French and English eBook

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Chapter 1: A Western Settler.

Humphrey Angell came swinging along through the silent aisles of the vast primeval forest, his gun in the hollow of his arm, a heavy bag of venison meat hanging from his shoulders.

A strange, wild figure, in the midst of a strange, wild scene: his clothes, originally of some homespun cloth, now patched so freely with dressed deerskin as to leave little of the original material; moccasins on his feet, a beaver cap upon his head, his leather belt stuck round with hunting knives, and the pistol to be used at close quarters should any emergency arise.

He was a stalwart fellow, as these sons of the forest had need to be—standing over six feet, and with a muscular development to match his stately height. His tawny hair had been darkened by exposure to hot suns, and his handsome face was deeply imbrowned from the influences of weather in all seasons. His blue eyes had that direct yet far-away look which comes to men who live face to face with nature, and learn to know her in all her moods, and to study her caprices in the earning of their daily bread.

Humphrey Angell was not more than twenty years of age, and he had lived ten years in the forest. He had come there as a child with his father, who had emigrated in his young life from England to the settlement of Pennsylvania, and had afterwards become one of the scattered settlers on the debatable ground between the French and English borders, establishing himself in the heart of the boundless forest, and setting to work with the utmost zeal and industry to gather round himself a little farmstead where he could pass his own later years in peace, and leave it for an inheritance to his two sons.

Humphrey could remember Pennsylvania a little, although the life in the small democratic township seemed now like a dream to him. All his interests centred in the free forest, where he had grown to manhood. Now and again a longing would come upon him to see something of the great, tumultuous, seething world of whose existence he was dimly aware. There were times in the long winter evenings when he and his brother, the old father, and the brother's wife would sit round the stove after the children had been put to bed, talking of the past and the future. Then old Angell would tell his sons of the life he had once led in far-away England, before the spirit of adventure drove him forth to seek his fortune in the New World; and at such times Humphrey would listen with eager attention, feeling the stirrings of a like spirit within him, and wondering whether the vast walls of the giant forest would for ever shut him in, or whether it would be his lot some day to cross the heaving, mysterious, ever-moving ocean of which his father often spoke, and visit the country of which he was still proud to call himself a son.

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Yet he loved his forest home and the free, wild life he led. Nor was the element of peril lacking to the daily lot—peril which had not found them yet, but which might spring upon them unawares at any moment. For after years of peace and apparent goodwill on the part of the Indians of the Five Nations, as this tract of debatable land had come to be called, a spirit of ill will and ferocity was arising again; and settlers who had for years lived in peace and quietness in their lonely homes had been swooped down upon, scalped, their houses burnt, their wives and children tomahawked—the raid being so swift and sudden that defence and resistance had alike been futile.

What gave an added horror to this sudden change of policy on the part of the Indians was the growing conviction throughout the settlement that it was due to the agency of white men.

France, not content with the undisputed possession of Canada, and of vast tracts of territory in the west and south which she had no means of populating, was bitterly jealous of the English colony in the east, and, above all; of any attempts which it might make to extend its western border.

Fighting there had been already. Humphrey had heard rumours of disasters to the English arms farther away to the south. He had heard of Braddock's army having been cut to pieces in its attempt to reach and capture the French Fort Duquesne, and a vague uneasiness was penetrating to these scattered settlers, who had hitherto lived in quietness and peace.

Perhaps had they known more of the spirit of parties beyond their limited horizon, they would have been more uneasy still. But habit is an enormous power in a man's life. Humphrey had gone forth into the forest to kill meat for the family larder three or four days in the week, in all seasons when the farm work was not specially pressing. He came back day by day to the low-browed log house, with its patches of Indian corn and other crops, its pleasant sounds of life, the welcome from the children, the approval of father and brother if the day had been successful, and the smiles of the housewife when he displayed the contents of his bag. It was almost impossible to remember from day to day that peril from the silent, mysterious forest threatened them. They had lived there for ten years unmolested and at peace; who would care to molest them now?

And yet Humphrey, who knew the forest so well—its mysterious, interminable depths, its trackless, boundless extent, rolling over hill and valley in endless billows—he knew well how silently, how suddenly an ambushed foe might approach, spring out from the thick, tangled shelter to do some murderous deed, and in the maze of giant timber be at once swallowed up beyond all danger of pursuit.

In the open plains the Indian raids were terrible enough, but the horrors of uncertainty and ignorance which enveloped the settlers in the forests might well cause the stoutest heart to quail when once it became known that the Indians had become their enemies,

and that there was another enemy stirring up the strife, and bribing the fierce and greedy savages to carry desolation and death into the settlements of the English colonists.

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Whispers—rumours—had just begun to penetrate into these leafy solitudes; but communication with the outside world was so rare that the Angell family, who had long been self-supporting, and able to live without the products of the mother colony away to the east, had scarcely realized the change that was creeping over the country. The old man had never seen anything of Indian warfare, and his sons had had little more experience. They had been peaceful denizens of the woods, and bore arms for purposes of the chase rather than for self-preservation from human foes, as did the bulk of those dwellers in the woods that fringed the western border of the English-speaking colony.

“We have no enemies; why should we fear?” asked Charles, the elder brother, a man of placable temperament, a fine worker with the axe or plough, a man of indomitable industry, endurance, and patience, but one who had never shown any desire after adventure or the chances of warfare. He was ten years older than Humphrey; and the brothers had two sisters now married and settled in the colony. The younger brother sometimes talked of visiting the sisters, and bringing back news of them to the father at home; but Charles never desired to leave the homestead. He was a singularly affectionate husband and father, and had been an excellent son to the fine old man, who now had his time of ease by the hearth in the winter weather, though during a great part of the year he toiled in the fields with a right good will, and with much of his old fire and energy.

Humphrey was nearing home now, and started whistling a favourite air which generally heralded his approach, and brought the children tumbling out to meet him in a rush of merry welcome. But there was no answering hubbub to be heard from the direction of the house, no patter of little feet, no lowing of kine.

Humphrey stopped suddenly short in his whistling, and bent his ear forward as though to listen. A faint, muffled, strangled cry seemed to be borne to his ears. Under his bronze his face suddenly grew white. He flung the heavy bag from off his back, and grasping his gun more firmly in his hands, he rushed through the narrow pathway; and came out upon the clearing around the little farmstead.

In the morning he had left it, smiling in the autumn sunshine, a peaceful, prosperous-looking place, homely, quaint, and bright. Now his eyes rested upon a heap of smoking ruins, trampled crops, empty sheds; and upon a still more horrible sight—the remains of mangled corpses tied to the group of trees which sheltered the porch. It was enough to curdle the blood of the stoutest hearted, and freeze with horror the bravest warrior.

Humphrey was no warrior, but a strong-limbed, tender-hearted youth; and as he looked at the awful scene before him, a blood-red mist seemed to swim before his eyes. He gasped, and clutched at the nearest tree trunk for support. Surely, surely it was some fever dream which had come upon him. It could not, it should not be a terrible reality.

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“Humphrey, Humphrey! help, help!”

It was the strangled, muffled cry again. The sound woke the young man from his trance of horror and amazement. He uttered a hoarse cry, which he scarcely knew for his own, and dashed blindly onwards.

“Here, here! This way. By the barn! Quick!”

No need to hasten Humphrey’s flying feet. He rushed through the trampled fields. He gained the clearing about the house and its buildings. He reached the spot indicated, and saw a sight he would never forget.

His brother Charles was tightly, cruelly bound to the stump of a tree which had been often used for tethering animals at milking time just outside the barn. His clothes were half torn from off his back, and several gaping, bleeding wounds told of the fight which had ended in his capture. Most significant of all was the long semicircular red line round the brow, where the scalping knife had plainly passed.

Humphrey’s stout knife was cutting through the cruel cords, even while his horrified eyes were taking in these details.

When his brother was released, he seemed to collapse for a moment, and fell face downwards upon the ground, a quiver running through all his limbs, such as Humphrey had seen many a time in some wild creature stricken with its death wound.

He uttered a sharp cry of terror and anguish, and averting his eyes from the awful sights with which the place abounded, he dashed to the well, and bringing back a supply of pure cold water, flung it over his brother’s prostrate form, laving his face and hands, and holding a small vessel to his parched and swollen lips so that the draught could trickle into his mouth.

There was an effort to swallow, a quiver and a struggle, and the wounded man opened his eyes and sat up.

“Where am I—what is it?” he gasped, draining the cup again and again, like one who has been near to perish with thirst. “O Humphrey, I have had such an awful dream!”

Humphrey had so placed his brother that he should not see on opening his eyes that ghastly sight which turned the younger man sick with horror each time his eyes wandered that way.

Charles saw the familiar outline of the forest, and his brother’s face bending over him. He had for a moment a vague impression of something unspeakably awful and horrible, but at that moment he believed that some mischance had befallen himself alone, and that he had imagined some black, nameless horror in a fevered dream.

A shiver ran through Humphrey's frame. His blue eyes were dazed and dilated. What answer could he make? He busied himself with dressing the wounds upon his brother's chest and shoulders, from which the blood still oozed slowly.

"What is it?" asked Charles once again; "how did I come to be hurt?"

Humphrey made no reply, but a groan burst unawares from his lips. The sound seemed to startle Charles from his momentary calm. He suddenly put up his hand to his brow, felt the smart of the significant red line left by the scalping knife, and the next moment he had sprung to his feet with a sharp, low cry of unspeakable anguish.

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He faced round then—and looked!

Humphrey stood beside him shoulder to shoulder, with his arm about his brother, lest physical weakness should again overpower him. But Charles seemed like one turned to stone.

For perhaps three long minutes he stood thus—speechless, motionless; then a wild cry burst from his lips, accompanied by a torrent of the wildest, fiercest invective—appeals to Heaven for vengeance, threats of undying hatred, undying hostility to those savage murderers whose raid had made this fair spot into a desolation so awful.

Humphrey stood still and silent the while, like one spellbound. He scarcely knew his brother in this moment of passionate despair and fury. Charles had been a silent, placable man all his life through. Born and bred in the Quaker settlement, till he had taken to the life of the forest he had been a man of quiet industry and toil rather than a fighter or a talker. A peaceful creed had been his, and he had perhaps never before raised a hand in anger against a fellow creature.

This made the sudden wild and passionate outburst the more strange and awful to Humphrey. It was almost as though Charles was no longer the brother he had known all these years, but had been transformed into a different being by the swift and fearful calamity which had swept down upon them during these past few hours.

“I will avenge—I swear it! As they have done, so shall it be done unto them. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life—is not that written in the Scriptures? The avenger of blood shall follow and overtake. His hand shall not spare, neither his eye pity. The evildoer shall be rooted out of the land. His place shall be no more found. Even as they have done, so shall it be done unto them.”

He stopped, and suddenly raised his clasped hands to heaven. A torrent of words broke from his lips.

“O God, Thou hast seen, Thine eyes have beheld. If it had been an open enemy that had done this thing, then could I perchance have borne it. If it had been the untutored savage, in his ignorant ferocity, then would I have left Thee, O Lord, to deal with him—to avenge! But the white brother has risen up against his own flesh and blood. The white man has stood by to see. He has hounded on the savages! He has disgraced his humanity! O Lord God, give him into my hands! let me avenge me of mine adversary. Let the ignorant Indian escape if Thou wilt, but grant unto me to slay and slay and slay amid the ranks of the white man, who has sold his soul for gain, and has become more treacherous and cruel than the Indian ally whose aid he has invoked. Judge Thou betwixt us, O Lord; look upon this scene! Strengthen Thou mine arm to the battle, for here I vow that I will henceforth give my life to this work. I will till the fields no more. I will beat my pruning hook into a sword. I will slay, and spare not, and Thou, O God of

battles, shalt be with me. Thou shalt strengthen mine arm; Thou shalt give unto me the victory. Thou shalt deliver mine enemy into mine hand. I know it, I see it! For Thou art God, and I am Thy servant, and I will avenge upon him who has defied Thee this hideous crime upon which Thine eyes have looked!”

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Humphrey stood by silent and awed. An answering thrill was in his own heart. He had averted his eyes from the ghastly spectacle of those charred and mangled corpses; but they turned upon them once more at this moment, and he could not marvel at his brother's words. He, too, had been trained to peaceable thoughts and ways. He had hoped that there would soon be an end of these rumours of wars. His immediate forefathers had been men of peace, and he had never known the craving after the excitement of battle.

Yet as his brother spoke there came upon him a new feeling. He felt his arm tingling; he felt the hot blood surging through his veins. He was conscious that were an enemy to show face at that moment between the trees of the forest, he would be ready to spring upon him like a wild beast, and rend him limb from limb without pity and without remorse.

But the Indians had made off as silently and as swiftly as they appeared. Not a vestige of the band remained behind. And there was work for the brothers at that moment of a different sort, and work which left its lasting mark upon the memory and even upon the nature of Humphrey Angell.

Together the brothers dug a deep grave. Reverently they deposited in it all that was left of the mortal remains of those whom they had loved so tenderly and well: the kindly house mother, to whose industry and thrift so much of their comfort had been due; the little, innocent, prattling children and brave little lads, who were already learning to be useful to father and mother. None of them spared—no pity shown to sex or age. All ruthlessly murdered; husband and father forced to watch the horrid spectacle, himself a helpless prisoner, waiting for his doom.

Humphrey had not hitherto dared to ask the question which had been exercising him all the while—how it was that his brother's life had been spared. He also wanted to know where the old man their father was; for the corpses they had laid in the grave were those of Charles's wife and children.

Charles noted his questioning glance around when the grave had received its victims, and he pointed to the smoking ruins of the house.

"He lies there. They bound him in his chair. They tied the babe down in his cradle. They set fire to the house. Heaven send that the reek choked them before the fire touched them! They lie yonder beneath the funeral pyre—our venerable sire and my bonny, laughing babe!"

He stopped short, choked by a sudden rush of tears; and Humphrey, flinging down his spade, threw himself along the ground in a paroxysm of unspeakable anguish, choking sobs breaking from him, the unaccustomed tears raining down his cheeks.

The brothers wept together. Perhaps those tears saved Charles from some severe fever of the brain. He wept till he was perfectly exhausted, and at last his condition of prostration so far aroused Humphrey that he was forced into action.

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He half lifted, half dragged his brother into one of the empty barns, where he laid him down upon some straw. He rolled up his own coat for a pillow, and after hastily finishing the filling in of the grave, he went back into the forest for his game bag, and having kindled a fire, cooked some of the meat, and forced his brother to eat and drink. It was growing dark by that time, and the blackness of the forest seemed to be swallowing them up.

A faint red glow still came from the direction of the burning homestead, where the fire still smouldered amid the smoking ruins. Humphrey closed the door of the barn, to shut out the sight and also the chill freshness of the autumn night.

He lay down upon the straw beside his brother, worn out in body and mind. But there could be no thought of sleep for either man that night; the horror was too pressing and ever present, and anguish lay like a physical load upon their hearts.

The silence was full of horror for both; in self defence Humphrey began to speak.

“When was it, Charles? I was in the forest all day, and I saw and heard nothing. The silence was never broken save by the accustomed sounds of the wild creatures of the wood. No war party came my way. When was it?”

“At the noontide meal. We had all gathered within doors. There was none to give warning of danger. Suddenly and silently as ghosts they must have filed from out the forest. We were already surrounded and helpless before the first wild war whoop broke upon our ears!”

Charles put up his hands as though to shut out that awful yell, the echoes of which rang so long in the ears of those who had heard it. Humphrey shivered, and his hands clinched themselves nervously together.

“Why was I not here to fight and to die?”

“Better to live—and to avenge their blood!” answered Charles, with a gleam lighting his sunken eyes. He was silent awhile, and then went on with his narrative.

“It was not a fight; it was only a slaughter! The children rushed screaming from the house, escaping the first rush of the painted savages when they burst in upon us. But there were others outside, who hacked and slashed them as they passed. I had only my hunting knife in my belt. I stood before Ellen, and I fought like ten demons! God is witness that I did all that one man could. But what avail against scores of such foes? Three corpses were heaped at my threshold. I saw them carrying away many others dead or wounded, Our father fought too; and Ellen backed into the corner where the gun stood, and with her own hands she shot down two of the savages.

“Would to heaven she had shot at the white one, who was tenfold more of a fiend! But he shall not escape—he shall not escape! I shall know his face when I see it next. And I will not go down to the grave till he and I have stood face to face once more, when I am not bound and helpless, but a free man with weapons in my hand. That day will come; I read it in the book of fate. The Lord God, unto whom vengeance belongeth, He will cause it to come to pass!”

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Humphrey was afraid of these wild outbursts, as likely to bring on fever; and yet he could not but desire to know more.

“A white man? Nay, brother; that is scarce to be believed. A white man to league himself to such deeds as these!”

“A white man—a Frenchman. For I called upon him in our tongue, and he answered me in the same, but with that halting accent which I know belongs to the sons of France. Moreover, he made no secret of it. He called us dogs of English, who were robbers of the soil where none had right to penetrate save the subjects of his royal master. He swore that they would make an end of us, root and branch; and he laughed when he saw the Indians cutting down the little ones, and covering their tender bodies with cruel wounds; nor had he any pity upon the one white woman; and when I raved upon him and cursed him, he laughed back, and said he had no power to allay the fury of the savages. Those who would preserve themselves safe should retire within the bounds of the colony to which they belong. France would have an end of encroachment, and the Indians were her friends, and would help her to drive out the common foe!”

Humphrey set his teeth and clinched his hands. The old instinctive hatred of centuries between French and English, never really dead, now leaped into life in his breast. He had heard plenty of talk during his boyhood of France’s boundless pretensions with regard to the great New World of the West, and how she sought, by the simple process of declaring territory to be hers, to extend her power over millions of miles of the untrodden plains and forests, which she could never hope to populate. He had laughed with others at these claims, and had thought little enough of them when with father and brother he set out for the western frontier.

There was then peace between the nations. Nor had it entered into the calculations of the settlers that their white brethren would stir up the friendly Indians against them, and bring havoc and destruction to their scattered dwellings. That was a method of warfare undreamed of a few years back; but it was now becoming a terrible reality.

“But your life was spared?” said Humphrey at last; “and yet the scalping-knife came very close to doing its horrid work.”

“Yes: they spared me—he spared me—when he had made me suffer what was tenfold worse than death; yet I wot well he only thought to leave me to a lingering death of anguish, more terrible than that of the scalping knife! They knew not that I had any to come to my succour. When he drew off the howling Indians and left me bound to the stump, he thought he left me to perish of starvation and burning thirst. It was no mercy that he showed me—rather a refinement of cruelty. I begged him to make an end of my wretched life; but he smiled, and bid me a mocking farewell.

“Great God of heaven and earth, look down and avenge me of mine adversary! I trust there are not many such fiends in human shape even in the ranks of the jealous and all-grasping French. But if there be, may it be mine to carry death and desolation into their ranks! May they be driven forth from this fair land which they have helped to desolate! May death and destruction come swiftly upon them; and when they fall, let them rise up no more!”

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“Amen!” said Humphrey solemnly; and the brothers sat in silence for a great while, the gloom hiding them the one from the other, though they knew that their hearts were beating in sympathy.

“The war has broken out,” said Humphrey at last. “We can perchance find our place in the ranks of those who go to drive out the oppressive race, whose claims are such as English subjects will not tolerate.”

“Ay, there will be fighting, fighting, fighting now till they are driven forth, and till England’s flag waves proudly over this great land!” cried Charles, with a strange confidence and exultation in his tones. “England will fight, and I will fight with her. I will slay and slay, and spare not; and I will tell this tale to all wherever I go. I will hunt out mine enemy until I compass his death. They have despoiled me of home, of wife, of children. They have taken away all the joy of life. The light of my eyes is gone. Henceforth I have but one thing to live for. I bare my sword against France. Against her will I fight until the Lord gives us the victory. The world shall know, and all ears shall tingle at the tale which I will tell. There shall be no quarter, no pity for those who use such means as those which have left me what I am tonight!”

Humphrey could not marvel at the intensity of the ferocity in Charles’s tones. It sounded strange in one of so gentle and placable a nature; but he had cause—he had cause!

“Think you that the man was other than one of those wild fellows who run from all law and order in the townships and become denizens of the wood, and little better than the wild Indians themselves? We. have heard of these coureurs de bois, as they are called. There are laws passed against them, severe and restrictive, by their own people. Perchance it were scarce just to the French to credit them with all that this man has done.”

“Peace, Humphrey,” was the stern reply. “We know that the French are inciting the Indians against our peaceful settlers, and that what has happened here today is happening in other places along our scattered frontier. The work is the work of France, and against France will I fight till she is overthrown. I have sworn it. Seek not to turn me from my purpose. I will fight, and fight, and fight till I see her lying in the dust, and till I have met mine enemy face to face and have set my foot upon his neck. God has heard my vow; He will fight for me till it be fulfilled.”

Chapter 2: Friends In Need.

It was not to be surprised at that, after that terrible day and night, Charles should awake from the restless sleep into which he had dropped towards dawn in a state of high fever.

He lay raving in delirium for three days, whilst Humphrey sat beside him, putting water to his parched lips, striving to soothe and quiet him; often shuddering with horror as he seemed to see again with his brother's eyes those horrid scenes upon which the fevered man's fancy ever dwelt; waking sometimes at night in a sweat of terror, thinking he heard the Indian war whoop echoing through the forest.

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Those were terrible days for Humphrey—days of a loneliness that was beyond anything he had experienced before. His brother was near him in the flesh, but severed from him by a whole world of fevered imaginings. Sometimes Humphrey found it in his heart to wish that the Indians would come back and make a final end of them both. All hope and zest and joy in life seemed to have been taken from him at one blow. He could neither think of the happy past without pangs of pain, nor yet face a future which seemed barren of hope and promise.

He could only sit beside his brother, tend him, nurse him, pray for him. But the words of prayer too often died away upon his lips. Had they not all prayed together, after the godly habit of the household, upon the very morning when this awful disaster fell upon them? Were these vast solitudes too far away for God to hear the prayers that went up from them?

Humphrey had never known what awful loneliness could engulf the human spirit till he sat beside the fevered man in the vast solitude of the primeval forest, asking in his heart whether God Himself had not forsaken them.

It was the hour of sundown, and Humphrey had gone outside for a breath of fresh air. He looked ten years older than he had done a few days back, when he had come whistling through the forest track, expecting to see the children bounding forth to meet him. His eyes were sunken, his face was pale and haggard, his dress was unkempt and ragged. There were no clever fingers now to patch tattered raiment, and keep things neat and trim.

There was an unwonted sound in the forest! It was distant still. To some ears it would have been inaudible; but Humphrey heard it, and his heart suddenly beat faster.

The sound was that of approaching steps—the steps of men. A few minutes more and he heard the sound of voices, too. He had been about to dash into the shed for his gun, but the fresh sounds arrested his movement.

He had ears as sharp as those of an ambushed Indian, and he detected in a moment that the men who were approaching the clearing were of his own nationality. The words he could not hear, but he could distinguish the intonation. It was not the rapid, thin-sounding French tongue; it was English—he was certain of it! And a light leaped to his eyes at the bare thought of meeting a brother countryman in this desolate place.

Probably it was some other settler, one of that hardy race that fringed the colony on its western frontier. Miles and miles of rolling forest lay between these scattered holdings, and since war was but lately begun, nothing had been done for the protection of the hapless people now becoming an easy prey of the Indians stirred up to molest them.

Humphrey knew none of their neighbours. Forest travelling was too difficult and dangerous to tempt the settler far away from his own holding. If it were one of these coming now, most likely he too had suffered from attack or fear of attack, and was seeking a friend in the nearest locality.

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He stood like one spellbound, watching and waiting. The sound of steps drew nearer to the fringe of obscuring forest trees; the sound of voices became plainer and more plain. In another minute Humphrey saw them—two bronzed and stalwart men—advancing from the wood into the clearing. They came upon it unawares, as was plain from their sudden pause. But they were white men; they were brothers in this wild land. There was something like a sob in Humphrey's throat, which he hastily swallowed down, as he advanced with great strides to meet them.

"You are welcome," he said. "I had thought the Indians had left no living beings behind them in all this forest save my brother and myself."

No introductions were needed in this savage place; the face of every white man lit up at sight of a like countenance, and at the sound of the familiar tongue. The men shook hands with a hearty grip, and one said to Humphrey:

"You have had Indians here?"

Humphrey made an expressive gesture with his hand.

"This was a week ago as fair a holding as heart of man could wish to see in this grim forest. You see what is left today!"

"Your house is burnt down, as we plainly see. Have you lost aught beside? Has human blood been spilt?"

"The corpse of my venerable father, and that of a bold baby boy, lie beneath yon heap of ruins which made their funeral pyre. In yonder grave lie the mingled corpses of my brother's wife and four fair children, hacked to death and half burnt by the savages. And yet this work is not the work of savages alone. With them we have dwelt at peace these many years. The shame, the horror, the disgrace of it is that we owe these horrors to the white sons of France, who hound on the savages to make these raids, and stand by to see them do their bloody work!"

The two strangers exchanged glances—meaning glances—and one of them laid a hand upon Humphrey's shoulder, looking earnestly into his eyes the while.

"Is it so in very truth? So have we heard in whispers, but it was a thing we could scarce believe. We have travelled far from the lands of the south to join our brethren of the English race. We heard rumours of wars cruel and bloody. Yet it seemed to us too strange a thing to believe that here, amid the hostile, savage Indians, white man could wage war with white man, and take the bloody heathen man as his ally, instead of the brother who bears the name of Christ!"

Humphrey looked with some wonder and fascination into the face of the youth who spoke. It was a refined and beautiful face, notwithstanding the evidences of long

exposure to sun and wind. The features were finely cut, sensitive and expressive, and the eyes were very luminous in their glance, and possessed strangely penetrating powers. In stature the young man was almost as tall as Humphrey, but of a much slighter build; yet he was wiry and muscular, as could well be seen, and plainly well used to the life of the wild woodlands. His dress was that of the backwoods, dressed deerskin being the chief material used. Both travellers wore moccasins on their feet, and carried the usual weapons of offence and defence.

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Yet Humphrey felt as though this man was in some sort different from those he had met in the woods at rare times when out hunting. His voice, his words, his phraseology seemed in some sort strange, and he asked him wonderingly:

“From whence are you, friends?”

“From the land of the far south—from the rolling plains of the giant Mississippi, that vast river of which perchance you have heard?”

“Ay, verily,” answered Humphrey, with a touch of bitterness in his tone. “I have heard of that great river, which the French King claims to have discovered, and which they say he will guard with a chain of forts right away from Canada, and will thus command all the New World of the West, pinning us English within the limits of that portion of land lying betwixt the ocean and the range of the Allegheny Mountains,” and Humphrey waved his hand in that direction, and looked questioningly at the men before him.

He had an impression that all who came from the far south, from the colony of Louisiana, as he had heard it called, must be in some sort French subjects. And yet these men spoke his own tongue, and seemed to be friends and brothers.

“That was the chimera of the French Monarch more than a century ago. Methinks it is little nearer its accomplishment now than when our forefathers, acting as pioneers, made a small settlement in a green valley near to the mouth of the giant river, waiting for the King to send his priests and missionaries to convert the heathen from their evil ways, and found a fair Christian realm in that fair land.”

“Then were your forefathers French subjects?” asked Humphrey, rather bewildered. “If so, how come you to speak mine own tongue as you do?”

“I come of no French stock!” cried the companion stranger, who had remained silent until now, looking searchingly round the clearing, and examining Humphrey himself with curiosity; “I have no drop of French blood in my veins, whatever Julian may have. I am Fritz Neville. I come of an English family. But you shall hear all later on, as we sit by our fire at night. I would hear all your tale of desolation and woe. We, for our part, have no cause to love the French oppressors, whose ambition and greed seem to know no bounds. Can you give us shelter by your hearth tonight? Food we have of our own, since we find game in sufficient abundance in these forest tracks.”

As he spoke he unslung from his shoulders a fine young fawn which they had lately shot, and Humphrey made eager answer to the request for hospitality.

“Would that we had better to offer! But the homestead is burnt. My brother lies sick of a fever in yon shed—a fever brought on by loss of blood and by anguish of mind. I have

been alone in this place with him hard upon a week now, and to me it seems as though years instead of days had passed over my head since the calamity happened."

"I can well believe that," said the first speaker, whom his companion had spoken of as Julian. "There be times in a man's life when hours are as days and days as years. But let me see your brother if he be sick. I have some skill in the treatment of fevers, and I have brought in my wallet some simples which we find wonderfully helpful down in the south, from where I come. I doubt not I can bring him relief."

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Humphrey's face brightened with a look of joyful relief, and Fritz exclaimed heartily:

"Yes, yes, Julian is a notable leech. We all come to him with our troubles both of body and mind.

"Lead on, comrade. I will cook the supper whilst you and he tend the sick man; and afterwards we will tell all our tale; and take counsel for the future."

It was new life to Humphrey to hear the sound of human voices, to feel the touch of friendly hands, to know himself not alone in the awful isolation of the vast forest. He led the way to the rough shed, which he had contrived during the past days to convert into a rude species of sleeping and living room. He had made a hearth and a chimney, so that he could cook food whilst still keeping an eye upon his sick brother. He had contrived a certain amount of rude comfort in Charles's bed and surroundings. The place looked pleasant to the wearied, travellers, for it was spotlessly clean, and it afforded shelter from the keen night air.

They had been finding the nights grow cold as they journeyed northward, and Fritz rubbed his hands at sight of the glow of the fire, and set to work eagerly upon his culinary tasks; whilst Julian and Humphrey bent over Charles, the former examining the condition of his pulse and skin with the air of one who knows how to combat the symptoms of illness.

He administered a draught, and bathed the sick man's temples with some pungent decoction of herbs which he prepared with hot water; and after giving him a small quantity of soup, told Humphrey that he would probably sleep quietly all night, and might very likely awake without any fever, though as weak as a child.

And in effect only a short time elapsed before his eyes closed, and he sank into a peaceful slumber, such as he had not known throughout the past days.

"Thank God you came!" said Humphrey with fervour; "I had thought to bury my brother here beside his wife, and the loneliness and horror had well nigh driven me mad. If he live, I shall have something left to live for; else I could have wished that we had all perished together!"

"Nay," cried Fritz from the fire, "we can do better than that: we can join those who have the welfare of the country at heart. We can punish proud France for her ambition and encroachments, and perchance—who knows?—England's flag may ere long proudly wave where now only the banner of France has floated from her scattered forts."

But just at this moment Humphrey could not be roused to any patriotic fervour. The sense of personal loss and horror was strong upon him. His thoughts were turning vaguely towards the mother country from which his fathers had come. For the moment

the wild West was hateful to him. He could not face the thought of taking up the old life again. He had been uprooted too suddenly and ruthlessly. The spell of the forest was gone. Sometimes he felt that he never wished to look upon waving trees again.

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As they partook of the well-cooked supper which Fritz had provided, and afterwards sat smoking their pipes beside the fire, whilst the wind moaned and sighed round the corners of the shed, and whispered through the trees around the clearing, he told these strangers the whole history of his life, and how it had seemed to be suddenly cut in half a week ago, whilst the last half already began to look and feel to him longer than the first.

There was no lack of sympathy and interest in the faces of his hearers. When they heard how a Frenchman had been with the Indians upon their raid, Fritz smote the ground heavily with his open hand, exclaiming:

“That is what we heard as we journeyed onward; that is the rumour that reached us even in the far south. It was hard to believe that brother should turn against brother out here in these trackless wilds, amid hordes of savage Indians. We said it must surely be false—that Christian men could not be guilty of such wickedness! Yet it has proved all too true. We have heard stories during our journey which have filled our hearts with loathing and scorn. France is playing a treacherous, a vile and unworthy game. England is no match for her yet—unprepared and taken at a disadvantage. But you will see, you will see! She will arise from sleep like a giant refreshed! And then let proud France tremble for her bloody laurels!”

His eye flashed, and Julian said thoughtfully:

“Ay, truly has she stained her laurels with blood; and she is even now staining her annals with dark crimes, when she stirs up the savage Indian to bring death and desolation to those peaceful settlers with whom they have so long lived as friends. God will require their blood at the hands of France. Let her beware! for the hour of her destruction will not be prolonged if she sells herself to sin.”

There was a long silence then between the three men; it was at length broken by Humphrey, who looked from one to the other, and said:

“You have not yet told me of yourselves. Who are you, and whence do you come? I have heard of vast plains and mighty rivers in the south and west, but I know nothing beyond these forest tracks which lie about our desolated home.”

Fritz signed to Julian to be the speaker, and he leaned his back against the wall, clasping his hands behind his head. The firelight gleamed upon his earnest face and shone in his brilliant eyes. Humphrey regarded him with a species of fascination. He had never seen a man quite of this type before.

“Have you ever heard,” asked Julian, “of that great explorer La Salle, who first made the voyage of the great river Mississippi, and founded the infant colony of Louisiana, albeit

he himself perished by the hand of an assassin in the wilderness, before he had half achieved the object to which he was pledged?"

"I have heard the name," said Humphrey; "I used to hear the men of Philadelphia talk of such things when I was a boy. But he was a Frenchman."

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“Yes, and came with a commission from the King of France hard upon a century ago. My great-grandfather and his father were of the company of La Salle, although they bore their part in a different expedition from that which is known to the world.”

“Are you then French?” asked Humphrey, half disappointed, though he could not tell why.

Julian smiled, reading the thought in his heart.

“French in little beside name,” he replied. “My great grandfather, Gaspard Dautray, was half English through his mother, an Englishwoman; and he married Mary Neville, an English maiden, from whose family Fritz there is descended. In brief, let me tell you the story. Long before La Salle had penetrated the fastnesses of the west, there had grown up in a green valley a little colony of English, outcasts from their own land by reason of their faith. They had lived at peace for long with the Indian tribes; but when more white men began invading their country, jealousy and fury were awakened in the hearts of the Indians, and this little settlement was in great danger. In their extremity this little colony sent to La Salle, and though he himself was absent, his lieutenant sent them a band of men to aid them in defending their lives and property, and in routing the attacking Indian force.

“But it was no longer safe to remain in the green valley which had sheltered them so long. They heard of the lands of the south, down the great mysterious river, and they resolved to seek an asylum there.

“With the company of La Salle, and yet not attached to it, was a holy man whom all the world called Father Fritz; a priest, yet one who followed not the Pope of Rome, but loved each Christian brother, and recognized only one Church—the Church of the baptized. He went with the little band, and they made themselves a new home in the land of the south. They were beloved of the Indians about them. Father Fritz taught them, baptized such as were truly converted, and lived amongst them to a hoary old age, loving and beloved; seeking always to hold them back from greed and covetousness, and teaching them that the hope for which they must look was the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to reign upon the earth.”

Julian paused, looking thoughtfully into the fire. Humphrey heaved a great sigh, and said half bitterly:

“But the Lord delayeth His coming, and men wage war against their brethren.”

“Yes, verily; yet I think that should make us long the more for the day which will surely come. However, let me tell my tale. The great enterprise of France in the south and west has come to but a very small thing. No chain of forts guards the great river. The highway from Canada to the south has never been opened up. France is speaking of it

to this day. These very hostile movements towards England are all part and parcel of the old plan. She still desires to hold the whole territory by this

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chain of forts, and shut England in between the sea and those mountains yonder. You have heard, I doubt not, how England is resolved not to be thus held in check. Major George Washington and General Braddock have both made attacks upon Fort Duquesne, and though both have suffered defeat owing to untoward causes and bad generalship, the spirit within them is still unquenched. Fort Duquesne, Fort Niagara, Fort Ticonderoga—these are the three northern links of the chain, and I think that England will never rest until she has floated her flag over these three forts.

"We have come from far to the heart of that great struggle which all men know must come. The day of rest for us seemed ended. We have been travelling all through the long, hot summer months, to find and to be with our countrymen when the hour of battle should come."

Humphrey looked from one to the other, and said:

"There are only two of you. Where are all the rest from your smiling valley of the south? Were you the only twain that desired to join the fight?"

"A dozen of us started, but two turned back quickly, discouraged by the hardness of the way, and a few died of fever in the great swamps and jungles: Others turned aside when we neared the great lakes, thinking to find an easier way. But Fritz and I had our own plan of making our way to New England, and after long toil and travel here we are at the end of our journey. For this indeed seems like the end, when we have found a comrade who will show us the way and lead us to the civilized world again!"

"Ay, I can do that," answered Humphrey; "I know well the road back to the world. Nor is it a matter of more than a few days' travel to reach the outlying townships. I have often said I would go and visit our sisters and friends, but I have never done so. Alas that I should go at last with such heavy tidings!"

"Heavy tidings indeed," said Fritz, with sympathy; "yet we will avenge these treacherous murders upon those who have brought them to pass."

"That will not restore the dead to life," said Humphrey mournfully.

"No, but it will ease the burning heart of its load of rage and vengeance."

Humphrey's eyes turned for a moment towards his sleeping brother. He knew how welcome would be such words to him—that is, if he awoke from his fever dreams in the same mood as they had found him.

"And yet," said Julian thoughtfully, "we have been taught by our fathers that brothers should live at peace together, even as we in our valley lived long at peace with all and

with one another. So long as the memory of our venerable Father remained alive there was all harmony and concord, and every man sought his brother's well being as earnestly as his own."

"Can you remember the holy man?" asked Humphrey, with interest.

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“No; but my father remembered him well. He was well grown towards manhood before the venerable old man died at a great age. My grandfather has told me story after story of him. I have been brought up to love and revere his memory, and to hold fast the things which he taught us. But after his death, alas! a new spirit gradually entered into the hearts of our people. They began to grow covetous of gain, to trade with the Indians for their own benefit, to fall into careless and sometimes evil practices. Before my father died he said to me that the Home of Peace was no longer the place it once had been, and that he should like to think that I might find a better place to live in, since I was young and had my life before me.”

“Was that long ago?”

“Just a year. My mother had died six months earlier. The dissensions of the parent countries had begun to reach to us. We had been French and English from the beginning, but had dwelt in peace and brotherly goodwill for nigh upon eighty years. We had married amongst ourselves, so that some amongst us scarce knew whether to call themselves French or English. But for all that disunion grew and spread. Stragglers of Louisiana found their way to us. They brought new fashions of thought and teaching with them. Some Romish priests found us out, and took possession of the little chapel which Father Fritz had built with such loving care, and the Mass was said instead of that simpler service which he had drawn up for us. Many of us the priests dubbed as heretics, and because we would not change our views for them, they became angry, and we were excommunicated. It has been nothing but growing strife and disunion for the past two years. I was glad to turn my back upon it at last, and find my way to a freer land, and one where a man may worship God according to his conscience; albeit I have no desire to speak ill of the priests, who were good men, and sought to teach us what they deemed to be the truth.”

“I am a Protestant,” said Humphrey; “I know little about Romish devices. I was taught to hate and abhor them. We dwelt among the Quaker folk of Pennsylvania. but we are not Quakers ourselves. Out here in the wilds we must live as we can. We have the Bible —and that is all.”

“People say of the Quakers that they will not fight!” said Fritz suddenly. “Is that so?”

“I know not,” answered Humphrey; “I think I have heard my father say something of that sort. But surely they will fight to avenge such things as that!” and he made a gesture with his hand as though indicating the burnt homestead and the graves of the murdered woman and children.

“If they be men they surely will. You will go and tell them your story, Humphrey?”

“Ay, that I will!” answered Humphrey, between his shut teeth.

Fritz sat staring into the fire for some time, and then he too broke out with some heat.

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“Yes, it is the same story all over. It was the French who came and spoiled our happy home. If they had let us alone, perchance we might have been there still, hunting, fishing, following the same kind of life as our fathers—at peace with ourselves and with the world. But they came amongst us. They sowed disunion and strife. They were resolved to get rid of the English party, as they called it. They were all softness and mildness to them. But those in whom the sturdy British spirit flourished they regarded with jealousy and dislike. They sowed the seeds of disunion. They spoiled our valley and our life. Doubtless the germs were there before, but it was the emissaries of France who wrought the mischief. If they could have done it, I believe they would have taught the Indians to distrust us English; but that was beyond their power. Even they held in loving reverence the name of Father Fritz, and none of his children, as they called us all alike, could do wrong in their eyes. So then it was their policy to get rid of such as would not own the supremacy of France in all things. I was glad at the last to go. We became weary of the bickerings and strife. Some of the elders remained behind, but the rest of us went forth to find ourselves a new home and a new country.”

Humphrey listened to this tale with as much interest as it was possible for him to give to any concern other than his own. Something of that indignant hatred which was springing into active life all through the western continent began to inflame his breast. It had been no effect of Charles’s inflamed imagination. The French were raising the Indians against them, and striving to overthrow England’s sons wherever they had a foothold, beyond their immediate colonies. It was time they should arise and assert themselves. Humphrey’s eyes kindled as he sat thinking upon these things.

“I too will go forth and fight France,” he said at last; and with that resolve the sense of numb lethargy and despair fell away from him like a worn-out garment, and his old fire and energy returned.

Chapter 3: Philadelphia.

“I will go and tell my tale in the ears of my countrymen,” said Charles, with steady voice but burning eyes, “and then I will go forth and fight the French, and slay and slay till they be driven from off the face of the western world!”

The fever had left Charles now. Some of his former strength had come back to him. But his brother looked at him often with wondering eyes, for it seemed to him that this Charles was a new being, with whom he had but scant acquaintance. He could not recognize in this stern faced, brooding man the quiet, homely farmer and settler whose home he had shared for so long.

Their new comrades were glad of the rest afforded them by the necessity of waiting till Charles should be fit to move. They had been travelling for many months, and the shelter of a roof—even though it was only the roof of a shed—was grateful to them.

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Fritz and Charles took a strong mutual liking almost from the first. Both were men of unwonted strength and endurance, and both were fired by a strong personal enmity towards the French and their aggressive policy.

Julian told Humphrey, in their private conferences, something of the cause of this personal rancour.

“There was a fair maid in our valley—Renee we called her—and her parents were French. But we were all friends together; and Fritz and she loved each other, and were about to be betrothed. Then came these troubles, and the priest forbade Renee to wed a heretic; and though she herself would have been faithful, her parents were afraid. It seemed to all then that the French were going to be masters of the land. There was another youth who loved her also, and to him they married her. That was just before we came away—a dozen of us English youths, who could not stand the new state of things and the strife of party. Fritz has neither forgotten nor forgiven. The name of France us odious in his ears.”

“And in yours, too?” asked Humphrey.

Julian’s face was grave and thoughtful.

“I have my moments of passionate anger. I hate everything that is vile and treacherous and aggressive. But I would seek to remember that after all we are brothers, and that we all bear the name of Christ. That is what Father Fritz of old sought to make us remember. Perhaps it comes the easier to me in that I have French blood in my veins, albeit I regard myself now as an English subject. I have cast in my lot with the English.”

Humphrey and Julian drew together, much as did Charles and Fritz. Julian was a year or two older than Humphrey, and Charles was several years older than Fritz; but all had led a free open-air life, and had tastes and feelings in common. They understood woodcraft and hunting; they were hardy, self reliant, courageous.

It was of such men as these that the best soldiers were made in the days that were at hand; although the military leaders, especially if they came from the Old World with its code of civilized warfare, were slow to recognize it.

A heavy storm of wind and rain—the precursor of the coming winter—raged round the little settlement for several days, during which the party sat round their fire, talking of the past and the future, and learning to know each other more and more intimately.

Charles recovered rapidly from the loss of blood and the fever weakness. His constitution triumphed easily over his recent illness, and he was only longing to be on the road, that he might the sooner stand face to face with the foe.

And now the storm was abating. The sun began to shine out through the driving wrack of clouds. The woodland tracks might be wet, but little reeked the travellers of that.

They bound upon their backs as much provision as would suffice for their immediate needs. They looked well to their arms and ammunition. They had mended their clothes, and were strong and fresh and full of courage.

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The journey before them seemed as nothing to the pair who had traversed so many thousands of miles of wood and water. And the settlers had friends at the other end who would remember them, and have tears of sympathy to shed at hearing their terrible tale.

The brothers stood looking their last upon the clearing which had for so long been their home. In Humphrey's eyes there was an unwonted moisture; but Charles's face was set and stern, and his lips twitched with the excess of restrained emotion. His eyes were fixed upon the mound which hid from his view the corpses of wife and children. Suddenly he lifted his clinched hand towards heaven.

"Strengthen, O Lord, this right hand of mine, that it may be strong against the nation whose crimes bring desolation upon Thy children. Be with us in the hour of vengeance and victory. Help us to render unto them even as they have rendered to us."

Julian and Fritz had withdrawn themselves a little, respecting the inevitable emotion which must come to men at such a moment. Humphrey turned away, and took a few uncertain steps, half blinded by the unwonted smart of tears in his eyes. He had come almost to hate this place of terrible associations; and yet it wrung his heart for a moment to leave those nameless graves, and that little lonely spot where so many peaceful and happy hours had been spent.

Julian's hand was on his arm, and his voice spoke in his ear.

"I know what it feels like; I have been through it. The smart is keen. But it helps us to remember that we are but strangers and pilgrims. It is perhaps those who have no abiding city here who most readily seek that which is theirs above."

Humphrey pressed Julian's hand, feeling vaguely comforted by his words, although he could not enter fully into their significance.

To Charles Julian said:

"'We must remember, even in our righteous wrath, that God has said He is the avenger. We can trust our wrongs in His hands. He will use us as His instruments if He thinks good. But let us beware of private acts of vengeance of our own planning. We must not forget the reverse of the picture—the mercy as well as the anger of God. We must not take things out of His hands into our own, lest we stumble and fall. We have a commandment to love our enemies, and to do good to those that hate us."

Charles looked fixedly at him.

"I have not forgotten," he said, in his strange, slow way; "I was brought up amongst those who refuse the sword, calling themselves servants of the Prince of Peace. We

shall see which the Lord will have—peace or war. Do you think He desires to see a repetition of such scenes as that?”

Charles pointed sternly to the ruined homestead—the grave beside it, and his gloomy eyes looked straight into those of Julian; but he did not even wait for an answer, but plunged along the forest track in an easterly direction.

