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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

Volume 2.

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VII

"QUOTH LITTLE GARAINÉ"

I have given the whole story here as though it had been thought out and written that Sunday afternoon which brought me good news of Juste Duvarney. But it was not so. I did not choose to break the run of the tale to tell of other things and of the passing of time. The making took me many, many weeks, and in all that time I had seen no face but Gabord's, and heard no voice but his, when he came twice a day to bring me bread and water. He would answer no questions concerning Juste Duvarney, or Voban, or Monsieur Doltaire, nor tell me anything of what was forward in the town. He had had his orders precise enough, he said. At the end of my hints and turnings and approaches, stretching himself

up, and turning the corn about with his foot (but not crushing it, for he saw that I prized the poor little comrades), he would say:

"Snug, snug, quiet and warm! The cosiest nest in the world—aho!"

There was no coaxing him, and at last I desisted. I had no light. With resolution I set my mind to see in spite of the dark, and at the end of a month I was able to note the outlines of my dungeon; nay, more, I was able to see my field of corn; and at last what joy I had when, hearing a little rustle near me, I looked closely and beheld a mouse running across the floor! I straightway began to scatter crumbs of bread, that it might, perhaps, come near me—as at last it did.

I have not spoken at all of my wounds, though they gave me many painful hours, and I had no attendance but my own and Gabord's. The wound in my side was long healing, for it was more easily disturbed as I turned in my sleep, while I could ease my arm at all times, and it came on slowly. My sufferings drew on my flesh, my blood, and my spirits, and to this was added that disease inaction, the corrosion of solitude, and the fever of suspense and uncertainty as to Alixe and Juste Duvarney. Every hour, every moment that I had ever passed in Alixe's presence, with many little incidents and scenes in which we shared, passed before me—vivid and cherished pictures of the mind. One of those incidents I will set down here.

A year or so before, soon after Juste Duvarney came from Montreal, he brought in one day from hunting a young live hawk, and put it in a cage. When I came the next morning, Alixe met me, and asked me to see what he had brought. There, beside the kitchen door, overhung with morning-glories and flanked by hollyhocks, was a large green cage, and in it the gray-brown hawk. "Poor thing, poor prisoned thing!" she said. "Look how strange and hunted it seems! See how its feathers stir! And those flashing, watchful eyes, they seem to read through you, and to say, 'Who are you? What do you want with me? Your world is not my world; your air is not my air; your homes are holes, and mine hangs high up between you and God. Who are you? Why do you pen me? You have shut me in that I may not travel, not even die out in the open world. All the world is mine; yours is only a stolen field. Who are you? What do you want with me? There is a fire within my head, it eats to my eyes, and I burn away. What do you want with me?'"

She did not speak these words all at once as I have written them here, but little by little, as we stood there beside the cage. Yet, as she talked with me, her mind was on the bird, her fingers running up and down the cage bars soothingly, her voice now and again interjecting soft reflections and exclamations.

"Shall I set it free?" I asked her.

She turned upon me and replied, "Ah, monsieur, I hoped you would—without my asking. You are a prisoner too," she added; "one captive should feel for another."

"And the freeman for both," I answered meaningly, as I softly opened the cage.

She did not drop her eyes, but raised them shining honestly and frankly to mine, and said, "I wished you to think that."

Opening the cage door wide, I called the little captive to freedom. But while we stood close by it would not stir, and the look in its eyes became wilder. I moved away, and Alixe followed me. Standing beside an old well we waited and watched. Presently the hawk dropped from the perch, hopped to the door, then with a wild spring was gone, up, up, up, and was away over the maple woods beyond, lost in the sun and the good air.

I know not quite why I dwell on this scene, save that it throws some little light upon her nature, and shows how simple and yet deep she was in soul, and what was the fashion of our friendship. But I can perhaps give a deeper insight of her character if I here set down the substance of a letter written about that time, which came into my possession long afterwards. It was her custom to write her letters first in a book, and afterwards to copy them for posting. This she did that they might be an impulse to her friendships and a record of her feelings.

ALIXE DUVARNEY TO LUCIE LOTBINIERE.

QUEBEC CITY, the 10th of May, 1756.

MY DEAR LUCIE: I wish I knew how to tell you all I have been thinking since we parted at the door of the Ursulines a year ago. Then we were going to meet again in a few weeks, and now twelve months have gone! How have I spent them? Not wickedly, I hope, and yet sometimes I wonder if Mere St. George would quite approve of me; for I have such wild spirits now and then, and I shout and sing in

the woods and along the river as if I were a mad youngster home from school. But indeed, that is the way I feel at times, though again I am so quiet that I am frightened of myself. I am a hawk to-day and a mouse to-morrow, and fond of pleasure all the time. Ah, what good days I have had with Juste! You remember him before he went to Montreal? He is gay, full of fancies, as brave as can be, and plays and sings well, but he is very hot-headed, and likes to play the tyrant. We have some bad encounters now and then. But we love each other better for it; he respects me, and he does not become spoiled, as you will see when you come to us.

I have had no society yet. My mother thinks seventeen years too few to warrant my going into the gay world. I wonder will my wings be any stronger, will there be less danger of scorching them at twenty-six? Years do not make us wise; one may be as wise at twenty as at fifty. And they do not save us from the scorching. I know more than they guess how cruel the world may be to the innocent as to—the other. One can not live within sight of the Intendant's palace and the Chateau St. Louis without learning many things; and, for myself, though I hunger for all the joys of life, I do not fret because my mother holds me back from the gay doings in the town. I have my long walks, my fishing and rowing, and sometimes hunting, with Juste and my sweet sister Georgette, my drawing, painting, music, and needlework, and my housework.

Yet I am not entirely happy, I do not know quite why. Do you ever feel as if there were some sorrow far back in you, which now and then rushed in and flooded your spirits, and then drew back, and you could not give it a name? Well, that is the way with me. Yesterday, as I stood in the kitchen beside our old cook Jovin, she said a kind word to me, and my eyes filled, and I ran up to my room, and burst into tears as I lay upon my bed. I could not help it. I thought at first it was because of the poor hawk that Captain Moray and I set free yesterday morning; but it could not have been that, for it was FREE when I cried, you see. You know, of course, that he saved my father's life, some years ago? That is one reason why he has been used so well in Quebec, for otherwise no one would have lessened the rigours of his captivity. But there are tales that he is too curious about our government and state, and so he may be kept close jailed, though he only came here as a hostage. He is much at our home, and sometimes walks with Juste and me and Georgette, and accompanies my mother in the streets. This is not to the liking of the Intendant, who loves not my father because he is such a friend of our cousin the Governor. If their lives and characters be anything to the point the Governor must be in the right.

In truth, things are in a sad way here, for there is robbery on every hand, and who can tell what the end may be? Perhaps that we go to the English after all. Monsieur Doltaire—you do not know him, I think—says, "If the English eat us, as they swear they will, they'll die of megrims, our affairs are so indigestible." At another time he said, "Better to be English than to be damned." And when some one asked him what he meant, he said, "Is it not read from the altar, 'Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man'? The English trust nobody, and we trust the English." That was aimed at Captain Moray, who was present, and I felt it a cruel thing for him to say; but Captain Moray, smiling at the ladies, said, "Better to be French and damned than not to be French at all." And this pleased Monsieur Doltaire, who does not love him. I know not why, but there are vague whispers that he is acting against the Englishman for causes best known at Versailles, which have nothing to do with our affairs here. I do believe that Monsieur Doltaire would rather hear a clever thing than get ten thousand francs. At such times his face lights up, he is at once on his mettle, his eyes look almost fiendishly beautiful. He is a handsome man, but he is wicked, and I do not think he has one little sense of morals. I do not suppose he would stab a man in the back, or remove his neighbour's landmark in the night, though he'd rob him of it in open daylight, and call it "enterprise"—a usual word with him.

He is a favourite with Madame Cournal, who influences Bigot most, and one day we may see the boon companions at each other's throats; and if either falls, I hope it maybe Bigot, for Monsieur Doltaire is, at least, no robber. Indeed, he is kind to the poor in a disdainful sort of way. He gives to them and scoffs at them at the same moment; a bad man, with just enough natural kindness to make him dangerous. I have not seen much of the world, but some things we know by instinct; we feel them; and I often wonder if that is not the way we know everything in the end. Sometimes when I take my long walks, or go and sit beside the Falls of Montmorenci, looking out to the great city on the Heights, to dear Isle Orleans, where we have our pretty villa (we are to go there next week for three months—happy summer months), up at the blue sky and into the deep woods, I have strange feelings, which afterwards become thoughts; and sometimes they fly away like butterflies, but oftener they stay with me, and I give them a little garden to roam in—you can guess where. Now and then I call them out of the garden and make them speak, and then I set down what they say in my journal; but I think they like their garden best. You remember the song we used to sing at school?

"Where do the stars grow, little Garaine?

The garden of moons, is it far away?

The orchard of suns, my little Garaine,

Will you take us there some day?'

"If you shut your eyes,' quoth little Garaine,
'I will show you the way to go
To the orchard of suns, and the garden of moons,
And the field where the stars do grow.

"But you must speak soft,' quoth little Garaine,
'And still must your footsteps be,
For a great bear prowls in the field of the stars,
And the moons they have men to see.

"And the suns have the Children of Signs to guard,
And they have no pity at all—
You must not stumble, you must not speak,
When you come to the orchard wall.

"The gates are locked,' quoth little Garaine,
'But the way I am going to tell?
The key of your heart it will open them all:
And there's where the darlings dwell!"

You may not care to read these lines again, but it helps to show what I mean: that everything is in the heart, and that nothing is at all if we do not feel it. Sometimes I have spoken of these things to my mother, but she does not see as I do. I dare not tell my father all I think, and Juste is so much a creature of moods that I am never sure whether he will be sensible and kind, or scoff. One can not bear to be laughed at. And as for my sister, she never thinks; she only lives; and she looks it—looks beautiful. But there, dear Lucie, I must not tire you with my childish philosophy, though I feel no longer a child. You would not know your friend. I can not tell what has come over me. Voila!

To-morrow we go to visit General Montcalm, who has just arrived in the colony. Bigot and his gay set are not likely to be there. My mother insists that I shall never darken the doors of the Intendant's palace.

Do you still hold to your former purpose of keeping a daily journal? If so, I beg you to copy into it this epistle and your answer; and when I go up to your dear manor house at Beauce next summer, we will read over our letters and other things set down, and gossip of the changes come since we met last. Do sketch the old place for me (as will I our new villa on dear Isle Orleans), and make interest with the good cure to bring it to me with your letter, since there are no posts, no postmen, yet between here and Beauce. The cure most kindly bears this to you, and says he will gladly be our messenger. Yesterday he said to me, shaking his head in a whimsical way, "But no treason, mademoiselle, and no heresy or schism." I am not quite sure what he meant. I dare hardly think he had Captain Moray in his mind. I would not for the world so lessen my good opinion of him as to think him suspicious of me when no other dare; and so I put his words down to chance hitting, to a humorous fancy.

Be sure, dear Lucie, I shall not love you less for giving me a prompt answer. Tell me of what you are thinking and what doing. If Juste can be spared from the Governor's establishment, may I bring him with me next summer? He is a difficult, sparkling sort of fellow, but you are so steady-tempered, so full of tact, getting your own way so quietly and cleverly, that I am sure I should find plenty of straw for the bricks of my house of hope, my castle in Spain!

Do not give too much of my share of thy heart elsewhere, and continue to think me, my dear Lucie, thy friend, loyal and loving,

ALIXE DUVARNEY.

P.S.—Since the above was written we have visited the General. Both Monsieur Doltaire and Captain Moray were there, but neither took much note of me—Monsieur Doltaire not at all. Those two either hate each other lovingly, or love hatefully, I know not which, they are so biting, yet so friendly to each other's cleverness, though their style of word-play is so different: Monsieur Doltaire's like a bodkin-point, Captain Moray's like a musket-stock a-clubbing. Be not surprised to see the British at our gates any day. Though we shall beat them back, I shall feel no less easy because I have a friend in the enemy's camp. You may guess who. Do not smile. He is old enough to be my father. He said so himself six months ago.

ALIXE.

AS VAIN AS ABSALOM

Gabord, coming in to me one day after I had lain down to sleep, said, "See, m'sieu' the dormouse, 'tis holiday-eve; the King's sport comes to-morrow."

I sat up in bed with a start, for I knew not but that my death had been decided on without trial; and yet on second thought I was sure this could not be, for every rule of military conduct was against it.

"Whose holiday?" asked I after a moment; "and what is King's sport?"

"You're to play bear in the streets to-morrow—which is sport for the King," he retorted; "we lead you by a rope, and you dance the quickstep to please our ladies all the way to the Chateau, where they bring the bear to drum-head."

"Who sits behind the drum?" I questioned.

"The Marquis de Vaudreuil," he replied, "the Intendant, Master Devil Doltaire, and the little men." By these last he meant officers of the colonial soldiery.

So then, at last I was to be tried, to be dealt with definitely on the abominable charge. I should at least again see light and breathe fresh air, and feel about me the stir of the world. For a long year I had heard no voice but my own and Gabord's, had had no friends but my pale blades of corn and a timid mouse, day after day no light at all; and now winter was at hand again, and without fire and with poor food my body was chilled and starved. I had had no news of the world, nor of her who was dear to me, nor of Juste Duvarney save that he lived, nor of our cause. But succeeding the thrill of delight I had at thought of seeing the open world again there came a feeling of lassitude, of indifference; I shrank from the jar of activity. But presently I got upon my feet, and with a little air of drollery straightened out my clothes and flicked a handkerchief across my gaiters. Then I twisted my head over my shoulder as if I were noting the shape of my back and the set of my clothes in a mirror, and thrust a leg out in the manner of an exquisite. I had need to do some mocking thing at the moment, or I should have given way to tears like a woman, so suddenly weak had I become.

Gabord burst out laughing.

An idea came to me. "I must be fine to-morrow," said I. "I must not shame my jailer." I rubbed my beard—I had none when I came into this dungeon first.

"Aho!" said he, his eyes wheeling.

I knew he understood me. I did not speak, but went on running my fingers through my beard.

"As vain as Absalom," he added. "Do you think they'll hang you by the hair?"

"I'd have it off," said I, "to be clean for the sacrifice."

"You had Voban before," he rejoined; "we know what happened—a dainty bit of a letter all rose-lily scented, and comfits for the soldier. The pretty wren perches now in the Governor's house—a-cousining, a-cousining. Think you it is that she may get a glimpse of m'sieu' the dormouse as he comes to trial? But 'tis no business o' mine; and if I bring my prisoner up when called for, there's duty done!"

I saw the friendly spirit in the words.

"Voban," urged I, "Voban may come to me?"

"The Intendant said no, but the Governor yes," was the reply; "and that M'sieu' Doltaire is not yet come back from Montreal, so he had no voice. They look for him here to-morrow."

"Voban may come?" I asked again.

"At daybreak Voban—aho!" he continued. "There's milk and honey to-morrow," he added, and then, without a word, he drew forth from his coat, and hurriedly thrust into my hands, a piece of meat and a small flask of wine, and, swinging round like a schoolboy afraid of being caught in a misdemeanor, he passed through the door and the bolts clanged after him. He left the torch behind him, stuck in the cleft of the wall.

