

The Seats Of The Mighty, Volume 4.

Gilbert Parker

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Title: The Seats Of The Mighty, Volume 4.

Author: Gilbert Parker

Release Date: August, 2004 [EBook #6227]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on October 4, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SEATS OF THE MIGHTY, PARKER, V4 ***

This eBook was produced by Andrew Sly

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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 4.

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XX

UPON THE RAMPARTS

The Governor visited me. His attitude was marked by nothing so much as a supercilious courtesy, a manner which said, You must see I am not to be trifled with; and though I have you here in my chateau, it is that I may make a fine scorching of you in the end. He would make of me an example to amaze and instruct the nations--when I was robust enough to die.

I might easily have flattered myself on being an object of interest to the eyes of nations. I almost pitied him; for he appeared so lost in self-admiration and the importance of his office that he would never see disaster when it came.

"There is but one master here in Canada," he said, "and I am he. If things go wrong it is because my orders are not obeyed. Your people have taken Louisburg; had I been there, it should never have been given up. Drucour was hasty--he listened to the women. I should allow no woman to move me. I should be inflexible. They might send two Amhersts and two Wolfes against me, I would hold my fortress."

"They will never send two, your Excellency," said I.

He did not see the irony, and he prattled on: "That Wolfe, they tell me, is bandy-legged; is no better than a girl at sea, and never well ashore. I am always in raw health--the strong mind in the potent body. Had I been at Louisburg, I should have held it, as I held Ticonderoga last July, and drove the English back with monstrous slaughter."

Here was news. I had had no information in many months, and all at once two great facts were brought to me.

"Your Excellency, then, was at Ticonderoga?" said I.

"I sent Montcalm to defend it," he replied pompously. "I told him how he must act; I was explicit, and it came out as I had said: we were victorious. Yet he would have done better had he obeyed me in everything. If I had been at Louisburg--"

I could not at first bring myself to flatter the vice-regal peacock; for it had been my mind to fight these Frenchmen always; to yield in nothing; to defeat them like a soldier, not like a juggler. But I brought myself to say half ironically, "If all great men had capable instruments, they would seldom fail."

"You have touched the heart of the matter," he said credulously. "It is a pity," he added, with complacent severity, "that you have been so misguided and criminal; you have, in some things, more sense than folly."

I bowed as to a compliment from a great man. Then, all at once, I spoke to him with an air of apparent frankness, and said that if I must die, I cared to do so like a gentleman, with some sort of health, and not like an invalid. He must admit that at least I was no coward. He might fence me about with what guards he chose, but I prayed him to let me walk upon the ramparts, when I was strong enough to be abroad, under all due espionage. I had already suffered many deaths, I said, and I would go to the final one looking like a man, and not like an outcast of humanity.

"Ah, I have heard this before," said he. "Monsieur Doltaire, who is in prison here, and is to fare on to the Bastille, was insolent enough to send me message yesterday that I should keep you close in your dungeon. But I had had enough of Monsieur Doltaire; and indeed it was through me that the Grande Marquise had him called to durance. He was a muddler here. They must not interfere with me; I am not to be cajoled or crossed in my plans. We shall see, we shall see about the ramparts," he continued. "Meanwhile prepare to die." This he said with such importance that I almost laughed in his face. But I bowed with a sort of awed submission, and he turned and left the room.

I grew stronger slowly day by day, but it was quite a month before Alixe came again. Sometimes I saw her walking on the banks of the river, and I was sure she was there that I might see her, though she made no sign towards me, nor ever seemed to look towards my window.

Spring was now fully come. The snow had gone from the ground, the tender grass was springing, the air was so soft and kind. One fine day, at the beginning of May, I heard the booming of cannons and a great shouting, and, looking out, I could see crowds of people upon the banks, and many boats in the river, where yet the ice had not entirely broken up. By stretching from my window, through the bars of which I could get my head, but not my body, I noted a squadron sailing round the point of the Island of Orleans. I took it to be a fleet from France bearing re-enforcements and supplies--as indeed afterwards I found was so; but the

re-enforcements were so small and the supplies so limited that it is said Montcalm, when he knew, cried out, "Now is all lost! Nothing remains but to fight and die. I shall see my beloved Candiac no more."

For the first time all the English colonies had combined against Canada. Vaudreuil and Montcalm were at variance, and Vaudreuil had, through his personal hatred and envy of Montcalm, signed the death-warrant of the colony by writing to the colonial minister that Montcalm's agents, going for succour, were not to be trusted. Yet at that moment I did not know these things, and the sight made me grave, though it made me sure also that this year would find the British battering this same Chateau.

Presently there came word from the Governor that I might walk upon the ramparts, and I was taken forth for several hours each day; always, however, under strict surveillance, my guards, well armed, attending, while the ramparts were, as usual, patrolled by soldiers. I could see that ample preparations were being made against a siege, and every day the excitement increased. I got to know more definitely of what was going on, when, under vigilance, I was allowed to speak to Lieutenant Stevens, who also was permitted some such freedom as I had enjoyed when I first came to Quebec. He had private information that General Wolfe or General Amherst was likely to proceed against Quebec from Louisburg, and he was determined to join the expedition.

For months he had been maturing plans for escape. There was one Clark, a ship-carpenter (of whom I have before written), and two other bold spirits, who were sick of captivity, and it was intended to fare forth one night and make a run for freedom. Clark had had a notable plan. A wreck of several transports had occurred at Belle Isle, and it was thought to send him down the river with a sloop to bring back the crew, and break up the wreck. It was his purpose to arm his sloop with Lieutenant Stevens and some English prisoners the night before she was to sail, and steal away with her down the river. But whether or not the authorities suspected him, the command was given to another.

It was proposed, however, on a dark night, to get away to some point on the river, where a boat should be stationed--though that was a difficult matter, for the river was well patrolled and boats were scarce--and drift quietly down the stream, till a good distance below the city. Mr. Stevens said he had delayed the attempt on the faint hope of fetching me along. Money, he said, was needed, for Clark and all were very poor, and common necessaries were now at exorbitant prices in the country. Tyranny and robbery had made corn and clothing luxuries. All the old tricks of Bigot and his La Friponne, which, after the outbreak the night of my arrest at the Seigneur Duvarney's, had been somewhat repressed, were in full swing again, and robbery in the name of providing for defense was the only habit.

I managed to convey to Mr. Stevens a good sum of money, and begged him to meet me every day upon the ramparts, until I also should see my way to making a dart for freedom. I advised him in many ways, for he was more bold than shrewd, and I made him promise that he would not tell Clark or the others that I was to make trial to go with them. I feared the accident of disclosure, and any new

failure on my part to get away would, I knew, mean my instant death, consent of King or no consent.

One evening, a soldier entered my room, whom in the half-darkness I did not recognize, till a voice said, "There's orders new! Not dungeon now, but this room Governor bespeaks for gentlemen from France."

"And where am I to go, Gabord?"

"Where you will have fighting," he answered.

"With whom?"

"Yourself, aho!" A queer smile crossed his lips, and was followed by a sort of sternness. There was something graver in his manner than I had ever seen. I could not guess his meaning. At last he added, pulling roughly at his mustache, "And when that's done, if not well done, to answer to Gabord the soldier; for, God take my soul without bed-going, but I will call you to account! That Seigneur's home is no place for you."

"You speak in riddles," said I. Then all at once the matter burst upon me. "The Governor quarters me at the Seigneur Duvarney's?" I asked.

"No other," answered he. "In three days to go."

I understood him now. He had had a struggle, knowing of the relations between Alixe and myself, to avoid telling the Governor all. And now, if I involved her, used her to effect my escape from her father's house! Even his peasant brain saw my difficulty, the danger to my honour--and hers. In spite of the joy I felt at being near her, seeing her, I shrank from the situation. If I escaped from the Seigneur Duvarney's, it would throw suspicion upon him, upon Alixe, and that made me stand abashed. Inside the Seigneur Duvarney's house I should now feel unhappy, bound to certain calls of honour concerning his daughter and himself. I stood long, thinking, Gabord watching me.

Finally, "Gabord," said I, "I give you my word of honour that I will not put Mademoiselle or Monsieur Duvarney in peril."

"You will not try to escape?"

"Not to use them for escape. To elude my guards, to fight my way to liberty--yes--yes--yes!"

"But that mends not. Who's to know the lady did not help you?"

"You. You are to be my jailer again there?"

He nodded, and fell to pulling his mustache. "'Tis not enough," he said decisively.

"Come, then," said I, "I will strike a bargain with you. If you will grant me one thing, I will give my word of honour not to escape from the seigneur's house."

"Say on."

"You tell me I am not to go to the seigneur's for three days yet. Arrange that mademoiselle may come to me to-morrow at dusk--at six o'clock, when all the world dines--and I will give my word. No more do I ask you--only that."

"Done," said he. "It shall be so."

"You will fetch her yourself?" I asked.

"On the stroke of six. Guard changes then."

Here our talk ended. He went, and I plunged deep into my great plan; for all at once, as we had talked, came a thing to me which I shall make clear ere long. I set my wits to work. Once since my coming to the chateau I had been visited by the English chaplain who had been a prisoner at the citadel the year before. He was now on parole, and had freedom to come and go in the town. The Governor had said he might visit me on a certain day every week, at a fixed hour, and the next day at five o'clock was the time appointed for his second visit. Gabord had promised to bring Alixe to me at six.

The following morning I met Mr. Stevens on the ramparts. I told him it was my purpose to escape the next night, if possible. If not, I must go to the Seigneur Duvarney's, where I should be on parole--to Gabord. I bade him fulfill my wishes to the letter, for on his boldness and my own, and the courage of his men, I depended for escape. He declared himself ready to risk all, and die in the attempt, if need be, for he was sick of idleness. He could, he said, mature his plans that day, if he had more money. I gave him secretly a small bag of gold, and then I made explicit note of what I required of him: that he should tie up in a loose but safe bundle a sheet, a woman's skirt, some river grasses and reeds, some phosphorus, a pistol and a knife, and some saltpetre and other chemicals. That evening, about nine o'clock, which was the hour the guard changed, he was to tie this bundle to a string which I let down from my window, and I would draw it up. Then, the night following, the others must steal away to that place near Sillery--the west side of the town was always ill guarded--and wait there with a boat. He should see me at a certain point on the ramparts, and, well armed, we also would make our way to Sillery, and from the spot called the Anse du Foulon drift down the river in the dead of night.

He promised to do all as I wished.

The rest of the day I spent in my room fashioning strange toys out of willow rods. I had got these rods from my guards, to make whistles for their children, and they had carried away many of them. But now, with pieces of a silk handkerchief tied to the whistle and filled with air, I made a toy which, when squeezed, sent out a weird lament. Once when my guard came in, I pressed one of these things in my pocket, and it gave forth a sort of smothered cry, like a sick child. At this he started, and looked round the room in trepidation; for, of all peoples, these Canadian Frenchmen are the most superstitious, and may be worked on without limit. The cry had seemed to come from a distance. I looked around, also, and appeared serious, and he asked me if I had heard the thing

before.

"Once or twice," said I.

"Then you are a dead man," said he; "'tis a warning, that!"

"Maybe it is not I, but one of you," I answered. Then, with a sort of hush, "Is't like the cry of La Jongleuse?" I added. (La Jongleuse is their fabled witch, or spirit, of disaster.)

He nodded his head, crossed himself, mumbled a prayer, and turned to go, but came back. "I'll fetch a crucifix," he said. "You are a heathen, and you bring her here. She is the devil's dam."

He left with a scared face, and I laughed to myself quietly, for I saw success ahead of me. True to his word, he brought a crucifix and put it up--not where he wished, but, at my request, opposite the door, upon the wall. He crossed himself before it, and was most devout.

It looked singular to see this big, rough soldier, who was in most things a swaggerer, so childlike in all that touched his religion. With this you could fetch him to his knees; with it I would cow him that I might myself escape.

At half past five the chaplain came, having been delayed by the guard to have his order indorsed by Captain Lancy of the Governor's household. To him I told my plans so far as I thought he should know them, and then I explained what I wished him to do. He was grave and thoughtful for some minutes, but at last consented. He was a pious man, and of as honest a heart as I have known, albeit narrow and confined, which sprang perhaps from his provincial practice and his theological cutting and trimming. We were in the midst of a serious talk, wherein I urged him upon matters which shall presently be set forth, when there came a noise outside. I begged him to retire to the alcove where my bed was, and draw the curtain for a few moments, nor come forth until I called. He did so, yet I thought it hurt his sense of dignity to be shifted to a bedroom.

As he disappeared the door opened, and Gabord and Alixe entered. "One half hour," said Gabord, and went out again.

Presently Alixe told me her story.

"I have not been idle, Robert, but I could not act, for my father and mother suspect my love for you. I have come but little to the chateau without them, and I was closely watched. I knew not how the thing would end, but I kept up my workings with the Governor, which is easier now Monsieur Doltaire is gone, and I got you the freedom to walk upon the ramparts. Well, once before my father suspected me, I said that if his Excellency disliked your being in the Chateau, you could be as well guarded in my father's house, with sentinels always there, until you could, in better health, be taken to the common jail again. What was my surprise when yesterday came word to my father that he should make ready to receive you as a prisoner; being sure that he, his Excellency's cousin, the father of the man you had injured, and the most loyal of Frenchmen, would guard you diligently; he now needed all extra room in the Chateau for the

entertainment of gentlemen and officers lately come from France.