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In a wide street in Philadelphia, not far from the Assembly Rooms where such hot debates were constantly going on, stood an old-fashioned house, quaintly gabled, above the door of which hung out a sign board intimating that travellers might find rest and refreshment within.

The whole house was spotlessly clean, and its aspect was prim and sober, as was indeed that of the whole city. Men in wide-brimmed hats and wide-skirted coats of sombre hue walked the streets, and talked earnestly together at the corners; whilst the women, for the most part, passed on their way with lowered eyes, and hoods drawn modestly over their heads, neither speaking nor being spoken to as they pursued their way.

To be sure there were exceptions. In some quarters there were plenty of people of a different aspect and bearing; but in this wide and pleasant street, overlooked by the window of the hostelry, there were few gaily-dressed persons to be seen, but nearly all of them wore the dress and adopted the quaint speech of the Quaker community.

From this window a bright-faced girl was looking eagerly out into the street. She wore a plain enough dress of grey homespun cloth, and a little prim cap covered her pretty hair. Yet for all that several little rebellious curls peeped forth, surrounding her face with a tiny nimbus; and there was something dainty in the fashion of her white frilled kerchief, arranged across her dress bodice and tied behind. She would dearly have loved to adorn herself with some knots of rose-coloured ribbon, but the rose tints in her cheek gave the touch of colour which brightened her sombre raiment, and her dancing blue eyes would have made sunshine in any place.

She had opened the window lattice and craned her head to look down the street; but at the sound of a footstep within doors she quickly drew it in again, for her mother reproved her when she found her hanging out at the window.

“What is all the stir about, mother?” she asked; “there be so many folks abroad, and they have been passing in and out of the Assembly Rooms for above an hour. What does it all mean? Are they baiting the Governor again? Are they having another fight about the taxes?”

“Nay, child, I know not. I have been in the kitchen, looking to the supper. Thy father came in awhile back, and said we had guests arrived, and that he desired the supper to be extra good. That is all I know.”

“Something has happened, I am sure of that!” cried the girl again, “and I would father would come and tell us what it is all about. He always hears all the news. Perhaps the

travellers he is bringing here will know. I may sit with you at the supper table, may I not, mother?"

"Yes, child; so your father said. He came in with a smile upon his face. But he was in a great haste, and has been gone ever since. So what it all means I know not."

Susanna—for such was the name of the girl—became at once interested and excited.

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“O mother, what can it be? Hark at that noise in the street below! People are crying out in a great rage. What can it be? It was so that day a week agone, when news was brought in that some poor settlers had been murdered by Indians, and the Assembly would do nothing but wrangle with the Governor instead of sending out troops to defend our people. Do you think something can have happened again?”

The mother’s face turned a little pale.

“Heaven send it be not so!” she exclaimed. “I am always in fear when I hear of such things—in fear for my old father, and for my brothers. You know they live away there on the border. I pray Heaven no trouble will fall upon them.”

Susanna’s eyes dilated with interest, as they always did when her mother talked to her of these unknown relations, away beyond the region of safety and civilization.

To be correct, it should be explained that Susanna was not the real daughter of the woman whom she called mother; for Benjamin Ashley had been twice married, and Susanna had been five years old before Hannah Angell had taken the mother’s place. But she never thought of this herself. She remembered no other mother, and the tie between them was strong and tender, despite the fact that there was not more than thirteen years’ difference in age between them, and some girls might have rebelled against the rule of one who might almost have been a sister.

But Susanna had no desire to rebel. Hannah’s rule was a mild and gentle one, although it was exercised with a certain amount of prim decorum. Still the girl was shrewd enough to know that her father’s leanings towards the Quaker code had been greatly modified by the influence of his wife, and that she was kept less strictly than he would have kept her had he remained a widower.

Hannah bustled away to the kitchen, and Susanna, after one more longing look out of the window towards the crowd assembled in the open space beyond, followed her, and gave active assistance in the setting of the supper table.

A young man in Quaker garb, and with a broad-brimmed hat in his hand, entered the outer room, engaged in hot dispute with another youth of different aspect, whose face was deeply flushed as if in anger.

“Your Franklin may be a clever man—I have nothing against that!” he exclaimed hotly; “but if he backs up the stubborn Assembly, and stands idle whilst our settlers are being massacred like sheep, then say I that he and they alike deserve hanging in a row from the gables of their own Assembly House; and that if the Indians break in upon us and scalp them all, they will but meet the deserts of their obstinacy and folly!”

“Friend,” said the other of the sober raiment, “thee speaks as a heathen man and a vain fellow. The Lord hath given us a commandment to love one another, and to live at peace with all men. We may not lightly set aside that commandment; we may not do evil that good may come.”

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“Tush, man! get your Bible and look. I am no scholar, but I know that the Lord calls Himself a man of war—that He rides forth, sword in hand, conquering, and to conquer; that the armies in heaven itself fight under the Archangel against the powers of darkness. And are we men to let our brothers be brutally murdered, whilst we sit with folded hands, or wrangle weeks and months away, as you Quakers are wrangling over some petty question of taxation which a man of sense would settle in five minutes? I am ashamed of Philadelphia! The whole world will be pointing the finger of scorn at us. We are acting like cowards—like fools—not like men! If there were but a man to lead us forth, I and a hundred stout fellows would start forth to the border country tomorrow to wage war with those villainous Indians and their more villainous allies the crafty sons of France.”

“Have patience, friend,” said the Quaker youth, with his solemn air; “I tell thee that the Assembly is in the right. Who are the Penns these proprietaries—that their lands should be exempt from taxation? If the Governor will yield that point, then will the Assembly raise the needful aid for keeping in check the enemy, albeit it goes sorely against their righteous souls. But they will not give everything and gain nothing; it is not right they should.”

“And while they wrangle and snarl and bicker, like so many dogs over a bone, our countrywomen and their innocent children are to be scalped and burnt and massacred? That is Scripture law, is it? that is your vaunted religion. You will give way—you will yield your principles for a petty victory on a point of law, but not to save the lives of the helpless brothers who are crying aloud on all hands to you to come and save them!”

The Quaker youth moved his large feet uneasily; he, in common with the seniors of his party, was beginning to find it a little difficult to maintain a logical position in face of the pressing urgency of the position. He had been brought up in the tenets which largely prevailed in Pennsylvania at that day, and was primed with numerous arguments which up till now had been urged with confidence by the Quaker community. But the peace-loving Quakers were beginning to feel the ground shaking beneath their feet. The day was advancing with rapid strides when they would be forced either to take up arms in defence of their colony, or to sit still and see it pass bodily into the hands of the enemy.

Susanna was peeping in at the door of the next room. She knew both the speakers well. Ebenezer Jenkyns had indeed been paying her some attention of late, although she laughed him to scorn. Much more to her liking was bold John Stark, her father’s kinsman; and as there was nobody in the room beside these two, she ventured to go a step within the doorway and ask:

“What is the matter now, Jack? what are you two fighting about so hotly?”

“Faith, ’tis ever the same old tale—more massacres and outrages upon our borders, more women and children slaughtered! Settlers from the western border calling aloud

to us to send them help, and these Quaker fellows of the Assembly doing nothing but wrangle, wrangle, wrangle with the Governor, and standing idle whilst their brothers perish. Save me from the faith of the peace makers!”

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Again the other young man moved uneasily, the more so as he saw the look of disdain and scorn flitting over the pretty face of Susanna.

“Thee does us an injustice, friend,” he said. “Was it not Benjamin Franklin who a few months back gave such notable help to General Braddock that he called him the only man of honesty and vigour in all the western world? But the Lord showed that He would not have us attack our brother men, and Braddock’s army was cut to pieces, and he himself slain. When the Lord shows us His mind, it is not for us to persist in our evil courses; we must be patient beneath His chastenings.”

“Tush, man! the whole campaign was grossly mismanaged; all the world knows that by now. But why hark back to the past? it is the present, the future that lie before us. Are we to let our province become overrun and despoiled by hordes of savage Indians, or are we to rise like men and sweep them back whence they came? There is the case in a nutshell. And instead of facing it like men, the Assembly talks and squabbles and wrangles like a pack of silly women!”

“Oh no, Cousin Jack,” quoth Susanna saucily, “say not like women! Women would make up their minds to action in an hour. Say rather like men, like men such as Ebenezer loves—men with the tongues of giants and the spirit of mice; men who speak great swelling words, and boast of their righteousness, but who are put to shame by the brute beasts themselves. Even a timid hen will be brave when her brood is attacked; but a Quaker cannot be anything but a coward, and will sit with folded hands whilst his own kinsmen perish miserably!”

This was rather too much even for Ebenezer’s phlegmatic spirit. He seized his broad-brimmed hat and clapped it on his head.

“Thee will be sorry some day, Susanna, for making game of the Quakers, and of the godly ones of the earth,” he spluttered.

“Go thee to the poultry yard, friend Ebenezer,” called Susanna after him; “the old hen there will give thee a warm welcome. Go and learn from her how to fight. I warrant thee will learn more from her than thee has ever known before—more than thine own people will ever teach thee. Go to the old hen to learn; only I fear thee will soon flee from her with a text in thy mouth to aid thy legs to run!”

“Susanna, Susanna!” cried a voice from within, whilst Jack doubled himself up in a paroxysm of delight, “what are you saying so loud and free? Come hither, child. You grow over bold, and I cannot have you in the public room. With whom are you talking there?”

“There is only Jack here now,” answered Susanna meekly, although the sparkle still gleamed in her eyes; “Ebenezer has just gone out. I was saying farewell to him.”

“Come back now, and finish setting the table; and if John will stay to supper, he will be welcome.”

John was only too glad, for he took keen pleasure in the society of Susanna, and was fond of the quaint old house where his kinsman lived. He rose and went into the inner room, where Hannah received him with a smile and a nod.

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Susanna would have asked him what special news had reached the town that day, but the sound of approaching feet outside warned her of the return of her father with the friends he was bringing to supper. She flew to the kitchen for the first relay of dishes, and Hannah left her to dish them up, whilst she went to meet the guests.

Jack and the maidservant assisted Susanna at the stove, and a few minutes passed before they entered the supper room, where the company had assembled. When they did so, the girl was surprised to note that her mother was standing between two tall strangers, one of whom had his arm about her, and that she was weeping silently yet bitterly.

Susanna put down her dishes on the table and crept to her father's side.

"What is the matter?" she asked timidly.

"Matter enough to bring tears to all our eyes—ay, tears of blood!" answered Ashley sternly. "These two men are your mother's brothers, who arrived today—just a short while back—as I hoped with pleasant tidings. Now have we learned a different tale. Their old father and Charles's wife and children have been brutally murdered by Indians, and he himself escaped as by a miracle. We have been telling the tale to the Assembly this very afternoon. Ah, it would have moved hearts of stone to hear Charles's words! I pray Heaven that something may soon be done. It is fearful to think of the sufferings which our inaction is causing to our settlers in the west!"

"It is a shame—a disgrace!" exclaimed Jack hotly, and then he turned his glance upon the two other men who were seated at the table, taking in the whole scene in silence.

Both wore the look of travellers; both were tanned by exposure, and were clad in stained and curious garments, such as betokened the life of the wilderness. Jack was instantly and keenly interested. He himself would willingly have been a backwoodsman had he been able to adopt that adventurous life.

Ashley saw the look he bent upon the travellers, and he made them known to one another.

"These friends have travelled far from the lands of the south, and have been friends in need to our kinsmen yonder. Fritz Neville and Julian Dautray are their names.

"Susanna, set food before them. Your mother will not be able to think of aught just now. We must let her have her cry out before we trouble her."

The rest of the party seated themselves, whilst in the recess by the window Hannah stood between the brothers she had parted from ten years ago, listening to their tale, and weeping as she listened.

Ashley turned to his two guests, who were eating with appetite from the well-filled platters placed before them, and he began to speak as though taking up a theme which had lately been dropped.

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“It is no wonder that you are perplexed by what you hear and see in this city. I will seek to make the point at issue as clear to you as it may be. You have doubtless heard of the Penn family, from whom this colony takes its name. Much we owe to our founder—his wisdom, liberality, and enlightenment; but his sons are hated here. They are absent in England, but they are the proprietaries of vast tracts of land, and it is with regard to these lands that the troubles in the Assembly arise. The proprietaries are regarded as renegades from the faith; for the Assembly here is Quaker almost to a man. They hate the feudalism of the tenure of the proprietaries, and they are resolved to tax these lands, although they will not defend them, and although no income is at present derived from them.”

“Have they the power to do so?” asked Julian.

“Not without the consent of the Governor. That is where the whole trouble lies. And the Governor has no power to grant them leave to tax the proprietary lands. Not only so, but he is expressly forbidden by the terms of his commission to permit this taxation. But the Assembly will not yield the point, nor will they consent to furnish means for the defence of the colony until this point is conceded. That is where the deadlock comes in. The Governor cannot yield; his powers do not permit it. The Assembly will not yield. They hate the thought of war, and seem glad to shelter themselves behind this quibble. For a while many of us, their friends, although not exactly at one with them in all things, stood by them and upheld them; but we are fast losing patience now. When it comes to having our peaceful settlers barbarously murdered, and our western border desolated and encroached upon; when it becomes known that this is the doing of jealous France, not of the Indians themselves, then it is time to take a wider outlook. Let the question of the proprietary lands stand over till another time; the question may then be settled at a less price than is being paid for it now, when every month’s delay costs us the lives of helpless women and children, and when humanity herself is crying aloud in our streets.”

Ashley, although he had long been on most friendly terms with the Quaker population of the town, was not by faith a Quaker, and was growing impatient with the Assembly and its stubborn policy of resistance. He felt that his old friend Franklin should know better, and show a wider spirit. He had acted with promptness and patriotism earlier in the year, when Braddock’s luckless expedition had applied to him for help. But in this warfare he was sternly resolved on the victory over the Governor, and at this moment it seemed as though all Philadelphia was much more eager to achieve this than to defend the borders of the colony.

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Hitherto the danger had not appeared pressing to the eastern part of the colony. They were in no danger from Indian raids, and they had small pity for their brethren on the western frontier. Between them and the encroaching Indians lay a population, mostly German, that acted like a buffer state to them; and notwithstanding that every post brought in urgent appeals for help, they passed the time in wrangling with the Governor, in drawing up bills professing to be framed to meet the emergency, but each one of them containing the clause through which the Governor was forced to draw his pen.

Governor Morris had written off to England stating the exceeding difficulty of his position. His appeals to the Assembly to defend the colony were spirited and manly. He was anxious to join with the other colonies for an organized and united resistance, but this was at present extremely difficult. Others before him had tried the same policy, but it had ended in failure. Petty jealousies did more to hold the colonies apart than a common peril to bind them together. Political and religious strife was always arising. There was nothing to bind them together save a common, though rather cold, allegiance to the English King. Now and again, in moments of imminent peril, they had united for a common object; but they fell apart almost at once. Each had its own pet quarrel with its Governor, which was far more interesting to the people at the moment than anything else.

Julian and Fritz listened in amaze as Ashley, who was a well-informed man and a shrewd observer, put before them, as well as he was able, the state of affairs reigning in Pennsylvania and the sister states.

“I am often ashamed of our policy, of our bickerings, of our tardiness,” concluded the good man; “yet for all that there is stuff of the right sort in our people. We have English blood in our veins, and I always maintain that England is bound to be the dominant power in these lands of the west. Let them but send us good leaders and generals from the old country, and I will answer for it that the rising generation of New England will fight and will conquer, and drive the encroaching French back whence they came!”

Chapter 4: An Exciting Struggle.

It was an exciting scene. Susanna stood at the window, and gazed eagerly along the street, striving hard to obtain a sight of the seething crowd in the open square.

She could see the tall, haggard form of her Uncle Charles, as she called him. He was standing upon a little platform that his friends had erected for him in front of the Assembly Rooms, and he was speaking aloud to the surging crowd in accents that rang far through the still air, and even reached the ears of the listeners at the open window.

For once Hannah made no protest when the girl thrust out her head. She herself seemed to be striving to catch the echoes of the clear, trumpet-like voice. Her colour

came and went in her cheeks; her breast heaved with the emotion which often found vent in those days in a fit of silent weeping.

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“Mother dear, do not weep; they shall be avenged! Nobody can listen to Uncle Charles and not be moved. Hark how they are shouting now—hark! I can see them raising their arms to heaven. They are shaking their fists in the direction of the windows of the Assembly House. Surely those cowardly men must be roused to action; they cannot hear unmoved a tale such as Uncle Charles has to tell!”

“Yet even so the dead will not be restored to life; and war is a cruel, bitter thing.”

“Yes, but victory is glorious. And we shall surely triumph, for our cause is righteous. I am sure of that. And Julian Dautray says the same. I think he is a very good man, mother; I think he is better than the Quakers, though he does not talk as if he thought himself a saint.

“O mother, there is Uncle Humphrey looking up at us! I pray you let me go down to him. I long so greatly to hear what Uncle Charles is saying. And I shall be safe in his care.”

“I think I will come, too,” said Hannah, whose interest and curiosity were keenly aroused; and after signalling as much to Humphrey, they threw on their cloaks and hoods, and were soon out in the streets, where an excited crowd had gathered.

“The posts have come in,” said Humphrey, as they made their way slowly along, “and there is news of fresh disasters, and nearer. In a few minutes we shall have more news. Men have gone in who promise to come out and read us the letters. But the bearers themselves declare that things are terrible. The Germans have been attacked. A Moravian settlement has been burnt to the ground, and all its inhabitants butchered. Families are flying from the border country, naked and destitute, to get clear of the savages and their tomahawks. Every where the people are calling aloud upon the Assembly to come to their succour.”

The crowd in the street was surging to and fro. Some were Quakers, with pale, determined countenances, still holding to their stubborn policy of non-resistance to the enemy, but of obstinate resistance to the Governor and the proprietaries. The sight of these men seemed to inflame the rest of the populace, and they were hustled and hooted as they made their way into the Assembly; whilst the Governor was cheered as he went by with a grave and troubled face, and on the steps of his house he turned and addressed the people.

“My friends,” he said, “I am doing what I can. I have written to the proprietaries and to the government at home. I have told them that the conduct of the Assembly is to me shocking beyond parallel. I am asking for fresh powers to deal with this horrible crisis. But I cannot look for an answer for long; and meantime are all our helpless settlers in the west to be butchered? You men of the city, rise you and make a solemn protest to

these obstinate rulers of yours. I have spoken all that one man may, and they will not hear. Try you now if you cannot make your voice heard."

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“We will, we will!” shouted a hundred voices; and forthwith knots of influential men began to gather together in corners, talking eagerly together, and gesticulating in their excitement.

And all this while Charles, wild-eyed and haggard, was keeping his place on the little platform, and telling his story again and again to the shifting groups who came and went. Men and women hung upon his words in a sort of horrible fascination. Others might talk of horrors guessed at, yet unseen; Charles had witnessed the things of which he spoke, and his words sent thrills of horror through the frames of those who heard. Women wept, and wrung their hands, and the faces of men grew white and stern.

But upon the opposite side of the square another orator was haranguing the crowd. A young Quaker woman had got up upon some steps, moved in spirit, as she declared, to denounce the wickedness of war, and to urge the townsmen to peaceful methods. Her shrill voice rose high and piercing, and she invoked Heaven to bless the work of those who would endure all things rather than spill human blood.

But the people had heard something too much of this peaceful gospel. For long they had upheld the policy of non-resistance. They had their shops, their farms, their merchandise; they were prosperous and phlegmatic, more interested in local than in national issues. They had been content to be preached at by the Quakers, and to give passive adhesion to their policy; but the hour of awakening had come. The agonized cries of those who looked to them for aid had pierced their ears too often to be ignored. Humanity itself must rise in answer to such an appeal. They were beginning to see that their peace policy was costing untold human lives, amid scenes of unspeakable horror.

They let the woman speak in peace; they did not try to stop her utterances. But when a brother Quaker took her place and began a similar harangue, the young men round raised a howl, and a voice cried out:

“Duck him in the horse pond! Roll him in a barrel! Let him be tarred and feathered like an Indian, since he loves the scalping savages so well. Who’s got a tomahawk? Let’s see how they use them. Does anybody know how they scalp their prisoners? A Quaker would never miss his scalp; he always has his hat on!”

A roar of laughter greeted this sally; and a rush was made for the unlucky orator, who showed a bold front enough to the mob. But at that moment public attention was turned in a different direction by the appearing upon the steps of the Assembly Rooms of a well-known citizen of high repute, who had until latterly been one of the peace party, but who of late had made a resolute stand, insisting that something must be done for the protection of the western settlers, and for the curbing of the ambitious encroachments and preposterous claims of France.

This grave-faced citizen came out with some papers in his hand, and the crowd was hushed into silence.

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Overhead anxious faces could be seen looking out at the window. It was not by the wishes of the Assembly that such letters were made public; but many of them had been addressed to James Freeman himself, and they could not restrain him from doing as he would with his own.

“My friends,” he said, and his voice rose distinct in the clear air, “we have heavy tidings today. You shall hear what is written from some sufferers not far from Fort Cumberland, where forty white men, women, and children were barbarously murdered a few days back.

“’We are in as bad circumstances as ever any poor Christians were ever in; for the cries of the widowers, widows, fatherless and motherless children are enough to pierce the hardest of hearts. Likewise it is a very sorrowful spectacle to see those that escaped with their lives with not a mouthful to eat, or bed to lie on, or clothes to cover their nakedness or keep them warm, but all they had consumed to ashes. These deplorable circumstances cry aloud to your Honour’s most wise consideration how steps may speedily be taken to deliver us out of the hand of our persecutors the cruel and murderous savages, and to bring the struggle to an end.’”

The reader paused, and a low, deep murmur passed through the crowd, its note of rage and menace being clearly heard. The speaker took up another paper and recommenced.

“This comes from John Harris on the east bank of the Susquehanna:

“’The Indians are cutting us off every day, and I had a certain account of about fifteen hundred Indians, besides French, being on their march against us and Virginia, and now close on our borders, their scouts scalping our families on our frontier daily.’”

Another pause, another murmur like a roar, and a voice from the crowd was raised to ask:

“And what says the Assembly to that?”

“They say that if the Indians are rising against us, who have been friendly so long, then we must surely have done something to wrong them; and they are about to search for the cause of such a possible wrong, and redress it, rather than impose upon the colony the calamities of a cruel Indian war!”

A yell and a groan went up from the crowd. For a moment it seemed almost as though some attack would be made upon the Assembly House. The habits of law and obedience were, however, strong in the citizens of Philadelphia, and in the end they dispersed quietly to their own homes; but a fire had been kindled in their hearts which would not easily be quenched.

Days were wasted by the Quakers in an unsuccessful attempt to prove that there had been some fraud on the part of the Governor in a recent land purchase from the Indians. And they again laid before the Governor one of their proposals, still containing the clause which he was unable to entertain, and which inevitably brought matters to a deadlock.

The Quakers drew up a declaration affirming that they had now taken every step in their power, “consistent with the just rights of the freemen of Pennsylvania, for the relief of the poor distressed inhabitants,” and further declared that “we have reason to believe that they themselves would not wish us to go further. Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary relief and safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

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The Governor, in a dignified reply, once more urged upon them the absolute necessity of waiving for the present the vexed question of the proprietary estates, and passing a bill for the relief of the present sufferers; but the Quakers remained deaf and mute, and would not budge one inch from their position.

All the city was roused. In houses like that of Benjamin Ashley, where people were coming and going the whole day long, and where travellers from these border lands were to be found who could give information at first hand, the discussion went on every day and all day long. Ashley himself was keenly excited. He had quite broken away from a number of his old friends who supported the Assembly in its blind obstinacy. Nobody could sit by unmoved whilst Charles and Humphrey Angell told their tale of horror and woe; and, moreover, both Julian Dautray and Fritz Neville had much to tell of the aggressive policy of France, and of her resolute determination to stifle and strangle the growing colonies of England, by giving them no room to expand, whilst she herself claimed boundless untrodden regions which she could never hope to populate or hold.

Fresh excitements came daily to the city. Early one morning, as the tardy daylight broke, a rumble of wheels in the street below told of the arrival of travellers. The wheels stopped before Ashley's door, and he hastily finished his toilet and went down.

In a few moments all the house was in a stir and commotion. A terrible whisper was running from mouth to mouth. That cart standing grimly silent in the street below carried, it was said, a terrible load. Beneath its heavy cover lay the bodies of about twenty victims of Indian ferocity; and the guardians of the load were stern-faced men, bearing recent scars upon their own persons, who ate and drank in stony silence, and only waited till the Assembly had met before completing their grim mission.

The thing had got wind in the town by now, and the square space was thronged. The members of the Assembly looked a little uneasy as they passed through the crowd, but not a sound was made till all had gathered in the upper room.

Then from out the yard of the inn was dragged the cart. No horses were fastened to it. The young men of the city dragged it out and pushed it along. The silent, grim-faced guardians walked in front. As it reached the square the crowd sent up a groaning cry, and opened right and left for the dreadful load to be set in position before the windows of the great room where the Assembly had met.

Then the cover was thrown back, and yells and cries arose from all. Shouts were raised for the Assembly to come and look at their work.

There was no resisting the mandate of the crowd. White and trembling, the members of the Assembly were had out upon the steps, and forced to look at the bodies of their victims. The crowd hooted, groaned, yelled with maddened fury. The advocates of peace shrank into themselves, appalled at the evidences of barbarities they had sought

to believe exaggerated. It was useless now to attempt to deny the truth of what had been reported.

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Back they slunk into the Assembly House, white and trembling, and for the moment cowed. The cart was moved on, and stopped in front of house after house where notable Quakers dwelt who were not members of the Assembly. They were called to come to their windows and look, and were greeted with hisses and curses.

The very next day a paper, under preparation by a number of the leading citizens at the suggestion of the Governor, was presented to the Assembly under the title of a "Representation." It contained a stern appeal for the organization of measures of defence, and ended by the dignified and significant words:

"You will forgive us, gentlemen, if we assume characters somewhat higher than that of humble suitors praying for the defence of our lives and properties as a matter of grace or favour on your side. You will permit us to make a positive and immediate demand of it."

The Quakers were frightened, incensed, and perplexed. Their preachers went about the streets urging upon the people the doctrine of non-resistance, and picturing the horrors of warfare. The Assembly debated and debated, but invariably came to the conclusion that they must withstand the Governor to the last upon the question of taxation.

All the city was in a tumult and ferment; but when the news came that a settlement only sixty miles away, Tulpehocken by name, had been destroyed and its inhabitants massacred, even the advocates of peace grew white with fear, and the House began to draw up a militia law—the most futile and foolish perhaps that had ever been suggested even by lovers of peace—in the vain hope of appeasing the people.

But the people would not be appeased by a mere mockery. They clamoured for the raising of money for a systematic defence of their colony, and the ground was cut from beneath the feet of the Assembly by a letter received from England by the Governor—-not indeed in response to his recent urgent appeals, but still written with some knowledge of the unsettled state of the country. In this letter the proprietaries promised a donation of five thousand pounds as a free gift for the defence of the provinces threatened in so formidable a manner, provided it was regarded as a gift and not as any part of a tax upon their estates, which were to remain free according to the old feudal tenure.

The Assembly upon hearing this could hold out no longer. They were forced by the clamour of public opinion to strike out the debated and debatable clause from the long-contested bill, and immediately it was passed into law by the Governor.

"Ay, they have come to their senses at last—when it is well nigh too late!" spoke John Stark, with a touch of bitterness in his tone. "They will furnish money now; but what can be done with the winter just upon us? For six months we must lie idle, whilst the snow

and ice wrap us round. Why was not this thing done before our settlements were destroyed, and when we could have pushed forth an army into the field to drive back the encroaching foe, so that they would never have dared to show their faces upon our border again?”

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Charles looked up with burning eyes.

“What say you? Six months to wait? That will not do for me! My blood is boiling in my veins; I must needs cool it! If these laggard rulers, with their clumsy methods, cannot put an army in the field before the spring, surely there are men enough amongst us to go forth—a hardy band of woodsmen and huntsmen—and hunt and harry, and slay and destroy, even as they have done!”

“That is what the Rangers do!” cried Stark, with kindling eyes; “I have heard of them before this. The Rangers of New England have done good work before now. Good thought, good thought! Why not form ourselves into a band of Rangers? Are we not strong and full of courage, seasoned to hardship, expert in our way with gun or axe? Why should we lie idle here all the long winter through? Why not let us forth to the forest—find out where help is needed most, and make here a dash and there a raid, striking terror into the hearts of the foe, and bringing help and comfort to those desolate inhabitants of the wilderness who go in terror of their lives? Why not be a party of bold Rangers, scouring the forests, and doing whatever work comes to hand? Men have banded themselves together for this work before now; why may not we do the like?”

“Why not, indeed?” cried Fritz, leaping to his feet. “I pine in the restraint of this town; I long for the forest and the plain once more. My blood, too, is hot within me at the thought of what has been done and will be done again. Let us band ourselves together as brothers in arms. There must be work and to spare for those who desire it.”

Ashley thoughtfully stroked his chin, looking round the circle before him. He was a shrewd and thoughtful man, and there was nothing of cowardice in his nature, although he was cautious and careful.

“It is not a bad thought, Nephew John,” he said; “and yet I had been thinking of something different for some of you intrepid and adventurous youths to do. I had thought of sending news of the state of parties here to our friends and kinsmen in England. When all is said and done, it is to England that we must look for help. She must send us generals to command us, and she must help us with her money. There are many families across the water who would open their purses on our behalf right generously were our sad case made known to them. Letters are sent continually, but it is the spoken tale that moves the heart. I had thought to send across myself to such of our friends and families as still regard us as belonging to them. If they made a response such as I look for, we should soon have means at our disposal to augment what the tardy Assembly may do by an auxiliary force, equipped and furnished with all that can be needed. But you cannot be in two places at once.

“What think you, my young friends? Will you serve your distressed brethren better as Rangers of the forest, or as emissaries to England?”

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“Why not divide our forces?” asked John Stark; “there are enough of us for that. I have often heard Humphrey speak of a wish to cross the sea, and to visit the land from which we have all come. Why not let him choose a comrade, and go thither with letters and messages, and tell his tale in the ears of friends? And whilst they are thus absent, why should not the rest of us make up a party of bold spirits, and go forth into the wilderness, and there carry on such work of defence and aggression as we find for us to do?”

“Ay. I have no love for the unknown ocean,” said Charles; “I have other work to do than to visit new lands. I have a vow upon me, and I cannot rest till it be accomplished.”

Humphrey and Julian looked at each other. Already they had spoken of a visit to England. Both desired to see the lands of the Eastern Hemisphere from whence their fathers had come. Hitherto they had not seen how this could be accomplished; but Ashley’s words opened out an unexpected way. If the citizens of Philadelphia wanted to send messengers to their friends across the water, they would gladly volunteer for the service.

“If Julian will go with me, I will gladly go,” said Humphrey.

“I will go, with all my heart,” answered Julian at once; “and we will seek and strive to do the pleasure of those who send us.”

Ashley’s face beamed upon the pair. He knew by this time that no better messenger than Julian Dautray could be found. He had a gift of eloquence and a singularly attractive personality. His nature was gentle and refined—curiously so considering his upbringing—and he had a largeness of heart and a gift of sympathy which was seldom to be met with amongst the more rugged sons of the north.

He had made himself something of a power already in the circle into which he had been thrown; and when it was known amongst Ashley’s friends and acquaintance that his wife’s brother, together with Julian Dautray, would go to England with their representations to friends and to those in authority, a liberal response was made as to their outfit and introductions, and the young men were surprised to find themselves suddenly raised to a place of such importance and distinction.

It was an exciting time for Susanna and for all in the house. John Stark came to and fro, bringing news that he had found fresh volunteers to join the band of Rangers, who were already making preparations for departure upon their perilous life of adventure.

Some of the older citizens looked doubtful, and spoke of the rigours of the winter; but John laughed, and Charles smiled his strange, mirthless smile, and all declared themselves fearless and ready to face whatever might be in store. Come what might,

they would go to the help of the settlers, be the Assembly ever so dilatory in sending help.

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“But you will not get killed?” Susanna would plead, looking from one face to the other. She was fond of John, who had been like a brother to her all her life; she had a great admiration for handsome Fritz, who often spent whole evenings telling her wonderful stories of the far south whilst she plied her needle over the rough garments the Rangers were to take with them. It seemed to her a splendid thing these men were about to do, but she shrank from the thought that harm might come to them. She sometimes almost wished they had not thought of it, and that they had been content to remain in the city, drilling with the town militia, and thinking of the coming spring campaign.

“We must take our chance,” answered Fritz, as he bent over her with a smile on one of those occasions. “You would not have us value our lives above the safety of our distressed brethren or the honour of our nation? The things which have happened here of late have tarnished England’s fair name and fame. You would not have us hold back, if we can help to bring back the lustre of that name? I know you better than that.”

“I would have you do heroic deeds,” answered Susanna, with quickly-kindled enthusiasm, “only I would not have you lose your lives in doing it.”

“We must take our chance of that,” answered Fritz, with a smile, “as other soldiers take theirs. But we shall be a strong and wary company; and I have passed already unscathed through many perils. You will not forget us when we are gone, Susanna? I shall think of you sitting beside this comfortable hearth, when we are lying out beneath the frosty stars, with the world lying white beneath us, wrapped in its winding sheet!”

“Ah, you will suffer such hardships! they all say that.”

There was a look of distress in the girl’s eyes; but Fritz laughed aloud.

“Hardship! what is hardship? I know not the name. We can track game in the forest, and fish the rivers for it. We can make ourselves fires of sparkling, crackling pine logs; we can slip along over ice and snow upon our snowshoes and skates, as I have heard them described, albeit I myself shall have to learn the trick of them—for we had none such methods in my country, where the cold could never get a grip of us. Fear not for us, Susanna; we shall fare well, and we shall do the work of men, I trow. I am weary already of the life of the city; I would go forth once more to my forest home.”

There was a sparkle almost like that of tears in the girl’s eyes, and a little unconscious note as of reproach in her voice.

“That is always the way with men; they would ever be doing and daring. Would that I too were a man! there is naught in the world for a maid to do.”

“Say not so,” cried Fritz, taking the little hand and holding it tenderly between his own. “Life would be but a sorry thing for us men were it not for the gentle maidens left at

home to think of us and pray for us and welcome us back again. Say, Susanna, what sort of a welcome will you have for me, when I come to claim it after my duty is done?”

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She raised her eyes to his, and the colour flooded her face.

“I shall welcome you back with great gladness of heart, Fritz, and I shall pray for you every day whilst you are away.”

“And not forget me, even if other fine fellows of officers, such as we begin to see in our streets now, come speaking fine words to you, and seeking to win smiles from your bright eyes? You will keep a place in your heart still for the rough Ranger Fritz?”

Susanna’s eyes lighted with something of mischievous amusement, and then as she proceeded grew more grave and soft.

“My good mother will take care that I have small converse with the gay young officers, Fritz. But in truth, even were it not so, I should never care for them, or think of them as I do of you. You are facing perils they would not. You are brave with the bravery of a true hero. It is with the Rangers of the forest that my heart will go. Be sure you break it not, Fritz, by too rashly exposing yourself to peril.”

“Sweetheart!” was his softly-spoken answer; and Susanna went to her bed that night with a heart that beat high with a strange sweet happiness, although the cloud of coming parting lay heavy upon her soul.

A few days later, Humphrey and Julian, fully equipped with instructions, introductions, money and other necessaries, left the city, ready for their homeward voyage; and in another week the small but hardy band of Rangers, with their plain and meagre outfit, but with stout hearts and brave resolves, said adieu to those they left behind, and started westward for that debatable ground upon which a bloody warfare had to be fought to the bitter end.

Book 2: Roger’s Rangers.

Chapter 1: A Day Of Vengeance.

To the west! to the west! to the west!

Such was the watchword of the band of sturdy Rangers who set forth from Pennsylvania to the defence of the hapless settlers.

They were but a handful of bold spirits. It was little they could hope to accomplish in attempting to stem the tide of war; but their presence brought comfort to many an aching heart, and nerved many a lonely settler to intrench and defend his house and family, instead of giving way to utter despair.

There was work for the little band to do amongst these scattered holdings. John Stark urged upon such settlers as had the courage to remain to build themselves block houses, to establish some sort of communication with one another, to collect arms and ammunition, and be ready to retire behind their defences and repel an attack. For the moment the Indians seemed glutted with spoil and with blood, and were more quiet, although this tranquillity was not to be reckoned upon for a day. Still, whilst it lasted it gave a breathing space to many harassed and desperate settlers; and Fritz could give them many valuable hints as to the best method of intrenching themselves in block houses. He had seen so many of these upon his long journey, and understood their construction well.

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Everywhere they found the people in a state of either deep despondency or intense exasperation. It seemed to them that they had been basely deserted and betrayed by their countrymen, who should have been prompt to send to their defence; and although the arrival of the Rangers, and the news they brought of future help, did something to cheer and encourage them, it was easy to see that they were deeply hurt at the manner in which their appeals had been met, and were ready to curse the Quakers and the Assembly who had calmly let them be slaughtered like brute beasts, whilst they wrangled in peaceful security over some disputed point with the Governor.

“Are you Rogers’ men?” was a question which the Rangers met again and again as they pursued their way.

“No,” they would answer; “we know of no Rogers. Who is he, and why is his name in all men’s mouths?”

This question was not always easy to get answered. Some said one thing and some another; but as they pursued their western way, they reached a settlement where more precise information was to be had.

“Have you not heard of Robert Rogers, the New Hampshire Ranger? Well, you will hear his name many times before this war is closed. He has gathered about him a band of bold and daring spirits. He has lived in the forest from boyhood. He has been used to dealings with both English and French settlers. He speaks the language of both. But he is stanch to the heart’s core. He is vowed to the service of his country. He moves through the forests, over the lakes, across the rivers. None can say where he will next appear. He seems everywhere—he spies upon the foe. He appears beneath the walls of their forts, snatches a sleepy sentry away from his post, and carries him to the English camp, where information is thus gleaned of the doings of the enemy. He and his band are here, there, and everywhere. We had hoped to have seen them here by this. Colonel Armstrong sent a message praying him to come and help him to attack a pestilent nest of savages which is the curse of his life. We had hoped you were the forerunners of his band when you appeared. But in these troublous times who can tell whether the messenger ever reached his destination?”

“But if we are not Rogers’ men, we are Rangers of the forest,” cried Stark, who was leader of the party. “We can fight; we are trained to the exercise of arms. We will push on to this Colonel Armstrong, and what aid so small a band can give him that we will give.”

“He will welcome any help from bold men willing to fight,” was the answer they got. “Pray Heaven you be successful; for we all go in terror of our lives from the cruelty of Captain Jacobs. If he were slain, we might have rest awhile.”

“Captain Jacobs?”

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“So they call him. He is a notable Indian chieftain. Most likely the French baptized him by that name. They like to be called by some name and title which sounds like that of a white man. He lives at the Indian town of Kittanning, on the banks of the Allegheny, and he is upheld by the French from Fort Duquesne and Venango. They supply him with the munitions of war, and he makes of our lives a terror. Colonel Armstrong has been sent by the Governor to try to fall upon him unawares, and oust him from his vantage ground. If the town were but destroyed and he slain, we might know a little ease of mind.”

The eyes of the Rangers lighted with anticipation. This was the first they had heard of real warfare. If they could lend a hand to such an expedition as this, they would feel rewarded for all their pains and toil.

“Captain Jacobs, Captain Jacobs!” repeated Charles, with a gleam in his sombre eyes; “tell me what manner of man this Captain Jacobs is.”

“I have seen him once—a giant in height, painted in vermilion, and carrying always in his hand a mighty spear, which they say none but he can wield. His eyes roll terribly, and upon his brow is a strange scar shaped like a crescent—”

“Ay, ay, ay; and in his hair is one white tuft, which he has braided with scarlet thread,” interposed Charles, panting and twitching in his excitement.

“That is the man—the most bloodthirsty fire eater of all the Indian chiefs. Could the country but be rid of him, we might sleep in our beds in peace once more, instead of lying shivering and shaking at every breath which passes over the forest at night.”

“Let us be gone!” cried Charles, shaking his knife in a meaning and menacing fashion; “I thirst to be there when that man’s record is closed. Let me see his end; let me plunge my knife into his black heart! There is another yet whom my vengeance must overtake; but let me fall upon this one first.”

“Was he one of the attacking party that desolated your homestead?” asked Stark, as they moved along in the given direction, after a brief pause for rest and refreshment.

“Ay, he was,” answered Charles grimly. “I could not forget that gigantic form, that mighty spear, that scar and the white tuft! He stood by, and laughed at my frantic struggles, at the screams of the children, at the agony of my gentle wife. A fiend from the pit could not have been more cruel. But the hour is at hand when it shall be done to him as he has done. His hand lighted the wood pile they had set against the door of the house. Let him suffer a like fate at our hands in the day of vengeance!”

Spurred on by the hope of striking some well-planted blow at the heart of the enemy, the hardy band of Rangers pushed their way through the forest tracks, scarcely pausing for

rest or sleep, till the lights of a little camp and settlement twinkled before them in the dusk, and they were hailed by the voice of a watchful sentinel.

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“Friends,” cried Stark, in clear tones—“Rangers of the forest—come to the aid of Colonel Armstrong, hoping to be in time for the attack on Kittanning.”

“Now welcome, welcome!” cried the man, running joyfully forward; and the next minute the little band was borne into the camp by a joyful company of raw soldiers, who seemed to feel a great sense of support even from the arrival of a mere handful.

“Rogers’ Rangers are come! the Rangers are come!” was the word eagerly passed from mouth to mouth; and before the newcomers could make any explanation, they found themselves pushed into a fair-sized building, some thing in the form of a temporary blockhouse, and confronted with the Colonel himself, who received them with great goodwill.

“You are from Captain Rogers?” he said; “is one of you that notable man himself?”

Stark stepped forward to act as spokesman, and was shaken warmly by the hand.

“Rangers we are, but not of Rogers’ company,” he said. “Indeed, when we started forth from Philadelphia to the succour of the distressed districts, we had not even heard the name of Rogers, though it is now familiar enough.

“We heard, however, that you were in need of the help of Rangers, and we have come with all haste to your camp. We wish for nothing better than to stand in the forefront of the battle against the treacherous and hostile Indians. Although not of Rogers’ training, you will not find us faint of heart or feeble of limb. There are a dozen of us, as you see, and we will fight with the best that we have.”

“And right welcome at such a moment,” was the cordial answer, “for the men I have with me are little trained to warfare; and though they will follow when bravely led, they are somewhat like sheep, and are easily thrown into confusion or turned aside from the way. Tonight you shall rest and be well fed after your march, and on the morrow we will make a rapid secret march, and seek to fall upon the foe unawares.”

The Rangers were as hungry as hunters, and glad enough to sit down once more to a well-spread table. The rations were not luxurious as to quality, but there was sufficient quantity, which to hungry men is the great matter. The Colonel sat with them at table, heard all they had to tell of the state of the country from Philadelphia westward, and had many grim tales to tell himself of outrages and losses in this district.

“We lost Fort Granville at harvest time, when the men were forced to garner their crops, and we had to send out soldiers to protect them. The French and Indians set upon the Fort, and though it was gallantly defended by the lieutenant in charge, it fell into their hands. Since then their aggressions have been unbearable. Captain Jacobs has been making the lives of the settlers a terror to them. We have sent for help from the colony,

with what success you know. We have sent to the Rangers under Rogers, and had hoped to be reinforced by them.

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“But if he cannot help us, it is much to have stout-hearted friends come unexpectedly to our aid. Have you seen fighting, friends? or are you like the bulk of our men—inured to toil and hardship, full of zeal and courage, ready to wield any and every weapon in defence of property, or against the treacherous Indian?”

“Something like that,” answered Stark; “but we can all claim to be good marksmen, and to have good weapons with us. Our rifles carry far, and we seldom miss the quarry. I will answer for us that we stand firm, and that we come not behind your soldiers in steadiness, nor in the use of arms at close quarters.”

“That I can well believe,” answered the Colonel, with a smile; “I have but a score of men who have been trained in the school of arms. The rest were but raw recruits a few months ago, and many of them have little love of fighting, though they seek to do their duty.

“Well, well, we must not sit up all night talking. We have a hard day’s march before us tomorrow, and we must needs make all the speed we can. Indian scouts might discover our camp at any moment, and our only chance is to fall upon the Indian town unawares. They do not look for attack in the winter months—that is our best protection from spies. And so far I think we have escaped notice. But it may not last, and we must be wary. We will sleep till dawn, but with the first of the daylight we must be moving. The way is long, but we have some good guides who know the best tracks. We ought to reach the town soon after nightfall; and when all are sleeping in fancied security, we will fall upon them.”

The Rangers were glad enough of the few hours of sleep which they were able to obtain, and it was luxury to them to sleep beneath a roof, and to be served the next morning with breakfast which they had not had to kill and cook themselves.

The men were in good spirits, too. The arrival of the little body of Rangers had encouraged them; and as the company marched through the forest, generally in single file, the newcomers scattered themselves amongst the larger body, and talked to them of what was going forward in the eastern districts, and how, after long delay, reinforcements were being prepared to come to the aid of the hapless settlers.

That was cheering news for all, and it put new heart into the band. They marched along cheerily, although cautiously, for they knew not what black scouts might be lurking in the thickets; and if the Indians once got wind of their coming, there would be little hope of successful attack.

On and on they marched all through the keen winter air, which gave them fine appetites for their meals when they paused to rest and refresh themselves, but made walking easier than when the sun beat down pitilessly upon them in the summer. There had been no heavy snow as yet, and the track was not hard to find. But the way was longer

than had been anticipated, and night had long closed in before they caught a glimpse of any settlement, although they knew they must be drawing near.

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The guides became perplexed in the darkness of the forest. The moon was shining, but the light was dim and deceptive within the great glades. Still they pushed on resolutely, and the Rangers gradually drew to the front, goaded on by their own eagerness, and less disposed to feel fatigue than the soldiers, who were in reality less hardy than they.

