



BECAUSE
OF
CONSCIENCE
A NOVEL



AMY E. BLANCHARD



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BECAUSE OF CONSCIENCE

By AMY E. BLANCHARD

AN INDEPENDENT DAUGHTER
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“ Because you have shown me how powerful a shield a woman can be, I stand here”

Because of Conscience

*Being a NOVEL relating to the ADVENTURES
of certain HUGUENOTS in OLD NEW YORK*

By

Amy E. Blanchard

Author of "Her Very Best," "Betty of Wye,"
"Two Girls," "Girls Together,"
"Three Pretty Maids,"
etc.

With Frontispiece by

E. Benson Kennedy



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DEDICATED

WITH DEEP AFFECTION AND PROFOUND ADMIRATION
TO

ELIZA ELVIRA KENYON

WHOSE LOVING INTEREST AND LOFTY EXAMPLE
HAVE BEEN MY STAY FOR
MANY YEARS

A. E. B.

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BECAUSE OF CONSCIENCE



CHAPTER I

A WILD MARIGOLD

NOTHING in the world smelled so sweet as fresh sun-dried linen, thought Alaine as she watched Michelle heaping the white pile upon her strong arms; unless, indeed, Alaine reflected a moment later, it be a loaf baking in the oven, yet even that did not suggest odorous grass and winds laden with the fragrance of hedge and wood. She lay in the long grass, chin in hands, her brown eyes wandering over the low-growing objects which her position brought easily within her vision. "Now I know what it is to be a creature like Fifi; no wonder he is forever running after the impossible, as it seems to me, for I, gigantically lifted above him, cannot see the objects on a level with his sharp eyes." She watched her dog darting among the stubble at the edge of the field, and as she idly viewed his gambols her eyes caught sight of a yellow flower growing near the hedge. She lifted her little head with its toss of brown hair, then drew her slender,

lithe body from its covert to stand erect and to walk slowly across the open space to gather the wild marigold, at which she gazed thoughtfully, standing so still that her shadow scarcely wavered.

The sudden sharp bark of her little dog roused her, and she turned her head to see some one coming toward her,—a young man swinging along with an easy, confident tread.

“Good-evening, my cousin,” he cried. “You were so deep in thought that I fancied I should not move you till I came near enough to touch you. What are you studying so intently?”

“This.” Alaine held out her yellow blossom. “Tell me, Étienne, does it turn always to the sun, this yellow marigold?”

“Who told you so?”

“Michelle, and she says it was chosen as her device by Margaret of Valois because it does truly resemble the sun. It is likewise the emblem of the Protestants, who say that it signifies that they ever turn to the true source of light,—God in his heaven. Was Margaret of Valois Protestant, Étienne, and——”

“Is Michelle, then, Protestant?” Étienne interrupted her by asking.

“Yes, I think so. I know so. She has a little Bible, Étienne, which she guards sacredly, and she makes long journeys at night to secret meetings, I fancy. She is very good and devout, Étienne, but still——”

“Still you can cry, ‘À bas les Huguenots!’ is it

not so? She would make you Protestant, my cousin, would she not?"

Alaine looked up at him gravely from under her long lashes. She wondered how much she dared tell to this cousin to whose opinions she had deferred ever since she could remember.

"Would she not?" he repeated, smiling as he took the flower, with rather too rough a hand, Alaine thought. "Can you say with true spirit, 'À bas les Huguenots'?" He spoke the words so fiercely that Alaine looked half alarmed, at which he laughed. "There, my cousin," he continued, "you are too young to be troubled by these questions, and your father is too good a Catholic to let you stray from the fold."

"But I do not wish to be done with questions. I wish to know about everything, and I mean to ask my father this very night when he returns from Paris. He will tell me, if you will not. I know he will. You are very provoking, Étienne, to treat my questions so," she pouted. "Give me my flower; I want to wear it."

"What if I want to wear it?"

"Ah, Étienne, are you, then, a Huguenot?"

"That is nothing to you," he returned. "I am simply your cousin, Étienne Villeneau. Better trust me, Alainette; I know more than Michelle there; in fact, it is an amusement of mine to follow up all sources of information that will in any way benefit the house of Villeneau, and I will pass over to you

anything in the matter of news which may be good for you."

"Which may be good for me! As if news were like doses of medicine. I will take your news or not, as I like."

"You will take it whether you like it or not," he returned, looking at her for a moment with narrowed eyes. "If your father does not return from Paris you will be glad enough to run to me for knowledge of him."

"Étienne, how can you? My father will return from Paris; he said he would, and he speaks truly at all times."

"Too truly for once, it is reported. Au revoir, my cousin; when you are ready to hear what I have to tell send me word." And he turned on his heel.

"You are hateful! a beast, a monster!" Alaine cried after him. "I hate you."

"I have heard that before," the young man replied over his shoulder, "and the next day you have told me the opposite."

"It will not be the next day this time, nor for many days that you hear it," Alaine retorted. "And you have not given me back my flower. Thief! Robber!"

He tossed the flower on the ground, then, as if urged by an angry impulse, he stopped and ground it with his heel, but immediately after he turned, laughing: "That for your naughtiness, fierce little cousin. Adieu."

“Go!” she cried. “I am glad to see your wicked body disappear.” Then, half in tears, she ran to Michelle, who had returned from bearing her burden into the house and was now picking up the remaining articles left on the grass to bleach. “Michelle! Michelle!” cried the girl, “that detestable cousin of mine has been teasing me, and has crushed the life out of the little yellow marigold I meant for you. Is he not a beast, Michelle? and how dares he say that there is any doubt of my father’s return?”

“He says that?” exclaimed Michelle, looking startled.

“He did not say just that, but only if my father should not return that I would be glad to run to him for news of him. He will return; say so at once, Michelle.” She shook the good woman’s arm impatiently.

“God grant he returns,” murmured Michelle, gravely. “And your cousin, what further did he say?”

“Very little, except to ask if you were trying to make me Protestant. You would like to have me one, you know, Michelle, but my tender flesh shrinks from the horrors of which you tell me, and that have been going on since before I was born. I have no wish to be dragged through the streets, to be beaten or burned or foully abused in any way, and I do not see how you can be happy with such a possibility hanging over you, Michelle.”

“Listen to the poor little one,” said Michelle to

herself. "She little knows of the real terrors that threaten us. And your cousin Étienne, did you tell him I was Protestant?"

"I believe I did, but no doubt he knew it before; and what matters it anyhow to one of the family to whom you have always been so good? Many a scrape have you helped my cousin out of. He would defend you to the last, and so would I, Michelle, Catholic as I am."

Michelle made no answer. She stood still with her arms clasped around the web of homespun linen which had been bleaching on the grass. Her eyes wandered over the fair fields to the spires of Rouen in the distance, and then to the chateau closer at hand, showing dimly gray through the trees. She shook her head, but turned with a smile to the girl at her side. "Come in, my Alainette," she said; "it grows late and I have a loaf in the oven. There is no need to be angered by the words of your cousin, he did but tease; and should your father not return to-night, there is no doubt some good reason for his staying." And Alaine, accustomed as she had been from babyhood to accept Michelle's adjustments of her difficulties, forgot her late quarrel with her cousin and ran on ahead to satisfy her youthful appetite with the fresh sweet loaf that no one knew better than Michelle how to bake.

The days were over when the Huguenots were an influence, or were at all formidable in politics. They pursued amiably and tranquilly their various avoca-

tions. The massacre of St. Bartholomew had occurred over a century before ; La Rochelle had fallen more than half a century back, and Protestant subjects were so faithful in their allegiance to the throne that even the reigning sovereign, Louis XIV., acknowledged that his Huguenot servitors had proved their devotion ; he had, moreover, promised that the provisions of the Edict of Nantes should be faithfully maintained, yet at this very time a decree was issued fixing the age of seven as that when children were to be allowed to declare their religious preferences, and forbidding parents to send their children out of the country to be educated. In consequence, it was a common thing for children to be enticed from their parents to be placed in the hands of the clergy, or to be persuaded by rewards or coerced by threats to attend mass, and then to be claimed by the Church. One by one the Protestant seats of learning were suppressed, and the consternation of the Huguenots was great.

Beyond this the system of dragonnades had done much toward terrorizing and impoverishing the Protestants, so that again numbers were fleeing the country through every possible means. The times were ripe for the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

Of all these things Alaine Hervieu was passingly aware. The horizon of her little world was bounded by Rouen, beyond whose borders she dwelt, spending a quiet and joyous existence with Michelle, her foster-mother and her chief guardian : Michelle with

her fund of reminiscences, too often those thrilling and horrifying tales of massacres and persecutions. When Michelle waxed too fierce and terrifying Alaine would fly to her father for diversion, but, to her credit be it said, she never laid the cause of her frights upon her nurse, but rather complained of loneliness and begged that dear papa would tell her tales of his boyhood; of her sainted mother she was quite ready to hear, but of other saints she heard more than enough from Father Bisset, she declared. Something rousing and merry she preferred; and her father, taking her on his knee, would tell her of the Fête des Rois, and would show her the basket of wax fruit won upon one of those festive occasions. Or he would sing her some old song, such as

“Gloria patri ma mere a petri
Elle a faict une galette,
Houppegay, Houppegay, j’ay bu du cidre Alotel.”

And he would tell her of the time when the Boise of St. Nicaise was dragged away and burned by the young men of St. Godard.

Alaine herself had more than once been taken to the Fête St. Anne to see, running about the streets, the boys dressed as angels and the girls as Virgins, and at Easter Eve she had watched the children when they mocked and hooted at the now scorned herring while the boys pitched barrels and fish-barrows into the river.

But of late it was of other things he told her; of

brave resistance by those who fought for freedom of thought; of the loss of position by those who refused to conform to the requirements of state and church; and sometimes he would sing to her in a low voice, from a small book, some of those psalms which Michelle, too, sang.

Alaine once showed the little old book with its silver clasps to her cousin Étienne. "I remember it well," he told her; "it belonged to our great-grandfather, for in his day the Psalms of David were held in great esteem by the ladies and gentlemen of the court, and once on a time in the heart of Paris, on the favorite promenade, five or six thousand, including the king and queen of Navarre, joined in singing psalms."

"It must have been fine. I wish I had been there," Alaine exclaimed, clapping her hands. "Go on, Étienne, what more about the book?"

"It is a seditious thing now," he returned, turning to the copy of the Hervieu coat of arms on the inside cover. "If we were as zealous as we should be we would burn it, for if it were discovered here trouble might come of it. Let us make a fire of the heretical thing, Alaine."

"No, no." Alaine clasped it to her breast. "I like it, Étienne. It is a family relic. I will keep it safely hidden, and no one shall know of it."

She did keep it safely hidden, and her father never once asked for it, because another book had taken its place; one over which he pored for hours at a

time, and which Alaine knew to be a Bible. Was her father turning Protestant? she asked herself.

Within the last few months it was Alaine who tried to divert her father, for often there was a cloud upon his brow, and he was frequently grave and taciturn, so that his daughter tried to set him laughing when she could, and when she could not would take refuge with her cousin Étienne, who lived but a short distance away. He was her elder by ten years, but a good companion for all that, with whom Alaine quarrelled once a day upon an average, and upon whom she penitently used her blandishments when next they met.

She, therefore, was quite ready for Étienne when he appeared upon the terrace the next morning after her latest quarrel with him. "Papa did not come, Étienne," she cried, jumping up to meet him, "but Michelle says it is nothing; men are often detained so. Come, sit here and tell me what you have done, and how is my aunt; also, if you have that piece of news you offered me yesterday."

"Am I a thief and robber, then? A monster and a beast?" he asked, sitting down beside her.

"No, you are not; it was yesterday you were those things, and this is to-day."

"Child!" he exclaimed, "but a woman-child for all. Alainette, would you turn Protestant if your father were one?"

"There, now, you said we were done with that question."

“It was you who urged it upon me, and who became angry with me because I put you off.”

“Again that was yesterday, and this is to-day, as I told you.”

“Nevertheless, I put the question again.”

“Oh, I don’t know. What would you do if you were I, Étienne?”

“I should do as my conscience and my Church bade me, rather than obey my father.” He looked at her again with those narrowed eyes, the expression of which Alaine was beginning to dread.

“Thank you for your advice, sir. My father is not likely to command me to do anything wrong; and even if he did——”

“Even if he did,” repeated her cousin, “you would be taken to a convent and be separated from him, as you well know. There would be one way out of it, Alaine.”

“And that?” She looked up at him with all the confidence of her youth shining in her piquant little face.

“Would be to marry me,” he said, slowly.

The blood rushed to the girl’s face and she sprang to her feet. “How dare you say such a thing, Étienne? It is for your mother and my father to arrange a matter like that. Besides,”—she burst into a sob,—“I—I don’t want to be married. I don’t want to go to a convent either. Why do you come here troubling me with such dreadful things, Étienne? I hate you for it.”

He caught her hands and looked down closely into her dark eyes. "No you don't; you love me for it."

"I do not! I do not!" she cried, passionately. "I detest you. Monster, beast! Monster, beast! Hear me, I say it again and again. I hate you, hate you, hate you!" And having wrested one hand from his grasp, she gave him a stinging blow on the ear.

He loosed his grasp of her and pushed her from him. "You shall pay me for that," he said, his breath coming quickly, as he sprang to his feet.

Alaine, frightened at what she had done, shrank from him. "I—I never did so before, did I, Étienne? I—I was so surprised, you see." She made a faint attempt to smile, but there was no response from her cousin. She remembered vaguely that she had once or twice before seen him thus angry, and she also remembered that her aunt had told her that Étienne was very vindictive. "It would not be proper for me to say that I would marry you, Étienne," she said, wistfully. "You know we must not think of such things; Michelle says we must not, and Mother Angelique says that it is very wrong. It really would not be proper for me to tell you that I would marry you."

"You shall tell no one else," he said, fiercely, "and you will have to do it soon or——"

"Or what?" She crept closer to him and laid her hand on his arm.

He looked down at her, the resentment in his face fading into something like compassion. "Listen, Alaine; your father will not come back to-day; one cannot say that he ever will. He has announced himself a Huguenot, and has disappeared, we know not where."

Alaine fixed her great eyes on him. Suddenly she dropped her childish coaxing tone. "Are you telling me the truth, Étienne? I am—yes, I am nearly a woman. A girl of fifteen has a right to decide for herself as you say. Tell me, are you merely teasing me, or is this the truth?"

"It is the truth, and at any moment this place may be given over to the dragonnades. Will you stay? If you do not come to us your case will be pitiable, indeed. I have not said anything as yet to my mother, for you know her state of health, but you will be safe with us, Alaine."

"And Michelle, she must go too."

"No, she must not. She is Protestant, and must take the risks with those she has chosen."

"Étienne! and after all these years that you have known her, and when she has done you more than one good service."

"We cannot remember anything but that she is an enemy of the Church."

"You have said that if my father commanded I must not obey, therefore I will learn his commands, if I can. You would not desire to marry a Huguenot, Étienne."

“That need not disturb you just now; the main thing is your safety.”

“And if I refuse to leave Michelle?”

“You know the consequences.”

“Do you think, then, that Father Bisset will not speak for me? Have I ever neglected my religious duties? And the Mother Angelique, will she not answer for me?”

“Once you go to them you will find closer bonds than those with which I would bind you.”

“But they love me.”

“Because they love you they would keep you. It has been weeks since you saw Mother Angelique, and as for Father Bisset, how long since you have had a call from him? At this moment he is on his way to Holland, unless, indeed, he has been overtaken, the poor miserable apostate.”

“How do you know? How do you know?”

“I am neither deaf nor blind. I see what is before me and I hear what is told me.”

“It is the Revocation which is doing all this,” cried Alaine. “Michelle told me so. Dear Father Bisset! Would he had told me he was going and had given me his blessing before he fled! I hope he will escape in safety.”

“I hope he will not,” returned Étienne, savagely.

Alaine turned and looked at him, then paced up and down the walk, her hands folded against her breast, her eyes bent upon the ground. Her brain was in a whirl, but by degrees she collected herself

sufficiently to say, "Étienne, my cousin, I am but a young and not overwise girl, and I cannot decide this thing while you are here to disconcert me. Leave me to-day, and do not come near me till I have thought this over. You have thrust a hard alternative upon me, but I see that I must meet it. I will believe that you intend the best for me, but I must have time to think. To-morrow I will tell you what I will do. It is good of you to allow me the privilege of choosing my own way, for I can see that it might be otherwise; that, in the absence of my father, you and my aunt have the right to exercise a control, or that you might at once report me to the authorities, who would not hesitate to send me whither they would. I am safe here, in my own home, till to-morrow you think?"

"Yes, I am sure you are."

"Then, leave me, please. Give my duty to my aunt and thank you, Étienne." She looked up into his face as if searching for something she did not find. "Étienne, you forgive me for what I did yesterday? I was very rude. You do not bear resentment against me for it?"

The look she dreaded came into his eyes. "Would I wish to marry you if I did?" he returned, but without a smile.

She let him go, not adding another word; and when he was beyond hearing she sank again upon the bench where they two had sat together. Marriage with Étienne; she had never thought of it, and sud-

denly she realized that her whole nature shrank from it. She dropped her face in her hands, for a moment sitting very still, then, with a swift determination, she ran to find her nurse.

“Michelle, Michelle,” she cried, taking the good woman’s comforting arms and folding them around herself, “I am sorely pressed. Tell me what to do. My father, did you know? he is Protestant. Étienne has just told me of his admission, and that he has disappeared, he could not tell where. Oh, Michelle, what shall I do? What shall I do? I am afraid of Étienne, I am afraid.”

The mother look on Michelle’s broad face deepened into one of anxiety. “My lamb! My lamb!” she murmured. “An hour of great distress is at hand. Yes, I know. I have known for some time, but for your sake, my pretty one, your father has not declared his convictions for fear you would be stolen from him.”

“And now! Ah, Michelle!” She then told of her cousin Étienne’s proposal and her own distress. “Ah, that I knew my father’s desires!” she cried. “Shall I ever see him again? If I thought I could find him I would hie me forth this very night.”

“And forsake all else?”

“Yes, yes.”

“You would be willing to become a refugee for his sake? You would give up the protection and comfort you would find in your aunt’s home to become a wanderer? You would give up your Church?”

“Yes, and more, if it gave me a chance to again be united to my father; a thousand times yes. Those whom I love best upon earth, whom from childhood I have been accustomed to obey, have become Protestants, why should an ignorant girl dare to say they are not right? My father, you, and Father Bisset, have you not all been my teachers and guardians? Shall I forsake you now?”

“My infant! My child of the good heart!” cried Michelle, weeping copiously. “I am the one to lead you forth from your own country, and I cannot hesitate.” She thrust her hand under the kerchief folded across her bosom and drew forth a paper. “Read,” she said, holding it out to the girl.

“From my father!” cried Alaine. “What does he say?” She took the letter and read rapidly. “He sees danger ahead; he does not know how it will result. Some one has contrived to undermine him when he felt safe, and he may have to make an effort to escape to England or to Holland. Listen, Michelle: ‘Should my daughter desire to remain in France, or should she declare herself unable to accept my belief, do not urge her, but allow her to remain with her relations, and bear to her my love and last blessing. But should she wish to join me in London, Christian friends at the French church on Threadneedle Street will be able to give her word of me if I succeed in making my escape. We can no longer, my good Michelle, expect tolerance, now that the Edict of Nantes has been revoked, and

for your own sake I would advise you to leave the country. But my little daughter, should you desert her, where will her comfort be?

“Ah, Michelle,” the tears rained down Alaine’s cheeks, “let us go. Take me with you, dear Michelle. I shall not care to live without you and papa. Take me; let us go.”

“My dear little one, have you thought well upon it? The way is full of danger. Are you willing to share the lot of a poor Huguenot? Can you be content in poverty and in a strange land?”

“Yes, yes, no matter what comes, I am willing to face it. Teach me my father’s belief, Michelle, so that he may know that we are one in all things.”

“We shall have to start before to-morrow dawns,” said Michelle, after a moment’s thought.

“So much the better, for I promised my cousin that he should have my answer to-morrow. He will find it here. We must not let the servants know. We will say that we go to the city to join my father.”

“Say nothing, but come to my room after dark this night. I have thought of little else this day. I was up betimes, for the letter came to me by the hand of a friend last night, and I did but wait for a proper time to reveal its contents to you. Your father foresaw this days ago. He told me where I should find money. I have sewed it into the hem of my petticoat. You will be disguised as a boy. I have the clothes ready.”

“Where did you get them?”

“From my sister. They belonged to her son. We will set out before dawn and carry eggs to market.”

“We will stand in no danger of being intercepted?”

“I think not. Go now, my pretty one, and try to be as like yourself as possible. In these days one does not know who may be friend or foe. I have prepared a chest, which I shall send out during the day by one of my own faith. He will carry it safely to Dieppe for us, and we shall not need to leave all behind.”

“Poor little Fifi, I shall have to leave him. Jean will be good to him I hope.” She turned away sadly as a realizing sense of what she must forsake came over her.

It was a long, weary day for the girl, who occupied herself feverishly in such ways as would seem most usual to the servants. “Never again will I see my home,” she said over and over again. Over an unknown way to an unknown land, the thought would now and again terrify her, but her heart leaped as she thought of her father, and more than once Michelle heard her clear young voice singing an old madrigal. “Child of the good heart,” she would sigh, “she little knows of what is before her. It is but the strange journey to a strange land of which she thinks, the poor little one.”

The house was very still when Alaine crept from

her room and presented herself before the door of Michelle's chamber. The housekeeper's room was not far from her own, for Michelle was something more than servant and scarcely less than one of the family. "Are you ready, Michelle?" came Alaine's whisper.

The door opened cautiously and she went in. "Can I help you?" she asked. "We are to be comrades from now henceforth, Michelle; let us not stand upon ceremony," she added, sweetly, as she saw her companion hesitated to ask a service.

"If you will help me, dear child, to roll my Bible into my hair. I must carry it so lest it be discovered. It will not show?"

"Not at all." Alaine viewed the arrangement critically. "What have I to do?"

"First I must crop your abundance of brown locks. A boy has not such a crop of hair." And she relentlessly clipped the shining tresses, which slipped to the ground in soft coils. Alaine laughed to see herself, at last, clad in the blouse of a peasant lad, a cap set upon her short curls, her slender hands stained and even scratched. "They will then look more in keeping with my character," the girl said, gayly.

Then out into the night they slipped; Michelle with basket on arm, Alaine with one hand inside her blouse clasping tightly the small Beza psalm-book; from henceforth it would mean more than a family relic. One last look at the gray walls of her home

looming up darkly against the starry sky, and Alaine whispered, "Forever! forever!" then she followed Michelle down the dusty road to where Rouen lay sleeping by the river Seine.

The streets of the city when the fugitives reached it were full of armed men, who rode about the town changing place as soon as they had compelled those upon whom they were quartered to sign their act of conformation. They seemed to be everywhere, and Alaine shrank closer to Michelle as she noted the haughty, overbearing look of the soldiers. "Be of good heart, little one," Michelle whispered. "Remember you are no longer Alaine Hervieu, but Jacques Assire, my son, and we live in the direction of Dieppe; we return to our home when we have sold our eggs. Name of Grace! but one sees a woe-begone set of countenances here; it is pitiful indeed. We have escaped none too soon; the dragonnades are in full force, as you see, and if we would not be witnesses to worse sights than the driving forth of women and children into the streets we will not tarry long. It is early yet, but none too early for our purpose."

And, indeed, Michelle had hardly exchanged her eggs for some of the homely commodities which a peasant might be supposed to buy, when issuing from a shop across the narrow street Alaine caught sight of her cousin Étienne. "Michelle, Michelle, do not look; my cousin is there on the other side," the girl said, in a shrill whisper.

Michelle needed no second warning, but, proving equal to the occasion, re-entered the shop, where she was well known, and where she held a brief consultation with the shopkeeper, which resulted in the conducting of the two through a back way into one of the riverside streets, where numerous inns and drinking-places stood to the right and left. Here sailors rolled jauntily along, and here wonderful old houses, each story overlapping the one below, loomed up over the heads of the passers-by. A few steps away was the Rue Harenguerie, and here in the midst of the cries and chatterings of the fish-wives it was easy to lose one's self. Across on the opposite bank was the favorite promenade of the ladies of the town. Alaine had often been there with her aunt among the careless pleasure-seekers, but now she watched anxiously the stolid countenance of Michelle, who elbowed her way through the market, and at last stopped upon its outskirts, where, after some chaffering with a sharp-eyed man, she appeared satisfied, and turned with a smile to her charge.

“Here we go,” she said. “Yonder is the cart which will take us in the direction of Dieppe; but, alas! my little one, you have been looked upon too suspiciously; yours is no peasant face, and despite your dress you may be detected, for I gather enough to know that it is going to be no easy task to get away safely. However, if you can be content with a bed of cabbages and a coverlet of carrots you shall

be transported without harm. As for me, I am weather-beaten enough to pass easily, yet we must wait till evening before we start. Meantime, under yonder cart is your refuge, and I will stay here pretending to sell fish."

In the dimness of twilight Alaine was established uncomfortably enough on her bed of cabbages, and over her were lightly piled some overturned baskets which were to hide her from view. She could breathe easily and could move slightly, but the journey was long, and more than once there were moments of terror when the cart was stopped and the driver questioned. Michelle, however, was always equal to the occasion, and by daybreak the small fishing village toward which their faces were set was in sight, and by high noon the refugees were on their way to England.

CHAPTER II

THE FEAST OF THE FAT CALF

IN the little village of New Rochelle there was a great jollification on a day in June which marks the feast of John the Baptist. From one of the houses erected on the side of the high street could be heard a voice singing clearly the Huguenot battle psalm,—

“Oh, Lord, thou didst us clean forsake
And scatter all abroad,”—

and from a doorway a girl's face peeped out. “They are making ready, Mère Michelle,” she cried, stopping her song. “Hurry with the loaves, I see Gerard coming now; the men are gathering from every direction. Hola, Gerard, is it a very fat calf?” she cried to the young man, who waved his cap to her as he approached.

“A lusty young creature, indeed,” he replied, as he came near. “Are the loaves ready?”

“Mère Michelle is but now placing them in the baskets. It will be a fine day for the feast, Gerard. Some one said there were new-comers in the village to swell the crowd.”

“So there are, and to share the feast. The number increases. Hasten, good mother,” he cried, and

from the inside room from which issued odors of newly baked bread came Michelle, her honest face wreathed in smiles. "Papa has been hurrying me this half-hour, as if one would take underdone bread from the oven. Yet I see the occasion approaches; the procession is forming."

"And I must be there. You will soon be ready, you and Alaine. I shall see you with the others." And he went off bearing his two baskets of fresh loaves.

Mère Michelle settled her cap. Alaine gave a glance at herself in the tiny mirror, smoothed down her black silk gown, and tucked a stray lock behind her ear. "Will I do, Mère Michelle?" she asked.

Michelle looked at her critically. "Your silver chain, my dear; a maid needs a bit of ornament. But hasten, for I hear sounds of shouting and singing coming nearer and nearer."

Alaine clambered up the ladder which led to her little loft chamber, and speedily returned decked out with her silver chain. She caught Michelle's hand and hurried her along. The clumsy latch of the door clicked behind them and they stepped out into the glory of the June weather.

Up the little street the procession trooped: a fat calf well garlanded was being led along amid cheers and voluble chatterings. This was the yearly fee to John Pell, lord of the manor of Pelham, in return for having conveyed to Jacob Leisler six thousand acres of land on which was built the village of New

Rochelle. The merry crowd was every few steps augmented by new participants, who joined it as it passed along, and all trooped towards the place of presentation. A great ceremony this, a feast always following the acceptance of the calf, and the sober Huguenots became for the occasion lively Frenchmen. The appearance of the huge joints and stacks of fowls and venison piled up before them served as an assurance that even here in this wild country one might still enjoy an occasional fête day.

“La, la!” cried Mère Michelle, “it does my eyes good, my friend, to see such an indulgence of mirth; it was not so a couple of years ago, eh, Alainette?”

“Where is Papa Louis?” said Alaine, her soft eyes taking in the scene. “Ah, here he is, and here comes Gerard bringing a stranger.”

“Be wary of strangers,” was Michelle’s warning.

But it did not take Michelle’s words to teach Alaine discretion; she had learned her lesson well in these two years; moreover, she did not quite like the crafty expression in the eyes of the young man who bowed before her.

“’Tis good to hear one’s own tongue spoken without hesitation,” said the stranger. “I am come up from New York, where I hear little except a vile Dutch tongue and that brain-splitting English. One finds great relief in this gay company, as much from the merry occasion as from the association. Your brother was good enough to accede to my request to present me. He is your brother, is he not?”

“The son of my mother’s husband,” returned Alaine, sedately. “He is my step-brother.”

“Ah! and yonder rosy-faced good wife is your mother? You do not resemble her, mademoiselle.”

“I resemble my own father,” replied Alaine, steadily.

“And from what part of France are you? Madame Mercier should be from Normandy. I am at home there. I was born in Rouen.”

“Yes?” Alaine tried to look indifferent, but her eyes were taking in every detail. She had a dim consciousness of having seen this face before. “I was not born there,” she added. “The Merciers are not from there, and in these days, monsieur, one’s birthplace is of less account than that place where he will meet his death.”

“Yes, yes; quite true, when one is in a wild and savage country. M. Mercier, is it he standing yonder by his son? The son has overtopped his father by many inches.”

“That is M. Mercier. But listen, some one is starting up a song of praise, and I see my brother comes for me.”

“I say but *au revoir*, mademoiselle.”

Alaine made a slight inclination of her head. She did not like the confident tone. “Gerard,” she whispered as he led her away, “who is the man? He is too inquisitive for my liking. He does not sing, either. I hope he is not some evil, prying

creature. I told him but little, whatever he may have desired to know."

"What did you tell him?" asked Gerard.

"I said only that you were my step-father's son and that I was not born in Rouen."

Gerard laughed. "Discreet little Alainette. Come and tell Papa Louis; it will amuse him. Do you know it is over two years, Alaine, since we left England, and more than a year since we came away from Martinique?"

"Those long journeys, how I remember them with horror, Gerard! Two years ago I was Alaine Hervieu and you were Gerard Legrand; to-day we are both children of the same parents and of the name of Mercier."

"Than whom no better parents exist. For our sakes, Alaine, what have they not done?"

"So, my children, what gives you so grave an aspect?" inquired Papa Louis, as they approached the spot where he and his wife were waiting for them that they might continue their homeward way.

"We were talking of you, Papa Louis," retorted Alaine, with a flash of mischief in her eyes.

"And so you were grave," he laughed. "Enough, indeed, am I for gravity, as Michelle says when I tramp with muddied feet upon her clean floor, or when I do not praise her cooking in fine enough terms. The good Michelle, to stand a mulish husband who is so obstinate not to see the virtue of

neatness. A year and more married and no improvement; no wonder you are serious, Alaine."

"My life, but you invent mockeries, Louis," said Michelle. "Who was the young man to whom you were talking, my daughter?"

"M. Dupont, from Rouen," she returned, calmly. Michelle started. "And you told him—what?"

"I told him nothing save that you were my mother, Papa Louis your husband, Gerard my brother by marriage. Was not that enough?"

"Enough, and not too much," said Papa Louis, patting her hand. "Where did you meet him, Gerard?"

"He came up with some visitors from Manhatte."

"He remains for some time?"

"But so long as it suits him."

"He must not meet you again, Alaine." Michelle spoke with anxious voice. "Avoid him. He may have recognized you as it is, for he is a friend of your cousin Étienne's."

"And what of that? I am far removed from my cousin Étienne, and beyond his anger, thanks to you, good mother."

"You cannot be sure of that."

"Ah, foolish one," said Papa Louis, "how can he reach her here in a free country? You are right, Alaine; you need not fear."

"I do not." She threw back her head with a movement expressive of her feeling of unchecked action. "I fear no one now."

"But you will not tell him your name," Michelle

urged, still anxious. "Do me so small a favor as this, Alaine."

"I have already told him I am Alaine Mercier, and I shall not likely meet him again."

"Yet promise me."

"If it please you, yes, I promise. Now, Papa Louis, why do you not make Gerard promise the same thing on his part?"

Papa Louis rubbed his hands together and chuckled. He was a little man, with an eager, gentle face. He stooped slightly and had the air of a student rather than of a peasant or a mechanic. Gerard towered far above him.

"Papa Louis and I have nothing to lose," said the young man. "Those from whom all has been taken have nothing to conceal. Every one knows our story."

"Still," said the cautious Michelle, "I would not be too free to tell it."

"Maman has not yet lost her fear of the dragonnades," remarked Papa Louis. "She cannot quite grasp the fact that we are utterly safe, and wakes up with a dread of having insolent soldiers quartered upon her before night."

"Which is not true," maintained Michelle, sturdily; "but, Louis, I know too much not to feel that the long arm of resentment can stretch across seas."

Papa Louis raised his hands. "She speaks well, this wife of mine. She has acquired a glibness of speech which is truly remarkable."

“That comes from association with you, Papa Louis,” laughed Alaine, taking his arm. “Let us be going. Mère Michelle’s bread has disappeared like dew before the sun; we shall get no more though we stay here all night. Take maman with you, Gerard, and Papa Louis and I will follow. I think we should celebrate the day, too,” she said to M. Mercier, “for it is due to that same accomplishment of making such excellent bread that we are here to-day.”

“True, my daughter,” returned her companion. “See, we will deck maman.” And picking up a discarded wreath from the ground, he ran forward and flung it around his wife’s neck.

“Am I, then, a fat calf?” spluttered Michelle, indignant at this assault upon her dignity.

“No, no, maman, you are honored because of your able pursuance of a craft which brought us here,” said Alaine, kissing her. “Let me see, we will rehearse it all as we walk along, that you may understand why Papa Louis, in a burst of gratitude, has so decorated you. We met two years ago on shipboard. We remember it, do we not, Gerard? You with your tutor, Papa Louis there, and I with my foster-mother, Mère Michelle. You were dressed as a girl, and in your petticoats, as well as in Mère Michelle’s, were sewed some gold pieces, while in my blouse I carried my book of psalms, and Papa Louis carried the leaves of his Bible stitched in his coat. We became friends when you believed me a

boy and I believed you a girl. How astonished we were when we discovered that we might well exchange places, and how soon those gold pieces melted away in England! and in Martinique, what distress we endured! so hungry and forlorn were we. Then did maman happily think of baking bread and selling it. A good trade it was and one that satisfied our own hunger, for we could eat the stale loaves. And when Papa Louis fell ill did Mère Michelle nurse him while you and I watched the loaves in the oven. You would tell me of your home in La Rochelle, and of your escape after your father and mother were dragged away, and I would relate of our weary watching for my father, of whom not a word could we learn in London. Then—be patient, maman, we are coming to the end of the story—because there was still not freedom for us in Martinique, said Papa Louis, ‘Had I but the money for the passage we would go to New England,’ and that day you, Mère Michelle, found a gold coin where it had slipped into a seam of your petticoat, and not long after papa remembered a jewel which he still retained for Gerard. Then said he, ‘When we can earn enough we will go as a family, my good Michelle, if you will. These are our children, Alaine and Gerard Mercier, and you are Madame Mercier if you consent, for we have been comrades in misfortune this year past, and my life, which your nursing has saved, is yours.’ Was it not so, maman? So now, because of the happy thought of the bread

which did sustain us all, and because of your industry in baking and selling the good bread which all were so eager to buy, we at last managed to save enough to bring us here, and we are one family. So, now, to-day, on which they celebrate the feast of John Baptist, at home in dear France, and here does honor to the fat calf, we will also have a feast of the loaves, and you shall always be crowned queen of the feast. Shall it not be so, Papa Louis? Shall it not, Gerard?"

The recital of the tale and the honor bestowed upon her so overcame Mère Michelle that her dignity lost itself in tears, and she fell on the neck of her little husband, who braced himself to receive her weight, and patted her comfortingly on the back, while Alaine and Gerard started up a joyful psalm, then ran on ahead down the woodland path towards the village, saying they would prepare a reception at home.

The sound of merry voices had not ceased in the direction of the place of the feast. The occasion was one not only for the expression of ordinary joy, but it served to voice a deeper note, that of thanksgiving for an escape from persecution, and to the rollicking songs were added psalms of praise, those psalms so long denied utterance to the patient band of Huguenots now setting up their homes in this new world.

The woods sweetly smelling in the June weather, the soft odors arising from the sea-salt marshes, the

glimpses of the blue sound, the peeping up here and their of unfamiliar blossoms beneath their feet, all these things awoke in the hearts of Alaine and Gerard a strange new feeling of unfettered joyousness, and in sheer good fellowship Gerard reached out a hand to clasp the girl's as they walked home. "You look very happy, my sister," he said. "Not since we left England's shores have I seen you so."

"It is good to live," Alaine answered, raising her face to the sky. "To be young and free and hopeful is much. On days like this, Gerard, I always believe that I shall see my father again. Do you feel so?"

"No, I do not. Papa Louis has always warned me against an encouragement of hope in that direction. He thinks there is no doubt but that my father and mother are with the good God."

"So he tells me, but Mère Michelle says that it is possible that my father may have become an engagé; that thought is to me more terrible than the other, for if he is with the good God he is at peace, but otherwise he is suffering misery at the hands of masters. And oh, Gerard, you have told me how you saw those miserable ones tied two and two, walking in procession like criminals, or wretchedly bound in a cart. Ah, me, to be sold into slavery, yes, that is worse than death for a Huguenot. We saw at Martinique many of those unfortunates, and the thought that my father may be one such as those is too dreadful to endure. No, I myself am readier to

believe that he is somewhere in hiding, and that he will yet discover us. So many escaped to Holland who eventually have reached England, and our friends of the church in London are aware of our arrival here, therefore I take the hope to my heart that my father and I may yet meet. Meanwhile, I am willing to work hard in gratitude to those dear parents of our adoption."

"And I, too, Alaine. We must do our share for their sakes, for they have spared no pains to help us. Papa Louis has never been strong since that dreadful fever on the island, and besides, a man who has spent his days poring over books, what is he to till the ground or to work at the looms?"

"You grow so tall and strong, Gerard, I think you look a man already. I, too, grow strong and hardy in this good salt air. I trust I may grow in grace likewise," she added, piously. "I cared not once much about that, Gerard, but these sore trials have sobered me." Then her fresh young voice took up the psalm,—

"Sus, sus, mon ame, il te faut dire bien
De l'Eternal : ô mon vrai Dieu, combien
Ta grandeur est excellent et notoire !"

Gerard joined in, and hand in hand they continued their way through the woods and up the path to their home, Papa Louis and Michelle following, the latter still garlanded.

Gerard and Alaine fled laughing to the little loft

chamber, and presently down came a lad in a blouse too small for the expanding figure, and following, a girl in very short petticoat and coarse chemise.

“La, la!” cried Michelle. “Here they are, the bad ones. Look, papa, did you ever know such mischiefs? They have grown, in truth, these two years. Such short petticoats, Gerard, and your blouse, Alaine, is far too small; you can scarce meet it. Another year and you cannot wear the garments, my children. Put them away and keep them as a reminder that the grace of God has lent you the name of Mercier.”

A knock at the door silenced their laughter. Alaine shrank behind Michelle’s broad back, and Gerard, looking rather foolish in his short petticoat, retreated into a corner. Papa Louis opened the door to welcome a neighbor, M. Therolde. Behind him came the stranger whom Alaine had met at the fête. “A little frolic to end the day’s entertainment,” said Papa Louis. “My children are attired for our amusement. You will excuse their costumes, gentlemen. Come forward, Gerard; your petticoats are none too short that they need stand in the way of a greeting to our friends. And you, my daughter, need not mind masquerading in your brother’s clothes upon a fête-day.”

“We but stopped to give you thanks for the acceptable addition to our feast, Madame Mercier,” said Jacob Therolde. “Truly, madame distinguishes herself in the baking of excellent bread. Not a frag-

ment was left ; the good wives even saved the crusts, nor would let the dogs have them. You have changed places, eh, my children ? Come, M. Dupont, we are promised at home."

"It was an ill-timed call," complained Michelle, when the guests had departed. "I saw that young man view you with all too familiar eyes, Alaine. I wish he might never be seen here again. I do not like him, nor ever did."

"There, maman, there," began Papa Louis, "do not discompose yourself ; we must be merry to-night. Your little bird will not hop so far out of your sight that she will be snared. A beaker of wine will we drink in health to us all, and then Gerard and I must see to our chores, for it is later than it would seem ; the long day was over an hour ago."

CHAPTER III

THE WAY TO CHURCH

"It is a long walk, my child," Papa Louis was saying; "you should not think of taking it."

"But try me, papa," Alaine persisted, "and if I tire myself there may be cars to take me in. Is it not so, Mother Michelle? Surely the Bonneaux or the Allaires or the Sicards are no stronger than I; and even if there be no room, or no cars going in the morning, I can walk."

"She must have her will at all times, the little one," Papa Louis said, with a sigh of resignation. "See you, then, Gerard, that maman does not over-fatigue herself, and so you will go ahead, Michelle, and we follow in the morning. We shall needs be up by break of day, Alaine."

Already the sound of the low-wheeled wagons could be heard rumbling down the one street of the town; these "cars" with their canvas tops, their deep felloes and turned spokes, were thoroughly French in appearance; they were filled with women and children, only the very little ones being left at home with some care-taker. By the side of the wagons walked the men in sabots, and carrying their shoes and stockings in their hands. Each man

was well armed, for the way through the deep forests was full of possible dangers. Upon the soft silence of the summer evening arose the plaintive strains of a hymn. The march to church had begun, although it was still Saturday evening. "O Lord, Thou didst us clean forsake," chimed in the voices of Gerard and Michelle as they, too, joined the company, dressed in their Sunday clothes, a touch of color giving evidence of the fact that, sober and earnest as were these people, they were still truly French.

Down the street the troop went, their hymn, which they invariably sang upon starting, echoing along the way. They were always singing, these Huguenots, as if they could never make up for those days when their psalms were denied them. Alaine watched till the last figure became hidden by the trees, then she turned to say, "The poor little cow, it would scarce be right to leave her, and you well know, Papa Louis, that I would be wretched to know you were here alone. I do not mind the long walk nor the early start, and by morning I hope our Petite Etoile will have regained her health; she would be a sore loss."

Papa Louis looked grave. It had been a struggle to acquire even the little they had, though it was of the plainest. Theirs was a long, low-pitched house, with a big living-room below and two loft chambers above. In the former could be seen two beds with blue linen curtains, a couple of chests, a small table octagonal in form, a little mirror in gilded frame.

By the huge fireplace hung the warming-pan, and there was a brass candlestick upon the shelf above it. A gun and powder-horn were hung within easy reach of Papa Louis's arm. In the fireplace swung two iron pots on long cranes, and at the side hung a bright kettle. Two spinning-wheels, of course, held their places, but now their drowsy hum was hushed, for Alaine, stepping briskly back and forth, prepared the supper. From time to time she looked out of the open door toward the barn just beyond the garden, now brave in summer blossoms. The pretty young cow had been joyously welcomed, and now a wicked wolf had torn her sleek skin so that Papa Louis must needs doctor her. "He is so skilful, that Papa Louis," said Alaine to herself, pausing, wooden tankard in hand; "he knows herbs and simples well; his book knowledge has served him more than once, the dear little papa. And how he loved his garden! It is well that Gerard has a strong arm for the furrows, else the corn would not look as well as the flowers. Mère Michelle can guide a plough and handle a scythe better than her husband. How we laughed, Gerard and I, when she first taught papa to follow the plough! the poor little papa, he was so determined and so patient, while big Mère Michelle scolded and encouraged and laughed." She took her tankard out to the well, which stood in front of the door. Guiding the long sweep till the bucket touched the clear water below, she waited till it filled and then drew it up, balanced it on the curb,

and poured the water into the trough. At this instant Papa Louis appeared leading the cow. "Good!" cried Alaine. "He brings her for a drink, poor pretty Etoile. It was fortunate that she was not far off when Gerard heard her cry, else she would have fed the wicked wolf ere now." Over the orderly rows of vegetables she looked to see Papa Louis advance.

"We shall have no milk to-night," he told her, "yet she becomes better, and I think to-morrow will see her safe, so we can start betimes."

Alaine with gentle hand stroked the soft ears of the cow, which eagerly drank from the trough and was led back to the barn; then the girl filled her tankard and bore it indoors.

"I must go to see Alexandre Allaire," said Papa Louis when the simple meal was over. "I shall have to leave you alone here for a short time, my daughter, but there is nothing to fear. I greatly desire to know where we stand in the matter of a new church; a deep longing for it takes possession of us all, and I trust the day is not distant when we can rear the walls of a new temple here in the wilderness."

By the time he had disappeared behind the leafy trees just beyond the newly set out orchard Alaine had cleared away the supper dishes and ran out for a last look at her fowls. They must be well secured, and there was no Michelle there to spy out a possible loop-hole where wild creatures could make an

entrance. Assuring herself that all was safe, she returned to the house. As she entered the sitting-room, by the dim light she saw sitting a figure bending over the little table.

“Ah, mademoiselle, I am indeed fortunate,” said François Dupont, who put down the book he had been holding and advanced to meet her. “I feared you might have gone with the others upon the long journey to Manhatte, yet I did not see you among the train as they passed, and, therefore, I ventured here in hopes of finding you.”

Alaine retreated a step. What ill fate had given her an interview with this man whom she had hoped never to see again?

“And I was fortunate,” he repeated, “Mademoiselle—Hervieu.”

Alaine started, but recovered herself to say, steadily, “My father, M. Louis Mercier, will be here in a moment to welcome you, monsieur. I regret that Madame Mercier, my mother, is not here to entertain you.”

M. Dupont looked at her with a half-smile curling his lips. “All of which sounds very well, mademoiselle, but does not alter the fact that Mademoiselle Hervieu, herself, does not seem over-glad to meet an old acquaintance.”

“An old acquaintance? An exceedingly short acquaintance. It was at the Feast of the Fat Calf that I met you, and since then not at all.”

“But that was not our first meeting: I remember

a charming child who visited her aunt one day, when I was also there, and to whom I offered some cherries which I had gathered; I snatched them from her before she had a taste of them, and I remember how I chased the little maid around the garden and made her give me a taste of her cherry lips in exchange for the fruit. I have not forgotten the pretty little incident, Mademoiselle Hervieu, although it was some years ago, and you were but a gay and happy child."

Alaine stood silent, but there was fierce anger in her eyes. He dared remind her now. She looked helplessly from one side to the other, then she lifted her chin with a haughty gesture. "Monsieur, your imagination quite exceeds your memory. I declare to you that I have not the honor of your acquaintance."

