

Wacousta : a tale of the Pontiac conspiracy — Volume 2 eBook

Wacousta : a tale of the Pontiac conspiracy — Volume 2 by John Richardson (author)

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CHAPTER III.

Two days had succeeded to the departure of the officers from the fort, but unproductive of any event of importance. About daybreak, however, on the morning of the third, the harassed garrison were once more summoned to arms, by an alarm from the sentinels planted in rear of the works; a body of Indians they had traced and lost at intervals, as they wound along the skirt of the forest, in their progress from their encampment, were at length developing themselves in force near the bomb proof. With a readiness which long experience and watchfulness had rendered in some degree habitual to them, the troops flew to their respective posts; while a few of the senior officers, among whom was the governor, hastened to the ramparts to reconnoitre the strength and purpose of their enemies. It was evident the views of these latter were not immediately hostile; for neither were they in their war paint, nor were their arms of a description to carry intimidation to a disciplined and fortified soldiery. Bows, arrows, tomahawks, war clubs, spears, and scalping knives, constituted their warlike equipments, but neither rifle nor fire-arms of any kind were discernible. Several of their leaders, distinguishable by a certain haughty carriage and commanding gesticulation, were collected within the elevated bomb-proof, apparently holding a short but important conference apart from their people, most of whom stood or lay in picturesque attitudes around the ruin. These also had a directing spirit. A tall and noble looking warrior, wearing a deer-skin hunting frock closely girded around his loins, appeared to command the deference of his colleagues, claiming profound attention when he spoke himself, and manifesting his assent or dissent to the apparently expressed opinions of the lesser chiefs merely by a slight movement of the head.

"There he is indeed!" exclaimed Captain Erskine, speaking as one who communes with his own thoughts, while he kept his telescope levelled on the form of the last warrior; "looking just as noble as when, three years ago, he opposed himself to the progress of the first English detachment that had ever penetrated to this part of the world. What a pity such a fine fellow should be so desperate and determined an enemy!"

"True; you were with Major Rogers on that expedition," observed the governor, in a tone now completely divested of the haughtiness which formerly characterised his address to his officers. "I have often heard him speak of it. You had many difficulties to contend against, if I recollect."

"We had indeed, sir," returned the frank-hearted Erskine, dropping the glass from his eye. "So many, in fact, that more than once, in the course of our progress through the wilderness, did I wish myself at head-quarters with my company. Never shall I forget the proud and determined expression of Pontecac's countenance, when he told Rogers, in his figurative language, 'he stood in the path in which he travelled.'"



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“Thank Heaven, he at least stands not in the path in which *others* travel,” musingly rejoined the governor. “But what sudden movement is that within the ruin?”

“The Indians are preparing to show a white flag,” shouted an artillery-man from his station in one of the embrasures below.

The governor and his officers received this intelligence without surprise: the former took the glass from Captain Erskine, and coolly raised it to his eye. The consultation had ceased; and the several chiefs, with the exception of their leader and two others, were now seen quitting the bomb-proof to join their respective tribes. One of those who remained, sprang upon an elevated fragment of the ruin, and uttered a prolonged cry, the purport of which,—and it was fully understood from its peculiar nature,—was to claim attention from the fort. He then received from the hands of the other chief a long spear, to the end of which was attached a piece of white linen. This he waved several times above his head; then stuck the barb of the spear firmly into the projecting fragment. Quitting his elevated station, he next stood at the side of the Ottawa chief, who had already assumed the air and attitude of one waiting to observe in what manner his signal would be received.

“A flag of truce in all its bearings, by Jupiter!” remarked Captain Erskine. “Pontecac seems to have acquired a few lessons since we first met.”

“This is evidently the suggestion of some European,” observed Major Blackwater; “for how should he understand any thing of the nature of a white flag? Some of those vile spies have put him up to this.”

“True enough, Blackwater; and they appear to have found an intelligent pupil,” observed Captain Wentworth. “I was curious to know how he would make the attempt to approach us; but certainly never once dreamt of his having recourse to so civilised a method. Their plot works well, no doubt; still we have the counter-plot to oppose to it.”

“We must foil them with their own weapons,” remarked the governor, “even if it be only with a view to gain time. Wentworth, desire one of your bombardiers to hoist the large French flag on the staff.”

The order was promptly obeyed. The Indians made a simultaneous movement expressive of their satisfaction; and in the course of a minute, the tall warrior, accompanied by nearly a dozen inferior chiefs, was seen slowly advancing across the common, towards the group of officers.

“What generous confidence the fellow has, for an Indian!” observed Captain Erskine, who could not dissemble his admiration of the warrior. “He steps as firmly and as proudly within reach of our muskets, as if he was leading in the war-dance.”

“How strange,” mused Captain Blessington, “that one who meditates so deep a treachery, should have no apprehension of it in others!”

“It is a compliment to the honour of our flag,” observed the governor, “which it must be our interest to encourage. If, as you say, Erskine, the man is really endowed with generosity, the result of this affair will assuredly call it forth.”



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“If it prove otherwise, sir,” was the reply, “we must only attribute his perseverance to the influence which that terrible warrior of the Fleur de lis is said to exercise over his better feelings. By the by, I see nothing of him among this flag of truce party. It could scarcely be called a violation of faith to cut off such a rascally renegade. Were he of the number of those advancing, and Valletort’s rifle within my reach, I know not what use I might not be tempted to make of the last.”

Poor Erskine was singularly infelicitous in touching, and ever unconsciously, on a subject sure to give pain to more than one of his brother officers. A cloud passed over the brow of the governor, but it was one that originated more in sorrow than in anger. Neither had he time to linger on the painful recollections hastily and confusedly called up by the allusion made to this formidable and mysterious being, for the attention of all was now absorbed by the approaching Indians. With a bold and confiding carriage the fierce Pontecac moved at the head of his little party, nor hesitated one moment in his course, until he got near the brink of the ditch, and stood face to face with the governor, at a distance that gave both parties not only the facility of tracing the expression of each other’s features, but of conversing without effort. There he made a sudden stand, and thrusting his spear into the earth, assumed an attitude as devoid of apprehension as if he had been in the heart of his own encampment.

“My father has understood my sign,” said the haughty chief. “The warriors of a dozen tribes are far behind the path the Ottawa has just travelled; but when the red skin comes unarmed, the hand of the Saganaw is tied behind his back.”

“The strong hold of the Saganaw is his safeguard,” replied the governor, adopting the language of the Indian. “When the enemies of his great father come in strength, he knows how to disperse them; but when a warrior throws himself unarmed into his power, he respects his confidence, and his arms hang rusting at his side.”

“The talk of my father is big,” replied the warrior, with a scornful expression that seemed to doubt the fact of so much indifference as to himself; “but when it is a great chief who directs the nations, and that chief his sworn enemy, the temptation to the Saganaw may be strong.”

“The Saganaw is without fear,” emphatically rejoined the governor; “he is strong in his own honour; and he would rather die under the tomahawk of the red skin, than procure a peace by an act of treachery.”

The Indian paused; cold, calm looks of intelligence passed between him and his followers, and a few indistinct and guttural sentences were exchanged among themselves.

“But our father asks not why our mocassins have brushed the dew from off the common,” resumed the chief; “and yet it is long since the Saganaw and the red skin

have spoken to each other, except through the war whoop. My father must wonder to see the great chief of the Ottawas without the hatchet in his hand.”

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“The hatchet often wounds those who use it unskillfully,” calmly returned the governor. “The Saganaw is not blind. The Ottawas, and the other tribes, find the war paint heavy on their skins. They see that my young men are not to be conquered, and they have sent the great head of all the nations to sue for peace.”

In spite of the habitual reserve and self-possession of his race, the haughty warrior could not repress a movement of impatience at the bold and taunting language of his enemy, and for a moment there was a fire in his eye that told how willingly he would have washed away the insult in his blood. The same low guttural exclamations that had previously escaped their lips, marked the sense entertained of the remark by his companions.

“My father is right,” pursued the chief, resuming his self-command; “the Ottawas, and the other tribes, ask for peace, but not because they are afraid of war. When they strike the hatchet into the war post, they leave it there until their enemies ask them to take it out.”

“Why come they now, then, to ask for peace?” was the cool demand.

The warrior hesitated, evidently at a loss to give a reply that could reconcile the palpable contradiction of his words.

“The rich furs of our forests have become many,” he at length observed, “since we first took up the hatchet against the Saganaw; and every bullet we keep for our enemies is a loss to our trade. We once exchanged furs with the children of our father of the pale flag. They gave us, in return, guns, blankets, powder, ball, and all that the red man requires in the hunting season. These are all expended; and my young men would deal with the Saganaw as they did with the French.”

“Good; the red skins would make peace; and although the arm of the Saganaw is strong, he will not turn a deaf ear to their desire.”

“All the strong holds of the Saganaw, except two, have fallen before the great chief of the Ottawas!” proudly returned the Indian, with a look of mingled scorn and defiance. “They, too, thought themselves beyond the reach of our tomahawks; but they were deceived. In less than a single moon nine of them have fallen, and the tents of my young warriors are darkened with their scalps; but this is past. If the red skin asks for peace, it is because he is tired of seeing the blood of the Saganaw on his tomahawk. Does my father hear?”

“We will listen to the great chief of the Ottawas, and hear what he has to say,” returned the governor, who, as well as the officers at his side, could with difficulty conceal their disgust and sorrow at the dreadful intelligence thus imparted of the fates of their companions. “But peace,” he pursued with dignity, “can only be made in the council



room, and under the sacred pledge of the calumet. The great chief has a wampum belt on his shoulder, and a calumet in his hand. His aged warriors, too, are at his side. What says the Ottawa? Will he enter? If so, the gate of the Saganaw shall be open to him.”



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The warrior started; and for a moment the confidence that had hitherto distinguished him seemed to give place to an apprehension of meditated treachery. He, however, speedily recovered himself, and observed emphatically, "It is the great head of all the nations whom my father invites to the council seat. Were he to remain in the hands of the Saganaw, his young men would lose their strength. They would bury the hatchet for ever in despair, and hide their faces in the laps of their women."

"Does the Ottawa chief see the pale flag on the strong hold of his enemies. While that continues to fly, he is safe as if he were under the cover of his own wigwam. If the Saganaw could use guile like the fox" (and this was said with marked emphasis), "what should prevent him from cutting off the Ottawa and his chiefs, even where they now stand?"

A half smile of derision passed over the dark cheek of the Indian. "If the arm of an Ottawa is strong," he said, "his foot is not less swift. The short guns of the chiefs of the Saganaw" (pointing to the pistols of the officers) "could not reach us; and before the voice of our father could be raised, or his eye turned, to call his warriors to his side, the Ottawa would be already far on his way to the forest."

"The great chief of the Ottawas shall judge better of the Saganaw," returned the governor.—"He shall see that his young men are ever watchful at their posts:—Up, men, and show yourselves."

A second or two sufficed to bring the whole, of Captain Erskine's company, who had been lying flat on their faces, to their feet on the rampart. The Indians were evidently taken by surprise, though they evinced no fear. The low and guttural "Ugh!" was the only expression they gave to their astonishment, not unmingled with admiration.

But, although the chiefs preserved their presence of mind, the sudden appearance of the soldiers had excited alarm among their warriors, who, grouped in and around the bomb-proof, were watching every movement of the conferring parties, with an interest proportioned to the risk they conceived their head men had incurred in venturing under the very walls of their enemies. Fierce yells were uttered; and more than a hundred dusky warriors, brandishing their tomahawks in air, leaped along the skirt of the common, evidently only awaiting the signal of their great chief, to advance and cover his retreat. At the command of the governor, however, the men had again suddenly disappeared from the surface of the rampart; so that when the Indians finally perceived their leader stood unharmed and unmolested, on the spot he had previously occupied, the excitement died away, and they once more assumed their attitude of profound attention.

"What thinks the great chief of the Ottawas now?" asked the governor;—"did he imagine that the young white men lie sleeping like beavers in their dams, when the hunter sets

his traps to catch them?—did he imagine that they foresee not the designs of their enemies? and that they are not always on the watch to prevent them?”



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“My father is a great warrior,” returned the Indian; “and if his arm is full of strength, his head is full of wisdom. The chiefs will no longer hesitate;—they will enter the strong hold of the Saganaw, and sit with him in the council.”

He next addressed a few words, and in a language not understood by those upon the walls, to one of the younger of the Indians. The latter acknowledged his sense and approbation of what was said to him by an assent and expressive “Ugh!” which came from his chest without any apparent emotion of the lips, much in the manner of a modern ventriloquist. He then hastened, with rapid and lengthened boundings, across the common towards his band. After the lapse of a minute or two from reaching them, another simultaneous cry arose, differing in expression from any that had hitherto been heard. It was one denoting submission to the will, and compliance with some conveyed desire, of their superior.

“Is the gate of the Saganaw open?” asked the latter, as soon as his ear had been greeted with the cry we have just named. “The Ottawa and the other great chiefs are ready;—their hearts are bold, and they throw themselves into the hands of the Saganaw without fear.”

“The Ottawa chief knows the path,” drily rejoined the governor: “when he comes in peace, it is ever open to him; but when his young men press it with the tomahawk in their hands, the big thunder is roused to anger, and they are scattered away like the leaves of the forest in the storm.” “Even now,” he pursued, as the little band of Indians moved slowly round the walls, “the gate of the Saganaw opens for the Ottawa and the other chiefs.”

“Let the most vigilant caution be used every where along the works, but especially in the rear,” continued the governor, addressing Captain Blessington, on whom the duty of the day had devolved. “We are safe, while their chiefs are with us; but still it will be necessary to watch the forest closely. We cannot be too much on our guard. The men had better remain concealed, every twentieth file only standing up to form a look-out chain. If any movement of a suspicious nature be observed, let it be communicated by the discharge of a single musket, that the drawbridge may be raised on the instant.” With the delivery of these brief instructions he quitted the rampart with the majority of his officers.

Meanwhile, hasty preparations had been made in the mess-room to receive the chiefs. The tables had been removed, and a number of clean rush mats, manufactured, after the Indian manner, into various figures and devices, spread carefully upon the floor. At the further end from the entrance was placed a small table and chair, covered with scarlet cloth. This was considerably elevated above the surface of the floor, and intended for the governor. On either side of the room, near these, were ranged a number of chairs for the accommodation of the inferior officers.



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Major Blackwater received the chiefs at the gate. With a firm, proud step, rendered more confident by his very unwillingness to betray any thing like fear, the tall, and, as Captain Erskine had justly designated him, the noble-looking Pontecac trod the yielding planks that might in the next moment cut him off from his people for ever. The other chiefs, following the example of their leader, evinced the same easy fearlessness of demeanour, nor glanced once behind them to see if there was any thing to justify the apprehension of hidden danger.

The Ottawa was evidently mortified at not being received by the governor in person. "My father is not here!" he said fiercely to the major:—"how is this? The Ottawa and the other chiefs are kings of all their tribes. The head of one great people should be received only by the head of another great people!"

"Our father sits in the council-hall," returned the major. "He has taken his seat, that he may receive the warriors with becoming honour. But I am the second chief, and our father has sent me to receive them."

To the proud spirit of the Indian this explanation scarcely sufficed. For a moment he seemed to struggle, as if endeavouring to stifle his keen sense of an affront put upon him. At length he nodded his head haughtily and condescendingly, in token of assent; and gathering up his noble form, and swelling out his chest, as if with a view to strike terror as well as admiration into the hearts of those by whom he expected to be surrounded, stalked majestically forward at the head of his confederates.

An indifferent observer, or one ignorant of these people, would have been at fault; but those who understood the workings of an Indian's spirit could not have been deceived by the tranquil exterior of these men. The rapid, keen, and lively glance—the suppressed sneer of exultation—the half start of surprise—the low, guttural, and almost inaudible "Ugh!"—all these indicated the eagerness with which, at one sly but compendious view, they embraced the whole interior of a fort which it was of such vital importance to their future interests they should become possessed of, yet which they had so long and so unsuccessfully attempted to subdue. As they advanced into the square, they looked around, expecting to behold the full array of their enemies; but, to their astonishment, not a soldier was to be seen. A few women and children only, in whom curiosity had overcome a natural loathing and repugnance to the savages, were peeping from the windows of the block houses. Even at a moment like the present, the fierce instinct of these latter was not to be controlled. One of the children, terrified at the wild appearance of the warriors, screamed violently, and clung to the bosom of its mother for protection. Fired at the sound, a young chief raised his hand to his lips, and was about to peal forth his terrible war whoop in the very centre of the fort, when the eye of the Ottawa suddenly arrested him.



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CHAPTER IV.

There were few forms of courtesy observed by the warriors towards the English officers on entering the council room. Pontecac, who had collected all his native haughtiness into one proud expression of look and figure, strode in without taking the slightest notice even of the governor. The other chiefs imitated his example, and all took their seats upon the matting in the order prescribed by their rank among the tribes, and their experience in council. The Ottawa chief sat at the near extremity of the room, and immediately facing the governor. A profound silence was observed for some minutes after the Indians had seated themselves, during which they proceeded to fill their pipes. The handle of that of the Ottawa chief was decorated with numerous feathers fancifully disposed.

“This is well,” at length observed the governor. “It is long since the great chiefs of the nations have smoked the sweet grass in the council hall of the Saganaw. What have they to say, that their young men may have peace to hunt the beaver, and to leave the print of their mocassins in the country of the Buffalo?—What says the Ottawa chief?”

“The Ottawa chief is a great warrior,” returned the other, haughtily; and again repudiating, in the indomitableness of his pride, the very views that a more artful policy had first led him to avow. “He has already said that, within a single moon, nine of the strong holds of the Saganaw have fallen into his hands, and that the scalps of the white men fill the tents of his warriors. If the red skins wish for peace, it is because they are sick with spilling the blood of their enemies. Does my father hear?”

“The Ottawa has been cunning, like the fox,” calmly returned the governor. “He went with deceit upon his lips, and said to the great chiefs of the strong holds of the Saganaw,—‘You have no more forts upon the lakes; they have all fallen before the red skins: they gave themselves into our hands; and we spared their lives, and sent them down to the great towns near the salt lake.’ But this was false: the chiefs of the Saganaw, believing what was said to them, gave up their strong holds; but their lives were not spared, and the grass of the Canadas is yet moist with their blood. Does the Ottawa hear?”

Amazement and stupefaction sat for a moment on the features of the Indians. The fact was as had been stated; and yet, so completely had the several forts been cut off from all communication, it was deemed almost impossible one could have received tidings of the fate of the other, unless conveyed through the Indians themselves.

“The spies of the Saganaw have been very quick to escape the vigilance of the red skins,” at length replied the Ottawa; “yet they have returned with a lie upon their lips. I swear by the Great Spirit, that nine of the strong holds of the Saganaw have been

destroyed. How could the Ottawa go with deceit upon his lips, when his words were truth?"

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“When the red skins said so to the warriors of the last forts they took, they said true; but when they went to the first, and said that all the rest had fallen, they used deceit. A great nation should overcome their enemies like warriors, and not seek to beguile them with their tongues under the edge of the scalping knife!”

“Why did the Saganaw come into the country of the red skins?” haughtily demanded the chief. “Why did they take our hunting grounds from us? Why have they strong places encircling the country of the Indians, like a belt of wampum round the waist of a warrior?”

“This is not true,” rejoined the governor. “It was not the Saganaw, but the warriors of the pale flag, who first came and took away the hunting grounds, and built the strong places. The great father of the Saganaw had beaten the great father of the pale flag quite out of the Canadas, and he sent his young men to take their place and to make peace with the red skins, and to trade with them, and to call them brothers.”

“The Saganaw was false,” retorted the Indian. “When a chief of the Saganaw came for the first time with his warriors into the country of the Ottawas, the chief of the Ottawas stood in his path, and asked him why, and from whom, he came? That chief was a bold warrior, and his heart was open, and the Ottawa liked him; and when he said he came to be friendly with the red skins, the Ottawa believed him, and he shook him by the hand, and said to his young men, ‘Touch not the life of a Saganaw; for their chief is the friend of the Ottawa chief, and his young men shall be the friends of the red warriors.’ Look,” he proceeded, marking his sense of the discovery by another of those ejaculatory “Ughs!” so expressive of surprise in an Indian, “at the right hand of my father I see a chief,” pointing to Captain Erskine, “who came with those of the Saganaw who first entered the country of the Detroit;—ask that chief if what the Ottawa says is not true. When the Saganaw said he came only to remove the warriors of the pale flag, that he might be friendly and trade with the red skins, the Ottawa received the belt of wampum he offered, and smoked the pipe of peace with him, and he made his men bring bags of parched corn to his warriors who wanted food, and he sent to all the nations on the lakes, and said to them, ‘The Saganaw must pass unhurt to the strong hold on the Detroit.’ But for the Ottawa, not a Saganaw would have escaped; for the nations were thirsting for their blood, and the knives of the warriors were eager to open their scalps. Ask the chief who sits at the right hand of my father,” he again energetically repeated, “if what the Ottawa says is not true.”



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“What the Ottawa says is true,” rejoined the governor; “for the chief who sits on my right hand has often said that, but for the Ottawa, the small number of the warriors of the Saganaw must have been cut off; and his heart is big with kindness to the Ottawa for what he did. But if the great chief meant to be friendly, why did he declare war after smoking the pipe of peace with the Saganaw? Why did he destroy the wigwams of the settlers, and carry off the scalps even of their weak women and children? All this has the Ottawa done; and yet he says that he wished to be friendly with my young men. But the Saganaw is not a fool. He knows the Ottawa chief had no will of his own. On the right hand of the Ottawa sits the great chief of the Delawares, and on his left the great chief of the Shawanees. They have long been the sworn enemies of the Saganaw; and they came from the rivers that run near the salt lake to stir up the red skins of the Detroit to war. They whispered wicked words in the ear of the Ottawa chief, and he determined to take up the bloody hatchet. This is a shame to a great warrior. The Ottawa was a king over all the tribes in the country of the fresh lakes, and yet he weakly took council like a woman from another.”

“My father lies!” fiercely retorted the warrior, half springing to his feet, and involuntarily putting his hand upon his tomahawk. “If the settlers of the Saganaw have fallen,” he resumed in a calmer tone, while he again sank upon his mat, “it is because they did not keep their faith with the red skins. When they came weak, and were not yet secure in their strong holds, their tongues were smooth and full of soft words; but when they became strong under the protection of their thunder, they no longer treated the red skins as their friends, and they laughed at them for letting them come into their country.” “But,” he pursued, elevating his voice, “the Ottawa is a great chief, and he will be respected.” Then adverting in bitterness to the influence supposed to be exercised over him,—“What my father has said is false. The Shawanees and the Delawares are great nations; but the Ottawas are greater than any, and their chiefs are full of wisdom. The Shawanees and the Delawares had no talk with the Ottawa chief to make him do what his own wisdom did not tell him.”

“Then, if the talk came not from the Shawanees and the Delawares, it came from the spies of the warriors of the pale flag. The great father of the French was angry with the great father of the Saganaw, because he conquered his warriors in many battles; and he sent wicked men to whisper lies of the Saganaw into the ears of the red skins, and to make them take up the hatchet against them. There is a tall spy at this moment in the camp of the red skins,” he pursued with earnestness, and yet paling as he spoke. “It is said he is the bosom friend of the great chief of the Ottawas. But I will not believe it. The head of a great nation would not be the friend of a spy—of one who is baser than a dog. His people would despise him; and they would say, ‘Our chief is not fit to sit in council, or to make war; for he is led by the word of a pale face who is without honour.’”



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The swarthy cheek of the Indian reddened, and his eye kindled into fire. "There is no spy, but a great warrior, in the camp of the Ottawas," he fiercely replied. "Though he came from the country that lies beyond the salt lake, he is now a chief of the red skins, and his arm is mighty, and his heart is big. Would my father know why he has become a chief of the Ottawas?" he pursued with scornful exultation. "When the strong holds of the Saganaw fell, the tomahawk of the 'white warrior' drank more blood than that of a red skin, and his tent is hung around with poles bending under the weight of the scalps he has taken. When the great chief of the Ottawas dies, the pale face will lead his warriors, and take the first seat in the council. The Ottawa chief is his friend."

"If the pale face be the friend of the Ottawa," pursued the governor, in the hope of obtaining some particular intelligence in regard to this terrible and mysterious being, "why is he not here to sit in council with the chiefs? Perhaps," he proceeded tauntingly, as he fancied he perceived a disinclination on the part of the Indian to account for the absence of the warrior, "the pale face is not worthy to take his place among the head men of the council. His arm may be strong like that of a warrior, but his head may be weak like that of a woman; or, perhaps, he is ashamed to show himself before the pale faces, who have turned him out of their tribe."

"My father lies!" again unceremoniously retorted the warrior. "If the friend of the Ottawa is not here, it is because his voice cannot speak. Does my father recollect the bridge on which he killed his young warrior? Does he recollect the terrible chase of the pale face by the friend of the Ottawa? Ugh!" he continued, as his attention was now diverted to another object of interest, "that pale face was swifter than any runner among the red skins, and for his fleetness he deserved to live to be a great hunter in the Canadas; but fear broke his heart,—fear of the friend of the Ottawa chief. The red skins saw him fall at the feet of the Saganaw without life, and they saw the young warriors bear him off in their arms. Is not the Ottawa right?" The Indian paused, threw his eye rapidly along the room, and then, fixing it on the governor, seemed to wait with deep but suppressed interest for his reply.

"Peace to the bones of a brave warrior!" seriously and evasively returned the governor: "the pale face is no longer in the land of the Canadas, and the young warriors of the Saganaw are sorry for his loss; but what would the Ottawa say of the bridge? and what has the pale warrior, the friend of the Ottawa, to do with it?"

A gleam of satisfaction pervaded the countenance of the Indian, as he eagerly bent his ear to receive the assurance that the fugitive was no more; but when allusion was again made to the strange warrior, his brow became overcast, and he replied with mingled haughtiness and anger,—



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“Does my father ask? He has dogs of spies among the settlers of the pale flag, but the tomahawk of the red skins will find them out, and they shall perish even as the Saganaw themselves. Two nights ago, when the warriors of the Ottawas were returning from their scout upon the common, they heard the voice of Onondato, the great wolf-dog of the friend of the Ottawa chief. The voice came from the bridge where the Saganaw killed his young warrior, and it called upon the red skins for assistance. My young men gave their war cry, and ran like wild deer to destroy the enemies of their chief; but when they came, the spies had fled, and the voice of Onondato was low and weak as that of a new fawn; and when the warriors came to the other end of the bridge, they found the pale chief lying across the road and covered over with blood. They thought he was dead, and their cry was terrible; for the pale warrior is a great chief, and the Ottawas love him; but when they looked again, they saw that the blood was the blood of Onondato, whose throat the spies of the Saganaw had cut, that he might not hunt them and give them to the tomahawk of the red skins.”

Frequent glances, expressive of their deep interest in the announcement of this intelligence, passed between the governor and his officers. It was clear the party who had encountered the terrible warrior of the Fleur de lis were not spies (for none were employed by the garrison), but their adventurous companions who had so recently quitted them. This was put beyond all doubt by the night, the hour, and the not less important feet of the locality; for it was from the bridge described by the Indian, near which the Canadian had stated his canoe to be chained, they were to embark on their perilous and uncertain enterprise. The question of their own escape from danger in this unlooked for collision with so powerful and ferocious an enemy, and of the fidelity of the Canadian, still remained involved in doubt, which it might be imprudent, if not dangerous, to seek to have resolved by any direct remark on the subject to the keen and observant warrior. The governor removed this difficulty by artfully observing,—

“The great chief of the Ottawas has said they were the spies of the Saganaw who killed the pale warrior. His young men has found them, then; or how could he know they were spies?”

“Is there a warrior among the Saganaw who dares to show himself in the path of the red skins, unless he come in strength and surrounded by his thunder?” was the sneering demand. “But my father is wrong, if he supposes the friend of the Ottawa is killed. No,” he pursued fiercely, “the dogs of spies could not kill him; they were afraid to face so terrible a warrior. They came behind him in the dark, and they struck him on the head like cowards and foxes as they were. The warrior of the pale face, and the friend of the Ottawa chief, is sick, but not dead. He lies without motion in his tent, and his voice cannot speak to his friend to tell him who were his enemies, that he may bring their scalps to hang up within his wigwam. But the great chief will soon be well, and his arm will be stronger than ever to spill the blood of the Saganaw as he has done before.”