All in a moment a strange sound smote upon their ears. It was the roll of an Indian drum. They paused suddenly, and looked each other in the face. The rolling sound continued, and then rose a sound of whooping and yelling such as some of their number had never heard before.

“It is the war dance,” whispered one of the guides; and a thrill ran through the whole company. Had they been discovered, and were the Indians coming out in a body against them?

For a brief while they were halted just below the top of the ridge, whilst a few of the guides and Rangers crept cautiously forward to inspect the hollow in which they knew the village lay.

Colonel Armstrong was one of this party, and he, with Stark and Fritz, cautiously crept up over the ridge and looked down upon the Indian town below.

The moon lighted up the whole scene. There was no appearance of tumult or excitement. The sound of the drum and the whooping of the warriors were not accompanied by any demonstration of activity by those within the community. Probably some war party or hunting party had returned with spoil, and they were celebrating the event by a banquet and a dance.

The soldiers were bidden to move onward, but very cautiously. It was necessary that they should make the descent of the rugged path before the moon set, and it was abundantly evident that the Indians had at present no idea of the presence of the enemy.

Slowly and cautiously the soldiers crept down the steep path, doing everything possible to avoid a noise; but suddenly the sound of a peculiar whistle sounded from somewhere below, and there were a movement and a thrill of dismay through all the ranks; for surely it was a signal of discovery!

Only Fritz was undismayed, and gave vent to a silent laugh.

“That is not an alarm,” he whispered to the Colonel; “it is but a young chief signalling to some squaw. But the place is not asleep yet; if we go much nearer we shall be seen. Those bushes would give us cover till all is quiet. We could crouch there and rest, and when the time has come spring out upon the village unawares.”

The Colonel approved the plan, and the weary men were glad enough of the rest before the battle should begin. All were full of hope and ardour; but in spite of that, most of them fell asleep crouched in the cover. The surrounding hills kept off the wind, and it was warm beneath the sheltering scrub.

But Charles sat up with his hands clasped round his knees, his eyes intently fixed upon the Indian village. Beside him were a few of his chosen comrades amongst the Rangers—men older than the hardy youths who had organized the band—settlers like himself, who had suffered losses like his own, and in whose hearts there burned a steady fire of vengeful hate that could only be quenched in blood.

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To them crept one of the guides who knew the district and the town of Kittanning. With him were his son and another hardy lad. He looked at Charles and made a sign. The next moment some six or eight men were silently creeping through the sleeping soldiers, unnoticed even by the sharp eyes of the Colonel, who was stationed at some little distance.

Like human snakes these men wriggled themselves down the tortuous path, keeping always under cover of the bushes; and even when the open ground below was reached, they slipped so silently along beneath the cover of the hedges that not an eye saw them, not even the sharp ears of the Indians heard their insidious approach.

“Which is the house of Captain Jacobs?” asked Charles in a whisper of the guide.

“It lies yonder,” he answered, “in the centre of the village. It is the strongest building in the place, and has loopholes from which a hot fire can be poured out upon an approaching foe. The Indians here have great stores of gunpowder and arms—given them by the French to keep up the border war. Unless we can take them by surprise, we be all dead men; for they are as ten to one, and are armed to the teeth.”

Charles’s face in the moonlight was set and stern.

“Here is a stack of wood,” he said. “Let every man take his fagot; but be silent as death.”

Plainly these men knew what they had come to do. In perfect silence, yet with an exercise of considerable strength, they loaded themselves with the dry brushwood, and split logs which the Indians had cut and piled up ready for use either to burn or for the building of their huts. Then, thus loaded, they crept like ghosts or ghouls through the sleeping street of the Indian town, and piled their burdens against the walls of the centre hut, which belonged to the chief.

Twice and thrice was this thing repeated; but Charles remained posted beside the door of the house, working in a strange and mysterious fashion at the entrance. Upon his face was a strange, set smile. Now and again he shook his clinched hand towards the heavens, as though invoking the aid or the wrath of the Deity.

The bold little band were in imminent peril. One accidental slip or fall, an unguarded word, an involuntary cough, and the lives of the whole party might pay the forfeit. They were in the heart of an Indian village, enemies and spies. But the good fortune which so often attends upon some rash enterprise was with them tonight. They completed their task, and drew away from the silent place as shadow-like as they had come.

But they did not return to their comrades; they posted themselves at a short distance from the place. They looked well to the priming of their rifles, and to their other arms, and sat in silence to await the commencement of the battle.

The moon set in golden radiance behind the wooded hills. In the eastern sky the first rose red showed that dawn would shortly break. Looking towards the hill, the little band saw that movement had already begun there. They rose to their feet, and looked from the moving shapes amid the brushwood towards the still sleeping, silent town.

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“The Lord of hosts is with us,” spoke Charles, in a solemn voice; “He will deliver the enemy into our hands. Let us quit ourselves like men and be strong. Let us do unto them even as they have done. Let not the wicked escape us. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if I reward not unto yon cruel chieftain his wickedness and his cruelties. If he leave this place alive, let my life pay the forfeit!”

A murmur ran through the little group about him. Each man grasped his weapon and stood still as a statue. This little company had posted themselves upon a knoll which commanded the house of the bloodthirsty chief. It was their business to see that he at least did not escape from the day of vengeance.

The moments seemed hours to those men waiting and watching; but they did not wait in vain.

A blaze of fire, a simultaneous crack of firearms, and a wild shout that was like one of already earned victory, and the assailants came charging down the hillside, and across the open fields, firing volley after volley upon the sleeping town, from which astonished and bewildered savages came pouring out in a dense mass, only to fall writhing beneath the hail of bullets from the foe who had surprised them thus unawares.

But there were in that community men trained in the arts of war, who were not to be scared into non-resistance by a sudden onslaught, however unexpected. These men occupied log houses around that of their chieftain, and instead of rushing forth, they remained behind their walls, and fired steadily back at the enemy with a rapidity and steadiness which evoked the admiration of the Colonel himself.

Fiercely rained the bullets from rank to rank. Indians yelled and whooped; the squaws rushed screaming hither and thither; the fight waxed hotter and yet more hot. But all unknown to the Indians, and unseen by them in the confusion and terror, a file of stern, determined men was stealing towards the very centre of their town, creeping along the ground so as to avoid notice, and be safe from the hail of shot, but ever drawing nearer and nearer to that centre, where the defence was so courageously maintained.

Charles was the first to reach the log house against which the brushwood had been piled. In the dim light of dawn his face could be seen wearing a look of concentrated purpose. He had lately passed an open hut from whence the inhabitants had fled, and he carried in his hand a smouldering firebrand. Now crouching against the place from which the hottest fire belched forth, he blew upon this brand till a tongue of flame darted forth, and in a moment more the brushwood around the house had begun to crackle with a sound like that made by a hissing snake before it makes the fatal spring.

Five minutes later and the ring of flame round the doomed house was complete. The firing suddenly ceased, and there was a sound of blows and cries, turning to howls of fury as the inmates found that the door would not yield—that they were trapped.

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The Rangers, rushing up, seized burning brands and commenced setting fire to house after house, whilst their comrades stood at a short distance shooting down the Indians as they burst forth. A scene of the wildest terror and confusion was now illumined by the glare of the fire, and at short intervals came the sound of short, sharp explosions, as the flames reached the charged guns of the Indians or the kegs of gunpowder lavishly stored in their houses.

But Charles stood like a statue in the midst of the turmoil. His face was white and terrible; his gun was in his hands. He did not attempt to fire it, although Indians were scuttling past him like hunted hares; he stood stern and passive, biding his time.

The ring of flame round the centre house rose higher and higher. Cries and screams were heard issuing from within. Some intrepid warrior was chanting his death song, dauntless to the last. A frightened squaw was shrieking aloud; but not even the sound of a woman's voice moved Charles from his fell purpose.

Suddenly his, face changed; the light flashed into his eyes. He raised his head, and he laid his gun to his shoulder.

Out upon the roof of the cabin, ringed as it was with fire, there sprang a man of gigantic aspect, daubed and tattooed in vermilion, his hair braided in scarlet, and one white tuft conspicuous in the black. He stood upon the roof, glaring wildly round him as if meditating a spring. Doubtless the smoke and fire shielded him in some sort from observation. Had not there been one relentless foe vowed to his destruction, he might in all probability have leaped the ring of flame and escaped with his life.

But Charles had covered him with his gun. The chieftain saw the gleaming barrel, and paused irresolute. Charles's voice rose clear above the surrounding din.

"Murderer, tyrant, tormentor of helpless women and babes, the white man's God doth war against thee. The hour of thy death has come. As thou hast done unto others, so shall it be done unto thee."

Then the sharp report of the rifle sounded, and the chief bounded into the air and fell back helpless. He was not dead—his yells of rage and fear told that—but he was helpless. His thigh was shattered. He lay upon the roof of the blazing cabin unable to move hand or foot, and Charles stood by like a grim sentinel till the frail building collapsed into a burning mass; then with a fierce gesture he stirred the ashes with the butt of his rifle, saying beneath his breath:

"That is one of them!"

Victory for the white man was complete, notwithstanding that bands of Indians from the other side of the river came rushing to the succour of their allies. They came too late,

and were scattered and dispersed by the resolute fire of the English. The whole village was destroyed. Colonel Armstrong took as many arms and as much ammunition as his men could carry, and devoted the rest to destruction.

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More satisfactory still, they released from captivity eleven prisoners, white men with women and children, who had been carried off at different times when others had been massacred. From these persons they learned that the Indians of Kittanning had often boasted that they had in the place a stock of ammunition sufficient to keep up a ten years' war with the English along the borders. To have taken and destroyed all these stores was no small matter, and the Colonel and his men rejoiced not a little over the blow thus struck at the foe almost in his own land.

But there was no chance of following up the victory. Armstrong was not strong enough to carry the war into the enemy's country; moreover, the winter was already upon them, although up till the present the season had been especially mild and open. He must march his men back to quarters, and provide for the safety of his wounded, and for the restoration of the rescued prisoners to their friends.

He would gladly have kept Stark and his little valiant band with him, but the Rangers had different aims in view.

"We must be up and doing; we must find fighting somewhere. On Lake George we shall surely find work for men to do. Rangers of wood and forest care nothing for winter ice and snow. We will go northward and eastward, asking news of Rogers and his Rangers. It may be that we shall fall in with them, and that we can make common cause with them against the common foe."

So said Stark, speaking for all his band, for all were of one heart and one mind.

Therefore, after a few days for rest and refreshment, the little army retreated whence it had come; whilst the bold band of Rangers started forth for the other scene of action, away towards the north, along the frozen lakes which formed one of the highways to Canada.

Chapter 2: Robert Rogers.

They met for the first time, face to face, amid a world of ice and snow, upon the frozen surface of Lake George.

Stark and his little band had been through strange experiences, and had met with many adventures as they pursued their course towards the spot where they heard that the French and English were lying encamped and intrenched, awaiting the arrival of spring before commencing the campaign afresh; and they now began to have a clearer notion of the situation between the two nations than they had hitherto had.

They had spent a week in the quaint Dutch town of Albany, and there they had heard many things with regard to the state of parties and the affairs between the two nations.

England and France were nominally at peace, or had been, even whilst these murderous onslaughts had been going on in the west. But it was evident to all that war must be shortly declared between the countries, if it had not already been proclaimed. The scent of battle seemed in the very air. Nothing was talked of but the great struggle for supremacy in the west, which must shortly be fought out to the bitter end.

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The aim of France was to connect Canada with Louisiana by a chain of forts, and keep the English penned up in their eastern provinces without room to expand. The northern links of this chain were Fort Ticonderoga, just where the waters of Lake George join those of Champlain; Fort Niagara, which commanded the lakes; and Fort Duquesne, at the head of the Ohio, the key to the great Mississippi.

It was a gigantic scheme, and one full of ambition; there was one immense drawback. The French emigrants of the western world numbered only about one hundred and eighty thousand souls, whilst the English colonies had their two millions of inhabitants. The French could only accomplish their ends if the Indians would become and remain their allies. The English, though equally anxious to keep on good terms with the dusky denizens of the woods, who could be such dangerous foes, had less need to use them in fight, as, if they chose to combine and act in concert, they could throw an army into the field which must overpower any the French could mass.

But the weakness of the provinces hitherto had been this lack of harmony. They would not act in concert. They were forever disputing, one province with another, and each at home with its governor. The home ministry sent out men unfit for the work of command. Military disasters followed one after the other. Washington and Braddock had both been overthrown in successive attempts upon Fort Duquesne; and now the English Fort of Oswego, their outpost at Lake Ontario, was lost through mismanagement and bad generalship.

Canada owned a centralized government. She could send out her men by the various routes to the points of vantage where the struggle lay. England had an enormous border to protect, and no one centre of operations to work from. She was hampered at every turn by internal jealousies, and by incompetent commanders. Braddock had been a good soldier, but he could not understand forest fighting, and had raged against the Virginian men, who were doing excellent work firing at the Indians from behind trees, and meeting their tactics by like ones. Braddock had driven them into rank by beating them with the flat of his sword, only to see them shot down like sheep. Blunders such as this had marked the whole course of the war; and misfortune after misfortune had attended the English arms upon the mainland, although in Acadia they had been more successful.

These things Stark and his little band heard from the Dutch of Albany; they also heard that the English were encamped at the southern end of Lake George, at Forts Edward and William Henry, their commander being John Winslow, whose name was becoming known and respected as that of a brave and humane soldier, who had carried through a difficult piece of business in Acadia with as much consideration and kindliness as possible.

Now he was in command of the English force watching the movements of the French at Ticonderoga; here also were Rogers and his Rangers to be found. They had marched

into Winslow's camp, it was said, some few months earlier, proffering their services; and there they had since remained, scouting up and down the lake upon skates or snowshoes, snatching away prisoners from the Indian allies, or from the very walls of the fort itself, and intercepting provisions sent down Lake Champlain for the use of the French.

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Details of these escapades on the part of the Rangers were not known in Albany; but rumours of Rogers' intrepidity reached them from time to time, and Stark and his band were fired anew by the desire to join themselves to this bold leader, and to assist him in his task of harassing the enemy, and bringing assistance of all sorts into the English camp.

Bidding adieu to the Dutch, who had received them kindly, and now sent them away with a sufficiency of provisions to last them several days, they skimmed away still to the northward on their snowshoes. They had taken directions as to what route to pursue in order to reach Fort Edward, and thence to pass on to Fort William Henry; but the heavy snowfall obliterated landmarks, and they presently came to the conclusion that they had missed the way, and had travelled too far north already.

"Then we must keep in a westerly direction," quoth Stark, as they sat in council together over their fire at night; "we cannot fail thus to strike the lake at last, and that, if frozen hard, can be our highway. At the southern end is the fort William Henry; at the northern outlet is the French fort with the name of Ticonderoga."

This deflection in direction being agreed to, the party lay down to sleep—Charles Angell offering to act as sentry, as he frequently did.

Since the tragedy which had wrecked his life, Charles had seldom been able to sleep quietly at night. He was haunted by horrible dreams, and the thought of sleep was repugnant to him. He would often drop asleep at odd hours over the campfire whilst his comrades were discussing and planning, and they would let him sleep in peace at such times; but at night he was alert and wide awake, and they were glad enough to give him his request, and let him keep watch whilst they rested and slumbered.

The silence of the snow-girt forest was profound; yet Charles was restless tonight, and kept pausing to listen with an odd intensity of expression. His faculties, both of sight and hearing, had become preternaturally acute of late. More than once this gift of his had saved the party from falling amongst a nest of hostile Indians; tonight it was to prove of service in another way.

In the dead of night the Rangers were awakened by a trumpet-like call.

"To arms, friends, to arms! The Indians are abroad; they are attacking our brothers! I hear the shouts of battle. We must to their rescue! Let us not delay! To arms, and follow me; I will lead you thither!"

In a second the camp was astir. The men lay down in their clothes, wrapping a buffalo robe about them for warmth. In a few seconds all were aroused, strapping their blankets upon their shoulders and seizing their weapons.

“What have you heard, Charles, and where?” asked Stark and Fritz in a breath as they ran up.

“Yonder, yonder!” cried Charles, pointing in a northwesterly direction; “it is a fight on the ice. It is not far away. The Indians are attacking white men—English men. I hear their cries and their shoutings. Hark—there is shooting, too! Come, follow me, and I will take you there. There is work for the Rangers tonight!”

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Yes, it was true. They could all hear the sound of shots. What had gone before had only reached the ears of Charles; but the report of firearms carried far. In three minutes the bold little company had started at a brisk run through the snow-covered forest, getting quickly into the long swing of their snowshoes, and skimming over the ground at an inconceivably rapid pace, considering the nature of the ground traversed.

All at once the forest opened before them. They came out upon its farthest fringe; and below them lay, white and bare, and sparkling in the moonlight, the frozen, snow-laden plateau of the lake.

It was a weirdly beautiful scene which lay spread like a panorama before them in the winter moonlight; but they had no time to think of that now. All eyes were fixed upon the stirring scene enacted in the middle of the lake, or at least well out upon its frozen surface, where a band of resolute men, sheltering themselves behind a few sledges, which made them a sort of rampart, were firing steadily, volley after volley, at a band of leaping, yelling Indians who had partially surrounded them, and who were slowly but steadily advancing, despite their heavy loss, returning the fire of the defendants, though by no means so steadily and regularly, and whooping and yelling with a fearful ferocity.

It was easy to see, even by the moonlight alone, that the men behind the sledges were white men. A sudden enthusiasm and excitement possessed our little band of Rangers as this sight burst upon them, and Stark gave the instant word:

“Steady, men, but lose not a moment. Form two lines, and rush them from behind. Reserve your fire till I give the word. Then let them have it hot, and close upon them from behind. When they find themselves between two fires, they will think themselves trapped. They will scatter like hunted hares. See, they have no notion of any foe save the one in front. Keep beneath the shadow of the forest till the last moment, and then rush them and fire!”

The men nodded, and unslung their guns. They made no noise gliding down the steep snow bank upon their long shoes, and then out upon the ice of the lake.

“Fire!” exclaimed Stark at the right moment; and as one man the Rangers halted, and each picked his man.

Crack-crack-crack!

Literally each bullet told. Twelve dusky savages bounded into the air, and fell dead upon the blood-stained snow.

Crack-crack-crack!

The affrighted Indians had faced round only to meet another volley from the intrepid little band behind.

That was enough. The prowess of the Rangers was well known from one end of the lake to the other. To be hemmed in between two companies was more than Indian bravery or Indian stoicism could stand. With yells of terror they dropped their arms and fled to the forest, followed by a fierce firing from both parties, which made great havoc in their ranks. The rout was complete and instantaneous. Had it not been for panic, they might have paused to note how few were those new foes in number, and how small even the united body was as compared with their own numbers; but they fled, as Stark had foretold, like hunted hares, and the white men were left upon the lake face to face, with dead and dying Indians around them.

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An enormously tall man leaped up from behind the rampart of sledges, and came forward with outstretched hand. He was a man of magnificent physique, with a mass of wild, tangled hair and beard, and black eyes which seemed to burn like live coals. His features were rugged and rather handsome, and his nose was of very large proportions.

Stark took a step forward and shook the outstretched hand. He knew this man, from descriptions received of him during their months of wandering.

“You are Captain Rogers?”

“Robert Rogers, of the Rangers, at your service,” replied the other, in a deep, sonorous voice, which seemed to match his size; “and this is my brother Richard,” as another fine-looking man approached and held out his hand to their deliverers. “And right glad are we to welcome such bold spirits amongst us, though who you are and whence you come we know not. You have saved us from peril of death tonight, and Rogers never forgets a service like that.”

“We have come from far to seek you,” answered Stark; “we ourselves are Rangers of the forest. We fear neither heat nor cold, peril, hardship, nor foe. We long to fight our country’s battle against the Indian savages and against the encroaching French. It has been told us again and again that Rogers is the captain for us, and to Rogers we have come.”

“And right welcome are all such bold spirits in Rogers’ camp!” was the quick reply. “That is the spirit of the true Ranger. Nor shall you be disappointed in your desire after peril and adventure. You can see by tonight’s experience the sort of adventure into which we are constantly running. We scouts of the lake have to watch ourselves against whole hordes of wily, savage Indian scouts and spies. Some of our number are killed and cut off with each encounter; and yet we live and thrive and prosper. And if you ask honest John Winslow who are those who help him most during this season of weary waiting, I trow he will tell you it is Rogers and his bold Rangers.”

By this time the whole band of Rangers had gathered round Stark’s little company, and the men were all talking together. In those wild lands ceremony is unknown; friendships are quickly made, if quickly sundered by the chances and changes of a life of adventure and change; and soon the band felt as if one common spirit inspired them.

There were three wounded men in Rogers’ company; they were put upon a sledge and well covered up. Then the party moved along to a position at some distance from that where they had met the attack.

“The Indians will come back to find and remove their dead,” explained Rogers. “It is better to be gone. We will encamp and bivouac a little farther away. Then we will hold a council as to our next move. They will not be in haste to molest us again.”

The plan was carried out. The hardy Rangers hollowed out a sheltered nook in the snow, threw up a wall of protection against the wind, lighted a fire, and sat round it discussing the events of the night, and exchanging amenities with their new comrades.

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The two Rogerses, together with Stark, Fritz, and the silent, watchful Charles, gathered in a knot a little apart, and Rogers laid before them, in a few brief speeches, the situation of affairs upon the lake.

Lake Champlain, the more northern and the larger of the twin lakes, was altogether guarded by the French. St. John stood at its head, and Crown Point guarded it lower down—being a great fortified promontory, where the lake narrowed to a very small passage, widening out again below, till it reached the other strong fort and colony of Ticonderoga, where Lake George formed a junction with it, though the lake itself still ran an independent course to the south, parallel with Lake George, being fed by the waters of Wood Creek, a narrow, river-like inlet, which was a second waterway into the larger lake.

The position of Ticonderoga was, therefore, very important, as it commanded both these waterways; and even if the English could succeed in avoiding the guns of that fort, there was still Crown Point, further to the north, to keep them from advancing.

In addition to these advantages, the French had won the local Indians to their side; and though they did much towards embarrassing their white allies, and were a perfect nuisance both to officers and men, they were too useful to risk offending or to be dispensed with, as they were always ready for a dash upon any English scouting parties, and formed a sort of balance to the tactics of the English Rangers.

“They are villainous foes!” said Rogers, with a dark scowl. “It is their great joy to take prisoners; and when the French have extracted from them all the information they can as to the strength and prospects of the English, the Indians will claim them again, to scalp and burn, and the French scarcely raise a protest. It is said that they speak with disgust of the barbarities of these savage allies, but they do little or nothing to check them. That is why my wrath often rises higher against the French than against the Indians themselves. They know no better; but for white man to deliver white man into their hands—that is what makes my blood boil!”

The fire leaped up in Charles’s eyes, and he had his tale to tell, at hearing of which the Rogerses set their teeth and muttered curses not loud but deep.

“Now will I tell you what we started forth to do,” said the leader of the band. “We have been busy all winter. Last month we skated down the lake when it was clear of snow, passed Ticonderoga all unseen, intercepted some sledges of provisions, and carried them and their drivers to our fort. Now we are bent upon a longer journey. We want to reach Crown Point, and make a plan of the works for our brave Commander Winslow. We were a part of the way on our route, when we fell in with Indians conveying provisions to the French on these sledges. We took them from them and dispersed the crew; but they must have scattered and got help, and they set

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upon us, as you have seen. Now that we have three wounded and two somewhat bruised and shaken, I am thinking it would be better to send them back, with a few sound men as escort—for the provisions will be welcome at the fort, which is not too well victualled—whilst the rest of us push on, and see if we can accomplish our errand. Now that we are thus reinforced, we shall be strong enough to do this."

The eyes of Stark and Fritz sparkled at the prospect.

"We will go with you," they cried. "We long for such work as this; it is what we have come for from our homes and friends."

And then Stark added modestly:

"And if I am but little trained to arms, I can draw. I have been used to that work in my old life, which was too tame for me. I understand how to make plans and elevations. If I could but get a good view of the fortifications, I will undertake to make a good drawing of them for your general."

Rogers slapped him heartily upon the back.

"A draughtsman is the very fellow we want," he cried; "and a draughtsman who can wield weapons as you can, John Stark, is the very man for us. You and your band will be right welcome. You can all use snowshoes, I see, and doubtless skates also?"

Stark nodded. By that time all were proficient in these arts, even Fritz, to whom they had been new at the commencement of the winter. Charles fingered the knife at his belt, and his cavern-like eyes glowed in their sockets.

"Let me fight the French-the French!" he muttered. "I have avenged myself upon the Indian foe. Now let me know the joy of meeting the white foe face to face!"

"Is that poor fellow mad?" asked Rogers of Fritz, when next morning, all preparations being speedily made, the party had divided, and the larger contingent was sweeping down the lake towards the distant junction, which was guarded by the guns of Ticonderoga.

"I think his brain is touched. He has been like that ever since I have known him; but his brother and friends say that once he was the most gentle and peaceful of men, and never desired to raise hand against his fellow. It is the horror of one awful memory that has made him what he is. I thought perhaps that when he wreaked his vengeance upon the Indian chieftain who had slain his wife and children, he would have been satisfied; but the fire in his heart seems unquenched and unquenchable. Sometimes I have a fancy that when his wrath is satisfied the spring of life will cease within him. He grows

more gaunt and thin each week; but he is borne along by the strong spirit within, and in battle his strength is as the strength of ten."

"As is ofttimes the way with men whose minds are unhinged," said Rogers. "Truly we have small reason to love our white brothers the French, since at their door lies the sin of these ravages upon the hapless border settlers. We will requite them even as they deserve! We will smite them hip and thigh! though we must not, and will not, become like the savage Indians. We will not suffer outrage; it shall be enough of shame and humiliation for them to see the flag of England flaunting proudly where their banners have been wont to fly."

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A few days of rather laborious travel—for the snow was soft—and Crown Point lay before them. They had left the lake some time before, skirting round Roger's Rock, and thus making a cut across country, and missing the perils of passing Ticonderoga.

"We will take that in returning," said Rogers; "but we will not risk being seen on our way down, else they might be upon the alert for our return. We will arrange a pleasant surprise for them."

The way was laborious now, for they had to climb hills which gave them a good view over the fortifications of Crown Point; but this elevation once safely attained, without any further molestation from Indians, they were able to make a complete survey of the fortifications; and Stark made some excellent plans and drawings, which gave a fine idea of the place.

So far all had been peaceful; but the Rangers were not wont to come and go and leave no trace. There were outlying farms around the fortifications, and comings and goings between the French soldiers and peasants.

"We will stop these supplies," said Rogers, with a sardonic smile; "the French shall learn to be as careful of their flour as we have to be!"

And carefully laying an ambush in the early grey of a winter's morning, he sprang suddenly out upon a train of wagons wending their way to the fortifications.

The drivers, scared and terrified, jumped from their places, and ran screaming into the defences, whence soldiers came rushing out, sword in hand, but only to find the wagons in flames, the horses driven off to the forest, and the barns and farmsteads behind burning.

It was a savage sort of warfare, but it was the work of the Rangers to repay ferocity in kind, and to leave behind them dread tokens of the visits they paid.

Whilst the terrified inhabitants and the angry soldiers were striving to extinguish the flames, and vituperating Rogers and his company, these bold Rangers themselves were fleeing down the lake as fast as snowshoes could take them, full of satisfaction at the havoc they had wrought, and intent upon leaving their mark at Ticonderoga before they passed on to Fort William Henry.

Guarded as it was by fortifications and surrounded by Indian spies, Rogers and his men approached it cautiously, yet without fear; for they knew every inch of the ground, and they were so expert in all woodcraft and strategic arts that they could lie hidden in brushwood within speaking distance of the foe, yet not betray their presence by so much as the crackle of a twig.

It was night when they neared the silent fort. A dying moon gave faint light. The advancing party glided like ghosts along the opposite bank. A sentry here and there tramped steadily. The Rangers could hear the exchange of salute and the rattle of a grounded musket. But no sign did they make of their presence. They kept close in the black shadow, and halted in a cavern-like spot well known to them from intimate acquaintance.

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Richard Rogers had been sent scouting by his brother, and came in with news.

“There will be marching on the morrow. Some soldiers will leave the fort for the nearest camp; I could not gather how many, but there will be some marching through the forest. If we post ourselves near to the road by which they will pass, we may do some havoc ere they know our whereabouts.”

This was work entirely to the liking of the Rangers. Before dawn they were posted in their ambush, and allowed themselves a few hours of repose, but lighted no fire. They must not draw attention to themselves.

They were awake and astir with the first light of the tardy dawn, eagerly listening whilst they looked to the priming of their arms, and exchanged whispered prognostications.

Then came the expected sound—the tramp, tramp, tramp of a number of men on the march.

“Hist!” whispered Rogers, “lie low, and reserve your fire. These sound too many for us.”

The men kept watch, and saw the soldiers file by. There were close upon two hundred. It would have been madness to attack them, and the Rangers looked at one another in disappointment.

“Cheer up! there may be more to come,” suggested Rogers; and before another hour had passed, their listening ears were rewarded by the sound of a bugle call, and in a few minutes more the trampling of feet was heard once again, and this time the sound was less and more irregular.

“Some stragglers kept behind for something, seeking to catch up the main body,” spoke Rogers in a whisper. “Be ready, men; mark each his foe, and then out upon them, and take prisoners if you can.”

The taking of prisoners was most important. It was from them that each side learned what was being done by the various commanders. A prisoner was valuable booty to return with to the fort. Rogers seldom went forth upon any important expedition without returning with one or more.

The men swung by carelessly, laughing and talking. They had such faith in their Indian scouts that they never thought of an ambushed foe.

The ping of the rifles in their rear caused a strange panic amongst them. They faced round to see the redoubtable Rogers spring out at the head of a compact body of men.

But the strangest thing in that strange attack was a wild, unearthly yell which suddenly broke from one of the Rangers.

It was like nothing human; it was like the fierce roar of some terrible wild beast. Even Rogers himself was startled for the moment, and looked back to see from whence it had come.

At that moment Charles Angell dashed forward in a frantic manner. He had flung his gun from him; his eyeballs were fixed and staring; there was foam upon his lips; his hair was streaming in the wind. He bore an aspect so strange and fearful that the French uttered yells of terror, and fled helter-skelter from the onslaught.

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But if any had had eyes to note it, there was one Frenchman whose face became ashy white as he met the rolling gaze of those terrible, bloodshot eyes. He too flung away his gun, and uttered a frantic yell of terror, plunging headlong into the wood without a thought save flight.

“It is he! it is he! it is he!”

This was the shout which rang from the lips of Charles as he dashed after the retreating figure. All was confusion now amid French and Rangers alike; that awful yell, and something in the appearance of Charles, had startled friend and foe alike.

There were several of the French soldiers left dead in the wood, and one was captured and made prisoner; but the rest had fled like men demented, and the Rangers could not come up with them. As for Charles and his quarry, they had disappeared, and it was long before any trace could be found of them.

Stark and Fritz, however, would not give up the search, and at last they came upon the prostrate form of Charles. He lay face downwards on the frozen ground, which was deeply stained with blood. His wrist was fearfully gashed by some knife; yet in his fingers he held still a piece of cloth from the coat of the French fugitive. It had been literally torn out of his grasp before the man could get free, and he had nearly hacked off the left hand of the hapless Charles.

Yet the man had made good his escape, leaving Charles well nigh dead from loss of blood. But they carried him tenderly back to their cave, and making a rough sledge for him; then brought him safely with their prisoner into the camp at Fort William Henry.

Chapter 3: The Life Of Adventure.

“I have seen him once, and he has escaped me. But we shall meet again, and then the hour of vengeance will have come!”

This was the burden of Charles’s words as he lay in his narrow quarters in the Rangers’ huts just without Fort William Henry, tended by his comrades till his wound healed. The fever which so often follows upon loss of blood had him in its grip for awhile, and he would lie and mutter for hours in a state of semi-delirium.

The sympathy of his comrades for this strange man with the tragic story was deep and widespread. Charles had become a favourite and an object of interest throughout the ranks of the Rangers, and great excitement prevailed when it was understood that he had really seen the man—the Frenchman—who had stood by to see his wife and family massacred, and had deliberately designed to leave him, cruelly pinioned, to die a lingering death of agony in the heart of the lonely forest.

Every day he had visitors to his sickbed, and again and again he told the tale, described his foe, and told how he knew that the man recognized him, first taking him—or so he believed—for a spectre from the tomb, afterwards filled with the most lively terror as he realized that he was pursued by one who had such dire cause for bitter vengeance.

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“We have met twice!” Charles would say, between his shut teeth. “Once I was at his mercy, and he showed none. The second time he fled before me as a man flees from death and hell. The third time we meet—and meet we shall—it will be that the Lord has delivered him into my hand. I will strike, and spare not. It will be the hour appointed of Heaven!”

With the lengthening days and the approach of spring the life of the Rangers became less full of hardship, though not less full of adventure. Snowshoes and skates were laid aside, and the men started to construct boats and canoes in which they soon began to skim the surface of the lake; scouting here, there, and all over, and bringing back news of the enemy’s movements and strength even when no capture of prisoners rewarded their efforts.

Rogers had taken a great liking to John Stark and his followers. He dubbed Stark his lieutenant, and Fritz and Stark were inseparable companions by this time. Charles attached himself to no person in particular, but was the friend of all; pitied and respected for his misfortunes, allowed to come and go much as he would; regarded rather as one set aside by Heaven for an instrument of vengeance; standing alone, as it were, not quite like any of his comrades; a dreamy, solitary creature, seldom talking much, often passing the whole day in silent brooding; yet when there was fighting to be done, waking up to a sort of Berserker fury, dealing blows with an almost superhuman strength, and invariably filling the hearts of his adversaries with a species of superstitious fear and dread.

For the tall, gaunt figure with the haggard face, flaming eyes, and wildly-floating locks bore so weird an aspect that a man might be pardoned for regarding it as an apparition. Not a particle of colour remained in Charles’s face. The flesh had shrunk away till the bones stood out almost like skin stretched over a skull. The hair, too, was white as snow, whilst the brows were coal black, enhancing the effect of the luminous, fiery eyes beneath. It was small wonder that Charles was regarded by Rangers and soldiers alike as a thing apart. He came and went as he would, no man interfering or asking him questions.

At the same time he seemed to regard Fritz and Stark as his chief friends; and if they started forth with any of the Rangers, it was generally observed that Charles would be of the company.

The life of the forest was pleasant enough in the warmer weather; but the garrison at the fort were anxious to know what orders they would receive for the summer campaign, and so far nothing was heard but that they were to remain on the defensive. This might be prudent, seeing that Ticonderoga was< strongly fortified and garrisoned; but it pleased neither soldiers nor officers, and the Rangers went scouting more and more eagerly, hoping to learn news which might tempt those in authority to sanction some more overt movement.

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One day a strange adventure befell the Rangers. Rogers and his little flotilla of boats were here, there, and everywhere upon the lake. Not only did they move up and down Lake George, which was debatable ground, commanded at the different ends by a French and English fort, but they carried boats across a mountain gorge to the eastward, launched them again in South Bay, and rowed down the narrow prolongation of Lake Champlain, and under cover of dark nights would glide with muffled oars beneath the very guns of Ticonderoga, within hearing of the sentries' challenge to each other, and so on to Crown Point, whence they could watch the movements of the enemy, and see their transports passing to and fro with provisions for Ticonderoga.

Many a small boat was seized, many a large one sunk by these hardy Rangers of the forest. They were as wily as Indians, and as sudden and secret in their movements. The French regarded them with a species of awe and fear. They would sometimes find an English boat or canoe in some spot perfectly inexplicable to them. They could not believe that anyone could pass the fortifications of Ticonderoga unseen and unheard, and would start the wildest hypotheses to account for the phenomenon, even to believing that some waterway existed which was unknown alike to them and their Indian scouts.

But to return to the adventure to which allusion has been made.

Rogers with some thirty of his Rangers was out upon one of those daring adventures. They were encamped within a mile of Ticonderoga. Their boats were lying in a little wooded creek which gave access to the lake. Some of the party, headed by Rogers, had gone on towards Crown Point by night. Stark, with a handful of trusty men, lay in hiding, watching the movements from the fort, and keeping a wary eye upon those who came and went, ready to pounce out upon any straggler who should adventure himself unawares into the forest, and carry him off captive to the English camp.

Certain tidings as to the course the campaign was likely to take were urgently wanted by this time. The posts to the English fort brought in no news save that it was thought better for the army on the western frontier to remain upon the defensive, and no talk of sending large reinforcements came to cheer or encourage them. Winslow was impatient and resentful. He thought there were mismanagement and lack of energy. He knew that the provinces had been roused at last out of their lethargy, and had pledged themselves to some active effort to check French aggression; yet weeks were slipping by, one after the other, and no help of any consequence came to the army on the outskirts. No command reached the eager soldiers for a blow to be struck there, as had been confidently expected.

Perhaps the French might be better informed as to what was going on in other parts of the great continent, and so prisoners were wanted more urgently than ever.

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At midday upon a steamy midsummer day, one of the young Rangers who had been wandering about near to the camp in search of game came back with cautious haste to report that he had seen a small party of French leaving the fort by the water gate, cross the narrow waterway, and plunge into the forest. He had observed the direction taken, and thought they could easily surround and cut them off. He did not think there were more than six in the party; probably they were out hunting, unconscious of the proximity of any foe.

Stark was on his feet in a second. This was just the chance for the Rangers. Seizing their arms and hastily conferring together, they laid their plans, and then divided themselves into three companies of three, planning to fetch a circuit, keep under cover, and thus surround the little company, who would believe themselves entirely overmatched, and some of whom would surrender at discretion, if they did not all do so.

Stark, Fritz, and Charles remained together, taking a certain path as agreed upon. They crept like Indians through the wood. Hardly the breaking of a branch betrayed their movements. In Charles's eyes the slumbering fire leaped into life. He always lived in the hope of again meeting his foe face to face. He knew that he was probably within the walls of Ticonderoga. Any day might bring them face to face once more.

Softly and cautiously they crept through the brushwood. Stark had made a sign of extra caution, for some nameless instinct seemed to have told him that they were near the quarry now. He paused a moment, held up his hand as if in warning; and at that instant there suddenly arose from the heart of the wood the unwonted sound of a sweet, fresh girl's voice raised in a little French song!

The men looked at one another in amaze. Were their ears deceiving them? But no; the trilling notes came nearer. Involuntarily they pressed forward a few paces, and then came to a dead stop. What was it they saw?

A maiden, a young girl of perhaps seventeen summers, her hat suspended by a broad ribbon from her arm, and half filled with flowers, was wandering through the woodland tracks as quietly as though in her sheltered home across the water. As she moved she sang snatches of song in a clear, bird-like voice; and when her eyes suddenly fell upon the three strange figures in the path, there was no fear in their violet depths, only a sort of startled bewilderment, instantly followed by an eagerness that there was no mistaking.

"Oh," she exclaimed eagerly, in accents which denoted almost unmixed pleasure, and speaking English with only a very slight intonation denoting her mixed nationality, "I am sure that I have my wish at last! You are Rogers' Rangers!"

Stark and Fritz had doffed their hats in a moment. They were more nonplussed a great deal than this fearless maiden, who looked like the goddess of the glade, secure in her

right of possession. Her eyes were dancing with glee; her mouth had curved to a delicious smile of triumph.

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“I have been longing to see the Rangers ever since I arrived at Ticonderoga; but they declared they were terrible fire-eating men, worse than the wild Indians, and that they would kill me if I adventured myself near to them—kill me or carry me away captive. But I said ‘No!’” (and the girl threw back her head in a gesture of pride and scorn); “I said that the Rangers were Englishmen—English gentlemen, many of them—and that they did not war with women! I was not afraid; I knew they would not lay a finger upon me.

“I am not wrong, am I, sirs? You would not hurt a maiden who trusts your chivalry and honour?”

“I would slay the first man who dared so much as to lay a finger upon you, lady,” answered Stark impetuously, “even though he were my own comrade or brother! We are Rogers’ Rangers, as you have rightly guessed; and we are here scouting round Fort Ticonderoga, ready to intercept its inmates when we may catch them. But you are right: we war not with women; we fight with men who can fight us back.

“But tell us, fair lady, how comes it that you are here alone in the forest? It is scarce safe in these troubled times of warfare, with Indians all around, and rude soldiers prowling the woods and lurking in its fastnesses.”

“Ah, but my escort is close at hand. I did but stray away a little in search of flowers. They said the forest was free from peril today. The Indians have gone off yonder on some enterprise of their own, and the English are lying within their lines far enough away. I begged and prayed, and at last they gave way. My brother and the men are after a fine young deer they sighted. I bid them leave me. I was not afraid. I thought the worst that could happen would be that I came face to face with a party of Rangers, and that was exactly what I have longed to do ever since I arrived.”

The girl looked up smiling into the faces of the bronzed, stalwart men standing before her; then she seated herself upon a fallen tree and motioned them to be seated likewise.

“I want to talk,” she said; “let us sit down and be sociable. I daresay they will be some time in killing their quarry. We will enjoy ourselves till they come back. They shall not hurt you; I will ensure that.”

Stark smiled a little at the girl’s assurance.

“More likely they may suffer at our hands, lady. There are more of us scattered about the forest. But our aim is not to slay, but to obtain prisoners who shall give us news; so you need not fear that harm will befall your brother—least of all if he speaks the English tongue as you do. If I might make bold to ask you of yourself, how comes it that an English girl is in such a wild spot as this, and amid the soldiers of France?”

“I am not English,” answered the maiden, with a smile; “I am French upon my father’s side, and my mother was a Scotchwoman. I have lived in Scotland, where I learned your tongue; and I always spoke it with my mother so long as she lived. It is as easy to me as my father’s French.”

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“And how come you to this wild spot in the heart of these forests, and with warfare all around?”

“I will tell you that, too. My father has always been a man of action, who has loved travel and adventure. Since the outbreak of this war in the west he has longed to be in the midst of it. He is something of a soldier, and something of a statesman, and he is the friend of many great ones at Court, and has been entrusted before now with missions requiring skill and tact. He is also the kinsman of the Marquis of Montcalm, whose name no doubt you know by this time.”

“He is the new military commander sent out by the King of France, to take the lead in the war now commenced in Canada and along the border between France and England,” answered Stark promptly.

“Yes; and my father and uncle came out with him, and my brother and I also. My uncle is the good Abbe Messonnier; but you will not have heard of him, though he is well known and well beloved in France. My father has certain work to do here the nature of which I do not fully know, nor could I divulge if I did. We arrived at Quebec a short time ago, and thence we moved on to Montreal. But it was needful for my father and uncle to visit some of these outposts, and we begged, Colin and I, not to be left behind. We burned with curiosity to see the strange sights of which we had heard—the Indians in their war paint, the great forests and lakes, the forts and their garrisons, and all the wonders of the west.

“So they brought us in their company. My father takes me everywhere with him that he can. Since my mother’s death he seems unable to lose sight of me. We have been hard upon a month at the fort now. We are learning all we can of the condition of affairs, to report to the Marquis when we return to Montreal or to Quebec. He himself talks of coming to command here when the time comes for the attack to be made upon your fort; but that will scarcely be yet, for there is so much he has to set in order in Canada. Oh, the way things are managed there—it is a disgrace!”

“Is Canada weak then?” asked Stark, burning with curiosity for information on the subject.

The girl slowly shook her head.

“Perhaps I ought not to talk with you, since you are the enemies of my countrymen. And, in sooth, I know little enough to tell. I hear one say this and one the other, and I cannot know where the truth lies. But of one thing they are very certain and confident—that they will drive out the English from all these western outposts, and will keep them shut in between the mountains and the sea; and that France alone shall rule this mighty continent of giant forests and rivers, undisturbed by any foreign foe. Of that all men are confident.”

The Rangers exchanged glances, and the girl saw it.

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“You do not believe me,” she said quickly; “but, indeed, I have heard so many strange things that I know not what to believe myself. Strangest of all is that white men should call upon those terrible savage Indians to war with them against their white brethren. That, as my good uncle says, is a disgrace to humanity. Ah! I would you could have heard him speak to the officers at yonder fort since his arrival there. They brought in a few prisoners a few days after we came. They were going to cook and eat them—to treat them—oh, I cannot think of it! My uncle went to the officers, and bid them interfere; but they only shrugged their shoulders, and said they must not anger the Indians, or they would desert, and become even more troublesome than they are already. He got them out of their hands himself, and sent them safely to Montreal; and oh, how he spoke to the French soldiers and officers afterwards! He said that such wicked disregard of the bond betwixt Christian and Christian must inevitably draw down the wrath of Heaven upon those who practised it, and that no cause could prosper where such things were permitted.

“I have heard things since I have been here that have filled my heart with sorrow and anger. I have been ashamed of my countrymen! I have felt that our foes are nobler than ourselves, and that God must surely arise and fight for them if these abominations are suffered to continue.”

The Rangers were silent; they well knew what she meant. The French were culpably weak where the Indians were concerned, permitting them almost without remonstrance to burn their prisoners from the English lines, and even after engagements leaving the English dead and wounded to the Indians and the wolves, though the English always buried the French dead with their own when they had been in like circumstances, and had showed kindness to their wounded.

“The Indians are the plague of the lives of men and officers alike,” continued the girl, breaking forth in animated fashion. “They eat up a week’s rations in three days, and come clamouring for more. They make rules for the English which they will not observe themselves. They are insolent and disgusting and treacherous. Oh, I cannot think how our people bear it! I would sooner lose all than win through using such tools. I hate to think of victory obtained by such means. You Rangers are brave men; though men dread you, yet they respect you, and would fain imitate your prowess. The Indians are devils—I can find no other name for them. They are fiends, and I verily think that evil will befall us if we league ourselves with them. Thus my uncle tries to teach; but they will not listen to his words.”