He laughed mockingly. "She has very much the air of a peasant, this child of the good honest Michelle of the bourgeois face. Strange how she resembles her mother." He glanced at the girl's slim hands and feet, and his eyes travelled back to the well-set little head and the fine oval of the fair face. "So closely does she resemble her mother that I can well imagine how she will look some twenty-five years from now." He laughed again. "We of the upper class do not mind amusing ourselves with a peasant lass, mademoiselle, and so you cannot be surprised if I steal a second kiss, since you repudiate the one you gave me six or eight years ago." He

made a step toward her, and Alaine shrank back with a little cry. "Monsieur," she said, in a low, strained voice, "what is your motive in all this?"

"Ah-h! she comes to herself; the peasant lass is no more; she was too much for Mademoiselle Hervieu. I but desire to press my claim to your acquaintance, and to urge you to return to the home which is still open to you; to say that, as the friend of your cousin, Étienne Villeneau, I desire to do him the favor of returning the lady of his love to his arms. I had an opportunity of looking into the small black book on yonder table, the book which contains those hymns you Huguenots are so fond of singing at all times and in all places. I am too familiar with the Hervieu arms not to recognize the plate on the inside lid of the book, and the haunting face of the demoiselle whom I met at the fête was no longer that of a stranger. I understand why it seemed so familiar; in the flash of an eye I recollected the little scene which I have just recounted to you. That you were not better known to me is due to the fact that for some years past I have been in Paris to complete my studies." Alaine listened gravely, making no comment. He waved his hand to a chair. "May we not sit, mademoiselle? I have more to say. I would not keep you standing."

She bit her lip, but seated herself and regarded him silently.

"Étienne Villeneau is my friend; we were together at school in Rouen. Always Étienne spoke

of his little cousin, his sweetheart, as he called her. Judge of my surprise and distress when, upon my return home some two years ago, I was told that this same pretty child whom I so well remembered had been stolen by her foster-mother and had disappeared, no one knew where. Étienne was in despair; he sent his emissaries to search high and low, but to no avail. When he knew I was to depart for these colonies he gave me as a parting charge, 'My cousin, François, forget her not when you are in the land of the savage, and if chance be that you come across any who know of her, press home the discovery, so will you be my heart's best friend.' I find you here. I see you in this humble cot, performing with your own hands tasks that your servants at home should be doing for you, and, therefore, mademoiselle, not only in pity for my friend, but in sympathy for you, I beg of you to return to your native country."

"Monsieur," Alaine's voice was low and determined, "you forget that I am a Huguenot."

He snapped his fingers with an upward movement of them as he would say, "So slight a matter?" "That is easily adjusted, mademoiselle. Because you, as a child, were over-persuaded by your nurse is no reason why, as a woman, you should not revoke your opinions."

"My father is also Protestant," said Alaine, her dark eyes growing larger and more intense.

"Your father, M. Hervieu? And where is he?"

“I know not, but this I know: for his sake, if not for my own conviction, would I forswear the country which, if it has not witnessed his death, has condemned him to a life of misery. Dearly as I loved my own France, I am more Huguenot than French. Revoke my decision? Abjure my belief? Never! Day by day and hour by hour it becomes more and more dear to me in this free home. Listen, monsieur: to-morrow morning I start at break of day to walk over twenty miles to church. I shall do it gladly, joyfully, for it brings me to a service which is my delight. Would I do this if I could be turned by your chance words? My home is humble, yes, but here we are free to sing our psalms, to worship as we desire. I toil with my hands; I labor in the fields that I may help to pay for this piece of land which we call ours. I would work a thousand times harder for those who cherish me and who have given me their honest, honorable name that I may be safe from those who hunt me down and who seek to do me despite. Leave these, my dear adopted parents? Never, till my father himself returns to claim me.”

M. Dupont listened thoughtfully. “You would leave only at your father’s command? It behooves me, then, to find him.”

Alaine clasped her hands. “Oh, monsieur, find him, find him, and I will bless you forever, though you may be my enemy!”

“Your enemy?” He shrugged his shoulders; then looking at her with an inexplicable smile, he said,

“Consider me yours to command, mademoiselle. We shall meet again, fair Alaine Hervieu, and I shall yet bid you good-morrow under the skies of France.” He lifted the heavy wooden latch of the door and bowed himself out, leaving Alaine stunned and bewildered.

In the dimness of the room Papa Louis did not perceive the expression on the girl’s face as he entered and gayly cried, “The wolves have not devoured my little bird, I see.”

Alaine flew toward him and clasped his arm. “Oh, papa, papa, there has been some one here!” And she poured forth her tale, one moment the passionate tears falling, and the next a tremor born of fear creeping into her voice.

Papa Louis listened silently until she had concluded, then he said, “But this young man, he is Protestant; he is a friend of Jacob Therolde’s. I have been speaking but now of him to Alexandre Allaire. He has talked to one and another, and no one seems to imagine evil of him. This is a puzzle, my daughter. I am dismayed by the strangeness of it. Ma petite, he did but tease you, perhaps; yes, that is it, he did not mean it when he urged your return to France; he would find out how steadfast you really are, that is all.”

“No, no, I am sure it was not that; yet——” She paused and considered the matter. “He did not say that he was not Protestant, he but spoke as if it were nothing to change one’s religion as favors

come one's way. If he is not Protestant, why is he here among us, so far from home? and what means his ardent friendship for my cousin? I am terrified by it all, papa."

"But you need have no fear. Who shall take you from us? Not one man, nor two. So go to sleep, my little one; the good God will defend you. Say your prayers to Him and sleep well, for we have a long walk before us and must start betimes. I hope before long that it will be but a step to our own temple of worship. Mark how sweet is the air and how quiet the night. God be thanked for our peace. Embrace me, little one, and good-night."

Alaine crept up the ladder to her room above. Why, after all, should she fear? There were papa and Gerard and all the good friends and neighbors to defend her. What could one man do? and why should he desire to harm her? And she went to sleep with a prayer upon her lips.

It required an early start, indeed, to reach New York in time for the service. Alaine put up a frugal lunch, and with others, who had not gone the evening before, they started forth, the men armed, for who knew what lurking foe might not come upon them in the lonely woods. Singing they went: those old songs of Marot's and of Beza's so dear to the Huguenot heart. To-day the talk was serious. Fierce and fiercer had grown the conflict between Romanists and Protestants. James II. of England

had been compelled to abdicate; France had declared war against England; a Committee of Safety had intrusted Jacob Leisler with the command of the fort in New York, and to him the eyes of the people were turned. Would the French descend and threaten New York? Would the Indians join them and there be worse to be expected?

“Ah, la la,” sighed Alaine, as she stepped briskly along by the side of Papa Louis, “I see you are anxious to discuss the latest news with M. Sicard. Leave me to trudge along with the younger lads and go you, good papa, to those ahead.”

He looked at her with a smile. “So ready to be rid of papa? However, I do wish to discuss these matters, and I will send back to you some one who has been casting longing looks this way ever since we started. Approach, Pierre, and defend my daughter from any naughty enemy who may descend upon us,” he cried to one of the young men striding along in his clumping sabots and with gun in hand.

A smile lighted up the grave face of the youth. “Papa Louis is always a good companion,” he returned; “I fear mademoiselle will lose by the exchange.”

“Variety, my dear boy, variety; we need it. Pray, how would taste one’s pot à feu if but one ingredient composed it? A little of this, a little of that, and we have a dish fit for a king. So with life, my good Pierre; one needs a mixture. I leave you to help to a good flavor my daughter’s pottage to-day. Be

not onion to make her weep, nor pepper to cause her anger." And, laughing, Papa Louis gayly stepped ahead, and Pierre fell into a pace to match Alaine's.

"You undertake a long walk," Pierre said, after a moment's silence.

"Yes, but you know our cow was hurt, and 'twas not safe to leave her last night, so I stayed behind to keep Papa Louis company, although Gerard begged to do so. But papa would not hear of Mère Michelle's going alone, and thus it settled itself. I have long wanted to take this journey. I am young and strong, and why not? Mère Michelle, active as she is, could not well stand it, but I am sure I can." She paused and looked at her tall companion, who, always grave, to-day seemed more so than usual. "I wanted to tell you, Pierre," she began again, "that I do not trust that M. Dupont who was in our village yesterday, and also upon the day of the fête. He claims affiliation with us, but I believe he is a Papist."

"Even so, there are some good Papists," returned Pierre, quietly.

Alaine gave a little scream of protest. "You to say so, Pierre! You who began your life in the midst of horrors and who have suffered the loss of all nearest to you?"

He gave her one of his rare smiles. "Do you remember what the good Beza said in reply to the king of Navarre? 'Sire, it belongs in truth to the

Church of God, in whose name I speak, to endure blows and not inflict them. But it will also please your Majesty to remember that she is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.' ”

Alaine nodded. “I remember the couplet which Papa Louis taught me,—

‘ Plus a me frapper on s’amuse,
Tant plus de marteau on y use.’

But to tell you the truth, Pierre, I am not a patient being. I am full of indignation many times a day, and I wonder if I will ever be called a patient Huguenot. That anvil, it is because of Beza’s words that we have it for an emblem, is it not so? I like better the marigold myself.”

“And I like the anvil,” returned Pierre.

Alaine gave him a half-saucy look from under her long lashes. “Yes, you are more like an anvil,” she told him.

“Quite hard you mean?”

“I did not say so. Perhaps I meant very useful.”

“And you are more like the marigold.”

“Quite useless?”

“I did not say so. Perhaps I meant because of a heart of gold.”

“Merci, monsieur. I like that better than if you had said as truly lovely.”

“I meant that, too.”

“It strikes me,” said Alaine, slyly, “that one should not put honey in pot à feu.”

“Let us have, then—what shall we say?”

“A smack of gossip which we will call herbs for smart flavor; I will repeat that I do not trust M. Dupont, and you can contradict me if you will. I tell you this because I do not want to say so to Gerard, who is too fiery, nor to Papa Louis, who would call me an alarmist, nor to Mère Michelle, who would be seized with affright. But remember, if anything happens, that I said this. Ah, here we come to the rock where we rest. I see the clump of cedars quite plainly. You shall have a taste of Mère Michelle’s good bread for your pretty compliments.”

They were not long in reaching the spot which invariably served as the resting-place for the church-goers, and from there they travelled on to Collect Pond, where the dusty feet were bathed, the shoes and stockings put on, and the journey considered as nearly over. The neighborhood of the French church in Marketfield Street was alive with the crowds of those who had come from Long Island, Staten Island, and New Rochelle. Many had passed the night in the “cars,” and had eaten their breakfast in these same wagons, to be ready for the long service before the last stragglers should have arrived.

“And are you so very fatigued, my pigeon?” asked Papa Louis, as Alaine, a little pale, but still keeping up her energetic walk, approached the church.

“I am a little tired,” she returned, “but I am here,

and I shall have time to rest. "Ah-h!" she gave a little start. "See there, papa, M. Dupont is talking to M. Allaire. I trust he will not see us."

To Alaine's relief M. Dupont did not discover her. She kept a sharp eye out during the period of intermission, when a cheerful chatter was kept up by those who visited around from group to group. It was a great event, this communion service on special Sundays, and meant not only the enjoyment of free worship, but a gathering of friends and an exchange of visits; a day's pleasuring, in fact, for they enjoyed it all, from the hearty singing of the psalms and the long sermon to the arrival home after the toilsome journey.

"And you will not walk back?" said Pierre to Alaine, as they were making ready for the return.

She shook her head. "No; twenty-three miles in one day quite satisfies me, but I enjoyed it and the pot à feu, honey and all."

"What do you say, my daughter?" Mère Michelle's alert ears caught the last words.

"Nothing important, maman; I but discussed the difference between the pot à feu of those from Rouen and those from La Rochelle. Pierre there likes to put a sprinkling of honey in his."

Mère Michelle looked mystified.

"It is but some of Alaine's mischief," said Gerard, seeing the expression on Pierre's face. "Come, climb in, Alaine; we must be off." And the long journey home began.

CHAPTER IV

THE CIDER FROLIC

“COME, come, step up, my dear,” Mère Michelle said so often, one morning a few weeks later, that Alaine realized with a start that she was less virtuously energetic than usual. “So triste, my little one, or is it that you are fatigued from yesterday’s labors? I feared that you were going beyond your strength out there in the field.”

“No, no,” protested Alaine, “I have seldom enjoyed anything more. It was so pleasant there out under the blue sky, but one has so many things to think about as one grows older. I will hasten to finish my daily tasks, and then I wish to see Mathilde Duval.”

Mère Michelle looked at her sharply. “It is not well for a lass to frequent the home of a young man,” she said.

Alaine gave her delicate chin an upward toss. “I frequent the home of a young man? I fail to understand you, Madame Mercier.”

“Ta ta, she has quite the air of a grande dame, she who might now be weeping in a nunnery, or as a slave, a poor engagé, but for her old Michelle, who guards her but for her own good, poor little fledgling.”

“Forgive me, Mère Michelle,” cried Alaine, stopping her occupation of burnishing a brass kettle; “I forget sometimes, but indeed it was not because of Pierre, nor of any other man, that I wished to see Mathilde. We both desire to go to the Point this afternoon to join in the devotions and to send a prayer heavenward for the safety of our beloved ones.”

Michelle wiped a tear from her eye. “Wretched old woman that I am!” she said, with a quick digression from wrath to remorse. “I was thinking, Is not Gerard enough for her that she must run after other youths?”

“Gerard? Nay, but Gerard is my brother. You forget that he is a Mercier as well as I.”

“He is a Legrand as you are a Hervieu,” returned Mère Michelle.

Alaine shook her head. “No, no, we do not say so. I pray you, Mère Michelle, put any such ideas away. Whisper it not to any one that I am a Hervieu. But a day or two ago you warned me not to disclose it.”

“Ah, well, I say so to no one outside this house.”

“But the birds of the air; there is one now on the bush outside; I fear he will bear the news.”

Mère Michelle turned her head quickly, and then, at Alaine’s merry laugh, set to work again at paring the vegetables she was making ready for the dinner. “Beware how you go out alone,” she warned after

a moment's silence. "Louis says the Indians are gathering to-day for their yearly cider fête."

"That is nothing," replied Alaine; "they are friends. I do not fear them."

"Ah, that may have been, but nothing is certain since the word has come of intended war," said Mère Michelle, shaking her head. "Is it not expected that our countrymen from whom we have providentially escaped will descend upon us from Canada? and what may be expected at their hands should they be joined by the Indians? Affairs are in a turmoil. There are grave rumors and it is the hour's talk."

"Ah, but Monsieur Leisler, maman, remember him; he is at the head of the people; he stands for the Protestant party. He has assembled the people by beat of drum and has read to them the proclamation of the English William and Mary. You should have heard Pierre telling of it."

"Pierre! And did I not hear Gerard also tell?"

"He told not so much, but he said that M. Nicholas Bayard and Mayor Van Cortlandt did not uphold M. Leisler. Then cried out Pierre, 'Me, I am for Leisler,' and Gerard looked dubious. 'No wonder,' cried I, 'that Pierre is ready to put his trust in one who upholds Protestant faith; engagé that he was, he knows the grip of the irons.' For a truth, maman, it makes my heart bleed when Mathilde tells me of how Pierre endured that dreadful journey to Guadeloupe, of how he was beaten and abused by the

master to whom he was sold, and how it was he who planned the escape of the party of which she became one. Poor Mathilde, her sufferings were great, but his were greater."

"And she adores Pierre in consequence, of course," said Mère Michelle, with a grimness unusual to her.

"Yes, as I adore Gerard," replied Alaine, demurely. "Companions in misery, Pierre and Mathilde, Gerard and I. But dear maman, we suffered little, for it was the good God who gave us you and Papa Louis to lessen our difficulties, and we, though refugees, were never slaves."

"Since you adore Gerard," remarked Michelle, "it would be well if you were to pluck me a leaf or two from the garden to season his dinner."

Alaine needed no second bidding. Down between the rows of garden vegetables she went. If there was anything in which the Huguenots excelled it was in their cultivation of fruit and flowers, and their gardens were miracles of luxuriant growth. Soft-hued peaches sunned their sides on southern slopes, grape-vines showed here and there a purple cluster, for among his greatest treasures carefully brought from the mother country the refugee considered his slips of vines as among the first. Seeds, too, brought from France and carefully tended, brought a harvest of bloom along garden-beds to cheer with their brilliant colors the homesick emigrants. To these Huguenot refugees, more than to

any other element, is due the establishing of nurseries and floriculture in America.

Stopping to pick a leaf here, a sprig there, Alaine bent over the garden-beds. From the fields adjoining came the song of the workers. The girl paused a moment to listen, and then ran back to the house to help serve the dinner on broad wooden trenchers, to assist in the clearing away, and then to make ready for her visit to Mathilde.

The girlish figure appeared before Michelle quite differently attired; a half-shamed look was on Alaine's sweet face.

"Voilà!" cried Michelle; "she appears as if for a fête in her silk gown, her Lyons silk, of which she has but two remaining. Perhaps she is bidden by the red men to their cider fête, is it so, then? And a charming figure to be in the midst of howling savages scantily clothed and not too clean. For why is this on a week-day, and no feast at all that good Christians should attend? Ah-h!" she spread her fingers and shrugged her shoulders, "it is for M. Pierre, I doubt not."

The tears started to Alaine's eyes. "Mère Michelle," she said, "you do me wrong all the time of late. You have forgotten, though I have not, that this is my dear father's fête-day, and I go to Bonnefoy's Point with those who do not lose their memory of France; there with them I pray and send my psalm of longing across the sea. It is all that I can do to show my father honor, this, to wear my best."

Michelle dropped on a chair and covered her face with her apron. "Reproach me ; that will be right, my poor fatherless one. I do you wrong, I who should cherish you and defend you from unkindness and suspicion. I am to-day, as one would say, at odds with myself. Petite émigrée, pauvrete, fille, I am a stupide. I ought to have seen why your eyes have all day been triste and your mouth so wistful. It is not the kisses of a husband for which you sigh, but for those of a father. Go, then, star of my life, and I will add my prayers to yours."

Alaine, overcome at this humility, embraced her and called her dear mamma and her always beloved Michelle, and then she turned to go. From under her little cap her soft brown hair peeped, her high-heeled shoes with their silver buckles clicked as she walked across the floor, and her gown swished softly against the sides of the door as she passed out. It was no peasant girl, but the daughter of one well-born, who appeared that day on the street of New Rochelle. She walked quickly toward a solid-looking new house and knocked at the door. "Enter," came the word, and almost at the same moment Mathilde appeared.

"I knew it was yourself, my Alaine," she cried. "I am ready this quarter-hour. All are gone ; Pierre and my uncle to the fields, my aunt to the poor young wife of Jean de Caux ; she has hoped and feared till now the fear is swallowed up in grief,

for she has news that her husband died on the voyage from France. Wait here till I again assure myself that all is well."

Alaine stood waiting for her before the fireplace, which was adorned with tiles showing forth the history of the prodigal son, the lost piece of silver, and other Scriptural incidents. She was absorbed in contemplation of the raising of Lazarus when Mathilde returned.

"All is well," she announced, briskly. "Come, I saw Papa Renaud go by but this instant. The poor old one, he has never missed a day in going to the spot where he landed, to turn his eyes toward his beloved France and to lift up his voice in prayer and song. He is smitten with a great home-sickness, is Papa Renaud. But me, I never wish to see France again; it holds too many graves. Ciel! when I think of how many of them, I am affrighted by the number."

Alaine laid a caressing hand on her shoulder. "I do not wonder, my poor Mathilde; one who alone of all her family is left must feel so. As for me, I know not, and so I still long for France if it contain my father. Hark! Papa Renaud begins his psalm." They walked soberly to the spot where, with head uncovered, stood the old man, his arms outstretched, and his quavering voice chanting,—

"Estans assis aux rives aquatiques
De Babylon, plorions melancholiques."

Mathilde and Alaine joined in softly, and then kneeling down, with wet eyes, Alaine sent up a prayer for her father.

She knelt so long that Mathilde at last touched her on the shoulder. "I must go now," she said.

Alaine arose. "Leave me a little, then ; I wish to stay longer." Mathilde turned and left her, and for a long time the girl knelt with clasped hands, her eyes fixed upon the blue waters of the sound. So long was her gaze turned in one direction that she did not see that at last she was left quite alone by her friends and that a pair of crafty eyes were watching her. The sound of the psalm-singing had given place to the distant noise of the Indians in their frolic ; the rise and fall of a monotonous chant ; howlings and whoopings.

"Ah, my father," sighed the girl at last, "if you be on earth may the good God bring you safe to me." She arose to her feet, and with downcast head she descended to where a cave in the rocks showed the remains of charred wood. Here the arriving Huguenots, upon landing, had built their first fire. The place was held as common property, and the mood that caused Alaine to take a mournful pleasure in gazing at all which could in any way remind her of her friends, her faith, her lost France, made her linger here.

Suddenly stealthy footsteps crept up behind her ; a pair of sinewy arms seized her ; a hand was clapped over her mouth, and before she could scream or

struggle she was carried around a point of rocks and placed in a canoe, which was quickly pushed out upon the dancing waters of the sound. In vain she tried to make some signal to those on shore. Only the dancing, yelling Indians could see the little craft with one of their own number guiding it through the water. Friendly though they might be, this was their cider frolic, and even if they had been aware of the deed, they would have been in no state to render assistance.

Alaine had passed through too many trying scenes to weakly give up to tears. She lay very still in the bottom of the canoe, her large eyes fixed on the Indian's face. After a short time he loosened the thongs with which he had bound her and said, "Little squaw not be afraid."

"Where are you taking me?" she asked, sitting up. He gave a grunt and shook his head. That question was not to be answered.

"Estans assis aux rives aquatiques," she began to sing shrilly.

Her captor frowned and bade her hush. "No sing." What could she do? Where was he taking her? She cudgelled her brains for a reason for this sudden act, for this seizure of her innocent self, but could decide upon no cause for it.

On, on, the little canoe sped. The dense forests grew deeper and darker as the light waned. Alaine with eyes strained for sight of a passing boat scarcely moved, but as the sun began to sink and to redden

the water she shivered. Night was coming, and what would it bring her? Her thoughts travelled to her humble home in the village. Now Gerard and Papa Louis were coming in from the field; now Michelle was milking; now they were making ready for supper, a salad, an omelette, maybe. They would miss her; they would fear that she might be drowned, or that something dreadful had happened. Something dreadful? It had happened.

The light and rosy clouds were turning to gray when the boat at last touched shore. All was as silent as death. The great sombre pines beyond the sands loomed up grimly against the sky; a sea-bird once in a while dipped its wing into the waves, then, with a cry, circled aloft. The girl crouching in the canoe did not attempt to move even when the Indian drew the boat high off the sands. He waited for a moment, then put a hand on her shoulder with the word, "Come." She obediently arose, and he helped her out upon dry land. Then seizing her wrist, he strode up the beach toward the woods, which he entered by a narrow path. Beyond, a faint glimmer of light showed that a clearing existed not far off.

Alaine gave a little cry as, issuing from the dimness of the forest, she saw before her a substantial house, from the windows of which flickering lights were already beginning to twinkle. What was this, and who lived here? For a moment a sense of relief stole over her. This was no Indian camp, but the

home of white people ; all the surroundings indicated it. The evening breeze fluttered the vine-leaves over the small porch. Across this small porch the patient prisoner was led, and before a door the Indian paused for a moment. "Warraquid has come," announced he.

The door flew open and out stepped, gay and debonair, François Dupont. "Good-evening, Mademoiselle Hervieu," he said, with a splendid bow, "I trust I see you well. Your little trip has in no way given you discomfort, I hope. So fine an evening as this it should be delightful upon the water. Permit me." He extended his hand, but she proudly preceded him into the room, the door of which he held open for her.

It was a pathetic little figure which stood before the half-dozen men assembled in the great room ; her black silk gown was stained by mud and torn by briars, and her little high-heeled shoes were scratched and rubbed by rough stones, but the pale face, usually so sweetly piquant, held a look of noble resolve, though the shadows under the dark eyes bespoke anxiety.

"This, gentlemen," announced M. Dupont, "is Mademoiselle Hervieu, whose presence here is not so much a compliment to us as we could wish, since she was not aware of her destination." The gentlemen, who had arisen when the girl entered, now bowed low, and one advanced to lead her to a seat.

"Though you visit us perforce, mademoiselle,"

said this gentleman, "we trust your stay will not need be made a disagreeable one. You have but to answer a few questions and you will be safely returned to your own home."

"And if I cannot answer them."

"If you will not M. Dupont will tell you the alternative, which, after all, is not so unpleasant a one, or should not be to a young and charming lady. First, then, you are well acquainted with Pierre Boutillier, Louis Mercier, and——"

Alaine turned swiftly. "I demand to know the alternative before I answer these questions." She faced M. Dupont imperiously. "It is true that I am here by no choice of my own, and my lips are sealed unless I know some good reason why I should speak. Whatever is just and right I will answer, but nothing else."

Her interrogator nodded in the direction of M. Dupont, who said, "By your favor, mademoiselle, we will discuss this in private, and to spare you the situation let me lead you to the other room." Again Alaine by a gesture refused his escort, and walked out with head carried high. In the hall she paused uncertainly, but M. Dupont, with a quick movement, opened a door on the opposite side and ushered her into a room sweet with newly gathered flowers, and silent but for the steady tick of an old Dutch clock which hung against the wall.

The door shut, Alaine again demanded, "The alternative."

“So short you are, fair mademoiselle; then short must I be. An’ you answer not these questions you will be sent to Canada, placed in a nunnery there till your cousin Étienne comes to claim you.”

“And if I refuse him.”

“You remain in the nunnery.”

Alaine pondered the situation gravely. “But why? What good are these questions? Alas! why do they distress a forlorn maid so sorely for the sake of such scant information as she can give?”

“Because—it is for France. Do you not love France, Alaine Hervieu, the dear place of your birth?”

She was silent a moment, then she said, slowly, “I love France.”

“It is for France you will do this; not for faith, nor for freedom, nor for favor, but for France. She is at war with England, and for her honor, her glory, we would know how stands this colony of Yorke. You know as well any other—you are not wanting in wit and wisdom and experience—that disaffection is at work in the colony; that Leisler holds the fort; that Nicholas Bayard and Phillipse and Van Cortlandt are his enemies; at such a time, when all is confusion and there is no unity at home, it is the time for a blow to be struck from the outside. Think of this as a French colony, of the peace and content and glory for those you love, for you do love them still, those in your old home. Think of being reunited to your father, when he shall occupy a place

of honor in this new country. No longer a peasant, you; no longer associating with servants, but lady of your own manor, an honored wife, a happy daughter. You will do this for France and for your father?" He spoke with rapid intensity, his brilliant black eyes fixed on her face.

Alaine listened with parted lips. "My father!" she cried. "Where is he? Does he live?"

"He lives. I can tell you no more. It is not so much you are asked to do. No one will be the wiser; no one worse off than before."

The girl's heart beat fast; her hands trembled. "Take me back. I will answer as I can, monsieur, as my conscience approves." This time she did not refuse the hand which led her through the hall back to the room where the others awaited her. She approached with steady step the table by which her questioner stood. "I am ready," she said.

"You are well acquainted with Louis Mercier, with Gerard Mercier, his reputed son; with Pierre Boutillier, the reputed nephew of M. Thauvet?" The question was put without preliminary.

"I know them," Alaine answered, without hesitation.

"They are friends and are upholders of Jacob Leisler?"

"Yes."

"They are refugees from France, and have interested themselves in raising soldiers for the defence of New York?"

“Yes.”

“Have you ever heard them say how many were with Leisler in the fort?”

Alaine was silent.

“Or in what condition are the fortifications?”

“No.”

“They are working upon them, so M. Dupont has already told us; so that may pass. We must ask of you but one more thing. Write at our dictation the following words: ‘I have been carried away by the Indians, but am now abandoned on the shore close to Long Point. Come to me as soon as possible. I send this by one who refuses me escort.—Alaine.’”

She looked from one to the other. What did this mean? The questions had seemed trivial and out of proportion to the deed of kidnapping her. She was suspicious, but even her alert mind could see no danger in sending the message which was to restore her to her friends, and she acquiesced without a word of protest.

“Three separate notes, if you please. Address them to Louis Mercier, to Gerard Mercier, to Pierre Boutillier,” came the request. Alaine did as they bade her, and a nod of satisfaction followed the courteous thanks she received. “To-morrow evening you will be free,” she was told. “François, summon some one to wait upon mademoiselle to her room.” And presently appeared an old woman, French and Indian half-breed, who silently conducted

the girl to an upper chamber, locked the door upon her and left her alone.

The room was comfortably furnished; there was no lack of order anywhere in the establishment, and Alaine wondered who had the ordering of it. No discourtesy had been shown her, yet she felt distrustful and uneasy. What did it mean? Had she unwittingly brought trouble upon those her best protectors? Upon Papa Louis, under whose roof she dwelt, upon Gerard her almost brother, upon Pierre who had already suffered so much? She caught her breath as she thought of this. Oh, to gain her freedom and warn them! She leaned far out the open window, but the house built with projecting upper story, in the old fashion, gave no means of escape in that direction. She drew back with a sigh. Night and darkness, and howling wolves, and prowling Indians confronted her, perils enough to make a stouter heart quake. Beyond these terrors, she knew not where she was, nor the way home. There was nothing to do but to submit to the inevitable.

With a woman's heed to appearance she smoothed her gown, brushed from it some of the stains and mud, tucked her soft brown locks under her cap, and was standing looking ruefully at her scarred shoes, when the door opened and the half-breed glided in. Alaine marked the greedy look in the twinkling eyes as they fell upon the silver buckles on her shoes and the chain about her neck, but the

eyes shifted before the girl's look of inquiry, and the summons to supper reminded Alaine that she was in reality very hungry.

She descended the stairs, at the foot of which stood François Dupont. "I await you, mademoiselle. It is a pity that you must take your meal with none but those of the stern sex, yet I trust your appetite is good. If you would prefer you can have your supper served in your own room. Let me thank you for what you have done for France."

She smiled a little sadly. "I fear it was not so much for France as for my own well liking. After we have eaten, monsieur, I would have further speech with you."

"To my pleasure ; but before we join the others let me give you a word of warning. For me, I am indifferent as to creeds, I am only for France, France Protestant or France Catholic, but with these gentlemen here it is different. I pray you speak not in disfavor of the Church. They believe you—but I will not anticipate our discourse. Let me lead you in."

She gave him her hand and was led into the long dining-room, where a plentiful meal was spread.

CHAPTER V.

FROM THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER

ALAINÉ'S youthful appetite sufficed to cause her to consume a good supper. The talk around the table was cheerful, and there were no issues raised. "A strange position for a young French girl," Alaine thought, "in company of these men, I who all my life have taken refuge by the side of my aunt or Michelle, and have never even taken a walk with any man save Gerçard or Papa Louis, unless I except that one Sunday when I walked to church with Pierre as companion. What would my aunt say to my present situation? Allowed free converse with a young man? Shocking!" She smiled to herself in spite of the condition of affairs. The Indian woman stood in one corner of the room during the meal, and the girl wondered if she were to be again conducted to her chamber, but she was relieved to find that this was not intended, for the other gentlemen, sitting over their wine, allowed François Dupont to lead her from the room.

"I am your guard, mademoiselle, therefore see that you do not overpower me and make your escape," he said, playfully.

"Into what?" she asked. "Into the terrors of the forest? Into unknown ways? I am not so

foolhardy, monsieur. I wish I might trust you," she added after a pause in which she had eyed him wistfully.

"Have I given you reason for lack of confidence?"

"Have you not? Ever since your arrival you have been persistently following me up and prescribing my actions. For why is this?"

"Said I not that I was a friend of Étienne Ville-neau? I will tell you, mademoiselle, they believe you to have been spirited away by your nurse, if not by force, by over-persuasion, and that once you are brought back you will conform."

She shook her head. "That will I never do. I am Protestant as my father is. If I did not accept entirely the teachings of his faith before I left France it was because I was not sufficiently informed. I now know them and accept them fully. I shall never retract."

"But you cannot blame your friends over there in France if they desire it."

"No, I cannot blame them, for they do not know the truth of it: how I begged to be taken with Michelle when my father's letter came, and how I knew that I would rather by far suffer with her and with my father than to live at ease as the wife of my cousin. No, they could not know that, nor that I would never conform."

"Not to save your father?"

"From what?"

“From the life of an engagé.”

“He is that? My poor father! Ah, I was not wrong, then, when I felt this to be so.”

“If he be still alive you can save him, and if he be not alive you can still save yourself from this life of poverty and labor. It is the wish of madame, your aunt, of your cousin Étienne, that you do not lose the property which is yours while you are Catholic, but which was in danger of confiscation when your father became Protestant. In view of the relation of the Villeneaux, who are not without influence in high circles, the estates await your return, and once you are Madame Étienne Villeneau they are yours. Am I not candid, mademoiselle?”

“You are. I understand it all but your part in the matter. I confess you seem frank, Monsieur Dupont, but why this extreme interest on your part?”

“You still doubt me? Be it so.” He shrugged his shoulders and changed the subject by saying, “’Tis not so bad a country this, if one had never lived in France.”

“It is a very good country in spite of France. We who are émigrés have brought over our own plants, have planted the vegetables familiar to us, and are cultivating the vine. We have modelled our homes upon those we have left, and we are not strangers.”

“We who are émigrés,” he repeated. “I do not accept the term in the case of yourself. You are still a daughter of France, la belle France.”

“Let us return to our first subject. My father, it is of him I think continually. To-day is his fête-day, and for him I dressed in my best that I might do him honor, though he knows it not, and for him I am become a prisoner. Alas, I am unfortunate!” She sighed and folded her hands resignedly.

François watched her for some moments, his head bent, his eyes taking in every detail of the delicate profile, the fine lines of the figure leaning against the post of the porch. “Mademoiselle,” he said at last, “I have another proposition to make. I throw myself at your feet. Escape you may. Your father, too, shall be free if——”

“If——” She turned quickly and leaned eagerly forward. “You mock me, monsieur. What would you say? If——”

“If you will fly with me to Canada.”

“With you?”

“With me, as my wife. Do you not see that I adore you?”

“I do not see it. You scarcely know me, monsieur.”

“To know you an hour is to love you.”

“And Étienne, your friend? This is your honorable love for him.”

“Did I not first plead his cause, and did you not refuse to consider him? Have I placed myself first? Listen, Alaine; it is so easy. We arise early; we go forth. I take you to Canada, to the convent. When you are ready we are united. I do not urge it now?”

I even make this concession : one year and you will marry me. I leave you with the Sisters, and at once I proceed to Guadaloupa, where I win the release of your father. I buy his discharge and I present him to you as my wedding-present. Is it not all so easy? We return to France, to your old home ; you leave behind you but a company of poor peasants, and you return to your own."

"And Étienne?"

"Will submit to the fate which has given you to me rather than to him. I will say, My good friend, I tried to induce mademoiselle to consider you, but since you commissioned me instead of going yourself, you see the result. Is it not so easy, so beautiful, this plan of mine?"

"But my father, you forget as a Huguenot he cannot return to France. How, then, shall I be benefited after all?"

"We can then do this : we can take up a residence in these colonies. I do not even say that I will not in time embrace your religion."

Alaine's heart was beating fast ; she had learned one supreme fact : her father was in Guadaloupa. Inside the house the others were playing cards with many excited exclamations and much laughter ; the clink of mugs of wine, the occasional thump of a hand as it laid a pile of jingling coin upon the table, the stir of a chair upon the bare floor, these sounds broke the stillness. Outside the insects kept up a monotonous jarring noise ; the damps of a Septem-

ber night began to chill the air. Alaine shivered slightly and leaned back again against the post of the porch. Her father's life or hers, for one does not have to die to lay down a life for a friend. At last she drew a long breath. "You would take me away alone?" she asked.

"Marie, the half-breed, shall attend you."

"And your plan is——"

He leaned eagerly forward; she could feel his warm breath against her cheek; where the light of the candles fell on his face she could see the intense-ness of his eyes. Her hands folded themselves in a rigid clasp as she listened to what he said in his low, rapid voice: "To-morrow morning early, very early, by break of day, I will have some one unlock your door, the one toward the rear of the house. Leave your room, follow the entry to the back of the house; at the farthest window you will see a ladder; climb down and follow the path to the edge of the wood; I will be there to meet you. We will go to the water's brink and find the boat left there last night; we have but to pursue our way a little farther and then strike inland, cross the northern colonies to Canada, and all is well."

"But why this great secrecy? These, your friends here, do they not agree with your way of settling this?"

"One cannot tell; they are Frenchmen, but they are also Jesuits; they would not agree to the escape of your father; they might discover our intention

with regard to him." He watched her narrowly to see the effect of his words.

"Oh, my father," she murmured.

"You understand; these men are Frenchmen, and there is war between France and England; there is no need to explain their mission here, nor the reason of secrecy where they are concerned. When they have accomplished their intention they will depart; we shall not see them again, but now, while they are here, one must be discreet."

For a long time Alaine sat with her chin resting in her two hands. At last she spoke: "If I consent to this, you will permit me to send a note to Michelle and M. Mercier to explain that I am safe. They have been very good to me, peasants though you call them."

"You shall certainly do so if it be no more than a note, and if it does not compromise these your present entertainers."

The girl arose to her feet. "Then, monsieur, if you see me at the edge of the wood to-morrow morning it will be because I consent; otherwise I shall have no object in going forth to tread an unknown way. I will retire."

He seized her hand and pressed a kiss upon it, and Alaine shuddered. "I will send Marie to you. Good-night, sweet Alaine," he murmured.

Slowly Alaine ascended the stairs and entered her room. The sound of the revellers came up from below-stairs. The girl knelt before the open win-

dow. Somewhere beneath the stars her father, a wretched slave, was resting. Conform? She would never do that; perhaps, after all, she need not. Yet, the nunnery, the ever-vigilant watchers, the loss of liberty. Alas! alas! there would be worse than all that. If she, of her own accord, by her own efforts, could win her father's release, how hard she would work. She would appeal to her friends; perhaps they could help her. "My father, my father," she sighed, "if I but knew what to do." She leaned her forehead on the window-sill, and back to her remembrance came those peaceful days at home in France before those hours of terror threatened her; then came the recollection of the quiet dwelling in New Rochelle, the good pious parents, the simple, earnest, happy ways. "I know now," she said, rising. "No one, not even my father, would have me seem to renounce my faith for any material good, nor have me live a lie. Die will I, and die must my father, but we will not, we cannot be treacherous to our friends nor our faith. This man, what do I know of him? How can I tell what designs induce his fair promises? No, no; I dare not trust myself in his hands. I do not know much of the world, but I have distrusted him from the first. He may never try to liberate my father once he wins me from my friends; he may be making these fair promises but as a ruse to tempt me away."

Marie's soft step aroused her from her thoughts. There was an angry glitter in the woman's eyes.

“Marie, Marie,” cried Alaine, pleadingly, “I am a lonely, friendless girl; be good to me this night.” Suddenly she slipped the silver chain from her neck, and, stooping, tore the buckles from her shoes. “See, see,” she whispered, “I will give you these if you will help me to escape. I do not want to go with François Dupont; I do not want to go back to France. Oh, Marie, you are a woman, save me.”

The woman’s brown fingers touched the silver ornaments caressingly. “Marie like zis,” she said. “She no like you go wis François Dupont. Marie sink you lof zis man, ees it so, yes?”

“No, no, I love only my own dear people, and I must go back to them. Oh, if I could but reach them on the other side of Long Point, could be sure that they and I were safe! If I could but get home again away from all this! Marie! Marie! help me, and anything I have is yours.”

The woman’s eyes were fixed upon the trinkets, but she raised them and allowed them to travel up and down the girl’s dress, and presently the brown finger pointed to a silver clasp in the shape of a dove which fastened Alaine’s kerchief.

“That, too? Yes, yes; you shall have all if you will but help me away, early, so early, before it is day. Can you? Will you?”

Marie lifted the chain and dropped it from one hand to the other, as she considered the subject. After a few moments she nodded.

“I take you. No Long Point; ozzer place where is some one will show you ze way.”

“Is it far? Can we walk, or do we have to go by water?”

“We walk. Early I come for you. I sleep here. François Dupont say meet him. I meet him.” She nodded her head emphatically. “Before ze sun, he is arise, we go.”

Comforted by this hope of escape Alaine fell asleep, to be awakened before the first indications of dawn had begun to tinge the sky. The gray shadows were just giving place to a streak of light in the east when the two women stole from the house, hurried across the wet grass and into the deep woods. The birds were chirping sleepily in their nests in the trees above them, though it was still dark in the forest. Save for a fox bounding along, a rabbit leaping from the underbrush, or a mole scuttling to his mound, there were no signs of wild creatures. A walk of two or three miles brought the two women to another clearing. Here Marie paused and pointed to a house from the chimney of which a wreath of blue smoke was beginning to curl. “It is there you find friend,” Alaine was told by her companion. “I go to meet François Dupont.”

Alaine caught her hand. “Adieu, Marie! The good God bless you for helping me.”

Marie held up the chain with a grim smile. “I am well pay, mam’selle.” Then she turned and disappeared into the sombre shadows of the woods.

Across the fields Alaine took her way and presented herself before the door of a house. Some one came clattering through the hall as the girl's knock was heard,—a sturdy Dutchwoman, who gazed at this early visitor in stolid surprise. “May I come in?” asked Alaine.

The woman looked at the little shoes, damp with the morning dew, and at the draggled skirts. Then she came out, shut the door behind her, and beckoned Alaine around the corner of the house to the back door, where she pointed to a mat on the step outside the kitchen. Alaine understood. She gave her shoes many rubbings upon the mat and stepped into the kitchen, warm from the wood-fire crackling upon the hearth. After a moment's gazing at the girl the woman pattered off into the house, and came back with a lady, who looked with curious eyes at the intruder. “Who are you, and where do you come from, my child?” she asked. Alaine in her broken English began to stammer out her story. The eyes of the lady lighted up as the stranger's accent bespoke her nationality, and she rapidly put her questions in French, and to these Alaine was able to reply clearly. “Poor little one, a refugee and a tool of enemies. Ah, me, how much wickedness there is in this world! Come see my husband; he is French, a Protestant and an émigré, so you may consult together and, companions in misery, may help each other. We are but guests here ourselves, but Annetje, guessing your French birth, brought me

to you. She is not so stupid as she looks, that good Annetje."

Alaine followed her guide to an inner room. Before a window stood a grave-looking man. "Nicholas, I have brought you a compatriot," said his wife, "and, like a good knight, you must lend your aid to a maiden in distress. This is my husband, Nicholas Bayard," she said, turning to Alaine, "and you are?"

"Alaine Mercier, of the Huguenot colony at New Rochelle. I was carried away from my home yesterday." And she told the details.

Her new-found friends listened attentively. "A plot!" cried Nicholas Bayard, striking his hands together. "French spies, without doubt, those men. Ah, that I had the power to drag them from their retreat! These friends of yours, can you imagine why these men are trying to secure them?"

Alaine answered in the negative.

"I can tell you. They have been commissioned as bearers of messages to certain points. They were to have started to-morrow. Doubtless these men desire to get them into their hands, knowing they are refugees, and that a threat to return them to France will cause them to divulge all they know of the affairs of the colonies. They will probably offer to take them into their service as spies, offering them such reward as they think will be of value to them in return for their promise to act in complicity with them. I think that explains it. We fear a de-

scent of the French and Indians, and I feel quite sure these men are acting for the enemy. As for me, I am a friend of the government, but not of Jacob Leisler, consequently, as an office-holder under James II., I am suspected of upholding the papists. Now you understand why I am here in hiding. You say these messages to your friends mentioned this evening as the time to find you. We must, then, return you before then, but, mind you, not a word of whom you have seen here. These friends of yours are all for Leisler, I suppose."

"Yes, they are Protestant, you know."

"And am I not Protestant? Is not Van Cortlandt Protestant? Bah! 'tis a poor excuse to gain the encouragement of the people. He is a vile upstart and usurper, that Leisler. To hale us out of town, who are the proper upholders of the government. Yet, I suppose you, mademoiselle, also believe in Leisler."

Alaine nodded. She was nothing if not truthful.

"Then no friend of mine," he returned, but he smiled as he spoke. "Poor little dove with the hawks after her," he said, half to himself; "we must send her under safe escort to her home. Where is Lendert, my wife?"

"He is here and ready for breakfast. And will be the more ready when he sees the guest we have," Madame Bayard said, smiling at Alaine. "Our good cousin Lendert Verplanck it is of whom we speak. Here he is. Your aunt will not leave her bed this

morning, cousin, but we have a guest you see, Mademoiselle Mercier, and you may take her out to breakfast."

The good-looking young Dutchman was nothing loath despite Alaine's torn clothes and dilapidated shoes, for it did not need that she should wear dainty raiment; the graceful head and little hands and feet were not those of a peasant.

"Lendert," said his cousin, "it must be you who will see this young lady to her home, for I know none better to protect her by the way."

"A horse from the stable and we are off whenever you say the word, my cousin," he returned. "We can cut across country and be out of the way of followers, I think. Then I will continue on to the city and bring you news of what goes on there. I believe it is not safe for you to venture there while Leisler holds the reins. It is best you should keep your hiding-place a secret." He glanced at Alaine as he spoke.

"It will never be known through me," she ventured, softly, "for, woman though I am, I can keep a secret. My days have been too full of trouble not to know the feeling of one hunted." She smiled at the young man, who protested that he had never dreamed of distrusting her.

"So lovely she is I could wish the way longer," he whispered to his cousin a half-hour later when they set off, Alaine mounted on a pillion behind her cavalier. Her graceful, well-knit, buoyant figure was

a strong contrast to his big heavy one, and her sense of humor of the situation once or twice caused her to smile behind the broad back. Here was she travelling through the country with a strange young man whose rosy Dutch face she had never seen till that morning. What would Michelle say, and Gerard and Pierre? Strange that she had perfect confidence in this escort, and had not the slightest fear of any one or anything while he was there. How angry M. Dupont must be by this time!

She gave a little shiver at the thought, and Lendert's blue eyes cast her a glance over his shoulder. "Are you not comfortable, mademoiselle?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," she returned, "but I suddenly thought of where I might now be but for my good fortune in finding friends."