"When my father got the news, he was thrown into dismay. He knew not what to do. On what ground could he refuse the Governor? Yet when he thought of me he felt it his duty to do so. Again, on what ground could he refuse this boon to you, to whom we all owe the blessing of his life? On my brother's account? But my brother has written to my father justifying you, and magnanimously praising you as a man, while hating you as an English soldier. On my account? But he could not give this reason to the Governor. As for me, I was silent, I waited--and I wait; I know not what will be the end. Meanwhile preparations go on to receive you."

I could see that Alixe's mood was more tranquil since Doltaire was gone. A certain restlessness had vanished. Her manner had much dignity, and every movement a peculiar grace and elegance. She was dressed in a soft cloth of a gray tone, touched off with red and slashed with gold, and a cloak of gray, trimmed with fur, with bright silver buckles, hung loosely on her, thrown off at one shoulder. There was a sweet disorder in the hair, which indeed was prettiest when freest.

When she had finished speaking, she looked at me, as I thought, with a little anxiety.

"Alixe," I said, "we have come to the cross-roads, and the way we choose now is for all time."

She looked up, startled, yet governing herself, and her hand sought mine and nestled there. "I feel that, too," she replied. "What is it, Robert?"

"I can not in honour escape from your father's house. I can not steal his daughter and his safety too--"

"You must escape," she interrupted firmly.

"From here, from the citadel, from anywhere but your house; and so I will not go to it."

"You will not go to it?" she repeated slowly and strangely. "How may you not? You are a prisoner. If they make my father your jailer--" She laughed.

"I owe that jailer and that jailer's daughter--"

"You owe them your safety and your freedom. Oh, Robert, I know, I know what you mean. But what care I what the world may think by-and-bye, or to-morrow, or to-day? My conscience is clear."

"Your father--" I persisted.

She nodded. "Yes, yes, you speak truth, alas! And yet you must be freed. And"--here she got to her feet, and with flashing eyes spoke out--"and you shall be set free. Let come what will, I owe my first duty to you, though all the world chatter; and I will not stir from that. As soon as I can make it possible, you shall escape."

"You shall have the right to set me free," said I, "if I must go to your father's house. And if I do not go there, but out to my own good country, you shall still have the right before all the world to follow, or to wait till I come to fetch you."

"I do not understand you, Robert," said she. "I do not--" Here she broke off, looking, looking at me, and trembling a little.

Then I stooped and whispered softly in her ear. She gave a little cry, and drew back from me; yet instantly her hand came out and caught my arm.

"Robert, Robert! I can not, I dare not!" she cried softly. "No, no, it may not be," she added in a whisper of fear.

I went to the alcove, drew back the curtain, and asked Mr. Wainfleet to step forth.

"Sir," said I, picking up my Prayer Book and putting it in his hands, "I beg you to marry this lady and myself."

He paused, dazed. "Marry you--here--now?" he asked shakingly.

"Before ten minutes go round, this lady must be my wife," said I.

"Mademoiselle Duvarney, you--" he began.

"Be pleased, dear sir, to open the book at 'Wilt thou have,'" said I. "The lady is a Catholic; she has not the consent of her people; but when she is my wife, made so by you, whose consent need we ask? Can you not tie us fast enough, a man and woman of sense sufficient, but you must pause here? Is the knot you tie safe against picking and stealing?"

I had touched his vanity and his ecclesiasticism. "Married by me," he replied, "once chaplain to the Bishop of London, you have a knot that no sword can cut. I am in full orders. My parish is in Boston itself."

"You will hand a certificate to my wife to-morrow, and you will uphold this marriage against all gossip?" asked I.

"Against all France and all England," he answered, roused now.

"Then come," I urged.

"But I must have a witness," he interposed, opening the book.

"You shall have one in due time," said I. "Go on. When the marriage is performed, and at the point where you shall proclaim us man and wife, I will have a witness."

I turned to Alixe, and found her pale and troubled. "Oh, Robert, Robert!" she cried, "it can not be. Now, now I am afraid, for the first time in my life, clear, the first time!"

"Dearest lass in the world," I said, "it must be. I shall not go to your father's. To-morrow night, I make my great stroke for freedom, and when I am free I shall return to fetch my wife."

"You will try to escape from here to-morrow?" she asked, her face flushing finely.

"I will escape or die," I answered; "but I shall not think of death. Come--come and say with me that we shall part no more--in spirit no more; that, whatever comes, you and I have fulfilled our great hope, though under the shadow of the sword."

At that she put her hand in mine with pride and sweetness, and said, "I am ready, Robert. I give my heart, my life, and my honour to you--forever."

Then, with great sweetness and solemnity she turned to the clergyman: "Sir, my honour is also in your hands. If you have mother or sister, or any care of souls upon you, I pray you, in the future act as becomes good men."

"Mademoiselle," he said earnestly, "I am risking my freedom, maybe my life, in this; do you think--"

Here she took his hand and pressed it. "Ah, I ask your pardon. I am of a different faith from you, and I have known how men forget when they should remember." She smiled at him so perfectly that he drew himself up with pride.

"Make haste, sir," said I. "Jailers are curious folk."

The room was not yet lighted, the evening shadows were creeping in, and up out of the town came the ringing of the vesper bell from the church of the Recollets. For a moment there was stillness in the room and all around us, and then the chaplain began in a low voice: "I require and charge you both--" and so on. In a few moments I had made the great vow, and had put on Alixe's finger a ring which the clergyman drew from his own hand. Then we knelt down, and I know we both prayed most fervently with the good man that we might "ever remain in perfect love and perfect peace together."

Rising, he paused, and I went to the door and knocked upon it. It was opened by Gabord. "Come in, Gabord," said I. "There is a thing that you must hear."

He stepped back and got a light, and then entered, holding it up, and shutting the door. A strange look came upon his face when he saw the chaplain, and a stranger when, stepping beside Alixe, I took her hand, and Mr. Wainfleet declared us man and wife. He stood like one dumfounded, and he did not stir as Alixe, turning to me, let me kiss her on the lips, and then went to the crucifix on the wall and embraced the feet of it, and stood for a moment, praying. Nor did he move or make a sign till she came back and stood beside me.

"A pretty scene!" he burst forth then with anger. "But, by God! no marriage is it!"

Alixe's hand tightened on my arm, and she drew close to me.

"A marriage that will stand at Judgment Day, Gabord," said I.

"But not in France or here. 'Tis mating wild, with end of doom."

"It is a marriage our great Archbishop at Lambeth Palace will uphold against a hundred popes and kings," said the chaplain with importance.

"You are no priest, but holy peddler!" cried Gabord roughly. "This is not mating as Christians, and fires of hell shall burn--aho! I will see you all go down, and hand of mine shall not be lifted for you!"

He puffed out his cheeks, and his great eyes rolled so like fire-wheels.

"You are a witness to this ceremony," said the chaplain. "And you shall answer to your God, but you must speak the truth for this man and wife."

"Man and wife?" laughed Gabord wildly. "May I die and be damned to--"

Like a flash Alixe was beside him, and put to his lips most swiftly the little wooden cross that Mathilde had given her.

"Gabord, Gabord," she said in a sweet, sad voice, "when you may come to die, a girl's prayers will be waiting at God's feet for you."

He stopped, and stared at her. Her hand lay on his arm, and she continued: "No night gives me sleep, Gabord, but I pray for the jailer who has been kind to an ill-treated gentleman."

"A juggling gentleman, that cheats Gabord before his eyes, and smuggles in a mongrel priest!" he blustered.

I waved my hand at the chaplain, or I think he would have put his Prayer Book to rougher use than was its wont, and I was about to answer, but Alixe spoke instead, and to greater purpose than I could have done. Her whole mood changed, her face grew still and proud, her eyes flashed bravely.

"Gabord," she said, "vanity speaks in you there, not honesty. No gentleman here is a juggler. No kindness you may have done warrants insolence. You have the power to bring great misery on us, and you may have the will, but, by God's help, both my husband and myself shall be delivered from cruel hands. At any moment I may stand alone in the world, friends, people, the Church, and all the land against me: if you desire to haste that time, to bring me to disaster, because you would injure my husband,"--how sweet the name sounded on her lips!--"then act, but do not insult us. But no, no," she broke off softly, "you spoke in temper, you meant it not, you were but vexed with us for the moment. Dear Gabord," she added, "did we not know that if we had asked you first, you would have refused us? You care so much for me, you would have feared my linking my life and fate with one--"

"With one the death-man has in hand, to pay price for wicked deed," he interrupted.

"With one innocent of all dishonour, a gentleman wronged every

way. Gabord, you know it so, for you have guarded him and fought with him, and you are an honourable gentleman," she added gently.

"No gentleman I," he burst forth, "but jailer base, and soldier born upon a truss of hay. But honour is an apple any man may eat since Adam walked in garden.... 'Tis honest foe, here," he continued magnanimously, and nodded towards me.

"We would have told you all," she said, "but how dare we involve you, or how dare we tempt you, or how dare we risk your refusal? It was love and truth drove us to this; and God will bless this mating as the birds mate, even as He gives honour to Gabord who was born upon a truss of hay."

"Poom!" said Gabord, puffing out his cheeks, and smiling on her with a look half sour, and yet with a doglike fondness, "Gabord's mouth is shut till 's head is off, and then to tell the tale to Twelve Apostles!"

Through his wayward, illusive speech we found his meaning. He would keep faith with us, and be best proof of this marriage, at risk of his head even.

As we spoke, the chaplain was writing in the blank fore-pages of the Prayer Book. Presently he said to me, handing me the pen, which he had picked from a table, "Inscribe your names here. It is a rough record of the ceremony, but it will suffice before all men, when to-morrow I have given Mistress Moray another record."

We wrote our names, and then the pen was handed to Gabord. He took it, and at last, with many flourishes and ahos, and by dint of puffings and rolling eyes, he wrote his name so large that it filled as much space as the other names and all the writing, and was indeed like a huge indorsement across the record.

When this was done, Alixe held out her hand to him. "Will you kiss me, Gabord?" she said.

The great soldier was all taken back. He flushed like a schoolboy, yet a big humour and pride looked out of his eyes.

"I owe you for the sables, too," she said. "But kiss me--not on my ears, as the Russian count kissed Gabord, but on both cheek."

This won him to our cause utterly, and I never think of Gabord, as I saw him last in the sway and carnage of battle, fighting with wild uproar and covered with wounds, but the memory of that moment, when he kissed my young wife, comes back to me.

At that he turned to leave. "I'll hold the door for ten minutes," he added; and bowed to the chaplain, who blessed us then with tears in his eyes, and smiled a little to my thanks and praises and purse of gold, and to Alixe's sweet gratitude. With lifting chin--good honest gentleman, who afterwards proved his fidelity and truth--he said that he would die to uphold this sacred ceremony. And so he made a little speech, as if he had a pulpit round him, and he wound up with a benediction which sent my dear girl to tears and soft trembling:

"The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace now and for evermore."

A moment afterwards the door closed, and for ten minutes I looked into my wife's face, and told her my plans for escape. When Gabord opened the door upon us, we had passed through years of understanding and resolve. Our parting was brave--a bravery on her side that I do not think any other woman could match. She was quivering with the new life come upon her, yet she was self-controlled; she moved as in a dream, yet I knew her mind was alert, vigilant, and strong; she was aching with thought of this separation, with the peril that faced us both, yet she carried a quiet joy in her face, a tranquil gravity of bearing.

"Whom God hath joined--" said I gravely at the last.

"Let no man put asunder," she answered softly and solemnly.

"Aho!" said Gabord, and turned his head away.

Then the door shut upon me, and though I am no Catholic, I have no shame in saying that I kissed the feet on the crucifix which her lips had blessed.

XXI

LA JONGLEUSE

At nine o'clock I was waiting by the window, and even as a bugle sounded "lights out" in the barracks and change of guard, I let the string down. Mr. Stevens shot round the corner of the chateau, just as the departing sentinel disappeared, and attached a bundle to the string, and I drew it up.

"Is all well?" I called softly down.

"All well," said Mr. Stevens, and, hugging the wall of the chateau, he sped away. In another moment a new sentinel began pacing up and down, and I shut the window and untied my bundle. All that I had asked for was there. I hid the things away in the alcove and went to bed at once, for I knew that I should have no sleep on the following night.

I did not leave my bed till the morning was well advanced. Once or twice during the day I brought my guards in with fear on their faces, the large fat man more distorted than his fellow, by the lamentable sounds I made with my willow toys. They crossed themselves again and again, and I myself appeared devout and troubled. When we walked abroad during the afternoon, I chose to saunter by the river rather than walk, for I wished to conserve my strength, which was now vastly increased, though, to mislead my watchers and the authorities, I assumed the delicacy of an invalid, and appeared unfit for any enterprise--no hard task, for I was still very thin and worn.

So I sat upon a favourite seat on the cliff, set against a solitary tree, fixed in the rocks. I gazed long on the river, and my guards, stoutly armed, stood near, watching me, and talking in low tones. Eager to hear their gossip, I appeared to sleep. They came nearer, and, facing me, sat upon a large stone, and gossiped freely concerning the strange sounds heard in my room at the chateau.

"See you, my Bamboir," said the lean to the fat soldier, "the British captain, he is to be carried off in burning flames by that La Jongleuse. We shall come in one morning and find a smell of sulphur only, and a circle of red on the floor where the imps danced before La Jongleuse said to them, 'Up with him, darlings, and away!'"