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“The talk of the Ottawa chief is strange,” returned the governor, emphatically and with dignity. “He says he conies to smoke the pipe of peace with the Saganaw, and yet he talks of spilling their blood as if it was water from the lake. What does the Ottawa mean?”

“Ugh!” exclaimed the Indian, in his surprise. “My father is right, but the Ottawa and the Saganaw have not yet smoked together. When they have, the hatchet will be buried for ever. Until then, they are still enemies.”

During this long and important colloquy of the leading parties, the strictest silence had been preserved by the remainder of the council. The inferior chiefs had continued deliberately puffing the smoke from their curled lips, as they sat cross-legged on their mats, and nodding their heads at intervals in confirmation of the occasional appeal made by the rapid glance of the Ottawa, and uttering their guttural “Ugh!” whenever any observation of the parlant parties touched their feelings, or called forth their surprise. The officers had been no less silent and attentive listeners, to a conversation on the issue of which hung so many dear and paramount interests. A pause in the conference gave them an opportunity of commenting in a low tone on the communication made, in the strong excitement of his pride, by the Ottawa chief, in regard to the terrible warrior of the Fleur de lis; who, it was evident, swayed the councils of the Indians, and consequently exercised an influence over the ultimate destinies of the English, which it was impossible to contemplate without alarm. It was evident to all, from whatsoever cause it might arise, this man cherished a rancour towards certain individuals in the fort, inducing an anxiety in its reduction scarcely equalled by that entertained on the part of the Indians themselves. Beyond this, however, all was mystery and doubt; nor had any clue been given to enable them to arrive even at a well founded apprehension of the motives which had given birth to the vindictiveness of purpose, so universally ascribed to him even by the savages themselves.

The chiefs also availed themselves of this pause in the conversation of the principals, to sustain a low and animated discussion. Those of the Shawanee and Delaware nations were especially earnest; and, as they spoke across the Ottawa, betrayed, by their vehemence of gesture, the action of some strong feeling upon their minds, the precise nature of which could not be ascertained from their speech at the opposite extremity of the room. The Ottawa did not deign to join in their conversation, but sat smoking his pipe in all the calm and forbidding dignity of a proud Indian warrior conscious of his own importance.

“Does the great chief of the Ottawas, then, seek for peace in his heart at length?” resumed the governor; “or is he come to the strong hold of Detroit, as he went to the other strong holds, with deceit on his lips?”



The Indian slowly removed his pipe from his mouth, fixed his keen eye searchingly on that of the questioner for nearly a minute, and then briefly and haughtily said, "The Ottawa chief has spoken."

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“And do the great chiefs of the Shawanees, and the great chiefs of the Delawares, and the great chiefs of the other nations, ask for peace also?” demanded the governor. “If so, let them speak for themselves, and for their warriors.”

We will not trespass on the reader, on whom we have already inflicted too much of this scene, by a transcript of the declarations of the inferior chiefs. Suffice it to observe, each in his turn avowed motives similar to those of the Ottawa for wishing the hatchet might be buried for ever, and that their young men should mingle once more in confidence, not only with the English troops, but with the settlers, who would again be brought into the country at the cessation of hostilities. When each had spoken, the Ottawa passed the pipe of ceremony, with which he was provided, to the governor.

The latter put it to his lips, and commenced smoking. The Indians keenly, and half furtively, watched the act; and looks of deep intelligence, that escaped not the notice of the equally anxious and observant officers, passed among them.

“The pipe of the great chief of the Ottawas smokes well,” calmly remarked the governor; “but the Ottawa chief, in his hurry to come and ask for peace, has made a mistake. The pipe and all its ornaments are red like blood: it is the pipe of war, and not the pipe of peace. The great chief of the Ottawas will be angry with himself; he has entered the strong hold of the Saganaw, and sat in the council, without doing any good for his young men. The Ottawa must come again.”

A deep but subdued expression of disappointment passed over the features of the chiefs. They watched the countenances of the officers, to see whether the substitution of one pipe for the other had been attributed, in their estimation, to accident or design. There was nothing, however, to indicate the slightest doubt of their sincerity.

“My father is right,” replied the Indian, with an appearance of embarrassment, which, whether natural or feigned, had nothing suspicious in it. “The great chief of the Ottawas has been foolish, like an old woman. The young chiefs of his tribe will laugh at him for this. But the Ottawa chief will come again, and the other chiefs with him, for, as my father sees, they all wish for peace; and that my father may know all the nations wish for peace, as well as their head men, the warriors of the Ottawa, and of the Shawanee, and of the Delaware, shall play at ball upon the common, to amuse his young men, while the chiefs sit in council with the chiefs of the Saganaw. The red skins shall come naked, and without their rifles and their tomahawks; and even the squaws of the warriors shall come upon the common, to show the Saganaw they may be without fear. Does my father hear?”

“The Ottawa chief says well,” returned the governor; “but will the pale friend of the Ottawa come also to take his seat in the council hall? The great chief has said the pale warrior has become the second chief among the Ottawas; and that when he is dead, the pale warrior will lead the Ottawas, and take the first seat in the council. He, too, should

smoke the pipe of peace with the Saganaw, that they may know he is no longer their enemy.”



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The Indian hesitated, uttering merely his quick ejaculatory "Ugh!" in expression of his surprise at so unexpected a requisition. "The pale warrior, the friend of the Ottawa, is very sick," he at length said; "but if the Great Spirit should give him back his voice before the chiefs come again to the council, the pale face will come too. If my father does not see him then, he will know the friend of the Ottawa chief is very sick."

The governor deemed it prudent not to press the question too closely, lest in so doing he should excite suspicion, and defeat his own object. "When will the Ottawa and the other chiefs come again?" he asked; "and when will their warriors play at ball upon the common, that the Saganaw may see them and be amused?"

"When the sun has travelled so many times," replied Pontecac, holding up three fingers of his left hand. "Then will the Ottawa and the other chiefs bring their young warriors and their women."

"It is too soon," was the reply; "the Saganaw must have time to collect their presents, that they may give them to the young warriors who are swiftest in the race, and the most active at the ball. The great chief of the Ottawas, too, must let the settlers of the pale flag, who are the friends of the red skins, bring in food for the Saganaw, that a great feast may be given to the chiefs, and to the warriors, and that the Saganaw may make peace with the Ottawas and the other nations as becomes a great people. In twice so many days," holding up three of his fingers in imitation of the Indian, "the Saganaw will be ready to receive the chiefs in council, that they may smoke the pipe of peace, and bury the hatchet for ever. What says the great chief of the Ottawas?"

"It is good," was the reply of the Indian, his eye lighting up with deep and exulting expression. "The settlers of the pale flag shall bring food to the Saganaw. The Ottawa chief will send them, and he will desire his young men not to prevent them. In so many days, then," indicating with his fingers, "the great chiefs will sit again in council with the Saganaw, and the Ottawa chief will not be a fool to bring the pipe he does not want."

With this assurance the conference terminated. Pontecac raised his tall frame from the mat on which he had been squatted, nodded condescendingly to the governor, and strode haughtily into the square or area of the fort. The other chiefs followed his example; and to Major Blackwater was again assigned the duty of accompanying them without the works. The glance of the savages, and that of Pontecac in particular, was less wary than at their entrance. Each seemed to embrace every object on which the eye could rest, as if to fix its position indelibly in his memory. The young chief, who had been so suddenly and opportunely checked while in the very act of peeling forth his terrible war whoop, again looked up at the windows of the block house, in quest of those whom his savage instinct had already devoted

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in intention to his tomahawk, but they were no longer there. Such was the silence that reigned every where, the fort appeared to be tenanted only by the few men of the guard, who lingered near their stations, attentively watching the Indians, as they passed towards the gate. A very few minutes sufficed to bring the latter once more in the midst of their warriors, whom, for a few moments, they harangued earnestly, when the whole body again moved off in the direction of their encampment.

CHAPTER V.

The week that intervened between the visit of the chiefs and the day appointed for their second meeting in council, was passed by the garrison in perfect freedom from alarm, although, as usual, in diligent watchfulness and preparations for casualties. In conformity with his promise, the Indian had despatched many of the Canadian settlers, with such provisions as the country then afforded, to the governor, and these, happy to obtain the gold of the troops in return for what they could conveniently spare, were not slow in availing themselves of the permission. Dried bears' meat, venison, and Indian corn, composed the substance of these supplies, which were in sufficient abundance to produce a six weeks' increase to the stock of the garrison. Hitherto they had been subsisting, in a great degree, upon salt provisions; the food furtively supplied by the Canadians being necessarily, from their dread of detection, on so limited a scale, that a very small portion of the troops had been enabled to profit by it. This, therefore, was an important and unexpected benefit, derived from the falling in of the garrison with the professed views of the savages; and one which, perhaps, few officers would, like Colonel de Haldimar, have possessed the forethought to have secured. But although it served to relieve the animal wants of the man, there was little to remove his moral inquietude. Discouraged by the sanguinary character of the warfare in which they seemed doomed to be for ever engaged, and harassed by constant watchings,—seldom taking off their clothes for weeks together,—the men had gradually been losing their energy of spirit, in the contemplation of the almost irremediable evils by which they were beset; and looked forward with sad and disheartening conviction to a fate, that all things tended to prove to them was unavoidable, however the period of its consummation might be protracted. Among the officers, this dejection, although proceeding from a different cause, was no less prevalent; and notwithstanding they sought to disguise it before their men, when left to themselves, they gave unlimited rein to a despondency hourly acquiring strength, as the day fixed on for the second council with the Indians drew near.



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At length it came, that terrible and eventful day, and, as if in mockery of those who saw no beauty in its golden beams, arrayed in all the gorgeous softness of its autumnal glory. Sad and heavy were the hearts of many within that far distant and isolated fort, as they rose, at the first glimmering of light above the horizon, to prepare for the several duties assigned them. All felt the influence of a feeling that laid prostrate the moral energies even of the boldest: but there was one young officer in particular, who exhibited a dejection, degenerating almost into stupefaction; and more than once, when he received an order from his superior, hesitated as one who either heard not, or, in attempting to perform it, mistook the purport of his instructions, and executed some entirely different duty. The countenance of this officer, whose attenuated person otherwise bore traces of languor and debility, but too plainly marked the abstractedness and terror of his mind, while the set stiff features and contracted muscles of the face contributed to give an expression of vacuity, that one who knew him not might have interpreted unfavourably. Several times, during the inspection of his company at the early parade, he was seen to raise his head, and throw forward his ear, as if expecting to catch the echo of some horrible and appalling cry, until the men themselves remarked, and commented, by interchange of looks, on the singular conduct of their officer, whose thoughts had evidently no connection with the duty he was performing, or the spot on which he stood.

When this customary inspection had been accomplished,—how imperfectly, has been seen,—and the men dismissed from their ranks, the same young officer was observed, by one who followed his every movement with interest, to ascend that part of the rampart which commanded an unbroken view of the country westward, from the point where the encampment of the Indians was supposed to lie, down to the bridge on which the terrible tragedy of Halloway's death had been so recently enacted. Unconscious of the presence of two sentinels, who moved to and fro near their respective posts, on either side of him, the young officer folded his arms, and gazed in that direction for some minutes, with his whole soul riveted on the scene. Then, as if overcome by recollections called up by that on which he gazed, he covered his eyes hurriedly with his hands, and betrayed, by the convulsed movement of his slender form, he was weeping bitterly. This paroxysm past, he uncovered his face, sank with one knee upon the ground, and upraising his clasped hands, as if in appeal to his God, seemed to pray deeply and fervently. In this attitude he continued for some moments, when he became sensible of the approach of an intruder. He raised himself from his knee, turned, and beheld one whose countenance was stamped with a dejection scarcely inferior to his own. It was Captain Blessington.

“Charles, my dear Charles!” exclaimed the latter hurriedly, as he laid his hand upon the shoulder of the emaciated De Haldimar, “consider you are not alone. For God's sake, check this weakness! There are men observing you on every side, and your strange manner has already been the subject of remark in the company.”



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“When the heart is sick, like mine,” replied the youth, in a tone of fearful despondency, “it is alike reckless of forms, and careless of appearances. I trust, however,” and here spoke the soldier, “there are few within this fort who will believe me less courageous, because I have been seen to bend my knee in supplication to my God. I did not think that *you*, Blessington, would have been the first to condemn the act.”

“I condemn it, Charles! you mistake me, indeed you do,” feelingly returned his captain, secretly pained at the mild reproach contained in the concluding sentence; “but there are two things to be considered. In the first instance, the men, who are yet in ignorance of the great evils with which we are threatened, may mistake the cause of your agitation; you were in tears just now, Charles, and the sentinels must have remarked it as well as myself. I would not have them to believe that one of their officers was affected by the anticipation of coming disaster, in a way their own hearts are incapable of estimating. You understand me, Charles? I would not have them too much discouraged by an example that may become infectious.”

“I *do* understand you, Blessington,” and a forced and sickly smile played for a moment over the wan yet handsome features of the young officer; “you would not have me appear a weeping coward in their eyes.”

“Nay, dear Charles, I did not say it.”

“But you meant it, Blessington; yet, think not,”—and he warmly pressed the hand of his captain,—“think not, I repeat, I take your hint in any other than the friendly light in which it was intended. That I have been no coward, however, I hope I have given proof more than once before the men, most of whom have known me from my very cradle; yet, whatever they may think, is to me, at this moment, a matter of utter indifference. Blessington,” and again the tears rolled from his fixed eyes over his cheek, while he pointed with his finger to the western horizon, “I have neither thought nor feeling for myself; my whole heart lies buried there. Oh, God of Heaven!” he pursued after a pause, and again raising his eyes in supplication, “avert the dreadful destiny that awaits my beloved sister.”

“Charles, Charles, if only for that sister’s sake, then, calm an agitation which, if thus indulged in, will assuredly destroy you. All will yet be well. The delay obtained by your father has been sufficient for the purpose proposed. Let us hope for the best: if we are deceived in our expectation, it will then be time enough to indulge in a grief, which could scarcely be exceeded, were the fearful misgivings of your mind to be realised before your eyes.”



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“Blessington,” returned the young officer,—and his features exhibited the liveliest image of despair,—“all hope has long since been extinct within my breast. See you yon theatre of death?” he mournfully pursued, pointing to the fatal bridge, which was thrown into full relief against the placid bosom of the Detroit: “recollect you the scene that was acted on it? As for me, it is ever present to my mind,—it haunts me in my thoughts by day, and in my dreams by night. I shall never forget it while memory is left to curse me with the power of retrospection. On the very spot on which I now stand was I borne in a chair, to witness the dreadful punishment; you see the stone at my feet, I marked it by that. I saw you conduct Halloway to the centre of the bridge; I beheld him kneel to receive his death; I saw, too, the terrible race for life, that interrupted the proceedings; I marked the sudden upspring of Halloway to his feet upon the coffin, and the exulting waving of his hand, as he seemed to recognise the rivals for mastery in that race. Then was heard the fatal volley, and I saw the death-struggle of him who had saved my brother’s life. I could have died, too, at that moment; and would to Providence I had! but it was otherwise decreed. My aching interest was, for a moment, diverted by the fearful chase now renewed upon the height; and, in common with those around me, I watched the efforts of the pursuer and the pursued with painful earnestness and doubt as to the final result. Ah, Blessington, why was not this all? The terrible shriek, uttered at the moment when the fugitive fell, apparently dead, at the feet of the firing party, reached us even here. I felt as if my heart must have burst, for I knew it to be the shriek of poor Ellen Halloway,—the suffering wife,—the broken-hearted woman who had so recently, in all the wild abandonment of her grief, wetted my pillow, and even my cheek, with her burning tears, while supplicating an intercession with my father for mercy, which I knew it would be utterly fruitless to promise. Oh, Blessington,” pursued the sensitive and affectionate young officer, “I should vainly attempt to paint all that passed in my mind at that dreadful moment. Nothing but the depth of my despair gave me strength to support the scene throughout. I saw the frantic and half-naked woman glide like a phantom past the troops, dividing the air with the rapidity of thought. I knew it to be Ellen; for the discovery of her exchange of clothes with one of the drum boys of the grenadiers was made soon after you left the fort. I saw her leap upon the coffin, and, standing over the body of her unhappy husband, raise her hands to heaven in adjuration, and my heart died within me. I recollected the words she had spoken on a previous occasion, during the first examination of Halloway, and I felt it to be the prophetic denunciation, then threatened, that she was now uttering on all the race of De Haldimar. I saw no more, Blessington.



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Sick, dizzy, and with every faculty of my mind annihilated, I turned away from the horrid scene, and was again borne to my room. I tried to give vent to my overcharged heart in tears; but the power was denied me, and I sank at once into that stupefaction which you have since remarked in me, and which has been increasing every hour. What additional cause I have had for the indulgence of this confirmed despondency you are well acquainted with. It is childish, it is unsoldierlike, I admit: but, alas! that dreadful scene is eternally before my eyes, and absorbs my mind, to the exclusion of every other feeling. I have not a thought or a care but for the fate that too certainly awaits those who are most dear to me; and if this be a weakness, it is one I shall never have the power to shake off. In a word, Blessington, I am heart-broken.”

Captain Blessington was deeply affected; for there was a solemnity in the voice and manner of the young officer that carried conviction to the heart; and it was some moments before he could so far recover himself as to observe,—

“That scene, Charles, was doubtless a heart-rending one to us all; for I well recollect, on turning to remark the impression made on my men when the wretched Ellen Halloway pronounced her appalling curse to have seen the large tears coursing each other over the furrowed cheeks of some of our oldest soldiers: and if *they* could feel thus, how much more acute must have been the grief of those immediately interested in its application!”

“*Their* tears were not for the denounced race of De Haldimar,” returned the youth,—
“they were shed for their unhappy comrade—they were wrung from their stubborn hearts by the agonising grief of the wife of Halloway.”

“That this was the case in part, I admit,” returned Captain Blessington. “The feelings of the men partook of a mixed character. It was evident that grief for Halloway, compassion for his wife, secret indignation and, it may be, disgust at the severity of your father, and sorrow for his innocent family, who were included in that denunciation, predominated with equal force in their hearts at the same moment. There was an expression that told how little they would have pitied any anguish of mind inflicted on their colonel, provided his children, whom they loved, were not to be sacrificed to its accomplishment.”

“You admit, then, Blessington, although indirectly,” replied the young De Haldimar in a voice of touching sorrow, “that the consummation of the sacrifice *is* to be looked for. Alas! it is that on which my mind perpetually lingers; yet, Heaven knows, my fears are not for myself.”



“You mistake me, dearest Charles. I look upon the observations of the unhappy woman as the ravings of a distracted mind—the last wild outpourings of a broken heart, turning with animal instinct on the hand that has inflicted its death-blow.”



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“Ah, why did she except no one member of that family!” said the unhappy De Haldimar, pursuing rather the chain of his reflections than replying to the observation of his captain. “Had the weight of her malediction fallen on all else than my adored sister, I could have borne the infliction, and awaited the issue with resignation, if not without apprehension. But my poor gentle and unoffending Clara,—alike innocent of the cause, and ignorant of the effect,—what had she done to be included in this terrible curse?—she, who, in the warm and generous affection of her nature, had ever treated Ellen Halloway rather as a sister than as the dependant she always appeared.” Again he covered his eyes with his hands, to conceal the starting tears.

“De Haldimar,” said Captain Blessington reprovingly, but mildly, “this immoderate grief is wrong—it is unmanly, and should be repressed. I can feel and understand the nature of your sorrow; but others may not judge so favourably. We shall soon be summoned to fall in; and I would not that Mr. Delme, in particular, should notice an emotion he is so incapable of understanding.”

The hand of the young officer dropped from his face to the hilt of his sword. His cheek became scarlet; and even through the tears which he half choked himself to command, there was an unwonted flashing from his blue eye, that told how deeply the insinuation had entered into his heart.

“Think you, Captain Blessington,” he proudly retorted, “there is an officer in the fort who should dare to taunt me with my feelings as you have done? I came here, sir, in the expectation I should be alone. At a fitting hour I shall be found where Captain Blessington’s subaltern should be—with his company.”

“De Haldimar—dear De Haldimar, forgive me!” returned his captain. “Heaven knows I would not, on any consideration, wantonly inflict pain on your sensitive heart. My design was to draw you out of this desponding humour; and with this view I sought to arouse your pride, but certainly not to wound your feelings. De Haldimar,” he concluded, with marked expression, “you must not, indeed, feel offended with one who has known and esteemed you from very boyhood. Friendship and interest in your deep affliction of spirit alone brought me here—the same feelings prompted my remark. Do you not believe me?”

“I do,” impressively returned the young man, grasping the hand that was extended to him in amity. “It is I, rather, Blessington, who should ask you to forgive my petulance; but, indeed, indeed,” and again his tone faltered, and his eye was dimmed, “I am more wretched even than I am willing to confess. Pardon my silly conduct—it was but the vain and momentary flashing of the soldier’s spirit impatient of an assumed imputation, and the man less than the profession is to be taxed with it. But it is past; and already do you behold me once more the tame and apprehensive being I must ever continue until all is over.”



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“What can I possibly urge to console one who seems so willing to nurse into conviction all the melancholy imaginings of a diseased mind,” observed Captain Blessington, in a voice that told how deeply he felt for the situation of his young friend. “Recollect, dearest Charles, the time that has been afforded to our friends. More than a week has gone by since they left the fort, and a less period was deemed sufficient for their purpose. Before this they must have gained their destination. In fact, it is my positive belief they have; for there could be nothing to detect them in their disguise. Had I the famous lamp of Aladdin,” he pursued, in a livelier tone, “over the history of which Clara and yourself used to spend so many hours in childhood, I have no doubt I could show them to you quietly seated within the fort, recounting their adventures to Clara and her cousin, and discoursing of their absent friends.”

“Would I to Heaven you had the power to do so!” replied De Haldimar, smiling faintly at the conceit, while a ray of hope beamed for a moment upon his sick soul; “for then, indeed, would all my fears for the present be at rest. But you forget, Blessington, the encounter stated to have taken place between them and that terrible stranger near the bridge. Besides, is it not highly probable the object of their expedition was divined by that singular and mysterious being, and that means have been taken to intercept their passage? If so, all hope is at an end.”

“Why persevere in viewing only the more sombre side of the picture?” returned his friend. “In your anxiety to anticipate evil, Charles, you have overlooked one important fact. Pontecac distinctly stated that his ruffian friend was still lying deprived of consciousness and speech within his tent, and yet two days had elapsed since the encounter was said to have taken place. Surely we have every reason then to infer they were beyond all reach of pursuit, even admitting, what is by no means probable the recovery of the wretch immediately after the return of the chiefs from the council.”

A gleam of satisfaction, but so transient as to be scarcely noticeable, passed over the pale features of the youthful De Haldimar. He looked his thanks to the kind officer who was thus solicitous to tender him consolation; and was about to reply, when the attention of both was diverted by the report of a musket from the rear of the fort. Presently afterwards, the word was passed along the chain of sentinels, upon the ramparts, that the Indians were issuing in force from the forest upon the common near the bomb-proof. Then was heard, as the sentinel at the gate delivered the password, the heavy roll of the drum summoning to arms.

“Ha! here already!” said Captain Blessington, as, glancing towards the forest, he beheld the skirt of the wood now alive with dusky human forms: “Pontecac’s visit is earlier than we had been taught to expect; but we are as well prepared to receive him now, as later; and, in fact, the sooner the interview is terminated, the sooner we shall know what we have to depend upon. Come, Charles, we must join the company, and let me entreat you to evince less despondency before the men. It is hard, I know, to sustain an

artificial character under such disheartening circumstances; still, for example's sake, it must be done."



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“What I can I will do, Blessington,” rejoined the youth, as they both moved from the ramparts; “but the task is, in truth, one to which I find myself wholly unequal. How do I know that, even at this moment, my defenceless, terrified, and innocent sister may not be invoking the name and arm of her brother to save her from destruction.”

“Trust in Providence, Charles. Even although our worst apprehensions be realised, as I fervently trust they will not, your sister may be spared. The Canadian could not have been unfaithful, or we should have learnt something of his treachery from the Indians. Another week will confirm us in the truth or fallacy of our impressions. Until then, let us arm our hearts with hope. Trust me, we shall yet see the laughing eyes of Clara fill with tears of affection, as I recount to her all her too sensitive and too desponding brother has suffered for her sake.”

De Haldimar made no reply. He deeply felt the kind intention of his captain, but was far from cherishing the hope that had been recommended. He sighed heavily, pressed the arm, on which he leaned, in gratitude for the motive, and moved silently with his friend to join their company below the rampart.

CHAPTER VI.

Meanwhile the white flag had again been raised by the Indians upon the bomb-proof; and this having been readily met by a corresponding signal from the fort, a numerous band of savages now issued from the cover with which their dark forms had hitherto been identified, and spread themselves far and near upon the common. On this occasion they were without arms, offensive or defensive, of any kind, if we may except the knife which was always carried at the girdle, and which constituted a part rather of their necessary dress than of their warlike equipment. These warriors might have been about five hundred in number, and were composed chiefly of picked men from the nations of the Ottawas, the Delawares, and the Shawanees; each race being distinctly recognisable from the others by certain peculiarities of form and feature which individualised, if we may so term it, the several tribes. Their only covering was the legging before described, composed in some instances of cloth, but principally of smoked deerskin, and the flap that passed through the girdle around the loins, by which the straps attached to the leggings were secured. Their bodies, necks, and arms were, with the exception of a few slight ornaments, entirely naked; and even the blanket, that served them as a couch by night and a covering by day, had, with one single exception, been dispensed with, apparently with a view to avoid any thing like encumbrance in their approaching sport. Each individual was provided with a stout sapling of about three feet in length, curved, and flattened at the root extremity, like that used at the Irish hurdle; which game, in fact, the manner of ball-playing among the Indians in every way resembled.

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Interspersed among these warriors were a nearly equal number of squaws. These were to be seen lounging carelessly about in small groups, and were of all ages; from the hoary-headed, shrivelled-up hag, whose eyes still sparkled with a fire that her lank and attenuated frame denied, to the young girl of twelve, whose dark and glowing cheek, rounded bust, and penetrating glance, bore striking evidence of the precociousness of Indian beauty. These latter looked with evident interest on the sports of the younger warriors, who, throwing down their hurdles, either vied with each other in the short but incredibly swift foot-race, or indulged themselves in wrestling and leaping; while their companions, abandoned to the full security they felt to be attached to the white flag waving on the fort, lay at their lazy length upon the sward, ostensibly following the movements of the several competitors in these sports, but in reality with heart and eye directed solely to the fortification that lay beyond. Each of these females, in addition to the machecoti, or petticoat, which in one solid square of broad-cloth was tightly wrapped around the loins, also carried a blanket loosely thrown around the person, but closely confined over the shoulders in front, and reaching below the knee. There was an air of constraint in their movements, which accorded ill with the occasion of festivity for which they were assembled; and it was remarkable, whether it arose from deference to those to whom they were slaves, as well as wives and daughters, or from whatever other cause it might be, none of them ventured to recline themselves upon the sward in imitation of the warriors.

When it had been made known to the governor that the Indians had begun to develop themselves in force upon the common unarmed, yet redolent with the spirit that was to direct their meditated sports, the soldiers were dismissed from their respective companies to the ramparts; where they were now to be seen, not drawn up in formidable and hostile array, but collected together in careless groups, and simply in their side-arms. This reciprocation of confidence on the part of the garrison was acknowledged by the Indians by marks of approbation, expressed as much by the sudden and classic disposition of their fine forms into attitudes strikingly illustrative of their admiration and pleasure, as by the interjectional sounds that passed from one to the other of the throng. From the increased alacrity with which they now lent themselves to the preparatory and inferior amusements of the day, it was evident their satisfaction was complete.

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Hitherto the principal chiefs had, as on the previous occasion, occupied the bomb-proof; and now, as then, they appeared to be deliberating among themselves, but evidently in a more energetic and serious manner. At length they separated, when Pontecac, accompanied by the chiefs who had attended him on the former day, once more led in the direction of the fort. The moment of his advance was the signal for the commencement of the principal game. In an instant those of the warriors who lay reclining on the sward sprang to their feet, while the wrestlers and racers resumed their hurdles, and prepared themselves for the trial of mingled skill and swiftness. At first they formed a dense group in the centre of the common; and then, diverging in two equal files both to the right and to the left of the immediate centre, where the large ball was placed, formed an open chain, extending from the skirt of the forest to the commencement of the village. On the one side were ranged the Delawares and the Shawanees, and on the other the more numerous nation of the Ottawas. The women of these several tribes, apparently much interested in the issue of an amusement in which the manliness and activity of their respective friends were staked, had gradually and imperceptibly gained the front of the fort, where they were now huddled in groups at about twenty paces from the drawbridge, and bending eagerly forward to command the movements of the ball-players.