I sat down on my couch, and for a moment gazed almost vacantly at the meat and wine in my hands. I had not touched either for a year, and now I could see that my fingers, as they closed on the food

nervously, were thin and bloodless, and I realized that my clothes hung loose upon my person. Here were light, meat, and wine, and there was a piece of bread on the board covering my water-jar. Luxury was spread before me, but although I had eaten little all day I was not hungry. Presently, however, I took the knife which I had hidden a year before, and cut pieces of the meat and laid them by the bread. Then I drew the cork from the bottle of wine, and, lifting it towards that face which was always visible to my soul, I drank—drank—drank!

The rich liquor swam through my veins like glorious fire. It wakened my brain and nerved my body. The old spring of life came back. This wine had come from the hands of Alixe—from the Governor's store, maybe; for never could Gabord have got such stuff. I ate heartily of the rich beef and bread with a new-made appetite, and drank the rest of the wine. When I had eaten and drunk the last, I sat and looked at the glowing torch, and felt a sort of comfort creep through me. Then there came a delightful thought. Months ago I had put away one last pipeful of tobacco, to save it till some day when I should need it most. I got it, and no man can guess how lovingly I held it to a flying flame of the torch, saw it light, and blew out the first whiff of smoke into the sombre air; for November was again piercing this underground house of mine, another winter was at hand. I sat and smoked, and—can you not guess my thoughts? For have you all not the same hearts, being British born and bred? When I had taken the last whiff, I wrapped myself in my cloak and went to sleep. But twice or thrice during the night I waked to see the torch still shining, and caught the fragrance of consuming pine, and minded not at all the smoke the burning made.

IX

A LITTLE CONCERNING THE CHEVALIER DE LA DARANTE

I was wakened completely by the shooting of bolts. With the opening of the door I saw the figures of Gabord and Voban. My little friend the mouse saw them also, and scampered from the bread it had been eating, away among the corn, through which my footsteps had now made two rectangular paths, not disregarded by Gabord, who solicitously pulled Voban into the narrow track, that he should not trespass on my harvest.

I rose, showed no particular delight at seeing Voban, but greeted him easily—though my heart was bursting to ask him of Alixe—and arranged my clothes. Presently Gabord said, "Stools for barber," and, wheeling, he left the dungeon. He was gone only an instant, but long enough for Voban to thrust a letter into my hand, which I ran into the lining of my waistcoat as I whispered, "Her brother—he is well?"

"Well, and he have go to France," he answered. "She make me say, look to the round window in the Chateau front."

We spoke in English—which, as I have said, Voban understood imperfectly. There was nothing more said, and if Gabord, when he returned, suspected, he showed no sign, but put down two stools, seating himself on one, as I seated myself on the other for Voban's handiwork. Presently a soldier appeared with a bowl of coffee. Gabord rose, took it from him, waved him away, and handed it to me. Never did coffee taste so sweet, and I sipped and sipped till Voban had ended his work with me. Then I drained the last drop and stood up. He handed me a mirror, and Gabord, fetching a fine white handkerchief from his pocket, said, "Here's for your tears, when they drum you to heaven, dickey-bird."

But when I saw my face in the mirror, I confess I was startled. My hair, which had been black, was plentifully sprinkled with white, my face was intensely pale and thin, and the eyes were sunk in dark hollows. I should not have recognized myself. But I laughed as I handed back the glass, and said, "All flesh is grass, but a dungeon's no good meadow."

"'Tis for the dry chaff," Gabord answered, "not for young grass—aho!"

He rose and made ready to leave, Voban with him. "The commissariat camps here in an hour or so," he said, with a ripe chuckle.

It was clear the new state of affairs was more to his mind than the long year's rigour and silence. It seemed to me strange then, and it has seemed so ever since, that during all that time I never was visited by Doltaire but once, and of that event I am going to write briefly here.

It was about two months before this particular morning that he came, greeting me courteously enough.

"Close quarters here," said he, looking round as if the place were new to him and smiling to himself.

"Not so close as we all come to one day," said I.

"Dismal comparison!" he rejoined; "you've lost your spirits."

"Not so," I retorted; "nothing but my liberty."

"You know the way to find it quickly," he suggested.

"The letters for La Pompadour?" I asked.

"A dead man's waste papers," responded he; "of no use to him or you, or any one save the Grande Marquise."

"Valuable to me," said I.

"None but the Grande Marquise and the writer would give you a penny for them!"

"Why should I not be my own merchant?"

"You can—to me. If not to me, to no one. You had your chance long ago, and you refused it. You must admit I dealt fairly with you. I did not move till you had set your own trap and fallen into it. Now, if you do not give me the letters—well, you will give them to none else in this world. It has been a fair game, and I am winning now. I've only used means which one gentleman might use with another. Had you been a lesser man I should have had you spitted long ago. You understand?"

"Perfectly. But since we have played so long, do you think I'll give you the stakes now—before the end?"

"It would be wiser," he answered thoughtfully.

"I have a nation behind me," urged I.

"It has left you in a hole here to rot."

"It will take over your citadel and dig me out some day," I retorted hotly.

"What good that? Your life is more to you than Quebec to England."

"No, no," said I quickly; "I would give my life a hundred times to see your flag hauled down!"

"A freakish ambition," he replied; "mere infatuation!"

"You do not understand it, Monsieur Doltaire," I remarked ironically.

"I love not endless puzzles. There is no sport in following a maze that leads to nowhere save the grave." He yawned. "This air is heavy," he added; "you must find it trying."

"Never as trying as at this moment," I retorted.

"Come, am I so malarious?"

"You are a trickster," I answered coldly.

"Ah, you mean that night at Bigot's?" He smiled. "No, no, you were to blame—so green. You might have known we were for having you between the stones."

"But it did not come out as you wished?" hinted I.

"It served my turn," he responded; and he gave me such a smiling, malicious look that I knew sought to convey he had his way with Alixe; and though I felt that she was true to me, his cool presumption so stirred me I could have struck him in the face. I got angrily to my feet, but as I did so I shrank a little, for at times the wound in my side, not yet entirely healed, hurt me.

"You are not well," he said, with instant show of curiosity; "your wounds still trouble you? They should be healed. Gabord was ordered to see you cared for."

"Gabord has done well enough," answered I. "I have had wounds before, monsieur."

He leaned against the wall and laughed. "What braggarts you English are!" he said. "A race of swashbucklers—even on bread and water!"

He had me at advantage, and I knew it, for he had kept his temper. I made an effort. "Both excellent," rejoined I, "and English too."

He laughed again. "Come, that is better. That's in your old vein. I love to see you so. But how knew you our baker was English?—which he is, a prisoner like yourself."

"As easily as I could tell the water was not made by Frenchmen."

"Now I have hope of you," he broke out gaily; "you will yet redeem your nation."

At that moment Gabord came with a message from the Governor to Doltaire, and he prepared to go.

"You are set on sacrifice?" he asked. "Think—dangling from Cape Diamond!"

"I will meditate on your fate instead," I replied.

"Think!" he said again, waving off my answer with his hand. "The letters I shall no more ask for; and you will not escape death?"

"Never by that way," rejoined I.

"So. Very good. Au plaisir, my captain. I go to dine at the Seigneur Duvarney's."

With that last thrust he was gone, and left me wondering if the Seigneur had ever made an effort to see me, if he had forgiven the duel with his son.

That was the incident.

* * * * *

When Gabord and Voban were gone, leaving the light behind, I went over to where the torch stuck in the wall, and drew Alixe's letter from my pocket with eager fingers. It told the whole story of her heart.

CHATEAU ST. LOUIS, 27th November, 1757.

Though I write you these few words, dear Robert, I do not know that they will reach you, for as yet it is not certain they will let Voban visit you. A year, dear friend, and not a word from you! I should have broken my heart if I had not heard of you one way and another. They say you are much worn in body, though you have always a cheerful air. There are stories of a visit Monsieur Doltaire paid you, and how you jested. He hates you, and yet he admires you too.

And now listen, Robert, and I beg you not to be angry—oh, do not be angry, for I am all yours; but I want to tell you that I have not repulsed Monsieur Doltaire when he has spoken flatteries to me. I have not believed them, and I have kept my spirits strong against the evil in him. I want to get you free of prison, and to that end I have to work through him with the Intendant, that he will not set the Governor more against you. With the Intendant himself I will not deal at all. So I use the lesser villain, and in truth the more powerful, for he stands higher at Versailles than any here. With the Governor I have influence, for he is, as you know, a kinsman of my mother's, and of late he has shown a fondness for me. Yet you can see that I must act most warily, that I must not seem to care for you, for that would be your complete undoing. I rather seem to scoff. (Oh, how it hurts me! how my cheeks tingle when I think of it alone! and how I clench my hands, hating them all for oppressing you!)

I do not believe their slanders—that you are a spy. It is I, Robert, who have at last induced the Governor to bring you to trial. They would have put it off till next year, but I feared you would die in that awful dungeon, and I was sure that if your trial came on there would be a change, as there is to be for a time, at least. You are to be lodged in the common jail during the sitting of the court; and so that is one step gained. Yet I had to use all manner of device with the Governor.

He is sometimes so playful with me that I can pretend to sulkiness; and so one day I said that he showed no regard for our family or for me in not bringing you, who had nearly killed my brother, to justice. So he consented, and being of a stubborn nature, too, when Monsieur Doltaire and the Intendant opposed the trial, he said it should come off at once. But one thing grieves me: they are to have you marched through the streets of the town like any common criminal, and I dare show no distress nor plead, nor can my father, though he wishes to move for you in this; and I dare not urge him, for then it would seem strange the daughter asked your punishment, and the father sought to lessen it.

When you are in the common jail it will be much easier to help you. I have seen Gabord, but he is not

to be bent to any purpose, though he is kind to me. I shall try once more to have him take some wine and meat to you to-night. If I fail, then I shall only pray that you may be given strength in body for your time of trouble equal to your courage.

It may be I can fix upon a point where you may look to see me as you pass to-morrow to the Chateau. There must be a sign. If you will put your hand to your forehead— But no, they may bind you, and your hands may not be free. When you see me, pause in your step for an instant, and I shall know. I will tell Voban where you shall send your glance, if he is to be let in to you, and I hope that what I plan may not fail.

And so, Robert, adieu. Time can not change me, and your misfortunes draw me closer to you. Only the dishonourable thing could make me close the doors of my heart, and I will not think you, whate'er they say, unworthy of my constant faith. Some day, maybe, we shall smile at, and even cherish, these sad times. In this gay house I must be flippant, for I am now of the foolish world! But under all the trivial sparkle a serious heart beats. It belongs to thee, if thou wilt have it, Robert, the heart of thy

ALIXE.

An hour after getting this good letter Gabord came again, and with him breakfast—a word which I had almost dropped from my language. True, it was only in a dungeon, on a pair of stools, by the light of a torch, but how I relished it!—a bottle of good wine, a piece of broiled fish, the half of a fowl, and some tender vegetables.

When Gabord came for me with two soldiers, an hour later—I say an hour, but I only guess so, for I had no way of noting time—I was ready for new cares, and to see the world again. Before the others Gabord was the rough, almost brutal soldier, and soon I knew that I was to be driven out upon the St. Foye Road and on into the town. My arms were well fastened down, and I was tied about till I must have looked like a bale of living goods of no great value. Indeed, my clothes were by no means handsome, and save for my well-shaven face and clean handkerchief I was an ill-favoured spectacle; but I tried to bear my shoulders up as we marched through dark reeking corridors, and presently came suddenly into well-lighted passages.

I had to pause, for the light blinded my eyes, and they hurt me horribly, so delicate were the nerves. For some minutes I stood there, my guards stolidly waiting, Gabord muttering a little and stamping upon the floor as if in anger, though I knew he was merely playing a small part to deceive his comrades. The pain in my eyes grew less, and, though they kept filling with moisture from the violence of the light, I soon could see without distress.

I was led into the yard of the citadel, where was drawn up a company of soldiers. Gabord bade me stand still, and advanced towards the officers' quarters. I asked him if I might not walk to the ramparts and view the scene. He gruffly assented, bidding the men watch me closely, and I walked over to a point where, standing three hundred feet above the noble river, I could look out upon its sweet expanse, across to the Levis shore, with its serried legions of trees behind, and its bold settlement in front upon the Heights. There, eastward lay the well-wooded Island of Orleans, and over all the clear sun and sky, enlivened by a crisp and cheering air. Snow had fallen, but none now lay upon the ground, and I saw a rare and winning earth. I stood absorbed. I was recalling that first day that I remember in my life, when at Balmore my grandfather made prophecies upon me, and for the first time I was conscious of the world.

As I stood lost to everything about me, I heard Doltaire's voice behind, and presently he said over my shoulder, "To wish Captain Moray a good-morning were superfluous!"

I smiled at him: the pleasure of that scene had given me an impulse towards good nature even with my enemies.

"The best I ever had," I answered quietly.

"Contrasts are life's delights," he said. "You should thank us. You have your best day because of our worst dungeon."

"But my thanks shall not be in words; you shall have the same courtesy at our hands one day."

"I had the Bastille for a year," he rejoined, calling up a squad of men with his finger as he spoke. "I have had my best day. Two would be monotony. You think your English will take this some time?" he asked, waving a finger towards the citadel. "It will need good play to pluck that ribbon from its place." He glanced up, as he spoke, at the white flag with its golden lilies.

"So much the better sport," I answered. "We will have the ribbon and its heritage."

"You yourself shall furnish evidence to-day. Gabord here will see you temptingly disposed—the wild bull led peaceably by the nose!"

"But one day I will twist your nose, Monsieur Doltaire."

"That is fair enough, if rude," he responded. "When your turn comes, you twist and I endure. You shall be nourished well like me, and I shall look a battered hulk like you. But I shall never be the fool that you are. If I had a way to slip the leash, I'd slip it. You are a dolt." He was touching upon the letters again.

"I weigh it all," said I. "I am no fool—anything else you will."

"You'll be nothing soon, I fear—which is a pity."

What more he might have said I do not know, but there now appeared in the yard a tall, reverend old gentleman, in the costume of the *coureur de bois*, though his belt was richly chased, and he wore an order on his breast. There was something more refined than powerful in his appearance, but he had a keen, kindly eye, and a manner unmistakably superior. His dress was a little barbarous, unlike Doltaire's splendid white uniform, set off with violet and gold, the lace of a fine handkerchief sticking from his belt, and a gold-handled sword at his side; but the manner of both was distinguished.

Seeing Doltaire, he came forward and they embraced. Then he turned towards me, and as they walked off a little distance I could see that he was curious concerning me. Presently he raised his hand, and, as if something had excited him, said, "No, no, no; hang him and have done with it, but I'll have nothing to do with it—not a thing. 'Tis enough for me to rule at—"

I could hear no further, but I was now sure that he was some one of note who had retired from any share in state affairs. He and Doltaire then moved on to the doors of the citadel, and, pausing there, Doltaire turned round and made a motion of his hand to Gabord. I was at once surrounded by the squad of men, and the order to march was given. A drum in front of me began to play a well-known derisive air of the French army, *The Fox and the Wolf*.

We came out on the St. Foye Road and down towards the Chateau St. Louis, between crowds of shouting people who beat drums, kettles, pans, and made all manner of mocking noises. It was meant not only against myself, but against the British people. The women were not behind the men in violence; from them at first came handfuls of gravel and dust which struck me in the face; but Gabord put a stop to that.

It was a shameful ordeal, which might have vexed me sorely if I had not had greater trials and expected worse. Now and again appeared a face I knew—some lady who turned her head away, or some gentleman who watched me curiously, but made no sign.

