltaire should wish me dead, for he had reasons for keeping me alive, as shall be seen.

Juste Duvarney liked me once, I knew, but still he had the Frenchman's temper, and had always to argue down his bias against my race, and to cherish a good heart towards me; for he was young, and most sensitive to the opinions of his comrades. I can not express what misery possessed me when I saw him leave Doltaire, and, coming to me where I stood alone, say—

"What secrets found you at our seigneury, monsieur?"

I understood the taunt—as though I were the common interrogation mark, the abuser of hospitality, the abominable Paul Pry. But I held my wits together.

"Monsieur," said I, "I found the secret of all good life: a noble kindness to the unfortunate."

There was a general laugh, led by Doltaire, a concerted influence on the young gentleman. I cursed myself that I had been snared to this trap.

"The insolent," responded Duvarney, "not the unfortunate."

"Insolence is no crime, at least," I rejoined quietly, "else this room were a penitentiary."

There was a moment's pause, and presently, as I kept my eye on him, he raised his handkerchief and flicked me across the face with it, saying, "Then this will be a virtue, and you may have more such virtues as often as you will."

In spite of will, my blood pounded in my veins, and a devilish anger took hold of me. To be struck across the face by a beardless Frenchman, scarce past his teens!—it shook me more than now I care to own. I felt my cheek burn, my teeth clinched, and I know a kind of snarl came from me; but again, all in a moment, I caught a turn of his head, a motion of the hand, which brought back Alixe to me. Anger died away, and I saw only a youth flushed with wine, stung by suggestions, with that foolish pride the youngster feels—and he was the youngest of them all—in being as good a man as the best, and as daring as the worst. I felt how useless it would be to try the straightening of matters there, though had we two been alone a dozen words would have been enough. But to try was my duty, and I tried with all my might; almost, for Alixe's sake, with all my heart.

"Do not trouble to illustrate your meaning," said I patiently. "Your phrases are clear and to the point."

"You bolt from my words," he retorted, "like a shy mare on the curb; you take insult like a donkey on a well-wheel. What fly will the English fish rise to? Now it no more plays to my hook than an August chub."

I could not help but admire his spirit and the sharpness of his speech, though it drew me into a deeper quandary. It was clear that he would not be tempered to friendliness; for, as is often so, when men have said things fiercely, their eloquence feeds their passion and convinces them of holiness in their cause. Calmly, but with a heavy heart, I answered:

"I wish not to find offense in your words, my friend, for in some good days gone you and I had good acquaintance, and I can not forget that the last hours of a light imprisonment before I entered on a dark one were spent in the home of your father—of the brave Seigneur whose life I once saved."

I am sure I should not have mentioned this in any other situation—it seemed as if I were throwing myself on his mercy; but yet I felt it was the only thing to do—that I must bridge this affair, if at cost of some reputation.

It was not to be. Here Doltaire, seeing that my words had indeed affected my opponent, said: "A double retreat! He swore to give a challenge to-night, and he cries off like a sheep from a porcupine; his courage is so slack, he dares not move a step to his liberty. It was a bet, a hazard. He was to drink glass for glass with any and all of us, and fight sword for sword with any of us who gave him cause. Having drunk his courage to death, he'd now browse at the feet of those who give him chance to win his stake."

His words came slowly and biting, yet with an air of damnable nonchalance. I looked round me. Every man present was full-sprung with wine; and a distance away, a gentleman on either side of him, stood the Intendant, smiling detestably, a keen, houndlike look shooting out of his small round eyes.

I had had enough; I could bear no more. To be baited like a bear by these Frenchmen—it was aloe in my teeth! I was not sorry then that these words of Juste Duvarney's gave me no chance of escape from fighting; though I would it had been any other man in the room than he. It was on my tongue to say that if some gentleman would take up his quarrel I should be glad to drive mine home, though for reasons I cared not myself to fight Duvarney. But I did not, for I knew that to carry that point farther might rouse a general thought of Alixe, and I had no wish to make matters hard for her. Everything in its own good time, and when I should be free! So, without more ado, I said to him:

"Monsieur, the quarrel was of your choosing, not mine. There was no need for strife between us, and you have more to lose than I: more friends, more years of life, more hopes. I have avoided your bait, as

you call it, for your sake, not mine own. Now I take it, and you, monsieur, show us what sort of fisherman you are."

All was arranged in a moment. As we turned to pass from the room to the courtyard, I noted that Bigot was gone. When we came outside, it was just one, as I could tell by a clock striking in a chamber near. It was cold, and some of the company shivered as we stepped upon the white, frosty stones. The late October air bit the cheek, though now and then a warm, pungent current passed across the courtyard—the breath from the people's burnt corn. Even yet upon the sky was the reflection of the fire, and distant sounds of singing, shouting, and carousal came to us from the Lower Town.

We stepped to a corner of the yard and took off our coats; swords were handed us—both excellent, for we had had our choice of many. It was partial moonlight, but there were flitting clouds. That we should have light, however, pine torches had been brought, and these were stuck in the wall. My back was to the outer wall of the courtyard, and I saw the Intendant at a window of the palace looking down at us. Doltaire stood a little apart from the other gentlemen in the courtyard, yet where he could see Duvarney and myself at advantage.

Before we engaged, I looked intently into my opponent's face, and measured him carefully with my eye, that I might have his height and figure explicit and exact; for I know how moonlight and fire distort, how the eye may be deceived. I looked for every button; for the spot in his lean, healthy body where I could disable him, spit him, and yet not kill him—for this was the thing furthest from my wishes, God knows. Now the deadly character of the event seemed to impress him, for he was pale, and the liquor he had drunk had given him dark hollows round the eyes, and a gray shining sweat was on his cheek. But his eyes themselves were fiery and keen and there was reckless daring in every turn of his body.

I was not long in finding his quality, for he came at me violently from the start, and I had chance to know his strength and weakness also. His hand was quick, his sight clear and sure, his knowledge to a certain point most definite and practical, his mastery of the sword delightful; but he had little imagination, he did not divine, he was merely a brilliant performer, he did not conceive. I saw that if I put him on the defensive I should have him at advantage, for he had not that art of the true swordsman, the prescient quality which foretells the opponents action and stands prepared. There I had him at fatal advantage—could, I felt, give him last reward of insult at my pleasure. Yet a lust of fighting got into me, and it was difficult to hold myself in check at all, nor was it easy to meet his breathless and adroit advances.

Then, too, remarks from the bystanders worked me up to a deep sort of anger, and I could feel Doltaire looking at me with that still, cold face of his, an ironical smile at his lips. Now and then, too, a ribald jest came from some young roisterer near, and the fact that I stood alone among sneering enemies wound me up to a point where pride was more active than aught else. I began to press him a little, and I pricked him once. Then a singular feeling possessed me. I would bring this to an end when I had counted ten; I would strike home when I said "ten."

So I began, and I was not aware then that I was counting aloud. "One—two—three!" It was weird to the onlookers, for the yard grew still, and you could hear nothing but maybe a shifting foot or a hard breathing. "Four—five—six!" There was a tenseness in the air, and Juste Duvarney, as if he felt a menace in the words, seemed to lose all sense of wariness, and came at me lunging, lunging with great swiftness and heat. I was incensed now, and he must take what fortune might send; one can not guide one's sword to do the least harm fighting as did we.