In his circuit round the walls, Pontecac was seen to remark the confiding appearance of the unarmed soldiery with a satisfaction that was not sought to be disguised; and from the manner in which he threw his glance along each face of the rampart, it was evident his object was to embrace the numerical strength collected there. It was moreover observed, when he passed the groups of squaws on his way to the gate, he addressed some words in a strange tongue to the elder matrons of each.

Once more the dark warriors were received at the gate by Major Blackwater; and, as with firm but elastic tread, they moved across the square, each threw his fierce eyes rapidly and anxiously around, and with less of concealment in his manner than had been manifested on the former occasion. On every hand the same air of nakedness and desertion met their gaze. Not even a soldier of the guard was to be seen; and when they cast their eyes upwards to the windows of the blockhouses, they were found to be tenantless as the area through which they passed. A gleam of fierce satisfaction pervaded the swarthy countenances of the Indians; and the features of Pontecac, in particular, expressed the deepest exultation. Instead of leading his party, he now brought up the rear; and when arrived in the centre of the fort, he, without any visible cause for the accident, stumbled, and fell to the earth. The other chiefs for a moment lost sight of their ordinary gravity, and marked their sense of the circumstance by a prolonged sound, partaking



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of the mingled character of a laugh and a yell. Startled at the cry, Major Blackwater, who was in front, turned to ascertain the cause. At that moment Pontecac sprang lightly again to his feet, responding to the yell of his confederates by another even more startling, fierce, and prolonged than their own. He then stalked proudly to the head of the party, and even preceded Major Blackwater into the council room.

In this rude theatre of conference some changes had been made since their recent visit, which escaped not the observation of the quick-sighted chiefs. Their mats lay in the position they had previously occupied, and the chairs of the officers were placed as before, but the room itself had been considerably enlarged. The slight partition terminating the interior extremity of the mess-room, and dividing it from that of one of the officers, had been removed; and midway through this, extending entirely across, was drawn a curtain of scarlet cloth, against which the imposing figure of the governor, elevated as his seat was above those of the other officers, was thrown into strong relief. There was another change, that escaped not the observation of the Indians, and that was, not more than one half of the officers who had been present at the first conference being now in the room. Of these latter, one had, moreover, been sent away by the governor the moment the chiefs were ushered in.

“Ugh!” ejaculated the proud leader, as he took his seat unceremoniously, and yet not without reluctance, upon the mat. “The council-room of my father is bigger than when the Ottawa was here before, yet the number of his chiefs is not so many.”

“The great chief of the Ottawas knows that the Saganaw has promised the red skins a feast,” returned the governor. “Were he to leave it to his young warriors to provide it, he would not be able to receive the Ottawa like a great chief, and to make peace with him as he could wish.”

“My father has a great deal of cloth, red, like the blood of a pale face,” pursued the Indian, rather in demand than in observation, as he pointed with his finger to the opposite end of the room. “When the Ottawa was here last, he did not see it.”

“The great chief of the Ottawas knows that the great father of the Saganaw has a big heart to make presents to the red skins. The cloth the Ottawa sees there is sufficient to make leggings for the chiefs of all the nations.”

Apparently satisfied with this reply, the fierce Indian uttered one of his strong guttural and assentient “ughs,” and then commenced filling the pipe of peace, correct on the present occasion in all its ornaments, which was handed to him by the Delaware chief. It was remarked by the officers this operation took up an unusually long portion of his time, and that he frequently turned his ear, like a horse stirred by the huntsman’s horn, with quick and irrepressible eagerness towards the door.



“The pale warrior, the friend of the Ottawa chief, is not here,” said the governor, as he glanced his eye along the semicircle of Indians. “How is this? Is his voice still sick, that he cannot come; or has the great chief of the Ottawas forgotten to tell him?”



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“The voice of the pale warrior is still sick, and he cannot speak,” replied the Indian. “The Ottawa chief is very sorry; for the tongue of his friend the pale face is full of wisdom.”

Scarcely had the last words escaped his lips, when a wild shrill cry from without the fort rang on the ears of the assembled council, and caused a momentary commotion among the officers. It arose from a single voice, and that voice could not be mistaken by any who had heard it once before. A second or two, during which the officers and chiefs kept their eyes intently fixed on each other, passed anxiously away, and then nearer to the gate, apparently on the very drawbridge itself, was pealed forth the wild and deafening yell of a legion of devilish voices. At that sound, the Ottawa and the other chiefs sprang to their feet, and their own fierce cry responded to that yet vibrating on the ears of all. Already were their gleaming tomahawks brandished wildly over their heads, and Pontiac had even bounded a pace forward to reach the governor with the deadly weapon, when, at the sudden stamping of the foot of the latter upon the floor, the scarlet cloth in the rear was thrown aside, and twenty soldiers, their eyes glancing along the barrels of their levelled muskets, met the startled gaze of the astonished Indians.

An instant was enough to satisfy the keen chief of the true state of the case. The calm composed mien of the officers, not one of whom had even attempted to quit his seat, amid the din by which his ears were so alarmingly assailed,—the triumphant, yet dignified, and even severe expression of the governor’s countenance; and, above all, the unexpected presence of the prepared soldiery,—all these at once assured him of the discovery of his treachery, and the danger that awaited him. The necessity for an immediate attempt to join his warriors without, was now obvious to the Ottawa; and scarcely had he conceived the idea before it was sought to be executed. In a single spring he gained the door of the mess-room, and, followed eagerly and tumultuously by the other chiefs, to whose departure no opposition was offered, in the next moment stood on the steps of the piazza that ran along the front of the building whence he had issued.

The surprise of the Indians on reaching this point, was now too powerful to be dissembled; and, incapable either of advancing or receding, they remained gazing on the scene before them with an air of mingled stupefaction, rage, and alarm. Scarcely ten minutes had elapsed since they had proudly strode through the naked area of the fort; and yet, even in that short space of time, its appearance had been entirely changed. Not a part was there now of the surrounding buildings that was not redolent with human life, and hostile preparation. Through every window of the officers’ low rooms, was to be seen the dark and frowning muzzle of a field-piece, bearing upon the gateway; and behind these were artillerymen, holding their lighted matches,

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supported again by files of bayonets, that glittered in their rear. In the block-houses the same formidable array of field-pieces and muskets was visible; while from the four angles of the square, as many heavy guns, that had been artfully masked at the entrance of the chiefs, seemed ready to sweep away every thing that should come before them. The guard-room near the gate presented the same hostile front. The doors of this, as well as of the other buildings, had been firmly secured within; but from every window affording cover to the troops, gleamed a line of bayonets rising above the threatening field-pieces, pointed, at a distance of little more than twelve feet, directly upon the gateway. In addition to his musket, each man of the guard moreover held a hand grenade, provided with a short fuze that could be ignited in a moment from the matches of the gunners, and with immediate effect. The soldiers in the block-houses were similarly provided.

Almost magic as was the change thus suddenly effected in the appearance of the garrison, it was not the most interesting feature in the exciting scene. Choking up the gateway, in which they were completely wedged, and crowding the drawbridge, a dense mass of dusky Indians were to be seen casting their fierce glances around; yet paralysed in their movements by the unlooked-for display of a resisting force, threatening instant annihilation to those who should attempt either to advance or to recede. Never, perhaps, were astonishment and disappointment more forcibly depicted on the human countenance, than as they were now exhibited by these men, who had already, in imagination, secured to themselves an easy conquest. They were the warriors who had so recently been engaged in the manly yet innocent exercise of the ball; but, instead of the harmless hurdle, each now carried a short gun in one hand and a gleaming tomahawk in the other. After the first general yelling heard in the council-room, not a sound was uttered. Their burst of rage and triumph had evidently been checked by the unexpected manner of their reception, and they now stood on the spot on which the further advance of each had been arrested, so silent and motionless, that, but for the rolling of their dark eyes, as they keenly measured the insurmountable barriers that were opposed to their progress, they might almost have been taken for a wild group of statuary.

Conspicuous at the head of these was he who wore the blanket; a tall warrior, on whom rested the startled eye of every officer and soldier who was so situated as to behold him. His face was painted black as death; and as he stood under the arch of the gateway, with his white turbaned head towering far above those of his companions, this formidable and mysterious enemy might have been likened to the spirit of darkness presiding over his terrible legions.



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In order to account for the extraordinary appearance of the Indians, armed in every way for death, at a moment when neither gun nor tomahawk was apparently within miles of their reach, it will be necessary to revert to the first entrance of the chiefs into the fort. The fall of Pontecac had been the effect of design; and the yell pealed forth by him, on recovering his feet, as if in taunting reply to the laugh of his comrades, was in reality a signal intended for the guidance of the Indians without. These, now following up their game with increasing spirit, at once changed the direction of their line, bringing the ball nearer to the fort. In their eagerness to effect this object, they had overlooked the gradual secession of the unarmed troops, spectators of their sport from the ramparts, until scarcely more than twenty stragglers were left. As they neared the gate, the squaws broke up their several groups, and, forming a line on either hand of the road leading to the drawbridge, appeared to separate solely with a view not to impede the action of the players. For an instant a dense group collected around the ball, which had been driven to within a hundred yards of the gate, and fifty hurdles were crossed in their endeavours to secure it, when the warrior, who formed the solitary exception to the multitude, in his blanket covering, and who had been lingering in the extreme rear of the party, came rapidly up to the spot where the well-affected struggle was maintained. At his approach, the hurdles of the other players were withdrawn, when, at a single blow from his powerful arm, the ball was seen flying into the air in an oblique direction, and was for a moment lost altogether to the view. When it again met the eye, it was descending perpendicularly into the very centre of the fort.

With the fleetness of thought now commenced a race that had ostensibly for its object the recovery of the lost ball; and in which, he who had driven it with such resistless force outstripped them all. Their course lay between the two lines of squaws; and scarcely had the head of the bounding Indians reached the opposite extremity of those lines, when the women suddenly threw back their blankets, and disclosed each a short gun and a tomahawk. To throw away their hurdles and seize upon these, was the work of an instant. Already, in imagination, was the fort their own; and, such was the peculiar exultation of the black and turbaned warrior, when he felt the planks of the drawbridge bending beneath his feet, all the ferocious joy of his soul was pealed forth in the terrible cry which, rapidly succeeded by that of the other Indians, had resounded so fearfully through the council-room. What their disappointment was, when, on gaining the interior, they found the garrison prepared for their reception, has already been shown.

“Secure that traitor, men!” exclaimed the governor, advancing into the square, and pointing to the black warrior, whose quick eye was now glancing on every side, to discover some assailable point in the formidable defences of the troops.



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A laugh of scorn and derision escaped the lips of the warrior. "Is there a man—are there any ten men, even with Governor de Haldimar at their head, who will be bold enough to attempt it?" he asked. "Nay!" he pursued, stepping boldly a pace or two in front of the wondering savages,—“here I stand singly, and defy your whole garrison!"

A sudden movement among the soldiers in the guard-room announced they were preparing to execute the order of their chief. The eye of the black warrior sparkled with ferocious pleasure; and he made a gesture to his followers, which was replied to by the sudden tension of their hitherto relaxed forms into attitudes of expectance and preparation.

“Stay, men; quit not your cover for your lives!” commanded the governor, in a loud deep voice:—“keep the barricades fast, and move not.”

A cloud of anger and disappointment passed over the features of the black warrior. It was evident the object of his bravado was to draw the troops from their defences, that they might be so mingled with their enemies as to render the cannon useless, unless friends and foes (which was by no means probable) should alike be sacrificed. The governor had penetrated the design in time to prevent the mischief.

In a moment of uncontrollable rage, the savage warrior aimed his tomahawk at the head of the governor. The latter stepped lightly aside, and the steel sank with such force into one of the posts supporting the piazza, that the quivering handle snapped close off at its head. At that moment, a single shot, fired from the guard-house, was drowned in the yell of approbation which burst from the lips of the dark crowd. The turban of the warrior was, however, seen flying through the air, carried away by the force of the bullet which had torn it from his head. He himself was unharmed.

“A narrow escape for us both, Colonel de Haldimar,” he observed, as soon as the yell had subsided, and with an air of the most perfect unconcern. “Had my tomahawk obeyed the first impulse of my heart, I should have cursed myself and died: as it is, I have reason to avoid all useless exposure of my own life, at present. A second bullet may be better directed; and to die, robbed of my revenge, would ill answer the purpose of a life devoted to its attainment. Remember my pledge!”

At the hasty command of the governor, a hundred muskets were raised to the shoulders of his men; but, before a single eye could glance along the barrel, the formidable and active warrior had bounded over the heads of the nearest Indians into a small space that was left unoccupied; when, stooping suddenly to the earth, he disappeared altogether from the view of his enemies. A slight movement in the centre of the numerous band crowding the gateway, and extending even beyond the bridge, was now discernible: it was like the waving of a field of standing corn, through which some animal rapidly winds its tortuous course, bending aside as the object advances, and closing again when it has passed. After the lapse of a minute, the terrible warrior was

seen to spring again to his feet, far in the rear of the band; and then, uttering a fierce shout of exultation, to make good his retreat towards the forest.

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Meanwhile, Pontecac and the other chiefs of the council continued rooted to the piazza on which they had rushed at the unexpected display of the armed men behind the scarlet curtain. The loud “Waugh” that burst from the lips of all, on finding themselves thus foiled in their schemes of massacre, had been succeeded, the instant afterwards, by feelings of personal apprehension, which each, however, had collectedness enough to disguise. Once the Ottawa made a movement as if he would have cleared the space that kept him from his warriors; but the emphatical pointing of the finger of Colonel de Haldimar to the levelled muskets of the men in the block-houses prevented him, and the attempt was not repeated. It was remarked by the officers, who also stood on the piazza, close behind the chiefs, when the black warrior threw his tomahawk at the governor, a shade of displeasure passed over the features of the Ottawa; and that, when he found the daring attempt was not retaliated on his people, his countenance had been momentarily lighted up with a satisfied expression, apparently marking his sense of the forbearance so unexpectedly shown.

“What says the great chief of the Ottawas now?” asked the governor calmly, and breaking a profound silence that had succeeded to the last fierce yell of the formidable being just departed. “Was the Saganaw not right, when he said the Ottawa came with guile in his heart, and with a lie upon his lips? But the Saganaw is not a fool, and he can read the thoughts of his enemies upon their faces, and long before their lips have spoken.”

“Ugh!” ejaculated the Indian; “my father is a great chief, and his head is full of wisdom. Had he been feeble, like the other chiefs of the Saganaw, the strong-hold of the Detroit must have fallen, and the red skins would have danced their war-dance round the scalps of his young men, even in the council-room where they came to talk of peace.”

“Does the great chief of the Ottawas see the big thunder of the Saganaw?” pursued the governor: “if not, let him open his eyes and look. The Saganaw has but to move his lips, and swifter than the lightning would the pale faces sweep away the warriors of the Ottawa, even where they now stand: in less time than the Saganaw is now speaking, would they mow them down like the grass of the Prairie.”

“Ugh!” again exclaimed the chief, with mixed doggedness and fierceness: “if what my father says is true, why does he not pour out his anger upon the red skins?”

“Let the great chief of the Ottawas listen,” replied the governor with dignity. “When the great chiefs of all the nations that are in league with the Ottawas came last to the council, the Saganaw knew that they carried deceit in their hearts, and that they never meant to smoke the pipe of peace, or to bury the hatchet in the ground. The Saganaw might have kept them prisoners, that their warriors might be without a head; but he had given his word



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to the great chief of the Ottawas, and the word of a Saganaw is never broken. Even now, while both the chiefs and the warriors are in his power,—he will not slay them, for he wishes to show the Ottawa the desire of the Saganaw is to be friendly with the red skins, and not to destroy them. Wicked men from the Canadas have whispered lies in the ear of the Ottawa; but a great chief should judge for himself, and take council only from the wisdom of his own heart. The Ottawa and his warriors may go,” he resumed, after a short pause; “the path by which they came is again open to them. Let them depart in peace; the big thunder of the Saganaw shall not harm them.”

The countenance of the Indian, who had clearly seen the danger of his position, wore an expression of surprise which could not be dissembled: low exclamations passed between him and his companions; and, then pointing to the tomahawk that lay half buried in the wood, he said, doubtingly,—

“It was the pale face, the friend of the great chief of the Ottawas, who struck the hatchet at my father. The Ottawa is not a fool to believe the Saganaw can sleep without revenge.”

“The great chief of the Ottawas shall know us better,” was the reply. “The young warriors of the Saganaw might destroy their enemies where they now stand, but they seek not their blood. When the Ottawa chief takes council from his own heart, and not from the lips of a cowardly dog of a pale face, who strikes his tomahawk and then flies, his wisdom will tell him to make peace with the Saganaw, whose warriors are without treachery, even as they are without fear.”

Another of those deep interjectional “ughs” escaped the chest of the proud Indian.

“What my father says is good,” he returned; “but the pale face is a great warrior, and the Ottawa chief is his friend. The Ottawa will go.”

He then addressed a few sentences, in a tongue unknown to the officers, to the swarthy and anxious crowd in front. These were answered by a low, sullen, yet assentient grunt, from the united band, who now turned, though with justifiable caution and distrust, and recrossed the drawbridge without hinderance from the troops. Pontecac waited until the last Indian had departed, and then making a movement to the governor, which, with all its haughtiness, was meant to mark his sense of the forbearance and good faith that had been manifested, once more stalked proudly and calmly across the area, followed by the remainder of the chiefs. The officers who were with the governor ascended to the ramparts, to follow their movements; and it was not before their report had been made, that the Indians were immersing once more into the heart of the forest, the troops were withdrawn from their formidable defences, and the gate of the fort again firmly secured.



CHAPTER VII.

While the reader is left to pause over the rapid succession of incidents resulting from the mysterious entrance of the warrior of the Fleur de lis into the English fort, be it our task to explain the circumstances connected with the singular disappearance of Captain de Haldimar, and the melancholy murder of his unfortunate servant.



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It will be recollected that the ill-fated Halloway, in the course of his defence before the court-martial, distinctly stated the voice of the individual who had approached his post, calling on the name of Captain de Haldimar, on the night of the alarm, to have been that of a female, and that the language in which they subsequently conversed was that of the Ottawa Indians. This was strictly the fact; and the only error into which the unfortunate soldier had fallen, had reference merely to the character and motives of the party. He had naturally imagined, as he had stated, it was some young female of the village, whom attachment for his officer had driven to the desperate determination of seeking an interview; nor was this impression at all weakened by the subsequent discourse of the parties in the Indian tongue, with which it was well known most of the Canadians, both male and female, were more or less conversant. The subject of that short, low, and hurried conference was, indeed, one that well warranted the singular intrusion; and, in the declaration of Halloway, we have already seen the importance and anxiety attached by the young officer to the communication. Without waiting to repeat the motives assigned for his departure, and the prayers and expostulations to which he had recourse to overcome the determination and sense of duty of the unfortunate sentinel, let us pass at once to the moment when, after having cleared the ditch, conjointly with his faithful follower, in the manner already shown, Captain de Haldimar first stood side by side with his midnight visitant.

The night, it has elsewhere been observed, was clear and starry, so that objects upon the common, such as the rude stump that here and there raised its dark low head above the surface, might be dimly seen in the distance. To obviate the danger of discovery by the sentinels, appeared to be the first study of the female; for, when Captain de Haldimar, followed by his servant, had reached the spot on which she stood, she put the forefinger of one hand to her lips, and with the other pointed to his booted foot. A corresponding signal showed that the lightness of the material offered little risk of betrayal. Donellan, however, was made to doff his heavy ammunition shoes; and, with this precaution, they all stole hastily along, under the shadows of the projecting ramparts, until they had gained the extreme rear. Here the female suddenly raised her tall figure from the stooping position in which she, as well as her companions, had performed the dangerous circuit; and, placing her finger once more significantly on her lips, led in the direction of the bomb-proof, unperceived by the sentinels, most of whom, it is probable, had, up to the moment of the alarm subsequently given, been too much overcome by previous watching and excitement to have kept the most vigilant look-out.



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Arrived at the skirt of the forest, the little party drew up within the shadow of the ruin, and a short and earnest dialogue ensued, in Indian, between the female and the officer. This was succeeded by a command from the latter to his servant, who, after a momentary but respectful expostulation, which, however, was utterly lost on him to whom it was addressed, proceeded to divest himself of his humble apparel, assuming in exchange the more elegant uniform of his superior. Donellan, who was also of the grenadiers, was remarkable for the resemblance he bore, in figure, to Captain de Haldimar; wanting, it is true, the grace and freedom of movement of the latter, but still presenting an outline which, in an attitude of profound repose, might, as it subsequently did, have set even those who were most intimate with the officer at fault.

"This is well," observed the female, as the young man proceeded to induct himself in the grey coat of his servant, having previously drawn the glazed hat close over his waving and redundant hair: "if the Saganaw is ready, Oucanasta will go."

"Sure, and your honour does not mane to lave me behind!" exclaimed the anxious soldier, as his captain now recommended him to stand closely concealed near the ruin until his return. "Who knows what ambuscade the she-devil may not lade your honour into; and thin who will you have to bring you out of it?"

"No, Donellan, it must not be: I first intended it, as you may perceive by my bringing you out; but the expedition on which I am going is of the utmost importance to us all, and too much precaution cannot be taken. I fear no ambuscade, for I can depend on the fidelity of my guide; but the presence of a third person would only embarrass, without assisting me in the least. You must remain behind; the woman insists upon it, and there is no more to be said."

"To ould Nick with the ugly winch, for her pains!" half muttered the disappointed soldier to himself. "I wish it may be as your honour says; but my mind misgives me sadly that evil will come of this. Has your honour secured the pistols?"

"They are here," returned his captain, placing a hand on either chest. "And now, Donellan, mark me: I know nothing that can detain me longer than an hour; at least the woman assures me, and I believe her, that I may be back then; but it is well to guard against accidents. You must continue here for the hour, and for the hour only. If I come not then, return to the fort without delay, for the rope must be removed, and the gate secured, before Halloway is relieved. The keys you will find in the pocket of my uniform: when you have done with them, let them be hung up in their proper place in the guard-room. My father must not know either that Halloway suffered me to pass the gate, or that you accompanied me."

"Lord love us! your honour talks as if you nivir would return, giving such a heap of orders!" exclaimed the startled man; "but if I go back alone, as I trust in heaven I shall not, how am I to account for being dressed in your honour's rigimintals?"



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"I tell you, Donellan," impatiently returned the officer, "that I shall be back; but I only wish to guard against accidents. The instant you get into the fort, you will take off my clothes and resume your own. Who the devil is to see you in the uniform, unless it be Halloway?"

"If the Saganaw would not see the earth red with the blood of his race, he will go," interrupted the female. "Oucanasta can feel the breath of the morning fresh upon her cheek, and the council of the chiefs must be begun."

"The Saganaw is ready, and Oucanasta shall lead the way," hastily returned the officer. "One word more, Donellan;" and he pressed the hand of his domestic kindly: "should I not return, you must, without committing Halloway or yourself, cause my father to be apprised that the Indians meditate a deep and treacherous plan to get possession of the fort. What that plan is, I know not yet myself, neither does this woman know; but she says that I shall hear it discussed unseen, even in the heart of their own encampment. All you have to do is to acquaint my father with the existence of danger. And now be cautious: above all things, keep close under the shadow of the bomb-proof; for there are scouts constantly prowling about the common, and the glittering of the uniform in the starlight may betray you."

"But why may I not follow your honour?" again urged the faithful soldier; "and where is the use of my remaining here to count the stars, and hear the 'All's well!' from the fort, when I could be so much better employed in guarding your honour from harm? What sort of protection can that Ingian woman afford, who is of the race of our bitterest enemies, them cursed Ottawas, and your honour venturing, too, like a spy into the very heart of the blood-hounds? Ah, Captain de Haldimar, for the love of God, do not trust yourself alone with her, or I am sure I shall never see your honour again!"

The last words (unhappily too prophetic) fell only on the ear of him who uttered them. The female and the officer had already disappeared round an abrupt angle of the bomb-proof; and the soldier, as directed by his master, now drew up his tall figure against the ruin, where he continued for a period immovable, as if he had been planted there in his ordinary character of sentinel, listening, until they eventually died away in distance, to the receding footsteps of his master; and then ruminating on the several apprehensions that crowded on his mind, in regard to the probable issue of his adventurous project.

Meanwhile, Captain de Haldimar and his guide trod the mazes of the forest, with an expedition that proved the latter to be well acquainted with its bearings. On quitting the bomb-proof, she had struck into a narrow winding path, less seen than felt in the deep gloom pervading the wood, and with light steps bounded over obstacles that lay strewn in their course, emitting scarcely more sound than would have been produced



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by the slimy crawl of its native rattlesnake. Not so, however, with the less experienced tread of her companion. Wanting the pliancy of movement given to it by the light mocassin, the booted foot of the young officer, despite of all his precaution, fell heavily to the ground, producing such a rustling among the dried leaves, that, had an Indian ear been lurking any where around, his approach must inevitably have been betrayed. More than once, too, neglecting to follow the injunction of his companion, who moved in a stooping posture, with her head bent over her chest, his hat was caught in the closely matted branches, and fell sullenly and heavily to the earth, evidently much to the discomfiture of his guide.

At length they stood on the verge of a dark and precipitous ravine, the abrupt sides of which were studded with underwood, so completely interwoven, that all passage appeared impracticable. What, however, seemed an insurmountable obstacle, proved, in reality, an inestimable advantage; for it was by clinging to this, in imitation of the example set him by his companion, the young officer was prevented from rolling into an abyss, the depth of which was lost in the profound obscurity that pervaded the scene. Through the bed of this dark dell rolled a narrow stream, so imperceptible to the eye in the "living darkness," and so noiseless in its course, that it was not until warned by his companion he stood on the very brink of it, Captain de Haldimar was made sensible of its existence. Both cleared it at a single bound, in which the activity of the female was not the least conspicuous, and, clambering up the opposite steep, secured their footing, by the aid of the same underwood that had assisted them in their descent.

On gaining the other summit, which was not done without detaching several loose stones from their sandy bed, they again, fell into the path, which had been lost sight of in traversing the ravine. They had proceeded along this about half a mile, when the female suddenly stopped, and pointing to a dim and lurid atmosphere that now began to show itself between the thin foliage, whispered that in the opening beyond stood the encampment of the Indians. She then seated herself on the trunk of a fallen tree, that lay at the side of the almost invisible path they had hitherto pursued, and motioning to her companion to unboot himself, proceeded to unlace the fastenings of her mocassins.

"The foot of the Saganaw must fall like the night dew on the prairie," she observed: "the ear of the red skin is quicker than the lightning, and he will know that a pale face is near, if he hear but his tread upon a blade of grass."

Gallantry in the civilised man is a sentiment that never wholly abandons him; and in whatever clime he may be thrown, or under whatever circumstances he may be placed, —be it called forth by white or by blackamoor,—it is certain to influence his conduct: it is a refinement, of that instinctive deference to the weaker sex, which nature has implanted in him for the wisest of purposes; and which, while it tends to exalt those to whom its influence is extended, fails not to reflect a corresponding lustre on himself.



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The young officer had, at the first suggestion of his guide, divested himself of his boots, prepared to perform the remainder of the journey merely in his stockings, but his companion now threw herself on her knees before him, and, without further ceremony, proceeded to draw over his foot one of the mocassins she had just relinquished.

“The feet of the Saganaw are soft as those of a young child,” she remarked, in a voice of commiseration; “but the mocassins of Oucanasta shall protect them from the thorns of the forest.”

This was too un-European,—too much reversing the established order of things, to be borne patiently. As if he had felt the dignity of his manhood offended by the proposal, the officer drew his foot hastily back, declaring, as he sprang from the log, he did not care for the thorns, and could not think of depriving a female, who must be much more sensible of pain than himself.

Oucanasta, however, was not to be outdone in politeness. She calmly reseated herself on the log, drew her right foot over her left knee, caught one of the hands of her companion, and placing it upon the naked sole, desired him to feel how impervious to attack of every description was that indurated portion of the lower limb.