When we came to the Chateau, I looked up as if casually, and there in the little round window I saw Alixe's face—for an instant only. I stopped in my tracks, was prodded by a soldier from behind, and I then stepped on. Entering, we were taken to the rear of the building, where, in an open courtyard, were a company of soldiers, some seats, and a table. On my right was the St. Lawrence swelling on its course, hundreds of feet beneath, little boats passing hither and thither on its flood.

We were waiting about half an hour, the noises of the clamoring crowd coming to us, as they carried me aloft in effigy, and, burning me at the cliff edge, fired guns and threw stones at me, till, rags, ashes, and flame, I was tumbled into the river far below. At last, from the Chateau came the Marquis de Vaudreuil, Bigot, and a number of officers. The Governor looked gravely at me, but did not bow; Bigot gave me a sneering smile, eying me curiously the while, and (I could feel) remarking on my poor appearance to Cournal beside him—Cournal, who winked at his wife's dishonour for the favour of her lover, who gave him means for public robbery.

Presently the Governor was seated, and he said, looking round, "Monsieur Doltaire—he is not here?"

Bigot shook his head, and answered, "No doubt he is detained at the citadel."

"And the Seigneur Duvarney?" the Governor added.

At that moment the Governor's secretary handed him a letter. The Governor opened it. "Listen," said he. He read to the effect that the Seigneur Duvarney felt he was hardly fitted to be a just judge in this case, remembering the conflict between his son and the notorious Captain Moray. And from another standpoint, though the prisoner merited any fate reserved for him, if guilty of spying, he could not forget that his life had been saved by this British captain—an obligation which, unfortunately, he could

neither repay nor wipe out. After much thought, he must disobey the Governor's summons, and he prayed that his Excellency would grant his consideration thereupon.

I saw the Governor frown, but he made no remark, while Bigot said something in his ear which did not improve his humour, for he replied curtly, and turned to his secretary. "We must have two gentlemen more," he said.

At that moment Doltaire entered with the old gentleman of whom I have written. The Governor instantly brightened, and gave the stranger a warm greeting, calling him his "dear Chevalier;" and, after a deal of urging, the Chevalier de la Darante was seated as one of my judges: which did not at all displease me, for I liked his face.

I do not need to dwell upon the trial here. I have set down the facts before. I had no counsel and no witnesses. There seemed no reason why the trial should have dragged on all day, for I soon saw it was intended to find me guilty. Yet I was surprised to see how Doltaire brought up a point here and a question there in my favour, which served to lengthen out the trial; and all the time he sat near the Chevalier de la Darante, now and again talking with him.

It was late evening before the trial came to a close. The one point to be established was that the letters taken from General Braddock were mine, and that I had made the plans while a hostage. I acknowledged nothing, and would not do so unless I was allowed to speak freely. This was not permitted until just before I was sentenced.

Then Doltaire's look was fixed on me, and I knew he waited to see if I would divulge the matter private between us. However, I stood by my compact with him. Besides, it could not serve me to speak of it here, or use it as an argument, and it would only hasten an end which I felt he could prevent if he chose.

So when I was asked if I had aught to say, I pleaded only that they had not kept the Articles of War signed at Fort Necessity, which provided I should be free within two months and a half—that is, when prisoners in our hands should be delivered up to them, as they were. They had broken their bond, though we had fulfilled ours, and I held myself justified in doing what I had done for our cause and for my own life.

I was not heard patiently, though I could see that the Governor and the Chevalier were impressed; but Bigot instantly urged the case hotly against me, and the end came very soon. It was now dark; a single light had been brought and placed beside the Governor, while a soldier held a torch at a distance. Suddenly there was a silence; then, in response to a signal, the sharp ringing of a hundred bayonets as they were drawn and fastened to the muskets, and I could see them gleaming in the feeble torchlight. Presently, out of the stillness, the Governor's voice was heard condemning me to death by hanging, thirty days hence, at sunrise. Silence fell again instantly, and then a thing occurred which sent a thrill through us all. From the dark balcony above us came a voice, weird, high, and wailing:

"Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! He is guilty, and shall die! Francois Bigot shall die!"

The voice was Mathilde's, and I saw Doltaire shrug a shoulder and look with malicious amusement at the Intendant. Bigot himself sat pale and furious. "Discover the intruder," he said to Gabord, who was standing near, "and have—him—jailed."

But the Governor interfered. "It is some drunken creature," he urged quietly. "Take no account of it."

X

AN OFFICER OF MARINES

What was my dismay to know that I was to be taken back again to my dungeon, and not lodged in the common jail, as I had hoped and Alixe had hinted! When I saw whither my footsteps were directed I said nothing, nor did Gabord speak at all. We marched back through a railing crowd as we had come, all silent and gloomy. I felt a chill at my heart when the citadel loomed up again out of the November shadow, and I half paused as I entered the gates. "Forward!" said Gabord mechanically, and I moved on into the yard, into the prison, through the dull corridors, the soldiers' heels clanking and resounding behind, down into the bowels of the earth, where the air was moist and warm, and then into my dungeon home! I stepped inside, and Gabord ordered the ropes off my person somewhat roughly, watched the soldiers till they were well away, and then leaned against the wall, waiting for me to

speak. I had no impulse to smile, but I knew how I could most touch him, and so I said lightly, "You've got dickey-bird home again."

He answered nothing and turned towards the door, leaving the torch stuck in the wall. But he suddenly stopped short, and suddenly thrust out to me a tiny piece of paper.

"A hand touched mine as I went through the Chateau," said he, "and when out I came, look you, this here! I can't see to read. What does it say?" he added, with a shrewd attempt at innocence.

I opened the little paper, held it towards the torch, and read:

"Because of the storm there is no sleeping. Is there not the watcher aloft? Shall the sparrow fall unheeded? The wicked shall be confounded."

It was Alixe's writing. She had hazarded this in the hands of my jailer as her only hope, and, knowing that he might not serve her, had put her message in vague sentences which I readily interpreted. I read the words aloud to him, and he laughed, and remarked, "'Tis a foolish thing that—The Scarlet Woman, mast like."

"Most like," I answered quietly; "yet what should she be doing there at the Chateau?"

"The mad go everywhere," he answered, "even to the intendance!"

With that he left me, going, as he said, "to fetch crumbs and wine." Exhausted with the day's business, I threw myself upon my couch, drew my cloak over me, composed myself, and in a few minutes was sound asleep. I waked to find Gabord in the dungeon, setting out food upon a board supported by two stools.

"'Tis custom to feed your dickey-bird ere you fetch him to the pot." he said, and drew the cork from a bottle of wine.

He watched me as I ate and talked, but he spoke little. When I had finished, he fetched a packet of tobacco from his pocket. I offered him money, but he refused it, and I did not press him, for he said the food and wine were not of his buying. Presently he left, and came back with pens, ink, paper, and candles, which he laid out on my couch without words.

After a little he came again, and laid a book on the improvised table before me. It was an English Bible. Opening it, I found inscribed on the fly-leaf, Charles Wainfleet, Chaplain to the British Army. Gabord explained that this chaplain had been in the citadel for some weeks; that he had often inquired about me; that he had been brought from the Ohio; and had known of me, having tended the lieutenant of my Virginian infantry in his last hours. Gabord thought I should now begin to make my peace with Heaven, and so had asked for the chaplain's Bible, which was freely given. I bade him thank the chaplain for me, and opening the book, I found a leaf turned down at the words,

"In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."

When I was left alone, I sat down to write diligently that history of myself which I had composed and fixed in my memory during the year of my housing in this dungeon. The words came from my pen freely, and hour after hour through many days, while no single word reached me from the outside world, I wrote on; carefully revising, but changing little from that which I had taken so long to record in my mind. I would not even yet think that they would hang me; and if they did, what good could brooding do? When the last word of the memoirs (I may call them so), addressed to Alixe, had been written, I turned my thoughts to other friends.

The day preceding that fixed for my execution came, yet there was no sign from friend or enemy without. At ten o'clock of that day Chaplain Wainfleet was admitted to me in the presence of Gabord and a soldier. I found great pleasure in his company, brief as his visit was; and after I had given him messages to bear for me to old friends, if we never met again and he were set free, he left me, benignly commending me to Heaven. There was the question of my other letters. I had but one desire—Voban again, unless at my request the Seigneur Duvarney would come, and they would let him come. If it were certain that I was to go to the scaffold, then I should not hesitate to tell him my relations with his daughter, that he might comfort her when, being gone from the world myself, my love could do her no harm. I could not think that he would hold against me the duel with his son, and I felt sure he would come to me if he could.

But why should I not try for both Voban and the Seigneur? So I spoke to Gabord.

"Voban! Voban!" said he. "Does dickey-bird play at peacock still? Well, thou shalt see Voban. Thou shalt go trimmed to heaven—aho!"

Presently I asked him if he would bear a message to the Governor, asking permission for the Seigneur Duvarney to visit me, if he were so inclined. At his request I wrote my petition out, and he carried it away with him, saying that I should have Voban that evening.

I waited hour after hour, but no one came. As near as I could judge it was now evening. It seemed strange to think that, twenty feet above me, the world was all white with snow; the sound of sleigh-bells and church-bells, and the cries of snowshoers ringing on the clear, sharp air. I pictured the streets of Quebec alive with people: the young seigneur set off with furs and silken sash and sword or pistols; the long-haired, black-eyed woodsman in his embroidered moccasins and leggings with flying thrums; the peasant farmer slapping his hands cheerfully in the lighted market-place; the petty noble, with his demoiselle, hovering in the precincts of the Chateau St. Louis and the intendance. Up there were light, freedom, and the inspiriting frost; down here in my dungeon, the blades of corn, which, dying, yet never died, told the story of a choking air, wherein the body and soul of a man droop and take long to die. This was the night before Christmas Eve, when in England and Virginia they would be preparing for feasting and thanksgiving.

The memories of past years crowded on me. I thought of feastings and spendthrift rejoicings in Glasgow and Virginia. All at once the carnal man in me rose up and damned these lying foes of mine. Resignation went whistling down the wind. Hang me! Hang me! No, by the God that gave me breath! I sat back and laughed—laughed at my own insipid virtue, by which, to keep faith with the fanatical follower of Prince Charlie, I had refused my liberty; cut myself off from the useful services of my King; wasted good years of my life, trusting to pressure and help to come from England, which never came; twisted the rope for my own neck to keep honour with the dishonourable Doltaire, who himself had set the noose swinging; and, inexpressible misery! involved in my shame and peril a young blithe spirit, breathing a miasma upon the health of a tender life. Every rebellious atom in my blood sprang to indignant action. I swore that if they fetched me to the gallows to celebrate their Noel, other lives than mine should go to keep me company on the dark trail. To die like a rat in a trap, oiled for the burning, and lighted by the torch of hatred! No, I would die fighting, if I must die.

I drew from its hiding-place the knife I had secreted the day I was brought into that dungeon—a little weapon, but it would serve for the first blow. At whom? Gabord? It all flashed through my mind how I might do it when he came in again: bury this blade in his neck or heart—it was long enough for the work; then, when he was dead, change my clothes for his, take his weapons, and run my chances to get free of the citadel. Free? Where should I go in the dead of winter? Who would hide me, shelter me? I could not make my way to an English settlement. Ill clad, exposed to the merciless climate, and the end death. But that was freedom—freedom! I could feel my body dilating with the thought, as I paced my dungeon like an ill-tempered beast. But kill Gabord, who had put himself in danger to serve me, who himself had kept the chains from off my ankles and body, whose own life depended upon my security—"Come, come, Robert Moray," said I, "what relish have you for that? That's an ill game for a gentleman. Alixe Duvarney would rather see you dead than get your freedom over the body of this man."

That was an hour of storm. I am glad that I conquered the baser part of me; for, almost before I had grown calm again, the bolts of the dungeon doors shot back, and presently Gabord stepped inside, followed by a muffled figure.

"Voban the barber," said Gabord in a strange voice, and stepping again outside, he closed the door, but did not shoot the bolts.

I stood as one in a dream. Voban the barber? In spite of cap and great fur coat, I saw the outline of a figure that no barber ever had in this world. I saw two eyes shining like lights set in a rosy sky. A moment of doubt, of impossible speculation, of delicious suspense, and then the coat of Voban the barber opened, dropped away from the lithe, graceful figure of a young officer of marines, the cap flew off, and in an instant the dear head, the blushing, shining face of Alixe was on my breast.

In that moment, stolen from the calendar of hate, I ran into the haven where true hearts cast anchor and bless God that they have seen upon the heights, to guide them, the lights of home. The moment flashed by and was gone, but the light it made went not with it.

When I drew her blushing face up, and stood her off from me that I might look at her again, the colour flew back and forth on her cheek, as you may see the fire flutter in an uncut ruby when you turn it in the sun. Modestly drawing the cloak she wore more closely about her, she hastened to tell me how it was she came in such a guise; but I made her pause for a moment while I gave her a seat and sat down beside her. Then by the light of the flickering torch and flaring candles I watched her feelings play upon her face as the warm light of autumn shifts upon the glories of ripe fruits. Her happiness was tempered by the sadness of our position, and my heart smote me that I had made her suffer, had brought care to her young life. I could see that in the year she had grown older, yet her beauty seemed

enhanced by that and by the trouble she had endured. I shall let her tell her story here unbroken by my questions and those interruptions which Gabord made, bidding her to make haste. She spoke without faltering, save here and there; but even then I could see her brave spirit quelling the riot of her emotions, shutting down the sluice-gate of tears.

"I knew," she said, her hand clasped in mine, "that Gabord was the only person like to be admitted to you, and so for days, living in fear lest the worst should happen, I have prepared for this chance. I have grown so in height that I knew an old uniform of my brothers would fit me, and I had it ready—small sword and all," she added, with a sad sort of humour, touching the weapon at her side. "You must know that we have for the winter a house here upon the ramparts near the Chateau. It was my mother's doings, that my sister Georgette and I might have no great journeyings in the cold to the festivities hereabouts. So I, being a favourite with the Governor, ran in and out of the Chateau at my will; of which my mother was proud, and she allowed me much liberty, for to be a favourite of the Governor is an honour. I knew how things were going, and what the chances were of the sentence being carried out on you. Sometimes I thought my heart would burst with the anxiety of it all, but I would not let that show to the world. If you could but have seen me smile at the Governor and Monsieur Doltaire—nay, do not press my hand so, Robert; you know well you have no need to fear monsieur—while I learned secrets of state, among them news of you. Three nights ago Monsieur Doltaire was talking with me at a ball—ah, those feastings while you were lying in a dungeon, and I shutting up my love and your danger close in my heart, even from those who loved me best! Well, suddenly he said, 'I think I will not have our English captain shifted to a better world.'

