

THE
HEROINE
OF THE
STRAIT

MARY
CATHERINE
CROWLEY



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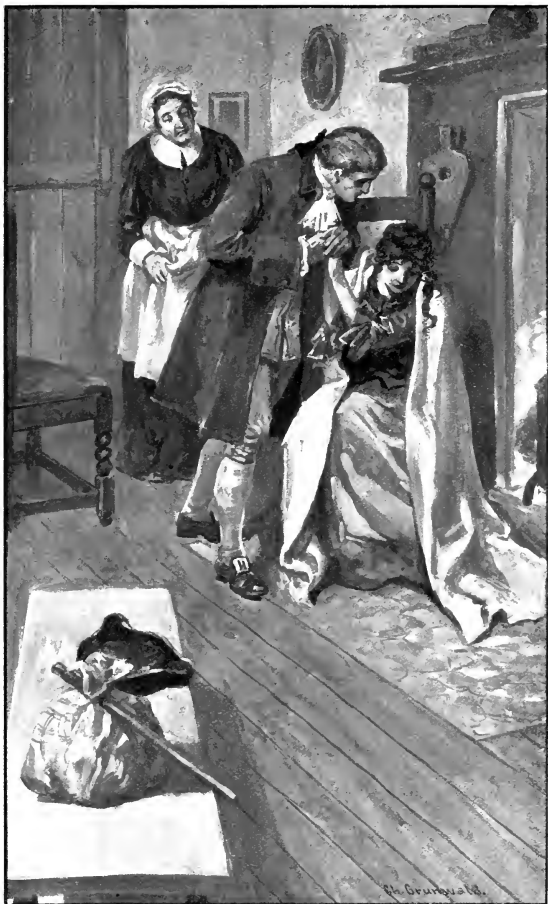
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The Heroine of the Strait



The Heroine of the Strait

*A Romance of Detroit in the
Time of Pontiac*

By

Mary Catherine Crowley

Author of "A Daughter of New France," etc.

Illustrated by
Ch. Grunwald

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PS
1473
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“To the dear Home-folk”

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The translation followed is the one preserved in the collection of the Michigan Pioneer Collection. Among other authorities consulted may be mentioned Schoolcraft's version of the Pontiac Manuscript; the short diary of the Siege, thought to have been written by the secretary of the British commandant; General Bradstreet's Report; the correspondence of General Amherst, Sir William Johnson, Major Gladwin, Captain Campbell, and others; Farmer's "History of Detroit;" Ross and Catlin's "Landmarks of Detroit;" Mrs. Carrie Watson Hamlin's book of legends, and the register of Ste. Anne's Church.

To the researches of Mr. Clarence M. Burton and Mr. Richard R. Elliott, the work is especially indebted; also to the latter's publication of the Account Books of the Huron Mission, and to the traditions of the old French-Canadian families.

Angélique Cuillerier was a veritable character, as was also James Sterling, who stands forth from the pages of the missionary's diary a strong and heroic personality.

Other personages who once lived figure in the pages of the romance, but in all cases the reality has only served as a foundation for the creative work of the author's imagination.

Dated from
"THE SPARROW'S PERCH UNDER THE EAVES,"
January the first, nineteen hundred and two.

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The Heroine of the Strait

CHAPTER FIRST

A MEETING IN THE WILDERNESS

IT was the Indian summer of the year 1760. The Moon of Beavers, from a slender crescent, shining above the roseate sunset clouds, and the amber-tinted waters of Lake Erie, had, like the fabled bow of the heaven-born Huron hunter, waxed stronger, sending its silver arrows deep into the heart of the forest, and bidding the wilderness give up dark secrets as unto the light of day.

All too soon, however, this warrior's moon, sinking to the surface of the lake, became as a spirit canoe and, wafted by light sails of mist, disappeared beneath the horizon, leaving at the mercy of the swift currents and the night a little fleet of bateaux making their way along as near as might be to the southern shore.

As the darkness closed in, the venturesome craft, illumined by the light of some half a dozen pine knots, stood out plainly against the desolate background of sea and wilderness, and a sky wherein the flame of the stars seemed to have gone out, so quickly was it becoming overcast with clouds.

In those few minutes the glimmer of the torches showed the occupants of the skiffs as in a picture

framed with shadows. A party of sturdy men clad in leather jerkins and trousers, and armed with hatchets, knives and guns, they might have been mistaken for any ordinary company of boatmen and adventurers accustomed to traverse these waters. But, at a closer view, their larger physiques and fair complexions would at once have shown that they were neither French-Canadian voyageurs nor half-breed coureurs de bois, while despite the wood-ranger's garb of the tall, muscular man who stood in the prow of one of the boats, his military bearing and air of command as readily proclaimed him to be a soldier and an officer.

Presently the rowers, seeking safety and shelter, with strong strokes swept the foremost bateau around a point of land and into the harbor afforded by the entrance to a little river, toward which they had been steadily making for the last hour.

With muskets levelled at the neighboring thickets or knives in grasp, the weary travellers awaited the moment when they might leap out upon the beach. One of the men, fancying that he heard a stir in the bushes that overhung the stream, and saw the branches move, fired into them. His companions jeered; an owl hooted mockingly, and he execrated his senses for the trick they had played him, wondering if he might lay it to the draught of "fire-water" he had shared with a comrade but shortly before, the last in his flask, as he regretfully recalled.

No one but the abashed fellow who had been so ready with his firelock felt the presence of the shadowy figure that, creeping noiselessly through the underbush, soon passed swiftly on to carry through the forest and beyond the news that an Ottawa runner had crossed the trail of a party of

soldiers who spoke another tongue than the French; that the British were coming up the Lakes and into the fastnesses of New France.

Rash in the easy self-confidence that belongs to those accustomed to dangers, hilarious and active after the long day in the boats, the torch bearers threw down their brands and made them the basis of a fire. Several of the men quickly cut the green saplings near by and added them to the blaze; others brought water from the river, and prepared a meal, to which all did ample justice, the lake breezes having given to their robust appetites an even sharper edge than usual.

Then before long the soldiers, all but the guard, contentedly cast themselves at full length upon the ground, with their feet to the fire and, enwrapped in their blankets, were soon lost in sleep, forming a ring that might have suggested some great sacrificial wheel.

Of the officers, a lank lieutenant, in his first campaign, had succumbed to slumber also; but the tall leader of the expedition, his captain, and a lithe young man who was habited in cloth of European make, appeared in no haste to avail themselves of the opportunity to obtain a few hours of rest.

Having thrown down upon the withered grass a pile of bear and buffalo skins, they half reclined thereon, smoking the Indian weed and playing at cards. The two older men kept themselves warm by frequent draughts of those "strong waters of the English" which the Indian allies of the French had begun to find as potent as the Canadian "eau de vie."

"You do not drink, Sterling, except in such measure as might fill a lady's thimble," exclaimed the

white chief, clapping a rough though friendly hand upon the shoulder of the young man beside him. "Zounds, before the winter is out you will find a man cannot live in this climate without something to warm his heart."

Sterling laughed, — a careless, boyish laugh.

"I fear I am not so abstemious as you would make out, major," he answered deprecatingly. "But I am not a soldier, and, should a party of redskins arise of a sudden from amid the desolation of this wood, I would fain not see each warrior double."

The leader threw back his head, and shook with mirth at this sally.

"Did we think them five times as many it would but make the fighting brisker. Is it not so, Captain Campbell?" he said, addressing the third member of this his immediate company.

"The warfare of the aborigines counts for little when matched against our ammunition," returned the captain, a thick-set man in the prime of life.

"As for your not being a soldier, Mr. Sterling, that is all gammon," continued the major. "In the encounters we have had with the savages, you showed that you can handle a fusil as well as any man in my troop, while with a rapier —"

"Oh, I was wont to practise at fence with my father, and he learned the art in France, as also the use of firearms," was the careless response.

"Then why, by all the Indian gods, do you not join the service? Come, I will obtain for you an appointment in my regiment."

"I thank you, sir," answered Sterling, as he rose and bowed with the respect of a subaltern to his superior officer. "I could ask no better commission than one under Major Rogers, whose brave deeds

and thrilling adventures are recounted by every fire-side in the Colonies. But, you have forgotten, I am a Scot. My father fought at Culloden for bonnie Prince Charlie."

"Humph, the cause of the Stuarts will not be revived in our time, young man," said Rogers. "Let us drink to your advancement as an officer of King George."

He poured another draught for himself, and the captain followed suit, saying he too was from the north, but he had seen no career before him save that of a soldier.

Sterling, however, shook his head.

"I cannot swear allegiance to George of Hanover," he insisted.

"The heart of youth is warmed by a mead more irresistible than is this ferment of treacle," suggested the captain in bantering fashion. "The sweetness of a maiden's smile, the witchery of her glance, what gallant can withstand them? Ah, Sterling, you and McDougal, who is sleeping so audibly yonder, had best have a care, else you may fall victims to the latter intoxicating influences when we reach our journey's end. Unless, of a truth, *your* fancy is already caught by some charming demoiselle of Montreal. But no, you rest and eat too well to be in love, to this I will testify. Yet, if you do not wish to be a soldier, why have you come into the wilderness?"

It was impossible to remain long at odds with the captain. The flush of annoyance that had mounted to the brow of the civilian died away at this raillery, and he answered with frank, good humor, "I have my fortune to make, and I hope to trade for furs, as some of my people did in Prince Rupert's land a hundred years since. Being neutral, I shall be able

to deal justly with all parties, French, Indians, and English."

"You are not wanting in the canniness of the Scot; I marvel it did not occur to you that you might bag two birds at once," laughed the major, closing one eye and nodding with significance.

The captain stiffened perceptibly, and a look of haughty protest passed over his usually amiable countenance. Thereupon Sterling bethought himself of a rumor he had heard that Rogers, dauntless soldier as he was, had not been above using his authority for his own pecuniary gain. He reflected further, that, but for the strong ferment of the juice of the sugar-cane, the tongue of the leader had not waxed so free.

"In any event, your sword is not like to rust in its scabbard," pursued Rogers, flinging away his drinking cup. "As for these strong waters, in faith at times they do steal away a man's judgment, and make him rash even to foolhardiness. A fine signal would this camp-fire be to the savages, for instance, had I not intelligence from my scouts that all the Indians who spend the summer hereabouts have gone northward for the hunting."

Scarcely had he ceased to speak when the sharp report of a musket ringing through the darkness aroused the sleeping men, causing them to spring to their feet and look to the priming of their weapons, while, with drawn swords, the officers stood ready for whatever might ensue.

Presently, the Irish sentry O'Desmond, whose shot had given the warning, appeared out of the gloom, and beside him there strode into the light of the fire an Indian youth, straight as an arrow and slender as a young birch tree,

“ Sir,” said O’Desmond, saluting the commandant, “ I walked up and down among the trees, keeping me eyes glued upon the dark beyond, and thinking what an *omathaum* I was to expect to see anythin’ there, with the night that black you could cut it with a knife, and even a witch’s cat could spy nothin’ out of it—Whin, lo and behold! I heard the whisper of a sound comin’ through the tangle of small wood. ‘Ho, ho, ’t is a fox,’ says I to meself, ‘or a thief of a wolf. By good fortune it might even be a bear cub to furnish a breakfast to the major, with a bit over and above for the men.’ Well, I let fly a charge of bullets, thinking it safer to shoot first and ask an explanation afterwards. By the powers, at that what should arise before me but this red naiger, with his hatchet upraised. ‘Me last moment is come,’ thought I, ‘me shot is fired, and I cannot say I like this spalpeen’s way of explainin’. A gun is a gun though, even if it is not loaded, and the red naigers have much respect for the same.’

“ ‘Your ’re me prisoner,’ says I, thrustin’ me blunderbuss into his face. So I’ve brought him to you, sir.”

Despite the self-satisfaction of O’Desmond over his supposed capture, it straightway became evident that the Indian had accompanied him not as a captive but as an ambassador.

The right hand of the savage grasped a glittering tomahawk, but in the left he held a branch of porcelain which he offered to the white leader as an assurance that his errand was one of peace. The redoubtable wood-ranger accepted the token and then inquired through his interpreter,—

“ Young brave who are you, and from whom do you come?”

"I come from my father," answered the youth. "A band of warriors attend me."

"And who, by all the manitous, is his father?" exclaimed Rogers, sotto voce.

The Indian eyed him with unflinching coolness, and, having as imperturbably surveyed the group of armed men who surrounded him, proceeded as though he had understood the query.

"My father is lord of all this country; he forbids you to advance further into his territory until he has had speech with you."

The bluff provincial major swore under his breath. He was too well versed in a knowledge of the aborigines, however, to give grave offence at the outset to a tribe through whose country he was struggling. By means of the half-breed interpreter, he replied with formal ceremony, and in the picturesque language to which the Indian was accustomed,—

"Son of the Great Chief! We will gladly hold council with your father."

"To-morrow at sunset he will come," announced the youth laconically. And therewith, passing boldly through the group of astonished men before they could stay him if they would, he vanished amid the darkness as mysteriously as he had appeared in the vicinity.

The aftermath of balmy weather called by the provincials the Indian summer, and by the French the summer of St. Martin, was now passed. The next morning was cold and stormy. It would have been folly to set forth again on the rough lake. Moreover, Rogers decided that, however annoying to his pride as a British officer, it was the better part of valor to await the interview with the sachem, whoever he might be.

The company remained encamped on the margin of the river all that day, therefore, the woods affording them a partial shelter from the rain. In the afternoon, the skies began to change from a dull leaden color to a softer gray; then the wind veered, and at last, like the fateful "Chasse Galère," the spectral aerial bark so dreaded by the habitants of New France, the light clouds floated away, and the sun, though far down in the west, for a brief space shone forth as with a new glory.

It was the time appointed by the mysterious chief for the council, and the white men held themselves prepared to receive him. Before long, their scouts brought in word that a number of Indians were advancing through the forest, and promptly at the hour named a band of warriors entered the camp.

It was a startling picture. On one side, a step in advance of his intrepid followers, waited the New Hampshire wood-ranger, Major Rogers, tall and heavy featured, in his pioneer dress of buckskin, with a gun resting in the hollow of his arm; and facing the party were ranged the lords of the forest, without war paint, but still impressive in their tunics of buffalo pelts and gaudy ornaments.

Yet the keen gaze of the British soldiers took small note of this array, for their attention became riveted upon the leader of the redmen. A splendid bronze figure, with flashing eyes, and straight flowing hair crowned with eagles' feathers, as he stood in majestic dignity against the disk of the setting sun, he might have been mistaken by a superstitious native of the wilderness for some Indian god; the fierce Kabibonokka, or Manabozho, the Great Hare Manitou, the Hiawatha of the Ottawas.

"How is it that the white chief comes into my ter-

ritory without invitation or permission?" he asked, stretching forth his hand as regally as though it held a sceptre. "Is the stranger's mission one of peace, or war?"

When his words had been interpreted, Rogers replied, —

"Great Chief, I wish to be no longer unknown to you. I am come in the name of the King of England to take possession of this region."

"This is *my* country; it does not belong to your king," answered the sachem in haughty protest. "To me and to my people belong all the lands bordering upon the Lakes, from here even to Michilimackinac, the dwelling-place of the Great Spirit."

"We have not come to take your hunting-grounds," answered Rogers calmly. "We want to trade with you, as we trade with the Iroquois in the east. We will not defraud you of your furs as do the French."

"But the Onontio of Montreal and Quebec?" queried the redman.

"Our king is greater than all the Onontios that ever lived, greater than the King of France. Our troops have conquered those of the French, and received their submission at Montreal. When our people come to settle here you will be glad."

The interpreter again performed his office, but the chief did not at once reply.

At length, by an imperious gesture silencing the murmurs of some of the braves, he said, again addressing Rogers, —

"White man, I will stand in your path until morning, and will protect you from harm. At daylight you may proceed on your way." Thereupon, gathering his blanket about his shoulders with the

air of an emperor, he passed into the wood, followed by his escort, and all were soon lost sight of among the shadows, now growing deeper at the approach of the early November twilight.

Dazed and in wonder, the soldiers looked at one another, some half believing that the proud warrior and his braves were not living men at all; others inclined to jest at his extravagant pretensions.

"Zounds, the redskin made no surrender to us. Instead, he has taken us under his protection, as though he were the commander of an unconquerable army," cried Rogers, nonplussed and angry.

"I would give up a guinea to know how his majesty is called," avowed Sterling rashly.

"A second Lucifer, he seemed to me," rejoined Captain Campbell. "Could one imagine a haughtier bearing even in a fallen archangel?"

"Shure, 't is the devil himself," O'Desmond was at the same time declaring to his comrades.

"In truth, it is better to have this strange personage for a friend than for an enemy," dryly observed the practical Lieutenant McDougal.

"Yes," replied Rogers. "Though I prefer a good fray to the rôle of diplomat, we have been wiser to conciliate this red king of the forest than if we had continued the expedition yesterday, as I had half a mind to do, notwithstanding the storm. To-morrow we will take to the boats betimes and press on. The fort of the strait must be ours by the end of the month."

CHAPTER SECOND

STRANGERS AT LE DÉTROIT

THE Moon of Beavers, an old moon now and growing pale, looked down upon a strange commotion at the isolated military post of Le Déroit. As the night died, and the light of morning strengthened, bringing the hour of reveille, the garrison, usually so listless and heavy with sleep as they turned out in response to the stern call of trumpet and drum, were wide awake and eager, as though under the influence of some extraordinary excitement.

The people of the rude town, too, were nearly every one astir, both those who lived in the small bark-roofed or straw-thatched houses within the enclosure of the fort, and those whose homes were along the river bank, each dwelling protected by a palisade of its own.

At this early hour of the morning, the habitants outside the stockade flocked to the gates and beat upon them, noisily demanding admittance of the sentry. Those within, traders, voyageurs, coureurs de bois, half-breeds, and Indians, women and children, thronged to the Place d'Armes, whereon fronted the barracks and the quarters of the officers.

The garrison lined up for morning drill, but with a cry of protest the populace took possession of the little square.

"The commandant! Where is Monsieur de Bellestre?" they called, in French of course, for it must

be understood in this narrative that the Canadians always speak in their own language unless the contrary is stated. "Where is Monsieur de Bellestre? We would fain have some explanation of this report brought in during the night by Ottawa runners."

The shouts continued and increased in volume. The disturbance had become well-nigh a riot, when the door of the commandant's house was flung open, and there strode out upon the gallery, in quick, fearless fashion, a handsome man of about forty years of age, wearing the bright blue uniform of an officer of King Louis, his three-cornered hat set firmly on his head, and his peruke as faultlessly curled and powdered as that of any chevalier in the army. It was François Picoté de Bellestre, beloved by both garrison and townsmen as one of the bravest soldiers, one of the most courteous gentlemen of New France.

"People of Le Détroit, what means so unseemly an uprising?" he demanded with severity.

"This news!" they reiterated hoarsely. "Are we to see our lands confiscated, — are we to be turned out of our homes and cast forth into the wilderness? What of the intelligence that our foes the British are approaching to take possession of Le Détroit?"

Monsieur de Bellestre shrugged a shoulder. "Eh bien, if the redcoats come, what matters it? We will but send them home again," he said with easy nonchalance.

The characteristic gesture, his air of careless indifference, did more to reassure the volatile people than would have been effected by a long harangue. A wave of laughter swept through the square.

"Ay," they repeated one to another in jocular humor, "we will send the redcoats home again, even as the gallant Beaujeau, though but captain of a gar-

ripen, routed their generals and drove leaders and troops back over the border, only five years since."

"But the savages," cried the sharp voice of old Campeau, "will the savages side with us now, or will they go over to the English?"

"Concern yourselves not upon that score, good friends," answered De Bellestre with official dignity; "your commandant has issued a proclamation to the redmen. Go and read it, where it hangs upon the forest gate of the palisade."

So saying, he turned upon his heel and passed again into the house, while, satisfied for the nonce and with curiosity aflame, the vociferating townfolk trooped away to the gate. There they encountered the crowd outside, — a company of merry-makers now, who roared with mirth and cracked many jests at the expense of the British, as they viewed the clever notification to the Indian allies of the French. For De Bellestre had caused to be hung up on the pickets a wide strip of buffalo hide, whereon was roughly painted the figure of a crow pecking at a man's head.

"Ha! ha! ha! The redskins themselves could do no better at picture-writing," mirthfully exclaimed Antoine Cuillerier, half-brother to the commandant, as his glance fell upon the glaring effigy. "'Tis plain as the nose on one's face that the crow is De Bellestre, who, with a single blow, will destroy these daring southerners if they presume to come so far into the wilds of New France."

"Did I not say well?" he continued to his neighbor Charles Parant, as a yell broke from a party of Ottawas who now bore down upon the fort. "The enemy will not find that whoop pleasant to their ears, I will risk a pelt on the surmise."

Nevertheless, that the English were at least coming, Le Détroit had evidence the same day. Soon after noon, a sentry-call from the bastion that overlooked the river gave notice of the approach of a canoe from the direction of the Lake of the Eries,—a canoe bearing a white flag.

The officer of the guard watched it curiously through his lenses; a squad of soldiers were ordered to the water-gate, to form an escort for the stranger envoy, and the inhabitants, including wives and maidens, thronged to the strand in a fever of impatience to learn with what intelligence this little craft might be freighted.

“Bah, they are but a party of *coureur de bois*,” ejaculated Baptiste Méloche.

When the canoe came up to the landing-place, however, the spectators at the water’s edge saw that, although the visitors were garbed like English wood-rangers, their leader wore a sword belt, and as he stepped ashore he rested his hand upon the golden hilt of a heavy sabre, whose burnished scabbard glistened in the sunlight.

“A likely officer, but, *mon Dieu*, the other with him can have seen scarce more than three and twenty years,” whispered pretty Angélique Cuillerier, the rich trader’s daughter, to her friend, the young wife of Jacques Godefroy. “Truly, the British are well-looking. ’T is sad to see them sent here to serve as targets for our soldiers, or else to lose their scalps to the savages; they are worthy of a different fate.”

“Ay, ay,” rejoined Clotilde Godefroy, née Chapoton, with a light laugh, as she slyly pinched the round arm of her companion. “It were better they should fall victims to the charms of the belle of Le Détroit, and be slain by her bright glances, no doubt. Tée,

why do you shake off my hand, Angélique? Were I not married, I might also grow tender-hearted at sight of these handsome strangers. Indeed, I fear my Jacques will not like it overmuch that I have run out to see the brave showing they make. He is ever wont to say that the people of position in the town, the descendants of those who obtained their lands from the Sieur de Cadillac, should hold somewhat aloof from the newcomers, and keep in their houses when others rush out to watch the sights and gather news. But, *miséricorde!* it would be dull were I at home and all this going on. Besides, it would not be fitting for me to leave a maid like you alone in this motley gathering, Angélique, my dear. How is it your father did not bid you remain within doors?"

"In truth he did enjoin me not to come beyond the wicket of our own palisade," responded Angélique coolly, "but let us make haste! If we delay thus, discussing the wisdom of our elders, we shall neither hear nor see what goes on at the Place d'Armes."

That little squib about their elders was "good cat, good rat" (tit for tat) for Clotilde's pinch; for Godefroy, a fine fellow whose age a glance at the parish register would have shown to be thirty-eight, was some twenty years older than his wife, and had been a widower when he married her. On this account, she was, on occasion, twitted by the merry demoiselles, the companions of her girlhood; yet more than one, perhaps, envied her good fortune.

In the present instance, however, Clotilde let the jest pass. She did not believe Angélique to be jealous of her because she had obtained a happy settlement in life, since the beauty had ever a string of cavaliers from among whom to choose a bridegroom. But, although Jacques often averred that,

before he led Clotilde to the altar, he had not been one of those who hung upon the smiles of her capricious friend, she was content that Angélique should consider her husband as old and staid as it might please her to do. Clotilde was blessed with a fair measure of sense for one who had not passed her nineteenth birthday.

When the two girls arrived at the square it presented an animated scene, being thronged with an eager multitude. The red caps, blanket coats, and bright sashes of the *coureurs de bois*, the fine fur capotes of the merchants, the deerskin apparel, fringed and embroidered with beads, worn by the voyageurs, the gay jupes and head-dresses of the women, and the blue uniforms of the garrison, made a picture of varied coloring.

The door of the commandant's house stood ajar, and the great fire of forest logs burning in the wide chimney of the council room, to the right of the narrow hallway, so lighted the interior that the outlines of the carved chair of state brought from Montreal could be distinctly seen.

Monsieur de Bellestre, with the courtliness that distinguished him, had come forth to greet the envoys, thinking perchance they were sent to treat with him for the exchange of prisoners, since two or three southerners had been held as hostages in the town from the days of Braddock's defeat.

"See, the ambassadors have well-nigh reached the house," whispered Angélique, as, in a fever of excitement that lent an added glow to her cheeks, she dragged the more sedate Madame Godefroy forward. A young voyageur, whose politeness was augmented by their comeliness, with a merry word made way for them, and presently they had gained an excellent

point of vantage, where they could hear as well as observe all that went on.

The two strangers who seemed to occupy positions of authority had now stepped upon the gallery, leaving their little guard of un-uniformed men below.

"Monsieur de Bellestre?" interrogatively said he who wore the heavy sword, as he saluted the French officer with formal courtesy.

"I am Monsieur de Bellestre," returned the commandant graciously, by a wave of the hand inviting them to enter the house.

But, at a sign from his companion, the other of the newcomers came forward.

"Monsieur de Bellestre," he began in French, "this gentleman, Monsieur Campbell, captain in the service of his Majesty, King George of England, having been commissioned to present to you certain communications, has selected me to be his interpreter. He judges from your evident unpreparedness that our appearance here is a surprise to you, and therefore would not take advantage of your courteous invitation to pass beneath your roof without warning you that he is the bearer of intelligence that will be in no wise pleasing to you. Nevertheless, it were better this message should be delivered in the seclusion of the council room."

The commandant bowed with hauteur.

"Accept my thanks for your consideration, monsieur," he said satirically. "You have my leave to state your mission here before all the people of Le Détroit. If of importance to me, it is of much more moment to them."

As he looked across the square, the sea of expectant faces told him that the multitude would not await

calmly the result of a conference with closed doors. The liberty-loving French-Canadians of the strait could not always be governed according to the rigid rules of civil or military etiquette that obtained in Montreal and Quebec.

“The youth essays to speak French ; but parbleu ! heard any one ever such an accent ?” exclaimed Angélique in a low voice, as she hid her laughing face on Clotilde’s shoulder.

“Chut ! would you expect a barbarian to speak as one but now out from the court of Versailles ?” responded her friend. “He does not ill, to my thinking ; though, to be sure, compared to the readiness wherewith my Jacques speaks the language of the British —”

Angélique laughed again. Godefroy’s monosyllabic knowledge, picked up from a trader at Montreal and a prisoner at the fort, although regarded with respect by his confrères, sounded to her shrewd ears little like the speech of the southerners. She speedily forgave the stranger interpreter his flat vowels, however, for he certainly was a pleasing representative of young manhood, as he stood before the commandant, his strong, well-knit frame shown to advantage by his civilian’s garb of brown.

“Which like you better — this one or the other ?” queried the irrepressible Mademoiselle Cuillerier of her youthful chaperon.

“The other is taller, and of more commanding presence,” hazarded Madame Clotilde.

“Bah, he is pompous and over-robust ; fine of feature, perhaps, and amiable, but of too rubicund a complexion, and his hair is touched with gray,” argued the coquette. “Now, this one has an agreeable carriage, and the red that burns upon his smooth-

shaven cheek is like the blush on the Normandy apples of good Father Potier across the river."

"Fi donc, Angélique! to compare the visage of a heretic to the fruit of the toil of the holy father, the matchless 'pommés de neige' which grow nowhere so well as in the enclosure of the Jesuit Mission," cried Clotilde in horror.

"Miséricorde! the apples are not holy because they grow in the orchard of a holy man," rejoined Angélique, with a toss of the head; "and how do you know the stranger is a heretic? Mayhap he got his faith where he learned his French; though, if 't is no better than his French, I pray le bon Dieu to have mercy on him. But do you not like the glint his brown hair has in the sunshine, and —"

"It matters not to me whether his hair be tawny, black as an Ottawa's, or crisp like that of the Ethiopians brought in the slave ships from Africa," answered Clotilde indifferently.

"Of a verity I am glad I am not married!" said Angélique, with a sigh of content, as she pressed a trifle farther to the fore of the spectators.

The encircling arm of the youthful matron quickly drew her back.

"Have a care, chère," pleaded Clotilde anxiously, "or your uncle, Monsieur de Bellestre, will notice you; and, later, your father will chide you for mingling with the crowd. Also, there is Godefroy on the other side of the square. If he catches sight of us, he will make his way hither, in dread lest we meet with rude speech; then I must needs carry myself more sedately, and there will be an end of this innocent frolic with you, sweet one. Also, be silent, I pray, else how shall we hear the news?"

Meantime, Mr. Campbell had begun and finished a

long address to Monsieur de Bellestre in the English language, whereof no one, save possibly Jacques Godefroy, understood so much as a single word. But now the interpreter again took up his task, and all in the throng bent their ears to listen.

“Monsieur de Bellestre,” he proceeded, handing to the commandant a paper which the captain passed over to him, “this is the text of the document that the officer of his Majesty has anon read to you. To it I add the translation duly written out. It is, you will see, a letter from Major Rogers, who was deputed by Sir Jeffrey Amherst to ascend the Lakes. He is arrived at the mouth of Le Détroit, and herewith sends due notice of his coming to you, as commandant, and to the settlers at Fort Pontchartrain.”

“Eh bien, what care I or the people of Fort Pontchartrain for the vicinity of your Major Rogers,” returned De Bellestre haughtily, “except that it behoves us to give him a warm reception?”

At his scornful words a cheer, followed by a chorus of laughter, broke from the crowd.

A frown of anger gathered upon the brow of the captain. He disdained even to look toward the clamorous rabble; but Sterling’s clear eyes swept over the enthusiastic throng with a glance commiserative of their ignorance of the true state of affairs.

“Monsieur de Bellestre,” he said quietly, “it is manifest you have not been informed that the power of the French is at an end in the north. Montreal has fallen. Some two months since the Marquis de Vaudreuil surrendered Canada and all its dependencies to the troops of King George.”

For a moment De Bellestre stood motionless, as though turned to stone. Had he been called upon to combat singly for his country, like Horatius of

old, or to lay down his life for New France, his noble heart would not for an instant have quailed. But to be told of her humiliation, and yet be unable to bid his sword leap forth for her defence; to listen to such news and not run through the body the man who had the temerity to bring it!

The cry of rage and incredulity that burst from the populace aroused him.

"Sir envoys, do not try my forbearance too far," he threatened in wrath. "Depart with your men. I would not wreck upon you the consequences of my just indignation, and the anger of the people of Le Détroit because of the trick that Major Rogers and this Sir Amherst have sought to play upon them."

"But, Sir Commandant," protested Sterling, "you cannot be ignorant of the fall of Louisbourg, Quebec, Niagara, and Fort Frontenac?"

"And if these good fortresses have been compelled by the hardships of long sieges to yield to the force of your superior numbers," admitted De Bellestre unwillingly, "when spring comes again we shall win them back for his Majesty Louis the Fifteenth."

"Sir, the articles of capitulation are signed," interposed the captain hotly. "Major Rogers brings with him not only a copy of this document, but a letter to you from the Marquis de Vaudreuil, late Governor of the provinces hitherto known as New France, directing you, as commandant, to deliver over this post to my chief, in accordance with the terms agreed upon between Monsieur de Vaudreuil and General Amherst."

When Sterling had duly translated this speech, Monsieur de Bellestre drew himself up to his full height.

"Messieurs," he said, "tell your commandant I am not to be decoyed by any ruse of war. Louisbourg

may have fallen; Quebec may have fallen, and even Montreal; but if one military post of New France remains to King Louis, it shall be the fort of Le Détroit. My soldiers and I will struggle on to victory or death under the banner of the fleur-de-lis. Go, you have my answer."

Cheer upon cheer from both the soldiers and townspeople greeted his spirited words. To them neither the captain nor Sterling made response. Having executed the commission whereon they had been sent, they saluted in silence, and, although they had with them but six or eight men, fearlessly marched through the menacing assemblage of French-Canadians, escorted by the squad of soldiers whose hostility was restrained only by military discipline. Even when they had embarked, and the boatmen pushed out from the beach, the irate inhabitants stood upon the strand, shaking their fists at the strangers, and calling after them in terms of imprecation and derision.

The following forenoon, however, Major Rogers sent up to the fort, by Captain Campbell, the papers in whose existence De Bellestre had scorned to believe, and the gallant commandant and knight of the Order of St. Louis was forced to declare himself and his garrison at the disposal of the English conquerors, without so much as striking a blow for the cause of New France.

The twenty-ninth of November, 1760, was a fair, clear day. A light snow lay upon the meadows and lent a new foliage to the forests; the broad river was still free of ice, save at the margins, and the sun shone in glory upon the blue waters and white fields. Yet the gladness of Nature brought no joy to Fort Pontchartrain. With angry hearts and grave faces, the soldiers of the garrison and the people of the colony

watched the long boats of the New Hampshire rangers coming slowly up against the current, between the prairie margins of Le Détroit. Nearer they came, past marsh and woodland, and the small white farmhouses of the habitants on either shore, on the right side leaving behind them the village of the Hurons, and on the left the settlement of the Pottawattomies. On they came, until they arrived opposite to the bark-roofed town above which the standard of France was still proudly flying, while to the sorrowing Canadians within the palisade the sunbeams seemed reverently to kiss the folds of the white banner, and the north wind to flaunt it in the faces of the victors.

Landing on the south bank of the river, the rangers pitched their tents upon the frozen prairie, and Major Rogers, with Captain Campbell and a small escort, crossed the strait to take possession of the post.

With roll of tambours and a salute of guns, the golden fleur-de-lis, never before lowered at Fort Pontchartrain to conqueror, civilized or savage, sank slowly from the flagstaff, never more to wave over Le Détroit. Sadly the dauntless little garrison defiled out of the gates of the fort, and laid down their arms.

To triumphant music of drum and flageolet, the British marched in, and the crimson ensign of St. George was raised aloft, while the Indians, until now the allies of the French, quickly transferring their allegiance, greeted the new government with a wild shout of congratulation, and their late friends with yells of derision.

"A memorable day this has been," exclaimed Major Rogers, as, having supped with his official family in the house of Monsieur de Bellestre, he

sat with Captain Campbell before the fire of the council room; for the late commandant, being on parole, had withdrawn to the house of his half-brother Cuillerier.

"A memorable day! Yet, zounds, there had been more honor in fighting out the quarrel with this French commandant. He would have made a gallant resistance, by the manitou of the strait, and these treaty surrenders are but tame affairs."

"To my thinking, the Northwest has a most rude gateway," laughed the captain jovially. "There has been overmuch ado about a weatherbeaten palisade and scarce a hundred houses."

Lieutenant McDougal, who, at the farther end of the room, was engaged in burnishing his sword, nodded assent but said nothing.

Sterling, too, was silent. He had seated himself upon a settle in a shadowed corner, apart from the major and the captain, that his presence might not be a constraint upon them if they chose to converse in low tones regarding the happenings of the day. Now lighting his pipe, he took to abstractedly studying the fire. Although in the camp of the conquerors to-night at Fort Pontchartrain, he had a curious sense that he was in truth less victor than vanquished. Amid his recollections of the hubbub and excitement of the English entrance into the little town, the cheers of Rogers' rangers, the mutterings of the inhabitants, the many visages bent upon him as he marched in with the troops, visages sad or frowning, bronze or pale, feminine or fierce, there arose before him the frightened face of a girl.

For a moment a pair of appealing black eyes met his. Then their owner recoiled, a look of pride flitted over her charming features, and, snatching at a curl

of the soft dark hair that hung loose about her shoulders, she drew it across her brow like a veil; while, with a vague longing to see those eyes again, he had passed on.

“Larron, who is the most beautiful demoiselle of Le Détroit?” the young Scotchman asked the next morning with affected carelessness, of an obsequious coureur de bois, who, since resistance was useless, had hastened to take service with the new masters of the fort.

“Ah, monsieur, it is without a doubt Mademoiselle Angélique Cuillerier, the niece of Monsieur de Bellestre,” replied Larron readily. “I have heard our French officers say there is not a ‘grande dame’ of Montreal or Quebec but might envy her beauty. Yet the lady is not like to be soon seen abroad now; her father loves not the British, — pardon, monsieur, — and she will, I dare say, remain closely indoors for some time to come.”

Sterling smiled quietly.

“I *have* seen Mademoiselle Cuillerier,” he said to himself.

CHAPTER THIRD

“HEIGH-HO, FOR A DANCING FROCK”

THE home of Antoine Cuillerier was outside of the fort. For years he had been on terms of friendship with the Indian chiefs of all the region of the strait. His *coureurs de bois* traversed the forest in every direction; his boatmen paddled the river and coursed along the shores of Lake Ste. Claire and far away, trading for furs with the redmen, and supplying them in exchange with guns and hatchets, blankets, scarlet cloth, eau de vie, beads, paints, and hawks' bells. When the sachems came to the settlement they ate at his table, and sometimes slept at night before his hearth-fire.

Having no fear of the savages, therefore, and mayhap wishing to be freer for purposes of barter, he had settled beyond the palisade, like several rival “*commerçant voyageurs*.” Antoine's farm, like all those of Le Détroit, stretched far back into the forest but had only a narrow frontage on the river. Thus, he was not isolated from his fellows. Campeau's house was but a short distance away, and the news of the town was frequently transmitted to him by his friends, and passed on by him to Casse St. Aubin, Campeau, Parant and Méloche, simply by each in turn calling it to his neighbor along the whole “*côte du nord*.” Even when Dame Godefroy below the fort wished to inform her dear friend Angélique that her godchild, the Godefroy firstborn, had cut a tooth

or taken his first steps on the pathway of life; or when Madame des Ruisseaux, sister-in-law of the late commandant, Monsieur de Bellestre, desired to ask her charming young relative to an assembly at her house within the stockade, — the invitation and the weighty intelligence were in the same manner conveyed by word of mouth along the river bank.

The house of Cuillerier, built of squared logs and clapboarded, was one story high, but in the long sloping roof was an additional half-story, which received light and air chiefly from two dormer windows on the front. The main door was painted green and divided horizontally in the centre, the upper section being kept open in fair weather and the lower part closed, lest perchance some vagrant fowl, guinea pig, or mongrel cur, straying from the roadway that followed the margin of the river, might find refuge in the dwelling. Indeed once, when Angélique was a child, this door being inadvertently left ajar, a roving bear cub had crept in and awakened the drowsy little maid from an afternoon's slumber in the hearthroom, by poking his inquisitive nose into her pretty face.

The building was covered with a coat of whitewash, and across the road was a small wharf, supported by stakes driven into the marsh. To this point the Pani women slaves came to fill the birch-bark buckets with water for use in the ménage. Here, too, was tied the canoe, so indispensable in fishing and trapping, and as a means of getting down to the fort in the spring-time when the road was bad, or in summer when it was hot. Within doors there were several small apartments beyond the hearthroom, and from it a ladder-like stair ascended to the loft, where Angélique had chosen a corner for herself. Often, during the leisure hours of a summer's day, with the river

breezes blowing in at the window, or in winter when the heat from the hearth below tempered the air above to a pleasant warmth, here in her nest under the eaves she spent many happy hours and planned many splendid “castles in Spain.”

Here she might have been found one balmy afternoon in the early part of September, 1761, seated near the recess of one of the dormers, before a plain chest of drawers, a testimony to the rude skill of the town carpenter. The young girl had pulled open one of the drawers, and was critically inspecting its contents.

“Ma foi, the result might be better,” she said to herself, with a laugh, half of fondness for the feminine frippery about whose folds lingered recollections sweet as the fragrance of the withered little prairie roses strewn among the simple finery, half in disappointment that the gewgaws necessary for a “grande toilette” had already been worn many times, at the informal levees at the stockade or the fête-day dancing parties given at the homes of her kinsfolk and acquaintance.

“Hélas, this jupe will never more make a brave showing,” she sighed, shaking out a skirt of red gauzy stuff; “that rent is past all mending. I got it at Dame St. Aubin’s birthday fête when I danced a gavotte with Robishe Navarre. Ha, ha, ha! I cannot but laugh when I recall the merry romp! And that bodice, — miséricorde, like our old dog Trouveur, it has seen its best days. This other which was sent to me from Quebec by my cousin is well enough, but, having been made for her, by ill-luck it is small for me, and will not meet at the waist. Now this blue petticoat might serve; also, I could make for myself a bodice out of the red jupe, with a sash of the

same. . . This string of corals is fair enough to set off even a plainer costume, though I have worn it a hundred times. And the little lace handkerchief, — phouff, Robishe Navarre stole the handkerchief for a keepsake! Well, there are the lace mittens. Hélas, Monsieur Sterling kept one of the mittens as a souvenir of our tête-à-tête in the moonlight on the gala night at the fort. Mon Dieu, did the gallants but know of the annoyance they put me to by possessing themselves of these bits of my belongings, to wear next their hearts, — so they say! 'Tis verily provoking. I have scarce a bright riband left, never a shoulder knot nor a rosette; but the mitten is a serious loss. 'Twas most audacious of this Monsieur James Sterling thus to make off with it. I must see that he pays dear for the theft. What is to be done with the other? Shall I go to the ball wearing one mitten — so?"

With a pout she stretched forth her hands and contemplated them in comic despair, one half hidden, save for the finger-tips, by the dainty white lace, the other shapely and dimpled, if a little brown, like her rich olive complexion, and showing a strength that could guide the home loom or paddle a canoe with skill. "Does not this Scotch monsieur know that a demoiselle at Le Détroit is fortunate if she possesses one pair of lace mittens for the evening? Fortunate am I that at our fêtes they are regarded only as an addition to the costume, 'a bit of pride,' as Tante Josette says. Parbleu, I must have a care, or presently a bold cavalier may purloin one of my dancing slippers, and then I should be put to absenting myself from all routs, — which, no doubt, would please good Father Potier well, since he is ever chiding me for my frivolity.

“Eh bien, the sum of this inventory is, that, had I a new bodice, I might be considered in readiness for any ordinary social gathering wherewith we of Le Détroit divert ourselves in summer, or while away the evenings of the long winter. But, for the ball to be held at the house of the English commandant to-morrow evening, what am I to do for a costume? The grand ball given in compliment to Sir William Johnson, whose arrival yesterday was attended with such éclat!

“My father, Antoine Cuillerier, hates the British, and so, of course, do I; but still, I have eyes, and ma foi, since the days of the Sieur de Cadillac never has Le Détroit seen a finer pageant. Three hundred soldiers in scarlet coats trooping up from their bateaux, and through the water-gate into the town to the measure of martial music, while the sunlight gleamed upon their gun-barrels and flashed back from the swords and epaulettes of the officers. And in the van, marching with head erect, a man young in years and somewhat austere of visage, but cast in a splendid mould of manly beauty. Yes, he is even more personable than is Monsieur Sterling.

“Then, following this military array, and escorted by the pleasant Captain Campbell, came Sir Johnson, who is lord, it seems, of all this country, since the English have come. Heigh-ho! A grand-looking personage and somewhat portly, with the breast of his surtout and his chapeau well-nigh covered with gold lace. Right glad am I that my aunt Des Ruisseaux sent for me early in the day to come to her. I would not have missed the pomp, and glitter, and enlivenment of it all; no, not even for a new jupe and bodice.

“And to-morrow night there is to be a ball which kind Captain Campbell asks the French ladies of

the post to honor with their presence. Where is it I put the billet? Ah, here it is in the little birch bark reticule that the son of the proud Indian chief of the Isle au Pêche presented to me with as much respect as if I were Queen of France. Yes, this sweet scented billet is most legibly writ and in fairly proper French by Monsieur Sterling, who has made much improvement in the language of late, having paid diligent heed to the lessons of his teacher."

At this the girl bent her head over the formal little note of invitation with a smile that told in what quarter the young Scotchman had prosecuted his studies with such commendable assiduity.

"Ah, but it is difficult to hate these strangers," she continued to herself. "Moreover, it is a sin to hate any one; so say our curé at Ste. Anne's and the missionary, Father Potier, across the river. Thus, in this matter, I am not bound to yield obedience to my father, Antoine Cuillerier. No; Father Potier says we must love our enemies. Love? Oh, it is very well to be loved at a distance; but to love Monsieur Sterling and the handsome newcomer Major Gladwin, and dear old Captain Campbell, and — phouff, that is too much to demand, even of so sad a coquette as Mam'selle Angélique Cuillerier de Beaubien. No, Angélique, love thy neighbor, but pull not down thy hedges."

She laughed again in a soft, murmuring fashion, as she thought how shocked the good vicar and the missionary would be at her frivolous interpretation of the little homilies wherein they counselled their French and Indian parishioners, and the English dwellers at Fort Pontchartrain, to mutual forbearance, that, despite their rival interests, the people of Le Détroit might live in peace.

“But about this new frock,” continued Angélique, as she wound one of her long curls about her forefinger and resumed her practice of thinking aloud. When a young demoiselle has no girl companion in the house, it is pleasant for her to hear a fresh clear voice debating the small dilemmas that come up for her decision, even though the voice be her own. “A pretty plight am I in, for the daughter of the wealthiest trader of the strait! Not an ell of fine fabric to be bought in the town, since, of course, every stuff of beauty is snapped up by the dames and demoiselles as soon as the bateaux arrive from Montreal. The autumn flotilla will not be here until the end of the month; and then, ’t is substantial cloths for the winter it will bring. Ah, Marianne de St. Ours ordered from my father’s buyers a marigold colored muslin, and has never worn the same, since her brother died before it arrived.

“I might buy it of her. Yes, I have some silver in this reticule, and could make up the balance in lengths of linen, or some trinket. But no, I will not buy it, for Marianne has shown it to all the ladies of quality in the settlement; and no matter how fair it might look, some envious body would say, ‘There is Angélique Cuillerier decked out in the finery of Mam’selle de St. Ours.’ Ay, though I paid for it a score of times. Now I know,—the white dimity overstrewn with little pastoral designs, that my father brought to Tante Josette last year! If she will let me have it I will coax him to get for her a gown of silk so heavy that it will stand alone. All tomorrow I will sew, until my frock is finished. I will ask her for it when she returns from her afternoon visit to my sister, Dame Chesne La Butte.”

She rose, passed beyond the deerskin curtain that

divided her own especial nook from the remainder of the loft, and, after a moment of hesitation, raised the lid of a green-painted chest, where were laid away in lavender the treasures of the spinster aunt who idolized her.

"The dear Tante will not be vexed if I just take a peep at it," said the precipitate Angélique, as, after some search, she drew forth the gauzy fabric. "Never has it even seen the shears."

Throwing a fold of the cloud-like drapery over her shoulder, and hastening back to the window, she peered into a small mirror that hung upon the wall. "Yes, mademoiselle, you could not have a more charming costume," she declared to the piquant face that looked back at her from the glass.

Then, with a qualm of conscience, hastily restoring the stuff to the chest, she returned to her low chair in the recess of the window, took down the mirror and, resting it upon her knees, gazed critically at the bright reflection that had so promptly decided the question of the "toilette du bal."

"Ah, it is good to be young, — and not ill-favored," she exclaimed with a sigh of content. "To be gay, and dance, and sing, and laugh! To be loved, — and to love, — sometime! What tales this old mirror might tell, had it a voice! My uncle, De Bellestre, gave it to me. It was found in the loft of his house among some effects left there long ago by the erstwhile commandant, Hugues Pean, knight of St. Louis and Lord of Livaudière. 'Tis said, little glass, that you once belonged to the wife of this proud chevalier, the beautiful Angélique de Meloise, and he brought you here as a keepsake. He loved her to the end, although she declined to come with him, having no mind to hide her beauty in the wilder-

ness. Ah, show me for once that charming face framed by its aureole of golden hair, those eyes blue as the heavens, the exquisite white and red of that matchless complexion!”

Angélique renewed the study of her own countenance with manifest dissatisfaction. “I would my visage was not so brown, that my hair was fair, and my eyes light instead of black,” she sighed, and lapsed into silence. Presently, however, she started from her reverie and hung up the mirror, with its face to the wall.

“No, no,” she said, crossing herself devoutly. “I am glad my hair and eyes are black and my skin is brown after all. Angélique de Meloise was a wicked woman, and I would not look as she did for anything in the world.”

Thereat a gay chanson rose to the lips of the happy-hearted girl. Though merry and somewhat given to innocent coquetry, Angélique was a guileless little demoiselle who decked with flowers the shrines of Ste. Anne’s and the mission chapel, and strove to keep her life all fair without and all white within, as were the apples that grew in the mission orchard; the apples that good Father Potier watched over with such care. Moreover, from her earliest years she had ever shown great courage in face of danger. Even when as a tiny creature she awoke and found the bear cub bending over her, heedless of his growling she had pushed him away, and driven him from the house with a stick. And recently, when an Indian who had imbibed too freely of “English milk” (rum) came to the door demanding gunpowder, and threatening revenge upon the household if his request was refused, she had covered him with her father’s fusee, and compelled him to leave instantly.

Humming the lively refrain of "Malbrouck," she descended the stairs to the hearthroom, where her young brothers were taking their simple supper, attended by a Pani woman. Dame Cuillerier and Tante Josette had not returned from their visit, and Antoine and his older sons were away in the forest.

Angélique joined the children, and, after the meal, wandered out with them along the river bank. Like a great flaming rose the sun was setting away down in the direction of Lake Erie, for here, from the many windings of Le Détroit, the points of the mariner's compass seem oddly changed. Near the shore the river was a swift current of opalescent tints, and afar off a gleaming sea of silver. Now from the tower of Ste. Anne's rang forth upon the soft September air the calm tones of the Angelus, while across the water came the answering antiphons from the bell of the Huron Mission.

"Ave Maria," sang the fresh, true voice of Angélique, the lads adding their shrill treble.

"Tendre Marie, Reine des cieux,
Mère chérie, patronne de ces lieux!
Veillez sur notre enfance,
Sauvez notre innocence,
Conservez-nous ce trésor précieux."

Scarcely had their tuneful chant died away when, with surprise, they heard its melody borne back to them upon the breeze in the clear notes of a flute, sweet as the fabled song of the dying swan.

Not a skiff was to be seen on the placid strait, but still the dulcet sounds came nearer and at last, around a point of land, appeared a canoe paddled by an Indian boy.

It was not he who produced the music, however, but a young "paleface" who sat in the centre of the

craft, and now, abandoning his flute, began to sing an old Scotch love song, —

“ Her eyes so brightly beaming,
Her look so frank and free,
In waking and in dreaming
Are evermore with me.
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Hire, my nut-brown maiden,
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Oh, she’s the maid for me.

“ With her fair face before me
How sweetly flew the hour,
When all her beauty held me
A captive to its power.
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Hire, my nut-brown maiden,
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Oh, she’s the maid for me.

“ Her face with kindness glowing,
Her heart that hides no guile;
The light grace of her going,
The witchcraft of her smile.
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Hire, my nut-brown maiden,
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Oh, she’s the maid for me.”

“ Monsieur Sterling! Monsieur Sterling!” cried the boys, hastening to the wharf with noisy welcome.

“ Heigh, my canty friends!” cried Sterling, as he leaped ashore. “ Jaco here has brought you new bows and arrows.”

Having thus with ready stratagem disposed both of his boatman and his juvenile hosts, he turned to Angélique. “ Will Mademoiselle Cuillerier be so gracious as to favor me with her company in a canoe ride on the river?” he asked, as he uncovered his head and bowed formally.

The teasing demoiselle hesitated only so much as that he must need press his invitation. At Le Dé-troit the liberty enjoyed by the pretty French maiden would have aroused the envy of her sisters in more conventional surroundings.

The young Scotchman, as an interpreter and trader not in the service of the English, occupied, in effect, the position of an intermediary between the conquerors and the French-Canadians of the strait. His ingenuous face and courtly manners had won for him a degree of favor with Antoine and the good Dame Cuillerier, and Angélique was free to go canoeing with him now, if she chose.

"The twilight is long, and we will return by eight of the clock," he urged.

"Eh bien, by eight it must be then," she answered, and stepped into the canoe with agile grace. "Am I to paddle, or will you, monsieur? I know not whether you would fain be musician or boatman?"

CHAPTER FOURTH

ON THE RIVER AT SUNSET

STERLING swore mentally. This charming *de-moiselle* had verily most tantalizing humors. "It may please you, *mademoiselle*, to make a jest of my want of skill with the paddle," he said aloud, "yet even a poor boatman performs wonders when his heart is in his work, and with you to smile upon my exertions, what greater incentive to improvement could I ask?"

"In faith, I am certain to *smile* upon them, even though at the same time I may be imploring the protection of the good Ste. Anne," she replied banteringly. "I fear me it needs a clear conscience, an adventurous spirit and a kind providence to risk the overturning of the skiff in a canoe ride with you, Monsieur Sterling."

"Then how can you reconcile with your conscience the unkind speeches you have been making for the last ten minutes?" returned Sterling gayly, as with a light and dexterous stroke his paddle dipped into the limpid waters, now on the right hand, now on the left, and the canoe bounded forward fleetly as the fawn of the forest. For the young Scotchman was no such novice in the management of the Indian's fairy-like craft as the perverse Angélique sought to pretend.

"As for the boldness of your spirit," he continued after a few minutes, during which they had glided into the current of the river, "I admire it mightily.

Ever have I noted that a woman's courage mounteth on occasion."

The scene was tranquilly lovely. The broad waters outstretched before them, still rosy with the glow of the sunset, and on either side of the strait green prairies extended to the horizon, save where a grove of hickory, birch, or maple lent variety to the landscape. In the foreground, bordering the shores, were the lodges of the Indian villages and the habitants' white farmhouses. The latter half embowered in trees or standing alone, as though they courted the sunshine, were surrounded by a high palisade of cedar pickets, here and there overgrown with the wild honeysuckle vine and the clematis, whose small snowy blossoms were at this season giving place to a cloud-like furze. Within the enclosures, the carefully tended parterres were now ablaze with the flame color and red of autumnal blooms, marigolds, zinnias, and the purple and rose china asters. Behind the homesteads lay the orchards, the branches of the sturdy trees now bending with the weight of the maturing fruit; and still beyond, for half a mile or more, the fields of grain and vegetables extended to the edge of the forest.

In the marsh land, tangled growths of pond lilies edged the river,—a fact whereof Sterling had been mindful on his way from the town, for now a cluster of the white star-flowers rested upon the knees of Angélique, as she sat in the bow of the canoe, smiling into the frank eyes of the young man, who, as he plied his paddle with half-indolent ease, bandied merry words with her, and answered her shafts of raillery with flashes of wit or a well-framed compliment.

There were other canoeing parties this evening also; in the summer and early autumn the settlers of

Le Détroit took to the river like a covey of water birds. Now a long bateau came up the stream, breasting the current gallantly like some beautiful, fabled charger of the sea and manned by a crew of red-capped voyageurs, who bent their strong backs to their oars, keeping time with the rhythm of a jovial boatsong, —

“ Mon père a fait bati maison, —
 Ha, ha, ha, — frit à l’huile, —
 Sont trois charpentiers qui la font, —
 Fritaine, friton, fritou, poilon !
 Ha, ha, ha, — frit à l’huile,
 Frit au beurre à l’ognon.”

Hardly had the echoes of the laughing refrain died away, when there shot by a solitary Indian skiff, its dusky pilot silent and inscrutable, as though he and his mysterious craft were one being, like a centaur and his steed.

The slower punts of the French-Canadians journeyed back and forth across the stream to the homesteads on either side or to and from the town, their occupants intent upon business or social visits. Presently there appeared a number of small boats from the fort, navigated by British soldiers, who raced one against another, joking and singing and making merry among themselves.

“ Hark,” cried Angélique joyously, as there floated across the water snatches of their song, —

“ We be soldiers three, —
 Pardonnez moi, je vous en prie, —
 Lately come from the Low Countrie,
 With never a penny of monie.

“ Here good fellow, I drink to thee, —
 Pardonnez moi, je vous en prie, —
 To all good fellows wherever they be
 With never a penny of monie.

“And he that will not pledge me this,—
 Pardonnez moi, je vous en prie,—
 Pays for the shot whatever it is,
 With never a penny of monie.

“Charge it again, boy, charge it again,—
 Pardonnez moi, je vous en prie,—
 As long as there is any ink in thy pen,
 With never a penny of monie.”

Sterling smiled, and turned aside his skiff to avoid a collision with a canoe drifting in midstream. It was that of Robishe Navarre, son of the sub-Intendant and royal notary; and Angélique shrugged a shoulder and pursed her rosy lips as she saw that his companion was the pretty Archange de Mersac; while Archange smiled, and artfully called the attention of Robishe to the escort of Angélique. The four exchanged greetings, and Sterling, paddling on, soon passed Jacques Godéfroy and his wife; Jacques smoking his brightly decorated Indian pipe, Clotilde with their child clasped in her arms.

And now all else upon the water seemed for a moment blotted out, and the surface of the stream in the vicinity of Sterling and Angélique was black with a fleet of Huron canoes, a band of fishers returning from the Lake of Ste. Claire to their village below the fort.

Such were the scenes upon the river highway at this hour, an ever-changing drama, wherein lovers, staid habitants, savages and merry-makers played their rôles. As Sterling and Mademoiselle Cuillierier continued their voyage, the young man dropped the tone of respectful gallantry wherewith he had met her sprightly sallies, and a note of tenderness crept into his voice as, letting the light craft drift, he said, reverting to the pleasantries she had uttered half an hour before,—

“Eh bien, Mademoiselle, if it was Providence who set us adrift thus together, I am emboldened to tell you something that is on my mind.”

“Oh, oh, I did but jest,” stammered Angélique in quick confusion.

“Ma foi, why is he so different from other cavaliers?” queried the girl to herself. “The gallants of Le Détroit may attempt to speak of love, and one can check them with a merry word, but ‘ce monsieur ici’ pays no heed to my warnings.”

“Ah, mademoiselle,” he went on with quiet tenacity, “you must know it is a great happiness to me to have you with me, here in my boat, even for this short twilight hour. I love you, sweet one, with all my heart. To me you are the most beautiful woman in the world. But, though your beauty fascinates me, I am still more drawn to you by the guilelessness of soul that is mirrored in your dear eyes. Be my wife, Angélique,—tell me that you will voyage with me in the canoe of life. For you I will do and dare great things,—whatever you ask. At least grant me leave to hope that sometime you will love me a little because I love you so fondly, as one who is cold grows warm at the hearth-fire; that you will plight with me the marriage vows before the altar of Ste. Anne’s?”

In his earnestness he leaned forward. Beyond his eager, ingenuous face Angélique saw the western sky, a pale sea of green and amber; a star gleamed faintly above it, while at the horizon gathered the violet mists of evening. For a moment, indeed, it seemed to the girl as if the gates of paradise were wide open, and, floating beyond them in this frail barque, she and Sterling, the husband of her choice, might voyage on, forever young, forever happy. Ah, yes, it

would be sweet to be loved and cherished as dearly as he vowed that he would love and cherish her.

Like one in a dream she listened. The young man from his position in the canoe could not see the fair afterglow of the sunset; he beheld only her countenance, radiant, gracious, sympathetic, as though her gentle spirit were attuned to his. Then, all at once, this rapt expression faded.

Alas for his hope! As Angélique lowered her eyes from the peaceful sky, they rested an instant upon the bastions of old Fort Pontchartrain. She remembered that Sterling had come to Le Détroit with the conquerors; and, alack, she thought also of the ball to be given by Colonel Campbell the next evening, and of the distinguished officers who would be his guests. Nevertheless, if she did not love the persistent Scotchman, her heart was more deeply stirred by his manly wooing than it had ever been before.

“Answer me, Angélique,” he entreated; “or may I take your silence for permission to still further plead my love, my respect and admiration for you?”

“Oh, monsieur, do not, I beg of you, so interpret it,” she broke out at length. “You are a stranger at Le Détroit; a short time ago I knew not of your existence.”

“There are those who will affirm what I have told you of myself and my people,” he began, but she stopped him abruptly.

“I have no mind to marry — yet,” she protested, “and how shall I reply to you? I cannot say ‘yes,’ you will not have me say ‘no;’ what then can it be?”

It was the answer of a coquette, yet Angélique had never been more in earnest.



“Let it remain unspoken, then, ‘ma belle,’ until it can be ‘yes,’” he rejoined, as he essayed to touch her hand.

“Oh, monsieur, have a care, lest you overturn the canoe,” exclaimed the teasing demoiselle, in pretended alarm.

Sterling was wise enough not to weary her with his love-making.

“You are right, mademoiselle,” he said quietly. “I would only beg you to believe that I did not ask you to come upon the river so that you must needs listen to my suit. If I chose an untimely moment to tell you of my love, it is because of late whenever I have been with you the avowal has trembled on my lips. If I have vexed you, it is my misfortune.”