This practical argument was not without its weight, and had more effect in deciding the officer than a volume of remonstrance. Most men love to render tribute to a delicate and pretty foot. Some, indeed, go so far as to connect every thing feminine with these qualities, and to believe that nothing can be feminine without them. For our parts, we confess, that, although no enemies to a pretty foot, it is by no means a sine qua non in our estimate of female perfection; being in no way disposed, where the head and heart are gems, to undervalue these in consideration of any deficiency in the heels. Captain de Haldimar probably thought otherwise; for when he had passed his unwilling hand over the foot of Oucanasta, which, whatever her face might have been, was certainly any thing but delicate, and encountered numerous ragged excrescences and raspy callosities that set all symmetry at defiance, a wonderful revolution came over his feelings; and, secretly determining the mocassins would be equally well placed on his own feet, he no longer offered any opposition.

This important point arranged, the officer once more followed his guide in silence. Gradually the forest, as they advanced, became lighter with the lurid atmosphere before alluded to; and at length, through the trees, could be indistinctly seen the Indian fires from which it proceeded. The young man was now desired by his conductress to use the utmost circumspection in making the circuit of the wood, in order to gain a position immediately opposite to the point where the path they had hitherto pursued terminated in the opening. This, indeed, was the most dangerous and critical part of the undertaking. A false step, or the crackling of a decayed branch beneath the foot, would have been sufficient to betray proximity, in which case his doom was sealed.



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Fortunate did he now deem himself in having yielded to the counsel of his guide. Had he retained his unbending boot, it must have crushed whatever it pressed; whereas, the pliant mocassin, yielding to the obstacles it encountered, enabled him to pass noiselessly over them. Still, while exempt from danger on this score, another, scarcely less perplexing, became at every instant more obvious; for, as they drew nearer to the point which the female sought to gain, the dim light of the half-slumbering fires fell so immediately upon their path, that had a single human eye been turned in that direction, their discovery was inevitable. It was with a beating heart, to which mere personal fear, however, was a stranger, that Captain de Haldimar performed this concluding stage of his adventurous course; but, at a moment when he considered detection unavoidable, and was arming himself with resolution to meet the event, the female suddenly halted, placing, in the act, the trunk of an enormous beech between her companion and the dusky forms within, whose very breathing could be heard by the anxious officer. Without uttering a word, she took his hand, and, drawing him gently forward, disappeared altogether from his view. The young man followed, and in the next moment found himself in the bowelless body of the tree itself; into which, on the side of the encampment, both light and sound were admitted by a small aperture formed by the natural decay of the wood.

The Indian pressed her lips to the ear of her companion, and rather breathed than said, —“The Saganaw will see and hear every thing from this in safety; and what he hears let him treasure in his heart. Oucanasta must go. When the council is over she will return, and lead him back to his warriors.”

With this brief intimation she departed, and so noiselessly, that the young officer was not aware of her absence until some minutes of silence had satisfied him she must be gone. His first care then was to survey, through the aperture that lay in a level with his eye, the character of the scene before him. The small plain, in which lay the encampment of the Indians, was a sort of oasis of the forest, girt round with a rude belt of underwood, and somewhat elevated, so as to present the appearance of a mound, constructed on the first principles of art. This was thickly although irregularly studded with tents, some of which were formed of large coarse mats thrown over poles disposed in a conical shape, while others were more rudely composed of the leafy branches of the forest.

Within these groups of human forms lay, wrapped in their blankets, stretched at their lazy length. Others, with their feet placed close to the dying embers of their fires, diverged like so many radii from their centre, and lay motionless in sleep, as if life and consciousness were wholly extinct. Here and there was to be seen a solitary warrior securing, with admirable neatness, and with delicate ligatures

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formed of the sinew of the deer, the guiding feather, or fashioning the bony barb of his long arrow; while others, with the same warlike spirit in view, employed themselves in cutting and greasing small patches of smoked deerskin, which were to secure and give a more certain direction to the murderous bullet. Among the warriors were interspersed many women, some of whom might be seen supporting in their laps the heavy heads of their unconscious helpmates, while they occupied themselves, by the firelight, in parting the long black matted hair, and maintaining a destructive warfare against the pigmy inhabitants of that dark region. These signs of life and activity in the body of the camp generally were, however, but few and occasional; but, at the spot where Captain de Haldimar stood concealed, the scene was different. At a few yards from the tree stood a sort of shed, composed of tall poles placed upright in the earth, and supporting a roof formed simply of rude boughs, the foliage of which had been withered by time. This simple edifice might be about fifty feet in circumference. In the centre blazed a large fire that had been newly fed, and around this were assembled a band of swarthy warriors, some twenty or thirty in number, who, by their proud, calm, and thoughtful bearing, might at once be known to be chiefs.

The faces of most of these were familiar to the young officer, who speedily recognised them for the principals of the various tribes Pontecac had leagued in arms against his enemies. That chief himself, ever remarkable for his haughty eye and commanding gesture, was of the number of those present; and, a little aloof from his inferiors, sat, with his feet stretched towards the fire, and half reclining on his side in an attitude of indolence; yet with his mind evidently engrossed by deep and absorbing thought. From some observations that distinctly met his ear, Captain de Haldimar gathered, the party were only awaiting the arrival of an important character, without whose presence the leading chief was unwilling the conference should begin. The period of the officer's concealment had just been long enough to enable him to fix all these particulars in his mind, when suddenly the faint report of a distant rifle was heard echoing throughout the wood. This was instantly succeeded by a second, that sounded more sharply on the ear; and then followed a long and piercing cry, that brought every warrior, even of those who slept, quickly to his feet.

An anxious interval of some minutes passed away in the fixed and listening attitudes, which the chiefs especially had assumed, when a noise resembling that of some animal forcing its way rapidly through the rustling branches, was faintly heard in the direction in which the shots had been fired. This gradually increased as it evidently approached the encampment, and then, distinctly, could be heard the light yet unguarded boundings of a human foot. At every moment the rustling of the underwood, rapidly divided



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by the approaching form, became more audible; and so closely did the intruder press upon the point in which Captain de Haldimar was concealed, that that officer, fancying he had been betrayed, turned hastily round, and, grasping one of the pistols he had secreted in his chest, prepared himself for a last and deadly encounter. An instant or two was sufficient to re-assure him. The form glided hastily past, brushing the tree with its garments in its course, and clearing, at a single bound, the belt of underwood that divided the encampment from the tall forest, stood suddenly among the group of anxious and expectant chiefs.

This individual, a man of tall stature, was powerfully made. He wore a jerkin, or hunting-coat, of leather; and his arms were, a rifle which had every appearance of having just been discharged, a tomahawk reeking with blood, and a scalping-knife, which, in the hurry of some recent service it had been made to perform, had missed its sheath, and was thrust naked into the belt that encircled his loins. His countenance wore an expression of malignant triumph; and as his eye fell on the assembled throng, its self-satisfied and exulting glance seemed to give them to understand he came not without credentials to recommend him to their notice. Captain de Haldimar was particularly struck by the air of bold daring and almost insolent recklessness pervading every movement of this man; and it was difficult to say whether the haughtiness of bearing peculiar to Pontecac himself, was not exceeded by that of this herculean warrior.

By the body of chiefs his appearance had been greeted with a mere general grunt of approbation; but the countenance of the leader expressed a more personal interest. All seemed to expect he had something of moment to communicate; but as it was not consistent with the dignity of Indian etiquette to enquire, they waited calmly until it should please their new associate to enter on the history of his exploits. In pursuance of an invitation from Pontecac, he now took his seat on the right hand of that chief, and immediately facing the tree, from which Captain de Haldimar, strongly excited both by the reports of the shots that had been fired, and the sight of the bloody tomahawk of the recently arrived Indian, gazed earnestly and anxiously on the swarthy throng.

Glancing once more triumphantly round the circle, who sat smoking their pipes in calm and deliberative silence, the latter now observed the eye of a young chief, who sat opposite to him, intently riveted on his left shoulder. He raised his hand to the part, withdrew it, looked at it, and found it wet with blood. A slight start of surprise betrayed his own unconsciousness of the accident; yet, secretly vexed at the discovery which had been made, and urged probably by one of his wayward fits, he demanded haughtily and insultingly of the young chief, if that was the first time he had ever looked on the blood of a warrior.



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“Does my brother feel pain?” was the taunting reply. “If he is come to us with a trophy, it is not without being dearly bought. The Saganaw has spilt his blood.”

“The weapons of the Saganaw, like those of the smooth face of the Ottawa, are without sting,” angrily retorted the other. “They only prick the skin like a thorn; but when Wacousta drinks the blood of his enemy,” and he glanced his eye fiercely at the young man, “it is the blood next his heart.”

“My brother has always big words upon his lips,” returned the young chief, with a scornful sneer at the implied threat against himself. “But where are his proofs?”

For a moment the eye of the party thus challenged kindled into flame, while his lips were firmly compressed together; and as he half bent himself forward, to scan with greater earnestness the features of his questioner, his right hand sank to his left side, tightly grasping the handle of his scalping-knife. The action was but momentary. Again he drew himself up, puffed the smoke deliberately from his bloody tomahawk, and, thrusting his right hand into his bosom, drew leisurely forth a reeking scalp, which he tossed insolently across the fire into the lap of the young chief. A loud and general “ugh!” testified the approbation of the assembled group, at the unequivocal answer thus given to the demand of the youth. The eye of the huge warrior sparkled with a deep and ferocious exultation.

“What says the smooth face of the Ottawas now?” he demanded, in the same insolent strain. “Does it make his heart sick to look upon the scalp of a great chief?”

The young man quietly turned the horrid trophy over several times in his hand, examining it attentively in every part. Then tossing it back with contemptuous coolness to its owner, he replied,—

“The eyes of my brother are weak with age. He is not cunning, like a red skin. The Ottawa has often seen the Saganaw in their fort, and he knows their chiefs have fine hair like women; but this is like the bristles of the fox. My brother has not slain a great chief, but a common warrior.”

A flush of irrepressible and threatening anger passed over the features of the vast savage.

“Is it for a boy,” he fiercely asked, “whose eyes know not yet the colour of blood, to judge of the enemies that fall by the tomahawk of Wacousta? but a great warrior never boasts of actions that he does not achieve. It is the son of the great chief of the Saganaw whom he has slain. If the smooth face doubts it, and has courage to venture, even at night, within a hundred yards of the fort, he will see a Saganaw without a scalp; and he will know that Saganaw by his dress—the dress,” he pursued, with a low

emphatic laugh, “that Oucanasta, the sister of the smooth face, loved so much to look upon.”

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Quicker than thought was the upspringing of the young Indian to his feet. With a cheek glowing, an eye flashing, and his gleaming tomahawk whirling rapidly round his head, he cleared at a single bound the fire that separated him from his insulter. The formidable man who had thus wantonly provoked the attack, was equally prompt in meeting it. At the first movement of the youth, he too had leapt to his feet, and brandished the terrible weapon that served in the double capacity of pipe and hatchet. A fierce yell escaped the lips of each, as they thus met in close and hostile collision, and the scene for the moment promised to be one of the most tragic character; but before either could find an assailable point on which to rest his formidable weapon, Pontecac himself had thrown his person between them, and in a voice of thunder commanded the instant abandonment of their purpose. Exasperated even as they now mutually were, the influence of that authority, for which the great chief of the Ottawas was well known, was not without due effect on the combatants. His anger was principally directed against the assailant, on whom the tones of his reproving voice produced a change the intimidation of his powerful opponent could never have effected. The young chief dropped the point of his tomahawk, bowed his head in submission, and then resuming his seat, sat during the remainder of the night with his arms folded, and his head bent in silence over his chest.

“Our brother has done well,” said Pontecac, glancing approvingly at him who had exhibited the reeking trophy, and whom he evidently favoured. “He is a great chief, and his words are truth. We heard the report of his rifle, and we also heard the cry that told he had borne away the scalp of an enemy. But we will think of this to-morrow. Let us now commence our talk.”

Our readers will readily imagine the feelings of Captain de Haldimar during this short but exciting scene. From the account given by the warrior, there could be no doubt the murdered man was the unhappy Donellan; who, probably, neglecting the caution given him, had exposed himself to the murderous aim of this fierce being, who was apparently a scout sent for the purpose of watching the movements of the garrison. The direction of the firing, the allusion made to the regimentals, nay, the scalp itself, which he knew from the short crop to be that of a soldier, and fancied he recognised from its colour to be that of his servant, formed but too conclusive evidence of the fact; and, bitterly and deeply, as he gazed on this melancholy proof of the man’s sacrifice of life to his interest, did he repent that he had made him the companion of his adventure, or that, having done so, he had not either brought him away altogether, or sent him instantly back to the fort. Commiseration for the fate of the unfortunate Donellan naturally induced a spirit of personal hostility towards his destroyer; and it was with feelings strongly excited in favour of him



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whom he now discovered to be the brother of his guide, that he saw him spring fiercely to the attack of his gigantic opponent. There was an activity about the young chief amply commensurate with the greater physical power of his adversary; while the manner in which he wielded his tomahawk, proved him to be any thing but the novice in the use of the formidable weapon the other had represented him. It was with a feeling of disappointment, therefore, which the peculiarity of his own position could not overcome, he saw Pontecac interpose himself between the parties.

Presently, however, a subject of deeper and more absorbing interest than even the fate of his unhappy follower engrossed every faculty of his mind, and riveted both eye and ear in painful tension to the aperture in his hiding-place. The chiefs had resumed their places, and the silence of a few minutes had succeeded to the fierce affray of the warriors, when Pontecac, in a calm and deliberate voice, proceeded to state he had summoned all the heads of the nations together, to hear a plan he had to offer for the reduction of the last remaining forts of their enemies, Michilimackinac and Detroit. He pointed out the tediousness of the warfare in which they were engaged; the desertion of the hunting-grounds by their warriors; and their consequent deficiency in all those articles of European traffic which they were formerly in the habit of receiving in exchange for their furs. He dwelt on the beneficial results that would accrue to them all in the event of the reduction of those two important fortresses; since, in that case, they would be enabled to make such terms with the English as would secure to them considerable advantages; while, instead of being treated with the indignity of a conquered people, they would be enabled to command respect from the imposing attitude this final crowning of their successes would enable them to assume. He stated that the prudence and vigilance of the commanders of these two unreduced fortresses were likely long to baffle, as had hitherto been the case, every open attempt at their capture; and admitted he had little expectation of terrifying them into a surrender by the same artifice that had succeeded with the forts on the Ohio and the lower lakes. The plan, however, which he had to propose, was one he felt assured would be attended with success. He would disclose that plan, and the great chiefs should give it the advantage of their deliberation.

Captain de Haldimar was on the rack. The chief had gradually dropped his voice as he explained his plan, until at length it became so low, that undistinguishable sounds alone reached the ear of the excited officer. For a moment he despaired of making himself fully master of the important secret; but in the course of the deliberation that ensued, the blanks left unsupplied in the discourse of the leader were abundantly filled up. It was what the reader has already seen. The necessities of the Indians were to be urged as



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a motive for their being tired of hostilities. A peace was to be solicited; a council held; a ball-playing among the warriors proposed, as a mark of their own sincerity and confidence during that council; and when the garrison, lulled into security, should be thrown entirely off their guard, the warriors were to seize their guns and tomahawks, with which (the former cut short, for the better concealment of their purpose) their women would be provided, rush in, under pretext of regaining their lost ball, when a universal massacre of men, women, and children was to ensue, until nothing wearing the garb of a Saganaw should be left.

It would be tedious to follow the chief through all the minor ramifications of his subtle plan. Suffice it they were of a nature to throw the most wary off his guard; and so admirably arranged was every part, so certain did it appear their enemies must give into the snare, that the oldest chiefs testified their approbation with a vivacity of manner and expression little wont to characterize the deliberative meetings of these reserved people. But deepest of all was the approval of the tall warrior who had so recently arrived. To him had the discourse of the leader been principally directed, as one whose counsel and experience were especially wanting to confirm him in his purpose. He was the last who spoke; but, when he did, it was with a force—an energy—that must have sunk every objection, even if the plan had not been so perfect and unexceptionable in its concoction as to have precluded a possibility of all negative argument. During the delivery of his animated speech, his swarthy countenance kindled into fierce and rapidly varying expression. A thousand dark and complicated passions evidently struggled at his heart; and as he dwelt leisurely and emphatically on the sacrifice of human life that must inevitably attend the adoption of the proposed measure, his eye grew larger, his chest expanded, nay, his very nostril appeared to dilate with unfathomably guileful exultation. Captain de Haldimar thought he had never gazed on any thing wearing the human shape half so atrociously savage.

Long before the council was terminated, the inferior warriors, who had been so suddenly aroused from their slumbering attitudes, had again retired to their tents, and stretched their lazy length before the embers of their fires. The weary chiefs now prepared to follow their example. They emptied the ashes from the bowls of their pipe-tomahawks, replaced them carefully at their side, rose, and retired to their respective tents. Pontecac and the tall warrior alone remained. For a time they conversed earnestly together. The former listened attentively to some observations made to him by his companion, in the course of which, the words “chief of the Saganaw—fort—spy—enemy,” and two or three others equally unconnected, were alone audible to the ear of him who so attentively sought to catch the slightest sound. He then thrust his hand under his hunting-coat, and, as if in confirmation of what he had been stating, exhibited a coil of rope and the glossy boot of an English officer. Pontecac uttered one of his sharp ejaculating “ughs!” and then rising quickly from his seat, followed by his companion, soon disappeared in the heart of the encampment.



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CHAPTER VIII.

How shall we attempt to paint all that passed through the mind of Captain de Haldimar during this important conference of the fierce chiefs?—where find language to convey the cold and thrilling horror with which he listened to the calm discussion of a plan, the object of which was the massacre, not only of a host of beings endeared to him by long communionship of service, but of those who were wedded to his heart by the dearer ties of affection and kindred? As Pontecac had justly observed, the English garrisons, strong in their own defences, were little likely to be speedily reduced, while their enemies confined themselves to overt acts of hostility; but, against their insidious professions of amity who could oppose a sufficient caution? His father, the young officer was aware, had all along manifested a spirit of conciliation towards the Indians, which, if followed up by the government generally, must have had the effect of preventing the cruel and sanguinary war that had so recently desolated this remote part of the British possessions. How likely, therefore, was it, having this object always in view, he should give in to the present wily stratagem, where such plausible motives for the abandonment of their hostile purpose were urged by the perfidious chiefs! From the few hasty hints already given him by his guide,—that kind being, who evidently sought to be the saviour of the devoted garrisons,—he had gathered that a deep and artful plan was to be submitted to the chiefs by their leader; but little did he imagine it was of the finished nature it now proved to be. Any other than the present attempt, the vigilance and prudence of his experienced father, he felt, would have rendered abortive; but there was so much speciousness in the pleas that were to be advanced in furtherance of their assumed object, he could not but admit the almost certainty of their influence, even on him.

Sick and discouraged as he was at the horrible perspective thus forced on his mental view, the young officer had not, for some moments, presence of mind to reflect that the danger of the garrison existed only so long as he should be absent from it. At length, however, the cheering recollection came, and with it the mantling rush of blood, to his faint heart. But, short was the consoling hope: again he felt dismay in every fibre of his frame; for he now reflected, that although his opportune discovery of the meditated scheme would save one fort, there was no guardian angel to extend, as in this instance, its protecting influence to the other; and within that other there breathed those who were dearer far to him than his own existence;—beings, whose lives were far more precious to him than any even in the garrison of which he was a member. His sister Clara, whom he loved with a love little inferior to that of his younger brother; and one, even more dearly loved than Clara,—Madeline de Haldimar, his cousin



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and affianced bride,—were both inmates of Michilimackinac, which was commanded by the father of the latter, a major in the —— regiment. With Madeline de Haldimar he had long since exchanged his vows of affection; and their nuptials, which were to have taken place about the period when the present war broke out, had only been suspended because all communication between the two posts had been entirely cut off by the enemy.

Captain de Haldimar had none of the natural weakness and timidity of character which belonged to the gentler and more sensitive Charles. Sanguine and full of enterprise, he seldom met evils half way; but when they did come, he sought to master them by the firmness and collectedness with which he opposed his mind to their infliction. If his heart was now racked with the most acute suffering—his reason incapacitated from exercising its calm deliberative power, the seeming contradiction arose not from any deficiency in his character, but was attributable wholly to the extraordinary circumstances of the moment.

It was a part of the profound plan of the Ottawa chief, that it should be essayed on the two forts on the same day; and it was a suggestion of the murderer of poor Donellan, that a parley should be obtained, through the medium of a white flag, the nature of which he explained to them, as it was understood among their enemies. If invited to the council, then they were to enter, or not, as circumstances might induce; but, in any case, they were to go unprovided with the pipe of peace, since this could not be smoked without violating every thing held most sacred among themselves. The red, or war-pipe, was to be substituted as if by accident; and, for the success of the deception, they were to presume on the ignorance of their enemies. This, however, was not important, since the period of their first parley was to be the moment chosen for the arrangement of a future council, and the proposal of a ball-playing upon the common. Three days were to be named as the interval between the first conference of Pontecac with the governor and the definitive council which was to ensue; during which, however, it was so arranged, that, before the lip of a red skin should touch the pipe of peace, the ball-players should rush in and massacre the unprepared soldiery, while the chiefs despatched the officers in council.

It was the proximity of the period allotted for the execution of their cruel scheme that mainly contributed to the dismay of Captain de Haldimar. The very next day was appointed for carrying into effect the first part of the Indian plan: and how was it possible that a messenger, even admitting he should elude the vigilance of the enemy, could reach the distant post of Michilimackinac within the short period on which hung the destiny of that devoted fortress. In the midst of the confused and distracting images that now crowded on his brain, came at length one thought, redolent with the brightest colourings of



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hope. On his return to the garrison, the treachery of the Indians being made known, the governor might so far, and with a view of gaining time, give in to the plan of his enemies, as to obtain such delay as would afford the chance of communication between the forts. The attempt, on the part of those who should be selected for this purpose, would, it is true, be a desperate one: still it must be made; and, with such incentives to exertion as he had, how willingly would he propose his own services!

The more he dwelt on this mode of defeating the subtle designs of the enemy, the more practicable did it appear. Of his own safe return to the fort he entertained not a doubt; for he knew and relied on the Indian woman, who was bound to him by a tie of gratitude, which her conduct that night evidently denoted to be superior even to the interests of her race. Moreover, as he had approached the encampment unnoticed while the chiefs were yet awake to every thing around them, how little probability was there of his return being detected while all lay wrapped in the most profound repose. It is true that, for a moment, his confidence deserted him as he recurred to the earnest dialogue of the two Indians, and the sudden display of the rope and boot, the latter of which articles he had at once recognised to be one of those he had so recently worn; but his apprehensions on that score were again speedily set to rest, when he reflected, had any suspicion existed in the minds of these men that an enemy was lurking near them, a general alarm would have been spread, and hundreds of warriors despatched to scour the forest.

The night was now rapidly waning away, and already the cold damp air of an autumnal morning was beginning to make itself felt. More than half an hour had elapsed since the departure of Pontecac and his companion, and yet Oucanasta came not. With a sense of the approach of day came new and discouraging thoughts, and, for some minutes, the mind of the young officer became petrified with horror, as he reflected on the bare possibility of his escape being intercepted. The more he lingered on this apprehension, the more bewildered were his ideas; and already, in horrible perspective, he beheld the destruction of his nearest and dearest friends, and the host of those who were humbler followers, and partakers in the same destiny. Absolutely terrified with the misgivings of his own heart, he, in the wildness and unconnectedness of his purpose, now resolved to make the attempt to return alone, although he knew not even the situation of the path he had so recently quitted. He had actually moved a pace forward on his desperate enterprise, when he felt a band touching the extended arm with which he groped to find the entrance to his hiding-place. The unexpected collision sent a cold shudder through his frame; and such was the excitement to which he had worked himself up, it was not without difficulty he suppressed an exclamation, that must inevitably have sealed his doom. The soft tones of Oucanasta's voice re-assured him.



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“The day will soon dawn,” she whispered; “the Saganaw must go.”

With the return of hope came the sense of all he owed to the devotedness of this kind woman. He grasped the hand that still lingered on his arm, pressed it affectionately in his own, and then placed it in silence on his throbbing heart. The breathing of Oucanasta became deeper, and the young officer fancied he could feel her trembling with agitation. Again, however, and in a tone of more subdued expression, she whispered that he must go.

There was little urging necessary to induce a prompt compliance with the hint. Cautiously emerging from his concealment, Captain de Haldimar now followed close in the rear of his guide, who took the same circuit of the forest to reach the path that led towards the fort. This they speedily gained, and then pursued their course in silence, until they at length arrived at the log where the exchange of mocassins had been made.

“Here the Saganaw may take breath,” she observed, as she seated herself on the fallen tree; “the sleep of the red skin is sound, and there is no one upon the path but Oucanasta.”

Anxious as he felt to secure his return to the fort, there was an implied solicitation in the tones of her to whom he owed so much, that prevented Captain de Haldimar from offering an objection, which he feared might be construed into slight.

For a moment or two the Indian remained with her arms folded, and her head bent over her chest; and then, in a low, deep, but tremulous voice, observed,—

“When the Saganaw saved Oucanasta from perishing in the angry waters, there was a girl of the pale faces with him, whose skin was like the snows of the Canadian winter, and whose hair was black like the fur of the squirrel. Oucanasta saw,” she pursued, dropping her voice yet lower, “that the Saganaw was loved by the pale girl, and her own heart was very sick, for the Saganaw had saved her life, and she loved him too. But she knew she was very foolish, and that an Indian girl could never be the wife of a handsome chief of the Saganaw; and she prayed to the Great Spirit of the red skins to give her strength to overcome her feelings; but the Great Spirit was angry with her, and would not hear her.” She paused a moment, and then abruptly demanded, “Where is that pale girl now?”

Captain de Haldimar had often been rallied, not only by his brother-officers, but even by his sister and Madeline de Haldimar herself, on the conquest he had evidently made of the heart of this Indian girl. The event to which she had alluded had taken place several months previous to the breaking out of hostilities. Oucanasta was directing her frail bark, one evening, along the shores of the Detroit, when one of those sudden gusts of wind, so frequent in these countries, upset the canoe, and left its pilot struggling amid

the waves. Captain de Haldimar, who happened to be on the bank at the moment with his sister and



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cousin, was an eye-witness of her danger, and instantly flew down the steep to her assistance. Being an excellent swimmer, he was not long in gaining the spot, where, exhausted with the exertion she had made, and encumbered with her awkward machecoti, the poor girl was already on the point of perishing. But for his timely assistance, indeed, she must have sunk to the bottom; and, since that period, the grateful being had been remarked for the strong but unexpressed attachment she felt for her deliverer. This, however, was the first moment Captain de Haldimar became acquainted with the extent of feelings, the avowal of which not a little startled and surprised, and even annoyed him. The last question, however, suggested a thought that kindled every fibre of his being into expectancy,—Oucanasta might be the saviour of those he loved; and he felt that, if time were but afforded her, she would. He rose from the log, dropped on one knee before the Indian, seized both her hands with eagerness, and then in tones of earnest supplication whispered,—

“Oucanasta is right: the pale girl with the skin like snow, and hair like the fur of the squirrel, is the bride of the Saganaw. Long before he saved the life of Oucanasta, he knew and loved that pale girl. She is dearer to the Saganaw than his own blood; but she is in the fort beyond the great lake, and the tomahawks of the red skins will destroy her; for the warriors of that fort have no one to tell them of their danger. What says the red girl? will she go and save the lives of the sister and the wife of the Saganaw.”

The breathing of the Indian became deeper; and Captain de Haldimar fancied she sighed heavily, as she replied,—

“Oucanasta is but a weak woman, and her feet are not swift like those of a runner among the red skins; but what the Saganaw asks, for his sake she will try. When she has seen him safe to his own fort, she will go and prepare herself for the journey. The pale girl shall lay her head on the bosom of the Saganaw, and Oucanasta will try to rejoice in her happiness.”

In the fervour of his gratitude, the young officer caught the drooping form of the generous Indian wildly to his heart; his lips pressed hers, and during the kiss that followed, the heart of the latter bounded and throbbed, as if it would have passed from her own into the bosom of her companion.

Never was a kiss less premeditated, less unchaste. Gratitude, not passion, had called it forth; and had Madeline de Haldimar been near at the moment, the feeling that had impelled the seeming infidelity to herself would have been regarded as an additional claim on her affection. On the whole, however, it was a most unfortunate and ill-timed kiss, and, as is often the case under such circumstances, led to the downfall of the woman. In the vivacity of his embrace, Captain de Haldimar had drawn his guide so far

forward upon the log, that she lost her balance, and fell with a heavy and reverberating crash among the leaves and dried sticks that were strewn thickly around.