"My heart stood still; I felt an ache across my breast so that I could hardly breathe. 'Why will you not?' said I; 'was not the sentence just?' He paused a minute, and then replied, 'All sentences are just when an enemy is dangerous.' Then said I as in surprise, 'Why, was he no spy, after all?' He sat back, and laughed a little. 'A spy according to the letter of the law, but you have heard of secret history—eh?' I tried to seem puzzled, for I had a thought there was something private between you and him which has to do with your fate. So I said, as if bewildered, 'You mean there is evidence which was not shown at the trial?' He answered slowly, 'Evidence that would bear upon the morals, not the law of the case.' Then said I, 'Has it to do with you, monsieur?' 'It has to do with France,' he replied. 'And so you will not have his death?' I asked. 'Bigot wishes it,' he replied, 'for no other reason than that Madame Cournal has spoken nice words for the good-looking captain, and because that unsuccessful duel gave Vaudreuil an advantage over himself. Vaudreuil wishes it because he thinks it will sound well in France, and also because he really believes the man a spy. The Council do not care much; they follow the Governor and Bigot, and both being agreed, their verdict is unanimous.' He paused, then added, 'And the Seigneur Duvarney—and his daughter—wish it because of a notable injury to one of their name.' At that I cautiously replied, 'No, my father does not wish it, for my brother gave the offense, and Captain Moray saved his life, as you know. I do not wish it, Monsieur Doltaire, because hanging is a shameful death, and he is a gentle man, not a ruffian. Let him be shot like a gentleman. How will it sound at the Court of France that, on insufficient evidence, as you admit, an English gentleman was hanged for a spy? Would not the King say (for he is a gentleman), Why was not this shown me before the man's death? Is it not a matter upon which a country would feel as gentlemen feel?'

"I knew it the right thing to say at the moment, and it seemed the only way to aid you, though I intended, if the worst came to the worst, to go myself to the Governor at the last and plead for your life, at least for a reprieve. But it had suddenly flashed upon me that a reference to France was the thing, since the Articles of War which you are accused of dishonouring were signed by officers from France and England.

"Presently he turned to me with a look of curiosity, and another sort of look also that made me tremble, and said, 'Now, there you have put your finger on the point—my point, the choice weapon I had reserved to prick the little bubble of Bigot's hate and the Governor's conceit, if I so chose, even at the last. And here is a girl, a young girl just freed from pinafores, who teaches them the law of nations! If it pleased me I should not speak, for Vaudreuil's and Bigot's affairs are none of mine; but, in truth, why should you kill your enemy? It is the sport to keep him living; you can get no change for your money from a dead man. He has had one cheerful year; why not another, and another, and another? And so watch him fretting to the slow-coming end, while now and again you give him a taste of hope, to drop him back again into the pit which has no sides for climbing.' He paused a minute, and then added, 'A year ago I thought he had touched you, this Britisher, with his raw humour and manners; but, my faith, how swiftly does a woman's fancy veer!' At that I said calmly to him, 'You must remember that then he was not thought so base.' 'Yes, yes,' he replied; 'and a woman loves to pity the captive, whatever his fault, if he be presentable and of some notice or talent. And Moray has gifts,' he went on. I appeared all at once to be offended. 'Veering, indeed! a woman's fancy! I think you might judge women better. You come from high places, Monsieur Doltaire, and they say this and that of your great talents and of your power at Versailles, but what proof have we had of it? You set a girl down with a fine

patronage, and you hint at weapons to cut off my cousin the Governor and the Intendant from their purposes; but how do we know you can use them, that you have power with either the unnoticeable woman or the great men?' I knew very well it was a bold move. He suddenly turned to me, in his cruel eyes a glittering kind of light, and said, 'I suggest no more than I can do with those "great men"; and as for the woman, the slave can not be patron—I am the slave. I thought not of power before; but now that I do, I will live up to my thinking. I seem idle, I am not; purposeless, I am not; a gamester, I am none. I am a sportsman, and I will not leave the field till all the hunt be over. I seem a trifler, yet I have persistency. I am no romanticist, I have no great admiration for myself, and yet when I set out to hunt a woman honestly, be sure I shall never back to kennel till she is mine or I am done for utterly. Not by worth nor by deserving, but by unending patience and diligence—that shall be my motto. I shall devote to the chase every art that I have learned or known by nature. So there you have me, mademoiselle. Since you have brought me to the point, I will unfurl my flag.... I am—your—hunter,' he went on, speaking with slow, painful emphasis, 'and I shall make you mine. You fight against me, but it is no use.' I got to my feet, and said with coolness, though I was sick at heart and trembling, 'You are frank. You have made two resolves. I shall give weight to one as you fulfill the other'; and, smiling at him, I moved away towards my mother.

"Masterful as he is, I felt that this would touch his vanity. There lay my great chance with him. If he had guessed the truth of what's between us, be sure, Robert, your life were not worth one hour beyond to-morrow's sunrise. You must know how I loathe deceitfulness, but when one weak girl is matched against powerful and evil men, what can she do? My conscience does not chide me, for I know my cause is just. Robert, look me in the eyes.... There, like that.... Now tell me. You are innocent of the dishonourable thing, are you not? I believe with all my soul, but that I may say from your own lips that you are no spy, tell me so."

When I had said as she had wished, assuring her she should know all, carrying proofs away with her, and that hidden evidence of which Doltaire had spoken, she went on:

"You put me to the test,' said monsieur. 'Doing one, it will be proof that I shall do the other.' He fixed his eyes upon me with such a look that my whole nature shrank from him, as if the next instant his hateful hands were to be placed on me. Oh, Robert, I know how perilous was the part I played, but I dared it for your sake. For a whole year I have dissembled to every one save to that poor mad soul Mathilde, who reads my heart in her wild way, to Voban, and to the rough soldier outside your dungeon. But they will not betray me. God has given us these rough but honest friends.

"Well, monsieur left me that night, and I have not seen him since, nor can I tell where he is, for no one knows, and I dare not ask too much. I did believe he would achieve his boast as to saving your life, and so, all yesterday and to-day, I have waited with most anxious heart; but not one word! Yet there was that in all he said which made me sure he meant to save you, and I believe he will. Yet think: if anything happened to him! You know what wild doings go on at Bigot's chateau out at Charlesbourg; or, again, in the storm of yesterday he may have been lost. You see, there are the hundred chances; so I determined not to trust wholly to him. There was one other way—to seek the Governor myself, open my heart to him, and beg for a reprieve. To-night at nine o'clock—it is now six, Robert—we go to the Chateau St. Louis, my mother and my father and I, to sup with the Governor. Oh, think what I must endure, to face them with this awful shadow on me! If no word come of the reprieve before that hour, I shall make my own appeal to the Governor. It may ruin me, but it may save you; and that done, what should I care for the rest? Your life is more to me than all the world beside." Here she put both hands upon my shoulders and looked me in the eyes.

I did not answer yet, but took her hands in mine, and she continued: "An hour past, I told my mother I should go to see my dear friend Lucie Lotbiniere. Then I stole up to my room, put on my brother's uniform, and came down to meet Voban near the citadel, as we had arranged. I knew he was to have an order from the Governor to visit you. He was waiting, and to my great joy he put the order in my hands. I took his coat and wig and cap, a poor disguise, and came straight to the citadel, handing the order to the soldiers at the gate. They gave it back without a word, and passed me on. I thought this strange, and looked at the paper by the light of the torches. What was my surprise to see that Voban's name had been left out! It but gave permission to the bearer. That would serve with the common soldier, but I knew well it would not with Gabord or with the commandant of the citadel. All at once I saw the great risk I was running, the danger to us both. Still I would not turn back. But how good fortune serves us when we least look for it! At the commandant's very door was Gabord. I did not think to deceive him. It was my purpose from the first to throw myself upon his mercy. So there, that moment, I thrust the order into his hand. He read it, looked a moment, half fiercely and half kindly, at me, then turned and took the order to the commandant. Presently he came out, and said to me, 'Come, m'sieu', and see you clip the gentleman dainty fine for his sunrise travel. He'll get no care 'twixt posting-house and end of journey, m'sieu.' This he said before two soldiers, speaking with harshness and a brutal humour. But inside the citadel he changed at once, and, taking from my head this cap and wig, he said quite gently,

yet I could see he was angry, too, 'This is a mad doing, young lady.' He said no more, and led me straight to you. If I had told him I was coming, I know he would have stayed me. But at the dangerous moment he had not heart to drive me back.... And that is all my story, Robert."

As I have said, this tale was broken often by little questionings and exclamations, and was not told in one long narrative as I have written it here. When she had done I sat silent and overcome for a moment. There was one thing now troubling me sorely, even in the painful joy of having her here close by me. She had risked all to save my life—reputation, friends, even myself, the one solace in her possible misery. Was it not my duty to agree to Doltaire's terms, for her sake, if there was yet a chance to do so? I had made a solemn promise to Sir John Godric that those letters, if they ever left my hands, should go to the lady who had written them; and to save my own life I would not have broken faith with my benefactor. But had I the right to add to the misery of this sweet, brave spirit? Suppose it was but for a year or two: had I the right to give her sorrow for that time, if I could prevent it, even at the cost of honour with the dead? Was it not my duty to act, and at once? Time was short.

While in a swift moment I was debating, Gabord opened the door, and said, "Come, end it, end it. Gabord has a head to save!" I begged him for one minute more, and then giving Alixe the packet which held my story, I told her hastily the matter between Doltaire and myself, and said that now, rather than give her sorrow, I was prepared to break my word with Sir John Godric. She heard me through with flashing eyes, and I could see her bosom heave. When I had done, she looked me straight in the eyes.

"Is all that here?" she said, holding up the packet.

"All," I answered.

"And you would not break your word to save your own life?"

I shook my head in negation.

"Now I know that you are truly honourable," she answered, "and you shall not break your promise for me. No, no, you shall not; you shall not stir. Tell me that you will not send word to Monsieur Doltaire—tell me!"

When, after some struggle, I had consented, she said, "But I may act. I am not bound to secrecy. I have given no word or bond. I will go to the Governor with my love, and I do not fear the end. They will put me in a convent, and I shall see you no more, but I shall have saved you."

In vain I begged her not to do so; her purpose was strong, and I could only get her promise that she would not act till midnight. This was hardly achieved when Gabord entered quickly, saying, "The Seigneur Duvarney! On with your coat, wig, and cap! Quick, mademoiselle!"

Swiftly the disguise was put on, and I clasped her to my breast with a joyful agony, while Gabord hastily put out the candles and torch, and drew Alixe behind the dungeon door. Then standing himself in the doorway, he loudly commended me to sleep sound and be ready for travel in the morning. Taking the hint, I threw myself upon my couch, and composed myself. An instant afterwards the Seigneur appeared with a soldier, and Gabord met him cheerfully, looked at the order from the Governor, and motioned the Seigneur in and the soldier away. As Duvarney stepped inside, Gabord followed, holding up a torch. I rose to meet my visitor, and as I took his hand I saw Gabord catch Alixe by the sleeve and hurry her out with a whispered word, swinging the door behind her as she passed. Then he stuck the torch in the wall, went out, shut and bolted the dungeon door, and left us two alone.

I was glad that Alixe's safety had been assured, and my greeting of her father was cordial. But he was more reserved than I had ever known him. The duel with his son, which had sent the youth to France and left him with a wound which would trouble him for many a day, weighed heavily against me. Again, I think that he guessed my love for Alixe, and resented it with all his might. What Frenchman would care to have his daughter lose her heart to one accused of a wretched crime, condemned to death, an enemy of his country, and a Protestant? I was sure that should he guess at the exact relations between us, Alixe would be sent behind the tall doors of a convent, where I should knock in vain.

"You must not think, Moray," said he, "that I have been indifferent to your fate, but you can not guess how strong the feeling is against you, how obdurate is the Governor, who, if he should appear lax in dealing with you, would give a weapon into Bigot's hands which might ruin him in France one day. I have but this moment come from the Governor, and there seems no way to move him."

I saw that he was troubled greatly, and I felt his helplessness. He went on: "There is but one man who could bend the Governor, but he, alas! is no friend of yours. And what way there is to move him I know not; he has no wish, I fancy, but that you shall go to your fate."

"You mean Monsieur Doltaire?" said I quietly.

"Doltaire," he answered. "I have tried to find him, for he is the secret agent of La Pompadour, and if I had one plausible reason to weigh with him— But I have none, unless you can give it. There are vague hints of things between you and him, and I have come to ask if you can put any fact, any argument, in my hands that would aid me with him. I would go far to serve you."

"Think not, I pray you," returned I, "that there is any debt unsatisfied between us."

He waved his hand in a melancholy way. "Indeed, I wish to serve you for the sake of past friendship between us, not only for that debt's sake."

"In spite of my quarrel with your son?" asked I.

"In spite of that, indeed," he said slowly, "though a great wedge was driven between us there."

"I am truly sorry for it," said I, with some pride. "The blame was in no sense mine. I was struck across the face; I humbled myself, remembering you, but he would have me out yes or no."

"Upon a wager!" he urged, somewhat coldly.

"With the Intendant, monsieur," I replied, "not with your son."

"I can not understand the matter," was his gloomy answer.

"I beg you not to try," I rejoined; "it is too late for explanations, and I have nothing to tell you of myself and Monsieur Doltaire. Only, whatever comes, remember I have begged nothing of you, have desired nothing but justice—that only. I shall make no further move; the axe shall fall if it must. I have nothing now to do but set my house in order, and live the hours between this and sunrise with what quiet I may. I am ready for either freedom or death. Life is not so incomparable a thing that I can not give it up without pother."

He looked at me a moment steadily. "You and I are standing far off from each other," he remarked. "I will say one last thing to you, though you seem to wish me gone and your own grave closing in. I was asked by the Governor to tell you that if you would put him in the way of knowing the affairs of your provinces from the letters you have received, together with estimate of forces and plans of your forts, as you have known them, he will spare you. I only tell you this because you close all other ways to me."

"I carry," said I, with a sharp burst of anger, "the scars of wounds an insolent youth gave me. I wish now that I had killed the son of the man who dares bring me such a message."

For a moment I had forgotten Alixe, everything, in the wildness of my anger. I choked with rage; I could have struck him.

"I mean nothing against you," he urged, with great ruefulness. "I suggest nothing. I bring the Governor's message, that is all. And let me say," he added, "that I have not thought you a spy, nor ever shall think so."

I was trembling with anger still, and I was glad that at the moment Gabord opened the door, and stood waiting.

"You will not part with me in peace, then?" asked the Seigneur slowly.

"I will remember the gentleman who gave a captive hospitality," I answered. "I am too near death to let a late injury outweigh an old friendship. I am ashamed, but not only for myself. Let us part in peace—ay, let us part in peace," I added with feeling, for the thought of Alixe came rushing over me, and this was her father!

"Good-by, Moray," he responded gravely. "You are a soldier, and brave; if the worst comes, I know how you will meet it. Let us waive all bitter thoughts between us. Good-by."

We shook hands then, without a word, and in a moment the dungeon door closed behind him, and I was alone; and for a moment my heart was heavy beyond telling, and a terrible darkness settled on my spirit. I sat on my couch and buried my head in my hands.

At last I was roused by Gabord's voice.

He sat down, and drew the leaves of faded corn between his fingers. "'Tis a poor life, this in a cage, after all—eh, dickey-bird? If a soldier can't stand in the field fighting, if a man can't rub shoulders with man, and pitch a tent of his own somewhere, why not go travelling with the Beast—aho? To have all the life sucked out like these—eh? To see the flesh melt and the hair go white, the eye to be one hour bright like a fire in a kiln, and the next like mother on working vinegar—that's not living at all—no."

The speech had evidently cost him much thinking, and when he ended, his cheeks puffed out and a soundless laugh seemed to gather, but it burst in a sort of sigh. I would have taken his hand that moment, if I had not remembered when once he drew back from such demonstrations. I did not speak, but nodded assent, and took to drawing the leaves of corn between my fingers as he was doing.