By a clever manipulation of the paddle he brought the canoe about, and headed it toward the Cuillerier homestead. For a few minutes there was an awkward silence. But Sterling, refraining by an effort from further expression of his hopes and emotions, sought to lessen his own and Angélique’s embarrassment by talking of indifferent matters.

Angélique trailed a hand in the blue water and watched him half shyly. Not in this wise would have acted Robishe Navarre, Jasmin de Joncaire, or one or two others she might name. The wooing of Robishe would have been more fervid, perchance; but she could have put it aside with a jest. And no fear, either, that he would carry around a broken heart; was not Archange de Mersac ready to console him? While, had Jasmin laid at her feet his lands and fortune, and met with so little success, he would have sulked all the way home. How considerate was this young Scotchman! Although not so well-favored as the English officer who arrived yes-

terday, he was well built, and as with light, steady strokes he drove the canoe onward, the exertion displayed his fine physique and manly strength to advantage. Moreover, he had a most frank and honest countenance. After all, she was almost sorry she had not said "yes" awhile ago; of a sudden, life had taken on a dreary grayness. She and her lover had turned back from the Gates of Happiness; she no longer looked upon the western sky, but before her in the distance the dusk began to settle down upon the Lake of Ste. Claire, and in the foreground were only the shadowy woodland solitudes of the Isle au Cochon and the Isle au Pêche.

But what is it this singular Monsieur Sterling is saying now? He is telling of his first coming to Le Détroit. So intently had she been thinking of him that she had paid small heed to his words.

"Pardon, I was regretting that the lilies have folded their petals over their golden hearts," she faltered, holding up before him the bunch of withered blooms.

"As you have closed your heart against me," he could not help saying. But she added hastily, "Ah, yes, full well I remember; it is near unto a year since the English took possession of Le Détroit. Major Rogers is gone to Michilimackinac, and Captain Campbell is commandant here. He is only to be second in authority, you say? This young officer who came yesterday, — how is it you call him, — Major Gladwin, is to be commandant? That is news indeed. What is that about a parley the English had with a savage chief on their way up from the Lake of the Eries?"

Sterling repeated his remark, and then went on to tell her of the Indian youth and the escort of warriors

sent to Major Rogers, while with his rangers he was encamped on the borders of the forest, the haughty message brought by the envoy, and the coming of the unknown chief at sunset.

“The youth was like to Panigwun, ‘the Strong Wing-Feather;’ and of what appearance was the lordlier savage?” inquired the girl, who had listened with parted lips to his strange recital.

“He was not a tall man,” continued Sterling thoughtfully, “but his muscular figure was distinguished by remarkable symmetry and vigor. In complexion he was darker than the other warriors, darker than are the Indians here at the strait; his features were stern and bold, his bearing imperious, like that of a man accustomed to sweep away all opposition by the force of his determined will. He wore his crimson blanket with a native majesty, and his feather head-dress could not have lent to him greater dignity had it been a crown of gold. He was willing, he said, to live at peace with the English; he will suffer them to remain in his country so long as they treat him with due deference, forsooth. In fact, we heard later that four hundred braves lay in ambush at the entrance to Le Détroit to cut us off, but the influence of this king of the wilderness was happily exerted in our behalf, and they were turned from their design.”

“And not one among the English was able to learn the name of the powerful warrior who gave them so signal a proof of his friendship?” queried Angélique incredulously.

“No. Major Rogers and, after him, Captain Campbell asked it of every brave who came to the fort. As one neutral in regard to all the rival interests here, I was requested to make inquiry of the French;

but from officers, traders, habitants, the reply has been ever the same, — ‘It was, without doubt, the Great Chief.’ Moreover, this remarkable man seems to have utterly vanished. At the councils with the Indians called by Major Rogers he was eagerly looked for, but he did not appear. Sir William Johnson is most curious to discover his identity, yet at the grand parley which our distinguished superintendent of Indian affairs held to-day with all the chiefs of Le Détroit, he was not present. Mademoiselle, can you explain this riddle? Who is this mysterious savage, — do you know?”

Angélique nodded.

“It can be no other than the mighty chief of the Ottawas, my father’s friend,” she rejoined at once, in a tone of conviction. “Often has he warmed himself at the hearth-fire of Antoine Cuillerier and sat at his board.”

Sterling stared at her in blank amazement, for as she spoke she raised her head with an air of pride.

He had seen in Britain, in France, in Puritan New England, many fair and modest damsels, but never, it seemed to him, had he met a young maid of sweeter nature or more natural delicacy than was this vivacious, naïve little demoiselle who had been born and bred here, at this frontier post, so far removed from the world of elegance and refinement. Any belle of the old world or the new might envy her exquisite daintiness and grace; and yet, save the mark, she boasted of the familiar footing whereon her father stood with a redskin of the forest.

“What anomalies are to be met with here in the wilderness,” he reflected. “How I wish I could take this captivating Angélique away from so rude a life.”

“But, mademoiselle,” he said aloud, with no attempt to conceal his surprise, “it is not possible that you have sat at table with a painted savage?”

The girl broke into a peal of musical laughter.

“Oh, no, monsieur,” she answered. “When the Indian warriors visit Antoine Cuillerier, the women of his household are invisible, save only the Pani slaves that wait upon the guests. With us it could not be otherwise, and his dusky associates are not offended, since among them no woman may be seated in the presence of her lord.”

She laughed again at the ease wherewith the difficulty was thus bridged; but Sterling frowned. Presently, however, his brow cleared.

“Since you know the name of the Great Chief, you will tell it to me? You will tell me where he may be found?” he urged.

Angélique hesitated. His face was so eager and animated, his smile so candid, his manner so winning, how could she decline to answer the simple question, especially when he had just given her the greatest proof of his confidence by asking her to be his wife? Her father, Antoine Cuillerier, had warned her to be cautious what she said to the English; but Sterling was not English. He was willing to trust her with his life's happiness; might she not trust him a little? She would do nothing rash, nevertheless; nothing to injure the French or their Indian allies.

“Why do you seek to learn these things?” she inquired, undecided.

“The English should cultivate the friendship of the Great Chief by pacts and presents, and thus secure a long peace for Le Détroit; to this end I would fain aid them,” he responded. “How can they

cement this peace unless they know in what part of the forest he lives?"

"Ah, yes, it is peace we need, above all else," impetuously exclaimed Angélique. "And it is well that the English should propitiate the Indians of the strait, for, I will tell you something, — the red men are not well pleased; they think the English esteem their friendship as of small account. The Great Chief is now away in the north, among the Ottawas, the Ojibwas, the Pottawattomies and Hurons, yet his warriors keep him informed of all that goes on at Le Détroit."

"But when he is in this vicinity, where may a messenger be sent to him?" insisted the young man.

"Turn the canoe across the stream, and I will show you his haunt," returned the girl.

So unexpected was her answer that Sterling nearly dropped the paddle as he hastily complied with her request.

"Now look yonder," proceeded Angélique. "Beyond the Isle au Cochon you have often remarked that other lonely island in the river; how black its groves appear to-night! We French call it the Isle au Pêche, because of its fine fisheries, but to the Indians it is known as the burial-place of the Prophet. When the Great Chief is in this region, it is there he has his lodge; there he holds council with the manitou of the strait."

"And his name?" reiterated Sterling.

"He is called Pontiac," replied the girl in a frightened whisper, as though the very utterance of the word aroused her fear. "Ma foi, monsieur," she added with a shudder, "paddle swiftly, I pray you. The air has grown chill, and I would gladly be at home before the dark falls."

Sterling dallied no more, but applied himself arduously to his task. The gloom of evening was fast creeping over the river; but as they reached the little wharf before the Cuillerier farm, there came to them again upon the cool night breeze the song from the bateau of the care-free voyageurs returning to the town, —

“Fritaine, friton, fritou, poilon !
Ha, ha, ha, — frit à l’huile,
Frit au beurre à l’ognon.”

CHAPTER FIFTH

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON

THE next afternoon, a glance into the living-room of the Cuillerier home would have shown a typical picture of life at Le Détroit in the year 1761. The room itself, with its many contrasts of light and shade, presented an interior that would have delighted the eye of Chardin, the peasant painter, who, with his charming genre pieces, was at the time winning fame in France. The sunlight, shining in through the open door, brought out into relief the dark rafters hung with yellow-seed corn, dried pumpkins, and hanks of unbleached yarn, an effect of color splendid as a golden tapestry. It fell in a broad stream upon the puncheon floor and the huge mat of plaited river grasses, the work of the Pani slaves; it burnished the flintlock muskets crossed upon the wall, and touched lightly the great mass of golden-rod, reed mace, or "cat's tails," and sedges, wherewith Angélique had filled the dark cavern of the chimney.

It peered also into the faces of a group of men, who, from force of habit, had drawn the rudely made, chintz-covered chairs up around the hearth, where they sat in a half-circle, smoking their red clay pipes, and chatting in the inconsequent fashion wherewith a group of idlers discuss the affairs of the hour, political or social.

There, over against the loom in the corner, sat Antoine Cuillerier, a small man, past middle age, with a swarthy shaven face, restless black eyes, and a thin straight nose; there was thick-set Baptiste Méloche; Charles Parant, hale and jovial; shrewd Jacques Campeau; besides St. Aubin, the sturdy, handsome Jacques Godefroy, and keen-witted Jacques Baby,¹ from across the river.

"It is as I say," exclaimed Parant, taking his pipe from his mouth, and watching the smoke as it formed in airy wreaths before him. "The hands of the French are tied by the capitulation of Montreal, and we must make the best of a bad bargain."

"So think the British. They say to us, 'You may plough and sow your fields as well as you can in your shackles. We will take the corn and leave you the husks; nevertheless, let us be friends.' And we answer 'Merci' for the husks, we ask no more," growled Jacques Campeau. "Bah, some day they will find that we have not abandoned our claim to Le Détroit, although we now let the question rest in abeyance."

"Ay, that they will," echoed St. Aubin sullenly.

"Morbleu, what comes by the fife goes back to the drum. The strangers in their self-sufficiency think the savages as complaisant as ourselves," said Godefroy, with a laugh. "They have strengthened the fort against a surprise from the redmen, as a habitant would look to his palisade lest a loose picket might admit a wolf; but as to cultivating the friendship of the warriors, as the French have always done, they regard the matter as of the least importance."

"Ah, were I in authority, the state of affairs would be very different," declared Cuillerier, "for I believe

¹ Pronounced Bawbee.

it is conceded that I am now the representative of his Majesty of France, here at the strait."

He looked gravely around for assent to his words. Godefroy shrugged a shoulder, Méloche scowled, Campeau mumbled, Parant smiled, and Baby grinned broadly. No one gainsaid Antoine in words, however, or questioned the position he claimed by no other title than his relationship to the late commandant, De Bellestre. They were, perhaps, too amused or too careless.

"As the representative of his Majesty, I will tell you this," continued Cuillerier pompously, "the Great Chief is angered against the English because of their overbearing conduct towards his people. Before long King Louis will send troops to help us; then with the aid of our Indian allies we will drive the intruders back to their southern land."

"God grant that Le Détroit may one day be our own again!" ejaculated Godefroy, with fervor.

"But how is it, Antoine, bon homme," demanded Méloche, "although you claim to be the King's deputy, yet you publicly keep on good terms with the newcomers at the fort? How is it that you will, I understand, permit your daughter to be present at the ball given to-night by the English officers, at the request of this Sir William Johnson, who has come here to strengthen the power of the conquerors at the strait?"

"And you, Jacques Baby," chimed in Godefroy, "how is it that your bateau goes back and forth so often between your farm and the stockade; that you are so frequent a visitor to the house of Captain Campbell?"

"Parbleu! it is because he buys from me hogs, corn meal, and eau-de-vie," returned Baby, with a

good-natured laugh. "No man smites the hand that puts money in his purse."

"There you have it," seconded Antoine; "one gains nothing by quarrelling with the redcoats until the time is ripe. If we do not trade with them, they will bring here in greater numbers their own lawless traders. We hate them, but there is no reason why we should despise their gold. Yes, the true ruler of the world is gold; they who have it hold in their hands the reins of power. As for the ball to-night, is there a man among you who does not know that 'what a woman wills, God wills'? My daughter is bent upon going to the ball, and that is an end of the matter."

"Eh bien," chuckled Parant, "the demoiselles have their own way of vanquishing the British, even as we have ours."

"For my part," said Campeau, "I think it well that the dames of Le Détroit should accept the invitation to the festivities. Their sharp eyes and feminine intuitions will discern for us what manner of men are these new masters of the fort more speedily than we could learn the same. Trust a woman for finding out a man's vulnerable point, — ha, ha, ha! I made no ado when my wife announced that she would go."

"Campeau was ever a wise fellow," whispered Parant to Méloche.

"I think not with you all," Godefroy broke out brusquely. "I will have nothing to do with the foreigners, even in pretence of amity, and my wife shall not attend the ball!"

A laugh went round.

"Then I'll wager a pound of tobacco there will be tears and a poor supper at your lodge to-night, friend Jacques," cried Cuillerier, clapping his knee.

"No, no, my word is law, and my wife most dutiful," retorted Jacques, as, vexed and impatient at their continued laughter, he rose, pushed back his chair with a jerk, and flung himself out of the house.

Could Captain Campbell of the fort have heard this conversation, he would not perhaps have so confidently assured Sir William Johnson that the people of Le Détroit had accepted the English rule with good grace. As it was, sanguine that there was no trouble to be feared from the French, and satisfied after his great powwow with the Indians that they were glad to be allied with the party in power, when evening came Sir William was in the most genial of moods.

"Adzooks, captain, you have transformed this council chamber, erstwhile so dreary, into a most festive ball-room," he remarked approvingly, as he glanced about the main apartment of the British headquarters, once the residence of Monsieur de Bellestre, who, at first sent a prisoner to Niagara, had been released and permitted to return to Montreal.

Captain Campbell smiled, gratified by the encomiums of his chief.

"I fear it presents a rude appearance compared to the splendors of Johnson Hall," he answered politely. "Some day, perhaps, we may be able to bring fine furnishings from England; at present there is little of the sort in the town, save a few pieces in the houses of the French, brought from France during the old régime; but we have done what we could."

"And the effect is excellent," repeated Sir William, as he raised his eyeglass and again surveyed the long, low-studded room, the sombreness of whose age and smoke-darkened walls was relieved by cur-

tains of Indian manufacture, — great elkskins tanned a pale buff color and ornamented with dyed porcupine quills and beads. The sides of the apartment were still further decorated by the antlers of giant elks, muskets, powder-horns made from the horns of the buffalo, flint-headed and feather-tipped arrows, and strings of wampum; the rafters with festoons of the red cotton cloth which the traders were wont to sell to the savages in exchange for their furs. The hall was lighted by hanging lamps of bears' oil, and the floor, in other times worn smooth by the feet of the councillors of the commandant of the French King, had now been made smoother by a coating of wax for the gay tread of dancers.

Now the band of the garrison struck up a spirited air; the guests began to arrive; and as the ladies with their cavaliers, some French, others English, were presented to the gallant superintendent of Indian affairs, for each dame and demoiselle he had, on the spur of the moment, a special compliment or word of flattery.

"Truly," exclaimed the captain, when all had been made welcome, "I congratulate your Excellency upon the popularity you have already attained at the strait. Here are twenty ladies, all of the best families of Le Détroit, come to grace this happy occasion."

"Egad, and handsomer women it has never been my fortune to meet," returned Sir William.

"With whom will your Excellency open the ball?" continued Captain Campbell. "Shall it be with Madame des Ruisseaux, the white-haired dame who has the air of a duchess, or Madame Campeau? The first lady is connected by marriage with the late French commandant, and —"

"I depute to you, captain, the honor of dancing

with these 'grandes dames' in their prime," interrupted Sir William, with a quizzical look. "I have given the day to arduous affairs; this evening I shall please myself. Tell me, Campbell, who is that charming creature who has just entered the room upon the arm of a young man whom I think you made known to me this morning? How is it you named him?"

Again he raised his eyeglass, as if forsooth his eye was not noted for its keenness.

"Ah, I do not wonder that you call her charming," was the prompt reply. "It is Mademoiselle Cuillerier, the bourgeois' daughter; her escort is Mr. Sterling, a Scotchman, of whose services as French interpreter we sometimes avail ourselves."

"Humph," ejaculated his Excellency, growing absent during the explanation, "it is with the exquisite little Watteau figure Mademoiselle Cuillerier that I will open the ball."

"But, sir—" began the captain.

"I shall lead out the beauty first," insisted Sir William.

"Well, well, after all, Mademoiselle Cuillerier is also related to Monsieur de Bellestre, and your choice thus explained will, I hope, mollify the other ladies present, since you cannot dance first with all of them," responded Campbell dubiously.

"In faith I care not on what ground you put it, only delay not to seek her. For if upon nearer view she is half so prepossessing as at this distance, I shall tread on air during the measures. Besides, it is not seemly to keep the guests waiting," rejoined the baronet dryly.

Radiant Angélique certainly appeared. Tante Josette had evidently sacrificed upon the altar of

affection the "white dimity bestrewn with little pastoral designs." As clearly, too, the girl had sewed with diligence all day, and now in her fleecy draperies she looked not altogether unlike a white cloud oversown with tiny garden-plots.

Sterling mentally likened her to the white river-lilies with golden hearts that he had plucked for her the evening before. He too was happy. Angélique had come with Madame des Ruisseaux, but she had promised him her hand for the opening dance; and since she had not answered him "nay" on the river last evening, he began to take on the air of an accepted lover. Already he was looking forward to another tête-à-tête with her upon the gallery, when the ball should be at its height.

"A handsome pair they make," whispered Madame St. Aubin to Madame des Ruisseaux. "Monsieur Sterling is most personable, clad thus in silver gray, and I esteem well this new manner of wearing the hair unpowdered and tied back with a riband. As for la belle Angélique, never has she appeared more engaging. Where got she that frock? In vain I tried to buy a new one in the town."

"Let us stand aside a moment," said Angélique to her cavalier. "Before I meet his Excellency I would fain see, to better advantage than yesterday, what manner of man he is."

They drew back against the wall, and she darted a quick glance at the noted personage who, among all the English, was reputed to have the greatest influence with their terrible Iroquois allies.

"He is tall and erect, if somewhat heavy of weight," she added, well pleased with her scrutiny; "and his features are, to my thinking, strong and manly. He is near unto fifty years of age, you say, Monsieur

Sterling? In truth, he does not look it in that ruby colored coat, so richly guarded with gold lace. Surely, the peruque curled thus on the sides is a new fashion too, and vastly becoming to the wearer."

Ere she had finished speaking, Captain Campbell came towards her.

"Mademoiselle," he asked, "may I present you to Sir William Johnson?"

"Thanks, Monsieur le Capitaine," she replied, "Monsieur Sterling has just offered to conduct me to pay my respects to his Excellency."

Sterling threw back his head proudly, but his satisfaction was soon dashed.

"Pardon, mademoiselle, if I still beg the privilege," continued the officer. "Sir William has deputed me to request you to open the ball with him."

As he concluded, the bright eyes of Angélique grew brighter with surprise and pleasure at so marked a compliment, and, vouchsafing only a smile of apology to the Scotchman, she suffered the colonel to lead her away.

In another moment she was curtsying before the great man. Sir William in turn bowed low over her hand, as he took it in his own.

"You will pardon me, mademoiselle, that from among all the fair women present I have singled you out as the most beautiful," he said impressively.

The girl blushed rosy red.

"Your Excellency is most gracious," she stammered.

"And you will do me the honor to tread the minuet with me?" he pursued, pressing the little hand he still retained.

"The distinction is mine, your Excellency," was her response.

Forthwith, to the music of "Rule Britannia," although the prettily confused damsel knew not the air, nor did the other French among the company, he led her to the top of the room, followed by the other officers and gentlemen, who had already engaged their partners.

To simple little Angélique it seemed as though the ceremonious court dance could never before have been so stately and graceful. Her uncle, De Bellestre, was the personification of courtliness; but this Sir Johnson not only bowed to her as though she were a princess royal, but as though she were a princess royal for whom he entertained a most respectful but hopeless devotion.

When the minuet was over, Sterling pressed forward to claim her for the Sir Roger de Coverley, but he presently muttered a forcible epithet under his breath, as the doughty baronet declared that Mademoiselle Angélique must again favor him for the reel.

By the time it was finished Angélique felt on terms of old friendship with Sir William. He laughed and jested with her now, and she grew vivacious, sparkling. She even told him the story of the odd silk mitten, and confided to him how, when presented to him, she had worn it on the right hand, although it was meant for the left, and had tried to conceal the mittenless hand in the folds of her frock. Thereat, he pretended to have detected the ruse, but vowed she should have, by an early English convoy, a pair of the finest gloves to be obtained from London, as a souvenir of this evening, which he would always remember.

Yet the other ladies were not neglected. While the gallant superintendent was making peace with

them, Major Gladwin danced with the belle, though he said he was fighting an attack of ague. Later, she gave a dance to Captain Campbell, and then one to Lieutenant McDougal. During the evening Sterling secured from her but a "gavotte" and a "jig à deux," wherein he acquitted himself ill, "not being familiar with these French gambols," he sullenly declared. His heart was hot with anger.

The joyous manner wherewith the capricious demoiselle permitted her attention to be engrossed by these strangers, of distinguished position though they were, her apparent forgetfulness of himself, galled him almost to madness. Why, even Robishe Navarre had two dances with her, and, in consequence, Archange de Mersac, who had given Sterling the quadrille, seemed as out of humor as himself.

"Angélique is but a heartless coquette," he muttered bitterly, as he watched her. "I told her, awhile since, she was like a pretty, white wood pigeon; but when the pigeon ventures out of the wood it is in danger of being caught in a snare. 'T was surely Lucifer who taught women to dance! Angélique seeks, strives, cares, only for admiration; what a fool I was to hope she might one day love me! Love? She loves only her own fair face in the looking-glass. Still, the butterfly should not flutter too near the devouring flame; the wood pigeon should remain in the wood. Ah, perhaps I may yet have five minutes with her," he exclaimed, as, seeing that she was for the moment disengaged, he abruptly checked his morose meditations and hastened to her side.

"Mademoiselle, will you take a turn upon the gallery?" he said.

Angélique looked up into his face; it was grave, almost stern.

"I have been unkind to him, and he is always so courteous to me," she said to herself. "No doubt he saw me promenading with Major Gladwin, and I promised him quarter of an hour in the moonlight. Well, the moon did not rise until late." Her sudden remorse rendered her very sweet and winning, as, folding her silken scarf about her shoulders, she stepped out with him into the mild evening air.

Alack, why had he not the wisdom to be content with the bliss of the moment without torturing his soul with thought of the past or the future? No, he must needs dash from him the cup of his present happiness before he had tasted it.

"You have had a pleasant evening, mademoiselle," he began. "For my part, I seldom watch a woman dancing but I think of Salome, the daughter of Herodias, who claimed as the reward of her dance the head of the prophet served up on a golden salver."

Angélique started. But, feeling that she had vexed him, she resolved to overlook his brusqueness.

"Vraiment, it is most commendable in you, monsieur, that you sometimes reflect upon Holy Writ," she rejoined serenely. "Nevertheless, why do people go to a ball if not to dance?"

"Oh, as a diversion, or a healthful exercise, it may be well at times," was his inconsequent reply. "Yet to-night, pardon me, — to-night, mademoiselle, to my thinking, you were not altogether fortunate in your choice of partners."

The girl had listened with a smile half of amusement, half of incredulity, to his wiseacre remark, but as he concluded she let fall her hand from his arm, and faced him with a dignity which he would have admired had he not been so carried away by his irritation.

"Monsieur," she said quietly, "you have no right to take me thus to task. At a ball, as in life, a woman's choice depends often upon what comes to her. If I have been complimented by some attention from the guest of the evening and the new commandant, I fail to see wherein I have done aught to merit either praise or blame from any one."

"Ah, Angélique, your pretty head has been turned by the smooth speeches of this Sir William Johnson," cried Sterling, losing the remnant of his self-command. "He would have you believe that his heart is already beneath your feet; it is his way with women. I thought, however, that you liked not the English?"

"He calls himself an Irishman," she argued.

"He is such only in his agreeable manners, his wit and cleverness, and in the fact that he happened to be born on the western shore of St. George's channel. But, able and brilliant official of England though he be, I do not care to have the woman I would make my wife honor him again with her hand in the dance."

Angélique's spirit rose. It was clear that her lover was insanely jealous, and she resented his dictatorial tone.

"Thanks, monsieur," she said, dropping him a courtesy. "Where you seek a wife is a matter of indifference to me, yet you had best look to it that she be one willing to remain at home by your fire and not stir abroad, for she will have no easy task-master."

"Angélique," he asseverated, "I did not mean to speak harshly; to-night I have been provoked beyond endurance. It is my love for you that has kindled this anger. But, if you continue to coquet

with this man, who, though ready enough to make love, is as ready to forget; if you prefer the poisoned honey of idle flattery to the love of an honest heart, then dearly as I love you, I will banish my yearning for you from my soul. I will not love you any more."

Angélique was now as exasperated as himself. Perhaps it was for this reason that she answered his passionate speech by a ripple of careless laughter, that reminded him of the music of a woodland cascade as it fell over the sharp rocks and hid in the stony heart of the ravine.

"Of a verity, monsieur, you have a taste for romance," she cried; "you should have lived at the strait in the day of the Sieur de Cadillac. Yesterday you told me that you loved me; you love me now, you say, but you will not love me to-morrow. Eh bien, I value not a love that alters thus with every wind. You had best begin at once not to love me. I am free, and you have much effrontery to expect me to govern my actions according to what may please you. Such audacity is not to be lightly pardoned."

"Angélique, I have been far too blunt, and I beg you to forgive me," protested the young Scotchman, as he laid a hand upon her scarf to detain her. But petulantly withdrawing the soft silk from his clasp, she re-entered the ball-room and sought out Madame des Ruisseaux.

That night she passed at the house of this lady within the palisade, returning home the next afternoon.

How glad she was to get back to her day dreaming in the recess of the window of the loft. Above her little looking-glass hung a chaplet of prayer-beads,

strung of white wampum shells by the deft fingers of Indian maidens under the instruction of Father Potier of the Huron Mission. For a moment the girl hesitated before them. Had she taken the chaplet, perchance many things would have been more fortunate for Sterling; but it was the fateful mirror of Angélique de Meloise that she chose.

“Ma foi, if we do not suit some folk, there are others who think us pleasing enough,” she said to the piquant face that looked out from within the circlet of the old carved wood frame, and smiled back at her reassuringly. “We will not be lectured, you and I. No; we will dance, and laugh, and be merry whenever it is to our mind.”

She kissed her hand to the demoiselle in the glass, and then, a little ashamed of having wasted a whole half-hour, hurried down to the hearthroom, to live over again the happy moments of the evening before, in relating the incidents of the ball to the confidante of her girlish triumphs, “cette chère Tante Josette.”

CHAPTER SIXTH

THE BLACK RAIN

THE fortnight that followed was long remembered at the strait. Sir William Johnson devoted each day to the affairs of the post, and held many conferences with the Indians. But the evenings he spent in social pleasures, and so great a popularity did his genial disposition win for him among the French, that he was fêted with lavish hospitality by the best families of the little town.

He himself gave a ball, which was even more brilliant than the first. He entertained at dinner the Vicar, Monsieur de Bocquet, curé of Ste. Anne's, and Father Potier, together with all the French gentlemen of Le Détroit, including Colonel Du Quesne and Major La Mothe, who had not long before been forced to surrender their swords to him at Niagara. He crossed the river to visit the Huron village, where the warriors were drawn up in line and fired a military salute in his honor. He addressed their council, and afterwards took supper with Father Potier. Finally when, on the 17th of September, he embarked for his return homeward, he left behind him a most favorable impression.

The leading settlers, the curé, and the missionary had found the superintendent of Indian affairs to be an official of large experience and remarkable capacity. He had gained the respect of the redmen by the consideration he showed them, the attentive ear

he lent to the story of their grievances, and his promise that these should be speedily righted. While, with the fair sex, his witty and gallant speeches, his deferential manner and unfailing good humor, had rendered him so great a favorite that what the capitulation had been powerless to effect, he accomplished by the charm of his personality; the women of Le Détroit had become, for the time being at least, the firm friends of the English.

Not that they were grown cold in their allegiance to New France — far from it; but as Charles Parant had said at the house of Cuillerier, the capitulation had been a bad bargain, and they must make the best of it.

After the departure of the British convoy down the Lake of the Eries, the season of merriment, so well inaugurated, continued for many weeks. Among the French there was dancing to the strains of the violin at one another's houses. The men had horse racing, since, if somewhat tardily, the hardy Canadian pony had been introduced into the settlement some twenty years before; and, when winter came, these contests were continued on the frozen surface of the strait and of the small river Rouge. There were games of lacrosse between the *coureurs de bois* and the Indians; sometimes, too, the French and English played at bowling with cannon balls in the narrow streets within the stockade.

For both young cavaliers and heads of families, dames and demoiselles, there were gatherings for story-telling around the broad hearths, whereon blazed great logs from the forest; skating and snowshoeing parties, and merry drives along the icy roadbed of Le Détroit in rudely made but comfortable "train-eaux," or sledges, lined with the thick furs of the buffalo and bear.

Major Gladwin, having suffered much from the fever of the marshes which he had contracted during the journey from Niagara, had gone on furlough to England, leaving Captain Campbell again commandant at the fort. The gallant captain, Lieutenant McDougal, and the other officers took part in many of the diversions of the French.

During this pleasant winter, Mademoiselle Angélique Cuillerier was the gayest of the gay. At the ball given by the able superintendent of Indian affairs, as a leave-taking, no pretty demoiselle had danced more blithely than she, none had received more attention from the distinguished host. "A fine girl," Sir William had named her, with bluff candor; and for the "jour de l'an" (New Year's Day), a letter came to her written in his own hand, and couched in the language of flowery compliment.

Nevertheless, now the sprightly damsel only laughed at its flattering phrases.

"'T was diverting enough to be the envied of all the dames and demoiselles because of the distinction he paid me while he was here," she confided to Tante Josette. "Ma foi, the gallant Sir William is a great man, but he is also almost an old man, as old as my father. Moreover, although he was never wanting in respect to me, his jests were not always to my liking. I fancied him not nearly so well as I do Major Gladwin, for instance. Rarely handsome is the Englishman, do you not think so, ma Tante? Brusque and taciturn he is indeed at times, but much esteemed in the service, think you not, since, though still young, he is in command of so important a post to the English as this, our *Détroit*?"

Of Sterling she said not a word; whereat the good Tante Josette was much puzzled.

In truth, Angélique had made more than one attempt to draw the young Scotchman back to her side; but all her pretty ruses were unheeded. With his lively spirits and his flute playing, he was the life of many a fireside company and as a story-teller had few equals. At lacrosse and bowling, as well as all the winter sports, he was a vigorous player; with Archange de Mersac, Marianne de St. Ours, and others he was affable enough, but toward herself his manner was ever distant. This behavior piqued and offended her. The volatile light-heartedness of the French-Canadian character, its excitability, its proneness to sudden anger and as sudden ignoring of all things annoying, this she knew well. But a character that could be sportive and yet inflexible, she did not comprehend. Under similar circumstances, she could have predicted what Robishe Navarre, son of Robert the Writer, or Jasmin de Joncaire would have done; but Sterling's very good temper seemed a wall of adamant between herself and him.

Of a surety, he thought her vain and frivolous. How often his last words to her on the evening of Captain Campbell's ball echoed in her heart like a knell, — "I will banish the yearning for you from my soul. I will not love you any more."

"Oh, he does not understand, either," the girl sometimes ejaculated passionately, when alone in her little corner under the eaves. "He does not know that a French-Canadian demoiselle must be gay; that words of compliment are to her as the comfits made of the sugar of the maple trees, which the Indian women bring from the forest; that if she is even passably well-favored, she looks to be flattered for her beauty. Her coquetry is as harmless as her laughter; and, notwithstanding her seeming indiffer-

ence, she can feel deeply. To the cavaliers of New France this is plain enough ; between herself and them there is an innocent *caméraderie* that has nothing to do with the heart. But this flute-playing Scotchman must make an ado over a slight quarrel ; besides, as I told him, he had no right to take me to task at all."

Angélique was uneasily conscious that she had swept away his sweet illusions regarding her, — she who would not ruthlessly brush aside a spider's web, lest to do so might bring her misfortune. But she decided that she would trouble her head about Sterling no more. "No, not while two such courteous chevaliers as Colonel Du Quesne and Major La Mothe resided on parole at the strait," she soliloquized ; "not while the officers at Fort Pontchartrain were so agreeable and friendly."

Time slipped away, giddy paced as the feet of dancers. The woods budded, took on their luxuriant summer foliage, and presently were ablaze with crimson and flame-color, as though the whole forest were some mighty Indian council fire, kindled by the torch of the autumnal sun. Beneath the rippling tide of gayety at Le Détroit there had been all along an undercurrent of anxiety on the part of the masters of the fort, of discontent among the older settlers, and disaffection among the savages.

One day, in the first part of October, pretty Angélique Cuillerier, who had been on a visit to her friend Clotilde Godefroy, set out to return home. She had some distance to go, but the walk along the river bank was usually attractive. To-day the skies had been lowering since early morning, and for an hour had been becoming more overcast.

Angélique, however, little minded the "sullen

weather" (for thus to Clotilde she termed the heaviness of the clouds). Folding her cloak of scarlet cloth around her lithe figure, and drawing its jaunty capouch well over her head, she tripped onward, stopping occasionally, now to possess herself of a spray of red sumach leaves, again to gather a bunch of Michaelmas daisies along the way.

While she loitered, plucking the petals of the fortune-telling flower, one by one, as she put to it the query, "Does he love me? Yes, a little, — not at all?" — a raindrop touched her soft cheek.

"Ma foi, I should have been at home before this, and spinning by the hearth-fire," she said. "I must make haste. How dark it has grown!"

A gust of wind caught her cloak and began to sport with it, as though, like her pestering lovers, fain to claim of her a souvenir.

To get the better of the gale, she wheeled about. The loneliness of her surroundings, the dreariness of the landscape, aroused in her a disquietude she had never before experienced when thus alone.

"What a strange gloom is settling on the river, and how hurriedly the men in the bateau yonder are pulling down the stream, as though they would leave even the swift current far behind," she reflected. "And those Indian canoes, how they dart for the shore! The savages must apprehend a severe storm when they betray such concern. What is that cry from the Ottawa village across the strait — a barbaric chant and incantation to the manitou of the tempest? It must be; at times like this, the children of the forest forget the teaching of Father Potier, and return to their pagan rites. How it frightens me! Ah, thank Heaven it is ended, at least for a time. But, mon Dieu, how the marshes of wind-mill point are lit

up by the feu follet!¹ How its flames burn about the ruined mill that the old miller's daughter willed to the devil long since! I thank Providence I have not that part of the road to travel, since wanderers are ever in danger of being enticed away by the phantom lights, and forced to grind the devil's grist. I have heard of more than one who thus disappeared in other years, and left no trace behind."

Angélique shuddered, and made the sign of the cross upon her forehead and breast, as she quickened her pace.

"Am I going blind?" she gasped, rubbing her eyes. But no, her sight had never been keener; it was the whole world that seemed on the point of being blotted out. The rain had begun to fall steadily; it dotted her cloak as with bullet marks. She caught some of it in her hand: the drops were black as soot. A darkness enwrapped the forest and shrouded the opposite shore of the river; the white houses of the côte disappeared from her view. Now she could no longer see the angry waters of the strait, although they must be within a few rods of where she stood. Soon the road was shut off by a dark, thick mist, but, fortunately, not before she had caught a glimpse of the red chimneys and strong timbers of a habitant's home.

"I will make my way there," she said.

Yet, where was it now? Between this appalling darkness and the wind tugging at her cloak, forcing her round and round, she had become utterly confused.

The alarmed girl listened for the voice of the river, hoping it would guide her safely. The sound of the rushing waters was, however, lost, so loud was the lamenting of the wind. One might almost as well be

¹ Will-o'-the-wisp.

out on the strait in a canoe without a paddle! She could not see two feet ahead, and to go farther might be to plunge into the swirling current.

Disheartened, Angélique sank down beside a bush, to whose branches she had clung, as her only landmark. If it were only possible to shut out from her ears the terrified cry of the cattle and ponies in the fields and farm-sheds, poor beasts crazed with the panic that makes wild creatures of the mild domestic animals!

“Nom de Dieu, is it that the last day of the world has arrived?” exclaimed the girl, getting upon her knees. And now there came to her a still more dreadful sound, — the howling of the wolves. Even to the heart of the wilderness must this strange terror, this shuddering of Nature, have penetrated and driven these savage creatures to the edge of the wood. Their hoarse bark drew nearer. Good God, would they fall upon and devour her in this horrible dusk?

The rain, now pouring down in torrents, emitted a noisome odor that made her faint and ill. She sank lower upon the grass, ejaculating, —

“What will it avail me to struggle longer? God has visited his wrath upon us; if we are all to die, I may as well die here as elsewhere!”

At this moment, above the fury of the storm, there came to her through the sulphurous air a message of hope. It was the bell of the parish church, ringing out amid the gloom to lead safely, as to the feet of the good Ste. Anne, any wayfarers who might be lost on the prairie. And presently, from the other side of the river, echoed more faintly the call of the bell of the mission chapel. Like angel voices, these bells also warned the inhabitants of Le Détroit, civi-

lized and savage, to unite in supplication that Providence would guard them from injury during the havoc of the storm; they cried out to the angry heavens a petition that God would have mercy on His people.

Their tone of cheer seemed to give new life to Angélique. Drawing forth her chaplet of wampum shells from beneath her kerchief, she began to tell the beads devoutly, gaining courage in prayer. After a time she started up, and, guided by the bells, pressed onward.

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An hour earlier, in the hearthroom of the Cuillerier homestead, "la bonne mère," rotund and rosy, stood directing the work of a Pani woman at the loom, while slight and graceful Tante Josette (of whom, in her youth, Angélique was now a picture) sat spinning by the fire.

So intent were they upon their occupations that, for an interval, they paid small heed to the deepening shadows. At last, however, Dame Cuillerier arrested the task of the slave.

"I can no longer see," she said.

"Nor I," cried Tante Josette, rising from her chair. "I cannot watch the thread, and but dimly discern the wool upon the distaff."

"It threatens to be a great tempest," she continued, going to the window. "How swollen the river is, and one would think the night was setting in, although we should have still some hours of daylight."

"Thank Heaven, the children have returned from the catechism class, and are above in the loft; but where are my good man, my tall sons, and Angélique," began Dame Cuillerier distractedly.

"Chut, be not so affrighted, madame," counselled Tante Josette, seeking to control her own fears in order to calm those of her sister-in-law. "My brother Antoine and your older sons are at the stockade, and will stay with some of our friends there. Angélique will of course remain with Madame Godefroy until the storm is over."

"Toussaint," interrupted Madame Cuillerier, turning to a Pani man-servant, "take a mount and go for mademoiselle. If she has set out, you will meet her on the way."

"The horses were ridden by my master and the young messieurs to the town, madame," answered Toussaint.

"Then take with you two or three farm boys, and go afoot," ordered the mistress; and Toussaint disappeared forthwith.

As the searching party passed out of the gate of the palisade, a horse galloped in. Another moment, and he stood before the door, quivering with excitement, while a young trader flung himself from the saddle, threw the bridle to a slave boy, and entered the house, to be cordially greeted by the two ladies.

"My friend, you have come in out of the rain none too soon," said Dame Cuillerier, motioning him to a settle in the chimney-corner. "Let the Pani take your cloak; a mug of 'cidre au charbon' [mulled cider] will keep you from a chill. Or shall it be, rather, a 'petit verre d'eau-de-vie'?"

"I appreciate your kind hospitality, madame," rejoined the young man, with a bow declining the invitation to be seated, "but I drew rein only to speak a word to Antoine Cuillerier on the matter of some furs for which I wish to bargain with certain redmen before they depart for the hunting. Since

the bourgeois is trusted by the Indians, I would ask him to tell these Ottawas I will deal justly with them."

"Sir, my husband is gone to the fort," replied "la bonne mère." "You had best await his return. There is some excellent tobacco on the shelf, and its fragrance is not unpleasant to us. Jean," she added to another little slave who crouched in a corner, "a pipe for your master's guest."

"Madame, I thank you again," replied the latter. "Still, I had best go on. Monsieur Cuillerier is like to be delayed by the storm, which is only just beginning, and I am anxious to reach the town before it breaks in its full strength. I hope all the others of your household are within doors, for this promises to be no ordinary tempest. The air smells of brimstone and, abroad on the prairie, the wind bays as if Cerberus and all the dogs of hell were unloosed."

"Mon Dieu, you terrify me, monsieur!" cried the dame; "for my daughter, who went to visit Madame Godefroy, is not yet returned."

"Mademoiselle Cuillerier may be out in the storm? Good God! I will go at once to seek her," he exclaimed.

"The servants have gone," protested the mother. A minute more, and he was again in the saddle and urging his horse to a rapid pace over the rough ground.

Meanwhile Angélique had pressed on, growing more and more perplexed. Her head seemed going round, and now even the voices of the bells bewildered her.

"Why has not some one been sent from home to meet me?" she sobbed, her nerves unstrung from fear and fatigue. "Why did I remain so long with

Clotilde, or, having remained, why did I set out when the skies were so ominous? Why did I not stop at the town? Is my mother going to leave me to die alone on the prairie? Surely, in the houses along the c^{ôte} the lamps must have been lighted! Perhaps by 'looking Indian' I may be able to distinguish the glow of some friendly hearth not too distant for me to reach it."

At the thought, she lay prone upon the grass, as the savages were wont to watch for an enemy or friend who might be afar off on the plain. Thus they were enabled to announce the coming of a traveller, hours before he appeared at the settlement.

Ah, the attempt was successful! Through the thick fog penetrated the glimmer of a light; was it a hearth-fire or a torch?

She looked again; now it was not quite so dim. It augured rest and warmth, or at least companionship; anything was better than wandering thus alone. Unless — oh, alas, was it only the "feu follet" after all, or a savage who would murder her? But no, her father was the friend of the Great Chief; an Indian would guide her home.

She sprang to her feet and struggled toward the light. The blood-curdling howl of the wolves came nearer; she was almost benumbed with cold. All at once she was conscious of some living presence close beside her. Was it the Indian stealing through the tall grass? Something brushed against her. She stretched out her hand; it touched a soft, furry object, and now a head with two burning eyes appeared. Her companion was a wolf whelp; the mother must be near. Angélique uttered a shriek of terror, and stumbled on. Were those eyes the light she had seen, or was it the flaming glance of the

wehr-wolf, — the Loup Garou who, the legend said, was ever on the watch to steal away young maidens? Through her brain surged recollections of the traditions she had heard of this monster, half human, half wolf, who walked erect through the forest. How once even a young Canadian huntsman had been lured away by the beast, and was never traced afterwards, although a *coureur de bois* averred he had met among the woods a wolf dressed in the clothes of the unfortunate wanderer. How another venturesome hunter moulded a bullet from a silver coin and patiently awaited his prey. And when at last he got a shot at the Loup Garou, the charmed bullet, instead of killing the monster, only cut off its tail. But the huntsman ever after was wont to show the brush as an evidence that he spoke the truth. How this tail of the wehr-wolf was said to have been for years the wonder of the strait, and was even worshipped by the Indians as a powerful manitou.

Angélique was now plodding through a marsh, wherein the mud reached to her ankles.

Hark! what was that cheering note amid the many terrible sounds of the storm? Could it be the frightened neigh of a horse? Merciful Heaven, were the illusions of one's dying hour stealing upon her, or was a human voice encouraging the poor beast and anon shouting her own name, —

“Angélique! Angélique!”

“Here! Here!” she called.

Her response was faint, for her voice broke. Nevertheless, there presently appeared before her out of the mist a man, leading a horse by the bridle and holding a lantern above his head.

“Thank God, I have found you, Angélique!” he exclaimed fervently.

"Monsieur Sterling," she faltered, and weak and trembling sank to the ground.

"At your home they told me you were out in the storm. Toussaint and Raphael are scouring the prairie in search of you. Truly, you have wandered far afield, but you will soon be under the shelter of your father's roof, mademoiselle," said the Scotchman, as he knelt beside her and put to her lips the cruse of cordial that Tante Josette had thrust into his hand as he left the house.

Rising quickly, he turned the horse toward the way from which he had come, and tied the lantern to the pommel of the saddle. Then taking the girl in his arms, he set her light weight upon the sturdy animal, and, springing up behind her, gave it the command to be off.

"You will pardon me, there was no time to be lost in parleying for your permission," he declared, as he would have humored a child. Angélique was too exhausted and cold to reply. He drew his cloak around her, and supported her with one arm, while he urged his steed forward.

Her head rested upon his breast; her heart thrilled with thankfulness and content. Was it also stirred by a deeper emotion? At least she felt a happy security in Sterling's protection, in the knowledge that it was he who had found her.

Was that a dog which ran jumping and whining beside them? Sterling changed the rein to his left hand, and with the right sought the pistol in his belt. Scarcely had he drawn it forth when the creature with a sharp bark which was succeeded by a cruel yelp leaped for the horse's flanks. Nom de Dieu, it was the mother-wolf, or else the Loup Garou! Angélique felt the horse stagger with fear. She shrank

closer to her preserver, but, with rare presence of mind, smothered the scream that nearly broke from her, for she was aware that their escape depended upon his attention being wholly given to the battle that must ensue.

The young trader hesitated to fire upon the beast while it was so close to Angélique; if it should be only wounded, it might fasten its fangs in her delicate flesh during the agony of its death struggle. By a powerful blow with the end of his weapon he beat the wolf down, and then pulled the trigger. At the shot the brute fell back with a fierce howl of pain. The bullet had evidently taken effect, for they heard nothing more from this savage pursuer, and only the sound of the whining of the whelp followed them, as they rode on in the dusk.

"You were very brave, mademoiselle," whispered Sterling.

Still Angélique did not speak, but only clutched at her chaplet and pressed it to her heart. He thought she had fainted, and she was glad that he thought so.

In less than an hour he lifted her off the horse at the door of her home, whereupon "la bonne mère" and Tante Josette, rushing out, bore her away from him into the hearthroom and to the settle, spread with bright Indian blankets. The sweet moments when he had taken care of her were over. He sighed at the realization, even while the two women thanked him volubly, and Angélique stammered a few half-coherent words of gratitude.

"I have a fine dinner cooked for you, and it shall be served directly, Monsieur Sterling," said practical Dame Cuillerier. "When a man is chilled to the marrow of his bones, as you must be, there is nothing

like a good dinner, with a 'petit verre' to begin it. The Pani boy will conduct you to the sleeping-room of my sons, where you will find a change of dry clothing. I think you and my firstborn, Alexis, are of about the same height."

"I am indeed obliged to you, madame, for your thoughtfulness, but if you will excuse me I will wait only for the 'petit verre,'" answered the young man, with a pleasant laugh. "The darkness is lightening a trifle. The boy has, I see, put a fresh peg-lamp in my lantern; and, since the eau-de-vie will render me proof against any ill consequence that might wait upon further drenching, I may as well continue on to the town. Good-day, mesdames; good-day, mademoiselle." And he was gone before Angélique could collect her wits to urge him to remain.

This adventure, momentous as it was to those directly concerned, was but one of many incidents of that strange storm. Throughout the winter, "La Pluie de Suie" (Rain of Soot) was the favorite topic of fireside stories among the people of the strait; and it was even told that Robert the Writer, having collected a small quantity of this "black rain" in a dish, had writ with the fluid a letter to the King of France. What was the purport of the letter no one could tell.

Major Gladwin and the rest of the English strove to explain the phenomenon by various theories. "The storm was caused by a total eclipse of the sun," some said. Others spoke of distant forest fires, and of the burning of grass upon the marshes; of the vapors that arose from the sulphurous springs in the vicinity, and of gases possibly set free by the digging of new wells.

But to these learned conjectures the French replied by a shrug of the shoulders, and the Indians by a scornful "Ugh!"

To Canadian and savage "La Pluie de Suie" was a portent of disaster, and forebodings of impending evil lay heavy on the hearts of the women of the settlement.

CHAPTER SEVENTH

INDIANS AND FLINTLOCKS

THE Indians have a saying, "When the beaver vacates his house, spring has come." In the year 1763 the young "Aumick" must have gone a-wooing early, for by the first week in May the forest about Fort Pontchartrain wore a tint of green; the prairie where the long grass had been cut in the autumn was like a soft emerald carpet, dotted with violets and "bouton d'or;" the air was sweet with the odor of eglantine and arbutus, that came forth like the spirit of fragrance from the woods.

It was on one of the fairest of May mornings that Toussaint, who had been sent by Madame Cuillerier upon an errand to the home of a neighbor, on his return brought a message for Angélique.

"The Dame St. Aubin has ordered her Pani rowers to take her across the river to the Ottawa village, that she may buy some venison of the Indians," he said; "and she bade me say she would be glad of the company of mademoiselle if the excursion is to her mind."

"Truly it is," exclaimed the girl, as, from the open half of the house-door, she looked out upon the clear waters of Le Détroit, dancing in the sunshine as if they too were happy that the long winter was past.

Within the half-hour Angélique had taken her place in the strong elm-bark canoe with Madame

St. Aubin; and anon, guided by the two dark-skinned boys, who were as much at home when struggling against the current as if it were their natural element, the little skiff shot out upon the strait.

“Well pleased I am that you sent for me, dame,” cried the demoiselle, as she shook back her curls, which the south wind tossed about as a teasing young giant with his great hand might ruffle the locks of a child.

Because of the mildness of the air, she had not donned her scarlet cloak with its capouch, but wore upon her pretty head the new hat of river grasses which she had plaited during the winter, and about her shoulders a small shawl, blue as the sky above, selected from among the merchandise that had come to her father by the spring convoy from the St. Lawrence, and was now on sale at his storehouse. The red ribbon on her hat contrasted well with the blue of the little shawl, and both set off to good advantage the dark beauty of the girl; at least, so thought Dame St. Aubin, as she watched her young neighbor, to whose animated face the kisses of the wind had brought a charming blush.

“I too have some purchases to make,” continued Angélique, with a smile. “I would fain have a beaded pouch such as Archange de Mersac bought of a squaw last week; also a mocock of fresh maple sugar. To pay for them I have brought some ells of cotton cloth. Look you, ’t is of the new supply my father has just got from Montreal.”

“An excellent cloth,” rejoined the dame, taking the end of the roll between her thumb and forefinger, that she might feel the texture. “I must make haste to procure some of the bourgeois before it is all bar-

tered away. And are there among the goods other shawls? The blue color is just suited to you, *ma belle*, but for myself I would choose one of a more sombre hue; a soft brown or gray would give serviceable wear."

"My father has them of all the tints of the rainbow and the shadow colors as well," was the reassuring answer.

"*Ma foi*, but you are looking as sweet as a spray of eglantine this morning," continued the older woman in a low tone, so as not to be overheard by the servants. "I would that some of your cavaliers might see you. Major Gladwin, who, in spite of his ague, had such an admiring eye for you before he went beyond the seas, or Captain Campbell—"

"The dear captain," interrupted the girl lightly; "I think he must be the most amiable of men. And he is ever so courteous and gallant. But you mistake; Major Gladwin gives me not a thought, and Mr. Campbell's heart is bestowed upon *la jolie Mathurine* at the red mill."

"Eh bien, there are *Robishe Navarre* and *Jasmin de Joncaire*; though in truth, my dear, I once supposed we should see you marry the young Scotch trader, *James Sterling*," pursued the loquacious dame. "What have you done to him, *chérie*, that he still keeps aloof from you? His rescue of you on the awful day of the Black Rain should have put an end to the estrangement between you and so faithful a lover."

"*Phouff!* a fig for your romancing, *madame*," exclaimed *Angélique*, suppressing a yawn. "*Monsieur Sterling* and I are on the best of terms. But if he prefers the society of *Marianne de St. Ours*, for

instance, and I incline to the company of Major La Mothe, each is better pleased, that is all."

If the flush in her cheeks deepened, perchance it was because the breeze, balmy along the shore, was keen upon the water. Presently she began to sing, while the dame took to considering how she might best secure from the Ottawa squaws the choice pieces of venison.

"Entre Paris et Saint-Denis
Il s'élève une danse ;
Toutes les dames de la ville
Sont alentour qui dansent.
Sur la feuille ron-don don don,
Sur la jolie, jolie feuille ronde,"

trolled the girl, with an air of careless gaiety.

" Il n'y a que la fill' du roi
D'un côté qui regarde.
Ell' voit venir son messenger,
Son messenger de Nantes.

" ' Beau messenger, beau messenger,
Quell's novell's va à Nantes ? '
' Les novell's que j'ai apportées :
Que votre amant vous mande, —

" ' Que vous fassiez choix d'un amant,
Pour lui a une amante.'
' Est-elle alors plus belle que moi,
Ah, est-elle plus savante ? ' "

" ' Elle n'est pas plus belle que toi,
Mais elle est plus savante ;
Ell' fait neiger, ell' fait grêler,
Ell' fait le vent qui vente.

" ' Ell' fait reluire le soleil
A minuit dans sa chambre ;

Ell' fait pousser le romarin
 Sur le bord de la Manche.'
 Sur la feuille ron-don don don,
 Sur la jolie, jolie feuille ronde." ¹

Even the sharp eyes of the older woman were deceived.

"The pretty coquette is heart whole," reflected Madame St. Aubin. Then she returned to her calculations as to how much of the deers' meat she

¹ "Twixt Paris gay and St. Denis
 The dance was up one day,
 And all the ladies of the town
 Looked on in brave array.
 Sur la feuille ron-don don don,
 Sur la jolie, jolie feuille ronde.

"All save the princess proud — who watched
 Afar the broad highway,
 To see her trusty messenger,
 Ride from where Nantes lay.

" 'Oh, messenger, bold messenger,
 What news from Nantes, pray?'
 'The only news I bring, ma belle, —
 Your lover bade me say,

" 'Choose you another gallant now,
 He has a sweetheart rare.'
 'Ah, is she wiser far than I,
 Or is her face more fair?'

" 'Her beauty is not like to yours,
 But secret lore she knows;
 She makes the snow, she makes the hail,
 She makes the wind that blows.

" 'She makes the sun to shine again
 At midnight in her bower;
 And on the borders of the sea
 The rosemary to flower.'
 Sur la feuille, ron-don don don,
 Sur la jolie, jolie feuille ronde."

was like to obtain in exchange for the homespun cotton cloth and the small box of beads she had brought.

Nevertheless, despite her affected indifference, Angélique was annoyed. Sterling's conduct since that dreadful afternoon when he found her wandering alone upon the prairie, was as inexplicable to her as it appeared to this kindly friend. Instead of profiting by the opportunity for a reconciliation wherewith fortune had then favored him, he had avoided her more persistently than before. Like a dream now seemed the moments when, with his protecting arm about her and her head pillowed upon his breast, she had prayed with all the ardor of her pure young heart that God would keep him during long years as he was then — strong, courageous, and trustworthy. Again, it angered her to think of the adventure. How cold he must be, forsooth, or did he regard her as a child? How humiliating to her was the recollection. He had taken Angélique Cuillerier in his arms, — Angélique Cuillerier who, with all her coquetry, would not permit to any cavalier the liberty of holding her hand. And she had clung to him, even as a girl who fears a cruel fate may part her from her lover. Yet, notwithstanding, they were again upon no more cordial terms than those of polite ceremony. "Allons, if he does not wish to remember, I am ready enough to forget," she said to herself. "Had I not been so weak and chilled when he found me, I would have insisted that he set me upon the horse and himself plod along in the mud by my side. But the wolf!"

It was usually at this stage of her meditations that Angélique began to sing or laugh, or to smile upon some gallant, if any chanced to be near.

Now the slave boys who paddled the canoe ran it up on the beach of the southern shore of the river. Angélique sprang agilely out on the strand, assisted Madame St. Aubin to alight, and the two women, ascending the steep bluff, passed through the gate of the well-built palisade that surrounded the Ottawa village.

"I am always filled with wonder and curiosity when I find myself in one of these Indian settlements," whispered the girl to her companion. "How ingeniously constructed are these long lodges of bark, arched like arbors! And look beyond, in the fields of the savages the maize is already sprouting!"

"Chut," sniffed Madame St. Aubin. "Even this passing glimpse of the lodges suffices to show that the interiors are far from cleanly; and I have heard that the Ottawa fields are not so well tilled as those of the Hurons below the fort. But let us hasten to the hut of the old squaw Okeemesemaw; she who is the mother of seven warriors. It is with her I wish to deal."

Obediently, Angélique kept up with the dame, yet her bright eyes took note of what was going on around her.

At the entrance to one wigwam, three or four braves were seated upon the ground. One held between his hands a roughly moulded bowl of red clay, wherein were some six or eight small pebbles, colored yellow on one side and black on the other. These he tossed up in the air with fierce glee, and when they fell back into the dish, all the men bent over it eagerly to see whether the black or the yellow side of the pebbles had fallen uppermost, and began talking all together in angry tones. They were playing

“bowl,” the Indian gambling game, and a dispute had arisen over the result of a throw.

Farther along, the white women saw the squaws stretching upon frames the hides of the deer that their lords had shot, and bringing in wood from the forest. At the fires before some of the lodges women were cooking chunks of venison, and the odor of burnt meats pervaded the vicinity.

In one arbor hut a number of girls were dancing to the sound of the “sisiquoi,” a kind of gourd filled with grains of shot.

Groups of idle warriors scowled at the visitors as they passed, but what chiefly impressed Angélique was the spirit of unrest abroad in the village. True, the braves lounged upon their rush mats, or stalked about, arrayed in their blankets, with an aspect of supreme forgetfulness of everything but the pleasant spring air. Yet the keen-witted demoiselle knew enough of the Indian character to feel that beneath their half-closed eyelids they were furtively watching herself and her companion. She caught a glimpse, too, of an old man who went through the camp from warrior to warrior. As he spoke a word in the ear, now of one, now of another, she fancied that the eye of each kindled; and although in no other way did the imperturbable expression of his visage change, she shuddered with an unaccountable sense that he had received some ominous communication.

And the women, all save the party of dancers, — were they not busied as they were wont to be before the setting out of their lords for the hunt, or upon an expedition against their enemies? What could it all mean?

At last, with Madame St. Aubin, she reached the lodge of Okeemesemaw. The old squaw was nowhere

in sight, and the dame was about to approach nearer the opening into the hut and call out, when Angélique laid a hand upon her arm.

"See those within, and note what they are doing," cried the girl, in an alarmed whisper.

Madame St. Aubin had already observed in time to draw back.

Among the shadows a redman was actually working. His task was a peculiar one. With one hand he grasped the barrel of a musket. In the other he held a strong steel file, which he wielded with as little noise as might be. He was engaged in filing off the barrel, so as to reduce the musket, stock and all, to the length of about a yard. Near him, seated upon a bear skin, was another young brave, employed in the same manner; while a third, whom Angélique recognized as Panigwun, son of Pontiac, having finished a like task, was now loading his weapon.

"Pretend to have seen nothing," Dame St. Aubin hurriedly murmured, as she drew the startled girl toward the rear of the wigwam, where they found the aged woman mending fish nets.

"Did the white chief's wife and daughter enter the lodge in search of me?" she inquired, with impassive countenance, although her gaze sharply strove to read the truth.

"No. I thought I heard voices without, and we came around the lodge expecting to find you here with some of the other women," returned Madame St. Aubin, in well-feigned unconcern.

"Ugh! I was talking to myself," explained Okeemesemaw. "You wish to buy venison of me? Yes, I will sell you a quarter or a half of a fine deer that one of my sons shot yesterday. Only now have I skinned it."

While they were bartering for the flesh of the deer, the son of Pontiac, whom the white women had noticed in the cabin, stalked noiselessly around to where they stood. His erect figure was almost enveloped in a gay blanket, but as he for a second flung open the latter in salutation, Angélique caught the gleam of steel, and knew it to be the shortened barrel of the gun. The next moment he thrust close to her face his own grinning visage, smeared with vermilion and ochre, and said in the halting patois half Canadian, half Indian, —

“The White Song-Bird is French; she need have no fear. Her father loves the Great Chief Pontiac; and Panigwun loves the White Song-Bird.”

The girl pressed closer to Madame St. Aubin, and was only restrained from shrieking aloud by the realization that to do so might imperil their safety.

Old Okeemesemaw promptly interposed, for she knew the braves had been drinking English milk (rum).

“Has Pontiac a son or a daughter in Panigwun?” she said, with biting sarcasm. “Has the Strong-Wing-Feather nothing to do but to stir the silly fright of a young maiden, when there is the grand game of lacrosse at the fort of the English for which to prepare? Ugh, he will never make a warrior!”

Panigwun strode away in disdain, and the squaw insisted upon conducting her customers back to their boat, after the demoiselle had hastily bought of her a mocock of maple sugar.