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Scarcely a second elapsed when the forest was alive with human yells, that fell achingly on the ears of both; and bounding warriors were heard on every hand, rapidly dividing the dense underwood they encountered in their pursuit.

Quick as thought the Indian had regained her feet. She grasped the hand of her companion; and hurrying, though not without caution, along the path, again stood on the brow of the ravine through which they had previously passed.

“The Saganaw must go alone,” she whispered. “The red skins are close upon our trail, but they will find only an Indian woman, when they expect a pale face. Oucanasta will save her friend.”

Captain de Haldimar did as he was desired. Clinging to the bushes that lined the face of the precipitous descent, he managed once more to gain the bed of the ravine. For a moment he paused to listen to the sounds of his pursuers, whose footsteps were now audible on the eminence he had just quitted; and then, gathering himself up for the leap that was to enable him to clear the rivulet, he threw himself heavily forward. His feet alighted upon an elevated and yielding substance, that gave way with a crashing sound that echoed far and near throughout the forest, and he felt himself secured as if in a trap. Although despairing of escape, he groped with his hands to discover what it was that thus detained him, and found he had fallen through a bark canoe, the bottom of which had been turned upwards. The heart of the fugitive now sank within him: there could be no doubt that his retreat was intercepted. The canoe had been placed there since he last passed through the ravine: and it was evident, from the close and triumphant yell that followed the rending of the frail bark, such a result had been anticipated.

Stunned as he was by the terrific cries of the savages, and confused as were his ideas, Captain de Haldimar had still presence of mind to perceive the path itself offered him no further security. He therefore quitted it altogether, and struck, in an oblique direction, up the opposite face of the ravine. Scarcely had he gone twenty yards, when he heard the voices of several Indians conversing earnestly near the canoe he had just quitted; and presently afterwards he could distinctly hear them ascending the opposite brow of the ravine by the path he recently congratulated himself on having abandoned. To advance or to recede was now equally impracticable; for, on every side, he was begirt by enemies, into whose hands a single false step must inevitably betray him. What would he not have given for the presence of Oucanasta, who was so capable of advising him in this difficulty! but, from the moment of his descending into the ravine, he had utterly lost sight of her.



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The spot on which he now rested was covered with thick brushwood, closely interwoven at their tops, but affording sufficient space beneath for a temporary close concealment; so that, unless some Indian should touch him with his foot, there was little seeming probability of his being discovered by the eye. Under this he crept, and lay, breathless and motionless, with his head raised from the ground, and his ear on the stretch for the slightest noise. For several minutes he remained in this position, vainly seeking to catch the sound of a voice, or the fall of a footstep; but the most deathlike silence had succeeded to the fierce yellings that had so recently rent the forest. At times he fancied he could distinguish faint noises in the direction of the encampment; and so certain was he of this, he at length came to the conclusion that the Indians, either baffled in their search, had relinquished the pursuit, or, having encountered Oucanasta, had been thrown on a different scent. His first intention had been to lie concealed until the following night, when the warriors, no longer on the alert, should leave the path once more open to him; but now that the conviction of their return was strong on his mind, he changed his determination, resolving to make the best of his way to the fort with the aid of the approaching dawn. With this view he partly withdrew his body from beneath its canopy of underwood; but, scarcely had he done so, when a hundred tongues, like the baying of so many blood-hounds, again rent the air with their wild cries, which seemed to rise up from the very bowels of the earth, and close to the appalled ear of the young officer.

Scarcely conscious of what he did, Captain de Haldimar grasped one of his pistols, for he fancied he felt the hot breathing of human life upon his cheek. With a sickly sensation of fear, he turned to satisfy himself whether it was not an illusion of his heated imagination. What, however, was his dismay, when he beheld bending over him a dark and heavy form, the outline of which alone was distinguishable in the deep gloom in which the ravine remained enveloped! Desperation was in the heart of the excited officer: he cocked his pistol; but scarcely had the sharp ticking sound floated on the air, when he felt a powerful hand upon his chest; and, with as much facility as if he had been a child, was he raised by that invisible hand to his feet. A dozen warriors now sprang to the assistance of their comrade, when the whole, having disarmed and bound their prisoner, led him back in triumph to their encampment.

CHAPTER IX.



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The fires of the Indians were nearly now extinct; but the faint light of the fast dawning day threw a ghastly, sickly, hue over the countenances of the savages, which rendered them even more terrific in their war paint. The chiefs grouped themselves immediately around their prisoner, while the inferior warriors, forming an outer circle, stood leaning their dark forms upon their rifles, and following, with keen and watchful eye, every movement of their captive. Hitherto the unfortunate officer had been too much engrossed by his despair to pay any immediate attention to the individual who had first discovered and seized him. It was sufficient for him to know all hope of the safety of the garrison had perished with his captivity: and, with that recklessness of life which often springs from the very consciousness of inability to preserve it, he now sullenly awaited the death which he expected at each moment would be inflicted. Suddenly his ear was startled by an interrogatory, in English, from one who stood behind him.

With a movement of surprise, Captain de Haldimar turned to examine his questioner. It was the dark and ferocious warrior who had exhibited the scalp of his ill-fated servant. For a moment the officer fixed his eyes firmly and unshrinkingly on those of the savage, seeking to reconcile the contradiction that existed between his dress and features and the purity of the English he had just spoken. The other saw his drift, and, impatient of the scrutiny, again repeated, as he fiercely pulled the strong leathern thong by which the prisoner now found himself secured to his girdle,—

“Who and what are you?—whence come you?—and for what purpose are you here?” Then, as if struck by some sudden recollection, he laid his hand upon the shoulder of his victim; and, while his eye grew upon his features, he pursued, in a tone of vehemence,—“Ha! by Heaven, I should know that face!—the cursed lines of the blood of De Haldimar are stamped upon that brow! But stay, one proof and I am satisfied.” While he yet spoke he dashed the menial hat of his captive to the earth, put aside his hair, and then, with fiendish exultation, pursued,—“It is even so. Do you recollect the battle of the plains of Abraham, Captain de Haldimar?—Recollect you the French officer who aimed so desperately at your life, and whose object was defeated by a soldier of your regiment? I am that officer: my victim escaped me then, but not for ever. The hour of vengeance is nearly now arrived, and your capture is the pledge of my success. Hark, how the death-cry of all his hated race will ring in madness on your father’s ear!”



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Amazement, stupefaction, and horror, filled the mind of the wretched officer at this extraordinary declaration. He perfectly recollected that the individual who had evinced so much personal hostility on the occasion alluded to, was indeed a man wearing the French uniform, although at the head of a band of savages, and of a stature and strength similar to those of him who now so fiercely avowed himself the bitter and deadly foe of all his race. If this were so, and his tone and language left little room for doubt, the doom of the ill-fated garrison was indeed irrevocably sealed. This mysterious enemy evidently possessed great influence in the councils of the Indians; and while the hot breath of his hatred continued to fan the flame of fierce hostility that had been kindled in the bosom of Pontecac, whose particular friend he appeared to be, there would be no end to the atrocities that must follow. Great, however, as was the dismay of Captain de Haldimar, who, exhausted with the adventures of the night, presented a ghastly image of anxiety and fatigue, it was impossible for him to repress the feelings of indignation with which the language of this fierce man had inspired him.

“If you are in reality a French officer,” he said, “and not an Englishman, as your accent would denote, the sentiments you have now avowed may well justify the belief, that you have been driven with ignominy from a service which your presence must eternally have disgraced. There is no country in Europe that would willingly claim you for its subject. Nay, even the savage race, with whom you are now connected, would, if apprised of your true nature, spurn you as a thing unworthy to herd even with their wolf-dogs.”

A fierce sardonic laugh burst from the lips of the warrior, but this was so mingled with rage as to give an almost devilish expression to his features.

“Ignominy—ignominy!” he repeated, while his right hand played convulsively with the handle of his tomahawk; “is it for a De Haldimar to taunt me with ignominy? Fool!” he pursued, after a momentary pause, “you have sealed your doom.” Then abruptly quitting the handle of his weapon, he thrust his hand into his bosom, and again drawing forth the reeking scalp of Donellan, he dashed it furiously in the face of his prisoner. “Not two hours since,” he exclaimed, “I cheered myself with the thought that the scalp of a De Haldimar was in my pouch. Now, indeed, do I glory in my mistake. The torture will be a more fitting death for you.”

Had an arm of the insulted soldier been at liberty, the offence would not have gone unavenged even there; for such was the desperation of his heart, that he felt he could have hugged the death struggle with his insolent captor, notwithstanding the fearful odds, nor quitted him until one or both should have paid the debt of fierce enmity with life. As it was he could only betray, by his flashing eye, excited look, and the impatient play of his foot upon the ground, the deep indignation that consumed his heart.



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The tall savage exulted in the mortification he had awakened, and as his eye glanced insolently from head to foot along his enemy, its expression told how much he laughed at the impotence of his anger. Suddenly, however, a change passed over his features. The mocassin of the officer had evidently attracted his attention, and he now demanded, in a more serious and imperative tone,—

“Ha! what means this disguise? Who is the wretch whom I have slain, mistaking him for a nobler victim; and how comes it that an officer of the English garrison appears here in the garb of a servant? By heaven, it is so! you are come as a spy into the camp of the Indians to steal away the councils of the chiefs. Speak, what have you heard?”

With these questions returned the calm and self-possession of the officer. He at once saw the importance of his answer, on which hung not merely his own last faint chance of safety, but that also of his generous deliverer. Struggling to subdue the disgust which he felt at holding converse with this atrocious monster, he asked in turn,—

“Am I then the only one whom the warriors have overtaken in their pursuit?”

“There was a woman, the sister of that boy,” and he pointed contemptuously to the young chief who had so recently assailed him, and who now, in common with his followers, stood impatiently listening to a colloquy that was unintelligible to all. “Speak truly, was *she* not the traitress who conducted you here?”

“Had you found me here,” returned the officer, with difficulty repressing his feelings, “there might have been some ground for the assertion; but surely the councils of the chiefs could not be overheard at the distant point at which you discovered me.”

“Why then were you there in this disguise?—and who is he,” again holding up the bloody scalp, “whom I have despoiled of this?”

“There are few of the Ottawa Indians,” returned Captain de Haldimar, “who are ignorant I once saved that young woman’s life. Is it then so very extraordinary an attachment should have been the consequence? The man whom you slew was my servant. I had brought him out with me for protection during my interview with the woman, and I exchanged my uniform with him for the same purpose. There is nothing in this, however, to warrant the supposition of my being a spy.”

During the delivery of these more than equivocal sentences, which, however, he felt were fully justified by circumstances, the young officer had struggled to appear calm and confident; but, despite of his exertions, his consciousness caused his cheek to colour, and his eye to twinkle, beneath the searching glance of his ferocious enemy. The latter thrust his hand into his chest, and slowly drew forth the rope he had previously exhibited to Pontec.



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“Do you think me a fool, Captain de Haldimar,” he observed, sneeringly, “that you expect so paltry a tale to be palmed successfully on my understanding? An English officer is not very likely to run the risk of breaking his neck by having recourse to such a means of exit from a besieged garrison, merely to intrigue with an Indian woman, when there are plenty of soldiers’ wives within, and that too at an hour when he knows the scouts of his enemies are prowling in the neighbourhood. Captain de Haldimar,” he concluded, slowly and deliberately, “you have lied.”

Despite of the last insult, his prisoner remained calm. The very observation that had just been made afforded him a final hope of exculpation, which, if it benefited not himself, might still be of service to the generous Oucanasta.

“The onus of such language,” he observed coolly and with dignity, “falls not on him to whom it is addressed, but on him who utters it. Yet one who professes to have been himself a soldier, must see in this very circumstance a proof of my innocence. Had I been sent out as a spy to reconnoitre the movements, and to overhear the councils of our enemies, the gate would have been open for my egress; but that rope is in itself an evidence I must have stolen forth unknown to the garrison.”

Whether it was that the warrior had his own particular reasons for attaching truth to this statement, or that he merely pretended to do so, Captain de Haldimar saw with secret satisfaction his last argument was conclusive.

“Well, be it so,” retorted the savage, while a ferocious smile passed over his swarthy features; “but, whether you have been here as a spy, or have merely ventured out in prosecution of an intrigue, it matters not. Before the sun has travelled far in the meridian you die; and the tomahawk of your father’s deadly foe—of—of—of Wacousta, as I am called, shall be the first to drink your blood.”

The officer made a final effort at mercy. “Who or what you are, or whence your hatred of my family, I know not,” he said; “but surely I have never injured you: wherefore, then, this insatiable thirst for my blood? If you are, indeed, a Christian and a soldier, let your heart be touched with humanity, and procure my restoration to my friends. You once attempted my life in honourable combat, why not wait, then, until a fitting opportunity shall give not a bound and defenceless victim to your steel, but one whose resistance may render him a conquest worthy of your arm?”

“What! and be balked of the chance of my just revenge? Hear me, Captain de Haldimar,” he pursued, in that low, quick, deep tone that told all the strong excitement of his heart:—“I have, it is true, no particular enmity to yourself, further than that you are a De Haldimar; but hell does not supply a feeling half so bitter as my enmity to your proud father; and months, nay years, have I passed in the hope of such an hour as this. For



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this have I forsworn my race, and become—what you now behold me—a savage both in garb and character. But this matters not,” he continued, fiercely and impatiently, “your doom is sealed; and before another sun has risen, your stern father’s gaze shall be blasted with the sight of the mangled carcass of his first born. Ha! ha! ha!” and he laughed low and exultingly; “even now I think I see him withering, if heart so hard can wither, beneath this proof of my undying hate.”

“Fiend!—monster!—devil!” exclaimed the excited officer, now losing sight of all considerations of prudence in the deep horror inspired by his captor:—“Kill me—torture me—commit any cruelty on me, if such be your savage will; but outrage not humanity by the fulfilment of your last disgusting threat. Suffer not a father’s heart to be agonised—a father’s eye to be blasted—with a view of the mangled remains of him to whom he has given life.”

Again the savage rudely pulled the thong that bound his prisoner to his girdle, and removing his tomahawk from his belt, and holding its sullied point close under the eye of the former, exclaimed, as he bent eagerly over him,—

“See you this, Captain de Haldimar? At the still hour of midnight, while you had abandoned your guard to revel in the arms of your Indian beauty, I stole into the fort by means of the same rope that you had used in quitting it. Unseen by the sentinels I gained your father’s apartment. It was the first time we had met for twenty years; and I do believe that had the very devil presented himself in my place, he would have been received with fewer marks of horror. Oh, how that proud man’s eye twinkled beneath this glittering blade! He attempted to call out, but my look paralysed his tongue, and cold drops of sweat stole rapidly down his brow and cheek. Then it was that my seared heart once more beat with the intoxication of triumph. Your father was alone and unarmed, and throughout the fort not a sound was to be heard, save the distant tread of the sentinels. I could have laid him dead, at my feet at a single blow, and yet have secured my retreat. But no, that was not my object. I came to taunt him with the promise of my revenge—to tell him the hour of my triumph was approaching fast; and, ha!” he concluded, laughing hideously as he passed his large rude hand through the wavy hair of the now uncovered officer,” this is, indeed, a fair and unexpected first earnest of the full redemption of my pledge. No—no!” he continued, as if talking to himself, “he must not die. Tantulus-like, he shall have death ever apparently within his grasp; but, until all his race have perished before his eyes, he shall not attain it.”

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Hitherto the Indians had preserved an attitude of calm, listening to the interrogatories put to the prisoner with that wonder and curiosity with which a savage people hear a language different from their own; and marking the several emotions that were elicited in the course of the animated colloquy of the pale faces. Gradually, however, they became impatient under its duration; and many of them, in the excitement produced by the fierce manner of him who was called Wacousta, fixed their dark eyes upon the captive, while they grasped the handles of their tomahawks, as if they would have disputed with the former the privilege of dying his weapon first in his blood. When they saw the warrior hold up his menacing blade to the eye of his victim, while he passed his hand through the redundant hair, they at once inferred the sacrifice was about to be completed, and rushing furiously forward, they bounded, and leaped, and yelled, and brandished their own weapons in the most appalling manner.

Already had the unhappy officer given himself self up for lost; fifty bright tomahawks were playing about his head at the same instant, and death—that death which is never without terror to the young, however brave they may be in the hour of generous conflict—seemed to have arrived at last. He raised his eyes to Heaven, committing his soul to his God in the same silent prayer that he offered up for the preservation of his friends and comrades; and then bending them upon the earth, summoned all his collectedness and courage to sustain him through the trial. At the very moment, however when he expected to feel the crashing steel within his brain, he felt himself again violently pulled by the thong that secured his hands. In the next instant he was pressed close to the chest of his vast enemy, who, with one arm encircling his prisoner, and the other brandishing his fierce blade in rapid evolutions round his head, kept the yelling band at bay, with the evident unshaken determination to maintain his sole and acknowledged right to the disposal of his captive.

For several moments the event appeared doubtful; but, notwithstanding his extreme agility in the use of a weapon, in the management of which he evinced all the dexterity of the most practised native, the odds were fearfully against Wacousta; and while his flashing eye and swelling chest betrayed his purpose rather to perish himself than suffer the infringement of his claim, it was evident that numbers must, in the end, prevail against him. On an appeal to Pontecac, however, of which he now suddenly bethought himself, the authority of the latter was successfully exerted, and he was again left in the full and undisturbed possession of his prisoner.



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A low and earnest conversation now ensued among the chiefs, in which, as before, Wacousta bore a principal part. When this was terminated, several Indians approached the unhappy officer, and unfastening the thong with which his hands were firmly and even painfully girt, deprived him both of coat, waistcoat, and shirt. He was then bound a second time in the same manner, his body besmeared with paint, and his head so disguised as to give him the caricature semblance of an Indian warrior. When these preparations were completed, he was led to the tree in which he had been previously concealed, and there firmly secured. Meanwhile Wacousta, at the head of a numerous band of warriors, had departed once more in the direction of the fort.

With the rising of the sun now vanished all traces of the mist that had fallen since the early hours of morning, leaving the unfortunate officer ample leisure to survey the difficulties of his position. He had fancied, from the course taken by his guide the previous night, that the plain or oasis, as we have elsewhere termed it, lay in the very heart of the forest; but that route now proved to have been circuitous. The tree to which he was bound was one of a slight belt, separating the encampment from the open grounds which extended towards the river, and which was so thin and scattered on that side as to leave the clear silver waters of the Detroit visible at intervals. Oh, what would he not have given, at that cheering sight, to have had his limbs free, and his chance of life staked on the swiftness of his flight! While he had imagined himself begirt by interminable forest, he felt as one whose very thought to elude those who were, in some degree, the deities of that wild scene, must be paralysed in its first conception. But here was the vivifying, picture of civilised nature. Corn fields, although trodden down and destroyed—dwelling houses, although burnt or dilapidated—told of the existence of those who were of the same race with himself; and notwithstanding these had perished even as he must perish, still there was something in the aspect of the very ruins of their habitations which, contrasted with the solemn gloom of the forest, carried a momentary and indefinable consolation to his spirit. Then there was the ripe and teeming orchard, and the low whitewashed cabin of the Canadian peasant, to whom the offices of charity, and the duties of humanity, were no strangers; and who, although the secret enemies of his country, had no motive for personal hostility towards himself. Then, on the river itself, even at that early hour, was to be seen, fastened to the long stake driven into its bed, or secured by the rude anchor of stone appended to a cable of twisted bark, the light canoe or clumsy periagua of the peasant fisherman, who, ever and anon, drew up from its deep bosom the shoal-loving pickerel or pike, or white or black bass, or whatever other tenant of these waters might chance to affix itself to the traitorous hook. It is true that his view of these objects was only occasional and indistinct; but his intimate acquaintance with the localities beyond brought every thing before Captain de Haldimar's eye; and even while he sighed to think they were for ever cut off from his reach, he already, in idea, followed the course of flight he should pursue were the power but afforded him.



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From this train of painful and exciting thought the wretched captive was aroused, by a faint but continued yelling in a distant part of the forest, and in the direction that had been taken by Wacousta and his warriors. Then, after a short interval, came the loud booming of the cannon of the fort, carried on with a spirit and promptitude that told of some pressing and dangerous emergency, and fainter afterwards the sharp shrill reports of the rifles, bearing evidence the savages were already in close collision with the garrison. Various were the conjectures that passed rapidly through the mind of the young officer, during a firing that had called almost every Indian in the encampment away to the scene of action, save the two or three young Ottawas who had been left to guard his own person, and who lay upon the sward near him, with head erect and ear sharply set, listening to the startling sounds of conflict. What the motive of the hurried departure of the Indians was he knew not; but he had conjectured the object of the fierce Wacousta was to possess himself of the uniform in which his wretched servant was clothed, that no mistake might occur in his identity, when its true owner should be exhibited in it, within view of the fort, mangled and disfigured, in the manner that fierce and mysterious man had already threatened. It was exceedingly probable the body of Donellan had been mistaken for his own, and that in the anxiety of his father to prevent the Indians from carrying it off, the cannon had been directed to open upon them. But if this were the case, how were the reports of the rifles, and the fierce yellings that continued, save at intervals, to ring throughout the forest to be accounted for? The bullets of the Indians evidently could not reach the fort, and they were too wily, and attached too much value to their ammunition, to risk a shot that was not certain of carrying a wound with it. For a moment the fact itself flashed across his mind, and he attributed the fire of small arms to the attack and defence of a party that had been sent out for the purpose of securing the body, supposed to be his own; yet, if so, again how was he to account for his not hearing the report of a single musket? His ear was too well practised not to know the sharp crack of the rifle from the heavy dull discharge of the musket, and as yet the former only had been distinguishable, amid the intervals that ensued between each sullen booming of the cannon. While this impression continued on the mind of the anxious officer, he caught, with the avidity of desperation, at the faint and improbable idea that his companions might be able to penetrate to his place of concealment, and procure his liberation; but when he found the firing, instead of drawing nearer, was confined to the same spot, and even more fiercely kept up by the Indians towards the close, he again gave way to his despair, and resigning himself to his fate, no longer sought comfort in vain speculation as to its cause. His ear now caught the report of the last shell as it exploded, and then all was still and hushed, as if what he had so recently heard was but a dream.



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The first intimation given him of the return of the savages was the death howl, set up by the women within the encampment. Captain de Haldimar turned his eyes, instinct with terror, towards the scene, and beheld the warriors slowly issuing from the opposite side of the forest into the plain, and bearing in silence the dead and stiffened forms of those who had been cut down by the destructive fire from the fort. Their mien was sullen and revengeful, and more than one dark and gleaming eye did he encounter turned upon him, with an expression that seemed to say a separate torture should avenge the death of each of their fallen comrades.

The early part of the morning wore away in preparation for the interment of the slain. These were placed in rows under the council shed, where they were attended by their female relatives, who composed the features and confined the limbs, while the gloomy warriors dug, within the limit of the encampment, rude graves, of a depth just sufficient to receive the body. When these were completed, the dead were deposited, with the usual superstitious ceremonies of these people, in their several receptacles, after which a mound of earth was thrown up over each, and the whole covered with round logs, so disposed as to form a tomb of semicircular shape: at the head of each grave was finally planted a pole, bearing various devices in paint, intended to illustrate the warlike achievements of the defunct parties.

Captain de Haldimar had followed the course of these proceedings with a beating heart; for too plainly had he read in the dark and threatening manner both of men and women, that the retribution about to be wreaked upon himself would be terrible indeed. Much as he clung to life, and bitterly as he mourned his early cutting off from the affections hitherto identified with his existence, his wretchedness would have been less, had he not been overwhelmed by the conviction that, with him, must perish every chance of the safety of those, the bare recollection of whom made the bitterness of death even more bitter. Harrowing as were these reflections, he felt that immediate destruction, since it could not be avoided, would be rather a blessing than otherwise. But such, evidently, was not the purpose of his relentless enemy. Every species of torment which his cruel invention could supply would, he felt convinced, be exercised upon his frame; and with this impression on his mind, it would have required sterner nerves than his, not to have shrunk from the very anticipation of so dreadful an ordeal.

It was now noon, and yet no visible preparation was making for the consummation of the sacrifice. This, Captain de Haldimar imputed to the absence of the fierce Wacousta, whom he had not seen since the return of the warriors from their skirmish. The momentary disappearance of this extraordinary and ferocious man was, however, fraught with no consolation to his unfortunate prisoner, who felt he was only



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engaged in taking such measures as would render not only his destruction more certain, but his preliminary sufferings more complicated and protracted. While he was thus indulging in fruitless speculation as to the motive for his absence, he fancied he heard the report of a rifle, succeeded immediately afterwards by the war-whoop, at a considerable distance, and in the direction of the river. In this impression he was confirmed, by the sudden upstarting to their feet of the young Indians to whose custody he had been committed, who now advanced to the outer edge of the belt of forest, with the apparent object of obtaining a more unconfined view of the open ground that lay beyond. The rapid gliding of spectral forms from the interior of the encampment in the same direction, denoted, moreover, that the Indians generally had heard, and were attracted by the same sound.

Presently afterwards, repeated “waughs!” and “Wacousta!—Wacousta!” from those who had reached the extreme skirt of the forest, fell on the dismayed ear of the young officer. It was evident, from the peculiar tones in which these words were pronounced, that they beheld that warrior approaching them with some communication of interest; and, sick at heart, and filled with irrepressible dismay, Captain de Haldimar felt his pulse to throb more violently as each moment brought his enemy nearer to him.

A startling interest was now created among the Indians; for, as the savage warrior neared the forest, his lips pealed forth that peculiar cry which is meant to announce some intelligence of alarm. Scarcely had its echoes died away in the forest, when the whole of the warriors rushed from the encampment towards the clearing. Directed by the sound, Captain de Haldimar bent his eyes upon the thin skirt of wood that lay immediately before him, and at intervals could see the towering form of that vast warrior bounding, with incredible speed, up the sloping ground that led from the town towards the forest. A ravine lay before him; but this he cleared, with a prodigious effort, at a single leap; and then, continuing his way up the slope, amid the low guttural acclamations of the warriors at his extraordinary dexterity and strength, finally gained the side of Pontecac, then leaning carelessly against a tree at a short distance from the prisoner.

A low and animated conversation now ensued between these two important personages, which at moments assumed the character of violent discussion. From what Captain de Haldimar could collect, the Ottawa chief was severely reproving his friend for the inconsiderate ardour which had led him that morning into collision with those whom it was their object to lull into security by a careful avoidance of hostility, and urging the possibility of their plan being defeated in consequence. He moreover obstinately refused the pressing request of Wacousta, in regard to some present enterprise which the latter had just suggested, the precise nature



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of which, however, Captain de Haldimar could not learn. Meanwhile, the rapid flitting of numerous forms to and from the encampment, arrayed in all the fierce panoply of savage warfare, while low exclamations of excitement occasionally caught his ear, led the officer to infer, strange and unusual as such an occurrence was, that either the detachment already engaged, or a second, was advancing on their position. Still, this offered little chance of security for himself; for more than once, during his long conference with Pontecac, had the fierce Wacousta bent his eye in ferocious triumph on his victim, as if he would have said,—“Come what will—whatever be the result—you, at least, shall not escape me.” Indeed, so confident did the latter feel that the instant of attack would be the signal of his own death, that, after the first momentary and instinctive cheering of his spirit, he rather regretted the circumstance of their approach; or, if he rejoiced at all, it was only because it afforded him the prospect of immediate death, instead of being exposed to all the horror of a lingering and agonising suffering from the torture.

While the chiefs were yet earnestly conversing, the alarm cry, previously uttered by Wacousta, was repeated, although in a low and subdued tone, by several of the Indians who stood on the brow of the eminence. Pontecac started suddenly to the same point; but Wacousta continued for a moment or two rooted to the spot on which he stood, with the air of one in doubt as to what course he should pursue. He then abruptly raised his head, fixed his dark and menacing eye on his captive, and was already in the act of approaching him, when the earnest and repeated demands for his presence, by the Ottawa chief, drew him once more to the outskirts of the wood.

Again Captain de Haldimar breathed freely. The presence of that fierce man had been a clog upon the vital functions of his heart; and, to be relieved from it, even at a moment like the present, when far more important interests might be supposed to occupy his mind, was a gratification, of which not even the consciousness of impending death could wholly deprive him. From the continued pressing of the Indians towards one particular point in the clearing, he now conjectured, that, from that point, the advance of the troops was visible. Anxious to obtain even a momentary view of those whom he deemed himself fated never more to mingle with in this life, he raised himself upon his feet, and stretched his neck and bent his eager glance in the direction by which Wacousta had approached; but, so closely were the dark warriors grouped among the trees, he found it impossible. Once or twice, however, he thought he could distinguish the gleaming of the English bayonets in the bright sunshine, as they seemed to file off in a parallel line with the ravine. Oh, how his generous heart throbbed at that moment; and how ardently did he wish that he could have stood in the position of the meanest soldier in those gallant ranks! Perhaps his own brave and devoted grenadiers were of the number, burning with enthusiasm to be led against the captors or destroyers of their officer; and this thought added to his wretchedness still more.