I had lost blood, and the game could go on no longer. "Eight!" I pressed him sharply now. "Nine!" I was preparing for the trick which would end the matter, when I slipped on the frosty stones, now glazed with our tramping back and forth, and, trying to recover myself, left my side open to his sword. It came home, though I partly diverted it. I was forced to my knees, but there, mad, unpardonable youth, he made another furious lunge at me. I threw myself back, deftly avoided the lunge, and he came plump on my upstretched sword, gave a long gasp, and sank down.

At that moment the doors of the courtyard opened, and men stepped inside, one coming quickly forward before the rest. It was the Governor, the Marquis de Vaudreuil. He spoke, but what he said I knew not, for the stark upturned face of Juste Duvarney was there before me, there was a great buzzing in my ears, and I fell back into darkness.

IV

When I waked I was alone. At first nothing was clear to me; my brain was dancing in my head, my sight was obscured, my body painful, my senses were blunted. I was in darkness, yet through an open door there showed a light, which, from the smell and flickering, I knew to be a torch. This, creeping into my senses, helped me to remember that the last thing I saw in the Intendant's courtyard was a burning torch, which suddenly multiplied to dancing hundreds and then went out. I now stretched forth a hand, and it touched a stone wall; I moved, and felt straw under me. Then I fixed my eyes steadily on the open door and the shaking light, and presently it all came to me: the events of the night, and that I was now in a cell of the citadel. Stirring, I found that the wound in my body had been bound and cared for. A loosely tied scarf round my arm showed that some one had lately left me, and would return to finish the bandaging. I raised myself with difficulty, and saw a basin of water, a sponge, bits of cloth, and a pocket-knife. Stupid and dazed though I was, the instinct of self-preservation lived, and I picked up the knife and hid it in my coat. I did it, I believe, mechanically, for a hundred things were going through my mind at the time.

All at once there rushed in on me the thought of Juste Duvarney as I saw him last—how long ago was it?—his white face turned to the sky, his arms stretched out, his body dabbled in blood. I groaned aloud. Fool, fool! to be trapped by these lying French! To be tricked into playing their shameless games for them, to have a broken body, to have killed the brother of the mistress of my heart, and so cut myself off from her and ruined my life for nothing—for worse than nothing! I had swaggered, boasted, had taken a challenge for a bout and a quarrel like any hanger-on of a tavern.

Suddenly I heard footsteps and voices outside; then one voice, louder than the other, saying, "He hasn't stirred a peg—lies like a log!" It was Gabord.

Doltaire's voice replied, "You will not need a surgeon—no?" His tone, as it seemed to me, was less careless than usual.

Gabord answered, "I know the trick of it all—what can a surgeon do? This brandy will fetch him to his intellects. And by-and-bye crack'll go his spine—aho!"

You have heard a lion growling on a bone. That is how Gabord's voice sounded to me then—a brutal rawness; but it came to my mind also that this was the man who had brought Voban to do me service!

"Come, come, Gabord, crack your jaws less, and see you fetch him on his feet again," said Doltaire. "From the seats of the mighty they have said that he must live—to die another day; and see to it, or the mighty folk will say that you must die to live another day—in a better world, my Gabord."

There was a moment in which the only sound was that of tearing linen, and I could see the shadows of the two upon the stone wall of the corridor wavering to the light of the torch; then the shadows shifted entirely, and their footsteps came on towards my door. I was lying on my back as when I came to, and, therefore, probably as Gabord had left me, and I determined to appear still in a faint. Through nearly closed eyelids however I saw Gabord enter. Doltaire stood in the doorway watching as the soldier knelt and lifted my arm to take off the bloody scarf. His manner was imperturbable as ever. Even then I wondered what his thoughts were, what pungent phrase he was suiting to the time and to me. I do not know to this day which more interested him—that very pungency of phrase, or the critical events which inspired his reflections. He had no sense of responsibility; his mind loved talent, skill, and cleverness, and though it was scathing of all usual ethics, for the crude, honest life of the poor it had sympathy. I remember remarks of his in the market-place a year before, as he and I watched the peasant in his sabots and the good-wife in her homespun cloth.

"These are they," said he, "who will save the earth one day, for they are like it, kin to it. When they are born they lie close to it, and when they die they fall no height to reach their graves. The rest—the world—are like ourselves in dreams: we do not walk; we think we fly, over houses, over trees, over mountains; and then one blessed instant the spring breaks, or the dream gets twisted, and we go falling, falling, in a sickening fear, and, waking up, we find we are and have been on the earth all the while, and yet can make no claim on it, and have no kin with it, and no right to ask anything of it—quelle vie—quelle vie!"

Sick as I was, I thought of that as he stood there, looking in at me; and though I knew I ought to hate him, I admired him in spite of all.

Presently he said to Gabord, "You'll come to me at noon to-morrow, and see you bring good news. He breathes?"

Gabord put a hand on my chest and at my neck, and said at once, "Breath for balloons—aho!"

Doltaire threw his cloak over his shoulder and walked away, his footsteps sounding loud in the

passages. Gabord began humming to himself as he tied the bandages, and then he reached down for the knife to cut the flying strings. I could see this out of a little corner of my eye. When he did not find it, he settled back on his haunches and looked at me. I could feel his lips puffing out, and I was ready for the "Poom!" that came from him. Then I could feel him stooping over me, and his hot strong breath in my face. I was so near to unconsciousness at that moment by a sudden anxiety that perhaps my feigning had the look of reality. In any case, he thought me unconscious and fancied that he had taken the knife away with him; for he tucked in the strings of the bandage. Then, lifting my head, he held the flask to my lips; for which I was most grateful—I was dizzy and miserably faint.

I think I came to with rather more alacrity than was wise, but he was deceived, and his first words were, "Ho, ho! the devil's knocking; who's for home, angels?"

It was his way to put all things allusively, using strange figures and metaphors. Yet, when one was used to him and to them, their potency seemed greater than polished speech and ordinary phrase.

He offered me more brandy, and then, without preface, I asked him the one question which sank back on my heart like a load of ice even as I sent it forth. "Is he alive?" I inquired. "Is Monsieur Juste Duvarney alive?"

With exasperating coolness he winked an eye, to connect the event with what he knew of the letter I had sent to Alixe, and, cocking his head, he blew out his lips with a soundless laugh, and said:

"To whisk the brother off to heaven is to say good-bye to sister and pack yourself to Father Peter."

"For God's sake, tell me, is the boy dead?" I asked, my voice cracking in my throat.

"He's not mounted for the journey yet," he answered, with a shrug, "but the Beast is at the door."

I plied my man with questions, and learned that they had carried Juste into the palace for dead, but found life in him, and straightway used all means to save him. A surgeon came, his father and mother were sent for, and when Doltaire had left there was hope that he would live.

I learned also that Voban had carried word to the Governor of the deed to be done that night; had for a long time failed to get admittance to him, but was at last permitted to tell his story; and Vaudreuil had gone to Bigot's palace to have me hurried to the citadel, and had come just too late.

After answering my first few questions, Gabord say nothing more, and presently he took the torch from the wall and with a gruff good-night prepared to go. When I asked that a light be left, he shook his head, said he had no orders. Whereupon he left me, the heavy door clanging to, the bolts were shot, and I was alone in darkness with my wounds and misery. My cloak had been put into the cell beside my couch, and this I now drew over me, and I lay and thought upon my condition and my prospects, which, as may be seen, were not cheering. I did not suffer great pain from my wounds—only a stiffness that troubled me not at all if I lay still. After an hour or so passed—for it is hard to keep count of time when one's thoughts are the only timekeeper—I fell asleep.