At this Bamboir shook his head, and answered, "To-morrow I'll to the Governor, and tell him what's coming. My wife, she falls upon my neck this morning. 'Argose,' she says, 'twill need the bishop and his college to drive La Jongleuse out of the grand chateau.'"

"No less," replied the other. "A deacon and sacred palm and sprinkle of holy water would do for a cottage, or even for a little manor house, with twelve candles burning, and a hymn to the Virgin. But in a king's house--"

"It's not the King's house."

"But yes, it is the King's house, though his Most Christian Majesty lives in France. The Marquis de Vaudreuil stands for the King, and we are sentinels in the King's house. But, my faith, I'd rather be fighting against Frederick, the Prussian boar, than watching this mad Englishman."

"But see you, my brother, that Englishman's a devil. Else how has he not been hanged long ago? He has vile arts to blind all, or he would not be sitting there. It is well known that M'sieu' Doltaire, even the King's son--his mother worked in the fields like your Nanette, Bamboir--"

"Or your Lablanche, my friend. She has hard hands, with warts, and red knuckles therefrom--"

"Or your Nanette, Bamboir, with nose that blisters in the summer, as she goes swingeing flax, and swelling feet that sweat in sabots, and chin thrust out from carrying pails upon her head--"

"Ay, like Nanette and like Lablanche, this peasant mother of M'sieu' Doltaire, and maybe no such firm breasts like Nanette--"

"Nor such an eye as has Lablanche. Well, M'sieu' Doltaire, who could override them all, he could not kill this barbarian. And Gabord--you know well how they fought, and the black horse and his rider came and carried him away. Why, the young M'sieu' Duvarney had him on his knees, the blade at his throat, and a sword flashed out from the dark--they say it was the devil's--and took him in the ribs and well-nigh killed him."

"But what say you to Ma'm'selle Duvarney coming to him that day, and again yesterday with Gabord?"

"Well, well, who knows, Bamboir? This morning I said to Nanette, 'Why is't, all in one moment, you send me to the devil, and pray to meet me in Abraham's bosom too?' What think you she answered me? Why, this, my Bamboir: 'Why is't Adam loved his wife and swore her down before the Lord also, all in one moment?' Why Ma'm'selle Duvarney does this or that is not for muddy brains like ours. It is some whimsy. They say that women are more curious about the devil than about St. Jean Baptiste. Perhaps she got of him a magic book."

"No, no! If he had the magic Petit Albert, he would have turned us into dogs long ago. But I do not like him. He is but thirty years, they say, and yet his hair is white as a pigeon's wing. It is not natural. Nor did he ever, says Gabord, do aught but laugh at everything they did to him. The chains they put would not stay, and when he was set against the wall to be shot, the watches stopped--the minute of his shooting passed. Then M'sieu' Doltaire came, and said a man that could do a trick like that should live to do another. And he did it, for M'sieu' Doltaire is gone to the Bastille. Voyez, this Englishman is a damned heretic, and has the wicked arts."

"But see, Bamboir, do you think he can cast spells?"

"What mean those sounds from his room?"

"So, so. But if he be a friend of the devil, La Jongleuse would not come for him, but--"

Startled and excited, they grasped each other's arms. "But for us--for us!"

"It would be a work of God to send him to the devil," said Bamboir in a loud whisper. "He has given us trouble enough. Who can tell what comes next? Those damned noises in his room, eh--eh?"

Then they whispered together, and presently I caught a fragment, by which I understood that, as we walked near the edge of the cliff, I should be pushed over, and they would make it appear that I had drowned myself.

They talked in low tones again, but soon got louder, and presently I knew that they were speaking of La Jongleuse; and Bamboir--the fat Bamboir, who the surgeon had said would some day die of apoplexy--was rash enough to say that he had seen her. He described her accurately, with the spirit of the born raconteur:

"Hair so black as the feather in the Governor's hat, and green eyes that flash fire, and a brown face with skin all scales. Oh, my saints of Heaven, when she pass I hide my head, and I go cold like stone. She is all covered with long reeds and lilies about her head and shoulders, and blue-red sparks fly up at every step. Flames go round her, and she burns not her robe--not at all. And as she go, I hear cries that make me sick, for it is, I said, some poor man in torture, and I think, perhaps it is Jacques Villon, perhaps Jean Rivas, perhaps Angele Damgoche. But no, it is a young priest of St. Clair, for he is never seen again--never!"

In my mind I commended this fat Bamboir as an excellent

story-teller, and thanked him for his true picture of La Jongleuse, whom, to my regret, I had never seen. I would not forget his stirring description, as he should see. I gave point to the tale by squeezing an inflated toy in my pocket, with my arm, while my hands remained folded in front of me; and it was as good as a play to see the faces of these soldiers, as they sprang to their feet, staring round in dismay. I myself seemed to wake with a start, and, rising to my feet, I asked what meant the noise and their amazement. We were in a spot where we could not easily be seen from any distance, and no one was in sight, nor were we to be remarked from the fort. They exchanged looks, as I started back towards the chateau, walking very near the edge of the cliff. A spirit of bravado came on me, and I said musingly to them as we walked:

"It would be easy to throw you both over the cliff, but I love you too well. I have proved that by making toys for your children."

It was as cordial to me to watch their faces. They both drew away from the cliff, and grasped their firearms apprehensively.

"My God," said Bamboir, "those toys shall be burned to-night. Alphonse has the smallpox and Susanne the croup--damned devil!" he added furiously, stepping forward to me with gun raised, "I'll--"

I believe he would have shot me, but that I said quickly, "If you did harm to me you'd come to the rope. The Governor would rather lose a hand than my life."

I pushed his musket down. "Why should you fret? I am leaving the chateau to-morrow for another prison. You fools, d'ye think I'd harm the children? I know as little of the devil or La Jongleuse as do you. We'll solve the witcheries of these sounds, you and I, to-night. If they come, we'll say the Lord's Prayer, and make the sacred gesture, and if it goes not, we will have one of your good priests to drive out this whining spirit."

This quieted them much, and I was glad of it, for they had looked bloodthirsty enough, and though I had a weapon on me, there was little use in seeking fighting or flight till the auspicious moment. They were not satisfied, however, and they watched me diligently as we came on to the chateau.

I could not bear that they should be frightened about their children, so I said:

"Make for me a sacred oath, and I will swear by it that those toys will do your children no harm."

I drew out the little wooden cross that Mathilde had given me, and held it up. They looked at me astonished. What should I, a heretic and a Protestant, do with this sacred emblem? "This never leaves me," said I; "it was a pious gift."

I raised the cross to my lips, and kissed it.

"That's well," said Bamboir to his comrade. "If otherwise, he should have been struck down by the Avenging Angel."

We got back to the chateau without more talk, and I was locked

in, while my guards retired. As soon as they had gone I got to work, for my great enterprise was at hand.

At ten o'clock I was ready for the venture. When the critical moment came, I was so arrayed that my dearest friend would not have known me. My object was to come out upon my guards as La Jongleuse, and, in the fright and confusion which should follow, make my escape through the corridors and to the entrance doors, past the sentinels, and so on out. It may be seen now why I got the woman's garb, the sheet, the horsehair, the phosphorus, the reeds, and such things; why I secured the knife and pistol may be guessed likewise. Upon the lid of a small stove in the room I placed my saltpetre, and I rubbed the horsehair on my head with phosphorus, also on my hands, and face, and feet, and on many objects in the room. The knife and pistol were at my hand, and when the clock struck ten, I set my toys to wailing.

Then I knocked upon the door with solemn taps, hurried back to the stove, and waited for the door to open before I applied the match. I heard a fumbling at the lock, then the door was thrown wide open. All was darkness in the hall without, save for a spluttering candle which Bamboir held over his head, as he and his fellow, deadly pale, stood peering forward. Suddenly they gave a cry, for I threw the sheet from my face and shoulders, and to their excited imagination La Jongleuse stood before them, all in flames. As I started down on them, the coloured fire flew up, making the room all blue and scarlet for a moment, in which I must have looked devilish indeed, with staring eyes, and outstretched chalky hands, and wailing cries coming from my robe.

I moved swiftly, and Bamboir, without a cry, dropped like a log (poor fellow, he never rose again! the apoplexy which the surgeon promised had come), his comrade gave a cry, and sank in a heap in a corner, mumbling a prayer, and making the sign of the cross, his face stark with terror.

I passed him, came along the corridor and down one staircase, without seeing any one; then two soldiers appeared in the half-lighted hallway. Presently also a door opened behind me, and some one came out. By now the phosphorus light diminished a little, but still I was a villainous picture, for in one hand I held a small cup from which suddenly sprang red and blue fires. The men fell back, and I sailed past them, but I had not gone far down the lower staircase when a shot rang after me, and a bullet passed by my head. Now I came rapidly to the outer door, where two more sentinels stood. They shrank back, and suddenly one threw down his musket and ran; the other, terrified, stood stock-still. I passed him, opened the door, and came out upon the Intendant, who was just alighting from his carriage.

The horses sprang away, frightened at sight of me, and nearly threw Bigot to the ground. I tossed the tin cup with its chemical fires full in his face, as he made a dash for me. He called out, and drew his sword. I wished not to fight, and I sprang aside; but he made a pass at me, and I drew my pistol and was about to fire, when another shot came from the hallway and struck him. He fell, almost at my feet, and I dashed away into the darkness. Fifty feet ahead I cast one glance back, and saw Monsieur Cournal standing in the doorway. I was sure that his second shot had not been meant for me, but for

the Intendant--a wild attempt at a revenge, long delayed, for the worst of wrongs.

I ran on, and presently came full upon five soldiers, two of whom drew their pistols, fired, and missed. Their comrades ran away howling. They barred my path, and now I fired, too, and brought one down; then came a shot from behind them, and another fell. The last one took to his heels, and a moment later I had my hand in that of Mr. Stevens. It was he who had fired the opportune shot that rid me of one foe. We came quickly along the river brink, and, skirting the citadel, got clear of it without discovery, though we could see soldiers hurrying past, roused by the firing at the chateau.

In about half an hour of steady running, with a few bad stumbles and falls, we reached the old windmill above the Anse du Foulon at Sillery, and came plump upon our waiting comrades. I had stripped myself of my disguise, and rubbed the phosphorus from my person as we came along, but enough remained to make me an uncanny figure. It had been kept secret from these people that I was to go with them, and they sullenly kept their muskets raised and cocked; but when Mr. Stevens told them who I was, they were agreeably surprised. I at once took command of the enterprise, saying firmly at the same time that I would shoot the first man who disobeyed my orders. I was sure that I could bring them to safety, but my will must be law. They took my terms like men, and swore to stand by me.

XXII

THE LORD OF KAMARSKA

We were five altogether--Mr. Stevens, Clark, the two Boston soldiers, and myself; and presently we came down the steep passage in the cliff to where our craft lay, secured by my dear wife--a birch canoe, well laden with necessaries. Our craft was none too large for our party, but she must do; and safely in, we pushed out upon the current, which was in our favour, for the tide was going out. My object was to cross the river softly, skirt the Levis shore, pass the Isle of Orleans, and so steal down the river. There was excitement in the town, as we could tell from the lights flashing along the shore, and boats soon began to patrol the banks, going swiftly up and down, and extending a line round to the St. Charles River towards Beauport.

It was well for us the night was dark, else we had run that gantlet. But we were lucky enough, by hard paddling, to get past the town on the Levis side. Never were better boatmen. The paddles dropped with agreeable precision, and no boatswain's rattan was needed to keep my fellows to their task. I, whose sight was long trained to darkness, could see a great distance round us, and so could prevent a trap, though once or twice we let our canoe drift with the tide, lest our paddles should be heard. I could not paddle long, I had so little strength. After the Isle of Orleans was passed, I drew a breath of relief, and played the part of captain and boatswain merely.

Yet when I looked back at the town on those strong heights, and saw

the bonfires burn to warn the settlers of our escape, saw the lights sparkling in many homes, and even fancied I could make out the light shining in my dear wife's window, I had a strange feeling of loneliness. There in the shadow of my prison walls, was the dearest thing on earth to me. Ought she not to be with me? She had begged to come, to share with me these dangers and hardships; but that I could not, would not grant. She would be safer with her people. As for us desperate men bent on escape, we must face hourly peril.

Thank God, there was work to do. Hour after hour the swing and dip of the paddles went on. No one showed weariness, and when the dawn broke slow and soft over the eastern hills, I motioned my good boatmen towards the shore, and landed safely. We lifted our frigate up, and carried her into a thicket, there to rest with us till night, when we would sally forth again into the friendly darkness. We were in no distress all that day, for the weather was fine, and we had enough to eat; and in such case were we for ten days and nights, though indeed some of the nights were dreary and very cold, for it was yet but the beginning of May.

It might thus seem that we were leaving danger well behind, after having travelled so many heavy leagues, but it was yet several hundred miles to Louisburg, our destination; and we had escaped only immediate danger. We passed Isle aux Coudres and the Isles of Kamaraska, and now we ventured by day to ramble the woods in search of game, which was most plentiful. In this good outdoor life my health came slowly back, and I should soon be able to bear equal tasks with any of my faithful comrades. Never man led better friends, though I have seen adventurous service near and far since that time. Even the genial ruffian Clark was amenable, and took sharp reprimand without revolt.