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While the unfortunate prisoner, thus strongly excited, bent his whole soul on the scene before him, he fancied he heard the approach of a cautious footstep. He turned his head as well as his confined position would admit, and beheld, close behind him, a dark Indian, whose eyes alone were visible above the blanket in which his person was completely enveloped. His right arm was uplifted, and the blade of a scalping knife glittered in his hand. A cold shudder ran through the veins of the young officer, and he closed his eyes, that he might not see the blow which he felt was about to be directed at his heart. The Indian glanced hurriedly yet cautiously around, to see if he was observed; and then, with the rapidity of thought, divided, first the thongs that secured the legs, and then those which confined the arms of the defenceless captive. When Captain de Haldimar, full of astonishment at finding himself once more at liberty, again unclosed his eyes, they fell on the not unhandsome features of the young chief, the brother of Oucanasta.

“The Saganaw is the prisoner of Wacousta,” said the Indian hastily; “and Wacousta is the enemy of the young Ottawa chief. The warriors of the pale faces are there” (and he pointed directly before him). “If the Saganaw has a bold heart and a swift foot, he may save his life:” and, with this intimation, he hurried away in the same cautious manner, and was in the next instant seen making a circuit to arrive at the point at which the principal strength of the Indians was collected.

The position of Captain de Haldimar had now attained its acme of interest; for on his own exertions alone depended every thing that remained to be accomplished. With wonderful presence of mind he surveyed all the difficulties of his course, while he availed himself at the same moment of whatever advantages were within his grasp. On the approach of Wacousta, the young Indians, to whose custody he had been committed, had returned to their post; but no sooner had that warrior, obeying the call of Pontecac, again departed, than they once more flew to the extreme skirt of the forest, after first satisfying themselves the ligatures which confined their prisoner were secure. Either with a view of avoiding unnecessary encumbrance in their course, or through hurry and inadvertence, they had left their blankets near the foot of the tree. The first thought of the officer was to seize one of these; for, in order to gain the point whence his final effort to join the detachment must be made, it was necessary he should pass through the body of scattered Indians who stood immediately in his way; and the disguise of the blanket could alone afford him a reasonable chance of moving unnoticed among them. Secretly congratulating himself on the insulting mockery that had inducted his upper form in the disguising warpaint of his enemies, he now drew the protecting blanket close up to his eyes; and then, with every nerve braced up, every faculty of mind and body called into action, commenced his dangerous enterprise.



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He had not, however, taken more than two or three steps in advance, when, to his great discomfiture and alarm, he beheld the formidable Wacousta approaching from a distance, evidently in search of his prisoner. With the quickness of thought he determined on his course. To appear to avoid him would be to excite the suspicion of the fierce warrior; and, desperate as the alternative was, he resolved to move undeviatingly forward. At each step that drew him nearer to his enemy, the beating of his heart became more violent; and had it not been for the thick coat of paint in which he was invested, the involuntary contraction of the muscles of his face must inevitably have betrayed him. Nay, even as it was, had the keen eye of the warrior fallen on him, such was the agitation of the officer, he felt he must have been discovered. Happily, however, Wacousta, who evidently took him for some inferior warrior hastening to the point where his fellows were already assembled, passed without deigning to look at him, and so close, their forms almost touched. Captain de Haldimar now quickened his pace. It was evident there was no time to be lost; for Wacousta, on finding him gone, would at once give the alarm, when a hundred warriors would be ready on the instant to intercept his flight. Taking the precaution to disguise his walk by turning in his toes after the Indian manner, he reached, with a beating heart, the first of the numerous warriors who were collected within the belt of forest, anxiously watching the movements of the detachment in the plain below. To his infinite joy he found that each was too much intent on what was passing in the distance, to heed any thing going on near themselves; and when he at length gained the extreme opening, and stood in a line with those who were the farthest advanced, without having excited a single suspicion in his course, he could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses.

Still the most difficult part of the enterprise remained to be completed. Hitherto he had moved under the friendly cover of the underwood, the advantage of which had been to conceal that part of his regimental trousers which the blanket left exposed; and if he moved forward into the clearing, the quick glance of an Indian would not be slow in detecting the difference between these and his own ruder leggings. There was no alternative now but to commence his flight from the spot on which he stood; and for this he prepared himself. At one rapid and comprehensive view he embraced the immediate localities before him. On the other side of the ravine he could now distinctly see the English troops, either planning, as he conceived, their own attack, or waiting in the hope of drawing the Indians from their cover. It was evident that to reach them the ravine must be crossed, unless the more circuitous route by the bridge, which was hid from his view by an intervening hillock, should be preferred; but as the former had been cleared by Wacousta in his ascent, and was the nearest point by which the detachment could be approached, to this did he now direct his undivided attention.



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While he yet paused with indecision, at one moment fancying the time for starting was not yet arrived, and at the next that he had suffered it to pass away, the powerful and threatening voice of Wacousta was heard proclaiming the escape of his captive. Low but expressive exclamations from the warriors marked their sense of the importance of the intelligence; and many of them hastily dispersed themselves in pursuit. This was the critical moment for action: for, as the anxious officer had rather wished than expected, those Indians who had been immediately in front, and whose proximity he most dreaded, were among the number of those who dashed into the heart of the forest—Captain de Haldimar now stood alone, and full twenty paces in front of the nearest of the savages. For a moment he played with his mocassined foot to satisfy himself, of the power and flexibility of its muscles, and then committing himself to his God, dashed the blanket suddenly from his shoulders, and, with eye and heart fixed on the distant soldiery, darted down the declivity with a speed of which he had never yet believed himself capable. Scarcely, however, had his fleeing form appeared in the opening, when a tremendous and deafening yell rent the air, and a dozen wild and naked warriors followed instantly in pursuit. Attracted by that yell, the terrible Wacousta, who had been seeking his victim in a different quarter, bounded forward to the front with an eye flashing fire, and a brow compressed into the fiercest hate; and so stupendous were his efforts, so extraordinary was his speed, that had it not been for the young Ottawa chief, who was one of the pursuing party, and who, under the pretence of assisting in the recapture of the prisoner, sought every opportunity of throwing himself before, and embarrassing the movements of his enemy, it is highly probable the latter would have succeeded. Despite of these obstacles, however, the fierce Wacousta, who had been the last to follow, soon left the foremost of his companions far behind him; and but for his sudden fall, while in the very act of seizing the arm of his prisoner, his gigantic efforts must have been crowned with the fullest success. But the reader has already seen how miraculously Captain de Haldimar, reduced to the last stage of debility, as much from inanition as from the unnatural efforts of his flight, finally accomplished his return to the detachment.

CHAPTER X.

At the western extremity of the lake Huron, and almost washed by the waters of that pigmy ocean, stands the fort of Michilimackinac. Constructed on a smaller scale, and garrisoned by a less numerical force, the defences of this post, although less formidable than those of the Detroit, were nearly similar, at the period embraced by our story, both in matter and in manner. Unlike the latter fortress, however, it boasted none of the advantages afforded by culture; neither, indeed, was there a single spot in the immediate



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vicinity that was not clad in the eternal forest of these regions. It is true, that art and laborious exertion had so far supplied the deficiencies of nature as to isolate the fort, and throw it under the protecting sweep of its cannon; but, while this afforded security, it failed to produce any thing like a pleasing effect to the eye. The very site on which the fortress now stood had at one period been a portion of the wilderness that every where around was only terminated by the sands on the lake shore: and, although time and the axe of the pioneer had in some degree changed its features, still there was no trace of that blended natural scenery that so pleasingly diversified the vicinity of the sister fort. Here and there, along the imperfect clearing, and amid the dark and thickly studded stumps of the felled trees, which in themselves were sufficient to give the most lugubrious character to the scene, rose the rude log cabin of the settler; but, beyond this, cultivation appeared to have lost her power in proportion with the difficulties she had to encounter. Even the two Indian villages, L'Arbre-Croche and Chabouiga, situate about a mile from the fort, with which they formed nearly an equilateral triangle, were hid from the view of the garrison by the dark dense forest, in the heart of which they were embedded.

Lake ward the view was scarcely less monotonous; but it was not, as in the rear, that monotony which is never occasionally broken in upon by some occurrence of interest. If the eye gazed long and anxiously for the white sail of the well known armed vessel, charged at stated intervals with letters and tidings of those whom time, and distance, and danger, far from estranging, rendered more dear to the memory, and bound more closely to the heart, it was sure of being rewarded at last; and then there was no picture on which it could love to linger so well as that of the silver waves bearing that valued vessel in safety to its wonted anchorage in the offing. Moreover, the light swift bark canoes of the natives often danced joyously on its surface; and while the sight was offended at the savage, skulking among the trees of the forest, like some dark spirit moving cautiously in its course of secret destruction, and watching the moment when he might pounce unnoticed on his unprepared victim, it followed, with momentary pleasure and excitement, the activity and skill displayed by the harmless paddler, in the swift and meteor-like race that set the troubled surface of the Huron in a sheet of hissing foam. Nor was this all. When the eye turned wood-ward, it fell heavily, and without interest, upon a dim and dusky point, known to enter upon savage scenes and unexplored countries; whereas, whenever it reposed upon the lake, it was with an eagerness and energy that embraced the most vivid recollections of the past, and led the imagination buoyantly over every well-remembered scene that had previously been traversed, and which must be traversed again before the land of the European could be pressed once more. The forest, in a word, formed, as it were, the gloomy and impenetrable walls of the prison-house, and the bright lake that lay before it the only portal through which happiness and liberty could be again secured.



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The principal entrance into the fort, which presented four equal sides of a square, was from the forest; but, immediately opposite to this, and behind the apartments of the commanding officer, there was another small gate that opened upon the lake shore; but which, since the investment of the place, had been kept bolted and locked, with a precaution befitting the danger to which the garrison was exposed. Still, there were periods, even now, when its sullen hinges were to be heard moaning on the midnight breeze; for it served as a medium of communication between the besieged and others who were no less critically circumstanced than themselves.

The very day before the Indians commenced their simultaneous attack on the several posts of the English, the only armed vessel that had been constructed on these upper lakes, serving chiefly as a medium of communication between Detroit and Michilimackinac, had arrived with despatches and letters from the former fort. A well-concerted plan of the savages to seize her in her passage through the narrow waters of the river Sinclair had only been defeated by the vigilance of her commander; but, ever since the breaking out of the war, she had been imprisoned within the limits of the Huron. Laborious indeed was the duty of the devoted crew. Several attempts had been renewed by the Indians to surprise them; but, although their little fleets stole cautiously and noiselessly, at the still hour of midnight, to the spot where, at the last expiring rays of twilight, they had beheld her carelessly anchored, and apparently lulled into security, the subject of their search was never to be met with. No sooner were objects on the shore rendered indistinct to the eye, than the anchor was silently weighed, and, gliding wherever the breeze might choose to carry her, the light bark was made to traverse the lake, with every sail set, until dawn. None, however, were suffered to slumber in the presumed security afforded by this judicious flight. Every man was at his post; and, while a silence so profound was preserved, that the noise of a falling pin might have been heard upon her decks, every thing was in readiness to repel an attack of their enemies, should the vessel, in her course, come accidentally in collision with their pigmy fleets. When morning broke, and no sign of their treacherous foes was visible, the vessel was again anchored, and the majority of the crew suffered to retire to their hammocks, while the few whose turn of duty it chanced to be, kept a vigilant look-out, that, on the slightest appearance of alarm, their slumbering comrades might again be aroused to energy and action.



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Severe and harassing as had been the duty on board this vessel for many months,—at one moment exposed to the assaults of the savages, at another assailed by the hurricanes that are so prevalent and so dangerous on the American lakes,—the situation of the crew was even less enviable than that of the garrison itself. What chiefly contributed to their disquietude, was the dreadful consciousness that, however their present efforts might secure a temporary safety, the period of their fall was only protracted. A few months more must bring with them all the severity of the winter of those climes, and then, blocked up in a sea of ice,—exposed to all the rigour of cold,—all the miseries of hunger,—what effectual resistance could they oppose to the numerous bands of Indians who, availing themselves of the defenceless position of their enemies, would rush from every quarter to their destruction.

At the outset of these disheartening circumstances the officer had summoned his faithful crew together, and pointing out the danger and uncertainty of their position, stated that two chances of escape still remained to them. The first was, by an attempt to accomplish the passage of the river Sinclair during some dark and boisterous night, when the Indians would be least likely to suspect such an intention: it was at this point that the efforts of their enemies were principally to be apprehended; but if, under cover of storm and darkness, they could accomplish this difficult passage, they would easily gain the Detroit, and thence pass into lake Erie, at the further extremity of which they might, favoured by Providence, effect a landing, and penetrate to the inhabited parts of the colony of New York. The other alternative was,—and he left it to themselves to determine,—to sink the vessel on the approach of winter, and throw themselves into the fort before them, there to await and share the destiny of its gallant defenders.

With the generous enthusiasm of their profession, the noble fellows had determined on the latter course. With their officer they fully coincided in opinion, that their ultimate hopes of life depended on the safe passage of the Sinclair; for it was but too obvious, that soon or late, unless some very extraordinary revolution should be effected in the intentions of the Indians, the fortress must be starved into submission. Still, as it was tolerably well supplied with provisions, this gloomy prospect was remote, and they were willing to run all chances with their friends on shore, rather than desert them in their extremity. The determination expressed by them, therefore, was, that when they could no longer keep the lake in safety, they would, if the officer permitted it, scuttle the vessel, and attempt an entrance into the fort, where they would share the fate of the troops, whatever it might chance to be.



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No sooner was this resolution made known, than their young commander sought an opportunity of communicating with the garrison, This, however, was no very easy task; for, so closely was the fort hemmed in by the savages, it was impossible to introduce a messenger within its walls; and so sudden had been the cutting off of all communication between the vessel and the shore, that the thought had not even occurred to either commander to establish the most ordinary intelligence by signal. In this dilemma recourse was had to an ingenious expedient. The dispatches of the officer were enclosed in one of the long tin tubes in which were generally deposited the maps and charts of the schooner, and to this, after having been carefully soldered, was attached an inch rope of several hundred fathoms in length: the case was then put into one of the ship's guns, so placed as to give it the elevation of a mortar; thus prepared, advantage was taken of a temporary absence of the Indians to bring the vessel within half a mile of the shore, and when the attention of the garrison, naturally attracted by this unusual movement, was sufficiently awakened, that opportunity was chosen for the discharge of the gun; and as the quantity of powder had been proportionably reduced for the limited range, the tube was soon safely deposited within the rampart. The same means were adopted in replying; and one end of the rope remaining attached to the schooner, all that was necessary was to solder up the tube as before, and throw it over the ramparts upon the sands, whence it was immediately pulled over her side by the watchful mariners.

As the dispatch conveyed to the garrison, among other subjects of interest, bore the unwelcome intelligence that the supplies of the crew were nearly expended, an arrangement was proposed by which, at stated intervals, a more immediate communication with the former might be effected. Whenever, therefore, the wind permitted, the vessel was kept hovering in sight during the day, beneath the eyes of the savages, and on the approach of evening an unshotted gun was discharged, with a view of drawing their attention more immediately to her movements; every sail was then set, and under a cloud of canvass the course of the schooner was directed towards the source of the Sinclair, as if an attempt to accomplish that passage was to be made during the night. No sooner, however, had the darkness fairly set in, than the vessel was put about, and, beating against the wind, generally contrived to reach the offing at a stated hour, when a boat, provided with muffled oars, was sent off to the shore. This ruse had several times deceived the Indians, and it was on these occasions that the small gate to which we have alluded was opened, for the purpose of conveying the necessary supplies.

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The buildings of the fort consisted chiefly of block-houses, the internal accommodations of which were fully in keeping with their rude exterior, being but indifferently provided with the most ordinary articles of comfort, and fitted up as the limited resources of that wild and remote district could supply. The best and most agreeably situated of these, if a choice could be made, was that of the commanding officer. This building rose considerably above the others, and overhanging that part of the rampart which skirted the shores of the Huron, commanded a full view of the lake, even to its extremity of frowning and belting forest.

To this block-house there were two staircases; the principal leading to the front entrance from the barrack-square, the other opening in the rear, close under the rampart, and communicating by a few rude steps with the small gate that led upon the sands. In the lower part of this building, appropriated by the commanding officer to that exclusive purpose, the official duties of his situation were usually performed; and on the ground-floor a large room, that extended from front to rear of the block-house on one side of the passage, had formerly been used as a hall of council with the Indian chiefs. The floor above this comprised both his own private apartments and those set apart for the general use of the family; but, above all, and preferable from their cheerful view over the lake, were others, which had been reserved for the exclusive accommodation of Miss de Haldimar. This upper floor consisted of two sleeping apartments, with a sitting-room, the latter extending the whole length of the block-house and opening immediately upon the lake, from the only two windows with which that side of the building was provided. The principal staircase led into one of the bed-rooms, and both of the latter communicated immediately with the sitting-room, which again, in its turn, opened, at the opposite extremity, on the narrow staircase that led to the rear of the block-house.

The furniture of this apartment, which might be taken as a fair sample of the best the country could afford, was wild, yet simple, in the extreme. Neat rush mats, of an oblong square, and fantastically put together, so as to exhibit in the weaving of the several coloured reeds both figures that were known to exist in the creation, and those which could have no being save in the imagination of their framers, served as excellent substitutes for carpets, while rush bottomed chairs, the product of Indian ingenuity also, occupied those intervals around the room that were unsupplied by the matting. Upon the walls were hung numerous specimens both of the dress and of the equipments of the savages, and mingled with these were many natural curiosities, the gifts of Indian chiefs to the commandant at various periods before the war.



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Nothing could be more unlike the embellishments of a modern European boudoir than those of this apartment, which had, in some degree, been made the sanctum of its present occupants. Here was to be seen the scaly carcass of some huge serpent, extending its now harmless length from the ceiling to the floor—there an alligator, stuffed after the same fashion; and in various directions the skins of the beaver, the marten, the otter, and an infinitude of others of that genus, filled up spaces that were left unsupplied by the more ingenious specimens of Indian art. Head-dresses tastefully wrought in the shape of the crowning bays of the ancients, and composed of the gorgeous feathers of the most splendid of the forest birds—bows and quivers handsomely, and even elegantly ornamented with that most tasteful of Indian decorations, the stained quill of the porcupine; war clubs of massive iron wood, their handles covered with stained horsehair and feathers curiously mingled together—machecotis, hunting coats, mocassins, and leggings, all worked in porcupine quill, and fancifully arranged,—these, with many others, had been called into requisition to bedeck and relieve the otherwise rude and naked walls of the apartment.

Nor did the walls alone reflect back the picture of savage ingenuity, for on the various tables, the rude polish of which was hid from view by the simple covering of green baize, which moreover constituted the garniture of the windows, were to be seen other products of their art. Here stood upon an elevated stand a model of a bark canoe, filled with its complement of paddlers carved in wood and dressed in full costume; the latter executed with such singular fidelity of feature, that although the speaking figures sprung not from the experienced and classic chisel of the sculptor but from the rude scalping knife of the savage, the very tribe to which they belonged could be discovered at a glance by the European who was conversant with the features of each: then there were handsomely ornamented vessels made of the birch bark, and filled with the delicate sugars which the natives extract from the maple tree in early spring; these of all sizes, even to the most tiny that could well be imagined, were valuable rather as exquisite specimens of the neatness with which those slight vessels could be put together, sewn as they were merely with strips of the same bark, than from any intrinsic value they possessed. Covered over with fantastic figures, done either in paint, or in quill work artfully interwoven into the fibres of the bark, they presented, in their smooth and polished surface, strong evidence of the address of the savages in their preparation of this most useful and abundant produce of the country. Interspersed with these, too, were numerous stands filled with stuffed birds, some of which combined in themselves every variety and shade of dazzling plumage; and numerous rude cases contained the rarest specimens of the American butterfly, most of which were of sizes and tints that are no where equalled in Europe. One solitary table alone was appropriated to whatever wore a transatlantic character in this wild and museum-like apartment. On this lay a Spanish guitar, a few pieces of old music, a collection of English and French books, a couple of writing-desks, and, scattered over the whole, several articles of unfinished needle-work.



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Such was the apartment in which Madeline and Clara de Haldimar were met at the moment we have selected for their introduction to our readers. It was the morning of that day on which the second council of the chiefs, the result of which has already been seen, was held at Detroit. The sun had risen bright and gorgeously above the adjacent forest, throwing his golden beams upon the calm glassy waters of the lake; and now, approaching rapidly towards the meridian, gradually diminished the tall bold shadows of the block-houses upon the shore. At the distance of about a mile lay the armed vessel so often alluded to; her light low hull dimly seen in the hazy atmosphere that danced upon the waters, and her attenuated masts and sloping yards, with their slight tracery of cordage, recalling rather the complex and delicate ramifications of the spider's web, than the elastic yet solid machinery to which the lives of those within had so often been committed in sea and tempest. Upon the strand, and close opposite to the small gate which now stood ajar, lay one of her boats, the crew of which had abandoned her with the exception only of a single individual, apparently her cockswain, who, with the tiller under his arm, lay half extended in the stern-sheets, his naked chest exposed, and his tarpaulin hat shielding his eyes from the sun while he indulged in profound repose. These were the only objects that told of human life. Everywhere beyond the eye rested on the faint outline of forest, that appeared like the softened tracing of a pencil at the distant junction of the waters with the horizon.

The windows that commanded this prospect were now open; and through that which was nearest to the gate, half reclined the elegant, slight, and somewhat petite form of a female, who, with one small and delicately formed hand supporting her cheek, while the other played almost unconsciously with an open letter, glanced her eye alternately, and with an expression of joyousness, towards the vessel that lay beyond, and the point in which the source of the Sinclair was known to lie. It was Clara de Haldimar.

Presently the vacant space at the same window was filled by another form, but of less girlish appearance—one that embraced all the full rich contour of the Medicean Venus, and a lazy languor in its movements that harmonised with the speaking outlines of the form, and without which the beauty of the whole would have been at variance and imperfect. Neither did the face belie the general expression of the figure. The eyes, of a light hazel, were large, full, and somewhat prominent—the forehead broad, high, and redolent with an expression of character—and the cheek rich in that peculiar colour which can be likened only to the downy hues of the peach, and is, in itself, a physical earnest of the existence of deep, but not boisterous—of devoted, but not obtrusive affections; an impression that was not, in the present instance, weakened by the full and pouting lip, and the rather heavy formation of the lower face. The general expression, moreover, of a countenance which, closely analysed, could not be termed beautiful, marked a mind at once ardent in its conceptions, and steady and resolute in its silent accomplishments of purpose. She was of the middle height.



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Such was the person of Madeline de Haldimar; but attractive, or rather winning, as were her womanly attributes, her principal power lay in her voice,—the beauty, nay, the voluptuousness of which nothing could surpass. It was impossible to listen to the slow, full, rich, deep, and melodious tones that fell trembling from her lips upon the ear, and not feel, aye shudder, under all their fascination on the soul. In such a voice might the Madonna of Raphael have been supposed to offer up her supplications from the gloomy precincts of the cloister. No wonder that Frederick de Haldimar loved her, and loved her with all the intense devotedness of his own glowing heart. His cousin was to him a divinity whom he worshipped in the innermost recesses of his being; and his, in return, was the only ear in which the accents of that almost superhuman voice had breathed the thrilling confession of an attachment, which its very tones announced could be deep and imperishable as the soul in which it had taken root. Often in the hours that preceded the period when they were to have been united heart and mind and thought in one common destiny, would he start from her side, his brain whirling with very intoxication, and then obeying another wild impulse, rush once more into her embrace; and clasping his beloved Madeline to his heart, entreat her again to pour forth all the melody of that confession in his enraptured ear. Artless and unaffected as she was generous and impassioned, the fond and noble girl never hesitated to gratify him whom alone she loved; and deep and fervent was the joy of the soldier, when he found that each passionate entreaty, far from being met with caprice, only drew from the lips of his cousin warmer and more affectionate expressions of her attachment. Such expressions, coming from any woman, must have been rapturous and soothing in the extreme; but, when they flowed from a voice whose very sound was melody, they acted on the heart of Captain de Haldimar with a potency that was as irresistible as the love itself which she inspired.

Such was the position of things just before the commencement of the Indian war. Madeline de Haldimar had been for some time on a visit to Detroit, and her marriage with her cousin was to have taken place within a few days. The unexpected arrival of intelligence from Michilimackinac that her father was dangerously ill, however, retarded the ceremony; and, up to the present period, their intercourse had been completely suspended. If Madeline de Haldimar was capable of strong attachment to her lover, the powerful ties of nature were no less deeply rooted in her heart, and commiseration and anxiety for her father now engrossed every faculty of her mind. She entreated her cousin to defer the solemnisation of their nuptials until her parent should be pronounced out of danger, and, having obtained his consent to the delay, instantly set off for Michilimackinac, accompanied by her cousin Clara, whom, she had prevailed on the governor to part with until her own return. Hostilities were commenced very shortly afterwards, and, although Major de Haldimar speedily recovered from his illness, the fair cousins were compelled to share the common imprisonment of the garrison.



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When Miss de Haldimar joined her more youthful cousin at the window, through which the latter was gazing thoughtfully on the scene before her, she flung her arm around her waist with the protecting manner of a mother. The mild blue eyes of Clara met those that were fastened in tenderness upon her, and a corresponding movement on her part brought the more matronly form of her cousin into close and affectionate contact with her own.

“Oh, Madeline, what a day is this!” she exclaimed; “and how often on my bended knees have I prayed to Heaven that it might arrive! Our trials are ended at last, and happiness and joy are once more before us. There is the boat that is to conduct us to the vessel, which, in its turn, is to bear me to the arms of my dear father, and you to those of the lover who adores you. How beautiful does that fabric appear to me now! Never did I feel half the pleasure in surveying it I do at this moment.”

“Dear, dear girl!” exclaimed Miss de Haldimar,—and she pressed her closer and in silence to her heart: then, after a slight pause, during which the mantling glow upon her brow told how deeply she desired the reunion alluded to by her cousin—“that, indeed, will be an hour of happiness to us both, Clara; for irrevocably as our affections have been pledged, it would be silly in the extreme to deny that I long most ardently to be restored to him who is already my husband. But, tell me,” she concluded, with an archness of expression that caused the long-lashed eyes of her companion to sink beneath her own, “are you quite sincere in your own case? I know how deeply you love your father and your brothers, but do these alone occupy your attention? Is there not a certain friend of Charles whom you have some little curiosity to see also?”

“How silly, Madeline!” and the cheek of the young girl became suffused with a deeper glow; “you know I have never seen this friend of my brother, how then can I possibly feel more than the most ordinary interest in him? I am disposed to like him, certainly, for the mere reason that Charles does; but this is all.”

“Well, Clara, I will not pretend to decide; but certain it is, this is the last letter you received from Charles, and that it contains the strongest recommendations of his friend to your notice. Equally certain is it, that scarcely a day has passed, since we have been shut up here, that you have not perused and re-perused it half a dozen times. Now, as I am confessedly one who should know something of these matters, I must be suffered to pronounce these are strong symptoms, to say the very least. Ah! Clara, that blush declares you guilty.—But, who have we here? Middleton and Baynton.”

The eyes of the cousins now fell upon the ramparts immediately under the window. Two officers, one apparently on duty for the day, were passing at the moment; and, as they heard their names pronounced, stopped, looked up, and saluted the young ladies with that easy freedom of manner, which, unmixed with either disrespect or effrontery, so usually characterises the address of military men.



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“What a contrast, by heaven!” exclaimed he who wore the badge of duty suspended over his chest, throwing himself playfully into a theatrical attitude, expressive at once of admiration and surprise, while his eye glanced intelligently over the fair but dissimilar forms of the cousins. “Venus and Psyche in the land of the Pottowatomies by all that is magnificent! Come, Middleton, quick, out with that eternal pencil of yours, and perform your promise.”

“And what may that promise be?” asked Clara, laughingly, and without adverting to the hyperbolical compliment of the dark-eyed officer who had just spoken.