I know not how long I slept, but I awoke refreshed. I stretched forth my uninjured arm, moving it about. In spite of will a sort of hopelessness went through me, for I could feel long blades of corn grown up about my couch, an unnatural meadow, springing from the earth floor of my dungeon. I drew the blades between my fingers, feeling towards them as if they were things of life out of place like myself. I wondered what colour they were. Surely, said I to myself, they can not be green, but rather a yellowish white, bloodless, having only fibre, the heart all pinched to death. Last night I had not noted them, yet now, looking back, I saw, as in a picture, Gabord the soldier feeling among them for the knife that I had taken. So may we see things, and yet not be conscious of them at the time, waking to their knowledge afterwards. So may we for years look upon a face without understanding, and then, suddenly, one day it comes flashing out, and we read its hidden story like a book.

I put my hand out farther, then brought it back near to my couch, feeling towards its foot mechanically, and now I touched an earthen pan. A small board lay across its top, and moving my fingers along it I found a piece of bread. Then I felt the jar, and knew it was filled with water. Sitting back, I thought hard for a moment. Of this I was sure: the pan and bread were not there when I went to sleep, for this was the spot where my eyes fell naturally while I lay in bed looking towards Doltaire; and I should have remembered it now, even if I had not noted it then. My jailer had brought these while I slept. But it was still dark. I waked again as though out of sleep, startled: I was in a dungeon that had no window!

Here I was, packed away in a farthest corner of the citadel, in a deep hole that maybe had not been used for years, to be, no doubt, denied all contact with the outer world—I was going to say FRIENDS, but whom could I name among them save that dear soul who, by last night's madness, should her

brother be dead, was forever made dumb and blind to me? Whom had I but her and Voban!—and Voban was yet to be proved. The Seigneur Duvarney had paid all debts he may have owed me, and he now might, because of the injury to his son, leave me to my fate. On Gabord the soldier I could not count at all.

There I was, as Doltaire had said, like a rat in a trap. But I would not let panic seize me. So I sat and ate the stale but sweet bread, took a long drink of the good water from the earthen jar, and then, stretching myself out, drew my cloak up to my chin, and settled myself for sleep again. And that I might keep up a kind delusion that I was not quite alone in the bowels of the earth, I reached out my hand and affectionately drew the blades of corn between my fingers.

Presently I drew my chin down to my shoulder, and let myself drift out of painful consciousness almost as easily as a sort of woman can call up tears at will. When I waked again, it was without a start or moving, without confusion, and I was bitterly hungry. Beside my couch, with his hands on his hips and his feet thrust out, stood Gabord, looking down at me in a quizzical and unsatisfied way. A torch was burning near him.

"Wake up, my dickey-bird," said he in his rough, mocking voice, "and we'll snuggle you into the pot. You've been long hiding; come out of the bush—aho!"

I drew myself up painfully. "What is the hour?" I asked, and meanwhile I looked for the earthen jar and the bread.

"Hour since when?" said he.

"Since it was twelve o'clock last night," I answered.

"Fourteen hours since THEN," said he.

The emphasis arrested my attention. "I mean," I added, "since the fighting in the courtyard."

"Thirty-six hours and more since then, m'sieu' the dormouse," was his reply.

I had slept a day and a half since the doors of this cell closed on me. It was Friday then; now it was Sunday afternoon. Gabord had come to me three times, and seeing how sound asleep I was had not disturbed me, but had brought bread and water—my prescribed diet.

He stood there, his feet buried in the blanched corn—I could see the long yellowish-white blades—the torch throwing shadows about him, his back against the wall. I looked carefully round my dungeon. There was no a sign of a window; I was to live in darkness. Yet if I were but allowed candles, or a lantern, or a torch, some books, paper, pencil, and tobacco, and the knowledge that I had not killed Juste Duvarney, I could abide the worst with some sort of calmness. How much might have happened, must have happened, in all these hours of sleep! My letter to Alixe should have been delivered long ere this; my trial, no doubt, had been decided on. What had Voban done? Had he any word for me? Dear Lord! here was a mass of questions tumbling one upon the other in my head, while my heart thumped behind my waistcoat like a rubber ball to a prize-fighter's fist. Misfortunes may be so great and many that one may find grim humour and grotesqueness in their impossible conjunction and multiplicity. I remembered at that moment a friend of mine in Virginia, the most unfortunate man I ever knew. Death, desertion, money losses, political defeat, flood, came one upon the other all in two years, and coupled with this was loss of health. One day he said to me:

"Robert, I have a perforated lung, my liver is a swelling sponge, eating crowds my waistband like a balloon, I have a swimming in my head and a sinking at my heart, and I can not say litany for happy release from these for my knees creak with rheumatism. The devil has done his worst, Robert, for these are his—plague and pestilence, being final, are the will of God—and, upon my soul, it is an absurd comedy of ills!" At that he had a fit of coughing, and I gave him a glass of spirits, which eased him.

"That's better," said I cheerily to him.

"It's robbing Peter to pay Paul," he answered; "for I owed it to my head to put the quid refert there, and here it's gone to my lungs to hurry up my breathing. Did you ever think, Robert," he added, "that this breathing of ours is a labor, and that we have to work every second to keep ourselves alive? We have to pump air in and out like a blacksmith's boy." He said it so drolly, though he was deadly ill, that I laughed for half an hour at the stretch, wiping away my tears as I did it; for his pale gray face looked so sorry, with its quaint smile and that odd, dry voice of his.

As I sat there in my dungeon, with Gabord cocking his head and his eyes rolling, that scene flashed on me, and I laughed freely—so much so that Gabord sulkily puffed out his lips, and flamed like bunting

on a coast-guard's hut. The more he scowled and spluttered, the more I laughed, till my wounded side hurt me and my arm had twinges. But my mood changed suddenly, and I politely begged his pardon, telling him frankly then and there what had made me laugh, and how I had come to think of it. The flame passed out of his cheeks, the revolving fire of his eyes dimmed, his lips broke into a soundless laugh, and then, in his big voice, he said:

"You've got your knees to pray on yet, and crack my bones, but you'll have need to con your penitentials if tattle in the town be true."

"Before you tell of that," said I, "how is young Monsieur Duvarney? Is—is he alive?" I added, as I saw his face look lower.

"The Beast was at door again last night, wild to be off, and foot of young Seigneur was in the stirrup, when along comes sister with drug got from an Indian squaw who nursed her when a child. She gives it him, and he drinks; they carry him back, sleeping, and Beast must stand there tugging at the leathers yet."

"His sister—it was his sister," said I, "that brought him back to life?"

"Like that—aho! They said she must not come, but she will have her way. Straight she goes to the palace at night, no one knowing but—guess who? You can't—but no!"

A light broke in on me. "With the Scarlet Woman—with Mathilde," I said, hoping in my heart that it was so, for somehow I felt even then that she, poor vagrant, would play a part in the history of Alixe's life and mine.

"At the first shot," he said. "'Twas the crimson one, as quiet as a baby chick, not hanging to ma'm'selle's skirts, but watching and whispering a little now and then—and she there in Bigot's palace, and he not knowing it! And maids do not tell him, for they knew the poor wench in better days—aho!"