On the eleventh night after our escape, our first real trial came. We were keeping the middle of the great river, as safest from detection, and when the tide was with us we could thus move more rapidly. We had had a constant favouring wind, but now suddenly, though we were running with the tide, the wind turned easterly, and blew up the river against the ebb. Soon it became a gale, to which was added snow and sleet, and a rough, choppy sea followed.

I saw it would be no easy task to fetch our craft to the land. The waves broke in upon us, and presently, while half of us were paddling with laboured and desperate stroke, the other half were bailing. Lifted on a crest, our canoe, heavily laden, dropped at both ends; and again, sinking into the hollows between the short, brutal waves, her gunwales yielded outward, and her waist gaped in a dismal way. We looked to see her with a broken back at any moment. To add to our ill fortune, a violent current set in from the shore, and it was vain to attempt a landing. Spirits and bodies flagged, and it needed all my cheerfulness to keep my good fellows to their tasks.

At last, the ebb of tide being almost spent, the waves began to fall, the wind shifted a little to the northward, and a piercing cold instantly froze our drenched clothes on our backs. But with the current changed there was a good chance of reaching the shore. As daylight came we passed into a little sheltered cove, and sank with exhaustion on the shore. Our frozen clothes rattled like tin, and we could scarce lift a leg. But we gathered a fine heap of

wood, flint and steel were ready, and the tinder was sought; which, when found, was soaking. Not a dry stitch or stick could we find anywhere, till at last, within a leather belt, Mr. Stevens found a handkerchief, which was, indeed, as he told me afterwards, the gift and pledge of a lady to him; and his returning to her with out it nearly lost him another and better gift and pledge, for this went to light our fire. We had had enough danger and work in one night to give us relish for some days of rest, and we piously took them.

The evening of the second day we set off again, and had a good night's run, and in the dawn, spying a snug little bay, we stood in, and went ashore. I sent my two Provincials foraging with their guns, and we who remained set about to fix our camp for the day and prepare breakfast. A few minutes only passed, and the two hunters came running back with rueful faces to say they had seen two Indians near, armed with muskets and knives. My plans were made at once. We needed their muskets, and the Indians must pay the price of their presence here, for our safety should be had at any cost.

I urged my men to utter no word at all, for none but Clark could speak French, and he but poorly. For myself, my accent would pass after these six years of practice. We came to a little river, beyond which we could observe the Indians standing on guard. We could only cross by wading, which we did; but one of my Provincials came down, wetting his musket and himself thoroughly. Reaching the shore, we marched together, I singing the refrain of an old French song as we went,

En roulant, ma boule roulant,
En roulant, ma boule

so attracting the attention of the Indians. The better to deceive, we all were now dressed in the costume of the French peasant--I had taken pains to have Mr. Stevens secure these for us before starting; a pair of homespun trousers, a coarse brown jacket, with thrums like waving tassels, a silk handkerchief about the neck, and a strong thick worsted wig on the head; no smart toupet, nor buckle; nor combed, nor powdered; and all crowned by a dull black cap. I myself was, as became my purpose, most like a small captain of militia, doing wood service, and in the braver costume of the *coureur de bois*.

I signalled to the Indians, and, coming near, addressed them in French. They were deceived, and presently, abreast of them, in the midst of apparent ceremony, their firelocks were seized, and Mr. Stevens and Clark had them safe. I said we must be satisfied as to who they were, for English prisoners escaped from Quebec were abroad, and no man could go unchallenged. They must at once lead me to their camp. So they did, and at their bark wigwam they said they had seen no Englishman. They were guardians of the fire; that is, it was their duty to light a fire on the shore when a hostile fleet should appear; and from another point farther up, other guardians, seeing, would do the same, until beacons would be shining even to Quebec, three hundred leagues away.

While I was questioning them, Clark rifled the wigwam; and presently, the excitable fellow, finding some excellent stores of skins, tea, maple sugar, coffee, and other things, broke out into English expletives. Instantly the Indians saw they had been trapped, and he whom Mr. Stevens held made a great spring from him,

caught up a gun, and gave a wild yell which echoed far and near. Mr. Stevens, with great rapidity, leveled his pistol and shot him in the heart, while I, in a close struggle with my captive, was glad--for I was not yet strong--that Clark finished my assailant: and so both lay there dead, two foes less of our good King.

Not far from where we stood was a pool of water, black and deep, and we sank the bodies there; but I did not know till long afterwards that Clark, with a barbarous and disgusting spirit, carried away their scalps to sell them in New York, where they would bring, as he confided to one of the Provincials, twelve pounds each. Before we left, we shot a poor howling dog that mourned for his masters, and sank him also in the dark pool.

We had but got back to our camp, when, looking out, we saw a well-manned four-oared boat making for the shore. My men were in dismay until I told them that, having begun the game of war, I would carry it on to the ripe end. This boat and all therein should be mine. Safely hidden, we watched the rowers draw in to shore, with brisk strokes, singing a quaint farewell song of the voyageurs, called *La Pauvre Mere*, of which the refrain is:

"And his mother says, 'My dear,
For your absence I shall grieve;
Come you home within the year.'"

They had evidently been upon a long voyage, and by their toiling we could see their boat was deep loaded; but they drove on, like a horse that, at the close of day, sees ahead the inn where he is to bait and refresh, and, rousing to the spur, comes cheerily home. The figure of a reverend old man was in the stern, and he sent them in to shore with brisk words. Bump came the big shallop on the beach, and at that moment I ordered my men to fire, but to aim wide, for I had another end in view than killing.

We were exactly matched as to numbers, so that a fight would be fair enough, but I hoped for peaceful conquest. As we fired I stepped out of the thicket, and behind me could be seen the shining barrels of our threatening muskets. The old gentleman stood up while his men cried for quarter. He waved them down with an impatient gesture, and stepped out on the beach. Then I recognized him. It was the Chevalier de la Darante. I stepped towards him, my sword drawn.

"Monsieur the Chevalier de la Darante, you are my prisoner," said I.

He started, then recognized me. "Now, by the blood of man! now, by the blood of man!" he said, and paused, dumfounded.

"You forget me, monsieur?" asked I.

"Forget you, monsieur?" said he. "As soon forget the devil at mass! But I thought you dead by now, and--"

"If you are disappointed," said I, "there is a way"; and I waved towards his men, then to Mr. Stevens and my own ambushed fellows.

He smiled an acid smile, and took a pinch of snuff. "It is not so fiery-edged as that," he answered; "I can endure it."

"You shall have time too for reverie," answered I.

He looked puzzled. "What is't you wish?" he asked.

"Your surrender first," said I, "and then your company at breakfast."

"The latter has meaning and compliment," he responded, "the former is beyond me. What would you do with me?"

"Detain you and your shallop for the services of my master, the King of England, soon to be the master of your master, if the signs are right."

"All signs fail with the blind, monsieur."

"I will give you good reading of those signs in due course," retorted I.

"Monsieur," he added, with great, almost too great dignity, "I am of the family of the Duc de Mirepoix. The whole Kamaraska Isles are mine, and the best gentlemen in this province do me vassalage. I make war on none, I have stepped aside from all affairs of state, I am a simple gentleman. I have been a great way down this river, at large expense and toil, to purchase wheat, for all the corn of these counties goes to Quebec to store the King's magazine, the adored La Friponne. I know not your purposes, but I trust you will not push your advantage"--he waved towards our muskets--"against a private gentleman."

"You forget, Chevalier," said I, "that you gave verdict for my death."

"Upon the evidence," he replied. "And I have no doubt you deserve hanging a thousand times."

I almost loved him for his boldness. I remembered also that he had no wish to be one of my judges, and that he spoke for me in the presence of the Governor. But he was not the man to make a point of that.

"Chevalier," said I, "I have been foully used in yonder town; by the fortune of war you shall help me to compensation. We have come a long, hard journey; we are all much overworked; we need rest, a better boat, and good sailors. You and your men, Chevalier, shall row us to Louisburg. When we are attacked, you shall be in the van; when we are at peace, you shall industriously serve under King George's flag. Now will you give up your men, and join me at breakfast?"

For a moment the excellent gentleman was mute, and my heart almost fell before his venerable white hair and his proud bearing; but something a little overdone in his pride, a little ludicrous in the situation, set me smiling; there came back on me the remembrance of all I had suffered, and I let no sentiment stand between me and my purposes.

"I am the Chevalier de la--" he began.

"If you were King Louis himself, and every man there in your boat a peer of his realm, you should row a British subject now," said I; "or, if you choose, you shall have fighting instead." I meant there should be nothing uncertain in my words.

"I surrender," said he; "and if you are bent on shaming me, let us have it over soon."

"You shall have better treatment than I had in Quebec," answered I.

A moment afterwards, his men were duly surrendered, disarmed, and guarded, and the Chevalier breakfasted with me, now and again asking me news of Quebec. He was much amazed to hear that Bigot had been shot, and distressed that I could not say whether fatally or not.

I fixed on a new plan. We would now proceed by day as well as by night, for the shallop could not leave the river, and, besides, I did not care to trust my prisoners on shore. I threw from the shallop into the stream enough wheat to lighten her, and now, well stored and trimmed, we pushed away upon our course, the Chevalier and his men rowing, while my men rested and tended the sail, which was now set. I was much loath to cut our good canoe adrift, but she stopped the shallop's way, and she was left behind.

After a time, our prisoners were in part relieved, and I made the Chevalier rest also, for he had taken his task in good part, and had ordered his men to submit cheerfully. In the late afternoon, after an excellent journey, we saw a high and shaggy point of land, far ahead, which shut off our view. I was anxious to see beyond it, for ships of war might appear at any moment. A good breeze brought up this land, and when we were abreast of it a lofty frigate was disclosed to view--a convoy (so the Chevalier said) to a fleet of transports which that morning had gone up the river. I resolved instantly, since fight was useless, to make a run for it. Seating myself at the tiller, I declared solemnly that I would shoot the first man who dared to stop the shallop's way, to make sign, or speak a word. So, as the frigate stood across the river, I had all sail set, roused the men at the oars, and we came running by her stern. Our prisoners were keen enough to get by in safety, for they were between two fires, and the excellent Chevalier was as alert and laborious as the rest. They signalled us from the frigate by a shot to bring to, but we came on gallantly. Another shot whizzed by at a distance, but we did not change our course, and then balls came flying over our heads, dropping round us, cooling their hot protests in the river. But none struck us, and presently all fell short.

We durst not slacken pace that night, and by morning, much exhausted, we deemed ourselves safe, and rested for a while, making a hearty breakfast, though a sombre shadow had settled on the face of the good Chevalier. Once more he ventured to protest, but I told him my resolution was fixed, and that I would at all costs secure escape from my six years' misery. He must abide the fortune of this war.

For several days we fared on, without more mishap. At last, one morning, we hugged the shore, I saw a large boat lying on the

beach. On landing we found the boat of excellent size, and made for swift going, and presently Clark discovered the oars. Then I turned to the Chevalier, who was watching me curiously, yet hiding anxiety, for he had upheld his dignity with some accent since he had come into my service:

"Chevalier," said I, "you shall find me more humane than my persecutors at Quebec. I will not hinder your going, if you will engage on your honour--as would, for instance, the Duc de Mirepoix!"--he bowed to my veiled irony--"that you will not divulge what brought you back thus far, till you shall reach your Kamaraska Isles; and you must undertake the same for your fellows here."

He consented, and I admired the fine, vain old man, and lamented that I had had to use him so.

"Then," said I, "you may depart with your shallop. Your mast and sail, however, must be ours; and for these I will pay. I will also pay for the wheat which was thrown into the river, and you shall have a share of our provisions, got from the Indians."

"Monsieur," said he, "I shall remember with pride that I have dealt with so fair a foe. I can not regret the pleasure of your acquaintance, even at the price. And see, monsieur, I do not think you the criminal they have made you out, and so I will tell a lady--"

I raised my hand at him, for I saw that he knew something, and Mr. Stevens was near us at the time.

"Chevalier," said I, drawing him aside, "if, as you say, you think I have used you honourably, then, if trouble falls upon my wife before I see her again, I beg you to stand her friend. In the sad fortunes of war and hate of me, she may need a friend--even against her own people, on her own hearthstone."

I never saw a man so amazed; and to his rapid questionings I gave the one reply, that Alixe was my wife. His lip trembled.

"Poor child! poor child!" he said; "they will put her in a nunnery. You did wrong, monsieur."

"Chevalier," said I, "did you ever love a woman?"

He made a motion of the hand, as if I had touched upon a tender point, and said, "So young, so young!"

"But you will stand by her," I urged, "by the memory of some good woman you have known!"

He put out his hand again with a chafing sort of motion. "There, there," said he, "the poor child shall never want a friend. If I can help it, she shall not be made a victim of the Church or of the State, nor yet of family pride--good God, no!"

Presently we parted, and soon we lost our grateful foes in the distance. All night we jogged along with easy sail, but just at dawn, in a sudden opening of the land, we saw a sloop at anchor near a wooded point, her pennant flying. We pushed along, unheeding

its fiery signal to bring to; and declining, she let fly a swivel loaded with grape, and again another, riddling our sail; but we were travelling with wind and tide, and we soon left the indignant patrol behind. Towards evening came a freshening wind and a cobbling sea, and I thought it best to make for shore. So, easing the sail, we brought our shallop before the wind. It was very dark, and there was a heavy surf running; but we had to take our fortune as it came, and we let drive for the unknown shore, for it was all alike to us. Presently, as we ran close in, our boat came hard upon a rock, which bulged her bows open. Taking what provisions we could, we left our poor craft upon the rocks, and fought our way to safety.