“Time will show, lady,” answered Fritz; “and there are Indians who are gentle and tamable, and are some of them even sincere believers in our Christian faith. I have seen and lived among such in the lands of the south. But here they have been corrupted by the vices of those who should teach them better. It is a disgrace to England and France alike that this should be so.”

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At this moment the sound of shouting and yelling arose from the forest, and some shots were fired in close succession. The girl started to her feet, looking white and scared; but Fritz and Stark stood close beside her, one on either hand, as if to assure her that no harm should befall her.

The next moment a fair-haired youth, with a strong likeness to the girl, came dashing blindly through the forest, calling her name in accents of frantic fear.

“Corinne, Corinne, Corinne! Where are you? Hide yourself! Have a care! The Rangers are upon us!”

“I am here, Colin. I am safe!” she cried, in her flute-like accents—“I am here all safe. The Rangers are taking care of me. See!”

He pulled up short, blinded and breathless. He had come tearing back to his sister’s aid, full of remorse at having been tempted to leave her for a moment in the pleasure of the chase. He stood panting, staring at the strange group, unable to get out a word.

“Call the men in,” said Stark, addressing Charles, who had remained silent all the while; “tell them to hurt no one—to make no captures. This lady’s escort is to remain unmolested. Bring them here, and we will deliver them their charge safe and sound.”

With alacrity Charles disappeared upon his errand. The old tender-heartedness of the man always returned when he saw anything young and helpless. There was no fierceness in his strange face today, and Corinne, looking after him, said wonderingly:

“Who is he? he looks like one who has seen a ghost!”

In a few terse phrases Fritz told the outline of Charles’s story, and how he himself with his companion had found the hapless man and his brother.

“Oh, this war is a terrible thing!” cried Corinne, pressing her hands together. “It makes men into devils, I think. Ah, why can we not live at peace and concord with our brothers? Surely out here, in these wild lands, French and English might join hands, and live as brothers instead of foes.”

“I fear me,” said Fritz, looking out before him with wide gaze, “that that time is far enough away—that it will never come until the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ, when He shall reign for ever and ever.”

She looked at him in quick surprise. She had not expected to hear such words in the mouth of one of Rogers’ Rangers.

“I have heard my uncle speak so,” she said slowly; “but the soldiers think of nothing but fighting and conquest.”

“We used to think much of that day down in my southern home. We were taught to look for the day of the Lord and the coming of Christ. But men were even there growing weary and impatient. The strife of parties was spoiling our home. That is why so many of us journeyed forth to see the world. But I do not forget what my forefathers taught and believed.”

There was a light of quick sympathy in the girl’s eyes; but she had no time to reply, for the Rangers were coming back, with the French soldiers in their company. They had surprised the whole band, and had practically made them prisoners when Charles came up with his strange message, and they marched them along to see what it all meant.

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Great was their astonishment when they saw the golden-haired girl with her fearless bearing, and the handsome lad standing beside her, still breathless and bewildered.

“Release these men,” said Stark briefly; “they have been told off for the service of this lady. Let them resume their charge, and return in safety to the fort, or continue their chase in the forest at pleasure. We do not war with women.

“If you wish to see some pretty hunting, Mistress Corinne, Rogers’ Rangers are at your service, and the haunts of bird and beast are well known to us.”

The girl’s eyes sparkled. She was as full of the love of adventure as any boy could be. She looked at her brother, but he shook his head in doubt.

“I think our father would not wish it,” he said. “I thank these gentlemen most gratefully for their courtesy and chivalry, but I think we must be returning to the fort. It may be that the shots will have been heard, and that soldiers may be coming in search of us already.

“We shall not forget your kindness, sir. I trust the day will come when we may be able to requite you in kind;” and he held out his hand, first to Stark and then to Fritz.

Corinne had looked a little mutinous at first; but when her brother spoke of a possible sortie across the water from the fort, her face changed. Perhaps she was not quite so confident of the chivalry of the French soldiers as she had been of that of the Rangers.

“Perhaps it is best so; yet I should have loved to scour the forest with Rogers’ Rangers.

“Are you the great Rogers himself?” she asked, turning to Stark, and then letting her glance wander to Fritz’s fine face.

“No, Mistress Corinne; Rogers himself is away farther afield,” answered Stark. “This is Fritz Neville, and I am John Stark, whom he honours with the title of his lieutenant.”

“Fritz Neville—John Stark,” she repeated, looking from one to the other, a smile in her frank, sweet eyes. “I shall not forget those names. I shall say them over every day to myself, and pray that in times of warfare the saints will watch over and protect the brave English Rangers, who had us as prisoners in their power, and let us go away safe and sound.”

She held out her hand as she spoke, first to one and then to the other of the men, both of whom took it reverently, pressed it, and bowed low with a sort of rude homage. The other Rangers sent up a little cheer for the brave young lady who spoke their tongue so well; and the French soldiers, who looked a little ashamed of the predicament in which they had placed themselves, smiled, and became friendly and at ease, realizing that all was well.

“We will escort you to your boat, lady,” said Stark; “you will suffer us that privilege.”

“Ah yes, if it will be safe. But they will not dare fire from the fort when they see that our company is returning. I would I could take you back with me, and introduce you to my father and uncle; but perchance it would not be safe.”

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“Perhaps we shall make their acquaintance some other way!” said Stark, with a touch of grim humour; and Corinne, understanding him, exclaimed:

“Ah, do not let us think of that! let us only remember that we have met as friends in the wild forest.”

“A pleasant memory truly,” answered Stark gallantly, “and one so new to a Ranger that he will never be like to forget it;” and as they pursued their way towards the lake, he held the youth and the girl spellbound and breathless by tales of the strange life of adventure which they led, and by detailing some of their hairbreadth escapes from the hands of Indians and Frenchmen as they scoured the forest, lay in ambush, and skulked beneath the very ramparts of the enemy’s fortifications, hearing the talk of the sentries overhead.

“Nay, but you are brave men in sooth; you deserve success. The fortunes of war must surely be yours at last,” cried Corinne, with covert enthusiasm.

“Ah! here is the lake, and here is our boat. Nay, come not further. I fear lest hurt should come to you. I thank you again with all my heart. Perhaps the day will come when we shall see each other again. I would fain believe that I shall meet again with Rogers’ bold, chivalrous Rangers.”

“It may be—it may be,” answered Stark, with a smile. “Farewell, sweet Mistress Corinne; may you come safely through all perils by land and water. Your brave spirit will carry you well through life’s troubled sea, I think.”

She smiled, and stepped into the boat. Then suddenly turning and waving her hand, she said:

“I will tell you one thing which my uncle has said. Whether he will be a true prophet or no I cannot tell. His words are these, and they were spoken to M. de Montcalm: ’You are safe now, for England is governed by an imbecile—the Duke of Newcastle—a minister without parts, understanding, or courage. But there is another man in England of a different calibre. If ever you hear that Pitt is at the head of the administration, then look to your laurels; for, if I be not greatly deceived, that man has brain and energy to turn the whole tide of battle. Three years after he begins to rule England’s policy, and France will have begun to lose her empire in the West!’”

Chapter 4: Vengeance And Disaster.

The episode of Corinne, and the prophecy she had quoted to them, formed one of the bright episodes in a year which brought little success or relief to the army encamped upon the waters of Lake George. There was no campaign that year. The two armies lay inside their respective fortifications, each keeping on the defensive; and the bold

Rangers alone did active skirmishing service, as has been related, appearing at all sorts of apparently impossible points, swooping down upon an unwary hunting party or a sleeping sentinel, bringing in spoil to the fort, burning transports bound for Ticonderoga, and doing gallant irregular service which kept the garrison and the Rangers in spirits, but did little or nothing to effect any change in the condition of affairs.

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Anxiously was news waited for from England. What was the parent country going to do for her Western children in their hour of need and extremity? There were rumours afloat of a massing of Indian tribes to be let loose upon the hapless settlers along the Indian border; and although Sir William Johnson, that able agent of England's with the natives, was hard at work seeking to oppose and counteract French diplomacy amongst the savage tribes, there was yet so much disunion and misunderstanding and jealousy amongst English commanders and governors, that matters were constantly at a deadlock; whilst France, with her centralized authority, moved on towards her goal unimpeded and at ease (as it seemed to the harassed English officials), although not without her internal troubles also.

November brought about the usual breaking up of the camps on both sides. The French soldiers were drafted back to Canada in great companies, sorely beset and harassed at times by the action of the Rangers; whilst Winslow drew off the bulk of his men to winter quarters in the larger towns of New England and the adjacent colonies, leaving Major Eyre in charge of the fort, with sufficient men to hold it during the dead winter season.

Rogers' Rangers were independent of weather. They pursued their hardy and adventurous calling as well through the ice-bound winter months as during the genial season of summer. But from time to time his followers liked to visit their homes and friends, and Winslow was glad enough to have their company upon his march back upon civilization; for the Rangers were masters of the art of woodcraft, and were the most able allies when difficulties arose through the rising of rivers or the intricacies of the forest paths.

Stark and his little band, now reduced from a dozen to nine, accompanied the army back to winter quarters; for John desired to see his friends, and also to raise recruits for next season's campaign, now that he had learned experience, and had inspiring tales to tell of adventure, victory, and quick retributive vengeance upon a treacherous and rapacious enemy.

Fritz and Charles both accompanied him, though the latter with some reluctance. He would rather have remained in the neighbourhood of the French lines, behind which lay the foe he was bent on meeting once more face to face; but Stark had represented to him that his sister would wish to see him once more, and Rogers had appointed January as the time when he and his Rangers would be back, when the ice would be firm and hard, and they could renew their wild winter warfare, whilst during the earlier months of the winter there was no certainty of carrying on any successful operations. Heavy rain and soft snow were too much even for the hardy Rangers to grapple with. They were practically useless now till the frost came and fastened its firm grip upon the sleeping world.

There was joy in many a city throughout the English colony when the troops marched in; although there was mourning in many homes for the loss of some son or brother killed by the foe, or by the many forms of sickness which prevailed at the fort.

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There were troubles, too, with the citizens about the billeting of the English contingent, and many were the heart burnings which arose between stubborn townsmen and military rulers before these matters could be adjusted. But all this made little matter in houses like that of Benjamin Ashley, who was a true patriot at heart, and threw open his doors not only to his wife's brother, but to as many war-weary soldiers as he could accommodate, and was never tired of hearing all that they could tell as to their past experiences, or of discussing with them the probable result of the coming struggle.

Fritz would sit beside Susanna's spinning wheel in the evening, telling her stories to which she listened in open-eyed amaze, and giving eager heed to the discussion of politics amongst the other men. Charles would sit apart, absent and dreamy—a strange figure amongst the rest—very gentle and tender in his manner towards Hannah and Susanna, but taking little or no interest in the daily round of life, and only counting the days till he could return to the forest and his mission of vengeance.

There was great discontent in the hearts of the colonists. They declared that nothing was done for them, and yet they were never prepared to bestir themselves actively. When Fritz asked eagerly about the English statesman Pitt, he was told that he and the Duke of Newcastle were now acting together in the ministry, and that some hoped for better things in consequence. But it was evident to all by this time that the first move made by the new minister would be directed against Louisbourg in Acadia, the only stronghold yet remaining to the French in Cape Breton Island. After driving the enemy from thence, he might, and probably would, turn his attention to the western frontier; but meantime the colonists here would have mainly to hold back the enemy by their own united efforts, and unity of action was just the thing which appeared most difficult to them.

It was not encouraging; but the hardy Rangers were not to be disheartened, and true to their promise, they only stayed within winter quarters till after the festive Christmas season; and then gathering together a compact little body of volunteers, Stark set forward once again for the wild forest, where he was to meet Rogers and his band.

Fritz was ready to go, despite his parting with pretty Susanna, whose bright eyes sparkled with tears as she said goodbye. It was not a time for making new ties; yet the little maiden knew very well by this time that her life and his were bound together by a strong and tender bond, and that into her own something had entered which could never be taken away.

They met in the heart of the forest, a few miles from Fort William Henry—Rogers and his large company, and Stark with his smaller contingent. But Stark was now the leader of a band of five-and-twenty bold spirits; for so inspiring had been his stories of the Ranger's life that volunteers had come crowding in, and he had had some ado to get rid of those who were manifestly unfit for the life. Even Ebenezer Jenkyns, in his wild desire to win the approval of Susanna, had begged to be permitted to join the Ranger

band, and Stark had had some difficulty in ridding himself of the youthful Quaker, suddenly possessed of martial ambitions and ardour.

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Right glad were the garrison at the fort to see the Rangers come marching in. They had been quite quiet, save for a few minor nocturnal raids from Indians, which had not done much harm. Their chief foe was smallpox, which kept breaking out amongst the men, as well as other forms of sickness. They did not understand sanitation, and the fort was dirty and unhealthy. Rogers would not have his men lodged within it; but the Rangers built themselves huts just outside, and when not otherwise occupied, spent their time in the construction of boats and sloops for use on the lake, in which work Major Eyre had kept his men employed during the previous months.

But it was not for peaceful toil like this that the Rangers had gathered together; in a little while, accordingly, a scouting party was formed, with Crown Point as its goal.

Snowshoes and skates were looked to, and the hardy Rangers started off beneath the grey, leaden winter sky, gliding through the grim, ghost-like forest, silent as death, past ice-bound waterfalls, and forests of fir and larch bent and bowed by the load of snow, ever onwards and northwards, always on the alert, ready for instant action, fearless and undismayed in a white wilderness and in those trackless solitudes which would strike dismay into many a bold heart.

They skirted round Ticonderoga, not showing themselves to their foe, and encamped upon the edge of Lake Champlain, lighting fires, and making themselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted. They had travelled hard for many days, and were glad of a little rest.

But this rest was not of long duration. Early the next morning, before it was well light, Charles, the sleepless watcher, awoke the camp by his low whistle of warning.

“I hear the sound of a sledge on the ice!” he said.

In a moment every Ranger was on the alert; every man had seized his weapons, the fires were stamped out, and preparations were made for an instant move.

A few minutes more and they heard the sound also—the sharp ring of a sledge upon the ice, and the beat of horse hooves as it drew nearer.

Now horses were prizes greatly in demand at the English fort, and Rogers was eager to obtain possession of this prize. He called out to Stark to make a dash along the lake side with a dozen of his men, and try to head it off towards the spot where he and the rest of the Rangers would wait. And hardly had the order left his lips before Stark was off upon his mission.

On and on dashed the sledge with its unsuspecting occupants. They had come forth from Ticonderoga, and were heading for Crown Point. Stark and his men flitted like shadows along the snowy banks. The horses paused. There was something amiss

with the harness. Stark looked at his men, gave a fine English cheer, and rushed forth upon the ice, with a dozen stout followers at his heels.

In a moment the occupants of the sledge saw their peril. A yell arose from the throats of all the three. They turned like lightning, and the horses sprang forward at a gallop; but in a moment they were surrounded by Stark and his men, who called upon them to surrender, and sprang at the horses to stay their headlong flight.

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But now a new terror was added to the scene. Round the bend of the lake swept other sledges—quite an army of them; and whilst the French sent up shouts for help, Stark looked round to see what Rogers and his company were doing.

“Here they come! here they come! Rogers’ Rangers! Rogers’ Rangers!” yelled his men, as they saw the compact band of veteran woodsmen rushing forth to their aid.

That cry was well known to the French. For a moment there was a pause, the sledges pulling up as though in doubt whether to rush forward and seek to fight their way through, or to turn and run back to Ticonderoga. But the energy with which the Rangers came on settled that point. Every sledge wheeled round and fled, whilst Rogers’ men dashed helter skelter upon them, flinging themselves upon the horses, firing at the occupants, and in spite of all resistance securing three sledges, six horses, and seven French prisoners.

The rest of the sledges escaped, and Rogers and Stark met each other with grave faces.

“They will give notice at Ticonderoga that we are here,” said the former. “They will come out against us and cut off our retreat. We must examine the prisoners ourselves and learn all we can from them, and then make our way to the fort as fast as possible through the forest. The enemy may be upon us before nightfall.”

Fritz, who spoke French as easily as English, had already been questioning the prisoners separately.

“They all tell the same tale,” he said gravely: “they have five hundred regular soldiers at the fort, and Indians coming in daily. They were organizing parties to intercept communication between Fort Edward and Fort William Henry. They are pledged to the extermination of the Rangers wherever they meet them. Directly they know that we are lurking in their vicinity, they will come out in great numbers against us.”

Rogers’ face was set and stern.

“We will give them a warm welcome when they do!” he said. “Meantime we will lose no time. Light up the fires and dry the ammunition which has become wet. The horses must be sacrificed and the sledges burned. As for the men, we must keep them till the last minute. When we go, they can go back to their fort. They will have nothing to tell there which is not known already. The Rangers slay men in fair fight, but they do not butcher prisoners.”

The thing was done. Rogers’ commands were carried out, and in cautious single file the band of Rangers crept through the forest by devious tracks known to themselves, keeping eyes and ears ever on the alert.

“Have a care!” came the warning cry of Charles at last; “I hear the cocking of guns.”

The words had hardly passed his lips before a volley blazed out from the bushes, and many a bold Ranger fell as he stood, shot through the heart.

“Steady, men—and fire!” cried Rogers, speaking as coolly as though a hail storm and not one of hot lead was raining about them. Blood was running down his cheek from a graze on the temple; and Fritz felt for the first time the stinging sensation in his arm which he had heard described so many times before.

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In a moment they had spread themselves out in the best possible manner, retreating upon the hill they had just descended, and covering themselves with the trees, from behind which they fired with unerring accuracy. Stark and some of his men were at the top of the hill, having been the rear guard of the company. They poured a steady, deadly fire into the bushes which concealed the foe; whilst their comrades, running from tree to tree, fell back upon them, and forming on the hilltop, repulsed again and again, with stubborn gallantry, the assault of a foe which they knew must outnumber them by four or five to one.

But the face of Rogers was still set and stern.

“They will try to outflank us next, and get round to the rear,” he said between his teeth to Stark. “Stark, you must pick some of our best men, and stop that movement if it occurs. If they get us between two fires, we are all dead men!”

“Fritz, you will be my lieutenant,” said Stark, as he looked about him and chose his company. Fritz was at his side in a moment. “We are in as evil a chance as ever men were yet,” he added, “but I think we shall live to tell the tale by the warm fireside at home. I have been in tight fixes before this, and have won through somehow. I trust our gallant Rogers will not fall. That would carry confusion to our ranks.”

Shoulder to shoulder stood Fritz and Stark, warily watching the movements of the foe. They saw them creeping round the base of the hill—saw it by the movement of the brushwood rather than by anything else; for their foes were used to bush craft, too.

“If anything should go amiss with me today, friend John,” said Fritz, as he loaded his piece, looking sternly down into the hollow beneath, “give my love to Susanna, and tell her that her name will be on my lips and my heart in the hour of death.”

“Talk not of death, man, but of victory!” cried Stark, whose indomitable cheerfulness never forsook him. “Yet I will remember and give the message to my pretty cousin—for I know that women live on words like these—if the blow has to fall. But never think of that!”

“I do not,” answered Fritz; “I hope to come forth safe and sound. But were it otherwise—”

“Fire!” cried Stark, breaking suddenly into the commander; and a sharp, deadly volley blazed forth from the guns of his contingent.

It was plain that the enemy had not expected this flank movement to be observed. Cries of dismay and pain rang through the forest. They broke cover and ran back towards the main body, followed by another well-directed volley from the brave Stark and his men.

Round the spot where Rogers and the main body of the Rangers stood the fight waxed fierce and hot. But Stark held to his post on the spur of the hill, where he saw how the foe was trying to get round to their rear; and again and again his well-aimed volleys sent them flying back decimated to their companions.

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But how was it going with the others? The firing was incessant, and shouts and cries told of death and disaster on both sides. Stark bid Fritz make a dash for the main body and bring back word. The brief winter's day was beginning to draw to a close. There was something terrible in the brightness of the fire that was streaming from the thickets as the daylight failed. It seemed as though the very forest was in flames; and the crack of musketry was almost unceasing.

"They are calling upon us to surrender," said Fritz, hastening back with his tale. "The French are calling upon Rogers by name, begging him to trust to their honour and clemency, and promising the best of treatment if he and his brave men will surrender. They are calling out that it is a pity so many bold men should perish like brute beasts. But Rogers stands like a rock, and replies by volley after volley. He has been hit through the wrist, and his head is bound about by a cloth; but he looks like a lion at bay, and will not yield one inch."

"Let us back to his side, and make one great charge against the foe!" shouted Stark, who saw that no further flank movement was to be anticipated now. His men answered by a cheer. They were ready for any display of gallantry and courage, and swore by Stark, who was beloved of all for his happy temper and cheerful, dauntless bravery.

Up the shoulder of the hill and across the ridge they dashed. They shouted their cry of "Rogers' Rangers! Rogers' Rangers!" It was taken up by those upon the top, who gathered together and made a blind rush down towards their foe. The French, taken by surprise at this impetuosity, and afraid of the darkness of the forest, made off in haste for Ticonderoga, having worked sad havoc amongst the bold Rangers, who were left alone with their wounded and dead, the shades of night gathering fast round them, and the camp of the foe within a few miles.

It was a situation of grave peril; but Rogers was not to be daunted. He buried his dead; he gathered together the wounded, and afraid to allow even a night for rest, he marched his party all through the night, and by morning they were upon the shores of Lake George.

"I will fetch a sledge for the wounded," quoth Stark, full of energy and enterprise as usual. "It will puzzle the enemy to find the route we have taken. Lie you here close and keep watch and ward, and I will fetch succour from the fort before the French have time to seek us out."

This was good counsel, and Rogers followed it. Stark, after a quick journey across the ice, brought sledges and soldiers from the fort, and in a few more days the Rangers were brought back in triumph to their huts without Fort William Henry, where they were content to lie idle for a short while, recovering from their wounds and fatigues. Hardly a man had escaped uninjured; and some were very dangerously wounded, and died from the effects of the injuries received.

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Fritz himself had a slight attack of fever resulting from the wound which he had scarcely noticed in the heat of battle. Stark was almost the only member of the company who had come forth quite unscathed, and he was the life of the party during the next spell of inaction, telling stories, setting the men to useful tasks, making drawings of the French forts for the guidance of the English, and amusing the whole place by his sudden escapades in different directions.

The Rangers were further cheered by a letter of thanks from General Abercromby, lately sent out from England, recognizing their gallant service, and promising that it should be made known to the King.

But the adventures of the winter were not over, although the days were lengthening out, and the blustering rains and winds of March had come. The snow was greatly lessened; but a spell of frost still held the lake bound, and the rigours of the season were little abated.

It was St. Patrick's Day; and as some of the soldiers in Fort William Henry were Irish, they had celebrated the anniversary by a revel which had left a large proportion more or less drunk and incapable. Their English comrades had followed their lead with alacrity, and the Fort was resounding with laughter and song.

But the Rangers in the huts outside were on the alert and as Stark remarked with a smile, they must keep watch and ward that night, for nobody else seemed to have any disposition to do so.

Major Eyre, in pity for the forlorn condition of his men, had not restrained them from amusing themselves in their own fashion upon this anniversary. It was well, however, that there were some sleepless watchers on the alert that night; for as the grey dawn began to break, a sound was heard over the ice as though of an approaching multitude. The Rangers gave the alarm, and manned the guns. There was nothing to be seen through the murky mists of dawn; but the guns belched forth fire and round shot towards the lake, and the sounds suddenly ceased.

An hour later Charles came rushing in; there was blood upon his face, and his eyes were wild, but in his excitement he seemed to know nothing of any hurt.

"They are coming! they are coming! I have seen them! There are hundreds upon hundreds of them, well armed, well equipped with everything that men can want. They are bound for the fort. They are going to take it, They have sworn it! And he is in their ranks. I saw him with these eyes. He is there. He is one of them. We shall meet again, and this time he shall not escape me!"

In a moment all was excitement and bustle. The men, sobered by the near presence of danger, were at their posts in a moment. All knew that the fort was not strong, and that a resolute assault by a large force would he difficult to repel; but at least they had not been taken by surprise, and that was something.

A yell from without told that something was going on there. The Rangers were driving off a party of men who had crept up under cover of the mist wreaths, hoping to fire the huts outside, and so burn the fort. They were sent helter skelter over the ice to rejoin their comrades; and after a pause of some hours an officer was seen advancing from the French lines bearing a flag.

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He was blindfolded, that he might not see the weak parts of the fort, and was brought to Major Byre and the other officers. His message was to advise them to surrender the fort and obtain for themselves favourable terms, threatening a massacre if this was refused.

“I shall defend myself to the last!” said Major Byre calmly. “Englishmen do not give up their forts at the bidding of the foe. We can at least die like men, if we cannot defend ourselves, and that has yet to be proved.”

The news of this demand and the reply flew like wildfire through the ranks, and inspired the men with courage and ardour. The Rangers were brought within the fort, and all was made ready for the assault.

A storm of shot hailed upon the fort. Through the gathering darkness of the night they could only distinguish the foe by the red glare from their guns. The English fort was dark and silent. It reserved its fire till the enemy came closer. The crisis was coming nearer and nearer. There was a tense feeling in the air, as though an electric cloud hovered over all.

Charles went about with a strange look upon his face.

“He is there—he is coming. We shall meet!” he kept repeating; and all through that night there was no sleep for him—he wandered about like a restless spirit. No service was demanded of him. He was counted as one whose mind wanders. Yet in the hour of battle none could fight with more obstinate bravery than Charles Angell.

“Fire! fire! fire!”

It was Charles’s voice that raised the cry in the dead of the night. No attack had been made upon the fort; but under cover of darkness the enemy had crept nearer and nearer to the outlying buildings, and tongues of flame were shooting up.

Instantly the guns were turned in that direction, and a fusillade awoke the silence of the sleeping lake, whilst cries of agony told how the bullets and shots had gone home.

“Come, Rangers,” shouted Rogers, “follow me out and fall upon them! Drive them back! Save the fort from fire!”

Rogers never called upon his men in vain. No service was too full of peril for them. Ignorant as they were of the number or power of their assailants, they dashed in a compact body out of the side gate towards the place where the glare of the fire illumined the darkness of the night.

Dark forms were hurrying hither and thither; but the moment the Rangers appeared with their battle cry, there was an instant rout and flight.

“After them!” shouted Rogers; and the men dashed over the rough ground, pursuers and pursued, shouting, yelling, firing—and they saw that some bolder spirits amongst the Frenchmen had even set fire to the sloop on the stocks which Rogers had been teaching the soldiers how to construct.

But in the forefront of the pursuit might be seen one wild, strange figure with flying hair and fiery eyes. He turned neither to the right hand nor to the left, but ran on and on in a straight line, keeping one flying figure ever in view.

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The flying figure seemed to know that some deadly pursuit was meant; for he, too, never turned nor swerved, but dashed on and on. He gained the frozen lake; but the treacherous, slippery ice seemed to yield beneath his feet. He had struck the lake at the point where it was broken up to obtain water for the fort.

A yell of horror escaped him. He flung up his arms and disappeared.

But his pursuer dashed on and on, a wild laugh escaping him as he saw what had happened. The next minute he was bending down over the yawning hole, and had put his long, strong arm through it into the icy water beneath.

He touched nothing. The hapless man had sunk to rise no more. Once sucked beneath the deep waters of the frozen lake, exhausted as he was, there was no hope for him. Charles cut and hacked at the ice blocks, regardless of his own personal safety; and after long labour he succeeded in moving some of them, and in dragging out the lifeless corpse, already frozen stiff, of the man he had sworn to slay.

The French were flying over the frozen ice, the Rangers in pursuit. They came upon the strange spectacle, and stopped short in amaze. A dead man lay upon the ice of the lake where it was broken and dangerous, his dead face turned up to the moonlight, his hands clinched and stiff and frozen. Beside the corpse sat Charles, his glassy eyes fixed upon the dead face, himself almost as stiff and stark.

They came up and spoke to him; but he only pointed to the corpse.

“That is he—that is he!” he cried hoarsely. “I saw him, and he saw me. We fought, and he fled. I have been running after him over ice and snow for years and years. He is dead now—dead, dead, dead! The Lord has delivered him into my hand. My work is done!”

He stood up suddenly, threw up his arms, and then fell heavily forward face downwards upon the ice.

When they lifted him up and carried him within the fort, it was to find that Charles Angell the Ranger was dead.

Book 3: Disaster.

Chapter 1: A Tale Of Woe.

The intrepidity of the officer in command, and the alertness and courage of the Rangers, had saved Fort William Henry from one threatened disaster.

When the French had fairly retreated, after having been forced to content themselves with the burning of the boats and the unfinished sloop and certain of the surrounding huts and buildings, the English found out from their prisoners how great their peril had been. For the French force sent against them had been a strong one, well equipped, and hopeful of surprising the place and carrying it by a coup de main.

Failing in this, they had made a show of hostility, but had not really attempted anything very serious. The season was against anything like a settled siege, and they had retreated quickly to their own quarters.

But this attack was only to be the prelude to one on a very different scale already being organized at headquarters. The English heard disquieting rumours from all quarters, and turned eager eyes towards England and their own colonies from whence help should come to them, for their numbers were terribly thinned by disease, and death in many forms had taken off pretty well a third of their number.

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Rogers himself had been attacked by smallpox, and upon his recovery he and the large body of the Rangers betook themselves to the woods and elsewhere, preferring the free life of the forest, with its manifold adventures and perils, to the monotonous life in an unhealthy fort.

But Fritz remained behind. When Rogers left he was not fit to accompany him, having been suffering from fever, though he had escaped the scourge of smallpox. He had felt the death of Charles a good deal. He had become attached to the strange, half-crazed man who had been his special comrade for so long. It seemed like something wanting in his life when his care was no longer required by any one person. Indeed all the Rangers missed their white-headed, wild-eyed, sharp-eared recruit; and as the saying is, many a better man could better have been spared.

Stark went with Rogers, too much the true Ranger now to be left behind. Fritz intended to follow them as soon as he was well enough. Meantime he had formed a warm friendship with two young officers lately come to the fort with the new commander, Colonel Monro—one of them being Captain Pringle, and the other a young lieutenant of the name of Roche.

Colonel Monro was a Scotchman, a brave man and a fine soldier. Those under his command spoke of him in terms of warm and loving admiration. Fritz heard of some of his achievements from his new friends, and in his turn told them of his own adventures and of the life he had led during the past two years.

“We have heard of the Rangers many a time and oft,” cried Roche. “We had thought of offering ourselves to Rogers as volunteers; but men are so sorely wanted for the regular army and the militia that our duty seemed to point that way. But I should like well to follow the fortunes of the hardy Rogers.”

It was true indeed that men were sorely wanted at Fort William Henry. Colonel Monro looked grave and anxious as he examined its defences. It was an irregular bastioned square, built of gravel and earth, crowned by a rampart of heavy logs, and guarded by ditches on three sides, and by the lake on the north. But it was not strong enough to stand a very heavy assault, although it was provided with seventeen cannons, besides some mortars and swivels.

The garrison numbered at this time something over two thousand; but there were many sick amongst these, and sickness was inclined to spread, to the grave anxiety of the commander.

Fourteen miles away to the south lay Fort Edward, and General Webb was there with some fifteen hundred men. He had sent on as many men as he felt able to spare some short time before, in response to an appeal from Colonel Monro. Disquieting rumours of

an advance from Ticonderoga were every day coming to their ears. Summer was at its height, and if a blow were to be struck, it would certainly be soon.

A scouting party was sent out under the command of a certain Colonel Parker, in order to learn the strength of the enemy and what they were about. Three days passed in anxious suspense, and as nothing was heard of the scouting party, Fritz begged leave to go forth with a handful of men to look for them, promising not to expose himself or them to danger. As he knew the forest so well, and was an experienced Ranger, leave was quickly obtained, and Pringle and Roche were permitted to be of the company.

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They started with the first dawn of the summer's morning; but they had not gone far before they came upon traces of their companions. Fritz's quick eyes saw tracks in the forest which bespoke the near neighbourhood of Indians, and this made them all proceed with great caution. The tracks, however, were some days old, he thought, and led away to the westward. At one spot he pointed out to his companions certain indications which convinced him that a large number of Indians had lately been lying there.

"Pray Heaven it has not been an ambush sent to outwit and overpower our men!" he said. "What would those raw lads from New Jersey do if suddenly confronted by a crew of yelling Indians? I trust I am no coward myself, but the sound of that awful war whoop thrills me still with a kind of horror; it has been the forerunner of many a tragedy to the white man out in wildernesses such as this."

"I have heard it once," said Pringle, with an expressive gesture, "and I could well wish never to hear it again, did not duty to King and country drive me willingly forth to fight against these dusky savages, who make of these fair lands a veritable hell upon earth.

"Hark! what is that?"

It was like the sound of a faint cry not so very far away. They listened, and it was presently repeated. Fritz started forward at a run.

"That is no Indian voice," he exclaimed; "it is one of our men calling for aid. He has heard our voices."

Followed by the rest of the party, Fritz ran forward, and soon came out into a more open glade, commanded by the ridge where he had observed the signs of Indian occupation. As he did so he uttered a startled exclamation, which was repeated in all kinds of keys by those who came after. For in this glade lay the bodies of full fifty of their soldiers, for the most part stripped and scalped; and the place was so trodden and bloodstained as to show plainly that it had been the scene of a bloody conflict.

Crawling forth from a little sheltered gorge was a wan, dishevelled figure, bloodstained and ghastly. And Fritz, springing forward, caught the lad in his strong arms, whilst he fell to feeble sobbing in the plenitude of his thankfulness and relief.

When he was fed and heartened up he had a terrible tale to tell.

It had been as Fritz thought. A party of Indians had been crouching in the forest, and had fallen upon the company unawares. Colonel Parker had not been wise. He had divided his men into two companies. One had gone by boats, and one had skirted through the forest. What had happened to the boats the lad could not tell. He had been one of the very few survivors of the land party, and he owed his escape to his having

fallen wounded and breathless into the little cleft in the rocks hidden by the thick undergrowth, so that the Indians did not find him when they made their search after scalps and accoutrements.

Crouching amongst the bushes, half fainting from terror, the lad had seen it all.

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“They scalped them one by one, yelling and shouting and dancing. They cared not whether they were dead or not. Oh, it was horrible, horrible! They lighted a fire to burn some of the prisoners, and danced around it yelling and jeering as their victims died. Oh, I can never forget the sight! Every moment I thought they would find me. I thought of all the things I had heard that savages did to their prisoners. If I had had my sword, I would have run it through my heart. But I had nothing, and presently I suppose I fainted, for I can remember no more; and when I woke they had all gone, and only the bodies lay about beside me. They had taken off their own dead; but I durst not come out, lest they should come back and find me, and I did not know where I was.

“There was water in the brook, or I should have died; and I used to crawl out and drink, and go and hide myself again. And last of all I heard English voices, and called out; and that is all I can tell you.”

They made a litter and carried the lad back to the fort, where he lay tossing in fever for many a long day to come. It was evil news that they had for their comrades; and it was not more cheering when stragglers from the scouting party came back by twos and threes, all with the same tale. The Indians were overrunning all the forests and lakes. They had mustered around the French camp by hundreds and thousands, and were scouring the woods everywhere, under no sort of discipline, excited, rebellious, rapacious, yet too useful as allies not to be humoured by those who had summoned them to their aid.

All had horrid tales to tell of cannibal feasts, and of the savage treatment of prisoners. Some declared they had seen French officers and ecclesiastics striving to interfere, but that the Indians paid no manner of heed to them.

“There was a young priest who saw them eating human flesh at their fire, and he came up and rebuked them. I was sitting by. I had a cord round my neck. Sweat was pouring from me, for I knew I should be the next victim. They looked at the priest, and one young Indian cried out in French, ’You have French taste, I have Indian; this is good meat for me. Taste it yourself, and see if you cannot learn to like it too!’ Whereat all the rest laughed aloud. But the priest rebuked them again, and offered money if they would give me up; and presently they did, though rather against their will. They were sending some prisoners to Montreal, and I was to have gone there, too; but in the night I escaped, and as I knew something of the forest, I have got back safe and sound.”

Tales like these came pouring in as the survivors struggled back to the fort. All were agreed that the Indians were very numerous and very fierce, and it was said by all that the muster of the French seemed to be very strong.

Anxiety and fear reigned throughout the fort. Fritz almost lived upon the lake in his boat, watching for the first signs of the enemy’s approach. That a great part of it would come by water he did not doubt. And sometimes he would leave his boat in a creek,

and climb some adjacent height, from whence he could scan the surface of the lake, and see what was stirring there.

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Roche was his companion on those excursions; and the two had climbed together to a commanding height, when upon the dawn of a glorious midsummer morning they saw the long-expected flotilla covering the lake and making headway up it.

What a sight it was! The hearts of the onlookers seemed to stand still within them as they looked. And yet it was a magnificent spectacle. Myriads and myriads of Indian canoes like flocks of waterfowl seemed swarming everywhere, whilst from two to three hundred bateaux conveyed the French and Canadian soldiers. Then there were great platforms bearing the heavy guns, and rowed by huge sweeps, as well as being assisted by the bateaux; whilst the blaze of colour formed by the uniforms of the various battalions formed in itself a picture which had seldom been seen in these savage solitudes.

“We shall have our work cut out to face such odds!” cried Fritz, as he turned to dash down the hill and regain his canoe. But Roche laid a hand upon his arm, and pointed significantly in another direction.

Fritz looked, and a smothered exclamation, almost like a groan, broke from him.

Far away through the mazes of the forest, skirting round towards the doomed fort by a road parallel with the lake, was a large body of troops—how large the spectators could not guess, but they saw enough to tell them that it was a very considerable detachment. Such an army as the one now marching upon Fort William Henry had not been seen there before. To those who knew the weakness of the fort and of its garrison it seemed already as though the day were lost.

Moreover these men knew that the great Marquis de Montcalm himself was coming this time to take personal command, and his name inspired respect and a certain fear. He was known to be a general of considerable distinction; it was felt that there would be no blundering when he was at the head of the expedition.

To fly back to the fort with these ominous tidings was but the work of a few short hours. In a moment all was stir and bustle. The soldiers were not to be disheartened. They were ready and almost eager for the battle, having become weary of inaction and suspense. But the face of Colonel Monro was grave and stern, and he called Fritz aside presently and conferred with him apart.

“I must send a messenger to Fort Edward to General Webb, to report to him our sorry plight. He has said that he can spare no more men; but this extremity of ours should be told him. Think you that you can take a letter safely to him? You Rangers are the best of messengers; and you have seen this great armament, and can speak with authority concerning it. Tell him how sore our need is. It may be that he can hurry up the reinforcements, or that they may be already on their way. Even a few hundreds would be better than none. At least he should know our need.”

Fritz was ready in a moment to take the message, but he had small hope of any result, and he saw that the brave Colonel had little either. General Webb was a man upon whose courage and generalship several aspersions had already been cast. If ever he was to regain confidence and show these aspersions to be untrue, this was the time to show himself in his true colours. But it was with no confidence that Fritz set forth upon his errand.

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Not long ago General Webb had visited the fort, and had given certain orders and had spoken brave words about coming to command in person should need arise; but he had returned to Fort Edward the following day, and had then sent the reinforcements which were all he was able to spare. It remained to be seen whether he would fulfil his promise when he knew that the attack of the enemy might be expected every hour.

Fritz rode in hot haste to the fort and asked for the General. He brought news of urgency, he told them, and was instantly shown to the General's quarters. He stood in silence whilst the letter which Fritz brought was opened and read; then he abruptly asked the tall young Ranger what it was he had seen.

Fritz told his tale in simple, graphic words, the General marching up and down the room meantime, evidently in some perturbation of spirit; but all he said at the close was:

"Go back and tell Colonel Monro that I have no troops here which I can safely withdraw, but that I have sent, and will send, expresses to the provinces for help."

Fritz was too much the soldier to make reply. He bowed and retired, well knowing that no express sent to New England could be of the smallest service now. It was with a bitter sense of failure that he took the fresh horse provided for him and made all speed back to the camp.

The road was still clear, but how long it would remain so there was no knowing. Swarms of Indians were drawing around them. If succour did not come quickly, it would arrive too late.

Monro received the message in silence, and continued to strengthen his own defences as best he might. The next day brought the enemy full in view, and the numbers of the hostile host astonished though they did not dismay the brave little garrison.

Once more Monro sent forth Fritz with a letter to the General.

"The French are upon us," he wrote, "both by land and water. They are well supplied with artillery, which will make sad havoc of our defences, for these, you have seen for yourself, are none of the strongest. Nevertheless the garrison are all in good spirits, and eager to do their duty. I make no doubt that you will send us a reinforcement, for we are very certain that a part of the enemy will soon get possession of the road, and in that case our condition would become very serious."

Again Fritz was entrusted with this letter; again he made the rapid night journey over the familiar road.

This time he was not admitted to the General's presence, and after he had remained at Fort Edward about an hour and had been refreshed, a message came to say that

General Webb had received the letter and considered it, but could make no other reply than he had done the previous day.

“Then God help us,” said the Scotch veteran when this message was brought him, “for vain is the help of man!”

And although he went about the fort with as calm and cheerful a mien as before, he was certain in his own heart that Fort William Henry was now doomed.

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“They are surrounding us on all sides,” cried Roche, as soon as Fritz appeared upon the ramparts with his disheartening message, which, however, he kept for the moment to himself. “See, they are working their way through the forest to the rear, just beyond our range. Soon we shall be hemmed in, and they will bring up their guns. We have done what we can for these poor walls; but they will not long stand the cannonade of all those guns we see lying yonder on the platoons upon the lake.”

“We must hope that the militia from the provinces will come up before their preparations are complete,” said Fritz. “They should be on their way by now. But delay and procrastination have ever marked our methods through this war. Nevertheless the men are in good spirits; they are eager for the fight to begin. I marvel at their courage, seeing how great are the odds. But even the sick seemed fired by martial ardour!”

It was so. The long inaction of the winter and spring had been wearisome and disheartening. It was impossible for the soldiers to doubt that they would receive help from without now that it was known that the enemy was actually upon them. Moreover, they all knew, and some remembered, how the assault of a few months back had been repulsed; and not realizing the different scale upon which this one was to be conducted, were full of hopeful confidence and emulation.

Before hostilities actually commenced, Colonel Monro summoned his officers about him. Great excitement prevailed in the fort, for it was known that a messenger had been admitted under a flag of truce, and that he brought a letter from the Marquis de Montcalm. It was to the reading of this letter that Monro invited his officers.

“We have to deal with an honourable foe, gentlemen,” said the veteran, looking at those about him, “as you will know when I read to you his words. ‘I owe it to humanity,’ so writes M. de Montcalm, ’to summon you to surrender. At present I can restrain the savages, and make them observe the terms of a capitulation, as I might not have power to do under other circumstances; and the most obstinate defence on your part can only retard the capture of the place a few days, and endanger an unfortunate garrison which cannot be relieved, in consequence of the dispositions I have made. I demand a decisive answer within an hour.’ That, gentlemen, is the message brought to us. What answer shall we return to our high-minded adversary?”

There was only one word in the mouths of all.

“No surrender! no surrender!” they called aloud, waving their swords in the air; and the cry was taken up by those without, and reached the soldiers upon the ramparts, and the welkin rang with the enthusiastic shout:

“No surrender! no surrender!”

By this time the Indians were swarming about close outside the ramparts, and hearing this cry and knowing its meaning, they looked up and gesticulated fiercely.

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“You won’t surrender, eh?” bawled in broken French an old Indian chief. “Fire away then and fight your best; for if we catch you after this, you shall get no quarter!”

The response to this threat was the heavy boom of the cannon as Fort William Henry discharged its first round of artillery.

For a moment it produced immense effect amongst the swarms of painted savages, who scuttled away yelling with fear; for though well used to the sound of musketry, and having considerable skill with firearms themselves, they had never heard the roar of big guns before, and the screaming of the shells as they whistled overhead filled them with terror and amaze.

They were intensely eager for the French guns to be got into position, and were a perfect nuisance to the regular soldiers, as they worked with intrepid industry at their trenches and mounds. But before long even the Indians were satisfied with the prolonged roar of artillery, which lasted day after day, day after day; whilst within their walls the brave but diminished garrison looked vainly for succour, and examined with a sinking heart their diminished store of ammunition and their cracked and overheated guns.

“It cannot go on long like this,” the officers said one to the other. “What is the General doing over yonder? He must hear by the heavy firing what straits we are in. He knows the condition of the fort. He should risk and dare everything to come to our aid. If this fort is lost, then our western frontier has lost its only point of defence against the inroads of Indians and the encroachments of France.”

A few days later and a cry went up from the walls, “A white flag! a white flag!” and for a moment a wild hope surged up in the hearts of the soldiers that the enemy had grown tired of the game of war, and had some proposal to make.

The messenger brought a letter. It was not from the French commander himself, though it was delivered with a courteous message from him. It had been found upon the body of a white man slain by the Indians a few days before, and brought to the French camp. The Marquis de Montcalm had read it, and sent it now to the person for whom it was intended.

“Give my thanks,” said Monro, “to the Marquis for his courtesy, and tell him that it is a joy to me to have to do with so generous a foe.”

But the letter thus received was one of evil omen to the hapless garrison. It came from General Webb, and repeated that, until reinforced from the provinces, he could do nothing for the garrison of Fort William Henry; and advised Colonel Monro to make the best terms that he could with the enemy, who were plainly too strong for him to withstand.

It was time indeed for the gallant little garrison to think of surrender. Men and officers stood in knots together gloomily surveying the scene.

“We have done what men can do,” said Captain Pringle to his friends Fritz and Roche; “but where are we now? A third of our men are sick and wounded. Almost all our big guns are burst. The enemy’s trenches are being pushed nearer and nearer, and there are still more of their guns to be brought to bear. Our wall is breached; I marvel they have not already made an assault. There is nothing for it but surrender, if we can obtain honourable terms of capitulation.”

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“Nay, rather let us die sword in hand and face to foe!” cried Roche, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm. “Let us make a last desperate sortie, and see if we cannot drive the enemy from their position. Anything is better than dying here like rats in a hole! A forlorn hope is better than none. Why should we not at least cut our way out to the free forest, if we cannot rout the enemy and drive them back whence they came?”