I got up with effort and pain, and made to grasp his hand in gratitude, but he drew back, putting his arms behind him.

"No, no," said he, "I am your jailer. They've put you here to break your high spirits, and I'm to help the breaking."

"But I thank you just the same," I answered him; "and I promise to give you as little trouble as may be while you are my jailer—which, with all my heart, I hope may be as long as I'm a prisoner."

He waved out his hands to the dungeon walls, and lifted his shoulders as if to say that I might as well be docile, for the prison was safe enough. "Poom!" said he, as if in genial disdain of my suggestion.

I smiled, and then, after putting my hands on the walls here and there to see if they were, as they seemed, quite dry, I drew back to my couch and sat down. Presently I stooped to tip the earthen jar of water to my lips, for I could not lift it with one hand, but my humane jailer took it from me and held it to my mouth. When I had drunk, "Do you know," asked I as calmly as I could, "if our barber gave the letter to Mademoiselle?"

"M'sieu', you've travelled far to reach that question," said he, jangling his keys as if he enjoyed it. "And if he had—?"

I caught at his vague suggestion, and my heart leaped.

"A reply," said I, "a message or a letter," though I had not dared to let myself even think of that.

He whipped a tiny packet from his coat. "'Tis a sparrow's pecking—no great matter here, eh?"—he weighed it up and down on his fingers—"a little piping wren's par pitie."

I reached out for it. "I should read it," said he. "There must be no more of this. But new orders came AFTER I'd got her dainty a m'sieu'! Yes, I must read it," said he—"but maybe not at first," he added, "not at first, if you'll give word of honour not to tear it."

"On my sacred honour," said I, reaching out still.

He looked it all over again provokingly, and then lifted it to his nose, for it had a delicate perfume. Then he gave a little grunt of wonder and pleasure, and handed it over.

I broke the seal, and my eyes ran swiftly through the lines, traced in a firm, delicate hand. I could see through it all the fine, sound nature, by its healthy simplicity mastering anxiety, care, and fear.

"Robert," she wrote, "by God's help my brother will live, to repent with you, I trust, of Friday night's ill work. He was near gone, yet we have held him back from that rough-rider, Death.

"You will thank God, will you not, that my brother did not die? Indeed, I feel you have. I do not blame you; I know—I need not tell you how—the heart of the affair; and even my mother can see through the wretched thing. My father says little, and he has not spoken harshly; for which I gave thanksgiving this morning in the chapel of the Ursulines. Yet you are in a dungeon, covered with wounds of my brother's making, both of you victims of others' villainy, and you are yet to bear worse things, for they are to try you for your life. But never shall I believe that they will find you guilty of dishonour. I have watched you these three years; I do not, nor ever will, doubt you, dear friend of my heart.

"You would not believe it, Robert, and you may think it fanciful, but as I got up from my prayers at the chapel I looked towards a window, and it being a little open, for it is a sunny day, there sat a bird on the sill, a little brown bird that peeped and nodded. I was so won by it that I came softly over to it. It did not fly away, but hopped a little here and there. I stretched out my hand gently on the stone, and putting its head now this side, now that, at last it tripped into it, and chirped most sweetly. After I had kissed it I placed it back on the window-sill, that it might fly away again. Yet no, it would not go, but stayed there, tipping its gold-brown head at me as though it would invite me to guess why it came. Again I reached out my hand, and once more it tripped into it. I stood wondering and holding it to my bosom, when I heard a voice behind me say, 'The bird would be with thee, my child. God hath many signs.' I turned and saw the good Mere St. George looking at me, she of whom I was always afraid, so distant is she. I did not speak, but only looked at her, and she nodded kindly at me and passed on.

"And, Robert, as I write to you here in the Intendant's palace (what a great wonderful place it is! I fear I do not hate it and its luxury as I ought!), the bird is beside me in a cage upon the table, with a little window open, so that it may come out if it will. My brother lies in the bed asleep; I can touch him if I but put out my hand, and I am alone save for one person. You sent two messengers: can you not guess the one that will be with me? Poor Mathilde, she sits and gazes at me till I almost fall weeping. But she seldom speaks, she is so quiet—as if she knew that she must keep a secret. For, Robert, though I know you did not tell her, she knows—she knows that you love me, and she has given me a little wooden cross which she said will make us happy.

"My mother did not drive her away, as I half feared she would, and at last she said that I might house her with one of our peasants. Meanwhile she is with me here. She is not so mad but that she has wisdom too, and she shall have my care and friendship.

"I bid thee to God's care, Robert. I need not tell thee to be not dismayed. Thou hast two jails, and one wherein I lock thee safe is warm and full of light. If the hours drag by, think of all thou wouldst do if thou wert free to go to thine own country—yet alas that thought!—and of what thou wouldst say if thou couldst speak to thy ALIXE.

"Postscript.—I trust that they have cared for thy wounds, and that thou hast light and food and wine. Voban hath promised to discover this for me. The soldier Gabord, at the citadel, he hath a good heart. Though thou canst expect no help from him, yet he will not be rougher than his orders. He did me a good service once, and he likes me, and I him. And so fare thee well, Robert. I will not languish; I will act, and not be weary. Dost thou really love me?"

V

THE DEVICE OF THE DORMOUSE

When I had read the letter, I handed it up to Gabord without a word. A show of trust in him was the only thing, for he had enough knowledge of our secret to ruin us, if he chose. He took the letter, turned it over, looking at it curiously, and at last, with a shrug of the shoulders, passed it back.

"'Tis a long tune on a dot of a fiddle," said he, for indeed the letter was but a small affair in bulk. "I'd need two pairs of eyes and telescope! Is it all Heart-o'-my-heart, and Come-trip-in-dewy-grass—aho? Or is there knave at window to bear m'sieu' away?"

I took the letter from him. "Listen," said I, "to what the lady says of you." And then I read him that part of her postscript which had to do with himself.

He put his head on one side like a great wise magpie, and "H'm—ha!" said he whimsically, "aho! Gabord the soldier, Gabord, thou hast a good heart—and the birds fed the beast with plums and froth of comfits till he died, and on his sugar tombstone they carved the words, 'Gabord had a good heart.'"

"It was spoken out of a true spirit," said I petulantly, for I could not bear from a common soldier even a tone of disparagement, though I saw the exact meaning of his words. So I added, "You shall read the whole letter, or I will read it to you and you shall judge. On the honour of a gentleman, I will read all of it!"

"Poom!" said he, "English fire-eater! corn-cracker! Show me the 'good heart' sentence, for I'd see how it is written—how GABORD looks with a woman's whimsies round it."

I traced the words with my fingers, holding the letter near the torch. "Yet he will not be rougher than his orders," said he after me, and "He did me a good service once."

"Comfits," he continued; "well, thou shalt have comfits, too," and he fished from his pocket a parcel. It was my tobacco and my pipe.

Truly, my state might have been vastly worse. Little more was said between Gabord and myself, but he refused bluntly to carry message or letter to anybody, and bade me not to vex him with petitions. But he left me the torch and a flint and steel, so I had light for a space, and I had my blessed tobacco and pipe. When the doors clanged shut and the bolts were shot, I lay back on my couch.