We had little joy that night in thinking of our shallop breaking on the reefs, and we discussed the chances of crossing overland to Louisburg; but we soon gave up that wild dream: this river was the only way. When daylight came, we found our boat, though badly wrecked, still held together. Now Clark rose to the great necessity, and said that he would patch her up to carry us on, or never lift a hammer more. With labour past reckoning we dragged her to shore, and got her on the stocks, and then set about to find materials to mend her. Tools were all too few--a hammer, a saw, and an adze were all we had. A piece of board or a nail were treasures then, and when the timbers of the craft were covered, for oakum we had resort to tree-gum. For caulking, one spared a handkerchief, another a stocking, and another a piece of shirt, till she was stuffed in all her fissures. In this labour we passed eight days, and then were ready for the launch again.

On the very afternoon fixed for starting, we saw two sails standing down the river, and edging towards our shore. One of them let anchor go right off the place where our patched boat lay. We had prudently carried on our work behind rocks and trees, so that we could not be seen, unless our foes came ashore. Our case seemed desperate enough, but all at once I determined on a daring enterprise.

The two vessels--convoys, I felt sure--had anchored some distance from each other, and from their mean appearance I did not think that they would have a large freight of men and arms; for they seemed not ships from France, but vessels of the country. If I could divide the force of either vessel, and quietly, under cover of night, steal on her by surprise, then I would trust our desperate courage, and open the war which soon General Wolfe and Admiral Saunders were to wage up and down this river.

I had brave fellows with me, and if we got our will it would be a thing worth remembrance. So I disclosed my plan to Mr. Stevens and the others, and, as I looked for, they had a fine relish for the enterprise. I agreed upon a signal with them, bade them to lie close along the ground, picked out the nearer (which was the smaller) ship for my purpose, and at sunset, tying a white handkerchief to a stick, came marching out of the woods, upon the shore, firing a gun at the same time. Presently a boat was put out from the sloop, and two men and a boy came rowing towards me. Standing off a little distance from the shore, they asked what was wanted.

"The King's errand," was my reply in French, and I must be carried down the river by them, for which I would pay generously.

Then, with idle gesture, I said that if they wished some drink, there was a bottle of rum near my fire, above me, to which they were welcome; also some game, which they might take as a gift to their captain and his crew.

This drew them like a magnet, and, as I lit my pipe, their boat scraped the sand, and, getting out, they hauled her up and came towards me. I met them, and, pointing towards my fire, as it might appear, led them up behind the rocks, when, at a sign, my men sprang up, the fellows were seized, and were forbidden to cry out on peril of their lives. I compelled them to tell what hands and what arms were left on board. The sloop from which they came, and the schooner, its consort, were bound for Gaspé, to bring provisions for several hundred Indians assembled at Miramichi and Aristiguish, who were to go by these same vessels to re-enforce the garrison of Quebec.

The sloop, they said, had six guns and a crew of twenty men; but the schooner, which was much larger, had no arms save muskets, and a crew and guard of thirty men.

In this country there is no twilight, and with sunset came instantly the dusk. Already silence and dark inclosed the sloop. I had the men bound to a tree, and gagged also, engaging to return and bring them away safe and unhurt when our task was over. I chose for pilot the boy, and presently, with great care, launching our patched shallop from the stocks--for the ship-boat was too small to carry six safely--we got quietly away. Rowing with silent stroke, we came alongside the sloop. No light burned save that in the binnacle, and all hands, except the watch, were below at supper and at cards.

I could see the watch forward as we dropped silently alongside the stern. My object was to catch this fellow as he came by. This I would trust to no one but myself; for now, grown stronger, I had the old spring in my blood, and I had also a good wish that my plans should not go wrong through the bungling of others. I motioned my men to sit silent, and then, when the fellow's back was toward me, coming softly up the side, I slid over quietly, and drew into the shadow of a boat that hung near.

He came on lazily, and when just past me I suddenly threw my arms about him, clapping my hand upon his mouth. He was stoutly built, and he began at once to struggle. He was no coward, and feeling for his knife, he drew it, and would have had it in me but that I was quicker, and, with a desperate wrench, my hand still over his mouth, half swung him round, and drove my dagger home.

He sank in my arms with a heaving sigh, and I laid him down, still and dead, upon the deck. Then I whispered up my comrades, the boy leading. As the last man came over, his pistol, stuck in his belt, caught the ratlings of the shrouds, and it dropped upon the deck. This gave the alarm, but I was at the companion-door on the instant, as the first master came bounding up, sword showing, and calling to his men, who swarmed after him. I fired; the bullet travelled his spine, and he fell back stunned.

A dozen others came on. Some reached the deck and grappled with my men. I never shall forget with what fiendish joy Clark fought that night--those five terrible minutes. He was like some mad

devil, and by his imprecations I knew that he was avenging the brutal death of his infant daughter some years before. He was armed with a long knife, and I saw four men fall beneath it, while he himself got but one bad cut. Of the Provincials, one fell wounded, and the other brought down his man. Mr. Stevens and myself held the companion-way, driving the crew back, not without hurt, for my wrist was slashed by a cutlass, and Mr. Stevens had a bullet in his thigh. But presently we had the joy of having those below cry quarter.

We were masters of the sloop. Quickly battening down the prisoners, I had the sails spread, the windlass going, and the anchor apeak quickly, and we soon were moving down upon the schooner, which was now all confusion, commands ringing out on the quiet air. But when, laying alongside, we gave her a dose, and then another, from all our swivels at once, sweeping her decks, the timid fellows cried quarter, and we boarded her. With my men's muskets cocked, I ordered her crew and soldiers below, till they were all, save two lusty youths, stowed away. Then I had everything of value brought from the sloop, together with the swivels, which we fastened to the schooner's side; and when all was done, we set fire to the sloop, and I stood and watched her burn with a proud--too proud--spirit.

Having brought our prisoners from the shore, we placed them with the rest below. At dawn I called a council with Mr. Stevens and the others--our one wounded Provincial was not omitted--and we all agreed that some of the prisoners should be sent off in the long boat, and a portion of the rest be used to work the ship. So we had half the fellows up, and giving them fishing-lines, rum, and provisions, with a couple of muskets and ammunition, we sent them off to shift for themselves, and, raising anchor, got on our way down the broad river, in perfect weather.

The days that followed are like a good dream to me, for we came on all the way without challenge and with no adventure, even round Gaspé, to Louisburg, thirty-eight days after my escape from the fortress.

XXIII

WITH WOLFE AT MONTMORENCI

At Louisburg we found that Admiral Saunders and General Wolfe were gone to Quebec. They had passed us as we came down, for we had sailed inside some islands of the coast, getting shelter and better passage, and the fleet had, no doubt, passed outside. This was a blow to me, for I had hoped to be in time to join General Wolfe and proceed with him to Quebec, where my knowledge of the place should be of service to him. It was, however, no time for lament, and I set about to find my way back again. Our prisoners I handed over to the authorities. The two Provincials decided to remain and take service under General Amherst; Mr. Stevens would join his own Rangers at once, but Clark would go back with me to have his hour with his hated foes.

I paid Mr. Stevens and the two Provincials for their shares in

the schooner, and Clark and I manned her afresh, and prepared to return instantly to Quebec. From General Amherst I received correspondence to carry to General Wolfe and Admiral Saunders. Before I started back, I sent letters to Governor Dinwiddie and to Mr. (now Colonel) George Washington, but I had no sooner done so than I received others from them through General Amherst. They had been sent to him to convey to General Wolfe at Quebec, who was, in turn, to hand them to me, when, as was hoped, I should be released from captivity, if not already beyond the power of men to free me.

The letters from these friends almost atoned for my past sufferings, and I was ashamed that ever I had thought my countrymen forgot me in my worst misery; for this was the first matter I saw when I opened the Governor's letter:

By the House of Burgesses.

Resolved, That the sum of three hundred pounds be paid to Captain Robert Moray, in consideration of his services to the country, and his singular sufferings in his confinement, as a hostage, in Quebec.

This, I learned, was one of three such resolutions.

But there were other matters in his letter which much amazed me. An attempt, he said, had been made one dark night upon his strong-room, which would have succeeded but for the great bravery and loyalty of an old retainer. Two men were engaged in the attempt, one of whom was a Frenchman. Both men were masked, and, when set upon, fought with consummate bravery, and escaped. It was found the next day that the safe of my partner had also been rifled and all my papers stolen. There was no doubt in my mind what this meant. Doltaire, with some renegade Virginian who knew Williamsburg and myself, had made essay to get my papers. But they had failed in their designs, for all my valuable documents--and those desired by Doltaire among them--remained safe in the Governor's strong-room.

I got away again for Quebec five days after reaching Louisburg. We came along with good winds, having no check, though twice we sighted French sloops, which, however, seemed most concerned to leave us to ourselves. At last, with colours flying, we sighted Kamaraska Isles, which I saluted, remembering the Chevalier de la Darante; then Isle aux Coudres, below which we poor fugitives came so near disaster. Here we all felt new fervour, for the British flag flew from a staff on a lofty point, tents were pitched thereon in a pretty cluster, and, rounding a point, we came plump upon Admiral Durell's little fleet, which was here to bar advance of French ships and to waylay stragglers.

On a blithe summer day we sighted, far off, the Island of Orleans and the tall masts of two patrol ships of war, which in due time we passed, saluting, and ran abreast of the island in the North Channel. Coming up this passage, I could see on an eminence, far distant, the tower of the Chateau Alixe.

Presently there opened on our sight the great bluff at the Falls of Montmorenci, and, crowning it, tents and batteries, the camp of General Wolfe himself, with the good ship Centurion standing off

like a sentinel at a point where the Basin, the River Montmorenci, and the North Channel seem to meet. To our left, across the shoals, was Major Hardy's post, on the extreme eastern point of the Isle Orleans; and again beyond that, in a straight line, Point Levis on the south shore, where Brigadier-General Monckton's camp was pitched; and farther on his batteries, from which shell and shot were poured into the town. How all had changed in the two months since I left there! Around the Seigneur Duvarney's manor, in the sweet village of Beauport, was encamped the French army, and redoubts and batteries were ranged where Alixe and I and her brother Juste had many a time walked in a sylvan quiet. Here, as it were, round the bent and broken sides of a bowl, war raged, and the centre was like some caldron out of which imps of ships sprang and sailed to hand up fires of hell to the battalions on the ledges. Here swung Admiral Saunders's and Admiral Holmes's divisions, out of reach of the French batteries, yet able to menace and destroy, and to feed the British camps with men and munitions. There was no French ship in sight--only two old hulks with guns in the mouth of the St. Charles River, to protect the road to the palace gate--that is, at the Intendance.

It was all there before me, the investment of Quebec, for which I had prayed and waited seven long years.

All at once, on a lull in the fighting which had lasted twenty-four hours, the heavy batteries from the Levis shore opened upon the town, emptying therein the fatal fuel. Mixed feelings possessed me. I had at first listened to Clark's delighted imprecations and devilish praises with a feeling of brag almost akin to his own--that was the soldier and the Briton in me. But all at once the man, the lover, and the husband spoke: my wife was in that beleaguered town under that monstrous shower! She had said that she would never leave it till I came to fetch her. For I knew well that our marriage must become known after I had escaped; that she would not, for her own good pride and womanhood, keep it secret then; that it would be proclaimed while yet Gabord and the excellent chaplain were alive to attest all.

Summoned by the Centurion, we were passed on beyond the eastern point of the Isle of Orleans to the admiral's ship, which lay in the channel off the point, with battleships in front and rear, and a line of frigates curving towards the rocky peninsula of Quebec. Then came a line of buoys beyond these, with manned boats moored alongside to protect the fleet from fire rafts, which once already the enemy had unavailingly sent down to ruin and burn our fleet.

Admiral Saunders received me with great cordiality, thanked me for the dispatches, heard with applause of my adventures with the convoy, and at once, with dry humour, said he would be glad, if General Wolfe consented, to make my captured schooner one of his fleet. Later, when her history and doings became known in the fleet, she was at once called the Terror of France; for she did a wild thing or two before Quebec fell, though from first to last she had but her six swivel guns, which I had taken from the burnt sloop. Clark had command of her.

From Admiral Saunders I learned that Bigot had recovered from his hurt, which had not been severe, and of the death of Monsieur Cournal, who had ridden his horse over the cliff in the dark.

From the Admiral I came to General Wolfe at Montmorenci.

I shall never forget my first look at my hero, my General, that flaming, exhaustless spirit, in a body so gauche and so unshapely. When I was brought to him, he was standing on a knoll alone, looking through a glass towards the batteries of Levis. The first thing that struck me, as he lowered the glass and leaned against a gun, was the melancholy in the lines of his figure. I never forget that, for it seemed to me even then that, whatever glory there was for British arms ahead, there was tragedy for him. Yet, as he turned at the sound of our footsteps, I almost laughed; for his straight red hair, his face defying all regularity, with the nose thrust out like a wedge and the chin falling back from an affectionate sort of mouth, his tall straggling frame and far from athletic shoulders, challenged contrast with the compact, handsome, graciously shaped Montcalm. In Montcalm was all manner of things to charm--all save that which presently filled me with awe, and showed me wherein this sallow-featured, pain-racked Briton was greater than his rival beyond measure: in that searching, burning eye, which carried all the distinction and greatness denied him elsewhere. There resolution, courage, endurance, deep design, clear vision, dogged will, and heroism, lived: a bright furnace of daring resolves and hopes, which gave England her sound desire.