He nodded in reply. He was rather silent, this young man of the flaxen locks, Alaine considered, but then, like Pierre, he might be of a thoughtful inclination. He was at least a good listener, for although Alaine did not understand Dutch, and his knowledge of French was evidently slight, they both knew enough English to make themselves understood, and Alaine noticed that mynheer could always supply the word over which she hesitated, if not in English then in his familiar Dutch. So that a good understanding between them was reached before they had compassed half their journey.

But it must be said that in following the bridle-

path through the dense forest Alaine felt somewhat less assured. She stopped her eager chatter, and her arm around the waist of Lendert crept closer. At this he turned and smiled at her with a reassuring expression of sympathy. "You are all safe," he told her.

She gave him a smile in return. "I know, but the forests are so still, so deep, so interminable, one fancies, one dreams, one almost fears that something terrifying may be lurking in the unknown beyond." Through the leaves patches of sunlight flickered down upon them; across their pathway a squirrel leaped; birds at their approach started from the branches overhead and, with sudden cries, darted deeper into the dim recesses.

"I know the way well," Lendert told her. "I travel here frequently. Half-way we are. There is a long straight path ahead; you can see where the sunlight comes through the trees all the way."

It was, as he said, a path of sunlight ahead of them, checkered, indeed, by leaf shadows, but much brighter than the surrounding woods. As they advanced something was discerned moving toward them rapidly. Presently their eyes discovered it to be a horseman urging his steed to its utmost. Lendert glanced at his pistols, gathered his bridle more firmly in his hand, cast a reassuring glance at Alaine, and continued his way with seeming placid unconcern. "He journeys fast," he remarked. "A messenger express, I take it." As they drew within

closer range he called out, "What, ho, my friend? What is the news you ride so fast with?"

But Alaine gave a little scream of dismay and hid her face behind Lendert's broad shoulder. She had caught sight of the wrathful countenance of François Dupont.

CHAPTER VI

FOR LIFE OR DEATH

At the sound of Alaine's cry Lendert set spurs to his horse and made a dash past the on-coming rider, but there came a report of a pistol; his hold upon the bridle loosened; he reeled slightly in his saddle: the horse made a plunge forward, then stopped short, and in an instant François was alongside.

"You thought to escape me, my falconet," he cried, "but I have the jesses ready. You do not leave my wrist again. By St. Maclovis, I was in luck to have crossed your path when I was on my way to your hiding-place."

He seized her waist and attempted to drag her from her seat, but she clung to Lendert, down whose cheek the blood was running.

"Mynheer Verplanck," she cried, "do not die! Do not leave me to the mercy of this man!" And she beat off with her fists the hands of the man whose hold was tightening upon her.

For a second Lendert looked around in a dazed way, then his stunned senses returned, and he gave the horse a cut which caused him to spring forward, and the suddenness of the movement dragged François from his saddle, but he clung to Alaine's pillion, and, cat-like, scrambled up behind her. "I also

go," he said. "To quote your favorite Scripture, mademoiselle, 'Whither thou goest I will go.'"

Lendert lashed at him furiously with his whip, at which François gave a low mocking laugh. "I advise you not to attempt that, monsieur," he said; "you might also strike Mademoiselle Hervieu. So closely are we united, she and I, that what touches one touches the other. Is it not so, Mademoiselle Hervieu?"

She made him no answer, but tried to shrink away from his close embrace, and leaning forward, asked, in a low voice, "Are you hurt, Monsieur Verplanck?"

"But slightly," he whispered back.

Alaine made a little exclamation, for at this instant François whipped out his knife to cut the belt into which Lendert's pistols were thrust. These fell with a clatter to the ground. In one moment their owner had pulled in his horse, but to dismount meant to leave Alaine in the hands of her enemy, and he but gave note to the spot and rode on.

"We ride," cried François, "to the devil, maybe, though I fancy your horse may grow weary if the journey be long. I am not of a great weight myself, but monsieur there is not too light, and three of us." He shrugged his shoulders. "Yet, I do not alight while mademoiselle rides," he continued.

Lendert gave a slow, sleepy look over his shoulder. "The mosquito is sometimes bad in the woods," he remarked, confidentially, to Alaine. "After a while

we are able to rid ourselves of the pest." And he turned his horse around.

"Ah-h!" cried François, "I see your manœuvre, monsieur," and with the quickness of a monkey he unloosed Alaine's hands from the hold and leaped with her to the ground, crying, "Ride on, monsieur, you are well rid of the pest, eh? He will satiate himself first, this mosquito." And again a pistol-shot rang out.

"Poltroon! villain!" cried Alaine. "You shoot a man when his back is turned."

"I use the means the good God gives me, mademoiselle. I kill to defend myself, and who would not? I kill even you, yes, rather than that other there possess you."

The pistol-shot had wounded Lendert in the shoulder, but he rode back over the ground at a gallop, was down from his horse in an instant, and picking up his own pistols from where they had fallen, he levelled one at François.

But without hesitation François thrust Alaine in front of him, crying, "This is a fashion of defence employed in some of your colonies, I hear. One Monsieur Bacon has adopted the measure in Virginia, and I follow this excellent American custom, good Sir Avoirdupois. Elephants are clumsy creatures, and the nimble mouse can sometimes get the better of the large beast of the long nose."

Lendert advanced steadily upon him, but, holding Alaine still as a shield, François sprang behind a

tree. "A game, a merry game in the wildwood," he cried. "Catch who can. Advance, monsieur; there are trees enough to enable us to keep up our pastime for many hours, and to resume it to-morrow, if we like. Yet, I fancy, Monsieur Le Gros, you will have lost the taste for sport by that time, judging from the amount of bloodletting I have caused you. Ah-h, mademoiselle, the toil in the fields has given you a peasant's strength, yet it is not worth while to attempt escape; I am the stronger, you see." For Alaine had tried, by a quick jerk, to extricate herself.

For two or three moments Lendert stood silently looking at them, then he gazed around him with a puzzled expression on his quiet heavy face.

"He is at a loss, that Monsieur Le Grand," François whispered, leaning forward and saying the words close to Alaine's ear. "He will presently leave us, since he does not care to have the sport prolonged. Did you think, Alaine, that I did not know the way to win a secret from Marie? Fool that she is, to be dazzled by a few paltry trinkets. I repeat, I am seldom at a loss, and she will do better the next time. You will not have a more vigilant guardian than Marie when she receives you into her keeping this evening. And to-morrow we commence our journey to Canada."

The horses had wandered away some little distance, and were cropping the grass along the path. Toward first one and then the other Lendert advanced, slipped their bridles over their heads, and

led them some little distance, where he fastened them. He next took off the deer-skin hunting-jacket which he wore and sat down upon the ground. Alaine saw that there was a deep red stain coloring the white shirt underneath. She watched him with fascinated eyes. What was he about to do? From his pocket he took his sharp hunting-knife, and, strip by strip, painfully and laboriously, he cut thongs from the deer-skin garment. It must be a painful operation, Alaine considered, for even the slightest movement of the wounded shoulder must give a pang.

“Monsieur Le Gros Cochon amuses himself,” said François. “I could compassionate him upon his lack of freedom of movement; I, too, can use but one arm, hampered as I am by the possession of this Naomi, to whom I have pledged myself, ‘Whither thou goest I will go.’”

“There is at least one place where monsieur cannot accompany me,” remarked Alaine, in cutting tones, and speaking for the first time to her captor.

“And where is that, my Mara, so bitter?”

“To heaven,” Alaine retorted.

François laughed. “Some would say otherwise, mademoiselle. I fancy those from whom you have parted company in la belle France would consign you to a more fiery abode, and since you refuse to conform, I may perhaps not be misunderstood if I employ any means which will still allow me to accompany you even to an uncomfortable place. But

we will discuss this later. There will be time enough. At present I am rather curious to discover our large friend's intention. It seems the work of an imbecile to cut one's clothes to pieces, wanting something else to do. Perchance he wishes to take me off my guard and seeks to mislead me by playing the fool, so that I will release you, but I hold you fast, do I not, my falconet?"

Lendert arose to his feet. His ruddy countenance was growing strangely white; his flaxen hair was dappled with blood and his shirt was stiffened by the same, but in his blue eyes there was the steady look of obstinate resolve.

"I think we may attempt to run now, mademoiselle," said François. "He cannot follow very fast nor very long. I regret that I cannot spare time from my devoted attention to you to reload my pistols. I may need them."

"You will not find yourself very light of foot with a dead weight to drag behind you," vouchsafed Alaine.

"But if I lead the chase, Monsieur Le Cochon Hollandais cannot keep up the pace for very long; he bleeds freely, the stuck pig. See, I start." He pushed the girl behind him, clasped her arms around his waist, and, holding her hands in front of him, set off on a run.

But Alaine, as she felt his left hand fumble for his pistols, let herself drop to her knees.

At this instant there came a singing, whirring

sound ; a slender leather rope whizzed through the air and fell about them, tightening around the man's shoulders with a jerk. He was brought to a standstill ; then as the thongs enclosed him more securely his arms were forced back by the strain, and the girl saw her opportunity. A short struggle and she was able to make her escape. She rushed breathlessly toward Lendert. "Monsieur Verplanck, I will help you," she cried.

François bowed himself and fiercely tore at the slender deer-skin thongs, and at last, running backward, was able to slacken the cord and to wriggle himself out of its hold. A moment more and his pistol was ready in his hand. Alaine foresaw his intention, and before he could fire she sprang before her deliverer, who had sunk upon his knees and was leaning heavily against a tree, all his strength gone from this last effort. "Monsieur," cried the girl, "it is an American custom, you say, to use a woman as a shield. Monsieur Verplanck has proved that it is false, and that it is but the makeshift of a coward. Yet, because you have shown me how powerful a shield a woman can be, I stand here." She gave a quick glance at the fainting figure before which she stood ; then she lifted her head high and faced François. "I defy you, monsieur," she said.

He rushed at her blind with rage. "I will kill you before you shall escape me!" he cried.

"Kill me if you will. I have warned you that where I go you cannot follow. Do you think me so

great a coward as to be afraid to die?" she asked, with a mocking look in her great eyes. "Death comes to all, and what matter when or where? Shall I be worse off in that other world because you choose to be the means of sending me there before God wills it so? Or shall you be better off here when I am gone, and after, when you go to face God's judgment of you? Take my life? You cannot; it is God's, who gave it, and it is for the life eternal. Kill me if you will; you lose all if you do and I gain everything."

Twice he lifted his pistol; twice it dropped to his side. "I will wait till your friend is dead," he said at last, in sinister tones. "'Twill not be long. I will wait, mademoiselle. It is sometimes better to endure patiently, say you Huguenots, therefore I follow your example. A dead man needs no shield, and, also, can tell no tales."

Alaine cast a frightened glance at the drooping figure behind her. "Monsieur Verplanck," she cried, in dread, "if I but dared to turn my back, but yonder wretch has no conscience, and he would finish the work he has begun. I must keep my face toward him to watch him, but I will try to stanch your wound." She took the kerchief from her neck, and without exposing him to the possible attack from François, managed to twist a tourniquet above the place which bled the most freely, after which she arose to her feet, and stood again defiant, determined. The eyes of her enemy were bent

fixedly upon her. She closed her own and began to sing one of the familiar psalms.

“ Aux paroles que je veux dire,
 Plaise toi l'oreille prester:
 Et à cognoistre t'arrester,
 Pourquoi, mon cœur, pense et soupire,
 Souverain Sire,”

rang out the plaintive voice in the still forest. “Sovereign Sire” came the echo. Was it an echo? Alaine's dark eyes grew more intense as she listened. Faintly upon the air came the second stanza of the psalm,—

“ Enten à la voix très ardente,
 De ma clameur, mon Dieu, mon Roy,
 Veu que tant seulement à toi
 Ma supplication présente
 J'offre et présente.”

Nearer and nearer came the voice, and with all her heart in her singing Alaine continued, but before she had finished the third stanza the song ended suddenly, and her glad cry was, “Pierre! Here, Pierre, mon ami! Praise to the good God, thou art come!” Then from the greenwood strode Pierre Boutillier, who stopped in amazement at the sight of Alaine standing guard over a prostrate man, while the form of François Dupont retreated down the path into the forest beyond.

“Pierre, Pierre, hasten! I dare not move. Se-

cure yonder man." Alaine's trembling finger pointed to François.

Pierre rushed forward. François raised his pistol and half turned in his flight, but before he was able to fire he stumbled and fell forward on his face.

"God have mercy!" cried Alaine. "Pierre, have you killed him?"

He stooped and turned over the body of the man at his feet. "No, he lives. It was his own pistol gave the hurt; it went off as his foot struck the root of this tree where he fell."

"God have mercy!" again whispered Alaine. "Then, Pierre, we have two of them wounded. And how did you find me? And is this not a terrible thing, all this? Have you some spirits? Monsieur Verplanck has fainted. Is it not strange that I am not dead? I thought my last hour had come. And you, Pierre, you are not hurt?"

He assured her that he was untouched, and then busied himself in ministering to Lendert while Alaine poured forth her story.

"We have been scouring the woods," Pierre told her, "and I took this direction, and when I heard your voice I knew the good God had put my feet upon the right path. Gerard is not far away. I think I can summon him. We were to meet at the end of this path when the sun was noon high. There, your friend is recovering; he opens his eyes."

"You are better, monsieur," said Alaine, softly, kneeling down by him. "Now, pray you, Pierre,

see to that other unfortunate. One would not have the blood even of an enemy upon his head; but, Pierre, I advise you to secure him that he does not move. He is possessed of the very evil one for strategy. Yet he spared me," she murmured. "If you find you can restore him, go you and find Gerard, and I will wait here. I am no longer afraid." She raised her lovely eyes to his, and Pierre with a swift movement caught her hands.

"I thought you dead, Alaine," he said, brokenly. "I thought I should see you nevermore in this world."

Lendert lay watching them. He stirred slightly, and Alaine with a soft flush on her cheek bent over him solicitously. "We are safe," she told him. "My good friend Pierre Boutillier, who has been out with a search-party looking for me, has arrived and goes for succor."

"And the Frenchman?" said Lendert, feebly.

"He is wounded sorely by a shot from his own pistol. He is not able to move, and can do no one harm for some time to come. We will take you to our home and nurse you well, monsieur." She nodded brightly as he shook his head. "'Tis no more than our right, since you were hurt in my service. But for me you might now be safe and unhurt. Will you not allow me to pay my debt? Mère Michelle is a famous nurse, and can make you strengthening soups such as you never ate, and will have you up and about in no time. I think you will

allow it is best, M. Verplanck. Besides," she lowered her voice, "it would not do to let it be known that Monsieur Bayard abides so near. I would not bring trouble upon him and madame, his wife, and so—— No, no, it is not that Pierre and Gerard and Papa Louis would try to do evil to one who had befriended me, but it might be inconvenient for them to know where hides Monsieur Bayard. Is it not so? You agree?"

"I agree," he answered; "though I do not wish to give you the trouble of nursing me."

Alaine had cut away the sleeve and was carefully examining the wound. "It is not severe, I think. You will not be very long an invalid. The loss of blood has weakened you. I ought to go to yonder man now."

Lendert looked at her in surprise.

"He is my enemy, yes, but one ought to do good to one's enemy," she said, simply. "I will first bind up your wound with these bandages steeped in the wine which Pierre has brought, and you will feel better."

But she was spared the necessity of giving attention to François, for Pierre and Gerard were soon with him. Alaine threw herself into Gerard's arms. "My brother," she cried, "I am here! Is it not wonderful that I am here? And you have been all night seeking me. I am thankful that you have found me; you do not know how thankful I am that Pierre came at that moment. You did not re-

ceive my message, for you have not been at home, and for that I am also thankful. All is well, very well, save that M. Verplanck is suffering for his defence of me. As for that other, he is punished for his wickedness. M. Verplanck does not deserve punishment, and yet he has it."

"We all deserve punishment," said Pierre, solemnly.

"That may be," returned Alaine, "but for me, I do not wish to say why one should suffer for his good deeds. No doubt the good God knows, but still I say if M. Verplanck suffers it may be for his good, but not because he deserves punishment. For what should he, Pierre, when he has but defended me?"

Pierre shook his head. "I cannot say, Alaine."

"And you, Gerard, is it punishment, think you?"

Gerard laughed. "To stop here in the forest to discuss a theological question when two suffering men are to be removed to a more comfortable place seems unnecessary. If you and Pierre must debate let it be on the way home. If your friend there can ride let him mount his horse, and I will take the other steed and bear the more injured one upon it. You and Pierre can walk, unless Pierre would prefer to be guard for M. Dupont."

But here Lendert interposed. "Why cannot Mlle. Mercier travel with me the same as before, on my horse?"

Alaine looked at Lendert and then at Pierre. "I

will walk till I am tired," she gave her decision, "and then, M. Verplanck, I will ride."

The tedious journey came to an end when the little hamlet of New Rochelle was reached that afternoon. Papa Louis was overtaken before they had come to the edge of the woods. "A pretty plot for a romance," he exclaimed, after clasping Alaine and kissing her on each cheek; "a lost ward returning with four attendant knights, and some of them wounded in the fray? Who are these, my daughter?"

"These, Papa Louis? Ah, it is a long story! I will walk with you and tell you my romance, as you call it; a strange one, indeed. Captured by Indians, rescued by yonder gentleman, wrested from him by the other, so sorely hurt. Am I not the heroine of a romance? Yet it has been a sad time for me, and I would rather the humdrum of every day so I be safe with you and Mère Michelle."

"And for what was it all?" asked Papa Louis, knitting his brows as Alaine went into the particulars of her experience.

"That I cannot altogether tell. I half doubt M. Dupont's words, though he acts the distracted lover, he who has seen me but two or three times."

Papa Louis shook his head. "It will be for Michelle to unravel it. She is very acute, is my Michelle, and though she has not the learning from books, she has a penetration unexcelled. She is distracted, the poor one; she one moment thinks you

destroyed by wolves, the next drowned in the waters of the sound, and again she declares you have been carried away by savages. She has not slept, neither has she eaten a mouthful. As for the neighbors, they have sent out search-parties in all directions. The news of your return must be given and the signal-fire lighted."

And, indeed, there was a great running to doors and windows and a great bustle in the street when the little procession wended its way through the village. Mère Michelle, weeping, fell on Alaine's neck. "She that was lost is found! Helas! my Alainette, how I have grieved for thee! On my knees all night, save when I watched from the window, prying into the darkness for a torch-light which might tell of your safe return." But here the good woman's attention was distracted by the sight of the two patients. Gerard and Pierre bore the unconscious François into the house and laid him on one of the beds, and Papa Louis assisted Lendert with much show of concern. Lendert protested, but was made to occupy the other bed, and this strange situation brought a grim smile to Pierre's lips.

Michelle, running from one to the other, directing, exclaiming, rejoicing, grieving, had her hands full. "Heat me a kettle of water, Louis. Ah, mon cœur, but he is badly hurt, this wicked one. Thank heaven! you escaped, my Alaine. Yet see your best silk gown, a rag, a fringe, and your buckles gone from your shoes, which are fit only for burning,

so skinned and torn are they, and where will you get another pair? Alas! you come back poorer than you went. A stoup of wine, Gerard, for this gentleman grows faint. He is of good stuff, for he has not flinched, and his shoulder must be very painful. Steep the bandages well, Gerard. Art better, monsieur? There, I think we must keep you very quiet. The other is of no weight. I could lift him myself, but he is the color of wax. He is not fit to die, the miserable, and we must save him for God knows what, yet we cannot let even an enemy go directly to burn in hell, as he surely would."

The eyes of the sufferer opened slowly; they caught sight of Alaine. "Whither thou goest," the white lips murmured, and Alaine, bravely as she had endured everything else, now burst into tears, and sobbed inconsolably upon Papa Louis's shoulder.

CHAPTER VII

WHITHER THOU GOEST

“DID I not say that I was not to be shaken off?” were the first words that greeted Alaine as she passed by the bed of François Dupont the next morning. “A charming situation, this; I could not have played my cards better. For what else but this sorry wound could have made me an inmate of your household? I am here—pouf! and you cannot move me or I die. I am lucky, by St. Michael.” The triumphant look in his eyes for an instant made Alaine pause, a retort upon her lips, but she passed on without a word. “Water! A draught of water; I am so parched!” cried François.

Alaine looked around. Mère Michelle was preparing a broth and was giving all her attention to it. Gerard and Papa Louis were not within-doors.

“A cup of water, Alaine,” said Michelle, without taking her eyes from the bubbling mess over which she stood. “Give him a fresh drink from the well. I am at a most critical point with this, and I dare not leave. Hasten back, for my hands are full. We shall have help later in the day.”

Silently Alaine took her cup to the well, in her heart protesting at having to do this service. “A wicked girl am I who am not willing to obey my

Bible, which says, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.' Helpless though he be, I still fear M. Dupont. I could, an' it were not wicked, I could wish he were never to leave his bed." She caught sight of Pierre across the street, and she called, "Pierre, Pierre!"

He came toward her gladly, a smile curving his grave lips. "Take this cup and give a drink to M. Dupont," she said. "I do not wish to be the bearer. I will not cheat him out of the water, but I will cheat him out of my service of it. Do not look so judicial, my friend. He is mine enemy, yet am I not sufficiently complaisant in sending him the water by such a good messenger as yourself? Carry it to him, good Pierre. How is Mathilde? And will all the village flock to behold me this morning? There, take in the cup, and tell Mère Michelle that I have gone to speak to Papa Louis, and that I will return in a moment."

Pierre took the cup without protest and entered the house. "Wait there till I come back," Alaine called after him, and then she disappeared into the garden.

The melancholy face of the young Huguenot bent over the pillow of François. "I bring you water," he said.

François opened his eyes. "So I am not to be favored by grace from my lady's hand. I will win it yet, and would win it the sooner were it not for yonder lubberly piece of flesh which sleeps so

soundly in his bed. By my faith, he did not stir when the demoiselle herself entered. I am a rack of pain and parching with fever, yet she bestows not a glance of compassion upon me, while she tiptoes past yonder Sir Mount-of-Flesh as he were a sleeping infant. I owe you small thanks for your part in this pain I bear, but I am under obligation to you, monsieur, for the good turn you have unwittingly done me in causing me to be in a condition to be brought here perforce, and I thank you for the cooling draught of water."

"Monsieur, you talk too much," came from Michelle. "I cannot answer for your recovery if, with a fever upon you, you chatter like a magpie."

"I will subside when I am ready," said François, "good Michelle, who, I remember well, has scolded me before in those old days in France, when Étienne Villeneau and I robbed her currant-bushes."

"Tchut, monsieur! you vagarize. You are wandering. I pray you compose yourself. Look yonder at M. Verplanck; he has the docility of a lamb. I say, 'Sleep;' he sleeps. I say, 'Eat;' he eats. I say, 'Drink this,' and he swallows my mess however nauseous. He will recover, that lamb."

"And I will not?"

"You will be longer at it, monsieur."

"Then I converse. I address myself to you, if you are here; to Monsieur Lamb, be he asleep or awake; to the wall; the fire."

Mère Michelle turned her back upon him and

beckoned Pierre to the window. "'Tis about Alaine I wish to speak," she began, in a low tone. "This will be upon the tongues of all, and monsieur there is too ready of speech. We must not let the whole story be known. We shall say that Alaine was captured by the Indians, who in their drunken frolic did not know what they were doing, but coming to their senses abandoned her and she was rescued by M. Verplanck; that you came upon them returning here; that M. Dupont was found wounded in the wood, and you brought him also. This is all strictly true, Pierre; a good Huguenot cannot lie, yet we must shield Alaine. You must say, Pierre, that our patients are too ill to receive company, and so will we keep off the curious ones. You agree, Pierre?"

"I agree."

"Then tell Alaine that I wish her here. Cœur de mon cœur, but I fear to have her out of my sight." She turned back toward the fire as Pierre closed the door and went out.

"I detest you, monsieur, I am ready to confess; I detest you. To yon funeral-faced Huguenot I am grateful because, though I would have fired at him, it was to secure my liberty, and he understands; but as for you, Monsieur Ox, Monsieur Beef, I detest you, sleeping there like a log." François rambled on. "No, Michelle, I will not be still. I am entertaining to myself, and I talk. I will drink your well dry, but I will take none of your herbs, nor your nauseous potions. I shall not die because I will to live. I

am of a strong will, Madame Mercier, who was Michelle Assire back there in France, and I do not mean to die just yet. A drink of water when I ask it, and you are free to pour your messes down yonder bumpkin's throat. I confess I would heal the sooner were he elsewhere, for I detest him, that Monsieur Blubber-fat."

"For shame, monsieur," Michelle chid him gravely. "You have done much more to offend than has M. Verplanck, and you must not call him such names here in my house."

"You cannot help it, Michelle, for you do not desire to pitch me out of doors and have my life on your conscience. Besides, he cannot speak French, and it amuses me to call him names. Ho, there, Ox! Wake up."

Michelle, distressed, hurried to Lendert's bedside.

"His brain wanders, good sir. I pray you do not mind him," she said, in anxious explanation.

Lendert smiled and turned his head. "Ho there, Mosquito!" he said, sleepily. "I thought I heard you buzz some time ago."

Michelle looked helplessly from one to the other. "You see he does understand more than you think. I shall have to separate you, gentlemen, if you are bound to carry on your differences here side by side."

And true enough, François found his defiance went for little, for, with Gerard's help, Michelle screened him in, and he was not allowed the diver-

sion of watching what went on outside the counterpanes which served as partitions to shut off his bed from the rest of the room. His chatter sometimes sank into a murmur, but he talked incessantly, while Lendert lay docility itself.

“She is distraught, is Mère Michelle,” Alaine told Pierre that same afternoon, “so distraught that I do not dare tell her the news of my father, nor what I intend to do when these two are well. I cannot leave her now, it would be too cruel, but I intend to rescue him, Pierre. I have told no one, not even Gerard, nor Papa Louis, what I mean to do.”

Pierre looked down at her concernedly. “And what is it, Alaine?”

“I mean to go to Guadaloupa. Surely they will accept me in my father’s stead, one as young and strong as I.”

He gave a smothered groan. “You know not of what you speak, Alaine. Once there you and he would both be restrained. You cannot, must not attempt it.”

The tears gathered in Alaine’s eyes. “But my father, I cannot let him remain bound when I go free. They will take me, Pierre. You surely do not think they would not do it.”

His eyes had a far-off look in them as she went on. “You have been so peaceful, so happy here,” he said.

“I cannot be happy now; I can never be happy while he is there. I should be content, I would

serve joyfully, if he were free. All my life there will be that misery at my heart if he dies an engagé and I make no effort to free him."

"What is your plan?" Pierre asked after a silence.

"I thought to go to Manhatte to find a ship sailing for the islands and touching at Guadaloupa. I have a little money, and I could earn more. I would sell anything I possess to add to the sum to pay my passage, and once there I would find my father's master. Oh, Pierre,—his master! You know what that means, for you have escaped from one. I would say, Here am I, young, strong, and willing; take me and let my father go."

Pierre shook his head. "That cannot be. You would never accomplish it, Alaine, but I will consider what is to be done, and we will speak of it again. Now I must warn you to be cautious how you tell of your experience. Not even to Mathilde must you tell all."

"I know. Mère Michelle has advised me. And I, also, warn you, Pierre. The three notes which came while you were off in the woods looking for me, I wrote them, yes, you know that, but those who bade me do so are spies; therefore beware, if you must go on any mission. You might be captured, and it would be best to take some other route than that you intended. This François Dupont may be a spy for all we know, and you must be very wary of him."

“And M. Verplanck, is he also an enemy?”

Alaine looked down. “I do not know, Pierre. I do not think he is.”

“Where does he live? How did you encounter him? I have not yet been informed of the whole matter.”

“I was directed to his aunt’s house by the woman Marie, and there I met him.”

“You saw his aunt?” Pierre looked down at the girl’s drooping head.

She hesitates a moment. “No, I did not see her. She was ill of a migraine. I saw another lady; her cousin.”

“And who was she?”

Alaine was silent.

“Did you see any other?”

“Yes, the Dutchwoman who rules the kitchen.”

“And no one else?”

Alaine gave her head a toss. “You question too closely, Monsieur Pierre; beyond your right, and beyond what I choose to answer.” She dimpled and smiled as she looked up into his grave face. “Mère Michelle warned me of speaking too minutely of my experiences. I take her advice.” She walked away. Pierre followed her a few steps.

“Alaine, Alainette,” he called, softly.

She paused under the shadows of the trees. He came close and said, slowly, “I have not the right to question you, Alaine, but I love you, Alaine. I love you.”

She sighed and glanced at him from under her long lashes. "Papa Louis and Mère Michelle have designed to marry me to Gerard."

"And Gerard?"

"Loves Mathilde better."

"Mathilde?"

"Yes; and you, do you not love Mathilde?"

"I love her, yes, as one does a sister; not as I do you, Alaine."

"As I love Gerard and as he loves me, no doubt. But one must be guided by one's parents."

"And your parents; one is in heaven, the other in Guadaloupa, as you have told me. Therefore, Alaine——"

"Therefore I have no one to whom I can refer you except Papa Louis and Mère Michelle."

"And yourself, Alaine? Ah, if you but knew how anguished I was at your disappearance; if you knew how I have thought of you, of you only since that blessed Sunday when you walked to church."

"And not before?"

"Before? Yes, ever since your little face like a star came to illumine my sky."

Alaine put her head bird-wise to one side. "You are a poet? I never knew that. You are so solemn, as an owl, Pierre. We should quarrel, yes, about those questions of theology. I am light-minded; when I have thrown aside a sorrow you do not know how I make merry over little things, and that would seem childish and unbecoming to you."

“You are not really that, Alaine. You are full of courage and dignity, yet you are also like the birds who sing. Ah, my soul, when I heard your voice in the woods singing ‘Aux paroles que je veux dire,’ I thought I should expire with joy.”

“Poor Pierre! I do not know, my friend; I, too, was overjoyed at sight of you, but—no, no, not so near—I do not know, I cannot tell whether it was because of its being Pierre Boutillier or whether it was because it was a deliverer. And then, Pierre,—this is my real reason,—as I have told you, I must release my father before I can consider a marriage with any one.”

“And if I could—if I should release him you would—Alaine, you would marry me?”

“I can make no promise. I would then marry him of whom my father should say, This is he whom I wish for my son. But if there is no way, no way, Pierre, save that I spoke of to you, I must go. You will learn about a ship for me?”

“I will do that.”

“Soon?”

“As soon as I can. There are things I must do first. I have to go away on a mission, Alaine-ette.”

“For whom?”

“For Governor Leisler. When I return I will see you, and then——”

“And then? Why do you look so miserable, Pierre?”

“Because I love you. You do not know how I love you, my Alainette.”

“Not yours, nor any one’s, but my father’s.”

“Whom you shall see again if he be alive.”

“Mère Michelle is calling me ; I must go.”

“You will let me say good-by to you here.”

“Yes ; but it need not be a long farewell I hope.”

“He caught her hands and pressed fervent kisses upon them. “God bless thee, now and forever,” he murmured.

“He is so good, that Pierre,” thought Alaine, as she walked slowly toward the house. “Ciel ! who would dream that he could say such things, he is so grave and solemn, my owl Pierre. I am very fond of him, I confess, but a maid has many minds, and now I have begun to fancy that blue eyes, sleepy blue eyes,—no, not always sleepy,—but honest blue eyes, may be more charming than black or brown. Black I like not ; no, I like them not. I fear it will be, Adieu, Pierre ; yet if you bring my father to me I keep my promise, good Pierre. I am very foolish ; a maid should not let her fancy rove when her parents have made a choice for her.”

“Alaine, Alaine !” called a voice from the garden.

“Yes, yes, Gerard, I come. Here I am,” she answered.

The young man waiting for Alaine at the edge of the garden was gazing over field and orchard. The young trees but a year ago planted gave promise of thriving well, and of supplying luscious peaches or

bouncing apples. The treasured vines, so carefully guarded in their transport from France, had grown sufficiently to twist their slender tendrils around the trellis built for them. In the garden-beds flourished endive, chicory, and those garden-stuffs dear to the French palate. Beyond the enclosure stretched fields of maize yellow for the harvest.

“It is a quiet, pleasant little home, Alaine,” said Gerard; “we owe it to Mère Michelle and Papa Louis that it is ours, is it not so?”

She came over to his side and leaned against the fence. “We owe them much, Gerard.”

“And because they have sacrificed themselves for us we should not show ourselves ungrateful.”

“You have worked with a good will, Gerard, side by side with Papa Louis in the garden, and, ciel! how many miles you must have walked in planting and tending the maize in the fields!”

“And you, Alaine, how your little hands have spun and scoured and toiled! You were not meant to do such things, my sister.”

“Nor were you, my brother.”

“Nor was Papa Louis meant to be a tiller of the ground. All of us save Mère Michelle have stepped out of the world in which our fathers lived. It was for us, I am sure, Alaine, that Papa Louis married. It was for me that he fled from France and became an émigré here in America. I well remember that flight in the dead of night, and the sound of the dragonnade. Papa Louis could have gone alone more

easily, but he took me, who had not always been the most diligent of pupils.”

“And Mère Michelle could have escaped without me, but burden herself she would. And when I was ill, how she tended me on that long voyage over, and before that and since !”

“And myself the same. She is a good nurse, a good wife, a good mother, that Mère Michelle.”

“And Papa Louis always so cheerful, so gay, and never willing to admit failure. So ready to help with his little strength. He has been very good to us, a giant in love and faithfulness.”

“And therefore, Alaine.”

“Therefore——”

“We should please them, those two, by acceding to their wishes.”

“We should do that, Gerard, yet——”

“You understand ?”

“Yes, I understand.”

“They would have us marry and succeed to the little farm they have begun to love so dearly, and where they hope to pass the rest of their days. They would have us to dwell here with them, to cherish them in their old age ; and have they not a right to expect that we will regard their wishes ?”

“Yes ; but, Gerard, I have made a promise.”

“Alaine ! Without consulting them ?”

“I was obliged to ; it was to Pierre. I promised him that I would marry whom my own father should desire. He may be alive, Gerard, and I am nursing

a little hope that he will return to me. Pierre is arranging a plan."

"But there is Mathilde."

"What of her?"

"Her uncle and aunt wish to see her married to Pierre."

Alaine's eyes danced and she laughed. "And you, Gerard, you would be delighted if it were arranged, I am sure."

He laughed too. "I see, then, there is nothing to be done at once. What is it that Pierre purposes doing? What is this plan of which you speak?"

Alaine shook her head. "Say nothing of it, Gerard. Leave it for a time. I fear it may be that my father no longer lives, yet I heard of him in Guadaloupa."

"And you love this sober Pierre?"

"I think he is very good, and if my father should say, Alaine, marry him, I should obey. It is he I should consider first, is it not, Gerard?"

"Of course. And if he does not say this?"

"I do not know what."

"Then there is nothing to do but to wait and see. We are young, Alaine, my sister, and we are very happy here in this little village."

"Yes, I am, or I would be if I could know my father were well and safe. You, Gerard, would be happy if it were Mathilde whom you were to bring home. I understand, my brother, that it would not be so hard to marry Alaine if Mathilde were prom-

ised to another, but she is not, you see, and therefore I think we will say no more on the subject at present. I do not wish to do wrong to Papa Louis and Mère Michelle, but we can wait. Yet I am afraid of yonder man who lies ill at home, and I think so is Mère Michelle."

"Not M. Verplanck; the other, you mean."

"The other who swears that whither I go he will follow. And there is also Étienne."

"Myself, Pierre, M. Dupont, and Étienne." Gerard counted on his fingers. "How many more, Alaine? Shall we add M. Verplanck?"

She blushed and looked down, but laughed. "You tease me, Gerard. I will tell you how it is. Of them all it is Pierre alone who loves me. Étienne, maybe, has a pride in uniting the estates, for I believe if I were to return it would be that they need not be confiscated, so Michelle says. He also hates the Protestants, and thinks if he could win me back it would be a great achievement. He loves me in a way, but only to the advantage of himself. He desires to rule, to have his way, and he cannot bear that a girl should prevent that. You, yourself, Gerard, are my brother, my dearly loved brother; that is enough. M. Dupont I cannot understand; he professes to adore me, yet there is something behind it all. I do not understand, I only fear."

Gerard took her hand and stroked it softly. "Do not be afraid, little sister. You have left out M. Verplanck," he said, after a moment's reflection.

“M. Verplanck but performed a knightly deed in escorting me, a lost maiden, to her home; he defended me as he would any other in distress. He will return to his family when he has recovered, and that will be the end of that. One thing troubles me, Gerard: why did those men seek to lure you to a certain spot through me?”

“They are French spies, we think, and seek to learn something to their advantage through the emissaries sent out to the various villages and settlements. We uphold Jacob Leisler, the friend of the people, the upholder of a Protestant king. We have the confidence of those who believe in him rather than in those aristocrats, Bayard and Van Cortlandt and Phillipse. There is much that you do not understand, my sister, and I am not at all sure but that we have enemies nearer home than France, enemies who would work the ruin of any belonging to our party.”

“And you will not go with messages to warn the settlements of danger from the French?”

“I will go where I am sent. Pierre and I will go; Papa Louis, no. We have another selected in his place.”

“And you start?”

“To-morrow. That is why I wanted to talk to you. I thought should anything happen to me it might be a comfort to the good parents to know that we were fiancée.”

“If anything were to happen to you they would

not be so easily comforted. We are brother and sister, Gerard, and I am fiancée to no one. There is Mère Michelle calling. I have left her there with those two miserables to nurse, and I chatter here half the afternoon.”

CHAPTER VIII

PLOT AND COUNTER-PLOT

THE situation in New York at this time was exciting. The air was rife with reports that the Roman Catholics of other colonies adjacent were making preparations to march upon New York, and that there were persons within the city's borders who were willing to betray it into the hands of those opposed to Protestantism. It was even rumored that General Dongan was in the plot, and the people turned to Jacob Leisler, that impetuous, if indiscreet, upholder of the liberties of the people. Having first seized the fort, he turned out the English troops, established himself in the name of the common people, and defied his enemies. It was quite natural that many of the Huguenots, dreading an establishment of that power from which they had already suffered so much, should cling to Leisler's cause, and that the Dutch militia, all strong Protestants, should also array themselves against any government which represented a Jacobite king. Yet there were many office-holders who because of their being members of the same church as Leisler should have been above suspicion, but the impetuous Leisler did not believe in half measures, and pursued, denounced, and arrested in a wholesale manner. It

was all or nothing with him, and honest as his intentions doubtless were, his hammer-and-nails way of dealing with his political opponents, his lack of tact, and his uncompromising faculty of making enemies at last brought about his own downfall.

Without being aware of it those under the roof of the Merciers were at loggerheads. Papa Louis and Gerard were strong upholders of Jacob Leisler; Lendert Verplanck was as strongly arrayed on the side of Van Cortlandt, Bayard, and Phillipse; while François Dupont, an ardent Frenchman, was ready to do what mischief he could to any foe of his own country. He considered that no means should be despised if it brought about the ultimate benefit to France, and he was ready to declare himself a friend to any cause if by so doing he could accomplish his ends.

“I love France. How, then? Who of her children does not?” he exclaimed, when Mère Michelle suspiciously sought to fathom his errand to New York. “You yourself, madame, and your good husband there, are you not also the same? And that old man of whom you tell me, he who goes every day to look toward France and to stretch out his hands in her direction, émigré though he is, has he forgotten his love for his country. Of what do you accuse me? Of being a Frenchman instead of a Dutchman, or an Englishman? Am I not Rouennese, and therefore the more your compatriot? Judge me not so ill as to think I plot against you, Mère Michelle.”

“I trust you not, else why did you steal away my child, my Alainette?”

“I steal her away?” He laughed. “’Twas I who rescued her from those who were her captors. Yes, yes, I know you will not believe that, nor that when the Indian brought her in I was as surprised as any one. Those in whose company she found me are no more your enemies than the Dutch monsieur yonder who receives your good offices. The story is this: Mademoiselle is carried off by a thieving Indian, who, for hope of reward, brings her to us with a tale of having rescued her from his comrades. I desire to aid mademoiselle to a return to her rightful possessions, and I offer her escape from yonder Dutchman, whose good intentions I have no reason to know. She, in a spasm of fear, resents this, and behold the result; I suffer from a gunshot wound, and monsieur, the Dutchman, suffers from my self-defence, and here we are.”

Michelle, slowly stirring a cup of broth, listened, but was not convinced by his plausible tale. “You have been too near to death, monsieur,” she said, “and you should not lie to me.”

“Mon Dieu! and do I lie? I lie on this good bed far too long. When do I arise, Mother Michelle?”

“Not for some days.”

“And monsieur, the Dutch ox?”

“M. Verplanck will arise to-day and will soon be on his way home.”

The eyes of François shone with satisfaction.

“Pray God we have a chance to meet on other than neutral ground. Pig that he is! I would fain have a good sword-arm to use when we do meet.”

“Why do you not strive to love your enemies, monsieur?” said Michelle, with unmoved gravity.

“Strive? I do not strive for such sorry results. He is your enemy as well as mine. Do you love him?”

“I am not averse to him; he seems a well-disposed and amiable young man.”

“Who will go hence and do you a harm when he gets a chance. Do you not know him for an aider and abettor of King James’s minions,—a Jacobite?”

“I know him for nothing but a wounded stranger who is patient and grateful.”

“And you think I am neither. I may prove to be both some day. To-morrow I arise from my bed, Mère Michelle, and that Dutchman yonder leaves the house.”

“Ta-ta-ta, but he is the very evil one, that M. Dupont,” Michelle confided to her husband the next day. “I am thankful, Louis, that you remain with us, else I know not what might happen here.”

Papa Louis swelled out his breast in conscious pride of his office as protector. “I remain, my wife, and you need have no fear; though Gerard and Pierre have departed, I remain.”

“I trust those two will return.”

“And why not?”

“There are signs and rumors and distresses; one cannot tell who is safe. If the French be ready to descend upon us we shall, ah, my husband! we shall again fall under the shadow of persecution.”

Papa Louis spread out his fingers and raised his hand as if to say, That flies away, that possibility. “For myself I am not anticipating that,” he said. “The good God who has brought us this far will not desert us.”

At this moment a white face and tottering form appeared from behind the curtain at the other side of the room. “Monsieur, you are defying Providence!” cried Michelle.

“I said I would arise, and I keep my word. Give me your shoulder, good Papa Mercier, and I will get to that seat by the door. Mon Dieu! but it is good to see the sunshine again. Ho, there, lubber, I am up before you!”

He turned toward the bed occupied by Lendert, and Papa Louis chuckled at his sudden change of expression. “Whom do you address, M. Dupont? Is it perhaps M. Verplanck? He has been sitting outside the door this half-hour.”

François ground his teeth. “The pig! How did he manage it?”

“You were asleep and we helped him quietly to dress. You would best sit here, monsieur.”

“No, nearer, where I can look out. Ah-h, I see why that other sits there outside; that he may the better converse alone with mademoiselle. I will be

watch-dog, Papa Mercier. You do not guard your daughter any too well."

"She needs no overlooking," spoke up Michelle, sharply, "and it is not M. Verplanck from whom she must be guarded."

François laughed mockingly. "We will prove the truth of that later on." He dropped trembling into his chair and gazed out upon the autumn landscape showing that haziness peculiar to the season. Under a large tree were two figures: Lendert Verplanck and Alaine. The girl with her hands folded before her was talking earnestly to the young man, with once in a while a toss of her head toward the house.

"They speak of me, no doubt," said François.

"You are egotist, monsieur," laughed Papa Louis as he was about to leave the room.

François called him back and motioned to a chair opposite. "Sit there, M. Mercier," he said. "I have said to Madame Mercier that I may yet be able to prove myself a grateful, if I have not been a welcome, guest. I see that mademoiselle has finished her conversation with M. Verplanck. We are alone?" He glanced around the room. Mère Michelle had gone out of the back door to attend to her dairy. No one was in sight. François leaned forward. "M. Mercier, you who are a friend of Jacob Leisler's cannot be a friend of Nicholas Bayard's. It is not a secret that Jacob Leisler desires to place Nicholas Bayard where his tongue will not run away with

him. He is in hiding, this Bayard, and you who are for the people would like to discover him I suppose."

Papa Louis gently patted one knee, but did not commit himself by so much as a word. The back door softly opened and shut again. François looked around impatiently. No one was visible. "This Verplanck," he continued, "it is at the house of his relatives that you will find Bayard, or at least he was there, and ten to one some one there can be bought over to tell where he can be found if he chance to have left. You have but to escort M. Verplanck to this house, where he will probably go first, and behold who is likely to come out to welcome him back but Nicholas Bayard. You say nothing; you ride away; at night you return and capture one or both."

"At the expense of doing wrong to our guest, who delivered our daughter from danger."

"Danger! I tell you not danger, a misunderstanding, a misconstruction. What do you know of this stranger? Whither was he taking her? What cause have you for thinking you would have had her restored to you by his hands? I, for myself, I have only her good at heart. I pray you, M. Mercier, think of your leader who would deliver you from a papistical king. Is Bayard not one of those whom you call aristocrats and papists? This fellow, too, is one of the same stamp. If you will I can arrange as pretty a plot as you could wish, and the people, the people whom Leisler leads, will be free of one

Romanist in disguise." He watched his listener narrowly.

Papa Louis did not change expression, but sat absorbed in thought. "One does not send away a guest to follow him with disaster," he replied, after a time.

"Guest! A guest perforce. Who asks you to bring disaster upon a guest? He is one no longer when he leaves your roof, and it is of the man Bayard of whom we chiefly speak. Well, you do not care to prove your friendship for your cause. You are not a very stanch champion, M. Mercier. Perhaps you, too, are a Jacobite, and are not without ambition to show yourself a partisan of these aristocrats. A man of your intellect might well expect to be admitted into what the adherents of Leisler call the court circle."

"No, no, that is no ambition of mine!" cried Papa Louis, vehemently. "I assure you I am not of that party at all. I will consult with my friends, monsieur. I will go to Manhatte to-morrow."

"And when does M. Verplanck depart?"

"He will not be strong enough for some days to come. There is nothing to be gained by haste, monsieur. I will consider what you have said, meanwhile remembering that you are no friend of the young man who has shared our attentions with you. Sit there and rest. For myself I have remained too long; I must go to my work. Without Gerard my hands are full."

“I could go a step farther, I think,” returned François. “Why may I not sit outside as well as you indolent churl? I’ll warrant he has not an idea in his head as he sits there like a blinking owl. Your shoulder again, M. Mercier, and I can creep along.”