I was not all unhappy. Thank God, they had not put chains on me, as Governor Dinwiddie had done with a French prisoner at Williamsburg, for whom I had vainly sought to be exchanged two years before, though he was my equal in all ways and importance. Doltaire was the cause of that, as you shall know. Well, there was one more item to add to his indebtedness. My face flushed and my fingers tingled at thought of him, and so I resolutely turned my meditations elsewhere, and again in a little while I seemed to think of nothing, but lay and bathed in the silence, and indulged my eyes with the good red light of the torch, inhaling its pitchy scent. I was conscious, yet for a time I had no thought: I was like something half animal, half vegetable, which feeds, yet has no mouth, nor sees, nor hears, nor has sense, but only lives. I seemed hung in space, as one feels when going from sleep to waking—a long lane of half-numb life, before the open road of full consciousness is reached.

At last I was aroused by the sudden cracking of a knot in the torch. I saw that it would last but a few hours more. I determined to put it out, for I might be allowed no more light, and even a few minutes of this torch every day would be a great boon. So I took it from its place, and was about to quench it in the moist earth at the foot of the wall, when I remembered my tobacco and my pipe. Can you think how joyfully I packed full the good brown bowl, delicately filling in every little corner, and at last held it to the flame, and saw it light? That first long whiff was like the indrawn breath of the cold, starved hunter, when, stepping into his house, he sees food, fire, and wife on his hearthstone. Presently I put out the torchlight, and then went back to my couch and sat down, the bowl shining like a star before me.

There and then a purpose came to me—something which would keep my brain from wandering, my nerves from fretting and wearing, for a time at least. I determined to write to my dear Alixe the true history of my life, even to the point—and after—of this thing which now was bringing me to so ill a pass. But I was in darkness, I had no paper, pens, nor ink. After a deal of thinking I came at last to the solution. I would compose the story, and learn it by heart, sentence by sentence, as I so composed it.

So there and then I began to run back over the years of my life, even to my first remembrances, that I might see it from first to last in a sort of whole and with a kind of measurement. But when I began to dwell upon my childhood, one little thing gave birth to another swiftly, as you may see one flicker in the heaven multiply and break upon the mystery of the dark, filling the night with clusters of stars. As I thought, I kept drawing spears of the dungeon corn between my fingers softly (they had come to be like comrades to me), and presently there flashed upon me the very first memory of my life. It had never come to me before, and I knew now that it was the beginning of conscious knowledge: for we can never know till we can remember. When a child remembers what it sees or feels, it has begun life.

I put that recollection into the letter which I wrote Alixe, and it shall be set down forthwith and in little space, though it took me so very many days and weeks to think it out, to give each word a fixed place, so that it should go from my mind no more. Every phrase of that story as I told it is as fixed as stone in my memory. Yet it must not be thought I can give it all here. I shall set down only a few things, but you shall find in them the spirit of the whole. I will come at once to the body of the letter.

VI

MORAY TELLS THE STORY OF HIS LIFE

"...I would have you know of what I am and whence I came, though I have given you glimpses in the

past. That done, I will make plain why I am charged with this that puts my life in danger, which would make you blush that you ever knew me if it were true. And I will show you first a picture as it runs before me, sitting here, the corn of my dungeon garden twining in my fingers:—

"A multiplying width of green grass spotted with white flowers, an upland where sheep browsed on a carpet of purple and gold and green, a tall rock on a hill where birds perched and fluttered, a blue sky arching over all. There, sprawling in a garden, a child pulled at long blades of grass, as he watched the birds flitting about the rocks, and heard a low voice coming down the wind. Here in my dungeon I can hear the voice as I have not heard it since that day in the year 1730—that voice stilled so long ago. The air and the words come floating down (for the words I knew years afterwards):

'Did ye see the white cloud in the glint o' the sun?

That's the brow and the eye o' my bairnie.

Did ye ken the red bloom at the bend o' the crag?

That's the rose in the cheek o' my bairnie.

Did ye hear the gay lilt o' the lark by the burn?

That's the voice of my bairnie, my dearie.

Did ye smell the wild scent in the green o' the wood?

That's the breath o' my ain, o' my bairnie.

Sae I'll gang awa' hame, to the shine o' the fire,

To the cot where I lie wi' my bairnie.'

"These words came crooning over the grass of that little garden at Balmore which was by my mother's home. There I was born one day in June, though I was reared in the busy streets of Glasgow, where my father was a prosperous merchant and famous for his parts and honesty.

"I see myself, a little child of no great strength, for I was, indeed, the only one of my family who lived past infancy, and my mother feared she should never bring me up. She, too, is in that picture, tall, delicate, kind yet firm of face, but with a strong brow, under which shone grave gray eyes, and a manner so distinguished that none might dispute her kinship to the renowned Montrose, who was lifted so high in dying, though his gallows was but thirty feet, that all the world has seen him there. There was one other in that picture, standing near my mother, and looking at me, who often used to speak of our great ancestor—my grandfather, John Mitchell, the Gentleman of Balmore, as he was called, out of regard for his ancestry and his rare merits.

"I have him well in mind: his black silk breeches and white stockings and gold seals, and two eyes that twinkled with great humour when, as he stooped over me, I ran my head between his calves and held him tight. I recall how my mother said, 'I doubt that I shall ever bring him up,' and how he replied (the words seem to come through great distances to me), 'He'll live to be Montrose the second, rascal laddie! Four seasons at the breast? Tut, tut! what o' that? 'Tis but his foolery, his scampishness! Nae, nae! his epitaph's no for writing till you and I are tucked i' the sod, my Jeanie. Then, like Montrose's, it will be—

'Tull Edinburrw they led him thair,

And on a gallows hong;

They hong him high abone the rest,

He was so trim a boy.'

"I can hear his laugh this minute, as he gave an accent to the words by stirring me with his stick, and I caught the gold head of it and carried it off, trailing it through the garden, till I heard my mother calling, and then forced her to give me chase, as I pushed open a little gate and posted away into that wide world of green, coming quickly to the river, where I paused and stood at bay. I can see my mother's anxious face now, as she caught me to her arms; and yet I know she had a kind of pride, too, when my grandfather said, on our return, 'The rascal's at it early. Next time he'll ford the stream and skirl at ye, Jeanie, from yonder bank.'

"This is the first of my life that I remember. It may seem strange to you that I thus suddenly recall not only it, but the words then spoken too. It is strange to me, also. But here it comes to me all on a sudden in this silence, as if another self of me were speaking from far places. At first all is in patches and confused, and then it folds out—if not clearly, still so I can understand—and the words I repeat come as if filtered through many brains to mine. I do not say that it is true—it may be dreams; and yet, as I say, it is firmly in my mind.

"The next that I remember was climbing upon a chair to reach for my grandfather's musket, which hung across the chimney. I got at last upon the mantelshelf, and my hands were on the weapon, when the door opened, and my grandfather and my father entered. I was so busy I did not hear them till I was caught by the legs and swung to a shoulder, where I sat kicking. 'You see his tastes, William,' said my

grandfather to my father; 'he's white o' face and slim o' body, but he'll no carry on your hopes.' And more he said to the point, though what it was I knew not. But I think it to have been suggestion (I heard him say it later) that I would bring Glasgow up to London by the sword (good doting soul!) as my father brought it by manufactures, gaining honour thereby.