“You shall hear,” pursued the lively captain of the guard. “While making the tour of the ramparts just now, to visit my sentries, I saw Middleton leaning most sentimentally against one of the boxes in front, his notebook in one hand and his pencil in the other. Curious to discover the subject of his abstraction, I stole cautiously behind him, and saw that he was sketching the head of a tall and rather handsome squaw, who, in the midst of a hundred others, was standing close to the gateway watching the preparations of the Indian ball-players. I at once taxed him with having lost his heart; and rallying him on his bad taste in devoting his pencil to any thing that had a red skin, never combed its hair, and turned its toes in while walking, pronounced his sketch to be an absolute fright. Well, will you believe what I have to add? The man absolutely flew into a tremendous passion with me, and swore that she was a Venus, a Juno, a Minerva, a beauty of the first water in short; and finished by promising, that when I could point out any woman who was superior to her in personal attraction, he would on the instant write no less than a dozen consecutive sonnets in her praise. I now call upon him to fulfil his promise, or maintain the superiority of his Indian beauty.”

Before the laughing Middleton could find time to reply to the light and unmeaning rattle of his friend, the quick low roll of a drum was heard from the front. The signal was understood by both officers, and they prepared to depart.

“This is the hour appointed for the council,” said Captain Baynton, looking at his watch, “and I must be with my guard, to receive the chiefs with becoming honour. How I pity you, Middleton, who will have the infliction of one of their great big talks, as Murphy would call it, dinned into your ear for the next two hours at least! Thank heaven, my tour of duty exempts me from that; and by way of killing an hour, I think I shall go and carry on a flirtation with your Indian Minerva, alias Venus, alias Juno, while you are discussing the affairs of the nation with closed doors. But hark! there is the assembly drum again. We must be off. Come, Middleton, come.—Adieu!” waving his hand to the cousins, “we shall meet at dinner.”

“What an incessant talker Baynton is!” observed Miss de Haldimar, as the young men now disappeared round an angle of the rampart; “but he has reminded me of what I had nearly forgotten, and that is to give orders for dinner. My father has invited all the officers to dine with him to day, in commemoration of the peace which is being

concluded. It will be the first time we shall have all met together since the commencement of this cruel war, and we must endeavour, Clara, to do honour to the feast.”



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"I hope," timidly observed her cousin, shuddering as she spoke, "that none of those horrid chiefs will be present, Madeline; for, without any affectation of fear whatever, I feel that I could not so far overcome my disgust as to sit at the same table with them. There was a time, it is true, when I thought nothing of these things; but, since the war, I have witnessed and heard so much of their horrid deeds, that I shall never be able to endure the sight of an Indian face again. Ah!" she concluded, turning her eyes upon the lake, while she clung more closely to the embrace of her companion; "would to Heaven, Madeline, that we were both at this moment gliding in yonder vessel, and in sight of my father's fort!"

CHAPTER XI.

The eyes of Miss de Haldimar followed those of her cousin, and rested on the dark hull of the schooner, with which so many recollections of the past and anticipations of the future were associated in their minds. When they had last looked upon it, all appearance of human life had vanished from its decks; but now there was strong evidence of unusual bustle and activity. Numerous persons could be seen moving hastily to and fro, their heads just peering above the bulwarks; and presently they beheld a small boat move from the ship's side, and shoot rapidly ahead, in a direct line with the well-known bearings of the Sinclair's source. While they continued to gaze on this point, following the course of the light vessel, and forming a variety of conjectures as to the cause of a movement, especially remarkable from the circumstance of the commander being at that moment in the fort, whither he had been summoned to attend the council, another and scarcely perceptible object was dimly seen, at the distance of about half a mile in front of the boat. With the aid of a telescope, which had formed one of the principal resources of the cousins during their long imprisonment, Miss de Haldimar now perceived a dark and shapeless mass moving somewhat heavily along the lake, and in a line with the schooner and the boat. This was evidently approaching; for each moment it loomed larger upon the hazy water, increasing in bulk in the same proportion that the departing skiff became less distinct: still, it was impossible to discover, at that distance, in what manner it was propelled. Wind there was none, not as much as would have changed the course of a feather dropping through space; and, except where the dividing oars of the boatmen had agitated the waters, the whole surface of the lake was like a sea of pale and liquid gold.



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At length the two dark bodies met, and the men in the boat were seen to lie upon their oars, while one in the stem seemed to be in the act of attaching a rope to the formless matter. For a few moments there was a cessation of all movement; and then again the active and sturdy rowing of the boatmen was renewed, and with an exertion of strength even more vigorous than that they had previously exhibited. Their course was now directed towards the vessel; and, as it gradually neared that fabric, the rope by which the strange-looking object was secured, could be distinctly though faintly seen with the telescope. It was impossible to say whether the latter, whatever it might be, was urged by some invisible means, or merely floated in the wake of the boat; for, although the waters through which it passed ran rippling and foaming from their course, this effect might have been produced by the boat which preceded it. As it now approached the vessel, it presented the appearance of a dense wood of evergreens, the overhanging branches of which descended close to the water's edge, and baffled every attempt of the cousins to discover its true character. The boat had now arrived within a hundred yards of the schooner, when a man was seen to rise from its bows, and, putting both his hands to his mouth, after the manner of sailors in hailing, to continue in that position for some moments, apparently conversing with those who were grouped along the nearest gangway. Then were observed rapid movements on the decks; and men were seen hastening aloft, and standing out upon the foremast yards. This, however, had offered no interruption to the exertions of the boatmen, who still kept plying with a vigour that set even the sail-less vessel in motion, as the foaming water, thrown from their bending oar-blades, dashed angrily against her prow. Soon afterwards both the boat and her prize disappeared on the opposite side of the schooner, which, now lying with her broadside immediately on a line with the shore, completely hid them from the further view of the cousins.

"Look!—Look!" said Clara, clinging sensitively and with alarm to the almost maternal bosom against which she reposed, while she pointed with her finger to another dark mass that was moving through the lake in a circular sweep from the point of wood terminating the clearing on the right of the fort.

Miss de Haldimar threw the glass on the object to which her attention was now directed. It was evidently some furred animal, and presented all the appearance either of a large water-rat or a beaver, the latter of which it was pronounced to be as a nearer approach rendered its shape more distinct. Ever and anon, too, it disappeared altogether under the water; and, when it again came in sight, it was always several yards nearer. Its course, at first circuitous, at length took a direct line with the stern of the boat, where the sailor who was in charge still lay extended at his drowsy length, his tarpaulin hat shading his eyes, and his arms folded over his uncovered and heaving chest, while he continued to sleep as profoundly as if he had been comfortably berthed in his hammock in the middle of the Atlantic.



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“What a large bold animal it is,” remarked Clara, in die tone of one who wishes to be confirmed in an impression but indifferently entertained. “See how close it approaches the boat! Mad that lazy sailor but his wits about him, he might easily knock it on the head with his oar. It is—it is a beaver, Madeline; I can distinguish its head even with the naked eye.”

“Heaven grant it may be a beaver,” answered Miss de Haldimar, in a voice so deep and full of meaning, that it made her cousin startle and turn paler even than before. “Nay, Clara, dearest, command yourself, nor give way to what may, after all, prove a groundless cause of alarm. Yet, I know not how it is, my heart misgives me sadly; for I like not the motions of this animal, which are strangely and unusually bold. But this is not all: a beaver or a rat might ruffle the mere surface of the water, yet this leaves behind it a deep and gurgling furrow, as if the element had been ploughed to its very bottom. Observe how the lake is agitated and discoloured wherever it has passed. Moreover, I dislike this sudden bustle on board the schooner, knowing, as I do, there is not an officer present to order the movements now visibly going forward. The men are evidently getting up the anchor; and see how her sails are loosened, apparently courting the breeze, as if she would fly to avoid some threatened danger. Would to Heaven this council scene were over; for I do, as much as yourself, dearest Clara, distrust these cruel Indians!”

A significant gesture from her trembling cousin again drew her attention from the vessel to the boat. The animal, which now exhibited the delicate and glossy fur of the beaver, had gained the stern, and remained stationary within a foot of her quarter. Presently the sailor made a sluggish movement, turning himself heavily on his side, and with his face towards his curious and daring visitant. In the act the tarpaulin hat had fallen from his eyes, but still he awoke not. Scarcely had he settled himself in his new position, when, to the infinite horror of the excited cousins, a naked human hand was raised from beneath the surface of the lake, and placed upon the gunwale of the boat. Then rose slowly, and still covered with its ingenious disguise, first the neck, then the shoulders, and finally the form, even to the midwaist, of a dark and swarthy Indian, who, stooping low and cautiously over the sailor, now reposed the hand that had quitted the gunwale upon his form, while the other was thrust searchingly into the belt encircling his waist.

Miss de Haldimar would have called out, to apprise the unhappy man of his danger; but her voice refused its office, and her cousin was even less capable of exertion than herself. The deep throbbings of their hearts were now audible to each; for the dreadful interest they took in the scene, had excited their feelings to the most intense stretch of agony. At the very moment, however, when, with almost suspended



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animation, they expected to see the knife of the savage driven into the chest of the sleeping and unsuspecting sailor, the latter suddenly started up, and, instinct with the full sense of the danger by which he was menaced, in less time than we take to describe it, seized the tiller of his rudder, the only available instrument within his reach, and directing a powerful blow at the head of his amphibious enemy, laid him, without apparent life or motion, across the boat.

“Almighty God! what can this mean?” exclaimed Miss de Haldimar, as soon as she could recover her presence of mind. “There is some fearful treachery in agitation; and a cloud now hangs over all, that will soon burst with irresistible fury on our devoted heads. Clara, my love,” and she conducted the almost fainting girl to a seat, “wait here until I return. The moment is critical, and my father must be apprised of what we have seen. Unless the gates of the fort be instantly closed, we are lost.”

“Oh, Madeline, leave me not alone,” entreated the sinking Clara. “We will go together. Perhaps I may be of service to you below.”

“The thought is good; but have you strength and courage to face the dark chiefs in the council-room. If so, hasten there, and put my father on his guard, while I fly across the parade, and warn Captain Baynton of the danger.”

With these words she drew the arm of her agitated cousin within her own, and, rapidly traversing the apartment, gained the bed-room which opened close upon the head of the principal staircase. Already were they descending the first steps, when a loud cry, that sent a thrill of terror through their blood, was heard from without the fort. For a moment Miss de Haldimar continued irresolute; and leaning against the rude balustrade for support, passed her hand rapidly across her brow, as if to collect her scattered energies. The necessity for prompt and immediate action was, however, evident; and she alone was capable of exertion. Speechless with alarm, and trembling in every joint, the unhappy Clara had now lost all command of her limbs; and, clinging close to the side of her cousin, by her wild looks alone betrayed consciousness had not wholly deserted her. The energy of despair lent more than woman’s strength to Miss de Haldimar. She caught the fainting girl in her arms, retraced her way to the chamber, and depositing her burden on the bed, emphatically enjoined her on no account to move until her return. She then quitted the room, and rapidly descended the staircase.

For some moments all was still and hushed as the waveless air; and then again a loud chorus of shouts was heard from the ramparts of the fort. The choked breathing of the young girl became more free, and the blood rushed once more from her oppressed heart to the extremities. Never did tones of the human voice fall more gratefully on the ear of mariner cast on some desert island, than did those on that of the highly excited Clara.



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It was the loud laugh of the soldiery, who, collected along the line of rampart in front, were watching the progress of the ball-players. Cheered by the welcome sounds, she raised herself from the bed to satisfy her eye her ear had not deceived her. The windows of both bed-chambers looked immediately on the barrack square, and commanded a full view of the principal entrance. From that at which she now stood, the revived but still anxious girl could distinctly see all that was passing in front. The ramparts were covered with soldiers, who, armed merely with their bayonets, stood grouped in careless attitudes—some with their wives leaning on their arms—others with their children upraised, that they might the better observe the enlivening sports without—some lay indolently with their legs overhanging the works—others, assuming pugilistic attitudes, dealt their harmless blows at each other,—and all were blended together, men, women, and children, with that heedlessness of thought that told how little of distrust existed within their breasts. The soldiers of the guard, too, exhibited the same air of calm and unsuspecting confidence; some walking to and fro within the square, while the greater portion either mixed with their comrades above, or, with arms folded, legs carelessly crossed, and pipe in mouth, leant lazily against the gate, and gazed beyond the lowered drawbridge on the Indian games.

A mountain weight seemed to have been removed from the breast of Clara at this sight, as she now dropped upon her knees before the window, and raised her hands in pious acknowledgment to Heaven.

“Almighty God, I thank thee,” she fervently exclaimed, her eye once more lighting up, and her cheek half suffused with blushes at her late vague and idle fears; while she embraced, at a single glance, the whole of the gladdening and inspiriting scene.

While her soul was yet upturned whither her words had gone before, her ears were again assailed by sounds that curdled her blood, and made her spring to her feet as if stricken by a bullet through the heart; or powerfully touched by some electric fluid. It was the well-known and devilish war-cry of the savages, startling the very air through which it passed, and falling like a deadly blight upon the spirit. With a mechanical and desperate effort at courage, the unhappy girl turned her eyes below, and there met images of death in their most appalling shapes. Hurry and confusion and despair were every where visible; for a band of Indians were already in the fort, and these, fast succeeded by others, rushed like a torrent into the square, and commenced their dreadful work of butchery. Many of the terrified soldiers, without thinking of drawing their bayonets, flew down the ramparts in order to gain their respective block-houses for their muskets: but these every where met death from the crashing tomahawk, short rifle, or gleaming knife;—others who had presence of mind sufficient to avail themselves of their only



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weapons of defence, rushed down in the fury of desperation on the yelling fiends, resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible; and for some minutes an obstinate contest was maintained: but the vast superiority of the Indian numbers triumphed; and although the men fought with all the fierceness of despair, forcing their way to the block-houses, their mangled corpses strewed the area in every direction. Neither was the horrid butchery confined to these. Women clinging to their husbands for protection, and, in the recklessness of their despair, impeding the efforts of the latter in their self-defence—children screaming in terror, or supplicating mercy on their bonded knees—infants clasped to their parents' breasts,—all alike sunk under the unpitied steel of the blood-thirsty savages. At the guard-house the principal stand had been made; for at the first rush into the fort, the men on duty had gained their station, and, having made fast the barricades, opened their fire upon the enemy. Mixed pele-mele as they were with the Indians, many of the English were shot by their own comrades, who, in the confusion of the moment, were incapable of taking a cool and discriminating aim. These, however, were finally overcome. A band of desperate Indians rushed upon the main door, and with repeated blows from their tomahawks and massive war-clubs, succeeded in demolishing it, while others diverted the fire of those within. The door once forced, the struggle was soon over. Every man of the guard perished; and their scalps and disfigured forms were thrown out to swell the number of those that already deluged the square with their blood.

Even amid all the horrors of this terrific scene, the agonised Clara preserved her consciousness. The very imminence of the danger endued her with strength to embrace it under all its most disheartening aspects; and she, whose mind had been wrought up to the highest pitch of powerful excitement by the mere preliminary threatenings, was comparatively collected under the catastrophe itself. Death, certain death, to all, she saw was inevitable; and while her perception at once embraced the futility of all attempts at escape from the general doom, she snatched from despair the power to follow its gloomy details without being annihilated under their weight.

The confusion of the garrison had now reached its acme of horror. The shrieks of women and the shrill cries of children, as they severally and fruitlessly fled from the death certain to overtake them in the end,—the cursings of the soldiers, the yellings of the Indians, the reports of rifles, and the crashings of tomahawks;— these, with the stamping of human feet in the death struggle maintained in the council-room below between the chiefs and the officers, and which shook the block-house to its very foundation, all mixed up in terrible chorus together, might have called up a not inapt image of hell to the bewildered and confounding brain. And yet the sun shone in yellow lustre, and all Nature smiled, and wore an air of calm, as if the accursed deed had had the sanction of Heaven, and the spirits of light loved to look upon the frightful atrocities then in perpetration.

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In the first distraction of her spirit, Clara had utterly lost all recollection of her cousin; but now that she had, with unnatural desperation, brought her mind to bear upon the fiercest points of the grim reality, she turned her eye every where amid the scene of death in search of the form of her beloved Madeline, whom she did not remember to have seen cross the parade in pursuance of the purpose she had named. While she yet gazed fearfully from the window, loud bursts of mingled anguish and rage, that were almost drowned in the fiercer yells with which they were blended, ascended from the ground floor of the block-house. These had hitherto been suppressed, as if the desperate attack of the chiefs on the officers had been made with closed doors. Now, however, there was an evident outburst of all parties into the passage; and there the struggle appeared to be desperately and fearfully maintained. In the midst of that chaotic scene, the loud and piercing shriek of a female rose far above the discordant yell even of the savages. There was an instant of pause, and then the crashing of a skull was heard, and the confusion was greater than before, and shrieks, and groans, and curses, and supplications rent the air.

The first single shriek came from Madeline de Haldimar, and vibrated through every chord of the heart on which it sank. Scarcely conscious of what she did, Clara, quitting the window, once more gained the top of the staircase, and at the extremity of her voice called on the name of her cousin in the most piteous accents. She was answered by a loud shout from the yelling band; and presently bounding feet and screaming voices were heard ascending the stairs. The terrified girl fancied at the moment she heard a door open on the floor immediately below her, and some one dart suddenly up the flight communicating with the spot on which she stood. Without waiting to satisfy herself, she rushed with all the mechanical instinct of self-preservation back into her own apartment. As she passed the bed-room window, she glanced once more hastily into the area below, and there beheld a sight that, filling her soul with despair, paralysed all further exertion. A tall savage was bearing off the apparently lifeless form of her cousin through the combatants in the square, her white dress stained all over with blood, and her beautiful hair loosened and trailing on the ground. She followed with her burning eyes until they passed the drawbridge, and finally disappeared behind the intervening rampart, and then bowing her head between her hands, and sinking upon her knees, she reposed her forehead against the sill of the window, and awaited unshrinkingly, yet in a state of inconceivable agony, the consummation of her own unhappy destiny.



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The sounds of ascending feet were now heard in the passage without; and presently, while the clangour of a thousand demons seemed to ring throughout the upper part of the building, a man rushed furiously into the room. The blood of the young girl curdled in her veins. She mechanically grasped the ledge of the window on which her aching head still reposed, and with her eyes firmly closed, to shut out from view the fiend whose sight she dreaded, even more than the death which threatened her, quietly awaited the blow that was to terminate at once her misery and her life. Scarcely, however, had the feet of the intruder pressed the sanctuary of her bedchamber, when the heavy door, strongly studded with nails, was pushed rapidly to, and bolt and lock were heard sliding into their several sockets. Before Clara could raise her head to discover the cause of this movement, she felt herself firmly secured in the grasp of an encircling arm, and borne hastily through the room. An instinctive sense of something worse even than death now flashed across the mind of the unhappy girl; and while she feared to uncloset her eyes, she struggled violently to disengage herself.

“Clara! dear Miss de Haldimar, do you not know me?” exclaimed her supporter, while, placing her for a moment on a seat, he proceeded to secure the fastenings of the second door, that led from the bed-chamber into the larger apartment.

Re-assured by the tones of a voice which, even in that dreadful moment of trial and destruction, were familiar to her ear, the trembling girl opened her eyes wildly upon her protector. A slight scream of terror marked her painful sense of the recognition. It was Captain Baynton whom she beheld: but how unlike the officer who a few minutes before had been conversing with her from the ramparts. His fine hair, matted with blood, now hung loosely and disfiguringly over his eyes, and his pallid face and brow were covered with gore spots, the evident splatterings from the wounds of others; while a stream that issued from one side of his head attested he himself had not escaped unhurt in the cruel melee. A skirt and a lappel had been torn from his uniform, which, together with other portions of his dress, were now stained in various parts by the blood continually flowing from his wound.

“Oh, Captain Baynton,” murmured the fainting girl, her whole soul sinking within her, as she gazed shudderingly on his person, “is there no hope for us? must we die?”

“No, by Heaven, not while I have strength to save you,” returned the officer, with energy. “If the savages have not penetrated to the rear, we may yet escape. I saw the postern open just now, on my passage round the rampart, and the boat of the schooner upon the strand. Ha!” he exclaimed, as he flew to the window, and cast his eye rapidly below, “we are lost! The gate is still clear, and not an Indian to be seen; but the coward sailor is pulling for his life towards the

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vessel. But hold! another boat is now quitting the ship's side. See, how manfully they give themselves to the oars: in a few minutes they will be here. Come, Clara, let us fly!" and again he caught her in his arms, and bore her across the room. "Hark, hear you not the exulting yellings of the monsters? They are forcing the outer door: mark how they redouble their efforts to break it open! That passed, but one more barrier remains between us and inevitable and instant death."

"And my cousin, my uncle!" shrieked the unhappy girl, as the officer now bore her rapidly down the back staircase.

"Oh, ask me not!" exclaimed Baynton: "were I to linger again on all I have witnessed, I should go mad. All, all have perished! but, hark!"

A tremendous yell now bursting from the passage, announced at once, the triumph of the savages in having effected an entrance into the bed-room, and their disappointment at finding their pursuit balked by a second door. Presently afterwards their heavy weapons were to be heard thundering at this new obstacle, in the most furious manner. This gave new stimulus to the exertions of the generous officer. Each winding of the staircase was familiar to him, and he now descended it with a rapidity which, considering the burden that reposed against his chest, could only have been inspired by his despair. The flight terminated at a door that led directly upon the rampart, without communicating with any of the passages of the building; and in this consisted the principal facility of escape: for, in order to reach them, the savages must either make the circuit of the block-house, or overtake them in the course they were now following. In this trying emergency, the presence of mind of the young officer, wounded and bleeding as he was, did not desert him. On quitting the larger apartment above, he had secured the outside fastenings of a small door at the top of the stairs, and having now gained the bottom, he took a similar precaution. All that remained was to unclose the bolts of the ponderous door that opened upon their final chance of escape: this was speedily done, but here the feelings of the officer were put to a severe test. A rude partition divided him from the fatal council-room; and while he undid the fastenings, the faint and dying groans of his butchered brother officers rung in his ears, even at the moment that he felt his feet dabbling in the blood that oozed through the imperfectly closed planks of which the partition was composed. As for Clara, she was insensible to all that was passing. From the moment of the Indian yell, announcing their entry into the bed-room, she had fainted.

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The huge door came now creaking back upon its hinges, when the sounds of the yet unfinished conflict in front, which had hitherto been deadened in their descent through the remote staircase, rang once more fiercely and startlingly upon the ear. A single glance satisfied Captain Baynton the moment for exertion was come, and that the way to the lake shore, which, by some strange oversight, both the Indians and the men had overlooked, was perfectly clear. He clasped his unconscious burden closer to his chest, and then, setting his life upon the cast, hastened down the few steps that led to the rampart, and dashed rapidly through the postern; in the next minute he stood on the uttermost verge of the sands, unharmed and onfollowed. He cast his eyes anxiously along the surface of the lake; but such was the excitement and confusion of his mind, produced by the horrid recollection of the past scene, it was not until he had been abruptly hailed from it, he could see a boat, at the distance of about two hundred yards, the crew of which were lying on their oars. It was the long boat of the schooner, which, prevented from a nearer approach by a sand bar that ran along the lake to a considerable extent, had taken her station there to receive the fugitives. Two tall young men in the dress, yet having little the mien, of common sailors, were standing up in her stern; and one of these, with evident anxiety in his manner, called on Baynton by name to make the best of his way to the boat. At that moment a loud and frantic yell came from the block-house the latter had just quitted. In the wild impulse of his excited feelings, he answered with a cheer of defiance, as he turned to discover the precise point whence it proceeded. The windows of the apartment so recently occupied by the unhappy cousins, were darkened with savage forms, who now pealed forth their mingled fury and disappointment in the most terrific manner.

“Fly, fly, Baynton, or you are lost!” exclaimed the same voice from the boat; “the devils are levelling from the windows.”

While he yet spake several shots came whizzing along the waters, and a spent ball even struck the now rapidly fleeing officer in the back; but the distance was too great for serious injury. The guns of the savages had been cut so short for their desperate enterprise, that they carried little further than a horse pistol.

Again, in the desperation of his feelings, and heedless of the danger he was drawing on himself and charge, the officer turned fiercely round and shouted, at his utmost lungs, a peal of triumph in the ears of his enemies. Scarcely, however, had the sounds escaped his lips, when two hideously painted Indians sprang through the postern, and, silent as the spectres they resembled, rushed down the sands, and thence into the lake. Loud shouts from the windows above were again pealed forth, and from the consternation visible on the features of those within the boat, the nearly exhausted Baynton learnt all the risk he

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incurred. Summoning all his strength, he now made the most desperate efforts to reach his friends. The lake was little more than knee deep from the shore to the bar, but, encumbered as he was, the difficulty opposed to his movements was immeasurably against him, and yet he seemed generously resolved rather to perish than relinquish his charge. Already were his pursuers, now closely followed by a numerous band, within twenty yards of him, when the two young men, each armed with a cutlass and pistol, sprang from the boat upon the sand bar: as the Indians came on they fired deliberately at them, but both missed their aim. Encouraged by this failure, the fearless devils dashed eagerly on, brandishing their gleaming tomahawks, but uttering not a sound. Already was the unfortunate Baynton within a few feet of the bar, when he felt that the savages were immediately upon him.

“Take, take, for God’s sake take her!” he cried, as with a desperate effort he threw the light form of the still unconscious girl into the arms of one of the young men. “My strength is quite exhausted, and I can do no more.”

For the first time a yell burst from the lips of the pursuing savages, as they saw him, to whom the guardianship of the wretched Clara was now confided, suddenly spring from the sand bar into the lake, and in a few rapid strokes gain the side of the boat. Leaving the hapless Baynton to be disposed of by his companion, the foremost darted upon the bank, burning with disappointment, and resolved to immolate another victim. For a moment he balanced his tomahawk, and then, with the rapidity of thought, darted it at the covered head of the youth who still lingered on the bar. A well-timed movement of the latter averted the blow, and the whizzing steel passed harmlessly on. A guttural “Ugh!” marked the disappointment of the Indian, now reduced to his scalping-knife; but before he could determine whether to advance or to retreat, his opponent had darted upon him, and, with a single blow from his cutlass, cleft his skull nearly asunder. The next instantaneous purpose of the victor was to advance to the rescue of the exhausted Baynton; but, when he turned to look for him, he saw the mangled form of what had once been that gallant and handsome officer floating, without life or motion, on the blood-stained surface of the Huron, while his fiendish murderer, calmly awaiting the approach of his companions, held up the reeking scalp, in triumph, to the view of the still yelling groups within the block-house.

“Noble, generous, self-devoted fellow!” exclaimed the youth, as he fixed his burning tearless eye for a moment on the unfortunate victim; “even you, then, are not spared to tell the horrid story of this butchery; yet is the fate of the fallen far, far more enviable than that of those who have survived this day.” He then committed his cutlass to its sheath; and, leaping into the deep water that lay beyond the bar, was, in a few seconds, once more in the stern of the boat.

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Meanwhile, the numerous band, who followed their two first fierce comrades into the lake, bounded rapidly forward; and, so active were their movements, that, at almost the same moment when the second of the youths had gained his temporary place of refuge, they stood yelling and screaming on the sand bar he had just quitted. Two or three, excited to desperation by the blood they had seen spilt, plunged unhesitatingly into the opposite depths of the lake; and the foremost of these was the destroyer of the ill-fated Baynton. With his bloody scalping-knife closely clutched between his teeth, and his tomahawk in his right hand, this fierce warrior buffeted the waves lustily with one arm, and, noiselessly as in the early part of his pursuit, urged his way towards the boat. In the stern of this a few planks from the schooner had been firmly lashed, to serve as a shield against the weapons of the savages, and was so arranged as to conceal all within while retiring from the shore. A small aperture had, however, been bored for the purpose of observing the movements of the enemy without risk. Through this an eye was now directed, while only the blades of the oars were to be seen projecting from the boat's sides as they reposed in their rowlocks. Encouraged by the seeming apathy and inertness of the crew, the swimming savages paused not to consider of consequences, but continued their daring course as if they had apprehended neither risk nor resistance. Presently a desperate splash was heard near the stern of the boat, and the sinuous form of the first savage was raised above the gunwale, his grim face looking devilish in its war-paint, and his fierce eyes gleaming and rolling like fire-balls in their sockets. Scarcely was he seen, however, when he had again disappeared. A blow from the cutlass that had destroyed his companion descended like lightning on his naked and hairless head; and, in the agony of death, he might be seen grinding his teeth against the knife which the instinctive ferocity of his nature forbade his relinquishing. A yell of fury burst from the savages on the bar, and presently a shower of bullets ran whistling through the air. Several were heard striking the rude rampart in the stem; but, although the boat was scarcely out of pistol-shot, the thickness of the wood prevented all injury to those within. Another fierce yell followed this volley; and then nearly a score of warriors, giving their guns in charge to their companions, plunged furiously into the water; and, with an air of the most infuriated determination, leaped rather than swam along its surface.