As the two figures disappeared out of the door, from behind the curtains peeped Alaine’s face. She shook her finger at the two. “Plots, Papa Louis, plots. I will not have you mixed up in them, neither will I allow good M. Bayard to suffer; and as for you, you scheming monster, I am not sure what is bad enough for you. Go to Manhatte if you must, go to-morrow, Papa Louis, we can manage without you. Adieu!” And she lightly blew him a kiss from the ends of her fingers.

“To Manhatte!” cried Mère Michelle, when her husband announced his intention of an early start. “And for why? Politics? Many a better man has been ruined by them. For my part I advise you to remain at home and watch your garden, your fields, your family. It is here you are needed and not in Manhatte. I pray you do not mix yourself up in affairs. It is better to be the small, the undistinguished, so you are overlooked, otherwise place yourself in the way, at a turn of the wheel, lo! you are crushed.”

Papa Louis shook his head. “I must go,” he said.

“And who will protect us?”

“I trust there will be no need, and even if there were, there are neighbors besides messieurs our guests. They have both recovered sufficiently to handle a gun.”

“To shoot each other? No, no. I will not be responsible for them.”

“Gerard returns this afternoon. You will be safe enough then.” Papa Louis spoke rather shortly. He did not half like his errand, yet was not inclined to give it up.

Alaine, from the door, watched him depart. She returned to the big living-room to hear Mère Michelle expostulating with François. “But, monsieur, I assure you it is still very early. You will weary before the day is out. I beg of you to rest till you have breakfasted.” She emerged from behind the curtains. “He will wear me to a bone, that one there,” she made her complaint to Alaine as she stirred about to prepare the breakfast. “M. Verplanck arises like a gentleman without discourse. He takes my advice; if I say, ‘Remain in bed,’ he remains.”

“And this morning?”

“He has already arisen, as you may perceive.”

Alaine ate her breakfast silently; once or twice she raised her eyes to M. Verplanck, who sat opposite, and when Mère Michelle went to the buttery, she said in a quick whisper, “Monsieur, I wish to speak to you; much depends upon it. I go to the garden.”

Into Lendert’s sleepy blue eyes came a flash of

understanding. He was not long in following Alaine to the garden. She stood waiting for him with something like impatience. "Monsieur Verplanck," she began, "you must leave us to-day."

"So?" he said, with a smile.

"Yes, they are plotting against you; they will follow you. M. Bayard will be discovered if you wait."

"Who will do this?"

Alaine was silent for a moment, then she raised her truthful eyes. "I overheard that one in there talking to Papa Louis. He, dear man, does not understand, or at least he is, you perceive, upon the other side, and—and—— Oh, monsieur, you will keep my secret as I do yours? You will not inform?"

"I should be base to do such a thing when I have been sheltered and cared for as a son or a brother. No, I could not do other than keep your secret, and again I would defend any one of this family if my opportunity came. I will go at once if it will please you."

"Your horse is in the stable; I will help you to get him. I wish you were altogether strong, monsieur."

"I am well enough; there is nothing to fear. I will not say which road I take lest your good conscience trouble you if you are asked. We must meet again; I go with regret. May I kiss your hand?"

Alaine with a blush extended her little brown fingers. He pressed them fervently, raised them to his lips and murmured, "We meet again; yes, we meet again."

"Adieu, monsieur," Alaine whispered, her eyes dropping before his gaze. "You—you are not an ox nor a stupid," she laughed, "though that one in there does call you so."

He laughed. "I thank you, gracious little lady; I cannot find words to say what you are; it would take a life in which to find words to praise you as I ought."

"Ah!" Alaine sighed. There was a kindling up of the smouldering fire in the blue eyes which did not remove their gaze from her face. This young man was something different from the sombre Pierre or the bold François. The very difference pleased the girl; this calmness attracted her, and for an instant she allowed her hand to rest in the big fingers of the young Dutchman, then she withdrew it and repeated, "Adieu, monsieur; I must not stay."

He only nodded in reply, still keeping his eyes fixed upon her.

"Shall I help you to get your horse?"

"No, I can get him."

"Then—adieu, monsieur."

She retreated a step; he followed her, that light in his eyes gathering strength and fascinating her so that a little grieving sigh she breathed as his arms enfolded her closer, closer, and his lips pressed hers.

“Too sweet thou art for me to leave thee,” he murmured.

Trembling, half crying, her heart beating tumultuously, Alaine thrust him from her. “This is very wrong, monsieur. I should not—— Oh, what is it I have done?” The tears had their way, and she leaned against the side of the barn, hiding her face.

But again she felt those enfolding arms and kisses showered on her brow, her hair. “Thou dost not love me?” Lendert whispered.

“I must not, I must not.”

“But I love thee, so brave, so beautiful. Where would Lendert Verplanck be but for thee?”

“In heaven, I hope,” returned Alaine, with an irresistible impulse.

He held her off and regarded her gravely. The autumn sunlight found the ruddy golds and browns of her hair, a soft peach-like hue bloomed on her cheek, her sweet red lips were parted. “Thou dost love me as I love thee, as I love thee, so beautiful?”

This time Alaine allowed her head to rest on the broad shoulder. “I love thee; I will be true in saying it, monsieur,” she whispered.

“Not that, but Lendert.”

“Then listen, Lendert. I must not love thee, for, alas! I am half promised to another, I do not know but to two others. You must go, Lendert, but first I will tell thee how it is. Those two, my adopted parents, wish me to marry Gerard, and there is another who has loved me this year past. Gerard

loves Mathilde, but Pierre, poor Pierre, so good, so true, he has none but me. He has suffered much, and to him I have promised my hand if he can find a way to restore my father to me, and if my father desires me to marry him."

Lendert softly stroked her hair back from her forehead while he listened, but he made no comment.

"And therefore, you see, Lendert, I should not love you," she continued.

He lifted her arms to clasp his neck and looked down with that compelling glance. "I love thee, Alaine, and thou lovest me; there is nothing else in the world to remember. It is not wrong to love, and we have not been able to do else than choose each other from out of the entire universe, then what? We love, and that is all. I will tell thee a confession, too; my mother wishes me to marry one of her choosing, the daughter of a friend and distant relative. I was content to consider her wishes, although I made no promise, but now I have seen thee, sweet Alaine, I cannot do it. As I lay in bed and heard thy voice, and saw thy face day after day, it grew, this love, and I thought, If she can love this big clumsy ox, as the Frenchman calls him, I will love her forever; I will marry none other; but I did not hope as yet, Alaine, that thou couldst love Lendert Verplanck, who loves thee so dearly."

"I did not know, either," sighed Alaine; "I did not know till now when thou must leave me."

“When I will not leave thee. I do not go to-day.”

“Oh, but thou must.”

“Not at all; it is all a needless alarm. When I go I shall take another road, and shall go where I select. I have nothing to take me directly home, nor even to those my relatives. None will wonder at my delay. The good Mother Mercier has sent messages more than once by a safe hand, and they know I am faring well. I will not leave thee to-day, Alaine; I wish to say more, to hear more.”

“But I must not stay here so long; Mère Michelle will wonder, though she knows I am taking some of Gerard’s duties. Since he and Papa Louis are away, I must do more.”

“And I will help thee.”

“She would be shocked, that good mother, so shocked if she knew what I have been doing. I am a very wicked girl.”

He laughed softly. “Wicked is it to love?”

“No, but I should not have told it. Thou shouldst have gone to Papa Louis very properly, and I should have been surprised when he told me and have behaved with great decorum. Perhaps they would not have told me at all; they might have said, You cannot have her, M. Verplanck; she is to be betrothed to Gerard.”

“And then this hour would have been lost to us. We would never have lived it. Art sorry, Alaine, sorry that it was not as thou hast described? Art sorry, sweet Alaine?”

“No,” she confessed, “I am not, for, Lendert, I, too, have been learning to love ever since that moment when thou wast wounded in the wood.”

They stood looking into each other's eyes, overcome by the remembrance of the fateful hour; then a cloud came over Alaine's face; “Poor Pierre,” she murmured, as she moved away to finish the tasks left for her to do. Lendert kept by her side and was able to give her such aid that it was not long before she returned to Mère Michelle, who more than once had gone to the door to look after the delinquents.

“You have been long, Alaine,” she said, sharply.

“I know,” replied Alaine, meekly. “We were talking, M. Verplanck and I, and then he helped me.”

“You must not allow it again. It is not proper, nor a maidenly thing to permit.” Mère Michelle spoke in her most reproofing tones. “Where did you leave M. Verplanck?”

“In the barn, attending to his horse.”

“They will soon be gone, those two,” Michelle went on, in a less severe voice, “and I shall not be sorry. I do not regret that we have been able, with God's help, to mend their wounds, though the one is as if he were a child of the evil one; the other, stolid Dutchman though he is, cannot be disliked.”

Alaine smiled at the word stolid; if Michelle could have seen her stolid Dutchman an hour ago! She

drew so long and quivering a sigh that Michelle stopped her spinning and looked at her sharply.

"I would you and Gerard were safely married," she said; "another year and you should be."

"He is too young, that brother of mine," Alaine answered, "not yet twenty, Mère Michelle, and it would be wiser if he were possessed of more before he takes to himself a wife."

"So Louis says, and so would I say were it not for the eyes of young men who trouble me by looking too long at you."

"Whose eyes?"

"Pierre Boutillier's and that evil creature's yonder, out of doors there, not to mention this mynheer's."

Alaine was silent, but she gave a quick glance to where François sat under the tree. She, too, would feel more comfortable when he had departed. How was it that, openly culpable as he had been, he had yet almost persuaded them all that he had contrived no ill again her? "Yet a wicked, deceitful maid am I," she reflected. "I am this moment posing as an innocent before Michelle; I have let Pierre go with my promise, while out there is a man I have known only a few weeks, and to whom I have given my inconstant heart. No, no, Lendert, it is my constant heart which I give you." Mère Michelle had left her alone, and she had taken up the spinning. With the whir of the wheel her thoughts kept time. "I love you, love you, love you, Lendert Verplanck.

I see you out there with the sun shining on your yellow hair, under the blue sky, blue like your eyes. Lendert, who loves me, who kissed me, who held me in his strong arms. I feel so safe, so happy, Lendert, with you near. I wish you might never go, Lendert Verplanck, with your yellow hair, your beautiful smile, and your broad shoulders. Monkey under the tree, if you but knew how insignificant you look beside him you would cease your mowing and grimacing."

François was beckoning to Lendert, who viewed him imperturbably from his point of vantage within the stable-yard. "Here, oaf, boor, ox, stolid ox! By St. Michael! it is as much as one's life is worth to bring an idea into that thick skull. He does well out there with the cattle in the barn-yard, for he looks at me as if he had no notion of what I am. I might be a stick or a stone for all the intelligence in his perception of me. The devil! I cannot rise without assistance and he does not budge. Here, you, I want your arm."

Lendert, over the fence, looked at him composedly. "I want both my arms myself," he said. "You'd better get the man who deprived you of the use of yours to supply you with what you want."

François laughed grimly. "He actually tries to display a sense of humor, the elephant; he would be light of speech. Eh bien, monsieur, stay where you are; mademoiselle there must help me, for go in-doors will I."

At this Lendert came forward.

François laughed maliciously. "It is because you fear the word to mademoiselle, I see, and not of compassion for me. Well, monsieur, it will not be long that the occasion for rivalry exists; you leave us, and then——"

"And then?" said Lendert, a heavier set to his mouth.

"And then—she is mine."

"You lie," returned Lendert, quietly.

"Ox! I would fell you to the earth were I able. As it is, you shall see. I owe you something, but not thanks, and I will have my payment for the pains I have endured, and the payment I shall take will be mademoiselle herself."

Lendert made a sudden movement, at which François gave a cry of pain. "Stupid ox! to make a mis-step! However, it goes in with the rest, but the payment is sure; digest that with your grass and hay and stubble, ox." He sank heavily into the chair ready for him inside. The hum of the wheel was scarcely stilled, but Alaine had vanished. Lendert smiled to himself and went out.

"Good mother," he said, when he had found Michelle, "your patient yonder needs you."

"And you?" she asked.

"I am beyond the necessity of your kind ministrations. I depart. I may not return for some time, but I take my leave with many thanks, and I shall never forget. Remember, good Mother Mer-

cier, that here is a friend if you ever have need of one."

"And you go at once?"

"Before night."

Michelle kissed him on each cheek. "Adieu then, my friend, may good fortune attend you."

CHAPTER IX

THREE PARTINGS

ALAINE, singing in the garden where she was gathering some late vegetables, saw Lendert coming. She had longed, yet dreaded to see him again. The color flew to her face as he drew near, and she moved away a few steps. "If you will stay there and help me with these beans I will tell you more of myself, some things which you do not know," she said.

Lendert took the place assigned him. Michelle, from the house, watched the pair; Lendert slowly picking from the vines the pods to fill a basket standing upon the walk, and Alaine with quick bird-like movements adding to the store. But Michelle did not know all that Alaine was saying, that she was disclosing herself as Alaine Hervieu, that she was telling of her great hope that her father might still be living, and of Pierre's interest in the quest.

To all this Lendert listened mutely. When the basket was filled the two carried it together to the barn. Michelle frowned and shook her head, still keeping an eye upon the barn door. What if she could have heard Lendert say, "I think I will go, my Alaine. Thou, my beloved, must believe in me even

if thou dost not see me in a long time. We love, thou and I, but what is best to do I must think, and I must leave thee, beloved one, for a time, but I leave my heart behind."

"And mine thou takest with thee."

"They will not marry thee to another meanwhile?"

"No, no."

"Yet thy father?"

"If he returns it will be his right to bestow my hand; that is what I tell myself and what I have told Pierre."

"And this Pierre?"

"He has gone away; when he returns we are to speak of how to obtain my father's release. I would have gone myself,—I meant to,—but now—Lendert, Lendert, I was ready to do this even a week ago."

"And now, is it I who keeps thee from it?"

"It is thou?" she whispered.

He kissed her hair, her eyes, her lips. "Now I know thou dost love me, and thou shalt understand one day how I value thy love. We must part, my beloved, but I will come again. In the mean time be thou patient and constant."

One last embrace and he was gone, leaving Alaine with a miserable sort of happiness. It seemed as if her heart would burst with this new-born love and with the memory of the parting. All these weeks, day by day, this flower of love had been growing and she was scarcely aware of it; now it had burst

into bloom, and she was bewildered and faint with its sweetness. She threw herself down on the hay and pressed her hands over her burning eyes.

She was aroused by a sudden stealthy sound. She lifted her head slightly and peeped between the spears of hay to see the sinuous form of an Indian skulking past the barn. With almost as secret a movement she crept to a point where she could watch his further actions. There was Michelle busy in the fields husking corn; the house was left for occupancy to François Dupont. Was this known to the red-skin? Was it François whom he sought? She watched him make his way to the house and insinuate his lithe body in at the door. "He may be simply one of the friendly creatures come with a message or to get work in the fields," she thought; "but no, he would not have then approached in this stealthy way."

At last she determined to busy herself openly in the garden, where there were still more beans to be gathered and where Michelle, in the field beyond, could see her. She was hard at work pulling the rattling pods when suddenly by her side appeared the Indian. She had been furtively watching, but had not seen him leave the house, and his appearance startled her. He paused only long enough to slip a paper into her hand, and then, gliding along by the fence, was lost in the woods beyond.

Wonderingly Alaine unfolded the paper. On it was written, "If you would say farewell, meet me

to-morrow at sunset at the cave where is the old fireplace. The ship will be ready.—Pierre.”

Alaine held the paper in her shaking hand. To leave now with Lendert's love warming her heart; with this new hope beautifying her life! She gazed with staring eyes at the words. “Oh, my father, my father!” she moaned. “But you said, Pierre, it would do no good, that they would not accept me in his stead.” She stood very still with the paper clinched in her hand. “Perhaps,” she thought, after reflection, “he means that he goes himself to see what can be done. The good, noble Pierre. I will meet him; I will give him every sou I have saved. I will bless you, my good Pierre, but I cannot reward you as I said I would. No, Lendert, I cannot, I cannot, even though my father bade me. I must be honest and tell Pierre that. But oh, my father, who will then deliver you?” She fell on her knees and sobbed out the words.

Michelle, beyond in the cornfield, saw her. “Something disturbs my little one,” she said to herself. “There are human wolves to be kept from my lamb. As soon as Louis returns that one in there must go. I can see that my little one fears him; I will not have it so.” She raised her basket of yellow corn and bore it toward the barn, taking care to pass Alaine on the way. “Tears in your eyes, my pretty one,” she said, putting down her basket. “What is this?”

“I was thinking of my father,” faltered Alaine,

and going to Michelle she put her arms around her. "Dear mother, comfort me; it is a wide world and there is much trouble in it."

"And much goodness."

"Yes, when I think of Papa Louis and you, and Gerard and" Pierre she would have added, but she substituted "our good pastor. Papa Louis returns to-night?"

"To-morrow; and then adieu to monsieur the wolf yonder."

Alaine's face brightened. "I am glad, glad, Michelle; he has brought us evil days. Before he came how peaceful and content I was."

"And now?"

The girl moved her head wearily. "I am too distraught by hopes and fears and dreads."

"We will stop this," thought Michelle. "She shall be safely married to Gerard before the winter is over. There, there, my child," she said, aloud, "once we are rid of our wolf your happy days will come back. God forbid I should commit murder in my heart, but to you I confess that I would not grieve if the ship which carries this man back to France should lose him overboard."

"Oh, Michelle, Michelle! You wicked?"

"I but spoke what more than one thinks," returned Michelle. "You shall not see him again if I can arrange it. Go to Mathilde Duval, ask there that they lend me the little Jean, and remain till this one goes. I with Jean shall be safe till Gerard or

Louis returns. We have but one guest now, though the worst of all he be. Yet, we must be patient, child, patient."

Alaine was only too glad of escape. If they would but wed Mathilde to Gerard instead of to Pierre; but then what good would that do? Pierre would still be left. No, she must be patient, patient, as Papa Louis and Mère Michelle were always telling her. Patience, the great characteristic of the Huguenots, she must cultivate it, she would try to do right when the moment for action came.

François, now that he was rid of his rival, had no idea of departing too hastily. The next morning he was groaning on his bed, declaring that he had taken cold and that he suffered as much as ever. Michelle submitted to the inevitable with none too good a grace, and felt obliged to send for Alaine. There was no help for it, but it was a disappointment, for she had endured a long season of nursing and felt that she deserved release. Beyond this, with Papa Louis and Gerard both away there were added tasks for the two women, and Michelle's face wore its grimmest expression. Whenever she could give Alaine tasks out of the house she did so, and it was not often that the girl was seen indoors. François clamored to have his screen removed, but this Michelle refused to do. She could not take the time, she said.

And so it was that when Papa Louis returned the next day it was to find that François was again on

his back, but, to his great relief, that Lendert Verplanck had departed, therefore the suggestion of François could not be carried out. "I am no Jacobite," he told François, "and I believe in the good intentions of Jacob Leisler, but he has resorted to strong measures, and has gone so far that he cannot retreat. I have talked the matter over with my good friends, and though one is of one opinion and one is of another, the good God has settled my part in the matter by removing temptation. I return, M. Verplanck has departed, the plot ends. As for yourself, monsieur——"

"As for me——"

"You remain? To help us if we need to resist the attacks of your countrymen from Canada?"

François was moodily silent and remained so, in strange contrast to his former loquacity, so that Michelle's fears were aroused and she warned Alaine. "He is very mute these days, that wolf, but his white teeth are strong and his eyes have still their evil gleam. My lamb must not go near him."

"I will keep out of the way," replied Alaine. "I am not anxious to spend my time in the company of M. Dupont." And she contrived so well that he seldom saw her.

She found little difficulty in making her escape the day of Papa Louis's return. She ran down to the well-known spot where Pierre was to meet her. What plan had he been able to contrive? She found him standing by the water's edge gazing out upon

the sound. He did not hear her approach, and she stood for a moment regarding him. His grave face wore a sadder look than usual; the quiet, firm lips were pressed together determinedly, but there was a singularly sweet expression in the face, and Alaine sighed. Poor Pierre, how sad a fate that had not let her love him!

At the sound of his name softly spoken he turned, and a flush of pleasure lighted up his dark eyes. "Alaine, Alainette," he said, holding out his hands.

She came and laid hers in them. "Are you going away, Pierre? Is that why you wished to say farewell?"

"I go, but a longer journey than you thought. I go for you, Alaine."

"Oh, no, no; I cannot let you do that."

"For your father's deliverance. I shall bring him back to you if he be alive or I never return."

"Pierre, Pierre, I cannot have you do this thing for me. Tell me what you intend. Suppose he, the one who called himself your master, should discover you, what then?"

"That is it, but I shall first have gained your father's release."

"No, no, I cannot consent; even for that I could not let you take such risks."

"What matters it? A little longer, a little shorter time and all is over. And life to me without Alaine, what would it be anywhere? The supreme joy, the wonder of happiness if I should succeed and return to

find you mine, Alaine, it is worth the deepest misery I could suffer. To see you happy, even if I miss a supreme joy myself, is enough."

"Do not, do not say that," she murmured. "Ah, Pierre, if you but knew how unworthy I am of such love."

"It is how I must love. Your happiness at any cost. I have seen tears in your eyes because of your father's condition, and could I hesitate if mine might be the hand to wipe them away? No, no, beloved, I would be a slave forever for your sweet sake; it would glorify my days to wake in the morning and say, She is happy there in her home, my Alaine; she smiles, she sings, and God has let me give her this happiness. Whatever my body might suffer, my heart would sing with yours."

Alaine's tears fell softly. "Oh, Pierre, Pierre, such great love, and I——"

He interrupted her hastily. "I do not ask yours. I ask only to do this for you." He laid his hand on her head and smoothed back the curling locks that strayed from under her little cap. "Sweet eyes, dear lips." He gave a long, shivering sigh. "I ask no promise, sweet."

Alaine lifted her tearful eyes. "I ought to give it, Pierre, for I do not forget that I told you I would marry whom my father should desire."

"I know that, but I would not have you bound even so much, for if he returned without me, or if neither returned, it would be a sad waiting. A

year, Alaine ; if at the end of a year you do not see your father, or if you do not hear from him or from me, you must be free to do whatever seems well and good."

"But your plan, Pierre, tell me more of it."

"I go to Manhatte to-morrow to sail by a vessel going to Guadaloupa." He did not tell her that he had shipped as a common sailor and would thus work his passage, saving his own earnings for the use of Alaine's father, should he need them.

"And there, Pierre, you will be sure to find him."

"I will find him if he be alive."

She put both hands in his. "Oh, my good Pierre, so good. I cannot thank you enough. I feel that I ought not to allow this, but——"

He shook his head. "It would be no use to refuse, Alaine, I should go ; if not now, at some other time. You cannot keep me. I desire to do this thing for you. Do not forbid it and destroy my only joy in life."

"Then I will not, but I will do my best while you are away. I will think of you and pray for you always, night and day."

"And if I do not return, think of me then sometimes, even then, Alaine."

"I will. I will always think of you, Pierre, so noble, so brave, so unselfish."

"Hush, hush, dear one, it is for my own pleasure that I go. I ask but this : one kiss to bear with me

as a remembrance, perhaps all I shall ever ask of you."

Alaine almost quailed at the request. She had promised to be true to one lover; the remembrance of his caresses, his kisses, still haunted her day and night. But this man, ready to lay down his life for her, could she refuse him? It was a sacred duty that she should send him away with all of happiness and hope that he could offer. She mutely raised her face to his, and he kissed her as it were a sacrament he took. "Adieu, my star. Alaine, I am yours, living or dead. I love you forever. A long adieu, sweet Alaine; it grows late and you will be missed. Leave me here. Once more, adieu!"

She gave him her hands again and looked long and wistfully into his face. "Adieu, Pierre," she said at last and turned away. Once she looked back and he smiled; but as she passed out of sight, he staggered back against the rocky ledge and leaned there white to the lips. And Alaine, as she went on her way with bowed head, struggled to keep down the rising cry of her heart, "Lendert, Lendert, I must be false to you; I must put you forever from my thoughts. If Pierre, for love of me, can do this great thing, ought I, for my father's sake,—for Pierre's sake,—to do less? Forgive me, Lendert, God knows I love you."

And so it was that Pierre sailed away, and in time François recovered, so that before the trees were bare he was well enough to take his departure too.

“It is but for a time, mademoiselle,” he said before parting. “I do not go far, and you shall see me again; believe me, it will not be so very long before you see me again. I have an acute perception and I watch; that Pierre has gone, no one seems to know why or where, and that other, our friend of large proportions, does not appear, therefore I feel that I need have no fear. The boy Gerard has eyes and ears for no one but the saucy damsel across the way, and you and he will not marry yet, in spite of Michelle. So ’tis but au revoir, mademoiselle, and I shall see you before we see these trees again bare. I trust that I shall some day prove to you all that I am not ungrateful for your care of me, and to Michelle most of all.” He bowed in the direction of Michelle, who had come forward and now stood stiff and uncompromising.

“You owe us nothing, monsieur, but the consideration that will leave us to ourselves,” she said. “Show us your good will so much as to do that, and we are content.”

He laughed. “I should be as impolite as that other patient of yours who has never had the grace to come back for a friendly call.” He glanced at Alaine as he spoke, and the color forsook the girl’s face.

But Michelle took up the cudgels. “He was in no way under obligation to do that, M. Dupont. This is not the city of Paris nor of Rouen, where to make a call is a small business. These are troublous

times, and our guest does us greater favor by protecting us from an invading foe than he could by his presence here.”

“Oho! so that is what you think,” returned François. “M. Mercier here could tell you another tale. He is busy, that friend of yours, in helping M. Bayard and others of the same stripe to keep secure. He is not fond of the Black People, nor is M. Bayard, you know.” He watched Alaine narrowly, but she had gone around to Michelle’s side and stood leaning upon the good woman’s broad shoulder.

“Well, well,” put in Papa Louis, cheerfully, “we will not quarrel when our parting is so near. Whatever the times bring forth, the condition of affairs is due neither to us nor to our visitors. We have a common foe to fight and must make common cause at last. You, monsieur, have given us reason to believe that you are with us in that, and why dispute anything else.”

“In faith, what else could I do?” returned François, shrugging his shoulders. “When one is on his back and scarce able to lift a finger, he must promise anything that will save his scalp, be it from Iroquois or Mohawk. I am out of any sort of a fight, as you see, not yet being able to hold sword or pistol.”

For all that, Michelle warned Papa Louis not to let monsieur escape without being sure of his destination, and to be careful that he did not at once join the French to discover to them something which might be detrimental to the colony. But François

either suspected or else had his own reasons for slipping away quietly, for one night, after making something of a display of his plans for leaving the next day, he went out, ostensibly to see one of the neighbors, and did not return. Just when and how he left the village no one seemed to know.

CHAPTER X

ON SHIPBOARD

As the weeks passed Alaine counted them, and as to one month was added two, three, and at last six months had gone by, she began to watch and listen and hope for a word from Pierre. If he had succeeded, at any day now she might hope to see her father. She resolutely determined to put from her all thought of Lendert Verplanck, for not a word nor sign had come from him. "He loved me and left me," she sighed. "It will be hard to forget, but he marries that other whom his mother has chosen, and for me, I marry Pierre, God willing."

More than once Mère Michelle brought up her darling project. "There is no reason, Alaine, why you and Gerard should not marry, or at least be acknowledged fiancée," she would say.

"But the spring will soon be here, and we shall all be busy."

"That evil wolf may return, and finding you still unmarried, will seek to devour you. Pierre has left to seek his fortune elsewhere,—see Mathilde deserted,—and if Gerard in the heat of his youth should become fretful of the quiet life here, he might do the same; but with a wife and home interests he

would be so bound by silken chains that he would not desire to leave us.”

“Ah, but, maman, these are uncertain times; look how the colony is rent by strife; and suppose the Jacobites once more rise into power, we might again find it necessary to take flight, and what then? No, no, neither Gerard nor I wish to leave you, and on that score you need have no fear. When this question of government and war is settled it will be time enough to think of marriage.” And Michelle, for the time being, would be silenced.

The destruction of Schenectady by the French and Indians, the arrival of Frontenac as governor of Canada, and the alarming prospect suggested absorbed the attention of even those in the little French settlement of New Rochelle. These who threatened them were their own countrymen, and to them this was civil war, yet they believed in Jacob Leisler. Had he not conveyed these lands to them, and was he not the friend of the people? And did not this Frontenac come armed with terrible orders? It would require one of whose religious beliefs there could be no doubt to be leader for those who shuddered at a possibility of a return of the persecutions from which they had fled.

“Alas! Alas!” cried Michelle, striking her hands together, when Papa Louis, with a grave face, told her of the disputes among the different factions. “It is from bad to worse. Be content to remain at home, Louis, and mix not up with affairs of government.

Your head may yet be placed on a pike, and how will you be better off than in that France from which you have escaped? Till your fields, say your prayers, and keep out of this."

Papa Louis decided to follow this advice, and, in spite of the ferment in the city, affairs went on quietly enough at home while summer came and went.

"Months since Pierre left and no news of him," Alaine said to Gerard, as the summer waned. "I fear I shall never see my father again. You, who alone know why Pierre has gone, can give me no comfort. I have sent him into slavery, and perhaps to his death."

"No, no, Alaine, that is a foolish way to look at it. He went of his own accord, so he told me, and, the good Pierre, he bade me try to comfort you. It may take a long time to effect his purpose. There is no reason for despair as yet. The vessels are slow in going and coming, and who knows what time and caution he must use in seeking your father? Even to-day a message may be on its way to you."

Alaine plucked up courage, and with better heart went singing to her work. Michelle and Papa Louis were in the fields, and Gerard had just come to the pump to quench his thirst. "Even now he may be on his way to me," Alaine repeated. "If he returns it means—what may it not mean?" The blood rushed to her face and brow. "Alas, my Lendert," she murmured, but instantly she shook her head as

if to put away too intrusive a thought and continued her spinning.

She had hardly recommenced her song when the latch of the door was lifted, and she saw before her a tall Indian. He gravely unrolled from a piece of deer-skin a small packet and handed it to her, then turned and walked out without a word. With trembling fingers Alaine undid the packet. On a bit of bark a few words were written: "Meet me at the cave at sunset. I have news for you. Tell no one, but come alone, or there may be danger for one you love.—Pierre."

Alaine stared at the bark, turned it over, and then hid it away. It was as Gerard had said; a message was truly on its way to her; one would almost think it a prophecy. It seemed as if the moments were doubly long that day, but at last the hours of labor were over, and the girl, all impatient expectation, stole down to the well-known spot. She wondered why the secrecy. What had happened? Why did not Pierre approach boldly, there in the village where all his friends were? She was anxious, apprehensive, yet so eager that she ran all the way to the shore, hoping no one else would be there. She glanced around; all was still; the place was deserted, for the weary workers in the fields did not care to do other than rest from their labors. Upon the water a little way out rocked a large sailing-vessel, its white sails catching the evening light. Perhaps—she hardly dared think it—her father was on board; it might

be that it was on his account there was need of secrecy. She looked around; no one was near; but presently from the vessel a little boat put out, and when it touched the shore a man leaped ashore.

“You await Pierre Boutillier?” he asked, in good French.

“Yes,” Alaine replied, eagerly.

“He asks if you will let me conduct you to yonder ship, where he can confer with you without observation.”

“Why did he not come himself?” Alaine asked, drawing back.

“He had the misfortune to trip over a coil of rope and sprain his ankle. He is clumsy, that Pierre.” The man looked at her with a bright, quizzical smile.

Alaine drew herself up. “He is not, then, but he is no sailor, rather a husbandman. Lead the way. I follow.” She spoke with a haughty air, and the man started on ahead, but cast frequent glances over his shoulder to see if she were yet behind him. She came on with a light tread and stepped without hesitation into the little boat, which quickly took her out to the larger vessel anchored beyond. She was then helped on board and conducted to a cabin, seeing no one on her way but a few sailors lounging on deck.

“I will tell monsieur that you have arrived,” said her conductor, “and myself will assist him hither.” He then withdrew.

“It is strange,” thought Alaine, “that Pierre was

not on deck to meet me. He is perhaps badly hurt ; he is unfortunate, poor Pierre. Only for my father would I have consented to come. Why does he not arrive, that Pierre ?” She grew impatient as the moments passed, and at last determined to go herself and seek her friend. She tried the door of the little room ; it was fast. “Pierre ! Pierre !” she called. There was no response. Overhead she could hear the tread of the sailors or the dragging of ropes across the deck. “Pierre ! Pierre !” Outside the sea-gulls dipped their free wings in the dancing waves. She could see their white breasts as they swept past the open port-hole. “He cannot have forgotten me,” she murmured. “What does this mean ?”

Suddenly she raised her hands above her head with a great cry. This was a plot, and who had designed it ? She sank moaning to the floor, and sat there, her hands tightly clasped, till the glory of the golden sky paled to gray, then the soft twilight descended ; night came on. The girl did not move except once in a while to ease her position. The sound of sailors singing, the shuffle of feet, the rattle of chains, the splash of the water against the sides of the vessel, these were what reached her ears strained to catch the least sound. Darkness had settled down, when, by the tossing of the ship and the increased movement overhead, she discovered that the vessel was moving. She started up with a great cry and then a fury of despair seized her. She

beat on the door, shrieking, "Poltroons! Knaves! Thieves! Thieves! Is there no one here to listen? I go mad! I kill myself, you there, who will not rescue me!"

The door opened at last; a lantern swung before her; its rays flashed on the face of the man she feared; François Dupont stood before her. She gave one wild cry of fear and horror, but the next moment bravely faced him. "You!" she said, in such scorn that he made a step back. In a moment he drew nearer, and she saw his face wore its usual smile of assurance and audacity.

"It is I in truth, Mademoiselle Alaine. You remember I vowed that we should not be separated long. 'Whither thou goest,' I said. I am forced to travel, behold you are here to accompany me. Since you would not have come by invitation from me, I was obliged to consider myself the proxy of M. Boutillier, for all is fair in a case of this kind. I am not ungenerous, fair Alaine, as you will see; I give you the key to your cabin; you shall not be disturbed. I regret the voyage is not to your liking, but that is all I regret. I desire to take you to Canada with me as my wife. We have a good priest aboard who can unite us. You refuse?"

"I refuse," Alaine replied, curtly, but with trembling lips.

"I feared that you would not accept me at once, nor even upon two or three urgings. We go to Canada, as I said; if by the time we reach that place

you still consider my suit unfavorably, we can extend the voyage; we can go to France, to Rouen; there you have the opportunity of choosing between your cousin Étienne and myself. I am generous, yes? They would say, our friends there in our beloved France, how he has worked for the good of this obstinate little lady! How he has suffered, that poor François, that he might bring her back to her own, to those to whom she rightly belongs, the perverse little one! But they will forgive, yes, they will forgive; the good Father Bisset says so."

"Father Bisset?" The words came in whispered surprise.

"The same; it is he of whom I spoke a moment ago. He is here. If you would like to see him, he awaits us. We will have a little supper together. Permit me to escort you, mademoiselle." He held the lantern high and looked questioningly at the girl's pale face. She refused his proffered hand, but mechanically walked with him to the larger cabin, where the kindly face of her old friend met her vision.

With a cry of mingled grief and pleasure she ran forward. Here was one who had never failed in his gentle consideration, in his mild guidance, his loving reproof. At once she fell under the spell of his presence. "Oh, my good father, save me!" she begged.

He looked down at her with a loving smile. "I ought not to have a word to say to you, little run-

away ; yet must we forgive when forgiveness is sought, and you are my spiritual child."

Alaine made no response, but clung to him. The old man nodded assurance as she mutely searched his face. "Be not troubled, my child. You are safe. And when did Father Bisset ever do you a wrong? Come, you are weary. M. Dupont has provided a good supper for us. Dry your eyes, my daughter, and join us at table. One may as well partake of good things when they are set before him."

Alaine suffered herself to be led to the table, and made a light supper, while her two companions kept up a race of trivial talk, full of lively anecdote, by which the girl was entertained in spite of herself. They sat a long time at table, and when he arose François said, "Marie shall attend you whenever you wish to go to your room ; meanwhile, I will leave you to the company of Father Bisset, who, I doubt not, will be more agreeable to you than myself. Pleasant dreams, Mademoiselle Alaine. Before we part for the night, I drink to our future." He took up a cup of wine and tossed it off, then, with a bow and a good-night, left them.

Father Bisset sat silently, leaning one arm on the table, and looked long and earnestly at the sad face before him. After a time he came over and drew a seat close to her side. "My daughter," he said, "you can trust Jacques Bisset. He is old, he is weak in body, and he has not a

great mind, but he can endure, he can suffer; he can perhaps use a little strategy." He bent nearer and whispered, "Do not seem surprised; he is also Protestant, this old man. Hush! we must dissemble." Then louder: "Yes, my child, it seems good to have you again under my guidance." Again his voice dropped. "This François Dupont,"—he glanced cautiously around,— "he believes me to be still a papist; he had not heard otherwise, it seems, and, as it happened, he was the first to meet me as I landed in New York a day or two ago. 'Ho, Father Bisset,' he cried, 'you have come to the wrong port. If, as I suppose, you are come on a mission to this wild land, you should have been better informed. They are all loud-mouthed for the Protestant William and Mary, and you'll stand a poor showing here. I would advise you to get out of the colony as soon as possible. I have it,' he cried, after a moment's thought, 'I will direct you to a safe retreat.' 'Thanks, monsieur,' I answered, 'I think I can find my way.' 'At all events,' he said, 'I will send some one to guide you to a fair lodging.' A stranger and acquainted with little Dutch and no English, I was not averse to accepting the offer, and I have not a great head-piece, my child, so I followed my guide, who brought me to a lonely spot by a running river and bade me step aboard a little boat that I might be ferried across stream. Ferried I was, but no farther than to mid-stream, when I was seized bodily and brought aboard this ship."

He gave a little low chuckle. "I have not protested as yet, for I am well fed and comfortably lodged, and my religious beliefs have not been questioned. I do not announce them, but allow them to be taken for granted. So, my child, let us be watchful and wary and we shall yet find that this adventure will work to our benefit. I am supposed to take you under my instruction, and I do not object." Again the familiar chuckle rejoiced Alaine's heart. "We will outwit François Dupont, and he will be none the wiser of our intent."

Alaine listened eagerly to all this, and her spirits rose as the genial old priest went on: "François warned me, just after we set sail, that I should see you, and I was prepared, therefore I showed no surprise. He is not a religious enthusiast, and will not notice what my devotions may be. It will not harm any one if I say my Pater Noster in Latin, and the good God will hear it just the same. Therefore observe me without disapproval if you can. The end sometimes justifies the means, and I pray I may be forgiven if I use covert means for your sake as well as my own. 'Wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove,' that is what one should be, and to wisdom we must add patience."

"You will tell me some day of how you made your escape from France, dear Father Bisset? There is much that I wish to hear."

"You shall hear it at some convenient time. Meanwhile, we must be careful of our conversa-

tion ; there are sharp ears about," he added, significantly.

Alaine looked up quickly and saw the dark face of Marie looking at her from a dim corner. She started, for it brought to mind the fact that she was again a prisoner, and although seemingly free, the blue waters encircling her were safer bonds than fetters of steel.

" 'Let not your heart be troubled,' " murmured Father Bisset. " May the good angel guard you, my child."

Alaine made the same respectful obeisance she had been wont to use as a child, and then turned to Marie. " I am ready to retire," she said. And the last thing of which she was conscious before she dropped off to sleep was that Marie's vigilant eyes seemed to watch her even there in the darkness.

CHAPTER XI

FROM SHIP TO SHORE

To get rid of Marie and to escape,—the thought recurred to Alaine over and over again for the next few days. She had nothing to do but to watch the sea-birds, and, when she was not talking to Father Bisset, the time hung heavily on her hands. The good old man, be it said, had given no cause for suspicion of his being a renegade priest, and, indeed, his lifelong manner of speech and his pious ejaculations were too much a matter of habit to evidence any change in his opinions. François, on his part, exercised quite as much acumen in treating Alaine with deference and in seldom forcing his society upon her.

“She will more readily accept the inevitable if I leave her to your persuasive arguments,” he said to the ex-priest, confidentially. “Ma foi! but she has a fine temper. Yet it is not a bad alternative. I am not so evil nor so cruel as I seem, good father, despite my having small interest in religious matters. I prefer the Church to no church, naturally, but I do not trouble myself to go further. I hear Mass; I make my confession; it is enough. You may not consider that as sufficient for the husband of Alaine,

yet better than a Huguenot, you will say. We will return to France after a time, and I keep my promise; yes, I am not all evil, for I swear I shall try to deliver M. Hervieu. That may not agree with what you approve; you may believe he should suffer his punishment, but I am not so tenacious. Do not shake your head, good father, you too will use your good offices for him; for if *Alaine* prefers to remain in a convent for a year, I shall take you to *Guadaloupa* and on the return voyage an opportunity is afforded you to deal artfully yet gently with the erring man, who by this will probably be glad enough to escape the experiences of an *engagé*. And so all goes well."

"But, my son," expostulated *Father Bisset*, "my mission is not to accompany you upon your travels."

"But, good Father, consider the reward. You come to *America* upon mission work. What is better than such an opportunity? And I promise you afterwards you shall go your ways and I will do my utmost for you. I will give you a heavy purse to further your good works. In the long run you will gain."

"But, my son, I cannot see why this little *Alaine* should be so great a prize that you take all this trouble. Is it not rather *Étienne* who should marry her?"

"*Étienne!*" *François* clinched his fist. "He shall never have her. At first—but I will not go into that,—it is sufficient that now I wish to marry

her, and I shall move heaven and earth to accomplish my object."

"Softly, softly, my son. Heaven is not to be moved for the accomplishment of human desires."

François laughed. "Then I will say that I mean to use every human endeavor to make it possible to marry Alaine Hervieu, and when a resolution takes possession of me I am not one to give it up easily."

The old man softly patted together the outstretched tips of his fingers and thoughtfully looked out upon the water. "Alaine was never a child to be coerced," he said.

"In matters of religion, perhaps not, but in matters of the heart a woman yields to him who proves himself her master, who does not cringe nor sue, but who gives her no chance to say no to him. For that reason, Father Bisset, I leave you to do your part by moral suasion while I direct the other matter with a high hand. It was through her affections entirely that she was won over to the Huguenots, and through her affections it is for you to win her back, first by mild discourse, and secondly by producing a father who has conformed to your belief. I think by playing your cards properly—I beg your pardon, by using the gentle means you know so well how to employ, that you will soon win her to your way of thinking. That is all I ask of you."

"And you will not be disappointed," returned the wily old man. "I feel sure that we shall both be

of one mind, Alaine and I, when we leave the ship, Monsieur Dupont."

"So soon?" François struck his hands together in satisfied approval. "As soon as this? You are doing well, Father." He laughed. "How sweet is revenge! There is nothing so sweet."

"Except forgiveness," returned the other, gently.

François got up and walked the deck excitedly. "I say revenge. By the saints, but I shall have won, if not in all directions, at least in one." He stepped closer to the old man. "And I reckon on you, Father Bisset, to make it possible for me to win in both. Alaine vows she will marry no one whom her father does not favor; the inference is obvious. Behold your son-in-law, good Monsieur Hervieu, bondman over there in Guadaloupa. I come to your assistance." He blew a kiss from his finger-tips. "You are grateful, monsieur, and with our good priest's help I shall endeavor to find a way to persuade you to agree with me, when I endeavor to show you why I should prove to be an acceptable husband for your daughter. I have come far to satisfy my desires; I shall not return ungratified."

"And your destination on this voyage?" inquired Father Bisset.

"Is Canada. We place Alaine with the good sisters, who will complete the work you have so well begun."

Father Bisset's eyelids drooped over his eyes to hide the sudden anxiety which leaped up into them.

“But suppose, my good sir, that Alaine should prefer the life of a religious to the name of Madame Dupont.”

“Ah-h, that she must not do!” François paused in his walk.

Father Bisset watched him. “Would it not be well, then, that they be warned that she is fiancée, and that all we require is good guidance, and not that she enter the convent to become one of them? You, of course, will know what line of argument to use, and how best to incline them toward this result.”

François looked thoughtfully seaward. “I? No, I do not. As I have told you, I was never an enthusiast in matters of religion. What shall I say?”

“More depends upon the manner of saying than upon the words,” replied Father Bisset, astutely. “One should know well how to choose his words. It is a pity that you are not a more saintly man,” he added, as it were, regretfully.

“Then, my dear Father, I must rely upon you, and shall commit the matter into your hands, first exacting a promise from you that you will not lose sight of Alaine a moment till she is safely established.”

“I can give you my word that I shall not allow her to leave my presence for a single instant till she is safely established,” Father Bisset returned, with emphasis, and the eyes, which a moment before

were downcast to hide their anxiety, were again dropped to hide their triumph.

“She can be very obstinate, that demoiselle,” said François, after a pause. “It must be for you to persuade her to go. In this instance a hint from me would cause rebellion.”

“I think I shall have no difficulty in persuading her. She has obeyed me from infancy, and the habit of a lifetime, albeit but a short life, is not easily broken.”

“Good!” cried François. “It was a lucky day when I ran across you there in New York. The saints be praised that I did. I have not made our voyage altogether distasteful to you, I hope, although I forced it upon you. Mademoiselle there grows triste. What is she reading?”

“A little book of devotion which I happened to have with me,” returned Father Bisset; but he gave a quick look at Alaine, who, in a sunny corner, had been reading intently.

The old man walked nonchalantly toward her. She looked up with a smile and put into his hand the book, which he slipped into an inner pocket. “I trust you have found it profitable reading, my daughter,” he said, seriously.

“I think so, Father.”

François did not see the sudden amused expression which played around Father Bisset’s mouth as he saw the satisfied look upon the young man’s face when he turned away.

Alaine made room by her side for her old friend. "Well?" she said, eagerly, when François was out of hearing.

"All is well," she was told. "I think we may hope to escape once we reach Canada. You, of course, refuse to marry here on shipboard."

"Of course."

"Then you go to a nunnery."

"Oh!"

"I go with you to prepare the nuns for the part they are to act toward you. That will be our opportunity. Do not look so glad. You must assume a pensive and troubled air. That is better. As we near land you must seem distressed, uncertain, shy, even of me, and at times silent and thoughtful. M. Dupont will urge you at the last to marry him, and you say you will refuse. Very good." The old man hesitated a moment, then said. "But, my daughter, it is a true intention of his to try for the release of your father. Will you, then, remain in the convent to await his return?"

"Oh, Father, that is a hard question. How shall I answer it?"