An officer of his staff presented me. He looked at me with piercing intelligence, and then, presently, his long hand made a swift motion of knowledge and greeting, and he said:

"Yes, yes, and you are welcome, Captain Moray. I have heard of you, of much to your credit. You were for years in durance there."

He pointed towards the town, where we could see the dome of the cathedral shine, and the leaping smoke and flame of the roaring batteries.

"Six years, your Excellency," said I.

"Papers of yours fell into General Braddock's hands, and they tried you for a spy--a curious case--a curious case! Wherein were they wrong and you justified, and why was all exchange refused?"

I told him the main, the bare facts, and how, to force certain papers from me, I had been hounded to the edge of the grave. He nodded, and seemed lost in study of the mud-flats at the Beauport shore, and presently took to beating his foot upon the ground. After a minute, as if he had come back from a distance, he said: "Yes, yes, broken articles. Few women have a sense of national honour, such as La Pompadour none! An interesting matter."

Then, after a moment: "You shall talk with our chief engineer; you know the town you should be useful to me, Captain Moray. What do you suggest concerning this siege of ours?"

"Has any attack been made from above the town, your Excellency?"

He lifted his eyebrows. "Is it vulnerable from there? From Cap Rouge, you mean?"

"They have you at advantage everywhere, sir," I said. "A thousand men could keep the town, so long as this river, those mud-flats, and those high cliffs are there."

"But above the town--"

"Above the citadel there is a way--the only way: a feint from the basin here, a sham menace and attack, and the real action at the other door of the town."

"They will, of course, throw fresh strength and vigilance above, if our fleet run their batteries and attack there; the river at Cap Rouge is like this Montmorenci for defense." He shook his head. "There is no way, I fear."

"General," said I, "if you will take me into your service, and then give me leave to handle my little schooner in this basin and in the river above, I will prove that you may take your army into Quebec by entering it myself, and returning with something as precious to me as the taking of Quebec to you."

He looked at me piercingly for a minute, then a sour sort of smile played at his lips. "A woman!" he said. "Well, it were not the first time the love of a wench opened the gates to a nation's victory."

"Love of a wife, sir, should carry a man farther."

He turned on me a commanding look. "Speak plainly," said he. "If we are to use you, let us know you in all."

He waved farther back the officers with him.

"I have no other wish, your Excellency," I answered him. Then I told him briefly of the Seigneur Duvarney, Alixe, and of Doltaire.

"Duvarney! Duvarney!" he said, and a light came into his look. Then he called an officer. "Was it not one Seigneur Duvarney who this morning prayed protection for his chateau on the Isle of Orleans?" he asked.

"Even so, your Excellency," was the reply; "and he said that if Captain Moray was with us, he would surely speak for the humanity and kindness he and his household had shown to British prisoners."

"You speak, then, for this gentleman?" he asked, with a dry sort of smile.

"With all my heart," I answered. "But why asks he protection at this late day?"

"New orders are issued to lay waste the country; hitherto all property was safe," was the General's reply. "See that the Seigneur Duvarney's suit is granted," he added to his officer, "and say it is by Captain Moray's intervention.--There is another matter of this kind to be arranged this noon," he continued: "an exchange of prisoners, among whom are some ladies of birth and breeding, captured but two days ago. A gentleman comes from General Montcalm directly upon the point. You might be useful herein," he added,

"if you will come to my tent in an hour." He turned to go.

"And my ship, and permission to enter the town, your Excellency?" I asked.

"What do you call your--ship?" he asked a little grimly.

I told him how the sailors had already christened her. He smiled. "Then let her prove her title to Terror of France," he said, "by being pilot to the rest of our fleet, up the river, and you, Captain Moray, be guide to a footing on those heights"--he pointed to the town. "Then this army and its General, and all England, please God, will thank you. Your craft shall have commission as a rover--but if she gets into trouble?"

"She will do as her owner has done these six years, your Excellency: she will fight her way out alone."

He gazed long at the town and at the Levis shore. "From above, then, there is a way?"

"For proof, if I come back alive--"

"For proof that you have been--" he answered meaningly, with an amused flash of his eyes, though at the very moment a spasm of pain crossed his face, for he was suffering from incurable disease, and went about his great task in daily misery, yet cheerful and inspiring.

"For proof, my wife, sir," said I.

He nodded, but his thoughts were diverted instantly, and he went from me at once abstracted. But again he came back. "If you return," said he, "you shall serve upon my staff. You will care to view our operations," he added, motioning towards the intrenchments at the river. Then he stepped quickly away, and I was taken by an officer to the river, and though my heart warmed within me to hear that an attack was presently to be made from the shore not far distant from the falls, I felt that the attempt could not succeed: the French were too well intrenched.

At the close of an hour I returned to the General's tent. It was luncheon-time, and they were about to sit as I was announced. The General motioned me to a seat, and then again, as if on second thought, made as though to introduce me to some one who stood beside him. My amazement was unbounded when I saw, smiling cynically at me, Monsieur Doltaire.

He was the envoy from Quebec. I looked him in the eyes steadily for a moment, into malicious, unswerving eyes, as maliciously and unswervingly myself, and then we both bowed.

"Captain Moray and I have sat at meat together before," he said, with mannered coolness. "We have played host and guest also: but that was ere he won our hearts by bold, romantic feats. Still, I dared scarcely hope to meet him at this table."

"Which is sacred to good manners," said I meaningly and coolly, for my anger and surprise were too deep for excitement.

I saw the General look at both of us keenly, then his marvellous eyes flashed intelligence, and a grim smile played at his lips a moment. After a little general conversation Doltaire addressed me:

"We are not yet so overwhelmed with war but your being here again will give a fillip to our gossip. It must seem sad to you--you were so long with us--you have broken bread with so many of us--to see us pelted so. Sometimes a dinner-table is disordered by a riotous shell."

He bent on torturing me. And it was not hard to do that, for how knew I what had happened? How came he back so soon from the Bastille? It was incredible. Perhaps he had never gone, in spite of all. After luncheon, the matter of exchange of prisoners was gone into, and one by one the names of the French prisoners in our hands--ladies and gentlemen apprehended at the chateau were ticked off, and I knew them all save two. The General deferred to me several times as to the persons and positions of the captives, and asked my suggestions. Immediately I proposed Mr. Wainfleet, the chaplain, in exchange for a prisoner, though his name was not on the list, but Doltaire shook his head in a blank sort of way.

"Mr. Wainfleet! Mr. Wainfleet! There was no such prisoner in the town," he said.

I insisted, but he stared at me inscrutably, and said that he had no record of the man. Then I spoke most forcibly to the General, and said that Mr. Wainfleet should be produced, or an account of him be given by the French Governor. Doltaire then said:

"I am only responsible for these names recorded. Our General trusts to your honour, and you to ours, Monsieur le General."

There was nothing more to say, and presently the exchanges were arranged, and, after compliments, Doltaire took his leave. I left the Governor also, and followed Doltaire. He turned to meet me.

"Captain Moray and I," he remarked to the officers near, "are old--enemies; and there is a sad sweetness in meetings like these. May I--"

The officers drew away at a little distance at once before the suggestion was made, and we were left alone. I was in a white heat, but yet in fair control.

"You are surprised to see me here," he said. "Did you think the Bastille was for me? Tut! I had not got out of the country when we a packet came, bearing fresh commands. La Pompadour forgave me, and in the King's name bade me return to New France, and in her own she bade me get your papers, or hang you straight. And--you will think it singular--if need be, I was to relieve the Governor and Bigot also, and work to save New France with the excellent Marquis de Montcalm." He laughed. "You can see how absurd that is. I have held my peace, and I keep my commission in my pocket."

I looked at him amazed that he should tell me this. He read my

look, and said:

"Yes, you are my confidant in this. I do not fear you. Your enemy is bound in honour, your friend may seek to serve himself." Again he laughed. "As if I, Tinoir Doltaire--note the agreeable combination of peasant and gentleman in my name--who held his hand from ambition for large things in France, should stake a lifetime on this foolish hazard! When I play, Captain Moray, it is for things large and vital. Else I remain the idler, the courtier--the son of the King."

"Yet you lend your vast talent, the genius of those unknown possibilities, to this, monsieur--this little business of exchange of prisoners," I retorted ironically.

"That is my whim--a social courtesy."

"You said you knew nothing of the chaplain," I broke out.

"Not so. I said he was on no record given me. Officially I know nothing of him."

"Come," said I, "you know well how I am concerned for him. You quibble; you lied to our General."

A wicked light shone in his eyes. "I choose to pass that by, for the moment," said he. "I am sorry you forget yourself; it were better for you and me to be courteous till our hour of reckoning, Shall we not meet some day?" he said, with a sweet hatred in his tone.

"With all my heart."

"But where?"

"In yonder town," said I, pointing.

He laughed provokingly. "You are melodramatic," he rejoined. "I could hold that town with one thousand men against all your army and five times your fleet."

"You have ever talked and nothing done," said I. "Will you tell me the truth of the chaplain?"

"Yes, in private the truth you shall hear," he said. "The man is dead."

"If you speak true, he was murdered," I broke out. "You know well why."

"No, no," he answered. "He was put in prison, escaped, made for the river, was pursued, fought, and was killed. So much for serving you."

"Will you answer me one question?" said I. "Is my wife well? Is she safe? She is there set among villainies."

"Your wife?" he answered, sneering. "If you mean Mademoiselle Duvarney, she is not there." Then he added solemnly and slowly: "She is in no fear of your batteries now--she is beyond them. When

she was there, she was not child enough to think that foolish game with the vanished chaplain was a marriage. Did you think to gull a lady so beyond the minute's wildness? She is not there," he added again in a low voice.

"She is dead?" I gasped. "My wife is dead?"

"Enough of that," he answered with cold fierceness. "The lady saw the folly of it all, before she had done with the world. You--you, monsieur! It was but the pity of her gentle heart, of a romantic nature. You--you blundering alien, spy, and seducer!"

With a gasp of anger I struck him in the face, and whipped out my sword. But the officers near came instantly between us, and I could see that they thought me gross, ill-mannered, and wild, to do this thing before the General's tent, and to an envoy.

Doltaire stood still a moment. Then presently wiped a little blood from his mouth, and said:

"Messieurs, Captain Moray's anger was justified; and for the blow he will justify that in some happier time--for me. He said that I had lied, and I proved him wrong. I called him a spy and a seducer--he sought to shame, he covered with sorrow, one of the noblest families of New France--and he has yet to prove me wrong. As envoy I may not fight him now, but I may tell you that I have every cue to send him to hell one day. He will do me the credit to say that it is not cowardice that stays me."

"If no coward in the way of fighting, coward in all other things," I retorted instantly.

"Well, well, as you may think." He turned to go. "We will meet there, then?" he said, pointing to the town. "And when?"

"To-morrow," said I.

He shrugged his shoulder as to a boyish petulance, for he thought it an idle boast. "To-morrow? Then come and pray with me in the cathedral, and after that we will cast up accounts--to-morrow," he said, with a poignant and exultant malice. A moment afterwards he was gone, and I was left alone.

Presently I saw a boat shoot out from the shore below, and he was in it. Seeing me, he waved a hand in an ironical way. I paced up and down, sick and distracted, for half an hour or more. I knew not whether he lied concerning Alixe, but my heart was wrung with misery, for indeed he spoke with an air of truth.

Dead! dead! dead! "In no fear of your batteries now," he had said. "Done with the world!" he had said. What else could it mean? Yet the more I thought, there came a feeling that somehow I had been tricked. "Done with the world!" Ay, a nunnery--was that it? But then, "In no fear of your batteries now"--that, what did that mean but death?

At this distressful moment a message came from the General, and I went to his tent, trying to calm myself, but overcome with apprehension. I was kept another half hour waiting, and then,

coming in to him, he questioned me closely for a little about Doltaire, and I told him the whole story briefly. Presently his secretary brought me the commission for my appointment to special service on the General's own staff.

"Your first duty," said his Excellency, "will be to--reconnoitre; and if you come back safe, we will talk further."

While he was speaking I kept looking at the list of prisoners which still lay upon his table. It ran thus:

Monsieur and Madame Joubert.
Monsieur and Madame Carcanal.
Madame Rousillon.
Madame Champigny.
Monsieur Pipon.
Mademoiselle La Rose.
L'Abbe Durand.
Monsieur Halboir.
La Soeur Angelique.
La Soeur Seraphine.

I know not why it was, but the last three names held my eyes. Each of the other names I knew, and their owners also. When I looked close, I saw that where "La Soeur Angelique" now was another name had been written and then erased. I saw also that the writing was recent. Again, where "Halboir" was written there had been another name, and the same process of erasure and substitution had been made. It was not so with "La Soeur Seraphine." I said to the General at once, "Your excellency, it is possible you have been tricked." Then I pointed out what I had discovered. He nodded.

"Will you let me go, sir?" said I. "Will you let me see this exchange?"

"I fear you will be too late," he answered. "It is not a vital matter, I fancy."

"Perhaps to me most vital," said I, and I explained my fears.

"Then go, go," he said kindly. He quickly gave directions to have me carried to Admiral Saunders's ship, where the exchange was to be effected, and at the same time a general passport.