As they again passed the hut where the music had been, a girl came out and placed herself in their path.

She was beautiful as a fawn of the forest, straight as an arrow, and of a fairer hue than her Indian com-

panions, although now her face was flushed from the romping. Her eyes were bright and lustrous, and her black hair hung down in front of her shoulders in two long, shining braids.

"Catherine!" exclaimed Angélique, with pleasure, recognizing in the charming apparition an acquaintance whom she had been wont to meet and talk with sometimes outside the chapel of the Jesuit Mission after Mass or Vespers.

The girl smiled in return, showing her white teeth, that somehow reminded Angélique of the teeth of the wolf.

"I am not Catherine here," she said. "It is true, so I was baptized at the mission; but among my people I am still Nedawniss, the daughter of Makatépelicité."

"Your people!" echoed Mademoiselle Cuillier, in astonishment; "you told me once that you lived among the Ojibwas, far down the river."

"Like the Great Chief Pontiac, I belong to both tribes," answered the girl haughtily. "My mother was an Ojibwa, my father is an Ottawa warrior."

"Why is it that you no longer come to the mission?" demanded Angélique, in digression.

The Indian shrugged her shoulders with the manner of some ancestral *coureur de bois* and replied, —

"No, I do not go; I think of other things."

Then drawing from her bosom a small square of deerskin whereon was begun a pattern embroidered in beads and dyed porcupine quills, she continued: "See, your lover, Major Gladwin, has ordered of me a pair of moccasins; do you think he will live to wear them? Will he take part in the game of lacrosse at the fort? If he will, he shall have the moccasins betimes. Go to the mission chapel or to Ste. Anne's and pray for him; I would if I were you."

"Catherine, what do you mean by these strange words?" gasped the demoiselle, grasping the arm of the Indian. "What has angered you? Well you know that Major Gladwin has often played at lacrosse with the French; but this is to be a game between the Ottawas and the Hurons, is it not? Make haste to finish the moccasins, for the commandant will pay you well for them. And — and — Father Potier is ill-pleased that you do not go to the chapel. He ever relied on you to lead the choir of Indian girls in the singing."

Catherine laughed harshly, and, before Angélique could say more, Madame St. Aubin hurried her onward to the boat.

"There is trouble brewing," ejaculated the dame, when the canoe was clear of the shore and the Panis paddled swiftly out into the current.

"The rivalry between the different tribes is always keen at the spring games," wearily responded Angélique, striving to argue away her fears.

"But the spring games do not account for the shortened gun barrels," pursued the dame, with a degree of asperity. "I shall counsel my good man to carry news to the stockade of what we have seen this day."

"Yes; a message must be sent to Major Gladwin," agreed the girl, now grave again. "Those dark words that Catherine let drop were, I believe, but the promptings of a childish jealousy. The commandant has bought bead trinkets of her, and because he commended her handiwork and spoke kindly to her once or twice, she cherishes for him, it seems, either an ardent attachment or a passionate hatred, I know not which. Yet — the gun barrels! You will surely see to it that the major is warned, dame?"

"I will surely see to it," was the decided reply.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

FOR THE MASTERY OF A SOUL

ON the first of May, the Chief Pontiac had appeared at the gate of Fort Pontchartrain, with forty warriors, and announced that the party had come to perform the calumet dance before the officers of the garrison.

Upon being admitted, they passed down Ste. Anne's Street and paused before the British headquarters. Here, in the Place d'Armes, the leader and thirty of his followers began the dance, each recounting his own exploits and boasting himself the bravest of the brave. The soldiers gathered round them, while, undeterred, the remaining ten of the redmen strolled about the town. When the ceremony was over, they all returned quietly to their village.

It was to a continuance of these festivities that the braves ostensibly looked forward at the time of the visit of the white women to their squaws.

Notwithstanding Dame St. Aubin's assurance that a messenger should be sent to the fort with word of what she and Mademoiselle Cuillerier had seen at the Indian village, Angélique was unlike herself during the remainder of the day. Her usual buoyant vivacity had deserted her, and even after she had seen Casse St. Aubin set out for the stockade, she flitted about, busying herself with the household tasks that came in her way with nervous energy.

At twilight, she stole away to the little beach that bordered the river, where one might walk screened by the steep bank from the view of any chance way-farer on the road above.

She wanted to be alone, to go over once more, as she had already recalled a score of times, all the incidents of the visit to the Ottawa settlement; to ponder again the allusions of the Ojibwa girl, and strive to determine whether there was in them anything more than petty feminine malice.

For a while the pretty demoiselle lingered by the river's edge, sometimes breaking off from her serious mood to pick up a flat pebble, send it skipping along the surface of the water, and watch it sink into the depths, wishing she might thus bury her misgivings. Again, she cast into the current some twig or bit of brushwood, whereat the old dog *Trouveur* plunged after it, with a sportiveness that could scarce be surpassed by any young puppy along the *côte*.

She was thus engaged when down the stream of Parant's Creek a canoe shot into the river, and a few minutes later the canoeist ran the little skiff up on the beach almost at the feet of the stroller on the sands.

Angélique started, half wondering if her thoughts had taken visible form, for before her stood the Ojibwa maiden.

A growl from the dog gave proof, however, that her visitor was no embodiment of a mental image.

"Catherine!" she cried in amazement, "how is it that you come by the creek? Had I expected you at all, I should have looked to see your pirogue skimming across the strait from the opposite shore."

"My canoe is like a bird of the Lakes; on its wings I fly; it swims the Rigolet des Hurons, Campeau's

rivulet, and this clear stream, as well as Le Détroit. It and I are free as the air and the swift-flowing waters," answered the girl, with her scornful smile. "We are lovers, my canoe and I. On the prairie, my feet are his feet; over the waters, he carries me in his arms."

"Oh, it matters not at all to me from what direction you come," replied Angélique. "But if 't is I whom you are come to see, what is your errand?"

"No, it matters not, unless mayhap I come from the direction of the fort," continued Catherine mockingly. "Yet, be not so brief, mademoiselle; there is much I might tell you."

"In God's name, what do you mean?" exclaimed Angélique, exasperated. "If by speaking you can save another, or others, from harm, speak, I implore you!" She laid a hand on the arm of the savage in earnest entreaty.

A wave of emotion swept over the usually immobile face of the Ojibwa; two natures seemed to struggle for the mastery of her fierce soul, the one noble and the other evil. At one moment she appeared to soften almost to tenderness; as though moved to some heroic action, she darted toward her canoe, evidently intending to depart in haste. But, alas, she turned back. Coming close to Angélique, who had followed her every motion, first in wonderment, again with quick sympathy, and now with horror, she peered into the beautiful face of the French girl, laughed gutterally as she had done earlier in the day, and cried, "Bah, I will not do it. Gitchie Manitou, let him die with the rest."

Angélique caught her by the wrists.

"You shall tell me what you mean," she said, "or I will cry out for my father. I will keep you here

until he sends me aid. I may not be as strong as you are, but Trouveur will help me. You shall be sent to the gaol within the stockade."

At the mention of the gaol, the girl laughed again that discordant bitter laugh, whereat Angélique marvelled that her voice had ever been considered sweet.

"If you would have my tidings, hear them then," returned the Indian, shaking off the firm hands of her white antagonist, as though they were but as the touch of a tame wood pigeon. "Hear and yet know that you, a French girl, dare not so much as raise a finger to give warning to those from whom the protection of the Great Spirit has passed. No, for if you attempt to warn them, the Chief Pontiac will pluck out your heart and eat it."

Angélique felt the blood in her veins grow cold, and a tremor ran through her slight yet vigorous frame. But she belonged to a race that had given chevaliers to New France; she was not to be cowed by the threats of this savage. The spirit of her grandmother, Madame Trottier de Beaubien, of her uncle, Picoté de Bellestre, blazed in her eyes as she said unflinchingly, —

"Tell me."

"The English have broken faith with my people," hissed Nedawniss, in a venomous whisper. "The white warriors rest idle within the stockade; their guns gather rust, their swords grow dim in the scabbards. They think by harsh words and plunderings to make slaves of the redmen. They are asleep, but the King of the forest is awake. Not many times has the sun risen and set since Pontiac held a council down at the little river Ecorse, — ha, ha, under the eyes of the red-coated dogs, who were asleep on their mats. Not for a necklace of the finest beads of the

French would I have missed the scene. There were warriors, women, children, and young maidens shining with bears' oil and ruddy with vermilion, like to Red Swan the bride of Singing Sands; handsomer than was ever milk-faced woman. Stealing from bush to bush on the newly green prairie, I saw the council; many chiefs seated in a wide circle upon the grass. The face of each was changeless, as though pictured on the cliffs near the Father of Waters,¹ or carved from the heart of a forest tree. But I who am of their blood,—I know what fires burned beneath those visages of stone. Pipes were lighted and passed from one to another. Then I saw the Great Chief Pontiac rise from his place; one might have thought the war-god himself stood before the nations. He spoke in a loud voice that stirred my soul, and at every pause there broke from the warriors deep mutterings of assent, like the bay of the wolves in the wilderness."

"And what did he say?" interrogated Angélique, catching her breath, lest a sob of anxiety should escape her.

"I heard no word," answered Nedawniss, abruptly breaking off her recital.

"You know why the council was called," persisted the French girl.

"This much I know," pursued Nedawniss evasively. "I would not give a wampum shell for the lives of the red-clad dogs at the stockade. There is one among them whom I would save if he loved me. But my heart has lain at his feet, and he has trodden upon it. Another white brave has found the breath of an Indian maiden sweet, her heart warm. My father is an Ottawa chief, my mother's father was a Frenchman,

¹ Lake Superior.

and the missionary wedded him to the maiden of his choice in the forest. No Indian girl can more deftly skin the beaver, the deer, and the muskrat than I, or stretch them more neatly upon the frames. Why should not this yellow-haired warrior wed me before the altar of Ste. Anne's or the mission chapel, as it is said Captain Campbell will marry the White Fawn whom the French call *la jolie Mathurine*?"

Despite her terror, Angélique was conscious of a feeling of incredulous astonishment.

"You are dreaming, Catherine," she said, half in pity. "The English do not marry Indian maidens. *La jolie Mathurine* is nearly as white as I am. She has been reared by Dame Cabacier of the red mill at *La Belle Fontaine*, and you are —"

She stopped short, but Nedawniss passionately added for her, —

"Yes, I am a savage. I would not stoop to be his slave, — no, not I, the daughter of a councillor of the Great Chief. But if he would love me as I would fain be loved — ah, then I would give to him a *sisso-baquet*¹ kiss. Yes, a kiss of such sweetness as he has never even dreamed. I would pillow his head on my breast and soothe him with songs, as a mother caresses and sings to her child; as Omeme, the wood pigeon, cooes to her mate."

The voice of the daughter of the forest took on a musical cadence, as Angélique listened in amazement. But all at once the softness died out of the black eyes of the Indian girl, and they burned with a fierce light.

"No, he does not love me," she exclaimed, with a vehemence inherited perhaps from her pale-faced ancestor. "He loves you — you, Mademoiselle Cuil-

¹ Sweet.

lerier, and you cannot raise a finger to save him! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will not pretend to be ignorant that it is of Major Gladwin you speak," continued Angélique, in the patois with which they were both so familiar. "But your words are strange indeed to me. You say that danger threatens him, yet you will not stretch forth your hand to turn it aside. It is not thus that a French girl loves, nor yet I dare hazard does an English maiden. A white woman will lay down her life for the man who has won her heart, whether he loves her in return or not."

"She may do it; but not if *his* heart is given to another woman," said the Ojibwa vindictively. "The pale-faced maiden may be gentleness itself, yet her lover had best beware the jealous anger of the dove. I shall be revenged. I have told you in part, that your soul may be plunged in anguish; you do not know enough to help him, even if you should risk the loss of your pretty scalp by going to tell him. But that you will never do."

As she flung this taunt at the shrinking demoiselle, the dog, Trouveur, which had several times menaced her by a low snarl, bounded forward with an angry bark.

The Indian girl sprang lightly aside, however, picked up a handful of sand, and cast it at the dog; and then, speeding across the little beach with incredible swiftness, leaped into the canoe, and with a stroke of the paddle drove it away from the shore.

"Stop! stop!" cried Angélique, running down to the water's edge. "Oh, come back! I do not want the heart of Major Gladwin; he says not a word to me of love. Go and tell him what you know of the evil de-

signs of these warriors. Thus you will win his gratitude. Save him, and I will pray that one day you may be loved, even as the fairest and purest of white women wish to be loved !”

Like the call of “Kawyawshe,” the soft-plumaged gull, her voice rang out over the water ; but Nedaw-niss, the daughter of Makatépelicité, looked back with a malicious smile, laughed mockingly, shook her head, and paddled away, leaving Angélique to wonder distractedly if she would heed this last appeal, or whether she was stonily resolved to keep locked within her own breast the secret that might mean so much to the English at the fort.

“Perhaps after all, Catherine only wanted to frighten me, and there is no secret at all,” said the little demoiselle to herself.

As she started to return to the house, a snow white pigeon from the wood winged past her, so near that she could almost have caught it in her hand. Angélique paused and made the sign of the cross upon her breast ; she shared the Canadian superstition that a bird coming thus might be the soul of some departed friend for whom she had forgotten to pray.

During the evening she could not shake off the spell that the Indian’s visit seemed to have cast upon her ; and when she retired to her own little nook under the eaves, it was to dream of the Chase-Galère, — that phantom barque which to the French-Canadian betokens approaching misfortune to himself or those dear to him. Scarcely had it vanished than, in her troubled sleep, she saw black, rough-coated dogs, coursing as if in the scent of game upon the waters of the strait ; and, running up the côte to evade them, she found that the clear stream of Parant’s Creek flowed red with blood,

From this uneasy slumber Angélique awoke, roused by some subtle sub-consciousness rather than by any definite sound, though, after a preliminary grumble, the old clock in the hearthroom presently spoke, announcing the time to be two hours past midnight.

The loft was dark, but in the angle opposite to her Tante Josette was sleeping the sleep of the just. A few moments elapsed, then it seemed to the girl that she heard the murmur of subdued conversation in the room beneath. Yes, a strange man was talking to her father.

A visitor at this hour? What could it mean? Until recently life upon the banks of Le Détroit had been so simple. Now some hidden scheme might lurk under the most commonplace incident of the day. How much of mystery might there not be in this conference held in the heart of the night! The Chase-Galère, the hunting dogs! Was this stranger the embodiment of still another warning of calamity, the solitary spectral huntsman with gaunt, bronzed face, sometimes seen in the sky after sunset, rifle in hand, and followed by a pack of wolfish hounds? At this time it behooved every one to know what was going on.

Noiselessly Angélique rose. Like a shade of the night, in her dark woollen robe, her soft curls falling in disorder upon her shoulders, she raised the deerskin curtain, and entered the outer apartment of the loft. Here two of the younger children lay in a sound sleep. Passing them, she crept to the opening from which the stair led to the first story of the building. The air was cool, and, as she expected, the remnant of a small fire, kindled to prepare the belated supper of the master of the house, had been raked out and another brand cast upon the embers, but for the purpose of giving light rather than heat, the blaze being

screened from the outer world by the leather hangings at the windows.

Crouching upon the floor, she crept to the edge of the opening and looked down. The sight that met her eyes caused her to shrink back quickly, and only by a rare presence of mind did she refrain from an exclamation of amazement.

Upon the table of forest pine in the centre of the hearthroom was placed the rudely made armchair that usually stood beside the hearth, and seated therein was her father. Yes, Antoine Cuillerier, yet at first glance she had not known him. Instead of his wonted attire, the bourgeois wore a military coat of azure color, heavily overwrought with gold lace; from the left shoulder across his breast extended a broad crimson sash, in imitation of the decoration of the Order of St. Louis; and upon his head was a three-cornered hat, adorned with ribbons of red and azure, and ornamented with quills of the wild turkey.

His daughter at once recognized the coat as having belonged to Monsieur de Bellestre. Her first impulse was to laugh silently over her father's fantastic dignity, yet the next moment she was more inclined to weep. Was not this masquerading an evidence that his mind had grown distraught over the fading away of the power of New France, even as she had sometimes feared would be the case?

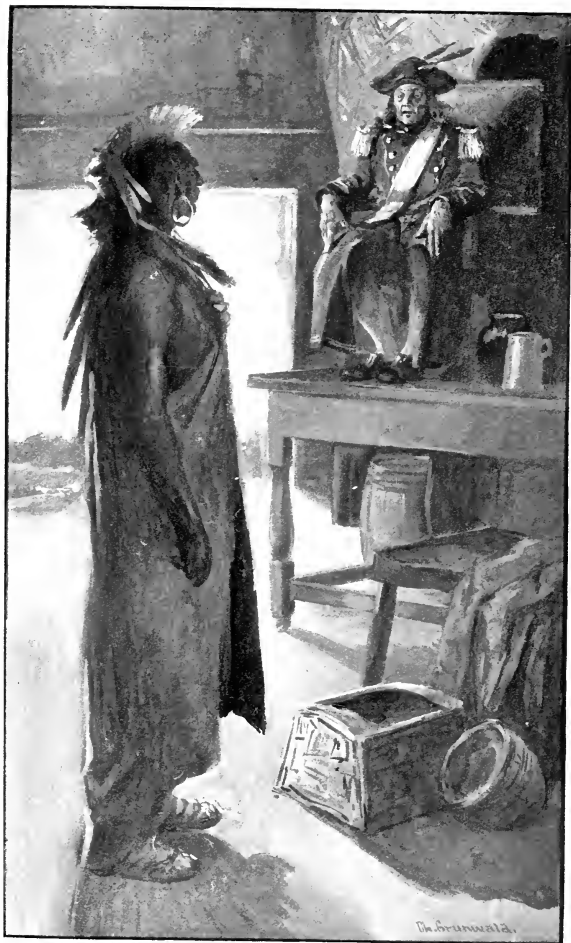
Singular as was his appearance, her glance soon passed from him to the guest, who had been, clearly, expected, yet of whose presence the remainder of the household were ignorant. Nearer the fire, but with his back to it as he faced the queerly arrayed figure in the chair that parodied a throne, stood an Indian chief. Of itself there was nothing unusual in the presence of the warrior, since the redmen had

ever been made welcome at the hearth of Cuillerier dit Beaubien, and, had the demoiselle seen the savage lying wrapped in his blanket before the fire, she would have been in no wise dismayed. But why this covert council? Why did her father affect this bizarre and pompous state? She looked again; the muscular form of the Indian clad in a tunic of cotton cloth was finer in its physical perfection than any of the splendid bronzes in King Louis' great palace of Versailles. Angélique was, however, impressed only by its strength. As he turned his head so that his dark features were in silhouette against the light of the fire, she saw that below the flowing hair, wherein was thrust a single eagle's feather, the unpainted face was intelligent and bold, the nose aquiline, and the eyes remarkably keen and piercing.

The secret guest was none other than the great Pontiac, and this conference between the King of the Wilderness and Antoine Cuillerier must have reference to a matter of importance.

With feminine curiosity, still further piqued by anxiety, Angélique listened intently, for the chief was speaking.

"The French came into the country of my fathers, and they were welcomed because they are the brothers of the redmen," he said, using the patois in which she had conversed with Catherine. "For the skins of the beaver, the Frenchman gave his red brother a gun that speaks with fire, and powder and bullets as food for the gun. He gave him cloth and blankets. Once the redman shot the deer with arrows headed with jasper, and knew no meat, clothing, or weapons other than that he found in the forest. Now it is not so, and these new people give us nothing; want, sufferings, and death stare us in the face. When I and



De. Brunwald.



my warriors paid visits to the posts of the French, we were treated with respect. I no longer go down to Fort Pontchartrain, for I should be met with cold looks. My braves are received with oaths, threats, and even blows by the soldiers. Many *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* say that the King of France has but fallen asleep, and thus the English have taken his forts and the lands of his red allies. Why do you not wake him? Tell me, Blue Coat, you who hold for him here the place of our father, Monsieur de Bellestre?"

As he spoke these last words in a tone of suppressed passion, Pontiac turned to his host with fierce inquiry.

Antoine Cuillerier smiled blandly. So great was his vanity and self-conceit that they made him oblivious of the risk he ran in attempting to hoodwink this hawk-eyed champion of a powerful race.

"The King of France is so rich he cares not if he loses many forts while he sleeps," he answered, with complaisance. "Nevertheless, his Majesty is now awake; he pities the losses of his children, and is angry because of the wrong done them. The corn is now sprouting; before it is a foot high, his armies will come to reconquer the forts that have been lost to his crown. The French and their Indian brother, fighting side by side, as they have done before, will drive the red-coated dogs back to the south."

"It is well," returned Pontiac sullenly. "Yet I do not care to await the pleasure of the French King. I will begin the work, and when he sends his war canoes to the strait and to the Lakes, his soldiers can finish it. I am head of many tribes. The Ottawas, the Ojibwas, the Pottawattomies, obey my will. They delay only until the time I have named."

"And you have held a council, I hear," said Cuillerier, with a gracious nod of the head, which might have been becoming in a prince, but was somewhat ludicrous from a man perched thus upon the table.

His ostentation might have impressed other of his forest friends, but Angélique's quick eyes read beneath the imperturbability of the Great Chief a scorn of Antoine's absurd pretensions, and in the darkness she felt her cheeks grow hot with mortification that her father should thus lower himself before the savage.

"The Blue Coat has said it," replied Pontiac; "I spoke to many warriors at the Ecorse. The moon now shows but little of her face; when she shows all her face the English will have vanished from this part of the earth. But, what is that? Once before I heard it! 'T was like a bird stirring in its nest. Does the darkness listen?" asked the chief, breaking off abruptly.

His ear, trained to detect the slightest rustle of leaves in the forest, had caught the sound of some slight motion of Angélique's.

"One of the papposes in the loft has no doubt grown uneasy in his sleep," answered Cuillerier, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"None but papposes are there?" demanded Pontiac.

"None but papposes," responded Antoine; and he thought he said truly, for to him Angélique was still one of the children, and he had forgotten Tante Josette.

The Great Chief eyed him for a moment with sternness. But the French had everything to gain and nothing to lose by the splendid conspiracy planned by the masterly brain of the Indian; and Antoine

Cuillerier professed to hate the English as bitterly as did Pontiac himself. It did not seem possible, therefore, even to the wily savage, that, under the roof of the man who assumed to be the representative of the French power at the strait, there might be listening one who would wish to thwart his bold design to banish the intruders from the region which his fathers and the nation of the fleur-de-lis had for so long governed together in peace.

At his inquiry, Angélique lay motionless upon the floor above, scarcely daring to breathe, and expecting discovery at every moment; discovery that would mean, as well, the loss of all opportunity to warn those against whom the Ottawa was maturing his plot with such remarkable sagacity, opposed only by a lukewarm expression of deprecation now and then on the part of her father.

"Angel of the night, shield and hide me beneath thy protecting wings," she ejaculated mentally.

But Antoine had met the glance of the visitor so frankly that the latter's momentary suspicion was dispelled. In a species of exultation, as though he verily believed himself chosen by the Gitchie Manitou for a sublime task, and rendered rash by his indomitable pride and a generous draught of eau-de-vie which Antoine had hospitably pressed upon him, he went on, revealing to his friend the French trader more of his scheme than his customary caution would have permitted him to do.

In the gray of the early morning he left the house as silently as he had entered it. Antoine Cuillerier had long since descended from his chair of state to join his guest in a potation. Now, at the departure of the chief, being in a heavy stupor, he sank upon the settle. When his regular breath-

ing, punctuated at intervals by a sonorous sound, proclaimed him unconscious of all around him, Angélique ventured to get upon her feet, and, with aching bones and a chill of terror at her heart, made her way back to her alcove at the end of the loft. Not to sleep, however, but to remain there, trembling and praying, until the others of the household were astir.

CHAPTER NINTH

IN THE MISSION ORCHARD

ACROSS the river, some distance below the fort, Father Pierre Potier walked in the orchard of the Huron Mission. He was sixty years of age, over six feet in height, and his commanding frame, clad in a Jesuit's gown of rusty black, was strong as iron. He had a long, lean face; a circle of gray hair showed beneath his black skull-cap; a thin fringe of beard outlined rather than concealed his chin; and his light eyes, though gentle, were so penetrating in their gaze that both French and Indians often felt that he read their motives and actions as though their hearts were a printed page before him.

The orchard was a pleasant spot on this afternoon of the 6th of May, 1763. Seen from afar, it resembled a great white garland, Nature's offering to the Creator, laid before the door of the mission chapel, even as the children of the forest were wont to present their gifts. At a nearer view, the white mass resolved itself into a score of apple and pear trees, offshoots of orchards in old France, planted here some thirty-five years before, when the mission was founded by the beloved Father de la Richardie.

As Monsieur Potier paused occasionally to contemplate now one carefully nurtured tree and again another, each appeared in itself, too, a beautiful bouquet. The first, perhaps, white as the snowflakes that had so often rested upon its branches during the

long winter; the last pink-tinted, like the modest flush in the cheeks of the little French maidens, when they came across the strait to kneel beside the Indian girls in the chapel, and, awaiting their turn with the latter, to kneel at the feet of the missionary, and confess their simple faults. For he was thought to be more forbearing with his penitents than was the zealous curé of Ste. Anne's.

Among the blossom-laden boughs the birds chirped and sang, busied with their wooing or nest-building. The sunshine was all-pervading, the very air was fragrant. The grass under the trees was soft and green, and dotted with violets. White and yellow butterflies flitted about; the young French maidens would have called them the souls of little children, come back to play in the spring sunshine, but they would have been gravely chided for the pretty superstition by the good father. The bees, too, sang their spring song, as they flew about their work. Was honey ever sweeter than the honey garnered from the blossoms of this orchard, and stored in the hives beyond the mission house?

The quiet spot was indeed a peaceful retreat. Just here the line of clay bluffs that extends along the edge of the stream sinks to the water's margin, and ends in a crescent bay, with beautifully sanded shores. Father de la Richardie had called the place *Pointe de Montréal*; and as the latter's successor walked to and fro, repeating the psalms from the breviary, he commanded an extensive view of the river, both in the direction of the Lake of the Eries, and upward toward the *Isle au Cochon*, the *Isle au Pêche*, and the Lake of Ste. Claire.

How fair were the clear waters,—yonder, blue as the Bay of Biscay across which he had looked for

the last time upon the land of France, and in the distance a gleaming flood of gold and silver. So tranquil was the afternoon, so solitary the environment, one might have imagined the strait still undiscovered in the wilderness.

The mission house was a long, low structure of huge, squared timbers, with wide white chimneys, and three dormers in the roof; rough and plain, but well builded as forest logs and honest toil could make it, that it might be for many years the headquarters of any Jesuit missionaries who roamed the wilderness south of Michilimackinac. Beside the mission stood the Huron chapel, also constructed of squared pine timbers upon solid stone foundations. Near by were a forge and a storehouse, the place being a fur-trading centre. Here the Indians could sell their pelts, and obtain supplies by just barter, without fear of being defrauded of their furs by a drahm of eau-de-vie, or English rum, as was so often the case when they dealt with the ordinary traders.

On this bright May afternoon, all the buildings were in perfect repair, owing to the supervision and often to the personal exertions of Father Potier. To his Indians, he was not only the priest charged with the care of their souls, but the friend who taught them, as far as they were capable of learning, the agricultural arts of civilization. The mission farm was intended to be to them a model, as well as to lay up a store of food for them in time of famine; since, fertile as was the region, the frequent wars among the various tribes sometimes brought the aborigines to hunger and destitution.

It was the hour of the "sieste," or afternoon repose, which the French-Canadian observes with extreme conscientiousness. The accustomed sound of

the hammer ringing upon the anvil of the forge was stilled for the time being. L'Espérance, the mission farmer, who had been planting vegetables in the fields, lay down between the furrows of the plough, and went to sleep. Brother Regis in the kitchen dozed in his chair; good man, he had been active about many tasks since early morning. Even the eyes of Father Potier grew a trifle heavy, but his alert, nervous temperament scorned the "sieste," and this hour he was wont to keep free for a walk in the orchard.

"Great are the works of the Lord; exquisite and agreeable are all His designs," read the priest from his book. Then he looked up, meditating on the words whose truth was so forcibly exemplified by the scene before him. As his gaze rested upon the river, a small dark object on its surface recalled him from his pious abstraction. It was a little canoe, and but a few minutes of observation sufficed to show that the paddler was making for the beach in front of the mission.

Before long the canoe had come close to the shore, then it disappeared; no doubt the canoeist was now concealing the light skiff among the high reeds of the marsh.

Who was the visitor? A messenger from the town, a habitant or Huron come to buy an axe or some farm implement at the forge? So tardy was the stranger in appearing that Monsieur Potier almost forgot there was a stranger, and returned to the recital of his office.

Quarter of an hour passed; chancing to raise his eyes, he saw, advancing toward him under the newly green trees, a young girl, whom he presently recognized as the daughter of the rich trader, Antoine Cuillerier.

"Little Angélique!" he exclaimed paternally, when, anon, she came up to him and bent her head for his blessing, "was it your canoe I saw on the river awhile ago?"

"Yes, my father," she answered demurely.

It was not necessary to explain that, fearing lest water-soaked moccasins might attract attention to herself later, she had, ere landing, taken off shoes and hose, and, having beached her boat, had stopped to put them on again.

"But we have not service in the chapel this afternoon," said the missionary, "and you should not come to the southern shore unaccompanied."

"That I know, Father Pierre," she stammered, in a low voice; "still, I had to come."

"Tut, tut," continued the holy man, with a shade of impatience, thinking she had brought to him some girlish matter of conscience. "Say your prayers, try to do your duty, and worry not your heart with foolish scruples. Remember, God is not a stepfather, and come to confession on the regular day."

As he concluded, looking fixedly at her for the first time, he noted with surprise that her round face, usually glowing with color, was quite pale; her eyes, so quick to light up with merriment, were grave and quiet; and her red lips, ever so near to smiling, wore a determined expression that betokened the presence of a stronger character behind the charming youthful countenance than the girl had ever before shown that she possessed.

"Angélique, my daughter, what has happened?" he inquired, with his habitual kindness, his concern being at once aroused at the trouble he saw mirrored in her earnest gaze. "Go into the chapel, and before the altar you shall tell me if you wish."

"No, no," cried the girl, "even the walls of the church might have ears. I will tell you here under God's own sky; here, where the river and the land can be seen on every side. Take your place on the bench under this apple tree, my father, and I will kneel by your side and whisper it to you. I have not come to tell my own sins to-day, yet what I have to say should surely be spoken on bended knees."

"Child, you cannot confess another's guilt. But if there is some wrong that in charity or justice I can right, tell me where we stand. If you need the counsel of the missionary, speak without fear."

"My father," began Angélique, "from before the light of day until an hour since, I have been praying and considering, seeking to know how I had best act, and at last I decided to ask advice from you. On the one hand, I am a French girl with all my heart, and I would not for the wealth in the King's grand palace of Versailles do anything that would put off, so much as by a day, the restoration of the power of New France. Would you not like to see the white banner of the fleur-de-lis floating again above the fort across the river, Father Pierre?"

"Ay, that I would, if God so willed," answered the priest, his eyes kindling with enthusiasm as his thoughts went back to his native land beyond the seas, and dwelt upon the glories won by her armies in the days of the Sun King. "Many times have I petitioned that Providence would give back to Canada, the youngest daughter of the Church, the possessions she has lost."

"Yes," sighed Angélique, casting down her eyes and clasping her palms together dejectedly. "Yet my soul revolts against the means by which, it is said, this ascendancy of my country may be brought

about. To a woman all wars are cruel! How can she judge of plans that, coming to her ears, seem barbarous, yet may be a paying back to our conquerors of what they have done to us?"

"My child," replied Monsieur Potier, "you speak in enigmas. We are no longer at war with the English; only the King can fling down the gage anew by declaring that he will not abide by the capitulation of Montreal. This, however, I have good reason to believe he has no intention of doing. His northern provinces of America must, therefore, adhere to the terms of the capitulation. Ah, little Angélique, our people love the fleur-de-lis, they love their country; but more than the flag, more even than their freedom, they love their own faith and honor and the faith and honor of New France."

"Yes, that is it — the faith and honor of New France," repeated the girl, as if his words made clear her own confused thought. "The fair fame of my country which must remain as unsullied as the hearts of her daughters. Listen, then, my father."

As the girl hurriedly told of what she and Madame St. Aubin had seen in the Ottawa village, Father Potier started, but did not interrupt the story.

"The dame told many of our neighbors," concluded Angélique, "and Méloche, the blacksmith, said that of late Indians had visited his forge and tried to borrow files, yet would not say for what they wanted them. Casse St. Aubin and Monsieur Guyon went to the fort and repeated the tale to Major Gladwin, but he only laughed at them. He is so brave that he makes light of every danger."

The priest shot a keen glance at the youthful face beside him; but the girl returned his look of shrewd inquiry with one of perfect simplicity and candor.

"It is well for a soldier to have unflinching courage, but foolhardiness is a fault," he said grimly. "I must look into this matter. Is it possible the files could have been bought at the mission forge? If so, Cécille, our smith and cutler has been most remiss in not having informed me of the transaction."

He turned about, and started for the forge.

"But that is not all, Father Pierre," cried Angélique, stretching out a hand to detain him.

Immediately arresting his steps, he asked with gentleness, —

"What more, child? Make haste; this matter must be sifted without delay."

"It is only the beginning," gasped the little demoiselle, faltering for a moment in her excitement, but presently recovering her former quick intensity, as she went on to describe Antoine Cuillerier's midnight visitor, and what she had heard in the hearthroom.

"I heard the Great Chief say," added Angélique, pausing only to take breath, "that in the Moon of the Maize, while he fasted and prayed to his manitou beside the bones of the Ottawa prophet on the Isle au Pêche, in a vision he saw marked out for him a wonderful and awful plan. Before the snows came he sent runners through the forest, and his messenger canoes upon the waters, to the north, far beyond the Sleeping Bear¹ and the Straits of Michilimackinac; to the borders of the river Ottawa, and south along the river of Le Père Marquette. The time was set for the Moon of Flowers, — this moon, Father Pierre. The tribes are to rise together; each is to destroy the English garrison in its neighborhood, and then, like a whirlwind sweeping over the prairie, all are to turn against the settlements of the frontier."

¹ Sleeping Bear — a point of land on Lake Michigan.

“Grand Dieu! what a retribution the savages would fain visit upon the conquerors for their rapacity and injustice,” exclaimed the missionary, paling slightly, despite his well-known intrepidity; for he had more than the courage of a soldier. His was the fortitude that upholds the martyr for faith or duty. He was ready to lay down his life at any moment in the performance of his office. “Grand Dieu! To think that such a diabolical scheme was hatched under our very eyes, yet we have known nothing of it! Is it not possible you may have misunderstood the patois of the chief, my daughter?”

“I am quite sure I heard aright,” was the sobbing answer.

“And what said Antoine Cuillerier of this plot?”

“Oh, Monsieur Potier,” faltered the girl, covering her face with her hands and sinking upon the bench under the apple tree in an agony of emotion. But after a few moments she grew calm again, and, looking up, replied, —

“My own father, Antoine Cuillerier, said nothing in approval of the plan; indeed, he counselled delay. Still, I grieve to tell, he sought but weakly to dissuade the chief, his friend. Perhaps he saw that all argument would be in vain. He broods much over the downfall of New France. The misfortunes of our unhappy country have unsettled his mind, I fear; and Pontiac humored him, saying he shall be governor here when the Indians restore Le Détroit to the French. He, on his part, told the savage that the armies of King Louis are advancing up the St. Lawrence and the river of Le Père Marquette, to drive the English from the hunting-grounds of his red children.”

“Juste ciel, it is false!” cried Father Potier, in

great excitement. "A missionary came in from the forest yesterday and was gone this morning. He had been at Montreal, and brought news that his Majesty King Louis is like to sign a treaty with the English, ceding to them his provinces of New France, all save Louisiana in the far south. Angélique, you have acted wisely in coming to me. I will go at once to Major Gladwin. When the plot is unfolded to him, he will be convinced of the peril that menaces his garrison."

"No, no, Father Pierre!" cried the girl, springing to her feet. "Were it known that you warned the English, who would stand between the French and the savages?"

"There is sageness in what you say, child," rejoined the priest; "nevertheless, we must fight each evil as we come to it."

"My father, I came to tell you, but I have thought it all out," she continued ardently. "From here I shall float in my canoe up the river to the mouth of the Rigolet des Hurons. Paddling along the stream, I shall go into the fort by the northern postern and thence to the house of my aunt, Madame des Ruis-seaux, who will despatch a servant for the canoe. She will also send and invite Major Gladwin to supper at her house. During the evening I will contrive to get a few words with him apart. Thus I shall tell him, and no one else will be the wiser."

Father Potier glanced again at the demoiselle, impressed by the readiness of her woman's wit that had found so facile a solution of the difficulty. Was her courage in wishing to go to reveal this plot prompted by a more than ordinary interest in the gallant young commandant? It had been reported long ago that the latter would gladly gain the favor of the French

by a marriage with the daughter of the wealthy Cuillerier. However matters stood between the Englishman and Angélique, her project was the best that could be devised. If he, Pierre Potier, went to the fort now, his Hurons would, in the light of subsequent events, suspect him of having learned of the conspiracy and disclosed it, and his power to hold them in check, if ever so little, would be gone. Then he could neither aid the French nor the English in the coming struggle. What could be more natural than that the girl should go to the house of her aunt? And, since no Indians were permitted about the fort after dusk, Pontiac would not be likely ever to learn that the news had been conveyed to Gladwin. Still, the missionary hesitated.

"I am going, my father; do not seek to dissuade me," repeated Angélique, with decision.

Father Potier sighed. Yes, for the sake of those whom he would fain save, he must refrain from going himself; yet he was loath to let the girl have her way.

"Well, if you *will* go, my child," he said at length, "may God protect and speed you on your errand of mercy. Say to the commandant that I regard this as a matter of no common gravity. Tell him I will restrain the savages as far as may be, and — may the Fair White Mary be your shield."

CHAPTER TENTH

AN AWKWARD ENCOUNTER

ANGÉLIQUE, fearing that Father Potier might yet recall and, in concern for her safety, forbid her to carry out her resolve, sped away forthwith. Indeed, he did cry out after her, "Angélique, Angélique!" But, like the flight of partridges that, having alighted for a moment upon the reeds of the swamp, presently floated over the strait in a small black cloud, her little canoe soon shot out from the land and floated down the stream. She met with no obstacle in carrying out the first part of her simple programme. When she reached the residence of Madame des Ruisseaux, a Pani boy was at once commissioned to go for the boat, which she had left at the north gate. Within doors, however, a disappointment awaited her.

"Madame des Ruisseaux is gone to pay a visit at the home of her brother, Monsieur Jacques Godefroy, where Mademoiselle de St. Ours has been staying for a few days; they will not be back to-night," the slave woman Agathe informed her. "But a comfortable supper will soon be ready for mademoiselle. The house is lonely with only the two Pani women and the boy here, yet there is madame's own room ready, and it will give us all pleasure to wait on Mademoiselle Angélique."

"Yes, I will remain until to-morrow," answered the girl, as she threw herself upon the settle. She

chatted amiably with Agathe, while the latter moved quietly about, busied with preparations for her comfort. The woman drew up near to her a little table, threw over it a cloth of damask from Montreal, and set thereon several precious pieces of blue china, especially prized by her mistress. Then she disappeared, to return ere long, bringing a dainty portion of venison, and a platter of hot crêpes, or pancakes, with bread, and a small measure of strawberry wine.

“Ma foi, Agathe, do you think I have the hunger of a voyageur?” exclaimed Angélique, with a laugh.

Notwithstanding the occasion she had for disquietude, she did not decline the tempting fare. Worried and distraught, she had left both breakfast and dinner almost untasted, and was now come from some two hours of exercise upon the river. Despite her assumption of gayety, she was glad when Agathe once more withdrew. The absence of her aunt was a contingency which Angélique had not considered. To send for Major Gladwin to come and spend the evening here was now out of the question. Yet, on the other hand, it was absolutely necessary that the momentous information she brought should be communicated to him without delay.

What was to be done? Refreshed and strengthened, she felt it impossible to remain longer inactive when so important a task lay before her. Should she send word to the commandant? Ah, no, the news she had to tell must not be intrusted to any one; neither should it be committed to writing, even had she been more ready with her pen. She might go to visit a neighbor, and then send a message to Gladwin that she wished him to come and see her? This, however, would furnish food for endless gossip.

She could have given the intelligence to the major at the house of Madame des Ruisseaux with comparatively small risk of her own safety. But, as matters stood, should she proceed, would not the danger of discovery be greatly increased? Who might she not meet, what obstacles might arise in her path? For some time she considered her dilemma, and at last started to her feet, exclaiming, —

“It is a chance, at least; yes, I will do it.”

Crossing the room, she stepped into the passage, and, opening a door that led to an outer kitchen, called to the Pani.

“Agathe, I am going but a short distance up the street. Mayhap Mademoiselle de Mersac can tell me when the next assembly dance is to be held. I will be back betimes.”

Then, catching up a wrap that lay upon the settle, she slipped out of the house.

The commandant of the fort was wont frequently to avail himself of the business knowledge of the merchant James Sterling in his dealings with the people of the town. Thus it happened that on the afternoon of the 6th of May, Gladwin had sent for the clever Scot, and, for an hour or more, in the principal room of the British headquarters, the two men had been engaged in going over certain papers which had to do with the affairs of the post. At length the commandant took up a long bill, written upon the coarse paper in use among the merchants of Le Détroit.

“Here is the account of Monsieur Baby across the river, who has been supplying the garrison with hogs, corn, and eau-de-vie,” he said. “I find the items correct and the prices high, yet not, perhaps,

exorbitant. What manner of man is this wealthy habitant? I hear he is on terms of close acquaintance with the Indians."

"That may be," answered Sterling; "nevertheless, he has suffered through this comradeship. The young Hurons stole hogs from his farm, until finally he complained to Pontiac, who therewith lay in wait for the thieves. He had no weary vigil; soon the plunderers came creeping through the gloom, and vastly astonished they were to be confronted by the Great Chief. 'Go back to your village, you Wyandotte dogs,' he said sternly, 'if you tread again upon this man's land you shall die.' They slunk away, and from that time the Canadian's property has been safe. The circumstance is all the more remarkable because the Ottawa had no authority over these Hurons; it was his powerful spirit that commanded their respect and obedience."

"And Baby?" persisted the major.

"Baby is, I am persuaded, a man to be trusted. He is incapable of betraying a friend, be that friend British, French, or savage."

When the clerical work was finished, Sterling thought the major singularly loath to detain him.

As he rose to go, the soldier O'Desmond, who guarded the doorway, entered the room.

"An Injun maid is without. She asks the favor of a few minutes' speech with you, sir," he announced, after saluting his commandant with military precision.

The message was evidently at the moment most unwelcome.

"Who is the girl?" inquired Gladwin curtly.

"I did not see her face, sir, but from the litheness of her form, I judge she may be the maiden whom I

have heard called Catherine. She spoke very low; belike she has some gew-gaw to sell."

"Ah, yes!" said the major, "the Ojibwa came here not long since bringing beautifully embroidered moccasins. I bought them of her, and agreed to take another pair. No doubt she has brought them now."

He stood beside the writing table, waiting for the merchant to take his departure.

The latter smiled grimly. He saw, or fancied he saw, that Gladwin thought he suspected a romance, and that the notion galled the major's haughty spirit. Captain Campbell might have lost his heart to an Indian girl, but Gladwin winced at the idea of being thought capable of such folly. Sterling enjoyed the situation. It was an excellent jest against the major, whom in truth he knew to be of too austere and proud a nature to be readily smitten with the charms of a daughter of the forest. Shortly before, he had been interrupted by the report of the sunset gun, and by a custom dating from the time of Monsieur de Cadillac, no redskin was permitted to remain in the town after sundown. Few of the warriors were admitted now at all. Might not the Indians, finding themselves thus excluded, have commissioned this squaw to execute their work for them? Perhaps they had even instructed her to open the gates, as they had bidden the false Ishkodah to do, in the days of the Chevalier de la Mothe! Moreover, surely he, Sterling, had heard somewhere that the Ojibwa Catherine loved but was scorned by Gladwin? Was it not possible that she had been sent, or had come of her own accord, to assassinate him? The aborigines were never known to forgive a slight, but cherished ever after an implacable resentment. Gladwin had angered Ster-

ling, yet the latter was of too generous and noble a disposition to harbor petty malice when thoughts of such weighty moment crowded upon him. He could not withhold his respect from the dignified young officer, and he admired the very boldness that rendered Gladwin so careless of the dangers which daily menaced him.

It was with these reflections that Sterling strode from the room. As he passed through the hallway he discerned standing in the shadow the forest maiden, who was waiting to be admitted to the presence of the commandant.

She was enveloped from head to feet in an Indian blanket, so that her face was entirely hidden. Nevertheless, as he approached, it seemed to him that she started slightly, repressing an exclamation so low that he wondered if he had imagined it also. The suspicion of treachery made him watchful. He was about to pass on, but, at second thought, hesitated.

And now, most certainly, the girl pressed back against the wall, as though she would fain shrink away out of his sight. The circumstance was singular. If she had come simply to sell a pair of moccasins, why should she fear this chance encounter with a stranger? True, if she loved Gladwin, as it was said, perhaps she felt a certain shyness at being met, bringing to him her handiwork, no doubt with the hope of winning a smile or expression of commendation from him. The Indian girls were coy as the deer of the wood, and a word in praise of their embroidery made them happy as children.

But *was* this the reason of Catherine's evident wish to avoid him? Was it not more likely that she had a weapon concealed beneath the folds of the blanket that so completely enshrouded her?

"Did you not hear the sunset gun? How is it that you, an Indian girl, are still within the stockade?" he demanded, stopping short, and addressing her in the patois of the strait, while there flashed through his mind the recollection of the tradition that the secretary of the Sieur Cadillac once put the same question to the maiden Ishkodah.

The girl raised her head disdainfully, as if to say he had no right to interrogate her. Instead of replying, however, she attempted to slip by him, and gain the door of the council room.

Sterling was too alert for her.

"You think to appeal to Major Gladwin? You must understand that I have something to say in this matter. I have been appointed a civil functionary of the town, and it is my duty to see that its laws are enforced," he said sternly, determined that she should not pass unless she could prove to him that she was not an emissary of her disaffected people.

"Let me see your face, that I may judge whether it is the face of a friend to the English," he persisted.

Still the girl kept her visage muffled in the blanket cloak, even her hands being hidden in its folds.

Sterling was usually courteous to all women, but the obstinacy of the Indian made him now more determined to compel her obedience. For a moment they tacitly challenged each other, she apparently dogged and sullen, he cool and relentless.

"I must know who you are, or I shall have you thrust out beyond the gate of the palisade," he continued, beginning to believe this was not Catherine after all, but some savage youth, a lover of the maiden, perhaps, come to take revenge upon the white chief for having unwittingly stolen her heart.

“Even Major Gladwin himself cannot set aside the law of the town.”

At another time, the merchant would have pitied the girl, if, after all, this was a girl, and the distress evinced by the blanketed figure was truly most womanly. In this encounter one thought possessed him; she represented some Indian plot, since she would not reveal her identity.

“I regret that I shall be compelled to summon the guard who is detained within, or else to use force,” he proceeded, stretching forth his hand.

It grasped the air, however, for the girl sprang aside. Then, like some gentle forest creature goaded beyond endurance, she turned, flung back the cloak with an imperious gesture, and stood before him, dignified, defiant, and silently reproachful. Sterling recoiled in amazement, and a pang of remorse shot through his breast. For there confronted him, not the dusky features of an Indian, but a beautiful Caucasian face, now strangely pale, a pair of flashing black eyes, a shapely head framed by a mass of dark curls, a throat graceful as the wild swan's, and a slight sylph-like form; the face and form of Angélique Cuillerier, the girl whom he had wooed for his wife, and whom he still loved with all his heart.

“Mademoiselle Cuillerier!” he cried, aghast.

“Yes, it is I, Monsieur Sterling,” she replied, while her eyes blazed with anger. “Now go and noise abroad the story of my coming here in the guise of an Indian maiden if you will. I had something to say to Major Gladwin, that is why I came.”

“Mademoiselle,” he said, with a frigid obeisance, “you may rely upon my discretion. Nevertheless, I must say it was an odd whim of yours to choose this masquerade.”

At his words her spirit died away as swiftly as it had arisen, and she answered with a tremor in her voice, —

“ Yes; doubtless you do not comprehend that, notwithstanding the liberty enjoyed by the young Canadienne in many respects, in others she is trammelled by various little French conventions. She is free to go canoeing on the river with any cavalier of whom her parents approve, but for her to come unattended to the council house, even though there still remains half an hour of daylight, would be regarded by all her relatives and friends as an act of forwardness unbecoming a well-bred demoiselle.”

Much as she shrank from the comments of the French counterpart of Mrs. Grundy, there was no real impropriety in the girl's stopping for a moment at the British headquarters.

“ But, zounds, what had Angélique to say to Gladwin?” Sterling asked mentally, with the readiness of a jealous lover. Was the commandant the suitor upon whom she looked with most favor? Or was this but some impulse of coquetry prompted by the vanity and love of admiration which had caused her to quarrel with himself at the ball given to Sir William Johnson? A flaw in her character as he read it, which had led him to struggle against his love for her, and made him hesitate to ask her again to be his wife. Her heart was pure as a forest spring, he would take his oath on it, but he could not now refrain from contrasting her with the Scottish and English maidens beyond the seas. Had one of these maids something to say to her lover, she would wait at home for him. He forgot how the primness of these damsels sometimes had vexed him; these garden flowers now seemed to him sweeter than the eglantine of the prairie. And yet, how charming

Angélique was! Confound Gladwin; if he could only challenge and fight him. The Scot began to think that in love as in hunting a man begins where he likes and leaves off when he can.

"I wish I could tell you about it, monsieur," the girl said artlessly, "but it is a secret."

"Mademoiselle, it is unnecessary for you to tell me anything," he answered, stepping back, that she might pass.

Still she hesitated, glancing timidly up at him. His features were absolutely rigid, however, and turning away with head erect, she again gathered the Indian blanket about her, and concealed her face within its folds.

Scarcely had she done so when O'Desmond returned.

"The major is afther givin' orders that he will see you," he said.

A moment later Angélique found herself in the former council chamber of the French commandant, now the office and audience room of the British. The rencontre with Sterling had strangely unnerved her, and now with quickening heart-throbs she glanced about the walls once so familiar. She had been here to the commandant's assemblies or levees several times since the ball given by Sir William Johnson more than a year ago, and yet it was that scene which now rose to her recollection. Then the spacious apartment had been festively decorated, and blazed with the radiance of many lamps, while never had there been gayer music at the fort. Now the sides of the room and the rafters were blankly black, the silence was so dreary that she longed to cry out, and the waning daylight was dim, except near the window where the commandant sat, writing.

On that occasion, too, she had come with a particularly joyous heart; here she had achieved her highest social triumph in having been chosen to open the ball with the most distinguished representative that the English had sent to Fort Pontchartrain. Now she had stolen here to bring a warning of dire calamity.

Ah, how many associations this room had for her! As a child, she had played about its hearth; and there, at the same table where the Englishman now bent over his papers, she had seen her uncle, Monsieur de Bellestre, reading documents written in the stately language of Versailles,—documents that sometimes bore even the seal of the great King of France.

If she should go away, silent as to the errand upon which she had come, a French commandant, perhaps her own uncle, might once more preside in this old council chamber; his Majesty King Louis might again send his royal mandates to Fort Pontchartrain.

And if she spoke, if she thwarted the scheme to which a number of the French settlers, among them her own father, gave at least a tacit assent,—if she set herself against all her people, would she not be scorned and branded by them as a traitor to the cause that was dearest to her heart? It might never be known whose voice betrayed the plot to drive the English from the fair provinces won from the wilderness by the explorations of Champlain, Cartier, Marquette, and others; by the toil of the missionaries, the wisdom of Frontenac, the courage of many proud chevaliers from Old France. Yet, though it should never be discovered who gave the warning to save the alien officers and garrison, would not her own

heart ever proclaim her false to her country? There was time for her to slip away. Major Gladwin was still unaware of her presence, and the uninterrupted scratching of his pen showed that his attention was preoccupied.

Yes, she would go. Why should she, an inexperienced girl, oppose her pity, her fears, against the opinions, the sagacity of her elders? When there was a prospect that one day the golden lilies of the Bourbons might again wave over Le Détroit, was it for a maiden of New France to crush with her weak hand that grand opportunity, to choose what banner should float over the fort of the strait?

With these thoughts surging in her brain, Angélique retreated along the wall of the room.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

A MESSAGE TO MAJOR GLADWIN

SECURED by her disguise against recognition, Mademoiselle Cuillerier reached the door of the council hall, resolved to go away as silently as she had come ; but when about to cross the threshold she paused, as though stayed by an invisible hand. The tall form of Father Potier rose before her mind's eye, as she had seen him standing under the blooming trees in the orchard of the Huron Mission. Again she beheld him, erect as a soldier, his head thrown back, his eyes kindling with ardor, his countenance suffused with emotion, as she pictured the glorious white standard of the Sun King floating once more over Le Détroit. And then she remembered how the light of that enthusiasm died out of his strong face, and its expression changed to horror and contempt for the few traders who had lent a half assent to the plotting of their Indian neighbors, and had deceived the latter with rumors of an army to come to their aid from beyond the seas. And how his ascetic visage shone with the spirit of a hero, the spirit of the old French chivalry, of one whose shield was stainless as his life. Once more his words sounded in her ears, like the notes of a trumpet, voicing the general sentiment of the Canadians, in opposition to any ignoble plotters there might be in the land.

“Our people love the fleur-de-lis, they love their country; but more than the banner of St. Louis,

more even than their freedom, they love their own faith and honor, and the faith and honor of New France."

Did the fragrance of apple blossoms, borne in by the breeze through the open window, conjure up the illusion that she was again in the quiet orchard? Was it the prayer of the missionary, breathed for her in the chapel across the river, that strengthened the wavering French girl, and determined her to carry out the project which had brought her here? She *must not* falter. Father Potier had bidden her to speak; and had she not given him her word to do so, he himself would have sent another messenger. Should she fail him now, it would be too late for him to warn Major Gladwin. To-morrow was the fateful day named for striking the fatal blow at the English. She must speak at once, for the honor of New France was in her keeping.

Stepping out from among the shadows into the space near the middle of the floor where the light fell, Angélique coughed softly.

The commandant looked up abstractedly from his writing, and as his eyes fell upon the slight figure enveloped in the Indian blanket, he frowned with impatience.

"This Ojibwa girl is beautiful, with the mysterious beauty of the forest; her voice is sweet as the song of the ortolan, her manner fierce and innocently amorous, like a fire that warms yet can also destroy," he reflected irritably. "But the music of that sweet voice fails to awaken so much as a passing thrill within my breast; I turn from that glowing fire. Ah, I am put to more pains to banish from my mind one piquant, radiant face! Still the little French-Canadian girl fascinates me by her loveliness and her

native charm, struggle against their power as I may. It is folly, aye, worse than folly, therefore I WILL *not* to love her. But why does this Indian maiden pester me with her abject devotion?"

Nevertheless, to be the object of an ardent, though hopeless, feminine passion is seldom altogether unpleasing to a man, especially if he has suffered from the apparent coldness of the woman who has rejected his addresses. The knowledge that the forest maiden well-nigh worshipped the ground he trod upon rendered the accents of the young commandant unusually gentle, as he said in his halting French, —

"Well, Catherine, where are the moccasins I commissioned you to make for me? I presume you have brought them, since you are returned so soon."

There was a chiding in his tone that would have cut the proud Indian to the heart, had the words been, indeed, as he supposed, addressed to her.

Angélique was for the nonce disconcerted. She had forgotten Catherine and the moccasins, and had not meant to personate her. It was no uncommon circumstance for a squaw to go from house to house, selling bead-work or maple sugar, and she had adopted the Indian disguise because it was the first at hand. Realizing that she must presently make herself known, she drew nearer to the window, but did not speak.

"Have you not brought the moccasins?" he demanded more curtly.

"No," she answered, so softly that he did not distinguish her voice.

"And why not?" he continued inconsequently, as, picking up the little sand-box from the table, he shook the fine sand over the letter he had been writing, in order to dry the ink.

"I had no suitable skin whereof to make them," rejoined Angélique, with perfect truth, still speaking in a muffled manner through the folds of the blanket.

"No? Why, I have a skin somewhere about," he began, rising from his chair and searching among the squirrel bullet-pouches and similar articles upon the wall. "Here is a piece of buckskin that will serve excellently well, will it not?"

He tossed it to her across the board, hoping she would now be gone. Instead of taking up the skin, however, the girl remained motionless.

"It would be useless for me to make the moccasins for the white chief. I should not be able to deliver them to him in the spirit land," she said, bowing low, and for a second throwing back the blanket a few inches, as is the Indian form of salutation.

The mysterious words, the voice, unrecognized yet not unfamiliar, produced a change in the manner of Gladwin.

"Woman, you are not the Ojibwa, Catherine! Yet, who then are you?" he exclaimed, coming around the table and darting forward, as though to seize her by the wrists.

But, lightly as a fawn, Angélique sprang away from him, and at the same moment suffered her blanket cloak to fall to the ground.

"Mademoiselle Cuillerier!" cried the commandant, stepping back half a dozen paces and coloring to the roots of his hair in astonishment. His admiring glance noted every detail of her appearance: the trimly short jupe of bright blue; the small feet, encased in moccasins, like those of the Indian girl he had thought her; the white bodice and red kerchief; the dark curls that lay caressingly against her pretty neck and divided

in little ringlets about her brow; the expressive eyes, now strangely serious.

Why had she come? More than a year before he had asked her to marry him, and she had answered him nay. Now, if there were no other gulf between them, would not his invincible pride, his self-concentration and reserve be enough to dissuade him from again laying his heart at her feet? Was he a man to risk having his suit twice rejected? If there were only the differences of faith, of nationality, of early prejudices, surely these would be enough to make a man hesitate to sue again. But above and beyond all this there was a sweet English girl across the seas. He and the latter had been betrothed by the parents of each in their childhood. For years he had thought little of the engagement made for a boy by others. Yet this girl, grown a woman, had waited for him, and now, since his recent visit to England, was he not bound to her by every consideration of honor? Angélique did not know of this, however, and—what if she had discovered that she loved him after all, and had chosen this madcap fashion of giving him a proof of her confidence and liking?

Gladwin's brain seemed to reel. If those who thought him cold and unfeeling could have looked into his heart at the moment, how astounded they would have been to witness the emotions raging there. But he controlled the storm by a great effort, and Angélique only noted that his glance was gentler than it had been of late, and his tone even more respectful than usual, as he said,—

“Mademoiselle Cuillerier, I know not to what good fortune I owe the honor of this visit; yet do not, I beseech you, presently fade away as a vision. Be assured I appreciate the bit of pleasantry that led

you to assume this Indian disguise, and to favor the old council house by stopping at its door a moment upon your way from the river. Will you accord me the privilege of escorting you to the house of Madame des Ruisseaux, whither, I dare say, you are bent?"

Angélique flushed red as a rose of the prairie. "Ma foi, monsieur, you must not imagine I would do aught so unbecoming as to be, by design, the herald of my own arrival at the stockade, or that I find it necessary to drum up my cavaliers after so undignified a fashion," she answered, with a proud toss of the head. "No; I am here because, having something of great moment to communicate to you, I had no time to reflect that my coming might be construed as unmaidenly."

She faltered, remembering with a sense of disquietude the stern inquiry in the eyes of Sterling, which, coupled with the amazement of Gladwin, was most embarrassing.

"Mademoiselle, it would be impossible for you to do aught unmaidenly, and I know you have come in kindness," responded the commandant, with grave deference, as he drew out from before the table one of the high-backed chairs of the old councillors and begged her to be seated.