"As your conscience dictates. Can you stand steadfast till our return? There will be much pressure brought to bear upon you. And will you run the risk of our finding your father no longer alive and of a forced return to France for you with François Dupont?"

"But my father, if he should be living? Advise

me, I beg of you, for I cannot see what is right."

"Could you stand the privations, the experiences you would have to endure in a flight to the colonies with only this old man as your protector?"

"I should not be afraid to risk it."

"Then, my beloved daughter, I advise you to escape while you can. We cannot tell how the bonds may tighten around you, and it may be too late a year, or even six months, from now. We would best seize the opportunity while we may. I know your father would so desire it, and you tell me there is another working for his deliverance. We will trust God for that to be accomplished and get away when we can."

"Ah, Father, how fortunate a day when I chanced upon you!" sighed Alaine.

He smiled as he remembered that François had said the same words a few minutes before. "One must sometimes dissemble when it is for good," the old man told himself. "I am no longer a Jesuit, but I have not been one without learning that stratagem is often better than open rebellion."

Under her friend's advice and leadership Alaine so comforted herself that François with satisfaction viewed the quiet, somewhat pensive mien. "We are taming the wild bird. I shall yet see you come at my bidding, Alaine, with the fluttering wings, and when we return to France and I face Étienne Ville-neau, what joy!" He laughed to himself as he

leaned over the side of the vessel. But after a moment he raised his eyes to the blue sky. "Thou up there wilt understand that I do this for thee, for thee," he murmured.

In the dim distance a faint line of shore indicated that they were nearing the great river. Alaine by Father Bisset's side watched it grow more and more distinct. For many days she had felt comparatively safe, but now would soon come a crisis. If at the last moment the plot failed; if François should insist upon accompanying them himself, or should send Marie to see that she reached the destination he intended for her, what then? Marie, herself, silent, vigilant, unapproachable, might be suspicious and might follow them. Alaine confided her fears to Father Bisset.

"I have thought of all that," he replied. "I, myself, am not sure of the woman, the other I can manage. I am prepared for that. We must put our trust in the Lord, my daughter, he will deliver us from the snare of the fowler. 'Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.'"

A roundabout way it was, this by water all the way to Quebec by the outside route, but François had his reasons for selecting it. His prisoners had no means of escape, and Alaine would be the longer under the tutelage of Father Bisset. It was some time after they had entered upon the voyage that the young man approached Alaine. "Mademoiselle,"

he began, "we are going to Quebec. You will not find it a bad place. Will you enter it as Madame François Dupont?" He stood regarding her with a grave courtesy.

"Monsieur," returned Alaine, sweetly, "I am not indifferent to the compliment you pay me, but I cannot accept your name."

"You prefer the convent? Then, mademoiselle, if in six months or a year hence I return with your father as my companion I may claim you from the good nuns, who will guard you well I feel assured."

Alaine made no reply, and he went on. "I understand that you are willing to accept him whom your father shall desire to receive as his son-in-law. Am I not right?"

Alaine gave a hasty glance at Father Bisset. The question was a hard one to answer evasively. "Six months, a year is a long time," she at length replied, after some hesitation. "How can one promise what one may do in that time?"

"Then we will leave it so, and I will rest content that you will bide by your father's selection and do his bidding."

"I think I can promise that."

"That gives me hope sufficient, my fiancée. Soon we must part for a season. Father Bisset will parley with the good sisters better than I. He will conduct you to them, and then he will return to me. Is it no consolation to you, mademoiselle, that this

same genial father goes with me to Guadaloupa to help me in my quest of releasing your father?"

"Whoever has the good fortune to be under the guardianship of Father Bisset is indeed fortunate," replied Alaine. "If monsieur is to be honored by such company, he is indeed blest."

François bowed, and then, with a laugh, said, "This time I am not able to say, 'Whither thou goest,' is it not so? I do not keep my word in this instance, but it is because I cannot."

"No, monsieur, you cannot say that, since it will probably be many days before we meet, and there will soon be many miles between us."

"Can you lay any discourtesy to my charge since you have been taken this enforced journey?"

"No, M. Dupont; I have been treated with every consideration. I might have preferred a more agreeable maid, but not a more faithful one could I have selected, and of your own conduct, of that of your sailing-master and his men, I have no complaint to make."

"For that much grace my thanks. I trust that mademoiselle when she is established in the convent will remember me with a little less aversion, and will reflect that, though I may seem at times to have been discourteous, my rudenesses have never been directed to her, and, despite the fact that I have more than once given her no choice in the matter of travel, I have had her own good in view. Perish her enemies! I have taken for my watchword.

Father Bisset there tells me that forgiveness is sweeter than revenge." He looked at her with a little inquiring smile.

Alaine smiled in return. "When I see you again, monsieur, after this long parting, I may be better able to extend my forgiveness, at present——"

"You withhold it. That is not unexpected. Ah-h, France! See, there flies her flag. Does it not thrill your heart to look upon it, Alaine Hervieu?"

She looked up and saw flying from the fort the flag of her native country. For a moment her heart did indeed swell and tears came to her eyes. "Dear France!" she sighed.

"This will seem quite like home to you," said Father Bisset, diplomatically. "We shall all feel as if we were again under the skies of France. I regret, M. Dupont, that we do not tarry longer. When did I understand you to say that we set sail for the return trip?"

"As soon as possible," replied François.

"I should like to see something of the town, now we are here," the old man remarked, with a pensive air.

"We can grant you time enough for that," returned François.

Alaine watched the frowning cliff grow nearer and nearer. The Château of St. Louis upon the terrace of the Upper Town rose before her; below twisted the streets of the Lower Town, its gray

wharves stretching along the river. She gazed at the clusters of spires and of buildings. Under which roof might be those nuns of whom M. Dupont had spoken? Darkness had settled down when the vessel at last dropped her anchor, and Alaine went to sleep with a feeling half dread, half joy, for what the morrow might bring.

She was out upon deck early the next morning. The town stretched out before her in all its outline of spire and roof, of postern and bastion; a French city, and she, a French girl, there a prisoner before it. Father Bisset noted her sigh before he made his presence known. "Art sorrowful at leaving the ship?" he whispered, smiling.

"No, Father, but one has many thoughts. All this," she waved her hand, "does it not bring back thoughts of home to you?"

"Of wrong and persecution, of oppression and death?" he asked.

"Yes, for us it includes that. Oh, Father, shall we surely escape?"

He nodded. "I have the clue I missed. If Marie should follow us I can manage her. As for the other, he will take a nap this afternoon, I fancy."

"Sh! here he comes."

François approached, debonair and confident. "We will breakfast a little late. I have sent ashore for some provisions, and we will have such a feast as we have not had for many a long day. Now that our voyage is ended, I will admit that it was not

without danger. With England at war with us, and her ships upon the seas, besides the possibility of heavy storms at this time of year, we might have fared hardly; yet all has gone well and we will celebrate the event. Mademoiselle will not refuse a glass of good old wine, and you, Father Bisset, will not object to drinking her health. I would see you first in my cabin; I have a few words for your ear."

Father Bisset followed him, and when they were alone François said, "Mademoiselle will need a better wardrobe than she is at present provided with;" he handed him a purse; "this for the purpose."

Father Bisset recoiled. "My dear sir, I am not versed in the art of selecting toilettes for a lady; I pray you commission some one else."

François tossed the purse from one hand to the other. "Then hand it over to the good sisters and let them attend to it. I may count on your return, Father Bisset. You will give me your word that when you leave mademoiselle at the convent you will return to the ship."

"I do not know why I should," returned the old man, reflectively. "I do not know on what grounds you have a right to exact it from me."

"Only because of mademoiselle; if she is assured that you accompany me on my search for her father she will feel more content."

"You are suddenly very considerate." Father Bisset's lip curled slightly.

“It is circumstance that has made me ever seem otherwise, and in this instance, if I have not your promise, I must feel compelled to detain you and send mademoiselle under other escort.”

“I promise you that when I leave mademoiselle it will be to return to you.”

“Good; that is sufficient.”

“But I shall take a little time to examine the city, and if I am not back at once——”

“I will wait for you; we understood that before.”

It was, indeed, quite an elaborate meal which François provided for his guests, and Father Bisset warmed to the occasion, so that when François, with a flourish, proposed the health of the future Madame Dupont, the old man tossed off his wine gayly. “To the future Madame Dupont,” he repeated; “a good toast that. You do not drink, Alaine;” and he laughed.

Alaine looked coldly disapproving; then suddenly it dawned upon her that it was not she of whom Father Bisset thought, for she remembered that he intended to make it impossible that she should ever bear that name. She smiled faintly. He was so sly, so like a crafty old fox, that Father Bisset.

“Mademoiselle is too modest to drink her own health,” cried François. “Another bottle, Father. It is good wine, is it not? None too heady, and smooth and soft as silk.”

“Should you not like to try this other?” asked Father Bisset, drawing a bottle from under the table,

removing the cork, and pouring out a glassful, which he handed to François. "Also good, is it not?"

"Also good; if anything, better than the other."

Father Bisset laughed. "I bribed your man to get it for me; I fancied it was to be had here; it is an old favorite of mine." He set the bottle by his side, and from time to time refilled François's glass.

"A bit heady," remarked François, after a time. "I think I have had enough." He staggered slightly as he rose from his chair.

"We would best depart, *Alaine* and I; it is later than we realized," said Father Bisset, "and a walk will do us good after this heavy meal. Will you order that we be set ashore?"

François looked at him with dimly seeing eyes. "I will order," he mumbled.

Father Bisset led him by the arm on deck; the fresh air revived him somewhat. "What was it you wanted?" he asked.

"That you order a boat to take us ashore."

"Yes, yes. See to it, my man," he said to a passing sailor. "Send the skipper to me."

But when the skipper appeared François was beyond the ability of giving orders. "A boat was to take *mademoiselle* and myself ashore," explained Father Bisset, blandly. "Monsieur has been testing too many of the good wines; I will assist him to his room." Still grasping François's arm, he led him to his cabin and saw him safely abed. "It was too heady," murmured François, drowsily.

Leaving him in a heavy slumber, Father Bisset sought Alaine. "The moment has arrived," he told her; "the boat is ready to go."

Marie stood watching them.

"Adieu, Marie," said Alaine.

The woman did not move, but simply returned, "Adieu, mademoiselle."

Up the narrow, crooked streets of the town the fugitives went, their faces set in the direction of the convent. They walked rapidly, and Alaine nearly lost breath as she climbed the steep rocky way, her companion panting beside her. They paused near the market-place. "Now we are here, the next thing is to get out," said Father Bisset. "We will not linger long, my child, for we are safe only for so many hours, and we must make the most of them." And he stalked on with increasing speed, looking anxiously around as he turned from one crooked street to another. From time to time he looked at Alaine thoughtfully, as if puzzling over some question. At last he entered a shop, bidding the girl to follow him, and saying, "I would have you remember, my daughter, that your brother, though younger, is about your height." The solution to these enigmatical words was evident when he purchased a suit of rough clothes, which he had made up into a bundle and took under his arm. He paused at the door of the shop as he was going out, and addressed the shopkeeper. "Could monsieur recommend a cheap and comfortable lodging where two could rest and

await the arrival of the lad just mentioned?" Monsieur could and did, with voluble directions pointing the way.

A few minutes of chaffering and the bargain with a sturdy Frenchwoman was made; but this done, they were established for the nonce in a by-street out of the way of general traffic.

About dawn there issued from the house two figures; one of a lad in coarse clothing and the other of the priest who had long ago exchanged his soutane for a peasant's dress. Down toward the water front they took their way among the groups of singing boatmen and coureurs de bois; farther and farther along till the spars of the vessel in which François Dupont still lay asleep were lost to sight, and the waters of the St. Lawrence before them were free of any craft save some light canoes. Yet farther out, nearer the sea, the ships of a fleet were sailing toward Quebec, the commander unconscious that one victory to result from his attack would be that affecting a girl fleeing from a persistent suitor.

CHAPTER XII

GENERAL JACQUES

FATHER BISSET stood by the brink of the rushing stream and looked up and down its banks. "Let us reflect," he said. "He will sleep late, till daylight, perhaps, and he will not at once realize that I do not intend to return. As for Marie, I think she will say nothing, for it would do no good, and but bring blame upon her. I think he will begin to suspect when he receives the packet I left for him, a purse which he handed to me for your use."

"He dared to do that!"

"Yes; but it was kindly meant, and I was obliged to receive it, but not to retain it. Very well, then, he discovers the purse, and after a time he comes to himself, and will immediately set out to make inquiry at the convent. We have not been there, then we have outwitted him and have escaped, though perhaps he will not think I have taken you out of the town, and he will search there first. All this will take time, and we have a good start. I think we are safe."

Alaine's hand on his arm tightened. "And you think there is no danger from him? He will not follow?"

"He may eventually, but we have some hours'

start. He must first satisfy himself that I do not intend to return, and that you are at none of the convents or anywhere in Quebec. The sleeping potion which I put in the wine will not lose its effect at once, and he will be stupid all day."

"I cannot imagine how you were able to do this," Alaine said, thoughtfully. "Where did you get the potion?"

"I took care to provide myself with several necessities when I left France, and in case of emergency I brought with me one or two weapons quite as useful as a sword or a pistol. I know how to use certain drugs, but I know little about wielding implements of war. My little possessions, you may remember, were brought aboard the vessel with me; some of them remain there, the rest I have here."

The soft purple light of an early October morning hovered over the lofty bluffs of Point Levi, and a delicate mist floated above plain and river. The boatmen were beginning to gather, and their songs were wafted upon the morning air. Silent and sleeping the town still lay, its people unaware of the approach of a little fleet, and not dreaming that the guns of the fort would soon bellow forth a savage greeting to Sir William Phipps.

To the fact of their being neither Dutch nor English was now due the safety of Alaine and her companion. A renegade priest might receive some sufferance from the friends of Frontenac, himself none too fond of the Jesuits, but with war upon them,

the French would have shown small mercy to one from the British colony of New York. Therefore Father Bisset impressed it upon Alaine, "We are French; we are from Rouen; we have come to make our fortunes. Henceforth I am your uncle Jacques, and thus you must address me. A boy and his uncle will not be so easily traced as a girl and the man she calls father. We will trudge along, my nephew, and get a little beyond the town; we shall not be very long in meeting some of those wild woodmen of whom we both have heard much; we shall in all probability have to spend some time with them, therefore prepare yourself for a rough life. For you, my child, it will be a hard experience; for me, well, he must expect it who flees his country. Fugitives from justice are many of these *coureurs de bois*, and a fellow feeling will do much toward establishing a good understanding."

Through the woods, brilliant with the autumn coloring in the keen Canadian air, they wandered, pursuing the track of the river, and at last they came upon a group of rough voyageurs intent upon their noonday meal. "Does there happen to be one Antoine Crepin among you?" asked Jacques Bisset as he approached. "I am in search of him; a fugitive from France am I, and I seek this Antoine, whom I well knew in my youth."

The men eyed him and looked askance at the delicate features of this questioner's companion. "Antoine Crepin?" at last one spoke up. "I know him;

he has gone farther along; he winters near Trois Rivières always."

"And do you go that way?"

"We go, yes, there or somewhere."

"Have you room for two more in your party? I have—what have I? Not much; a little of the silver of France for our passage." He carefully drew some coins from his pouch.

The men conferred together. "We will take you. Keep your money. It is share and share alike. You and the boy there will need something to begin life with, my friend. You have chosen a bad time for your travels, with the country alive with disputes. Up and down the river it is the same; they say the English may approach. For ourselves we get out, but we may fall into the hands of the Iroquois before night. However, that is the life; one cannot tell when one is in danger; one may be drowned or be torn by a wild beast, or be scalped by an Indian; one thing is as likely as another; it is all chance; if you wish to take yours with us, very well."

That wild journey, would Alaine ever forget it? the frail canoes shooting through the whirling rapids and borne on and on; the night beneath the bright stars, with the cries of prowling beasts in her ears, and the haunting dread of an Indian war-whoop disturbing her dreams; those days when weird songs and rude jests awoke the echoes in silent places. She had not labored in field and garden to be other than free of movement, and her skill

in cooking won her the approval of her rough companions. It was even harder for Jacques Bisset to hide the fact of his former calling than it was for Alaine to disguise her sex, and many a laugh arose at the old man's expense. "He is schoolmaster; he is scrivener; he is—what is he?" they cried. "And he guards the lad as if he were taking him to a monastery. Here, Alain, boy, leave that mother-man of yours and we'll give you a chance to kill a deer, a chance you'll not have had back there in France."

And Alaine would laugh and say, "I'd rather cook your deer than kill him, and this uncle, he will learn one day, though he is not young. Leave us here to keep up the fire and cook your food; we will sit and fish, and if you come home empty-handed we maybe will have something for you." So they would troop off and leave them to watch the camp till they returned with their game and were ready to launch again upon the river, each day bearing them farther from Quebec, where the guns of the fort were growling out their defiance of the doughty Phipps and where François Dupont had awakened from his long sleep to one predominant fact: the city was threatened; it was French, above all it was French, and to arms he flew, remembering for a time only dimly that there were such persons as Father Bisset or Alaine Hervieu, or, if he remembered, it was to feel a grim satisfaction that they were there on his side. It was only after Frontenac's valiant

defence, and when the bumptious Phipps sailed away the worse off by eight vessels and many men, that François began to think of his own affairs. "I promised the old priest that I would wait for him. Very well, I have waited. I shall find him, no doubt, somewhere with the monks at the college or the seminary. He may be assisting them at Notre Dame des Victoires to decorate with trophies after this our victory. Vive La France!" he shouted aloud at the remembrance. "I, too, share in that victory. Good! I first find Father Bisset, and then my vessel, if she is not blown up. We shall set sail rather later than we intended, but it is better than a few days too soon, for we might by this time be prisoners of that Phipps."

To the convent he went. No priest and no Mademoiselle Hervieu had ever been there. François looked mystified. "It was uncommonly heady, that wine," he remarked to himself. "I scarcely remember ever to have been so muddled by a little bout; yet—ah, yes, he has taken alarm. He learned that the English were coming and he removed himself and mademoiselle to a safer place. He will return. I sit here and wait; it is all that I can do. He learns of victory and he returns. I said I would wait, and I wait."

More than once Alaine had seen Father Bisset take from his pocket a paper which he studied carefully and then seemed lost in thought, a proceeding which brought forth jests from the rollicking voyageurs.

“An order for good living, is it, Jacques Bisset?” one would cry. “A letter from the king himself, very likely,” put in a big fellow with an immense voice to match his proportions. “We have here, my friends, one carrying orders for Louis XIV.; he will lead us against the English.” He bowed low, sweeping the ground with his fur cap. “I have discovered you, Monsieur le General Jacques Bisset.” Every one joined in the laugh that followed, and from that time he was dubbed General Jacques.

They had halted for their evening meal. Trois Rivières was not a day’s journey from them. Squatting around their fire they were preparing their meat for spitting before the cheerful blaze; the nights were waxing cold, and they huddled blinking in close range of the acceptable heat. Suddenly Petit Marc—so-called in sheer contrariness—slapped his knee. “Son of a donkey! Senseless hooting owl!” he cried. “I forget that it is near here that Antoine Crepin has his lodge. It is near an Indian village beyond the woods there. Come, General Jacques, we can make it before it grows too late. If it is Antoine you want, Antoine you shall have, though how one can prefer the surly fellow to any of us passes my comprehension. Here, boy, up with you, for from the alacrity with which the general stirs his bones it is good-by to us and how are you, Antoine? We shall find him, I think; these last nights have been cold enough to drive him in. Who’ll go with us? You, Gros Edouard? You, Richard?”

Two or three scrambled to their feet, and they set out without further ado through the dim forest, their torches aflame and their guns ready. "It is a little more than a mile westward," Petit Marc told them. "We can trot it in no time and back again. Antoine would rather have Indians for neighbors than whites, and he is half right," he added, in an aside. "We'll jog right on." They proceeded Indian-file through the leaf-carpeted wood, Petit Marc marching ahead, and Richard with Gros Edouard bringing up the rear. At last they came to a creek swollen with the autumn rains; it was a turbulent little stream, but it did not daunt the voyageurs. "We shall have to swim it," said Petit Marc, calmly looking up and down the rising stream. "You, General Jacques, can you use your fins? I'll take the boy on my back, for I'll swear he can't swim." He looked Alaine up and down. "How is it, son?"

Alaine shook her head.

"I thought so. Here, then, take me around the neck, so, first, then slip your hands to my shoulders, and hold hard. You needn't be scared; I have carried heavier bodies than yours across worse floods. Here we go." And he landed Alaine on the muddy bank at the other side. Shaking himself like a huge dog, he stood up to watch the progress of the remaining members of the party. "Keep it up, general," he shouted, "you'll soon make it. Help him, boys; he hasn't the muscle of the rest of us." And, indeed, the old man's strength was nearly spent, and

after being dragged up the bank he dropped trembling to the ground. Petit Marc pulled out a flask. "Tickle your throat with that and you'll be able to come on, general," he said.

A few minutes of rest sufficed to give breath to the old man, and they continued their way to the cabin, which stood but a short distance farther on. With a ponderous rap Petit Marc beat on the door. "Awake, there, Antoine," he called. "Here is General Jacques and a section of his army. Awake and open in the name of the king."

In an instant the door was opened and a face peered out, showing in the flame of the torches suspicious eyes and a grim, unsmiling mouth. "The general here insisted upon making your house his head-quarters," said Petit Marc, grinning; "he has written orders from the king to press us all into service, and you are to provision the whole army. We will have pity on you to-night, having supped fairly well, and we'll go back, but you'll have to keep him and the boy." He gave the dripping figure of Father Bisset none too gentle a push toward the door.

"Antoine Crepin?" said the shivering old man.

"That is my name."

"And Jeanne?"

Antoine looked closer, gave an exclamation of surprise, and opened wide the door. Father Bisset entered followed by Alaine. "It's all right, boys," said Petit Marc; "the general is safe, and we return.

Good-night, general ; we shall expect to receive our promotions in short order." And with a loud laugh Petit Marc and his companions turned back.

"He is very wet ; he will take cold, I am afraid," said Alaine to the man, who was looking at her curiously. "As for me," she continued, "on that broad back I scarcely touched the water enough to hurt me."

"But Jeanne?" Father Bisset interrupted.

Antoine placed his hand on the questioner's shoulder and conducted him across the floor to where an inner room was roughly separated from the larger apartment. Alaine did not follow, but drew nearer the fire and crouched on the hearth to wring the water from her damp moccasins and to dry her sleeves. By the dim, flickering light she saw that here was a dwelling of the rudest kind ; a roughly fashioned bench, a table, a pile of skins in one corner, a few cooking-utensils, were all that she could discern. From the inner room had come a quick exclamation, a surprised scream of delight, laughter and sobs mingled, and then voluble words expressive of astonishment, commiseration, and inquiry. Presently reappeared Antoine bearing a light, and behind him came two figures. At first sight these were so exactly alike that Alaine stared. Were there two Father Bissets, one many years younger than the other? She rubbed her eyes and looked again. A red kerchief was tied around each of these two heads ; each wore a fringed deer-skin

jacket, below which was wrapped an Indian blanket. The two faces showed alike kindly eyes, expansive lips, and the same genial smile. Then the older spoke. "This is Jeanne Crepin, my sister Jeanne, who remembers well little Alaine Hervieu in her babyhood."

Alaine at once comprehended; this was the sister of her old friend, the young sister of whom Michelle had often told her, who had married a gay young Parisian and had followed him overseas. There was some difficulty, some crime which affected these two, Alaine remembered, and they had not remained to take any risks. It was said that Father Bisset had covered the retreat, but of this no one could be positive, but it seemed that all these years he had kept track of the fugitives. It was all true, then, and here they were.

"Alaine Hervieu resembles her mother," came Jeanne Crepin's deep voice. "She is very welcome."

"And now you know," said Father Bisset, "why I was not so concerned when I learned that our destination would be Canada, for Canada I intended to reach, whether by Hudson, by sea, or by land, it mattered not, and I laughed in my sleeve that François Dupont should be helping me on my way."

Alaine smiled. She feared François no longer. "And all these years you have been living in these woods?" she asked of Jeanne.

"In these woods; they are kinder than cities.

One can learn how to face open foes ; it is those who approach us as friends that are most to be feared."

Antoine nodded gravely. Alaine looked at him with some curiosity. Michelle had described him as a handsome young cavalier, gay and full of life ; this serious, reticent old man did not answer to her description. Was he really guilty of that mysterious crime, and so bowed under the weight of it, or was it the injustice of being considered guilty while he was innocent that had embittered him? Alaine wondered over it. But she was tired, and the warmth of the room and the effect of a warm herby drink given her soon made her drowsy, so that her head began to droop, and she threw herself down on the pile of skins in the corner, dimly conscious that a low-voiced conversation went on for hours. Although she felt more secure than she had for weeks, she felt singularly lonely, and she slipped into a sleep to dream that she struggled alone through a sea whose waves ever beat her from the shore.

Having cast in his lot with these children of the wood, Jacques Bisset followed as closely as possible their manner of living, sallying forth into the crisp cold air with gun on shoulder, joining in with the mirth of Jeanne, holding friendly one-sided conversations with such Indians as they met, and teaching Alaine such woodcraft as he thought might be useful to her. Antoine, himself grave and silent, had a smile for no one but the cheerful Jeanne, yet he showed his brother-in-law more graciousness of

manner than he did any other. During the long evenings there was time enough for talk, at least it was Father Bisset who chiefly did the talking; Jeanne would put in her eager, saucy questions, and Alaine, well wrapped in furs, would crouch in a warm corner and listen, yet often letting her thoughts wander. Where were they, her father and Pierre, and—Lendert? Yes, Lendert. Even here, and in spite of all these changing scenes, she could not forget him. The devotion of Jeanne and her husband touched her deeply, and Antoine reminded her of Pierre. Poor Pierre, if he had returned he would wait and watch for her the rest of his days. But Lendert, had he forgotten? Yet it was of Lendert she thought the most frequently; it was Lendert she loved. There had been moments of peril, moments of solemn night when truth must be answered by truth; she had tried to retreat, but truth had held her and would be answered, and she, trembling, had confessed to Danger and to Night, “There is one I love. I cannot help it; I have tried with all my strength, but Love is mightier than I, and I am slave to love.” Then, as some red embers dropped with a soft brustle from the burning logs, she would start from her revery and come back to hear what Father Bisset was saying. Now he spoke of Holland, then of England. He had been in both places. Were they surprised, Jeanne and Antoine, that he was Huguenot? They had suffered; they would understand that a matter of conscience,—well, that was it.

“A matter of conscience, yes, when one has fled because of that there is nothing to say,” Jeanne would say. “We owe it to you, Jacques, my brother, that we have escaped to a place where the arm of law does not touch us. We do not criticise you, he and I; we have suffered too much from France ever to wish to see that country again. We live a wild life; there is not much religion in it, yet if one can believe in God and in his justice, not man’s, he is not altogether bad. I tell my beads; I say my prayers; I have respected the priests because you were one. Now, I hate the France that has persecuted you and the Jesuits who would curse you.”

Alaine heard this, then slept, awaking to hear, “The child Alaine must be returned to her friends. I ask that of you, Antoine and Jeanne. I am an old man, and of late I realize that I am not as strong as I used to be. If I am removed I leave her to your sacred charge. She must be taken to one of the English or Dutch settlements in New York. I was God’s instrument to save her from the pit digged for her, and I have guarded her from all the evil that I could. I may have been mistaken to bring her in this disguise, but it seemed better so, and it was not for long.”

“She is not much hurt,” laughed Jeanne. “Ma foi! if I could stand it for all these years she could stand it for two or three days. They are not so desperately wicked, those that brought you here. One may have been something worse than any

of them and still have remained respected in France."

"True, Jeanne, true," growled Antoine.

"At all events," continued Jeanne, "you need give yourself no uneasiness; we will start forth as soon as the weather permits and see her safe in one of the settlements, and then we return here to live and die together. As for the girl's dress, it is a good one, and warm at that. I wear much the same, and if I had to travel about more than I do, I should not cumber myself with anything more. It is quiet enough and cold enough here to wear anything one chooses."

Alaine lifted her head and stretched out her feet towards the blaze. "I am very comfortable," she said, "and I do not think I am likely to remember or repeat all that patois of the crew which brought us here, so give yourself no uneasiness, Uncle Jacques; I am grateful to the very tip of my moccasins for all that you have done for me. I want to go home, yes, but I want to take you all with me." The wave of her hand included even the gloomy Antoine.

Jeanne laughed. "She would take us all, you hear. Very well, let us go and see what Michelle will do."

"She will be very glad, I can assure you," Alaine returned, gravely.

"I am not so sure of that," Jeanne responded. "However, there is bitter weather before us, and who shall say what may happen before spring?"

Who, indeed, can say what may happen anywhere while human passions are allowed to slip from their leash? The wildest of solitary places is yet too narrow to prevent the lifting of Cain's hand against his brother. And because of this, one day along the snow-covered ground toward the lodge there came a file of men led by Petit Marc, who carried in his arms a burden. At every step there were red stains to be seen marking the snowy path. Behind Marc came Antoine, his arms held about the necks of two others; he stepped feebly, as one not sure of his way. At the door of the lodge the little company paused, and Jeanne, hearing the shuffling feet, opened to them.

"Mother of God!" she cried, "what is this?"

Petit Marc, without a word, entered and deposited his burden in the clumsy chair which, covered with furs, stood before the fire.

"Jacques!" cried Jeanne. "Antoine!" For a moment she was helpless, looking from one to the other.

"I am beyond remedy," whispered her brother; "go to Antoine."

His friends had placed Antoine on the pile of skins in the corner; and he lay there pressing his hand to his side.

"You are hurt, my Antoine," said Jeanne, the moan of a woman entering into the deep tones of her voice. She knelt beside him, touching him with tender fingers.

Alaine, like one dazed, looked on. "How did it happen? What is it?" she asked, turning to Petit Marc.

Antoine half raised himself. "I will tell. He called me a murderer, he, that wretched outlaw. He recognized me, called me by name, taunted me. I drew my pistol, but it was he who fired. Jacques rushed between. 'Jeanne cannot spare you,' he cried. He fell, and could I endure it? I rushed upon him with my knife, but he was ready, I was wounded and he has escaped."

"Now God's vengeance follow him!" Jeanne exclaimed. "Who was it? Who, who, Antoine?"

"Victor Le Roux," he whispered; "it was he. I recognized him, as he did me, after all these years. 'Hold there, Olivier Herault,' he said; 'murderer art thou, and liar as well, if thou sayest I cheat.'"

Petit Marc lifted his head. He was chafing the hands of the old man over whom he was bending. "Olivier Herault!" he exclaimed. "And what of him?"

"I am he," said Antoine, faintly. He gently pushed away the hand with which Jeanne would have arrested the words.

Father Bisset opened his eyes and smiled. "Olivier Antoine Crepin Herault, Jeanne's husband," he said.

Petit Marc stood up, his giant form towering above them all. "Olivier Herault? then an innocent man," he said, slowly.

“And why? Why?” Jeanne turned her rugged face toward him, and Antoine essayed to stagger to his feet.

Petit Marc looked toward the other men grouped together by the door. “Here, my friends, this one, Antoine here, I know him to be innocent of any crime. Among us here in the woods it matters little what a man has been, but there are some of us who carry about with us the poison of an unjust charge. Most of us make the best of it; we care but little; we would rather be more free here than less free there, and we would not go back to the old life, but we do not tell of what is behind us; the present is enough for us to live for. Yet when one may clear a man, one may as well do it. More than ten years ago one of my comrades, hurt by a falling tree, died in my arms. He wished to confess his sins before he departed, and he told me that he had fled from France because of having murdered a man in a quarrel. ‘For this crime,’ he said, ‘one Olivier Herault is accused. I have heard that he escaped on the eve of his arrest, and that there was a hue-and-cry raised because of it. If you ever find him give him my confession; write it out as I tell you.’ And I did; here it is.” He drew forth a torn, stained bit of paper. “I sent word to France, but I have never heard whether the message reached there. I thought some day to find out, for I, too, Marc Lenoir, know what it is to be falsely accused. The law is not always so sure nor so just. Your inno-

cence is proved, Olivier Herault; no one believes in mine." He spoke simply, as one who long ago had accepted a fact and made the best of it.

"Antoine! Antoine! do you hear?" cried Jeanne. "Jacques, my brother Jacques, you, who believed in him, who let him escape and said nothing, do you not hear? You have saved him for this great moment, my Jacques."

There was a far-away look in the old man's eyes; he seemed not to know what was going on; he gasped painfully. "Little Alaine," he murmured, "come here, little Alaine, and say your prayers before I go. The angelus is ringing and it will soon be your bedtime."

Alaine with clasped hands and streaming eyes crept to his knees and bowed there as a child before its mother. He held her warm hands in his nerveless ones, now growing so sadly cold. "Pater Noster," he began faintly, and Alaine sobbingly repeated, "Pater Noster."

"Qui es in cœlis."

"Qui es in cœlis."

"Sanctificetur nomen tuum;" the voice was growing very faint.

"Sanctificetur nomen tuum;" the girl gathered strength and repeated the words distinctly, following the whispered sentences till one could no longer hear them, and she finished the prayer alone.

Every one was kneeling. The cold light of a winter's sun touched the white hair of the old man with

faint gold like a halo of glory. Alaine with bowed head now sobbed unrestrainedly, not yet aware that upon the lips of Father Bisset the Angel of Death had set his seal.

CHAPTER XIII

A DAUGHTER OF THE WOODS

FOR some moments no one spoke, then there was a stir among the men, who, one by one, filed out, until of them only Petit Marc was left. He, with the half-dozen others, had made their winter quarters near by, too indifferent to the affairs of war to care to mix with the more zealous community, yet ready to take up a cause at any time when there seemed sufficient promise for adventure. A short time before they had been joined by the man Victor Le Roux, who had the name of being a hot-headed, quarrelsome fellow, and a reckless one. Over some matter concerning the division of the spoils of a day's hunt had begun the quarrel with Antoine. Victor had recognized in Antoine an early acquaintance with whom he had never been upon very good terms, even in the old days of their youth, and he lost no opportunity of showing his feeling. So little value was set upon life in these wilds of America that a touch, a word, and the swords would fly out, the pistols would be drawn, and the man least on his guard would come off worst.

Petit Marc reflected upon this as he stood regarding Antoine, who, with burning gaze, did not remove

his eyes from the peaceful face of Father Bisset. "He shall die," at last said Marc.

Antoine looked up. "He shall die," he repeated.

Marc held his pistol in his hand; he turned it over and looked at it critically. "I promise you that," he said. "As for you, Antoine."

"I must live to return to France to face them there."

Marc looked at him reflectively. "Is it worth while?" he asked. "Life is short at best. We are forgotten there; we may as well not stir up dead embers from which no fire can again be kindled. Who lives now that would care? I advise you to remain and live out the life you have begun here; it is a good life."

"If I live, I will go back, but first I wish to know that Victor Le Roux no longer lives. I wish first to kill him."

"And return with the stain upon your hands of which they were clean when you left?" Marc continued.

Antoine fell back upon his uncouth bed. "One does not expect moralizing from you, Marc Lenoir," he said.

Marc smiled. "No, I profess nothing. I am become a *coureur de bois*; I do not belie my character. I do not pretend to be anything else than a lawless runner of the woods, a man who cares for neither God, man, nor the devil. I have no wish to vaunt a claim to respectability, even, grant you, a

right to do so is accorded me. I escaped the country after a charge of robbery, a political robbery at that." He laughed. "As if that were an uncommon thing. *Ma foi!* if every political robber were transported to the colonies, what an immense increase there would be in the population! I never wronged a man in my life, unless the sending of a half-dozen Iroquois to the Happy Hunting-Grounds be considered a wrong to them. I do not go now to France for justice; I work it out for myself here, and I say that Victor Le Roux must die. I constitute myself judge, and I shall not find it hard to discover the executioner." He turned and left the room, closing the door very gently.

It was days before he returned, and then it was to find that for Father Bisset had been made a grave in a sheltered spot in the forest, and that by his side lay Antoine Crepin, who never again saw France, but who hugged to himself the promise of his return even up to the last moment. "We will go in the spring, Jeanne," he said over and over. "In the spring, when I am well and strong, and the leaves are coming out. We will take the child to Manhatte, and will sail from there." But it was to an eternal spring that he went home.

In these years Jeanne Crepin, always cheerful, humorous, vivacious, had enlarged these qualities by adding a devil-may-care manner. Spontaneously free and easy by nature, she had found no curb necessary in this life of unrestrained wildness, and

it suited her. Her husband's bitterness of spirit caused him to grow taciturn and grim, making him look a much older man than he was, and, to offset this, Jeanne, at first in desperation, and later in natural response to her limitless environment, was always ready with jest, with smile, with song. The coquetries of her girlhood were exchanged for a certain audacity which stood her in good stead with the rough voyageurs, who were about her only friends, unless one excepted the Indian squaws and their braves. Deeply as she loved her brother and her husband, and faithfully as she mourned them, hers was not a nature to brood, and she simply checked off her grief as one more wrong to lay to the charge of France, and accounted it no treachery to say that she abjured her country.

"For me what has France done? Sent us here, Antoine and I. Not so bad, you say? No, but one suffers before one gets used to it, and now Jacques lies there in the forest. God knows I am thankful he had not more to endure, yet, for all that, I lay his death to the charge of those who haled him out of his quiet corner. And Antoine, was he not hounded and pursued by vindictive wretches who took on hearsay his guilt when he was innocent? Do I forgive France the bitterness of his life, the putting out of the light of his youth? No, long ago Antoine and I decided that we owed France nothing."

She was talking to Petit Marc, who had stopped to tell her the news from the settlements and to ask

how the boy fared. He had just returned from a long journey. What he had accomplished he did not tell, save that Victor Le Roux had come to his end at the hands of two Indians. "He deserved what he got," Marc said, laconically, and Jeanne did not question further.

"The boy?" Jeanne in her half-mannish attire stood in the doorway of her lodge; she looked quizzically at Petit Marc. "The boy is well enough." She laughed softly. "I shall keep him here till the snows are gone."

"And then?" Petit Marc asked.

"Time enough to tell when the time comes." Jeanne snapped her fingers as if to dismiss the subject.

Petit Marc stood shifting his cap from hand to hand. "Can't I see him? You keep him as close as if he were a week's old baby."

Jeanne laughed again. "If you can keep a secret, Marc Lenoir, you may see my baby."

"If it is a secret that has the boy in it, you may trust me."

Jeanne gave an assenting nod which invited Marc to follow her indoors, and he saw, sitting demurely by the open fire, Alaine deftly sewing together bits of doeskin. She wore a little cap set upon her brown curls, and despite her furry jacket and leather leggings, there was such an unmistakable air of femininity in her attitude and employment that Marc at first stared, and then exclaimed, "A girl!"

“Surely. A young lady of good birth, Mademoiselle Hervieu, of Rouen, now in flight from a would-be lover, who more than once has carried her off, and from whom she has as often miraculously escaped. On this account she has disguised herself, for she wishes to elude discovery till she is safe at home again.”

Petit Marc stood abashed before the young lady, but Alaine smiled and dimpled. “You need not be afraid of me, Petit Marc,” she said. “I am as good a friend as when you taught me how to trap a beaver. Sit down and tell me about them all, Gros Edouard, Ricard of the big nose, and all the rest. I shall never forget how good you all were to me on that wild journey from Quebec.”

Petit Marc dropped his big hulk on a bench and sat looking at the fire; then he turned to Alaine with a dawning smile. “No wonder that General Jacques stood guard over you, and looked as if he would skin and devour us one after another if we so much as said ‘the devil!’ in your presence. He had a way, that General Jacques, and we all wondered afterwards why on that trip we kept our mouths so uncommonly sweet. Yet, mademoiselle, I think you must have heard some things you never heard before.”

Jeanne spoke up sharply. “You need not remind her of that, Petit Marc. It is I who now stand guard.”

“You!” Petit Marc burst into a rousing laugh.

“My faith, Jeanne, you will have to walk backward for more than one year before you come to where you left off being a lady.”

Jeanne glowered at him. “I have not forgotten how,” she returned; “but you, Petit Marc, could never have been a gentleman even at your best, and when you were there in Paris, of which you pretend to know so much. Circumstances did not need to change you so noticeably. For me, I repeat, I do not forget, and one need not wear court manners to be called a good woman.”

Petit Marc became suddenly sober, although he said, lightly enough, “Ta, ta, Jeanne, it was but a rough joke, the like you have heard dozens of times. You are become suddenly touchy, and no wonder. You shall not complain of me again, and if you need me, I, too, will remember that it does not take court manners to make one a good man. I will remember that—if I can.” He laughed again. Nothing long disturbed his gay humor. He would be ready for a jocular remark a moment after he had killed his worst enemy or buried his best friend. He stretched his huge length along the bench and looked good-naturedly at Jeanne, who responded with a half smile. “I pray you keep to that,” she said. “If I want you, I shall expect you to come.”

“I will come.” He rose to his feet. “But at present I go. I will look in to-morrow, Jeanne. Adieu, mademoiselle.” He bowed with a grace not learned from savages and went out.

“Ta, ta, ta,” said Jeanne. “He is not so bad, after all, and we shall need him some day. I shall not soon forget what he has done for us all, poor Petit Marc.” She sighed, but recovered herself at once. She was stoically gay with Alaine, who, nervous and overwrought, was none too amiable these days. It seemed that the association with Jeanne had given back some of the petulance of her childhood.

“You are so big, so like a man, Jeanne,” she would say. “How can you pretend to know what a girl feels? You keep me shut up here like a rabbit in a hutch, and I want to go; I must go. I am weary of this life. How long do we stay?”

“Till I learn to remember the graces of my youth,” Jeanne would reply, laughing. “You will be ashamed of me there among your friends. How does one carry a train, for example?” And she would give her blanket a sweep across the floor with the air of a court lady.

“So foolish you are, Jeanne. We do not wear court clothes at New Rochelle, and besides, you know they do not countenance the papists there. So, what are you going to do about that?”

“Am I, then, a papist?” Jeanne looked meditative. “I think I buried all that with Jacques. I am whatever is convenient, Alaine. I am like those fish which are one thing up here among the French and another down there with the Dutch. Call me whichever you will, I am to the taste of whoever

likes me. I am a man, am I? Then come sit on my knee and be my sweetheart." And she would seize Alaine bodily, giving her a sounding smack, and jolt her up and down till she begged for mercy.

It was worth while to see this daughter of the woods go stalking off, gun in hand, in the direction of the Indian village, where she was well known and liked for her fearlessness, her kindness, and her skill. The Man-Wife they called her, or Jeanne the white brave. Whistling she would go, her great snow-shoes planted dexterously at every step, and returning, would bring such game as she had shot or trapped or could barter for. More than once Alaine had begged the life of a wounded squirrel or a timid rabbit, till the lodge by degrees became the home of several of these pets, these serving as company for Alaine, who, in Jeanne's absence, bolted and barred in, passed long solitary hours.

For all Jeanne's brave front, Alaine would sometimes find her sitting on the floor of the inner room, in her eyes the agony of love and longing as she held hugged to her the old leathern jacket Antoine had worn, or pressed to her cheek the dingy fur cap which had dropped from his head that day when they brought him home. Therefore Jeanne did not forget, but made her moan silently. Under the indifferent manner toward matters religious Alaine discovered, too, a conscience as that of a Puritan, an unswerving fidelity to truth, to purity, and righteous dealing. Jacques Bisset spoke the truth when

he called his sister a good woman. The men might laugh and joke with her, but only to a certain point, beyond that she was as prim as a Quaker, and they knew the limit. With the Indians she was uniformly frank and considerate, never failing to be generous in her trades with them. Therefore the forest could not hold a better guardian for a wandering maid than Jeanne Crepin.

In her fur cap and jacket, her leathern breeches and short skirt, with her gruff voice and her great height, one could scarce discern that she was not a man, a fact which she rather enjoyed. "Who cares what I am?" she would say. "So long as I know how to make my way and am comfortable so, I do not care." She had made Alaine a similar costume. "We will travel in this dress," she told her, "and while they are puzzling over whether we are men or women, it will give us the advantage. We will start before the Iroquois begin their raids. I know the language of some of their tribes, and I think I can manage to get on, yet it is not altogether a pleasure jaunt we will take. At first I thought we would best go alone, but I think we will let Petit Marc go with us, at least part of the way, till we cross into the Dutch country. You know a little of their language?"

"A little, and some English."

"We shall do, I think. Down the river to the Richelieu, through the lake to the carrying-place, and then down the Hudson. I have studied it all

out. Petit Marc has been there to Orange, and he knows. Now, teach me the English words you know, and see if I can remember some of the manners I had when I was a girl. Does one courtesy so? And what does a woman say when a man praises her beauty?"

Alaine laughed at the simper upon Jeanne's face and the awkward dip of her gaunt figure.

"I shall want to overpower Michelle with my elegance," Jeanne rattled on. "Michelle the house-keeper, the nurse of the Hervieus, and I the wife of as gay a cavalier as one could find in all Paris, and now——" She stretched out her hands, knotted and browned. "Where is the Jeanne Bisset who could grace a silken robe, and whose hands were as soft as the laces which covered them? She is gone, and Michelle rises, the wife of a man of education and good blood. I am a daughter of the woods, the wife of an outcast. So it goes. Yet I would not have it otherwise; it was for you, Antoine," she murmured. Then with a twirl of her body she cut such a caper as set Alaine laughing. "How does one dance a figure?" she asked.

"We shall probably find you do not forget the dancing," the girl returned. "I think we can spare you that lesson, Jeanne."

"Then be you Michelle and I the grande dame of her remembrance." Jeanne's quick fingers fashioned a turban from her kerchief. She spread a fur robe across her knees, picked up the turkey-tail they

used for sweeping up the hearth, and assumed a languishing air.

“Madame Herault.” Alaine swept her a courtesy.

“Ah, my good Michelle, I remember you quite well. You used to give me curds and whey in your dairy. Do you still manage a dairy, Michelle?”

“Yes, madame, but a small affair, not to be compared to that which you remember.”

“And your good husband? I hear he is something of a student. Do you find time to assist him in his studies?”

“No, madame; on the contrary, he assists me to plough a furrow to make the garden, to gather in our crops.”

“Indeed?” Jeanne raised her eyebrows in such supercilious surprise that Alaine clapped her hands.

“You have not forgotten, Jeanne. You will do? I feel myself quite crushed by your elegance.”