"However that may be, I would not rest till my grandfather had put the musket into my arms. I could scarcely lift it, but from the first it had a charm for me, and now and then, in spite of my mother's protests, I was let to handle it, to learn its parts, to burnish it, and by-and-bye—I could not have been more than six years old—to rest it on a rock and fire it off. It kicked my shoulder roughly in firing, but I know I did not wink as I pulled the trigger. Then I got a wild hunger to fire it at all times; so much so, indeed, that powder and shot were locked up, and the musket was put away in my grandfather's chest. But now and again it was taken out, and I made war upon the unresisting hillside, to the dismay of our neighbours in Balmore. Feeding the fever in my veins, my grandfather taught me soldiers' exercises and the handling of arms: to my dear mother's sorrow, for she ever fancied me as leading a merchant's quiet life like my father's, hugging the hearthstone, and finding joy in small civic duties, while she and my dear father sat peacefully watching me in their decline of years.

"I have told you of that river which flowed near my father's house. At this time most of my hours were spent by it in good weather, for at last my mother came to trust me alone there, having found her alert fears of little use. But she would very often come with me and watch me as I played there. I loved to fancy myself a miller, and my little mill-wheel, made by my own hands, did duty here and there on the stream, and many drives of logs did I, in fancy, saw into piles of lumber, and loads of flour sent away to the City of Desire. Then, again, I made bridges, and drove mimic armies across them; and if they were enemies, craftily let them partly cross, to tumble them in at the moment when part of the forces were on one side of the stream and part on the other, and at the mercy of my men.

"My grandfather taught me how to build forts and breastworks, and I lay in ambush for the beadle, who was my good friend, for my grandfather, and for half a dozen other village folk, who took no offense at my sport, but made believe to be bitterly afraid when I surrounded them and drove them, shackled, to my fort by the river. Little by little the fort grew, until it was a goodly pile; for now and then a village youth helped me, or again an old man, whose heart, maybe, rejoiced to play at being child again with me. Years after, whenever I went back to Balmore, there stood the fort, for no one ever meddled with it, nor tore it down.

"And I will tell you one reason why this was, and you will think it strange that it should have played such a part in the history of the village, as in my own life. You must know that people living in secluded places are mostly superstitious. Well, when my fort was built to such proportions that a small ladder must be used to fix new mud and mortar in place upon it, something happened.

"Once a year there came to Balmore—and he had done so for a generation—one of those beings called The Men, who are given to prayer, fasting, and prophesying, who preach the word of warning ever, calling even the ministers of the Lord sharply to account. One day this Man came past my fort, folk with him, looking for preaching or prophesy from him. Suddenly turning he came inside my fort, and, standing upon the ladder against the wall, spoke to them fervently. His last words became a legend in Balmore, and spread even to Glasgow and beyond.

"'Hear me!' cried he. 'As I stand looking at ye from this wall, calling on ye in your natural bodies to take refuge in the Fort of God, the Angel of Death is looking ower the battlements of heaven, choosing ye out, the sheep frae the goats; calling the one to burning flames, and the other into peaceable habitations. I hear the voice now,' cried he, 'and some soul among us goeth forth. Flee ye to the Fort of Refuge.' I can see him now, his pale face shining, his eyes burning, his beard blowing in the wind, his grizzled hair shaking on his forehead. I had stood within the fort watching him. At last he turned, and, seeing me intent, stooped, caught me by the arms, and lifted me upon the wall. 'See you,' said he, 'yesterday's babe a warrior to-day. Have done, have done, ye quarrelsome hearts. Ye that build forts here shall lie in darksome prisons; there is no fort but the Fort of God. The call comes frae the white ramparts. Hush!' he added solemnly, raising a finger. 'One of us goeth hence this day; are ye ready to walk i' the fearsome valley?'

"I have heard my mother speak these words over often, and they were, as I said, like an old song in Balmore and Glasgow. He set me down, and then walked away, waving the frightened people back; and there was none of them that slept that night.

"Now comes the stranger thing. In the morning The Man was found dead in my little fort, at the foot of the wall. Henceforth the spot was sacred, and I am sure it stands there as when last I saw it twelve years ago, but worn away by rains and winds.

"Again and again my mother said over to me his words, 'Ye that build forts here shall lie in darksome

prisons'; for always she had fear of the soldier's life, and she was moved by signs and dreams.

"But this is how the thing came to shape my life:

"About a year after The Man died, there came to my grandfather's house, my mother and I being present, a gentleman, by name Sir John Godric, and he would have my mother tell the whole story of The Man. That being done, he said that The Man was his brother, who had been bad and wild in youth, a soldier; but repenting had gone as far the other way, giving up place and property, and cutting off from all his kin.

"This gentleman took much notice of me and said that he should be glad to see more of me. And so he did, for in the years that followed he would visit at our home in Glasgow when I was at school, or at Balmore until my grandfather died.

"My father liked Sir John greatly, and they grew exceedingly friendly, walking forth in the streets of Glasgow, Sir John's hand upon my father's arm. One day they came to the school in High Street, where I learned Latin and other accomplishments, together with fencing from an excellent master, Sergeant Dowie of the One Hundredth Foot. They found me with my regiment at drill; for I had got full thirty of my school-fellows under arms, and spent all leisure hours in mustering, marching, and drum-beating, and practising all manner of discipline and evolution which I had been taught by my grandfather and Sergeant Dowie.

"Those were the days soon after which came Dettingen and Fontenoy and Charles Edward the Pretender, and the ardour of arms ran high. Sir John was a follower of the Stuarts, and this was the one point at which he and my father paused in their good friendship. When Sir John saw me with my thirty lads marching in fine order, all fired with the little sport of battle—for to me it was all real, and our sham fights often saw broken heads and bruised shoulders—he stamped his cane upon the ground, and said in a big voice, 'Well done! well done! For that you shall have a hundred pounds next birthday, and as fine a suit of scarlet as you please, and a sword from London too.'

"Then he came to me and caught me by both shoulders. 'But alack, alack! there needs some blood and flesh here, Robert Moray,' said he. 'You have more heart than muscle.'

"This was true. I had ever been more eager than my strength—thank God, that day is gone!—and sometimes, after Latin and the drill of my Lightfoots, as I called them, I could have cried for weakness and weariness, had I been a girl and not a proud lad. And Sir John kept his word, liking me better from that day forth, and coming now and again to see me at the school,—though he was much abroad in France—giving many a pound to my Lightfoots, who were no worse soldiers for that. His eye ran us over sharply, and his head nodded, as we marched past him; and once I heard him say, 'If they had had but ten years each on their heads, my Prince!'

"About this time my father died—that is, when I was fourteen years old. Sir John became one of the executors with my mother, and at my wish, a year afterwards, I was sent to the university, where at least fifteen of my Lightfoots went also; and there I formed a new battalion of them, though we were watched at first, and even held in suspicion, because of the known friendship of Sir John for me; and he himself had twice been under arrest for his friendship to the Stuart cause. That he helped Prince Charles was clear: his estates were mortgaged to the hilt.