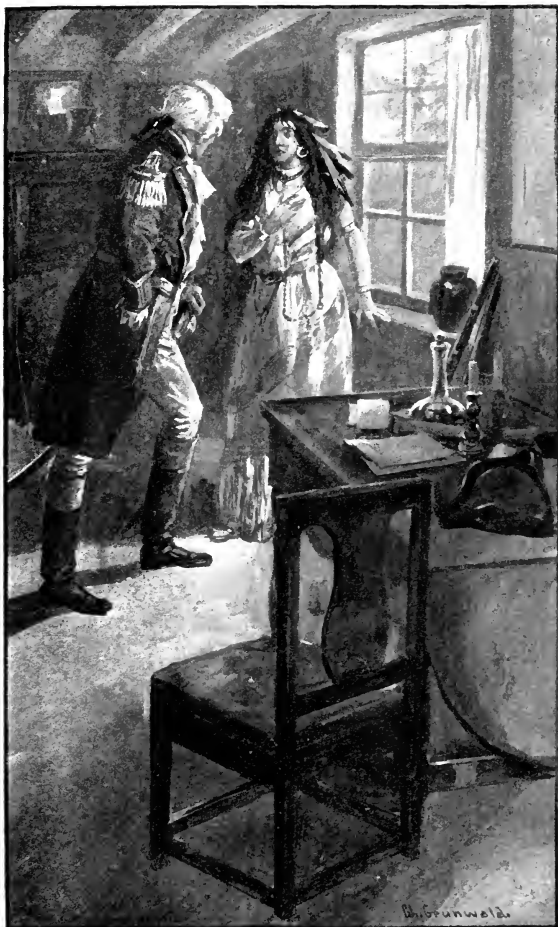
"No, no," she said, "I must give you my tidings, and return in all haste to the house of my aunt. Madame des Ruisseaux is absent, hence I could not send to ask you to come there, without giving to some one a clue to what had best be kept secret. Know then, Major Gladwin, to-morrow the great Ottawa chief Pontiac will come to the fort with sixty of his warriors. Each will be armed with a gun cut short, and hidden under his blanket. Pontiac will demand to hold a council with you and your officers, and this request being

granted, at the council he will offer you a peace belt of wampum. But beware, for, if all goes well from his point of view, but most ill for you, he will present the belt in a reversed position. This will be the signal for an attack. The warriors will, at the instant, spring up and fire upon you and the other officers, and without, in the street of Ste. Anne and in all the streets, the Indians will fall upon the garrison. Every Englishman in the town will be killed, but not a Frenchman will lose his scalp."

Gladwin started. At last he was aroused to the danger that threatened the British at this fort of the strait, — a danger he must avert, or it would not only be fatal to him, but would cover his name with dishonor for his rashness in not having been more upon his guard against it.

The warnings he had hitherto received were only rumors and suspicions, but this news brought by Cuillerier's daughter was something palpable. It gave the time and the details of a definite plot; a plan to wipe out the post as a British possession, to slay, and no doubt with atrocious cruelty, every man of English blood at Le Détroit.

Of his personal peril, Gladwin took not a second thought. He was a British soldier, ever ready to fight or to die in the service of his country. But his responsibility for his command, for the royal standard which symbolized the authority of England in this new province, her supremacy in the Northwest, — all these had been committed to his keeping as an officer in the service of King George, and by his imprudent boldness he had jeopardized them. It was with conflicting emotions that he glanced toward the girl who had brought him the tidings, in defiance of the malice of the town scandal-mongers should they chance to



get report of this apparently hoidenish escapade; the girl who had saved him from the consequences of his own folly, since "he who is forewarned is also forearmed."

"Mademoiselle, it is idle to attempt to thank you for bringing me this intelligence," he said, with deep earnestness. "May I ask how such important information came to your knowledge?"

"No," cried Angélique, putting a hand before her eyes, as though to shut out a sight that seemed ever before them. The scene between Pontiac and her father in the Cuillerier hearthroom, while she crouched in the loft above, afraid to make the least motion lest the next moment might be her last; in which case all hope of saving the strangers whom she pitied would die with her.

"No, no," she reiterated, "I cannot reveal how or where I learned these things, but they are true beyond the possibility of doubt. Moreover, the plot is no ordinary one against this isolated garrison of the strait. All the English posts from Du Quesne to the north are menaced, — Venango, Presque Isle, Sandusky, St. Joseph, Michilimackinac, and Green Bay. The attacks are to be made when each of the forts is too busied in its own defence to render assistance to any others, and while their commandants are off guard, fancying themselves secure."

As the girl spoke, fervidly, excitedly, even Gladwin, brave as he was, felt for the minute appalled, as the magnitude of the savage scheme with its probable train of horrors arose before his mental vision.

But the bent of his mind was eminently practical, and had been rendered more so by his military training and experience. Might not Mademoiselle Angé-

lique, with the ardent imagination of a young maid, have unconsciously colored her report, weighty as it undoubtedly was?

"A great conspiracy," he said, with a shake of the head. "I scarce comprehend that it can amount to so much; the aborigines have never had a leader who could plan an extensive campaign."

Angélique recoiled haughtily. Was it because she was only a girl that the commandant now appeared to treat her news lightly? She turned away. If this self-confident officer would not credit her story, let the English look to their own preservation. Out of the pity of her woman's heart, with a woman's horror of war and bloodshed, she had spoken. If they would not believe her, why should she not leave them to their fancied security? Once more she took a few steps toward the door. But again an invisible hand seemed to restrain her, and the message of the missionary flashed upon her recollection. Angélique turned and faced the Englishman.

"Regard the matter as you will, monsieur," she said, with hauteur; "nevertheless, you seem unaware of the resources, and the great power of the Ottawa's chief, Pontiac. You will soon discover that not only his nation, but the Pottawattomies, the Miamies, Shawnies, Ottagamies, Winnebagoes, Massagagas, even the distant Senecas, are in league against your people. I will only add that I have disclosed this matter to no one but Father Potier. He would have come himself to warn you, but I implored him, for the sake of the many lives at stake, not to do so. The missionary bade me tell you the plot is one of no common gravity; but he will restrain the Indians in so far as is possible."

"Father Potier sent me this message?" ejaculated

Gladwin. "Ah, then, indeed the situation must be serious!"

The officer knew the priest's judgment to be cool and calm, and that no one understood the nature of the aborigines as did he.

All at once, too, there came to Gladwin a fuller comprehension of Angélique's heroism in hastening to warn him of this tremendous conspiracy. From whatever source her information had been obtained, it was detailed. Thanks to her courage, the plan might now be frustrated. She had come so quietly that it might never become known who had thwarted it; but, should the secret be discovered, could even the authority of the Black Robe save her from the persecution of the French conspirators, the cruel vengeance of Pontiac and his savage warriors? That she had done this act knowing her peril he felt sure, moreover, as he glanced at her again, for her face, which he had ever seen dimpling and care-free, now wore a look of quiet resolution, and her usually smiling lips were grave and firm.

"Mademoiselle," he said, bowing low before her, "forgive me if for a moment I failed to follow the full significance of the momentous news you have brought me. You have saved the lives of the English at Le Détroit, and of many others, I doubt not, since I shall do my utmost to send aid, or at least a warning, to the nearest British forts. In the cause of humanity you have put your own life in jeopardy, to insure the safety of your enemies, who yet can never know the name of their preserver; since, were it ever revealed, your life would be sacrificed. A heroine, you yet can never reap your due reward in the admiration, gratitude, and love which are the recompense of those who do generous deeds."

"No such return is necessary. I am no heroine," protested Angélique, with assumed carelessness. "Do you think, Monsieur Gladwin, that I could ever again sleep peacefully had I remained dumb and suffered this massacre of the English here at the fort to take place? Do you think I could remain sane in face of atrocities that I might have prevented?"

"Mademoiselle, you are the bravest woman I have ever known," rejoined the commandant; "and I swear to you by the Almighty and All-merciful One, that never will I utter or in any way mention your name as connected with the revelation you have made to me this evening. Never will I confide to any one the name of the friend who, in this darkest hour, has stretched forth a hand to succor the strangers at the strait. But, for myself, I bless God that it was the hand of Angélique Cuillerier."

As a soldier to his sovereign, as a brave man to the savior of his people, Gladwin bent a knee before the French girl, and raised her brown fingers to his lips.

But Angélique had no liking for heroics, and his fervor embarrassed her. With a return of her saucy spirit, she withdrew her hand from his clasp, caught up the blanket cloak that had formed her disguise, folded it about her once more, and, her mission accomplished, was gone before Gladwin could say a word to detain her a moment longer.

CHAPTER TWELFTH

A CLUSTER OF FLEURS-DE-LIS

WHEN gallant Major Gladwin found himself alone, he sighed heavily. Grave as was the exigency of the moment, in his heart concern for the safety of Angélique dominated even his other great anxieties. Now that she was gone, he was oppressed by an intolerable dread that perhaps while she disclosed to him the plot against the English, some lurking savage might have heard, and marked her as a victim for a swift revenge. If he could only keep her under his own protection; if he could set a guard about her, even as a posse of regulars are set to guard the crown jewels of England! But no, and he smiled bitterly as he realized the truth. The only succor he could give to the demoiselle was by silence. She must not be seen speaking to him or to any of the British; it was unfortunate that she was in the town at all. Good Father Potier by his prayers could help her far more than could the commandant of the fort, with his soldiers, though he would gladly lay down his life for her if need should come.

“But ‘the help of Heaven is always good,’ and surely the God of armies will protect so generous and brave a girl,” he said aloud, as with his signet ring he tapped sharply on the small gong on the table before him.

“Request Captain Campbell to come here at once, and do you carry to the sergeant my order that all

the sentries be doubled," he directed O'Desmond, who responded to his summons.

Captain Campbell reported without delay. There was a hurried conference, and he left again to issue commands right and left. Gladwin presently went out, made the round of the garrison and the little town, saw that his directions as to the patrolling of the streets and of the inner wall were obeyed, that extra ammunition was given out, and then, returning to the council room, sat down once more to his writing-table.

It was highly probable that he would not survive the battle of the next day. He had best write out for Sir Jeffrey Amherst a description of the conspiracy of Pontiac, as he had heard it, suppressing only the name of his informant, and transcribing also a copy to be sent in warning to the nearest military post.

The commandant was thus engaged when Sterling returned.

"I was so careless as to leave upon the table some papers of my own, and I am come for them," he said stiffly.

Gladwin merely inclined his head.

The Scotchman, having taken the papers, was about to make his exit, when, by a curious coincidence, O'Desmond threw open the door and announced, —

"Sir, the Injun girl is come back, and is bound to see you again. She will not be turned away at all, at all."

"Admit her at once," replied the officer brusquely.

The guard disappeared, but Sterling paused.

"You are favored with visits from the fair sex to-day, Major Gladwin," he said, with bitter irony.

"You call an Indian maiden *fair*?" inquired the commandant, ignoring the sarcasm.

"Ay, such an Indian as was here not long since," retorted the other, with a forced laugh.

Gladwin's brows lowered ominously. His soul had been tried by many anxieties during the past hour, while the Scotchman was still ignorant of the danger that hung over the post. It was not a time for individual quarrels.

Sterling's heart was filled with doubt and jealousy, but he also controlled his anger. Determined to remain and witness this second interview between Angélique and Gladwin, he stood immovable. The major swore mentally. What difficulties might not the demoiselle have already encountered, since she had found it best to return? But perhaps she had forgotten some important detail, or had learned of some meditated treachery within the town? Sterling's attitude made the situation awkward. Gladwin could not dismiss the trader, lest the latter, resolved to unravel the mystery, should, unwittingly, direct toward Mademoiselle Cuillerier the suspicion of the French allies of Pontiac. He dared not tell him what had brought Angélique there before, because he had solemnly sworn to reveal this to no one.

The only way out of the dilemma was to assume an air of nonchalance, and let the sequel take care of itself. Perhaps the lady's clever wit would find a way out of the difficulty. He more than half expected that, seeing the merchant, she would withdraw, and await a better opportunity to communicate with him.

After an interval of a few minutes, which yet seemed an age, the girl entered.

As before, she kept her countenance hidden in the folds of her blanket. At sight of Sterling, she hung

back, indeed, but did not retire. The guard went out and closed the door behind him. Sterling breathed hard, but Gladwin seemed almost to cease all respiration. The one man was anxious, the other enraged. Both knew that in another moment they would be face to face with Angélique Cuillerier, the woman whom Sterling acknowledged to himself that he still passionately loved; the woman from whose fascination Gladwin proudly sought to free himself.

Each saw in the other his rival; each disliked the other for any success he had achieved with the demoiselle.

The muffled figure drew nearer. She threw back her blanket and stood before them, erect and motionless. The two men started in surprise; Gladwin laughed shortly, and Sterling muttered an oath. There confronting them stood, not Mademoiselle Cuillerier the bourgeois' daughter, but Catherine the Ojibwa.

The mirth of the commandant grated rudely upon the ears of the Indian, and with a sullen scowl she said, —

“You are merry, monsieur, but it may be you will not be merry long. After sundown to-morrow you may never laugh again.”

Here, however, her voice lost its resentment and grew pathetic, as, with earnestness and eloquence, she proceeded to pour out to the white chief something of the same story which Angélique had told him, although she clearly had no knowledge of the details whereon the French girl had dwelt so explicitly.

Sterling stood by, aghast at what he heard, but Gladwin scarcely appeared to heed, and went on with his writing.

When the maiden, perplexed at his apparent indifference, paused and silently gazed at him, seeking to

read the thoughts behind his stern visage, he looked up and said, —

“Catherine, I thank you for your wish to save the English, but you should not have remained in the fort after the sunset gun. Return at once to your own people.”

Thereat, summoning the guard by a stroke upon the gong, he directed him, —

“Soldier, conduct this Indian damsel to the gate, and see that she goes out. She is no longer to be allowed to enter the stockade.”

The sullen expression settled again upon Catherine’s face, yet not daring to show any insubordination, she turned away with a smothered sob, and followed the sentry.

“Egad, Major Gladwin, you but ill requite those who would fain serve you faithfully. Though dark-skinned, the girl is a heroine, yet you vouchsafed her not a word of commendation for what she has done,” cried Sterling, with heat. “As to the news, — which you scarce deemed worthy your attention, — are all the British at Le Détroit to be slaughtered because you hold in contempt the prowess of the most blood-thirsty savages on earth?”

Gladwin smiled in an exasperating manner.

“My dear Mr. Sterling,” he rejoined, “do you think it would be a kindness to the girl to permit her to remain within the stockade and be ferretted out by the spies of Pontiac when he comes to-morrow? Pardon me, for I must leave you; there are matters which require my attention.”

So saying, he passed out of the room, to go upon the bastion and look abroad upon the lands of the strait, as they lay tranquil in the starlight.

As Sterling went home, he noted that soldiers were

being already stationed in the streets; and while he supped alone, Jaco, the Pani boy, came in with news that a sergeant was knocking at each house-door and warning the French to keep inside the fortifications on the following day, since the Indians were known to be in a dangerous mood.

“Humph! the commandant is not so like to be taken unawares as I supposed,” soliloquized the Scotchman.

He was in no mood to linger over the meal, and, presently rising from the table, took down his musket from the wall and saw to it that the lock was in order. Then, proceeding to his sleeping apartment, he got down upon his hands and knees on the floor, and, feeling along the knot-holes of the boards, pressed the hidden spring of a concealed trap-door. The latter sprang open, and, raising it, he leaped into a small dug-out or cellar, of whose existence no one knew but himself. The light from the sconce on the wall above shining into the cave revealed a strong, iron-bound chest. He threw back the lid; the box was not the repository of golden treasure, but held a good store of ammunition. From it Sterling filled his pouch with bullets. Then he carefully locked the coffer again, and, returning to the room, secured the trap-door.

“I am no Englishman, nor yet an adherent of King George,” he said aloud, “but if Pontiac gives the concerted signal to-morrow, I will fight to the last in defence of my friends here at the fort, in the cause of civilization against the savage.”

The night of the 6th of May, 1763, was one of watching and activity within the old stockade on the margin of Le Détroit. Arms were primed, that they

might be ready for use at any moment, powder and shot dealt out, and the officers walked through the town directing all preparations for the expected conflict of the next day.

The skies were clear, and the stars, looking down upon the river and woodland, beheld a scene of peaceful beauty. As the sentinels upon the eastern bastion peered through the semi-darkness, however, they caught the gleam of distant camp-fires in the forest, and discerned from time to time darker shadows upon the waters. When day broke, they reported that many canoes had crossed from the southern shore, landing warriors below the Isle au Cochon.

The sun rose in its springtime splendor on the broad strait, on the newly green, flower-dotted prairie and the budding woods; upon the rude farmhouses of the "côte du nord," the buildings and blooming orchard of the Huron Mission, upon the wooden bastions and cedar pickets of the little fort and the Indian camp, a mile or more farther up the river.

Still there were no signs of hostility. Rations were served to the garrison, and the town breakfasted; even a hero can be more heroic when properly fed.

Angélique Cuillerier had spent a wakeful and restless night at the habitation of Madame des Ruisseaux. One thing she saw plainly: she must get outside the palisade and away from the river road as soon as possible. She had told her mother that she was going to the town to visit their relative, and would return the following day. She must now hasten home, for if any of the Indians should come to the farm of Cuillerier and note her absence, the suspicion of Pontiac might fall upon the household when he learned that the English had been forewarned against his masterly though cruel scheme.

It was not to Gladwin that she went for permission to leave the stockade, but to Captain Campbell, whom she found at the gate, giving orders to the sentries. Exact as he was in his military duty, he still held the report of the anticipated attack but lightly, and esteemed the preparations of the commandant as a wise but hardly necessary precaution. Moreover, he was too good a soldier to have his equanimity ruffled by the rumors of danger. In fact, he was of opinion that a menace from the savages would rouse the men from the lethargy of a long period of inaction, and furnish a rather pleasant little excitement for the officers.

It was with his usual genial smile, therefore, that he wheeled about at sight of Mademoiselle Cuillierier, and bowed to her with urbane formality.

“Bon jour, monsieur le capitaine,” began Angélique in French, which she always spoke, leaving her English acquaintances to understand her as best they might, “will you be so good as to let me go through the gate? I came into the town yesterday to stay the night with my aunt, and expecting to have a gay evening with my friends, and ‘ma foi,’ what did I find but the whole place in commotion; no merriment at all or use for the dancing slippers that I brought, and my gloves, Captain Campbell, — the gloves Sir William Johnson ordered for me from London. Ciel! instead of music and gayety, the streets were patrolled with soldiers all the night long. English and French think of nothing but to make ready their firelocks. The like I have not seen since the British themselves were reported as down the river, and we prepared to give them a warm reception; which would have been the case indeed but for that stupid capitulation of the Marquis de Vaudreuil.”

“Have a care, mademoiselle,” replied the captain, entering into her humor. “Some day you also may capitulate to a gallant Englishman. La Nouvelle France was like a beautiful widow, so fair that England sought to wed her; and in turn each son of Britain who comes hither woos, and swears to win, one of her beautiful daughters for his wife.”

“A pretty compliment,” said Angélique, with a courtesy; “now, I pray you, monsieur le capitaine, let me through the gate.”

“Ha, ha! here I have a blithe Canadian bobolink safe in an English cage; why should I set it free?” he cried; and then growing serious, added, “In truth, mademoiselle, for your own sake I must deny your request. With the town awaiting an Indian outbreak, it is certainly not safe for you to set out alone across the plain.”

Angélique paled a trifle, yet she persisted entreatingly, —

“Oh, I beseech you, Monsieur Campbell! My mother will be distraught with anxiety if there is a conflict with the savages and I am not at home. A quarter of an hour since, I heard your sentinels call that all is still quiet at the Ottawa camp. I can reach the côte before anything happens. And — and — even if I should chance to meet a band of Indians on the road, the principal warriors know me to be the daughter of Antoine Cuillerier. They have no grievance against the French; and, having eaten at the hearth-fire of my father, they will not harm me.”

It was not possible for the captain to resist the pleadings of the sprightly demoiselle, especially since what she said was sage and sensible. If she could gain her home betimes, she would be much safer there than in the town.

"Very well, you shall go, mademoiselle," he answered, "provided you accept the escort of young Jasmin de Joncaire, who has also obtained permission to return to the 'côte du nord-est.'" ¹

Angélique pursed her red lips in pouting protest, but the officer was firm.

"You must have a protector," he explained, "and Monsieur de Joncaire is well armed."

The girl flashed from a leather sheath beneath her belt a long knife, such as those used by the *coureurs de bois*.

"So am I," she cried, with sudden vehemence.

Jasmin de Joncaire was already at hand, having stepped forth from behind a group of by-standers, eager to assure her that he would guard her safety at the risk of his life.

"I will intrust to you, then, monsieur, the duty of conducting this demoiselle with all speed to the Cuillierier homestead," enjoined Captain Campbell.

It was expedient to yield gracefully.

"Monsieur de Joncaire is an old friend and neighbor, and I shall be glad of his company," Angélique said, with a toss of her curls.

The next moment, at a signal from the captain, the guard threw open the postern, the wayfarers passed out, and the wicket was closed and barred after them.

Choosing a by-path across the prairie, they continued on for half an hour without adventure. Angélique's spirits rose; the sense of danger thrilled her with a nervous excitement, which was mistaken by De Joncaire for an irrepressible gaiety. The air was

¹ All the prairie on the northern shore of the strait was called "la côte du nord." The locality above the fort was sometimes more particularly designated "la côte du nord-est," that below the fort "la côte du nord-ouest."

sweet and fresh, and, as they walked along, the purple eyes of the early violets looked up from the grass, the dandelions offered them a harvest of golden coins, and in swampy places the fleurs-de-lis raised their stately heads. The French girl plucked a cluster of the latter, and kissed them passionately.

"I love the fleurs-de-lis," she exclaimed, with ardor. "No blossom that grows is so beautiful, to my thinking."

Jasmin smiled in proud approval. The journey of the two young people together was nearly over; a few rods more, and they would be at the Cuillerier farm. Anon they reached the gate of its strong palisade.

"Give me the fleurs-de-lis to wear in my chapeau," pleaded the youth tenderly. He remembered that Angélique had kissed the flowers.

For this reason, however, the captious demoiselle was unwilling he should have them. He argued the matter, and while averting her eyes from his admiring gaze, Angélique chanced to glance up the river bank.

"Oh, look, look, Jasmin!" she cried.

Toward them along the road approached in single file a line of Indian braves, wrapped in their blankets. As the redmen came nearer, the young man and the girl recognized in the leader the war chief, Pontiac, crested with eagles' feathers, and arrayed in all the savage finery that pertains to a mighty king among warriors, as though he were about to participate in a great feast.

Now he was but a few rods away, his followers coming close behind. The two Canadians could distinguish his fierce features, rendered more terrible by the daubs of ochre upon his high cheek-bones, the tracery of indigo upon the beetling brow, and the shaven head bright with vermilion and bear's grease.

Angélique almost shrieked aloud in terror, but by an effort she choked back the cry that rose to her lips. Her first impulse was to run to the house, but her limbs grew so weak that she could scarcely have done so. Yet to cry out or flee would be perilous. Why should she be afraid of Pontiac and his braves? Were they not on terms of friendship with the French? She stood motionless, therefore. Her hat had fallen from her hand, and lay concealed from the view of any one on the road by a budding snowberry-bush inside the gate. The girl breathed freer as she quickly reflected that she might be supposed to have come down the garden path for a word with the good-looking Jasmin. Even the astute Ottawa could not divine by instinct that she had been at the fort. And if he should learn it later, after all, what was more natural than that she had been to see her aunt, and as she left the town had been heard to complain because she had been disappointed about a dance, and to sigh for the good old days when her uncle, Monsieur de Bellestre, was commandant at Le Détroit?

Although half fainting with fear, Angélique remained leaning against a post of the gate and within its shadow. She dared not look up, but bent her head low over the chapeau of De Joncaire, which he had a moment before vainly held out to her with the request that she would fasten in with the ribbon two or three sprays of the bright fleurs-de-lis.

Now she tightly clutched the picturesque straw headpiece, and was thankful that with it she could screen her face. If Pontiac noticed her at all, however, it was as one of Antoine Cuillerier's older pap-pooes, who had been in the meadow gathering spring flowers. With but a glance at Jasmin, he passed on, followed by his sixty warriors, one behind the other.

At sight of the young people there flitted over the visages of two or three of the braves as near an approach to a smile as ever relaxed their solemn features. Doubtless they thought the loiterers were lovers, dallying in the sunshine.

Near the end of the file came the son of the Ottawa chief. Panigwun and De Joncaire had often been together on short expeditions into the forest to shoot game and birds. Now as the young brave recognized in the man at the gate his former comrade he laughed, a rough, mirthless laugh, and, with a jerk of his thumb toward the blossoms in the hand of the girl, said, —

“Ugh, the flowers of the French! Soon you shall see them growing again in the air, down yonder.”

Glancing sharply at Jasmin, he opened the folds of his blanket. Something beneath it caught and flashed back a sunbeam that played about his straight figure; the gleaming steel was a shortened gunbarrel.

Having shown his weapon, Panigwun patted it with savage satisfaction, and pointed once more toward the fort. Then, with a sudden lurch forward, he stretched forth his hand to seize the flowers.

Angélique uttered a low cry, and they fell from her grasp, while Jasmin in a rage pushed him away. At another time there would have been a fierce quarrel; but on this morning “the Strong Wing-Feather” was pledged to follow his father Pontiac, and he had already well-nigh lost his place in the line.

With a threatening gesture toward De Joncaire, therefore, and another guttural laugh, he sped swiftly down the road after the long chain of warriors that, like a venomous snake, writhed along beside the river, onward, onward, to wind its deadly coils about the garrison at the fort of Le Détroit.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

THE GREAT OTTAWA

MEANTIME, on the prairie outside the stockade many Indians began to gather, young braves who made a feint of playing at lacrosse, squaws and children, apparently spectators of the game. Within the fort the garrison was under arms. Sterling and the English fur traders had closed their storehouses and armed their men; all awaited with calm courage the result of the approaching interview.

At ten o'clock, Pontiac and his followers reached the gate that faced the "côte du nord-est." It stood open, and, as he passed in, his immobile countenance betrayed no surprise at sight of the soldiers who lined both sides of the narrow street, their weapons gleaming in the sunshine.

The roll of the tambour, like the growl of a mastiff, warned him to beware; but, haughtily raising his head, he led his warriors onward to the council house, while from the homes of the French the frightened women and children watched them as they went by.

The door of the British headquarters was also ajar, and entering, they there found Major Gladwin and his officers. Each of the white men wore a pair of pistols in his belt and a sword at his side. The principal chiefs seated themselves upon the skins that had been spread for them, the others ranged around the walls and crowded the hallway; the place swarmed with them.

For a time the silence was unbroken. Then the Great Ottawa, turning to the commandant, asked with affected mildness, —

“How is it that so many of my father’s young men stand in the street with their guns? Does my father expect the soldiers of the French?”

Gladwin spoke a few words to the interpreter La Butte, and the latter repeated them in the Indian tongue.

“The commandant has ordered his young men under arms to keep them ever prompt and ready in the military drill,” he said significantly. “Thus, if a war comes they will be able to fight well.”

The sixty chiefs remained grim and dumb, their dark eyes turning from Pontiac to Gladwin, and furtively watching the guards in the room. Their severe training, which taught them to endure even torture with stolidity, stood them now in good stead; not an eye quailed, not by the least motion did they betray the deadly purpose of their coming. They were ready to slay or to be slain; the manner wherewith their chief should present the peace belt would decide the life or death of six hundred beings at the least. After a time Pontiac rose and addressed Gladwin.

“My father,” he said, “we are come in friendship for the English. You are great chiefs. You have driven the French warriors from Le Détroit because you are mighty men in battle. The Ottawas and all the tribes of the country of the strait wish to show you their good will and to smoke with you the pipe of peace. In token of this friendship, I, Pontiac, the chief of many tribes, offer you this belt of wampum.”

As the Great Chief began to unfasten the white belt from his girdle, the guards in the hall clicked the locks of their muskets, the officers half drew their

swords from the scabbards, the sentinel at the open door signalled to a long row of soldiers stationed in front of the entrance; the drums rolled the assembly, and the soldiers made a noisy clatter of arms.

Death hovered in the air, and Pontiac felt its nearness. His hand did not tremble; the belt was unfastened; he retained it an instant in hesitation. All present seemed to refrain from breathing. Then he handed it to Gladwin in the usual fashion,—and Death passed them by.

It was now Gladwin's turn to speak.

Having received the belt, with cold scorn he poured upon Pontiac and his followers caustic words of reproach.

"False redmen, you have sought to deceive me with lies and to slay me by treachery," he cried. "But I know your baseness. You are armed, every warrior among you, like this brave by my side."

He rose from his chair of state, stepped to the nearest Indian, and, snatching open the folds of his blanket, revealed the shortened gun concealed beneath.

"My father does us wrong; he does not believe; then we will go," replied Pontiac, getting upon his feet.

"When you asked to hold a council with me, I agreed that you should be free to go forth again. I will abide by the promise, little as you deserve such clemency," proceeded the commandant. "Howbeit, treacherous dogs, you had best make your way speedily out of the fort, lest my young men, being made acquainted with your evil design, may fall upon you, and cut you to pieces."

Pontiac's falcon eyes gleamed with anger, but with royal dignity he gathered his blanket about his broad

shoulders and walked slowly from the council room, and out between the double line of soldiers, followed by his warriors.

Silent and sullen, they filed once more through the town. The gates of the palisade, which had been closed during the conference, were again thrown open, and the defeated savages were permitted to depart, congratulating themselves, no doubt, as they reached the open prairie.

When they were gone, there was great rejoicing in the fort. It was the general opinion that since Major Gladwin had unmasked the scheme of the Indians, and yet shown them mercy, he had thus disposed of the whole matter, and they would in future be more favorably disposed toward the English. Sterling did not, however, share this supposition, and in the afternoon he called at headquarters to offer himself for whatever future service might be required of him.

Having stated his errand to the commandant, he added bluntly, —

“In faith, Major Gladwin, I regret that you suffered the perfidious Indians to escape. An entrapped wolf meets with no quarter from the hunter, and a savage caught in his treachery has no claim to forbearance.”

“Mr. Sterling,” replied the major, drawing himself up to his full height, “it is not incumbent upon me to explain my position to any one at the strait. Nevertheless, I will say that had I arrested the chiefs when they were gathered at a public council, the act would have been ill interpreted by both the French and the savages. I trust, however, that the threatened war-cloud will soon blow over.”

While they were speaking, O'Desmond entered.

“Sir,” he said, “outside are six Injun devils, who have dragged a squaw here with thim. Red naiger

as she is, shure the creature's a woman, and 't would melt the heart of a stone to see the way they brandished their knives over her, like so many fiends. 'Shtop that,' I calls to them in Irish. 'She's now within the gates, and if you hurt a hair of her head the major'll set ye up as targets an' have ye riddled with bullets.' Well, the Irish is a most commanding language, an' belike the tone of me voice had in it a thwack of the shillaleh. Whether or no, they quieted down a bit, and one said in his jibberish, with a touch of 'parlez-vous,' what I made out to be that they'd hunted the creature out of the village of the Foxes and fetched her here for you to say, sir, if t' was she who told you that the Evil One himself, an' that's Pontiac, wanted to murder us all without shrift. The which they say is all lies, sir, the blackest of lies, for they are the most peaceable creatures that ever lived, and by the same token this Misther Pontiac is a most dacent, mild-mannered man."

Here O'Desmond unmistakably shut one eye, and grinned at the commandant.

Gladwin impatiently shifted his position. He was sometimes inclined to overlook the garrulity of the Irishman because of the latter's fidelity and his splendid fighting qualities. Besides, while in important points a strict disciplinarian, he had learned that to be too much of a martinet in regard to small matters in the wilderness would have lost him the good will of his soldiers.

"I will not receive these savages," he said. Then a thought arrested his refusal. If he denied them admittance, would they not wreck their anger upon the squaw with barbarous cruelty?

"Stay! You may conduct them here," he ordered. They came, pushing and jostling their prisoner,

urging her forward at the points of their knives, and finally halting before the officer, as he stood with his back to the chimney of the council room, conversing thus coolly with Sterling.

With darkening countenance he saw that the woman was the Ojibwa Catherine, or Nedawniss. The trader was scarcely less shocked. "What would the major do?" he asked himself. "How was he to save the girl from being torn limb from limb by these vultures?"

Poor Catherine, indeed, presented a spectacle of misery. Her glossy hair was now dishevelled, her face swollen from weeping; her cotton gown unsightly from the mud that had been flung at her by men, women, and children, as she passed through the Indian settlements.

With a low moan, she fell forward on her face before the commandant.

"Kill me, white chief," she prayed, "but do not deliver me again into the hands of the Ottawas."

Gladwin stooped, and raised her to her feet. Even at the grasp of his hand she seemed to gain new courage.

He summoned the interpreter, La Butte, and through him addressed the braves with stern upbraiding.

"Why do you maltreat the young squaw?" he asked. "It was not from her that I learned of the dark designs of your chief Pontiac. It was the All-Seeing and All-Knowing God who revealed to me the treacherous conspiracy."

The Indians wavered, puzzled and amazed.

"My word, he carries it off well," Sterling commented to himself, noting the unflinching gaze where-with the major cowed the savages. "Gladwin was

bound, in common humanity, to shield the girl from the fury of her people. But, forsooth, he can beat the aborigines with their own weapons. Had I not myself heard the Ojibwa tell him the tale, I would not know him to be lying."

"Release her," continued the commandant, as the braves still hesitated. "She shall leave the fort by one gate, and you will go out by the other. But first, soldier, you will see that these men are furnished with beer and bread. Provide also some refreshment for the girl."

The prospect of being regaled with the white man's food and drink, especially the latter, rendered the Indians tractable for the time, and they agreed to let the young woman go.

"Shure, to fill them up with lead would be far better," grumbled O'Desmond audaciously, as he led them away to the kitchen.

The next day was Sunday, and the little military post lay tranquil in the sunshine, as though protected by the truce of God.

Early in the afternoon, Pontiac came to the fort with three of his chiefs, declared that "evil birds had sung lies in the ears of the English," and asked the commandant and Captain Campbell to smoke a peace-pipe with him. It would have been madness to decline. Both officers therefore smoked a few whiffs of the pipe, but when the captain would have returned it, the Ottawa said, —

"No, Eagle Heart, I will leave this sacred calumet in your hands as a pledge of our faith."

An hour or more later many young braves and habitants gathered on the common to play ball. At dusk the garrison was startled by a burst of loud, shrill yells, the drums beat to arms, and the troops

were ordered to their positions; but the alarm was only caused by the victors in the ball game, who announced their success by these discordant cries.

It was early in the morning of the 9th of May, — so early that the sun had not yet shot his golden arrows before him, as a signal that he was coming from beyond the dark forests stretching for leagues back of the Ottawa village; so early that all the settlements on the banks of Le Déroit were still wrapped in slumber.

The sky was cloudless, betokening the awakening of a perfect day; the blue waters flowed on in majesty, as they had flowed since the first dawn of their creation; on the prairies that bordered the strait the dew lay in the fleecy gossamers called by the habitants "the Virgin's web;" a flight of gulls passed over the river; with joyous tranquillity Nature awaited the coming of her lover; the song-birds called to one another, making ready to greet him with a burst of melody.

"How fair and beautiful is the world, even as if fresh from the hand of its Maker," exclaimed Father Potier, as, occupied with the points of the pious meditation prescribed by the rule of his order, he walked beneath the blossom-laden trees of the mission orchard. This was the day set down in the calendar for the blessing of the fields. In another hour he would begin the Mass in the chapel, and his red-skinned congregation would gather about him; but at present not a soul save himself seemed abroad on either shore, though, in the mission house, Brother Regis and Brother La Tour were already at work.

Before long the good father finished his devotions for the nonce, but still he lingered, lost in thought,

beneath the blooming apple trees. His mind was troubled about his people. The history of Pontiac's visit to the fort with the sixty warriors, and his anger at finding the English prepared and wary, had created much excitement in the vicinity of the mission; for the Ottawa chief was seeking by both promises and threats to induce the Hurons to join his conspiracy.

On the day before (Sunday), therefore, Monsieur Potier had preached to them most earnestly upon the blessings of peace, and significantly warned them that vengeance was not to be taken upon guiltless individuals for the injustice inflicted by a government; that massacre was not war, but murder.

The heart of the missionary was filled with a deep pity for the aborigines. Daily he prayed that their wrongs might be righted; yet he was far-seeing enough to discern that even should Pontiac succeed in driving the strangers from the Country of the Lakes, it would be only for a time. Sagacious and clever as was the chief, he could not permanently resist the power that had sent the redcoats into the wilderness. He might slaughter the garrisons from Michilimackinac to Niagara and deluge the land with blood, but from this seed there would arise new soldiers, even as in the old fable armies were said to have sprung up from the sown dragon's teeth. Father Potier knew that the Ottawa's scheme, bold and brilliant as it was, meant only ultimate misery to the warriors at the strait, suffering, peril, and destitution for the women and children. He was resolved to keep from this misery those who would listen to his words; the Hurons of his mission who had been enticed away from the north by the Sieur de Cadillac; the redmen whose ancestors had greeted "Le Père Marquette" with "the heart's right hand of welcome,"

Yes, he, Pierre Potier, the Black Robe, was their friend, their father, and he would save them if he could.

Thus he continued to devise how he could best insure their welfare, when suddenly a footfall almost beside him caused him to stop short in his walk; and as he turned abruptly he beheld, well-nigh at his elbow, an Indian maiden.

“Catherine!” he exclaimed in astonishment, recognizing the girl as the Ojibwa whose sweet voice had until recently led his mission choir, and was as the notes of the thrush in a chorus of woodland birds. “Catherine, you have come early for the services; see, it is not yet sunrise. But why is it, my child, that you have absented yourself of late from the holy Mass and Vespers, that you no longer join with your sisters in singing the praises of the good God?”

“Oh, my father, do not reproach me,” cried the girl, throwing up her hands and swaying to and fro in sorrowing fashion. “I have indeed had a bad heart,—an evil flame has burned in my breast. I have had revengeful thoughts and prayed wicked prayers. I have forgotten your teaching, and raised my voice in incantations to the heathen gods of my people. But I have been greatly punished, my father. I have been beaten with rods,—I, the daughter of a chief. I have been humbled before the man in whose eyes I would fain appear with most favor. And now I am come to you, my father, to acknowledge my fault.”

“Go, then, and kneel on the step of the chapel, daughter. Brother La Tour will open the door be-times. Prepare to confess with the other penitents before the Mass,” said the priest gently.

"Black Robe, I will do so; but as the friend of the poor Indian, listen now also," she entreated, falling on her knees at the feet of the missionary. "My father, the Indian girl has a heart of fire; to her the white man appears as a god."

Father Potier sighed and raised his eyes to Heaven. How often he had heard the story; how tirelessly had he striven to keep the lambs of his fold within the boundaries of the mission villages; how rejoiced he was when the forest maidens married with the warriors of their own or the neighboring tribes!

"A Frenchman has won your love, my daughter?" he asked. "Tell me his name, and I will speak to Father Bocquet, who will see to it that your marriage is duly solemnized."

"No, no, Black Robe," she murmured, with a choking sob, crouching lower and clasping her shoulders with either hand, so that her arms formed a cross upon her breast. "It is not a Frenchman; it is one of the strangers."

"Then, girl, you must tear this love from your breast as though it were a viper," exhorted the priest, with vehemence. "The English marry not with the Indian, as do the French sometimes. Strangle this viper love, or 't is your own soul it will feed upon."

"My father, I cannot. It is the white chief at the fort whom I love."

Father Potier's start of surprise was scarcely perceptible, yet it did not escape the acute senses of the Indian.

"Yes, the yellow-haired, pale-faced commandant. I love him as the summer loves the west wind. I love him more than man was ever loved before. But the Holy Virgin folded me in her fair white mantle; she

held her holy veil before my heart, though I was unworthy. He does not know the fierceness of my love. The glance of the forest maiden is keen as the eyes of Pawpawsay, the woodpecker. I soon came to hate a French demoiselle, because upon her the paleface chief bestows the love which to me would be more precious than many bracelets of silver, more than many strings of silver half-moons and necklaces of wampum beads, more than all the jewels in the crown of the English King. Report came to me of a plan by which my people hoped to rid the country of the red-clad dogs who have stolen the hunting-grounds of our warriors. I thought I would go to the English chief and warn him. Then the vipers in my heart aroused themselves. 'Fool,' they hissed, 'the English chief does not love you; let him die with the rest.'

The girl buried her face in her hands. Father Potier waited patiently.

Presently she raised her head, and continued in a harder tone, —

"I went to this demoiselle whom the white chief loves. To torture her I told her something of the plot, but not enough to permit her to save her lover. I knew, too, that being a French girl, she could do nothing, since if she tried to warn him by word or signal, the anger of Pontiac would fall upon her. I saw her tremble and grow pale with fear. Then I sped away in my boat, my beloved 'Nedjemon.' She called after me in her proud white beauty that she wanted him not for her lover. I hated her more than ever at the moment; to think she so lightly cast away, as though it were 'apukwa,' a bullrush, the love I would have prized more than 'Ketegawn,' a blooming garden. I laughed at her. She besought me to tell him

what I knew, saying, if I did so, she would pray God to give me much love. I laughed once more, and paddled away. I was resolved that the white chief should die."

The girl looked up into the face of the priest. It wore an expression of grave compassion for the storm-tossed soul whose dark recesses were thus disclosed to him. The French demoiselle of whom she spoke could be none other than Angélique Cuillerier, and from amid the sombreness of this tale of savage revenge, Angélique stood forth, sweet, and good, and true; the trembling, frightened Angélique, who with the terrible threat of Pontiac's wrath cold at her heart and still haunted by the tones of his voice, had yet ventured to come to the mission for counsel, had dared after all to carry the news to Gladwin.

"But the last words of the demoiselle echoed in my ears, my father," pursued the Indian. "I ceased my charms and incantations, and prayed to the Great Spirit whom I had forgotten. The Master of Life took pity on me. He sent the Holy Virgin to me in a dream. She crushed the vipers in my heart. She laid her hand upon my aching head, upon my breast. The fire no longer rages there; it burns softly like the flame of the chapel lamps. I have given her my heart to be a votive offering like to the hearts of silver hung before the shrine. I awoke in sadness, knowing the love of the white chief can never be mine; yet I resolved to go to the fort, and tell him all I had learned of the plot."

"But you did not go, my daughter?" queried Father Potier.

The instinct of self-preservation caused the girl to peer cautiously around in all directions. Except

for the twittering of the birds, the orchard was absolutely quiet; upon every side extended the short grass like a carpet, and she could see beneath every tree. Craning her neck, she looked up among the fragrant branches above her head; only the birds and blossoms were there. Had an Indian been lurking anywhere about, she must have discovered him.

Satisfied that no one was listening, she sprang to her feet, and answered in a tense whisper, —

“Yes, Black Robe, I told the commandant all I knew, and in return he had me thrust outside the stockade. There was a great pain in my heart, but, like a bird singing in the wood, there was with me a gladness that I had spoken.”

Catherine, or Nedawniss, then went on to relate how she had been apprehended, accused of having betrayed the scheme of Pontiac, and dragged before Major Gladwin, to be in effect condemned to death by the man she loved. And how then, to her amazement, the commandant had declared it was not from her that he had learned of the dark design of Pontiac; and thereupon the Ottawa, after beating her on the head with his ball stick, set her free, despite the clamor of the warriors, not daring to reck his vengeance upon her after what the commandant had said.

“To Major Gladwin I owe my life, Black Robe,” she concluded, “but he spoke falsely to shield me. It was Catherine the Ojibwa who warned him, and when Pontiac discovers this I shall be put to death. ’T will be a just punishment of my wickedness; I am come to ask the forgiveness of the Master of Life.”

What a wild tale it was, ranging through the gamut of human passions. Yet Father Potier could not

but marvel at the victory the Indian girl had achieved over her own fierce nature. He saw rewarded, in such manner as earth could reward, his years of patient and often apparently fruitless toil among the savages. The gentle lessons of Christianity had triumphed; in a spirit of renunciation and atonement as sublime as any he had ever witnessed, Catherine the Ojibwa had not only risked her life to save a man who did not love her, but was ready to yield it up in atonement for her sin of hatred and revenge. Could penitence approach more nearly to perfection? The girl must not be permitted to sacrifice herself. Yet, on the other hand, Angélique's secret must be carefully guarded. Remorseful as Nedawniss now was, should passion once more gain the mastery of her nature, what might she not do? If by any chance her suspicion should turn upon Cuillerier's daughter, might she not betray the girl to the Ottawas?

"Catherine," began the missionary, "God would be angered were you to throw away your life and, I doubt not, when this emotion is past you will wish to avail yourself of all just means to preserve it. You have no right to say that the commandant did not speak the truth."

"Could it have been the demoiselle who told him?" exclaimed the Indian abruptly.

It was a critical moment.

"You have said, my child, that you did not tell the demoiselle enough of the plot to render possible the chance that she might reveal it," observed the priest quietly.

"Then it was Larron! No, for though he fawns upon the English like a tame fox, I believe he hates them in his heart," she continued. "Or do you think it was Mahigan the Ottawa, my father? Ma-

higan is dead. This morning he fought with Wasson on the bluff, and Wasson stabbed him."

"Mahigan the Ottawa is dead?" echoed Father Potier. "Of a surety they cannot say it was *not* Mahigan."

If Nedawniss was bent upon fixing the charge upon some one, surely it would do no great harm to a dead man.

"Daughter, accuse neither yourself nor any one else of this," added the priest. "Pontiac is not like to have you again apprehended. If he does, show him this sacred symbol; say I gave it to you and bade you tell him to send for me before he dare condemn you. Although not a Christian, he will respect my signet, lest the Almighty God send vengeance upon him."

As he spoke, the missionary took from the breast of his black robe a crucifix, which he placed in the hands of the girl.

"Now go, Catherine," he said; "collect your thoughts, that presently the peace which is above all earthly happiness may comfort your troubled heart."

The Indian sped away as silently as she had come; and anon, Monsieur Potier saw her kneeling in devotion on the step of the forest sanctuary, as was the custom among her people.

Other women joined her there; dusky children and a few braves followed; and soon old Brother La Tour came out of the mission house, and went down the walk to open the door of the chapel.

Over the primeval woods the sun rose in unveiled splendor; the swivel gun upon the water bastion of the fort boomed forth its wonted salute; the drums beat the reveille, and, at the same moment from both

shores of the strait, the bells rang out the Resurrexit of the Easter-tide.

Father Potier uncovered his head, and repeated in a low tone the prayer they chanted. Then he passed beyond the orchard, to minister to his little congregation in the rude log church.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

THE ENVOYS OF PEACE

A FEW hours later, while Father Potier invoked for his Hurons and the neighboring tribes an abundant harvest, on the northern shore of Le Détroit, Monsieur Bocquet, the Recollet curé of Ste. Anne's, led a procession of the French over the farms of the "côte du nord," and, as is the custom in Old France, asked a blessing on the newly sown seed, that it might yield a thousand-fold.

Scarcely had the townfolk returned from these exercises, when the common behind the fort was again thronged with Indians, who had come down the river with a fleet of canoes. At their head was Pontiac.

"Open the gates to me and my people," he cried to the sentinels; "we are come to hold a great council with the white chiefs. To cement my friendship with the English, I wish all my warriors to smell the smoke of the calumet."

While he gesticulated and shouted, Major Gladwin appeared at the gate, accompanied by La Butte.

"Tell the chief he may enter with half a score of his principal warriors, but I will not have this red herd inside the palisade," said the officer to his interpreter.

This answer greatly incensed the proud Ottawa.

"And you," he rejoined, with a threatening gesture toward the Frenchman, "do you, Chesne La Butte, say to the chief of the redcoats that all my warriors

are equal. Unless every one of my followers is admitted within the palisade, not one shall pass the gate. Tell the white chief he may stay in his fort, if he so wills, but I shall keep the country, which belongs to me, as it belonged to my fathers."

While these momentous events were happening before the stockade, at the "côte du nord," Angélique Cuillierier was striving, as best she could, to hide her fears and anxiety. On her return home she had lamented to her mother and Tante Josette her own ill-luck in having chosen a day for her visit when Madame des Ruisseaux and Marianne de St. Ours were absent, and few would have supposed that she had a thought in her pretty head beyond a girlish petulance because her short stay in the town had been stupid instead of gay.

Antoine was neither in the house nor around the farm, and his daughter was glad to learn that he knew nothing of her excursion to the fort. Evidently he had no wish to be about when the storm brewed by Pontiac in the magical séances of the Metai should break over Le Détroit.

Angélique was a child of the wilderness, accustomed to see savage faces peering in at the windows, and savage forms fling open the house-door and stalk, unbidden, across the threshold of her home. She realized what she had done, and if a dread of the possible consequences to herself at times appalled her, she was not unnerved at the appearance of an Indian. Vivacious and ardent by nature, sweet and true-hearted, she nevertheless possessed the woman's art of concealing her real thoughts and emotions. In another age, and under different circumstances, she would have made a capital actress. As it was, she summoned her resources for a difficult rôle.

She dared not hide away in her little nook under the eaves; she must busy herself with cookery. Who so well as Angélique could give the inviting shade of golden brown to the fried "poisson blanc" (white fish) or the "poisson doré" (pickerel); who understood so perfectly the art of roasting the toothsome "cochon au lait" (sucking pig)? Then, too, the flower seeds gathered in the autumn were to be planted; and all this she must do unconcernedly, with only such interest in the fate of the English as a helpless shrinking from the spectacle of deeds of violence and slaughter would naturally awaken in the breast of a young woman.

Three days passed away. On that eventful Saturday the demoiselle had seen the chief Pontiac and his sixty warriors sweep back down the river road and onward across Méloche's bridge, with the fury of a cyclone, embark in canoes at the mouth of Parant's run, and paddle with the haste of rage to the Ottawa village on the opposite side of the strait. From this she knew they had been baffled in their scheme against the fort; the warning to Gladwin had been given in time, and her heart sent up a prayer of gratitude to Heaven that the contemplated massacre had been averted.

Sunday morning, with a new ribbon on her bee-hive hat, she went to Mass at the church of Ste. Anne, for the French were still permitted to go into the town for the services. Robishe Navarre walked home with her, and from him she learned that the French looked forward to a new era of peace for Le Détroit. The next day the sun shone bright upon the newly sown fields, as though the hand of God was indeed stretched forth to bless them. Angélique worked in her garden with more content than she had known since that

awful night in the loft when she had heard the Great Chief talking to her father. While vowing her harvest of flowers to the good Ste. Anne as a thankoffering for the fête of the saint in July, she sang to herself snatches of a song brought by the French across the seas, even as the stately pear tree whose praises she rehearsed had been brought from a famous orchard in Normandy, —

“ Par derrier chez mon père, —
 Vole mon cœur, vole,
 Par derrier chez mon père
 I ya-t-un pommier doux,
 Tout doux,
 I ya-t-un pommier.

“ Les feuilles en sont vertes, —
 Vole mon cœur, vole,
 Les feuilles en sont vertes,
 Et le fruit en est doux,
 Tout doux,
 Et le fruit en est doux,
 Vole mon cœur, vo — ”

As she knelt upon the ground, patting the soil above the seeds of her carnations and china asters as though they were her little brothers and sisters, and she was tucking them into their soft beds, the girl's heart was in truth ready to fly away with happiness, to fly to the lover whom she loved, whoever this fortunate personage might be. But at the last words of the chanson she rose to her feet, brushed the earth from her hands as a bird might flutter its wings, and, tossing back her head, trolled the “vole mon cœur” with the joyousness of the meadow lark.

The final “vole,” however, died upon her lips, as the sweet notes die in the throat of the lark when the sportsman's shot pierces its little singing breast. For

at this moment there burst upon the air of the tranquil afternoon a horrible din and tumult from the direction of the fort; a whooping as of a horde of demons broken loose. Running to the river edge, she looked toward the town. The prairie was black with people, who from their yells must be savages. Quickly the frightened girl fled to the house, where she found Dame Cuillerier, Tante Josette, the children, and the Pani women as alarmed as herself. Until darkness came, the wild rejoicings continued, yet the habitants of the côte remained in ignorance of what had taken place.

All night long from her window in the loft of the Cuillerier home Angélique watched the Indian campfires on the southern bank of the river, and heard with horror the cries which proclaimed that the war dance was being performed in the Ottawa village. When toward morning she fell asleep upon a pelt on the floor of the dormer, the whole bizarre picture rose before her in a dream as once she saw it as a child, when carried into the redmen's camp by her father.

Again she beheld the circle of dark warriors seated upon their mats, and so hideous that they looked the incarnate spirits of evil. She saw Pontiac leap into the centre of the ring, waving his tomahawk and stamping upon the ground, as he chanted his past exploits, and swore to exterminate the English. Now the warriors closed in about him. They caught his wild mood; one after another joined in the dance, circling round and round, with fierce gestures and blood-curdling yells.

Crying aloud, Angélique awoke in a tremor of fear, wishing she had not closed her eyes. Turning her gaze once more to the window, she saw with dismay

that during her sleep, brief as it was, a change had taken place in the aspect of the banks of the strait. The inhabitants of the Ottawa village were crossing the river, evidently with the intention of erecting their arbor-like lodges at the mouth of the creek, hard by the house of Baptiste Méloche.

"Juste ciel, so the redskins have come to live among us," she exclaimed a quarter of an hour later, as she made her appearance in the hearthroom, where Dame Cuillerier was directing a Pani woman in the preparation of the morning meal.

"Yes, truly, and fine neighbors they will make for the young wife of Monsieur Méloche," replied the dame, in French of course. "Poor woman, she will wish them farther away, even though her husband and the chief are such fast friends."

While it was still early, the Pani boys brought in word that the Indians were gathering in a great horde, and suddenly a war-whoop arose from the plain and re-echoed from the woods and waters. Not only the Ottawas, but the Pottawattomies, Ojibwas, and disaffected Hurons had joined in the assault.

Angélique rushed again to the gate. The air above the fort was thick with flying arrows; at intervals the swivel guns upon the eastern bastion with a lion-like roar belched forth flame and sent their fiery balls among the enemy, but with what effect it was impossible to judge.

After some hours, the din of the conflict ceased, and about mid-afternoon, Tante Josette descried three masculine figures trudging sturdily up the road.

"Madame! Angélique!" she called, "who are these Frenchmen coming from the town?"

In a trice Angélique was beside her, to watch them with her younger eyes.

"They are my sister's husband, La Butte, Jacques Godefroy, and Clotilde's father, the old surgeon," she announced, and straightway hurried down the garden path to greet the visitors, with whom she presently returned.

"Bon jour, Madame Cuillerier," began Major Chapoton, "we have come to the côte at the request of Monsieur Gladwin to arrange a peace with Pontiac, and we count upon the help of Antoine's influence with the Ottawa. Is your good man within?"

"That he is not, major," rejoined la bonne mère, in a tone that said she highly disapproved the absence of her spouse. "He took his gun yesterday, and went into the woods after saying he did not know how long he would be away. But be seated, monsieur, and you also, La Butte and friend Godefroy. How is Dame Clotilde? The 'petit enfant' is thriving, I am sure! Plain have I seen in him from the first a look of his grandsire, although one can tell at a glance, too, that he is Jacques Godefroy's boy."

"Thanks, dame, but I fear we cannot delay," protested Godefroy awkwardly, as their hostess rattled on.

A peculiar smile flitted over the countenance of Madame Cuillerier.

"Since when, neighbor, have you been so zealous a friend of the strangers?" she queried mockingly.

"A friend to them I am not at all, madame," he answered, with vehemence. "It is because I could not abide the atrocities of the savages yesterday that you see me willing to essay the part of peacemaker."

"What led to the attack upon the fort this morning?" interposed Tante Josette. "We know only that when Pontiac visited Major Gladwin, he took from his speech bag a belt of white wampum and pre-

sented it to the commandant. Thereat Major Gladwin was angered, and, catching hold of the bag, drew from it a red wampum belt, whose presence there was a token understood among his warriors that the white belt meant war, and not peace."

"Eh bien, you have the gist of the matter," said La Butte. "To-day the redmen set fire to the hut of the English woman who pastured her cows and sold milk upon the common. Having murdered her, together with her two sons, they went to the Isle au Cochon and slew the settler Fisher and his wife; you know them, — he was, awhile since, sergeant at the fort. The woman they would have spared, 't is said, for she was young and comely, but she piteously bewailed the death of her husband, and almost thrust herself beneath their tomahawks."

"A strange tale is being repeated, too," chimed in Godefroy, in an awed undertone, as he crossed himself and glanced over his shoulder, as if he half expected to behold an apparition standing behind him. "Pettier, who lives across the strait and is married to an Ottawa woman, — Pettier went over to the island, hastily buried the dead, took the two children to the fort, and gave their nurse-maid as a servant to his squaw. Later, going again to the place, with horror he beheld the hands of the murdered man thrust out of the earth, as though in entreaty. He covered them, but when he returned past the spot they were once more thrust forth. Then he knew the poor wretch was pleading for Christian burial, so in great fear he went and brought Father Potier, who blessed the grave, and now the unfortunate farmer rests in peace."

This gruesome history was received by the women with expressions of consternation.

“That is not all,” said Major Chapoton. “Desnoyer brought in news this morning that the savages have slain the English officers who went up to the river Ste. Claire to sound for a channel deep enough to permit them to send their schooner up to Michilimackinac. Also, the Sauteurs from the shores of the Bay of Saginaw are on the war-path, and coming to join Pontiac. I love the English no better than my friend Godefroy here; but since we are bound to keep peace with them, I think it the part of honorable Frenchmen to prevent their being massacred. Moreover,” he continued, turning to Angélique, “mademoiselle, you know the White Fawn, the adopted child of the Cabaciers at the red mill below the fort, the maiden who has so captivated Captain Campbell that he is minded to marry her notwithstanding her dash of Indian blood?”

“Yes, yes; as sweet a demoiselle as any to be found at Le Détroit. And she has given her heart to the captain, too,” responded Mademoiselle Cuillier. “I would almost forget she is of the Indian race, she is so fair, and so well taught in thrifty ways by Dame Cabacier.”

“There is one who has not forgotten her Ottawa blood,” replied the surgeon sadly; “the chief Wasson, who wanted her for his bride. Enraged that the White Fawn would not accept his savage love, he turned his anger against the maiden. This morning she was found on the prairie, killed by an Indian tomahawk. Wasson is named as the assassin, and it is said he alleges ’t was she who thwarted the design of Pontiac by revealing to her lover the plot whereby the Ottawa hoped to gain possession of the fort.”

Angélique could not repress a start, and the color

faded from her face. Had Mathurine died for this, when she, Angélique Cuillerier, alone was guilty? She covered her face with her hands, for before her mind's eye rose the picture of the White Fawn lying dead upon the meadow.

"The Sauteur strove but to justify himself; he knew the girl was ignorant of Pontiac's scheme," said La Butte, ascribing Angélique's pallor to womanly pity. "It is thought, however, that when attacked, she was on her way to the fort to warn Captain Campbell to beware of Wasson. Thus she may be said to have died to save her lover. Indian maidens have placed caged birds to mark the spot where she already lies beneath the flower-dotted sod of the prairie, birds to be released with kisses and caresses by these forest sisters when they begin to sing, that, winging their way to the spirit land, they may bear with them the soul of la jolie Mathurine."

"Eh bien, my friends, we must be going," declared Major Chapoton, starting to his feet.

Madame Cuillerier had scarce begun to lament anew the absence of her lord, when who should stride in through the house-door but Antoine himself. After some demur, he agreed to accompany the party, and they set out forthwith.

Two hours later the three envoys returned with Antoine. La bonne mère, with the assistance of her slave women, had ready for them an excellent supper, and Angélique helped Tante Josette to wait upon the guests, according to the French-Canadian custom. While thus flitting about, she gathered from the conversation that Pontiac had replied by fair messages to the commandant, and sent a splendid peace-pipe to Captain Campbell, asking him to go to the Indian camp and treat with him and his warriors.

But although Godefroy, La Butte, and the old surgeon were in high spirits over the success of their mission, the demoiselle noted that Cuillerier took little part in the clamor of their creole voices. Did he know this plan to be another subterfuge? She could not believe so. She remembered how, during Pontiac's midnight visit to the hearthroom, her heart had thrilled with sympathy for the redmen, as the Great Chief told of their wrongs. But again she saw the astute savage obtaining a mastery over the mind of Antoine by his flatteries and false promises, lulling his conscience even as a snake charms and deadens the will power of its victim, and coils itself about the unhappy man, for whom there is then no escape. No; Pontiac was not sincere in his apparent readiness to cement a peace. What was that? The Ottawa had appointed this very house as the place for the meeting between the warriors and Captain Campbell. Pontiac wished to make a tool of her father. But he should not; no, clever as he was, she, a girl, must once more try to outwit him. She would take courage; had she not heard Father Potier say that God sometimes sets the weak to confound the strong?

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH

A NOBLE GENTLEMAN

“MY head is heavy, and the air of the room stifles me. I will go out and walk in the twilight,” whispered Angélique to Tante Josette.

As she slipped away, “cette chère tante” and Dame Cuillerier exchanged glances of smiling significance. Perchance Jasmin de Joncaire awaited a tête-à-tête with the demoiselle upon the strand; or mayhap, if Robishe Navarre was able to get outside the stockade, he had come in his canoe to take her upon the river.

The two older women had noticed with satisfaction that of late the young Frenchmen were again in favor. Gladwin was not liked in the Cuillerier household; and though the Scotchman, James Sterling, at one time stood in the good graces of “la bonne mère,” the latter acknowledged that she would prefer for a second son-in-law a man bred in New France, as was La Butte, the husband of her older daughter. Therefore, when Tante Josette repeated to her the girl’s excuse, she answered, —

“‘La pauvre petite,’ no wonder her feelings are overwrought after the dreadful tales we have heard this day. The evening air will soothe her, and if a neighbor’s son appears to turn her thoughts to other themes, so much the better.”