Jeanne threw aside her robe and the turkey-tail she carried for a fan and jumped to her feet. “But it would weary me, it would weary me. Ciel! when I remember the hours one must sit trussed up in tight clothes!” She gave her shoulders a hitch. “It wearies me but to remember it. No, I will not return to civilization, Alaine.”

“Then what will you do?”

“I don’t know. As my brother would say, I will do the Lord’s will.” The light was sinking in the sky. Outside howled the wolves and the wintry winds; it was desolate, desolate. But with the

touch of spring would come the Iroquois roused to action, and those who ventured from their fortified places might never expect to see home again. Better, safer, to go farther up the country away from the bordering river lands, to fear no worse foe than the beasts of the forests, thought Jeanne. She sank into the big chair and rested her chin in her hands. "Life is sweet; it is strange that it is so; and if we go away yonder we may face terrible death. Better to slip out of the world and die by wasting disease than to be captured and tortured. Shall we not stay, Alaine? We can go far from the dangers of war. Who cares for the glory of France or England now?" She sat gazing into the fire, her dark hair, which she had unbound to play the lady, falling about her face. "Petit Marc says there will be war-parties everywhere when the spring opens," she continued. "One cannot be safe anywhere along the border."

"I would rather die by the way," Alaine cried out. "I will go, Jeanne; I must." Then, after a pause, "I am selfish, Jeanne. I will not have you go with me. I will not allow you to take the risk of capture or a worse death. I will find the way somehow."

Jeanne sat up straight. "We will go together. Enough said. As well one way as another. Would it be worth my while to stay alone? If death, the sooner I meet Antoine. If capture, I can bear it. I am used to the ways of the Indians; it might not be

so hard to me, after all. Yes, we will go, Alaine. I fear more for you than for myself, that is all."

Therefore, before the last snows had melted or the first bluebird had come, Alaine set free her pets: the squirrel which had become so tame that he would hide his nuts in her hair; the rabbit which hopped after her everywhere she went, and which now scurried off into the nearest brush; the cunning fox-cub with his bright, sharp eyes, which had been wont to curl himself up into a sleepy ball in her lap, but which now pricked up his ears and set out jauntily to seek adventures. "Adieu, my little friends," sighed Alaine; "you go into the woods where are enemies you know not of, and I go my way into like dangers. We shall never see each other again." She watched them disappear. Into what perils were they going who seemed to be so glad of freedom? The talons of an eagle, the fangs of a wolf, the bullet from a hunter's rifle, might end the existence of any or all of them before night.

She turned sadly away to join Petit Marc and Jeanne, who, standing side by side, seemed as if they might be the children of a giant race. As they passed by the two graves under a sombre pine they all paused; Jeanne knelt, the other two walked on. A few moments later Jeanne joined them; she did not look back, nor did she have jest or word for either of her companions until they reached the water's edge, where Marc made ready to launch his canoe.

CHAPTER XIV

PIERRE, THE ENGAGÉ

DURING all these months it had not fared well with Pierre Boutillier. A baleful star seemed to control his life. Of a poetic, morbidly religious temperament, he was of the stuff of which martyrs are made. His love for Alaine represented the poetry of his nature; his voluntary sacrifice the depth of his religious fervor. Had he remained in the Roman Church he would probably have entered some austere order of monks, and, by repeated scourgings and penances, would have become a saintly father; as it was, he was resolved that his love demanded a consecration of his life, and he sailed away in search of a battle to fight or a martyrdom to endure.

The martyrdom was in sight when he approached the shores of Guadaloupa. It had been but two or three years since he had escaped from that place, a slave running away from a cruel master. It was the policy of those who led the persecution of the Huguenots to make the life of the engagé as hard as possible, as a warning to those uncertainly arrayed upon the side of the Protestants and as a means of compelling any to conform. Therefore, half-starved, beaten, hard worked, the poor engagé lived till his strength failed under the burning suns and

he died, less considered than the beasts of the field.

It was with a momentary feeling of weakness, of heart-sickness, and desire to retreat that Pierre set foot on shore. He could feel the lash of the whip, he could hear the coarse jeers, the taunts, the curses. He could see the face of his master, insolently cruel. He stood a moment irresolutely looking about him, and then slowly proceeded toward a building the use of which he seemed to know. Here were various offices, and here he would find the ship's lists. Was there one Theodore Hervieu upon them? If so, where could he be found? A man with keen eyes rapidly examined the lists. No, there was no one of that name. Still, one could not tell; there were those who were sent out as convicts under assumed names. It might not be impossible to find such a one. Yet, it took time and money. A good ransom offered, and there would probably be a response if the man were still alive. Was there anything in it for one who knew the methods? if so—— Pierre shook his head. No, not much; the man was an engagé, Huguenot, he had promised friends to make inquiry.

“Pouf!” A wave of the hand dismissed all interest in the subject. “Let him go. He is dead, in all probability, and a good riddance. It would take weeks to follow it up, unless one had a certain clue?” And the official settled himself back, while Pierre went out and gazed up the long road. He

stood for a moment thinking, and then slowly advanced up the dusty way leading to the plantation he best knew.

He had no need to travel far. His was not a face to forget; he had not walked far when he came face to face with the man who called himself his master, and from whom he had escaped three years before. The recognition was mutual; the red-faced, testy man who confronted the pale young Huguenot raised his heavy stick. "Dog of a Huguenot! Knave! Vile renegade! You dare to return and face me!" The stick descended upon Pierre's head and shoulders, blow after blow fell until, bruised and unconscious, he lay at his master's feet, to remain there till some one could be sent to take him up and bear him to the slave's quarters on the plantation, there to lie, bereft of reason, for days. "He shall have the full benefit of the lash when he is able to stand up!" roared the planter. "Did he think to fool me? I do not forget faces, and he shall serve his time and then double it, the impudent whelp. Let me know when he is on his feet." And to this prospect Pierre was to awaken.

Meanwhile, from the port of New York had set out a vessel laden with merchandise for the Carriby Islands. The cargo, carefully selected, was looked after by one of the owners of the vessel, who, sailing southward, would carry his goods to be exchanged for sugar, molasses, and rum, with such articles as could readily find a sale in the burgh of New York.

He was a tall, well-formed young fellow, this trader, who talked little, thought much, and saw a great deal. He had made his journey into the wilds of the country, and had proved himself a good man in the matter of bringing home pelts, and this being his first venture in foreign fields, he was more than usually concerned. Beyond this, another matter lay very near his heart, for, with practical forethought, along with this expedition, which he hoped would benefit him financially, he was bent upon carrying out a plan over which he had spent many hours of thought. This was nothing more nor less than the release of one Theodore Hervieu, who, he had heard, was bondman in Guadaloupa, for Lendert Verplanck was setting about his errand in a very different way from that which suggested itself to the less practical Pierre. He would hunt up Pierre, and the two would proceed to discover M. Hervieu. They would return and let Alaine's father decide which was the better man of the two.

Lendert measured Pierre by his own standards, and had not much faith in the young Huguenot's efforts at liberating M. Hervieu. In his quiet way Lendert had observed a great deal, and he felt sure that, ardent and zealous as Pierre might be, his plans would lack system, and so fall short of their object. The matter had been given careful thought by the young Dutchman. He knew the laws of the colony forbade a marriage without the consent of parents, and the thing, therefore, was to obtain M. Hervieu's

consent, and then his own mother's approval. Lendert realized that he had set himself something of a task, but his slow persistence in overcoming difficulties would avail him much, and he would take time. Yes, he would not go about it with a rush, as Pierre did; he would take time.

And so he sailed to Guadaloupa, sold his cargo, made his inquiries, learned next to nothing, and then sailed home again to think it over and to decide what to do next. He returned to find Alaine lost, Pierre still absent, and no light anywhere to guide him. But true to his usual method of proceeding, he resolved to take time to think about what to do next, not counting Alaine lost to him till it were proved so, and not believing Pierre dead till he found out that there was no possibility of his being alive. Then he decided that the next thing to do was to make another trip and find Pierre, about whose movements he had further satisfied himself, and had evidence that he had shipped for Guadaloupa and had landed there. Before he should go Lendert determined that he would first see Michelle and Papa Louis to discover if they had anything to add to their first news of Alaine's disappearance. Next he would see his mother, and then he would make his second trip, having a little more now to put into his next cargo. Having arranged this business, he set out for New Rochelle.

It was with some moderate excitement that Trynje Van der Deen ran up to the goede vrouw De Vries

one morning in May. Two Frenchmen were below asking shelter. Were they to be admitted? Might they not be spies? The lad, to be sure, had a pretty face and the man looked pleasant, and both were dressed rather oddly. Trynje was suspicious, and would the mistress of the house say what was to be done?

In all her breadth of petticoats the lady descended to the yard where stood the two wayfarers. The elder could speak no Dutch and knew but little English; the other could speak a little of both, and assured the *goede vrow* that they but wanted shelter and directions for reaching New York. "We are Huguenots," was announced, "and have escaped many perils and have gone through many adventures."

Madam De Vries looked the little figure over, and saw that the tanned, roughened hands were slender and the brown eyes wistful and full of intelligence.

"We are not beggars; we are but unfortunates who escape from our enemies," said the lad, in broken English.

"Take them to Maria," said Madam, turning to Trynje; "she can see that they are lodged and fed. When they are satisfied and are rested, fetch the boy to me."

Trynje obeyed and cast many curious looks at the graceful lad, who ate heartily enough, but seemed ill at ease under the girl's scrutiny. Yet he followed her willingly when summoned to return to the house.

Trynje ushered her charge into Madam's presence, and stood waiting to hear what was to be said next. "You need not stay, Trynje," said Madam. "Go and look after the looms for me like a good child." Trynje smiled and obeyed. She rather liked this intimacy which the treatment of her as a daughter of the house implied.

Madam sat silent for a few moments after Trynje left, her eyes observing closely the figure before her. "I want a boy about the place," she said in French. "Will you stay and work for me? My son is away, gone on some mysterious errand, and I am much alone. Were it not for my little friend who gives me her frequent presence, I should be left with only my servants. Can you read and write?"

"In French, yes. A little, also, in both Dutch and English."

Madam nodded with a satisfied air. "Better and better. Will you stay? I will pay you well."

Alaine's lips twitched. It seemed an amusing situation. Should she disclose her sex? She would not without first speaking to Jeanne. "I must consult my uncle," she replied.

"Ah, yes; he is your uncle?"

"Not really, but the same as one; but for him I should be farther from home than I am now."

"At all events, then, you can stay awhile. I can find plenty for both of you to do. My overseer has fallen ill, and there is not any one who can take his place; perhaps your uncle would help me there,

and for you I can find writing to do. I have need of a secretary, being given to other employments which I like better than that of writing letters. Let me see, you must be better clad. My son's clothes would be much too large for you. We will see what can be done. Call Trynje for me; you will find her in the sitting-room by this time."

Alaine withdrew and summoned the girl, who ran ahead, Alaine slowly following.

From her chatelaine, from which depended many articles, Madam took a big key. "Go to the large chest, the oak one on the west side of the upper hall, and bring me a roll of linen," she bade Trynje. "We must contrive a shirt for this boy, whom I shall take into the house."

A red flush mounted to Alaine's cheek, but she stood watching Trynje's movements. As the girl knelt before the chest the sun shone on her yellow hair and smote the red of her cheek. She was a pleasant-looking little Dutch maid, round-faced and blue-eyed, slow of movement and of speech. Alaine waited while she brought the roll of linen and dropped it into Madam's lap.

"This will do," said that lady. "Here, boy, kneel here and I will measure you. Truly he has a pretty face," she said aside to Trynje, and Trynje smiled at Alaine, who in good fellowship smiled back, and then Trynje dropped her eyes.

"Roll up the sleeve of that jerkin you wear," Madam commanded, and Alaine obeyed. The firm,

smooth arm, muscular and strong as it was, seemed too shapely and delicate for a boy, and Madam dropped the linen, looking searchingly into the girl's face. "Stand up," she said, and she herself arose, laying her hand lightly upon the girl's shoulder. Then she laughed. "Here, Trynje," she cried, "your blushes were for naught; 'tis not a boy at all, but a girl. Tell us your story, little maid. I might have known from the first." And Alaine, smiling and blushing, gave an account of herself, but said nothing of her companion.

"So! So!" cried Madam. "Such a romance, and your lover is probably there waiting for you."

"My lover?" Alaine gasped.

"Yes; not that kidnapping Frenchman, but the one you say has gone to rescue your father. He will have returned. Yes, yes, I see, we must not detain you too long. Go now with Trynje and let her dress you up. I would see how you look in the dress that best becomes a maid." She gave her a gentle push toward Trynje's outstretched hand of invitation. "She has a romance too, has Trynje," Madam continued, playfully. "Let her tell it you."

Alaine followed the sturdy little Dutch girl, and was herself soon petticoated and pranked out to Trynje's delight. Alaine regarded herself in the glass. "It does not so become me as you," she remarked, "for I have not your fair skin and yellow hair. I do not look like a Dutch girl with my crop of curls instead of those long yellow braids."

Trynje laughed. "No, but you will do. Come, I will take you down to Madam."

"And the romance?" Alaine paused to ask.

Trynje looked down. "It is that Madam desires me for her daughter-in-law."

"And you?"

"My parents do not know this; they have another in view."

"But you prefer this one?"

Trynje shook her head. "I do not tell that," she replied, laughing.

Madam struck her hands softly together as the two reappeared. "A better maid than man," she cried. "Go fetch the Frenchman, Trynje; we will surprise him. Hurry back and let us see you both together." She laughed as she looked again at Alaine's curly head. "Yes, one can see that you are not a Dutch girl," she said. "There, place yourself in that corner and Trynje by your side." She turned them from the light when Trynje returned to take her place, and then at Jeanne's entrance she went forward to meet her. "I am glad to receive and entertain travellers," she said, graciously. "M. Crepin, let me present you to Trynje van der Deen and——" But Jeanne perceived and joined in the laugh. "Alaine!" she cried. "Thou, little one, art discovered."

"Madam wished to employ me," said Alaine, "but now she understands——"

"She still wishes you to remain as long as you

will if you will do her the service of helping her to manage her affairs." She looked at Jeanne.

"We thank you, madam," said Jeanne, with a bow which would have done François Dupont credit. "My niece there is greatly wearied. It is no small journey to take, and when there is war in the land there is more danger to be looked for than that of rapid streams and wild beasts."

"He who led you thither, where is he?"

"He left us when we were safe in English possessions."

"I would have had him here also, for he must be as brave as yourself. I am alone, save for my servants, and I stand in continual fear of a raid from some of your Indians. Yet, I do not wish to leave. I expect my son at any time, and hope I can persuade him to remain. I manage this place with the help of an overseer and the servants, but one needs also a man of one's own family. When he marries," she glanced at Trynje, "I can hope to keep him at home."

The two girls had retired to the window. Jeanne noted the direction of Madam's glance. "It is, then, your future daughter-in-law that we see?"

"It is my future daughter-in-law," replied Madam, compressing her lips. "My son must obey my desire in such a matter. You will remain, M. Crepin?"

"Till chance favors our journey farther."

"A few days more or less can make no difference."

“Delays are dangerous, and hope deferred maketh the heart sick. The child there has friends who mourn for her, who sicken with doubt and dread.”

“I understand that, yet I would fain detain you till my son returns. He can give you the best information about reaching your home, and will see that you have safe conduct down the river to Albany. The girl has led too rough a life, I fear, but I would like to give Trynje a young companion, yet I wonder would it be safe for her.” She spoke reflectively, as if not addressing any one, but upon Jeanne’s face came a look such as her brother wore upon occasions.

She controlled herself, however, and said, simply, “The girl is a good child, madam. I have guarded her as my own daughter. She is as pure and sweet as yonder maiden could possibly be.”

“But she has spent days in the company of rough men, has heard their ribald jests, their low songs.”

“She has not, for in her presence, boy though they supposed her to be, they dared not say or sing anything she might not hear.”

Madam smiled. “The fact does you credit.” She waved her hand as if to dismiss the subject.

Jeanne bowed. After the storm and stress of the past few weeks it would not be unpleasant to take a little rest. “Meanwhile,” continued Madam, with a bright glance at Alaine, “we will contrive to get word to the girl’s friends. It will be enough that they know she is safe and will return when opportunity allows. Yes, that is how we must manage it,

and then you need be in no haste to depart. I will myself send letters to Orange." She leaned her head on her hand and looked out and beyond the tall figure before her into the light of spring. Jeanne felt herself dismissed, but Madam recalled her. "You will not refuse to join us at meals, M. Crepin? and if I need the girl's quick fingers with my letters, you will not disallow it?"

"We shall both be grateful, madam."

Madam leaned nearer and asked, "She inherits estates in France?"

"She would if she were disposed to relinquish her religion, otherwise they are confiscate."

"Ah! They are fair estates?"

"Very fair. Her father possessed wealth and position, now both will be transferred to the eldest son of his sister, one Étienne Villeneuve."

"Whom the girl does not fancy?"

"As cousins they were good friends, but as husband and wife, that is another thing."

"This other, the wild, piratical Dupont, of whom the girl told me, what is his object?"

"That, madam, I have yet to learn. He desires to marry mademoiselle, it would seem."

"For her possible wealth?"

"I think not."

"For love of her?"

"Again, I think not."

"Then, why? I wish I might play the spy on him. It is a pretty tale of romance of which I

would fain see the end. And this Pierre who has gone in search of the child's father?"

Jeanne did not show her surprise. She had not heard of Pierre and did not know that Alaine's sudden confidence had been given because the presence of a girl of her own age had invited it. "Of Pierre I cannot say," returned Jeanne, after a silence. "It has been some time, you see," she added, diplomatically.

"And all these months the girl has worn this strange garb. I wonder she could so endure it. Twice, she tells me, she has been obliged to don such a costume for purposes of escape."

"Evil lines have been hers, but the Lord has delivered her," replied Jeanne, piously.

Madam smiled at the incongruity of the speech with the appearance of the speaker. "You do not disguise yourself, good sir," she remarked. "There would be little use in your appearing in the dress of a woman once you spoke. Yet your face is smooth of beard, and I have seen women as tall."

"I have been for many years a companion of the *coureurs de bois*," returned Jeanne, calmly. "I am not unversed in matters of the hunt, in trapping beasts, and in those manly accomplishments which are known to the *voyageurs*."

"A *voyageur*? Then sing me one of their songs," said Madam, laughing. And the good Jeanne, with a twinkle in her eye, trolled out a boatman's ditty, at the sound of which Alaine and Trynje started

from their place by the window and came toward them.

“Good!” cried Madam, clapping her hands when Jeanne had finished. “It was a well-answered test, monsieur. I trust that you will pardon me for putting you to it. Strange and doubtful as your story may have seemed, I believe it, and that you are in very truth what you seem.”

Jeanne burst into a laugh. “For once, madam, your penetration is at fault, for I must contradict you. I, also, am a woman.”

“Impossible!” Madam drew herself away a little.

“Even so, and my own story, though not in the same way romantic, may not be uninteresting to you.”

“Will you tell it?”

Jeanne began monotonously, but by degrees her natural dramatic fire crept into it, and at the end the tears were dropping from Madam’s eyes. She caught Jeanne’s hand in hers. “Stay with me,” she cried; “I, too, have been bereft. I will not constrain you, but stay with me as my guest.”

“As your servitor, for a season; but I have promised, and I must perform. I must see the girl safe at home, and then what is ordered will come next. I am all unused to delicate living, and I pray you house me among those who work in your fields.”

“As you like; I will give you quarters to yourself, and hope you may be comfortable, but you are my guest, none the less.”

She could be very gracious, this Madam De Vries, but she could be none the less haughty, imperious, and obstinate, as Alaine found before two days were over. The servants stood in awe of her, yet grumbled over the insistence with which an unimportant point was often carried. Uncompromising and unyielding as she was when angered or crossed, she was uniformly gentle to Trynje, whom she did not hesitate to call daughter. She was impulsive and changeable, too, and impatient of those who disagreed with her. Just now it pleased her to make much of these uninvited visitors who appealed to her imagination and love of excitement.

The plantation, some miles from Albany, was one of those comfortable Dutch estates which thrift and industry had secured to its owner, who, dying, left it to his widow to carry on in the same competent way, and it was by no means a bad place to live.

After a discussion of the matter, Madam agreed that both Jeanne and Alaine should retain the dress in which they had arrived. "It will cause less comment," she said, "and until she is safe in her home I do not feel that the girl may not be tracked by the Dupont."

"Which is my own opinion," agreed Jeanne. "He is indefatigable; he is a born intriguer; he stands at nothing, and he may yet find a way to discover us, once she assumes her own dress."

"It is like a play," said Madam, "and it is vastly exciting. To protect the girl, then, I agree, and if

any come prowling around the place questioning the servants, they will have no tales to tell.”

And therefore Alaine changed the short gown and petticoat for a linen shirt and breeches. Yet she was kept indoors, and, amid much laughter from Trynje, would sew or spin when no one else was nigh to observe her. Out of doors both she and Jeanne occupied themselves in such employment as was agreeable to them and which would keep them apart from the other workers, and Madam's private garden promised to thrive well in consequence. It pleased Madam's fancy not to let them go, and day after day some excuse was made to detain them longer. It is not improbable that she would have enjoyed somewhat a descent upon them by François Dupont, and that she was not without hope that it would take place; then she, at the head of her retainers, would drive him off, and it would be a pleasant and exciting diversion without the danger included in another incursion, such as those by the Indians.

Trynje attached herself devotedly to this new friend, for she was not without her love of romance either, amiable and prosaic as she appeared. But it was romance in which others, rather than herself, were concerned, which most interested her. These affairs required no puzzling solutions, no sleepless nights, nor uncomfortable situations. So far as she was concerned she was satisfied that others should direct her way, and what was nearest and easiest

would receive her endorsement. So the two worked side by side, Trynje laughing at the attempts to speak Dutch which Alaine strenuously made, and the latter trying to drum into Trynje's stupid little head a few French phrases. They could be seen almost any afternoon busy in one corner of the big sitting-room, while at the other end Madam's head could be observed bending over her letters and accounts.

CHAPTER XV

MADAM, MY MOTHER

It was one day a week or so later that Alaine came upon Madam pacing the floor in deep thought. She looked up as the girl came in. "My son arrives to-night," she said, abruptly, "and I have been thinking will it be best that he meet you as girl or boy. If as boy, you would best not appear at table; if as girl, we must announce the cause of the masquerade to him and to the rest of the household."

"Oh, madam, permit me to keep in the background," returned the girl. "I would much rather it should be so; and if we take up our journey again, it will be best that I do not alter my dress till I am safe at home; you remember that we decided so."

Madam stood considering; then she smiled. "Taking all things into consideration, I think it will be best; and you need not neglect Trynje, but leave her only when my son seems to desire to be with her. I think," she smiled again, "he will desire it the more because of the presence of a handsome lad. Yes, that is it; we will make him jealous. So, put on your most devoted air; you are a head taller than Trynje, and will seem quite a possible rival."

Alaine laughed. She rather enjoyed the humor of the situation.

"I do not know much about your son," she ventured to say. "Trynje will not talk of him, and when I try to bring the conversation that way she only laughs and changes the subject."

"He is very triste these days," continued Madam. "I do not know why, though he is never very communicative, this son of mine. He says little of his affairs, and I shall not tell him all of mine. He and Trynje have been playmates from youth, and she still calls him Bo, as she did when a tiny child and he tried to teach her the English for boy."

"Must I take my meals with you, madam?"

"You would rather not? I can understand that it might be awkward; then Maria and Johannes shall have your company if you do not mind."

"I do not mind at all."

"Then it is settled, and perhaps we shall have a wedding before June, who knows? Trynje has deep affections once they are given, but she has pride as well. Now, then, let us see how well you can act your part in this pretty play."

In the dusk of the evening there was the sound of trampling of hoofs outside by the porch. Madam arose. "Come, Trynje," she called, and Trynje ran forward, leaving Alaine in the shadowy corner where they had been sitting. The door opened, and by the waning light Alaine saw a tall form embrace Madam, saw Trynje's little plump hand carried to a man's

lips, then as the waning light fell upon the man's face she saw the smile of Lendert Verplanck.

"Lendert!" she whispered, and then she dropped back again upon the settle. "Lendert!" She sat there staring for a moment before she made her escape to her little room above-stairs which Madam had insisted upon her occupying. Her heart was beating tumultuously, her head throbbing. She threw herself face down on the floor. "My Lendert! My Lendert!" she whispered. "He has forgotten me. I dare not make myself known. I must try to get away without his knowledge, for there is Pierre and here is Trynje, who love me. Jeanne must know, and she will help me." She lay there sobbing convulsively till her first tumult of grief was spent, and then she arose and knelt by the window, her elbows on the sill. The little latticed casement was open, and through it was wafted the mysterious sweetness of May, the sweetness of new-born leaves, of blossoms shaking out their perfume to the winds. So perilously sweet the season to those who love, for the promise of bliss, of beauty, the expectant hush covering things as yet wrapped in mystery, the almost answer to everlasting questions, these are conveyed to the heart of youth on a May night. Unutterable thoughts came to the girl as she leaned out and felt the breath of evening on her hot face. Her yearning heart mounted to the skies bearing the enduring "Why?" and again her eyes overflowed.

A light step along the hall was followed by a tap on the door. "Where are you, little runaway?" came from Madam in a bantering tone. "This is not keeping your word. My son has gone to smoke his pipe on the stoop with our manly Jeanne, who has actually joined him. Did she learn to smoke from the Indians? Trynje is watching for you. It is all very good, for I have had a word with my son, and he has said, 'We will talk of it after a while; if it be so great a desire with you, madam, my mother, I will try to yield to your wishes. One must marry, I suppose, and why not Trynje as well as another? She is an amiable little girl.' So, you see, it is as good as settled. Now to make him jealous, and he will think she wears many more virtues than the one of amiability." She had come in and stood by Alaine's side. "You have had your supper?"

"No, not yet."

"And so late. Fie upon you for a bashful child! Go along and get it at once, and then come to us." And she swept out, leaving Alaine with hands nervously clinched and trembling with overwrought feelings.

"Why do I not die?" she moaned. "God knows I have tried to do my duty. I have tried,—I want to do it. O God, why are the hearts of women so weak and their love so strong? My heart will break,—it will break! He has forgotten me!" She leaned her face against the casement. Hark! it was his voice there below. He spoke to Jeanne. She could

hear distinctly the slow, deliberate tones. Oh, let her not lose this one happiness before she accepted the inevitable misery of flying from him !

He spoke slowly in halting French. It was evident that he had heard something of Jeanne from his mother, and believed her to be simply a sort of upper gardener. "You are Rouennaise, I think you say," Alaine heard him remark.

"From near Rouen, but I left there many years ago."

"Perhaps you knew a family of the name Hervieu."

"I knew them well ; they were among those who stood high in the parish of my brother."

There was silence for a moment while Lendert puffed at his great pipe. "This family, I have met a member of it. They became Protestant."

"A part of the family did and fled the country."

"Yes, but one has since returned, I have been told."

"I had not heard of it. M. Theodore Hervieu, I suppose."

"No, his daughter."

Jeanne leaned forward and peered into the other's face. "I think you are mistaken," she said.

"I know it to be true," Lendert continued.

Jeanne laughed and leaned back again against the railing of the porch. "Then we do not speak of the same family. There are several of the name."

There was silence again. Alaine above there, with

the whispering leaves saying a hundred things to her, leaned farther out.

After a long pause Lendert spoke again, as with difficulty. "This young lady's name was Alaine Hervieu, the adopted daughter of one Louis Mercier and his wife Michelle. I know them all. She saved my life, and—I was ill at their house there in New Rochelle. She disappeared. They mourned her as dead, but she is married, they afterwards learned. I have seen them; they told me. They had just received word from France. She was there, the wife of François Dupont. I would rather she were dead. She is dead to me. She has abjured her faith and will remain among her relatives in France."

"It is all a lie," said Jeanne, quietly.

"It cannot be. I saw the letter myself."

There was a swift running of feet along the hall and down the stair. In the doorway appeared a slight figure, and a voice cried, "Lendert! Lendert! I am not dead! I am not married! I am here!"

Down went the great pipe with a clatter to the ground. The sweet, shrill, imploring tones rang out upon the May night. With one stride Lendert reached her where she stood poised upon the door-sill. "Alaine!" he cried. "Oh, thou good God! It is Alaine!" And then Jeanne stepped in between them, but Lendert swept her aside.

"Shame upon you, girl!" The words came from Madam De Vries, who, shaking with anger, saw the

two standing as one before her. "Lendert, what does this mean? Girl, go to your room!"

But Lendert held her fast. "It means, madam, that this Alaine Hervieu is the woman to whom before God I have pledged myself. I have vowed to marry no other, and I will not."

"An outcast, a beggar, a creature of my bounty, a companion of *coureurs de bois* and of wandering women! You would take such to your home, present her to your mother, smirch your honest name——"

"Stop!" Jeanne strode forward, anger on her face and blazing from her eyes. "You, who are a woman, dare to say that to one who has been afflicted so sorely! You, a mother, can dare to cast your venomous slurs at an innocent, motherless girl, who but yesterday roused your compassion and drew tears from your eyes by the recital of her wrongs! Beware, lest Heaven's curse——" She paused and dropped her hand raised in malediction. "Monsieur," she said, turning to Lendert, "the girl is now my charge, and has been under the protection of my brother, a holy man, from her birth up, with the exception of the few years with the *Merciers*. I am ready to vouch for her innocence and goodness as for an angel's."

Lendert leaned his head down till his cheek touched Alaine's curly head resting against his encircling arm. "I should never question it," he answered. "She is Alaine, and that is enough. I love

her. I could never doubt her, having once known her. There is no need of your defence of her, yet I thank you for it."

"Come to me, my child," Jeanne ordered, and Alaine slipped from Lendert's hold to hers.

"Tell your story, monsieur," Jeanne continued. "Though I do not doubt your faithfulness, I must be as particular in my knowledge of who you are as Madam would be of her son's wife. You are Madam's son, yet your name is Verplanck."

"My mother has been twice married," said Lendert. "I am her son by her first marriage. Some months ago I met Mademoiselle Hervieu. She interposed herself between me and death. She and her adopted parents took me in, a stranger, and for weeks cared for me as for one of their own flesh and blood. I saw and loved Alaine. I gave her my vows and my promise to return and marry her. We parted. I had a mission to perform; it is not yet done, but I determined when it proved successful to return and claim her, trusting to my mother's good sense and affection not to oppose my happiness. I went to New Rochelle. I saw Michelle and Louis Mercier. They showed me a letter they had received from François Dupont, he who stole their child away; it was written in Canada; it assured them that Alaine was safe, was well and happy; that she was married to him, and that they were about to depart for France. There were messages from Alaine, and it all seemed as if true."

“That evil-doer,” muttered Jeanne. “It was all a ruse, monsieur, to prevent further action on the part of her friends. I do not know what he hoped to gain by it. Mademoiselle Hervieu left Quebec in the company of my brother six months ago. She has not seen François Dupont since that time. It is quite true that he carried mademoiselle off and would have married her, but, fortunately, my brother was the instrument in God’s hands to prevent it. It is a long story; we will discuss it later. At present our entire desire is to leave here and reach Manhatte.”

“Which you shall do, and the sooner the better. My roof no longer affords you shelter,” said Madam, bitterly.

Lendert’s sleepy eyes half closed. “Mademoiselle Hervieu is under no obligation to you, madam, my mother, for your son is alive through her defence and her protection. The obligation is upon the other side.”

“There is no obligation where there is a graceless, disobedient son who perjures himself and defies his mother.”

“Perjures himself?”

“Did you not, an hour since, promise to marry Trynje van der Deen?”

“I said I would consider it after a while, but there was then nothing of all this. My troth to Alaine I believed severed by her marriage. Now it is different.”

“You cannot marry without my consent; the laws of our colony forbid.”

“Then I will not marry while Alaine is free.”

“And Trynje?”

Trynje had come out and was listening wonderingly. She nestled her hand in Alaine's and spoke up. “Trynje, madam, does not desire to marry Lendert Verplanck. She prefers to let her parents select for her. You have shown her how very unpleasant a mother can be, and Trynje does not like discord. Lendert Verplanck, I am Alaine's friend; I love her. I wish her happiness, and my own will not suffer by reason of you, be sure of that.”

Madam standing alone in the doorway with all arrayed against her awoke Trynje's pity, and she went over to her. “Dear Madam De Vries,” she said, “it would be a very pleasant thing if you would agree with the rest of us and let us be merry over this instead of angry. It was but this morning that you spoke very sweetly of Alaine, and she is the same now as then.”

Madam withdrew the hand Trynje had taken. “Little fool,” she muttered, “if you had but claimed your own we could yet have our own way.”

“I am having my way,” returned Trynje, “only it isn't your way, madam.”

“She is not the fool she would seem,” remarked Jeanne, in an aside.

“Good little Trynje!” cried Lendert.

Trynje stood a moment looking wistfully from one

to the other. She did not enjoy this disturbance, but she had a happy consciousness of having done what made it easier for all but Madam.

“Go, girl!” Madam commanded Alaine in a hard tone. “Go, take off the clothes my bounty has provided for you. Your rags Maria will return to you. I want never to see your face again.”

“Nor your son’s?” asked Lendert.

“Nor his, unless he agrees to bring Trynje home to me. All this would then be his. Otherwise he can leave my roof; his disobedience casts him out.”

“It is not the first time I have been cast out,” replied Lendert, with some bitterness. “My first opposition to your wishes brought me that.”

“You will not find it necessary to repeat the experience,” responded Madam. “These lands belong to the widow of Pieter De Vries, and not to the son of Kilian Verplanck. Come, Trynje, we will go in. I do not turn you away.”

Trynje did not budge, but held Alaine’s hand tightly in hers. “I am sorry not to oblige you, madam, but I can’t let Alaine sleep in the woods to-night. I shall take her to my mother.”

“The wench has slept often enough in the woods,” sneered Madam. “You do not need to spare her; she is not used to a delicate life, we know that.”

“The more that she should be spared further privation,” spoke up the spunky little Trynje. “If you will get my horse and your own, Lendert Ver-

planck, we can all travel together, and can reach home in an hour."

"No, no, Trynje, dear little Trynje," whispered Alaine. "I will not take you away; it is not safe going at night through the woods."

"As safe for me as for you, and perhaps safer than a settlement. Then, I wish to go. I want my mother."

Tears came to Alaine's eyes, and she bent over and kissed the girl's soft cheek. This loyalty of Trynje's touched her deeply.

It was not long before the little party was ready to start, Alaine and Jeanne mounted on Trynje's horse, and Trynje behind Lendert upon his own steed. They left a silent house, from the windows of which not a light gleamed, but within whose walls sat a disappointed, obdurate woman with rage and self-pity gnawing at her heart.

The travellers rode along quietly enough through the woods. The leaves were yet too sparsely green to shut out the light of the sky, and the bridle-path was easily followed. Lendert's watchful eyes kept a sharp lookout right and left, and his hand upon his gun was ready. Neither he nor Trynje were great talkers, and they said little. Alaine, on the contrary, kept up a low-voiced conversation with Jeanne. Neither Madam's sharp words nor the painfulness of the entire situation could take the joy from Alaine's heart. Above all else arose the one thought: Lendert loved her; he had not forgotten

her. Once or twice she lifted her face to the twinkling stars whose beams sifted down between the tender twigs and the little new leaves, and she repeated softly one of the dear old psalms, "The heavens declare the glory of God." It had been a long time since she had heard any one sing them, but soon, soon she would be at home and free. There was so much she desired to ask Lendert, so much, for he had seen those dear ones not long ago, and she busied herself with this or that surmise as she chattered to Jeanne, and at last she sobered down into pensive recollections of her old life. What of all her resolves? What of the promise she had made to herself that she would forget Lendert and remember Pierre? These had vanished utterly at sight of him to whom her heart was given.

So presently she spoke very gravely. "Dear Jeanne, in those old days in France I used to go to Father Bisset with all my puzzling questions, and he always set me right. Now here am I in a sorry uncertainty. Listen, Jeanne, and tell me what I should do. I have not told you all this, because I thought I ought to try to overcome my love and think only of Pierre and his great sacrifice for my sake. Yet, here is another who loves me so well that he forsakes all else for me, and him I love. I have tried not to. I have sought to let my thoughts dwell on Pierre. And then, at home, Michelle and Papa Louis would have me marry Gerard, yet I

think when my father returns they will see that it is he who should order my goings. What must I do, dear Jeanne? You saw that my heart outran my resolve, and I have again confessed my love for Lendert. Am I not a deceitful wicked thing? I am miserable when I think of it."

"What have you promised Pierre?"

"I promised him nothing, for he would not allow it; and furthermore he told me that I must not be bound, and if in a year he or my father had not returned, that I must be free to do what seemed best. Before then I told him I would marry him or whomsoever should be my father's choice."

"Then await the end of the year, and if your father returns let him settle it."

"But Lendert, my whole heart goes out to him, and if he loves me he offends his mother, and if I love him I may offend my father, yet each of us loves only the other."

Jeanne sighed. "Earthly love is very strong; one cannot always conquer that at once; yet, my dear, if you ought not to marry Lendert you must not."

"You think I ought not to marry him even if his mother should at last consent?"

"If you gave your promise first to Pierre, and if your father orders it, you should marry Pierre."

Alaine's head drooped lower and lower. Ahead rode Lendert; she could see his stalwart figure outlined against the dimly soft sky. She felt that she could leap from her horse, fly to him, beg him to

take her away, away from all her confusing and conflicting problems.

The piteous sigh she gave aroused Jeanne's compassion. "I am telling you what is right, my child, as you asked me to do, but remember, when the year is at an end you will be free to do what your heart dictates. I think there is no doubt of that."

"Then you think I shall not see my father again?"

"Or Pierre? I think it is very doubtful."

"It is terrible, terrible, that I should build any happiness on that. I will not. I will think they are both to return, and will be patient. Will you tell Lendert what you have told me it is right to do? Will you let him know that I must abide by the right at any cost? I am so weak-hearted that I should yield up my love again to him if he asked it. When I think of it, Jeanne, I know that love is mightier than death, for I wish we could die together, he and I, this minute. Is it not pitiful that love is so strong and will is so weak? I want to do right. I mean to do right, while every fibre of my being throbs for Lendert. If I am to be the wife of another I must not let him even look at me, with the lovelight in his eyes, for mine will surely answer. Twice in my life for a few moments I have been so happy that I can believe what heaven is like. It is not given to all of us to be so happy, even for a few moments, in this world, therefore I must be satisfied with that and believe that I am more favored than many

women." Her voice shook, and Jeanne knew without seeing it that her tears were falling fast.

"Do I not know? Can I not understand?" Into Jeanne's voice crept a note of love and longing akin to Alaine's. "We have been sorely afflicted. The waves and the billows have gone over us both. It is a wonderful thing this love of woman for man. None knows how wonderful or how great but those who have felt it. And none but they can tell how much a human soul can suffer. I will speak to M. Verplanck, and I think he will understand and will be patient also. It is very hard for youth to be patient," she continued, half to herself. "One must think of the things for which one must be thankful, then it will not be so hard. You have been wonderfully delivered more than once, and surely you should believe that you will be again."

"I will believe that, dear Jeanne." Alaine's arm around Jeanne's waist gave her a gentle pressure, and they rode on silently till the twinkling lights ahead of them showed that they were approaching a small settlement. In a few minutes a stockade was reached, this enclosed the fort and blockhouse where dwelt Joachim van der Deen and his tenant farmers. To the query, "Who goes there?" Trynje answered, "I, Trynje van der Deen, with friends." And an immediate admittance was vouchsafed.

Trynje, helped from her horse by Lendert, went at once toward the door which was flung wide open in

answer to her summons. "Whom have we here?" asked a stout, red-faced Dutchman. "What is my daughter doing travelling about this time of night, and who are these in her company?"

"Lendert Verplanck, whom you know, Mademoiselle Hervieu, whom you do not know, and Jeanne Crepin."

"They are French?" Joachim van der Deen looked suspicious, and pulled the door together a little.

"We are Huguenots and refugees, good sir," interposed Alaine, "and as your generous Holland has sheltered so many of our faith, we hope we do not ask in vain for shelter here. I have travelled in this dress for some months past that I might the more readily escape detection of my enemies."

Joachim van der Deen smiled, and, taking Alaine's hand, he led her to an inner room where sat his buxom wife. "We have visitors, Johanna," he said. "Trynje returns with them. Let her tell her tale while I see to this gentleman. It is past bedtime and we will retire at once, my friends, unless you have good reason to remain without a good night's rest."

Trynje poured forth her story into her mother's ears. The goede vrow listened attentively, and at the close remarked, triumphantly, "I always said you would find Madam De Vries a hard mother, and you are well awake to it now. We shall have no more objections to Adriaen Vrooman hereafter."

Trynje blushed and snuggled up to her mother's side. It was very clear that she agreed with her, and that when Adriaen returned from his journey into the distant forests he would receive a smiling reception from Trynje.

CHAPTER XVI

ONE NIGHT IN MAY

ALAIINE found herself comfortably lodged, with Trynje's little negro maid in attendance on the two girls. Before long they were nestled in an immense feather-bed which billowed up around them and almost hid them from sight. Alaine, however, did not sleep. She listened to the soft breathing of Trynje, who was not many minutes in dropping off into slumber; she listened to the gentle whisper of the new leaves and the trickle of a little stream not far away. Into her feeling of quiet resignation every now and then would burst the recollection of the wild joy she had experienced at seeing her lover, now lying in a room so near her. Perhaps he did not sleep. Perhaps Jeanne had found an opportunity of speaking to him and was even now telling him that though she loved him she must leave him.

At last, after tossing restlessly on the big feather, bed for an hour, she softly arose and went to the window to look out upon the beautiful quiet night. The moon, now on the wane, had not set, but hung low in the sky, a luminous crescent of misty silver. The garrison of the little fort, like herself, were watching, and the thought of this took away her

feeling of loneliness. It was not the first time that she had been received under the roof of a stranger, she reflected. Many unlooked-for things had befallen her, and any day might bring a new danger. She was so young and so weary. Was there safety anywhere under that sky's broad canopy? Was there rest anywhere under those twinkling stars?

Hark! She started to her feet. Suddenly upon the midnight air came the horrible war-cry of the Indians. It seemed to fill the air with a wild prophecy of death and torture and captivity. In an instant every one in the fort was awake. There were sounds of stern orders given, of tramping feet, of the click of triggers, of the rasp of a sword dropped into its scabbard. Hastily throwing on their clothes, the women and children, shaking with apprehension, weeping with terror, flocked together in the blockhouse, Alaine with the rest.

"We are none too well garrisoned," said a man as he passed her. "Here, boy, can you shoot?"

Alaine turned. "Try me," she replied, laconically.

"All right, then ; come on."

For an instant Alaine's fears gave place to an exultant feeling. If she must die it would be by the side of Lendert. She heard a shot ring out, and the cries of the women and children grew fainter as she followed the covered way which led to the fort from the blockhouse.

Watchful men were stationed at the loopholes, a

stern and determined look upon each face. Alaine looked around her. Where was Lendert?

"Go, my daughter," whispered some one at her side. "Your place is not here."

"I was ordered to remain," Alaine answered, "and I shall stay. Am I so poor a shot that I must be denied the right to protect myself? Is not this as much my place as yours, Jeanne Crepin?"

Jeanne smiled grimly. "Very well, then we will both remain. We may be privileged to die fighting. Come, we are needed, every man of us." She smiled again.

The savages now were rushing violently at the palisades to be met by a deadly fire from those within. Each time the besiegers fell back to devise a new method of attack. Once came a glare of torches flaring up into the night and hurled like fiery rockets at the palisades, but one after another fell harmlessly to the ground, feebly flickered a moment and then went out, as the spark of life likewise fled from their bearers stretched on the ground by the unerring shots from the little fort.

Alaine had discovered Lendert and had crept to his side. He did not see her; he was mechanically loading and reloading his musket. On the other side of the girl Joachim stationed himself to see her do as good service as any. At last the foe retreated for a brief rest, and Lendert withdrew his gaze from the loophole to see Alaine standing by him. "Here? Why are you not safe in the blockhouse, Alaine?"

“I am of more use here,” she replied, “and I would rather be with Jeanne and—you.” She whispered the last word. “I thought, perhaps God would let us die together, Lendert. That would be a happier fate than if I were taken into captivity. See, the east begins to warm into a rosy color; it will soon be day. Will they leave us then, do you think?”

He folded her hand in his own. “Alaine, so brave thou art. No, they will not, I think. They are not all Indians.”

The gray light was beginning to steal over the earth, and they could dimly distinguish the faces of their enemies. In the party were included a number of *coureurs de bois* and a few adventurous young Frenchmen. Alaine looking out upon them as they held their parley, grasped Jeanne’s arm with a quick exclamation. “He is there! Ah, me! Again, again! Jeanne, Lendert, do you see him? It is François Dupont!”

“Ah-h!” came a savage growl from Lendert, as he patted his musket softly. “So, then, I have double need to fight.”

“It will be my dead body alone that he possesses,” said Alaine, resolutely.

“And it will be over my dead body that he treads to reach yours,” returned Lendert.

And now Joachim van der Deen strode up. “We have very little water,” he said. “The attack was a surprise and the supply was short. It has given out before we knew it.”

Some one presently touched Alaine on the shoulder. It was Jeanne. She drew her aside. "I shall make the effort to get water. Yonder I see Ricard Le Nez. If I can escape unhurt at first, I can make myself known to him and the others. They will not hurt me, once they see I am French."

"Jeanne, Jeanne!" Alaine caught her firm, hard hand, "you must not go."

"I shall go."

Alaine stood for a moment gazing at her, then she rushed to the blockhouse and found Trynje. "Give me one of your petticoats!" she exclaimed. Trynje looked at her in surprise, but obediently slipped off her upper skirt, which Alaine hastily put on and ran back. "If I see that she is taken I shall go forth myself," she said. "François will not let them torture me, and so——" She went to the nearest loophole and looked out. Jeanne had just crept from the enclosure and was stealthily moving toward the spring. If she could go and return in this gray of morning all would be well. Alaine watched her breathlessly. So far she was safe.

But presently beyond there, coming down the road from the woods on the other side, she saw a figure on horseback followed by several men on foot. She watched eagerly, and presently with a smothered cry she turned to the man standing by her side. "Lendert, Lendert, it is your mother, and she does not know!"

A groan escaped Lendert's lips as he looked out upon the approaching rider.