"Now, then, my lads, give way," said he at the look-out; "there are more than a dozen of the devils in full cry; and our only chance is in flight! Ha! another here!" as, turning to issue these directions, he chanced to see the dark hand of a savage at that moment grasping the gunwale of the boat, as if with a view to retard her movements until the arrival of his companions.



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A heavy blow from his cutlass accompanied these words. The fingers, divided at their very roots, rolled to the bottom of the boat, and the carcass of the savage dropped, with a yell of anguish, far in the rear. The heavy oar-blades of the seamen now made play, dashing the lake away in sheets of foam; and, in less than five minutes, the heads of the swimming savages were seen mingling like so many rats upon the water, as they returned once more in disappointment from their fruitless pursuit.

CHAPTER XII.

The sun had gone down, as he had risen, in all the gloriousness of his autumnal splendour, and twilight was now fast descending on the waters of the Huron. A slight breeze was just beginning to make itself felt from the land, the gradual rising of which was hailed by many an anxious heart, as the schooner, which had been making vain attempts to quit her anchorage during the day, now urged her light bows through the slightly curling element. A death-like silence, interrupted only by the low gruff voice of a veteran seaman, as he issued, in technical language, the necessary orders for the management of the vessel, prevailed every where along her decks. The dress and general appearance of this individual announced him for a petty officer of the royal service; and it was evident, from the tone of authority with which he spoke, he was now in the enjoyment of a temporary command. The crew, consisting of about thirty souls, and chiefly veterans of the same class, were assembled along the gangways, each man wearing a brace of pistols in the belt, which, moreover, secured a naked cutlass around his loins; and these now lingered near the several guns that were thrown out from their gloomy looking ports, as if ready for some active service. But, although the arming of these men indicated hostile preparation, there was none of that buoyancy of movement and animation of feature to be observed, which so usually characterise the indomitable daring of the British sailor. Some stood leaning their heads pensively on their hands against the rigging and hammocks that were stowed away along the bulwarks, after the fashion of war ships in boarding; others, with arms tightly folded across their chests, spirted the tobacco juice thoughtfully from their closed teeth into the receding waters; while not a few gazed earnestly and despondingly on the burning fort in the distance, amid the rolling volumes of smoke and flame from which, ever and anon, arose the fiendish yell of those who, having already sacked, were now reducing it to ashes. Nor was this the only object of their attention. On the sand bank alluded to in our last chapter were to be dimly seen through the growing dusk, the dark outlines of many of the savages, who, frantic with rage at their inability to devote them to the same doom, were still unwilling to quit a spot which approached them nearest to the last surviving objects of their

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enmity. Around this point, were collected numerous canoes, filled also with warriors; and, at the moment when the vessel, obeying the impulse given by her flowing sails, glided from her anchorage, these followed, scudding in her wake, and made a show of attacking her in the stern. The sudden yawing of the schooner, however, in bringing her tier of bristling ports into view, had checked the ardour of the pursuing fleet; and the discharge of a single gun, destroying in its course three of their canoes, and carrying death among those who directed them, had driven them back, in the greatest hurry and confusion, to their yelling and disappointed comrades.

The after-deck of the schooner presented a different, though not less sombre and discouraging, scene. On a pile of mattresses lay the light and almost inanimate form of Clara de Haldimar; her fair and redundant hair overshadowing her pallid brow and cheek, and the dress she had worn at the moment of her escape from the fort still spotted with the blood of her generous but unfortunate preserver. Close at her side, with her hands clasped in his, while he watched the expression of deep suffering reflected from each set feature, and yet with the air of one pre-occupied with some other subject of painful interest, sat, on an empty shot-box, the young man in sailor's attire, whose cutlass had performed the double service of destroying his own immediate opponent, and avenging the death of the devoted Baynton. At the head of the rude couch, and leaning against a portion of the schooner's stern-work, stood his companion, who from delicacy appeared to have turned away his eyes from the group below, merely to cast them vacantly on the dark waters through which the vessel was now beginning to urge her course.

Such was the immediate position of this little party, when the gun fired at the Indians was heard booming heavily along the lake. The loud report, in exciting new sources of alarm, seemed to have dissipated the spell that had hitherto chained the energies and perception of the still weak, but now highly excited girl.

"Oh, Captain Baynton, where are we?" she exclaimed, starting up suddenly in terror, and throwing her arms around him, who sat at her side, as if she would have clung to him for protection. "Is the horrid massacre not finished yet? Where is Madeline? where is my cousin? Oh, I cannot leave the fort without her."

"Ha! where indeed is she?" exclaimed the youth, as he clasped his trembling and scarcely conscious burden to his chest, "Almighty God, where is she?" Then, after a short pause, and in a voice of tender but exquisite anguish, "Clara, my beloved sister, do you not know me? It is not Baynton but your brother, who now clasps you to his breaking heart."



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A deluge of tears was the only answer of the wretched girl. They were the first she had shed,—the first marks of consciousness she had exhibited. Hitherto her heart had been oppressed; every fibre of her brain racked almost to bursting, and filled only with ghastly flitting visions of the dreadful horrors she had seen perpetrated, she had continued, since the moment of her fainting in the block-house, as one bereft of all memory of the past, or apprehension of the present. But now, the full outpouring of her grief relieved her overcharged brain and heart, even while the confused images floating before her recollection acquired a more tangible and painful character. She raised herself a moment from the chest on which her burning head reposed, looked steadfastly in the face that hung anxiously over her own, and saw indeed that it was her brother. She tried to speak, but she could not utter a word, for the memory of all that had occurred that fatal morning rushed with mountain weight upon her fainting spirit, and again she wept, and more bitterly than before.

The young man pressed her in silence to his chest; nor was it until she had given full vent to her grief, that he ventured to address her on the subject of his own immediate sorrows. At length, when she appeared somewhat more calm, he observed, in a voice broken by emotion,—

“Clara, dearest, what account have you to give me of Madeline? Has she shared the fate of all? or have you reason to suppose her life has been spared?”

Another burst of tears succeeded to these questions, for coupled with the name of her cousin arose all the horrid associations connected with her loss. As soon, however, as she could compose herself, she briefly stated all she had witnessed of the affair, from the moment when the boat of the schooner was seen to meet the strange looking object on the water, to that when she had beheld her ill-fated cousin borne away apparently lifeless in the arms of the tall Indian by whom she had been captured.

During this recital, the heart of Captain de Haldimar, —for it was he,—beat audibly against the cheek that still reposed on his breast; but when his sister had, in a faint voice, closed her melancholy narrative with the manner of her cousin’s disappearance, he gave a sudden start, uttering at the same time an exclamation of joy.

“Thank God, she still lives!” he cried, pressing his sister once more in fondness to his heart; then turning to his companion, who, although seemingly abstracted, had been a silent and attentive witness of the scene,—“By Heaven! Valletort, there is yet a hope. She it was indeed whom we saw borne out of the fort, and subsequently made to walk by the cruel Indian who had charge of her.”

“Valletort, Valletort,” murmured Clara unconsciously, her sick heart throbbing with she knew not what. “How is this, Frederick?—Where, then, is Captain Baynton? and how came you here?”



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“Alas! Clara, poor Baynton is no more. Even at the moment when he confided the unconscious burden, preserved at the peril of his own life, to the arms of Sir Everard here, he fell beneath the tomahawk of a pursuing savage. Poor, noble, generous Baynton,” he continued, mournfully; “to him, indeed, Clara, are you indebted for your life; yet was it purchased at the price of his own.”

Again the pained and affectionate girl wept bitterly, and her brother proceeded:—

“The strange object you saw on the lake, my love, was nothing more than a canoe disguised with leafy boughs, in which Sir Everard Valletort and myself, under the guidance of old Francois of the Fleur de lis, whom you must recollect, have made the dangerous passage of the Sinclair in the garb of duck hunters,—which latter we had only discarded on reaching the schooner, in order to assume another we conceived better suited to our purpose. Alas!” and he struck his hand violently against his brow, “had we made directly for the shore without touching the vessel at all, there might have been time to save those we came to apprise of their danger. Do you not think there was, Valletort?”

“Most assuredly not,” returned his companion, anxious to remove the impression of self-blame that existed in the mind of Captain de Haldimar. “From the moment of our reaching the schooner, which lay immediately in our route, to that when the shout was raised by the savages as they rushed into the fort, there was scarcely an interval of three minutes; and it would have required a longer period to have enabled us even to gain the shore.”

“Thank, thank you for that!” exclaimed the officer, drawing himself up with the air of one who breathes more freely. “I would not, for the wealth and honours of the united world, that such a cause for self-reproach should linger on my mind. By Heaven! it would break my heart to think we had been in time to save them, and yet had lost the opportunity through even one moment of neglect.” Then turning once more to his sister, —“Now, Clara, that I see you in safety, I have another sacred duty to perform. I must leave you, but not alone.”

“What mean you, Frederick?” exclaimed his agitated sister, clinging more closely to his embrace. “Scarce have we met, and you talk of leaving me. Oh, whither would you go?”

“Surely, my love,” and he spoke half reproachfully, although with tenderness of accent, “my meaning must be obvious. But what do I say? You know it not. Madeline still lives. We saw her, as we pulled towards the shore, led across the clearing in the direction of Chabouiga. Hear me, then: the canoe in which we came is still towing from the vessel’s stern, and in this do I mean to embark, without further loss of time, in search of her who is dearer to me than existence. I know,” he pursued with emotion, “I have but little hope of rescuing, even if I do succeed in finding her; but at least I shall

not have to suffer under the self-reproach of having neglected the only chance that now lies within my reach. If she be doomed to die, I shall then have nothing left to live for—except you, Clara,” he concluded, after a pause, pressing the weeping girl to his heart, as he remarked how much she seemed pained by the declaration.

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Having placed his sister once more on the couch, and covered her with a cloak that had been brought from the cabin of the unfortunate commander, Captain de Haldimar now rose from his humble seat, and grasping the hand of his friend,—

“Valletort,” he said, “I commit this dear girl to your keeping. Hitherto we have been equal sharers in an enterprise having for its object the preservation of our mutual companions and friends. At present, interests of a more personal nature occupy my attention; and to these must I devote myself alone. I trust you will reach Detroit in safety; and when you have delivered my unfortunate sister into the arms of her father, you will say to him from me, I could not survive the loss of that being to whom I had sworn eternal fidelity and affection. Francois must be my only companion on this occasion. Nay,” he continued, pointing to his sister, in answer to the rising remonstrance of the baronet, “will you desert the precious charge I have confided to your keeping? Recollect, Valletort,” in a more subdued tone, “that besides yourself, there will be none near her but rude and uneducated sailors;—honest men enough in their way, it is true; but not the sort of people to whom I should like to confide my poor sister.”

The warm and silent pressure by Sir Everard of his hand announced his participation in the sentiment; and Captain de Haldimar now hastened forward to apprise the Canadian of his purpose. He found mine host of the Fleur de lis seated in the forecabin of the schooner; and with an air of the most perfect unconcern discussing a substantial meal, consisting of dried uncooked venison, raw onions, and Indian corn bread, the contents of a large bag or wallet that lay at his feet. No sooner, however, had the impatient officer communicated his design, asking at the same time if he might expect his assistance in the enterprise, than the unfinished meal of the Canadian was discontinued, the wallet refilled, and the large greasy clasp-knife with which the portions had been separated, closed and thrust into a pocket of his blanket coat.

“I shall go to de devils for you, capitaine, if we must,” he said, as he raised his portly form, not without effort, from the deck, slapping the shoulder of the officer at the same time somewhat rudely with his hand. There was nothing, however, offensively familiar in this action. It expressed merely the devotedness of heart with which the man lent himself to the service to which he had pledged himself, and was rather complimentary than otherwise to him to whom it was directed. Captain de Haldimar took it in the light in which we have just shown it, and he grasped and shook the rough hand of the Canadian with an earnestness highly gratifying to the latter.

Every thing was now in readiness for their departure. The canoe, still covered with its streaming boughs, was drawn close up to the gangway, and a few hasty necessaries thrown in. While this was passing, the officer had again assumed his disguise of a duck-hunter; and he now appeared in the blanket costume in which we introduced Sir Everard and himself at the opening of this volume.



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“If I may be so bold as to put in my oar, your honour,”—said the veteran boatswain, on whom the command of the schooner had fallen, as he now advanced, rolling his quid in his mouth, and dropping his hat on his shoulder, while the fingers of the hand which clutched it were busily occupied in scratching his bald head,—“if I may be so bold, there is another chap here as might better sarve your honour’s purpose than that ’ere fat Canadian, who seems to think only of stuffing while his betters are fasting.”

“And who is he, my good Mullins?” asked Captain de Haldimar.

“Why, that ’ere Ingian, your honour, as began the butchery in the fort, yonder, by trying to kill Jack Fuller while he laid asleep this morning, waiting for the captain in the jolly boat. Jack never seed him coming, until he felt his black hands upon his throat, and then he ups with the tiller at his noddle, and sends him floundering across the boat’s thwarts like a flat-fish. I thought, your honour, seeing as how I have got the command of the schooner, of tying him up to the mainmast, and giving him two or three round dozen or so, and then sending him to swim among the mascannungy with a twenty-four pound shot in his neckcloth; but, seeing as how your honour is going among them savages agin, I thought as how some good might be done with him, if your honour could contrive to keep him in tow, and close under your lee quarter, to prevent his escape.”

“At all events,” returned the officer, after a pause of some moments, during which he appeared to be deliberating on his course of action, “it may be dangerous to keep him in the vessel; and yet, if we take him ashore, he may be the means of our more immediate destruction; unless, indeed, as you observe, he can be so secured as to prevent the possibility of escape: but that I very much doubt indeed. Where is he, Mullins? I should like to see and question him.”

“He shall be up, your honour, in no time,” replied the sailor, once more resuming his hat, and moving a pace or two forward. Then addressing two or three men in the starboard gangway in the authoritative tone of command: —“Bear a hand there, my men, and cast off the lashings of that black Ingian, and send him aft, here, to the officer.”

The order was speedily executed. In a few minutes the Indian stood on the quarter-deck, his hands firmly secured behind, and his head sunk upon his chest in sullen despondency. In the increasing gloom in which objects were now gradually becoming more and more indistinct, it was impossible for Captain de Haldimar to distinguish his features; but there was something in the outline of the Indian’s form that impressed him with the conviction he had seen it before. Advancing a pace or two forward, he pronounced, in an emphatic and audible whisper, the name of “Oucanasta!”

The Indian gave an involuntary start,—uttered a deep interjectional “Ugh!”—and, raising his head from his chest, fixed his eye heavily on the officer.



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“Hookynaster!—Hookynaster!” growled Jack Fuller, who had followed to hear the examination of his immediate captive: “why, your honour, that jaw-breaking name reminds me as how the chap had a bit of a paper when I chucked him into the jolly boat, stuck in his girdle. It was covered over with pencil-marks, as writing like; but all was rubbed out agin, except some such sort of a name as that.”

“Where is it?—what have you done with it?” hastily asked Captain de Haldimar.

“Here, in my backy-box, your honour. I kept it safe, thinking as how it might sarve to let us know all about it afterwards.”

The sailor now drew from the receptacle just named a dirty piece of folded paper, deeply impregnated with the perfume of stale and oft rechewed quids of coarse tobacco; and then, with the air of one conscious of having “rendered the state some service,” hitched up his trowsers with one hand, while with the other he extended the important document.

To glance his eye hurriedly over the paper by the light of a dark lanthorn that had meanwhile been brought upon deck, unclasp his hunting-knife, and divide the ligatures of the captive, and then warmly press his liberated hands within his own, were, with Captain de Haldimar, but the work of a minute.

“Hilloa! which the devil way does the wind blow now?” muttered Fuller, the leer of self-satisfaction that had hitherto played in his eye rapidly giving place to an air of seriousness and surprise; an expression that was not at all diminished by an observation from his new commander.

“I tell you what it is, Jack,” said the latter, impressively; “I don’t pretend to have more gumption (qu. discernment?) than my messmates; but I can see through a millstone as clear as any man as ever heaved a lead in these here lakes; and may I never pipe boatswain’s whistle again, if you ’ar’n’t, some how or other, in the wrong box. That ’ere Ingian’s one of us!”

The feelings of Captain de Haldimar may easily be comprehended by our readers, when, on glancing at the paper, he found himself confirmed in the impression previously made on him by the outline of the captive’s form. The writing, nearly obliterated by damp, had been rudely traced by his own pencil on a leaf torn from his pocket-book. In the night of his visit to the Indian encampment, and at the moment when, seated on the fatal log, Oucanasta had generously promised her assistance in at least rescuing his betrothed bride. They were addressed to Major de Haldimar, and briefly stated that a treacherous plan was in contemplation by the enemy to surprise the fort, which the bearer, Oucanasta (the latter word strongly marked), would fully explain, if she could possibly obtain access within. From the narrative entered into by Clara, who had particularly dwelt on the emotions of fear that had sprung up in her own and cousin’s

heart by the sudden transformation of a supposed harmless beaver into a fierce and threatening savage, he had no difficulty in solving the enigma.



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The Indian, in whom he had recognised the young chief who had saved him from the fury of Wacousta, had evidently been won upon by his sister to perform a service which offered so much less difficulty to a warrior than to a woman; and it was clear, that, finding all other means of communication with the fort, undiscovered by his own people, impracticable, he had availed himself of the opportunity, when he saw the boat waiting on the strand, to assume a disguise so well adapted to insure success. It was no remarkable thing in these countries, to see both the beaver and the otter moving on the calm surface of the waters in the vicinity of the forts, even at mid-day; and occupied as the Indians were, to a man, at that moment with their cruel projects, it was by no means likely that their attention should have been called off from these to so apparently unimportant a circumstance. The act that had principally alarmed the cousins, and terminated, as we have seen, in the sudden attack of the sailor, had evidently been misconceived. The hand supposed to be feeling for the heart of the sluggard, had, in all probability, been placed on his chest with a view to arouse him from his slumber; while that which was believed to have been dropped to the handle of his knife, was, in reality, merely seeking the paper that contained the announcement, which, if then delivered, might have saved the garrison.

Such was the tram of conjecture that now passed through the mind of the officer; but, although he thus placed the conduct of the Indian in the most favourable light, his impression received no confirmation from the lips of the latter. Sullen and doggedly, notwithstanding the release from his bonds, the Ottawa hung his head upon his chest, with his eyes riveted on the deck, and obstinately refused to answer every question put to him by his deliverer. This, however, did not the less tend to confirm Captain de Haldimar in his belief. He knew enough of the Indian character, to understand the indignant and even revengeful spirit likely to be aroused by the treatment the savage had met with in return for his intended services. He was aware that, without pausing to reflect on the fact, that the sailor, ignorant of his actual purpose, could merely have seen in him an enemy in the act of attempting his life, the chief would only consider and inflame himself over the recollection of the blow inflicted; and that, with the true obstinacy of his race, he would rather suffer captivity or death itself, than humble the haughty pride of his nature, by condescending to an explanation with those by whom he felt himself so deeply injured. Still, even amid all his own personal griefs,—griefs that rendered the boon in some degree at present valueless,—Captain de Haldimar could not forget that the youth, no matter by what motive induced, had rescued him from a dreadful death on a previous occasion. With the generous warmth, therefore, of a grateful mind, he now sought to impress on the Indian the deep sense of obligation under which he laboured; explaining at the same time the very natural error into which the sailor had fallen, and concluding with a declaration that he was free to quit the vessel in the canoe in which he himself was about to take his departure for the shore, in search of her whom his sister had pledged herself, at all hazards, to save.



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The address of the officer, touching and impressive as language ever is that comes from the heart, was not altogether without effect on the Indian. Several times he interrupted him with a short, quick, approving "Ugh!" and when he at length received the assurance that he was no longer a prisoner, he raised his eyes rapidly, although without moving his head, to the countenance of his deliverer. Already were his lips opening to speak for the first time, when the attention of the group around him was arrested by his giving a sudden start of surprise. At the same moment he raised his head, stretched his neck, threw forward his right ear, and, uttering a loud and emphatic "Waugh!" pointed with his finger over the bows of the vessel.

All listened for upwards of a minute in mute suspense; and then a faint and scarcely distinguishable sound was heard in the direction in which he pointed. Scarcely had it floated on the air, when a shrill, loud, and prolonged cry, of peculiar tendency, burst hurriedly and eagerly from the lips of the captive; and, spreading over the broad expanse of water, seemed to be re-echoed back from every point of the surrounding shore.

Great was the confusion that followed this startling yell on the decks of the schooner. "Cut the hell-fiend down!"—"Chuck him overboard!"—"We are betrayed!"—"Every man to his gun!"—"Put the craft about!" were among the numerous exclamations that now rose simultaneously from at least twenty lips, and almost drowned the loud shriek that burst again from the wretched Clara de Haldimar.

"Stop, Mullins!—Stop, men!" shouted Captain de Haldimar, firmly, as the excited boatswain, with two or three of his companions,—now advanced with the intention of laying violent hands on the Indian. "I will answer for his fidelity with my life. If he be false, it will be time enough to punish him afterwards; but let us calmly await the issue like men. Hear me," he proceeded, as he remarked their incredulous, uncertain, and still threatening air;—"this Indian saved me from the tomahawks of his tribe not a week ago; and, even now, he has become our captive in the act of taking a note from me to the garrison, to warn them of their danger. But for that slumbering fool," he added, bitterly, pointing to Fuller, who slept when he should have watched, "your fort would not now have been what it is,—a mass of smoking ruins. He has an ocean of blood upon his soul, that all the waters of the Huron can never wash out!"

Struck by the vehement manner of the officer, and the disclosure he had just made, the sailors sunk once more into inaction and silence. The boatswain alone spoke.

"I thought, your honour, as how Jack Fuller, who sartainly is a better hand at a snooze than a watch, had got into a bit of a mess; but, shiver my topsails, if I think it's quite fair to blame him, neither, for clapping a stopper on the Indian's cable, seeing as how he was expecting a shot between wind and water. Still, as the chap turns out to be an honest chap, and has saved your honour's life above all, I don't much care if I give him a grip. Here, old fellow, tip us your fist!"



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Without seeming to understand that his cry had been productive of general and intense alarm throughout the vessel, the Indian had viewed the sudden rushing of the crew towards him as an act of gratuitous hostility; and, without shrinking from the attack, had once more resumed his original air of dogged sullenness. It was evident to him, from the discussion going on, that some violence, about to be offered to his person, had only been prevented by the interference of the officer. With the natural haughtiness of his savage nature, he therefore rejected the overtures of the sailor, whose hand he had observed among the first that were raised against him.

While the angry boatswain was yet rolling his quid within his capacious jaws, racking his brain for the strongest language wherein to give vent to his indignation, his ears were suddenly saluted by a low but clear "Hilloa!" from the bows of the schooner.

"Ay, ay!" was the brief response.

"There's something approaching us ahead, on the weather fore quarter," continued the same voice, which was that of the man on the look-out.

The most profound silence now pervaded the deck. Every individual, including Captain de Haldimar and the boatswain, had flown to the gangway of the quarter indicated, which was on the side occupied by the couch of the unfortunate Clara. Presently a noise like that produced by a single paddle rapidly dividing the water, was heard by every anxious ear. Night had long since thrown her mantle over the surrounding waste; and all that was to be seen reflected from the bosom of the gradually darkening river, scarcely ruffled by the yet incipient breeze, were a few straggling stars, that here and there appeared in the overcast heavens. Hitherto no object could be discovered by those who strained their eyes eagerly and painfully through the gloom, although the sounds became at each moment more distinct. It was evident the party, guided by the noise of the rippling waves that fell from the bows of the schooner, was enabled to follow up a course, the direct clue to which had been indicated by the cry of the captive. Every man stood near his gun on the starboard battery, and the burning matches hanging over their respective buckets ready to be seized at a moment's notice. Still, but little room for apprehension existed; for the practised ear of the mariners could easily tell that a solitary bark alone approached; and of one, or even ten, they entertained no fear. Suddenly, as the course of the vessel was now changed a point to windward, —a movement that brought her bows more off the adjacent shore,—the sound, in which all were more or less interested, was heard not more than twenty yards off, and in a line with the gangway at which the principal of the crew were assembled. In the next minute the low hull of a canoe came in sight, and then a tall and solitary human figure was seen in the stern, bending alternately to the right and to the left, as the paddle was rapidly and successively changed from side to side.



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Another deep and exulting “Ugh!” was now heaved from the chest of the Indian, who stood calmly on the spot on which he had first rested, while Fuller prepared a coil of rope to throw to the active steersman.

“Avast there, Jack!” growled the boatswain, addressing the sailor; “how can the stranger keep the bow of his craft on, and grapple at the same time? Just pass one end of the coil round your waist, and swing yourself gently into her.”

The head of the canoe was now near enough for the purpose. The sailor did as he was desired, having previously divested himself of his shoes, and leaping forward, alighted on what appeared to be a bundle of blankets stowed away in her bows. No sooner, however, had he secured his footing, when with another desperate leap, and greatly to the astonishment of all around, he bounded once more to the deck of the schooner, his countenance exhibiting every mark of superstitious alarm. In the act of quitting the canoe he had spurned her violently several feet from the vessel, which the silent steersman was again making every effort to reach.

“Why what the devil’s the matter with you now?” exclaimed the rough boatswain, who, as well as Captain de Haldimar and the rest of the crew, had quitted the gangway to learn the cause of this extraordinary conduct. “Damn my eyes, if you ar’n’t worse scared than when the Ingian stood over you in the jolly boat.”

“Scared, ay, to be sure I am; and so would you be scared too, if you’d a see’d what I did. May I never touch the point at Portsmouth, if I a’n’t seen her ghost.”

“Where?—whose ghost?—what ghost?—what do you mean, Jack?” exclaimed several of the startled men in the same breath, while the superstitious dread so common to mariners drew them still closer in the group that encircled their companion.

“Well, then, as I am a miserable sinner,” returned the man, impressively, and in a low tone, “I see’d in the bows of the canoe,—and the hand that steered it was not made of flesh and blood like ours,—what do you think?— the ghost of—”

Captain de Haldimar heard no more. At a single bound he had gained the ship’s side. He strained his eyes anxiously over the gangway in search of the canoe, but it was gone. A death-like silence throughout the deck followed the communication of the sailor, and in that pause the sound of the receding boat could be heard, not urged, as it had approached, by one paddle, but by two. The heart of the officer throbbed almost to suffocation; and his firmness, hitherto supported by the manly energies of his nature, now failed him quite. Heedless of appearances, regardless of being overlooked, he tottered like a drunken man for support against the mainmast. For a moment or two he leant his head upon his hand, with the air of one immersed in the most profound abstraction; while the crew, at once alarmed and touched by the deep distress into which this mysterious circumstance had plunged him, stood silently and respectfully

watching his emotion. Suddenly he started from his attitude of painful repose, like one awaking from a dream, and demanded what had become of the Indian.



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Every one looked around, but the captive was nowhere to be seen. Search was made below, both in the cabin and in the fore decks, and men were sent up aloft to see if he had secreted himself in the rigging; but all returned, stating he was nowhere to be found. He had disappeared from the vessel altogether, yet no one knew how; for he had not been observed to stir from the spot on which he had first planted himself. It was plain, however, he had joined the mysterious party in the canoe, from the fact of the second paddle having been detected; and all attempts at pursuit, without endangering the vessel on the shallows, whither the course of the fugitives was now directed, was declared by the boatswain utterly impracticable.

The announcement of the Indian's disappearance seemed to put the climax to the despair of the unfortunate officer. —“Then is our every hope lost!” he groaned aloud, as, quitting the centre of the vessel, he slowly traversed the deck, and once more stood at the side of his no less unhappy and excited sister. For a moment or two he remained with his arms folded across his chest, gazing on the dark outline of her form; and then, in a wild paroxysm of silent tearless grief, threw himself suddenly on the edge of the couch, and clasping her in a long close embrace to his audibly beating heart, lay like one bereft of all sense and consciousness of surrounding objects.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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