Meanwhile Angélique had passed beyond the palisade that surrounded the house, and, avoiding the

river road, had entered upon a by-path leading through the fields. At first she strolled as if aimlessly, but, when well away from the vicinity of her home, screened by the deepening twilight, she began to run. True, she was a French girl, and the Indians were friendly with her people, yet she knew well that when the fighting spirit of the savage is aroused, there is no telling against whom it may next turn. At any moment a dark form might spring up from the long dry grass of the prairie, which had remained uncut for many seasons; a relentless hand with knife or tomahawk might mete out to her the fate of the gentle White Fawn. If there had been time to consider all this, perchance her resolution might have failed. But a woman is brave by impulse; hers is not the calm, cool intrepidity of the mind, but rather the ardent courage of the heart, — a courage which finds its strength in self-forgetfulness.

One thought possessed the brain of Angélique as she ran on, faster and faster, for by this time La Butte, Godefroy, and Major Chapoton must have started on their return to the fort. She must arrive before them with her warning, otherwise Captain Campbell misled by their representations, false, although offered in all sincerity, would go out with them to meet Pontiac on the "côte du nord-est." Now she was almost at the stockade; the lights in the houses of the town glowed softly beyond the pickets. Suddenly she stopped short and hid behind a bush; she had caught the sound of some one approaching. Was it an Indian? Her heart seemed to stand still with apprehension. In another moment a stalwart soldierly figure strode past her place of concealment, and she recognized Captain Campbell himself.

He was walking with head bowed and arms folded across his breast, his whole air betokening a deep dejection, all the more marked in one usually light-hearted and genial. An exclamation rose to her lips. He looked up quickly, and his hand mechanically went to his sword. But when she stepped out from behind the laurel shrub, he dropped the blade again into its scabbard, and fell back a pace or two.

It happened that the girl wore a frock of light-colored cotton stuff, which in the dusk looked white, and gave her perhaps an unearthly appearance as she arose thus in his path. Did he think her the spirit of the White Fawn, come to soothe and comfort his grief over her loss?

Angélique stood motionless. With two or three strides he was beside her.

"Mademoiselle Cuillerier," he ejaculated, in astonishment, "why, how is it that you are wandering alone on the prairie? Are you bound for the fort to visit your aunt? The sentinels have been forbidden to let any of the French go in or out, but I will pass you and give you a written order that will enable you to return to the côte when you choose."

"No, Captain Campbell, I am not going to the town. It is for your sake I am come, to caution you before it is too late," she faltered.

"For my sake?" he repeated sadly.

"Yes, my good friend."

Thereupon she told him of the envoys who had returned in high feather from Pontiac's camp, because they had been asked to bring the captain to the Cuillerier house that evening to treat with the warriors.

"Ha, I have always had the good will of the red-men," exclaimed the captain, with a dash of his old spirit, "except indeed of the black-hearted Wasson."

He clenched his hands, and his face hardened. "I shall be rejoiced to extricate the gallant Major Gladwin from an awkward predicament."

"No, no, you must not listen to the envoys," entreated Angélique. "Like many others, monsieur, I look for the time when the fleur-de-lis will wave again over the stockade yonder. But, I said to myself, this good Captain Campbell has ever been pleasant and kind to me. He has not been harsh either to the French or the Indians; the Ottawa chief will cheat my father and his friends; he will cheat you, monsieur le capitaine. I am only a foolish demoiselle, but I feel this in my heart."

With grateful emotion Campbell heard the pleadings of the girl, who had come alone across the prairie to put him on his guard.

"Mademoiselle," he said, a bit unsteadily, "from my soul I thank you for your brave friendship which led you at the risk of danger to yourself to come to tell me this. I shall always remember it with the liveliest gratitude. But a soldier must take chances of peril in order to achieve important ends."

"Oh, do not go to the council," she persisted, in excitement. "If you do, it will be but to fling away your life."

"Again I thank you," he returned, and presently added, with fierce bitterness, "My life! What if Pontiac and his warriors do take it? Have they not deprived me of the only object that could make a continued existence in this desolate country tolerable to me? Condemned by military duty to spend my best years in the wilderness, I sought to conciliate its wild inhabitants, and also to make friends of the gentle little creatures of the forest; the hares and squirrels, the birds and young fawns. This was no

pursuit for a soldier, perhaps, but sometimes a soldier wearies of strife and wars; because of the very sternness of his trade he loves the relaxations of peace.

“One day in the early autumn, passing down by the Spring Wells, I was overtaken by a heavy storm. During the rain, the thunder roared like a battery of artillery, the lightning played about me. With a crash it felled a tree, not many rods from where I walked upon the open plain. The next thing I knew a white man was bending over me. Before many minutes I was sufficiently recovered to seek with him the shelter of his home, the red mill. By the hearth-fire stood a girl, the embodiment of the mysterious, captivating beauty of this region. Her appealing hazel eyes, the brown tint of her hair, showed that she was a child of New France; only the deep flush of her cheek proclaimed her also a daughter of the forest. After that day, I often went to the red mill. My heart was stirred by Mathurine’s shy welcome. I grew to love her. At first I thought only of how her timid affection cheered my solicitude. I had always fancied my bride would be some sweet English girl. Yet, what woman accustomed to the comforts of civilization would be content in this remote place, even were she willing to follow me here? A French girl would be too loyal to the fleur-de-lis to love an Englishman. But the White Fawn, whose heart was pure as the forest spring, I would make her my wife and find happiness in her caresses. Forgive me, mademoiselle, I have taxed your patience with this tale, but you have a warm heart, and when a man is stricken with affliction, the sympathy of a good woman soothes and strengthens him.”

Without speaking, Angélique impulsively laid her firm young hand for a moment on the captain’s arm.

She had often said to herself that it was well to be neighborly with the strangers, and no great harm to coquet with them a little; but to marry among them would not be fitting for a Cuillier de Beaubien, a niece of the commandant De Bellestre. Nevertheless, she knew of more than one pretty Canadienne of Le Détroit who would have listened kindly to the suit of the agreeable captain. Still, no doubt pretty Mathurine of the mill would have pleased him best, and Angélique was conscious of a deep pity for the strong man who was withal so kind, and who had loved the White Fawn with so tender and honorable a love.

“But,” he went on, “you have heard, mademoiselle, how the Sauteur chief dared to raise his eyes to Mathurine, thinking to make her his squaw and drag her down to savagery? How, because she would not heed his wooing, he murdered her upon the prairie?”

The captain broke off abruptly — almost overcome.

“As Wasson killed the White Fawn, so he would destroy you, monsieur le capitaine,” faltered Angélique.

“Whatever comes, I must meet the warriors to-night,” rejoined Campbell steadfastly. “If this Sauteur is there, I will charge him with the murder of the girl, who traced her lineage from the tribe of Pontiac. I will demand of the chief the punishment of this criminal in the name of his own nation. He dare not refuse it. As for myself, I am willing to lay down my life if to do so would insure the supremacy of the standard of St. George over Fort Pontchartrain. Mademoiselle, I need not ask you to pardon the loyalty of a soldier to his cause.”

Angélique saw with dismay that she could not dis-

suade him from this desperate expedition. His last words, moreover, aroused in her the antagonism of her people against the conquerors, and she was about to make a sharp retort when the sound of voices announced the approach of a number of men along the river road.

"Listen!" she cried, with a finger on her lips.

"That is Jacques Godefroy," said the captain carelessly.

"Yes," whispered the girl, "the envoys are coming now. I beg you once more, do not go with them."

For answer, the captain took her hands in his, and pressed them in thankfulness for the service she sought to render him. But as she hurried away across the prairie, he shook his head, and walked toward the road to meet the Frenchman.

Major Gladwin was reluctant that his first officer should go to treat with Pontiac.

Unfortunately, the garrison depended largely on the Indian hunters for their supplies of meats; the stores sent from Niagara were getting low, the fort was in no condition to stand the threatened siege. He therefore at last yielded his consent, and the captain set out, accompanied by a junior officer, Lieutenant McDougal, and attended by La Butte, Major Chapoton, and Godefroy.

As they passed through the town, Robishe Navarre, who had come in from the *côte*, hailed the party, and said to Campbell, with tears in his eyes, "Monsieur, I pray you to abandon this enterprise; even though Pontiac may be acting in good faith, I doubt if he can control his warriors."

But the fearless captain, whose spirit chafed like that of the war horse at the scent of battle, laughed

caution to the winds, and passed on with the others in the direction of Cuillerier's house. As they drew nearer to the Indian camp, however, he realized that he had been overrash, for a band of savages sprang up the steep bluff from the strand below, where they had landed from canoes, and attacked the party. This, assuredly, would have been an end of the expedition, had not the commanding form of Pontiac at that moment loomed up out of the darkness.

In the tone of one who would brook no resistance of his authority, he ordered the braves to fall back, and they forthwith slunk away, like curs, before the lash of the master.

"The English chief is come; it is well," he said, saluting the captain with stately dignity. "Pontiac will hold the redmen in check; the chief and his friends may go on in safety to the place of the council."

When the officers with their companions arrived at the house of Cuillerier, they were greeted by the latter with an elaborate show of courtesy. So droll was his appearance that at another time the genial captain would have burst out a-laughing, for Antoine was arrayed in his parti-colored finery, as Angélique had once seen him, and looked not unlike a tame domestic fowl dyed and tricked out in bright plumage to imitate the bird of paradise.

Scarcely were the party seated when a door, leading to the pantry, was thrown open and a Pani woman entered with a tray of pewter mugs, each filled to the brim with home-brewed beer. After her came Angélique with a flagon; and, beset as he was by serious anxieties, Captain Campbell started when he saw her.

"Zounds, the girl must have run all the way home," he said to himself.

Such was indeed the case, yet being an hour in advance, she had gained time to compose herself. If the color glowed in her round cheeks more richly than usual, she showed in no other way that she had fled swiftly as a hare across the prairie.

With a gay laugh, and a word of pleasantry for every one, she passed around, refilling the cup of each man from the flagon.

After a few moments, Antoine turned from Mr. Campbell to duly impress the young lieutenant with the dignity of the Bourgeois Cuillier of Le Détroit.

Angélique seized upon the opportunity to exchange a few words with the captain.

"Why did you come?" she said reproachfully.

He smiled and shrugged his shoulders, a gesture learned from the French.

"I shall pray that no harm may follow your obstinacy," she continued, holding high the flagon to screen her features, as she poured the simple brew for him slowly. "It may be that all danger is averted, for Father Potier has brought back to their senses the most tractable of the Hurons by refusing them the sacraments if they lend their aid to any outbreak."

Having given him this information, she passed on, and presently disappeared from the room. Before long Pontiac arrived, with his principal chiefs, Maka-téplicité, Panigwun, Chavoignon, Ninivois, chief of the Foxes, and Takee, of the bad band of Hurons. At once the gray eyes of Captain Campbell swept over the group, and involuntarily he half drew his rapier. Wasson the Sauteur was not with them, however.

And now occurred a most extraordinary proceeding. Two young braves placed an armchair on the table, and, mounting upon the board, Antoine Cuil-

lerier seated himself therein. In his tawdry state he looked a farcical representation of authority. Nevertheless, the Indians saluted him with respect.

The two officers, Major Chapoton, La Butte, and Godefroy stood at one side of the dark fireplace, wherein lay a heap of cold ashes. In the lamps the cotton wicks, floating in bear's oil, smoked and flared fitfully. It was a bizarre and cheerless picture.

Stepping out from among his followers, Pontiac opened his blanket in token of salutation of the assembly, and began to speak.

"Blue-Coat," he said, addressing Cuillerier, with a deference that had in it a suspicion of irony, "you are the father of Le Détroit until the King of France sends Monsieur de Bellestre back to us. I and my warriors say before you, then, that the lands of the strait belong not to the English, nor to the French, but to the redman, as they belonged to his fathers. The French are our brothers, and we will share with them as they share with us; but the English must take to their ships and go away, leaving their guns and provisions for us, and the fort to the French. I, Pontiac, have spoken for myself and for the chiefs of all the nations from the Sleeping Bear to the land of the Delawares."

When the Ottawa leader had finished, little Cuillerier hopped down from his perch and seized the hand of Captain Campbell with a cordial grip.

"Je vous fais mes compliments, monsieur le capitaine, and to you also, monsieur le lieutenant," he added, turning to McDougal. "You have heard the Great Chief, Pontiac. He has shown you the way out of the difficulty. Is it not so? Ah, I treated for you to the best of my ability, je serais diplomate, n'est-ce pas?"

"The wrath of the Indians smouldered like a hidden fire. It threatened to break forth in a terrible flame, like the conflagrations that sometimes sweep over the prairies. But I, messieurs, I poured oil on the troubled waters," continued Antoine, getting hopelessly confused in his metaphors. "I dared not expect my friend Pontiac to be so lenient. All you have to do is to sail away peaceably, — to go down to the Lake of the English,¹ or even to Montreal, if you will."

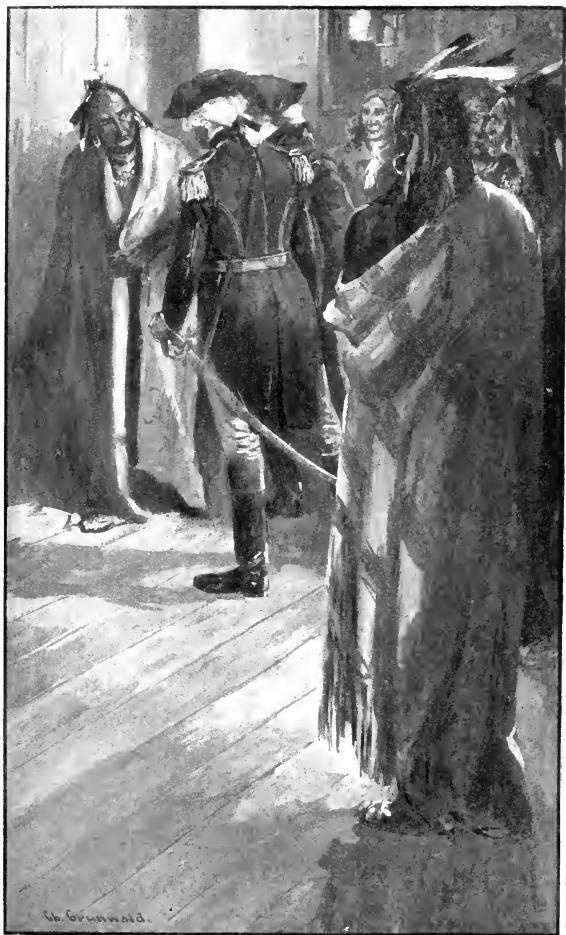
"I thank you, Mr. Cuillerier, for whatever good offices you have done myself and my compatriots," rejoined Captain Campbell, scarcely able to repress a grim smile. "But you do not know the English well if you think they will so readily abandon what they have won in a fair fight. The soldiers of his Majesty George the Third never retreat, sir."

"Bah!" exclaimed the little habitant, in disappointment, as he snapped his fingers in the face of the officer. "Your foolish old King must be crazier even than they say, if he'd have his people scalped rather than surrender a rotting stockade in the wilderness. As for retreating, ma foi," he added, with a gleam of prophetic insight, dropping from the French into a dialect which he considered to be the English tongue, "eef 'ees foolish Majestee's redcoats go not now, still will Antoine Cuillerier see them fly away *queek* enough from Le Détroit, un jour; oui, sans doubt. Ha, ha, ha!"

Campbell disdained a reply to what he considered a preposterous prediction, but, turning to Pontiac and his warriors, he answered them with soldierly frankness and dignity, —

"Chief of the Ottawas, you and your braves have

¹ Ontario.



G. Brunwald.

done well to trust in my wish to deal fairly with you," he said. "It is well that you and the English should be friends. The English need the pelts and venison obtained by your hunters, while you need the hatchets, knives, guns, and cloth which we bring to the strait. What would you do without them, now that you are used to them? You would suffer and die. Is it not better to be at peace with those who bring you weapons and clothing? The King of France has forgotten you. Without our consent, the French can bring you nothing."

The words of the captain were not without effect. The chiefs took counsel among themselves, and presently Pontiac put to him questions regarding certain points that he desired to have specified in the treaty.

"Not being commandant of the fort, I cannot decide upon these matters," replied the captain. "Since it is growing late, I and my companion will return to the stockade. I will explain to Major Gladwin the terms you desire, and to-morrow I will bring you his answer."

So saying, he strode across the room to depart, and Lieutenant McDougal followed.

But Pontiac interposed his powerful figure between them and the door.

"That cannot be," he said in his French patois. "My father will sleep to-night in the lodges of his red children."

With a calmness which compelled the admiration of his captors, the gallant captain drew back, and the junior officer strove to emulate his imperturbability. Nevertheless, despite the information Campbell had received, it was with amazement that they found themselves prisoners,

The captain shot an angry glance of inquiry at Cuillerier. The latter shrugged his shoulders, and spread out his hands in Gallic fashion, as though to say he was not to blame; he had done what he could.

From him Campbell looked toward the other Frenchmen. Surprise and genuine chagrin were depicted upon their countenances. Plainly, they had not been parties to the ruse whereby the English officers had been snared. Major Chapoton and Jacques Godefroy protested hotly that the gentlemen must be permitted to return to the fort, but Pontiac haughtily bade them be silent, and if they would themselves go free, to be off at once.

"Go, my friends," said the captain curtly, "you do us no good by staying, and I depute you to carry the report of what has taken place to Major Gladwin."

Downcast enough, they took leave of him. Pontiac, however, began to survey his captives with some uneasiness; he had not decided where he would bestow them for the night. After all, the English might regain the supremacy of Le Détroit, and in that contingency, he and his braves would fare better if they now showed Captain Campbell and his aide the consideration which white men paid to officers captured in war. To keep them among the savages would not be wise, for should the warriors chance to get at any English rum or French eau-de-vie, he could not restrain them. No, the French must lodge and feed his prisoners, and he would see to it that they should have no opportunity to escape.

"My father, the Blue-Coat," he began, turning to Cuillerier.

"As representative of his Majesty King Louis, I am forced to remain neutral in this matter," said Antoine haltingly.

Uncertain how Major Gladwin would act upon learning of the detention of the officers, he did not wish to risk the enmity of the English by becoming the gaoler of Pontiac's captives.

Here was an unlooked-for turn of affairs.

The Ottawa chief glared at his old friend for a moment. Then he said to his followers, —

“Take the Englishmen to the house of Louis Campeau, near the little chapel on the bank of the river, and tell him the white chief is to be treated with all the respect due to so brave a warrior.”

By this time, Pontiac and his horde had the entire c^{ôte} so much in awe of their power that he commanded the French at will. In any event, Campeau and his wife were disposed to receive the gentlemen kindly. When they arrived, no guard was stationed within doors, but a party of Indians camped outside.

Dame Campeau and her Pani women had just prepared a neat apartment for the officers, however, when Pontiac entered the house. He promptly decided that it was too near the town, and accordingly had his captives removed to the home of Baptiste Méloche at Parant's Creek.

“I am sorry you come to us perforce, monsieur le capitaine,” said Baptiste, in his soft creole French, as he greeted them, half an hour later. “But you are welcome to the best my house affords, and it will be better for you and your lieutenant to be with us than in the village of the Indians.”

“We will do all we can to make your stay endurable, not to say comfortable,” added Méloche's young wife, with her bright smile.

Her womanly sympathy went out to the white men, who had been so shrewdly tricked by the Ottawa.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH

A DARING ADVENTURE

ALTHOUGH Antoine Cuillerier and his companion "commerçant voyageurs" of Le Détroit lived upon the "côte du nord," or prairie extending along the margin of the river, they all had warehouses within the palisade. Other traders had habitations in the town, the fronts of these buildings being taken up with stores and merchandise, while the dwelling-rooms were in the rear, but under the same roof.

Such was the log house of James Sterling; not so pretentious as some (according to the simple pretensions of the forest settlement), yet commodious and well built, for the young merchant had prospered. Integrity was his motto; he was as punctilious as to his reputation in matters of trade as was ever knight of old that there should be no stain upon his shield, as was ever chevalier of New France that no reproach should be cast upon his courage or honor. Accordingly, though a young man, he had attained a decided standing in the town, and possessed the respect of both the commandant and the people, while among the Indians he was known as "the paleface who neither cheats nor sells rum."

In his fur-press were piled high the fine pelts of the beaver, the otter, and the silver fox, as well as the skins of the buffalo, lynx, bear, and wolf. These products of his barter with the aborigines he hoped to forward

by the next convoy to Niagara, whence they would be sent to England.

On the opposite side of his warehouse were to be seen the goods wherewith he bought the precious pelts, the iron implements and muskets, the blankets, cotton cloth, and a few made garments intended for customers among the garrison; tinware, vermilion, ochre, indigo, and other pigments, besides quantities of bright-colored beads. Coin was scarce at Le Détroit, even at British headquarters; there was still less of it among the French, and to the savages its use was entirely unknown. Therefore, almost all mercantile transactions were matters of exchange.

Were the chest in the corner unlocked, so that the lid might be raised, a glance into the interior would have revealed a collection of more valuable trinkets. Strings of silver half-moons, crosses, gorgets, silver armbands, wristbands, brooches, hairplates, hairbobs, earbobs, calculated to attract the savages, besides other ornaments, designed to please the French dames and demoiselles.

Surrounded by the evidences that he was laying the foundation of a good business, the merchant had, it would seem, good reason for contentment, save that beside his hearthstone sat no gentle wife to whom he might confide his hopes; who would rejoice at his successes and console his failures. But it was Angélique Cuillerier whom he wished to marry. In her centered his ideal of home; and Angélique cared not for him at all, else she would not have cast aside his love for the sake of a dance with Sir William Johnson. True, she had been gracious to him once or twice after the day of the Black Rain, when he had gone in search of and found her in the storm.

But, doubtless, this was from a sense of obligation, and the thought galled his pride as much as it wounded his affection. Outside his window was a vine brought from the prairie; the more he pruned and checked it, the more it flourished. The more he strove to control his love for Angélique, the stronger and more beautiful it grew.

Perhaps it was because "love's anger is the fuel of love" that he was so conscious of his passion during these early days of the Indian troubles at the strait. For his soul was filled with a jealous rage against the girl and against Gladwin, the more since at this crisis he could not quarrel with the commandant, even had Gladwin of a certainty won the love of this fair demoiselle of New France. And had he? Confusion seize him, yes, it must be! Otherwise, why the stolen visit of Angélique, when he, Sterling, had compelled her to cast aside her disguise, and she had defied him in her youthful beauty? Otherwise, what could she have had to say to the commandant?

Might there not have been a secret marriage? Antoine Cuillerier would be like to refuse his assent to the union of his daughter with one of the hated foreigners; yet Gladwin was not a man to be thwarted by such prejudices. But no, according to the law of the place, the consent of the bride's parents was necessary to make a marriage legal, unless she had passed the age of one-and-twenty. A betrothal there might be, however. He could imagine that some other woman might prefer Gladwin to himself; but Mademoiselle Cuillerier should have more discernment. Gladwin was not ill favored, was of good lineage and fair ability (if somewhat overrated, perhaps), yet he,

Sterling, also made a passable appearance, if the flattering asides of the ladies of Le Détroit were to be credited.

He possessed fair talents. In a few years he would be able to give his wife everything in the way of jewels and rich dress that she could in reason desire. As for descent, did he not trace an honorable ancestry far back into the misty past? Gladwin in his cool fashion might swear to Angélique that he adored her; yet Angélique ought to know he could never give her the passionate devotion, the strong love, that burned for her in the heart of James Sterling.

But thoughts of love and even of jealousy must yield to employment, and there was much for the young trader to do, since the officers of the fort relied upon him to show the inhabitants of the town that their best interests lay in making common cause with the English in the coming struggle against the savages.

Despite his efforts, many of the French, alarmed at the prospect of an attack upon the garrison, asked leave to withdraw to their farms upon the côtes, and went out, abandoning their homes and a part of their goods.

One day at the noon hour Sterling was alone in his warehouse, engaged with his accounts, when there came to him from without the tones of a light baritone voice singing with gay abandon, —

“‘ Ma Mignonette, embrassez moi?’

‘ Nenni, monsieur, je n’oserais,

Car, si mon papa le savait.’ —

‘ Les oiseaux parlent-ils?’

‘ Oui, ils parlent français, latin aussi.’

‘ Ils parlent français, latin aussi?’

Hélas, que le monde est malin,
D'apprendre aux oiseaux le latin.'"¹

The next moment a shadow obscured the sunlight that fell upon the desk, and, looking up, the Scotchman beheld in the open doorway a young man who evidently affected the costume of a voyageur, yet wore it with the air of a prince. His blue blouse showed to advantage the clear olive tint of his handsome face, from which looked out a pair of fine dark eyes, while a jaunty red cap, set upon the wavy black locks that hung loose about his shoulders, lent an additional picturesqueness to a remarkably attractive personality. It was Robishe Navarre, the son of the notary, Robert the Writer.

"Navarre," exclaimed Sterling, with pleasure, rising and extending his hand, which the other grasped with frank cordiality.

The two men respected each other, and even their whilom rivalry for the favor of the tantalizing demoiselle Angélique Cuillerier had not proved an insurmountable barrier to their friendship.

"Robishe, be seated. No, not on that bale of cloth; take the chair, and I will find a place on the chest. You have been away beyond the côte for some days. I am glad you have come back to the town when so many of the French are leaving."

"Chut, quelle bêtise! It is safer within the palisade than without," responded the creole indif-

¹ "Mignonette, one little kiss?"

'Nay, nay, good sir, for I should fear,
Of it my dear papa would hear.'

'Bah, would the birds tell, think you?'

'Yes, they speak French and Latin too.'

'What, they speak French and Latin too?'

Ah, 't is a cruel world we live in,
Where the forest birds learn Latin.'

ferently. "But he who has not courage must have legs!"

"No man can answer for his courage until he has been in danger," said Sterling, with a laugh. "What news do you bring? You have heard, I suppose, of Major Gladwin's haughty answer to Pontiac: 'The King of England has sent me to command this fort, and I will hold it.'"

Robishe nodded, and proceeded to say that the warriors were robbing the French of ammunition and farm produce; that the Great Chief had sent La Butte to ask the curé if God would prevent the Indians from vanquishing the English in case he, Pontiac, set fire to the church of Ste. Anne by means of an arrow winged with a blaze of punk and tow, that thus the stockade might be destroyed. "However, it is not of these matters I am come to you, but because of Captain Campbell and his lieutenant," pursued the vivacious creole.

"You bring me a message from Mr. Campbell?" cried Sterling, starting to his feet.

"Ay," responded Robishe, his light-heartedness giving place to gloom. In common with the majority of the French, he liked the genial officer, and was sorry for his captivity.

"Yes, rumor says he was bidden not to go to the côte by the spirit of la jolie Mathurine. Indeed, a habitant, who was on the prairie searching for a lost cow, avers that he saw the ghostly form of a young maiden flitting before the captain and stretching forth shadowy hands to detain him when he set out with the envoys."

"I'll warrant the teller of the story saw spirits of another kind ere *he* went forth," commented Sterling.

"That may be," rejoined Robishe; "yet I do not

discredit the tale of the apparition of a maiden, because on that evening, some time after dusk, as I myself was strolling on the meadow at this side of the Cuillerier farm, I encountered Mademoiselle Angélique, who was short of breath, as if she had run a long distance. She seemed not over-pleased to see me, but I walked by her side until we reached her home. I'll wager she was sent to decoy the captain."

"But the message?" reiterated Sterling, compressing his lips.

"Oh, yes; it is a letter. Did I not bestow it in my pouch? I have not lost it! Heaven forbid."

While he searched for the missive, the Scotchman's mind was in a tumult. Had he been wrong about Angélique after all? Instead of being betrothed to the commandant, had she all along acted the spy for her father, who was known to be the special friend of Pontiac? If so, this would account for her strange interview with Gladwin. She had been sent to him with some message calculated to deceive; old Cuillerier and Pontiac had availed themselves of the commandant's fancy for her to throw dust in his eyes; and now again they had employed her to beg Captain Campbell to attend the council at the house of Cuillerier, ostensibly in the interests of peace. The envoys might fail in their mission, but the gallant captain would not harden his heart against the naïve pleading of the belle of Le Détroit. The young merchant sighed. He would almost rather hear that she was married to Gladwin than that she had lent her aid to this ignoble scheme, even under the delusion that she was helping the cause of New France.

These thoughts passed rapidly through his brain; but presently Robishe drew forth the letter from an inner pocket of his blouse.

“Ah, here it is,” he exclaimed; and, having put it into the merchant’s hand, he turned on his heel and began to examine the stock in the warehouse.

The billet was inscribed upon two small, thin sheets of birch bark, and fastened together with fibres of the same, the ink being evidently made of soot from the chimney of Méloche’s kitchen mingled with water. Thus ran the writing, —

“MR. STERLING, — I beg you to send me the goods mentioned in the list below, since I do not find a supply in the packet brought from my quarters at the fort, and know not what has become of them. I have some moneys lodged at Philadelphia, which I have ordered sent to me by the next convoy, and out of this sum I will repay you. [The list had reference to some clothing he wished to have. Then the letter continued.]

“Young Mr. Navarre is here with a slave boy. He goes to town, but says he will return in the afternoon upon some errand of his own. He has civilly offered to have the Pani bring back the packet for me. I beg you to add to it some trinket that, with my host’s permission, I may present to Madame Méloche, who has been most kind to me. Save that I chafe at my enforced inaction, I am not badly off, and, having given my parole, am suffered to walk upon the prairie in the vicinity of this house. But, zounds! my dear Mr. Sterling, had I heeded the counsel of ‘the bonnie lassie,’ I should not be in this stress. You more than any one save myself will appreciate her courage. She has been to see me. You will not grudge this consolation to a luckless captive, for short-sighted as I am, I have marked that her cheeks flush at the mention of your name. I shall say no more, but subscribe myself,

“With great esteem, your obedient servant,

“DONALD CAMPBELL.”

With a revulsion of feeling, Sterling thrust the letter into his belt. "The bonnie lassie!" Thus had Campbell more than once named Mademoiselle Cuillerier to his fellow Scot. Writing in English, which to all but one or two of the French, as well as to the Indians, was like a cipher, he had passed over his own misfortunes to tell a lover that the woman he loved had acted the part of a heroine.

"The captain shall have gratis everything that James Sterling can furnish for his comfort," resolved the merchant. "And I must see Angélique without delay. She shall be my wife, if I have to fight for her against a score of suitors."

"Monsieur de Navarre," he said aloud, interrupting the young man's inspection of a fine firelock, "when do you return to the côte?"

"Two hours hence, but I shall come back to the town to-morrow."

"In two hours the packet will be ready, and I know you will see that it is conveyed to Captain Campbell."

"So I have promised," replied the Frenchman, with a dramatic wave of his right hand.

He started away, but, at a call from Sterling, arrested his steps.

"Is it true, Monsieur de Navarre, that you are betrothed to Mademoiselle de Mersac?" asked the merchant haltingly.

"Oui, Monsieur, the honor and happiness are mine," replied Robishe, with enthusiasm. "Ah, her beauty is of a softer kind than that of other demoiselles I might name. And what grace is hers! A gentle disposition, too, looks out of her gray eyes; her skin is fair as the apple blossoms. Moreover, my sweet Archange has a loving nature."

"I congratulate you with all my heart," said Sterling, with a warm clasp of his hand. "Now, there is a favor I would ask of you. On the way to Baptiste Méloche's you will pass the house of Antoine Cuillerier. After his treatment of Captain Campbell I cannot go there, yet I wish to send a word to Mademoiselle Angélique."

Robishe scowled. Although Archange was now the demoiselle of his dreams, he still resented the coldness that Angélique had shown to his former devotion, since, of all the attributes of love, the last to die is jealousy.

The next moment, however, his liking for the Scotchman reasserted itself. Further, the thought occurred to him that in no surer way could he impress Mademoiselle Cuillerier with his present indifference to her charms than by carrying to her a message from another lover. It would be an excellent means of being quits with her.

"Eh bien?" queried Sterling, breaking the pause that had followed his request.

"Eh bien, my friend," answered Navarre, with a laugh, "a man's words are like an arrow, close to the mark, but the words of a coquette are like a broken fan of feathers. The smile of Angélique Cuillerier warms the heart like wine, but it is a sweet poison. Nevertheless, if you persist, I will take the billet."

"The demoiselle and I have had a misunderstanding, and I would fain make my peace with her before we of the town are shut in behind the stockade by an Indian siege," explained Sterling nonchalantly.

Two hours later, when Robishe again repaired to the warehouse of the merchant, the packet was ready for the shoulders of the Pani, and Sterling handed to

the young Frenchman a scented scrap of paper folded in the intricate and fanciful manner that was supposed by the gentlemen of the period to make a "billet doux" more interesting to one of the fair sex. Therein the Scotchman had prayed his sweetheart to grant him an interview, saying that he would go up the river at twilight on the first evening he could get away from his duties at the fort, and as a signal he would blow three notes upon the pibbigwin, or Indian flute.

Meantime, on the southern shore of the strait, Pontiac, unknown to Father Potier, visited the "good band of Hurons," and won from them a promise to join the Foxes in an assault upon the stockade the next day.

"Yet to-morrow is a high holiday," they said. "If we are not at the services, the Black Robe will know we have this design hidden in our hearts, and he will not let us go with you. After the Mass, therefore, we will go."

The Indian girls were at the time decking the altar of the chapel for the Feast of the Ascension. Pontiac, being a pagan, knew neither holiday nor Sunday, but he agreed to wait. In the morning, so devout was the bearing of the Hurons that their missionary obtained no inkling of their intent. As soon as the services were over each warrior returned to his lodge for his weapons. The band then crossed the river in twelve canoes, were welcomed with cries of joy by the Foxes, and proved the most valiant of the savages in withstanding the rain of bullets from the stockade.

The battle continued for the rest of the day. Major Gladwin, seeing that the Indians took refuge in the houses and barns of the habitants, destroyed these buildings by causing iron bolts to be heated

red-hot, and fired upon the thatched roofs. The fort was now regularly besieged; the garrison remained day and night upon the bastions, hearth-fires were promptly extinguished after the preparation of food, and women and children were ordered to keep within doors.

James Sterling had been appointed to command the French who lived in the town, and were ready to aid in its defence. At the first lull in the hostilities of the redmen he volunteered to go to the c^{ôte}, reconnoitre the enemy, and bring back, if possible, some intelligence of what was going on at the Ottawa camp.

Anxious as Gladwin was for such information, he did not at once embrace the offer, and the Scotchman with annoyance concluded that the commandant suspected him of having another object in view. If the latter's reluctance arose from a wish to prevent him from gaining speech with Mademoiselle Cuillier, however, it was a clear case of dog in the manger, since Gladwin could not go in any event.

In justice to Sterling it must be set down that he would have been ready to undertake the expedition were there no demoiselle in consideration. The desire to see and talk with Angélique but whetted his courage. Yet, how should he go? The prairie was infested with Indians; to put out boldly from the stockade was not feasible. No, he would swim across the river to the farm of Jacques Baby; it was double the distance, but this could not be helped. Baby would lend him a boat, and he would take care not to let fall a word that his adventure was other than to keep a lover's tryst.

Since the days when Leander swam the Hellespont, men have done many chivalrous deeds for love's sake,

and among them may surely be reckoned the daring feat which the young merchant was now resolved to attempt. For though only the breadth of half a mile of blue water lies between the site of the old fort of Le Détroit and the Baby lands, the current is swift and strong, and in the latter part of May still cold from the snows of the Northwest.

Sterling was, however, unsurpassed as a swimmer, even by many of the voyageurs.

Accordingly, an hour before sunset, he struck out from the shore, carrying the costume of a habitant, wrapped in oilskin and strapped upon his back. On the bastion of the fort a pennant fluttered for a moment, this being a pre-concerted signal to the ships beyond that the commandant was sending a messenger to the opposite shore; a necessary precaution, since otherwise the swimmer might be descried from the vessels, and fired upon as his head appeared above the water. After buffeting for some time with the current, he reached the small boat that, made fast by a painter, floated at the stern of the larger ship. Grasping the side of the boat, he rested a few minutes, called a message to the men above on the deck, and then continued on until, by alternately swimming and floating, he reached the southern bank of the strait.

Half an hour later, a man in the guise of a young Canadian farmer knocked at the house of Jacques Baby. It was honest Jacques himself who flung open the door.

“Ma foi — non — mais oui! It is indeed you, Monsieur L'Écossais” (Mr. Scotchman), he cried, as he recognized Sterling. “You are welcome as the flowers of May, but in God's name how did you come? I thought you were of those shut up in the

fort yonder, and harassed by the wolves of the forest. You swam the river? Nom de Dieu, what plan put you to carry out such an undertaking?"

With little ado, the merchant told the good man so much of his project as he had decided to acknowledge.

"Parbleu, 'a fence between makes love more keen.' I will not seek to learn for what jolie Canadienne you are bent upon this dare-devil enterprise. My wife, Suzanne Reaume, was the rosiest girl on the c^ote in her day, so I have not forgot that one hair of a fair woman can draw more than my team of oxen, though they are the best on the lands of this region. Lend you a canoe? To be sure I will, and send you away after supper with a 'Dieu vous sauve!'"

Dame Baby, who had bustled about in the preparation of the food, now presided at the board, smiling, stout, and comely. The meal over, Baby took from a peg on the wall a wide-brimmed hat of home-woven straw which he was wont to wear in the fields.

"Here," he said, "a habitant dons a headpiece such as this, often even in the moonlight. It will screen your face, if occasion there be, better than the dark-colored handkerchief you have bound about your brow."

He would have summoned his negro servant to launch a canoe that lay beside the house, but Sterling protested.

"Few should know whence I came, and how I have gone," he said; "with your leave, I will fetch it myself."

"As you will," was the reply.

Bidding "au revoir" to his host, Sterling raised the light craft upon his shoulders, carried it to the water's edge, and embarked. He would go up the

river a short distance, and then make for the northern bank. The sun had set, and he designed to reach the Cuillierier farm before the darkness fell, yet not until the shadows had begun to gather, since otherwise his canoe might be observed from the Ottawa camp. For a time all went well; if the French of the southern côte noted his skiff as he paddled steadily on, no doubt they thought the boatman Jacques Baby, bound upon a friendly visit to a comrade, or perchance young Morand dit Grimard or Rivard dit Maisonville, going to see his "bonne amie" (sweet-heart).

On the shores were to be seen no indications of the Indian outbreak that had vented its fury upon the unfortunate settlers of the Isle au Cochon. The white farmhouses wore an air of quiet; the pirogues of the habitants crossed and recrossed the strait as usual, and the Scotchman found that though his boat was not likely to attract attention from the land, to avoid discovery he must keep well away from the other craft upon the water. For though the wisest of the French were eager for peace, there were others who sided strongly with Pontiac.

Now a social Canadian hailed the adventurer as a neighbor, and the next moment called after him, "Canaille, imbecile!" because with only an answering "hòlà!" he paddled on. Again, and more alarming, some redman, happy with his "Nedjemon" (canoe), a mate more beloved than was ever Indian maiden, challenged the supposed voyageur to a water race, and cried out in disgust when he paid no heed.

Half a score of times he was on the point of being discovered, once by a warrior from Pontiac's village. When Sterling recognized the savage as Wasson, the slayer of la jolie Mathurine, his hand sought the

pistol that he carried; he felt an almost uncontrollable longing to avenge the fate of the gentle girl. But to shoot the Sauteur from the canoe would be madness; the discharge of his weapon would bring about him a horde of savages. As it was, there were fewer redmen than French upon the river, but over near the Ottawa camp the water was black with the heads of Indian bathers, who yelled to one another, and sometimes ran leaping and shouting along the strand.

As the young man turned toward the shore, a point of land hid them from his view, and presently he brought his canoe close to a secluded stretch of shingle, not far from the home of Antoine Cuillerier. The overhanging bluff rendered this point one of the most secure from observation of any along the river edge. Here Angélique had encountered Catherine the Ojibwa and been taunted by the Indian girl; to this spot Sterling had asked the demoiselle to come, that he might exchange a few words with her.

It was that tenderest time of the gloaming sacred to love and to lovers the world over, — the witching half-hour wherein the young Night, with the evening star gleaming upon his forehead, impatiently waits at the trysting-place for the fair Day; waits to cast his strong, faithful arms about her in a lover's caress. To the Scotchman the twilight always brought recollections of his own country. Now again in fancy he saw the heather-mantled moors and hills; he heard the call of the cuckoo in the spring, and the blackbird singing on the hawthorn hedge. For a moment a touch of that worst of all maladies to the exile, a longing for his native land, swept over him; how often had he hunted the deer among its mountains, and fished in its clear stony brooks! But, straightway, with a laugh of content he put away

the home-longing. No, it was not there after all that he wished to be; it was here at Le Détroit, over which Kenu, the Indian war-bird, hovered; here near the strand of the river, waiting for a glimpse of Angélique Cuillerier.

Close at his hand lay the rude flute he had brought. He raised it to his lips and blew softly three notes like the notes of a whip-poor-will.

He could see the Cuillerier house, though he could not himself be observed from it. At first there seemed no one about the place, but ere many minutes a woman crossed the gallery. It was Angélique he felt sure. Again he gave the soft, clear call he had named as the signal. The white-clad figure seemed to hesitate, came a short distance down the garden walk, paused; then turned deliberately, went slowly back, and disappeared.

What did this mean? In his ardor for the meeting with his sweetheart, the exertions he had made to obtain it, and the risk he ran, Sterling had lost sight of the possibility that Angélique might not be willing to come to the trysting-place as he had craved in his billet. Yet such it seemed was the case.

A third time he sounded the notes upon the pib-bigwin, hazardous as it was to do so. Still, all was silent; the white figure did not reappear; no, Angélique would not come.

Hot with anger, the young man shot his canoe out into the stream; after all he had endured to obtain this interview, after the dangers he had braved, Angélique Cuillerier, the heartless coquette, would not walk a stone's throw from her home to reward him by so much as a pleasant greeting; not even to give him a good wish that in the next assault upon the fort he might again escape unharmed.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH

COURAGE BREAKS ILL LUCK

STERLING'S disappointment made him reckless, and he paddled farther up the stream. Yonder, just above the mouth of the creek, was the house of Baptiste Méloche, and there in a side room burned a light. Was this the room which was assigned to Captain Campbell and Lieutenant McDougal, as Robishe Navarre had said? He took note of its position, hoping the knowledge might be of service in any plans to be formed for the rescue of the officers. Then he proceeded, close to the shore. The Sauteurs had joined with the Sacs, Foxes, and Ottawas in one great camp, on the north bank of Le Détroit. Surprised at its extent, he estimated their number and remembered with concern that Baby had said food was abundant among them and they had plenty of ammunition, having taken nearly all the store of the French.

Darkness had now fallen and there was great excitement in the village. Behind the camp, the forests gave to the scene a background of impenetrable blackness; the river flowed onward in a gray flood; the few stars to be seen shone but dimly, as though they would fain veil their faces with clouds; and in the red glow of the campfires he could see the savage forms of Indian braves dancing the war-dance. Round and round a post they circled, striking it with their tomahawks and knives with frenzied zeal, as

though each blow was meant for the heart of some human victim. To Sterling they seemed like so many demons rejoicing in the woes of mankind, and he reflected gloomily that this dance boded no good for the officers and garrison shut up in the fort by the siege, and augured ill for Captain Campbell and McDougal. The weird spectacle had for him a species of fascination, and he continued to gaze as though under a spell.

From this lethargy he was aroused by the faint sound of a paddle dipped lightly into the water at regular intervals. He was not alone upon this part of the river as he had supposed; a canoe was coming toward him, was quite near, otherwise he would not have heard that stroke like the wing of a water fowl brushing the surface of the stream. With a start, Sterling aroused himself and grasped his own paddle, for he had allowed his boat to drift with the current. Was he discovered in his reconnoitring, and was this an Indian sent out to bring him to the shore? Even in civilized warfare the punishment of a spy was death; what would be his fate if taken? Torture, with death delayed, that he might suffer more!

The Scotchman set his teeth and resolved that he would never be taken alive. He had a knife in his belt; he drew it forth. If his enemy was a solitary Indian he would use it to defend himself, and there would be a fair chance of escape. If several savages were in the canoe, he would have recourse to the pistol, and punish as many redskins as he could before they finished him. He dared not use his paddle now, lest its touch upon the water should reveal his position, yet he hoped among the shadows to elude the foe who was evidently seeking him out.

Yes, he would make a desperate struggle for his life, that he might carry back to the fort the information he had gathered. Nevertheless, as still upon his ear smote the light paddle stroke, while the canoe gained steadily upon him, he felt that his last hour was come; and drifting thus, surrounded by the rushing waters and with the calm sky above him, it seemed to him as if the whole world were swept away in a flood of waters, and his soul stood for judgment before the Creator.

On, on came the pursuer. Sterling grasped his knife firmly in one hand and his paddle in the other. A minute more, then the chasing canoe shot out of the darkness close beside him, and he saw that it had but a single occupant.

"Hôlà, who goes there?" called a brusque voice in French.

The young man, who had leaned forward ready to make a thrust with his knife, drew back so quickly as almost to upset his frail barque.

"Jacques Godefroy!" he exclaimed, while the tension of his nerves relaxed, and already the danger he had with reason apprehended seemed a dream of the dusk.

"Jacques Godefroy! Who would have expected to meet you here near the redmen's encampment at this hour?"

"Bien, little did I think 't was you I was chasing, Monsieur L'Écossais," returned Godefroy, with bluff good humor. "I thought I was in pursuit of a dastardly savage who had made off with some of the goods of the French. Ma foi, such things never happened before the coming of the English."

"Ay, not content with the claim that the Indians are lords of Le Détroit, Pontiac and his chiefs assume

to be lords of the French as well," answered Sterling, as the two canoes floated side by side.

"Eh bien, it will soon be made right," continued Godefroy ambiguously.

"Ah, I have heard that Father Potier has called upon the settlers to aid him to stop this whirlwind. Has his influence prevailed?" inquired the merchant. Here was another chance to gain intelligence to carry back to the stockade.

"It has at least great weight with us, for we look upon the holy man as a saint on earth," admitted the Frenchman; and then, as though he had said too much, he hastily changed the subject by asking,—

"But what brings you up here into the enemy's country, monsieur? Do you wish to make of yourself a third prisoner in the house of Méloche yonder? I might have thought little Angélique Cuillerier responsible for your rashness, since the whisper of a 'jolie fillette' can be heard farther than the loudest call to duty. But of late la belle du Détroit has so flouted her lovers that she may, in the end, remain unwed like her aunt Josette. Although, I dare say, were Josette minded, she might still marry Pierre St. Cosme, the lover of her youth, who for her sake has lived a hermit's life at La Grosse Pointe."

"Time, wind, maidens, and fortune change like the moon, my friend; and must not man alter with them?" replied Sterling, forcing a laugh. "Are there not living along the côte as many charming maidens as we might count upon the fingers of both hands? Is it strange, then, if I may have been drawn hither by a longing to look again into the sweet eyes of some one among them?"

"No, no, of a truth it is *not* strange," rejoined Godefroy, chuckling. "In faith, I would have run

as heedlessly into danger when I was courting pretty Clotilde Chapoton. However, have a care, Monsieur L'Écossais, and steal not up again from the fort, or your demoiselle will of a surety lose her lover, not to any other fillette, mayhap, but to the fierce chief Pontiac. Au revoir, au revoir, until a happier tomorrow."

Each had involuntarily dipped his paddle in the water, and now their courses began to diverge, Sterling keeping on down the river, while Godefroy headed his canoe toward the "côte du nord."

Presently he disappeared from view, and the Scotchman was once more left to his own cogitations.

These thoughts might have been less bitter had he known that, after having so resolutely gone within doors at the sound of his flute call, Angélique Cuillerier had hastened to the loft and from her nook in the eastern dormer peered out into the twilight with the hope that she might gain a glimpse of his canoe upon the river. It might have been as a soothing balm to his wounded pride, his flouted love, had "the little Indian spirits who carry the news" whispered to him the truth, that the darkness found "la belle Angélique" kneeling upon the floor of the dormer, weeping and sobbing as though her heart would break.

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Godefroy had not told Sterling that when the principal habitants on both sides of the river received word that the missionary wished to confer with them, they went to him at once, and it was decided that twelve of these Frenchmen should visit the camp of Pontiac and strive to induce the Ottawa and his chiefs to end the war.

Soon afterwards the council was held at Méloche's house. The Great Chief would not listen, however, to any proposition tending toward peace. He reminded the envoys of the aid he had given his French brothers at the defeat of General Braddock, and said it was for their sakes as well as for the Indian nations that he was resolved to drive the English from the strait. When reproached with the wrongs which his followers daily committed against the habitants in destroying their cattle and thereby preventing them from working their fields, and robbing in a manner hitherto unknown among the aborigines, he promised that these depredations should cease on condition that the squaws be permitted to cultivate corn on the fallow lands of the Canadians. The next day the Indian women went to work sowing the corn, the farmers having broken the ground for them. After this, by Pontiac's order, the savages did not even cross the fields of the French, but the chief levied upon each farm a tax for provisions, and these stores were collected in Méloche's barns, Baptiste being required to distribute them as they were needed by the redmen.

Gladwin now determined to send the schooner which bore his name to Niagara with despatches to be forwarded to Sir Jeffrey Amherst at New York, informing him of the situation and asking his aid.

As the little ship sailed down the river, five canoes manned by Indians put off after her, and, with cruel cunning, Captain Campbell was placed in the bow of the foremost craft to shield the redmen. When the canoe was so near the "Gladwin" that the gunners must needs fire upon it, seeing that they hesitated to do so, the brave captain cried out sturdily, —

"Pay no heed to me, my friends; do your duty."

The next moment a shot struck the canoe, and a Pottawattomie fell over, dead. Thereupon the savages paddled swiftly to the shore, to be greeted when they reached the strand by many jeers from the trader Cuillerier, who from below the fort had witnessed their precipitate flight.

Satisfied as Major Gladwin was with the result of Sterling's solitary reconnoitring up the river, he became suspicious upon learning of the Scotchman's encounter with Jacques Godefroy in mid-stream.

"I do not like it, Mr. Sterling," he said decisively; "more than one report has come to me that Godefroy is in league with Pontiac. He is of those Frenchmen who cannot believe the King at Versailles has yielded Canada to our victorious arms without contemplating another blow in its defence. He anticipates that this Indian warfare will result in the return of De Bellestre and the French troops to Le Détroit. Depend upon it, when he pursued you it was as a spy of the Ottawa. Only his special friendship for you, sir, prevented him from taking you a prisoner to the house of Méloche. Yes, Jacques Godefroy is the ally of Pontiac."

As though in verification of the assertion, just at this time Jacques Godefroy utterly disappeared from the neighborhood. No one saw him go, no one knew whither he was gone; not even his young wife, Madame Clotilde, who, to the inquiries of his comrades, as well as to the teasing questions of her friend Angélique Cuillerier, replied that he had told her nothing, save that he was bound upon some business of his own, and would return before long.

It was about this time that one afternoon, as Angélique worked in her garden on the "côte du nord," she saw the savages from the camp above gathering in

large numbers on the river bank, and calling to one another in great excitement, as they pointed to some object on the surface of the strait coming up from the fort.

Running to the gate of the palisade, she looked down Le Détroit also, and presently cried to the other women of the family who had come at her summons, —

“ See, see, Tante Josette ! See, ma mère, it is the smaller of the English ships with her sails set; the wind favors her. How bravely she makes her way against the current ! ”

As the ship passed on up the river she approached nearer to the shore. The Indians awaited the valiant little craft with yells of delight, their fierce hearts exulting in the expectation that she would soon run aground and thus fall into their clutches.

“ What new folly is this ? ” exclaimed la bonne mère in high disapproval. “ For foolhardiness the British surpass all men I have ever beheld. ”

Now a cloud of smoke burst from the side of the sloop, and was almost instantaneously followed by a booming cannon shot.

At the report, the women of the bourgeois' household fled within doors. The “ Beaver ” was bombarding the camp of Pontiac. From the windows of the farmhouse, Angélique, her mother, and Tante Josette saw the astonished warriors and the terrified squaws and children fleeing in every direction, while the bark huts were knocked down by the balls like the pins in a game of skittles.

A superstitious awe of this White-Winged Thunder-Bird kept the Indians off the river for a day or two. Taking advantage of the brief interval, Sterling resolved to make another attempt to see Angélique

Cuillerier. He was still chafing with vexation against her, but a certain masterfulness possessed him, and he told himself that he would continue to go to the côte until fortune should grant him the interview he sought.

The Scotchman had been in command of the little ship that attacked the Ottawa village, and won the admiration of the soldier-crew by his coolness and temerity. On the second evening after this expedition, he let himself down by a rope from the deck of the "Beaver" into a canoe which floated at the stern, and paddled up the stream as before. In this instance success favored the adventurous, for, as he approached the shore near the Cuillerier house, he saw upon the beach a girl in a light-colored frock, that fluttered in the breeze as she ran to and fro, sporting with a great black dog, or casting sticks or stones into the water, and by imperious gestures ordering her playfellow to swim out after them. It was, doubtless, *la belle du Détroit* and her trusty protector *Trouveur*.

Instead of heading directly for the strand, he made a *détour*, and thereby shot around the point of land which made the spot so retired, and came up almost to the feet of *Angélique* before she was aware of his proximity.

As out of the twilight there stepped this young habitant whom she did not know, she called the dog to her side and turned to climb the bank, intending to hasten home.

But, quickly beaching his canoe, Sterling sprang forward and, not daring to address the girl lest he should alarm her still further, contented himself with a soft whistle to the dog; a summons to which he had familiarized the intelligent animal in other days, —

the call of a Highland shepherd to his collie. Trouveur recognized it at once. He stopped short, ran a few paces toward the newcomer, then back to his mistress, leaping up to touch her hand, catching at her frock, and striving by every means in his power to tell her that here was a friend whom she was formerly glad to greet and begging her to tarry.

Puzzled by these queer antics on the part of her shaggy companion, Angélique arrested her steps. "À bas, Trouveur, à bas; why, what ails thee, bouffon?" she cried chidingly, as she faced the stranger.

The dog stood for a second, wagging his tail and panting with satisfaction at having prevailed. The next moment he bounded toward the man and sprang upon him with every demonstration of delight.

"Who are you, monsieur, and by what charm have you drawn away the dog that never before has thus deserted me?" demanded Mademoiselle Cuillierier, with an assumption of haughty fearlessness.

The intruder upon her solitude came nearer. "Pardon me, mademoiselle, if I have frightened you," he said, taking off his wide-brimmed hat. "Even Trouveur knows I would not willingly do so; but I have sworn to myself that I will have speech with you."

At the sound of the rich, manly voice the girl caught her breath, took a rapid survey of her visitor, then sighed in perplexity. Her whole being had thrilled at those welcome tones, but she feared that her heart deceived her.

Yet this habitant was taller and of finer physique than the young Frenchmen of the vicinity, and surely, that accent was the same over which she had jested many times! In the dusk, his visage was now familiar, now strange, framed as it was by the thick hair

falling in loose locks about the neck. Angélique peered closer.

"Monsieur Sterling!" she exclaimed, in astonishment; then, quickly recovering herself, laughed lightly. "Monsieur Sterling, and in the garb of a habitant, pretending to be what he is not! Ma foi, how long is it since a certain cavalier was most properly shocked at encountering a lady masquerading in strange attire? Truly, now the lion and the linnet are caught in the same snare."

"Forgetfulness is dumb, and I have tried to school myself to remember nothing of an episode whereof I was not meant to be a witness," said the young man gravely. "As for myself, I care not who knows that I have risked capture by Pontiac to obtain these few moments with you."

The girl trembled slightly.

"Have you not come, rather, to spy upon my father?" she demanded. "He does not cringe to the English. Have they sent you to apprehend him for the taking of Captain Campbell and Lieutenant McDougal at his house? I assure you, he had no part in this ruse of Pontiac."

"Mademoiselle, I have accepted the hospitality of Antoine Cuillerier and grasped his hand in friendship; I would not come on such an errand as you mention. Of any order for the arrest of your father you need have little fear, however; no doubt the commandant will overlook all he dare for the sake of the belle of Le Détroit. I have come only to see *you*. I came before, and gave the signal of which I told you in my billet, — three notes of the pibbigwin, like the cry of the whip-poor-will. You were on the gallery of the house, but you fled; you would not come to the beach even to wish me well."

He spoke earnestly, with something of reproach, but more from the fervor of his love. In the gloom he could not see that Angélique was moved. Striving to conceal her emotion, she answered with mocking perverseness, —

“In truth, yes, I heard, though I did not come. Saw you ever a bird fly direct to the hand that would imprison it? You, who would fain preach to a mad-cap the behavior best suited to a maid, do you think it would become her to be over-ready to catch up the handkerchief a gallant happens to cast at her in token that she pleases his fancy? Get you to some other demoiselle with your pride and your minstrelsy, monsieur.”

Had Sterling been better versed in the ways of a maid, he might have read in her petulance a resentment of his former aloofness. As it was, the little winged god that, Puck-like, makes sport of mankind, prompted him to an answer which in part disarmed her.

“Forgive me if I have been too importunate,” he said, with the pride that apes humility. “By the pibbigwin or flute of polished bone, the Indian woos the maiden of his love.”

Angélique relented. His persistency and recklessness in coming again to the côte evoked her admiration, although she feared for his safety. Nevertheless she continued, taking him to task in the wilful manner wherewith a girl who is sure of her lover contrives to make his love at once a joy and a torment to him.

When a woman begins to look kindly upon a suitor, does she not ever coyly scheme and parade her prettiest coquetries to lure him to repeat over and over the sweet words “I love you,” and plead once more

for the love she hides from him only to lead him to ask for it again ?

“For one so given to fine language, monsieur,” said the demoiselle, with a fascinating pout, which, of a pity, he did not see, “you showed little wit in your choice of a bearer for your billet doux.”

“How so ? Navarre reported to me that you received it most graciously,” protested Sterling, marveling at this new humor of his sweetheart.

“Most graciously, to be sure. And did you flatter yourself that my complaisance was all for your honored self, monsieur ? Ma foi, what but graciousness could a poor maid oppose to the spite of a former suitor who would prove that he loves her no longer ?”

“Had I not supposed you utterly indifferent to Navarre, I should not, of course, have asked him to deliver my message,” said the Scotchman coolly. Angélique tossed her head. He had seized his advantage.

“A fig for such nonsense,” she cried. “Indeed, I do not care for Robishe as a lover at all; and it would matter nothing to me were he fifty times betrothed to Archange de Mersac.”

“Yet for such paltry quibbles as these you would not meet and speak with me, although I was forced to overcome countless obstacles to keep the tryst I proposed.”

The reproach warned Angélique that she had best trifle no longer. There was no foretelling when she should see Sterling again, and here she was, wasting the priceless minutes they could spend together, in idle cavilling. She would not have him go away thinking her the heartless malapert she had chosen to appear.

"It was not altogether because of these passing grievances that I did not come to the strand," she began — broke off — and presently continued in a voice that shook with emotion. "Mon Dieu, do you not see, monsieur, my heart was filled with dread lest in your boldness you would fall into the power of Pontiac? When I heard your signal, my one thought was, 'If I go to the beach, he will linger and be taken captive; if I do not respond to his wood-bird's call, he will leave in angry haste; thus he will escape those who lie in wait for spies from the stockade.' Oh, I could not, I dared not come. And yet," she added naïvely, "I have walked on the sands here every evening since."

"Angélique, my dearest one," cried Sterling, taking the girl's cold hands in his, "I have never loved you so fondly as at this moment, when at last I learn from your own lips that I have won your love."

"Chut, chut! how, Monsieur L'Écossais?" she stammered in saucy defiance, attempting to shake off his clasp.

"Do not seek to deny it, beloved," he went on, intoxicated with happiness. "Unconsciously, in your fear for my safety you have told me all. Your heart has spoken at last, and now I understand that the teasing coquetry which so vexed yet allured me was but a woman's shield against the shafts of love. A real coquette would have kept the tryst; did her cavalier rush into danger for her sake, his recklessness would be but another tribute to her charms. You thought, not of yourself, but of me, sweetheart, therefore I know you love me."

He would have clasped her to his breast, but she drew back, and the dog Trouveur gave a warning growl.

"You have forgotten the evening of the ball given to Sir William Johnson?" she questioned, with down-cast eyes.

"I was audacious to take the tone I did," he acknowledged, — a notable admission for one so unyielding as Sterling.

"Perhaps you were not altogether wrong," faltered Angélique, conceding a point also. "Have you conquered your distrust of me because I went in disguise to the fort? For I must still keep from you what I said to Major Gladwin," she continued, with recovered firmness.