"See, see," Alaine whispered, hoarsely, "she comes perhaps to ask your forgiveness; she comes to seek you. Lendert, Lendert, I must save her. No, no, hold me not; I tell you it is I who must go. Do you not see that one of those out there is Francois Dupont? Another is Ricard. I shall not fall into the hands of enemies, for they will recognize that I am French and will think me here a prisoner. I must go. Lendert, if you love me, let me go!"

"I cannot. I will not see you killed before my very eyes. They will fire before they understand."

"But thy mother, thy mother!"

"Whom I must try to save."

"No, no; do you not see for you is the danger, for me not so much?"

"I see only that I will go, and that I cannot let you run the risk for my mother, who ill used thee."

"No matter, no matter. She has come to seek us. It is too horrible to see them coming nearer, nearer. Do you not see that for me is only possible danger, and that for you it is sure death? If you go, I will surely follow."

"Then we go together."

She would have pushed him from her as she tried to escape from the place, but he held her hand firmly. "We die together," he groaned. Still hand in hand they crept from the fort. "Quick, run to

your mother, while I distract their attention ; it is the only safe way for either of us," Alaine whispered.

But at this moment Jeanne, on her way from the spring, spied the figure approaching. With head bent low, she dropped her bucket and ran swiftly toward the path at the end of which awaited such danger for the unconscious rider.

Lendert, taken off his guard for a second, gazed after her half dazed, and in this moment Alaine sprang from him and ran, but in an opposite direction from that which Jeanne was taking. She reached a little mound and stood there in plain view of the enemy. "I am here, I, Alaine Hervieu!" she called out in her native French. "I am here, François Dupont!" At the first instant of her appearance a dozen bullets whizzed through the air, but none touched her, then from the group parleying there at the edge of the wood rushed two figures.

Not daring to turn her gaze from them lest their attention be drawn to Madam De Vries, Alaine stood with face to foe. "She is of us! She is French!" passed from one to another. "She is perhaps an escaped prisoner," and they awaited results.

Meanwhile, Lendert, in an agony of mind over the safety of his mother and of Alaine, stood, gun in hand, ready to defend either or both. Madam De Vries had reined in her horse at Jeanne's approach, had gathered her little body-guard around her, and as yet was not seen by the attacking party.

Alaine waited quietly till the two men came up.

“You have been prisoner here?” cried Ricard. “How happens this? She is of us!” he shouted. “Not a hair of her head must be touched. It is Alaine in petticoats. You remember, Henri, you, Robert, M. Bisset and his companion? Well, then, here is one of them,” he called to his comrades.

At this instant François caught sight of Lendert standing at the entrance of the path to the woods. He gnashed his teeth and shouted. “Again, villain! At last on equal grounds, face to face and foe to foe. Take him, you there, Ricard!”

Like a flash Alaine ran from her little hillock and stood before her lover, who laid about him valiantly while the girl cried, “Again, monsieur, I am a shield!” But this time the supple body was no defence, for a dozen hands tore him from her, and he was marched off in triumph. Then shot after shot came ringing from the fort as well as from the little company hidden in the woods. The air seemed full of flying bullets. François was struck down at Alaine’s feet, his hold upon her gone, so that she was free to run to Ricard, crying, “Save him, save him, your prisoner there! I beg, I entreat, Ricard, Henri, you who know me, I fall upon my knees to implore you to spare him and take me instead! Where is Jeanne? Where is Jeanne?”

Her friend was not far off. “I will do what I can,” she whispered, as she dragged the distracted girl with her to a place of retreat behind a huge tree. “Do you not see that you must save yourself? I will do

what I can, I promise you. For yourself, if you would escape, pretend to have fallen; assume death, now, at once." Alaine staggered and fell. Jeanne bent over her and wrung her hands. "Remain here," she whispered. "Lie perfectly still and you shall not be harmed."

Lying flat on the ground behind the big tree, the bullets flying around her, Alaine, faint with suspense, waited, putting her trust in Jeanne, who, she believed, would find a way to set Lendert at liberty and would then return to her.

The moments passed, and at last the sound of firing ceased. The Indians, believing that those in the fort had received re-enforcements on account of the furious firing from the party in the woods, and finding their number was fast decreasing, began a retreat. They were followed so closely by a sortie from the fort that with yells and howls they took themselves off, leaving their leader for dead and taking with them their one unhappy prisoner.

At last Alaine ventured to raise her head. The glory of the May morning showed the woods gold-green; the rill, which formed the outlet of the spring, went tinkling on its way as merrily as if its waters were unstained by the life-blood of those who lay dead at its banks. Overhead the birds, startled into stillness by the din of battle, now began a timid warbling. Under Alaine's hand frail anemones peeped, and around her the springing grasses grew. So had it been spring after spring. Nature, impas-

sive and lovely, smiles upon the agony of earth's children and will not tell them the secret of her peace. Alaine sat up and pushed back the hair from her eyes. Beyond her lay the bodies of the fallen foe, among them François Dupont. She turned her head and shuddered. "Lendert," she said, piteously, "Lendert, where are you? Jeanne, you said you would come."

She looked around and listened. There was no answer to her call. Then she wailed, "He is gone, gone, and I am here!" She stood up and stretched her hands toward the sky. "Thou God, whom I implored to let us die together, I am here and he is not. Thou hast forsaken me!"

A kind hand was laid upon her shoulder. "My child," said Joachim van der Deen, "why are you here alone? God has not forsaken you."

Alaine dropped her head on the good man's arm. "I am desolate, desolate," she moaned. "If we had but died together; but now, this moment, he may be enduring tortures such as I never dreamed of. Ah-h!" she shrieked in her despair and fell to the ground, hiding her face, as if she would shut out the frightful possibilities that her misery suggested to her.

Joachim knelt beside her. "God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted, my child," he said, gently. "Trust thou in him, and thou shalt yet praise him."

But now that it seemed certain the enemy had departed, from the fort came trooping the garrison,

and then followed the company of women, little Trynje running ahead. "Alaine, Alaine!" she called; "are you hurt, Alaine, Alaine?"

She saw her father approaching carrying in his arms the drooping figure, and she made haste to reach him. "She is not dead, not dead?"

"No, but happily unconscious, poor child!" And in Joachim van der Deen's strong arms Alaine was borne indoors, Trynje following, solicitous and helpful.

Meantime, from out of the woods had issued the little company, whose coming had served the garrison well and Lendert so badly, Madam De Vries riding ahead. She was followed by a dozen of her retainers, who in the shelter of the wood from behind trees had done good execution. "Though," said Joachim van der Deen, bluntly, "they would all be roasting now but for the timely warning of that good Jeanne, whose bravery would have it seem that we have been entertaining an angel unawares. Where is she, by the way?" he asked of Trynje, who was bending over Alaine's unconscious form. But this no one could tell. Jeanne had vanished as completely as the enemy. At this report Joachim looked grave; this might be the performance of a spy, but since there was no help for it, there was nothing to be done. "Where is Madam De Vries?" he asked his daughter.

"Gone to find my mother. Heaven knows how she must feel with her only son a captive."

Her father shook his head. "She has herself to thank for it. He and the girl ran to her rescue, though that big Jeanne could have managed it alone. I must leave this lass to your tender mercies, for there are others in need of me. She is a brave creature. I shall not soon forget how I felt to see her standing there facing that horde."

After Alaine had been carried in and left to the ministrations of the women, Joachim returned to find his wife among the wounded on the ground. She was bending over a figure lying motionless upon the tender young grass. "He lives, Joachim," she said, looking up, "but I think it is a desperate case. God have mercy on him."

"Who is it?" her husband asked, gazing at the waxen face.

"I do not know. I judge he must have been the leader of that company of Frenchmen by his dress."

"And our prisoner," returned Joachim, grimly. "We will take him in with the rest and see what can be done for him. Here, boys, gently; he is pretty badly hurt, we shall hardly be able to save him, but we will do our duty as Christians." He watched them bear the man away. "Madam De Vries expressed a wish to see you, Johanna, but you can offer her little consolation, I fear."

Johanna van der Deen stood looking after the men who bore François Dupont to the fort. She was a very religious woman, and one who never failed to

press home her pious truths. She and Madam De Vries had never been the best of friends, for the former's lack of seriousness was not approved by the good Johanna. Moreover, she had heard repeated a remark of Madam De Vries, a remark which ridiculed her neighbor's pious attitude. This was quite enough to determine Madam van der Deen not to encourage Madam De Vries in her overtures in a matter of marriage for her son. "Daughter of mine shall not marry a son of Arianie De Vries," she had told her husband.

"Lendert is a good young man," Joachim had answered between puffs of his pipe.

"There are others quite as good whose mothers are better," Johanna had made reply, and Joachim had agreed. Nevertheless, they had allowed Trynje to visit Madam De Vries, wisely believing that in time she would see for herself that Madam could be very disagreeable and that her daughter-in-law might expect to have a stormy time. Thinking of all this and of how it had come according to their expectations, Madam van der Deen shook her head. "I will go to her. Poor soul, I fear I cannot persuade her that she should kiss the rod. It is hard for one who has desired her own way to find that our ways are not the Lord's ways and that we are but as the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow shall be cast into the oven. Look to that poor creature they have carried in, and I will come to him later." And she moved toward the fort, passing

on to enter the blockhouse, where Madam De Vries sat, cold and tearless.

“My son is captive,” were the words that greeted Johanna van der Deen, “and I have that girl to thank for it. But for her he would have been safe at home. Therefore I owe your daughter small thanks for bringing him here. That is all I wish to say.” She dismissed Madam van der Deen with a wave of her hand, and she, without a word, went back to the fort where François Dupont lay motionless, save but for a barely perceptible flutter of his breast.

Madam van der Deen stood looking at him. Here was an end to human hopes, ambitions, and all revenge. Even resentment must fade into pity before this awful shadow which seemed to be hovering over the helpless man. She sent for a stoup of wine. “It will be of little use, yet one must try to give him time for repentance,” she murmured. She went away for bandages and returned to see Madam De Vries bending over the pallet. There were tears in her eyes. “Some one’s son,” she whispered, as if to herself; “young and handsome, yet he has the privilege of death in this way, while my boy——” she shuddered and hid her face in her hands. “Give me the wine,” she said presently. “I will nurse this man.” She did not seem to notice that it was Madam van der Deen to whom she spoke. She moistened the pale lips and stanchd the wounds, and at last the dark eyes opened to look upon the pitying face of a woman.

“This is well,” whispered François. “I am glad you have come, mother. I think I am dying, and I wanted to die at home in France. I am glad you are here.”

“Yes, I know,” returned Madam De Vries, soothingly.

“I cannot remember all,” he went on, in a weak whisper, “but they fled from the British that time in Quebec. Father Bisset took Alaine and fled. They must have been taken prisoners somehow. I stayed there to fight for France, for France. You would not have had me do otherwise, mother.” He closed his eyes, but after a time opened them again. “Where is the Dutch pig?” he asked. “It was to save him she threw herself between. Once more she made a shield of her sweet body.”

“Sh!” warned Madam van der Deen, glancing at Madam De Vries, but François wandered on.

“Is she dead? I did not love her, poor little Alaine, but listen, this is my confession. I wish to confess. I am dying, you know, and you are my mother.” He was quiet again.

After a moment he began anew. “It was the Dutchman she loved, I know that now. I did not think so at first; but, though I did not love her, I hated him.”

“Madam,” said Johanna, in a low voice, “this is something it were better you did not hear. Will you go away?” The pity lingered in Madam’s eyes; as yet she did not understand, and she remained.

“The Dutch pig,” repeated François, “that Verplanck. You are safe now, Monsieur Le Bœuf.”

Madam De Vries recoiled, all the softness in her face giving place to horror. “Beast!” she cried. “Beast! And I have pitied you.”

“He may be dying, madam,” said Madam van der Deen, quietly. “Will you leave us?”

Madam De Vries opened her lips as if to speak, but without another word she walked away.

François kept up his whispering talk. “Poor little Alaine. I liked the girl. I would have been kind to her. You who know me, mother, you believe that. Say that you believe that.”

“Yes.” Madam van der Deen saw that he waited for a reply.

François closed his eyes; he did not seem to hear; his voice was very weak. “I stayed there in Quebec for France, for France. I have lied for her, I have suffered for her, and now I die for her. For France.” His voice died away and he could say no more. He lay very still, and Madam van der Deen by his side watched him all day. Once or twice Trynje came to bring word of Alaine, who tossed in fever and babbled incessantly.

Night came, and still François lived. “It would almost seem as if he might recover,” Madam van der Deen said to her husband as they examined him.

“He may rally a little, but I think he will never rise from his bed,” was the reply. “We will do all

we can for him, enemy though he is. He may not be so bad a man, and he is suffering."

"And he has made others suffer," returned his wife.

"That is true. Blindness and egotism will always do that."

Madam van der Deen said nothing. Her narrow religious view made her behold only a pit of fire for such as François.

Yet the dawn of another day saw him still alive, and so it continued day after day, a little better, a little worse, while above Alaine, exhausted by fever, was watched over by faithful little Trynje and her mother.

Madam De Vries did not tarry long, but took her aching heart back to her home. "I am a lonely, childless old woman," she told Trynje, "and I care not how soon I leave this wretched world. It is woe and misery on every side." And when she disappeared into the forest with her little retinue, Trynje watched her with eyes full of tears. She still gave her some love and much pity.

CHAPTER XVII

FORGIVENESS

AT last there came a day when Alaine, though pitifully weak and pale, was able to creep out into the open air, supported by the strong arm of Trynje's father, solicitously followed by Madam van der Deen and Trynje, and stared at by a group of tow-headed little children of various ages.

"I want to go home, Mynheer," Alaine whispered to the good man, who so carefully placed her in the big chair which had been set for her under a spreading tree.

He nodded. "You shall go."

Trynje, busying herself in tucking a robe around her patient's feet, did not hear. "There," she exclaimed, "you are well placed." She stood off and looked at her charge with a satisfied air. "It is good to be out again, is it not? Are you tired? When you are rested I will tell you something about myself. I have been keeping it till now to tell you." She sat down on the ground by Alaine's side, her round, smiling face rosier than ever. "You will get well," she went on, "for after a while my wedding will be."

"What?" Alaine smiled to see the blushes.

Trynje nodded. "Yes, all arranged it is. Last night he was here."

Alaine laid her hand, now so frail-looking, on Trynje's plump one. "He was? And who is he?"

"Adriaen Vrooman. He has returned from a long journey into the woods with his man Isaac, and they brought many pelts. He is now ready to marry. Betrothed we are, and married we will be before the winter comes."

"And you are happy, Trynje, happy?"

"Oh, yes." Trynje looked very complacent. She was quite satisfied.

Alaine patted the hand resting on her knee, but as she leaned her head back against the soft fur which hung over the chair the tears welled up into her eyes. Madam van der Deen, standing behind her, laid her hand upon the girl's head. She looked up and with trembling lips asked, "Is there no hope, no hope?"

"We have heard nothing, but there is always hope till worst is proved. Be comforted by that, my child. One there is in there who has less to hope for than you, for he is helpless, paralyzed, but entirely conscious, and there he must lie waiting for death to release him, and with but a misspent life to dwell upon. Yet sinned against he has been, and forgive him you should."

Alaine turned her dark eyes upon the goede vrouw's kind face. "You mean—who is it, Madam?"

"François Dupont it is."

"He is here? He lives! But for him——"

She turned her head from side to side as if to deny any possibility of forgiveness.

“He wishes to see you when you are stronger. He has a confession to make to you.”

“I cannot hear it; not now,” returned Alaine, “not now.”

“Then we will not urge it. Very long his time cannot be. Far beyond what we looked for he has endured. But I hoped——”

“Hush, hush, mother,” Trynje broke in. “She is not to be troubled by such things. She her strength must get, and worry her you must not.” And Trynje looked as severe as she was capable of doing. “I must go in now, my mother, and I leave you here; very cheerful you must be; of dying and such things you must not speak. Good stories you must tell of when you were a little girl, and laugh you must.” She shook her finger at her mother and ran in.

Alaine sat mournfully gazing around her. Yonder was the woodland path along which Madam De Vries had approached; there the little spring to which Jeanne had gone for water; there—— She shuddered and hid her eyes, as if still before her shrieked and yelled the horde of bloodthirsty Indians. “I want to go home,” she murmured. “I want to see Michelle and Papa Louis and Gerard. I am so tired of being away from home. Will you not take me there?”

“In a little while; as soon as you are able,”

Madam van der Deen told her, gently. And, indeed, it seemed while in the midst of scenes connected with such terrible memories that she was not likely to entirely recover. Therefore, to Trynje's disappointment it was decided that the invalid should be taken as far as Fort Orange, and, if she were able to stand the journey, to go from there to New York, still known as New Amsterdam by these good people.

"And must I remain?" said François, when he was told. "I cannot be left here to trouble you. Prisoner I am, but I shall be free soon, and I would die among my own people. I, too, must go."

Madam van der Deen looked puzzled. It was part of the plan that Alaine should be removed from his neighborhood, for the mere mention of him caused the girl such distress that the *goede vrouw* had determined to give up a scheme for the meeting of these two, resolved that if one must be considered that Alaine should be the one. Yet she made a final effort in François's behalf and drew a pitiful picture of the man's helplessness, his longing for forgiveness, his desire to make his peace with the world before he left it, so that Alaine, moved to pity, no longer protested, but faintly said, "Could he be taken away safely? Does he so desire it?"

"He desires it above all things to be taken to the house of your family there in New Rochelle. He refers again and again to the goodness of Madame Mercier, to his own tyrannical spirit, and repeats his

longing to be allowed to die there. I think my husband will have no difficulty in persuading the authorities to allow it when they see his condition. He is our enemy and a prisoner, but a helpless one."

Alaine sat thinking deeply. "I think I am almost forgetting to be a Christian," she said. "I am so weak, so wretched, so grief-worn, but if it can ease a departing soul to grant his request, and he can be safely taken, I shall not deny my consent. But do not let me see him yet."

"That is the good child. I expected nothing less of you," Madam told her. "So then I think we shall trust him to Adriaen, whose heart is so warm at thought of his marriage to Trynje that the whole world he loves. Smiling and staring, he sits there by François just for the sake of comradeship. They can go on ahead to Fort Orange, and we will follow. From there it will not be much of a voyage down the river to New Amsterdam." The *goede vrouw* had arranged it all to her satisfaction, and sat smiling over the plan.

"He is better. Better is François Dupont," Trynje told Alaine. "Scarce believe it would I, but he lies there and smiles and chatters at Adriaen, who smiles at him, and sits and smokes and blinks and blushes, though not a word he understands of what is said." Trynje laughed. "But good care he will have, and I shall let him go all the way to New Amsterdam." She spoke with a pretty air of pro-

prietorship. Her little heart had adjusted itself very readily and there was not any one now like Adriaen. "And my mother will go," Trynje added, "and my father. They will take the time to buy my wedding finery, though it is little I need, for long ago my chests were filled."

One morning, therefore, Alaine bade good-by to the fort and the blockhouse, to little Trynje and the flock of flaxen-haired children. Mynheer van der Deen and his *goede vrouw* accompanied this party; the first had gone on. Adriaen and his man Isaac took charge of François. The young Dutchman's face was wreathed in smiles. He gloated over his charge as a mother over her baby. Trynje had given him this to do. Very well, it became a pleasure, and he would do it as faithfully as he could.

François gave a little weak laugh as he was deposited in the canoe on a pile of skins. "My faith! but I never expected to travel again, and here I am still following mademoiselle about. She has not a word for me, and no wonder." A shadow passed over his face, for the pains spent upon him by Johanna van der Deen were not without result, and in the weeks of suffering, in the long nights when she had watched by his side, he had spoken to her as to a mother. He had lost much of his arrogance, and acknowledged that he was a mere straw driven by the wind, a leaf in a storm.

"You have dared to undertake to change the decrees of the Almighty, little insignificant human

creature that you are," Madam van der Deen had said to him. "You have thought your will stronger than that of God. Wrapped in your own selfish desires you have forgotten that the cry of the helpless is more powerful than the clash of a destroying sword in the hands of man."

"You have me here, and I cannot get away," François had returned. "Say on, mother. I will listen, for I cannot help myself. You are as good a preacher as the old renegade priest." He had learned of Father Bisset's change of belief and of his plan of escape, and he had laughed. His respect for the wily Jacques Bisset increased as his anger against the priest died away. "At least, then, we are quits," he had said. "I fooled him and he fooled me, so that is done with. Now I am here, shattered and done for. Lendert Verplanck takes his way out of the world by another road. There is then left the man Pierre Boutillier, and he is no doubt as good as dead. All that the work of one girl."

"The work of wicked men," Madam van der Deen had replied, "of Louis XIV. and François Dupont."

At that François had laughed. "Thanks for coupling my name with his majesty's. He would feel flattered."

But all this had been gone over days before, François reflected, as he lay in the canoe floating down the river Hudson. A prisoner, with a useless and suffering body, but with brain alive and strong enough

to guide his will. They did not want him. They would fain have thrown him overboard. He would be received with aversion by Michelle ; yet, helpless as he was, he was having his way, and he could still smile when he thought of that.

At Fort Orange they learned that Jacob Leisler had paid the penalty of his mistaken and obdurate policy, and that by contemptible methods his enemies had rid themselves of him. The new governor was in power and the white people were again in the ascendant. Alaine, overcome with grief, and full of longing to see her friends again, heard these matters discussed, but heard indifferently. The time had passed when they could interest her. She felt a dull sense of pleasure that the first stage of the journey was over and that they would soon be nearing New York. So far she had steadfastly avoided meeting François, but soon it would be no longer possible, for they must travel in the same conveyance from New York to the French settlement.

“It will have to be, my child,” said Madam van der Deen. “You cannot avoid it, for he will be under the same roof.”

“So he has been these weeks past and I have not seen him. He must be there, yes, while he lives, while he lives. Ah, that I might have been spared this !”

“It is not so great a matter,” said the good lady, looking at her serenely.

“He is Lendert’s murderer.”

“Oh, no, that he is not.”

“It was he who ordered them to take him. Shall I ever forget it? And has he not made my life one of unutterable misery? Must I forgive him all he has made me suffer during these years? Did I not have enough to bear before that? Was it nothing that I must leave my home, be separated from my only living parent, and come to a strange land, but I must be weighted down by these heavier sorrows?”

“Seventy times seven,” returned her friend.

Alaine shook her head. “There are some things one can never forgive.”

“But he is penitent.”

“How do you know? He can appear to be anything. He is a vile dissembler.”

“He has confessed to me that he is sorry for his misdeeds. He wishes to tell you so, and there are other things he desires you to know.”

“I do not trust him. He would be as bad as ever if he were strong and well.”

“That he will never be. Will you see him now?”

Alaine arose. They had lodged for the night in one of the ordinaries of the town. They would soon be starting upon the second stage of their journey.

The girl’s face was drawn and white as she followed Madam van der Deen to another room. She trembled and was hot by turns. This meeting that she had dreaded for weeks, that she had put off, and

that Trynje had helped her to defer, must now come about.

At Madam's tap upon the door Adriaen opened it. The two women entered and the door closed behind them. Where the light from a window fell upon him François Dupont was propped up in his bed; he was waiting for them. He was so thin that his eyes seemed too large and deep set for so pale a face; his hands were like claws, and his lips were bloodless. At sight of his utter helplessness Alaine felt her first wave of pity, but she steeled herself against it.

He smiled as he saw her, and said, "At last, mademoiselle. I have long wanted to see you, and the fault of our not meeting is not mine. Will my good nurse give mademoiselle a chair?"

Adriaen understood, but Alaine refused to seat herself.

With a look at Adriaen, Madam retired and the young Dutchman followed. Alaine, mute, troubled, a little pitiful for the invalid, wholly resentful toward the man, stood there.

François regarded her for some moments in silence. "I have been the cause of much suffering for you, mademoiselle," he said at last, "and I wish to tell you of my sorrow."

"Sorrow comes too late, monsieur. In return I can only say that if I despised you before, now that you are become the worst of creation, a murderer, I can only look at you with horror and loathing."

He winced but went on speaking. "Let us first talk of that morning when I saw you last. The attack was not a personal matter. I was with others who had long desired to make a raid into the English colony. The opportunity came and we took it. I was chosen to lead the little company of Frenchmen who were allies of the Indians. If the carrying out of what seems one's duty in serving one's country is a crime, then I am punished. None but myself can realize how great is this punishment, this long death. I lie here paralyzed; only my head and my hands are free to move. I do not say this to extort pity from you, but to let you know that I have not come off better than my enemies. M. Verplanck——"

"Hush!" Alaine raised her hand. There was agony in her eyes and in her voice.

François turned his head away. "I did not understand," he said, after a pause. "I thought it was your sweet womanly pity which made you give your body as a defence. I thought it was the other one,—that Pierre. I cannot ask your forgiveness now, mademoiselle, for I understand. I must tell you that I employed one who played the spy for me in those first days of our acquaintance, and when you came so readily in answer to the supposed word from Pierre, I believed he was the one you favored. I thought it was but a friendship and a wish to oppose me that gave you a kindly attitude toward any one else. I understand. Holy Mother! yes,

who better? I wish to tell you; it was Étienne, and I desired revenge. I loved Constance De Caux in my student days there in France, but Étienne she loved. He laughed when I said he had stolen her from me. He said, 'If you do not know how to keep her love, find out, but if you expect me not to profit by your ignorance, you are a fool.' And I vowed I would win her or would have my revenge. She did not love me, although I swear but for Étienne she would have done so, and she was all pity for Étienne, who had lost his cousin Alaine. He came to me bowed down with grief, and I pretended to give him my friendship again. But I had not forgotten. No, I had not forgotten. Will you give me a drop of that wine? I am very weak."

Alaine handed him the cup but did not offer to help him to drink; instead she turned away and stood looking out the window till he spoke again, then she took the cup from him and placed it on the table.

He went on with his story. "Then I said, I will find her, this cousin, and if I can bring her back to Étienne he will marry her, and after a while Constance will remember how long I have loved her. I came. I found Alaine, but she would not marry Étienne, I saw that, but I did not tell him, for I had then another plan. He believed Alaine to be dead, and then he married Constance, and broke her heart by his indifference. I never told you all this, for I wished to marry you myself, and returning, I thought to flaunt my wife in the face of him who had vowed to

win her, as I had vowed to win Constance. I knew that your estates would return to you once you became my wife, and I said I will have them and herself too; thus will I revenge myself upon Étienne, who would fain have had both. He crossed me in my love, and I will show him that I can do the same. A sweet revenge! A sweet revenge! for Constance is dead and in heaven; she will know who it is that loves her, and there she is mine and not his—not his. I would have won you for my wife, and so he would have been left with neither one to bless his days. Now it is all over and I have lost my last throw.”

He lay very still, his eyes closed, his breath coming quickly. It was evident that the recital had cost him all the strength he could summon. Alaine again took the cup of wine to him. “Will you drink?” she said. “It has been an effort to tell me all this.”

He opened his eyes to smile at her. “Thank you. How kind you are! How good and sweet you have always been! Even when you have flung your defiance at me, it was always as a rebuking angel might speak. If I had never loved Constance—Yet, I would have been kind to you. I would have loved you as most men love, or even better. One does not love madly, with the pain and the depth of a hundred loves all bound in one, one does not love so but once. Never but once that comes, and to few.”

“I—know.” The words came painfully from Alaine’s lips. As she took the cup away, François seized her hand and turned his face over upon it. Alaine felt hot tears from the eyes pressing her palm.

“Don’t! Don’t!” she cried, drawing her hand away.

“At last I understand,” he repeated. “As I cannot forgive Étienne, so you cannot forgive me. Let me tell you all. I lured you to the house in the woods that first summer that we met. The men whom you believed to be political spies were emissaries of a Jesuit who is yet working among them there in Manhatte. He is not known as aught but a Protestant, and I will not reveal his name, but it was through him that I was able to carry out the plan which we meant should result in your being removed from your home. The questions put to you were of no importance, and were but to blind you to the real object. Again I wrote the letter from Quebec, after I found you had escaped. I hoped that it might aid me in preventing your marriage to another, and I hoped to discover your hiding-place and to prevent any others from seeking you. How I have planned and plotted and set spies upon you and dogged your actions! I meant, if you should find your way back to your friends, to come to you with a letter purporting to be from your father. I had meant to do even that, to pretend that I had his consent to our marriage. I would have done even that. I think I have told you all now. If I have

robbed your life of happiness, so you know I am not less miserable. I carry the burden of love denied, of revenge untasted, of ambition thwarted, of a miserable, helpless, suffering body. Mon Dieu! is it not enough? I ask you, even you, Alaine Hervieu, whom I have wronged and have hurt as I have hurt no other creature, is it not enough that with all this I must yet live and face you, and see your misery and bear this gnawing misery of knowing I have broken your heart, and that my own wretchedness is scarcely greater?"

Alaine dropped on her knees by the bedside. "Lord be merciful to us!" she cried. "Pray, François Dupont, pray!"

And François whispered, "Lord be merciful to us!"

Alaine buried her face in her hands. Sobs shook her slight frame. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." She said the words brokenly.

François timidly reached out his hand and laid it on her head. His lips moved, and when Alaine arose to her feet he looked at her with eyes so full of entreaty that she bowed her head. "God forgive you, François Dupont, and I pray that I may. I cannot yet,—I cannot,—but I pray that I may yet be able to do so."

And then Adriaen came in. "We must make ready to start," he said.

Alaine turned to go. "Mademoiselle," said François, "if I could fall on my knees before you I

would do it; as it is, my heart is bowed in reverence for you. God knows it would be a small thing to die for you, but I shall live, and perhaps by living a little longer I may yet do something to undo my great wrong to you. If I might, if I might."

When she had left the room François spoke to Adriaen. He had learned enough Dutch in these weeks to carry on a halting conversation with his self-instituted nurse. "Adriaen, my good fellow, I am as full of whims as an egg is of meat. What would you say if I declared that I had determined to go back to Canada? Helpless wretch that I am, there is yet work for me to do and you must help me to do it. Will you?"

It took some moments for this to get through Adriaen's brain, but finally he nodded, "Yes."

"I am a prisoner. I wish to be exchanged. I wish to remain here in Orange. I shall not die yet. I am not worth one able-bodied man, but there is enough of me, seeing my headpiece is still good, there is enough to work an exchange. You will stay with me here?"

"That will I do."

"Very well, then. I shall go back. One might suppose I enjoyed travelling about the country in a canoe." He laughed mirthlessly. "I ought to die by the way, but I shall not, I say I shall not. Let me remain here and see the big-wigs. Get that managed for me, and let us remain. It is that much nearer your sweetheart, you see."

Adriaen smiled broadly and regarded François with a puzzled look. This sudden change of plans was bewildering, and he felt that he could not adjust himself to it as rapidly as this keen young Frenchman.

“Will you ask Madam van der Deen and mademoiselle if they will permit me to make my adieux to them? I would not force myself upon them again to-day, but I may not live to see them again.” He spoke quietly of what long since had become an accepted fact with him.

Adriaen withdrew and took the message to Madam van der Deen. “What means this sudden change of plans?” she asked.

“That I know not.” Adriaen had not recovered from his surprise of it himself.

“How can he wish to attempt it when he has been so eager to reach New Rochelle? It passes my comprehension. I must consult my husband. The man will die by the way,” Madam declared.

“Perhaps that is what he wishes,” thought Alaine.

The interview with François which Joachim van der Deen sought did not alter the former’s decision. “He has a will of iron,” Joachim told his wife. “He cannot be moved from his intention, and, helpless though he is, one finds oneself agreeing with whatever he proposes. A pity so able a man should be smitten down at this early age. He is our enemy and could do us much harm, but one cannot remember that when one is in his presence. He

means to return to Canada, and when all is said that is the sum of it."

"Will you go in to see him?" Madam looked at Alaine, who followed without a word.

"This is kind, madam," was the greeting from François. "And you, mademoiselle, I did not hope for this added grace from you. I am going. I mean to do more before I die. If I can, I will do more. We shall probably not meet again, and therefore I have asked to make my final adieux. Words are poor things. I cannot thank you as I would for all your motherly kindness to a wounded prisoner, Madam van der Deen, but I shall remember it as one of the few pleasant things which have come to me. Mademoiselle Hervieu, adieu. Will you come nearer?" She came to his side. "You said pray, and I will pray to the blessed Virgin day and night, to her and to all the saints, that you may have peace. If we do not meet again, I shall have tried to make amends. Will you remember that?"

She bowed her head in assent.

"Adieu, then."

"Adieu, monsieur."

They left him, so weak in body, so strong of will, so wrong-headed, so weary-hearted, with determination written in his deep-set eyes, and even indicated by the nervous clasp of the wasted fingers. He turned to Adriaen. "Now, then, we remain for a space, and the saints spare me to do this thing which is not for revenge, nor for ambition, nor for fame."

CHAPTER XVIII

PAPA LOUIS TELLS A STORY

EVERYTHING was gay and smiling in and around the home of the Merciers on that day when Alaine arrived. The door was open and there was the sound of some one singing as Alaine used to sing. "How soon one is forgotten!" she whispered to Madam van der Deen.

The *goede vrouw* shook her head. "That does not count. One sometimes sings to cover up a heartache."

But in this instance this was not so, for, as Alaine stopped before the door and looked in, she saw a brisk little figure stepping back and forth before the spinning-wheel. Her thread broke short with a snap as she saw who was arrived. "Nomme de Dieu!" she cried, turning pale and staring at Alaine as if she saw a ghost.

"Mathilde!" cried Alaine, holding out her hands. "Mathilde, and do you not know me?"

Then with a scream Mathilde darted toward her, kissed her on each cheek, pinched her, patted her, all the time exclaiming between tears and laughter.

"Michelle, and Papa Louis, and Gerard, where are they?" at last Alaine, recovering from the embraces, found voice to ask.

“I will call them. They do not know? Ciel! but this is a good day. I will not stop to question, though I am dying to know how it is that you come, and all of it.” She but stopped to drop a courtesy to the friends, whom Alaine named, and was off.

Familiar, yet unfamiliar, the place looked to Alaine. The little table still held the small black books; there was the big chair on its rollers; yonder the high-post bedsteads, yet the dim blue hangings had been exchanged for a soft yellow, with a delicate tracery of vine bordering them, and they were further finished by a knitted fringe. A coverlet of the same linen adorned the bed, and this, too, was embroidered. Two painted feather fans ornamented the mantel, and a hand-screen lay on the table near by. Throughout the room there was a dainty feminine touch visible which had not been so observable before. Alaine noticed, too, that one of the doors led to a room lately added. This she must see. There stood another high bed and a dressing-table decked with soft white draperies delicately embroidered.

She had not time to distinguish more, for a clatter of wooden shoes along the porch and a sound of voices scolding, protesting, laughing, proclaimed the coming of the Merciers. Michelle, in advance of the others, stopped short at sight of strangers, of Madam van der Deen and the sturdy Joachim; then she broke forth with a cry, “My child! My child! is it of her you bring me news? My little lost lamb?”

Alaine, half hidden by the curtains of the bed, sprang out. "Not lost, Michelle, dear Mère Michelle, but here, here! Look at me, see me, it is your own Alainette!"

Michelle turned to her husband for support. "What shall I do? What shall I do? She has renounced her faith and her friends. She has become French," and Michelle dropped upon a bench and covered her face with her hands.

Alaine knelt by her. "That she has not, Michelle. It was all a wicked lie meant to deceive you. I am still Alaine Mercier, your daughter and Papa Louis's, if you will have it so. I have never returned to France. I have never become the wife of any one. I have never renounced my faith. Will you not welcome me again, Papa Louis and Gerard?"

For answer Papa Louis opened his arms, and Alaine went to him, resting her head on his shoulder and holding out her hand to Gerard. "And you, my brother?"

"Alaine, my sister." He stooped and kissed her upon each cheek.

Then Michelle arose. "You claim her, all of you, when she was mine first, mine. My little baby all those years ago when my own little one died after they brought my young husband home to me, dead. My baby, who comforted me and who crept into my desolate heart. My girl, whom I cherished and cared for after her own sainted mother became an angel. Mine, whom I have cared for and wept over and

nursed and loved. Go, all of you. Do not touch her, my little one, my baby, my heart. Come to me, my Alainette. I was dazed. I was blind. I was stupefied. Come to me, my baby, my daughter."

Alaine's arms went around Michelle's neck. "God is good! God is good!" Michelle murmured, the tears running down her cheeks.

Meantime, Papa Louis turned to Mynheer van der Deen and his wife. "You will excuse this, my friends. We are overcome, and we forget to thank you for bringing us our daughter."

"I want to know how it happened," said Mathilde.

Alaine disengaged herself from Michelle's embrace. "It is a long, long story. Can you hear it now? There are many things I, too, would know." She looked from one to the other, and saw on the faces of Mathilde and Gerard a conscious smile. Then she understood. "You are married, you two! That is why——" She looked around the room. These pretty femininities were Mathilde's work. She remembered how Mathilde had excelled in the use of her brush and her needle. She ran up to her and shook her playfully. "Tell me, is it true?"

"It is true," laughed Mathilde. "It happened two weeks ago last Sunday at the church in Manhatte. We were married there. Tell her, Gerard." She turned with a pretty bashful look at her young husband, who regarded her small self with admiring eyes.

He in his turn said, "Let Papa Louis tell the story; he is the best orator."

"It was last winter that we first began to think of it; I should say that it was then that Michelle and I did so, for no doubt but that it had been interfering with the peace of these young persons long before that," Papa Louis began. "Michelle there fell sick of a rheumatic fever and we all were in despair. The neighbors were kind, so very kind, but kindest of all was our little Mathilde, who came and helped to nurse her night and day. She did more than that, for she looked after the house so deftly that our good Michelle herself said that she could have done no better, and that Mathilde's dainty touch was something that she could never hope to attain. For myself, I did not contradict her; an invalid must not be contradicted, you know." His cheery laugh warmed Alaine's heart, it was so pleasantly familiar.

"So, then, when our maman became herself again she was still too feeble to do all that she had heretofore, and while she was striving for strength came the letter from François Dupont, which was like a death-knell to our hope of seeing our daughter Alaine again, for not a day but that we had prayed and longed for her return. So, then, we said, she is lost to us forever. Then came the young Dutchman. Ah, said I, when I told him the news, here is one whose grief is as great as ours, and if it should be that Alaine returns, it is he who loves her too well

for us to deny her to him. By this time it had become very plain to me where Gerard's heart was placed, and I am a sentimental old man, I love the poets, I love the songs of romance, I do not like to break hearts, and here, I said, we shall make a mistake if we reserve Gerard for one who will not return, and even, as I half expected, if the news were false, even then, I thought, it will still be better, for it is Mathilde whom Gerard loves. Do not blush so, little bride, it is quite true. I said that, and I saw—— No, no, you are safely married; there is no harm in telling that I perceived that you loved him. It is quite natural, I said, for he is tall and she is so little; it is always that way. Observe my inches and then gaze upon my wife." Every one laughed. There was never any resisting Papa Louis's pleasantries.

"Now I come to the finale. By this time we were agreed that a daughter was an indispensable luxury. Since we cannot have Alaine, I say, why not Mathilde? 'Why not, indeed,' agreed Michelle, as if she had just thought of it, although I know the idea had kept her awake nights."

"Ta, ta, Louis," broke in Michelle, "that is not so. Mathilde's nightcaps were always of a sort to make one sleep. To be sure, I thought of it—in the daytime."

Papa Louis laughed. "Very well, then, we proceed. I approach Gerard with caution. I say, 'My son, it would be well if you should marry. We

suddenly seem old, my wife and I; we need younger hands, and yours, big as they are, cannot do everything.' 'Who, then, would you have me marry?' asked Gerard, all expectant eyes and ears. I consider a moment. 'How would Madelaine Theroulde please you?' I say. He turned pale. You did, Gerard, though you shake your head. 'She is a good girl,' he said, 'certainly, but——' 'Ah,' I remark, 'you say "but." Then let us pass on. I think Michelle and I might be satisfied with some one else. What do you say to Adrienne Selaine?' And then Gerard had no smile nor even a word for a moment or two. At last he blurted out, 'And why not Mathilde Duval?' I laughed then. I had a good laugh. 'I have amused myself,' I cried. 'I desired to break it gently to you lest you faint, and I am not strong enough, Gerard, to carry you in, so I approached the subject with care. It was Mathilde whom, all the time, I meant.' And, will you believe it? the undutiful son then and there fell upon me and pounded me, then he embraced me in so bearlike a manner that I have scarce since been able to breathe as freely as before, and the only way I could recover myself from his embrace of me was to gasp, 'But Mathilde, Mathilde, we may not be able to receive the consent of her guardian.' And then he dropped me and stood off staring at me. Do not laugh, Mathilde. I should not perhaps tell all this, for it is not best always to let a woman know her power. I never confess to Michelle how I tremble in her presence."

Michelle shook her head at him. "We desire facts, Louis, and not fancies."

He nodded at his audience as he would say, You see how I am ruled. "So, then," he resumed, "we digress. He looked crestfallen. I assure him that I will at once proceed to the uncle of Mathilde. I go. I return shortly. I do not seem to see that Gerard has done much work in my absence, for he sits stupidly by the door listening to Mathilde's singing." Papa Louis put his head back and laughed again.

"I say as I enter, 'Will you go to the garden, Gerard, and see how many chickens the yellow hen has hatched? Michelle wishes to know.' 'But M. Theroulde?' says Gerard. 'I have no message for you from M. Theroulde,' I say, looking severe, 'but I have one for Mathilde.' He goes forth slowly as if his shoes were of iron instead of wood, and I enter the house. 'Mathilde,' I say, 'Gerard has gone to count the yellow hen's chickens. Will you go to him and tell him that when he has concluded the sum of them that I am waiting here with Michelle to bestow a blessing?' Mathilde looked puzzled. 'On the chickens?' she asked. Ho! ho! she said that. 'Not on the chickens, but on two geese,' I reply. She ran out. I do not know yet if she understood, but one thing I do know: to this day I have not been told the number of the yellow hen's chickens."

"There were eleven," said Michelle, gravely. And every one else burst into a hearty laugh.

“That is all my part of the story,” Papa Louis concluded. “Of the rest it better befits Michelle and Mathilde to tell. We are very well pleased, are we not, Mathilde?” He pinched her cheek and looked around with a smile for every one.

And then Michelle, arising to her duty as hostess, set out to prepare a feast for the visitors, while Alaine gave a recital of her experiences. That the dinner was not late was not due to the frequent interruptions caused by Michelle’s dropping suddenly in a chair to raise her eyes to heaven and to exclaim at the wickedness of man.

It was after the meal was over and the guests departed that Alaine, looking at Mathilde, said, “And Pierre?”

“He has not sent a word nor a line. We fear he is no more.”

Alaine sighed. Of her lovers, who were left? François, a wreck, a man whose days were numbered. Étienne, who had married another, and who had never been a possibility in Alaine’s opinion. The two who had loved her best, who of all had received affection from her, these were gone. She leaned back in her chair and slow tears rolled down her cheeks.

Mathilde came and stood over her. “So pale and wistful you look, dear Alaine, and I am too happy to be here before you. What can I do not to have it seem so great a contrast for you, my sister Alaine? For you are my sister.”

“And I never had one,” sighed Alaine.

“Think, then, now I have father, mother, sister, and brother, I who lately had no one. Think of that, Alaine. I, too, a year ago was desolate, and now how happy I am! If I needed anything to complete my joy, it was your return, and to-day brings me that. I can almost say I love France, I am so at peace. Do you know, my uncle will not speak French save at home, and he calls his children by the English names John and Margaret and James. He says he is not French, that this is his country and he owes it his allegiance, and so say I. Let us forget France, I tell Gerard. We have had merry times here together, and still shall have. Now that you return there will be occasion for many a frolic. I shall take you to a little festivity to-morrow, the fête-day of Suzanne Gombeau. We shall dance and sing, and you will be at home again among your friends.”

“Dance? I dance?” Alaine shook her head. “My heart is too heavy for me to be light-footed. I will stay at home, Mathilde.”

“We will see what Mère Michelle will say to that. She is so glad to-day she could dance herself, I think.”

Michelle stood gazing at her darling. “I cannot yet believe it,” she told her, “and I would hear more of those strange journeys of yours, of Father Bisset and Madame Herault. Well do I remember her, a handsome young woman so blithe and so

brilliant." She shook her head. Alaine's tale of Jeanne had greatly moved her. "And you knew not what became of her? That is strange," she remarked at the close of Alaine's tale of Jeanne's disappearance.

"We do not know whether she was taken away by force or whether she went willingly. I hope the latter." This had been the one thought which had given Alaine comfort. If Jeanne had accompanied the raiders on their retreat she might be able to lend some protection to Lendert, she and Ricard. The Indians, however, might have become enraged at what they felt to be treachery on Jeanne's part and she, too, might be prisoner.

To Alaine it seemed years ago that all those strange things had happened. In a year she had travelled far, had suffered the sorrows of a lifetime, yet here she was again in this quiet corner of the world. The twittering birds, the soft tinkling of some musical instrument, treasured by a neighbor and brought over from France with great care, the old familiar sounds came in through the open window. Here was rest for brain and body, for all but her aching heart. And strange, in the midst of her prayers that night arose a thought of François. "Lord have mercy," she again faltered.

And François? Only his iron will took him safely through the fatigues of the next few days. After a night's rest he had demanded that Adriaen should see certain officials for him. "I will receive

them here," he said. "You will explain why I do not present myself in person."

His message was received courteously, and following Adriaen's account of him came a visit from two of the dignitaries of the place. The courage with which François faced them, his Spartan-like endurance, and his compelling presence won their attention and they found themselves interested, so that before they left they had promised to make immediate efforts to arrange for an exchange.

Then François dismissed Adriaen. "Go to your sweetheart," he said. "I will get you to hire me a man, and then I will do." He took the young man's hand in his. "You have been a good friend, Adriaen, and I wish you all the happiness that I have missed. Tell your little Trynje that I thank her for lending you to me. I should not have been able to get through without you. And say to her that for what I have made her friend suffer I have no words in which to ask forgiveness. I remember now; the old priest said it: 'Forgiveness is sweeter than revenge.' I have come to see it. It was Alaine herself who showed me that. Now get me a good man, and then adieu, Adriaen."

There were real tears in the young Dutchman's eyes when he finally took his leave of his friend, and after he had gone François, with a deep sigh, shut his eyes. Then he set his mind upon what was to be done next.

What it was transpired not long after. For in

exchange for a wounded Englishman François's paralyzed body was sent on to Montreal. Here he was not long in setting his friends about his business. "I want to find," he said, "a coureur de bois called Ricard le Nez. If he cannot be found, then one Edouard le Gros will do."