After a moment, cocking his head at me as might a surly schoolmaster in a pause of leniency, he added, "As quiet, as quiet, and never did he fly at door of cage, nor peck at jailer—aho!"

I looked at him a minute seriously, and then, feeling in my coat, handed to him the knife which I had secreted, with the words, "Enough for pecking with, eh?"

He looked at me so strangely, as he weighed the knife up and down in his hand, that I could not at first guess his thought; but presently I understood it, and I almost could have told what he would say. He opened the knife, felt the blade, measured it along his fingers, and then said, with a little bursting of the lips, "Poom! But what would ma'm'selle have thought if Gabord was found dead with a hole in his neck—behind? Eh?"

He had struck the very note that had sung in me when the temptation came; but he was gay at once again, and I said to him, "What is the hour fixed?"

"Seven o'clock," he answered, "and I will bring your breakfast first."

"Good-night, then," said I. "Coffee and a little tobacco will be enough."

When he was gone, I lay down on my bag of straw, which, never having been renewed, was now only full of worn chaff, and, gathering myself in my cloak, was soon in a dreamless sleep.

I waked to the opening of the dungeon door, to see Gabord entering with a torch and a tray that held my frugal breakfast. He had added some brandy, also, of which I was glad, for it was bitter cold outside, as I discovered later. He was quiet, seeming often to wish to speak, but pausing before the act, never getting beyond a stumbling aho! I greeted him cheerfully enough. After making a little toilette, I drank my coffee with relish. At last I asked Gabord if no word had come to the citadel for me; and he said, none at all, nothing save a message from the Governor, before midnight, ordering certain matters. No more was said, until, turning to the door, he told me he would return to fetch me forth in a few minutes. But when halfway out he suddenly wheeled, came back, and blurted out, "If you and I could only fight it out, m'sieu! 'Tis ill for a gentleman and a soldier to die without thrust or parry."

"Gabord," said I, smiling at him, "you preach good sermons always, and I never saw a man I'd rather fight and be killed by than you!" Then, with an attempt at rough humour, I added, "But as I told you once, the knot is'nt at my throat, and I'll tie another one yet elsewhere, if God loves honest men."

I had no hope at all, yet I felt I must say it. He nodded, but said nothing, and presently I was alone.

I sat down on my straw couch and composed myself to think; not upon my end, for my mind was made up as to that, but upon the girl who was so dear to me, whose life had crept into mine and filled it, making it of value in the world. It must not be thought that I no longer had care for our cause, for I would willingly have spent my life a hundred times for my country, as my best friends will bear witness; but there comes a time when a man has a right to set all else aside but his own personal love and welfare, and to me the world was now bounded by just so much space as my dear Alixe might move in. I fastened my thought upon her face as I had last seen it. My eyes seemed to search for it also, and to find it in the torch which stuck out, softly sputtering, from the wall. I do not pretend, even at this distance of time, after having thought much over the thing, to give any good reason for so sudden a change as took place in me there. All at once a voice appeared to say to me, "When you are gone, she will be Doltaire's. Remember what she said. She fears him. He has a power over her."

Now, some will set it down to a low, unmanly jealousy and suspicion; it is hard to name it, but I know that I was seized with a misery so deep that all my past sufferings and disappointments, and even this present horror were shadowy beside it. I pictured to myself Alixe in Doltaire's arms, after I had gone beyond human call. It is strange how an idea will seize us and master us, and an inconspicuous possibility suddenly stand out with huge distinctness. All at once I felt in my head "the ring of fire" of

which Mathilde had warned me, a maddening heat filled my veins, and that hateful picture grew more vivid. Things Alixe had said the night before flashed to my mind, and I fancied that, unknown to herself even, he already had a substantial power over her.

He had deep determination, the gracious subtlety which charms a woman, and she, hemmed in by his devices, overcome by his pleadings, attracted by his enviable personality, would come at last to his will. The evening before I had seen strong signs of the dramatic qualities of her nature. She had the gift of imagination, the epic spirit. Even three years previous I felt how she had seen every little incident of her daily life in a way which gave it vividness and distinction. All things touched her with delicate emphasis—were etched upon her brain—or did not touch her at all. She would love the picturesque in life, though her own tastes were so simple and fine. Imagination would beset her path with dangers; it would be to her, with her beauty, a fatal gift, a danger to herself and others. She would have power, and feeling it, womanlike, would use it, dissipating her emotions, paying out the sweetness of her soul, till one day a dramatic move, a strong picturesque personality like Doltaire's, would catch her from the moorings of her truth, and the end must be tragedy to her. Doltaire! Doltaire! The name burnt into my brain. Some prescient quality in me awaked, and I saw her the sacrifice of her imagination, of the dramatic beauty of her nature, my enemy her tyrant and destroyer. He would leave nothing undone to achieve his end, and do nothing that would not in the end poison her soul and turn her very glories into miseries. How could she withstand the charm of his keen knowledge of the world, the fascination of his temperament, the alluring eloquence of his frank wickedness? And I should rather a million times see her in her grave than passed through the atmosphere of his life.

This may seem madness, selfish and small; but after-events went far to justify my fears and imaginings, for behind there was a love, an aching, absorbing solicitude. I can not think that my anxiety was all vulgar smallness then.

I called him by coarse names, as I tramped up and down my dungeon; I cursed him; impotent contempt was poured out on him; in imagination I held him there before me, and choked him till his eyes burst out and his body grew limp in my arms. The ring of fire in my head scorched and narrowed till I could have shrieked in agony. My breath came short and labored, and my heart felt as though it were in a vise and being clamped to nothing. For an instant, also, I broke out in wild bitterness against Alixe. She had said she would save me, and yet in an hour or less I should be dead. She had come to me last night ah—true; but that was in keeping with her dramatic temperament; it was the drama of it that had appealed to her; and to-morrow she would forget me, and sink her fresh spirit in the malarial shadows of Doltaire's.

In my passion I thrust my hand into my waistcoat and unconsciously drew out something. At first my only feeling was that my hand could clench it, but slowly a knowledge of it travelled to my brain, as if through clouds and vapours. Now I am no Catholic, I do not know that I am superstitious, yet when I became conscious that the thing I held was the wooden cross that Mathilde had given me, a weird feeling passed through me, and there was an arrest of the passions of mind and body; a coolness passed over all my nerves, and my brain got clear again, the ring of fire loosing, melting away. It was a happy, diverting influence, which gave the mind rest for a moment, till the better spirit, the wiser feeling, had a chance to reassert itself; but then it seemed to me almost supernatural.

One can laugh when misery and danger are over, and it would be easy to turn this matter into ridicule, but from that hour to this the wooden cross which turned the flood of my feelings then into a saving channel has never left me. I keep it, not indeed for what it was, but for what it did.

As I stood musing, there came to my mind suddenly the words of a song which I had heard some voyageurs sing on the St. Lawrence, as I sat on the cliff a hundred feet above them and watched them drift down in the twilight:

"Brothers, we go to the Scarlet Hills:
(Little gold sun, come out of the dawn!)
There we will meet in the cedar groves;
(Shining white dew, come down!)
There is a bed where you sleep so sound,
The little good folk of the hills will guard,
Till the morning wakes and your love comes home.
(Fly away, heart, to the Scarlet Hills!)"

Something in the half-mystical, half-Arcadian spirit of the words soothed me, lightened my thoughts, so that when, presently, Gabord opened the door, and entered with four soldiers, I was calm enough for the great shift. Gabord did not speak, but set about pinioning me himself. I asked him if he could not let me go unpinioned, for it was ignoble to go to ones death tied like a beast. At first he shook his head, but as if with a sudden impulse lie cast the ropes aside, and, helping me on with my cloak, threw again over

it a heavier cloak he had brought, gave me a fur cap to wear, and at last himself put on me a pair of woollen leggings, which, if they were no ornament, and to be of but transitory use (it seemed strange to me then that one should be caring for a body so soon to be cut off from all feeling), were most comforting when we came into the bitter, steely air. Gabord might easily have given these last tasks to the soldiers, but he was solicitous to perform them himself. Yet with surly brow and a rough accent he gave the word to go forward, and in a moment we were marching through the passages, up frosty steps, in the stone corridors, and on out of the citadel into the yard.

I remember that as we passed into the open air I heard the voice of a soldier singing a gay air of love and war. Presently he came in sight. He saw me, stood still for a moment looking curiously, and then, taking up the song again at the very line where he had broken off, passed round an angle of the building and was gone. To him I was no more than a moth fluttering in the candle, to drop dead a moment later.

It was just on the verge of sunrise. There was the grayish-blue light in the west, the top of a long range of forest was sharply outlined against it, and a timorous darkness was hurrying out of the zenith. In the east a sad golden radiance was stealing up and driving back the mystery of the night, and that weird loneliness of an arctic world. The city was hardly waking as yet, but straight silver columns of smoke rolled up out of many chimneys, and the golden cross on the cathedral caught the first rays of the sun. I was not interested in the city; I had now, as I thought, done with men. Besides the four soldiers who had brought me out, another squad surrounded me, commanded by a young officer whom I recognized as Captain Lancy, the rough roysterer who had insulted me at Bigot's palace over a year ago. I looked with a spirit absorbed upon the world about me, and a hundred thoughts which had to do with man's life passed through my mind. But the young officer, speaking sharply to me, ordered me on, and changed the current of my thoughts. The coarseness of the man and his insulting words were hard to bear, so that I was constrained to ask him if it were not customary to protect a condemned man from insult rather than to expose him to it. I said that I should be glad of my last moments in peace. At that he asked Gabord why I was unbound, and my jailer answered that binding was for criminals who were to be HANGED!

I could scarcely believe my ears. I was to be shot, not hanged. I had a thrill of gratitude which I can not describe. It may seem a nice distinction, but to me there were whole seas between the two modes of death. I need not blush in advance for being shot—my friends could bear that without humiliation; but hanging would have always tainted their memory of me, try as they would against it.

"The gallows is ready, and my orders were to see him hanged,"
Mr. Lancy said.

"An order came at midnight that he should be shot," was Gabord's reply, producing the order, and handing it over.

The officer contemptuously tossed it back, and now, a little more courteous, ordered me against the wall, and I let my cloak fall to the ground. I was placed where, looking east, I could see the Island of Orleans, on which was the summer-house of the Seigneur Duvarney. Gabord came to me and said, "M'sieu', you are a brave man"—then, all at once breaking off, he added in a low, hurried voice, "'Tis not a long flight to heaven, m'sieu'!" I could see his face twitching as he stood looking at me. He hardly dared to turn round to his comrades, lest his emotion should be seen. But the officer roughly ordered him back. Gabord coolly drew out his watch, and made a motion to me not to take off my cloak yet.

"'Tis not the time by six minutes," he said. "The gentleman is to be shot to the stroke—aho!" His voice and manner were dogged. The officer stepped forward threateningly; but Gabord said something angrily in an undertone, and the other turned on his heel and began walking up and down. This continued for a moment, in which we all were very still and bitter cold—the air cut like steel—and then my heart gave a great leap, for suddenly there stepped into the yard Doltaire. Action seemed suspended in me, but I know I listened with singular curiosity to the shrill creaking of his boots on the frosty earth, and I noticed that the fur collar of the coat he wore was all white with the frozen moisture of his breath, also that tiny icicles hung from his eyelashes. He came down the yard slowly, and presently paused and looked at Gabord and the young officer, his head laid a little to one side in a quizzical fashion, his eyelids drooping.

"What time was monsieur to be shot?" he asked of Captain Lancy.

"At seven o'clock, monsieur," was the reply.

Doltaire took out his watch. "It wants three minutes of seven," said he. "What the devil means this business before the stroke o' the hour?" waving a hand towards me.

"We were waiting for the minute, monsieur," was the officer's reply.

A cynical, cutting smile crossed Doltaire's face. "A charitable trick, upon my soul, to fetch a gentleman from a warm dungeon and stand him against an icy wall on a deadly morning to cool his heels as he waits for his hour to die! You'd skin your lion and shoot him afterwards—voilà!" All this time he held the watch in his hand.

"You, Gabord," he went on, "you are a man to obey orders—eh?"

Gabord hesitated a moment as if waiting for Lancy to speak, and then said, "I was not in command. When I was called upon I brought him forth."

"Excuses! excuses! You sweated to be rid of your charge."

Gabord's face lowered. "M'sieu' would have been in heaven by this if I had'nt stopped it," he broke out angrily.

Doltaire turned sharply on Lancy. "I thought as much," said he, "and you would have let Gabord share your misdemeanor. Yet your father was a gentleman! If you had shot monsieur before seven, you would have taken the dungeon he left. You must learn, my young provincial, that you are not to supersede France and the King. It is now seven o'clock; you will march your men back into quarters."

Then turning to me, he raised his cap. "You will find your cloak more comfortable, Captain Moray," said he, and he motioned Gabord to hand it to me, as he came forward. "May I breakfast with you?" he added courteously. He yawned a little. "I have not risen so early in years, and I am chilled to the bone. Gabord insists that it is warm in your dungeon; I have a fancy to breakfast there. It will recall my year in the Bastile."

He smiled in a quaint, elusive sort of fashion, and as I drew the cloak about me, I said through chattering teeth, for I had suffered with the brutal cold, "I am glad to have the chance to offer breakfast."

"To me or any one?" he dryly suggested. "Think! by now, had I not come, you might have been in a warmer world than this—indeed, much warmer," he suddenly said, as he stooped, picked up some snow in his bare hand, and clapped it to my cheek, rubbing it with force and swiftness. The cold had nipped it, and this was the way to draw out the frost. His solicitude at the moment was so natural and earnest that it was hard to think he was my enemy.

When he had rubbed awhile, he gave me his own handkerchief to dry my face; and so perfect was his courtesy, it was impossible to do otherwise than meet him as he meant and showed for the moment. He had stepped between me and death, and even an enemy who does that, no matter what the motive, deserves something at your hands.

"Gabord," he said, as we stepped inside the citadel, "we will breakfast at eight o'clock. Meanwhile, I have some duties with our officers here. Till we meet in your dining-hall, then, monsieur," he added to me, and raised his cap.

"You must put up with frugal fare," I answered, bowing.

"If you but furnish locusts," he said gaily, "I will bring the wild honey.... What wonderful hives of bees they have at the Seigneur Duvarney's!" he continued musingly, as if with second thought; "a beautiful manor—a place for pretty birds and honey-bees!"

His eyelids drooped languidly, as was their way when he had said something a little carbolic, as this was to me, because of its hateful suggestion. His words drew nothing from me, not even a look of understanding, and, again bowing, we went our ways.

At the door of the dungeon Gabord held the torch up to my face. His own had a look which came as near to being gentle as was possible to him. Yet he was so ugly that it looked almost ludicrous in him. "Poom!" said he. "A friend at court. More comfits."

"You think Monsieur Doltaire gets comfits, too?" asked I.

He rubbed his cheek with a key. "Aho!" mused he—"aho! M'sieu' Doltaire rises not early for naught."

"THE POINT ENVENOMED TOO!"

I was roused by the opening of the door. Doltaire entered. He advanced towards me with the manner of an admired comrade, and, with no trace of what would mark him as my foe, said, as he sniffed the air:

"Monsieur, I have been selfish. I asked myself to breakfast with you, yet, while I love the new experience, I will deny myself in this. You shall breakfast with me, as you pass to your new lodgings. You must not say no," he added, as though we were in some salon. "I have a sleigh here at the door, and a fellow has already gone to fan my kitchen fires and forage for the table. Come," he went on, "let me help you with your cloak."