Sterling hesitated. It was indeed a test for an ardent lover.

"Angélique, I would tell you everything that concerns myself. What secret is there between you and Major Gladwin which you cannot share with the man who hopes as soon as may be to make you his wife?" he persisted.

"Were we in a canoe on the strait at midday, with the sun looking forth from a cloudless sky, and not a creature nigh but our two selves, I might tell you," she replied. "But no, perhaps I would not. If you really loved me, you would trust me too."

"Dearest, I trust you entirely. I love you with all my heart," he answered. "Say you will meet me at the mission chapel, where Father Potier will unite us?"

The demoiselle laughed again, but not unkindly, at his impetuosity. This was more like the gay flute-playing Sterling of old than the grave, stern man he had become of late.

"Phouff, monsieur," she said half tenderly, "it is to the curé of Ste. Anne's you should go under such circumstances. But, I beg of you, say no more to

me of love or marriage until the siege of the fort is raised and Le Détroit is at peace."

The uneasiness of Trouveur continued.

"Juste ciel, some one is coming! Go, monsieur," she conjured.

"Tush! the dog but grudges me the attention of his mistress," insisted the young man. "Say at least that I may still hope?"

"Monsieur, you need not despair. Now go, and do not come again, for I shall not answer the call of the whip-poor-will."

She started abruptly toward the house, but, having gone a few paces, retraced her steps to where her lover still stood, motionless.

"If there is any plan to rescue Captain Campbell, I will do what I can to aid it," she said, in a cautious whisper. "I go sometimes to the house of Madame Méloche to bring him what cheer I may. A strange presentiment regarding him hangs over me. I would gladly see him escape."

Her words recalled to Sterling a plan he had formed for the rescue of the captain. Bending his head close to hers, he told her wherein he needed her help.

The dog barked fiercely, running up and down the strand.

"Yes, I understand. I will arrange everything. Go, go!" she cried.

Sterling caught the girl in his arms and kissed her.

"It is our betrothal," he said fervently, adding, as she half demurred, "well, at least by this kiss I plight my troth to you."

Then he sprang into his canoe and put off from the shore. Not a whit too soon, either; for the next moment a musket shot, crisp and sharp, rang out

upon the air, and Angélique felt a bullet whiz past, as, with Trouveur close beside her, she ran with all speed to the house.

“Thank God he is gone,” she ejaculated, when she had gained her nook in the loft. “May the great warrior archangel Michael go with him as his safeguard!”

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH

THE OTTAWA'S HOUR

THE last days of May, "the Moon of Leaves," were come, yet the intrepid little band of troops at Le Détroit remained without tidings of the spring convoy which was to bring them stores and reinforcements from the east. Their provisions were nearly exhausted, and but for honest Jacques Baby their plight would have been desperate. Baby had arranged with Major Gladwin that he would bring hogs and beeves to the stockade whenever notified of the great need of the besieged by the swinging of a glowing lantern near the water plank after dark, or at other times by the display of the ensign of St. George from the flagstaff. Thus, in answer to the signals, he often landed supplies close to the river gate at dead of night.

Day after day the officers watched the lower strait through their lenses in the hope of espying, far down near Lake Erie, some cloud upon the water that, gathering form and bulk, might reveal itself as the long-awaited fleet of barges from the fort above the cataract of the Niagara.

Daily James Sterling went the round of the ramparts to make sure that the butts and water-casks at the corners were kept filled with water, for ever and anon report reached the commandant of some attempt on the part of Pontiac to set fire to the fort. On one particular morning the Scotchman found the

Irish soldier O'Desmond doing sentry duty on the patrol-way of the flag bastion, which looked toward the river.

"I see you are one of those who oppose a bold front to adversity, soldier," said he. "You manage to be cheerful, even on half rations."

O'Desmond glanced along the barrel of his gun, and grinned comically. He was a good-looking young fellow, with a shock of curling black locks, a round, good-humored face, blue eyes that had ever a laugh in them, and a reckless, dare-devil air.

"Oh, 't is not the scantiness of the rations at all that I mind, sir," he answered, "though I will say, a fare made up of a little of everything and not much of anything is like to give one *confusion* of the stomach. And that same reminds me of a story I've heard me father tell many a time. Did ye ever taste olives, Mr. Sterling?"

"Yes," answered the merchant simply, "once, at a dinner in London."

"Well, I never did, but I have a notion what they're like from what me father said. He fought with the French in the Low Countries, and was servant to the captain of his regiment, as fine an Irish gentleman as ever lived in the ould land or out of it. Well, one evening — 't was after the fall of Tournay — the captain gave a dinner in his tent, and me father waited upon the officers. The dinner was not so much to boast of, but on the table was a little dish of fruit of a beautiful green color; leastwise, me father thought 't was fruit, but he knew well enough afterwards 't was a dish of olives, no less.

"After the guests were gone, the captain said, 'You did well, Dennis; I'm proud of ye. Will ye have something to keep up your spirits?'

“‘For the sake of drinkin’ your health, sir, I will, thank ye,’ says me father.

“So the captain poured a cup of Flemish sack, and was just handing it over when he stopped short. ‘Oh, take one of these first,’ says he, pointing to the green fruit that me father had been eying. ‘Take one of these; ’t will improve the flavor of the wine.’

“So me father reached out, picked up an olive, and took a bite out of it, thinking to find it as sweet as a ripe gooseberry.

“‘By the powers, what is the matter with ye, man?’ asked the captain, with a roar of laughter. For me father was gaspin’ an’ sputterin’ so you’d think he was goin’ into a fit; but ’t was all on account of the olive.

“‘Don’t ye like it, ye omathaun?’ roared the captain again.

“Me father, rest his soul, had never a laugh out of him. But, having swallowed the pesky thing at last, he says, very solemn-like, looking at the dish o’ olives, ‘*May the Lord forgive the man that put salt sea-water on thim plums!*’”

Sterling laughed heartily.

“O’Desmond, how is it that you, a descendant, I dare say, of one of the victors of Fontenoy, serve in the ranks of the British army?” he asked.

“’T is the tale of many another,” returned the Irishman, “the story of an ould mother at home, poverty at the door, and a love of soldiering. Though in faith me mother would rather have had me take up with any other calling, shure misfortunately, there is little chance for a lad to get on in the ould land, and the army was the first means to earn an honest livin’ that offered, sir —”

Here O’Desmond, who still kept an eye on the

river, broke off suddenly in his explanation and cried out with glad enthusiasm, —

“See yonder, Mr. Sterling! What is that black shadow afar down beyond the Pointe de Montréal? If I'm not blind as a bat 't is a barge, and there's another behind it. They can be no less than the ships coming up from the fort above the Big Falls, glory be to God!”

“You are right,” said Sterling, after he had watched the distant objects for a few minutes. “They are certainly barges. Yes, *there* is a third.”

“A ship! a ship!” cried the Irishman, at the full strength of his lungs. Like a bugle blast the call aroused the little settlement. O'Desmond ran to notify the officer of the guard, the latter reported to his superior, and the commandant, with his subalterns, the garrison, and all the people of the town, mounted the bastion, and broke into hearty cheers as the little fleet came up the strait. The drums sounded a triumphant greeting; the small band of the fort played “Rule Britannia.”

All at once, however, Major Gladwin, who was viewing the boats through his lens, exclaimed forcibly, —

“Hist, damn it, stop that music! Zounds, will some one go among those fools upon the strand and bid them cease those shouts of rejoicing!”

Those whose eyes were drawn to him by astonishment at his vehemence saw to their amazement that his usually unflinching hand trembled slightly, and his ruddy English complexion had grown pale.

“Look, Mr. Sterling!” he said, handing the glass to his captain of militia.

“By my faith, those dark figures in the barque can be only savages or demons,” ejaculated the merchant,

with the horror of a brave man who is confronted with a tragedy.

And now, in place of an answering salute from the boats, came a fierce war-whoop.

In the second and third barges were a score of soldiers who, deprived of their weapons, were compelled to act as rowers for the armed Indians who stood over them, while bands of redmen followed the fleet along the southern shore. In the foremost boat there were only four soldiers and three savages. As it approached the "Beaver," which lay in mid-stream, Sterling cried, —

"See what is going on yonder!"

Clearly two of the soldiers had resolved to escape or die in the attempt. Rising as though to change places in the boat, each seized his Indian guard, and in a terrible struggle for life the savages and the white men grappled with one another.

"Begorra, that's well done," broke out O'Desmond. "Look, sir, one of the men has thrown his enemy into the river and now falls upon the third redskin. Shure, he is a giant in strength."

"But his comrade has fallen into the water and the red fiend clings to him like a devil fish," sighed the merchant.

As the first soldier and his foe gained their feet, the sunlight flashed upon a knife in the grasp of the savage. The next moment like a sword in the sun-beam it descended, and the white man fell lifeless into the water.

The second soldier, having hit the Indian on the head with his paddle, was swimming for the shore. Sterling and others ran down to the strand and brought in the poor man who had fought so well; but the brave fellow had also been stabbed by his guard,

and lived only half an hour. Meantime the two soldiers who remained in the bateau pulled for the "Beaver," shouting for aid. The Indians on the southern shore fired upon them, and presently the water was black with canoes, bullets whizzed about the prisoners, and their doom seemed certain, when from the sloop came the roar of a swivel gun. The savages drew off in terror, a second cannon shot scattered the redmen on the shore, and the two soldiers reached the vessel.

"Truly," exclaimed Major Gladwin, "each of those men is a living example that Fortune favors the brave."

By their good fight they had not only saved their own lives, but brought with the boat several barrels of pork and provisions for the hungry garrison. Unluckily, the Indians landed the other prisoners below the "Beaver," and the watchers at the stockade sadly saw the captives led along the southern shore toward the former site of the Ottawa village.

The next afternoon, as the Scotchman sat at the desk in his warehouse, he heard a commotion in the town, while from the forest came a weird sound like the cry of a pack of wolves. Going out, he beheld the eastern bastion thronged with townspeople and soldiers, whose gaze was turned in horror toward the woods, from which issued a long line of warriors, each painted black and carrying a pole from which waved a pennon that the spectators knew only too well to be a human scalp.

While they watched the awful scene a young habitant knocked for admittance at the wicket of the palisade, and Sterling was summoned to the gate, a part of his duty being to keep note of the comings and goings of the French.

The newcomer from the côte was Jasmin de Joncaire.

"What news? what news?" shouted the people in the street.

"Dire enough, but it is first for the ear of the commandant," he returned, as they crowded around him.

"Make way," ordered Sterling, drawing his sword as a sign of his authority.

The throng parted, and Jasmin followed the captain of militia to the British headquarters.

"Well, sir, what intelligence do you bring?" Major Gladwin demanded of him, with the brusqueness of keen anxiety.

"Monsieur, your English fort of Sandusky has been captured by the bad band of Hurons, and the greater number of the garrison have been scalped," began the Frenchman. "Those brought here yesterday were taken across in canoes to Pontiac's camp, and forced to disembark, one by one, while the Indians shot at them. When, to avoid the arrows, they threw themselves upon the ground, they were forced by blows to get upon their feet once more, until they fell dead. Others were flayed alive with gunflints or maimed; others still were tied to stakes, and the children burned them with slow fires. Indian women joined in the barbarous sport, but some few pitied the prisoners and, as their lords grew drunk from the rum found among the captured stores, and fiercer from their cannibal feast, these women hid away the weapons, fearing a general massacre."

Gladwin averted his face.

"Did none of the white men escape this terrible fate?" he inquired hoarsely, with an effort to preserve his outward composure.

"But one, a well-favored young man who was, I

surmise, in charge of the post. He is agile and strong. I should like to see him play at lacrosse, or run a race."

"Lieutenant Paully. He still lives?"

"Yes, monsieur le commandant, and is a happy bridegroom," answered the debonair Canadian, who found it difficult to be grave, even under these gloomy circumstances. "The lieutenant was condemned to be burned alive, and his captors had taken away his pistols; but Cupid aimed a shaft in his defence. In the Ottawa camp there is a woman named Pah-puk-kee-na, the Grass-hopper. Pah-puk-kee-na's husband died not long since. Looking upon the officer, she liked his yellow hair and blue eyes. 'Ha ha! The white chief is too comely to burn,' she cried, when the braves, women, and children returned with the brushwood they had gathered for the fire. 'I adopt him for my husband.' There was muttering among the savages that they were cheated of their sport, but the woman's husband had been killed in battle, and she had a right to choose another from among their captives. The Englishman seemed scarce better pleased with this new turn of his fortunes, but, by the 'Red Dwarf,' they hurried him back to the river, and plunged him in the current, that the white blood might be washed from his veins. Henceforth he is an Ottawa warrior."

So great had been the tension of mind and nerves of the commandant that now, as a vent to his feelings, he laughed long, though mirthlessly, as his imagination pictured the unwilling bridegroom. Sterling joined in his hilarity, yet the brain of each was soon busy with plans for the rescue of this new-fledged brave, while their souls were moved by the story of his sufferings.

"Fort St. Joseph has also fallen into the hands of the Indians, monsieur," pursued Jasmin; "the garrison was slain likewise, and a scout reports that the returning savages are bringing the officers here as prisoners for Pontiac."

A look of high courage settled upon the countenance of Gladwin as he paced the floor with hand upon his sword, as though he longed to strike at the enemy.

De Joncaire withdrew unnoticed.

Suddenly the major stopped short in his walk.

"Mr. Sterling," he said abruptly, "the bell of Ste. Anne's is mute of late. Why is it that the good saint no longer lifts up her sweet voice to ask the help of Heaven upon our arms?"

Was it from pretty Angélique Cuillerier that the commandant had learned this poetic Canadian simile? Not so long ago Sterling would have been glum enough at the suspicion, but now the thought caused him only a passing sense of annoyance, as he answered interrogatively, —

"Is it not always so in time of siege, sir? Monsieur Bocquet told me when first we were cooped up here that he would no longer have the bell sounded, lest the enemy should learn from it the hours when the people assemble in the church."

"Egad, the Recollet is to be commended for his consideration," rejoined the major. "Nevertheless, since the French go to their services armed, and my garrison remains always on guard, you may tell the curé, from me, to have the bell rung as before. It will strike more terror into the hearts of the savages than a volley from our cannon; for it will remind them that we place our reliance in the God of armies."

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It was Sunday morning, a cloudless morning in mid-June. The blue skies looked brightly down upon their own reflection in the sapphire waters of the strait; and so abloom was the plain with "boutons d'ors" that Megissogwon, the Great Pearl Feather, the Indian manitou of wealth, might be thought to have oversown the green meadows with shining gold pieces. The forests were robed in the full majesty of their kingly state. Over all the region of Le Détroit reigned a tranquil stillness; a quiet that was yet melodious with the song of the yellow warbler, the thrush, the robin, and the Recollet bird, so called by the Canadians because of his cowl-like crest and his sweet voice.

The bell of Ste. Anne's was ringing for the Grand Mass, and, in obedience to the summons, the French came forth from their houses; the traders in their coats of red, green, or blue cloth, knickerbocker trousers, silver-buckled shoes, and three-cornered hats; the engagés, voyageurs, and coureurs de bois, shabby, yet making a brave showing with their scarlet caps and sashes, each man carrying his firelock. The women, tricked out in such simple finery as they possessed, were pleasing to the eye, though a second glance revealed upon the smiling faces of dames and demoiselles the wan look that comes of anxious days and nights of watching.

At this the most peaceful quarter of an hour of the forenoon, an unexpected visitor knocked at the gate of old Fort Pontchartrain. He was a man of middle age, a stranger at Le Détroit; and, although he was fresh shaven, and the stains of travel had been removed as well as might be from his much-worn black robe, the haggard lines in his face told that he was still weary from a long and arduous voyage.

"I am Pierre du Janois, Jesuit missionary to the Ottawas of the north, and I have business with Major Gladwin," he said to the sentry.

The latter, forthwith beckoning to Robishe Navarre, who was on his way to the church, asked him to carry the message to headquarters.

The young man returned betimes.

"Be so good as to come with me, mon père," he cried, doffing his cap. "Major Gladwin sends you his respectful compliments, and bids me say he awaits an interview with you."

Together they passed down the main street, the soldiers on duty staring as though the black-robed figure were an apparition; the townspeople round-eyed, the men uncovering their heads as Navarre had done; the women courtesying and asking the blessing of the man of God.

When the priest and his guide reached the council room, the commandant dismissed Robishe by a summary nod of the head; even in small matters he lacked the art to conciliate the French. Monsieur Janois he received, however, with marked deference.

"You are welcome to Le Détroit, reverend father," he said, grasping the hand of the missionary, "although 't is a surprise to me that you are here. When and with what expedition did you come?"

"Yesterday at noon I was landed on the southern shore a mile above this place," answered Du Janois, the smile of greeting still lingering upon his rugged features, which, from exposure to the inclemency of many winters and the heat of the sun in summer, were almost the color of dried deerskin. "I voyaged down the lakes in company with a band of Ottawas and Sauteurs, and, having spent the night at the Huron Mission, am come to you with a letter

from the commandant at Michilimackinac. I regret to be the bearer of unwelcome news, monsieur. What is it your Shakespeare says — ‘The tongue of such a one sounds ever after as a sullen bell!’”

Therewith he took from his belt the important paper, and handed it to the major.

Father Janois had spoken in English, but with a quaint French accent.

With the forced composure and natural reserve which renders the British soldier cool and self-possessed under almost all circumstances, Gladwin begged his guest to be seated, and withdrew to the window to read the missive from Captain Etherington, his brother officer at the post of the Upper Lakes. He needed all his self-control, for it told of the Indians' capture of Fort Michilimackinac under the ruse of a game of ball, and the massacre of the men; begged for ammunition and provisions; explained that the priest had been directed not to land directly at the stockade of Le Détroit, and requested the major to speed the homeward journey of the missionary.

“Ill news it is,” acknowledged Gladwin, tapping the paper with his hand, as he came back to the centre of the room and took a chair facing Father Janois. “What you have not learned from observation of our condition at Le Détroit, sir, has no doubt been told you by Monsieur Potier. You see that at present I can furnish no help to Michilimackinac. I will not ask what other affairs have brought you here. When you are about to return to the north, be so good as to give me word, that I may intrust to you an answer for the commandant, describing our dilemma, but assuring him that if he and the few of his men who are left can hold out a little longer we will send them aid at the first opportunity.”

"Monsieur," replied the priest, rising and bowing with a courtliness he had not forgotten during the long years he had spent in the wilderness, "though you refrain from asking the object of my visit, I will tell you: I came to bring this word from Captain Etherington."

"You, a Frenchman, have voyaged many leagues and braved death at the hands of your savage companions, to ask succor for the English, your hereditary foes, men of an alien race and creed," exclaimed Gladwin in admiration.

"He who has lived long in the wilderness forgets the boundaries of countries, the narrowness of prejudice," rejoined the missionary, with gentleness. "He loves his native land indeed as ardently as ever. Like the two lights upon the altar at the holy Mass, his patriotism and his religion burn brightly upon the altar of his soul. But he sees the whole earth as God's world; to him all men are brothers; and his mission is to all with whom he comes in contact. One other aim I had in coming—"

"Ah," ejaculated Gladwin, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes," pursued Father Janois, "I cannot deny that I came to try to lead back to Michilimackinac those of my flock who have joined in this war; to confront Pontiac, and warn him that the punishment of Heaven will follow him if the atrocities perpetrated by his authority do not cease. Monsieur, the Indians have suffered much through the lawlessness of your traders, the degrading influence of your fire-water, and for this they have my sympathy. But in all ages the savage has been forced to give way to civilized man. And I believe the only hope of my people is 'to make friends of the mammon of iniquity,' meaning the English," he

added, with a twinkle of his kindly eyes and a humorous smile.

Gladwin had absently remained seated, while his visitor stood. Recollecting himself, he now sprang to his feet.

"God bless you, sir, for your eagerness to help our poor soldiers as well as those in the north," he said sincerely.

"I have already spoken to Pontiac, and another conference is appointed for this afternoon," proceeded the Jesuit; "but I am not over-sanguine as to the result. This evening I set out upon my return voyage; therefore, I pray you, send to me at dusk by some trusted Frenchman the letters you wish me to take."

"You go this evening? But you are not yet rested from your journey," protested the officer.

Father Janois replied with a Gallic shrug.

"That matters not," he laughed. "I must go back at once. I exacted from the Indians a promise that they would not commit any hostilities during my absence. I must go to hold in check the tribes of the north."

Gladwin regarded him curiously. Yes, this man in the worn black gown, a man aged before his time, possessed the only power that could in the least degree control the savages; a power won by his devoted and self-sacrificing life in the forest.

"Therefore I will bid you 'au revoir,' monsieur le commandant, although to say 'adieu' were no ominous leavetaking," continued the priest. "Let it be both 'au revoir' and 'adieu.' Do not despair. Your little garrison still rests in God's keeping."

"Farewell, sir," answered the major, with Anglo-Saxon immobility, though his heart beat warmly in response to the words of the missionary.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

ANGÉLIQUE'S SCHEMING

DESPITE Sterling's anxiety to effect the release of Mr. Campbell, and the assistance which his sweetheart, the courageous Angélique Cuillierier, had promised to lend in his daring project, a month rolled by, and yet the gallant officer was still a prisoner.

It had been impossible for the merchant and his fair auxiliary to put their scheme into execution. Major Gladwin also had replied to the haughty demands of Pontiac, that he would make no terms with the Indians until his captain and lieutenant were sent back to the fort in safety. But to this the fierce Ottawa returned the barbaric message that the kettles of his camp were heating to boil the inmates of the stockade, and if the hostages were freed they would share the fate in store for the garrison. Clever, treacherous, and revengeful, the Indian leader nevertheless showed to the French at times that he could be generous, noble, and even courteous. Thus it happened one morning that Mademoiselle Cuillierier found herself indebted to the Great Chief for a visit from her friend Marianne de St. Ours.

"A la bonne heure, mon amie! Did the manitou of the winds, as the squaws say, did Okeewaisee waft you here through the air?" exclaimed Angélique, as Marianne suddenly appeared before her in the outer kitchen of the Cuillierier house, where with la bonne mère and Tante Josette she was engaged in preparing

the "pain benit" (bread to be blessed) to be distributed during the grand Mass of Corpus Christi Day.

Hitherto, each family of the parish of Ste. Anne had, in turn, furnished this offering to the church upon the great festivals. Now, because of the siege, the people of the côte must needs worship at the small chapel, near the house of Louis Campeau; yet Dame Cuillerier had resolved that the little congregation should miss none of the observances of the feast.

The scene that presented itself to the eyes of Mademoiselle de St. Ours was one which would have delighted the artistic sense of a poet or a painter accustomed to look for the picturesque amid the commonplace.

Two Pani women were kneading the dough in a large wooden trough. Angélique, with sleeves pinned up, displaying her dimpled arms, was plaiting strips of the dough into the wreath or "couronne" that was to adorn the top loaf of the pinnacle of bread, to be sent on a great salver to the chapel. This "couronne" must be most carefully fashioned, for after the Mass it would be sent to Madame St. Aubin, as a token that she had been chosen to prepare the "pain benit" for the next festival.

At a table near by Tante Josette was cutting the accessory "cousins," a kind of cake, into palm shapes, and with a feather brushing the top of each with egg and sugar, while, as they were ready, Dame Cuillerier placed them in the wide oven at the side of the fireplace.

The blazing pine knots in the open chimney shed a pleasant light upon the faces of the women, caught a bright reflection from the burnished brass and cop-

per cooking utensils upon the dresser, and played in fitful gleams upon the rough puncheon floor.

To Marianne, the motherless demoiselle who had been reared at the Ursuline Convent at Quebec, the simple scene appeared charmingly picturesque and homelike, as she stood smiling upon it.

In another moment Angélique crossed the room and, taking the delicate face of the young guest between her own pretty hands, kissed the girl with warm affection.

"How dared you come over the prairie, and how did you obtain permission to leave the stockade?" she asked in a breath, at the same time flecking away a little patch of flour that she had left on her friend's satin cheek.

"Your 'bon ami,' Monsieur Sterling, not only gave me a pass to go out, but deputed the interpreter Monsieur Larron to conduct me," explained Marianne.

"Larron! I do not like his lean sombre visage and cold gray eyes," interrupted Angélique. "He is too solemn for a Frenchman."

"But surely our French-Canadians are not always laughing, singing, or dancing," protested her cousin.

"True; yet the gravity of this Larron is not natural; he wears it as a mask."

"No doubt Monsieur Larron has fallen into disfavor with the French because he is so much esteemed by the English at the fort. I hope he will suffer no harm thereby," said Marianne.

Then affecting to take no note of Angélique's toss of the head and muttered remark that Larron would probably save his scalp, she continued, —

"But besides the company of this cavalier in coming hither, I had a guard of Indians from the camp

of Pontiac, and the two Pani youths that Madame des Ruisseaux sent with me."

"You had an escort from Pontiac?"

"From the Ottawa chief?" ejaculated Tante Josette and la bonne mère simultaneously.

"Yes, madame and ma tante."

Marianne's pale beauty was enhanced by a rosy flush as she proceeded, —

"You will remember that some time since I sent to the British settlement of New York for a box of goods. It was foolish of me, but I had a fancy to secure some apparel from the grand town of London over the seas. I heard that the goods were shipped by the convoy which the savages captured. Some friend of mine mentioned the matter to Pontiac, and the Great Ottawa sent me word that I might have them and welcome; so I am come to see if they may be among the stores brought to the house of Baptiste Méloche."

"Well, well," cried Dame Cuillerier. "You need not grow so rose-red, chère! We all know the chest contains the bridal gown that you wished to have of London fashioning, to please your English bridegroom. 'T would be a pity were it gone astray, so near its destination too. We will put up a petition to le bon St. Antoine, the finder of things lost, that you may recover it. But, rest awhile; you must be tired after your walk."

"I thank you," cried Marianne, blushing still more. "I had best not stay longer; the interpreter and the Indians await me at the gate."

Angélique sauntered down the garden path with her visitor, who, as they went, slipped into her hand a pink-tinted billet.

"It is from your 'bon ami,' your sweetheart," she

whispered, with sly merriment and a droll stumbling over the Saxon word. "Ah, it was not difficult for me to get the pass when I announced that, after going my errand, I wished to visit my Aunt Cuillerier."

"Phouff! what notion is this? No one among the English is my 'bon ami,'" protested the other demoiselle; but she thrust the billet into the bosom of her frock with all haste, and her eyes brightened as Marianne promised to stop at the house again on returning from the camp of Pontiac.

In the course of an hour, Mademoiselle de St. Ours came back in high feather. The chest was found; Pontiac had delivered it over to her with the courtesy of a prince, and the Panis would carry it to the town. Her escort were outside, but she had run in to tell the good news to "la bonne mère," and Tante Josette, and "cette chère Angélique."

"Ah, Marianne, you happy girl!" exclaimed Angélique, as she drew her cousin from the kitchen, where the cookery was still in progress, into the coolness and quiet of the hearthroom. "This Captain Dalzell whom you met in Montreal is so brave and handsome, they say, and he loves you so devotedly that I can forgive him even for being English."

"Yes, yes, I am happy," acknowledged Marianne. "Or at least I shall be when he comes to the strait. Months ago he wrote me, saying he had asked to be sent here; but that was before this dreadful Indian trouble. And now, fondly as I long to see him, I sometimes wish he had not applied for this favor. Alas, the braver the soldier lover, the more anxiety has his betrothed."

"Tush, say rather the more cause you have for pride," declared her sympathetic confidante. "Your

hero will come with a large force of troops, and put an end to the war."

"The soldiers of the King of France may come, and then the strife will be the fiercer," sighed Marianne timorously. "Ah, I fear I am a very wicked girl to have given my love to an alien."

"Bah," broke out Mademoiselle Cuillerier, "cheer up, ma petite; Father Potier says marriages are made in Heaven! Now if Heaven designs to favor this Englishman with so sweet a wife as you will make, why should you thwart the designs of Providence? As for the soldiers of the fleur-de-lis, I fear they will never more be seen at Le Détroit. The neighbors who come to chat with my father — St. Aubin and others — have taken to muttering of late. They say King Louis cares not a whit for his loyal subjects of New France; why then should these subjects remain the chattels of his Majesty? To be governed by the English would be as good as to be ruled by Pontiac.

"Last Sunday, la chère tante and I went to Mass and confession at the Huron Mission. You know how the rich habitants are wont to have their easy-chairs rigged out with side bars, and, seated thus in state, are carried to church by their Pani slaves? Eh bien, as after the service we came out under the trees of Le Père Richardie, we saw the Great Ottawa take his place in one of these chairs. Borne on the shoulders of his braves, he visited the farms of the southern shore to see for himself the amount of grain in the possession of the farmers, so said Jacques Baby. Before he set out, however, he bought corn and cattle of some Canadians at the church door, and we saw him give in exchange his note of indebtedness, as the commandant at the fort

is wont to do. Only, the notes of Pontiac were bits of birch bark whereon he scratched the figure of a coon, the totem he has chosen. I told my father of it all, and he says Pontiac ever redeems his pledges in honorable manner. But truly, if your lover, Major Dalzell, comes, — well, I long to dance at your wedding, chère ; and here is the answer to the billet you brought me.”

With some confusion, she thrust a folded scrap of paper into Marianne’s hand.

“ Ah, for your ‘ bon ami,’ ” persisted the other demoiselle roguishly.

Angélique let the jest pass.

“ It is better Marianne should think I have accepted him as my ‘ bon ami ’ than that she should know the billet contains matter of importance,” she said to herself. “ But of course it is not so, and — and — though he kissed me — I could not help it. Last Sunday when I asked advice of Father Potier, he told me if I had given my troth to this cavalier of whom I spoke, the kiss was *permissible* for that occasion. Shall I consider that I gave my troth, for the sake of thinking it *permissible*? The Scotchman said by it he plighted his troth to me. But how can he be betrothed to me if I am not betrothed to him? ”

Thus mused the perplexed demoiselle after Marianne had gone back to the town. In the letter Angélique had begged of Sterling, by the love he had sworn to her, to come no more to the côte. She repeated that the voice of the whip-poor-will was mournful, and she would shut her ears to it, adding in enigmatic phrase, of which he alone possessed the key, that she could best effect the escape of the captain by her own devices. If the merchant persisted

in coming, suspicion might fall upon her as one who favored the English. This last argument would, she knew, prove conclusive. Yet, after the message was despatched, the girl wept, and was beset by many nervous fears lest, amid the stress and danger of the times, she might never see her likely young gallant again.

The cloud of discouragement that hung over the stockade was becoming less dense, however. One night an English prisoner escaped from the Ottawa camp, bringing a letter found in the clothes of a scout killed by the Hurons. The missive, written by an officer at Niagara to the commandant at Fort Miami, conveyed the intelligence of the signing of the treaty of Paris; and having perused it, Major Gladwin ordered James Sterling to assemble the French of the town at the door of the church of Ste. Anne, and read to them the news that New France had been formally ceded to the English. When this had been done, a concert was given by the little band of the fort.

One sultry afternoon about this time, Angélique Cuillerier bent over the berry patch in her garden, picking the choicest of the red, ripe fruit into a china bowl, of a thickness calculated to withstand the rough usage of years.

"Well may the savages call these weeks of June 'the Moon of Strawberries,'" she reflected. "Never have our berries been more luscious, and every time Pontiac has entered the house and demanded a meal, I have feared he would send his braves to despoil the patch. How good my mother is when the Ottawa comes! She does not call me when I run away and hide. Heigh-ho, she little dreams, though, what cause I have to fear him."

Her task completed, the girl laid upon the fruit she had gathered a cluster of the dark green foliage of the garden pear tree, the "pommier doux" whereof she was wont to sing, and, returning, set the bowl on the table in the hearthroom. Then mounting to her corner under the eaves, she bathed her face, smoothed her disordered curls, exchanged her blue cotton frock for one of white linen, and, donning a white sun-bonnet, issued from the house, carrying the china bowl with great care.

From the window of the loft, Tante Josette looked sleepily after her.

"La chère is going to pay a visit to Madame Méloche," she soliloquized. "The child finds it dull now that she cannot go to the town. Captain Campbell does not take a sieste, and although he still grieves for la jolie Mathurine, he obtains a wondrous consolation from the bright eyes and sweet sympathy of la chère Angélique. Eh bien, if she persists in going out during the heat of the sun, she will get a row of freckles across her nose; but she has a kind heart, and the afternoon is long for the pleasant gentleman. Madame Méloche has been appointed by her husband the captain's gaoler, but she says when Angélique is there the officer is sure to go no further away than the garden."

It was not far to the house of Baptiste Méloche — a short walk on the river road where it crossed the prairie past the home of his cousin, François, and then over the bridge of Parant's Creek.

Behind the Méloche palisade, under a pear tree which might have been the twin of the one beside the door of the Cuillierier homestead, sat the captain in a rude chair before a rustic table, writing upon strips of birch bark with a swan's-quill pen, which he dipped

from time to time in an inkhorn, made likewise of the bark, and filled with the sooty liquid he had used in inditing his note to Sterling.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Cuillerier," he exclaimed, rising as he perceived the demoiselle, "Madame Méloche is, I believe, within; shall I summon a Pani to announce you, or will you seek her in her own apartments?"

Often as Angélique came here, this little comedy was invariably gone through with between herself and the good captain. His gallantry would not permit him to presume that she came to see him, while she shrank from appearing to remind him that he was a prisoner. And "to visit and cheer those in captivity" was one of the "seven corporal works of mercy," so taught the zealous Father Potier.

"Oh, it is too warm to go indoors; I will stay out here where there is a breeze from the river," she replied, casting her sun-bonnet upon the table. "No doubt Madame Méloche is dozing, and I shall have to await her awakening. Here, Monsieur Campbell, I have brought you some strawberries. You should have had cream with them were it not that a certain warrior has left us only one cow, and we cannot save milk for cream. As for sugar, we have none but such as is from the maple trees, which you do not like. The berries are, however, quite sweet, and I plucked them myself."

"Sweet they must be, then," said the captain, with a smile that thanked her for the trouble she had taken to please him. "Now will you not join me in the feast?"

"Not I," she answered; "but I am going to sit here and watch you until you have eaten them all."

Pleased as a boy at her kind thought of him, the

captain laughed, and raising one of the ripe berries by its stem, for Angélique had plucked them as though they were so many scarlet flowers, he threw back his head and let the luscious fruit drop into his mouth. Another and another berry followed the first; then saying gaily, "My faith, it will not do to devour them all; we must keep a few for Lieutenant McDougal," he set the bowl upon the opposite side of the table, as though pushing away temptation.

Angélique frowned, but quickly smiled again. Yes, the lieutenant was welcome to a share. She had seated herself upon a bench that rested against the trunk of the tree, and, having picked up her bonnet once more, was fanning herself with it.

"Mademoiselle, you remind me of a beautiful white butterfly that I sometimes see flitting about in this garden," averred the captain, gazing at her with admiring eyes.

Oddly enough, the girl was in no mood for compliments and scarce seemed to hear him. A pause, which was not awkward, intervened; for there existed between the middle-aged officer and the young French demoiselle as near an approach to a Platonic friendship as can perhaps be quoted.

Now Angélique sat facing the house and covertly observing its windows, even to the dormers in the roof, though to any one scrutinizing her from the interior she might have presented a charming picture of youthful indolence as she leaned back nonchalantly, and patted the grass with her moccasined foot in very idleness.

Meantime the captain, lounging in his chair, fell to surveying the river, as it lay glittering in the sunlight like a mirror of burnished silver, just beyond the road and the bluff at the end of the garden.

As the silence continued, he shifted his position so that he could look down the strait in the direction of the stockade. Above the bastions of the fort the standard of St. George was proudly flying, and, as his eyes rested upon the crimson banner, Mademoiselle Cuillerier, who had begun to study him narrowly, saw that they kindled with the enthusiasm of a soldier who salutes his colors; then presently his gaze grew absent and sad. There being nothing to call up his ready smile or to compel a cheery speech, she noted how much graver and more lined was his bronzed visage than it had been a few weeks before; and although, lacking his accustomed exercise, he had increased in weight, he appeared to have lost much of his former activity and vigor.

Angélique sighed; clearly the captain would seem like an elderly man if he remained much longer in captivity.

Anon, she glanced up among the branches above her head, as if attracted by the chirping of the birds in their leafy bowers; a natural action, yet it was the same to which the girl Nedawniss had resorted in the mission orchard before she revealed the dark workings of her heart to Father Potier.

But no dusky face peered down through the sun-touched foliage, no Indian form clung close to the gray branches. Having assured herself that no one was within earshot, the demoiselle said softly, retaining her careless pose, —

“Monsieur Campbell, did you ever decline to aid a lady in distress?”

The captain came back from his reverie with a start.

“Who, I? Bless my soul, no!” he exclaimed, with warmth. “During my life I have doubtless been

derelict in many things, but unchivalrous to a woman — never!”

“Mademoiselle, if I can render a service to any friend of yours, I swear to do so. Yet, alas! I forgot, I am a prisoner;” and he struck the arm of the chair with his clenched hand.

“Oh, monsieur le capitaine, you can render the greatest service,” stammered the girl, lowering her eyes demurely. “But, lean back in your chair, fill your pipe, and smoke it while I tell you.”

The captain laughed, resumed his easy posture, and with a protest took the pipe from his pouch.

Angélique plucked a white clover blossom from the grass and began to pick it to pieces.

“Monsieur,” she continued, in a tense undertone, “I am the lady in distress.”

He raised his eyebrows inquiringly, and his countenance grew serious.

“Yes, I gave a promise, and without your aid I cannot keep it. I agreed to set you free; the means are prepared; you must avail yourself of them tonight.”

The captain was startled at her temerity, but by no abrupt gesture did he betray his surprise. A prisoner learns to guard his every look.

“Ah, mademoiselle, how relentlessly you have ensnared me,” he cried, endeavoring to pass the matter off as a jest.

“You will not be foresworn?” protested the girl, aghast. “For weeks I have awaited this opportunity. Pontiac’s camp was too near. Now he has removed his villages farther up the river, and only a few warriors have their lodges here. Listen: after dusk I will leave my canoe moored at my father’s wharf. In the dead of night, you and Lieutenant McDougal must

manage to escape from this house and make your way to the wharf. You will find the paddle among the bushes. Be swift, leap into the canoe, push out from the shore, and paddle in all haste to the fort. By good fortune the moon does not rise until late; the stars will give you sufficient light, yet will not afford enough to favor your detection."

"My dear young lady," interposed the captain, much moved, "I am most grateful for your interest in my behalf. Your scheme shows a woman's cleverness, and if Mr. McDougal chooses to adopt it, I wish him all success. For myself," he added, in a lighter tone, "by my faith, I am overweighted with flesh to make a good runner, and so short-sighted that in the night I am as blind as is a bat at noonday. Were I to accompany McDougal I should only hinder him from regaining his liberty. Moreover, I have given my word of honor to Pontiac that I will not try to escape. I cannot break my parole."

In Mr. Campbell's reply Angélique recognized the same proud spirit of "noblesse oblige" which distinguished her uncle Picoté de Bellestre, and the chevaliers of the old régime. Ardently admiring this punctilious sense of honor, she sighed nevertheless.

"Pontiac captured you by a trick. He had no right to exact the promise, monsieur le capitaine," she said presently.

"Perhaps not, yet when peace comes the Ottawa will remember that I kept my word to him. Having thus had my small part in promoting amicable relations between the aborigines and our people, I shall have performed a soldier's duty to his country."

Tears of disappointment glistened in the pretty eyes of Angélique. Captain Campbell had risen as he spoke, and while she glanced up at him, she noted

that he stood in the centre of a long, black shadow. It was only the shadow of the Méloche house, but to her imagination the circumstance seemed ominous.

Now he strode to her side and would have raised her hands to his lips; but, hiding them beneath her apron, she faltered, —

“I beseech you, monsieur, do not betray that we speak of anything more important than the time of day. There may be an Indian eye behind every crack and cranny of yonder house. The canoe will be at the wharf to-night; take it, and secure your freedom. Hark!”

As she concluded, her quick ear detected a step in the passage within. The next moment a tall, lank figure appeared in the doorway, and, after a swift glance, she smiled a greeting, perceiving the newcomer to be Mr. McDougal, who showed some chagrin at his tardy arrival, when he beheld the pretty vision in white, seated under the old pear tree.

“Ha, ha, sir lieutenant, you have missed the opportunity of your life by remaining indoors this afternoon, pretending to read the volume of Bossuet that Father Potier was so kind as to lend us, whereas you were dozing over the book, I trow,” called the captain rallying, in French. “Here have I had the pleasure of discussing the weather and the crops with la belle du Détroit.”

“Verily, my captain, you have had a panacea against the ‘dolce far niente’ which, in these parts, creeps upon one unawares,” rejoined the young officer, with a bow to the demoiselle.

“I am glad you have profited by the time of the ‘sieste,’ monsieur,” began Angélique, in a bantering tone. Then lowering her voice she added, “Because when next this household goes to rest, you must act.”

McDougal's keen eyes searched her face, but he gave no other evidence that the communication was unexpected.

Assuming a coquettish manner in strange contrast to her words, she repeated to the younger officer the plan she had unfolded to the captain, and besought him to strive to overcome the latter's unwillingness to seize upon this opportunity of escape.

"That I will," agreed McDougal, who considered the captain's scruples most quixotic. "To-morrow, mademoiselle, I trust we shall be in the fort; and ever after, during all the to-morrows that come to us, we shall toast the noble French demoiselle who lent us her aid."

"Au revoir, then, my friends, au revoir," cried Angélique, in high spirits. Darting a glance of entreaty at the captain, and bestowing a kindly one upon the lieutenant, she ran lightly away to the house, to find Madame Méloche looking out at the two officers through a slit in the deerskin curtain of her apartment.

The girl breathed nervously, and for a second a tremor possessed her. But reflecting that her conversation with the gentlemen had been carried on in so subdued a tone that it could not possibly have reached other ears, she said lightly, —

"Vraiment, mon amie, I am glad to find you aroused. Why did you not come into the garden? I stopped awhile to speak to your prisoners. Ma foi! they do not laugh and sing as a Frenchman would under the same circumstances, if only to spite his gaolor."

"Chut, chut! what does a lively demoiselle know of such grave matters?" chided the young dame, with the superior condescension of a woman who has a

husband and a child, and a home of her own. "The poor gentlemen endure their captivity with fine fortitude, to my thinking."

"Eh bien, I did not come to discuss the English," returned the girl, suppressing a yawn. "Ah, there is your little daughter awake in the cradle. Truly, she grows prettier each day."

Mademoiselle Cuillerier spent half an hour in chatting with Dame Méloche and playing with the two-year-old baby. Then taking her china bowl, and calling back to the officers another and more careless "au revoir," she set out for home.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH

THE PRICE OF VENGEANCE

HAD Tante Josette been inclined to wakefulness, she might have discovered that her niece Angélique slept little on the night that succeeded her visit to Dame Méloche, but spent the long hours kneeling at the window in the dormer. "Cette chère tante" doubly welcomed a quiet night now, however, and devoted it to slumber with conscientious exactness, so often of late had the repose of the côte been disturbed by wild war chants and savage cries.

In the morning the girl saw with delight that her canoe had disappeared from the wharf. It was nearly noon when Antoine Cuillerier, having come in from the woods for dinner, announced to "la bonne mère," —

"Morbleu, what think you, ma mie, the English prisoners have escaped!"

His daughter's heart leaped for joy.

"Escaped!" echoed the dame. "Mon Dieu, in what manner?"

"That is the strangest part of it; they have not left the faintest trace of how they got away," returned Cuillerier. "Méloche dreads the wrath of Pontiac, but the Indian guards have been drunk every night since the capture of the rum meant for the garrison at the stockade."

"Did all the prisoners gain their liberty?" inquired Tante Josette.

So engrossed with her plan had Angélique been that she had not taken into account the probability of getting the Méloches into trouble. With many emotions surging in her heart, she tremblingly awaited her father's answer.

"The lieutenant and a trader; not the captain," he began. "Méloche says Monsieur Campbell rejoices over the escape of the others, yet declares he would not go himself because he had given his word to Pontiac. The more fool he; ha, ha! Still the Great Chief will be mightily appeased thereby. Phouff, 'ma Angélique,' why do you wax so white? Morbleu, nowadays our women are so easily frightened, one would think the Indians had never been wont to come in and out of our houses."

"Ay, but in other days they came asking for food, and it was never denied them. Now they take it and often deal a blow in the bargain; only yesterday one of our Pani women was so beaten," protested the girl, recovering herself.

As she spoke, Toussaint entered the hearthroom.

"My master, the canoe of Mademoiselle Angélique is missing," he said.

Angélique clenched her hands, and exerted all her strength of will to keep from crying out in terror. Antoine Cuillerier looked more sharply at his daughter. Whether he suspected that she had aught to do with the escape of the young officer, she could not determine. Perhaps, since the news had come that the Canadians were now British subjects by the will of their own King, he shrewdly thought that if the girl had acted impetuously, the circumstance might serve him well with the English, should they prevail against the Ottawa. At all events, he said, with an assumption of anger, —

“Angélique, you are a little fool to let your canoe drift away. Toussaint, say not a word to any one that it is gone, or I will have you flogged. 'Tis an accident which might bring trouble to us from the savages.”

Toussaint, seeing that he had blundered, withdrew in doleful distress. It needed not the threat to keep him silent; that the mystery in some way involved his young mistress was enough to insure his dumbness on the subject.

While these events were happening on the “côte du nord,” one day as honest Jacques Baby sat at dinner in his house on the southern margin of the strait, an Indian girl appeared suddenly in the doorway.

“Dame, bring some bread for the squaw, and bid her be gone,” he called to his wife, as he applied himself anew to the savory morsel of “cochon au lait” on the platter before him.

But, when madame returned, the girl dashed the proffered dough-cake to the ground.

“I do not want food,” she cried, with scorn. “I am come to Jacques Baby because it is said he is a friend to the commandant at the fort. Is this the truth?”

Jacques Baby shifted uneasily in his chair. The question was scarcely a safe one to answer in these times.

“I am a friend to Pontiac,” he responded in the patois of the strait, and with some condescension. “The Great Ottawa slept here by my hearth last night; the English at New York would pay a sum of gold equal to a king’s ransom for his capture, yet I did not give him up. Is the forest maiden answered?”

“The ‘little spirits who carry the news’ say also that Jacques Baby is called by the redmen Big Heart, and he would never betray one who has slept in his lodge,” pursued the Indian doggedly. “If he would serve the commandant, he may learn what the white chief would wish to hear.”

The irritation of the habitant was appeased.

“How do they call the daughter of the forest?” he inquired.

Unheeding Dame Baby’s glance of distrust, the visitor replied, —

“Nedawniss, the daughter of Makatépelicité, is known at the Huron Mission as Catherine the Ojibwa.”

The dame ceased to frown.

“’T is a sweet-voiced creature who leads the choir of redskin girls,” she volunteered.

“Catherine the Ojibwa, who pestered the major with her devotion until he cast her out of the fort,” Baby muttered in French.

Therewith pushing back his chair from the table, he murmured a thanksgiving more sincere than devout, —

“For a savory ‘cochon au lait’ may we be truly grateful;” and, turning to the girl, continued, “If the spirits who carry the news have word of anything of moment to the commandant, perhaps I will lend them a pirogue to take it across the river.”

Her face brightened.

“Listen, then, Big Heart,” she said. “I am often known as Ieena the Wanderer, for like the deer I love to roam the wilderness. The sun has risen but twice since I ascended the Rivière au Canard. On its banks I saw encamped the Hurons and Pottawatomies. Putting in to the beach, I went among them. The

young men were making bows and arrows of hickory-wood; the squaws were twisting strips of deerskin, and stringing the bows with the inner bark of elm. Others were tying wild turkey feathers on the arrows to guide their flight, and binding on the poisoned flintheads with the finest thread from the raccoon. Farther on I came upon an old woman who was dyeing quills. I sat down beside her, and, taking some of the beads from my pouch, offered them in exchange for the quills. The generous bargain made her as happy as Onawut-a-qu-ta, — he who catches the clouds. But I too appeared well pleased.

“‘Noko, old mother,’ I said, ‘there is much work going on at these camps. This is not the hunting season. Why do your young men and maidens make ready the arrows? Have not your people treated for peace with the soldiers at the stockade?’

“The Noko laughed. She was so ugly I feared she might be the Mukakee Mindemoca, the Toad-woman; but she was not, for the Monedo Kway, the prophetess, would have seen my heart.

“‘Our people are at work,’ she said, ‘because we have word from the Lake of the Eries that a barque freighted with stores for the redcoats is on its way to the fort —’”

“This is welcome news for Major Gladwin,” cried Baby, springing to his feet. “I will see that it reaches him; and you shall be recompensed, Nedawniss.”

“I am no Indian runner, to be paid with baubles,” broke out the girl passionately. “I am the daughter of a chief; what I do for the English I do as a friend and ally.”

With this fervid speech she passed beyond the doorway, and strode across the prairie.

"Whew! Mon Dieu!" ejaculated Baby, leaning back in his chair; "ma mie, saw you ever an arrogance equal to the pride of this squaw?"

But the dame had betaken herself to the kitchen to give some instructions to her black slave, Monique.

Two days later the ship reached the Water Gate, after a battle with the savages down the river. Exasperated by the safe arrival of the provisions for those shut up in the stockade, Pontiac called a council of the habitants. In an open space, surrounded by the lodges of the various tribes, the deputies seated themselves upon the ground, and the Indians took places at the opposite side of the ring. There was an interval of silence; then the Great Chief rose, and threw down the war belt at the feet of the French.

"My brothers," he said, "how long will you suffer this bad flesh to remain on your lands? The Master of Life commands that all the English must perish throughout New France. We would have let you sit quiet on your mats while we fought for you; but you are not our friends. You sell food to the redcoats; you go as spies to our villages; you even seek to free our prisoners. Do not deny it. It was in a canoe of one of the French that the white brave escaped from the 'côte du nord-est.'"

At this St. Aubin protested with heat.

"I know whereof I speak," answered Pontiac laconically.

"Morbleu, mon ami, even though it may chance to be true that the dog of an Englishman stole a pirogue, it is not our fault," grumbled Jacques Campeau. "Have the British not stolen our country?"

"Nevertheless, I shall find out who owned the canoe, even as I shall one day discover who revealed to the redcoat my plan to rid Le Détroit of him and

his people," returned the Ottawa. "I bide my time, but I shall know at last."

The majority of the Canadians heard him with indifference, real or assumed. If the countenance of Antoine Cuillerier grew a shade paler at the threat of his friend and ally, the fact was scarcely perceptible beneath the leathery texture of his complexion. But although he preserved a stolidity of expression, learned from his associates of the forest, his mind was busy.

"Humph! if Angélique had aught to do with this, it may cost her life," he reflected. "I wonder if she has been to visit Madame Méloche? I shall forbid her to cross the threshold of that house, even though she and Baptiste's young wife have long been friends. I must tell Pontiac that I intend to marry her to Jasmin de Joncaire ere many weeks. But, chut! Angélique knew nothing of the lieutenant's scheme to escape. 'T was the boys who carelessly left the canoe at the wharf."

Having thus decided, little Antoine again gave heed to what the Great Ottawa was saying.

"My brothers," proceeded Pontiac decisively, "it is not well that brothers should fight against one another for the sake of dogs, but you must be wholly French or wholly English. Look upon the belt, and let us have your answer."

At this point Jacques Campeau stood up in his place. Unwilling to acknowledge that the Canadians were no longer subjects of the King of France, he was resolved to continue the old pretence that a French army was on its way to drive the English invaders from New France. He had therefore shrewdly brought with him a copy of the capitulation of Montreal, instead of a transcript of the treaty of peace.

“My brothers,” he said, in the name of his companions, “we would gladly join with you in driving away the redcoats were it not that in this paper our father, the Great King, tells us to sit quiet and obey the English until his soldiers come. When our father Monsieur de Bellestre returns, he will untie the cords that hold us back from you.”

Pontiac was not appeased, however, and sullenly maintained that the habitants should join him in the war.

At last, influenced by the Ottawa's harangue, a man who occupied an honored place in the circle got upon his feet. It was Larron, the most trusted interpreter of the British.

“Warriors,” he cried, “I and my young men, these coureurs de bois, voyageurs, and trappers, are ready to follow you. Vive le Roi! Vive Pontiac, his ally! We shall soon have the fort and all that is in it!”

Thereupon, he took up the red war belt and passed it to his comrades.

“Infamous conduct this,” exclaimed Charles Parant to his neighbor Baby.

“He is but acting as the spy of the English,” asserted St. Aubin.

With a start Antoine Cuillerier saw his own son Alexis among the wild party who pledged themselves to follow Pontiac. Yet he said nothing. For might not the action of this reckless boy prevent the suspicion of the Great Chief from falling upon Angélique, who was the pride of old Cuillerier's heart? Much as the bourgeois loved his sons, he would have sacrificed them all for this beautiful daughter.

When night came, a party of Ottawas, accompanied by the lawless Frenchmen, took up a position near the fort, and made ready to fire upon the garrison at

daybreak. Larron was not among them, but those who knew him to be a better talker than fighter only laughed at his desertion. The officers on the ramparts soon discovered the attacking party, and in the gray dawn a bold dash was made upon them from the stockade.

To James Sterling the excitement of the sortie was as the smell of gunpowder to a war-horse. The soldier spirit of the Scot burned in his veins. He forgot the death blow given at Culloden to the cause he loved: remembered only that he was fighting for his friends, and before him were foes to be routed. Thus no one among the little company of white men fell upon the Indians and renegades with more boldness.

In the heat of the skirmish the Scotchman found himself face to face with a brave in the Ottawa wardress. By that strange proneness of the mind to take note of trifles in moments of supreme importance, he observed in the early morning light that the face of his antagonist was daubed with ochre and vermilion, his head crowned with feathers, and upon his breast hung a necklace of wampum. The young man was, nevertheless, not an Indian. His skin was a swarthy olive, not copper hued. His features were finer than those of the aborigines, and his gaze brighter, if perhaps less keen.

For the space of a lightning flash the two combatants confronted each other, while a gleam of recognition leaped into the eyes of each. Then the wild creole deliberately raised his musket, and took aim at Sterling's heart.

Were it not for one of those fortunate happenings which seem a special interposition of Providence, the end of the Scotchman had certainly come. But the

flintlock missed fire, and so close were the men that when his weapon thus failed him, the Canadian found himself at the mercy of his enemy. Instead of shooting him down, Sterling disarmed him, after a desperate struggle.

"Renegade," he cried, "you are the brother of Angélique Cuillierier; therefore I spare your life, but you are my prisoner."

For answer the young habitant cursed his luck roundly, declaring that he would rather die than fall into the hands of the English. Sterling paid no heed to his ravings, and perforce he gloomily yielded himself a captive.

The savages and coureurs de bois were now scattering over the prairie. Among the last to flee was a stalwart young warrior who fought with extraordinary courage. At length, after a volley of musketry, with a defiant cry he sank lifeless to the ground, whereupon a soldier running forward knelt upon the body of the fallen brave, tore away the scalp, and with an exultant shout shook it toward the retreating savages.

The sallying party then returned to the fort. Some hours later, the men upon the prairie bastion descried running toward the stockade a fugitive chased by Indians. When he arrived near enough to be protected by the guns, they abandoned the pursuit. Although his strength plainly began to fail, the man came on. The wicket of the great gate was thrown open, and, rushing in, he sank exhausted at the feet of the officer of the guard.

Major Gladwin was soon upon the spot.

"Zounds! it is Lieutenant Pully, the late commandant at Sandusky," he exclaimed, as he contemplated the lifeless form of the stranger.

Before long, aided by a generous draught of the "old Jamaica," saved with the ship's cargo, the officer revived, and was able to tell his story.

"The Indian woman by whom I found myself adopted in so droll a fashion was as kind as a mother to me," he said, with a whimsical smile. "Without delay she began to plan for my escape, and to that end hid me in a French house, where I have remained many days in concealment. Seeing the fight with the Indians and their defeat, I concluded that they would keep away from the neighborhood for the rest of the day; but alack! I well-nigh paid with my life for my mistake. Your skirmishing party greatly angered them. The Indian scalped by one of your men was Waugoosh, nephew of Wasson, chief of the Sauteurs. The unfortunate circumstance bodes no good to the officers and garrison of this fort."

In the afternoon of this same day la belle du Détroit stood at the gate of the Cuillierier palisade, looking out upon the river road. At dawn the habitants of the côte had been awakened by the noise of the fight upon the prairie. Later, like a covey of water-fowl, a fleet of Indian canoes had swept up the river, but as yet no definite news of what had taken place was known among the French; for the wild young men who had joined in the fray, ashamed of their defeat, had betaken themselves to the woods.

The tranquillity of Nature reigned again. The swift-flowing current of the strait was now blue, anon pearly, and again a rippling tide of light, as it reflected the sky, the fleecy clouds, the midsummer sunshine.

"It reminds me of the opal in the brooch of my aunt, Madame des Ruisseaux," soliloquized Angé-

lique, as she viewed the broad expanse. "That is, if anything so grand as this shining, ever-flowing river may be likened to a gem, which is but as the sparkling of one drop from its clear depths."

Her gaze did not linger long upon the waters, but was presently turned again toward the fort. Strain her eyes as she would, however, the demoiselle could see no one. With a girlish frown, as though vexed even with the song of the birds because they sang to her no tidings of her lover, she turned and scanned the upper part of the road that stretched away to Wind Mill Point, behind whose wide marshes lay the present camp of Pontiac. There its bark huts were less exposed to the fire of the "Beaver," which still at intervals sailed up to bombard them.

In this direction, too, the highway and the prairie were solitary.

"The redmen had the worst of the engagement," she judged shrewdly. "They have all gone back to the encampment."

Growing bolder, she ventured into the road. How calm and mysterious seemed the forest, like a wall reared before the English, a barrier that bade them advance no farther. The plains, the waters, they had claimed; the woods still belonged to the Indian and his French brother. And how pleasant was the prairie! Yesterday, the Pani slaves of Antoine Cuillerier had mown the meadow near his farm to provide food for the ponies, and now the air was sweet with the fragrance of the newly cut grass.

"Why, what is this?" exclaimed the girl. "The nest of a meadow-lark that in some marvellous way escaped the mowers! Or, rather, did Toussaint, the slow-witted but tender-hearted, save the tiny mother

and her family, and transfer them to the shelter of this sumach bush?"

Angélique bent over the nest; above it circled the mother bird in pitiful distress. Once, as it fluttered helplessly, its wings brushed her cheek. Now it soared away, as though tempting her to follow, and all the while the featherless fledglings stretched up their mouths and uttered the faintest of sounds.

"You little dears!" cooed Angélique. "You poor bird mother, do not flutter and fear. I love your chirp too well to hurt you. See, I will put the nest still farther under the bush. Au revoir. When the grass grows long again, some of your nestlings will sing upon the meadow."

With a laugh, clear as the voice of the other parent bird which now returned from a foraging expedition with a twitter of concern, the demoiselle rose to her feet. As she proceeded a few paces, she saw issue upon the road from the Méloche palisade a portly man who walked with head erect and an air of military precision.

"Ah, it is Monsieur Campbell, and, I doubt not, he is coming to visit us; for, now that Pontiac knows he will observe his parole even as though it were given to the King of France, he is permitted to roam about the upper part of the côte at his pleasure," she said aloud. "How fine is his bearing! These officers carry themselves with well-nigh as much distinction as does a knight of St. Louis."

Catching her crimson kerchief from her neck, she waved it to attract the attention of the captain.

"He sees it," she cried gaily. "He raises his hand in response. I know he is smiling. I will run indoors and tell la bonne mère he is coming, that she may prepare for him a sangaree from the wine of the strait.

It will be acceptable this hot afternoon. No, I will await him here. He raises his hand again as he comes across the stretch of prairie. *Bon jour, bon jour, monsieur le capitaine!*”

In girlish glee, Angélique merrily flaunted and flourished the kerchief. At the captain's distance she might have seemed a bird just ready for flight, so light and graceful was her poise. Her sun-bonnet fell back, the soft breeze stirred the dark wavy hair that hung upon her shoulders, and played with the short locks which curled about her pretty forehead; her cheeks flushed pink as the eglantine. Thus an artist might have painted her as the spirit of mirth and laughter.

But, oh God! what is it that causes the laugh to die upon her lips and her face to blanch? Why does she cry out in terror and wave the kerchief now as a signal of warning. What is that other form which a moment before started up from a hollow in the prairie, — a figure that follows the Englishman like a shadow in the sun? An Indian? Yes, an Indian with uplifted tomahawk.

The girl trembles in every limb; a faintness steals over her, but she struggles against it. Once more she frantically signals to the captain. Ah, thank Heaven he understands. He turns; the tomahawk strikes the air. Ha, ha! he is saved; he will shoot his assailant. Alack, no; and Angélique grows weak again as the remembrance flashes upon her. No, the captain told her that Pontiac took away his pistols. But he has a knife; he draws it from his belt, and is defending himself.