“The life of the free forest would mean death to those raw lads who have come out from England or from the provinces,” said Fritz gravely. “It would be hardly more than a choice of deaths; and yet I would sooner die sword in hand, hewing my way to freedom, than cooped up between walls where every shot begins to tell, and where the dead can scarce be buried for the peril to the living.”

And indeed the position of affairs was so deplorable that a council was held by Monro; and it was agreed that if any desired to make this last sortie, either for life and liberty for themselves, or in the last forlorn hope of driving the enemy from their position, it might be attempted; but if it failed, there was nothing for it but capitulation, if honourable terms could be had, or if not to die at their posts, fighting to the very last.

A cheer went up from the men when they heard these words. If they had well nigh lost hope, their courage was not quenched, and a large band volunteered for the sortie. Fritz and Roche were amongst these, but Pringle remained behind in the fort.

“I will stand by the Colonel and the sinking ship,” he said. “It is but a choice of evils. I doubt if any of us will see the light of many more days. I prefer the chances of war to the unknown horrors of the forest filled with savages.”

He laid a hand upon Roche’s arm and looked affectionately into the boyish brave young face. Then he turned to Fritz.

“If you should get through, take care of the lad. You are a Ranger; you know the forest well. If any can escape safely thither, it will be you and such as you. But don’t forsake the boy—don’t let him fall alive into the hands of the Indians; kill him yourself sooner. And now fare well, and God bless you both: for I think that on this earth we shall meet no more.”

“Nay, why think that?” cried Roche eagerly; “stranger things have happened before now than that we should all live to tell the tale of these days.”

Pringle shook his head; whilst Fritz wrung his hand and said:

“At least remember this: if you should wish to have news of us, ask it of Rogers’ Rangers, who are always to be heard of in these parts. If we escape, it is to Rogers we shall find our way. He will be glad enough to welcome us, and from any of his Rangers you will hear news of us if we ever reach his ranks.”

There was no sleep for the fort that night. Indeed the hot summer nights were all too short for any enterprise to be undertaken then. The glow in the western sky had scarcely paled before there might have been seen creeping forth through the battered gateway file after file of soldiers, as well equipped as their circumstances allowed—-silent, stealthy, eager for the signal which should launch them against the intrenched foe so close at hand.

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But alas for them, they had foes wily, watchful, lynx-eyed, ever on the watch for some such movement. Hardly had they got clear of their protecting walls and ditches, when, with a horrid yell, hundreds and thousands of dusky Indians leaped up from the ground and rushed frantically towards them. The next moment the boom of guns overhead told that the French camp had been alarmed. The regular soldiers would be upon them in a few minutes, driving them back to the fort, killing and wounding, and leaving the Indians to butcher and scalp at their leisure. The fearful war whoop was ringing in their ears. The line wavered—broke; the men made a frantic rush backwards towards their lines.

“Don’t fly!” cried Roche suddenly to Fritz, at whose side he marched; “let us cut our way through, or die doing it. It is death whichever way we turn. Let us die like men, with our faces and not our backs to the foe!”

“Come then!” cried Fritz, upon whom had fallen one of those strange bursts of desperate fury which give a man whilst it lasts the strength of ten.

With a wild bound he sprang forward, bursting through the ranks of Indians like the track of a whirlwind, scattering them right and left, hewing, hacking, cutting! Roche was just behind or at his side; the two seemed invulnerable, irresistible, possessed of some supernatural strength. The Indians in amaze gave way right and left, and turned their attention to the flying men, who were easier to deal with than this strange couple.

A shout went up that the devil was abroad, and the Indian, ever superstitious, shrank away from these stalwart figures, believing them to be denizens from some other world; whilst the French soldiers, who might have felt very differently, had not yet so far equipped themselves as to be ready to come out from their lines.

Fritz had marked his line with care. Only upon one small section between lake and forest was there any possible passage without peril from the French lines, and that was by skirting the head of the lake just where their own intrenched camp, now almost in ruins, gave them shelter.

The woodsman’s and the Ranger’s instinct kept true within him even in the confusion and darkness. He never deflected from his line.

“This way! this way!” he called to Roche in smothered tones, as they heard the sound of the fight growing fainter behind them. He took the lad’s hand, and plunged into the marshy hollow. He knew that none would follow them there; the ground was too treacherous. But there was a path known to himself which he could find blindfold by day or night.

He pulled his comrade along with a fierce, wild haste, till at a certain point he paused. There was a little cavernous shelter in the midst of the morass, and here the pair sank down breathless and exhausted.

“We are saved!” gasped Roche, clasping his comrade by the hand.

“For the moment—yes,” answered Fritz; “but what of afterwards?”

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Chapter 2: Escape.

Young Roche lay face downwards upon the rocky floor of the little cavern, great sobs breaking from him which he was unable to restrain. Fritz, with a stern, set face, sat beside another prostrate figure—that of a man who looked more dead than alive, and whose head and arm were wrapped in linen bandages soaked through and through with blood.

It was Captain Pringle, their friend and comrade in Fort William Henry, who had elected to remain with the garrison when the other two took part in a sortie and cut themselves a path to the forest. Had he remained with them, he might have fared better; he would at least have been spared the horrors of a scene which would now be branded forever upon his memory in characters of fire.

What had happened to that ill-fated fort Fritz and Roche knew little as yet. They had heard the tremendous firing which had followed whilst they remained in hiding during the day the dawn of which had seen the last desperate sortie. They had at night seen flames which spoke of Indian campfires all round the place, and from the complete cessation of firing after two they concluded that terms of surrender had been made. They had meant to wander deeper and deeper into the forest, out of reach of possible peril from prowling Indians; but they had been unable to tear themselves away without learning more of the fate of the hapless fort and its garrison.

At daybreak—or rather with the, first grey of dawn—they had crept through the brushwood as stealthily as Indians themselves, only to be made aware shortly that something horrible and terrible was going on. Yells and war whoops and the screech of Indian voices rose and clamoured through the silence of the forest, mingled with the shrieks of victims brutally massacred, and the shouts and entreaties of the French officers, who ran hither and thither seeking to restrain the brutal and savage treachery of their unworthy allies.

Roche had lost his head, and would have rushed madly upon the scene of bloodshed and confusion; and Fritz must needs have followed, for he was not one to let a comrade go to his death alone: but before they had proceeded far, they met their comrade Pringle dashing through the forest, covered with wounds, and pursued by half a dozen screeching Indians, and in a moment they had sprung to his rescue.

With a yell as fierce in its way as that of the Indians themselves they sprang upon the painted savages, and taking them unawares, they killed every one before the dusky and drunken sons of the forest had recovered from their surprise at being thus met and opposed.

But plainly there was no time to lose. The forest was ringing with the awful war whoop. Their comrade was in no state for further fighting; he was almost too far gone even for flight.

They seized him one by each arm; they dashed along through the tangled forest by an unfrequented track known to Fritz, half leading, half carrying him the while. The din and the horrid clamour grew fainter in their ears. No pursuing footsteps gave them cause to pause to defend themselves. The centre of excitement round the fort drew the human wolves, as carrion draws vultures. The forest was dim and silent and deserted as the fugitives pursued their way through it.

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From time to time the wounded man dropped some words full of horror and despair. Young Roche, new to these fearful border wars, was almost overcome by this broken narrative, realizing the fearful fate which had overtaken so many of his brave comrades of the past weeks.

When at last they reached the little cave for which Fritz was heading, and where they felt that for the moment at least they were safe, he could only throw himself along the ground in an agony of grief and physical exhaustion: whilst the hardier Fritz bathed the wounds of their unfortunate comrade, binding them up with no small skill, and refreshing him with draughts of water from the pool hard by, which was all the sick man desired at this moment.

All three comrades were exhausted to the uttermost, and for a long while nothing broke the silence of the dim place save the long-drawn, gasping sobs of the lad. Gradually these died away into silence, and Fritz saw that both his companions slept—the fitful sleep of overwrought nature. Yet he was thankful even for that. Moving softly about he lighted a fire, and having captured one of the wild turkeys which were plentiful in the forest at that season, he proceeded to prepare a meal for them when they should awake.

Roche slept on and on, as the young will do when nature has been tried to her extreme limits; but Pringle presently opened his eyes, and looked feebly about him.

Fritz had a little weak broth to offer him by that time, and after drinking it the Captain looked a little less wan and ghastly.

“Where are we?” he asked, in a weak voice; “and how many are there of us?”

“We have only Roche with us. We have been in the forest since the sortie when we cut our way out. We met you the next day with half a dozen Indians at your heels. We know nothing save what you have spoken of treachery and massacre. Can it be true that the French permitted such abominations? The forest was ringing with the Indian war whoops and the screams of their wretched victims!”

A shudder ran through Pringle’s frame.

“It is too true,” he said; “it is horrible—unspeakably horrible! Yet we must not blame the French too much. They did what they could to prevent it. Indeed, I heard the Marquis de Montcalm himself bidding the Indians kill him, but spare the English garrison, which had surrendered, and had been promised all the honours of war and a safe escort to Fort Edward.”

“If men will stoop to use fiends to do their work,” said Fritz sternly, “they must expect to be disgraced and defied by these fiends, over whom they have no sort of influence. If men will use unworthy instruments, they must take the consequences.”

“Yes; but the consequences have been the massacre of our hapless sick and wounded, and scenes of horror at thought of which my blood curdles. They have fallen upon us, not upon them.”

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“For the moment, yes,” said Fritz, still in the same stern tone; “but, Pringle, there is a God above us who looks down upon these things, and who will not suffer such deeds to pass unavenged. We are His children; we bear His name. We look to Him in the dark moments of despair and overthrow. I am sure that He will hear and answer. He will not suffer these crimes against humanity and civilization to go unpunished. He will provide the instrument for the overthrow of the power which can deal thus treacherously, even though the treachery may be that of their allies, and not their own. It is they who employ such unworthy tools. They must bear the responsibility when these things happen.”

There was a long silence between the two men then, after which Pringle said:

“If they had only sent us reinforcements! I know that we shall hear later on that the reserves were on their way. Why do we do everything a month or more too late? It has been the ruin of our western frontier from first to last. We are never ready!”

“No; that has been the mistake so far, but I think it will not always be so. There is an able man in England now whose hands are on the helm; and though full power is not his as yet, he can and will do much, they say. Even the more astute of the French begin to dread the name of Pitt. I think that the tide will turn presently, and we shall see our victorious foes flying before us like chaff before the wind.”

“You think that?”

“I do. I have seen and heard much of the methods of France in the south—her ambition, her presumption, her weakness. Here in the north she has a firmer grip, and Canada is her stronghold. But if once we can shake her power there, all will be gone. They say that Pitt knows this, and that his eyes are upon the Western world. France has her hands full at home. A great war is raging in Europe. A few well-planted blows, ably directed from beyond the sea by England herself, might do untold harm to her western provinces. I hope to live to see the day when those blows will be given.”

Young Roche began to stir in his sleep, and presently sat up, bewildered and perplexed; but soon recollection swept over him, and he stumbled to his feet, and joined the other two by the fire.

“Tell us all,” he said, as they began to think of supper; for he and Fritz had scarcely broken their fast all day, and nature was now asserting her needs. “I would learn all, horrible though it is. Tell us—did Fort William Henry surrender?”

“Yes; there was nothing else for it. New batteries opened upon us, as well as the old ones. There was a great breach in the wall which could have been carried by assault at any moment, and our guns were all burst, save a few of the smaller ones. They gave us lenient terms. We were to march out with the honours of war, and keep one of our guns; they were to give us safe escort to Fort Edward; we were to take our baggage

with us. The Marquis showed himself a generous foe—of him we have reason to think well; but the Indians, and even the Canadians—well. I will come to that in its turn. Thank Heaven, I did not see too much; what I did see will haunt me to my dying day!"

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The lad's eyes dilated. It was terrible; but he wanted to hear all.

"All was arranged. The French soldiers marched in and took possession. We marched out to the intrenched camp to join our comrades there, who, of course, had been included in the capitulation. In the charge of the French we left our sick, who could not march. Hardly had we gone before the Indians swarmed in in search of plunder, and finding little—for, as you know, there was little to find—they instantly began to murder the sick, rushing hither and thither, yelling wildly, waving scalps in their hands!"

"And the French allowed it!" exclaimed Roche, setting his teeth hard; for he had friends and comrades lying sick at the fort when he left it.

"It was done so quickly they might not have known. One missionary was there, and rushed hither and thither seeking to stay them; but he might as well have spoken to the wild waves of the sea in a storm. But that was not all. In an hour or so they were clamouring and swarming all round the camp, and the French soldiers told off for our protection either could not or would not keep them out. Montcalm, in great anxiety, came over himself seeking to restore order; but the Indians were drunk with blood, and would not listen to him. He begged us to stave in our rum barrels, which was instantly done; but the act provoked the savages, and they pounced upon our baggage, which had been reserved to us by the terms of the treaty. We appealed to the Marquis; but he advised us to give it up.

"'I am doing all I can,' he said to Colonel Monro; 'but I shall be only too happy if I can prevent a massacre!'"

"Horrible!" ejaculated the young lieutenant. "Oh, better, far better, to have held the fort and perished in open fight than to be set upon in cold blood by those fiends!"

"Yes," quoth Pringle sternly; "that is what we felt and said. But it was too late then. The Indians were all amongst us. They were here, there, and everywhere. They got hold of the long hair of the women and the terrified children, and drew their scalping knives and menaced them till they shrieked and cried aloud in abject terror—"

Pringle paused; a spasm of horror shook him. After a brief pause he recommenced in more rapid tones:

"Why prolong the tale? it has lasted already too long. No proper guard was provided for us. Why I cannot tell, for the Marquis was truly horrified at what was going on. Perhaps he thought the steps he had taken were sufficient, or that the rage of the Indians was appeased; but be that as it might, when we marched out towards Fort Edward, we had no efficient protection, and the Indians were all round us, snatching at caps and coats, and forcing the soldiers to give them rum from their canteens, every drop of which seemed to add fuel to the fire."

“And you had no escort?”

“None of any efficacy. Monro, our gallant Colonel, went back to the French camp to protest and petition; but while he was gone the spark kindled.

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“It was the Anenaki chief who first raised the war whoop, and the effect was instantaneous. They sprang upon us like fiends. They seized the shrieking women and children and bore them off to the woods, killing and scalping them as they ran. We had guns, but no ammunition, and were almost exhausted with what we had been through.

“In a moment all was a scene of indescribable horror and confusion. I can only speak of what I saw myself. I was set upon by the savages; but I could give blow for blow. They sprang after others less able to defend themselves. I saw a little lad rush screaming through the wood. I at once ran after him, and knocked down his pursuer. He clung about me, begging me to save him. I took his hand, and we dashed into the forest together.

“As we did so, I was aware that some French officers, with the Marquis de Montcalm, were rushing up to try to appease the tumult; but I doubt me if their words produced any effect. The boy and I ran on together. Then out dashed a dozen or more warriors upon us, with scalps in their hands—a sight horrible to behold. I set the boy against a tree, and stood before him; but they were all round us. I felt his despairing, clutching hands torn from round my waist whilst I was hacking and hewing down the men in front. I heard the shriek of agony and the gurgling cry as the tomahawk descended upon his head.

“I knew that he was dead, and the rage which filled me drove me on and on with the strength of madness. I had lost the sense of direction. I only knew that I had burst through the ring of my assailants, and that I was running my headlong course with the whole pack of them yelling at my heels. Now and again a cry from right or left would divert one or another of my pursuers, but some of them held resolutely on, and I knew that my strength must eventually give out, and that only a horrible death awaited me.

“Then it was that I heard shouts in the English tongue, and knew that some person or persons had come to my rescue. But my eyes were full of blood, and my senses were well nigh failing. It was only by degrees I came to know who had saved my life. I shall never forget it, though I cannot say what is in my heart.”

He held out his hand first to one and then to the other of his comrades, and they grasped it warmly. Roche lifted his right hand and shook it upwards.

“May Heaven give me the chance to revenge this day’s work upon the foes of England! May the time come when France shall drink deep of that cup of suffering and humiliation which she has caused us to drink withal; and may I be there to see!”

And yet, before many months had passed, Roche and his companions had reason to know that their foes could be chivalrous and generous to an enemy in distress.

The comrades lay in close hiding for many days, until the work of demolishing the hapless fort had been accomplished, and the French, together with their savage allies, had withdrawn back to their own lines at Ticonderoga.

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There was no dash made upon Fort Edward, as might well have been the case. Satisfied with what he had accomplished, and under orders to permit the Canadian troops to return home in time to gather in the harvest, the Marquis de Montcalm withdrew his forces when his task was finished. Possibly he felt that victory was too dearly purchased at the cost of such horrors as had followed the capture of Fort William Henry.

Pringle recovered from his wounds, which, though numerous, were none of them severe. The spell of rest was welcome to all after the fatigues and privations of the siege. Fritz was an expert huntsman, and kept their larder well stocked; and when they were ready to travel, he was able to lead them safely through the forest, towards the haunts where Rogers and his Rangers were likely to be met with.

It was upon a clear September afternoon that they first met white men, or indeed human beings of any kind; for they had sedulously avoided falling in with Indians, and the loneliness of the forest had become a little oppressive to Pringle and Roche, although they were eager to learn the arts of woodcraft, and were proving apt pupils. They were both going to volunteer to join Rogers' bold band of Rangers, for they had grown almost disheartened at the regular army service, where one blunder and disaster was invariably capped by another; and the life of the Rangers did at least give scope for personal daring and adventure, and might enable them to strike a blow now and again at the enemy who had wrought them such woe.

They heard themselves hailed one day out of the heart of the forest by a cheery English voice.

"What ho! who goes there?"

"Friend to Rogers and his Rangers!" called back Fritz, in the formula of the forest, and the next minute a bronzed and bright-faced, handsome man had sprung lightly out of the thicket, and stood before them.

He was a stranger to Fritz, but something in his dress and general aspect proclaimed him to be a Ranger, and he grasped Fritz by the hand warmly.

"You come in good time to give us news. We have been far afield—almost as far as Niagara itself. We hear rumours of disaster and treachery; but hitherto we have had no certain tidings. Is it true that Fort William Henry has fallen?"

The tale was told once again, other Rangers crowding round to hear. Pringle was naturally the spokesman, and Fritz, singling out from the group a man whom he had known before, asked him who the gallant-looking stranger was who seemed like the leader of a band.

“That is Lord Howe,” was the answer. “He came out from England to fight the French; but the expedition to Louisbourg came to nothing through delay and mismanagement. He landed, and whilst waiting for further orders from home he has joined the Rangers, in order to learn their methods of fighting. Never was hardier or braver man, or one more cheerful and blithe. Even the stern Rogers himself unbends when he is near. He has been the very life of our party since he has joined us.”

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Fritz soon found that this was no exaggeration. Howe was a splendid comrade and Ranger, full of courage, the hardiest of the hardy, never failing in spirits whatever were the hardships of the life, and showing such aptitude for generalship and command that already he had made his mark amongst the hardy Rangers, and was entrusted with enterprises of difficulty and danger.

It was not much that could be done against the foe with the inclement winter season approaching. The snow fell early. The Canadians and regulars had gone into winter quarters; but there was still a garrison in Ticonderoga, and to harass and despoil that garrison was the pastime of the Rangers. They stole beneath the walls upon the frozen lake. They carried off cattle, and made banquets off their carcasses. If they could not do with all the meat themselves, they would leave the carcasses at the foot of the walls, sometimes with mocking letters attached to the horns.

Thus, after a more than usually successful raid, when they had taken two prisoners and driven off a number of head of cattle, they tied to the horns of one of the slain beasts the following words, written large for all to read.

“I am obliged to you, sir, for the rest you have allowed me to take, and for the fresh meat you have supplied me with. I shall take good care of my prisoners. My compliments to the Marquis de Montcalm.

“—(Signed)

“*Rogers*.”

But in spite of these successful raids, a misfortune was in store for the gallant Rangers in the early spring which broke up and scattered their band for that season, and spread throughout the district the false report of Rogers’ death.

Captain Hebecourt was commanding the French at Ticonderoga, and in March he received large reinforcements of Canadians and Indians, and the latter instantly detected recent marks of snowshoes in the vicinity betraying the neighbourhood of white men. An attack was therefore organized to try to rid the place of the pestilent Rangers, as the French called them; whilst, as it so happened, the Rangers had no knowledge of the reinforcements which had come in to the fort.

Rogers’ fault was ever a daring rashness, and when one day he and his little band saw the advance of a party of Indians, he drew his men under cover and greeted them with a hot and fatal fire.

But this was only the advance guard. Unknown and unguessed at by Rogers, the large body behind was approaching, and the next moment the whole place was echoing with

triumphant yells, as the pursuing Rangers were met by a compact force outnumbering them by four to one, who sprang furiously upon them, trying to hack them to pieces.

Rogers, gallantly backed by Lord Howe, who had all the instinct of the true general, recalled them hastily and formed them up on the slope of a hill, where they made a gallant stand, and drove back the enemy again and again. But outnumbered as they were, it was a terrible struggle, and Ranger after Ranger dropped at his post; whilst at last the cry was raised that the foe had surrounded them upon the rear, and nothing was left them but to take to the forest in flight.

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“To the woods, men, to the woods!” shouted Rogers. “Leave me, and every man for himself!”

Indeed it was soon impossible for any party to keep together. It was just one dash from tree to tree for bare life, seeking to evade the wily foe, and seeing brave comrades drop at every turn.

Rogers, Howe, and about twenty fine fellows were making a running fight for it along the crest of the ridge. Pringle, Roche, and Fritz were separated from these, but kept together, and by the use of all their strength and sagacity succeeded in eluding the Indians and hiding themselves in the snow-covered forest.

All was desolation around them. A heavy snowstorm gathered and burst. They were hopelessly separated from their comrades, and Fritz, who was their guide in woodcraft, was wounded in the head, and in a strangely dazed condition.

“I can take you to Rogers’ camp, nevertheless,” he kept repeating. “We must not lie down, or we shall die. But I can find the road—I can find the road. I know the forest in all its aspects; I shall not lose the way.”

It was a terrible night. They had no food but a little ginger which Pringle chanced to have in his pocket, and a bit of a sausage that Roche had secreted about him. The snow drifted in their faces. They were wearied to death, yet dared not lie down; and though always hoping to reach the spot where Fritz declared that Rogers was certain to be found, they discovered, when the grey light of morning came, that they had only fetched a circle, and were at the place they had started from, in perilous proximity to the French fort.

Yet as they gazed at one another in mute despair a more terrible thing happened. The Indian war whoop sounded loud in their ears, and a band of savages dashed out upon them. Before they could attempt resistance in their numbed state, they were surrounded and carried off captive.

“We can die like men; that is all that is left to us!” said Pringle, pressing up to Roche to whisper in his ear. “Heaven grant they kill us quickly; it is the only grace we can hope for now.”

Dizzy and faint and exhausted, they were hurried along by their captors they knew not whither. They had come out from the forest, and the sun was beginning to shine round them, when they suddenly heard a voice shouting out something the meaning of which they could not catch; and the next moment a body of white men came running up wearing the familiar uniform of French soldiers and officers.

“Uncle!” cried a lad’s clear voice, speaking in French, a language perfectly intelligible to Fritz, “that tall man there is the one who saved Corinne and me in the forest that day when we were surrounded and nearly taken by the Rangers. Get him away from the Indians; they shall not have him! He saved us from peril once; we must save him now.”

“Assuredly, my son,” came the response, in a full, sonorous voice; and Fritz, rallying his failing powers, shook off for a moment the mists which seemed to enwrap him, and saw that a fine-looking man of benevolent aspect, wearing the habit of an ecclesiastic, was speaking earnestly to the Indians who had them in their hands, whilst several French officers and soldiers had formed up round them.

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There was some quick and rather excited talk between the Abbe and the dusky savages; but he appeared to prevail with them at length, and Fritz heard the order given:

“Take these men into the fort, and give them every care and attention. I shall come later to see how my orders have been carried out.”

The men saluted. They cut the cords which bound the prisoners. They led them away kindly enough.

The lad who had first spoken pressed up to the side of Fritz.

“I will take care of you, and my uncle will heal your wound. You remember how Corinne promised some day to return the good favour that you did us. You are our guests; you are not prisoners. My uncle, the Abbe, has said so, and no one will dare to dispute his word. He is the Abbe de Messonnier, whom all the world loves and reveres.”

Chapter 3: Albany.

“You are not our prisoner,” said Colin; “you and your friends are our guests, welcome to stay or go as you will. Only we hope and desire that you will not go forth into the forest again until the snow has melted, and you are sound and whole once more.”

The bright-faced boy was seated beside the bed whereon lay Fritz, who felt like a man awakening from a long, strange, and rather frightful dream. He had become unconscious almost immediately after their rescue three days before, and had only now recovered the use of his faculties and the memory of recent events.

“You had a bad wound on the side of your head when we found you,” explained Colin. “My uncle, the Abbe, says that had it been left much longer untended you must have died. He is an excellent surgeon himself, having learned much as to the treatment of wounds and bruises and sicknesses of all kinds. He is well pleased with its appearance now, and with your state of health. He says that you Rangers are marvellous tough customers, whether as soldiers or as patients. You take a great deal of killing!”

Fritz smiled in response to the boy’s bright look, but there was anxiety in his face too.

“Can you tell me aught of the Rangers?” he said. “You, doubtless, know how we were set upon and dispersed a few days back.”

“Yes; and our Captain of the fort is right glad at it,” said the boy, “for Rogers led him a dog’s life with his raids and robberies. But all is fair in love and war, and it is not for us to complain of what we ourselves have provoked and should do in like circumstances. Nevertheless there is rejoicing at Ticonderoga that the Rangers are dispersed and

broken for the present. We were beginning to fear lest they should take away from us all our provision and cut off our supplies."

"Do you know how many were slain?"

"No; but it must have been a considerable number. I am sorry myself. I delight in all brave deeds of daring, and it is the Rangers who have shown themselves the heroes of this campaign. At first they said Rogers himself had been killed, but that has since been contradicted. For myself I do not believe it. The dead were carefully examined by one who knew Rogers well, and he declares there is no corpse that in any way resembles him; and others declare that he was seen escaping to the forest, fighting every inch of the way, with a resolute little band around him whom none cared to follow."

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“I myself saw something of that,” answered Fritz; “but it all seems like a dream of long ago. Tell me now of those who were with me—Captain Pringle and the lad Roche. Are they here, and unhurt of the Indians?”

“They are sound and well, and though sorely exhausted by cold and hunger and fatigue when they were brought in, are fully recovered now. Captain Pringle is quite a hero with us, for he has told us all the story of that disgraceful and dishonourable day of August last when the laurels of France were sorely tarnished by the treacherous villainy of her Indian allies! Believe me, friend Fritz, we men of France deplore that massacre, and cry shame upon ourselves and our countrymen for not taking sterner measures to repress it. For that reason alone, as mine uncle says, we owe to you and to your companions every honour and courtesy which we can show. If we have sometimes to blush for the conduct of our allies, we can show that we are capable of better things ourselves; and if we can make reparation ever so little, you will not find us backward in doing it.”

This indeed seemed to be the feeling of those within the fort. Although these men were Rangers, part of the band which had harassed them so sorely through the winter months, the garrison received them with open arms, ministered to their wants, and vied with one another in making them at home.

The influence of the venerable Abbe might have had something to do with this; but it was greatly due to the chivalry of the French nature, and to the eager desire to show kindness to those who had witnessed and suffered from that awful tragedy which had followed upon the surrender of Fort William Henry, which they felt to be a lasting disgrace to their cause.

Those of the officers who had been there averred that they could never forget the horror of those two days; and the French surgeon who had taken over the English sick and wounded, and yet saw them butchered before his eyes ere he could even call for help, had never been the same man since.

So when Fritz was able to rise from his bed and join his companions, he found himself in pleasant enough quarters, surrounded by friendly faces, and made much of by all in the fort. He, being able to speak French fluently, made himself a great favorite with the men, and he enjoyed many long conversations with the Abbe, who was a man of much acumen and discernment, and saw more clearly the course which events were likely to take than did those amongst whom he lived.

From him Fritz learned that affairs in Canada were looking very grave. There were constant difficulties arising between the various officials there, and the most gross corruption existed in financial affairs, so that there was a rottenness that was eating like a canker into the heart of the colony, despite its outward aspect of prosperity. France was burdened by foreign wars and could do little for her dependencies beyond the sea; whilst England was beginning to awake from her apathy, and she had at her helm now a

man who understood as no statesman there had done before him the value to her of these lands beyond the sea.

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“I have always maintained,” the Abbe would say, “that in spite of all her blunders, which blunders and tardinesses are still continuing, there is a spirit in your English colonies which will one day rise triumphant, and make you a foe to be feared and dreaded. You move with the times; we stand still. You teach and learn independence and self government; we depend wholly upon a King who cares little for us and a country that is engrossed in other matters, and has little thought to spend upon our perils and our troubles. You are growing, and, like a young horse or bullock, you do not know yet how to use your strength. You are unbroken to yoke and halter; you waste your energy in plunging and butting when you should be utilizing it to some good end. Yet mark my words, the day is coming when you will learn to answer to the rein; when you will use your strength reasonably and for a great end and then shall we have cause to tremble before you!”

Fritz listened and partly understood, and could admire the man who spoke so boldly even when he depreciated the power of his own people. He grew to love and revere the Abbe not a little, and when the day came for them to say farewell, it was with real sorrow he spoke his adieu.

“You have been very good to us, my father,” he said. “I hope the day may come when we may be able to show our gratitude.”

“Like enough it will, my son,” answered the Abbe gently; “I have little doubt that it will. If not to me, yet to my children and countrymen. For the moment the laurels of victory remain in our hands; but the tide may some day turn. If so, then remember to be merciful and gentle to those who will be in your power. I think that the English have ever shown themselves generous foes; I think they will continue to show themselves such in the hour of victory.”

It was with hearts much cheered and strengthened that the comrades went forth from Ticonderoga. Colin and a few French soldiers accompanied them for some distance.

They did not propose to try to seek Rogers or his scattered Rangers; there was no knowing where they would now be found. Fritz had decided to push back to Fort Edward, and so to Albany, the quaint Dutch settlement which had been the basis of recent operations, being the town nearest to the western frontier at this point. There they would be certain to get news of what was going on in the country, and for a short time it would be pleasant to dwell amid the haunts of men, instead of in these remote fastnesses of the forest.

“I hope we shall meet again,” said Colin, as he held Fritz’s hand in a last clasp. “I am not altogether French. I find that I can love the English well. Quebec will be my home before long. Corinne is there already, and my uncle and I will return there shortly. It is a fine city, such as you have hardly seen in your wanderings so far. I would I could show it you. Some say the English have an eye upon it, as the key to Canada. In sooth I

think they would find it a hard nut to crack. We of the city call it impregnable. But come you in peace there, and I will show it you with joy."

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They parted with a smile and a warm clasp, little guessing how they would meet next.

The journey to Albany was uneventful. The travellers met with no misadventures, and upon a sunny April evening drew near to the pleasant little town, smiling in the soft sunshine of a remarkably warm evening.

It presented a singularly peaceful appearance. The fort was on the hill behind, and seemed to stand sentinel for the little township it was there to protect. The wide grassy road ran down towards the river, its row of quaint Dutch houses broken by a group of finer and more imposing buildings, including the market, the guard house, the town hall, and two churches.

The houses were not built in rows, but each stood in its own garden, possessing its well, its green paddock, and its own overshadowing tree or trees. They were quaintly built, with timbered fronts, and great projecting porches where the inhabitants gathered at the close of the day, to discuss the news and to gossip over local or provincial affairs.

As the travellers entered the long, wide street, their eyes looked upon a pleasant, homely scene—the cows straying homeward, making music with their bells, stopping each at her own gate to be milked; the children hanging around, porringer in hand, waiting for the evening meal; matrons and the elder men gathered in groups round the doors and in the porches; young men wrestling or arguing in eager groups; and the girls gathered together chatting and laughing, throwing smiling glances towards their brothers and lovers as they strove for victory in some feat of skill or strength.

It was difficult to believe that so peaceful a scene could exist in a country harassed by war, or that these settlers could carry on their lives in so serene and untroubled a fashion with the dread war cloud hovering in the sky above.

There was one house which stood a little apart from the others, and wore a rather more imposing aspect, although, like all the rest, it was of a quaint and home-like appearance. It stood a little back from the main streets and its porch was wider and larger, whilst the garden in front was laid out with a taste and care which bespoke both skill and a love for nature's products.

The travellers were slowly wending their way past this house, debating within themselves where to stop for the night, and just beginning to attract the attention of the inhabitants, when a voice hailed them eagerly from the wide porch.

"Fritz Neville, or I'm a Dutchman myself! And Pringle and Roche as well! Why, man, we thought we had left you dead in the forest. We saw you cut off from us and surrounded. We never had a hope of seeing you alive again. This is a happy meeting, in truth!"

Fritz started at the sound of his name, and the next minute had made a quick forward hound, his face shining all over.

It was Lord Howe who had hailed him—the bold, joyous young Viscount beloved by all who knew him. The comrades shook hands again and again as they eagerly exchanged greetings.

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“Oh, we got away to the forest, Rogers and Stark and I, and a score or more. Other stragglers kept dropping in and joining us, and many more, as we found later, had made their way back to Fort Edward. But nowhere could we learn news of you. Come in, come in; you will be welcomed warmly by my kind hostess, Mrs. Schuyler. She has been the friend and mother of all English fugitives in their destitution and need. I have a home with her here for the present, till the army from England and the levies from the provinces arrive. Come in, good comrades, and do not fear; there will be a warm welcome here for you.”

They followed Howe to the house, and found that he had not deceived them as to the welcome they would receive. Colonel Schuyler was a great man in Albany, and his wife was deservedly respected and beloved. Just now the Colonel was absent on duties connected with the coming campaign, in which Albany was becoming keenly interested. The neighbouring provinces, particularly that of Massachusetts, had awakened at last from lethargy, and the inhabitants were bestirring themselves with zeal, if not always with discretion. The Colonel, who had warmly embraced the English cause, was doing what he could there to raise arms and men, and his wife at home was playing her part in caring for the fugitives who kept passing through on their way from the forest, both after the massacre at Fort William Henry, and after the rout of the Rangers.

Rogers himself was too restless a being to remain in the haunts of civilization. He and a few picked men were again off to the forest. But Stark, who had been wounded, and Lord Howe, who was awaiting orders from England as to his position in command during the approaching campaign, remained as guests with Mrs. Schuyler; and she at once begged that Fritz and his companions would do the same, since her house was roomy, and she desired to do all in her power for those who were about to risk their lives in the endeavour to suppress the terrible Indian raids, and to crush the aggressions of those who used these raids as a means of obtaining their own aggrandizement.

It was a pleasant house to stay in, and Mrs. Schuyler was like a mother to them all. For Lord Howe she entertained a warm affection, which he requited with a kindred feeling.

All was excitement in Albany now. General Abercromby was on the way to take the command of the forces; but Lord Howe was to have a position of considerable importance, and it was whispered by those who knew what went on behind the scenes that it was to his skill and courage and military prowess that Pitt really looked. He received private dispatches by special messengers, and his bright young face was full of purpose and lofty courage.

The Massachusetts levies began to assemble, and Howe took the raw lads in hand, and began to drill them with a wonderful success. But it was no play work to be under such a commander. They had come for once rather well provided with clothing and baggage; but Howe laughed aloud at the thought of soldiers encumbering themselves with more impedimenta than was actually needful.

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The long, heavy-skirted coats which the soldiers wore, both regulars and provincials, excited his ridicule, as did also the long hair plaited into a queue behind and tied with ribbons.

His own hair he had long since cut short to his head—a fashion speedily imitated by officers and men alike, who all adored him. He suggested that skirtless coats would be more easy to march in than the heavy ones in vogue, and forthwith all the skirts were cut off, and the coats became short jackets, scarcely reaching the waist.

The men laughed at their droll appearance, but felt the freedom and increased marching power; and as Lord Howe wore just such a coat himself, who could complain? He wore leggings of leather, such as were absolutely needful to forest journeys, and soon his men did the same. No women were to be allowed to follow his contingent; and as for washing of clothes, why, Lord Howe was seen going down to the river side to wash his own, and the fashion thus set was followed enthusiastically by his men.

If their baggage was cut down to a minimum, they were each ordered to carry thirty pounds of meal in a bag; so that it was soon seen that Lord Rowe's contingent could not only walk further and faster in march than any other, but that it would be independent of the supply trains for pretty nearly a month. They carried their own bread material, and the forest would always supply meat.

Fritz was ever forward to carry out the wishes and act as the right hand of the hardy Brigadier; for that was Lord Howe's military rank. Pringle and Roche served under him, too, and there was a warm bond growing up betwixt officers and men, and a feeling of enthusiasm which seemed to them like an augury of victory to come.

"Our business is to fight the foe—to do our duty whether we live or die," Howe would say to his men. "We have failed before; we may fail again. Never mind; we shall conquer at last. With results the soldier has nothing to do. Remember that. He does his duty. He sticks to his post. He obeys his commands. Do that, men; and whether we conquer or die, we shall have done our duty, and that is all our country asks of us."

And now the long days of June had come, and all were eager for the opening campaign. Ticonderoga was to be attacked. To wrest from the French some of their strong holds on the western English border—to break their power in the sight of the Indians—was a thing that was absolutely necessary to the life of the New England colonies and the other provinces under English rule. Fort Edward still remained to her, though Oswego and William Henry had fallen and were demolished. The capture of Ticonderoga would be a blow to France which would weaken her immensely, and lower her prestige with the Indians, which was now a source of great danger to the English colonists.

The story of the massacre after the surrender of Fort William Henry had made a profound impression throughout the English-speaking provinces, and had awakened a longing after vengeance which in itself had seemed almost like an earnest of victory. And now the regular troops began to muster and pour in, and Albany was all excitement and enthusiasm; for the Dutch had by that time come to have a thorough distrust of France, and to desire the victory of the English arms only less ardently than the English themselves.

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Mrs. Schuyler, as usual, opened her doors wide to receive as many of the officers as she was able whilst the final preparations were being made. And upon a soft midsummer evening Lord Howe appeared in the supper room, bringing with him two fine-looking officers—one grey headed, the other young and ardent—and introducing them to his hostess and those assembled round the table as Major Duncan Campbell, the Laird of Inverawe, in Scotland; with his son Alexander, a Lieutenant of the Highland force.

Young Alexander was seated next to Fritz at table, and began an eager conversation with him. Talk surged to and fro that night. Excitement prevailed everywhere. But Fritz observed that Major Campbell sat very grave and silent, and that even Lord Howe's efforts to draw him into conversation proved unavailing.

Mrs. Schuyler also tried, but with little success, to make the veteran talk. He answered with grave courtesy all remarks made to him, but immediately lapsed into a sombre abstraction, from which it seemed difficult to rouse him.

At the end of the supper Lord Howe rose to his feet, made a dashing little speech to the company, full of fire and enthusiasm, and proposed the toast:

"Success to the expedition against Ticonderoga!"

Fritz happened to be looking at the grave, still face of Major Campbell, and as these words were spoken he saw a sudden spasm pass across it. The soldier rose suddenly to his feet, took up his glass for a moment, put it down untasted, and with a bow to his hostess pushed aside his chair, and strode from the room in an access of visible emotion.

Lord Howe looked after him a moment, and draining his glass, seemed about to go after the guest; but young Alexander, from the other side of the table, made him a sign, and he sat down again.

The incident, however, seemed to act like the breaking up of the supper party, and the guests rose and left the table, dispersing quickly to look after bag or baggage or some last duty, till only Mrs. Schuyler, Lord Howe, Fritz, and Lieutenant Campbell were left in the supper room.

It was then that young Alexander looked round and said, "It was the name you spoke which affected my father so strangely—the fatal name of Ticonderoga!"

"Fatal! how fatal?" asked Lord Howe quickly.

"You have not heard the strange story, then?"

"No; what story?"

“It concerns my father; it is the cause of his melancholy. When you have heard it you will not perhaps wonder, though to you the incident may seem incredible.”

“I have learned that there are many things in this world which are wonderful and mysterious, yet which it is folly to disbelieve,” answered Howe. “Let us hear your story, Campbell. I would not have spoken words to hurt your father could I have known.”

“I am sure you would not; but hear the tale, and you will know why that name sounds in his ears like a death knell.

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“Long years ago it must have been when I was but a little child—my father was sitting alone over the fire in our home at Inverawe; a wild, strange place that I love as I love no other spot on earth. He was in the great hall, and, suddenly there came a knocking at the door, loud and imperative. He opened, and there stood a man without, wild and dishevelled, who told how he had slain a man in a fray, and was flying from his pursuers.

“‘Give me help and shelter!’ he implored; and my father drew him in and closed the door, and promised to hide him. ’Swear on your dirk not to give me up!’ he implored; and my father swore, though with him his word was ever his bond. He hid the fugitive in a secret place, and hardly had he done so before there was another loud knocking at the door.

“This time it was the pursuers, hot on the track of the murderer. ‘He has slain your cousin Donald,’ they told him. ’He cannot be far away. We are hunting for him. Can you help us?’ My father was in a great strait; but he remembered his oath, and though he sent out servants to help in the search, he would not give up to justice the man who had trusted him.”

“And he was right,” said Lord Howe quickly; “I honour and respect him for that.”

“It may be so, yet it is against the traditions of our house and race,” answered Alexander gravely; “and that night my father woke suddenly from a troubled dream to see the ghost of his murdered kinsman standing at his bedside. The spectre spoke to him in urgent tones:

“’Inverawe, Inverawe, blood has been shed; shield not the murderer!’

“Unable to sleep, my father rose, and went to the fugitive and told him he could not shelter him longer. ‘You swore on your dirk!’ replied the miserable man; and my father, admitting the oath not to betray him, led him away in the darkness and hid him in a mountain cave known to hardly any save himself.

“That night once more the spectre came and spoke the same words, ‘Inverawe, Inverawe, blood has been shed; shield not the murderer!’ The vision troubled my father greatly. At daybreak he went once more to the cave; but the man was gone—whither he never knew. He went home, and again upon the third night the ghostly figure stood beside him; but this time he was less stern of voice and aspect.

“He spoke these words, ’Farewell, Inverawe; farewell, till we meet at Ticonderoga.’ Then it vanished, and he has never seen it since.”

“Ticonderoga!” repeated Lord Howe, and looked steadily at Alexander, who proceeded:

“That was the word. My father had never heard it before. The sound of it was so strange that he wrote it down; and when I was a youth of perhaps seventeen summers, and had become a companion to him, he told me the whole story, and we pondered together as to what and where Ticonderoga could be. Years had passed since he saw the vision, and he had never heard the name from that day. I had not heard it either—-then.”

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The faces of the listeners were full of grave interest. The strangeness of the coincidence struck them all.

“And then?” queried Howe, after a silence.

“Then came the news of this war, and some Highland regiments were ordered off. My father and I were amongst those to go. We were long in hearing what our destination was to be. We had landed upon these shores before we heard that the expedition to which we were attached was bound for Ticonderoga.”

Again there was silence, which Mrs. Schuyler broke by asking gently:

“And your father thinks that there is some doom connected with that name?”

“He is convinced that be will meet his death there,” replied Alexander, “and I confess I fear the same myself.”

Nobody spoke for a minute, and then Mrs. Schuyler said softly:

“It is a strange, weird story; yet it cannot but be true. No man could guess at such a name. Ticonderoga, Ticonderoga. I wonder what will be the end of that day!”

“And what matters the end if we do our duty to the last?” spoke Lord Howe, lifting his bright young face and throwing back his head with a gesture that his friends knew well. “A man can but die once. For my part, I only ask to die sword in hand and face to the foe, doing my duty to my country, my heart at peace with God. That is the spirit with which we soldiers must go into battle. We are sent there by our country; we fight for her. If need be we die for her. Can we ask a nobler death? For myself I do not. Let it come to me at Ticonderoga, or wherever Providence wills, I will not shrink or fear. Give me only the power to die doing my duty, and I ask no more.”

There was a beautiful light in his great hazel eyes, a sweet smile hovered round his lips. Fritz, looking at him, seemed to see something in his face which he had scarcely noted before—a depth, a serenity, a beauty quite apart from the dashing gallantry of look and bearing which was his most salient characteristic.

Into the eyes of Mrs. Schuyler there had sprung sudden tears. She went over to the young man and laid a hand upon his head.

“Thank God that our soldiers still go into battle in that spirit; that they make their peace with Him before they draw sword upon their fellow men. A soldier’s life is a strange paradox; yet God, who is the God of battles as well as Prince of Peace, knows and understands. He will bless the righteous cause, though He may call to rest many a gallant soldier, and still in death many an ardent young heart. But however mysteriously He works, we are instruments in His hands. Let us strive to be worthy of that honour,

and then we shall know that we are helping to bring nearer His kingdom upon earth, which, when once set up, shall bring in a reign of peace, where war shall be no more."

"Amen, with all my heart!" quoth Lord Howe, and there was a light in his eyes which bespoke that, soldier though he was to his fingertips, he was no stranger to the hope of the eternal peace which the Lord alone can give.

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Mrs. Schuyler was not a demonstrative woman in daily life; but when her guest rose to say goodnight upon this last evening, she kissed him as a mother might, and he kissed her back with words of tender gratitude and affection.

And so the night fell upon the town of Albany—the night before the march to Ticonderoga.

Chapter 4: Ticonderoga.

A joyous farewell to friends at Albany, with anticipation of a speedy and victorious return thither; a rapid and well-arranged march to Fort Edward and Lake George, where they were gladdened by the sight of the hardy Rogers and the remnant of his gallant band, embarked in whaleboats, and ready to lead the van or perform any daring service asked of them; a cheerful embarking upon the lake in the great multitude of boats and bateaux; bright sunshine overhead, the sound of military music in their ears, flags waving, men cheering and shouting—what expedition could have started under happier and more joyous auspices?