In a few moments we were hard on our way. Now the batteries were silent. By the General's orders, the bombardment ceased while the exchange was being effected, and the French batteries also were still. A sudden quietness seemed to settle on land and sea, and there was only heard, now and then, the note of a bugle from a ship of war. The water in the basin was moveless, and the air was calm and quiet. This heraldry of war was all unnatural in the golden weather and sweet-smelling land.

I urged the rowers to their task, and we flew on. We passed another boat loaded with men, singing boisterously a disorderly sort of song, called "Hot Stuff," set to the air "Lilies of France." It was out of touch with the general quiet:

"When the gay Forty-Seventh is dashing ashore,
While bullets are whistling and cannons do roar,
Says Montcalm, 'Those are Shirleys--I know the lapels.'
'You lie,' says Ned Botwood, 'we swipe for Lascelles!
Though our clothing is changed, and we scout powder-puff,
Here's at you, ye swabs--here's give you Hot Stuff!'"

While yet we were about two miles away, I saw a boat put out from the admiral's ship, then, at the same moment, one from the Lower Town, and they drew towards each other. I urged my men to their task, and as we were passing some of Admiral Saunders's ships, their sailors cheered us. Then came a silence, and it seemed to me that all our army and fleet, and that at Beauport, and the garrison of Quebec, were watching us; for the ramparts and shore were crowded. We drove on at an angle, to intercept the boat that left the admiral's ship before it reached the town.

War leaned upon its arms and watched a strange duel. There was no authority in any one's hands save my own to stop the boat, and the two armies must avoid firing, for the people of both nations were here in this space between--ladies and gentlemen in the French boat going to the town, Englishmen and a poor woman or two coming to our own fleet.

My men strained every muscle, but the pace was impossible--it could not last; and the rowers in the French boat hung over their oars also with enthusiasm. With the glass of the officer near me--Kingdon of Anstruther's Regiment--I could now see Doltaire standing erect in the boat, urging the boatmen on.

All round that basin, on shore and cliff and mountains, thousands of veteran fighters--Fraser's, Otway's, Townsend's, Murray's; and on the other side the splendid soldiers of La Sarre, Languedoc, Bearn, and Guienne--watched in silence. Well they might, for in this entr'acte was the little weapon forged which opened the door of New France to England's glory. So may the little talent or opportunity make possible the genius of the great.

The pain of this suspense grew so, that I longed for some sound to break the stillness; but there was nothing for minute after minute. Then, at last, on the halcyon air of that summer day floated the Angelus from the cathedral tower. Only a moment, in which one could feel, and see also, the French army praying, then came from the ramparts the sharp inspiring roll of a drum, and presently all was still again. Nearer and nearer the boat of prisoners approached the stone steps of the landing, and we were several hundred yards behind.

I motioned to Doltaire to stop, but he made no sign. I saw the cloaked figures of the nuns near him, and I strained my eyes, but I could not note their faces. My men worked on ardently, and presently we gained. But I saw that it was impossible to reach them before they set foot on shore. Now their boat came to the steps, and one by one they hastily got out. Then I called twice to Doltaire to stop. The air was still, and my voice carried distinctly. Suddenly one of the cloaked figures sprang towards the steps with arms outstretched, calling aloud, "Robert! Robert!" After a moment, "Robert, my husband!" rang out again, and then a young officer and the other nun took her by the arm to force her away. At the sharp instigation

of Doltaire, instantly some companies of marines filed in upon the place where they had stood, leveled their muskets on us, and hid my beloved wife from my view. I recognized the young officer who had put a hand upon Alixe. It was her brother Juste.

"Alixe! Alixe!" I called, as my boat still came on.

"Save me, Robert!" came the anguished reply, a faint but searching sound, and then no more.

Misery and mystery were in my heart all at once. Doltaire had tricked me. "Those batteries can not harm her now!" Yes, yes, they could not while she was a prisoner in our camp. "Done with the world!" Truly, when wearing the garb of the Sister Angelique. But why that garb? I swore that I would be within that town by the morrow, that I would fetch my wife into safety, out from the damnable arts and devices of Master Devil Doltaire, as Gabord had called him.

The captain of the marines called to us that another boat's length would fetch upon us the fire of his men. There was nothing to do, but to turn back, while from the shore I was reviled by soldiers and by the rabble. My marriage with Alixe had been made a national matter--of race and religion. So, as my men rowed back towards our fleet, I faced my enemies, and looked towards them without moving. I was grim enough that moment, God knows; I felt turned to stone. I did not stir when--ineffaceable brutality--the batteries on the heights began to play upon us, the shot falling round us, and passing over our heads, and musket-firing followed.

"Damned villains! Faithless brutes!" cried Kingdon beside me. I did not speak a word, but stood there defiant, as when we first had turned back. Now, sharply, angrily, from all our batteries, there came reply to the French; and as we came on with only one man wounded and one oar broken, the whole fleet cheered us. I steered straight for the Terror of France, and there Clark and I, he swearing violently, laid plans.

XXIV

THE SACRED COUNTERSIGN

That night, at nine o'clock, the Terror of France, catching the flow of the tide, with one sail set and a gentle wind, left the fleet, and came slowly up the river, under the batteries of the town. In the gloom we passed lazily on with the flow of the tide, unquestioned, soon leaving the citadel behind, and ere long came softly to that point called Anse du Foulon, above which Sillery stood. The shore could not be seen distinctly, but I knew by a perfect instinct the cleft in the hillside where was the path leading up the mountain. I bade Clark come up the river again two nights hence to watch for my signal, which was there agreed upon. If I did not come, then, with General Wolfe's consent, he must show the General this path up the mountain. He swore that all should be as I wished; and indeed you would have thought that he and his Terror of France were to level Quebec to the water's edge.

I stole softly to the shore in a boat, which I drew up among the bushes, hiding it as well as I could in the dark, and then, feeling for my pistols and my knife, I crept upwards, coming presently to the passage in the mountain. I toiled on to the summit without a sound of alarm from above. Pushing forward, a light flashed from the windmill, and a man, and then two men, appeared in the open door. One of them was Captain Lancy, whom I had very good reason to remember. The last time I saw him was that famous morning when he would have had me shot five minutes before the appointed hour, rather than endure the cold and be kept from his breakfast. I itched to call him to account then and there, but that would have been foolish play. I was outside of the belt of light falling from the door, and stealing round I came near to the windmill on the town side. I was not surprised to see such poor watch kept. Above the town, up to this time, the guard was of a perfunctory sort, for the great cliffs were thought impregnable; and even if surmounted, there was still the walled town to take, surrounded by the St. Lawrence, the St. Charles, and these massive bulwarks.

Presently Lancy stepped out into the light, and said, with a hoarse laugh, "Blood of Peter, it was a sight to-day! She has a constant fancy for the English filibuster. 'Robert! my husband!' she bleated like a pretty lamb, and Doltaire grinned at her."

"But Doltaire will have her yet."

"He has her pinched like a mouse in a weasel's teeth."

"My faith, mademoiselle has no sweet road to travel since her mother died," was the careless reply.

I almost cried out. Here was a blow which staggered me. Her mother dead!

Presently the scoffer continued: "The Duvarneys would remain in the city, and on that very night, as they sit at dinner, a shell disturbs them, a splinter strikes Madame, and two days after she is carried to her grave."

They linked arms and walked on.

It was a dangerous business I was set on, for I was sure that I would be hung without shrift if captured. As it proved afterwards, I had been proclaimed, and it was enjoined on all Frenchmen and true Catholics to kill me if the chance showed.

Only two things could I depend on: Voban and my disguise, which was very good. From the Terror of France I had got a peasant's dress, and by rubbing my hands and face with the stain of butternut, cutting again my new-grown beard, and wearing a wig, I was well guarded against discovery.

How to get into the city was the question. By the St. Charles River and the Palace Gate, and by the St. Louis Gate, not far from the citadel, were the only ways, and both were difficult. I had, however, two or three plans, and these I chewed as I went across Maitre Abraham's fields, and came to the main road from Sillery to the town.

Soon I heard the noise of clattering hoofs, and jointly with this I saw a figure rise up not far ahead of me, as if waiting for the coming horseman. I drew back. The horseman passed me, and, as he came on slowly, I saw the figure spring suddenly from the roadside and make a stroke at the horseman. In a moment they were a rolling mass upon the ground, while the horse trotted down the road a little, and stood still. I never knew the cause of that encounter--robbery, or private hate, or paid assault; but there was scarcely a sound as the two men struggled. Presently, there was groaning, and both lay still. I hurried to them, and found one dead, and the other dying, and dagger wounds in both, for the assault had been at such close quarters that the horseman had had no chance to use a pistol.

My plans were changed on the instant. I drew the military coat, boots, and cap off the horseman, and put them on myself; and thrusting my hand into his waistcoat--for he looked like a courier--I found a packet. This I put into my pocket, and then, making for the horse which stood quiet in the road, I mounted it and rode on towards the town. Striking a light, I found that the packet was addressed to the Governor. A serious thought disturbed me: I could not get into the town through the gates without the countersign. I rode on, anxious and perplexed.

Presently a thought pulled me up. The courier was insensible when I left him, and he was the only one who could help me in this. I greatly reproached myself for leaving him while he was still alive. "Poor devil," thought I to myself, "there is some one whom his death will hurt. He must not die alone. He was no enemy of mine." I went back, and, getting from the horse, stooped to him, lifted up his head, and found that he was not dead. I spoke in his ear. He moaned, and his eyes opened.

"What is your name?" said I.

"Jean--Labrouk," he whispered.

Now I remembered him. He was the soldier whom Gabord had sent as messenger to Voban the night I was first taken to the citadel.

"Shall I carry word for you to any one?" asked I.

There was a slight pause; then he said, "Tell my--Babette--Jacques Dobrotte owes me ten francs--and--a leg--of mutton. Tell--my Babette--to give my coat of beaver fur to Gabord the soldier. Tell"...he sank back, but raised himself, and continued: "Tell my Babette I weep with her.... Ah, mon grand homme de Calvaire--bon soir!" He sank back again, but I roused him with one question more, vital to me. I must have the countersign.

"Labrouk! Labrouk!" said I sharply.

He opened his dull, glazed eyes.

"Qui va la?" said I, and I waited anxiously.

Thought seemed to rally in him, and, staring--alas! how helpless and how sad: that look of a man brought back for an instant from

the Shadows!--his lips moved.

"France," was the whispered reply.

"Advance and give the countersign!" I urged.

"Jesu--" he murmured faintly. I drew from my breast the cross that Mathilde had given me, and pressed it to his lips. He sighed softly, lifted his hand to it, and then fell back, never to speak again.

After covering his face and decently laying the body out, I mounted the horse again. Glancing up, I saw that this bad business had befallen not twenty feet from a high Calvary at the roadside.

I was in a painful quandary. Did Labrouk mean that the countersign was "Jesu," or was that word the broken prayer of his soul as it hurried forth? So strange a countersign I had never heard, and yet it might be used in this Catholic country. This day might be some great feast of the Church--possibly that of the naming of Christ (which was the case, as I afterwards knew). I rode on, tossed about in my mind. So much hung on this. If I could not give the countersign, I should have to fight my way back again the road I came. But I must try my luck. So I went on, beating up my heart to confidence; and now I came to the St. Louis Gate. A tiny fire was burning near, and two sentinels stepped forward as I rode boldly on the entrance.

"Qui va la?" was the sharp call.

"France," was my reply, in a voice as like the peasant's as possible.

"Advance and give the countersign," came the demand.

Another voice called from the darkness of the wall: "Come and drink, comrade; I've a brother with Bougainville."

"Jesu," said I to the sentinel, answering his demand for the countersign, and I spurred on my horse idly, though my heart was thumping hard, for there were several sturdy fellows lying beyond the dull handful of fire.

Instantly the sentinel's hand came to my bridle-rein. "Halt!" roared he.

Surely some good spirit was with me then to prompt me, for, with a careless laugh, as though I had not before finished the countersign, "Christ," I added--"Jesu Christ!"

With an oath the soldier let go the bridle-rein, the other opened the gates, and I passed through. I heard the first fellow swearing roundly to the others that he would "send yon courier to fires of hell, if he played with him again so."

The gates closed behind me, and I was in the town which had seen the worst days and best moments of my life. I rode along at a trot, and once again beyond the citadel was summoned by a sentinel. Safely passed on, I came down towards the Chateau St. Louis. I rode boldly up to the great entrance door, and handed the packet to the

sentinel.

"From whom?" he asked.

"Look in the corner," said I. "And what business is't of yours?"

"There is no word in the corner," answered he doggedly. "Is't from Monsieur le General at Cap Rouge?"

"Bah! Did you think it was from an English wolf?" I asked.

His dull face broke a little. "Is Jean Labrouk with Bougainville yet?"

"He's done with Bougainville; he's dead," I answered.

"Dead! dead!" said he, a sort of grin playing on his face.

I made a shot at a venture. "But you're to pay his wife Babette the ten francs and the leg of mutton in twenty-four hours, or his ghost will follow you. Swallow that, pudding-head! And see you pay it, or every man in our company swears to break a score of shingles on your bare back."

"I'll pay, I'll pay," he said, and he took to trembling.

"Where shall I find Babette?" asked I. "I come from Isle aux Coudres; I know not this rambling town."

"A little house hugging the cathedral rear," he explained. "Babette sweeps out the vestry, and fetches water for the priests."