“*Toussaint,*” she calls at the top of her voice. “*Toussaint! Raphael!*”

Juste ciel, it is a terrible fight! Yet, if he can only

keep the red fiend at bay, the servants of Antoine Cuillerier will speedily come to the rescue.

“Jésu! Marie!”

A blind, feminine impulse prompts the demoiselle to rush down the road toward the grappling men. She has gone but a few steps, however, when she remembers this is folly.

“Toussaint! Raphael!” she cries again, then speeds onward by a path along the shore, half-way down the bluff. The Indian, being younger, lighter, and better armed than the captain, will prevail unless the Panis come without delay. If they come the savage may flee to save his own life, and then, she, la Demoiselle Cuillerier, will have the captain borne back to her father’s house, where she will tend his wounds and nurse him back to strength.

These thoughts surge through her brain as she runs on. Her head being upon the level of the bluff, at times she can see the combatants. Alas! the captain weakens; he staggers back; and now,—

“My God! My God!”

The shouts of the officer, the girl’s agonized appeal to Heaven, bring the laborers running from the distant fields at the edge of the forest. But, before they reach the prairie by the river road, an Indian yell of triumph rings out upon the air.

It is followed by a woman’s shriek, so wild and frenzied that those who hear hastily cross themselves as they hurry on, saying to one another that it might have been the cry of a suffering soul in purgatory.

Quarter of an hour afterwards, Toussaint and Raphael found their young mistress unconscious and inanimate, fallen with her face pressed to the earth in a marshy bed of fleurs-de-lis beside the footpath below the bluff.

During the remainder of that memorable month of July, la belle Angélique knew little of what went on around her. The shock of what she saw that day left her mind a blank for a time, and again filled it with strange, weird delusions. Watched over and cared for as she was by her mother and Tante Josette, no report came to her of the world beyond the narrow walls of the cool little room on the lower floor of the house, which had been prepared for her. Not until long afterwards did she learn that the mutilated body of the captain, being cast into the river, floated down to the Cuillerier palisade, as to her feet.

The Sauteur Wasson, ostensibly to avenge the death of Waugoosh, had taken vengeance upon the gallant white chief who had won the love of "la jolie Mathurine."

Angélique was, however, spared the intelligence that the Sauteur and two of his companions had eaten the heart of the intrepid officer, believing it would render them ever courageous in battle.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST

LOVE THRIVES IN WAR

WHEN the news of Mr. Campbell's tragic fate reached the stockade, great was the indignation of the besieged, and Major Gladwin promptly sent by Jacques Baby an angry message to Pontiac demanding the punishment of the black-hearted Wasson, and asking with haughty scorn if in this manner the Ottawa kept his pledges, and how he deemed it possible, after what had passed, that the English could place reliance upon the word or honor of a savage.

To this taunting charge the Indian leader replied in a missive inscribed upon birch bark by an English prisoner.

“Pontiac, chief of the Ottawas and of all the tribes of the north, is sorry for the evil that Pah-hah-undootah, the little old woman who makes war, has brought to the Eagle Heart, Monsieur Campbell,” it said. “The Ottawa took the hand of the Eagle Heart in friendship, for the white chief did not treat the redman as a dog, or a wolf, Mawingawn. His blood is upon your own people. You say Wasson killed the Eagle Heart because he hated him. That may be, but he would not have dared to do it if you had not enraged his braves by flinging after them the scalp of Waugoosh. I would put Wasson to death, but he has fled to Saginaw, and from his own nation I cannot take him.”

After the flight of the Sauteur, Pontiac continued to devise new plans against the fort.

Thus it came about that one night during the time when Angélique Cuillerier was slowly recovering from the nervous shock by which she had been prostrated, the girl was aroused by the sounds of an Indian gathering at Parant's Creek, where the savages were evidently engaged in some unaccustomed occupation.

Wide awake, she listened restlessly, her head aching and confused. All at once, the darkness of her little room was illumined by a sudden flare of light that glowed blood-red upon the white-washed walls, the rude furniture, and the uneven puncheon floor.

Angélique uttered an exclamation of terror. Presently summoning her strength, she dressed in frightened haste, sped through the hearthroom, unbolted the house-door, and ran out upon the gallery. In another second Tante Josette was beside her. Nor were they many minutes alone; the whole household speedily hurried out, to find that many of the neighbors were abroad upon the river road, as though the evening were but just begun, yet the clock in the hearthroom called out anon, in a rasping voice, that it was one o'clock.

The heavens were starlit, but down in the direction of the fort they reflected in fainter degree the light that had alarmed the excited demoiselle. Dame Cuillerier hastened to the end of the gallery.

"Look, look!" she cried; "one of the English ships is ablaze on the river."

The other women followed to her coigne of vantage. Antoine had gone to the gate with his younger boys; the older sons were still away in the woods, whither they had fled after the skirmish before the stockade.

"No, no! Whatever the conflagration, it is not fed by either of the ships," declared Angélique. "See, in the fiery gleam, the spars and rigging of the barques stand out black against the sky."

An ominous silence now hung over the strait; a flotilla of ghostly canoes rode upon the lurid waters, and presently, as the little group of women watched, down the river, beyond the point of land which had obstructed their view, floated a great burning mass, a bulk of flame that drifted straight toward the ships.

"Mon Dieu, what can it be?" ejaculated Tante Josette.

"What is afire, mon ami?" called la bonne mère to her husband, who came trudging back through the garden.

Antoine Cullerier chuckled to himself in high good humor.

"Parbleu, the Great Chief is clever as a fox," he said; "our gracious King Louis should give him the decoration of a general. He has sent a burning raft down the river to destroy the enemy's ships. For hours his braves have been making it ready. Charles Parant tells me 't is most ingeniously constructed of two barges tied together and filled with pitch pine and dry brushwood. How cheerily it blazes! Ha, ha! The intruders will be helpless enough now."

"Cheerily," repeated Angélique under her breath. "Miséricorde, how this strife changes men until they seem to partake of the ferocity of the wild creatures of the wilderness."

King Louis had said he did not want New France, a land of ice and snows; why, then, should the creoles of Canada grasp at the hand that shook them off? The girl no longer wished to be French, nor yet English;

a new spirit was stirring in her soul,—the spirit of liberty, the birthright of the western world.

How unconscious are the men in the ships, the officers and garrison at the fort, of the impending frustration of their only chance of escape to Niagara, their approaching doom! And Monsieur Sterling, who has cast in his lot with them, will he share their fate?

With an anxious heart, Angélique remains motionless, her eyes fixed upon the raft. Onward it drifts, beneath the calm sky, between the wide prairies that bound the strait, onward past the white Canadian farmhouses, that in the light of the burning pine and birch bark stand out boldly from their dark background of trees and lonely plain.

It is almost upon the ships. But now — ciel, can the watchers trust their eyes? Yes, *now* it has floated past the barques, missing them by the distance of an arpent! Onward it holds its course, beyond the Huron Mission, beyond the village of the Pottawatomes. But, unharmed, the stanch little ships, the "Beaver" and the "Gladwin," ride at anchor in the river.

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The feast of "the good Ste. Anne" found many of the habitants gathered at the small chapel of the "côte du nord-est."

To the Vespers came Clotilde Godefroy, smiling and serene, as though there were not an Indian within many hundred leagues.

"Ma foi, chérie, you must have a mind at ease; have you not found your hearth dreary, and been much disquieted from fear of the savages during the absence of your husband?" queried Angélique, as she greeted the young dame after the service.

"Vraiment, of loneliness I must plead guilty; but of fear, I have shared the alarm of my neighbors, that is all," answered Clotilde, in sprightly fashion, "for my father took me home."

"I might have known as much, meeting you here above the fort. Eh bien, as a protector, Major Chapoton is equal in courage to a whole regiment of soldiers," her friend admitted readily.

"As for my mind," continued Madame Clotilde, "well, 't is said 'a blithe heart makes a blooming visage,' and much reason have I to be happy. My Jacques is come back from his journey."

"Returned? Now surely you can reveal where he has been?" coaxed the girl, with feminine curiosity.

"I can only say that all day he has been on the southern shore at an Indian pow-wow," admitted the young wife.

"Oh, if you will tell me nothing, au revoir, Clotilde," cried Angélique. "I pray you, give a kiss to your pretty young son for me, and tell him he shall have a mocockful of maple sugar comfits if he will come to see me."

"Chut, you shall not beguile the boy by your arts, mademoiselle," jested Madame Godefroy. "He tells me, he will never love any other woman but his mother; and I hope to keep him in the same mind for twenty years to come, or at least until a beard begins to darken his rosy cheeks."

"And in his baby prattle he has already sworn I shall be his wife," returned the girl. "Alas! the duplicity of man, even in his infancy."

With a laugh she ran away, but once more alone on the road, stopped short and gazed absently into the river.

“When will Le Détroit be at peace?” she sighed. “Will it be when Marianne’s English bridegroom comes? If so, may fair winds waft him hither.”

At the home of Madame des Ruisseaux within the stockade, Angélique’s passing wish was, with Marianne de St. Ours, a daily prayer. Wherever she went, a presentiment of evil seemed to peer covertly at her, like “sorrow’s spy.” But she strove to banish from her thoughts this Gorgon visage which to her imagination took the form of the stony Indian countenance of the fabled prophetess, Moneda Kway. Her rest was haunted by many omens, — the hooting of an owl from a tree in the garden, the barking of ghostly dogs, the mysterious voices of bells ringing in mid-air. Yet “for Dalzell’s sake I will be brave,” she said; “when he comes all will be well.”

Marianne did not mean to be selfish. She told herself that she longed for the coming of the convoy because it would bring additional defenders and much-needed supplies to the post; but to her it meant none of these things. It meant only Dalzell, and love, and happiness.

One morning toward the last of July, when she looked from her window, it was to sigh with a disappointment more keen than usual; she could not see the river, for a thick fog had built a great outer wall about the fort. An hour later the first rays of the rising sun changed the white mists to golden billows, which rolled away like the waves of a phantom ocean, revealing the opalescent surface of the strait, the dark forests, the beautiful prairies that border Le Détroit.

In those days it was considered a mark of good breeding as well as of piety for dames and demoiselles to go daily to church. It was but courteous to thank

the Lord by an act of public worship for the blessings the day might hold.

As Marianne stepped forth from the house-door on her way to Ste. Anne's, a cannon shot boomed threateningly from the water bastion, and at the sound the French who were not in the street ran out of their homes, demanding of the patrol what the report might portend.

"Faith, 'tis a warning to another batch of Injuns that have come to join the red naigers that do be peppering us with their shots. Shure, we ought to be as hot as Calcutta curry, bad cess to them," rejoined the soldier O'Desmond, raising his musket and critically examining the flint, while with nonchalant coolness he strove to calm the affrighted women and children.

"Don't ye be afeard, me darlin' ladies. Ivery man on the ramparts has a dose of lead ready for the red naigers. And like the prescriptions of ould Dandy the apothecary in me own town at home, it is warranted to kill or cure without fail!"

Not waiting to hear more, Mademoiselle de St. Ours hurried on. Twice during the service the shot from the swivel was repeated, and each time the good women who formed the little congregation bent their heads lower, and petitioned Heaven to save the town from the savages.

As they flocked out of the church, a dull boom, which seemed to come from far across the water, caused them to start and exchange glances of questioning surprise. Could that be an answering shot from some gallant ship making its way up the river?

"Is it the convoy?" Marianne tremulously demanded of the sentry.

"Divil a doubt," was the quick response. "Ahem, ahem," and the discomfited fellow strove to cover his

blunder with a cough. "I ask your pardon, mademoiselle; I speak lightly of the prince of darkness, because I have no respect for him."

The demoiselle, however, had already passed on, to join the throng of women who had followed the townsmen, officers, and soldiers to the ramparts. Yes, there, far down the river, were two dark objects like clouds upon the horizon. As she watched them wistfully, James Sterling paused beside her.

"Mademoiselle, already the air is filled with the music of your marriage bells," he said, with smiling significance, offering her his lens.

Marianne took it with a trembling hand, and scanned the distance where the sky and waters met.

"How pretty she is," mentally commented the merchant, as he noted her blushing confusion. "By the Braes of Balquhiddy, the British may conquer the strait, but la jolie Canadienne will continue to conquer the British! Le Détroit will still be French for many a day!"

And then he told her that Major Gladwin had embarked upon the "Beaver," and gone down to meet the convoy.

On came the barges, but as they reached the point between the Huron village on the southern and the Pottawattomie settlement on the northern shore, they were greeted by a sharp fire from both banks of the river. A short engagement ensued, but the guns of the ships promptly put the savages to rout, and, this danger passed, the barques sailed nearer and nearer, and finally landed the troops on the strand outside the fort, amid the cheers of the garrison.

Marianne with the other women hurried to the water gate. Despite the press of the throng of shouting soldiers, excited Frenchmen, babbling dames and

"fillettes," and clamorous children, she gained an excellent position whence to observe the entry of the reinforcements, thanks to Jasmin de Joncaire, who made way for her.

What a grand spectacle it was to watch the newcomers disembark! The girl's spirits rose higher; she would fain have cheered with the good folk around her; she did flutter her kerchief with joyous enthusiasm.

What a great panacea is happiness! Could this bright-eyed, light-hearted girl be the same Mademoiselle de St. Ours who had waited in pale patience for this hour during the long weeks of the fateful summer?

"A fine showing the men make in their gay green uniforms," exclaimed an apple-cheeked matron admiringly, as the detachment came up from the beach.

"Vive, vive, le régiment vert!" called out a lively maid, who, like Marianne, had an English sweetheart.

The cry was taken up by her friends. It was becoming intolerably dreary to these creole dames and demoiselles to be shut within the narrow limits of the stockade; to be forced to forego their visits to neighbors along the côte, their pleasant evenings upon the river.

"Vive, vive, the green regiment!" re-echoed the crowd, who welcomed the stalwart soldiers as deliverers.

At the head of each company marched its officers, with the military precision which distinguished the British. How eagerly Marianne peered at their faces! Valiant, strong men they were, but her heart sank; all were strange to her.

"Jésu, Marie, is he not come?" she murmured, still hoping, yet with a chill of disappointment creeping over her.

There was a short delay, then up the strand came a small band of men in buckskin, half soldiers, half scouts, their leader tall, and sturdy of frame and rough in feature.

"Major Rogers and his provincials!" shouted the garrison. "Hurrah for Rogers! Hurrah for the rangers!"

Marianne smiled absently. It was well that Major Rogers was come; but — but — She glanced beyond him. The last of the troops were leaving the boats. She drew back, not daring to watch longer, lest it should be only to learn that he, for whom she waited, was not among them.

Yet she must know the truth at once; this suspense was not to be endured. Again she turned her gaze toward the chink in the wall of cheering people that lined both sides of the way. As she did so, her heart fluttered like a bird, and then seemed to stand still. She felt a tightening at her throat as if a hand were laid upon it; tears dimmed her eyes, and yet she could have laughed out in gladness. Yes, there in the van of his men was a handsome young officer, whose splendid bearing bespoke a noble pride and courage, whose nervous step, and the red color that mounted to his brow at the cheers of the populace, marked him as a man of impetuous and ardent character.

Yes, it was Dalzell, the gallant aide-de-camp of Sir Jeffrey Amherst.

As he came on, the subtle sub-consciousness wherein soul acts upon soul told him that Marianne was near, and drew his eyes toward her. The next moment, by a singular coincidence, the crowd parted, so that she seemed to stand out alone from a confused background of faces.

For a second the gaze of the officer and the demoiselle met, somewhat as James Sterling and Angélique Cuillerier had looked into each other's eyes when the British had first landed at Le Détroit, yet with a difference. Between Sterling and Angélique had flashed the glance that awakens love, while this was love's question and answer, the mutual assurance of a troth well kept.

A glad light leaped into the eyes of Dalzell, a gleam of passionate devotion that held the sweet, shy gaze of the girl. He smiled sunnily, and with confidence, as a true-hearted man smiles upon the woman he loves and longs to shield from the sorrows of the world. It was all swift as the flight of a sea gull; in another minute he had passed.

By that glance of mutual love, Marianne and the officer were betrothed anew; but, now that he was gone on toward the council house, to Mademoiselle de St. Ours the sunlight seemed to grow dim; her brain reeled, her limbs became weak, and presently she lost all knowledge of what was happening around her.

"Poor demoiselle," cried the rosy-faced girl who had given the green regiment its name, "I have heard that the handsome English officer is her lover; and, at the escape of the convoy from the Indian vultures of the lakes, she has fainted for joy."

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"Nom de Ste. Anne, what a shocking disregard of 'les convenances'! To think that a niece of mine should rush out among the crowd to obtain a first glimpse of her lover, like any fillette of the humbler order!" exclaimed Madame des Ruisseaux, as she sat in the high-backed chair near the chimney-piece in her little parlor. "Were it an escapade of that

madcap, Angélique Cuillerier, I should not so much marvel; but for you to so forget your dignity, Marianne, you who are wont to be as timid and retiring as a mouse!"

Marianne had been flitting restlessly about the room. At this reproach, she glided to her aunt's side and clasped her white hands around the old dowager's neck, kissing the faded cheek that had once been one of the fairest at Le Détroit, and the soft curls that made the dame the picture of a great lady of the French court.

"Of course, ma tante, I should have sat quietly at home and awaited the coming of Captain Dalzell," the younger woman admitted, with a winsome affectation of penitence; "but when you were young, and the Sieur Trottier des Ruisseaux came home from the wars, did you stop to think that others might be taking note of every look you gave him?"

"Chut! chut! mayhap I did not," relented the stately mentor, her heart touched by the unexpected demonstration of affection from the reserved Marianne. "But why does your captain tarry? Nom de Ste. Anne, it was not thus when I was your age, and Des Ruisseaux sued for my favor!"

Marianne smiled. Had she not exchanged that glance with her lover as he marched up to the British headquarters, possibly she too might have thought him lacking in ardor. But his look of love, the brightening of his countenance as he caught sight of her,—these caresses of the soul had filled her with trust; her heart, like a shy little thrush, sang a song of happiness over and over to itself.

"He will come the first moment that he is free," she said confidently, and darted away once more to peer from behind the window curtain into the street,

where gaily attired townspeople and the new soldiers in their smart uniforms continually passed and repassed.

Presently she saw coming from the council house the robust O'Desmond, who stepped briskly down the thoroughfare as though bent upon some special commission. The jovial soldier was not an ideal messenger of Cupid. His rollicking air, the gleam of humor in his blue eyes, appeared more like to put the little winged god to flight. And yet, some of the "fillettes" of the strait, daughters of the artisans, and small traders, and *coureurs de bois*, were wont to say that no man among the garrison could make love so well as the witty Irishman.

Straight as a shaft from the bow he came toward the home of Madame des Ruisseaux, and Marianne felt sure he brought some word from her lover. As he approached nearer she let fall the curtain and drew back into the room, breathing quickly. A sharp rap on the house-door reassured her; and despite a faint protest from her aunt, she fled to open it and learn the errand of the messenger.

Standing on the door-stone, O'Desmond touched his cap with a flourish that for the occasion seemed to him more fitting than the military salute.

"Mademeselle, the little luck spirits that the red naigers do be always talking about have been kind to Larry O'Desmond, since they have sent him with a word to so beautiful a lady as yourself," he said with the inimitable blending of respect and audacity which make one believe the Irish tongue to be the true language of compliment.

"You have a message for me?" demanded Marianne, with smiling impatience.

"Yes, mademeselle; a bit of a note," he answered, producing the billet.

Joyously unfolding the three-cornered scrap of paper, she read the few words scrawled upon a leaf hastily torn from an officer's pocket-book, —

"BELOVED, — You know full well were I to follow the leadings of my will I should be with you now. I am detained here at headquarters by a council of war. Within an hour, however, I hope to clasp you to my heart.

"Yours forever,

DALZELL."

For a few moments, the girl forgot the messenger. Then recovering herself, she said, confusedly, —

"Thank you, Monsieur O'Desmond; there is no answer."

The soldier grinned, saluted once more, and retired.

"Shure, love is the same in every country," he soliloquized, as he trudged onward to the barracks. "Whether it shines back at you from the eyes of a contrary Irish colleen, a shy English maid, or a pretty Canadienne, 't is the same sweet light that warms a man's heart like a ray of God's own blessed sunshine!" Which goes to show that the gallant O'Desmond had no little experience in the tender passion that makes gods of men.

Before the hour was over Dalzell came.

"At last, sweetheart," he said, as he folded his betrothed to his honest breast, "at last we are reunited, and for all our lives. I am come to claim you as my wife. Hereafter, even when a soldier's duty calls me from your side, being wed, made one in soul, we can never again be parted."

As is usual with one of a calm deep nature, Marianne said little in response to his fervid words. But her heart thrilled with the content of an innocent girl whose every earthly joy and hope is centred in

her love, whose every tender emotion becomes a passionate prayer to Heaven for the welfare of her lover.

During the weeks that had passed, when she sat sewing upon her simple bridal outfit, while her busy fingers flew and her eyes saw only the swiftly glancing needle, all her life was blossoming inwardly. Like the thread of silver that ran through the amethyst beads of the small chaplet given to her by the nuns of the Ursuline convent, her days were linked together by the sweet consciousness of her love, by the thought of Dalzell. Now her joy was so great that she thought such must be the bliss of Heaven. Yet no! in Heaven the intensity of love brings with it no sense of pain, and now it seemed to her that her heart could not hold so much happiness; that it must break, as sometimes a little crystal votive lamp before the shrine of Ste. Anne was shattered by the strength of the flame that burned within it.

"Dearest, why do you not speak to me?" half chided her lover.

"I—I—am so happy, it frightens me," she faltered tremblingly. "Surely, no one can be so happy and continue to live."

Dalzell laughed breezily with the confidence of a practical man who takes life as he finds it. He did not understand his demoiselle's timid fears and self-questionings.

"Do not burden your heart with such doubts, dear one," he said, smoothing the braids of her brown hair as one might soothe a child. "Since the world began, perhaps no lovers have loved with a greater degree of tenderness, of trust, and perfect sympathy, than exists between us. But many in every age have loved during long years of wedded happiness. Why should not we?"

Marianne smiled. Being as head over ears in love as was this hot-headed soldier, she was entirely ready to believe what most lovers aver, yet only the first dwellers in Eden could say with truth, that none before them ever knew so well the bliss of worthy love.

Thus for a brief space she and the captain planned their future. Then, all too soon, Madame des Ruisseaux bustled into the room with formal greetings and an invitation to dinner.

Tempting as were the viands of this little fête prepared in his honor, the young officer found to his own surprise that he had slight relish for them. It was feast enough to sit beside Marianne, to hear her joyous laugh, to note the charm and grace of her manner, and to know that she loved him with all her heart, even as he loved her.

At the gala repast Madame des Ruisseaux presided with urbane state, but her duties as hostess being over she considerably left the lovers to themselves once more. When at a late hour Dalzell lingered at the house-door over his "good-night," he said, returning to the subject they had discussed at intervals during the evening, "Then you will grant me this, sweetheart? Let our marriage be the day after to-morrow? I will arrange all matters with the curé in the morning."

Still Marianne demurred, as though in truth she had not been long prepared for her wedding.

"As you love me, do not plead for more delay, dear one," he urged.

"Bien, then it shall be as you will," she whispered, and with shy smiles received his kiss of thanks.

"With this your promise to cheer me, I shall be ready to lead my men to-morrow with a gay heart,"

he exclaimed. "Sometime during the day I shall see you again, beloved; not until night do we go out to attack the enemy."

"You go to attack the enemy?" repeated the girl, growing suddenly white and anxious. "I do not understand;" and she put a hand to her head in dazed confusion.

"It is only this," he made answer with affected carelessness. "I asked to come to Le Détroit that I might marry my betrothed. General Amherst granted my request, but he also commissioned me to help to end the siege of this town. Hard upon my arrival, a council of war was held, and I begged leave of Major Gladwin to lead forth a skirmishing party under cover of the darkness. I am resolved to capture this redoubtable Pontiac who has stirred up such a warfare among the tribes of the west."

"But if you fail?" faltered Marianne, clasping his arm convulsively. "Remember the fate of Captain Campbell."

Terrible as was the picture conjured up by her words, Dalzell did not flinch.

"No man can be brave who considers pain the chief evil of life," he said, "and the greatest service one can render a good cause is to die for it. It would be ignoble of me to hold back, when by a bold move it is possible to raise the siege. But cheer up, my sweet, I shall return in triumph long before the hour you have chosen for our wedding. Do not weep, but make ready your bridal dress. Once more, beloved, good-night."

"Helas! my perfect happiness was indeed but a passing bliss," sighed Marianne, as she withdrew into the shadowy house. "How often grief comes hand in hand with love! Dalzell will go to meet the redmen,

while I must fight against my own anxiety. Ah, do men ever understand what battles we poor women wage within our hearts; conflicts whose victories are celebrated by no gleaming banners or triumphant songs? But what trophy do I ask of Heaven but my lover's safe return? I wish he had begged me to wed him to-morrow."

Thereat she reproached herself, as though the thought of hastening her nuptials by a day was unmaidenly, and, having gained her own little room, sank upon her knees, to weep and pray until the gentle comforter, Sleep, laid a quieting hand upon her aching head in the refreshing coolness of the early morning.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND

A BOLD SALLY

VALIAN'T as Dalzell was, no doubt his spirit would have been keyed to a higher pitch of courage had he known that at this supreme moment, when he was about to attempt his perilous sortie, Marianne would gladly have linked her fate with his. But how was he to surmise that the girl who had deprecated his haste when he besought her to name Sunday as their marriage day, would now have married him on Saturday had he asked her ?

Unconscious of the change in the sentiments of his betrothed, but happy in the thought that she would soon be his bride, he sauntered slowly up the street of Ste. Anne, trolling a love-song, —

“ Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day ;
With night we banish sorrow ;
Sweet air blow soft, mount lark aloft,
To give my love good-morrow !
Wings from the wind to please her mind,
Notes from the lark I ’ll borrow !
Bird prune thy wing, nightingale sing,
To give my love good-morrow.
To give my love good-morrow,
Notes from them both I ’ll borrow.

“ Wake from thy nest, robin redbreast ;
Sing birds in every furrow ;
And from each bill let music shrill,
Give my fair love good-morrow,

Blackbird and thrush, in every bush, —
 Stare, linnet, and cock sparrow, —
 You merry elves amongst yourselves,
 Sing my fair love good-morrow.
 To give my love good-morrow,
 Sing birds in every furrow.

“O fly, make haste. See, see she falls
 Into a pretty slumber.
 Say to her, 't is her lover true,
 That sendeth love by you, by you,
 O give my love good-morrow.”

He had nearly reached the house of Major Gladwin, where he lodged, when he observed, standing in the recessed entrance to a house, a man who seemed to be lying in wait for him.

Dalzell's hand went to his sword, but before he had time to draw, the watcher stepped out into the moonlight.

“Mr. Sterling!” cried the officer, recognizing the Scotch trader whom the commandant had made known to him in the afternoon.

“Yes, Captain Dalzell,” replied the other. “I sought you at headquarters. I ask your permission to go with you to-night.”

“But,” objected Dalzell, and had he been an Indian warrior, he might have been loath that the spirit of his Guardian Shape should hear how differently he now spoke of his expedition from when he had mentioned it to Marianne, — “my dear sir, this is a hazardous venture.”

“The blood of a soldier runs in my veins, and I can no more keep out of a fight than could Prince Charlie himself,” answered Sterling. “Moreover, good and ill luck are like the two buckets in a well; why should not fate reel up the better one for you?”

"Egad, my friend, you have the first requisite of a good fighter,—confidence in his leader," exclaimed Dalzell. "Come if you will; I am a gainer by your offer."

The next day was spent in preparation for the attack, and not until evening was Dalzell free to pay his devoirs to Marianne.

"Poor little girl, I shall be hard put to cheer her," he soliloquized with a sigh, as he took his way to Madame des Ruisseaux. Here, however, a surprise awaited him. He found Mademoiselle de St. Ours not tearful, but radiant.

Marianne had adorned herself to appear her fairest in his eyes, half imagining that the more beautiful she was, the more like he would be to come back to her. Already in her heart the sweet unreasonableness of the maid who must be wooed was giving place to the unselfishness of the wife who has been won. For, in another day, was she not to be the wife, the "keeper of the soul" of Dalzell? Timid, convent-bred, and wanting in the courage natural to one reared on the borders of the wilderness, yet this gentle girl did not altogether lack the heroic spirit that made the madcap Angélique Cuillerier so audacious. Marianne could not, like Angélique, have defied the rage of Pontiac; but under the white ash lives the burning coal,—that no regretful thought of her might sadden her lover, or unnerve his arm in battle, she could keep a smiling face and chatter blithely, even though her heart was oppressed with fears.

Dalzell was amazed, delighted. Was this vivacious beauty his demure and diffident Marianne? Until a late hour she held him captive by a new charm. It was only when he came to take leave of her that

she broke down, and cast herself sobbing upon his breast.

"Courage, sweetheart; do not weep, but be gay and make ready for our wedding," he whispered. "The darkest hour must pass at last, and to-morrow will be our marriage day."

"Au revoir; may God guard you," she faltered. And then, with a last kiss, he was gone.

Some time after midnight the gates of the stockade were thrown open, and two hundred and fifty men passed out quietly, and filed along the road; while the two ships, each with a small cannon on its bow, stole silently up the river. Sterling, who because of his knowledge of the locality, was chosen by Dalzell as his guide, marched beside the captain, the Irish soldier O'Desmond being close behind. In the centre of the column were Major Rogers and his band of rangers, and the rear was brought up by Mr. Grant and Mr. Grey, captains of the green regiment.

The night was still and hot. On the right of the way lay the river, whose mirror-like surface split up into gleaming fragments the myriad stars that looked down upon the rushing waters; on the left extended the farms and orchards of the côte, the bark-roofed, white-washed houses and barns, surrounded by high palisades, whence the barking of watchdogs challenged the passing soldiers. The habitants, aroused from sleep, looked from the windows in amazement; and as the troops approached one of the dwellings, they saw upon the roof a small figure silhouetted against the sky.

"Bejabbers, it's a red naiger!" exclaimed O'Desmond, rushing forward and taking aim with his flint-lock. Sterling knocked up the barrel of the musket.

"That is but the young son of a farmer, bent upon catching a glimpse of our bayonets in the last beams of the moon as it sinks behind the fort," he said.

"Faith, then the gossoon was like to have learned more of our weapons than he bargained for," returned the soldier. "By my soul, I should not wonder if the red dogs were watching us from behind every one of these stables and cattle-sheds, and the high pickets which make a fortified place of every farm."

"It is quite possible," said Sterling, turning to the captain. "Let me beseech you again, Mr. Dalzell, to abandon this mad expedition."

"Mr. Sterling, I have not come into the wilderness to remain shut up within the stockade of Le Détroit. I go forward with my men though there be a scorpion under every stone of the way, but you may turn back if you choose."

"Sir, where you lead I follow," replied the Scot, nettled. "It was not for my own sake I spoke; I esteemed it a duty to inform you that the Indians have more than once deceived us by their ambushes hereabouts."

"Well, well, sir, it may be I was too hasty," admitted the captain, appeased. "I have information that the savages have had a fine carousal over a supply of rum which formed the cargo of the barge they captured a day or two since, and I doubt not they are now deep in a drunken sleep."

"Humph, I like not a silent dog," muttered Sterling between his teeth, but he trudged on without further expostulation.

Just beyond the farm where they had seen the boy lay the palisade of Antoine Cuillerier. When the marching men came abreast of the house, Sterling scanned it eagerly. Was that a woman on the gal-

lery, or was it only a shadow? He could not determine, but his heart beat high at the thought that Angélique might be watching the detachment, and might divine that he was among the brave men advancing to trap the king of the forest in his lair.

Onward they marched, toward the wild hollow overgrown with sedges through which Parant's Creek flowed into the river. The crickets sang, the grasses of the prairie were stirred by insect life, and swarms of gnats attacked the soldiers.

"Bedad, Mr. Sterling," said O'Desmond, as the captain of militia fell back to exchange a word with him, — "bedad, sir, this is a great country."

"Yes?" replied the merchant interrogatively.

"Yes," continued the Irishman, slapping vigorously around his own face and neck. "Shure, I've often known what it is to be stung by tormenting flutter-jacks like these, but never — no," he repeated, pointing to the myriad fireflies upon the meadows, "no, never before have I seen mosquitoes carrying lanterns about with them like those same. It beats all, how clever iverything is in this new world!"

Now the road crossed the run by a narrow bridge near its mouth. Beyond, the land lay in abrupt ridges parallel to the stream.

"Yonder, Mr. Dalzell, are the rude intrenchments made by Pontiac to protect his camp, which formerly occupied that ground," said Sterling, stepping forward.

The moon had set by this time, and, as the little company advanced, they could dimly see the log house of Baptiste Méloche to the left and the bridge before them, but the earthworks of the abandoned encampment were as a black wall looming up to obstruct their progress.

“By the powers, he that laughs on Friday may cry on Saturday,” declared O’Desmond to the soldier who kept pace with him. “If the Evil One wanted an ambush he’d choose a spot like this. Faith, our captain must love misfortune well when he fares forth to challenge the jade after this fashion. But an easy way to save our scalps will be to fight for them; though mayhap, me friend, when the savages see your hairless crown they may think you’ve been scalped already. I’ll lay you a wager now that you never saw a red naiger with a bald pate. Ivery man among them has as fine a growth of hair as if he cultivated it to adorn the belt of his enemy. We do not want their scalps, but we’ll have the last shot at them, whethern no. And that puts me in mind of a man I used to know at home in Ireland.

“He went by the name of Brian, and the neighbors were wont to boast that no one, not even his wife, could get the last word in an argument with him; not so much that he would never listen to what anybody else was saying, as because of his glibness of speech. Well, one day, a stranger in the town, having heard of Brian’s powers, chanced to meet him on the road. ‘I’ll hold ye five shillin’s, me boy, that I’ll take you to where you cannot have the last word,’ says he. ‘Done!’ says Brian. As good as his word, the stranger led the way to where there was a grand echo between two wooded hills.

“Nathless, ere long Brian came back to the town jingling his five shillin’s.

“‘Shure, avick, how did you ever get the better o’ the echo?’ cried one of his friends, while a crowd gathered about to hear his answer.

“‘True for ye, b’ys,’ says Brian, with a grin, ‘the thing came back on me for a spell. But bedad, I

got even with it in the end, *for I shpoke the last wur-rd undher me breath!*”

Thus with a jest and a laugh the brave fellow kept up the spirits of his comrades.

Anon, for the first time since the setting out of the expedition, Dalzell became apprehensive that the Indians might be prepared for his attack. As the conviction forced itself upon him, he dashed forward, followed by his command in close order.

The advance guard were half-way over the bridge when, like the crack of doom, an Indian war-whoop rent the stillness of the night and, as a shaft from the devil's bow, a volley of musketry blazed from the side of the ravine, cutting down the front ranks of the skirmishers. Another column pressed forward unflinchingly, to meet the same fate; but, when the main body of the troops essayed to pass the gorge, they grew confused and began to recoil. Above the din rose the resolute voice of their gallant leader, as he rallied his men. Another volley poured upon them; again they hesitated, but with a shout their captain led the charge across the bridge. The savages had fled, yet ever and again their war-cry frenzied the white men, and the fire of their guns flashed in the darkness.

The English pushed on; in vain Sterling sought to guide them. Having left the road, they lost their way; every wood-pile, cattle-shed, and farmhouse was an ambush, and whenever Dalzell heard the sound of musketry he dashed onward, hoping to drive the savages before him. It soon became evident, however, that he and his party were surrounded by a horde of Indians. At his order the soldiers retreated, marching backward and continuing to fight as they went.

A small band remained behind to hold off the red-men, while the dead and wounded of the troops were placed on board the barges which had approached the shore, under cover of their guns, but amid a sharp fire from the Indians. The task was accomplished through the efforts of Sterling and the redoubtable O'Desmond.

When it was completed, Captain Dalzell called to the Scotchman, bidding him carry a message to Captain Grant, and the merchant volunteer was off like a shot. It was still dark, but a lightening of the skies above the forest gave promise of the dawn.

Thinking that Grant had taken possession of the house of Baptiste Méloche and was to be found within, Sterling made his way toward the gallery. As he crossed the garden he fancied that he discerned through the gloom two women running to the kitchen from the horse mill, whither they had doubtless fled for refuge when the fight was at its height. Still he could not be sure; the shadowy forms might be blanketed Indians.

With a hand on the lock of his musket he strode in at the main entrance to the house and looked into the hearthroom. It was empty; but, as he paused on the threshold, he heard a slight grating sound as of a door creaking on its hinges, and, by the uncertain light of a hanging lamp whose floating wick flickered and sputtered in the bear's oil, saw the wooden shutter of a window slowly open.

The next moment a girl sprang into the room from the garden, and, not observing him, turned to give a helping hand to some one without.

Thus assisted, there followed, in the same stealthy fashion, a young woman, carrying in her arms a small

child, whose startled eyes and white face showed it to be half dazed with fear.

The girl was Angélique Cuillerier; the matron Madame Méloche.

It was the child who first discovered that there was some one in the apartment besides themselves, and, pointing to the doorway, cried out that the shadows moved. Thereat, drawing a knife from her belt, the girl placed herself before the mother and the little one.

At the same instant Sterling stepped forward under the lamp.

"Angélique!" he exclaimed. "Merciful Heaven, how is it that coming here with a message to the English captain, instead of meeting Mr. Grant, I find you encompassed by dangers?"

Mademoiselle Cuillerier recoiled, dropped the dagger back into its sheath, and put a hand before her eyes.

"Monsieur Sterling," she stammered. "Undaunted by the possible foe in the darkness, as was St. Margaret before the dragon, now at the reaction she faltered, but quickly recovered herself as he stretched out his arms to save her from falling.

"Early in the evening Madame Méloche sent word to me that her child was ill. I came to stay the night with her, and help in the care of the little creature," she said. "We had no warning that the Indians and the English would arouse the demon of the strait as they have done. The child has been frightened out of her ailment, I half believe, while the mother and I know not whether we shall live to see the rising of the sun. When the firing began we took refuge in the mill, but the cannonading of the gunboats threatened to make short work of its destruction, and we



returned in haste as soon as the house appeared to be deserted."

"And Pontiac drove Madame Méloche and her guest defenceless out into the night?" cried Sterling, gritting his teeth.

"It all came about like a whirlwind," interposed the young dame. "An old chief was sitting in the hearthroom, smoking with my husband, when the troops came up. At the sound of the firing, he discharged his musket from the window. They thought Baptiste had attacked them, and they called to him with rage, but it was the Indian."

"When the soldiers fell back the savages broke into the enclosure through the postern, and swarmed into the house. Had we been here then, no doubt we would have been scalped," continued Angélique. "Juste ciel, can women remain sane in the midst of such peril to themselves, and to the men dear to them?"

Even at this moment, with the sounds of the conflict outside ringing in his ears, the reports of musketry, the shouts of the soldiers, the moans of the dying, Sterling's face brightened at the glance she unconsciously gave him as she spoke.

With a thrill of joy at his heart, he bent his lips to her hand.

"You are safe here now, since the savages will either follow our people or retire to the woods at daylight, as is their custom," he assured her. "And as for the men who fight,—eh bien, mademoiselle, a soldier's best shield is the prayer of the woman he loves."

Angélique smiled, yet her eyes glistened with tears.

"You say you are bound upon a message, monsieur. Do not delay, I beg of you," she conjured abruptly.

Loath to leave her with only the protection the house afforded, Sterling yet knew that in delaying he would be faithless to his duty. Nevertheless, he hesitated.

"Go, go," entreated the girl. "May the warrior archangel shield you from harm—you and Mr. Dalzell, for Marianne's sake. Oh, I will pray for all the poor soldiers. How horrible is war!"

Sterling was saved from further indecision by the return of Baptiste, who had been out seeking his wife and child. Angélique would be safer with these habitants than had the Scotchman himself been free to remain to protect her. Speeding across the fields, he encountered a company of the "green regiment" as they were returning through the Méloche orchard, after having driven one band of savages into the forest. Having delivered his message to Captain Grant, he made his way again to Dalzell, who had just shouted to his men to wheel about and retreat in the regular manner. By this order Grant was now in the van, and Dalzell in the rear, with the enemy following at a distance, and keeping up a desultory firing, while now and again his company faced around and gave them a return volley.

As they approached a place where a cellar had been newly dug, the hollow belched forth flame, and several men fell lifeless, to be promptly scalped by their barbaric pursuers. Panic stricken, the remainder of the soldiers thronged down the road, but their leader continued to fight, and in the first gray light of dawn the enemy marked him by his extraordinary bravery. Finding that Dalzell was wounded, Sterling, O'Desmond, and two or three others would have closed in about him, but he waved them off, and continued to encourage his men, reproaching

some, and with the flat of his sword beating others back to the conflict.

By this, day had come, but a fog rising from the river made the prairie like another sea, and screened the pursuing Indians, so that the clouds seemed to rain bullets and the deadly lightnings of a withering fire. The yells of the savages were to the bewildered men like the voices of the demon followers of the Red Dwarf, the evil manitou of the strait.

Sterling and O'Desmond still kept near Dalzell, who in his intrepidity lingered behind, still shooting through the mist. All at once, from its shelter leaped out three Indians, who no doubt thought to capture him and his guard before they could fight their way back to the main body of the troops.

In a flash Sterling recognized one as Panigwun; another was Wasson, the Sauteur; the third he had never before seen. O'Desmond fired. Panigwun, with a howl like the dying cry of a wolf, leaped high in the air and pitched forward on his face. Sterling took aim at the Saginaw warrior with a wild hope that he might avenge the murder of Captain Campbell; Wasson also fell, and Dalzell brought down the third savage.

Believing all dead, the three white men plunged down the road. In the fog they became separated. Five minutes passed; then Sterling heard a shout from Dalzell. He dashed forward in the direction whence the sound had proceeded. It was followed by an ominous silence; he did not know which way to turn.

Presently, however, another demoniacal war-whoop smote upon his ears, and after continuing on for perhaps five minutes more he stumbled over the prostrate form of a soldier.

Bending over the body, he discovered with horror that it was Dalzell. Beside the captain lay O'Desmond, also dead, shot through the forehead.

With a cry of rage and grief, Sterling fired his musket blindly through the fog. Scarcely had the report died away when a low groan almost at his feet told him that he was not alone. Searching a few feet farther along he came upon a sergeant of the "green regiment," moaning in mortal pain.

"The captain found me. He tried to drag me away from the savages," gasped the poor fellow, with momentarily increasing difficulty. "The Irish soldier — strove — to — aid — him. Two warriors came. They fought. The Irishman thrust himself before the captain — crying out something about 'red niggers' — and that — some — woman's heart would be broken if he did not return. The savages fled — the others, wounded — died — as — they — fell."

Dalzell had been slain in the act of helping one of his men; and the dauntless O'Desmond, with a jest on his lips, and an unselfish thought to spare a woman's tears, had died for a stranger, and for the glory of a flag that for more than two centuries had been to his country a symbol of oppression.

Such was the story painfully and disconnectedly told by the wounded soldier. As he concluded, he half raised himself, and gazed wild-eyed at the merchant. But the effort exhausted the remnant of his strength. As he sank back, Sterling caught him, held a water-bottle to his lips, and swore not to leave him during the few moments he had yet to live.

The din of the fight was around the two men; the Scotchman held his musket ready, guarding the dying.

After a while the form of the sergeant grew heavy and rigid. Then Sterling knew that he had kept his

promise. He rose to his feet, and, turning to where Dalzell had fallen, dragged the body of the gallant officer behind a neighboring bush, hoping that the foliage and the mist might screen it from the savages. He would fain have paid the same respect to the intrepid O'Desmond, but the shouts of the troops for succor warned him of the duty he owed to the living. Hastening on, he came upon a few of Rogers' rangers, who were storming a house, from every window of which the Ottawas poured a shower of bullets.

"Ho, there, Sterling! Lend me your aid to burst in this door," cried Rogers, mounting the steps of the gallery in his impatience to get at the aborigines, whose fire his own men returned without ceasing.

Sterling, with some three or four others, responded with enthusiasm to his call, and the heavy wooden bar that fastened the door gave way with their weight. The merchant had plucked Dalzell's sword from its scabbard, resolved that it should yet do good service that day. Waving it, he pressed into the house after Rogers, a reinforcement of rangers following.

Some of the redmen dropped before them; the others, scattering like rats, leaped from the windows and took to the trees, whence they continued their fire. Captain Grey was ordered to dislodge a third band from behind a palisade near by. He charged with his men, but sank to the ground riddled with bullets; and, as the company was forced back, a chief hideous in war-paint sprang upon the bleeding body and cut out the heart.

Having driven the Indians from this stronghold, Rogers proceeded to conduct the retreat in a masterly manner, fighting, so said those of his followers who survived, "as though the fiends themselves were his opponents."

To keep the Indians at bay, he entered the strong house of Jacques Campeau, but was soon besieged there. Some of the regulars who had broken in after him seized upon a keg of rum and drank generously of the liquor; others piled furniture and bales of furs against the windows and doors to serve as a barricade, and at intervals, thrusting out their flintlocks, fired upon the yelling foes. Again a bullet whizzed through an opening, wounding a man, or glancing off from some object.

Jacques stood on the hatch of the cellar to keep skulking soldiers from seeking to hide themselves below, since there the women had taken refuge. A ball grazed his head and struck the wall beyond him.

The shrieks of the women, the noise without, the shouts and oaths of the soldiers, made the place seem a pandemonium.

The tactics of Rogers were, however, successful. The gunboats, which had gone down to the water gate with the dead and wounded, now returned to a point on the river opposite to Campeau's house, and the fire of their swivels quickly drove the besiegers back to the woods. Thus released, Rogers and his rangers came out and joined Grant's company. A line of communication with the fort was soon established, and anon the daring major, upon whom had devolved the chief command, gained the stockade with ninety men; all that were left of the skirmishing party that had set out so confidently a few hours earlier.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD

GIVE LOVE GOOD-MORROW

FEAR is a great inventor, and one who fears to suffer, suffers from fear. So it was with Marianne de St. Ours. As Schiller's young diver clutched at the golden cup he had risked his life to win, so this gentle demoiselle held fast to her happiness with the desperation of a great dread that it would presently be wrested from her in the maelstrom of fate. Yet, beyond the heaviness of heart which foreboded grief, she gave no thought to herself, but suffered agonies of fear for the safety of Dalzell. Screened by the deerskin curtain of the window, she had watched the command march down the street of Ste. Anne in the moonlight; had plainly distinguished her lover, and noted with a thrill of joy that, as he passed the house, he turned his head and looked at the dormer where she knelt, as though he felt her presence; even as but yesterday her eyes had drawn his gaze to herself among the throng at the water gate.

So quietly had the troops gone forth that the majority of the townspeople, sleeping heavily in their beds, were ignorant of the sally. Had the secret been kept from the French, save the few trusted men who, disowned by their own king, cast in their lot with the British, all might have been well. But, how many individuals there are whose tongues would fain outrun their feet with news! Earlier in the even-

ing, at the bark-roofed cabin which served as a tavern, a soldier in his cups let fall a word of the intended sortie to a *coureur de bois* with a lean, solemn visage, who, because he brought in game for food, was still permitted to go in and out of the stockade,—an interpreter who, although trusted by the English, had arisen at the council of the Ottawa and sworn to join with him. An hour later, a drunkard lay under the table of the cabaret, his chance of glory lost, his miserable life saved for that day. At the same time the runner of the woods, having shown his pass at the gate and given some plausible excuse for going out, had sped away to warn Pontiac.

Of this Marianne was, of course, ignorant; yet she could not go to rest, but, still kneeling at the window, prayed and wept.

“This will never do,” she soliloquized, rising to her feet at last. “I will offer my every heart-beat as a prayer to God for my hero, but when Dalzell returns he must not find his bride with eyes dimmed by weeping.”

Thereupon she lighted a candle, and, with it still in her hand, crossed the room, and took from her marriage chest the wedding gown that the merchant, James Sterling, had at her request ordered sent out to her from London; a gown of white satin, her one extravagance, indulged in because she was resolved in her foolish young heart to be as fair a bride as any English girl whom Dalzell might have chosen. As though, forsooth, her lover would not have sworn she was the loveliest woman in the world had she met him at the altar in a frock of homespun cotton cloth!

The light of the candle flitted over the shimmering fabric with strange antics. “For all the world like an old woman dancing at a *fête*,” Marianne thought, and

laughed low at the fancy, as she thrust the candle in a knothole of the chimney-shelf above her head.

“Of a truth, Pontiac was a most courteous savage to deliver over the box to me,” she went on, communing with herself. “When Dalzell brings him back a prisoner, I will remind the commandant of this circumstance, and gain for the Ottawa chief some favor to requite it. Major Gladwin will deny no petition offered by the bride of the hero of Le Détroit.”

Having spread the gown upon the settle, she next took from the chest a square of the lace of Alençon, an heirloom brought from France to grace the bridal beauty of the daughters of a Canadian seigneur, in the days when Comte Frontenac ruled at Quebec with well-nigh as great dignity as the Sun King at Versailles.

The heads of many happy brides had been veiled by this fleecy cobweb. Marianne wondered if any of them had thought of the lace maker, whose eyes mayhap had grown dim over the intricate pattern.

The girl shuddered. But for her family pride, she would have preferred a veil as new as the gown; one into which no wretchedness was woven, one that had not been worn by dead and gone brides.

“But no, I will not harbor such thoughts,” she said to herself. “Perchance the maker of this lace was a maiden who wove into it her own love-dream, and did not grow blind, but gained by her work a purse of gold for her marriage dot.

“I will not think of withered bridal wreaths; God grant I may be as good a wife as were the women who wore this veil that I shall don to-day. It is a favor of Heaven to be well-born, yet of how much greater worth than a patent of nobility is a heritage of virtue!”

Now, upon her little dressing-table she laid the scented gloves that had come with the gown; her mother's prayer-book; the knot of white ribbon which she would send with a spray of white clematis to her bridegroom to pin upon the breast of his scarlet coat.

Already the darkness was less dense; the dawn would soon come, the glad sun would rise, and it would be her wedding day.

Sinking upon the settle beside her bridal finery, Marianne fell a-dreaming.

Before many minutes, however, distant sounds broke in upon her maiden reverie. Hastening to the window once more, she leaned out over the sill, straining her eyes in vain, since she could not see the "côte du nord-est" whence came the noise of the conflict.

"Jésu, Marie, save him!" she cried, clasping her hands. "Save him! Save him!"

For half an hour, an hour, two hours, the sounds of the battle continued. All the French within the stockade had long before this flocked out of doors. The sentries patrolled the streets, ordering the men to the ramparts, the women and children back into the houses. The guards at the gate were doubled.

Less frequent grew the firing; the war-whoops of the Indians died away and, now and again, a ringing shout announced some advantage won by the English.

Anon, there was silence upon the prairie.

Major Gladwin and his officers, who watched the plain from the forest bastion, announced that the troops were making their way back to the fort in good order, and the intelligence was cried through the town. Then came the barges down the river, with their woeful freight. Marianne had withdrawn behind her screen of deerskin, from which position

she continued to look out upon the thoroughfare and beyond to the river. When, from the vociferations of the passers-by, she learned what manner of passengers the gunboat had brought, her heart seemed to stand still with terror and apprehension.

"Come away from the window, *chère*," urged Madame des Ruisseaux, who had hastened to her room to bear her company. "Come below, and rest on the settle in the hearthroom. Ill news travels on horseback; if there were sorrowful tidings for you, they would be cried aloud before now. If you do not rest, your captain will not be able to boast of the beauty of his lady."

But Marianne shrank from the kind hand.

"Not yet, aunt," she cried, clinging to the frame of the casement. "Not until I know the truth!"

As she again scanned the street, her anxious glance fell upon Robishe Navarre, hurrying to the water gate.

"Robishe! Robishe!" she called.

The young man stopped short. Himself a lover and expectant bridegroom, he felt his sympathy at once aroused by the sight of the white face of the demoiselle. Was ever the face of a willing bride so sad upon her wedding day?

"Go yonder, bring me word," she gasped, pointing to the bateaux.

Navarre understood.

"Be of good courage, mademoiselle," he said; "I will be back with all speed."

And in a trice he did return to call up to her reassuringly.

"Mademoiselle, no one whom you love has come home by the river."

"Heaven forgive me for my selfishness!" she exclaimed, fully conscious how heavy had been her

heart only now when it grew light once more. She would have run out to succor the wounded who were being borne to the hospital, but her aunt forbade.

"Such doleful sights are not for a demoiselle upon her wedding morning," protested Madame des Ruisseaux. "I will go, but you must betake yourself to rest; or else call in Agathe, and let her begin to coif you. By Ste. Anne, she may as well bring my rouge-pot, too."

"No, no," remonstrated the girl; "Dalzell shall have no painted bride."

"Eh bien, if you look so like a ghost, you shall not be married to-day at all."

Forthwith kissing her niece, and satisfied that she had made use of the strongest argument to compel Marianne to take some repose, the energetic lady set out to minister to the suffering soldiers, with that womanly devotedness which characterized the "grandes dames" of the age.

But it is one thing to say "Hush, my dear, and slumber," and quite another to dispose oneself to tranquillity.

"Every moment is bringing the returning troops nearer to the fort," said Marianne to herself with happy exultation. "Dalzell will soon be here. Shall I begin to dress for my bridal as my aunt advised? No, no, not yet."

For a few minutes she stood looking out at the river. The water was like a sheet of burnished silver, the balmy air was vibrant with the song of birds, and presently from the square bark-roofed towers of Ste. Anne's and the Huron Mission rang the sweet voices of the bells, calling the worshippers to the early Mass of Sunday morning.

Marianne aroused herself; she would go to the

service now while the morning was young, instead of waiting for "le grand Messe," later.

Her simple toilet was soon made. Bending over her bridal gown, she laid her cheek tenderly against its soft folds, pressed a kiss upon the bit of ribbon she had knotted for her bridegroom, then, stealing down the rough stairway, she left the house and walked quickly to the church.

How like it all was to that other occasion but two days since when, here, as it were at the feet of the Mother of the Blessed Virgin, she had received news of the coming of her lover!

Now, too, before the service was over there was a commotion without; half of the congregation ran into the street, and men called to one another that the skirmishing party had reached the gates of the town.

Still Marianne was of those who lingered in the sacred edifice. As the priest turned to give the last blessing, the throng outside set up a great shout.

"They come! They come!"

Trembling with excitement, the girl started to her feet and rushed to the door just as the haggard remnant of Dalzell's brave command came opposite to the church.

Wild-eyed she stood upon the step as they went by. There were Major Rogers and his rangers; there were Captain Grant, Sterling, and a band of smoke-begrimed, weary, valiant men. But where was the leader who had so confidently led them forth a few hours before?

Scarcely noting the glances of commiseration cast upon her by the soldiers, yet unconsciously impressed by them, she waited in silence until the troops had passed. Then she turned back into the church.

There was a sound as of a bird helplessly beating its wings against fate, a low moan as of a dove wounded unto death; then a heart-broken girl sped up the aisle, and cast herself before the altar with a cry of anguish.

“Waileth a woman, ‘Oh, my God!’
Her hopes are withered, her love is crushed;
A starless and pitiless night has rushed
On the light of her life.”

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“Why is it that the prayer of the pure of heart sometimes remains unanswered, that upon the knight without reproach the sword of the angel falls?” half rebelliously demanded the Dame des Ruisseaux of the curé, Monsieur de Bocquet, later in the day.

“My dear madame,” rejoined the good man with gentleness, “it is because earth is earth, and not heaven; because the soul is formed for greater bliss than the joys of time; and the life we know is but the cloud-darkened dawn of existence.”

After that one hopeless cry, Marianne de St. Ours, who but the day before yesterday had fainted with joy at sight of her lover, went home to dress herself in her bridal robes; to smile and sing; to reproach her friends because they did not offer her their congratulations.

“Captain Dalzell bade me array myself for our marriage; he will soon be here. Make haste to summon the wedding guests,” she said, while all who saw and heard her shuddered as they asked of one another, “Will it always be so? Has ‘le bon Dieu’ taken her reason for good and all, as well as her lover?”

Weeks passed. Yet the mad bride of Le Détroit still robed herself each day for her marriage, and knotted ribbons into favors for her bridegroom. She

never knew that Pontiac, who but a few weeks before with such marvellous consideration had delivered over her wedding chest, now sent to Major Gladwin the head of the captain upon a picket.

Content in the hope of her bridegroom's coming, she sang her pretty songs and dreamed of happiness.

Sterling told her of Dalzell's end, but she only smiled at him, and kissed the clematis she had gathered for her lover, nor noticed that, instead of blossoms, the vine whence she had plucked it already began to show only misty blooms, the ghosts of its small, bride-flowers.

September came, the Moon of the Maize, but there was little change in Marianne de St. Ours. After the battle of Parant's Creek, called by the English the Bloody Run, and by the French the Creek of the Crimson Waters, Pontiac, elated by his victory, sent runners through the woods, and messengers in swift canoes upon the waters, to bear tidings of his victory to all the tribes of the vicinity who were not already gathered about his camp.

The scarcity of provisions in the fort rendered it expedient to admit the women of the good band of Hurons when they came to the gate to sell venison, corn, barberries, and the wild grapes of the prairie. Thus it was that one afternoon as pretty, gentle Marianne sat by the window in Madame des Ruisseaux's parlor, her brown hair veiled by the bridal lace of Alençon, her slight form robed in the shimmering satin gown, she suddenly beheld, standing beside the chimney-piece like a statue in bronze, a lithe Indian girl, who looked down on her with keen, searching eyes.

"Are you the Pani woman who brings me the sweet Catawba grapes from beyond La Belle Fon-

taine?" inquired Marianne, smoothing the folds of her gown, and returning the gaze of her visitor with a child-like smile.

"I am Nedawniss, the daughter of Makatépelicité. I do not barter with either the French or the English," replied the girl haughtily.

"Oh!" said Marianne, going back to the stroking of her dress.

Since the day when she had smilingly looked into the eyes of Sterling when he spoke of her lover's fate, the words "Indian" and "English" had never been mentioned before her. Now, as they fell upon her ears, a shadow of doubt and perplexity flitted across her usually serene face.

Meanwhile, Nedawniss, who would have been proud and fearless before Pontiac, in face of the armies of England, or the court of Versailles, drew back in awe of the hapless young bride-elect.

The Indian has a dread of one on whom the Master of Life has set the seal of madness. But was the beautiful pale-faced lady really mad?

As for Marianne,—the very sight of the dusky girl, with her vermilion-tinted cheeks and blanket dress, her wampum necklace and armlets of silver, stirred a strange emotion in the heart of the mad bride of Le Détroit, as the string of a lute long relaxed is aroused to life by the hand that keys it to its wonted pitch.

For a second the two girls remained steadfastly regarding each other. Then Nedawniss said, —

"I came to tell the demoiselle something, but perhaps she does not care to hear it, since she can smile and sing; for when I entered she *was* singing. If she cared she would not deck herself with jewels; being a 'dame blanche,' she would weep all day."

Marianne glanced furtively around the room. Presently her eyes came back to the red-skinned girl.

"I will tell you something," she answered, with her confiding smile. "In my heart I often feel that I must weep; but I dare not. *He* bade me be gay until he should come again. I do not wish to disobey him, for already his soul and mine are wedded. But oh, he delays so long! Sometimes I think it is not as it should be, to smile when one does not feel like smiling. It is as if the sun shone hot, and there was never rain — as if it were always day, and never night."

"An Indian girl never weeps," exclaimed Nedawniss. "Her heart is always like the twilight of the forest; with her, to love means to suffer."

"No, no; to love is to be always glad — to laugh and sing; to feel the heart beat fast in the breast, and all for one who is dearer than life," interrupted the French demoiselle, with eagerness.

"To love is to suffer," repeated the Indian stoically.

Marianne gave over the contest.

"Yes; perhaps to love is to suffer," she assented wearily. "I wish he would send me the message. It is hard never to weep."

Nedawniss studied the delicate face before her.

"Was it the English officer whom the demoiselle loved and was to have married?" she said. "The officer who was killed as he stayed to save a soldier at the battle of the Crimson Waters?"

Marianne put a hand to her forehead, and brushed back the wavy locks of her hair.

"My head aches, and I know nothing of the Crimson Waters," she replied simply. "But the officer whom I love is the handsomest and the bravest of the English."

For a moment Nedawniss looked as though on the point of disputing the assertion.

"I have brought mademoiselle a present from her lover," she broke out at length.

A tremor seized upon Marianne; her face grew whiter, and the smile faded from her lips. With an unexpected, pathetic dignity, she rose to her feet.

"You have brought me a present from Captain Dalzell?" she said sweetly, crushing back a strange excitement which anon brought the old glow to her cheeks, and a faint gleam of the old light to her eyes. "*From Captain Dalzell!* Pray, give it to me at once."