He threw my cloak around me, and turned towards the door. I had not spoken a word, for what with weakness, the announcement that I was to have new lodgings, and the sudden change in my affairs, I was like a child walking in its sleep. I could do no more than bow to him and force a smile, which must have told more than aught else of my state, for he stepped to my side and offered me his arm. I drew back from that with thanks, for I felt a quick hatred of myself that I should take favours of the man who had moved for my destruction, and to steal from me my promised wife. Yet it was my duty to live if I could, to escape if that were possible, to use every means to foil my enemies. It was all a game; why should I not accept advances at my enemy's hands, and match dissimulation with dissimulation?

When I refused his arm, he smiled comically, and raised his shoulders in deprecation.

"You forget your dignity, monsieur," I said presently as we walked on, Gabord meeting us and lighting us through the passages; "you voted me a villain, a spy, at my trial!"

"Technically and publicly, you are a spy, a vulgar criminal," he replied; "privately, you are a foolish, blundering gentleman."

"A soldier, also, you will admit, who keeps his compact with his enemy."

"Otherwise we should not breakfast together this morning," he answered. "What difference would it make to this government if our private matter had been dragged in? Technically, you still would have been the spy. But I will say this, monsieur, to me you are a man better worth torture than death."

"Do you ever stop to think of how this may end for you?" I asked quietly.

He seemed pleased with the question. "I have thought it might be interesting," he answered; "else, as I said, you should long ago have left this naughty world. Is it in your mind that we shall cross swords one day?"

"I feel it in my bones," said I, "that I shall kill you."

At that moment we stood at the entrance to the citadel, where a good pair of horses and a sleigh awaited us. We got in, the robes were piled around us, and the horses started off at a long trot. I was muffled to the ears, but I could see how white and beautiful was the world, how the frost glistened in the trees, how the balsams were weighted down with snow, and how snug the chateaux looked with the smoke curling up from their hunched chimneys.

Presently Doltaire replied to my last remark. "Conviction is the executioner of the stupid," said he. "When a man is not great enough to let change and chance guide him, he gets convictions, and dies a fool."

"Conviction has made men and nations strong," I rejoined.

"Has made men and nations asses," he retorted. "The Mohammedan has conviction, so has the Christian: they die fighting each other, and the philosopher sits by and laughs. Expediency, monsieur, expediency is the real wisdom, the true master of this world. Expediency saved your life to-day; conviction would have sent you to a starry home."

As he spoke a thought came in on me. Here we were in the open world, travelling together, without a guard of any kind. Was it not possible to make a dash for freedom? The idea was put away from me, and yet it was a fresh accent of Doltaire's character that he tempted me in this way. As if he divined what I thought, he said to me—for I made no attempt to answer his question:

"Men of sense never confuse issues or choose the wrong time for their purposes. Foes may have unwritten truces."

There was the matter in a nutshell. He had done nothing carelessly; he was touching off our conflict

with flashes of genius. He was the man who had roused in me last night the fiercest passions of my life, and yet this morning he had saved me from death, and, though he was still my sworn enemy, I was about to breakfast with him.

Already the streets of the town were filling; for it was the day before Christmas, and it would be the great market-day of the year. Few noticed us as we sped along down Palace Street and I could not conceive whither we were going, until, passing the Hotel Dieu, I saw in front the Intendance. I remembered the last time I was there, and what had happened then, and a thought flashed through me that perhaps this was another trap. But I put it from me, and soon afterwards Doltaire said:

"I have now a slice of the Intendance for my own, and we shall breakfast like squirrels in a loft."

As we drove into the open space before the palace, a company of soldiers standing before the great door began marching up to the road by which we came. With them was a prisoner. I saw at once that he was a British officer, but I did not recognize his face. I asked his name of Doltaire, and found it was one Lieutenant Stevens, of Rogers' Rangers, those brave New Englanders. After an interview with Bigot he was being taken to the common jail. To my request that I might speak with him Doltaire assented, and at a sign from my companion the soldiers stopped. Stevens's eyes were fixed on me with a puzzled, disturbed expression. He was well built, of intrepid bearing, with a fine openness of manner joined to handsome features. But there was a recklessness in his eye which seemed to me to come nearer the swashbuckling character of a young French seigneur than the wariness of a British soldier.

I spoke his name and introduced myself. His surprise and pleasure were pronounced, for he had thought (as he said) that by this time I would be dead. There was an instant's flash of his eye, as if a suspicion of my loyalty had crossed his mind; but it was gone on the instant, and immediately Doltaire, who also had interpreted the look, smiled, and said he had carried me off to breakfast while the furniture of my former prison was being shifted to my new one. After a word or two more, with Stevens's assurance that the British had recovered from Braddock's defeat and would soon be knocking at the portals of the Chateau St. Louis, we parted, and soon Doltaire and I got out at the high stone steps of the palace.

Standing there a moment, I looked round. In this space surrounding the Intendance was gathered the history of New France. This palace, large enough for the king of a European country with a population of a million, was the official residence of the commercial ruler of a province. It was the house of the miller, and across the way was the King's storehouse, La Friponne, where poor folk were ground between the stones. The great square was already filling with people who had come to trade. Here were barrels of malt being unloaded; there, great sacks of grain, bags of dried fruits, bales of home-made cloth, and loads of fine-sawn boards and timber. Moving about among the peasants were the regular soldiers in their white uniforms faced with blue, red, yellow, or violet, with black three-cornered hats, and black gaiters from foot to knee, and the militia in coats of white with black facings. Behind a great collar of dogskin a pair of jet-black eyes flashed out from under a pretty forehead; and presently one saw these same eyes grown sorrowful or dull under heavy knotted brows, which told of a life too vexed by care and labour to keep alive a spark of youth's romance. Now the bell in the tower above us rang a short peal, the signal for the opening of La Friponne, and the bustling crowd moved towards its doors. As I stood there on the great steps, I chanced to look along the plain, bare front of the palace to an annex at the end, and standing in a doorway opening on a pair of steps was Voban. I was amazed that he should be there—the man whose life had been spoiled by Bigot. At the same moment Doltaire motioned to him to return inside; which he did.

Doltairé laughed at my surprise, and as he showed me inside the palace said: "There is no barber in the world like Voban. Interesting interesting! I love to watch his eye when he draws the razor down my throat. It would be so easy to fetch it across; but Voban, as you see, is not a man of absolute conviction. It will be sport, some day, to put Bigot's valet to bed with a broken leg or a fit of spleen, and send Voban to shave him."

"Where is Mathilde?" I asked, as though I knew naught of her whereabouts.

"Mathilde is where none may touch her, monsieur; under the protection of the daintiest lady of New France. It is her whim; and when a lady is charming, an Intendant, even, must not trouble her caprice."

He did not need to speak more plainly. It was he who had prevented Bigot from taking Mathilde away from Alixe, and locking her up, or worse. I said nothing, however, and soon we were in a large room, sumptuously furnished, looking out on the great square. The morning sun stared in, some snowbirds twittered on the window-sill, and inside, a canary, in an alcove hung with plants and flowers, sang as if it were the heart of summer. All was warm and comfortable, and it was like a dream that I had just come from the dismal chance of a miserable death. My cloak and cap and leggings had been taken from me when I entered, as courteously as though I had been King Louis himself, and a great chair was

drawn solicitously to the fire. All this was done by the servant, after one quick look from Doltaire. The man seemed to understand his master perfectly, to read one look as though it were a volume—

"The constant service of the antique world."

Such was Doltaire's influence. The closer you came to him, the more compelling was he—a devilish attraction, notably selfish, yet capable of benevolence. Two years before this time I saw him lift a load from the back of a peasant woman and carry it home for her, putting into her hand a gold piece on leaving. At another time, an old man had died of a foul disease in a miserable upper room of a warehouse. Doltaire was passing at the moment when the body should be carried to burial. The stricken widow of the dead man stood below, waiting, but no one would fetch the body down. Doltaire stopped and questioned her kindly, and in another minute he was driving the carter and another upstairs at the point of his sword. Together they brought the body down, and Doltaire followed it to the burying-ground; keeping the gravedigger at his task when he would have run away, and saying the responses to the priest in the short service read above the grave.

I said to him then, "You rail at the world and scoff at men and many decencies, and yet you do these things!"

To this he replied—he was in my own lodgings at the time—"The brain may call all men liars and fools, but the senses feel the shock of misery which we do not ourselves inflict. Inflicting, we are prone to cruelty, as you have seen a schoolmaster begin punishment with tears, grow angry at the shrinking back under his cane, and give way to a sudden lust of torture. I have little pity for those who can help themselves—let them fight or eat the leek; but the child and the helpless and the sick it is a pleasure to aid. I love the poor as much as I love anything. I could live their life, if I were put to it. As a gentleman, I hate squalor and the puddles of wretchedness but I could have worked at the plough or the anvil; I could have dug in the earth till my knuckles grew big and my shoulders hardened to a roundness, have eaten my beans and pork and pea-soup, and have been a healthy ox, munching the bread of industry and trailing the puissant pike, a diligent serf. I have no ethics, and yet I am on the side of the just when they do not put thorns in my bed to keep me awake at night!"

Upon the walls hung suits of armour, swords of beautiful make, spears, belts of wonderful workmanship, a tattered banner, sashes knit by ladies' fingers, pouches, bandoleers, and many strong sketches of scenes that I knew well. Now and then a woman's head in oils or pencil peeped out from the abundant ornaments. I recalled then another thing he said at that time of which I write:

"I have never juggled with my conscience—never 'made believe' with it. My will was always stronger than my wish for anything, always stronger than temptation. I have chosen this way or that deliberately. I am ever ready to face consequences, and never to cry out. It is the ass who does not deserve either reward or punishment who says that something carried him away, and, being weak, he fell. That is a poor man who is no stronger than his passions. I can understand the devil fighting God, and taking the long punishment without repentance, like a powerful prince as he was. I could understand a peasant, killing King Louis in the palace, and being ready, if he had a hundred lives, to give them all, having done the deed he set out to do. If a man must have convictions of that sort, he can escape everlasting laughter—the final hell—only by facing the rebound of his wild deeds."

These were strange sentiments in the mouth of a man who was ever the mannered courtier, and as I sat there alone, while he was gone elsewhere for some minutes, many such things he had said came back to me, suggested, no doubt, by this new, inexplicable attitude towards myself. I could trace some of his sentiments, perhaps vaguely, to the fact that—as I had come to know through the Seigneur Duvarney—his mother was of peasant blood, the beautiful daughter of a farmer of Poitiers, who had died soon after giving birth to Doltaire. His peculiar nature had shown itself in his refusal to accept a title. It was his whim to be the plain "Monsieur"; behind which was, perhaps, some native arrogance which made him prefer that to being a noble whose origin, well known, must ever interfere with his ambitions. Then, too, maybe, the peasant in him—never in his face or form, which were patrician altogether—spoke for more truth and manliness than he was capable of, and so he chose to be the cynical, irresponsible courtier, while many of his instincts had urged him to the peasant's integrity. He had undisturbed, however, one instinct of the peasant—a directness, which was evident chiefly in the clearness of his thoughts.

As these things hurried through my mind, my body sunk in a kind of restfulness before the great fire, Doltaire came back.

"I will not keep you from breakfast," said he. "Voban must wait, if you will pass by untidiness."

A thought flashed through my mind. Maybe Voban had some word for me from Alixe! So I said instantly, "I am not hungry. Perhaps you will let me wait yonder while Voban tends you. As you said, it

should be interesting."

"You will not mind the disorder of my dressing-room? Well, then, this way, and we can talk while Voban plays with temptation."

So saying, he courteously led the way into another chamber, where Voban stood waiting. I spoke to him, and he bowed, but did not speak; and then Doltaire said:

"You see, Voban, your labour on Monsieur was wasted so far as concerns the world to come. You trimmed him for the glorious company of the apostles, and see, he breakfasts with Monsieur Doltaire—in the Intendance, too, my Voban, which, as you know, is wicked—a very nest of wasps!"

I never saw more hate than shot out of Voban's eyes at that moment; but the lids drooped over them at once, and he made ready for his work, as Doltaire, putting aside his coat, seated himself, laughing. There was no little daring, as there was cruelty, in thus torturing a man whose life had been broken by Doltaire's associate. I wondered now and then if Doltaire were not really putting acid on the barber's bare nerves for some other purpose than mere general cruelty. Even as he would have understood the peasant's murder of King Louis, so he would have seen a logical end to a terrible game in Bigot's death at the hand of Voban. Possibly he wondered that Voban did not strike, and he himself took a delight in showing him his own wrongs occasionally. Then, again, Doltaire might wish for Bigot's death, to succeed him in his place! But this I put by as improbable, for the Intendant's post was not his ambition, or, favourite of La Pompadour as he was, he would, desiring, have long ago achieved that end. Moreover, every evidence showed that he would gladly return to France, for his clear brain foresaw the final ruin of the colony and the triumph of the British. He had once said in my hearing:

"Those swaggering Englishmen will keep coming on. They are too stupid to turn back. The eternal sameness of it all will so distress us we shall awake one morning, find them at our bedsides, give a kick, and die from sheer ennui. They'll use our banners to boil their fat puddings in, they'll roast oxen in the highways, and after our girls have married them they'll turn them into kitchen wenches with frowsy skirts and ankles like beeves!"

But, indeed, beneath his dangerous irony there was a strain of impishness, and he would, if need be, laugh at his own troubles, and torture himself as he had tortured others. This morning he was full of a carbohic humour. As the razor came to his neck he said:

"Voban, a barber must have patience. It is a sad thing to mistake friend for enemy. What is a friend? Is it one who says sweet words?"

There was a pause, in which the shaving went on, and then he continued:

"Is it he who says, I have eaten Voban's bread, and Voban shall therefore go to prison, or be hurried to Walhalla? Or is it he who stays the iron hand, who puts nettles in Voban's cold, cold bed, that he may rise early and go forth among the heroes?"

I do not think Voban understood that, through some freak of purpose, Doltaire was telling him thus obliquely he had saved him from Bigot's cruelty, from prison or death. Once or twice he glanced at me, but not meaningly, for Doltaire was seated opposite a mirror, and could see each motion made by either of us. Presently Doltaire said to me idly:

"I dine to-day at the Seigneur Duvarney's. You will be glad to hear that mademoiselle bids fair to rival the charming Madame Cournal. Her followers are as many, so they say, and all in one short year she has suddenly thrown out a thousand new faculties and charms. Doubtless you remember she was gifted, but who would have thought she could have blossomed so! She was all light and softness and air; she is now all fire and skill as well. Matchless! matchless! Every day sees her with some new capacity, some fresh and delicate aplomb. She has set the town admiring, and jealous mothers prophesy trist ending for her. Her swift mastery of the social arts is weird, they say. La! la! The social arts! A good brain, a gift of penetration, a manner—which is a grand necessity, and it must be with birth—no heart to speak of, and the rest is easy. No heart—there is the thing; with a good brain and senses all warm with life—to feel, but never to have the arrow strike home. You must never think to love and be loved, and be wise too. The emotions blind the judgment. Be heartless, be perfect with heavenly artifice, and, if you are a woman, have no vitriol on your tongue—and you may rule at Versailles or Quebec. But with this difference: in Quebec you may be virtuous; at Versailles you must not. It is a pity that you may not meet Mademoiselle Duvarney. She would astound you. She was a simple ballad a year ago; to-morrow she may be an epic."