There were regulars from England—the foremost being the Fifty-fifth, commanded by Lord Howe. There were American and Highland regiments, and the provincials from numbers of the provinces, each in its own uniform and colours. The lake was alive with above one thousand craft for the transport of this great army with its heavy artillery, and Rogers declared that Ticonderoga was as good as their own: for it had only provision to last eight or nine days; and if not at once battered down by the enemy's guns, it could easily be starved out by a judicious disposition of the troops.

One night was spent camped halfway down the lake. Lord Howe, with Stark and Rogers and Fritz for companions, lay upon his bearskin overlooking Fritz's diagrams of the fort, taken in past days, listening to what all the three men had to tell of the fortress, both inside and out, and making many plans for the attack upon the morrow.

General Abercromby was with the army; yet it was well known that Lord Howe was the leading spirit, and to him it was that all the men instinctively looked. It was he who upon the morrow, when they had reached and passed the Narrows and were drawing near to the fort, reconnoitred the landing place in whaleboats, drove off a small party of French soldiers who were watching them, but were unable to oppose them, and superintended the landing of the whole army.

The lake here had narrowed down to the dimensions of a river, and it made a considerable bend something like a horseshoe. If the bridge had not been broken down, they could have marched to a point much nearer to Ticonderoga upon a well-trodden road; but the bridge being gone, it was necessary to march the army along the west bank of this river-like waterway which connected Lake George with Lake

Champlain, for there were too many dangerous rapids for navigation to be possible; and upon the tongue of land jutting out into Lake Champlain, and washed by the waters of this river on its other side, stood the fortress of Ticonderoga, their goal.

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Rogers was their leader. He knew the forest well; yet even he found it a somewhat difficult matter to pick his way through the dense summer foliage. The columns following found the forest tracks extraordinarily difficult to follow. They were many of them unused to such rough walking, and fell into inevitable confusion.

Rogers, together with Lord Howe and some of his hardier soldiers and the Rangers, pushed boldly on. Whilst they walked they talked of what lay before them. Rogers told how Montcalm himself was within the fort, and that his presence there inspired the soldiers with great courage and confidence; because he was a fine soldier, a very gallant gentleman, and had had considerable success in arms ever since he arrived in Canada.

As the forest tracks grew more densely overgrown, Lord Howe paused in his rapid walk beside Rogers.

“My men are growing puzzled by the forest,” he said, “and indeed it is small wonder, seeing that we ourselves scarce know where we are. Go you on with the Rangers, Rogers, and I will return a short distance and get my men into better order. I do not anticipate an ambush; but there may be enemies lurking in the woods. We must not be taken unawares. Push you on, and I will follow with my company at a short distance.”

“I will take a handful of men with me,” answered Rogers, “and push on to reconnoitre. Let the rest remain with you. They will encourage and hearten up the regulars, who are new to this sort of thing; and when I know more clearly our exact position, I will fall back and report.”

Fritz remained with Howe, whose men came marching up in a rather confused and straggling fashion, but were only perplexed, not in any wise disheartened, by the roughness of the road. When the column had regained something like marching order, the word was given to start, and Lord Howe with a bodyguard of Rangers marched at the head.

They had proceeded like this for perhaps a mile or more, when there was a quick stir in the thicket. Next moment the challenge rang out:

“Qui vive?”

“Francais!” shouted back a Ranger, who had learned Rogers’ trick of puzzling his opponents by the use of French words.

But this time they were not deceived. A stern word of command was given. A crack of rifles sounded out from the bushes; puffs of smoke and flashes of fire were seen.

“Steady, men; load and fire!”

The command was given by Lord Howe. It was the last he ever spoke. The wood rang with the crossfire of the foes who could not see each other. Fritz had discharged his piece, and was loading again when he saw Lord Howe suddenly throw up his hands and fall helplessly forward.

He sprang to his side with a cry of dismay. He strove to hold him up and support him to some place of safety, but could only lay him down beneath a tree hard by, where a ring of Rangers instantly formed around him, whilst the skirmish in the forest was hotly maintained on both sides.

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“He is shot through the heart!” cried Stark, in a lamentable voice, as he hastily examined the wound; and indeed the shadow of death had fallen upon the brave, bright, noble face of the young officer.

Just once the heavy lids lifted themselves. Lord Howe looked into the faces of the two men bending over him, and a faint smile curved his lips.

“Keep them steady,” he just managed to whisper, and the next moment his head fell back against Fritz’s shoulder. He had passed into the unknown land where the clamour of battle is no more heard.

It was a terrible blow, and consternation spread through the ranks as it became known. Indeed, but for the Rangers, a panic and flight would probably have followed. But Rogers, Stark, and Fritz were of sterner stuff than the levies, and more seasoned than the bulk of regular soldiers.

Rogers had returned instantly upon hearing the firing, and had discharged a brisk volley upon the French as he dashed through their ranks to regain his companions. Caught between two fires, they were in no small peril, and made a dash for the riverbed; the Rangers standing steady and driving them to their destruction, whilst the ranks had time to recover themselves and maintain their ground.

The rout of this body of French soldiers was complete, whilst the English loss was small numerically; but the loss of Howe was irreparable, and all heart and hope seemed taken out of the gallant army which had started forth so full of hope. There was nothing now to be done but to fall back upon the main army, with the sorrowful tidings of their leader’s death, and await the order of General Abercromby as to the next move.

This was done, and the men were kept under arms all night, waiting for orders which never came. Indecision and procrastination again prevailed, and were again the undoing of the English enterprise.

Still there was no question but that the fort must be attacked, and as the Rangers came in with the news that the French had broken up and deserted a camp they had hitherto held at some sawmills on the river, a little way from the fort, a detachment of soldiers was sent to take possession of this place. This having been done, and a bridge thrown over the river by an able officer of the name of Bradstreet, the army was moved up, and encamped at this place prior to the assault of the fort. Rogers and his Rangers had reconnoitred the whole place, and were eager to tell their tale.

Fort Ticonderoga occupied a triangular promontory, washed upon two sides by the waters of Lake Champlain and the river-like extremity of Lake George. The landward approach was guarded by a strong rampart of felled trees, which the soldiers had formed into a breastwork and abattis which might almost be called musket-proof. So at

least Rogers and his men had judged. They had watched the French at their task, and had good reason to know the solid protection given to the men behind by a rampart of this sort.

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He was therefore all eagerness for the cannon to be brought up from the lake.

“The artillery will make short work of it, General,” he said, in his bluff, abrupt fashion. “It will come rattling about their heads, and they must take to the walls behind, and these will soon give way before a steady cannonade. Or if we take the cannon up to yonder heights of Rattlesnake Hill, we can fling our round shot within their breastwork from end to end, and drive the men back like rabbits to their burrow; or we can plant a battery at the narrow mouth of Lake Champlain, and cut off their supplies. With the big guns we can beat them in half a dozen ways; but let our first act be to bring them up, for muskets and rifles are of little use against such a rampart as they have made, bristling with spikes and living twigs and branches, which baffle assault as you might scarce believe without a trial.”

Rogers spoke with the assurance and freedom of a man used to command and certain of his subject. He and Lord Howe had been on terms of most friendly intimacy, and the young Brigadier had learned much from the veteran Ranger, whose services had been of so much value to the English. He would never have taken umbrage at advice given by a subordinate. But General Abercromby was of a different order, and he little liked Rogers’ assured manner and brusque, independent tone. He heard him to the end, but gave an evasive reply, and sent out an engineer on his own account to survey the French position, and bring him word what was his opinion.

This worthy made his survey, and came back full of confidence.

“The rampart is but a hastily-constructed breastwork of felled trees; it should be easily carried by assault,” he reported, full of careless confidence. “A good bayonet charge, resolutely conducted, is all that is needed, and we shall be in the fort before night.”

The soldiers cheered aloud when they heard the news. They were filled with valour and eagerness, in spite of the death of their beloved leader. It seemed as though his spirit inspired them with ardent desire to show what they could do; although generalship, alas! had perished with the young Brigadier, who had fallen at such an untimely moment.

The Rangers looked at one another with grim faces. They would not speak a word to dishearten the troops; but they knew, far better than the raw levies or the English regulars could do, the nature of the obstruction to be encountered.

“A bayonet charge by soldiers full of valour is no light thing,” said Pringle to the Ranger, as they stood in the evening light talking together. “Resolute men have done wonders before now in such a charge, and why not we tomorrow?”

“Have you seen the abattis?” asked Rogers, in his grim and brusque fashion.

“No,” answered Pringle; “I have only heard it described by those who have.”

“Come, then, and look at it before it be dark,” was Rogers’ reply; and he, together with Stark, led Fritz and Pringle and Roche along a narrow forest pathway which the Rangers were engaged in widening and improving, ready for the morrow’s march, until he was able to show them, from a knoll of rising ground, the nature of the fortification they were to attack upon the morrow.

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The French had shown no small skill in the building of this breastwork, which ran along a ridge of high ground behind the fort itself, and commanded the approach towards it from the land side. The whole forest in the immediate vicinity had been felled. It bore the appearance of a tract of ground through which a cyclone has whirled its way. Great numbers of the trees had been dragged up to form the rampart, but there were hundreds of others, as well as innumerable roots and stumps, lugs and heads, lying in confusion all around; and Rogers, pointing towards the encumbered tract just beneath and around the rampart, looked at Pringle and said:

“How do you think a bayonet charge is to be rushed over such ground as that? And what good will our musketry fire be against those tough wooden walls, directed upon a foe we cannot see, but who can pick us off in security from behind their breastwork? For let me tell you that there is great skill shown in its construction. On the inside, I doubt not, they can approach close to their loopholes, which you can detect all along, and take easy aim at us; but on this side it is bristling with pointed stakes, twisted boughs, and treetops so arranged as to baffle and hinder any attempt at assault. As I told your General, his cannon could shatter it in a few hours, if he would but bring them to bear. But a rampart like that is practically bayonet and musket proof. It will prove impregnable to assault.”

Pringle and Roche exchanged glances. They had seen something of fighting before this, but never warfare so strange.

“Would that Lord Howe were living!” exclaimed the younger officer. “He would have heard reason; he would have been advised. But the General—”

He paused, and a meaning gesture concluded the sentence. It was not for them to speak against their commander; but he inspired no confidence in his men, and it was plainly seen that he was about to take a very ill-judged step.

It is the soldier’s fate that he must not rebel or remonstrate or argue; his duty is to obey orders and leave the rest. But that night, as the army slept in the camp round the deserted sawmills, there were many whose eyes never closed in slumber. Fritz saw the veteran Campbell sitting in the moonlight, looking straight before him with wide, unseeing eyes; and when the grey light of day broke over the forest, his face was shadowed, as it seemed, by the approach of death.

“I shall never see another sunrise,” he said to Fritz, as the latter walked up to him; “my span of life will be cut through here at Ticonderoga.”

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Fritz made no reply. It seemed to him that many lives would be cut short upon this fateful day. He wondered whether he should live to see the shades of evening fall. He had no thought of quailing or drawing back. He had cast in his lot with the army, and he meant to fight his very best that day; but he realized the hopelessness of the contest before them, and although, if the General could only be aroused in time to a sense of his own blunder, and would at the eleventh hour order up the cannon, and take those steps which might ensure success, the tide of battle might soon be turned. Yet no man felt any confidence in him as a leader, and it was only the ignorant soldiers, unaware of what lay before them, who rose to greet the coming day with hope and confidence in their hearts.

But it was something that they should start forth with so high a courage. Even if they were going to their death, it was better they should believe that they were marching forth to victory. They cheered lustily as they received the order, which was to carry the breastwork by a bayonet charge; and only the Rangers saw the grim smile which crossed the face of Rogers as he heard that word given.

Yet he and his gallant band of Rangers were in the van. They did not shrink from the task before them, although they knew better than others the perils and difficulties by which it was beset. They had widened the path; they led the way. There was no more confusion in the line of march.

The General remained behind at the sawmills, to direct the operations of the whole army, as there were other slighter enterprises to be undertaken upon the same day, though the assault of the protecting rampart was the chief one. News was to be brought to him at short intervals of the course the fight was taking. It was Rogers' great hope that he would soon be made aware of the impossibility of the task he had set his soldiers, and would send instant and urgent orders for the cannon to be brought up to the aid of his foot soldiers.

Full of hope and confidence the columns pressed forward, till shortly after midday they emerged from the shelter of the forest, and saw before them the broken space of open ground, with its encumbering mass of stumps and fallen timber, and behind that the grim rampart, where all looked still as death. They formed into line quickly and without confusion and then, with an enthusiastic cheer, made a dash for the barrier.

The Rangers and light infantry in front began to fire as they advanced; but the main body of soldiers held their bayonets in position, and strove after an orderly advance. But over such ground order was impossible. They had to clamber, to scramble, to cut their way as best they could. The twigs and branches blinded them; they fell over the knotted roots; they became disordered and scattered, though their confidence remained unshaken.

Then suddenly, when they were half across the open space, came the long crack and blaze from end to end of the rampart; smoke seemed to gush and flash out from one extremity to the other. Sharp cries of agony and dismay, shouts and curses, filled the air. The English fell in dozens amid the fallen trees, and those behind rushed forward over the bodies of their doomed companions.

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It was in vain to try to carry the rampart by the bayonet. The soldiers drew up and fired all along their line; but of what avail was it to fire upon an enemy they could not see, whilst they themselves were a target for the grapeshot and musketballs which swept in a deadly cross fire through their ranks? But they would not fall back. Headed by the Rangers, who made rapid way over the rough and encumbered ground, they pressed on, undaunted by the hail of iron about them, and inflamed to fury by the fall of their comrades around them.

It was an awful scene. It was branded upon the memory of the survivors in characters of fire.

Fritz kept in the foremost rank, unable to understand why he was not shot down. He reached the rampart, and was halfway up, when he was clutched by the hands of a man in front, who in his death agony knew not what he did, and the two rolled into the ditch together.

For a moment all was suffocation and horror. Unwounded, but buried and battered, with his musket torn from his grasp, Fritz struggled out through the writhing heap of humanity, and saw that the head of the column had fallen back for a breathing space, though with the evident intention of re-forming and dashing again to the charge.

The firing from the rampart still continued; but Fritz made a successful dash back to the lines, and reached them in safety. He was known by this time as an experienced Ranger, and was taken aside by Bradstreet, the officer in command of the light infantry that with the Rangers headed the charge.

The gallant officer was wounded and breathless, and was seated upon a fallen trunk.

“Neville,” he said, “I know that you are fleet of foot and stout of heart. I would have you return to the camp on the instant, with a message for the General. Tell him how things are here, and that this rampart is to the utmost as impregnable as Rogers warned us. Our men are falling thick and fast, and although full of courage, cannot do the impossible. Beg him to order the guns to be brought up, for without them we are helpless against the enemy.”

Fritz knew this right well, and took the message.

“We shall make another charge immediately,” Bradstreet said in conclusion. “We shall not fail to carry out our orders; but I have little hope of success. We can do almost nothing against the French, whilst they mow us down by hundreds. No men can hold on at such odds for long. Go quickly, and bring us word again, for we are like to be cut to pieces.

“You are not wounded yourself?”

“No; I have escaped as by a miracle. I will run the whole distance and take the message. Would that the General had listened to counsel before!”

Bradstreet made a gesture of assent, but said nothing. Fritz sped through the forest, hot and breathless, yet straining every nerve to reach his goal.

It was a blazing day where the shade of the forest was not found, and this made the fighting all the harder. Fritz’s heart was heavy within him for the lives thrown away so needlessly. When he reached the tent of the General, and was ushered into his presence, burning words rushed to his lips, and it was only with an effort that he commanded himself to speak calmly of the fight and deliver the message with which he was charged.

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General Abercromby listened and frowned, and looked about him as though to take counsel with his officers. But the best of these were away at the fight, and those with him were few and insignificant and inexperienced.

“Surely a little resolution and vigour would suffice to carry an insignificant breastwork, hastily thrown up only a few days ago,” he said, unwilling to confess himself in the wrong. “I will order up the Highland regiments to your aid. With their assistance you can make another charge, and it will be strange if you cannot carry all before you.”

Fritz compressed his lips, and his heart sank.

“I will give you a line to Colonel Bradstreet. Tell him that reinforcements are coming, and that another concerted attack must be made. It will be time enough to talk of sending for the artillery when we see the result of that.”

A few lines were penned by the General and entrusted to Fritz, who dashed back with burning heart to where the fight still raged so fiercely. He heard the bagpipes of the Highlanders skirling behind as he reached the opening in the forest. He knew that these brave men could fight like tigers; but to what avail, he thought, were so many gallant soldiers to be sent to their death?

The fighting in his absence had been hot and furious, but nothing had been done to change the aspect of affairs. Intrepid men had assaulted the rampart, and even leaped upon and over it, only to meet their death upon the other side.

Once a white flag had been seen waving over the rampart, and for a moment hope had sprung up that the enemy was about to surrender. The firing for that brief space had been suspended, the English raising their muskets over their heads and crying “Quarter!”—meaning that they would show mercy to the foe; the French thinking that they were coming to give themselves up as prisoners of war. The signal had merely been waved by a young captain in defiance to the foe. He had tied his handkerchief to his musket in his excitement, without any intention to deceive. But the incident aroused a bitter feeling. The English shouted out that the French were seeking to betray them, and the fight was resumed with such fury that for a brief while the rampart was in real danger of being taken, and the French General was in considerable anxiety.

But the odds were too great. The gallant assailants were driven back, and when Fritz arrived with his news there was again a slight cessation in the vehemence of the attack.

Bradstreet eagerly snatched at the letter and opened it. Fritz’s face had told him something; the written words made assurance doubly sure.

He tore the paper across, and set his foot upon it.

“We can die but once,” he said briefly; “but it goes to my heart to see these brave fellows led like sheep to the slaughter. England will want to know the reason why when this story is told at home.”

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The Highlanders were soon upon the scene of action filled to the brim with the stubborn fury with which they were wont to fight. At their head marched their Major, the dark-faced Inverawe, his son only a little behind.

The arrival of reinforcements put new heart into the gallant but exhausted regiments which had led the attack; and now the Highlanders were swarming about the foot of the rampart, seeking to scale its bristling sides, often gaining the top, by using the bodies of their slain countrymen as ladders, but only to be cut down upon the other side.

The Major cheered on his men. The shadow was gone from his face now. In the heat of the battle he had no thought left for himself. His kinsmen and clansmen were about him. He was ever in the van. One young chieftain with some twenty followers was on the top of the rampart, hacking and hewing at those behind, as if possessed of superhuman strength. The Highlanders, with their strange cries and yells, pressed ever on and on. But the raking fire from behind the abattis swept their ranks, mowed them down, and strewed the ground with dying and dead.

Like a rock stood Campbell of Inverawe, his eyes everywhere, directing, encouraging, cheering on his men, who needed not his words to inspire them with unquenchable fury.

Suddenly his tall figure swayed forward. Without so much as a cry he fell. There was a rush towards him of his own clansmen. They lifted him, and bore him from the scene of action. It was the end of the assault. The Highlanders who had scaled the rampart had all been bayoneted within. Nearly two thousand men, wounded or dead, lay in that terrible clearing. It was hopeless to fight longer. All that man could do had been done. The recall was sounded, and the brave troops, given over to death and disaster by the incompetence of one man, were led back to the camp exhausted and despairing; the Rangers still doing good service in carrying off the wounded, and keeping up a steady fire whilst this task was being proceeded with.

General Abercromby's terror at the result of the day's work was as pitiful as his mismanagement had been. There was no talk now of retrieving past blunders; there was nothing but a general rout—a retreat upon Fort Edward as fast as boats could take them. One blunder was capped by another. Ticonderoga was left to the French, when it might have been an easy prey to the English. The day of disaster was not yet ended, though away in the east the star of hope was rising.

It was at Fort Edward that the wounded laird of Inverawe breathed his last. His wound had been mortal, and he was barely living when they landed him on the banks of Lake George.

"Donald, you are avenged!" he said once, a few minutes before his death. "We have met at Ticonderoga!"

Book 4: Wolfe.

Chapter 1: A Soldier At Home.

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He lay upon a couch beneath the shade of a drooping lime tree, where flickering lights and shadows played upon his tall, slight figure and pale, quaint face. There was nothing martial in the aspect of this young man, invalided home from active service on the Continent, where the war was fiercely raging between the European powers. He had a very white skin, and his hair was fair, with a distinct shade of red in it. It was cut short in front, and lightly powdered when the young man was in full dress, and behind it was tied in the queue so universally worn.

He was quite young still, barely thirty years old; yet he had seen years of active service in the army, and had achieved no small distinction for intrepidity and cool daring. He had won the notice already of the man now at the helm of state, whose eyes were anxiously fixed upon any rising soldier of promise, ready to avail himself of the services of such to sustain England's honour and prestige both on land and sea.

James Wolfe was the son of a soldier, and had been brought up to the profession of arms almost as a matter of course. Yet he seemed a man little cut out for the life of the camp; for he suffered from almost chronic ill-health, and was often in sore pain of body even though the indomitable spirit was never quenched within him. His face bore the look of resolution and self mastery which is often to be seen in those who have been through keen physical suffering. There were lines there which told of weary days and nights of pain; but there was an unquenchable light in the eyes that invariably struck those who came into contact with the young officer. He had already learned the secret of imparting to his men the enthusiasm which was kindled in his own breast; and there was not a man in his company but would gladly have laid down his life in his service, if he had been called upon to do so.

Today, however, there was nothing of the soldier and leader of forlorn hope in his aspect. He lay back upon his couch with a dreamy abstraction in his gaze. The gambols of his canine favourites passed unnoticed by him. He had been reading news that stirred him deeply, and he had fallen into a meditation.

The news sheet contained a brief and hasty account of the loss of Fort William Henry, with a hint respecting the massacre which had followed. No particulars were as yet forthcoming. This was but the voice of rumour. But the paragraph, vague as it was, had been sufficient to arouse strange feelings within the young officer. He had let the paper fall now, and was turning things over in his own mind.

One of the articles had said how needful it was becoming for England to awake from her lethargy, and send substantial aid to her colonies, unless she desired to see them annihilated by the aggressions of France. National feeling against that proud foe was beginning to rise high. The Continental war had quickened it, and Wolfe, who had served against the armies of France in many a closely-contested battle, felt his pulses tingling at the recital of her successes against England's infant colonies.

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Men were wanted for the service, the paper had said—men of courage and proved valour. We had had too many bunglers already out there; it was now time that men of a different stamp should be forthcoming.

In his ears there seemed beaten the sound of a question and its reply. Where had he heard those words, and when?

“Who will go up to battle against this proud foe?”

“Here am I; send me.”

The light leaped into his eyes; his long, thin hands clasped and unclasped themselves as stirring thoughts swept over him. He knew that there was a great struggle impending between England and her French rival upon the other side of the world. Hitherto his battlefields had been in Europe, but a voice from far away seemed to be calling to him in urgent accents. Away in the West, English subjects were being harried and killed, driven like helpless sheep to slaughter. How long was it to continue? Would the mother country be content that her provinces should be first contracted and then slowly strangled by the chains imposed by the boundless ambition of France? Never, never, never! The young officer spoke the words aloud, half raising himself from his couch as he did so.

There was a rising man now at the helm of the state; he had not the full powers that many desired to see. He had to work hand in hand with a colleague of known incapacity. Yet the voice of the nation was beginning to make itself heard. England was growing enraged against a minister under whose rule so many grievous blunders had been committed. Newcastle still retained his position of foremost of the King’s advisers, but Pitt now stood at his side; and it was understood that the younger statesman was to take the real command of the ship of state, whilst his elder associate confined himself to those matters in which he could not well do harm.

“If only it had come three years earlier,” breathed Wolfe—“before we had suffered such loss and disgrace!”

The young soldier knew that an expedition had been fitted out a few months ago for Louisbourg in Acadia—that French fortress of Cape Breton which alone had been able to resist the English arms. The capture of Louisbourg had been the one thing determined upon by the tardy government for the relief of their colonies in the Western world. It had been surmised that this action on their part would draw away the French troops from the frontier, and thus relieve the colonists from any pressing anxiety; but although there had been little definite news from the fleet so far, it began to be reared that the Admirals had mismanaged matters, and that no blow would be struck this season.

September had come—a hot, sunny, summer-like month in England. But Wolfe had heard something of the rock-bound coasts of Cape Breton, and he was well aware that if the furious equinoctial gales should once threaten the English fleet, no Admiral would be able to attempt an action by sea, or even the landing of the troops.

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Young Wolfe had one friend out With the expedition, and from him he had received a letter only a short time ago, telling him of all the delays and procrastinations which were already beginning to render abortive a well-planned scheme. It made his blood boil in his veins to think how the incapacity of those in command doomed the hopes of so many to such bitter disappointment, and lowered the prestige of England in the eyes of the whole civilized world.

“If Pitt could but have a free hand, things would be different!” exclaimed Wolfe again, speaking aloud, as is the fashion of lonely men. “But the King is beginning to value and appreciate him, and the nation is learning confidence. The time will come—yes, the time will come! Heaven send that I live to see the day, and have a hand in the glorious work!”

As he spoke these words he observed a certain excitement amongst the dogs playing around him, and guessed that their quick ears had caught sounds of an arrival of some sort. In a few minutes’ time his servant approached him, bearing a letter which he handed to his master, who opened it and cast his eyes over its contents.

“Are the two gentlemen here?” he asked.

“Yes, sir; they asked that the letter might be given to you, and that they might wait until you had read it.”

“Then show them out to me here, and bring us coffee,” said Wolfe, whose face had put on a look of considerable eagerness and animation; and as the servant retired towards the house, the soldier remained looking after him, as though wistful to catch the first glimpse of the expected guests.

In a few minutes they appeared in the wake of the servant. Both were quietly dressed in sober riding suits; but there the resemblance ended. One of the pair was a very tall man, with fair hair cut short all round his head, and a pair of large blue-grey eyes that had a trick of seeming to look through and beyond the objects upon which they were bent, and a thoroughly English type of feature; whilst his companion was more slightly built, albeit a man of fine proportions, too, with a darker face, more chiselled features, and hair dressed according to the prevailing mode, lightly powdered in front, and tied in a queue behind.

Wolfe rose slowly to his feet, his brow slightly contracting with the effort. Upon his face there was a very attractive smile, and he held out his hand in turn to the two newcomers.

“You are very welcome, gentlemen—more welcome than I can say. I am grateful to my friend Sir Charles for giving me this opportunity of making your acquaintance. It has been my great wish to speak face to face with men who have lived in that great land

whither all eyes are now turning. Be seated, I pray you, gentlemen, and tell me which of you is Mr. Julia Dautray, and which Mr. Humphrey Angell."

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“My name is Dautray,” answered the dark-eyed man. “We have travelled to England together, my friend and I, but have also been in France, to visit some of those there still bearing my name, although my immediate forefathers have lived and died in the lands of the far West. We have met with much kindness in this country, and have some time since accomplished the mission on which we were dispatched. Our thoughts are turning once more towards the land of our birth. Had we not been in France at the time, we would gladly have accompanied the expedition which set sail for Louisbourg not long since.”

“I cannot regret that you failed to do so,” answered Wolfe, in his winning way, “since it has brought me the pleasure of this visit. I trust, gentlemen, that you will honour me by being my guests for a few days at least. There is very much that I desire to learn about the lands from which you come. My friend Sir Charles speaks as though you were wanderers upon the face of the earth. If that be so, I may hope that you will stay your wanderings meantime, and make my home yours for a while.”

“You are very kind, Captain Wolfe,” said Julian gratefully; “if it be not trespassing too far upon your hospitality, we should be glad and grateful to accept it.”

“The honour will be mine,” said Wolfe; “I have long desired to know more of that world beyond the seas. Hitherto I have seen nothing save my own country, and a few of those which lie nearest to it. But I have the feeling within me that the time is coming when I shall be sent farther afield. Men will be needed for the strife which must soon be waged on the far side of the Atlantic, and it may be that I shall be chosen as one of those who will go thither.”

“That is what Sir Charles said when he gave us this letter for you,” said Julian. “He said that Mr. Pitt had named you once or twice as a rising officer, likely to be chosen for service there. That is why Sir Charles thought that a visit from us would be welcome. I do not know whether we can give you any news which you have not heard already; but we can at least answer such questions as to the country and its life as may be interesting to you, though it is now two years since we sailed from its shores.”

Into Wolfe’s eyes there had leaped a bright light.

“Spoke Sir Charles such words of me?” he said eagerly. “Has Mr. Pitt named me as likely for this service?”

“So it was told us,” answered Julian. “We came to England in the early spring of last year, with letters and urgent appeals to friends in England from their kinfolk beyond the sea. We went from place to place, as our directions were, and saw many men and heard much hot discussion; but it seemed hard to get a hearing in high places, and for a while we thought we had had our journey in vain. Nevertheless they would not let us

go. One and another would keep us, hoping to gain introduction to some influential man, in whose ears we could tell

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our tale. And so matters went on, and we were passed from place to place, always well treated and well cared for. In the spring we went to France, though we were warned of danger, because of the war. But we met with no hurt. Humphrey passed as my servant, and I have French blood in my veins, and can speak the language as one born there. Nor did we go to any large centres, but contented ourselves with the remote spots, where I found kinsfolk of mine own name living still. And we reached England again only two months ago."

"And then?"

"There was more excitement then. The fleet had sailed for Louisbourg; men's hearts were stirred within them. Tales of fresh atrocities along the border had reached home. Anger against France was stirred up by the war. It was then we were brought before Sir Charles Graham, and told our tale to him. He is the friend of Mr. Pitt, and he came back to us many times to learn more of what we had to tell of the difficulties of the provinces, and of the apathy that prevailed there, even though terrible things Were passing daily close by.

"It was he who at last bid us go to you. He said you were his friend, and would make us welcome for his sake and ours. And when he gave us this letter, he told us the words of Mr. Pitt respecting you."

"And have you other news besides?" asked Wolfe eagerly. "When left you London? And is it yet known there whether this rumour of fresh disaster is true? See, there is the Western news sheet; it speaks of a disquieting rumour as to the fall of Fort William Henry, our outpost on Lake George. Have fresh tidings been received? for if that place fall, we are in evil case indeed."

Julian gravely shook his head.

"The rumour is all too true. Had you not heard? A fast-sailing vessel has brought it to Southampton—the evil tidings of disaster and death. The fort held out bravely through a terrible cannonade; but no relief was sent, and the walls were battered down. There was nothing for it but surrender. The garrison obtained honourable terms; but the French either could not or would not restrain their Indian allies. Surrender was followed by a brutal massacre of the hapless soldiers and their wives and children. It is horrible to read the story of the atrocities committed. We have seen Indians at their hideous work. We know, as you in this land never can do, what it is like."

Wolfe's eyes flashed fire.

"A surrendered garrison massacred! and the French stood by and suffered it!"

“The account is confused. Some say they did try without avail; some that they were callous and indifferent; some that they did much to avert the horrors, and saved large numbers of victims out of their clutches. But they did not succeed in stopping an awful loss of life. The pages of history will be stained dark when the story of that day is written!”

“Ay, truly!” cried Humphrey, in his deep, resonant voice, speaking for the first time; “the page of history should be written in characters of blood and fire. I have seen the work of those savage fiends. I have seen, and I shall remember to the last day of my life!”

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“Tell me,” said Wolfe, looking straight at the stalwart youth, whose lips had slightly drawn themselves back, showing the firm line of the white teeth beneath.

Humphrey had told his tale many times during the past months. He told it to Wolfe that day—told it with a curious graphic power, considering that his words were few, and that his manner was perfectly quiet.

A red flush mounted into Wolfe’s face, and died away again. He drew his breath through, his teeth with a slightly whistling sound. With him this was a sign of keen emotion.

“You saw all that?”

“With my own eyes. I am telling no tale of hearsay. And men have tales yet more horrid to tell—tales to which a man may scarce listen for the horror and the shame. This is the way the Indians serve the subjects of the English crown at the bidding of the servants of France!”

Wolfe raised his right hand, and let it slowly drop again.

“May Heaven give to me the grace,” he said, in a voice that vibrated with tense feeling, “to go forth to the succour of my countrymen there—to fight and to avenge!”

After that there was silence for a while, and the servant came and brought coffee, and took orders for the entertainment and lodging of the guests. When he had gone Wolfe was calm again, and listened with keen interest to the story they had to tell of their arrival in Pennsylvania, and of the extraordinary apathy of the colonists in the eastern towns, and the difficulty of arousing them to any concerted action with their own countrymen in the neighbouring provinces, even for the common defence.

Wolfe knew something of that, and of the causes at work to bring about such a result. He talked with more comprehension and insight as to the state of infant colonies, partially self-governed and self-dependent, struggling out of leading strings, and intent upon growing to man’s estate, than anybody had hitherto done.

“We shall never have a second Canada out there such as France has won—a country wholly dependent upon the one at home, looking always to her for government, help, care, money. No, no; the spirit of those who went forth from England was utterly different. They are English subjects still, but they want to rule themselves after their own way. They will never be helpless and dependent; they will be more like to shake our yoke from off their necks when they arrive at man’s estate. But what matter if they do? We shall be brothers, even though the sea roll between them. The parent country has sent them forth, and must protect them till they are able to protect themselves, even as the birds and the beasts of the fields defend their young. After that we shall see. But

for my part I prefer that struggling spirit of independence and desire after self-government. It can be carried too far; but it shows life, energy, youth, and strength. If Canada were not bound hand and foot to the throne of the French tyrant, she would be a more formidable foe to tackle than she can show herself now."

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“Yet she has done us grievous hurt. We seem able to make no headway against her, in spite of our best efforts.”

“Let us see what better efforts we can make then,” cried Wolfe, with eager eyes. “Best! why, man, we have done nothing but procrastinate and blunder, till my ears tingle with shame as I read the story! But we are awakening at last, and we have a man to look to who is no blunderer. The tide will turn ere long, you will see; and when it does, may I be there to see and to bear my share!”

Julian looked at the gaunt, prostrate form of the soldier, and said gravely:

“But you are surely in no fit state for military service?”

Wolfe threw back his head with a little gesture of impatience, and then smiled brightly.

“This carcass of mine has been a source of trouble and pain to me from my boyhood, and there come moments when I must needs give it a little rest. But yet I have found that it can carry me through the necessary fatigues with a vigour I had scarcely expected of it. It is being patched up again after a hard campaign; and now that the summer has closed, nothing can be set afoot till the spring comes. By that time I shall be fit for service once more, you will see. I am taking the waters of Bath with sedulous care. They have done much for me as it is. Soon I trust to be hale and sound once more.”

“Have you been wounded, sir?”

“Many times, but not seriously; only that everything tells when one is afflicted by such a rickety body as this,” and the young officer smiled his peculiarly brilliant smile, which made the chief charm of his pale, unusual face. “I got both a wound and a severe strain in my last campaign, which has bothered me ever since, and still keeps me to my couch the greater part of the day. But rheumatism is my chronic foe; it follows me wherever I go, lying in wait to pounce upon me, and hold me a cripple in its red-hot iron hand. That is the trouble of my life on the march. It is so often all but impossible to get through the day’s work, and yet it is wonderful how the foe can be held at bay when some task has to be done whether or not.

“But a truce to such talk! A soldier has other things to think of than aching joints and weary bones. A man can but once die for his country, and that is all I ask to do. That mine will not he a long life I feel a certain assurance. All I ask is the power to serve my country as long as I am able, and to die for her, sword in hand, when the hour has come.”

The eyes kindled and the smile flashed forth. Julian and Humphrey looked into the face of the man whom they had heard described as one of the most promising and intrepid

young officers of the English army, and felt a thrill of admiration run through them. The frame was so frail and weak and helpless; but the indomitable spirit seemed as though it would be able to bear its master through any and every peril which duty might bid him face.

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They had consented to be his guests for a few days; but it had not occurred to them that this visit would be prolonged to any great length, and yet thus it came about.

Colonel Wolfe and his wife, the mother of whom the young soldier often spoke in tender and loving terms, were detained from rejoining their son, as they had purposed doing before the winter came. Colonel Wolfe had a property of his own in Kent, and his presence was wanted there. The son was compelled to remain in the neighbourhood of Bath for the sake of his shattered health. They had intended all spending the winter there together in the pleasant house they had taken; but this soon became impossible, and it was then that Wolfe said to his new friends, with that quaint look of appeal in his eyes which they had come to know by this time:

“Could you two be persuaded to take pity upon a capricious and whimsical sick man, and be his companions through the winter months? Then with the spring, when we know what is to be done for the succour of our comrades in the West, we will make shift to go forth to their assistance. If you will stay with me till then, I will promise you shall not lack fitting equipment to follow the army when it sails hence.”

There was nothing the two companions desired more by that time than to remain with Wolfe, the charm of whose personality had by that time quite fascinated them. They felt almost like brothers already. It was upon Humphrey’s strong arm that Wolfe would take his daily walk into the town for the needful baths or water drinkings. It was Julian who read to him the news of the day, and they all discussed it eagerly together. Moreover, he saw to the drilling and training of these two fine men with the keenest interest and enthusiasm. They had the making in them of excellent soldiers, and showed an aptitude which delighted him for all sorts of exercises and feats of arms.

The war fever permeated the whole country by that time, and training and drilling were going on all around. It was easy for the travellers to pick up all that was needful to them of comprehension as to military terms and commands. Hours were spent by themselves and Wolfe over books and maps in the library, whilst he fought over again with them campaign after campaign—those where he had served, and those before his time with which he had close acquaintance; and they entered more and more into the spirit of martial exercise, learning to comprehend military tactics and the art of war as they had never done before.

Meantime the news from the Western world was all bad. The attempt upon Louisbourg had been abortive, owing to the tardiness of the English Admiral, of London the Governor out there, and the early storms which had obliged the fleet to retire even when it had mustered for the attack.

“It is shameful!” cried Wolfe with flashing eyes, as the news was made known; “England will become the laughingstock of the whole world! Fort Oswego lost, William Henry lost, and its garrison massacred! Louisbourg left to the French, without a blow being struck!

Shame upon us! shame upon us! We should blush for our tardy procrastination. But mark my word, this will be the last such blunder! Pitt will take the reins in his own grasp. We shall see a change now."

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“I trust so,” said Humphrey grimly; “it is time indeed. I know what these attacks against Louisbourg will mean for those along the frontier—death, disaster, more Indian raids, less power of protection. The Governor will draw off the levies which might come to their assistance for the work at Louisbourg. The French will hound on the Indians to ravage more and more. We shall hear fresh tales of horror there before the end comes.”

“Which we will avenge!” spoke Wolfe, between his shut teeth. “It shall not always be said of England that she slept whilst her subjects died!”

With the turn of the year active preparations began to be discussed, and Wolfe to receive letters from headquarters. All was now excitement in that household, for there was no doubt that England’s great minister was going to take active measures, and that the day of tardy blundering was to be brought to an end.

Wolfe was found one day in a state of keen excitement.

“I have heard from Mr. Pitt myself!” he cried, waving the paper over his head. “He has taken the great resolve, not only to check the aggressions of France upon the border, but to sweep her out from the Western world, till she can find no place for herself there! That is the spirit I delight in; that is the task I long to aid in; that is the one and only thing to do. Leave her neither root nor branch in the world of the West! If we do, she will be a thorn in our side, a upas tree poisoning the air. Let Canada be ours once for all, and we have no more to fear!”

Humphrey and Julian exchanged glances of amaze. Such a scheme as this seemed to smack of madness.

“You think it cannot be done, my friends? England has done greater feats before.”

“But there is Quebec,” said Julian gravely; “I have heard that it is a fortress absolutely impregnable. And Quebec is the key of Canada.”

“I know it,” answered Wolfe, with a light in his eyes, “I know it well. I have seen drawings; I have heard descriptions of it. That it will be a nut hard to crack I do not doubt. But yet—but yet—ah, well, we may not boast of what we will do in the future. Let it suffice us first to take Louisbourg from the foe. But that once done, I shall know no rest, day or night, till I stand as victor at the walls of Quebec!”

Chapter 2: Louisbourg.

“Do not leave Gabarus Bay until I have effected a landing!”

So spoke Admiral Boscawen; and when the word was known, a cheer ran through the squadron from end to end.

Brigadier Wolfe had struggled up upon deck, looking white and ghostlike, for he had suffered much during the voyage; but when that word reached him, the fire leaped into his eyes, and he turned an exultant look upon his friends, and exclaimed:

“That is an excellent good word; that is the spirit which inspires victory!”

Yet it was no light thing which was to be attempted, as no one knew better than Wolfe himself; for he had been out in a boat upon the previous day with Major General Amherst and his comrade Brigadier Lawrence, reconnoitring the shore all along the bay, and they had seen how strongly it was commanded by French batteries, and how difficult it would be to land any body of troops there.

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To their right, as they looked shorewards, stood the town and grim fortress of Louisbourg, boldly and commandingly placed upon the rocky promontory which protects one side of the harbour, running out, as it were, to meet another promontory, the extremity of which is called Lighthouse Point. These two promontories almost enclose the harbour of Louisbourg; and midway between them is Goat Island, upon which, in the days of warfare of which we are telling, a strong battery was placed, so that no enemy's ship could enter the harbour without being subjected to a murderous crossfire, enough to disable and sink it.

Within the harbour were a number of French ships, which, in spite of a feeble attempt at blockade earlier in the year by some English and American vessels, had succeeded in making their way thither with an ample supply of provisions for the garrison.

To force an entrance into the harbour was manifestly impossible at the present juncture of affairs. The only hope lay in effecting a landing in the larger bay outside, where lay the English fleet; and the shore had been reconnoitred the previous day with a view of ascertaining the chances of this.

The report had not been encouraging. The French batteries were well placed, and were well furnished with cannon. It would be difficult enough to land. It would be yet more difficult to approach the citadel itself; but the experienced eyes of Wolfe and others saw that the only hope lay in an attack from the landward side. The dangerous craggy shore was its best protection. On land there were ridges of high ground from which it might be stormed, if only guns could be carried up. That would be a task of no small danger and difficulty; but courage and resolution might win the day; and Amherst was a commander of a different stamp from the hesitating Abercromby, who was at that very time mustering his troops with a view to the attack upon Ticonderoga.

"It is a fine fortress," said Wolfe to Julian, as they stood surveying the place from the raised deck of the vessel. "You cannot see much from here; the distance is too great. But they have batteries well posted on every height all along the bay; and as for the fortress and citadel, I have seldom seen such workmanship. Its bastions, ramparts, and glacis are a marvel of engineering. It may well be called the Dunkirk of the Western world. It will be a hard nut to crack; but I never believe there is a fortress which English valour cannot suffice to take!"

The resolution to land the troops once made, arrangements were speedily set in order. There were three places along the bay where it might he possible to effect a landing—-White Point, Flat Point, and Freshwater Cove—all on the west of the town. To the east there was an inlet where it might be possible to land troops, though perilously near the guns of the citadel. It was resolved to make a feint here, and to send parties to each of the three other points, so as to divide and distract the attention of the enemy. Wolfe was to take command of the landing at Freshwater Cove, which was the spot where Amherst most desired to make his first stand, and here the most determined attempt

was to be made. The Commander came and conferred with his Brigadier as to the best method of procedure, and left him full powers of command when the moment should come.

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Julian and Humphrey were with Wolfe, and had been his companions and best friends upon the voyage out. They had both obtained commissions, partly through the influence of the Brigadier; and were eager to see warfare. Julian had been Wolfe's nurse and attendant during the voyage, and the bond which now united them was a strong and tender one. Wolfe bad suffered both from seasickness and from a renewal of the former strain, and looked even now but little fit for the enterprise upon which he was bound; but no physical weakness had ever yet hindered him in the moment of peril from doing his duty, and his eyes flashed with the old fire, as he spoke of what was about to take place.

"Let us but once gain possession of that battery," he cried, pointing to the guns frowning grimly over Freshwater Cove, "and turn the guns against their present masters, and we shall have taken the first step. Once let us get foot upon this shore, and it will take more than the cannonade of the Frenchmen to get us off again."

Eagerly did the fleet await the moment of attack; but their patience was rather severely tried. Gale first and then heavy fog, with a tremendous swell at sea, detained them long at their anchorage, and one good ship struck upon a rock, and was in considerable danger for a while.

Wolfe suffered much during those days; but his spirit was as unquenchable as ever, and as soon as the stormy sea had gone down a little, was eager for the enterprise.

"Let us but set foot ashore, and I shall be a new man!" he cried. "I weary of the everlasting heaving of the sea; but upon shore, with my sword in my hand, there I am at home!"

The sea grew calm. There was still a heavy swell, and the waves broke in snowy surf upon the beach; but the attempt had become practicable, and the word was given overnight for a start at daybreak. The men were told off into light boats, such as could be taken close inshore; whilst the frigates were to approach the various points of real or feigned attack, and open a heavy cannonade upon the French batteries.

Julian and Humphrey found themselves in boats alongside each other. Humphrey was an Ensign, whilst Julian had been made a Lieutenant. They belonged to the flotilla commanded by Wolfe, and were directing some of the boats which were upon the right extremity of the little fleet.

The hearts of the men were beating high with excitement and the anticipation of stern work before them. The guns looked grimly forth from the heights above the shore. All was yet silent as death; still it was impossible to think that the French were ignorant of the concerted movement about to be made against them.

A roar from the shore, behind and to their right, told them that already the battle had begun in other quarters. The sailors set their teeth and rowed their hardest. The boats shot through the great green waves.

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Suddenly the smoke puffed out from the batteries in front. There was a flash of fire, and in a few seconds a dull roar, with strange, screaming noises interspersed. The water became lashed by a storm of shot, and shrieks of human agony mingled with the noise of the battle. It was a deadly fire which fell hot around the devoted little fleet; but Humphrey and Julian, away to the right, were a little out of range, and slightly protected by a craggy ridge. No man of their company had been killed; but they saw that along the line of boats terrible havoc was being wrought.

They saw Wolfe's tall, thin figure standing up and making signs. He was waving his hand to them now, and Humphrey exclaimed in his keen excitement:

"We are to land behind the crag and rush the guns!"