Through the same subtle instinct by which the children of the wilderness read the secrets of inanimate nature, Nedawniss felt that a change had taken place in the consciousness of the mad bride—that the young creature before her was no longer a stricken child, but a woman struggling to stand upright beneath her burden of sorrow.

"At once," reiterated Marianne.

The Indian would have resented the tone of command in another, but now she glided to the French girl's side, saying, —

"You shall have it. On the prairie I found *this*. A Canadian in the Ottawa camp said the writing inside would tell any one that it belonged to the white chief who went out to fight the warriors of Pontiac."

Thereupon, she put into Marianne's hands a notebook of English leather, much the worse for having lain long among the prairie grasses under the sun and showers, and having a dark stain upon one corner, — a stain that had not been entirely washed out by the rains,

Marianne shivered as she took the gift, but the next moment she pressed it to her heart. Yes, it was Dalzell's diary. Only the night before he went out beyond the stockade, beyond the gates of her life, he had shown her the glad words he had set down on the day when he came to Le Détroit to claim her as his bride.

With trembling fingers she slipped the little leather strap that bound it, and opened the weather-worn book. As her eyes fell on the familiar writing, a low cry escaped her.

"It is like the lament of the hare struck by the arrow of the hunter, the little Mawboos, who seeks to hide his misery amid a tangle of vines," thought Nedawniss, watching her.

Moaning thus, poor, distraught Marianne turned the leaves, yet distinguished nothing of what was written there. A scrap of paper fell from between the pages and fluttered to the floor. Nedawniss with rare humility stooped to pick up the fragment, but Marianne in sudden anger pounced upon it, like a young lioness protecting her own.

It was her last letter to her lover ; with a sigh she replaced it. And what was this in the pocket at the back of the book? The locket that contained her picture ; the blue ribbon having worn thin, he had still carried the locket next his heart. Again she turned the leaves, murmuring half coherently, —

"Ah, here are the last words he wrote ; all beyond is white and — red."

She bent over the page ; other words danced before her — these words, —

"July 31st. Took leave of my little bride. My poor Marianne, *weep if you must, but be brave, be brave.*"

"The message! the message!" gasped the girl; and throwing up her arms wildly, she fell back upon the settle and gave way to a passion of tears.

From that time Marianne de St. Ours wore her wedding dress no more, but she spent many days in weeping.

"Do not chide her," said the old doctor, Major Chapoton. "Tears will be as a revivifying dew to her hot heart and brain; she will recover."

And so it was. At first the girl, white and listless, like the ghost of her lost happiness, began to flit silently through the street to the church. Then she visited the hospital with Madame des Ruisseaux, and thus, little by little, grew again in touch with the life around her. And those who looked after her as she went her way, said to one another, —

"Before, she was but a 'jolie demoiselle,' but sorrow has made her a beautiful woman."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

A MESSENGER TO SIR WILLIAM

THE month of October was nearly gone, when one day a corporal brought to James Sterling a request from Major Gladwin, bidding him repair to headquarters. Though the Scotchman had given himself heart and soul to the defence of the fort, he had held little speech with the commandant, save in the line of his duty, since the evening when he had met Angélique Cuillerier in the disguise of an Indian girl, seeking an interview with Gladwin.

While the major had availed himself of the services of his captain of militia, the personal intercourse of the two men had been characterized by an awkward reserve and hauteur, more marked than their former distant courtesy and occasional attempts at friendship.

Now the commandant informed the merchant curtly that when night came, the troops would embark under cover of the darkness and sail away toward Niagara.

For a moment Sterling's heart beat high. Would not the departure of the English end the troubles at the strait? The present state of affairs was ruining his business; moreover, once Gladwin was gone, would not Angélique marry him? But could he be such a craven as to purchase his own happiness at a cost to the community? The withdrawal of the garrison would mean only that in the spring Sir Jeffrey Amherst would send new troops to the fort; the Indians would gather around it in greater force, and

the misery of Le Détroit would be increased a hundred-fold.

Therefore, after a sharp struggle with himself, he represented to the major that Pontiac was about to set out for the hunting, and now the habitants would be willing enough to furnish food to the garrison, for he had discovered that the French commandant at Fort Chartres had refused to send aid to the chief.

So well did he argue against himself, that with renewed spirit Gladwin declared he would hold the fort at all hazard.

Before the end of the week, the great Ottawa withdrew with his family to the Maumie. A few days later, Gladwin again sent for the Scotchman, and announced that he had decided to send him for stores to Niagara, and beyond with a report to Sir William Johnson.

At another time Sterling would have welcomed this opportunity for a voyage accompanied by enough of peril to lend a zest to the spirit of adventure, and an exhilarating journey through the forest in the keen air of late November. After being shut up in the stockade for many months, the prospect would have been, indeed, pleasant to a man of his energetic temperament.

Yet, who could say that he would ever come back from this expedition? Even though the ship in which he sailed might ride the storms of Lake Erie, would he escape the fury of the hostile Delawares who roamed the woods of western New York and Pennsylvania, and were constantly on the watch for the scouting parties of the English? Was Gladwin sending him away that he might supplant him in the favor of "la belle du Détroit"? Well, if so, he would strive to outwit the major by succeeding in

the task assigned him; he would win honors, that he might lay them at her feet.

Animated by these thoughts, he answered tersely, "Very well, sir, I will go."

The following evening he went out to the Cuillerier farm. Unfortunately for his hope of a tête-à-tête with Angélique, her father was at home, and chose to treat him with marked coolness. La bonne mère, too, being out of temper, pointedly alluded to the sorrows of Marianne de St. Ours as a punishment sent from Providence because of the demoiselle's promise to marry an enemy of her country. It was only too plain that her warning was like a knell in the ears of her daughter. The demoiselle had not yet recovered from the shock of having witnessed the tragic fate of Captain Campbell, and the fright of the battle of the Creek of the Crimson Waters, it was said. None were aware of the additional fear which had wrecked her nerves, the ever-present dread of Pontiac's vengeance. Now she was ill again. Had Sterling known that this illness had followed the receipt of the news of his intended journey (brought home by Antoine), he might have discovered in the coincidence some reason for cheerfulness.

As it was, too weak to rise, she sat by the hearth, while Madame Cuillerier remained in evidence, plainly determined to give him no opportunity for a tender parting.

Angélique, summoning her old merry spirit, was gaily gracious. When, however, after a short stay, he rose to go and, bending over her chair, took her hands and kissed them, to his surprise she burst into tears.

He saw Dame Cuillerier snatch a smelling-bottle from the table.

"Were those tears for me, sweetheart, I would bid you dry your eyes," he whispered hastily to the weeping girl. "Pray God, I may return. I carry the thought of you ever in my heart! Love, do not forget, do not forget!"

Before he could say more, *la bonne mère* thrust herself between them and bade him an unceremonious "Au revoir."

"Au revoir, monsieur," echoed Angélique with a choking sob.

Thus dismissed, he had no choice save to take his departure. Before he reached the gate of the palisade, he heard a soft voice calling his name.

"Monsieur Sterling!"

He turned, and in the light from the open doorway saw Tante Josette hurrying down the path.

"Au revoir, monsieur," she said, as she came up to him, "do not be disheartened. *La chère Angélique* has nerves, and she has been much pestered of late. When peace comes, she will be herself again. Au revoir; I doubt not she will pray daily for the safe return of so faithful a friend as you have been, and I myself will beg the good *Ste. Anne* to obtain you all success."

Before the Scotchman could find words for more than a hasty "God bless you, Mademoiselle Josette," the kind-hearted little old maid sped again to the house. The next day he sailed away on the "*Gladwin*."

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Soon after, the snows and ice, mailed hosts of the north, beleagued the lonely fort of *Le Détroit* in as close a siege as that erstwhile waged by the Indians.

The "Gateway of the Strait" was locked fast by the hand of the Frost King. Come what might, there

was no longer a chance of escape for the garrison by river or lake. Sometimes for weeks together not a redman was seen in the vicinity of the stockade, yet if a soldier chanced to wander into the forest in search of game, or strolled upon the prairie beyond the range of the guns of the fort, he was never heard of again.

A tragedy there was, also, within the fort. Late one evening as Major Gladwin, going the rounds of the stockade, walked down a little cross-street, he felt instinctively the presence of some one near, and, wheeling about, found that his steps were being dogged by an Indian girl.

"Has not the Ojibwa been commanded to keep away from the palisade?" he demanded sternly.

"Monsieur le commandant, I am only bringing home a little pair of moccasins that I have made for Mademoiselle de St. Ours. Madame de Ruisseaux will shelter me for the night," answered the girl deprecatingly.

Under the circumstances, how could he order her to be put out? Turning away, he strode on, impatiently conscious that she still followed. Now and again, a ray from a lamp of bears' oil or a candle glimmered from behind the curtains of a house, but the open space of the military garden (through which he had to pass) was lit only by the dim light of the stars.

He had proceeded about half-way across this parade ground when, suddenly, a man wearing a mask arose in his path like a spirit of evil, and thrust at him with a dagger. He had no time to draw his sword, nor even to snatch the pistol from his belt. He could only depend upon his muscular strength to ward off the would-be assassin. Already wounded

in the side by his assailant, he grew faint, his brain reeled, his grasp upon the arm of his unknown enemy relaxed. Again the latter raised the knife, but on the instant out of the night an Indian woman sprang between the combatants. The next moment the knife meant for the heart of Gladwin was plunged deep in her breast, and with a faint cry she sank dying at the feet of the man for whom she had willingly given her life.

It had all happened within a few minutes. The commandant shot into the darkness after the fleeing stranger. The report of his weapon, and his call as he bent over the girl, brought the guard to the spot. But the unknown man had escaped. And when the sentry flashed his torch upon the still form lying on the grass, Gladwin saw with mingled sorrow, admiration, and pity that the soul of Nedawness the Ojibwa had taken flight to the Land of the Hereafter.

The end of the long winter, sometimes prayed for, again dreaded, came at last. Once more the orchard of the Huron Mission, the Normandy pear trees of the habitants' gardens, were like great bouquets of fragrant blooms; there was "a perfume in every wind, music in every tree." The rich carpets of Versailles would have appeared paltry and mean compared to the splendor of the prairie. The woods were fair walls of green, shutting in from the outer world this region which the old missionary voyageurs Galinée and Dollier de Casson, and after them the gallant Sieur Cadillac, termed the terrestrial paradise.

The Moon of the Young Leaves lengthened into June, and the Moon of Strawberries became the Moon of the Roving Deer; the Hurons, Pottawat-

tomies, Ojibwas, and many of the Ottawas returned from the hunt to their villages. Yet Pontiac did not appear at Le Grand Marais, nor was he to be found among the groves of the Isle au Pêche. It was rumored that the Great Chief was still engaged in stirring up the tribes of the west. Since he had not come, the habitants who had sown their fields in fear began to reap the harvest with gladness.

Meantime, an Ojibwa runner, who came in from the forests bordering Lake Erie, brought news that a company of English had embarked on the lake, and one day at the close of the summer a fleet came proudly sailing up the river. It was Bradstreet's ostentatious expedition, and on the day his army landed the long-suffering garrison was relieved and the new troops went on duty.

With the reinforcements came Sterling, triumphant and successful.

When he appeared at the Cuillerier homestead Angélique welcomed him with shining eyes. She was no longer ill, and the color that suffused her countenance rendered her lovelier than ever. She paid a flattering attention to the story of his adventures, sighed over his perils, and congratulated him upon the honors he had received at Niagara. But when he sought to turn the conversation to the subject nearest to his heart, parbleu, swift as a bird, the girl put to him a hundred questions about the officers at Fort Schlosser, about his fierce encounter with a band of Schawnees! Did Sir William Johnson really ask for her? Was the baronet's new, half-Indian wife, Molly Brant, as handsome as report said? Mademoiselle Angélique was clearly in no mood for sentiment, now that her lover was safe at home again. La bonne mère was, however, more

civil to the Scotchman than at his last visit; Tante Josette, frankly cordial; Antoine was away.

The next evening as the merchant sat over his solitary supper in the parlor beyond his warehouse, Jaco the Pani boy brought to him a small mocock, or Indian basket, saying, —

“Monsieur, here is a box of bonbons that Madame des Ruisseaux's woman Agathe bade me put into your hands with the compliments of her mistress.”

It was a pretty French custom to send such little gifts to family friends upon festival days in token of good will and remembrance, and the fête of the Assumption was just passed.

“Madame des Ruisseaux is very kind. You may go, Jaco.”

“Gitche manitou,” mumbled the boy as he quitted the room, “there sits the master and never once looks into the mocock, yet under the lid are candied cherries and meringues of pounded hickory nuts. But I dared only peep at them, for Agathe said that though they are harmless for white people, were a Pani to taste of them he would fall down dead.”

Left alone, Sterling stared blankly at the box.

“The dear old madame thinks I have still the sweet tooth of a lad,” he ruminated.

All at once he became aware that the tracery around the edge of the lid formed itself into written words, and following the curved lines of the arabesque, he read in French, “*He who seeks, finds.*” Similar legends were almost always inscribed upon these souvenirs, he now recalled. Nevertheless, this one seemed to have a special significance. With careless curiosity he turned out the contents of the box upon the table. The next moment he started, for there among the comfits lay a tiny fragment of

birch bark, folded into the shape of a military chapeau.

"A note from Madame des Ruisseaux! This must be about some matter which requires caution and discretion," he soliloquized, opening the missive.

Written in French, of course, its substance was as follows:

"MONSIEUR STERLING, — I am with my aunt, Madame des Ruisseaux. Pray come to see me as soon as you have read this. Come without delay, a life may be at stake.

"ANGÉLIQUE."

The merchant raised his eyes, and, chancing to turn them toward the window, saw the woman Agathe flit past, as though she had waited to make sure he had found the billet.

He started to his feet and called the slave boy.

"Jaco," he said, when the latter appeared, "close the shutters. I will return before the bugler at the fort sounds the last call, or the bell of Ste. Anne's tolls the 'De Profundis.'"

Taking his hat, he hurried out of the house and down the street.

When he arrived at the residence of Madame des Ruisseaux, it was the dame herself, and not Angélique, who greeted him.

"Permit me to bid you a warm welcome home, Monsieur Sterling," she said, motioning him to a place on the settle beside her.

"Madame, I hope I find you well," answered the merchant, wondering why he had been so hastily summoned.

"I sleep excellently and do not decline three meals a day," was the conclusive rejoinder.

"And Mademoiselle de St. Ours is happier?"

Madame des Ruisseaux raised her hands and eyes to Heaven, or, to be more exact, to the dingy rafters above her head.

"Praise be to Ste. Anne!" she exclaimed with a sigh, "la chère Marianne spends nearly all of her time at the hospital now. 'The Angel of Consolation' the sick soldiers call her. To the French habitants, who have been made poor by the war, she is most charitable, as also to the Indian women and children, although, 'pauvre demoiselle,' one might think she would shrink from the aborigines. When peace comes, albeit I shall have many reasons for joy, there will be one for sadness, since then Marianne will go to Quebec to enter the convent of the Hotel Dieu. At first we thought the Ursulines would be her choice, but to the care of the unhappy she wishes to devote her life. Ah, monsieur! as grain is winnowed by the wind, so is the soul rendered more goodly by suffering."

Sterling silently assented. Yet, sincere as was his sympathy for the beautiful Marianne de St. Ours, he saw that Madame des Ruisseaux was talking in a perfunctory manner. The sound of a woman's sobbing that presently came from the room beyond confirmed this suspicion. The old lady leaned toward him, as though about to speak upon some subject which evidently agitated her, but at the same moment the door between the two rooms was flung open and Mademoiselle Cuillerier appeared, supporting the trembling form of Madame Clotilde Godefroy. Sterling sprang to his feet and bowed low to the ladies.

Angélique was alert, self-reliant, and fired with energy, as her lover liked best to see her. Madame Godefroy was pale, and, although she strove for composure, her heavy eyelids showed that it was she who had been weeping.

“Monsieur Sterling,” she began, and stopped short, overcome by emotion.

“Clearly you have not heard, monsieur,” interposed Angélique, to spare her the effort of proceeding. “Clearly you do not know what ce bête English officer has done now?”

“Colonel Bradstreet has indeed made several deplorable blunders since he has been at Le Détroit, as, for instance, the cutting into shreds of the peace belt the Indians presented to him; an act that has greatly angered them, I hear,” acknowledged Sterling.

“*Quel sottise!*” interrupted Mademoiselle Cullerier. “He thinks himself a greater man than Sir William Johnson, yet he will stir up not only the savages, but the French. Here, only two days after his arrival, he talks of hanging our brave Jacques Godefroy, with more indifference than he would show when ordering his dinner. For ’tis said he is overfond of the pleasures of the table, and finds the liquor of the French as good as English rum, if so be there is enough of it.”

“Madame, believe me, you are needlessly alarmed,” said the Scotchman, turning to Clotilde. “Surely, you remember that soon after the departure of Pontiac, when many of the habitants purposed to embark their families in pirogues and forsake the shores of Le Détroit for those of the Wabash, Major Gladwin informed them that they might remain here without fear of molestation by the English conquerors. Moreover, he bade me impress upon the commanding officer at Niagara that for the sake of those Canadians who rendered valuable services to the English during the siege, the lives and property of all the farmers and townspeople should be protected.”

“Alas, my husband was excepted from the general

amnesty," lamented the unhappy Clotilde, finding voice at last. "Major Gladwin has never liked him since the luckless evening when Pontiac detained the brave and ill-fated Captain Campbell at the house of Angélique's father. But Jacques has been accused of many acts that were done by others."

"Major Gladwin may be prejudiced, but he will not be unjust," rejoined Sterling confidently. "As for Colonel Bradstreet, he is a gruff man, and perchance some careless speech of his, uttered after a too generous potation, has been repeated to you."

"Word was brought to Madame Godefroy awhile since that the fate of her husband is to be decided to-night," interposed Mademoiselle Cuillerier. "Dame Clotilde therewith rushed from her home with her child, and came to Madame des Ruisseaux for advice. Being here, I despatched a message to you in a box of comfits, for in these times 't is safest to trust few with a knowledge of our affairs. We go at once to seek speech with the colonel, and would be glad of your escort."

"Mademoiselle, madame, you honor me by the request," replied Sterling. "Let me not delay you further; we will consult together on the way."

"Take care of my child who is sleeping so sweetly in the room yonder," pleaded Clotilde, embracing Madame des Ruisseaux.

"Praise be to Ste. Anne, the English colonel is not an ogre to spirit away children. Be off with you," retorted the older woman, with pretended impatience.

Thereupon the distracted wife set out with Angélique and the merchant. They proceeded rapidly toward the gate of the town, called then and for many years after the Pontiac Gate, because by it the Great Chief entered to hold his treacherous council with Major

Gladwin, and through it he retreated crest-fallen when his plot failed.

Sterling's elation at Angélique's choice of him as her knight was suddenly dashed by the realization that without his aid she and her friend could not have passed this gate. Still, he took a grim satisfaction in the thought that she had found it expedient to turn to him. As they reached the shadow of the tall hickory posts which formed the sides of the entrance, a soldier with levelled musket stepped out of the gloom, and challenged the party. The women shrank back, but, as captain of militia, Sterling had the countersign and gave it, upon which the guard threw open the wicket, and they passed on.

It was now about eight o'clock. From the tranquil August sky the stars shone down upon Bradstreet's little army, encamped upon the common outside the stockade. The weather-stained tents gleamed white in the dim light, and beyond them lay the river, a dark current as resistless as time. At the outpost of the tented town there was another guard to be passed; then presently the visitors stood before the quarters of the chief officer. Again they were halted.

"The countersign is not enough here, sir," said the sentry tersely; "the colonel has but just dined. He is engaged with Major Gladwin in the consideration of business of importance, and my orders are to admit no one."

Madame Godefroy recoiled as though she had received a blow, for she knew the business whereof he spoke concerned the life of her husband. Angélique also appeared disconcerted.

A moody impulse seized upon the Scotchman. Taking from the pocket of his surtout a notebook, he opened it at a blank page, and passing it to the girl,

together with the silver pencil case wherein leads were carried at that day, he said, —

“If mademoiselle will write a line to Major Gladwin, I have no doubt it will be the only password needed.”

In the imperfect light he did not see the reproachful glance she cast at him, but she laughed lightly, tossed her head, and replied in a low tone, —

“I thank you, monsieur; but before appealing to the courtesy of the commandant, I prefer to test your influence with the colonel.”

The artful minx; this was a clever turning of the tables. Sterling compressed his lips, and bethought himself that a man is rash indeed to seek to bandy words with a woman. Mechanically he tore a page from the book, wrote a request thereon, and handed the scrap of paper to the guard. Fortunately, the latter had heard many tales of Sterling's kindness to the soldiers during the siege, therefore he was willing to oblige the popular captain of militia. Summoning an orderly from the ante-room of the tent, he bade him take the message to his chief. After a few minutes, spent by the party in awkward silence, the orderly returned.

“Colonel Bradstreet bids me say *has 'ow 'e* will receive Mr. Sterling *hand* the ladies,” he said, with a grin.

Sterling's brow cleared; despite the gravity of the situation, Angélique could not refrain from darting at him a demurely roguish glance. But she checked the smile upon her lips, and, turning to Dame Clotilde, whispered encouragement to the young wife, and besought her to dry her tears.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIFTH

JACQUES GODEFROY

THE orderly led the way, and the two women, escorted by Sterling, followed through the small outer apartment. When they entered the main tent, however, Madame Godefroy uttered a low cry, and would have fallen to the ground but for the supporting arm of Angélique.

The girl was also startled by the scene before her, while the Scotchman could hardly conceal his own surprise. The colonel was still at table ; on his right hand sat Major Gladwin, at his left, Captain Morris, who had come with him from Niagara, and was to go into the Illinois country to receive the submission of Pontiac.

Upon the board remained the remnant of the repast, and amid the disorder lay Bradstreet's overturned goblet. Having found a draught of the home-made red wine of the habitants insipid after his stronger potations, he had pushed it from him, and now down the white napery it dripped in slow drops like blood, which a fine dog that lay under the table lapped as they fell.

Madame Godefroy had not been dismayed by the rubicund, forbidding countenance of Bradstreet, nor yet by the stern, cold face of Gladwin. Opposite to the officers, against the background of canvas wall, stood Jacques Godefroy. His hands were bound behind him ; his blue blouse, fallen open at the throat,

revealed his broad, bronzed chest; a long lock of straight black hair hung over his brow, and upon his dark visage was a look of sullen and impotent opposition. It was when his eyes met those of Clotilde that she, realizing the peril of his position and feeling its ignominy like a sword thrust, came so near to swooning.

"What — what — is this?" demanded the colonel, turning upon Sterling. "Your request said two ladies wished to pay their respects to me, and I directed that your party should be admitted; for I am never so ungallant as to be indifferent to the fair sex," he added, with a leer at Angélique. "I do not wonder that the dame dislikes the look of the fellow in the corner yonder. Egad, of a truth I forgot him for the nonce. Let her withdraw for a few minutes; we shall be done with him presently."

"Sir," answered the Scotchman, with dry satire, "it is in the interest of this prisoner, Monsieur Godefroy, that these ladies have come. They did not, however, expect to meet with him here and in this manner; therefore, you will perhaps think it small wonder that his wife is for the moment somewhat agitated."

"*His wife*, you say, Mr. Sterling?" repeated Bradstreet testily. "Odzookens, I'll have no tomfoolery or play-acting. Take her away, take her away."

But by this time Madame Clotilde had regained strength and composure; for the gentle caress, the womanly sympathy of Angélique were to her like a sweet cordial, and now she stood erect and apparently calm, save that her clasped hands worked nervously.

"I beseech your Excellency's permission to stay," she pleaded, with an effort to steady her voice; "I

will make no further trouble. It is many weeks since I have been allowed to see my husband."

"Gad so, let her regard him then, sir, if her emotion is caused by admiration of the picture," interjected the young captain in an undertone. "Women are skittish cattle, and if you have her turned out she will take to such a lamenting as will put the camp in a panic. The soldiers will think it an Indian death-cry, or the bay of the ghostly hound of the Chase Galère, and you will get no good fighting out of them if we are caught in a skirmish with the savages."

"Odzookens, then she may stay," answered the colonel, the more readily, perhaps, because if Madame Clotilde retired Angélique would go, too, and he was loath to so soon lose sight of the pretty demoiselle.

When it was decided that the women should remain, a smile of satisfaction flitted across the swarthy features of Godefroy, but the next moment his expression became as fiercely lowering as before.

"Odzookens, since the decanters are empty, I suppose we must come to some decision before we have them refilled," Bradstreet continued, glancing from Gladwin to the captain.

The officers bowed gravely, and he thereupon turned to the prisoner.

"Well, sirrah," he began, and then added in French, which he spoke haltingly, "well, what have you to say for yourself?"

The Canadian raised his head and flung back the lock of hair that shaded his eyes.

"I have to say," he replied proudly in his native language, "first, that my name is not *seerrah*, but Jacques Godefroy. I am the son of the Sieur de Marboeuf,

and descended from the Godefroys of Rouen, whose ancestor was the great Godefroy de Bouillon."

"Odzookens, I did not know, major, that you had in duress a scion of one of the old crusaders," laughed Bradstreet, with cutting irony.

Mademoiselle Cuillerier stared at him with half-credulous horror. Was it in this hap-hazard manner that Godefroy had been arraigned and was to be tried for his life?

"Well, Mr. De Marboeuf, De Bouillon, or whatever you choose to call yourself," proceeded the colonel, "since you were arrested with the birch-bark missives of Pontiac in your pouch, I presume you will not deny that you sustained the arch-fiend in his savage warfare against the British forces, and thus have proved yourself a traitor to your legitimate sovereign, King George the Third. You stand convicted of treason, sirrah, and the penalty of treason is death."

At the last word Madame Clotilde waxed as white as her kerchief, and swayed blindly; Angélique's arm again supported her, however, and she betrayed her emotion only by an agonized glance at her husband. For she knew that any moan or ejaculation of grief would mean her exclusion from the proceedings, and her all-absorbing wish was to remain near him in this crisis of his disasters.

But Jacques Godefroy had faced danger too often to blanch when confronted with it now. In the forest, among hostile savages, on lake and river, at the mercy of the elements, at the hands of the English, he had braved "the fell sergeant, death." Now he actually listened with a smile to the pompous address of Bradstreet. But it reminded Sterling of the smile of the Indian at the stake, the stoical defiance

wherewith the redman flaunts his enemies when he sees life and all its joys fast receding from him, and his soul is in the throes of a greater conflict than the agony that tortures his body. When the colonel had finished his harangue, the prisoner rejoined calmly, —

“Monsieur, I neither admit nor deny the charges you bring against me. I never pretended to take service with the English; yet, on the other side, never did I betray them. Major Gladwin has said I knowingly decoyed Captain Campbell to his fate. It is not true. When I prevailed upon the captain to go out to the ‘côte du nord,’ I thought that by going he would save the English from massacre. Pontiac deceived me, although he was my friend. He has slept many times at my hearth and eaten at my table. For years I traded with his young men for furs, and they were glad to have of me the hunting knives, guns, and blankets which I brought from Montreal. Major Rogers and his rangers came through the woods and over the waters and found us here. They showed strange orders to our commandant, Monsieur de Bellestre, and sent him a prisoner to Niagara. But the French of Le Détroit could not believe that our King had given up his fine province of New France. I swore on the cross that to the last I would be faithful to the cause of the fleur-de-lis, but I did not countenance murder. I sought to hold the Great Chief in check, telling him that King Louis would in good time send his soldiers to drive away the English.”

“Ha, ha!” cried Bradstreet, interrupting the creole’s manly defence; “you have a ready tongue, monsieur! Nevertheless, despite the tidings of the treaty of Paris, the messages sent to the French here by

their own former Governor of Montreal, the reiterated news of the cession of Canada to his Majesty King George, you twice went on a mission from Pontiac to the French forts in the Illinois country. You went to stir up their commanders and soldiers against us. You are a traitor both to your former and your present sovereign, both to the King of France and the King of England."

"Monsieur, I am no traitor!" cried Godefroy, starting forward angrily.

At the same moment the guards covered him with their muskets, and his wife smothered a cry of despair.

Remembering his position as a captive, and his bound hands, he fell back a pace, while a scornful smile again played about his strong mouth.

"I am no traitor," he repeated doggedly, "and of many acts alleged against me I am guiltless. Your commandant here at the fort has indeed cherished a viper, but I am not the man. Would you blame a son for being slow to believe that his father has deserted him, has refused him help in his need and given him up to his enemies? I held by King Louis. But when I went to Fort Chartres, and learned that the English had not lied to us, or forged the documents of the treaty, then I knew all hope for the cause of the fleur-de-lis was gone. Coming back, I faithfully delivered to Pontiac the message of Monsieur Neyon; to his advice I added my word, counselling the Ottawa to make peace with your people. Having heard me, he withdrew to the Maumie. Is it for this you call me traitor, for this you would put me to death? Your flag floats over Fort Pontchartrain, and the fleur-de-lis is trailed in the dust. You may call New France a British province, but you

cannot make her people English! God has made them French, and French they will ever be!"

"Cease, sirrah! Such seditious language cannot be tolerated. Odzookens, I'll have you hanged to-morrow in the name of the King. It is martial law with us now; we have no need of court or legal bickerings. A rebel may be strung up sans shrift on a bough of the nearest tree."

At this harsh verdict from the commanding officer, a shrill cry broke from Madame Godefroy, and she rushed forward to cast herself upon her husband's neck, but was warded off by the cold steel of the guards' muskets levelled at her breast.

"Take the woman out!" roared Bradstreet.

Poor Madame Clotilde quickly withdrew behind the flap of the curtain which separated the main tent from the ante-chamber, and the pitying orderly assumed that the command was obeyed according to the letter.

At this point Captain Morris interposed. The fearless bearing and straightforward defence of Godefroy had impressed him greatly. Here was a man to be trusted; a man who acknowledged his loyalty to his friends, his cause, even in the face of death. He felt that Jacques Godefroy would keep any pledge he might give. He (Morris) needed the help of such a man.

"Colonel Bradstreet," he said, "mayhap you might make a more serviceable disposal of the prisoner than by hanging him."

"How now?" demanded the colonel, turning upon him.

"In commissioning me to go into the Illinois country, did you not grant me the privilege of selecting my escort?"

"Yes, verily, since the expedition will be one for no carpet knight," rejoined his chief, laughing.

"I understand its perils; therefore I wish to have Jacques Godefroy for my guide."

Even the prisoner started.

"Would you put your head into the lion's mouth?" queried the colonel, with a sneer.

"Certainly not; but could I have a better intermediary than this man? If Jacques Godefroy will promise to lead me through the wilderness and be loyal to me, I choose him for a conductor above all others."

Godefroy raised his head once more and turned a grateful, softened look upon the young man who not only intervened to save him from a felon's fate, but offered him a position of confidence and honor.

"Odzookens, if you can make use of the fellow I would willingly give him to you were it not that Major Gladwin has been at some pains to impress upon me that he should be hanged," replied the colonel, yawning.

In truth, he was weary of the subject. The life of a creole seemed to him of no more account than that of an Indian, and he regarded the latter as pests of whom his countrymen were to rid themselves as soon as might be.

During all this scene Major Gladwin had sat silent and apparently coldly indifferent to what was taking place before him.

Now, being directly appealed to, he said, with an unchanging countenance, —

"My sentiments are not altered, sir; I see no reason why clemency should be extended to the prisoner."

Even a brave man is glad to make a truce with

death. The light that had illumined Jacques' honest face, as the hope of reprieve was extended to him, faded at the words of the major, and he nerved himself to hear his condemnation blurted out by Bradstreet.

In an agony of terror, Dame Clotilde emerged from the shadow, and would have cast herself at the feet of Gladwin to beg the life of her husband, but a glance from Godefroy forbade her. Perhaps he surmised that her prayer would be of no avail; perhaps in his pride he preferred death rather than to see his wife thus plead with his enemy for mercy.

But in Sterling he had another champion.

"Surely, Major Gladwin, you are willing to accord the prisoner this chance held out to him by Captain Morris?" he urged with heat.

There was a tense pause, during which the colonel was seized with a violent fit of coughing. What with strong liquor and tobacco, his throat had grown dry, and he was stout and apoplectic.

The orderly stepped into the ante-room and, seizing a ewer filled with water that stood upon the floor of the tent, brought it in, and, pouring some of the water into a goblet, offered it to the choking official.

Before the latter raised it to his lips, however, the voice of Godefroy rang out clear and firm, —

"Do not drink it; the water is poisoned."

Bradstreet's hand was a trifle unsteady, as he set down the goblet, and, pointing to the dog at his feet, gasped, —

"Try it on the brute."

Sterling experienced a feeling of disgust.

"It were a pity to sacrifice the poor beast," he said.

Bradstreet did not believe that the water was poisoned.

"It is a ruse; the Canadian is crafty as a Norman," he muttered between paroxysms of coughing.

The orderly poured a little of the water into a dish, and the dog drank it with avidity. Whatever the nature of the poison, it took effect speedily; within a few moments the animal had sunk into a deep sleep.

"Odzookens, major, I shall have to leave this matter in your hands with a recommendation to mercy. I cannot hang a man who has prevented me from becoming like to that insensate log," declared Bradstreet, as soon as he could speak.

Sterling's lip curled with scorn at the colonel's weak evasion of the matter, when he should have taken it upon himself.

Godefroy's glance sought the face of the commandant; Clotilde's eyes were fixed upon the officer in agonized supplication; Sterling's questioned him, but still he averted his gaze and remained silent, rigid as a statue of marble.

Gladwin had decided that Godefroy should pay the penalty for his stubborn resistance of British authority, his obduracy in remaining the friend of Pontiac; and, imagining that in this decision he was biassed by no personal prejudice or enmity, the major clung to it with the obstinacy of his character. Godefroy must suffer death, as an example to the French that the sovereignty of the British was not to be defied with impunity.

"Since the decision is left to me," he began, after clearing his throat—

"One moment, sir, I beg of you," interrupted Angélique Cuillerier, stepping forward and speaking for the first time.

As Sterling watched her, his thoughts flew back to the memorable evening when he had encountered her at the council house. Now, as then, her soft cheeks glowed with the delicate blush of the eglantine, her eyes grew lustrous, and her dark hair, falling in wavy disorder about her brow and neck, made a frame for her sweet face.

"Monsieur Gladwin," she said simply, in a voice which trembled somewhat, "Monsieur Gladwin, I ask the release of your prisoner."

For an instant Gladwin's brows lowered, and he changed color. There was a moment of tense silence. Then, tardily, unwillingly, and as though impelled by an influence stronger than himself, he turned his head, and met the glance of the demoiselle. Angélique smiled, — confidently, expectantly.

At that smile all the chivalry in the nature of the man seemed unlocked, even as a sunbeam thaws the hoar frost and melts the snows.

Slowly he rose to his feet, bowed to her with soldierly dignity, and, facing Colonel Bradstreet, said, —

"Sir, during the time we were besieged by Pontiac, this young lady rendered a great service to the officers and garrison of this fort. I am bound in honor to give heed to any petition she may make. Therefore, since *she* intercedes for Jacques Godefroy, I recommend that the prisoner be released."

Bradstreet nodded assent, and, picking up his silver snuff-box from the table, took a generous pinch of Rappee.

Had the death-penalty been demanded, he would as coolly have bidden the guard to conduct honest Jacques from his presence, and make for him a gibbet of the nearest tree. But, if the commandant chose to

spare the life of the Frenchman at the request of a charming demoiselle, it mattered little to him.

"Odzookens, you sly fox," he muttered in an undertone to Gladwin, "the girl is so deuced pretty, that to gain a pleasant glance from her I would pardon a score of rebels."

The major scarcely heard, however. He had turned again to Angélique, who smiled her thanks and curt-sied low.

"Jacques Godefroy," said the colonel, "you owe your life to the mediation of Mademoiselle Cuillerier; but I impose a condition. It is that you pledge yourself to faithfully guide this gentleman, Captain Morris, during the expedition whereon he is about to set out, and that you will take good care of him. Will you give me this pledge upon your oath?"

"I swear by le bon Dieu that I will guard his life with my own," answered Godefroy solemnly.

"Set the man free," said Bradstreet to the guards.

Thereupon, the soldier to the right of the prisoner drew his dirk and cut the thongs that bound the hands of Godefroy; and Dame Clotilde, weeping now for gladness, cast herself into her husband's arms.

The other soldier, saluting the colonel, pointed to the floor of the tent, in front of the table.

Bradstreet, who had forgotten the dog, now glanced carelessly toward it.

"Odzookens, the brute is dead!" he said, and fiery and swollen as was his visage, it seemed to grow less red as he contemplated the poisoned animal.

The attention of the commandant being thus called to it also, he disgustedly touched it with the toe of his boot, and, having made sure that it was really dead, motioned to the men to take it away.

As they approached to do so, the sharp crack of a

musket-shot rang through the tent, and a bullet, aimed to kill Gladwin, grazing his left arm, tore a rent in the canvas wall but three feet beyond him.

The report was followed by a succession of shots without. Snatching the pistols from their belts, Gladwin and Captain Morris rushed from the tent, Sterling beside them, with drawn sword. The colonel, sobered on the instant, followed, baring his sabre as he went.

Had that shot been the signal of a new uprising of the French? Finding the English thus encamped upon the open common, had they betrayed their conquerors into the hands of the savages? Was Pontiac returned, many times more powerful than before?

The commotion might mean any or all of these things. Yet it meant none of them, and presently a laugh went up from the officers and the soldiers of the camp, as it became evident that their apprehensions were groundless.

The captain of the watch approached Gladwin, and saluted.

"A spy and assassin has been shot dead, sir," he reported.

The commandant went forward to survey the body. The moon was now risen, and, as a soldier stooped and turned over the dark object lying inanimate upon the grass, a ray of silver light fell upon the face of the dead man.

"It is Larron?" exclaimed Gladwin, starting back in horror and surprise.

"Yes, Larron, whom you trusted, monsieur le commandant," replied Jacques Godefroy, who, having seized a musket that stood in a corner of the tent, had followed close behind to defend, if there were need, the men that awhile before would have put

him to death. "Larron, who betrayed your plans to Pontiac; Larron, who poisoned the drinking water in the ewer. As I was conducted here from the blockhouse which you made my prison, I saw him lingering about the outer tent and suspected his errand, though I could not have sworn to it. His caution and reason had been stolen by deep draughts of your English rum, else he would not have cast away his miserable life so wantonly. Clever as you English are, he duped you to the last. Despite his wiles and fawning for your favor, he hated you with all the venom of his snake-like nature. He took your bribes and mocked at you. It was he who connived at the butcheries of the Ottawas; he who would have slain you before you had a chance to cry out, save for the intervention of the Ojibwa girl, Nedawniss. Now, in his drunken madness he thought, no doubt, that by picking off one of the officers he would start an uprising of the townspeople; whereupon the Indians, quickly forgetting the peace belts they exchanged with you to-day, would rush to the aid of the French. Words are wind, but seeing is believing, Major Gladwin! In shooting down this spy, your soldiers have done better work for your cause than if they had routed a horde of savage warriors."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH

CONQUEST IN SURRENDER

IT was late afternoon at the strait—the afternoon of one of those cool, delightful days that come toward the last of August, deluding those who are not weather-wise into the belief that the heat of summer is over, a faith to be speedily submerged by the torrid wave upon whose sunlit crest comes floating in, like a waif from the sea of Time, the young god of the harvest, September.

The fort was a scene of gaiety upon this pleasant afternoon. There had been a review of the troops on the parade ground in front of the council house. The French were out in gala attire, and congratulated one another that they were no longer penned up within the stockade, as the marionettes of a puppet show are shut up in a box when they have no part to play upon the stage.

The gates of the palisade were wide open. Although sentinels stood on guard, townspeople and habitants flocked in and out at will, or strolled through the English camp upon the common. As the sun sank to the west, many of the holiday makers sought the river. Farmers from the “côte du nord” and the southern shore set out for home in their pirogues, from the water gate or at the mouth of the Rigolet des Hurons. Soldiers, voyageurs, lovers embarked on the stream, and the voices of many gay boating parties floated over the waters.

Pottawattomie women haunted the strand, offering moccasins and bead-work for sale, while their pap-pooes stared round-eyed from the birch-bark cradles bound upon the backs of the mothers. Traders in fantastic dress jested with shy Indian girls, redskin children played upon the bank or swam in the clear current, and now and again a warrior without his war-paint strode by on the pebbly beach.

It was at this hour that Colonel Bradstreet, standing on the water bastion, saw the interpreter, James Sterling, assist into a canoe the pretty young lady who the evening before had confronted the military court with such charming temerity, and had claimed from Major Gladwin the life of her countryman with an assurance that her request would not be denied.

"Odzookens," soliloquized the colonel, levelling his lens upon the little skiff to behold the young man take the place facing his fair passenger, "I would give a purse of gold to be the pilot of that craft, though I am not exactly built for aquatic exercise."

His glance roved ruefully over his bulky and rotund form as he continued, —

"Where is Gladwin, I wonder! Is he going to let the canny Scot carry off the pearl of these creole demoiselles? There should be a duel, at least! Egad, it might be a fine plan for me to set the two to kill each other, and then elope with the lady myself. By my faith, I thought the major a frozen sea, calm on the surface but surging beneath, yet I could swear his color deepened when the black-eyed demoiselle flung him that look of reproach and spirited demand last night. A romance is under all this, I'll wager, but it would take an ocean plummet line to fathom Gladwin."

Meanwhile, the Scotchman, with Mademoiselle Cuillerier in the bow of his canoe, paddled up the river. Young and ardent, each confronted in the eyes of the other the sweet question and answer that make life more worth the living.

Did the thoughts of both, like the lake birds flitting over the water, wing their way back over their course to the close of a day memorable in the town and on the côtes, since it was the first that followed the arrival of Sir William Johnson at Le Détroit? That evening long past, when Angélique had gone boating with Sterling just after the Angelus hour?

Again, as then, the young man beheld the graceful figure and piquant face of the girl against the dreary background of the Isle au Cochon, the morass of Le Grand Marais, the forests, and the wide expanse of the river.

Dark, mysterious, and silent, the wooded island might be likened to some grim Indian warrior keeping watch before the still lonelier retreat beyond. As Sterling's imagination thus pictured it, he seemed to hear again the voice of his companion saying, —

“We French call that isolated spot the Isle au Pêche, because of its fine fisheries; but to the Indians it is known as the burial-place of their Prophet. There the Great Chief has his lodge and holds council with the manitou of the strait.”

He recalled how, when he had asked the name of this mighty leader of the aborigines, her voice sank to a frightened whisper, and she shivered with a sudden chill as she answered, —

“He is called Pontiac.”

And at the very utterance of the fateful name a gloom had settled upon them, — a gloom that never since had been entirely lifted.

Yes, now it was, of course, again the voice of Angélique which sounded in his ears. But at present her tone was one of raillery, and the breeze was only pleasantly cool, giving her an excuse to draw her bewitching blue scarf closer about her shoulders.

"Eh bien, Monsieur Taciturne, your silence is most entertaining, though many a demoiselle might prefer a livelier cavalier in a canoe ride this fair evening," she chided banteringly.

The Scotchman aroused himself with a start.

"A thousand pardons, mademoiselle," he cried. "I was a churl to let my gaze stray from your face to the black groves, that rest upon the water like the dark, threatening hand of the Indian prophet, the Keeper of the Gates of the Lakes. My only excuse is that my reverie was of you. I was thinking of the dangers you have braved since the evening upon the river, when I first heard from your lips the name of the remarkable Ottawa who involved us all, French and British, in such misery. Ah, Angélique, although in your company I may be at times as one tongue-tied, yet the consciousness that you are near thrills ever through my heart. Thus my soul is filled with joy and thankfulness, when from the sombre view of Nature, outstretched yonder, my eyes return to you, and I see you lovelier, sweeter, nobler even than before the storm which has swept over this country of the strait, and left such devastation in its wake."

Angélique gave a little deprecating shrug of the shoulders and contracted her brows, but her frown soon changed to a smile. The Highlander had made a pretty apology for his muteness. Moreover, now, as on the never-to-be-forgotten evening before the siege, she saw beyond his earnest face the glow of the sunset.

True, it was not now a calm tide of green and amber, but an ocean of rose and flame that grew every moment fainter, until above it gleamed the evening star.

"I do not care to look upon the groves of the Isle au Pêche, or the scenes of Indian fury," she said. "Ah, monsieur, head the canoe a little to the south, I pray, that you may see the glory of the western sky."

Dipping his paddle, Sterling brought the boat half round, and once more a quiet fell upon the lovers as they watched the celestial sea.

In the life of a woman one hour stands forth supreme, — the hour when the man who has become the hero of her maiden fancy avows his love and asks her to lay her hand in his before God's altar. More than once Sterling had repeated his protestations of devotion and renewed his offer of marriage, but still she had hesitated.

"Angélique," he now said, pointing toward the sunset, "the gates of the future are open; say, sweet one, that you will voyage with me in the canoe of life?"

He leaned forward and, unrepulsed, laid his strong right hand upon her own, but still she did not reply.

"Tell me that you love me, Angélique," he entreated. "Tell me that you will be my wife?"

And Angélique, lowering her eyes from the cloud ocean, whose shining billows seemed to break upon the Islands of the Blessed, met his gaze and answered falteringly, —

"Yes, Monsieur Sterling, I love you; I will be your wife."

Leaning toward her, he kissed the sweet lips that had so often mocked him with their smiling.

"Since there can be no doubt about this being a

betrothal, even good Father Potier would not disapprove," he said teasingly. "Ah, chère, with your dear face before me, what will it matter to me how dark may be life's background! With the promise of a bright to-morrow shining through the gates of light, we shall not lose courage as we voyage on."

Engrossed in their happiness, the lovers presently found themselves in the vicinity of the English ship wherein Major Gladwin was to sail the next day for Fort Schlosser, with the discharged garrison.

"How strange it will be to have a new commandant at the fort! Brave Major Gladwin! *Ma foi*, I fear he will not be sorry to leave *Le Détroit*," said Angélique inadvertently, as the canoe, obeying the impetus of Sterling's dexterous stroke, shot past the dark hulk of the vessel.

"As events have turned out, he will not be sorry," replied her lover pointedly. "He is a strong man, and in his military capacity I wished him all advantage. In his love-making I could not desire his success, since to do so would be to wish my own defeat. Yes, I will acknowledge, sweetheart, I have been most jealous of the commandant."

Angélique flushed red as the peonies that grew before the door of the Cuillerier homestead, and, trailing a hand over the side of the canoe, toyed with the water, dipping it up in her palm and then shaking the drops like pearls from her fingers.

"*Ma foi*, ces Anglais, ces Anglais," she exclaimed suddenly, with a peal of merry laughter.

"Chère, I am not English," he protested.

"Eh bien, these British," she retorted tantalizingly. "Fi donc, mon bon ami, are you not ashamed thus to harbor the *Loup-Garou* of jealousy? Major Gladwin is married."

"*Married?*" echoed Sterling, in intense and incredulous surprise. "He has not taken a wife at the strait! You mean that he was married when he came back from England? His officers are not aware of this; you knew it, yet never spoke of it to me, *ma belle?*"

"The name of Major Gladwin was seldom mentioned between us; it seemed always to put Monsieur Sterling in an ill humor," she replied naïvely. "If the commandant did not tell his brother officers of his marriage, I presume it was because he considered that it did not concern them."

She had touched the keynote of Gladwin's character, a proud and impenetrable reserve, a sensitiveness to and dislike of mess-room or barracks gossip which made him averse to having his personal affairs discussed among his subalterns and men.

Sterling was for a moment impressed by her surmise. Presently his face darkened, and he brought the paddle down upon the water with such force that the canoe leaped forward like a frightened deer.

"No, that is not the reason the man kept his marriage secret," he cried fiercely. "He has dared to pay court to you, Angélique, to offer you his love, and all the while he had a wife beyond the seas. Thank Heaven, you have given me the right to avenge this insult. I will fight him, I will kill him before he has a chance to sail away."

Angélique's mobile face grew white, and she drew herself up proudly.

"I am beholden to you for your championship, *mon bon ami*," she said. "But calm yourself, for you are mistaken. Since Major Gladwin's return from England he has not spoken of love to me."

“And before?” Sterling could not refrain from asking, though when the words were uttered he almost regretted his persistence.

Angélique hesitated and her eyes flashed with annoyance. Half in consternation she realized that she was no longer free, that in plighting her troth to Sterling she had given him a right to look into her heart, to question her thus; that if she declined to answer there might be a misunderstanding between them forever. The tenderness of his wooing still thrilled her soul, and she relented.

“Before?” she repeated quietly. “Eh bien, mon bon ami, since you *will* have the story. When Major Gladwin was ill of the fever, shortly after his coming to Le Détroit, my aunt, Madame des Ruisseaux, helped to nurse him. Sometimes during his convalescence I went with her to see him, and afterwards we often met at her house. It was on one of these occasions, if you must needs know, that the gallant gentleman did me the honor to offer me his heart and hand. But, I did not love him and he went away. In England he married the sweetheart of his boyhood. He loves her; his thought of me was only a passing fancy. For some time after his return I did not know of his marriage; yet I seldom had speech with him. One evening, however, after I saw him at the council house, he called at Madame des Ruisseaux’s. I happened to be there, and he told me of his romance in frank and honorable fashion. There was one other, at least, to whom it became known also. This was Nedawniss the Ojibwa whom Father Potier had arranged to send to live among the Ottawa women beyond the Maumie. Nedawniss, who on the eve of her departure, having heard rumor of a plot against the commandant, watched about the fort, and saved

him from the knife of the assassin at the cost of her own life."

"Poor Nedawniss," rejoined Sterling pityingly. "As for Major Gladwin, in truth, I never thought to feel so kindly toward him. May honors and happiness await him in England!"

"And you no longer wish to know why I once went in disguise to the council house to gain speech with him?" queried Angélique.

"I no longer wish to know, if you do not wish to tell me."

"Eh bien, then I *will* tell you," she said. "It was a matter of grave moment."

Her tone was eloquent and she struggled to control the emotion that betrayed itself in the tremor of her voice.

A light broke upon Sterling. Had he not heard Nedawniss tell her story, no doubt he would have thought of this before.

"Angélique," he declared, "it was you who revealed to Major Gladwin the conspiracy of Pontiac. It was you, and not Nedawniss the Ojibwa girl?"

"H'sh," murmured the demoiselle warningly.

"Yes, you are right, mon bon ami. Pontiac's contempt for the white squaw alone saved me from discovery. He could never have believed that a French girl would dare tempt his vengeance."

"Sweetheart, you are the bravest woman in the Canadas," exclaimed her lover. "I pray God we may spend many years together in wedded happiness, yet the longest life would be all too short for me to prove to you how much I love you."

"Oh, oh, monsieur, you will overturn the canoe," cautioned his tantalizing sweetheart with a dash of her wonted spirit.

This masterful "bon ami" had taken her to task about her former cavaliers, and she had answered him, for he was soon to be her husband. Nevertheless, she would punish him. It was not safe in a canoe ride to let a "bon ami" steal a kiss. It had been done, but was too perilous for repetition; no, in a canoe a "bon ami" must paddle.

The Scotchman was about to protest that he had grown most expert in the management of his craft, when Angélique, raising her pretty hand, cried, —
 "Hark, do you remember?"

From over the waters came the sounds of music, faint at first but growing every moment more distinct, until the canoeists could distinguish the strains of a gay French chanson.

Nearer and nearer came the melody, and presently there swept by their little skiff a long pirogue manned by a party of habitants returning from the fisheries of Lake Ste. Claire, who, as they passed, keeping time to the stroke of their oars, trolled merrily, —

"C'est une pâté de trois pigeons, —
 Ha, ha, ha, — frit à l'huile!
 Assieds-toi et le mangeons;
 Fritaine, fritou, friton, poilon, —
 Ha, ha, ha, — frit à l'huile!
 Frit au beurre à l'ognon."

Even Sterling was constrained to join in Angélique's teasing laugh at this prosaic interruption to his love-making.

But, as now, in the twilight, he slowly paddled the canoe toward the "côte du nord" and the small wharf before the house of Antoine Cuillerier, he sang to Angélique the old Scotch love song wherewith he had first wooed her.

“ Her eyes so brightly beaming,
Her look so frank and free,
In waking and in dreaming
Are evermore with me.
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Hire, my nut-brown maiden,
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Oh, she 's the maid for me.

“ With her fair face before me
How sweetly flew the hour,
When all her beauty held me
A captive to its power.
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Hire, my nut-brown maiden,
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Oh, she 's the maid for me.

“ Her face with kindness glowing,
Her heart that hides no guile;
The light grace of her going,
The witchcraft of her smile.
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Hire, my nut-brown maiden,
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Oh, she 's the maid for me.

“ Ah, when, with blossoms laden,
The summer comes again,
I 'll wed my nut-brown maiden,
And bring her from the glen.
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Hire, my nut-brown maiden,
Hiro, my nut-brown maiden,
Oh, she 's the maid for me.”

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A few weeks later, Sterling and Angélique were married, and with the fall convoy, sent by the French traders to the St. Lawrence, went Marianne de St. Ours to join the sisterhood of the Hotel Dieu at

Quebec. The aid given to Pontiac by Antoine Cuillerier seemed now forgotten by the red coats, but only Father Potier and James Sterling could have told that Angélique, by her prompt action on a fair May day two years before, had saved her father and the fortunes of her family in saving from massacre the fort and garrison of Le Détroit.

Pontiac came to the strait, made a treaty with the conquerors, and the following spring smoked the peace pipe with Sir William Johnson at Niagara. Thence he went to live with the French at St. Louis, where he adopted the dress of a military officer, wearing on occasion the uniform that had been presented to him by the gallant Marquis de Montcalm. One day he was followed from a feast into the woods, and assassinated by an Illinois Indian, who had been hired to kill him by an English trader, the price of the crime being a barrel of rum. To-day in the city of St. Louis a tablet to the memory of the kingly Ottawa hangs in the hall of the Southern Hotel, a few feet from the spot where he was buried with military honors. Well was he called "the Great Chief," for although in his cruelty, his cunning and vindictiveness he was a savage, he gave his strength and all his remarkable resources for his country and his people.

Perhaps it was the cupidity of Major Rogers which caused him to fail the colonies in their hour of need. Having at first cast his lot with the Americans in the War of the Revolution, he went over to the British and his subsequent life was passed in obscurity.

After the Pontiac war Sir Jeffrey Amherst wished to reward James Sterling for the conspicuous bravery wherewith he had commanded the French of Detroit during the siege. The merchant, however, accepted

only the position of interpreter, thinking that in this office he might promote friendly relations between the discomfited creoles and their new rulers.

"For the rest," he said, "I am a Scotchman; George of Hanover is not my king, and I cannot receive a favor from his government."

Sterling was among the first bold spirits of Detroit to embrace the cause of independence.

"We have had enough of misrule," he publicly asserted. "The Bourbon forsook his people of New France. The Hanoverian is a dolt; his government shares his madness. The Stuarts, too, were faithless to their trust. It is the new flag of the Continental Congress that should wave over the fort of the strait. You say you have never beheld it, friends. Look above to the deep blue field of the star-studded sky on a winter's night; look abroad over the snow-covered prairie to where the aurora glows in the northern heavens. Or see the sun reflected many times in the azure waters of the river, see the white mists of Lake Erie blending with the red of the sunset. The beauties of the land and the skies we love are reflected in this new flag. It is the flag that God himself has unfurled over *Le Détroit*! Shall we not live for it? Shall we not, if need be, die for it?"

Naturally, these daring utterances caused the banishment of the Scotchman by General Hamilton, the British governor, and he was not permitted to return until after Detroit was ceded to the United States in 1796.

Upon his departure to join the American forces at Kaskasia, he left his affairs in charge of his wife, saying, —

"I know your courage, my *Angélique*. When in doubt what to do, consult Father Potier. He can

give you as good advice in temporal matters as upon those pertaining to his office."

Occasionally, therefore, on a summer afternoon, Angélique embarked in a canoe with her children; and while Jacques and Angélique the younger paddled the light craft down the Rigolet des Hurons, little Pierre, whom Sterling had named for the missionary, played with the bright water.

Thus they came to the Pointe de Montréal, and, drawing the boat up among the bushes, climbed the bluff, and entered the mission orchard, perhaps to find good Father Potier walking there.

Or, if he were not outside, they knocked at the half-open door, breaking the monastic stillness of the spacious house. At the knock, even the birds in the apple trees paused in their song to peer at the strangers and ask, in short, staccato notes, why they had come, and why with such rude sounds they interrupted the tranquillity of the place.

And then, Brother La Tour came hobbling out to say, either that the good Father was in the church, catechising the young Indians in the faith, or else that, in his study, he was employing a chance hour of leisure in the preparation of his Huron grammar and vocabulary, designed to serve as an aid to the labors of future missionaries. For he was a scholarly man, and later, left many valuable manuscripts, which were, however, sequestered by Hamilton, and thus lost.

But if within doors on this pleasant afternoon, Father Potier presently came forth under the trees. And, while the dame poured out her heart or received the counsels of the venerable man, the children played about the orchard, hiding from one another, chasing the yellow butterflies, or feasting upon the luscious apples; while more than once

Brother Regis the cook sent them croquecignoles from the kitchen.

Why there should be croquecignoles Jacques and Angélique and little Pierre could not understand, since the brother said the ascetic missionary never tasted them. But Brother Regis explained that the good father was wont to inculcate his catechism lessons by distributing among his pupils these toothsome cakes, a method of imparting instruction most popular with the young savages. And, on the way back to the beach the Sterlings went round by way of the forge, that Jacques and Angélique and little Pierre might see the mission blacksmith beat the red-hot iron into long, pointed nails, and watch the sparks fly, while the thick-set, brawny Cécile laughed at their wonderment, saying that in life it is better to be the hammer than the anvil, and "a hammer of gold will not break Heaven's gate."

But one day in the summer of 1781, when the children and their mother went to see the missionary, he did not come forth as usual, and the Hurons were singing a dirge in their village. Fifty years of strenuous toil among the aborigines of the wilderness had at last broken the giant strength of the devoted priest. Brother La Tour, who took no pains to conceal the tears that stole down his honest cheeks, told the visitors that the saintly old man, being overcome with faintness while at work in his study, had fallen and struck his head a fatal blow against one of the great brass andirons in the open chimney.

Thus passed away the last missionary of Le Détroit. The log-church of the Hurons remained in existence until 1852, and among the French of Detroit are to be found sexagenarians who once worshipped within its walls. The redmen are gone from the Pointe de

Montréal. Their head sachem Mondoron adopted an English name and settled at Windsor, Ontario, not far from the ancient Huron village. His wife was a creole woman; his eldest son became a member of the parliament at Ottawa; his daughters are well married in the little Canadian city of the strait. Others of the posterity of the aborigines, whom good Father Potier won from paganism to Christianity and civilization, own and cultivate small farms on the southern bank of the river.

But the Mission House, and the orchard? A year ago, the stanch old house was still standing, and gave shelter to a family of the descendants of the sturdy habitants who built it in order that the gentle Black Robe, driven from the region by the fiery arrogance of the *Sieur de Cadillac*, might again live among them.

Its huge, squared timbers, never painted, and in their age showing the tints and shadows of silver, the wide white-washed chimneys, the sloping roof with its three dormers, all bore witness to the strength of construction that enabled it to weather the storms of one hundred and seventy winters. And the orchard? A year ago, in the spring, the Normandy apple and pear trees of good Father Potier were white with blossoms, even as on the May afternoon when *Angélique Cuillerier*, with a heart torn by anguish and doubt, sought counsel of the missionary.

In the summer, the sunshine lingered long about the enclosure, as if it loved the spot; the apples were still wholesome and sweet; and the yellow and white butterflies flitted among the wild flowers that lent a hue of purple to the long grass.

Within the shadow of the Mission House, with the venerable trees looking down as if in grave approval,

and the birds singing encouragement, as though they would help to tell the traditions of the leafy boughs and moss-grown eaves where their kind had nested for nearly two centuries, — here, in this tranquil solitude overlooking the shining waters, was woven, during many a happy afternoon, this story of “The Heroine of the Strait.”

From the mission farm, looking up the river, one sees the tall buildings of the metropolis that commands the Gateway of the Lakes; below the Pointe de Montréal, over the United States military post, floats the star-blazoned banner which has replaced the fleur-de-lis and the standard of St. George upon the northern bank of Le Détroit. But now the hand of modern enterprise has touched the old Jesuit landmark spared by Time. The great white chimneys, a monument to the missionaries, and to the faith of the French-Canadians, have been torn down, and the old Mission House, removed from its foundations, is destined to form the nucleus of the storage cellars for the wines from the vineyards of the vicinity. The pleasant orchard will soon be no more.

Thus, before our Utilitarian Age, from localities hallowed by tradition and sweet memories, —

“Ancient and holy things
Fade like a dream.”

THE END

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