"Good," said I. "Take that to the Governor at once, and send the corporal of the guard to have this horse fed and cared for, and he's to carry back the Governor's messenger. I've further business for the General in the town. And tell your captain of the guard to send and pick up two dead men in the highway, just against the first Calvary beyond the town."

He did my bidding, and I dismounted, and was about to get away, when I saw the Chevalier de la Darante and the Intendant appear at the door. They paused upon the steps. The Chevalier was speaking most earnestly:

"To a nunnery--a piteous shame! it should not be, your Excellency."

"To decline upon Monsieur Doltaire, then?" asked Bigot, with a sneer.

"Your Excellency believes in no woman," responded the Chevalier stiffly.

"Ah yes, in one!" was the cynical reply.

"Is it possible? And she remains a friend of your Excellency?" came back in irony.

"The very best; she finds me unendurable."

"Philosophy shirks the solving of that problem, your Excellency," was the cold reply.

"No, it is easy. The woman to be trusted is she who never trusts."

"The paragon--or prodigy--who is she?"

"Even Madame Jamond."

"She danced for you once, your Excellency, they tell me."

"She was a devil that night; she drove us mad."

So Doltaire had not given up the secret of that affair! There was silence for a moment, and then the Chevalier said, "Her father will not let her go to a nunnery--no, no. Why should he yield to the Church in this?"

Bigot shrugged a shoulder. "Not even to hide--shame?"

"Liar--ruffian!" said I through my teeth. The Chevalier answered for me:

"I would stake my life on her truth and purity."

"You forget the mock marriage, dear Chevalier."

"It was after the manner of his creed and people."

"It was after a manner we all have used at times."

"Speak for yourself, your Excellency," was the austere reply. Nevertheless, I could see that the Chevalier was much troubled.

"She forgot race, religion, people--all, to spend still hours with a foreign spy in prison," urged Bigot, with damnable point and suggestion.

"Hush, sir!" said the Chevalier. "She is a girl once much beloved and ever admired among us. Let not your rancour against the man be spent upon the maid. Nay, more, why should you hate the man so? It is said, your Excellency, that this Moray did not fire the shot that wounded you, but one who has less reason to love you."

Bigot smiled wickedly, but said nothing.

The Chevalier laid a hand on Bigot's arm. "Will you not oppose the Governor and the bishop? Her fate is sad enough."

"I will not lift a finger. There are weightier matters. Let Doltaire, the idler, the Don Amato, the hunter of that fawn, save her from the holy ambush. Tut, tut, Chevalier. Let her go. Your nephew is to marry her sister; let her be swallowed up--a shame behind the veil, the sweet litany of the cloister."

The Chevalier's voice set hard as he said in quick reply, "My family honour, Francois Bigot, needs no screen. And if you doubt that, I will give you argument at your pleasure;" so saying, he turned and went back into the chateau.

Thus the honest Chevalier kept his word, given to me when I released him from serving me on the St. Lawrence.

Bigot came down the steps, smiling detestably, and passed me with no more than a quick look. I made my way cautiously through the streets towards the cathedral, for I owed a duty to the poor soldier who had died in my arms, through whose death I had been able to enter the town.

Disarray and ruin met my sight at every hand. Shot and shell had made wicked havoc. Houses where, as a hostage, I had dined, were battered and broken; public buildings were shapeless masses, and dogs and thieves prowled among the ruins. Drunken soldiers staggered past me; hags begged for soup or bread at corners; and devoted priests and long-robed Recollet monks, cowed and alert, hurried past, silent, and worn with labours, watchings, and prayers. A number of officers in white uniforms rode by, going towards the chateau, and a company of *coureurs de bois* came up from Mountain Street, singing:

"Giron, giran! le canon grand--
Commencez-vous, commencez-vous!"

Here and there were fires lighted in the streets, though it was not cold, and beside them peasants and soldiers drank and quarreled over food--for starvation was abroad in the land.

By one of these fires, in a secluded street--for I had come a roundabout way--were a number of soldiers of Languedoc's regiment (I knew them by their trick of headgear and their stoutness), and with them reckless girls, who, in their abandonment, seemed to me like those revellers in Herculaneum, who danced their way into the Cimmerian darkness. I had no thought of staying there to moralize upon the theme; but, as I looked, a figure came out of the dusk ahead, and moved swiftly towards me.

It was Mathilde. She seemed bent on some errand, but the revellers at the fire caught her attention, and she suddenly swerved towards them, and came into the dull glow, her great black eyes shining with bewildered brilliancy and vague keenness, her long fingers reaching out with a sort of chafing motion. She did not speak till she was among them. I drew into the shade of a broken wall, and watched. She looked all round the circle, and then, without a word, took an iron crucifix which hung upon her breast, and silently lifted it above their heads for a moment. I myself felt a kind of thrill go through me, for her wild beauty was almost tragical. Her madness was not grotesque, but solemn and dramatic. There was something terribly deliberate in her strangeness; it was full of awe to the beholder, more searching and painfully pitiful than melancholy.

Coarse hands fell away from wanton waists; ribaldry hesitated; hot faces drew apart; and all at once a girl with a crackling laugh threw a tin cup of liquor into the fire. Even as she did it, a wretched dwarf sprang into the circle without a word, and, snatching the cup out of the flames, jumped back again into the darkness, peering into it with a hollow laugh. As he did so a soldier raised a heavy stick to throw at him; but the girl caught

him by the arms, and said, with a hoarse pathos, "My God, no, Alphonse! It is my brother!"

Here Mathilde, still holding out the cross, said in a loud whisper, "'Sh, 'sh! My children, go not to the palace, for there is Francois Bigot, and he has a devil. But if you have no cottage, I will give you a home. I know the way to it up in the hills. Poor children, see, I will make you happy."

She took a dozen little wooden crosses from her girdle, and, stepping round the circle, gave each person one. No man refused, save a young militiaman; and when, with a sneering laugh, he threw his into the fire, she stooped over him and said, "Poor boy! poor boy!"

She put her fingers on her lips, and whispered, "Beati immaculati--miserere mei, Deus," stray phrases gathered from the liturgy, pregnant to her brain, order and truth flashing out of wandering and fantasy. No one of the girls refused, but sat there, some laughing nervously, some silent; for this mad maid had come to be surrounded with a superstitious reverence in the eyes of the common people. It was said she had a home in the hills somewhere, to which she disappeared for days and weeks, and came back hung about the girdle with crosses; and it was also said that her red robe never became frayed, shabby, or disordered.

Suddenly she turned and left them. I let her pass, unchecked, and went on towards the cathedral, humming an old French chanson. I did this because now and then I met soldiers and patrols, and my free and careless manner disarmed notice. Once or twice drunken soldiers stopped me and threw their arms about me, saluting me on the cheeks a la mode, asking themselves to drink with me. Getting free of them, I came on my way, and was glad to reach the cathedral unchallenged. Here and there a broken buttress or a splintered wall told where our guns had played upon it, but inside I could hear an organ playing and a Miserere being chanted. I went round to its rear, and there I saw the little house described by the sentinel at the chateau. Coming to the door, I knocked, and it was opened at once by a warm-faced, woman of thirty or so, who instantly brightened on seeing me. "Ah, you come from Cap Rouge, m'sieu'," she said, looking at my clothes--her own husband's, though she knew it not.

"I come from Jean," said I, and stepped inside.

She shut the door, and then I saw, sitting in a corner, by a lighted table, an old man, bowed and shrunken, white hair and white beard falling all about him, and nothing of his features to be seen save high cheek-bones and two hawklike eyes which peered up at me.

"So, so, from Jean," he said in a high, piping voice. "Jean's a pretty boy--ay, ay, Jean's like his father, but neither with a foot like mine--a foot for the Court, said Frotenac to me--yes, yes, I knew the great Frotenac--"

The wife interrupted his gossip. "What news from Jean?" said she. "He hoped to come one day this week."

"He says," responded I gently, "that Jacques Dobrotte owes you

ten francs and a leg of mutton, and that you are to give his great beaver coat to Gabord the soldier."

"Ay, ay, Gabord the soldier, he that the English spy near sent to heaven." quavered the old man.

The bitter truth was slowly dawning upon the wife. She was repeating my words in a whisper, as if to grasp their full meaning.

"He said also," I continued, "'Tell Babette I weep with her.'"

She was very still and dazed; her fingers went to her white lips, and stayed there for a moment. I never saw such a numb misery in any face.

"And last of all, he said, 'Ah, mon grand homme de Calvaire--bon soir!'"

She turned round, and went and sat down beside the old man, looked into his face for a minute silently, and then said, "Grandfather, Jean is dead; our Jean is dead."

The old man peered at her for a moment, then broke into a strange laugh, which had in it the reflection of a distant misery, and said, "Our little Jean, our little Jean Labrouk! Ha! ha! There was Villon, Marmon, Gabriel, and Gouloir, and all their sons; and they all said the same at the last, 'Mon grand homme--de Calvaire--bon soir!' Then there was little Jean, the pretty little Jean. He could not row a boat, but he could ride a horse, and he had an eye like me. Ha, ha! I have seen them all say good-night. Good-morning, my children, I will say one day, and I will give them all the news, and I will tell them all I have done these hundred years. Ha, ha, ha--"

The wife put her fingers on his lips, and, turning to me, said with a peculiar sorrow, "Will they fetch him to me?"

I assured her that they would.

The old man fixed his eyes on me most strangely, and then, stretching out his finger and leaning forward, he said, with a voice of senile wildness, "Ah, ah, the coat of our little Jean!"

I stood there like any criminal caught in his shameful act. Though I had not forgotten that I wore the dead man's clothes, I could not think that they would be recognized, for they seemed like others of the French army--white, with violet facings. I can not tell to this day what it was that enabled them to detect the coat; but there I stood condemned before them.

The wife sprang to her feet, came to me with a set face, and stared stonily at the coat for an instant. Then, with a cry of alarm, she made for the door; but I stepped quickly before her, and bade her wait till she heard what I had to say. Like lightning it all went through my brain. I was ruined if she gave an alarm: all Quebec would be at my heels, and my purposes would be defeated. There was but one thing to do--tell her the whole truth, and trust her; for I had at least done fairly by her and by the dead man.

So I told them how Jean Labrouk had met his death; told them who I was, and why I was in Quebec--how Jean died in my arms; and, taking from my breast the cross that Mathilde had given me, I swore by it that every word which I said was true. The wife scarcely stirred while I spoke, but with wide dry eyes and hands clasping and unclasping heard me through. I told her how I might have left Jean to die without a sign or message to them, how I had put the cross to his lips as he went forth, and how by coming here at all I placed my safety in her hands, and now, by telling my story, my life itself.

It was a daring and a difficult task. When I had finished, both sat silent for a moment, and then the old man said, "Ay, ay, Jean's father and his uncle Marmon were killed a-horseback, and by the knife. Ay, ay, it is our way. Jean was good company--none better, mass over, on a Sunday. Come, we will light candles for Jean, and comb his hair back sweet, and masses shall be said, and--"

Again the woman interrupted, quieting him. Then she turned to me, and I awaited her words with a desperate sort of courage.

"I believe you," she said. "I remember you now. My sister was the wife of your keeper at the common jail. You shall be safe. Alas! my Jean might have died without a word to me all alone in the night. Merci mille fois, monsieur!" Then she rocked a little

to and fro, and the old man looked at her like a curious child. At last, "I must go to him," she said. "My poor Jean must be brought home."

I told her I had already left word concerning the body at headquarters. She thanked me again. Overcome as she was, she went and brought me a peasant's hat and coat. Such trust and kindness touched me. Trembling, she took from me the coat and hat I had worn, and she put her hands before her eyes when she saw a little spot of blood upon the flap of a pocket. The old man reached out his hands, and, taking them, he held them on his knees, whispering to himself.

"You will be safe here," the wife said to me. "The loft above is small, but it will hide you, if you have no better place."

I was thankful that I had told her all the truth. I should be snug here, awaiting the affair in the cathedral on the morrow. There was Voban, but I knew not of him, or whether he was open to aid or shelter me. His own safety had been long in peril; he might be dead, for all I knew. I thanked the poor woman warmly, and then asked her if the old man might not betray me to strangers. She bade me leave all that to her--that I should be safe for a while, at least.

Soon afterwards I went abroad, and made my way by a devious route to Voban's house. As I did so, I could see the lights of our fleet in the Basin, and the camp-fires of our army on the Levis shore, on Isle Orleans, and even at Montmorenci, and the myriad lights in the French encampment at Beauport. How impossible it all looked--to unseat from this high rock the Empire of France! Ay, and how hard it would be to get out of this same city with Alixe!

Voban's house stood amid a mass of ruins, itself broken a little, but still sound enough to live in. There was no light. I clambered over debris, made my way to his bedroom window, and tapped on the shutter. There was no response. I tried to open it, but it would not stir. So I thrust beneath it, on the chance of his finding it if he opened the casement in the morning, a little piece of paper, with one word upon it--the name of his brother. He knew my handwriting, and he would guess where to-morrow would find me, for I had also hastily drawn upon the paper the entrance of the cathedral.

I went back to the little house by the cathedral, and was admitted by the stricken wife. The old man was abed. I climbed up to the small loft, and lay there wide-awake for hours. At last came the sounds that I had waited for, and presently I knew by the tramp beneath, and by low laments floating up, that a wife was mourning over the dead body of her husband. I lay long and listened to the varying sounds, but at last all became still, and I fell asleep.

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