He nodded at me reflectively, and went on:

"Mademoiselle," said the Chevalier de la Darante to her at dinner, some weeks ago, 'if I were young, I

should adore you.' 'Monsieur,' she answered, 'you use that "if" to shirk the responsibility.' That put him on his mettle. 'Then, by the gods, I adore you now,' he answered. 'If I were young, I should blush to hear you say so,' was her reply. 'I empty out my heart, and away trips the disdainful nymph with a laugh,' he rejoined gaily, the rusty old courtier; 'there's nothing left but to fall upon my sword!' 'Disdainful nymphs are the better scabbards for distinguished swords,' she said, with charming courtesy. Then, laughing softly, 'There is an Egyptian proverb which runs thus: "If thou, Dol, son of Hoshti, hast emptied out thy heart, and it bring no fruit in exchange, curse not thy gods and die, but build a pyramid in the vineyard where thy love was spent, and write upon it, Pride hath no conqueror."' It is a mind for a palace, is it not?"

I could see in the mirror facing him the provoking devilry of his eyes. I knew that he was trying how much he could stir me. He guessed my love for her, but I could see he was sure that she no longer—if she ever had—thought of me. Besides, with a lover's understanding, I saw also that he liked to talk of her. His eyes, in the mirror, did not meet mine, but were fixed, as on some distant and pleasing prospect, though there was, as always, a slight disdain at his mouth. But the eyes were clear, resolute, and strong, never wavering—and I never saw them waver—yet in them something distant and inscrutable. It was a candid eye, and he was candid in his evil; he made no pretense; and though the means to his ends were wicked, they were never low. Presently, glancing round the room, I saw an easel on which was a canvas. He caught my glance.

"Silly work for a soldier and a gentleman," he said, "but silliness is a great privilege. It needs as much skill to carry folly as to be an ambassador. Now, you are often much too serious, Captain Moray."

At that he rose, and, after putting on his coat, came over to the easel and threw up the cloth, exposing a portrait of Alixe! It had been painted in by a few bold strokes, full of force and life, yet giving her face more of that look which comes to women bitterly wise in the ways of this world than I cared to see. The treatment was daring, and it cut me like a knife that the whole painting had a red glow: the dress was red, the light falling on the hair was red, the shine of the eyes was red also. It was fascinating, but weird, and, to me, distressful. There flashed through my mind the remembrance of Mathilde in her scarlet robe as she stood on the Heights that momentous night of my arrest. I looked at the picture in silence. He kept gazing at it with a curious, half-quizzical smile, as if he were unconscious of my presence. At last he said, with a slight knitting of his brows:

"It is strange—strange. I sketched that in two nights ago, by the light of the fire, after I had come from the Chateau St. Louis—from memory, as you see. It never struck me where the effect was taken from, that singular glow over all the face and figure. But now I see it; it returns: it is the impression of colour in the senses, left from the night that lady-bug Mathilde flashed out on the Heights! A fine—a fine effect! H'm! for another such one might give another such Mathilde!"

At that moment we were both startled by a sound behind us, and, wheeling, we saw Voban, a mad look in his face, in the act of throwing at Doltaire a short spear which he had caught up from a corner. The spear flew from his hand even as Doltaire sprang aside, drawing his sword with great swiftness. I thought he must have been killed, but the rapidity of his action saved him, for the spear passed his shoulder so close that it tore away a shred of his coat, and stuck in the wall behind him. In another instant Doltaire had his sword-point at Voban's throat. The man did not cringe, did not speak a word, but his hands clinched, and the muscles of his face worked painfully. There was at first a fury in Doltaire's face and a metallic hardness in his eyes, and I was sure he meant to pass his sword through the other's body; but after standing for a moment, death hanging on his sword-point, he quietly lowered his weapon, and, sitting on a chair-arm, looked curiously at Voban, as one might sit and watch a mad animal within a cage. Voban did not stir, but stood rooted to the spot, his eyes, however, never moving from Doltaire. It was clear that he had looked for death, and now expected punishment and prison. Doltaire took out his handkerchief and wiped a sweat from his cheeks. He turned to me soon, and said, in a singularly impersonal way, as though he were speaking of some animal:

"He had great provocation. The Duchess de Valois had a young panther once which she had brought up from the milk. She was inquisitive, and used to try its temper. It was good sport, but one day she took away its food, gave it to the cat, and pointed her finger at monsieur the panther. The Duchess de Valois never bared her breast thereafter to an admiring world—a panther's claws leave scars." He paused, and presently continued: "You remember it, Voban; you were the Duke's valet then—you see I recall you! Well, the panther lost his head, both figuratively and in fact. The panther did not mean to kill, maybe, but to kill the lady's beauty was death to her.... Voban, yonder spear was poisoned!"

He wiped his face, and said to me, "I think you saw that at the dangerous moment I had no fear; yet now when the game is in my own hands, my cheek runs with cold sweat. How easy to be charged with cowardice! Like evaporation, the hot breath of peril passing suddenly into the cold air of safety leaves this!"—he wiped his cheek again.

He rose, moved slowly to Voban, and, pricking him with his sword, said, "You are a bungler, barber. Now listen. I never wronged you; I have only been your blister. I prick your sores at home. Tut! tut! they prick them openly in the market-place. I gave you life a minute ago; I give you freedom now. Some day I may ask that life for a day's use, and then, Voban, then will you give it?"

There was a moment's pause, and the barber answered, "M'sieu', I owe you nothing. I would have killed you then; you may kill me, if you will."

Doltaire nodded musingly. Something was passing through his mind. I judged he was thinking that here was a man who as a servant would be invaluable.

"Well, well, we can discuss the thing at leisure, Voban," he said at last. "Meanwhile you may wait here till Captain Moray has breakfasted, and then you shall be at his service; and I would have a word with you, also."

Turning with a polite gesture to me, he led the way into the breakfast-room, and at once, half famished, I was seated at the table, drinking a glass of good wine, and busy with a broiled whitefish of delicate quality. We were silent for a time, and the bird in the alcove kept singing as though it were in Eden, while chiming in between the rhythms there came the silvery sound of sleigh-bells from the world without. I was in a sort of dream, and I felt there must be a rude awakening soon. After a while, Doltaire, who seemed thinking keenly, ordered the servant to take in a glass of wine to Voban.

He looked up at me after a little, as if he had come back from a long distance, and said, "It is my fate to have as foes the men I would have as friends, and as friends the men I would have as foes. The cause of my friends is often bad; the cause of my enemies is sometimes good. It is droll. I love directness, yet I have ever been the slave of complication. I delight in following my reason, yet I have been of the notes that stumble in the sunlight. I have enough cruelty in me, enough selfishness and will, to be a ruler, and yet I have never held an office in my life. I love true diplomacy, yet I have been comrade to the official liar, and am the captain of intrigue—la! la!"

"You have never had an enthusiasm, a purpose?" said I.

He laughed, a dry, ironical laugh. "I have both an enthusiasm and a purpose," he answered, "or you would by now be snug in bed forever."

I knew what he meant, though he could not guess I understood. He was referring to Alixe and the challenge she had given him. I did not feel that I had anything to get by playing a part of friendliness, and besides, he was a man to whom the boldest speaking was always palatable, even when most against himself.

"I am sure neither would bear daylight," said I.

"Why, I almost blush to say that they are both honest—would at this moment endure a moral microscope. The experience, I confess, is new, and has the glamour of originality."

"It will not stay honest," I retorted. "Honesty is a new toy with you. You will break it on the first rock that shows."

"I wonder," he answered, "I wonder, ... and yet I suppose you are right. Some devilish incident will twist things out of gear, and then the old Adam must improvise for safety and success. Yes, I suppose my one beautiful virtue will get a twist."

What he had said showed me his mind as in a mirror. He had no idea that I had the key to his enigmas. I felt as had Voban in the other room. I could see that he had set his mind on Alixe, and that she had roused in him what was perhaps the first honest passion of his life.

What further talk we might have had I can not tell, but while we were smoking and drinking coffee the door opened suddenly, and the servant said, "His Excellency the Marquis de Vaudreuil!"

Doltaire got to his feet, a look of annoyance crossing his face; but he courteously met the Governor, and placed a chair for him. The Governor, however, said frostily, "Monsieur Doltaire, it must seem difficult for Captain Moray to know who is Governor in Canada, since he has so many masters. I am not sure who needs assurance most upon the point, you or he. This is the second time he has been feasted at the Intendance when he should have been in prison. I came too late that other time; now it seems I am opportune."

Doltaire's reply was smooth: "Your Excellency will pardon the liberty. The Intendance was a sort of halfway house between the citadel and the jail."

"There is news from France," the Governor said, "brought from Gaspe. We meet in council at the Chateau in an hour. A guard is without to take Captain Moray to the common jail."

In a moment more, after a courteous good-by from Doltaire, and a remark from the Governor to the effect that I had spoiled his night's sleep to no purpose, I was soon on my way to the common jail, where arriving, what was my pleased surprise to see Gabord! He had been told off to be my especial guard, his services at the citadel having been deemed so efficient. He was outwardly surly—as rough as he was ever before the world, and without speaking a word to me, he had a soldier lock me in a cell.

XIII

"A LITTLE BOAST"

My new abode was more cheerful than the one I had quitted in the citadel. It was not large, but it had a window, well barred, through which came the good strong light of the northern sky. A wooden bench for my bed stood in one corner, and, what cheered me much, there was a small iron stove. Apart from warmth, its fire would be companionable, and to tend it a means of passing the time. Almost the first thing I did was to examine it. It was round, and shaped like a small bulging keg on end. It had a lid on top, and in the side a small door with bars for draught, suggesting to me in little the delight of a fireplace. A small pipe from the side carried away the smoke into a chimney in the wall. It seemed to me luxurious, and my spirits came back apace.

There was no fire yet, and it was bitter cold, so that I took to walking up and down to keep warmth in me. I was ill nourished, and I felt the cold intensely. But I trotted up and down, plans of escape already running through my head. I was as far off as you can imagine from that event of the early morning, when I stood waiting, half frozen, to be shot by Lancy's men.

After I had been walking swiftly up and down for an hour or more, slapping my hands against my sides to keep them warm—for it was so cold I ached and felt a nausea—I was glad to see Gabord enter with a soldier carrying wood and shavings. I do not think I could much longer have borne the chilling air—a dampness, too, had risen from the floor, which had been washed that morning—for my clothes were very light in texture and much worn. I had had but the one suit since I entered the dungeon, for my other suit, which was by no means smart, had been taken from me when I was first imprisoned the year before. As if many good things had been destined to come at once, soon afterwards another soldier entered with a knapsack, which he laid down on the bench. My delight was great when I saw it held my other poor suit of clothes, together with a rough set of woollens, a few handkerchiefs, two pairs of stockings, and a wool cap for night wear.

Gabord did not speak to me at all, but roughly hurried the soldier at his task of fire-lighting, and ordered the other to fetch a pair of stools and a jar of water. Meanwhile I stood near, watching, and stretched out my skinny hands to the grateful heat as soon as the fire was lighted. I had a boy's delight in noting how the draught pumped the fire into violence, shaking the stove till it puffed and roared. I was so filled, that moment, with the domestic spirit that I thought a steaming kettle on the little stove would give me a tabby-like comfort.

"Why not a kettle on the hob?" said I gaily to Gabord.

"Why not a cat before the fire, a bit of bacon on the coals, a pot of mulled wine at the elbow, and a wench's chin to chuck, baby-bumbo!" said Gabord in a mocking voice, which made the soldiers laugh at my expense. "And a spinet, too, for ducky dear, Scarrat; a piece of cake and cherry wine, and a soul to go to heaven! Tonnerre!" he added, with an oath, "these English prisoners want the world for a sou, and they'd owe that till judgment day."

I saw at once the meaning of his words, for he turned his back on me and went to the window and tried the stanchions, seeming much concerned about them, and muttering to himself. I drew out from my pocket two gold pieces, and gave them to the soldier Scarrat; and the other soldier coming in just then, I did the same with him; and I could see that their respect for me mightily increased. Gabord, still muttering, turned to us again, and began to berate the soldiers for their laziness. As the two men turned to go, Scarrat, evidently feeling that something was due for the gold I had given, said to Gabord, "Shall m'sieu' have the kettle?"

Gabord took a step forward as if to strike the soldier, but stopped short, blew out his cheeks, and laughed in a loud, mocking way.

"Ay, ay, fetch m'sieu' the kettle, and fetch him flax to spin, and a pinch of snuff, and hot flannels for

his stomach, and every night at sundown you shall feed him with pretty biscuits soaked in milk. Ah, go to the devil and fetch the kettle, fool!" he added roughly again, and quickly the place was empty save for him and myself.

"Those two fellows are to sit outside your cage door, dickey-bird, and two are to march beneath your window yonder, so you shall not lack care if you seek to go abroad. Those are the new orders."

"And you, Gabord," said I, "are you not to be my jailer?" I said it sorrowfully, for I had a genuine feeling for him, and I could not keep that from my voice.

When I had spoken so feelingly, he stood for a moment, flushing and puffing, as if confused by the compliment in the tone, and then he answered, "I'm to keep you safe till word comes from the King what's to be done with you."

Then he suddenly became surly again, standing with legs apart and keys dangling; for Scarrat entered with the kettle, and put it on the stove. "You will bring blankets for m'sieu'," he added, "and there's an order on my table for tobacco, which you will send your comrade for."

In a moment we were left alone.

"You'll live like a stuffed pig here," he said, "though 'twill be cold o' nights."

After another pass or two of words he left me, and I hastened to make a better toilet than I had done for a year. My old rusty suit which I exchanged for the one I had worn seemed almost sumptuous, and the woollen wear comforted my weakened body. Within an hour my cell looked snug, and I sat cosily by the fire, feeding it lazily.

It must have been about four o'clock when there was a turning of keys and a shooting of bolts, the door opened, and who should step inside but Gabord, followed by Alixe! I saw Alixe's lips frame my name thrice, though no word came forth, and my heart was bursting to cry out and clasp her to my breast. But still with a sweet, serious look cast on me, she put out her hand and stayed me.

Gabord, looking not at us at all, went straight to the window, and, standing on a stool, busied himself with the stanchions and to whistle. I took Alixe's hands and held them, and spoke her name softly, and she smiled up at me with so perfect a grace that I thought there never was aught like it in the world.

She was the first to break the good spell. I placed a seat for her, and sat down by her. She held out her fingers to the fire, and then, after a moment, she told me the story of last night's affair. First she made me tell her briefly of the events of the morning, of which she knew, but not fully. This done, she began. I will set down her story as a whole, and you must understand as you read that it was told as women tell a story, with all little graces and diversions, and those small details with which even momentous things are enveloped in their eyes. I loved her all the more because of these, and I saw, as Doltaire had said, how admirably poised was her intellect, how acute her wit, how delicate and astute a diplomatist she was becoming; and yet, through all, preserving a simplicity of character almost impossible of belief. Such qualities, in her directed to good ends, in lesser women have made them infamous. Once that day Alixe said to me, breaking off as her story went on, "Oh, Robert, when I see what power I have to dissimulate—for it is that, call it by what name you will—when I see how I enjoy accomplishing against all difficulty, how I can blind even so skilled a diplomatist as Monsieur Doltaire, I almost tremble. I see how, if God had not given me something here"—she placed her hand upon her heart—"that saves me, I might be like Madame Cournal, and far worse, far worse than she. For I love power—I do love it; I can see that!"