And in due time it came to pass that Jeanne Crepin in her lodge in the wilderness saw borne past her door on a rude stretcher the body of a man. "Hold, Ricard!" she cried; "whom have you there?"

The bearers stopped. "A man who is all head and no body," Ricard replied.

"I will see him." She came and stood over the man. "Who are you? What do you here?" she asked.

"One question at a time, good sir or madam, I know not which," replied François. "I am François Dupont, or what is left of that once lively individual."

"Then you are a child of the Evil One," returned Jeanne.

"Softly, softly, my good sir or madam. May I ask your name in return and how it is that you are so well acquainted with the family of Monsieur le Diable? since the putting of double questions seems to be the fashion in these parts."

"I am Jeanne Crepin."

"Ah, yes, to be sure." He spoke as if searching his memory for a lost recollection. "I remember, I

remember. Your brother was a friend of mine. Father Bisset has perhaps mentioned me to you. No, I have it, I have it. I recognize you now, madam; it was you whom I saw during our little skirmish over in the English colony of New York, as they call it now. I remember. So, so."

"What are you doing here?"

"What am I doing here? It is not I who can do at all; you perceive that I am a passive fact. I think, however, that it would be as well if we were to get on. I would doff my hat to you, madam, did I wear one. As it is, take my adieux in such courteous manner as may be best suited to the occasion, and consider that I have made my best obeisance. Advance, Ricard."

Jeanne took up the line of march with the others. "Where do you carry him?" she asked.

"To the Indian village beyond."

"Why does he go there?"

Ricard looked at her with a sidelong glance. "You would have to know him to guess why. I never knew stronger will in weaker body. How he has made this journey is past telling. He goes because he has heard that the young Dutchman is there."

"Ah-h!" Jeanne compressed her lips and walked on in silence. From time to time she looked at François, whose eyes returned her glance with something of their old mischief.

"I see, madam," he said at last, "twenty ques-

tions have risen to your lips, yet none are uttered. You say, Why does he go to the Indian village? What does he intend to do if he discovers Lendert Verplanck there? How much does he know? How little does he know? What is to be done after all? and all that. Am I right?"

"You are right," she returned, gravely.

"Then I will answer without further prelude. I go to the Indian village because there I have heard I will find Lendert Verplanck. I wish to see him, and if possible to set him free. And then I have really nothing more to do in this life. Love will do the rest." He searched Jeanne's face, over which a sudden softness spread.

"Ay," she said, "love will do the rest, if love meets life."

"Explain yourself, if you please."

"Lendert Verplanck has been kept alive from day to day only on sufferance. At first they would have despatched him by slow torture without hesitation, but some interfered, Ricard and some others, and the Indians agreed to wait till they should reach the village. Arriving there, he was made to run the gauntlet, to believe that each day must be his last, and that the morrow would see the fires of torture kindled for him. But Petit Marc sits there watching. He declares that once they glut themselves with the Dutchman's death, he, Petit Marc, has knowledge which will bring them terrible disaster."

"This is interesting. Then why do they not de-

spatch Monsieur Marc first? That would be my plan.”

Jeanne smiled a little ironically. “They know better, for Petit Marc has conveyed away one of them whom he holds as a hostage. They know that at a word from this big man——”

“Whom you call little——”

“That one of their braves will suffer as they would make the man Verplanck suffer. He knows them, this Marc. He knows their ways, their secrets. He has done them too many favors for them to regard him lightly. He sits there a guard over their prisoner, yet they will not give up the Dutchman.”

“They will, then,” said François. “Proceed a little more rapidly, Ricard.”

CHAPTER XIX

THE MARK OF THE RED FEATHER

INTO the company of Indians gathered around the imperturbable Marc and the prisoner suddenly walked Jeanne Crepin, whose coming was received with grunts of disapproval. She had an unpleasant way of appearing before these red brethren when she was least expected. They gave her a certain respect and even affectionate admiration, but they were not to be balked by a woman in their revenge. Lendert's scalp was a possession not to be despised, and it had required the combined strategy of Jeanne and Ricard to prevent its being taken on that homeward march. Jeanne had insisted that he was Ricard's prisoner and had refused to leave him while Ricard made a hasty journey in search of Petit Marc. After that Petit Marc took possession.

"You quarrel over the man," he said to them. "One brother says he is mine, another he is mine. I am judge between you. He is neither the one's nor the other's. Ricard took him, as every one knows, but it was because the Frenchman, your leader, told him to do it, and therefore if he belongs to any one it is to François, but he does not belong to him. He belongs to Yonondio, and to him he must be delivered at last. If the Frenchman, Fran-

çois Sharp Eyes, were here he would tell you so, but he is slain and he cannot deliver him up to Yonondio. Will Yonondio protect you? Will he believe you to be his friends when you steal from him his prisoners? Yet Yonondio loves François Sharp Eyes, and he would give him to him because he is his."

"The Frenchman, Sharp Eyes, is slain," said an old chief. "What is my brother saying? How does he expect that the slain shall come and claim his prisoner?"

"François Sharp Eyes is not slain," returned Marc, racking his brain for a device to lengthen the time for Lendert. "Moreover, my brothers forget that there are many who have lost friends in this war, and even in this battle, therefore it is but right and according to custom that this prisoner shall be delivered to one who has lost a friend in war. So only can the cloud be driven away which hangs over that one to whom grief has come."

"My brother speaks what is true," agreed the old chief, "and the prisoner must be given to one who has lost a friend in this battle."

Then came a long discussion as to who should possess Lendert, and finally this matter was settled by his being handed over to one Red Feather. Petit Marc protested all the while that it was no one's right to kill the man, and that the governor, Frontenac, whom the Indians called Yonondio, would tell their father, the King of France, and that he would be very angry that they had kept any pris-

oner from him. Nevertheless, every now and then murmurs arose, and the life of Lendert hung in the balance whenever news of a raid from the Iroquois aroused a new desire for revenge in Lendert's captors.

At last came the word that a bloody skirmish had taken place and that here was new cause for maltreatment of this representative of the enemy. Encouraged by Petit Marc, Lendert bore himself stoically while the wily Marc cast about for a reason to delay the expected torture. Bound to a tree and hopelessly waiting the pleasure of his tormentors, Lendert lay when Jeanne appeared.

"To whom do you say this man belongs?" she asked, at the same time touching him contemptuously with the toe of her moccasin. "You say he is Red Feather's. I say he is not. I say that no one but François Sharp Eyes has a right to him."

"Wah!" grunted the old chief, "the Man-Wife has been drinking the new sap of the fever-tree and it has touched her brain. Do dead bodies desire to take away prisoners from the living?"

Jeanne tossed up her chin. "No, but the living have a right to their own. See, my brothers, François Sharp Eyes is here." With a wave of her hand she indicated the approach of Ricard and Edouard with their burden.

"And not a minute too soon," growled Petit Marc. "It was getting to be close quarters for him."

Even the most impassive of the redskins stared to see the white face of François appear. Lendert struggled in his bonds and glared at this unexpected presence.

“Where is the prisoner?” asked François. “Place me near him.” He was laid under the tree where Lendert was bound.

“You see me, my brothers,” François began. “You ask if a dead body desires to take possession of a living one. Behold a dead body, this one of mine. As the chill of winter creeps farther and farther from the north, so over this body of mine creeps the chill of death; and who has caused this to happen? The same enemy who has robbed Red Feather of his son. Am I not worse off than Red Feather? He has another son, two or three of them. I have but my one body and it is worse than useless; only a frame to fasten this head upon. Was it not I who led you against the English? Said I not, We will have revenge for those indignities of the English and the Dutch and the Iroquois? You have come home in safety; I have been all these months a prisoner; and look at me. Who shall say that I should not have body for body?”

The Indians listened solemnly. Then one spoke up. “Our brother speaks well, but he has still his head. We will give him the body of the white man and we will take the head.”

This was received with much approval by the rest

of the Indians, and Petit Marc gave a short laugh. The grim humor of the speech struck him. "They have you there," he said aside to François.

"Pah!" François raised his hand. "Of what use is a body which cannot move? And if you deprive me of the head, how, then, can the body move for me? My living body has been taken; for it I demand a living body in return. This is what Yonondio would accord me. Call the head yours if you wish. I am willing, but how will it serve me to have two useless bodies? My brothers mock me; they wish to double my burdens by giving me two loads to carry, as if one were not enough. Who will be feet for my feet, legs for my legs? Who will run for me if I have not these living legs to do my will? And what will Yonondio say when I tell him, They have given me a dead man to bring to you as a prisoner?"

This was another matter for consideration, but the decision was not repealed. "The head is Red Feather's, the body belongs to François Sharp Eyes. If François takes away the head which is Red Feather's, how, then, will any one know that it belongs to his brother?"

It was François who solved the difficulty. "It will not be so bad as it might be, and it is that or his head," he said in an undertone to Petit Marc. "François Sharp Eyes, your brother, will tell you what to do," he went on to say. "Let Red Feather put his mark upon the man; let him brand him upon

the cheek, so will all know that it is the head of Red Feather though the body follow François."

The old chief nodded approval. "Our brother speaks with wisdom; it shall be as he desires. Yonondio will then perceive that we have done as he would command, and it will be a sign to him that the man was in our hands but that we desire to please our father, and that we have delivered the prisoner to François."

Finding that they were not to be deprived of all entertainment, the company proceeded, with much ceremony, to see to it that upon Lendert's cheek was branded a queer, small red feather. Then followed a feast and much powwowing, and at last Lendert was free.

As he faced his old enemy he felt that he would almost rather have suffered greater torture than to be handed over to this man. What further diabolical intention had he, who was mighty even in his helplessness? He had not opened his lips during all this ceremony, not even to ask word of his friends, of Alaine, whom Jeanne had left lying on the ground in feigned mortal hurt. Nor did he speak when his stiffened and cramped limbs followed the litter to Jeanne's lodge. Jeanne tramped along by his side, but turned her talk to Petit Marc, for she saw that Lendert was in no mood for conversation. It was only when they were arrived at her door that she turned to François and said, "And Alaine, what of her?"

“To-day she is with her friends,” François told her. “She is in New Rochelle, poor little soul.” He turned his eyes upon Lendert. “Come here, if you please, my friend. I have done you and Mademoiselle Hervieu much wrong. I do not know why I disliked you ; probably because you are Dutch and the enemy of my country, and because you came between me and my revenge. She will tell you all, for I send you to her. I am not going to live, and I made this journey to attain this object, to find you. I send you back to her you love and to her I have wronged. I believe she will forgive me. I know what a great love is, and I respect yours. Go with it to Mademoiselle Hervieu and say, I am François Dupont’s gift to you. I love you so deeply that I can even endure it that he whom I hate has been the means of liberating me and that it is from his hands that you receive me back to your heart. I do not ask your forgiveness, Lendert Verplanck ; only angels can forgive utterly, and it is an angel who waits for you there in New Rochelle.”

“I thank you, mynheer,” said Lendert, brokenly. “God knows I love her.”

“And you will marry her. Yes, I know. I have heard it all from the lips of that little Trynje and from her good mother and her better lover.” His eyes softened as he spoke of Adriaen. “Good boy ! good boy ! I love that lad,” he said, thoughtfully. “I know your mother’s feeling, but you will say to her that the man who gave up his revenge and his

will that he might go out of the world worthy of one who waits for him up there——” He gave a quick, short sigh. “I believe that! I believe that!” he said, passionately. “She waits for *me*. Well, then, say to your mother this man, half dead, took his poor body over hill and dale, through forest and down-stream, that he might right a wrong, and he gives you back your son, but in return he asks that you do not stand between him and happiness. This man, François Dupont, you will tell her what became of his strong will, and how Heaven treated him for his vainglory and stubbornness. I am not good; I am not religious, not I, but I know when I am beaten, and I can recognize the stroke when it comes. I am so near death that I can see the meaning of things. You will tell her of me and of what I say. Yet, because even then, in her strength and her power of health, she still refuses, there is something else. It will be told you in good time. Now, boys, we rest here for to-night, and to-morrow take me on to Quebec. I wish to die under the flag which waved above me when I fought there upon the heights of Quebec. I shall live to get there,—I shall do that. You will take me, Ricard, and you, Edouard, and Toito, my man? So now, you, M. Verplanck, must have safe escort to the other side of the river, and then you can go on.”

Lendert bowed his head in assent. He had not even words now for this strange man, whose devotion to a purpose rose above his egotism and ambi-

tions. But the young Dutchman carried all this in his heart, and when the next morning he saw François placed in the canoe which was to bear him upon his last journey before he should enter that darker river, the feeling of angry resentment, of hatred and revenge, gave way. It had been slowly growing less and less ever since the hour when he was freed, and he leaned over from the side of his own canoe to touch the hand of François, not now in anger nor in assault, but in pity and gratitude.

“Mynheer Dupont,” he said, “you told me that Mademoiselle Hervieu would forgive you, that it was an angel I should find when I return. Then, I cannot go to her with a black heart, and if I am your gift to her, one does not give angels as worthless a thing as a man who hates his deliverer. And so, mynheer, if you wish my forgiveness, here it is, and if you have aught against me, I pray you, in turn, let me ask your pardon for it.”

François turned his feverishly bright eyes upon him. “Head of Red Feather and body that is mine,” he said, with a whimsical smile, “you are of no account at all beside the heart which is Alaine Hervieu’s, and which is great enough to do this. Will you bend your head closer, monsieur?”

Lendert obeyed, and François touched his lips to the burning mark, which stood out red and inflamed, even though Jeanne’s soothing applications had taken away the worst of its fire. “When you go to Alaine,

tell her so I have dedicated this mark and bear her my long farewell.”

The canoes drifted apart, one going up stream, the other down, and to those who had best known him, who had suffered with and by him, whose fear had been turned into compassion, François Dupont became but a memory, yet from the memory at last all bitterness vanished, and he was remembered as one to whom reverence and gratitude were due.

The long and wearisome journey made by Lendert at last brought him to the house from which he had lately been cast out. But here was no mother to welcome him or to upbraid him, for Madam De Vries had gone to New York after Trynje's wedding. She felt a miserable satisfaction in nursing her resentment towards Alaine, yet was of a dozen minds about her. Trynje was no longer to be treated as a daughter, and the one whom her son had loved ought rightly to have taken her place. This Madam conceded to herself, but grew hot and angry at the thought, and so at last she shut herself away from her friends and brooded over it all. As day after day passed and the hopelessness of ever seeing Lendert again came over her, she grew more and more bitter, outwardly, and more and more yielding, inwardly, so that if, at certain moments, Alaine had appeared, she would have wept with her and have taken her to her heart. A dozen times she started to make the journey to New Rochelle, where she

knew Alaine to be, and as often she fell back in her chair, a slave to her obstinacy and self-pity.

It was one morning, six months after the events of the day, which it seemed to Madam De Vries must always pass in procession before her upon her first waking, that she suddenly decided to return to her home. "I cannot escape it wherever I go," she moaned; "I am idle here, and I brood too much. I will go to work. I will change everything; I will busy myself doing that. I will have nothing as it used to be, and so in time I may be able to live in a measure contented."

And thus it happened that the canoe bearing Lendert to New York passed the spot where his mother was resting overnight upon her homeward journey.

While Lendert was proceeding on his way some one else was nearing New York with hope and longing. M. Theodore Hervieu, late engagé upon the island of Dominica, was free at last and was now in possession of the knowledge of his daughter's whereabouts. These facts had come to him in that peculiar way which gives credence to the saying that truth is stranger than fiction. He had not fared badly, when all is told, for he was fortunate in falling into the hands of a compassionate master, who gave him such liberty as was his due and set him about tasks which were not heavy. It was, however, not upon the island of Guadaloupa, but upon St. Domingo, that he was landed, and having been shipped under a name differing somewhat from his own, he was not

discovered by those who had gone in search of him, remaining himself all the while ignorant of what had become of his daughter. Letters sent to France assured him that she had fled the country ; letters sent to England remained unanswered, therefore in patience possessing his soul M. Hervieu waited till an event occurred which turned the tide of his affairs.

One morning from a high rock upon the coast of Guadaloupa there might have been seen dangling a rope, and from it swung a man, looking below him to make sure of how far he might drop if he let go. Presently the rope swung free of its burden, and the man, limping a little, ran along the shore and was not long in reaching a small boat, which immediately set out for the neighboring island of Dominica. After six months of miserable bondage Pierre Boutillicr had a second time escaped, and as fate would have it, he found himself received upon the plantation of one Madame Valleau, and was taken into that lady's presence by her secretary, whom she addressed as M. Hervet.

The pitiful condition of the escaped man excited Madame's pity as she directed that he be given the best that the place could afford, and herself invited him to be her guest at dinner.

Madame Valleau had been a widow a little over two years. She was young and bewitching, and having married an elderly man who seemed more like a father than a husband to her, she was ready

to fall in love when the proper person should present himself, and this happened to be Pierre Boutilier, for, as did Desdemona, "she loved him for the dangers he had passed," and found in him a hero whom fate had cast at her feet.

Pierre had not been under her roof a week when she began to reproach him for his melancholy. "Thy grave and sombre face needs a different medicine to alter its expression from that I have to offer," she said one day. "M. Hervet, there, for all he has a missing daughter somewhere in the world, does not look so melancholy. Who is it you have left behind?" She gave a coquettish glance at the unresponsive Pierre, who shook his head.

"No kin of mine waits for me anywhere, for all perished under the hand of persecution in France."

Madame Felice Valteau tapped her foot reflectively. "And that is why you do not approve of me, I suppose. I am not Protestant."

"I never said, madame, that I did not approve of you. Who am I that I should abuse your bounty by vilifying you? Yet, I would you were Protestant."

"And suppose I were, then would I see you smile?"

"Without doubt I should smile that Providence had brought me into such a favorable haven of refuge."

"Then turn your head this way. I am Protestant and M. Hervet knows it. It was not my hus-

band's belief, but he did not cross me in it, and he was always kind to those of my faith. It was his way to say that each man was accountable to his own conscience for his faith, and he had no right to persecute others for thinking the same. He took M. Hervet into his employ, knowing him to be a Huguenot, but seeing him a gentleman and a good man of business. He finally made him his secretary, in which office in this house he still continues, though he is still an engagé, and it will be some time before he can have his freedom. I think he will likely wish to remain here if he can realize something from the estates he left in France. There is a secret about that too, which I will tell you some day. There are not bad opportunities in this place for one who has M. Hervet's ability, and I think he will do well to remain. But now let us return to our former subject. I see no reason for your melancholy, for I assure you that I shall treat you well."

"I do not doubt it, madame, and as for my grave manner, one who has suffered much cannot at once assume the gayety of those always free from care."

The tears came to the eyes of Madame Valleau. "It shall be my dearest privilege to drive that gloom away from one who has borne so much for the sake of my religion. Tell me again of that wild escape of yours. And why did you return when once you had freed yourself? I can never wring from you why you did that. Can you not tell me?" She looked at him with melting dark eyes and laid her

soft warm hand upon his arm. "Tell me," she said in a beseeching voice.

Pierre hesitated. He felt the woman's witchery, and told himself that there was not any reason why he should not confess that his was a mission of love, a sacrifice because of his devotion to Alaine. Yet he hesitated. After a pause, in which the silken garments of the pretty widow swept his feet and the entreaty in her eyes deepened, he said, slowly, "I returned that I might seek and liberate some one who, like myself, had been sent into slavery."

"He must have been very dear to you."

"I never saw him."

"What!" Felice Valteau leaned nearer. "Then it was for a woman you did it. Who is she? Tell me. Who is she?"

"Her name is Alaine Hervieu," Pierre answered in response to an irresistible impulse.

"Alaine Hervieu!" Felice screamed. Then a little light laugh rippled from her red lips. "Very well, then, you have come to the right place. I can find him for you. But first—— No, no," as Pierre's eager questions leaped to his lips. "No, not yet. Do you love this Alaine Hervieu madly? Would life be a blank without her?"

Pierre was silent.

"Does she love you?"

"I do not know. I did not demand that she should tell me. She made no promise. I would not allow that, but it was that if her father desired,

she would marry me when I returned with him."

Madame laughed again, and then leaned forward, her chin resting in one dainty palm, her soft round arm almost touching Pierre as he sat by her side. After a silence she looked at him with alluring, velvety eyes. "She does not love you. No, she does not. She would never have allowed you to leave her if she had. She would have flung herself into your arms and have implored you to stay. No, no."

"She did beg me not."

"But she did not do so with tears and sighs and kisses, with her heart in her eyes. She thought of her father first."

"Ye-es." The answer came reluctantly.

"Then, I repeat, she does not love you as you loved her. Why must you love her, Monsieur Pierre? By this time she has forgotten you."

"No; she will wait till the year is out."

"And will then marry some one else?"

"Perhaps."

"And when is the year up?"

"In three months."

"Then, in that time she shall see her father, if— if—— Listen, monsieur. If I let him go I shall demand the sacrifice you were willing to make. You were willing to give yourself for him. Then I shall demand the exchange. You will do this willingly?"

"Give myself to you?"

"Yes." Felice arose. She looked down at him

with a soft luminous expression. "Pierre, would it be such a sorry lot to remain with me? Could I not make you happy? This girl does not love you. I repeat it. In your heart you do not feel that she does, and will you force her to marry you because her father may demand it?"

"A thousand times no."

"And if, after you had gone back, you were to find that she loved some one, else would it not be harder then to give her up, who now is but a dream?"

"It would be harder."

"Then—— You are very humble, too humble, Pierre Boutillier; many men have sued on their knees for what is yours on your own conditions. I give you M. Theodore Hervieu, my secretary, and you give yourself to me."

"M. Hervet?"

"The same."

Pierre too had arisen and was looking down at the graceful figure clad in its filmy silken robes. "And if I do not," he said, hesitatingly, and pressing his hand over his eyes.

"Then I refuse to give up my slave, the man Thomas Hervet." She drew herself away a few steps. "You are very hard, very unresponsive, very ungrateful, Pierre Boutillier. I do not wonder that Alaine did not love you."

Pierre removed his hand from his eyes. He saw that there were tears standing in the soft eyes and

that the bewitching red lips were quivering like a hurt child's. He made a step forward. "Madame," he hastened to say, "I accept. I offer you this poor, heavy-eyed, ungainly Pierre Boutillier in exchange for Theodore Hervieu. I am yours, madame, do as you will with me." He knelt at her feet.

Felice bent over and kissed him gently on the head. "I would make you my slave," she said, softly. "And as for myself, take my hands; they are your willing servitors: take my heart; it is in chains that you have forged."

And so it happened that Pierre Boutillier became the head of a large estate, and the husband of the pretty widow of Eugene Valteau.

M. Hervieu's surprise came not in the news of the approaching marriage, but in the stranger fact that here was one who knew his daughter and who had come in search of him. "But I am still an engagé," he said, "and I have no money for my passage to Manhatte."

"You are not an engagé, and you are not penniless," Felice told him. "M. Valteau believed that it would be better for you to serve out your time here, thinking it would not be altogether disagreeable to you."

"It has been far otherwise. Your kindness and that of M. Valteau give me no unhappy recollection of my bondage," he answered.

"Before my husband died," Madame Valteau told him, "he gave me this," she handed him a paper,

“and told me that if ever you should wish to leave me, and it seemed advisable that you should do so, that you were to receive from my hands the amount brought by the sale of certain estates of yours in France, put up for sale and purchased by him for you. By his will he leaves that to you. ‘It is not a great gift,’ he said, ‘but it will start our friend again in some good enterprise when he is ready to take his place with his friends in another country. He has served me well for no wages, and I am doing only what is just in requiting for his services.’”

“Madame !” M. Hervieu was overcome, and could only murmur some unintelligible words of thanks.

“Therefore,” continued Felice, “if you will kindly remain with me until I am married, I will wish you God-speed. And will you please ask your daughter to write to me and send it by a safe hand, and will you give her this little packet?”

M. Hervieu promised, and two weeks later he left the island of St. Domingo, and set sail for the colony of New Netherlands, then beginning to be known as New York.

“This is a better voyage than the last I made,” he said to the captain of the ship in which he had taken passage; “in that I, with fifty others, was wedged into a space scarce big enough for a breath.”

The good Dutchman looked his sympathy; he had taken on this passenger who was willing to pay his way, and the thrifty man did not despise the money, though his was but a small merchantman.

He was making the return trip to New York and had seen something of the life of the engagé. "You vas locky to get owet alretty," he remarked.

M. Hervieu drew a long, free breath. It was good to take in the air of absolute liberty once more.

"Vat you vas calt?" asked the skipper. He must converse in English with this passenger who knew only a little of that language and French.

"I am called Theodore Hervieu now," was the reply.

The skipper took the pipe from his mouth and stared at his companion. "Py tam!" he exclaimed. And then he lapsed into a silence from which no remark of M. Hervieu aroused him for half an hour.

CHAPTER XX

MATHILDE'S TABLEAUX

MATHILDE was in a flutter of excitement. For the first time since her marriage she meant to give an entertainment to her friends. Small evening companies were quite a usual thing among the lively French emigrants, and an excuse to entertain one's friends was seldom wanting. Alaine had declared that she had no heart to dance, but Mathilde had a fertile brain; there should be something else. She, so deft with brush and needle, would arrange some tableaux. These would help to occupy Alaine and give her something new to think about. She had been under such a nervous strain and needed diversion. Mathilde quite appreciated Michelle's concern; they must rouse this triste Alaine. Life was sad enough at best, why not try to put some joy into it? Therefore Mathilde flitted about like some small bright-eyed bird, singing as she worked. Her slim, clever little fingers gave a twist to this, a touch to that, and lo, an artistic result.

"You are far more clever than I," Alaine would say, admiringly, "and yet I thought myself not deficient in embroidery and flower-painting. The sisters used to say I was an industrious pupil. Those

lovely laces, Mathilde, where did you get them? And those muslins, so beautiful they are."

"They are what remain of my mother's wardrobe," Mathilde told her, fingering the stuffs lovingly. "You shall wear this in the bower of roses which I mean for the rose maiden."

Alaine gave a little joyless laugh. "I, a rose maiden? No, no, do not press me into any such service; rather am I a weeping Niobe, a desolate Mara."

Mathilde's fingers flew back and forth as she sewed some strips together. "And you were once such a happy girl, Alaine. If Pierre should return in time you might find happiness with him, he is so good and true. See how dark it looked to me at one time."

"Pierre?"

"Yes. Gerard has told me why he went."

Alaine let her hands lie idle in her lap for a moment and looked mournfully out of the window. The year was past, but there was no Pierre to claim her, and no Lendert to step in between her and duty. "In what strange ways are our doings ordered," she said, gravely. "We mourn and sigh and fret over the difficulties in our pathway, and before we know it some convulsion of nature has removed them and we walk for evermore through a twilight world in which no stumbling is possible. With the danger we lose the light."

"Yes, but there is the morning still to come," re-

turned Mathilde, cheerily. "Here comes Mère Michelle; I will leave you for a little, I have forgotten something that I should have brought from my uncle's. We shall need it for our tableaux to-night."

It was a full hour before she returned all in a flutter. She sought Mère Michelle. There were whispers, chatterings, screams of astonishment, falling almost without notice upon Alaine's dull ears. Mathilde did love surprises; she had some new scheme afoot for the night's entertainment. But the girl did arouse to a sense of more important things being in prospect when Michelle, with much mystery, came and clasped her in her arms.

"Prepare yourself, my Alainette; this day will have a happy ending for you. Sorrow endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"What is it? What is it?" Alaine asked, faintly.

"We have heard from Pierre."

"Ah-h!" Alaine started. "He is coming?"

"No, not he. Some one in his stead."

"My father!" Alaine clasped her hands over her heart, and again Michelle fell upon her neck with tears and kisses and murmuring words of love.

"When will he come?" Alaine asked. "It is not a false report? You are sure, Michelle?"

"The letter arrived to-day; it was written hurriedly, and is only a line: 'M. Hervieu is discovered. He will set out as soon as possible for Manhatte. I remain here.' That was all."

“Poor Pierre!” sighed Alaine, “he has condemned himself to a life of slavery, I fear. Poor Pierre! There must be a drop of bitterness even in this cup, Michelle.”

“Dear little one, so gloomy and unlike your old self. This will not do—no, no. Here, Papa Louis wants you for a walk; the air is brisk and keen and you have bent over those paper flowers all day. Go out and get a breath.”

“Yes, take her off, Papa Louis. Go, both of you, and do not come back for an hour. We do not want you around. We need all the space we can get, and you are of such a size, Papa Louis, that you are in the way.” And, laughing, Mathilde playfully pushed the good man out of the door. “Bring back Alaine with some color, else I shall be ruined in paint for her cheeks to-night.”

Papa Louis, always good company, was to-day in a high state of jocularly. An entertainment such as this was dear to his heart. He and Mathilde had pored over such books as the little community possessed, had drawn upon their memories and upon their imaginations until they felt that the tableaux would surpass anything of the kind yet shown in the village. It was the kind of thing which gave Papa Louis supreme pleasure. He was in his element. He could quote poetry, he could make reference to classical characters, he could recall historical personages with an ease which awoke a new humility in Michelle, grown accustomed to ordering about

this little man, whose knowledge of a husbandman's crafts was so small, and who so often aroused her mocking laughter by his mistakes. He was superior. Yes, she knew it, and he had stooped to marry her. And so Michelle wore a very meek look these days.

Gerard and Mathilde, two children, frolicked through it all, played jokes upon each other, laughed and danced and quarrelled and kissed between the quarrels, so that it was really quite a hubbub from which Alaine escaped, given, too, a half-dozen other young people to join in the chatter, neighboring maidens and their swains who were to take part in the evening's festivities.

These were all still there when Alaine returned from her walk, but they were more subdued. They stopped their chatter as Alaine came in and pressed one another's hands sympathetically. They had an expectant air as Alaine stepped into the room, and cast quick glances at the improvised curtain, the old blue bedspreads hung below the rafters.

Mathilde went to Alaine and kissed her, then took the cold, thin hands in hers. "You are returned just in time, my dear. We have changed the tableaux somewhat, and will now rehearse the first one. Sit there, between Papa Louis and Mère Michelle. We call this *The Return*. It permits of two scenes. We shall want you for the second one, Alaine, dear Alaine. Draw the curtain, Gerard."

The blue linen hangings parted, and Alaine saw before her, smiling a little, two men, one whose gray

locks hung about a face somewhat older, somewhat more careworn, than she remembered it, but still the same that was her earliest memory. He rested his hand upon the shoulder of a younger man upon whose smooth cheek burned the mark of the red feather.

With parted lips and one cry, in which love, longing, and bewilderment were united, Alaine sprang to her feet, made one bound, and was clasped in her father's arms.

"Drop the curtain, Gerard," ordered Mathilde. "You have beheld the second scene, my friends. This tableau will not be repeated."

An hour later the guests came trooping in, the Allaires and the Bonneaus, the Theroldes and the Thauvets. The news had spread abroad, and Mathilde's tableaux proved to be less of an excitement than this drama in which the chief actors were Alaine and Theodore Hervieu and Lendert Verplanck.

It was late when the last tableau was announced. Surely it was a rose maiden who stood there in her gown of broidered pink, her short brown curls garlanded, and the bloom on her cheeks and lips that given by the touch of joy. So sweet and fair and slight she stood, and at her feet two little loves from out of the roses aimed their arrows. Around her glowed the flowers made by Mathilde's cunning hands. At sight of her who had suffered much, who was lost and was found, who had mourned and

had been mourned, who had been in perils oft, the whole company arose as if by an impulse, and burst out into a psalm of praise, singing so lustily that they might have been heard far in the quiet forest: "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good!" And who in all that company could sing the words with more exalted soul than Alaine?

It was when one after another had tramped home and the snatches of song had died away that Mathilde, unable to curb her curiosity any longer, asked, "And Pierre?"

"And Pierre?" mocked Gerard, his arm around her. "My wife, you see, desires to know of him."

Mathilde made a saucy face at him. "We desire to know of Pierre," she repeated. "No doubt you have told his story over a dozen times this evening, but we have not heard, and we are not less friends than the rest, M. Hervieu."

"Pierre." M. Hervieu looked at Alaine and smiled. "Pierre is quite comfortable and in good hands. He is married."

"Married!" the comical expression of dismay upon Mathilde's face was a sight to see. She turned to Gerard. "Then say no more to me of a man's constancy."

"What I wish to know," said Michelle, "is how it comes that you and M. Verplanck appear in company."

"That is a coincidence. I returned upon the first ship which touched at Dominica upon her return

voyage, and this happened to be the one of which M. Verplanck is half owner. It seems that he,"—he placed a kind hand upon the young man's arm,—“our friend here, had taken the journey to Guadaloupa some months ago, hoping to find me there. He was misinformed; I was not at Guadaloupa but at Dominica, and there Pierre Boutillier found me by chance. M. Verplanck had taken the precaution to have inquiry made for me at each succeeding voyage, and when I took passage upon the very ship that had come in search of me, the good skipper, when he learned my name, was completely dumfounded. And when upon arriving in port, M. Verplanck was there to receive his ship, he received me also. Then, since our destination was the same, we came together. I had no idea that I was so important a person that I must be sought for by two strangers, but it seems I am of more value than I knew.” He looked with loving eyes at Alaine as he said this.

Papa Louis laughed softly. “It is not always ourselves for which we are valued, M. Hervieu, but for what we possess. I am of little account, but Mathilde has coddled me ever since that day when she came to nurse my wife.”

Mathilde gave him a gentle tap. “For shame, Papa Louis, you would imply that I did so because of Gerard.”

“And was not that it?”

Mathilde pouted. “He tells dreadful stories, that

Papa Louis. Go on, M. Hervieu, we would hear more. No matter why you were sought, you are here and we are very glad. We wish next to hear of M. Verplanck's adventures."

But Michelle declared that that must wait till the morning, else Alaine would have no rest at all. "And she is not yet as strong as we would have her," she said, solicitously.

It seemed to Alaine, in her little bed up under the eaves, that the night was all too short for her long thoughts. Till morning she lay wide awake, with such great joy and gladness tugging at her heart that once or twice she sat up and put out her hand to touch the wall of her room that she might be sure this was no dream. "Lendert! Father!" she whispered. "I am happy! I am happy! It is so wonderful, dear God, to be happy when I have been wretched for so long, so long."

At dawn she arose and dressed quietly, then slipped softly down-stairs and out into the autumn morning. Michelle and Gerard were already astir, but she passed Michelle in her kitchen and Gerard in the garden and went on to the edge of the wood, where a golden finger of light was already touching the trees in their crimson. Before entering the well-remembered path she stopped. There were foot-steps behind her. She turned to see that Lendert had followed her. He took her hand, and together they went on into the still forest and with one consent knelt there together.

"The house was too narrow for me," said Alaine, when they arose and faced each other. "I was too full of thanksgiving to give it utterance there. My Lendert! my Lendert! Are we dead and is this heaven?" She yielded her sweet body to his embrace. So thrilled with happiness she was that it seemed that the world must fade before her blurred vision.

"My sweet! my sweet!" whispered Lendert, "I am a gift to you." And there in his arms she listened to the story of his rescue and received her message.

Standing on tiptoe she touched her lips to the red scar upon his cheek. "So I receive him, François," she said. "Thou poor mistaken, unhappy soul, God give thee peace in thine hour of death. I forgive thee. So I receive this gift dedicated to me by thy great courage and by thy supreme renunciation."

The tangy, winelike odor of the leaves under their feet filled the air. From the little farmsteads came the cheerful sounds of stirring life. Through the purple mists at the end of the path could be seen glimpses of the blue sound. The hush of Indian summer, not unlike that of an expectant spring, was around and over them.

"Do you remember that last morning when we went out into the woods together?" Alaine asked.

"Can we forget it?"

"Never has broken a morning since that when I

have not felt the horror of it. That was why I came out so early, that I might take my happiness with the dawn and remember that day no more. I have been so wretched, so weary."

"And now?"

She gazed at him with eyes full of love, while into his own came the look which long ago had caught her heart. "Thou lovest me?" he murmured.

"I love thee! I love thee! Ah, how I love thee!"

"And so I love thee. No one shall ever part us again."

"But thy mother?"

"She does not know. I have in some way missed her, and therefore I must leave thee for a little that I may find her; but we shall not even then be parted, for there is now no one to do us harm."

Hand in hand, yet in soberer mood, they went back to the house. Lendert had told his story to Alaine's father and had not been heard unkindly. If his mother's consent could be obtained all would go well, he believed.

"You will not leave us?" Michelle exclaimed in dismay when Lendert announced his intention of seeking his mother. Pierre disposed of, Gerard married, François beyond return, she began to think it would be well after all if this young man were not allowed to wander too far away. Besides, she really liked him and was bent upon securing Alaine's happiness. "He would make a desirable husband

for Alaine," she confided to M. Hervieu. "He has good prospects, and it is not so far to Manhatte, where they could live. It would be well if the girl were settled, she has had so many experiences, and I think she could not do better."

M. Hervieu nodded and smiled. He understood Michelle's concern for the girl, who had been as her very own, but he had observed a habit of self-restraint in these years past, and was not inclined to discuss the subject yet. For all that, he, too, advised Lendert not to return at once to his mother's home. "She has heard of your having been there and of your going on to Manhatte. She will in all probability go there at once to overtake you."

"And so you may keep it up, dodging each other for weeks," said Michelle. "Better remain here, my friend."

Lendert considered the matter. "I will go to the town and leave word with my mother's friends that I am here, and I will furthermore send a message to her that I await her pleasure. If she wills it so, I will go to her."

It was late one afternoon a week after that Alaine, from the porch where she had been sitting with her father, looked down the street to see three figures approaching. She had been examining the little packet sent her by Felice. "I send you a small token of my esteem," the little lady wrote. "May this silver dove take you an olive branch of peace." Then followed a few gracious words, and at the end,

“I have a curiosity to know if you ever loved Pierre Boutillier. You will understand, being a woman, why I wish to know this. If I believed your heart given to him I should not be happy in what I have done, but in sending you your father instead of a lover, I feel sure I am doing you no wrong. Assure me of this and receive my gratitude.”

Alaine was smiling over these words when she beheld the three advancing figures. Surely that stride was very familiar. She sprang to her feet. “It is Jeanne! Jeanne Crepin! and Petit Marc, and, oh, my father, it is Madam De Vries herself!”

It was Madam who arrived first, for she was riding ahead of the other two, who tramped along with a free swinging walk. She alighted from her horse and went tremblingly toward the girl, who stood by her father’s side not less agitated. In these months Madam had aged greatly. She looked like an old woman. “My son! My son!” she cried. “Where is he? I want my son!”

“He is here. We have sent for him. He will arrive at once,” M. Hervieu returned courteously. “Allow me to lead you in, madam.”

“Madam!” Alaine stood shyly by.

“Alaine!” The mother sank into a chair and began to weep softly. “Give him back to me, my boy. My poor boy!”

“He is here. You shall see him at once,” repeated Alaine, kneeling by her. “Madam, this is my father, who has lately been restored to his

daughter. He can understand." She saw Lendert coming and ran out another way. For some reason she would rather not witness the meeting between mother and son.

She ran out the gate and down the road to meet Jeanne just beyond the fence. "Jeanne! Jeanne! it is so good to see you again. Oh, you good Jeanne, how can I thank you and Petit Marc for your goodness to M. Verplanck? And Jeanne, Jeanne, it is my father who is in there. There are so many wonderful things happening. Come in, come in."

Jeanne shrank back a little. "Will I do, Alaine? Will I do? Remember I must meet Michelle with dignity. I am really trembling, Alaine, old stupide that I am. After all these years, and it is Theodore Hervieu in there."

If she were uncertain of her welcome, its heartiness took away all discomfort. It was M. Hervieu who grasped her hands and called her his dear old friend Jeanne Bisset. It was Michelle who, rather awkwardly, but in all kindness, first hesitated and then embraced her. It was Lendert who led her to his mother, saying, "But for these two, Jeanne Crepin and Marc Lenoir, I should no longer be living, madam."

This caused Madam's tears again to flow, and she sobbed forth, "And I drove her from me. Twice has she heaped coals of fire upon my head: first by warning me on that dreadful morning, and then

she saves you. I am a wicked old woman, Jeanne Crepin."

"We are all wicked, whether we be old or young, men or women," returned Jeanne, seriously. "I am no saint myself, neither is Petit Marc."

M. Hervieu looked at the big *coureur de bois* with attention, then he clapped him on the shoulder. "Surely I should know Marc Lenoir. No, no, let us say nothing of those old days. We know only these new ones. We are friends all, yes?" Yet when he looked around it was Alaine who turned away her head. Madam had not bestowed upon her the greeting one gives a daughter.

"I am not a rich man," M. Hervieu went on, "but I am a very fortunate one, or I have good friends, and I have enough to begin the world anew. I already have made my plans to go to Manhatte and engage in trade there. We shall be quite comfortable, my daughter and I, and I trust we shall be content."

Petit Marc had taken a packet from his blouse. "There is a small matter here that I wish to talk about," he said. "Perhaps we older ones would best discuss it by ourselves at first."

Mathilde, who had come in some time before, now led the way out. Lendert and Alaine followed. "They do not want us to hear," Mathilde remarked, "yet I am consumed with curiosity."

Alaine walked by Mathilde's side. She did not look at Lendert, but kept her eyes cast down as she

walked, and the young man looked troubled. "She does not forgive me," Alaine's look said.

Petit Marc drew his chair up to the table; the others followed his example. He slowly opened the paper he held. "I have here a copy of the last will and testament of François Dupont," he began. "Before the death of the testator he converted all his estates in France into English moneys. The amount is deposited in Orange with trustworthy persons. It is not a sum to be despised. This he leaves share and share alike to Lendert Verplanck and Alaine Hervieu should they marry. If, for any reason, there are objections raised to the marriage of Lendert Verplanck to Alaine Hervieu, he foregoes his share, and it is to be given for the sole use of Alaine Hervieu. Has any one here a word to say?" His eyes glanced from M. Hervieu to Madam De Vries.

The latter nervously fingered a hand-screen upon the table before her. M. Hervieu looked at her inquiringly. "Madam, I would know your desires in this matter. We are among those who are aware of the attachment of these two, and we need not seem blind to it."

"My son is all I have in the world," began Madam.

"My daughter is all I have," returned M. Hervieu. "I am not anxious that she should marry. I can maintain her in comfort, and she goes into no family not proud to receive her."

“She’ll have no lack of suitors either,” put in Jeanne’s gruff voice.

“With such a purse,” added Michelle complacently.

“Without it,” came from Papa Louis. “Alaine Hervieu has never had to lack for lovers. She has birth and beauty, and there are still those in France who would think themselves rich in gaining her if she were penniless.”

“And,” said Jeanne, watching Madam narrowly, “it is she who will be the gainer if the marriage does not take place. After all is said, would it not be better that it should not? I have stood in place of mother to her, and that is my opinion.”

“And I the same,” Michelle agreed, interpreting rightly the sly glance from Jeanne’s eye, and giving her husband a nudge.

Papa Louis looked thoughtful. “She might do better,” he said, reflectively; and then, as if recovering himself, “I beg your pardon, Madam De Vries, but I speak as a father, and, all things considered, you will admit that she might do better.”

“You are all against me,” passionately Madam broke forth, roused to anger by this seeming defiance of her opinion and this setting aside of her son’s interests. “Have I nothing to say? Do you all dare to dismiss the matter without a word from me?” She arose and swept to the door. “Alaine,” she called. “Alaine, come, my daughter, it is your Lendert’s mother who calls you. Come, my daughter.” And Alaine, from where she was dejectedly

pacing the walk, ran to her and was clasped in Madam's arms.

"Sh! sh!" said Jeanne, as all the rest began to laugh, though her own face was broad with smiles. "We must not let her suspect that we have done it. It was the only way to manage her."

There were several other bequests in François's will. A ring and all personal effects to Adriaen, except a sword and a brace of pistols to Petit Marc. To Michelle was left a tidy sum: "In affectionate acknowledgment of past kindnesses."

A silence fell upon them all as the last words of the will were read. Even now the man's strong individuality touched them all with a nearness not possible in their thought of another less forceful though more worthy of being loved.

"You will stay with us, Jeanne," Alaine begged, when they were alone in the garden, for Alaine must show this old friend all her haunts. "You will not return to that rough life."

Jeanne hitched her shoulders and gave a twitch to her petticoats. "I couldn't stand them much longer. We must go back. We could not endure any other life now."

"But why we? You do not need to follow Petit Marc. Come and live with us in our home in Manhatte."

Jeanne screwed up her eyes in the way that she had when embarrassed or amused. "Didn't I tell you?" she said. "We are married."

And then Alaine hugged her and kissed her till she cried, and called herself an old stupide, a chat-huant, an insensée, a dindon, and various other names with which Alaine had been familiar of old.

“I have not forgotten,” she told Alaine, “but one must have something to do, and Petit Marc, he will soon be growing old, and who will take care of him then?”

“Who indeed?” Alaine held the good weather-beaten face between her palms. “I shall often, often think of you up there, you two who have done so much for me, to whom I owe so much, and it will make me very glad to know you are together. But you must remain to see me married. Trynje and her husband and Mynheer van der Deen and Madam, his goede vrouw, and I cannot miss you from among those who love me and who will come to see me take my Lendert for my husband.”

After more persuasion Jeanne promised, and with Petit Marc attended the ceremony, a month later, the two being the most conspicuous couple present, if one may except the bride and groom. And, even in that day when romantic stories were common and thrilling adventure no novelty, the tale of the love of Lendert and Alaine brought to the French church in Marketfield Street such a crowd on that Sunday that the “cars” and the people fairly jostled each other for blocks around.

It was a few days after her marriage that Alaine answered the letter of Felice, and among other

things she wrote: "If it be any comfort to you, madame, take my assurance that with my whole heart I love and have ever loved the man who is now my very dear husband. He is Lendert Verplanck, whom your husband will remember, and though fate has played us many sad tricks, we are now supremely happy. At one time it seemed that we should never marry, yet even then, believe me, I could never have become the wife of any one else. We shall live in Manhatte, where my father and my husband have entered into business, and my husband has promised that upon one of his voyages to the islands he will take me with him that I may thank you in person for your great kindness to my father. I congratulate you, madame, upon possessing so good a husband, and I congratulate, with all my heart, my old friend Pierre Boutillier, who has been so fortunate as to win you for his wife."

When Felice showed this to Pierre she did so with dancing eyes and dimpling mouth. "What did I tell you?" she said. "Are you fortunate, my melancholy love?"

And Pierre, for answer, smiled, and kissed her.

THE END.

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