"He died suddenly on that day of January when Culloden was fought, before he knew of the defeat of the Prince. I was with him at the last. After some most serious business, which I shall come to by-and-bye, 'Robert,' said he, 'I wish thou hadst been with my Prince. When thou becomest a soldier, fight where thou hast heart to fight; but if thou hast conscience for it, let it be with a Stuart. I thought to leave thee a good moiety of my fortune, Robert, but little that's free is left for giving. Yet thou hast something from thy father, and down in Virginia, where my friend Dinwiddie is Governor, there's a plantation for thee, and a purse of gold, which was for me in case I should have cause to flee this troubled realm. But I need it not; I go for refuge to my Father's house. The little vineyard and the purse of gold are for thee, Robert. If thou thinkest well of it, leave this sick land for that new one. Build thyself a name in that great young country, wear thy sword honourably and bravely, use thy gifts in council and debate—for Dinwiddie will be thy friend—and think of me as one who would have been a father to thee if he could. Give thy good mother my loving farewells.... Forget not to wear my sword—it has come from the first King Charles himself, Robert.'

"After which he raised himself upon his elbow and said, 'Life—life, is it so hard to untie the knot?' Then a twinge of agony crossed over his face, and afterwards came a great clearing and peace, and he was gone.

"King George's soldiers entered with a warrant for him even as he died, and the same moment

dropped their hands upon my shoulder. I was kept in durance for many days, and was not even at the funeral of my benefactor; but through the efforts of the provost of the university and some good friends who could vouch for my loyal principles, I was released. But my pride had got a setback, and I listened with patience to my mother's prayers that I would not join the King's men. With the anger of a youth, I now blamed his Majesty for the acts of Sir John Godric's enemies. And though I was a good soldier of the King at heart, I would not serve him henceforth. We threshed matters back and forth, and presently it was thought I should sail to Virginia to take over my estate. My mother urged it, too, for she thought if I were weaned from my old comrades, military fame would no longer charm. So she urged me, and go I did, with a commission from some merchants of Glasgow, to give my visit to the colony more weight.

"It was great pain to leave my mother, but she bore the parting bravely, and away I set in a good ship. Arrived in Virginia, I was treated with great courtesy in Williamsburg, and the Governor gave me welcome to his home for the sake of his old friend; and yet a little for my own, I think, for we were of one temper, though he was old and I young. We were both full of impulse and proud, and given to daring hard things, and my military spirit suited him.

"In Virginia I spent a gay and busy year, and came off very well with the rough but gentlemanly cavaliers, who rode through the wide, sandy streets of the capital on excellent horses, or in English coaches, with a rusty sort of show and splendour, but always with great gallantry. The freedom of the life charmed me, and with rumours of war with the French there seemed enough to do, whether with the sword or in the House of Burgesses, where Governor Dinwiddie said his say with more force than complaisance. So taken was I with the life—my first excursion into the wide working world—that I delayed my going back to Glasgow, the more so that some matters touching my property called for action by the House of Burgesses, and I had to drive the affair to the end. Sir John had done better by me than he thought, and I thanked him over and over again for his good gifts.

"Presently I got a letter from my father's old partner to say that my dear mother was ill. I got back to Glasgow only in time—but how glad I was of that!—to hear her last words. When my mother was gone I turned towards Virginia with longing, for I could not so soon go against her wishes and join the King's army on the Continent, and less desire had I to be a Glasgow merchant. Gentlemen merchants had better times in Virginia. So there was a winding-up of the estate, not greatly to my pleasure; for it was found that by unwise ventures my father's partner had perilled the whole, and lost part of the property. But as it was, I had a competence and several houses in Glasgow, and I set forth to Virginia with a goodly sum of money and a shipload of merchandise, which I should sell to merchants, if it chanced I should become a planter only. I was warmly welcomed by old friends and by the Governor and his family, and I soon set up an establishment of my own in Williamsburg, joining with a merchant there in business, while my land was worked by a neighbouring planter.

"Those were hearty days, wherein I made little money, but had much pleasure in the giving and taking of civilities, in throwing my doors open to acquaintances, and with my young friend, Mr. Washington, laying the foundation for a Virginian army, by drill and yearly duty in camp, with occasional excursions against the Indians. I saw very well what the end of our troubles with the French would be, and I waited for the time when I should put to keen use the sword Sir John Godric had given me. Life beat high then, for I was in the first flush of manhood, and the spirit of a rich new land was waking in us all, while in our vanity we held to and cherished forms and customs that one would have thought to see left behind in London streets and drawing-rooms. These things, these functions in a small place, kept us a little vain and proud, but, I also hope it gave us some sense of civic duty.

"And now I come to that which will, comrade of my heart, bring home to your understanding what lies behind the charges against me:

"Trouble came between Canada and Virginia. Major Washington, one Captain Mackaye, and myself marched out to the Great Meadows, where at Fort Necessity we surrendered, after hard fighting, to a force three times our number. I, with one Captain Van Braam, became a hostage. Monsieur Coulon Villiers, the French commander, gave his bond that we should be delivered up when an officer and two cadets, who were prisoners with us, should be sent on. It was a choice between Mr. Mackaye of the Regulars and Mr. Washington, or Mr. Van Braam and myself. I thought of what would be best for the country; and besides, Monsieur Coulon Villiers pitched upon my name at once, and held to it. So I gave up my sword to Charles Bedford, my lieutenant, with more regret than I can tell, for it was sheathed in memories, charging him to keep it safe—that he would use it worthily I knew. And so, sorrowfully bidding my friends good-by, away we went upon the sorry trail of captivity, arriving in due time at Fort Du Quesne, at the junction of the Ohio and the Monongahela, where I was courteously treated. There I bettered my French and made the acquaintance of some ladies from Quebec city, who took pains to help me with their language.

"Now, there was one lady to whom I talked with some freedom of my early life and of Sir John Godric.

She was interested in all, but when I named Sir John she became at once much impressed, and I told her of his great attachment to Prince Charles. More than once she returned to the subject, begging me to tell her more; and so I did, still, however, saying nothing of certain papers Sir John had placed in my care. A few weeks after the first occasion of my speaking, there was a new arrival at the fort. It was—can you guess?—Monsieur Doltaire. The night after he came he visited me in my quarters, and after courteous passages, of which I need not speak, he suddenly said, 'You have the papers of Sir John Godric—those bearing on Prince Charles's invasion of England?'

"I was stunned by the question, for I could not guess his drift or purpose, though presently it dawned upon me.—Among the papers were many letters from a great lady in France, a growing rival with La Pompadour in the counsels and favour of the King. She it was who had a secret passion for Prince Charles, and these letters to Sir John, who had been with the Pretender at Versailles, must prove her ruin if produced. I had promised Sir John most solemnly that no one should ever have them while I lived, except the great lady herself, and that I would give them to her some time, or destroy them. It was Doltaire's mission to get these letters, and he had projected a visit to Williamsburg to see me, having just arrived in Canada, after a search for me in Scotland, when word came from the lady gossip at Fort Du Quesne (with whom he had been on most familiar terms in Quebec) that I was there.

"When I said I had the papers, he asked me lightly for 'those compromising letters,' remarking that a good price would be paid, and adding my liberty as a pleasant gift. I instantly refused, and told him I would not be the weapon of La Pompadour against her rival. With cool persistence he begged me to think again, for much depended on my answer.

"See, monsieur le capitaine,' said he, 'this little affair at Fort Necessity, at which you became a hostage, shall or shall not be a war between England and France as you shall dispose.' When I asked him how that was, he said, 'First, will you swear that you will not, to aid yourself, disclose what I tell you? You can see that matters will be where they were an hour ago in any case.'