In a moment the half-dozen or more boats of this little detachment were making for the shore as hard as the rowers' arms could take them. It was hard work to land amongst the breakers, which were dashing into snowy surf along the beach; but perhaps the surf hid them from their enemies a little, for they were not hindered by any storm of shot or shell. They landed on the beach, formed into a compact body, and headed by Major Scott and some bold Highland soldiers, they dashed up the slope towards the battery.

But now they were in the midst of a hail of bullets. It seemed to Humphrey as though hell's mouth had opened. But there was no thought of fear in his heart. The battle fury had come upon him. He sprang within the battery and flung himself upon the gunners. Others followed his example. There was a tremendous hand-to-hand fight—French, Indians, English, Scotch, all in one struggling melee; and then above the tumult Wolfe's clarion voice ringing out, cheering on his men, uttering concise words of command; and then a sense of release from the suffocating pressure, a consciousness that the enemy was giving way, was flying, was abandoning the position; a loud English cheer, and a yell from the Highlanders, the sound of flying footsteps, pursuers and pursued; and Humphrey found himself leaning against a gun, giddy and blind and bewildered, scarcely knowing whether he were alive or dead, till a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a familiar voice said in his ear:

"Well done, Ensign Angell. They tell me that we owe our victorious rush today to your blunder!"

"My blunder?"

"Yes; you mistook my signal. I was ordering a retreat. It would not have been possible to land the men under that deadly fire. I could not see, from my position, the little shelter of the crag. I had signalled to draw out of the range of the guns. But your mistake has won us the day."

Humphrey, half ashamed, half exultant, was too breathless to reply; Julian came hastening up; and Wolfe hurried away to see to the landing of the guns and stores, now that the enemy had made a full retreat upon the fortress.

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“You are not wounded, Humphrey?”

“I think not. I have only had all the breath knocked out of me; and the guns seem to stun one. Have they really left us in possession of the battery? And does not Wolfe say that, when once we get a footing on the shore, we will not leave till Louisbourg is ours?”

Triumph filled the hearts alike of soldiers and sailors. All day long they worked waist deep in the surf, getting ashore such things as were most needed, intrenching themselves behind the battery, clearing the ground, making a road up from the beach, and pitching their tents.

At. night a cheer went up from their weary throats, for they saw red tongues of flame shooting up, and soon it was known beyond a doubt that the French had fired one of their batteries, which they had felt obliged to abandon; and this showed that they had no intention of attacking the bold storming party which had established itself at the Cove.

At sea the guns roared and flashed all day and all night. The air was full of sounds of battle. But the wearied soldiers slept in their tents, and by day worked might and main at the task of making good their position. They extended the line of their camp, they built redoubts and blockhouses, they routed skirmishing parties of Indians and Acadians hiding in the woods and spying upon them, and they strengthened their position day by day, till it became too strong a one for the enemy to dare to approach.

Every day the men toiled at their task, cheered by items of news from the shore. The battery on Goat Island was silenced, after many days of hot fire from the English frigates. A French vessel had fired in the harbour, and had been burned to the water’s edge. The garrison had sent a frigate with dispatches pressing for aid to their governor in Canada. The frigate and dispatches fell into the hands of the English, and much valuable information was gleaned therefrom.

And day by day the camp stretched out in a semicircle behind the town. It was a difficult task to construct it; for a marsh lay before them, and the road could only be made at the cost of tremendous labour, and often the fire of the enemy disturbed the men at their work.

Wolfe was the life and soul of the camp all through this piece of arduous work. If he could not handle pick and shovel like some, his quick eye always saw the best course to pursue, and his keen insight was invaluable in the direction of operations. Ill or well, he was with and amongst his men every day and all day long, the friend of each and every one, noticing each man’s work, giving praise to industry and skill, cheering, encouraging, inspiring. Not a soldier but felt that the young officer was his personal friend; not a man but would most willingly and gladly have borne for him some of that physical suffering which at times was written all too clearly in his wasted face.

“Nay, it is nothing,” he would say to his companions, when they strove to make him spare himself; “I am happier amongst you all. I can always get through the day’s work somehow. In my tent I brood and rebel against this crazy carcass of mine; but out here, in the stir and the strife, I can go nigh to forget it.”

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But Wolfe was soon to have a task set him quite to his liking. He came to his quarters one day with eager, shining eyes; and so soon as he saw him, Julian knew that he had news to tell.

“The batteries upon Lighthouse Point are next to be silenced. We must gain the command of the harbour for our ships. If we can once do that, the day will be ours. I am told off to this task, with twelve hundred men. You and Humphrey are to go with me. We must march right round the town, under cover of night, taking our guns with us. By daybreak we will have them planted behind the French battery; by night, if all goes well, we shall have gained possession of it.”

The troops were all drawn up in order for the night march, full of hopeful anticipation. They had that kind of confidence in Wolfe which the commander inspires who is not made but born. Humphrey, whose skill in finding his way in the dark, and whose powers as a guide had been tested before now, was sent on in advance with a handful of men, to give warning of any impending peril to be passed or encountered. He had the untiring energy of a son of the forest, and the instinct which told him of the proximity of the foe before he saw him.

But the march was uneventful in that way. The French had fallen back upon the town. Their fears now were for the very fortress itself, that fortress which they had so proudly boasted was impregnable alike by land and sea! Before the dawn of the morning Humphrey came back to the main body, seeking speech with Wolfe.

“They have abandoned their battery on Lighthouse Point. It is ours without striking a blow. They have spiked their guns and gone! We have only to take possession, mount our guns, and the command of the harbour is ours!”

A shout of triumph went up from the men as this fact became known. Gaily did they push on over the broken country, doing what they could in passing to level the way for the transport of the cannon in the rear. By dawn of day, they were full in sight of their destination, and saw indeed that it was deserted, and only awaited their taking possession. With shouts and cheers they dragged up their guns and set them in position. They fired a salute to tell their friends that all was well, and sent a few shots flying amongst the French ships in the harbour, to the no small consternation of the town.

But Wolfe could not be idle. The task set him had been accomplished without his having to strike a blow.

“We must unite our line, and silence some of those batteries that protect the town on the land side,” he said to his men. “The guns and the gunners, with a sufficient force for their protection, will remain here. We have sterner work to do elsewhere; and whilst we

are pushing our lines nearer and nearer, I would I knew how they are feeling within the walls of the town."

"Let me be the one to find that out and report," said Julian eagerly.

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“You, man! and how?”

“Let me try to make my way within the lines. We have French prisoners; let me borrow the uniform of one. I can speak French as easily as though it were my mother tongue, which, in sooth, perhaps it is; for I might as well call myself French as English, although I have always loved the English and cast in my lot with them. No sentry can know the face of every soldier in the fortress. Let me see if I cannot get within the walls, and bring you word again of what is passing there!”

Wolfe stroked his face thoughtfully.

“It is a bold scheme, and I have a mind to take you at your word; but I would not have you run into too great peril.”

“I scarce think that I shall do so. I will have a care. In truth, I should well enough like to see within those solid walls. It is a wonderful fortress this. It might be good for us to know its strength or its weakness, if weakness it has. I would but remain a couple of nights, and then return and bring you word again.”

“I should like to hear the report right well,” answered Wolfe. “I only wish I could accompany you myself.”

“That would never do. Yours is too valuable a life to risk; mine is worth but little to any man save myself.”

“I fear rather that I should be but a clog upon your movements,” answered Wolfe; “and no man would take me for a Frenchman, even though I can speak the tongue indifferently well. Nor would Amherst suffer me to make the attempt. We are all under obedience to our superiors. But I will suffer you to go, if you think the risk not too great. But have a care of yourself, Julian, have a care. You have become a friend to me that I could ill spare. If aught of harm befell you, the campaign would be clouded to me, even though crowned with victory.”

Julian pressed the hand he held, and for a moment there was silence between the pair. Wolfe looked out before him, and said musingly:

“Does it never seem strange to you, Julian, the thought that our trade is one which makes us look upon the slaughter of our foes as the thing most to be desired, whilst we have that in our hearts which causes us to hate the very thought of suffering and death, either for ourselves or for others; and when we see our foes wounded and left upon the field of battle, we give them the care and tending that we give our own men, and seek in every way to allay their pain and bring them help and comfort?”

“Yes, truly; war is full of strange paradoxes,” answered Julian thoughtfully. “Sometimes I think that war, like all other ills, comes to us as a part of the curse which sin has brought

into the world. We cannot get away from it yet. There be times when it is right to fight —when to sit with folded hands would be a grievous and a cowardly action on the part of a nation. Yet we know that it is God's will that we should love our brethren, and we know that He loves all. So when we see them helpless and suffering, we know that we are right to tend and care for them, and that to do otherwise would be a sin in His sight. And we know, too, that the day will come when wars will cease, when Christ will come and take the power and rule, and when we shall see Him in His glory, and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ."

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Deep silence fell upon them both, and then Wolfe spoke gently.

“That would, indeed, be a glorious day! though I, a soldier trained to arms, say it. But I fear me I shall never live to see it.”

Julian was silent awhile, and then said slowly:

“We cannot tell. Of that day and hour knoweth no man. All we know is that it will come, and will come suddenly. I have lived amongst those who looked to see it from day to day. They had been waiting and watching for the Lord’s coming through hard upon a century, they and their fathers before them. The hope was beginning to fade and die out. Priests had come amongst them who bid them think of other things, and look no farther than the sacrifice of the Mass, daily offered before their eyes. And yet I used to feel that the other was the fuller, more glorious hope. I think I shall cherish it always.”

“I would were I you,” answered Wolfe in a low voice. “I think it is that which has made you different from other men. I think that if I were to be dying, Julian, I should like to hold your hand in mine and feel that you were near.”

Then the two friends pressed each other by the hand, and walked back to the camp. As Julian had said, there were many French prisoners there, brought in from time to time after skirmishes. They were treated exactly the same as the English wounded, and Wolfe made a point of visiting them daily, talking to them in their own tongue, and promising them a speedy exchange when any negotiation should be opened with the town. Julian, too, went much amongst them, able to win their confidence very easily, since he seemed to them almost like a brother. It was quite an easy thing for him to disguise himself in the white uniform of a French soldier, and to creep, under cover of the darkness, closer and closer to the wall of the town.

It so chanced that he could not have chosen a better night for his enterprise. The booming of guns across the harbour and from the batteries behind had now become constant, and attracted little notice from sentries or soldiers beyond range. But just as darkness began to fall, a shell from Wolfe’s newly-planted battery fell upon one of the French ships in the harbour, and set her on fire. The glare rose in the sky, and suddenly there was the sound of an explosion, sparks rose in dense clouds into the air, and the ship plunged like a wild creature in terror, broke from her moorings, and drifted alongside a sister ship. The flames spread to her rigging, and in a few minutes both were ablaze; and before the affrighted and bewildered crews could do anything to prevent it, a third vessel had become involved in the conflagration, and the town was illumined by the pillars of flame which shot up from the still waters of the harbour.

All was confusion and dismay, for the French had no ships to spare. Four had been deliberately sunk in the harbour’s mouth to prevent the entrance of the English, and here were three all in a blaze. The soldiers and inhabitants rushed madly down to the

water's edge to seek to stay the conflagration, and Julian, seizing his opportunity, rushed through the gateway with a small detachment of men from one of the outside batteries, and found himself within the town without having been so much as challenged.

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Down to the water's edge with the rest he rushed, shouting and gesticulating with the best of them. His uniform prevented his being even so much as looked at. To all appearance he was a French soldier. He did not hesitate to mingle in the crowd, or avoid conversation with any. Very soon he found he was working with the rest in the hopeless endeavour to save the doomed vessels; and he was helpful in getting off some of the half-stifled sailors, dashing upon deck quite a number of times, and bringing back in his strong arms the helpless men who had been overpowered by the flames before they could make their escape.

It was work which Julian loved; for saving life was more to his taste than killing. He toiled on, cheering up his comrades, till all that could be saved were placed upon shore; and when he stepped at last upon the quay after the last voyage to the burning ships, he found himself confronted by a fine soldierly man, whose dress and manner bespoke him a personage of some importance.

"Well done, my good fellow," he said approvingly; "I shall not forget your gallantry tonight. You doubtless belong to one of the vessels, since I have no knowledge of your face. You had better come up to the citadel, where you shall receive refreshment and a place to rest in. We want all the soldiers we can get for the defence of the town, since we are in evil case between foes on land and foes on the sea."

Julian saluted, and spoke a few words of thanks, and the crowd bore him towards the citadel.

"Who was it that spoke to me?" he asked of his next neighbour; and the man replied with a laugh:

"Why, Governor Drucour to be sure! Are you blind with the smoke, my friend? A very gallant governor and soldier he is, as you should know. And as for Madame, his wife—-ah, well, you must see her to understand!"

Nor was Julian long in understanding something of what was meant by this unfinished sentence; for he and his companions had not been long seated at table, with a good meal before them, when the door opened, and a tall, elegant lady entered the room, leaning on the arm of the Governor, and instantly the whole company rose, whilst a shout went up:

"Long live the Governor! Long live Madame his wife! Long live the King!"

The lady came in, and motioned to the company to be seated. She walked up and down amongst them, speaking brave words of thanks and cheer; and halting beside Julian, she made him quite a little special speech, telling him how she had heard that he had been the foremost of all in seeking to save the lives of those who might otherwise have perished in the flames.

No questions were asked of him, for the excitement was still strong, and it was taken for granted that he had come off one of the burning ships. The men were all talking together, with the volubility of their race, and Julian took just enough share in the conversation to avoid suspicion.

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Besides, why should he be suspected? He looked in every respect a Frenchman. And had he not risked his life more than once that night to save those left on board the vessels?

The next morning he was able to take an excellent view of the citadel and town. He was amazed at the strength of the place. In one sense of the word it was well nigh impregnable. From the water it could scarcely be touched; but the ridges above, now in the possession of the English, were a source of weakness and peril; and now that the enemy was pushing nearer and nearer, under cover of their own guns, it was plain that the position was becoming one of grave peril. A very little more and the English would be able to shell the whole town and fortress from the land side; and though the soldiers within the citadel were full of hope and confidence, the townsfolk were becoming more and more alarmed, and spoke openly together of the probable fall of the place.

They told Julian much that he desired to know, as did also the soldiers within the citadel. He was listening to them, when a sudden cry reached them, and a cheer went up, mingled with cries of “Vive Madame! vive Madame le General!”

Julian looked round, and saw that Madame Drucour had come out upon the ramparts, and was preparing with her own hands to fire off one of the great guns. This she did amid the applause of the soldiers, and the man standing beside Julian said with enthusiasm:

“Madame comes here every day, no matter the weather or the firing, and walks round the ramparts, and fires off one or more of the guns, to keep us in heart. She is a brave lady. If all soldiers and townsfolk had her spirit, there would be no talk of surrendering Louisbourg.”

Chapter 3: Victory.

“Julian! Is that you I see? Truly I had begun to fear that some misfortune had befallen you. So you have been within the walls of the town, and have returned safe and sound? Your face is a very welcome one, my friend!”

Wolfe stretched out his hand, which was eagerly grasped by Julian. It was a still, close evening, and the sullen booming of the guns continued without abatement. So used had the ears of besiegers and besieged grown to that sound of menace, that it was hardly heeded more than the roar of the surf upon the shore.

Wolfe was lying in his tent, looking white and worn, as was generally the case after the labours of the day were ended. His indomitable spirit bore him gallantly through the working hours of the long, hot days; but night found him exhausted, and often too

suffering to sleep. Julian had been his best companion at such times as these, and he had missed him a good deal these past days.

“I have been within the city and citadel, and have returned safe and sound,” answered Julian, throwing off the cloak he wore over his white French uniform. “It cannot be long before the place surrenders. Our guns are doing fearful havoc. Fires break out, as you must see, continually. The King’s Bastion was almost all consumed yesterday. The hearts of the townspeople are growing faint within them. The officers and soldiers are bold, and show a cheerful front; but they begin to know that sooner or later they will have to throw up the game.”

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Wolfe's eyes kindled with martial joy.

"It is the turn of the tide, the turn of the tide!" he exclaimed, his whole face instinct with anticipation of triumph. "The English flag has been trailed in the dust, humiliated, vanquished; but she shall wave aloft over yon proud fortress, which men have called impregnable. And if there, why not over Quebec itself?"

Then, whilst he made Julian refresh himself with food and drink, he bid him tell all the story of his visit to Louisbourg: how he had obtained entrance, what he had seen and heard, and what opinion he now held as to the position of the foe and the chances of the siege.

Wolfe was much delighted with the anecdotes related of the courage and kindness of Madame Drucour.

"The Commander shall hear of that. Brave lady! I would not that she should suffer needless hurt. Tell me, Julian, are they in need of food or wine or any such thing within the walls? I would gladly send to the brave Madame some token of goodwill and appreciation."

"They are well victualled; but I heard Madame say that the sick were suffering somewhat from scurvy, and that she wished she had fruit to distribute amongst them. Some of them have come off the ships, where the illness is frequent. Madame Drucour visits the sick constantly, and dresses their wounds with her own hands when the surgeons are busy. And, indeed, they need all the help they can get, for the sick and wounded increase upon their hands daily."

"They shall have fruit!" cried Wolfe eagerly. "We had a ship arrive to help the squadron, and she came laden with pines from the West Indies. We will send in a quantity to Madame Drucour under a flag of truce. We may be forced to fight our fellow men, but we need not forget that they are of the same flesh and blood as ourselves. An honourable foe is second only to a friend."

"Madame will be grateful for any such act of courtesy, I am sure," replied Julian. "She is a noble lady—gracious, beautiful, and brave. She spoke good words to me, little knowing who I was. It made me feel something treacherous to accept her courtesies, knowing myself for a spy. But yet I have not hurt them by my spying; I can see that the defence cannot long be maintained by those within the walls. Beyond that I have little to say. The fires by day and night tell of the destruction and havoc our guns are making. It needs no spy to report that."

General Amherst was keenly interested next day in hearing the story Julian had to tell, and was ready and eager to send a present of fruit and other dainties for the sick to

Madame Drucour. Under cover of a flag of truce the convoy was dispatched, and for half a day the guns on both sides ceased firing.

In addition to the fruit the General sent a very polite letter to the lady, expressing his regret for the annoyance and anxiety she must be experiencing, and sending a number of small billets and messages from wounded Frenchmen in their hands to their friends in the city.

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The messengers returned bearing with them a basket and a note. The basket contained some bottles of choice wine for the General's table, and the letter, written by Madame Drucour herself, was couched in terms of courtesy and gratitude. She declared that the fruit for the sick was just the very thing she had been most desiring, and wondered what bird of the air had whispered the message into the ear of the noble English officer. As for the war itself, deplorable as it must always be, the knowledge that they were fighting against a generous and worthy foe could not but be a source of happiness; and, in conclusion, the lady added that they had within the walls of Louisbourg a surgeon of uncommon skill with gunshot wounds, and that his services should always be at the command of any English officer who might desire them.

"That is like her!" exclaimed Julian to Wolfe, when the terms of the letter were made known. "She is a very noble and gracious lady, and I trust and hope no hurt will come to her. But she exposes herself to many perils in the hope of cheering and heartening up the men. They all fight better for the knowledge that she is near them; and she goes her daily rounds of the ramparts, be the firing ever so hot!"

The cannon were roaring again now from both lines of batteries. The doomed fortress was holding out gallantly, and had as yet given no sign of surrender.

Wolfe was hard at work, day after day, drawing his lines closer and closer. His military genius showed itself in every disposition of his lines and batteries. He saw at a glance exactly what should be done, and set to work to do it in the best possible way.

"How many ships have they in the harbour?" he asked of Julian, two days after his return from the town.

"Only two of any size—the Bienfaisant and the Prudent. The rest have been sunk or destroyed."

"I think we had better make an end of those two," said Wolfe thoughtfully.

"It might not be a task of great difficulty, if it could be done secretly," said Julian. "The soldiers are mostly on land. They need them more in the citadel than on board; and they think the ships are safe, lying as they do under their own batteries. If we could get a dull or foggy night, we might make a dash at them. We can enter the harbour now that the Island battery is silenced and the frigate Arethuse gone. They say the sailors on board the ships are longing for a task. They would rejoice to accomplish something of that sort."

"Get me ready a boat, and you and Humphrey row me out to our fleet yonder," said Wolfe, looking out over the wide expanse of blue beyond the harbour. "I will speak of this with the Admiral, and see what he thinks of the undertaking."

They rowed him out from Flat Point to the flagship, and put him on board. It was a fine sight to see the great battleships anchored in the bay, ready to take their part in the struggle at a word of command. But the French fleet had done little or nothing to harass them. They were complete masters of the deep. Even the ships in the harbour had not ventured out, and now only two of them remained.

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“There will be none tomorrow, if this sea mist comes down,” said Wolfe, with a little grim smile, as he entered the boat again. “Row me to the harbour’s mouth; I would take a look for myself at the position of the vessels.”

The sun was shining brilliantly upon land, but over the sea there was a little haze, which seemed disposed to increase. It had been so for two or three days, the fog coming thicker at night. Wolfe looked keenly about him as he reached the mouth of the harbour. He did not attempt to enter it, but sat looking before him with intent, critical gaze.

“I see,” he remarked, after a pause. “Now row me once more to the flagship, and so back. The thing can be done.”

Promptitude was one of Wolfe’s characteristics; he never let grass grow under his feet. If the thing was to be done, let it be done at once; and the British tar is never a laggard when there is fighting or adventure to be had!

Julian and Humphrey volunteered for the service. Humphrey was a favourite with the sailors, having been employed almost constantly in carrying messages to and from the fleet, or in helping to land transports. He was as expert now in the management of a boat as the best of the jack tars, and was eager to take part in the daring enterprise which was to be carried out that night.

Six hundred sailors, collected from different vessels, were to be told off for the task. They set to work with hearty goodwill, muffling their oars, and preparing for their noiseless advance into the harbour. The guns would roar ceaselessly overhead. That would do much to drown any sound from the water. Still, care and caution would have to be exercised; for the batteries of the fortress commanded the harbour, and the ships lay beneath their protecting guns. If the little flotilla betrayed its approach by any unguarded sound, it might easily be annihilated before ever it could approach its goal. So that the task set the hardy sailors was not without its distinct element of peril, which was perhaps its chiefest attraction.

The shades of night gathered slowly over land and sea. It seemed to Humphrey and some of those waiting in the boats as though night had never fallen so slowly before. But their eyes were gladdened by the sight of the soft fog wreaths which crept over the water as the dusk fell, lying upon it like a soft blanket, and blotting out the distance as much as the darkness could do.

It was not a heavy fog. The sailors were in no danger of losing their way as they rowed, first for the harbour mouth, and then for the two French warships at anchor beneath the batteries. But it was thick enough to hide their approach from those on land. It was not probable that even the crews of the vessels would be aware of their close proximity till

the word to board was given. Unless some accidental and unguarded sound betrayed their advance, they might in all likelihood carry all before them by a surprise movement.

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Julian was in the same boat as the officer in command of the expedition. His intimate knowledge of the position of the war vessels would be of use in this murk and darkness. Humphrey took an oar in the same boat; and the little fleet got together, and commenced its silent voyage just as the clocks of the fortress boomed out the midnight hour.

It was a strange, ghostly voyage. There was a moon in the sky overhead, and the outlines of the hills and batteries, and even of the fortress itself, could be distinguished wherever the ground rose high enough; but wreaths of white vapour lay lazily along the water, or seemed to curl slowly upwards like smoke from some fire, and the boats rowed along in the encircling mist, only able to gain glimpses from time to time of the moonlit world as a puff of wind drove the vapour away from their path and gave them a transitory outlook upon their surroundings.

The dull roar of the guns filled the air. Sometimes the batteries were silent at night; but Wolfe kept things alive on this occasion, in order to cover the approach of the boarding party. Now the mouth of the harbour was reached, and the little fleet gathered itself more compactly together, and the muffling of the oars was carefully looked to. Directions as to the order to be observed had been given before, and the boats fell into their appointed position with quickness and accuracy.

Julian took the helm of the leading boat, and steered it across the harbour towards the anchored vessels. He knew exactly where and how they lay. And soon the little flotilla was lying compactly together, its presence all unsuspected, within a cable's length of the two battleships.

Now the time for concealment was over. The men seized their arms in readiness. The boats dashed through the water at full speed. The next moment hundreds of hardy British sailors were swarming up the sides of the French vessels, uttering cheers and shouts of triumph the while.

Humphrey and Julian were amongst the first to spring upon the deck of the Bienfaisant. The startled crew were just rushing up from below, having been made aware of the peril only a few seconds earlier. Some of them were but half dressed; few of them knew what it was that was happening. They found themselves confronted by English sailors with dirk and musket. Sharp firing, shouts, curses, cries, made the night hideous for a few minutes, and then a ringing voice called out in French:

"Surrender the vessels, and your lives shall be spared."

It was Julian who cried these words at the command of the officer, and there was no resistance possible for the overpowered crew. The soldiers were on shore within the fort. They were but a handful of men in comparison with their English assailants. It was impossible to dispute possession.

“Take to your boats and go ashore, and you shall not be molested,” was the next cry; and the men were forced to obey, the fighting having lasted only a very brief space: for it was evident from the first that the English were masters, and needless carnage was not desired by them.

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Nevertheless the peril to the English sailors was by no means over yet. The guns in the battery now opened fire upon the fleet of boats, and a hailstorm of shot and shell raged round them; so that the French sailors dared not leave the vessel, but crowded below out of the hot fire, preferring to trust to the tender mercies of their captors rather than to the guns of their countrymen.

“Tow her away under one of our own batteries,” was the order, given as coolly as though this leaden rain were nothing but a summer shower.

Humphrey sprang to the side, and cut the cable which anchored her to her moorings. Just at that moment a glow of light through the fog fell across the deck, and looking up he saw a pillar of flame rising from the water close at hand, and casting strange lights and shadows upon the shifting mists which enwrapped them.

“They have fired the Prudent!” exclaimed Julian. “Now we shall have light for our task; but we shall be a better target for the enemy’s fire. We must lose no time. Cut loose the second cable; we should be moving. See that the boats are all ready to tow us along. What a grand sight that burning ship is!

“Ah, I see now. She is aground with the ebb tide. They could not move her, so they have fired her instead. There are her boats rowing for shore with her crew in them!”

It was a strange, grand sight, watching the flames enwrap the doomed vessel from stem to stern, till she was one sheet of rosy light. Even the guns from shore had ceased to fire for a brief space, as though the gunners were watching the weird spectacle of the illuminated fog, or were perhaps afraid lest their fire should hurt their own comrades in the boats. But the English sailors took advantage of the lull to set to their task of towing the Bienfaisant with hearty goodwill.

“She moves! she moves!” cried Humphrey excitedly, standing at the wheel to direct her course. “Well pulled, comrades—well pulled indeed! Ah, their guns are going to speak again! They will not let us go without a parting salute.”

The batteries on shore opened their mouths, and belched forth flame and smoke. The ship staggered beneath the leaden hail; but the guns were too high to do mischief to the boats upon the water, and the sailors replied by a lusty cheer. Julian wiped away a few drops of blood that trickled down his face from a slight cut on his temple; but for the most part the shot struck only the spars and rigging, whistling harmlessly over the heads of the men on deck, who laughed and cheered as they encouraged their comrades in the boats to row their hardest and get beyond reach of the enemy’s fire.

Wolfe had planted a battery himself just lately which commanded a part of the harbour, and beneath this sheltering battery the Bienfaisant was towed, whilst the sailors

cheered might and main; and once out of reach of the enemy's fire, rested on their oars and watched the grand illumination of the flame-wrapped Prudent.

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“If war is a horrible thing,” said Julian reflectively to Humphrey, “it has at least its grand sights. Look at the red glare upon the shifting fog banks! Is it not like some wild diabolic carnival? One could fancy one saw the forms of demons flitting to and fro in all that reek and glare.”

Humphrey’s grave young face wore a rather stern look.

“I have seen other fires than that, and heard of those I have not seen—fires the memory of which will live in my heart for years and years! If we burn the vessels of the French, is it not because they have hounded on the Indians to burn our homesteads, ay, and with them our defenceless wives and children, mothers and sisters? Shall not deeds like these bring about a stern retaliation? Are we not here to take vengeance upon those who have been treacherous foes, and shamed the Christian profession that they make? Shall we pity or spare when we remember what they have done? The blood of our brothers cries out to us. We do but repay them in their own coin.”

“Yes,” returned Julian thoughtfully; “there is a stern law of reaping and sowing ordained of God Himself. We may well believe that we are instruments in His hands for the carrying out of His purpose. Yet we must seek always to be led of Him, and not to take matters into our own hands. ’Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.’”

“I believe He will,” said Humphrey, with a flash in his eyes; “but give it to me to be there to see!”

“As I think we shall,” answered Julian, “for I believe that the key of the war will lie next at Quebec. Whoever holds that, holds the power in Canada, and from Canada can command the western frontier. And the taking of Quebec is the object upon which the mind of Wolfe is firmly set. You know how often he has said to us, ’If I could achieve that, I could say my Nunc Dimittis with joy and thankfulness.’ I believe in my heart that he will live to see that glorious victory for England’s arms.”

Wolfe was waiting upon the strand for the boat which brought Julian and Humphrey back with the details of the victorious enterprise. He grasped them both by the hand.

“Now I think that surrender cannot much longer be delayed, and, in truth, I hope it will not be. News has reached us from the west of some great disaster at Ticonderoga. It is but the voice of rumour. A light fishing smack brought letters to the General this evening, dated from Albany, and sent by special messenger. Nothing definite is known; but they report a disastrous defeat, attributed to the untimely death of Lord Howe quite early in the expedition. I cannot say what truth there may be in this, but I fear some great disaster has recently taken place. It has made the General and his officers very stern and resolved. England’s honour has been sorely tarnished by these many defeats. But I believe her star will rise again. Louisbourg at least must fall ere long.”

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Julian and Humphrey were both filled with sorrow and anxiety at this piece of news. Charles and Fritz were both likely, they thought, if living still, to be there with the army; and one was anxious for news of his brother, and the other of his comrade and friend.

“When Louisbourg is taken,” said Humphrey, “I shall ask leave of absence to go to seek my brother. My sister in Philadelphia will give me tidings of him. I shall go thither, and come back when the attempt upon proud Quebec is made.”

“If I had my way, we should sail from Louisbourg straight for Quebec,” cried Wolfe, with a flash in his eyes. “I would follow up one blow by another. Yet I know not whether our instructions will carry us thus far. Nevertheless, I hope to live to see the day when the English flag shall wave over the ramparts of that city and fortress which has been called the Impregnable.”

The news, rumour though it was and unconfirmed, of fresh disaster to the English arms in the interior excited much feeling in the English ranks. Had there been another massacre, such as had disgraced the struggle at Fort William Henry? What would be the next tidings which would reach them of their brethren in arms?

There had been so many tales of horror told out in the wild west that strong men often shuddered at the bare thought of what they might have to bear. So the faces of men and officers were alike stern and dark; and when the white flag fluttered at last from the walls of Louisbourg, and the news ran like wildfire through the camp that the fortress was about to surrender, there was a feeling in all hearts that the terms granted should not be too easy. France owed England a deep and mighty debt, which sooner or later she must pay.

Wolfe was sent for to be with General Amherst when he received the deputation of the French, and he returned to his quarters looking grave and thoughtful.

“We have told them that they must surrender as prisoners of war, and send their reply within an hour. If they refuse, we attack at once both by land and sea. We are all resolved that the siege shall be brought to an end. If we could have been here a month earlier, we might have effected a junction with our friends in the west, and have averted the calamity which has overtaken them there.”

“Will they accept?” asked Julian eagerly. “They are in a sore strait, but yet they are brave men. They might, perhaps, have looked to be permitted to march out with the honours of war after their bold defence.”

“Yes; and this would have been granted them had it not been for what happened at Fort William Henry. But the memory of that day cannot be wiped out from the memory of our officers, The General was supported by the bulk of his officers. They will have no conditions. They will treat the sick and the wounded and the towns people with every

consideration, but they will be absolute masters. The Admiral was there, and he and the General signed the note. They are resolved to abide by its contents."

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Excitement reigned everywhere. The firing had ceased, and the stillness of the air was like that which sometimes precedes the bursting of a thunderstorm, What reply would the fort return? and how quickly would it arrive? It was understood that, in the event of delay, a general assault would be made, and some of the soldiers would have eagerly welcomed the order for the advance.

Keen excitement prevailed when it became known that a messenger had come, not bringing the expected reply, but one asking for less rigorous terms.

“The General would not see him,” was the cry. “He was sent back to say that nothing would be changed from the last letter addressed to the Governor. The Admiral and General are alike agreed. There will be no wavering from that.”

It was plain that there was some variance in the city itself. In the ranks of the besieging force there was intense excitement and stir. Every man was looking to his arms, save when he was asking news and gazing towards the walls of the city. That something decisive must soon be settled was apparent to all.

The white flag again! A messenger was coming out towards the camp with the reply. He appeared in no haste, and paused again and again to look back. Suddenly another man appeared running hastily after him. The first messenger paused, consulted with him, and then turned back towards the city. The second man ran on alone, making vehement signs, as though afraid there might yet be some misunderstanding.

“We accept! we accept!” he shouted out, waving a paper above his head, beside himself with excitement.

Two men followed him; they were taken into the tent of the General, who, with the Admiral, was awaiting the final answer. But the first messenger remained without, panting and exhausted, and Julian instantly recognized him as an officer who had shown him some kindness during his short stay within the fortress.

He came up to him now, and the recognition was mutual.

“So you were a spy all the while, my friend!” said the Frenchman, with something like a grim laugh. “Had we known that, you would have received a different welcome. Ah well, it matters little now. And it is a pity for brave men to die like dogs. We were in a sad pass before. You could not have told much that was not already known.”

“The fortress is ready to capitulate?”

“Not the fortress, but the town. Bad as our condition is, we would not have surrendered on those terms. We had indeed dispatched a messenger to say as much. But the Provost and the citizens were too many for us. They ran to the citadel, and made such work that the Governor yielded, and I offered, being fleet of foot, to run after the

messenger and stop him if it could be done. Luckily his own heart misgave him, and he had not hurried. And close upon my heels were sent others with more definite instructions. And thus Louisbourg passes into the hands of gallant foes. But I trust they will show every courtesy to our brave Madame."

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“Have no fear on that score,” answered Julian; “I have told in the English camp of the bravery and gracious kindness of Madame le General. Our commander will see that she is treated with every consideration; as also the sick and wounded, her special charge. It is well not to drive us to assault the weakened town. Now we shall enter as friends rather than foes.”

“So said the Provost, remembering that the English have much cause of complaint against us. We cannot deny that ourselves. Ah me! it is the chance of war. We have had our triumphs, and now you have your turn. It is not here but at Quebec that the real trial of strength will be. I think, my friends, you will find that you have a hard nut to crack there.”

“So they said of Louisbourg, and yet that has been done,” answered Julian, with a smile. “But come in, and refresh yourself in my tent here whilst the messengers are conferring with our General. They will have to draw up terms of capitulation. There will be time to get a good meal whilst that is being done.”

At dawn the following morning the drums beat. The English soldiers got into order, and marched through the Dauphin gate into the town. The French soldiers, drawn up in array, threw down their muskets, and with tears of mortification marched away, leaving the victors in possession.

The English flag was run up, amid wild cheering, and floated over the grim and shattered ramparts. The turn of the tide had come at last, and Louisbourg had fallen into the hands of the English.

Chapter 4: The Fruits Of Victory.

Wolfe lay upon a couch in a comfortable apartment, such as he had not inhabited since he set sail from England months ago. It was in the citadel itself—in the heart of the King’s Bastion, where the Governor had his quarters.

Wolfe had been the life and soul of the siege. To his genius and indomitable resolution the victory of the English arms had been largely due. He had forced himself to take the lead, and had toiled night and day in the crisis of the struggle and the final triumph; and even after the victors had marched in, his eyes seemed to be everywhere, enforcing discipline, preventing any sort of disorder or licence amongst the soldiers, and sternly repressing the smallest attempt on their part to plunder the townsfolk, or take the slightest advantage of their helpless condition.

He had specially seen to the condition of the sick and wounded, insuring them the same care as was given to the English in like case. This had been one of the articles of the

capitulation, but it was one which was in like cases too often carelessly carried out, sometimes almost ignored.

Wolfe with his own eyes saw that there was no shirking, no mismanagement here. He seemed to be everywhere at once during those busy days which followed the entrance into the town. But outraged nature would have her revenge at last, and for three days he had lain helpless and suffering in the room assigned to him in the Governor's house, watched over and tended by Julian, who had by this time come to have a very adequate idea as to the treatment most needed by him when those attacks came on.

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The cool of the evening had followed upon the heat of a very sultry day, which had greatly tried the sufferer. Wolfe looked up, and saw his friend beside him, and smiled in recognition of his attentions.

“You are always here, Julian; you must surely want rest yourself. You have been here night and day. I know it even though I may not seem to do so. But I shall be on my legs again soon. I can feel that the access of pain is abating. How have things been going in the town since I was laid by the heels?”

“Oh well, several vessels with their load of prisoners have already sailed for England; many of the townsfolk and merchants have started, or are starting, for France; some regiments of our men are to be sent at once to reinforce General Abercromby. I fear by all accounts that they will come too late to be of any real use for the campaign this season. It is quite true that he suffered a crushing defeat at Ticonderoga, due, as many of the officers say, to bad generalship. Still he will doubtless be glad of support in the wilderness, wherever he may be. Humphrey is to start with the first detachment; he expects his orders for departure daily.”

Wolfe raised himself upon his elbow and sat up, despite his weakness, fired by excitement and energy.

“But Quebec, Quebec, Quebec!” he exclaimed; “surely we are going forward to Quebec?”

Julian shook his head doubtfully.

“I fear me not at least this present season. I hear it said that General Amherst was ready, but that the Admiral was against it for the present. They say there is still much to do in subduing the adjacent possessions of France in these lands, and so paving the way for the greater enterprise. Various officers are to be sent hither and thither upon expeditions to small settlements, to uproot or destroy them. When this has been done, perhaps the move to Quebec will be made. But I fear me it will not be before next year.”

Wolfe made a gesture of irritation and impatience.

“Have we not yet had enough of procrastination?” he questioned bitterly. “Will England never learn the lesson which her reverses should have taught her? What boots the victory we have gained here, if it be not the stepping stone to lead us to Quebec?”

“Who speaks of Quebec?” asked a clear, musical voice at the half-open door; and Julian sprang to his feet, exclaiming as he did so:

“It is Madame Drucour! she has come every day to see and inquire after you.”

Hearing the sound of her name, the lady pushed open the door and entered—a graceful, stately figure clothed all in black; her beautiful face worn and pale, and trouble lurking in the depths of her hazel eyes; yet calm and serene and noble of aspect as she moved forward and held out a slim white hand to the patient.

“You are better, Monsieur?” she asked, in her full, rich tones. “I trust that the suffering is less than it was. The fever, I can see, has abated somewhat.”

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Wolfe carried the hand he held to his lips. In common with all the officers who had made her acquaintance, Wolfe had come to have a very high opinion of Madame Drucour.

“I thank you, gracious lady, for your condescension in asking. I trust soon to be restored to such measure of health and strength as I ever enjoy. At best I am but a cranky creature; but with quarters such as these I should be worse than ungrateful if I did not mend. I trust my presence here has caused you no inconvenience; for truly I believe that I am in your house, and that I owe to you the comforts I enjoy.”

She gave a strange little smile as she seated herself beside him.

“In truth, Monsieur, I know not what I may call my own today. This town and fortress are now no longer ours, and we are but here ourselves on sufferance—prisoners of war—”

“Nay, nay, not prisoners—not you, Madame,” answered Wolfe hastily. “We war not against women—least of all such noble ladies as yourself!”

She acknowledged this speech by a little motion of the head, and then continued, in a tone at once sorrowful and dignified: “I cannot separate myself from those amongst whom I have lived for so long. I acknowledge with gratitude the courtesy I have received from all. I know that my personal liberty is assured to me. But my heart will always be where there is need of help by my own countrymen. If not a prisoner to the English, I am held in other bonds.”

“Ah yes,” answered Wolfe, with an answering sparkle in his eye; “that I understand well. We are all bound to our country in bonds that cannot be severed. And yet we are bound to the common cause of humanity, and there we meet on common ground. We need not remember anything else at such a time, Madame. We serve in one army there. Do not our wounded as well as your own bless the sight of your face and the sound of your voice amongst them?”

“And have they not cause to bless the name of that brave officer who, in spite of his own weakness and suffering, would not rest until he had seen in person that all were cared for—foes as well as friends? Yes, truly, Monsieur, in one warfare we can stand upon the same side, and fight the same battle against disease and suffering and death. I would that this were the only kind of warfare that is known in the world!”

“And I too—sometimes,” replied Wolfe, lying back again on his pillows and looking dreamily out before him. “There are moments, it is true, when the battle fever works in a man’s blood, and war seems to him then a glorious game. But it has its terrible and hateful side, as every soldier knows well. And yet the day seems far away when wars shall be no more.”

“Indeed yes,” answered Madame Drucour, with a little sigh; “we have a sorrowful prospect before us yet. What was the word which I heard you speak as I entered? Was it not of that projected march upon Quebec?”

“It was,” answered Wolfe frankly. “I may not deny, Madame, that the longing of my heart at this moment is to try conclusions with your gallant countrymen beneath the walls of Quebec.”

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“You are bold, Monsieur,” said Madame Drucour, with a little smile.

“You know Quebec, Madame?”

“Very well. It is there that I purpose going with my husband when the exchange is completed which gives him his liberty. I have relatives there, and I go to be with them when duty may call my husband elsewhere. If you come to Quebec, Monsieur, we may perchance meet again.”

“It will be something happy to look forward to.”

“There is always joy in feeling that the foe we fight is a noble and generous one. I shall tell in Quebec how the English General, though stern in his terms of capitulation, refused to me nothing that I asked when once the town was given up, and how generously he and all his officers showed themselves, and in especial one—Brigadier Wolfe!”

The young man bowed at the compliment.

“And I, on my side, shall know that if Madame Drucour is within the walls of Quebec, no garrison can fail to be gallant and devoted. Such an example before their eyes would put heart and heroism into the most faint hearted.”

A very sincere liking grew up between Madame Drucour and her guests before Wolfe was on his legs again, and able to return to his quarters amongst his men. Indeed, his happiest hours were spent in the company of that lady, for there was much to vex and try him when in the camp.

There was to be no move upon Quebec that season and Wolfe chafed rather bitterly at the decision, and wrote to General Amherst in stronger terms than most subordinate officers would have ventured to do. He even spoke of throwing up the service, if nothing were to be done at such a critical time; but the General would not hear of losing so valuable an officer, and indeed, in spite of the irritability sometimes engendered by his ill-health, Wolfe was too much the soldier at heart ever to abandon his calling.

It was, however, rather hard to one of his ardent and chivalrous temperament, eager for the great blow to be struck against Quebec, to be deputed to harry and destroy a number of little fishing settlements along the Gulf of St. Lawrence—which measure he considered a needless severity, and hated accordingly. It was a relief to him to know that Pitt, having heard of his severe bout of illness after the taking of Louisbourg, had summoned him back to England to recruit his health.

“When we have finished our great exploit of robbing fishermen of their nets and burning their huts, we will to England again, Julian; and you will come with me, my trusty comrade and friend. If we are spreading the terror of England’s name here, we are not

adding to her laurels. Let me remain at home till there be real warfare to accomplish, and then let me come out again. This task is odious and sickening to me. Were it not that another might show more harshness and barbarity over it, I would e'en decline the mission."

Humphrey had already left Louisbourg for Philadelphia and the western frontier; but Julian had elected to remain with Wolfe, who had come to depend upon him in no small measure. There was something in the temperaments of the two men which made them congenial one to the other. Wolfe's restless irritability was soothed by Julian's quiet calmness, and there was in both men a strain of ardent patriotism and self devotion which gave them sympathies in common.

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Together they set sail for England when the soldier's work was done, and after a fairly prosperous voyage they landed in that country, and immediately started for Bath, where Wolfe hoped to find relief from his rheumatic troubles, and gain the strength which he had lost during this hard campaign.

"I think my mother will be awaiting me there this time," he said, with a light in his eyes. "You have never seen my mother yet, Julian. Ah, how I long to see her again! she has been such a mother to me! There are times when I think if I have to give up this profession of arms, and take to a quiet life, I could have a very happy life at home with my mother. We suit each other so well, and we are like each other in our foibles and weaknesses. I think I have inherited my cranky health from her, but not her beauty. You will see for yourself how little like her I am in that respect when we get home."

To Julian, who had known nothing of the joys of home since he left his valley in the far south of the Western world, and who had no home to call his own now, there was something touching in the eagerness of Wolfe to reach his home and his mother. His father was not likely to be there. He would almost certainly be either in Kent, or else abroad; for he still held a command in the army, and the war on the Continent was still raging furiously. But the mother would be awaiting her son in the house he had written to ask her to secure for him again. It was within easy reach of the town, and yet it was quiet and secluded, and suited his tastes and habits.

It was almost dark one murky autumn evening when the lumbering coach, which had conveyed the friends the last stages of their journey, drew up at the door of the house. Lights shone in the windows, and from the open door there streamed out a glowing shaft of yellow light, bespeaking the warm welcome awaiting the tired traveller.

Wolfe had been weary to the verge of exhaustion when they had abandoned the attempt to ride the whole distance, and had secured the heavy coach; but now he seemed to revive to new life, and he sprang from it with some of the activity of youth and strength.

"Mother—there is my mother!" he exclaimed; and Julian saw him take the steps two at a time, to meet the advancing greeting from the mother who had come to welcome home her son.

Mrs. Wolfe was a distinctly beautiful woman, whose beauty had been but little dimmed by time. There was a sweet, matronly repose about her, and the brightness of her red-gold hair was dashed with streaks of soft grey beneath the laces with which it was crowned. But her complexion was clear and fair, and there was a look of soft fragility about her which made the son's protecting air of solicitude a natural and appropriate one. She folded him in her arms in a long, rapturous embrace; and Julian stood silently by the while, reverent of that deep love which for the moment could find no expression save in the whispered words:

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“Mother! mother! mother!”