She did not realize that it was her strict honesty with herself that was her true safeguard.

But here is the story she told me:

"When I left you, last night, I went at once to my home, and was glad to get in without being seen. At nine o'clock we were to be at the Chateau, and while my sister Georgette was helping me with my toilette—oh, how I wished she would go and leave me quite alone!—my head was in a whirl, and now and then I could feel my heart draw and shake like a half-choked pump, and there was a strange pain behind my eyes. Georgette is of such a warm disposition, so kind always to me, whom she would yield to in everything, so simple in her affections, that I seemed standing there by her like an intriguante, as one who had got wisdom at the price of a good something lost. But do not think, Robert, that for one instant I was sorry I played a part, and have done so for a long year and more. I would do it and more again, if it were for you.

"Georgette could not understand why it was I stopped all at once and caught her head to my breast, as she sat by me where I stood arranging my gown. I do not know quite why I did it, but perhaps it was

from my yearning that never should she have a lover in such sorrow and danger as mine, and that never should she have to learn to mask her heart as I have done. Ah, sometimes I fear, Robert, that when all is over, and you are free, and you see what the world and all this playing at hide-and-seek have made me, you will feel that such as Georgette, who have never looked inside the hearts of wicked people, and read the tales therein for knowledge to defeat wickedness—that such as she were better fitted for your life and love. No, no, please do not take my hand—not till you have heard all I am going to tell."

She continued quietly; yet her eye flashed out now and then, and now and then, also, something in her thoughts as to how she, a weak, powerless girl, had got her ends against astute evil men, sent a little laugh to her lips; for she had by nature as merry a heart as serious.

"At nine o'clock we came to the Chateau St. Louis from Ste. Anne Street, where our winter home is—yet how much do I prefer the Manor House! There were not many guests to supper, and Monsieur Doltaire was not among them. I affected a genial surprise, and asked the Governor if one of the two vacant chairs at the table was for monsieur; and looking a little as though he would reprove me—for he does not like to think of me as interested in monsieur—he said it was, but that monsieur was somewhere out of town, and there was no surety that he would come. The other chair was for the Chevalier de la Darante, one of the oldest and best of our nobility, who pretends great roughness and barbarism, but is a kind and honourable gentleman, though odd. He was one of your judges, Robert; and though he condemned you, he said that you had some reason on your side. And I will show you how he stood for you last night.

"I need not tell you how the supper passed, while I was planning—planning to reach the Governor if monsieur did not come; and if he did come, how to play my part so he should suspect nothing but a vain girl's caprice, and maybe heartlessness. Moment after moment went by, and he came not. I almost despaired. Presently the Chevalier de la Darante entered, and he took the vacant chair beside me. I was glad of this. I had gone in upon the arm of a rusty gentleman of the Court, who is over here to get his health again, and does it by gaming and drinking at the Chateau Bigot. The Chevalier began at once to talk to me, and he spoke of you, saying that he had heard of your duel with my brother, and that formerly you had been much a guest at our house. I answered him with what carefulness I could, and brought round the question of your death, by hint and allusion getting him to speak of the mode of execution.

"Upon this point he spoke his mind strongly, saying that it was a case where the penalty should be the musket, not the rope. It was no subject for the supper table, and the Governor felt this, and I feared he would show displeasure; but other gentlemen took up the matter, and he could not easily change the talk at the moment. The feeling was strong against you. My father stayed silent, but I could see he watched the effect upon the Governor. I knew that he himself had tried to get the mode of execution changed, but the Governor had been immovable. The Chevalier spoke most strongly, for he is afraid of no one, and he gave the other gentlemen raps upon the knuckles.

"I swear,' he said at last, 'I am sorry now I gave in to his death at all, for it seems to me that there is much cruelty and hatred behind the case against him. He seemed to me a gentleman of force and fearlessness, and what he said had weight. Why was the gentleman not exchanged long ago? He was here three years before he was tried on this charge. Ay, there's the point. Other prisoners were exchanged—why not he? If the gentleman is not given a decent death, after these years of captivity, I swear I will not leave Kamaraska again to set foot in Quebec.'

"At that the Governor gravely said, 'These are matters for our Council, dear Chevalier.' To this the Chevalier replied, 'I meant no reflection on your Excellency, but you are good enough to let the opinions of gentlemen not so wise as you weigh with you in your efforts to be just; and I have ever held that one wise autocrat was worth a score of juries.' There was an instant's pause, and then my father said quietly, 'If his Excellency had always councillors and colleagues like the Chevalier de la Darante, his path would be easier, and Canada happier and richer.' This settled the matter, for the Governor, looking at them both for a moment, suddenly said, 'Gentlemen, you shall have your way, and I thank you for your confidence.—If the ladies will pardon a sort of council of state here!' he added. The Governor called a servant, and ordered pen, ink, and paper; and there before us all he wrote an order to Gabord, your jailer, to be delivered before midnight.

"He had begun to read it aloud to us, when the curtains of the entrance-door parted, and Monsieur Doltaire stepped inside. The Governor did not hear him, and monsieur stood for a moment listening. When the reading was finished, he gave a dry little laugh, and came down to the Governor, apologizing for his lateness, and bowing to the rest of us. He did not look at me at all, but once he glanced keenly at my father, and I felt sure that he had heard my father's words to the Governor.

"Have the ladies been made councillors?' he asked lightly, and took his seat, which was opposite to

mine. 'Have they all conspired to give a criminal one less episode in his life for which to blush? ... May I not join the conspiracy?' he added, glancing round, and lifting a glass of wine. Not even yet had he looked at me. Then he waved his glass the circuit of the table, and said, 'I drink to the councillors and applaud the conspirators,' and as he raised his glass to his lips his eyes came abruptly to mine and stayed, and he bowed profoundly and with an air of suggestion. He drank, still looking, and then turned again to the Governor. I felt my heart stand still. Did he suspect my love for you, Robert? Had he discovered something? Was Gabord a traitor to us? Had I been watched, detected? I could have shrieked at the suspense. I was like one suddenly faced with a dreadful accusation, with which was a great fear. But I held myself still—oh, so still, so still—and as in a dream I heard the Governor say pleasantly, 'I would I had such conspirators always by me. I am sure you would wish them to take more responsibility than you will now assume in Canada.' Doltaire bowed and smiled, and the Governor went on: 'I am sure you will approve of Captain Moray being shot instead of hanged. But indeed it has been my good friend the Chevalier here who has given me the best council I have held in many a day.'

"To this Monsieur Doltaire replied: 'A council unknown to statute, but approved of those who stand for etiquette with ones foe's at any cost. For myself, it is so unpleasant to think of the rope'" (here Alixe hid her face in her hands for a moment) "'that I should eat no breakfast to-morrow, if the gentleman from Virginia were to hang.' It was impossible to tell from his tone what was in his mind, and I dared not think of his failure to interfere as he had promised me. As yet he had done nothing, I could see, and in eight or nine hours more you were to die. He did not look at me again for some time, but talked to my mother and my father and the Chevalier, commenting on affairs in France and the war between our countries, but saying nothing of where he had been during the past week. He seemed paler and thinner than when I last saw him, and I felt that something had happened to him. You shall hear soon what it was.

"At last he turned from the Chevalier to me, and, said, 'When did you hear from your brother, mademoiselle?' I told him; and he added, 'I have had a letter since, and after supper, if you will permit me, I will tell you of it.' Turning to my father and my mother, he assured them of Juste's well-being, and afterwards engaged in talk with the Governor, to whom he seemed to defer. When we all rose to go to the salon, he offered my mother his arm, and I went in upon the arm of the good Chevalier. A few moments afterwards he came to me, and remarked cheerfully, 'In this farther corner where the spinet sounds most we can talk best'; and we went near to the spinet, where Madame Lotbiniere was playing. 'It is true,' he began, 'that I have had a letter from your brother. He begs me to use influence for his advancement. You see he writes to me instead of to the Governor. You can guess how I stand in France. Well, we shall see what I may do.... Have you not wondered concerning me this week?' he asked. I said to him, 'I scarce expected you till after to-morrow, when you would plead some accident as cause for not fulfilling your pretty little boast.' He looked at me sharply for a minute, and then said: 'A pretty LITTLE boast, is it? H'm! you touch great things with light fingers.' I nodded. 'Yes,' said I, 'when I have no great faith.' 'You have marvellous coldness for a girl that promised warmth in her youth,' he answered. 'Even I, who am old in these matters, can not think of this Moray's death without a twinge, for it is not like an affair of battle; but you seem to think of it in its relation to my "little boast," as you call it. Is it not so?'

"'No, no,' said I, with apparent indignation, 'you must not make me out so cruel. I am not so hard-hearted as you think. My brother is well—I have no feeling against Captain Moray on his account; and as for spying—well, it is only a painful epithet for what is done here and everywhere all the time.' 'Dear me, dear me,' he remarked lightly, 'what a mind you have for argument!—a born casuist; and yet, like all women, you would let your sympathy rule you in matters of state. But come,' he added, 'where do you think I have been?' It was hard to answer him gaily, and yet it must be done, and so I said, 'You have probably put yourself in prison, that you should not keep your tiny boast.' 'I have been in prison,' he answered, 'and I was on the wrong side, with no key—even locked in a chest-room of the Intendance,' he explained, 'but as yet I do not know by whom, nor am I sure why. After two days without food or drink, I managed to get out through the barred window. I spent three days in my room, ill, and here I am. You must not speak of this—you will not?' he asked me. 'To no one,' I answered gaily, 'but my other self.' 'Where is your other self?' he asked. 'In here,' said I, touching my bosom. I did not mean to turn my head away when I said it, but indeed I felt I could not look him in the eyes at the moment, for I was thinking of you.

"He mistook me; he thought I was coquetting with him, and he leaned forward to speak in my ear, so that I could feel his breath on my cheek. I turned faint, for I saw how terrible was this game I was playing; but oh, Robert, Robert,"—her hands fluttered towards me, then drew back—"it was for your sake, for your sake, that I let his hand rest on mine an instant, as he said: 'I shall go hunting THERE to find your other self. Shall I know the face if I see it?' I drew my hand away, for it was torture to me, and I hated him, but I only said a little scornfully, 'You do not stand by your words. You said'—here I laughed a little disdainfully—'that you would meet the first test to prove your right to follow the second

boast.'

"He got to his feet, and said in a low, firm voice: 'Your memory is excellent, your aplomb perfect. You are young to know it all so well. But you bring your own punishment,' he added, with a wicked smile, 'and you shall pay hereafter. I am going to the Governor. Bigot has arrived, and is with Madame Cournal yonder. You shall have proof in half an hour.'

"Then he left me. An idea occurred to me. If he succeeded in staying your execution, you would in all likelihood be placed in the common jail. I would try to get an order from the Governor to visit the jail to distribute gifts to the prisoners, as my mother and I had done before on the day before Christmas. So, while Monsieur Doltaire was passing with Bigot and the Chevalier de la Darante into another room, I asked the Governor; and that very moment, at my wish, he had his secretary write the order, which he countersigned and handed me, with a gift of gold for the prisoners. As he left my mother and myself, Monsieur Doltaire came back with Bigot, and, approaching the Governor, they led him away, engaging at once in serious talk. One thing I noticed: as monsieur and Bigot came up, I could see monsieur eying the Intendant askance, as though he would read treachery; for I feel sure that it was Bigot who contrived to have monsieur shut up in the chest-room. I can not quite guess the reason, unless it be true what gossips say, that Bigot is jealous of the notice Madame Cournal has given Doltaire, who visits much at her house.

"Well, they asked me to sing, and so I did; and can you guess what it was? Even the voyageurs' song,

—

'Brothers, we go to the Scarlet Hills,
(Little gold sun, come out of the dawn!)

I know not how I sang it, for my heart, my thoughts, were far away in a whirl of clouds and mist, as you may see a flock of wild ducks in the haze upon a river, flying they know not whither, save that they follow the sound of the stream. I was just ending the song when Monsieur Doltaire leaned over me, and said in my ear, 'To-morrow I shall invite Captain Moray from the scaffold to my breakfast-table—or, better still, invite myself to his own.' His hand caught mine, as I gave a little cry; for when I felt sure of your reprieve, I could not, Robert, I could not keep it back. He thought I was startled at his hand-pressure, and did not guess the real cause.

"I have met one challenge, and I shall meet the other,' he said quickly. 'It is not so much a matter of power, either; it is that engine opportunity. You and I should go far in this wicked world,' he added. 'We think together, we see through ladders. I admire you, mademoiselle. Some men will say they love you; and they should, or they have no taste; and the more they love you, the better pleased am I—if you are best pleased with me. But it is possible for men to love and not to admire. It is a foolish thing to say that reverence must go with love. I know men who have lost their heads and their souls for women whom they knew infamous. But when one admires where one loves, then in the ebb and flow of passion the heart is safe, for admiration holds when the sense is cold.'

"You know well, Robert, how clever he is; how, listening to him, you must admit his talent and his power. But oh, believe that, though I am full of wonder at his cleverness, I can not bear him very near me."

She paused. I looked most gravely at her, as well one might who saw so sweet a maid employing her heart thus, and the danger that faced her. She misread my look a little, maybe, for she said at once:

"I must be honest with you, and so I tell you all—all, else the part I play were not possible to me. To you I can speak plainly, pour out my soul. Do not fear for me. I see a battle coming between that man and me, but I shall fight it stoutly, worthily, so that in this, at least, I shall never have to blush for you that you loved me. Be patient, Robert, and never doubt me; for that would make me close the doors of my heart, though I should never cease to aid you, never weary in labor for your well-being. If these things, and fighting all these wicked men, to make Doltaire help me to save you, have schooled to action some worse parts of me, there is yet in me that which shall never be brought low, never be dragged to the level of Versailles or the Chateau Bigot—never!"

She looked at me with such dignity and pride that my eyes filled with tears, and, not to be stayed, I reached out and took her hands, and would have clasped her to my breast, but she held back from me.

"You believe in me, Robert?" she said most earnestly. "You will never doubt me? You know that I am true and loyal."

"I believe in God, and you," I answered reverently, and I took her in my arms and kissed her. I did not care at all whether or no Gabord saw; but indeed he did not, as Alixe told me afterwards, for, womanlike, even in this sweet crisis she had an eye for such details.

"What more did he say?" I asked, my heart beating hard in the joy of that embrace.

"No more, or little more, for my mother came that instant and brought me to talk with the Chevalier de la Darante, who wished to ask me for next summer to Kamaraska or Isle aux Coudres, where he has manorhouses. Before I left Monsieur Doltaire, he said, 'I never made a promise but I wished to break it. This one shall balance all I've broken, for I'll never unwish it.'

"My mother heard this, and so I summoned all my will, and said gaily, 'Poor broken crockery! You stand a tower among the ruins.' This pleased him, and he answered, 'On the tower base is written, This crockery outserves all others.' My mother looked sharply at me, but said nothing, for she has come to think that I am heartless and cold to men and to the world, selfish in many things."

At this moment Gabord turned round, saying, "'Tis time to be done. Madame comes."

"It is my mother," said Alixe, standing up, and hastily placing her hands in mine. "I must be gone. Good-bye, good-bye."

There was no chance for further adieu, and I saw her pass out with Gabord; but she turned at the last, and said in English, for she spoke it fairly now, "Believe, and remember."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY, VOLUME 2 ***

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