"I agreed, for I could act even if I might not speak. So I gave my word. Then he told me that if those letters were not put into his hands, La Pompadour would be enraged, and fretful and hesitating now, would join Austria against England, since in this provincial war was convenient cue for battle. If I gave the letters up, she would not stir, and the disputed territory between us should be by articles conceded by the French.

"I thought much and long, during which he sat smoking and humming, and seeming to care little how my answer went. At last I turned on him, and told him I would not give up the letters, and if a war must hang on a whim of malice, then, by God's help, the rightness of our cause would be our strong weapon to bring France to her knees.

"That is your final answer?' asked he, rising, fingering his lace, and viewing himself in a looking-glass upon the wall.

"I will not change it now or ever,' answered I.

"Ever is a long time,' retorted he, as one might speak to a wilful child. 'You shall have time to think and space for reverie. For if you do not grant this trifle you shall no more see your dear Virginia; and when the time is ripe you shall go forth to a better land, as the Grande Marquise shall give you carriage.'

"The Articles of Capitulation!' I broke out protestingly.

"He waved his fingers at me. 'Ah, that,' he rejoined—'that is a matter for conning. You are a hostage. Well, we need not take any wastrel or nobody the English offer in exchange for you. Indeed, why should we be content with less than a royal duke? For you are worth more to us just now than any prince we have; at least so says the Grande Marquise. Is your mind quite firm to refuse?' he added, nodding his head in a bored sort of way.

"Entirely,' said I. 'I will not part with those letters.'

"But think once again,' he urged; 'the gain of territory to Virginia, the peace between our countries!'

"Folly!' returned I. 'I know well you overstate the case. You turn a small intrigue into a game of nations. Yours is a schoolboy's tale, Monsieur Doltaire.'

"You are something of an ass,' he mused, and took a pinch of snuff.

"And you—you have no name,' retorted I.

"I did not know, when I spoke, how this might strike home in two ways or I should not have said it. I had not meant, of course, that he was King Louis's illegitimate son.

"'There is some truth in that,' he replied patiently, though a red spot flamed high on his cheeks. 'But some men need no christening for their distinction, and others win their names with proper weapons. I am not here to quarrel with you. I am acting in a large affair, not in a small intrigue; a century of fate may hang on this. Come with me,' he added. 'You doubt my power, maybe.'

"He opened the door of the cell, and I followed him out, past the storehouse and the officers' apartments, to the drawbridge. Standing in the shadow by the gate, he took keys from his pocket. 'Here,' said he, 'are what will set you free. This fort is all mine: I act for France. Will you care to free yourself? You shall have escort to your own people. You see I am most serious,' he added, laughing lightly. 'It is not my way to sweat or worry. You and I hold war and peace in our hands. Which shall it be? In this trouble France or England will be mangled. It tires one to think of it when life can be so easy. Now, for the last time,' he urged, holding out the keys. 'Your word of honour that the letters shall be mine—eh?'

"'Never,' I concluded. 'England and France are in greater hands than yours or mine. The God of battles still stands beside the balances.'

"He shrugged a shoulder. 'Oh well,' said he, 'that ends it. It will be interesting to watch the way of the God of battles. Meanwhile you travel to Quebec. Remember that however free you may appear you will have watchers, that when you seem safe you will be in most danger, that in the end we will have those letters or your life; that meanwhile the war will go on, that you shall have no share in it, and that the whole power of England will not be enough to set her hostage free. That is all there is to say, I think.... Will you have a glass of wine with me?' he added courteously, waving a hand towards the commander's quarters.

"I assented, for why, thought I, should there be a personal quarrel between us? We talked on many things for an hour or more, and his I found the keenest mind that ever I have met. There was in him a dispassionateness, a breadth, which seemed most strange in a trifler of the Court, in an exquisite—for such he was. I sometimes think that his elegance and flippancy were deliberate, lest he should be taking himself or life too seriously. His intelligence charmed me, held me, and, later, as we travelled up to Quebec, I found my journey one long feast of interest. He was never dull, and his cynicism had an admirable grace and cordiality. A born intriguer, he still was above intrigue, justifying it on the basis that life was all sport. In logic a leveller, praising the moles, as he called them, the champion of the peasant, the apologist for the bourgeois—who always, he said, had civic virtues—he nevertheless held that what was was best, that it could not be altered, and that it was all interesting. 'I never repent,' he said to me one day. 'I have done after my nature, in the sway and impulse of our time, and as the King has said, After us the deluge. What a pity it is we shall see neither the flood nor the ark! And so, when all is done, we shall miss the most interesting thing of all: ourselves dead and the gap and ruin we leave behind us. By that, from my standpoint,' he would add, 'life is a failure as a spectacle.'

"Talking in this fashion and in a hundred other ways, we came to Quebec. And you know in general what happened. I met your honoured father, whose life I had saved on the Ohio some years before, and he worked for my comfort in my bondage. You know how exchange after exchange was refused, and that for near three years I have been here, fretting my soul out, eager to be fighting in our cause, yet tied hand and foot, wasting time and losing heart, idle in an enemy's country. As Doltaire said, war was declared, but not till he had made here in Quebec last efforts to get those letters. I do not complain so bitterly of these lost years, since they have brought me the best gift of my life, your love and friendship; but my enemies here, commanded from France, have bided their time, till an accident has given them a cue to dispose of me without openly breaking the accepted law of nations. They could not decently hang a hostage, for whom they had signed articles; but they have got their chance, as they think, to try me for a spy.

"Here is the case. When I found that they were determined and had ever determined to violate their articles, that they never intended to set me free, I felt absolved from my duty as an officer on parole, and I therefore secretly sent to Mr. Washington in Virginia a plan of Fort Du Quesne and one of Quebec. I knew that I was risking my life by so doing, but that did not deter me. By my promise to Doltaire, I could not tell of the matter between us, and whatever he has done in other ways, he has preserved my life; for it would have been easy to have me dropped off by a stray bullet, or to have accidentally drowned me in the St. Lawrence. I believe this matter of the letters to be between myself and him and Bigot—and perhaps not even Bigot, though he must know that La Pompadour has some peculiar reason for interesting herself in a poor captain of provincials. You now can see another motive for the duel which was brought about between your brother and myself.

"My plans and letters were given by Mr. Washington to General Braddock, and the sequel you know:

they have fallen into the hands of my enemies, copies have gone to France, and I am to be tried for my life. Preserving faith with my enemy Doltaire, I can not plead the real cause of my long detention; I can only urge that they had not kept to their articles, and that I, therefore, was free from the obligations of parole. I am sure they have no intention of giving me the benefit of any doubt. My real hope lies in escape and the intervention of England, though my country, alas! has not concerned herself about me, as if indeed she resented the non-delivery of those letters to Doltaire, since they were addressed to one she looked on as a traitor, and held by one whom she had unjustly put under suspicion.

"So, dear Alixe, from that little fort on the banks of the river Kelvin have come these strange twistings of my life, and I can date this dismal fortune of a dungeon from that day The Man made his prophecy from the wall of my mud fort.

"Whatever comes now, if you have this record, you will know the private history of my life.... I have told all, with unpractised tongue, but with a wish to be understood, and to set forth a story of which the letter should be as true as the spirit. Friend beyond all price to me, some day this tale will reach your hands, and I ask you to house it in your heart, and, whatever comes, let it be for my remembrance. God be with you, and farewell!"

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