“My son—my dear boy! my son come back to me!”

When the lady turned at length to greet the silent figure who stood silently watching this meeting, Julian could see that the tears were standing upon her cheeks and sparkling in her eyes.

“You will pardon me, sir, for this apparent neglect,” she said sweetly, putting her thin jewelled fingers into Julian’s hand; “but when my boy goes forth to the fight, I never know whether it will be God’s will to send him back to me safe and sound. A mother’s heart cannot but be full upon a day like this. But second only to my joy in welcoming him back is this of making acquaintance with the trusty friend who has been so much to him during his perils and labours.”

“Madam, it has been the joy and honour of my life to be able to serve so great a soldier and so noble a man!”

The warm clasp upon his fingers gave the mother’s answer to this; and then they all moved within the lighted hall, where a glowing fire and a number of candles gave bright illumination, and where quite a hubbub of welcome was going on. The servants were pressing forward to see and greet their young master, who had come home crowned with laurels. It was known by this time in England how much of the success at Louisbourg had been due to Wolfe’s unfailing energy and intrepidity. He was a hero at home as well as abroad, though he had hardly realized it yet. Moreover, he was vociferously welcomed by his dogs, all of whom had been brought by his mother to meet their master again; and he had much ado to return the manifold greetings bestowed upon him, and to free himself at last from the demonstrative affection of his canine friends.

A plentiful supper was awaiting the wearied travellers; and it was when they had put in order their dress and entered the dining room that they were aware of the presence of another lady, a very handsome, dark-eyed girl, who stood beside the glowing fire regarding their entrance with looks of unaffected interest.

“My dear,” said Mrs. Wolfe, “let me present to you my son James, of whom you know much, although you have never met; and his friend and companion, Lieutenant Julian Dautray, whose name is equally known to you.

“This, James, is Miss Kate Lowther, the daughter of an old friend of ours, who has left her in my charge whilst he takes a last voyage to Barbados, where once he was Governor, to be my daughter and companion till he comes back to claim her.”

The bright-eyed girl dropped a courtesy to the gentlemen, who bowed low before her; but then holding out her hand frankly to Wolfe, she said in a clear, fresh voice.

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“I am so glad to see you, Cousin James. I am going to call you that because I call your mother Aunt, and she has given me leave to do so. I know so much about you from your letters. I have copied every one of them to send to your father, for Aunt will not part with the originals even for him! I know all about Louisbourg, and the batteries, and the ships, and the big guns. Oh, I think if I were a man I could become an officer at once, and command a great campaign like that one! We had such rejoicings here when the news came! it was like new life to us. We had heard of that dreadful defeat at Ticonderoga, and it seemed as though England was never to rise from the dust of humiliation. It was openly said that Louisbourg would never fall; that it was as impregnable as Quebec. Oh, there was such lugubrious talk! And then came the news of the victory, and of Brigadier Wolfe’s valiant and doughty deeds. You may guess how your mother’s eyes shone at that! And all England echoed to the sound of your name!”

“A name more formidable in sound than in reality,” spoke Wolfe, laughing, but cheered and pleased by the sincere and pretty enthusiasm of the winning girl. “When those who have kindly admired me from the distance come to inspect me in person, what a shock they will receive! We shall have to palm Julian here off as the right man; he will play the part with much more dignity and grace.”

Kate looked from one to the other laughing.

“What do you expect me to say to that? Lieutenant Dautray looks every inch a soldier; but I think, Cousin James, that you have the air of the man born to command.”

“In spite of my cropped red head and lanky limbs? I am proud of the compliment paid me.”

Wolfe was certainly rather taken aback to find himself a man of so much mark when he showed himself in Bath. He had quite an ovation when first he appeared at the Pump Room; and although he was in a measure accustomed to lead a public life, and to be the object of attention and even admiration, he shrank from having this carried into his private life, and was happiest at home with his mother and friend, and with bright Kate Lowther, with whom he soon became wonderfully intimate.

The girl’s sincere affection for his frail and delicate mother would in any case have won his heart; but there was something exceedingly attractive in her whole personality and in her eager interest in his past career and in the fortunes of the war. She would sit for hours beside him whilst he related to his mother the incidents of the campaign, and her questions and comments showed a quick intelligence and ready sympathy that were a never-failing source of interest to him.

Her strength and vitality were refreshing to one who was himself almost always weak and suffering. He would watch her at play with the dogs in the garden, or up and down the staircase, and delight in the grace and vigour of her movements. She would come

in from her walks and rides with a glow upon her face and a light in her eyes, and sitting down beside him would relate all that had befallen her since her departure an hour or two before—telling everything in so racy and lively a fashion that it became the chiefest pleasure of Wolfe's life to lie and look at her and listen to her conversation.

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Christmas was close upon them. It would be a bright and happy season for mother and son, spent together after their long separation. Upon the eve of that day Kate came eagerly in with a large official letter in her hand, addressed to the soldier. It was a moment of excitement whilst he opened it, for it was known that he had been corresponding latterly with several ministers respecting the proposed expedition against Quebec, and all knew how dear to his heart was the fulfilment of that daring scheme.

As he read the document his cheek flushed. He sat up more erect in his chair, and there came into his face a look which his soldiers well knew. It was always to be seen there when he led them into battle.

“Mother,” he said very quietly, “Mr. Pitt has chosen me to command the expedition now fitting out against Quebec.”

Mrs. Wolfe gave a little gasp, the tears springing to her eyes; but over Kate’s face there spread a deep, beautiful flush, and she grasped the young man by the hand, exclaiming:

“O Cousin James, how glad I am! What a splendid victory it will be!”

“If it be won!” he said, looking up at her with kindling eyes. “But there is always an ‘if’ in the case.”

“There will be none when you are in command,” answered Kate, with a ring of proud assurance in her voice. “Had you been commander of the Louisbourg expedition, Quebec would have been ours by now.”

Their eyes met. In hers he read unbounded admiration and faith. It thrilled him strangely. It brought a look of new purpose into his face. He held her hand, and she left it lying in his clasp. He was holding it still when he turned to his mother.

“Are you not glad, mother mine?” he asked gently.

“Oh yes, my son—glad and proud of the honour done you, of the appreciation shown of your worth and service. But how will you be able to undergo all that fatigue, and the perils and sufferings of another voyage? That is what goes to my heart. You are so little fit for it all!”

“I have found that a man can always be fit for his duty,” said Wolfe gravely. “Is not that so, Kate?”

“With you it is,” she answered, with another of her wonderful glances; and the mother, watching the faces of the pair, rose from her seat and crept from the room. Her heart was at once glad and sorrowful, proud and heavy; she felt that she must ease it with a

little weeping before she could talk of this great thing with the spirit her son would look to find in her.

Wolfe and Kate were left alone together. He got possession of her other hand. She was standing before him still, a beautiful bloom upon her face, her eyes shining like stars.

“You are pleased with all this, my Kate?” he asked; and he let the last words escape him unconsciously.

“Pleased that your country should do you this great honour? Of course I am pleased. You have deserved it at her hands; yet men do not always get their deserts in this world.”

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“No; and you must not think that there are not hundreds of better and braver men than myself in our army, or that I am a very wonderful person. I have got the wish of my heart—it has been granted to me more fully than I ever looked to see it; but how often do we see in the hour of triumph that there is something bitter in the cup, something we had not looked to find there. Three months ago I was burning to sail for Quebec, and now—”

He paused for a moment, and she looked full at him.

“Surely you have not changed. You want to go; your heart is set upon it!”

“Yes,” he answered gravely: “my wish and purpose have never wavered; but now my heart is divided. Once it beat only for my country, and the clash of arms was music in my ears; now it has found a rival elsewhere. If I go to Quebec, I must leave you behind, my Kate!”

Suddenly into her bright eyes there sprang the smart of tears. She clasped the hands that held hers and pressed them closely.

“It will not be for long,” she said; “you will return covered with glory and renown!”

“It may be so, it may be so; yet who can tell? Think how many gallant soldiers have been left behind upon that great continent: Braddock, Howe—oh, I could name many others less known to fame, perhaps, but gallant soldiers all. We go out with our lives in our hand, and so many never return!”

The tears began to fall slowly in sparkling drops. She could not release her hands to wipe them away.

“Do not speak so, James; it is not like you! Why do you try to break my heart?”

“Would you care so much, so much, were I to find a soldier’s grave?”

A quick sob was her reply. She turned her head away.

“Kate, do you love me?”

“I think you know that I do, James.”

“I have begun to hope, and yet I have scarcely dared. You so full of life and strength and beauty, and I such a broken crock!”

“A hero, you mean!” she answered, with flashing eyes—“a soldier and a hero; tenfold more a hero in that you overcome pain and weakness, sickness and suffering, in the discharge of your duty, and do things that others would declare impossible! Oh yes, I

have heard of you; Lieutenant Dautray has told me. I know how you have done the impossible again and yet again. James, you will do this once again. You will storm that great fortress which men call impregnable—you will storm it and you will vanquish it; and you will come home crowned with glory and honour! And I shall be here waiting for you; I shall watch and wait till you come. It is written in the book of fate that your name is to go down to posterity as the hero of Quebec. I am sure of it—oh, I am sure! Do not say anything to damp my hope, for I will not believe you!"

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He looked into her face, and his own kindled strangely. “I will say nothing but that I love you—I love you—I love you! Today that is enough between us, Kate. Let the rest go—-the honour and glory of the world, the commission, and all besides. Today we belong to each other; tomorrow we sing of peace on earth, goodwill toward men. Let that suffice us; let us forget the rest. We will be happy together in our love, and in love to all mankind. After that we must think again of these things. Afterwards thoughts of war and strife must have their place; but for once let love be lord of our lives. After that storm and strife—and Quebec!”

Book 5: Within Quebec.

Chapter 1: The Impregnable City.

Within a lofty chamber, with narrow windows and walls of massive thickness, stood a young, bright-haired girl, looking with dreamy eyes across the wide waters of the great St. Lawrence, as it rolled its majestic course some hundreds of feet below. Although that mighty waterway narrowed as it passed the rocky promontory upon which the city of Quebec was built, it was even there a wonderful river; and looking westward, as the girl was doing, it seemed to spread out before her eyes like a veritable sea. It was dotted with ships of various dimensions bringing in supplies, or news of coming help or peril—news of that great armament from distant England, perhaps, whose approach was being awaited by all within the city with a sense of intense expectancy, not entirely unmixed with fear.

True, the soldiers laughed to scorn the idea of any attack upon Quebec. It stood upon its rocky tongue of land, frowning and unassailable, as it seemed to them. All along the north bank of the lower river the French were throwing up earthworks and intrenching their army, to hinder any attempt at landing troops there; and the guns of the town batteries would soon sink and destroy any vessel rash enough to try to pass the town, and gain a footing upon the shores above. Indeed, so frowning and precipitous were these that nature herself seemed to be sufficient guard.

“Let the English come, and see what welcome we have got for them!” was a favourite exclamation from soldiers and townsfolk; yet all the same there was anxiety in the faces of those who watched daily for the first approach of the English sails. Had not Louisbourg said the same, and yet had fallen before English hardihood and resolution? Those in the highest places in this Canadian capital best knew the rotten condition into which her affairs had fallen. The corruption amongst officials, the jealousy between Governor and General, the crafty self seeking of the Intendant—these and a hundred other things were enough to cause much anxiety at headquarters. The grand schemes of the French for acquiring a whole vast continent were fast dwindling down to the anxious hope of being able to keep what they already possessed.

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The girl gazing forth from the narrow window was turning over in her mind the things that she had heard. Her fair face was grave, yet it was bright, too, and as she threw out her hand towards the vista of the great river rolling its mighty volume of water towards the sea, she suddenly exclaimed:

“And what if they do come? what if they do conquer? Have we not deserved it? have we not brought ruin upon our own heads by the wickedness and cruelty we have made our allies? And if England’s flag should one day wave over the fortress of Quebec, as it now does over that of Louisbourg, what is that to me? Have I not English—or Scotch—-blood in my veins? Am I not as much English as French? I sometimes think that, had I my choice, England would be the country where I should best love to dwell. It is the land of freedom—all say that, even my good uncle, who knows so well. I love freedom; I love what is noble and great. Sometimes I feel in my heart that England will be the greatest country of the world.”

Her eyes glowed; she stretched forth her hands in a speaking gesture. The waters of the great river seemed to flash back an answer. Cooped up within frowning walls, amid the buildings of the fortress and upper town, Corinne felt sometimes like a bird in a prison cage; and yet the life fascinated her, with its constant excitements, its military environment, its atmosphere of coming danger. She did not want to leave Quebec till the struggle between the nations had been fought out. And yet she scarcely knew which side she wished to see win. French though her training had been of late years, yet her childhood had been spent in the stormy north, amid an English-speaking people. She had seen much that disgusted and saddened her here amongst the French of Canada. She despised the aged libertine who still sat upon the French throne with all the scorn and disgust of an ardent nature full of noble impulses.

“I hate to call myself his subject!” she had been known to say. “I will be free to choose to which nation I will belong. I have the right to call myself English if I choose.”

Not that Corinne very often gave way to such open demonstrations of her national independence, It was to her aunt, Madame Drucour, with whom she was now making a home, that she indulged these little rhapsodies, secure of a certain amount of indulgence and even sympathy from that lady, who had reason to think and speak well of English gallantry and chivalry.

Madame Drucour occupied a small house wedged in amongst the numerous strongly-built houses and ecclesiastical buildings of the upper town of Quebec. The house had been deserted by its original occupants upon the first news of the fall of Louisbourg. Many of the inhabitants of Quebec had taken fright at that, and had sailed for France; and Madame Drucour had been placed here by her husband, who himself was wanted in other quarters to repel English advances. The lady had been glad to summon to her side her niece Corinne, who, since the state of the country had become so disturbed,

had been placed by her father and uncle in the Convent of the Ursulines, under the charge of the good nuns there.

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Corinne had been fond of the nuns; but the life of the cloister was little to her taste. She was glad enough to escape from its monotony, and to make her home with her father's sister. Madame Drucour could tell her the most thrilling and delightful stories of the siege of Louisbourg. Already she felt to know a great deal about war in general and sieges in particular. She often experienced a thrill of pride and delight in the thought that she herself was about to be a witness of a siege of which all the world would be talking.

As she stood at the window today, a footstep rang through the quiet house below, and suddenly the door of the little chamber was flung wide open.

"Corinne!" cried a ringing voice which she well knew.

She turned round with a little cry of joy.

"Colin!" she cried, and the next minute brother and sister were locked in a fervent embrace.

"O Colin, Colin, when did you come, and whence?"

"Just this last hour, and from Montreal," he answered. "Oh, what strange adventures I have seen since last we met! Corinne, there have been times when I thought never to see you again! I have so much to say I know not where to begin. I have seen our triumphs, and I have seen our defeat. Corinne, it is as our uncle said. There is a great man now at the helm in England, and we are feeling his power out here in the West."

"Do you think the tide has turned against the French arms?" asked Corinne breathlessly.

"What else can I think? Has not Fort Frontenac fallen? Has not Fort Duquesne been abandoned before the advancing foe? Our realm in the west is cut away from Canada in the north. If we cannot reunite them, our power is gone. And they say that Ticonderoga and Crown Point will be the next to fall. The English are massing upon Lake George. They have commanders of a different calibre now. Poor Ticonderoga! I grew to love it well. I spent many a happy month there. But what can we do to save it, threatened as we are now by the English fleet in the great St. Lawrence itself?"

"Are they not brave, these English?" cried Corinne, with an enthusiasm of admiration in her face and voice. "Colin, I am glad, oh very glad, that you and I are not all French. We can admire our gallant foes without fear of disloyalty to our blood. We have cause to know how gallant and chivalrous they can be."

Colin's eyes lighted with eager pleasure.

"You remember that day in the forest, Corinne, and how we were protected by English Rangers from hurt?"

“Ah, do I not! And I have heard, too, from our Aunt Drucour, of their kindness and generosity to a conquered army—”

But she stopped, and waited for her brother to speak, as she saw that he had more to say.

“You remember the big, tall Ranger, whose name was Fritz?” he said eagerly.

“Yes, I remember him well.”

“He is here—in Quebec—in this house at this very minute! He and I have travelled from Montreal with my uncle.”

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Corinne's eyes were bright with eager interest.

Ah, Colin! is that truly so? And how came that about? You travelling with an English Ranger!"

"Yes, truly, and we owe our lives to his valour and protection. It is strange how Dame Fortune has thrown us across each other's path times and again during these past few short years. First, he saved us from attack in the forest. You need not that I should tell you more of that, Corinne. Afterwards, some few of us from Ticonderoga saved the lives of him and of a few other Rangers who had fallen into the hands of the Indians after that defeat at Fort William Henry, which had scattered them far and wide. We felt such shame at the way our Indian allies had behaved, and at the little protection given to the prisoners of war by our Canadian troops, that we were glad to show kindness and hospitality to the wanderers, Rangers though they were; and when I recognized Fritz, I was the more glad. He was wounded and ill, and we nursed him to health ere we sent him away. After that it was long before we met again, and then he came to our succour when we were in the same peril from Indians as he had been himself the year before."

"From Indians? O brother!" and Corinne shuddered, for she had that horror of the red-skinned race which comes to those who have seen and heard of their cruelties and treachery from those who have dwelt amongst them.

"Yes, you must know, Corinne, that in the west, where our uncle goes with the word of life and truth, the Indians are already wavering, and are disposed to return to their past friendship with the English. They are wonderfully cunning and far-seeing. They seem to have that same instinct as men say that rats possess, and are eager to leave the sinking ship, or to join themselves to the winning side, whichever way you like to put it. Since we have seen misfortune they have begun to change towards us. We cannot trust them out in the west. They are becoming sullen, if not hostile. A very little and they will turn upon us with savage fury—at least if they are not withheld from it by the English themselves."

Corinne's cheek flushed; she flung back her head with an indescribable gesture.

"And I believe the English will withhold them. To our shame be it spoken, the French have made use of them. They have stooped to a warfare which makes civilized man shudder with horror. England will not use such methods; I am sure of it, And she will prosper where we have failed; for God in the heavens rules the nations upon earth, and He will not suffer such wickedness to continue forever. If France in the west falls, she falls rather by her own act than by that of her foes."

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“That is what my uncle says,” answered Colin earnestly; “it is what he has striven all along to impress upon our leaders, but without avail. He has been seeking, too, to show to the Indians themselves the evil of their wicked practices. He has never been afraid of them; he has always been their friend. But the day came when they would no longer listen to him; when they drove us forth with hatred and malice; when there came into their faces that which made me more afraid than anything I have ever faced in my life before, Corinne. We dared not stay. The chief dismissed us and bid us be gone quickly, whilst he could still hold his people in check. He did not wish harm to come to us; but savage blood is hard to check.

“We got away from the village, and hoped the danger was over. We made our way as well as we could towards Montreal. But our uncle was weak; he had had several attacks of fever. One day he could not travel. That night we were set upon by a score of wandering Indians. They would not listen to our words, We were white men, that was enough. All white men were their enemies, they said. They would roast us alive first and eat us afterwards, they declared,”

“O Colin!” cried Corinne, with widely-dilated eyes.

“Yes; I can see their eyes now, rolling and gleaming. They began collecting light brushwood around the upright stakes they drove into the ground. They laughed and yelled, and sprang about with frightful contortions. They were working themselves up as they do before they set to one of their frightful pieces of work. Our uncle called me to him, and we prayed together. At least he prayed, and I tried to follow his words; but I could do nothing but watch those awful preparations. Then suddenly a shout arose from the forest hard by, and the Indians seized their weapons. We sent up a shout, caring little whether it was answered by English or French. We knew that what we had heard was no Indian whoop; it came from the throats of white men.

“Next minute a body of Rangers had dashed amongst us. The Indians fled, scattering right and left like chaff before the wind. Next minute I distinguished the friendly face of Fritz. He was kneeling beside our uncle, and asking him tenderly if he were hurt.”

“The same Fritz as saved us in the forest! Oh, I am glad it was he!”

“So was I; and doubly glad when I found that he knew more about the cure of these forest fevers than even our uncle himself. The Rangers made a hut for us, and for three days Fritz doctored our uncle, till he was almost well again. But they would not leave us in the forest, with the bands of treacherous Indians prowling around. They escorted us to within a short distance of Montreal itself, and Fritz consented to come into the city as our guest; and since he speaks French almost as well as English, he was a welcome guest to all. He became so much attached to my uncle that he consented to come with

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us to Quebec. For he is anxious to join the English squadron when it reaches these waters, and my uncle gave him his word of honour that no hindrance shall be placed in the way of his doing so. Perhaps it may be even well for one who has seen the extreme strength of the town, and the preparations made for its defence by land and sea, to go to warn the bold invaders that the task they contemplate is one which is well nigh if not quite impossible."

"O Colin, it is good indeed to have you again, out of the very jaws of death! Let me go myself and thank this noble Fritz for his good offices. Colin, I fear me I am half a traitor to the cause of France already; for there is that in my heart which bids me regard the English as friends rather than as foes. And when I hear men shake their heads and say that they may one day be the masters of these broad lands of the west, it raises within me no feeling of anger or grief. I cannot be a true daughter of France to feel so!"

"And yet I share that feeling, Corinne. I often feel that I am less than half a Frenchman! My good uncle sometimes shakes his head over me; but then he smiles, and says that the mother's blood always runs strong in the firstborn son; and methinks, had our mother lived, she would have been on the side of those who speak her tongue and hail from the grey lands of the north."

"Ah, it is good that you feel the same, Colin! I had almost chided myself for being half a traitor. And now take me to our good friend Fritz, that I may thank him myself and see him again with mine own eyes."

Brother and sister descended the stone stairway which divided the various floors of that narrow house. As they reached the foot of the staircase, they heard the sound of voices from a half-open door, and Corinne said with a smile:

"It is our Aunt Drucour talking with the stranger. She is ever eager for news of the war. A soldier is always a friend to her, so as he brings her tidings."

The room into which Corinne and Colin stepped softly, so as not to disturb the conversation of their elders, was a long and narrow apartment, with the same small windows which characterized the rest of the house. A table in the centre of the room took up the chief of the space, and at this table sat a bronzed and stalwart man, whom Corinne instantly recognized as her protector in that forest adventure of long ago. He was seated with a trencher before him, and was doing an justice to the fare set out; but he was also in earnest conversation with Madame Drucour, who was seated opposite, her elbows lightly resting upon the table, and her chin upon her clasped hands.

Upon a couch beneath the window lay the Abbe himself, with a cup of wine beside him. He looked like a man who has been through considerable fatigue and hardship, though

his brow was serene and his eyes were bright as he followed the rapid conversation which passed be tween the pair at the tables.

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As the boy and girl entered it was Fritz who was speaking, and he spoke eagerly.

“You have seen Julian Dautray, my friend and comrade who sailed away to England several years since on an embassy from the town of Philadelphia? Now this is news indeed. For I have heard no word of him from that day to this; yet once we were like brothers, and we made that long, long journey together from the far south, till our souls were knit together even as the souls of David and Jonathan. Tell me of him! Is he well? Is he still in this new world beyond the dividing sea?”

“After the capture of Louisbourg,” answered Madame Drucour, with the little touch of shrinking in her tone which such words always occasioned her, “he was to accompany the gallant Brigadier Wolfe (to whose untiring energy and zeal much of England’s success was due) upon some mission of destruction on the coasts, little indeed to that soldier’s liking. After that, I heard that they were to sail for England, since the brave officer’s health stood in great need of recruiting. But it was known to all of us that Monsieur Wolfe would never rest content till he had seen whether he might not repeat at Quebec what he had accomplished at Louisbourg. And if not actually known, it is more than conjectured that the fleet from England which brings our foes into these waters will bring with it that gallant soldier Wolfe; and if so, you may be sure that your good friend (and mine) Monsieur Julian Dautray will be with him.”

“That is good hearing,” cried Fritz, whose face was beaming with satisfaction and pleasure; “it is like a feast to a hungry man to hear news of Julian again!”

And he listened with extreme interest whilst the lady told him all she knew of his friend—his daring dash into the fortress disguised as a French soldier, and his many acts of chivalrous generosity at the close of the siege.

“We have reason to be grateful to you English,” said Madame Drucour, with a gracious smile. “It is a happiness, when we have to fight, to find such generous and noble foes. It is hard to believe that this strong city of Quebec will ever open its gates even to so brave a commander as the gallant Wolfe; and yet, if such a thing were again to be here as was at Louisbourg, I, for one, shall be able to welcome the victor with a smile as well as a sigh; for I have seen how generous he is to sick and wounded, and how gently chivalrous to women and children.”

“Yet those were stern terms demanded from capitulating Louisbourg,” spoke the Abbe thoughtfully.

“They were,” said the lady, with a sigh; “and yet can we wonder so greatly? England has suffered much from the methods we of France have pursued in our warfare. But let us not think of that tonight; let us remember only that English and French may be friends—individually—even though our nations are at war. Let us entertain Monsieur

with the best at our command, and bid him Godspeed when he shall choose to leave us.

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“Ah! and there I see my nephew Colin.

“Welcome, dear child; thou art child no longer.

“What a fine youth he has grown with the flight of years! I should scarce have known him!”

Whilst aunt and nephew were exchanging amenities in one part of the room, Corinne approached Fritz, who had risen to his feet at sight of her, and putting out a hand said with a shy smile:

“I am glad to welcome you again, Monsieur.”

“And I to see you once again, Mademoiselle,” he replied. “I have often wondered whether I should ever have that pleasure. The chance of war has brought me and your brother face to face three times already. But I scarce thought I should see you again. I thought these troubled days would have sent you back to France. These are strange places for tender maidens to abide in—these walled cities, with guns without and within!”

“Ah, but I have no home in France,” answered the girl, “and I would not be sent away. I have grown to love this strange Western land and the struggle and stress of the life here. I would fain see the end of this mighty struggle. To which scale will victory incline, think you, Monsieur? Will the flag of England displace that of France over the town and fortress of this city of Quebec?”

“Time alone can show that,” answered Fritz gravely; “and we must not boast of coming victory after all the ignominious defeats that we have suffered. But this I know—the spirit of England is yet unbroken. She has set herself to a task, and will not readily turn back from it. If the spirit of her sons is the same now as it was in the days of which our fathers have told us, I think that she will not quietly accept repulse.”

Corinne’s eyes flashed; she seemed to take a strange sort of pride in anticipations such as these.

“I like that spirit,” she cried; “it has not been the spirit of France. She has boasted, boasted, boasted of all the wonders she was to perform, and yet she has never made good her hold in the south. Now the tide seems to have turned here in the north; and though men speak brave words of defiance, their hearts are failing them for fear. And have they not reason to fear—they who have done so ignobly?”

“Do you remember what you told us when we met in the forest long ago?” asked Fritz. “Do you remember the name you spoke—the name of Pitt—and told us that when that man’s hand was on the helm of England’s statecraft the turn of the tide would come? And so we waited for news from home, and at last we heard the name of Pitt. And,

behold, since then the tide has turned indeed. Those words of yours have upheld our hopes in many a dark hour. And now that the fulfilment seems so near, shall we not feel grateful to those who held out the torch of hope when all was darkness?"

Corinne smiled brightly, and held out her little hand again.

"We will be friends, come what will," she said; "for I love the English as well as the French, and I have cause to know what generous foes they can make!"

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So Fritz became the guest of Madame Drucour in the narrow little stone house; the Abbe likewise remained as an inmate whilst he recruited the health that had been so sorely tried and shattered of late. Fritz was in no haste to depart, if his hosts desired his presence there. He would join the English fleet when it appeared; but it mattered little to him how he passed the intervening time. He could pass as well for a Frenchman as an Englishman, and did so for the time he remained in the city; but he kept his eyes open, and took careful note of what he saw, and, in truth, it seemed to him that the English fleet had little or no chance of effecting any landing in or near Quebec.

The fortifications of the town were immensely strong; so was its position—so commandingly situated upon the little tongue of land. There was a small camp upon the opposite point of land, which might perhaps be strengthened with advantage; but the whole of the north bank of the river was being fortified and intrenched, and was manned by regulars and Canadian troops, all well armed and munitioned. It was impossible to see how any attacking force could obtain a foothold upon that strand; and if Fritz's hosts took care to let him see all this, it seemed to him a proof that they well understood the impregnable character of their position.

But it was no part of Fritz's plan to linger over long in Quebec, although he was wishful to see the city for himself, and to judge of the strength of its position. He knew that the fleet from Louisbourg would be hanging about nearer the mouth of the great estuary, and to a traveller of his experience the journey either by land or water was a mere trifle.

Any day the sails of the English vessels might be expected to appear. The seething excitement in the city, and the eager and laborious preparations upon land, showed how public feeling was being aroused. It might not be well for Fritz to linger much longer. If his real connection with the English were discovered, he might find himself in difficulties.

"I have arranged with a boatman to take you down the river tonight, Monsieur," said Madame Drucour to him; when he had expressed a determination to leave. "He is scouting for information as to the English fleet, and we have heard that vessels have been seen in the region of the Isle-aux-Coudres. He will land you there, and you will then have no difficulty in rejoining your countrymen. If Monsieur Wolfe has arrived, pray give him my best compliments, and tell him that I hope his health is improved, and that if we should meet once again it will be as friends."

"I will not forget to do so, Madame," answered Fritz. "I myself look forward with pleasure to making the acquaintance of that great soldier. I should not have dared to think that I might approach him myself; but since Julian is his friend, I shall not be denied his presence."

Corinne was listening to the talk with eager interest; now she broke in with a smile:

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“And tell Monsieur Julian that if he should repeat his strategy of Louisbourg here at Quebec, and steal into the city in disguise, I hope he will come to see us here. We are very well disposed towards the English, my aunt and I. We should have a welcome for him, and would see that he came to no harm.”

Madame Drucour laughed, and patted the cheek of her niece.

“Make no rash promises, little one. The game of war is a fiercer and more deadly and dangerous one than thou canst realize as yet. It may be our privilege to shelter and succour a hunted foe; but tempt not any man to what might be certain destruction. Spies meet with scant mercy; and there are Indians in this city who know not the meaning of mercy, and have eyes and ears quicker and keener than our own. Monsieur and his friends had better now remain without the city walls, unless the day should come when they can enter them as conquerors and masters of all.”

She drew herself together and gave a little, quick, shuddering sigh, as though realizing as those never could do who had not seen war what must inevitably be ere such an end could be accomplished.

Fritz took her hand and carried it to his lips.

“If such a day as that come, Madame,” he said, “be very sure that my first duty and privilege will be to protect you and yours from harm. Adieu; and if I can ever repay your kindness to me, be sure the opportunity shall not be neglected.”

Chapter 2: The Defences Of Quebec.

Excitement reigned in the city. There had been a cry of fear earlier in the day. Men had rushed through the streets, crying aloud in every tone of consternation:

“The English fleet! the English fleet!”

But this had proved a false alarm. The sails seen advancing up the great waterway were those of friendly vessels, laden with provisions for the city, and great rejoicings were held as the supplies were carried into the storehouses by the eager citizens and soldiers. Colin, running hither and thither picking up news, came running back at short intervals with tidings for his sister and aunt.

“They all say the English fleet has sailed from England, and may be here any day; but at least we shall not starve yet. We have a fine consignment of provisions brought in today.”

Next time he came he had another item of information to give.

“Our General, Monsieur de Montcalm, met me in the street just now, and bid me say that he purposed to take his supper with us this evening, as there are certain matters he would discuss with my uncle, and with you, dear aunt, who have seen so much of warfare. He asked me if it would be convenient for you to receive him, and I said I was sure that it would.”

“Quite right, my child,” answered Madame Drucour; “I shall deem it an honour to entertain the brave Marquis. I have a great respect for him, both as a man and a soldier.”

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“Yes: they all speak well of him, and they say that the Governor, Vaudreuil, treats him shamefully, or at least traduces him shamefully behind his back to the Government in France. He is jealous because Monsieur de Montcalm is so much better a soldier than he. His jealousy is mean and pitiful. I hear things that make my blood boil!”

“Yes: Monsieur de Montcalm has had to exercise great patience and self restraint. We all honour him for it,” said the Abbe, looking up from his breviary. “His has been a difficult post from first to last, and he has filled it with marked ability. The Governor seeks to take to himself all the credit of success throughout the colony and the war, and to heap upon Montcalm all the blame wherever there has been discomfiture and defeat; but from what I can learn, the Minister of France is not deceived. The powers of the campaign are vested mainly in the hands of the General of the forces, let the Governor rage as he will.”

Colin and Corinne stood at the window watching the hubbub down in the lower town and along the quays. They could obtain a fair view from the upper window, where the girl spent so much of her time; and whilst the Abbe and Madame Drucour talked of public matters and the political outlook, Colin poured broadsides of information into the ears of his sister.

“They say that the English ships can never navigate the waters of this great river!” he cried. “I was talking with the sailors on the vessels which have come in. They dare not bring their own ships up without a pilot on board. If the English try to sail their great battleships up through the shoals and other perils, they will assuredly, say the men, run them upon the jagged edges of the sunken reefs and wreck them hopelessly. I was telling them that the English are better sailors than ever the French will be; but they only laughed grimly, and bid them come and see what their sailor craft could do without pilots in the mouth of the St. Lawrence. I should grieve if the noble vessels were wrecked and stranded in the Traverse, which they say is the most dangerous part of all. But the sailors are very confident that that is what will happen.”

“I don’t believe it!” cried Corinne, with flashing eyes. “The English have always been masters of the sea; have they not won themselves the name of ‘sea dogs’ and ‘sea rovers’ even from their enemies? The walls and guns of Quebec may prove too much for them, but not the navigation of the St. Lawrence.”

“So I think,” answered Colin eagerly; “but that is what the men say.

“The French are always something overconfident and boastful, I think,” said Corinne gravely. “They like to win their battles before they fight them, and beat back the foe before he appears. But we shall see—we shall see.”

Colin and Corinne were both much interested in the General of the forces, Monsieur the Marquis of Montcalm. In addition to being a very excellent soldier—brave, capable,

merciful, and modest—he was a very delightful and charming companion in any social gathering; and towards Corinne he showed himself especially tender, telling her, with the tears standing in his eyes, how much she reminded him of the little daughter he had left at home, Mirete; whom he feared he should never see again.

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“For my aide-de-camp, M. de Bougainville, lately returned from France, has brought me sad news. One of my daughters has died—he could not ascertain which; but I feel sure it is my little Mirete, who was always delicate and fragile. I loved her very much; she was such a clinging little thing, and had soft brown eyes like yours, my dear. I did not think, when I left my wife and children in our happy home at Candiac, that I should be detained here so long, or that death would have visited my house ere I returned. We were so happy in that far away home in France; my thoughts are ever turning back thither. Pray Heaven I may soon bring this war to a successful termination, and may then return to end my days in peace in that fair spot, surrounded by those I love so well!”

This little speech touched Corinne’s heart, and she lifted her face and gave the bereaved father a kiss of sympathy, the tears hanging upon her own long lashes. He squeezed her hand and returned the salute with warmth. Yet the next minute he was the soldier and the general all over, as he seated himself at table and proceeded to discuss the situation of affairs with the Abbe and his hostess.

“My policy,” he explained to them, “will be one of defence, not of attack. What we must set ourselves to do is to prevent any landing of English troops upon the north bank of this river anywhere near the city. I had thought at first of making the Plains of Abraham, behind the city, the basis of my encampment. But this, as you know, has been given up, and the north bank of the river, through Beauport and right away to the river and falls of the Montmorency, has been selected.

“When you are sufficiently recovered, my friend, I should like to take you to see our position. Our right rests upon the St. Charles, our left upon the Montmorency. Quebec is thus secured from any advance by land. Her own guns must protect her from any attempt by sea. No vessel should or ought to pass the rock without being instantly disabled, if not sunk. By disposing our forces in this way, and remaining upon the defensive, we shall have our foes in a vice, so to speak. The risk of disembarking and trying to fight us will be immense. They will lose ten men to our one in every encounter. And if we can play this waiting game long enough, the storms of winter will come down upon us, and the Admirals will have to withdraw their fleet to some safe harbourage, and we shall have saved Quebec!”

“Yes,” said the Abbe—“that sounds a wise and wary policy; but will the Canadian militia be patient and obedient during the long period of inaction? They are accustomed to a sort of fierce, short forest warfare, quick marches, hand-to-hand fights, and the freedom to return to their homes. How will they like the long imprisonment in the camp, without being brought face to face with the foe? The Canadian soldiers have always given trouble; I fear they will do so again.”

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“If they become troublesome,” said Montcalm, with a tightening of the lips, “they will be told that the Indians shall be loosed upon their lands and farms to harry and destroy! Mutineers are accorded scant mercy. Monsieur de Vaudreuil has made up his mind how to deal with them in such case.”

The Abbe stroked his chin thoughtfully.

“If we alienate the Canadians, and have only the regulars to fall back upon, we shall be very short handed.”

“True; but I do not anticipate such a contingency. The Canadians are no more desirous of seeing England’s flag waving over their lands than we are ourselves. They may be rebellious and discontented, but they will hardly go further than that.”

“It is ill work fighting with discontented soldiers,” said Madame Drucour thoughtfully.

“Very true, Madame. I often wish we had better material for our army. I abhor the Indians, and distrust the Canadians. But what can we do? France has sore need of all her soldiers for her European wars. What can she do for us here out in the western wilds? She has her hands full at home.”

“And yet,” said the Abbe, “if she loses her hold upon these same western wilds, she will lose that new kingdom upon which her eyes have been greedily fastened for two centuries or more. She has claimed half the world as her own; will she lose all for the sake of some petty quarrel with her neighbours?”

Montcalm smiled and slowly shook his head.

“Our royal master has his hands something too full at times,” he said; “yet we will do our best for him out here.”

“And if General Amherst with his great army should succeed in capturing Ticonderoga and Crown Point, and should advance upon us by the interior, and steal upon us from behind, what then?” asked the Abbe, who, having come from that part of the world, and knowing the apprehensions of the French along the western border, was not unmindful of this possible danger.

Montcalm’s face was grave.

“That will be our greatest danger,” he said. “If that should take place, we shall have to weaken our camp along the river and send reinforcements to the small detachments now placed along the upper river. But the English were routed at Ticonderoga once; let us hope it will happen so a second time.”

“General Amherst is a very different commander from General Abercromby,” said the Abbe gravely; and Madame Drucour added her testimony to the abilities of the General who had commanded at the siege of Louisbourg, although the dash and energy of Wolfe had been one of the main elements of strength to the besiegers.

“Yet I have confidence in our good Boulamaque,” answered Montcalm. “He will do all that can he done to check the advance of the invaders and hold out fortresses against them. We have had our disasters—far be it from me to deny it—but Ticonderoga is strong, and has long held her own; I think she will do so once again.”

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“And will you remain within the walls of Quebec yourself, my dear Marquis? or is it true what I hear—that your headquarters will be with the camp at Beauport?”

“My place is here—there—everywhere!” answered Montcalm, with a smile and a meaning gesture. “Within the city the Chevalier de Ramesay will hold command with sixteen thousand men. For my part, I shall occupy myself chiefly with the army along the river banks. The first peril will certainly lie there. The town is unassailable, but a landing will probably be attempted somewhere along there. The enemy must be driven back with loss and confusion each time such an attempt is made. That will discourage them, and inspire our men with hope and courage. We have also prepared fire ships at no small cost, to be launched and fired at convenient seasons, and sent adrift amongst the enemy’s ships. The sight of their burning vessels will do something to discourage the English. They put their trust in their ships. We will show them what a warm welcome we have waiting for them here!”

“And our own vessels,” asked the Abbe—“what of them? Will any naval battle he attempted?”

“No. The Governor has given orders that they shall disembark their men for the defence of the town, and the ships themselves will be sent some distance up the river out of harm’s way. We have kept some of the best for fire ships; the rest will remain at a distance, beyond the river Richelieu.”

“You think, then, that no British ship can pass the guns of the town?”

Montcalm’s face was a study of calm confidence.

“I only wish they might attempt it,” he said. “We would sink them one by one, as a child’s boats could be sunk by throwing stones upon them. The English have a task before them the magnitude of which they have little idea of. First they have the river itself to navigate; then they have the guns of Quebec to settle with. Let them take their choice between Scylla and Charybdis; for of a certainty they lie betwixt the two.”

Indeed the guns of Quebec were formidable enough. Next day Montcalm took Madame Drucour and her niece and nephew a tour of inspection about the town, and up to one of the heights which gave them a panoramic view of the city and its defences, both within and without. The batteries of the town bristled with formidable guns; the town itself swarmed with soldiers—regulars, militia, Indians. From the adjacent country men of all ages had come flocking in, eager to bear arms against the foe. The Bishop had issued a mandate to his flock, urging them to rally round their leaders, and never surrender the fair domain of Canada to the heretic usurper.

There was plenty of enthusiasm now amongst the Canadians they came flocking into the camp in great numbers. All were hardy fellows, trained to a certain sort of rough

fighting from their very childhood. They were invaluable in forest warfare, as had been proved again and again. But they lacked the stamina of the regular soldier. They were invariably unsteady when exposed to fire in the open, and they were impatient of discipline and control. Vaudreuil was always loud in their praise, trying to give them the credit of every successful engagement. But Montcalm reposed much more confidence in his regular soldiers; although he gave these others their due when they had proved of service to him.

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It was a wonderful sight to see the lines of defence stretching right away from the river St. Charles, close to the promontory on which Quebec was built, to that other invisible gorge where the wonderful cataract of the Montmorency flung its waters into the greater St. Lawrence below. Opposite was the height of Point Levi, with its smaller batteries; and away on the left, in the middle of the vast, sea-like river, could be distinguished the western end of the Isle of Orleans.

Earthworks, batteries, redoubts seemed to bristle every where. Squadrons of men, like brilliant-hued ants, moved to and fro upon the plains below. The tents of the camp stretched out in endless white spots; and the river was dotted with small craft of all sorts conveying provisions to the camp, and doing transport duty of all kinds.

“He will be a bold man who faces the fire from our batteries, I think,” said Montcalm, looking with a calm complacency upon the animated scene; and then he turned and pointed backwards behind him to Cape Diamond, fringed with its palisades and capped by parapet and redoubt.

A bold foe indeed to face the perils frowning from every height upon which the eye could rest. Madame Drucour’s face slowly brightened as she took in, with eyes that were experienced in such matters, the full strength of the position occupied by the city of Quebec.

“In truth, I scarce see how the enemy could effect a landing anywhere—could even attempt it,” she said. “And yet we said the same at Louisbourg—till they landed where none of us thought they could do, and took us in the rear!”

And her eyes sought the steep, precipitous banks of the river after the town had been passed, as though asking whether any landing could be effected there, if some ships should succeed in the daring attempt to pass the guns of the town, and find anchorage in the upper river.

Montcalm followed her glance with his, and seemed to read the thought in her heart.

“All these heights will be watched,” he said. “Although I have no fear of any vessel being foolhardy enough to attempt the passage, or clever enough to succeed in passing the guns of the fortifications, I shall leave no point unwatched or unguarded. Quebec shall not fall whilst I have life and breath! If the victor marches into the city, it will be across my dead body!”

Later upon that very day a fresh excitement occurred. Madame Drucour and her niece and nephew were in the pleasant upper room of their house, talking over the things they had seen and heard that day, when the clamour in the street below roused them to the consciousness that something unwonted was afoot; and Colin ran below, eager to know

what the matter could be. In a few minutes he returned, his face full of animation and eager interest.

“They have taken three prisoners!” he exclaimed—“English midshipmen all of them. You know our boats are scouting all round the Isle-aux-Coudres, where Durell and his contingent of ships from Louisbourg are lying waiting for the English fleet.”

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“Yes, yes,” cried Corinne eagerly; “we know that! But where are the prisoners?”

“They are below, in the house. They brought them to the Abbe, our uncle. They profess not to speak French, these lads, but I think they understand it fast enough.

“Come down and hear their story, my aunt; and you also, Corinne. They have been left in our care by the order of Monsieur de Montcalm, that we may win from them all that they know, respecting the strength of the English fleet. Let us go and hear what they say.”

“How came they to be taken?” asked Madame Drucour, as she rose to accompany Colin.

“They were taken on shore. They had left their ship, perhaps without leave, and were amusing themselves upon the island. The men in our boat watched them, and presently landed cautiously and surrounded them. They made a gallant struggle, but were captured at length. And now they have been brought to us that we may get from them all the information we can. Our uncle is talking to them even now. I want to hear, and I want Corinne also to hear what they say.”

“And the poor lads will doubtless be hungry,” said Madame Drucour, always thoughtful for the comfort of others; “we will set food before them as they talk. They shall see that we are not harsh captors.”

It was three bright-faced, bronzed English lads that they found in the lower room with the good Abbe. He had induced the rest of the people to disperse, and was now alone with the captives. The lads seemed quite disposed to be talkative, and when the lady entered bearing food, their eyes brightened; they stood up and made their bows to all, and fell upon the victuals with a hearty goodwill.

“Strong! I should think it was strong,” cried the eldest of the three, in response to a question from the Abbe respecting the English squadron on the way: “why, there are more than thirty ships of the line, and with frigates, sloops-of-war, and transports they must number over fifty. Then we have ten fine ships under Admiral Durell, waiting to join the main fleet when it comes; and there is another squadron under Admiral Holmes, which has gone to New York to take up the troops mustered in New England for the reduction of Quebec. Oh, it will be a grand sight, a grand sight, when it comes sailing up the waters of the St. Lawrence! Quebec, I dare wager, has never seen such a sight before!”

The faces of all the lads were full of animation and pride. They appeared to have no fears for their personal safety. They were enthusiastic in their descriptions of the wonderful feats which the world would soon see, and when once started on the subject were ready to talk on and on.

“They have fifteen or sixteen thousand men—picked troops—with the gallant Wolfe in command,” cried another. “You have seen something already of what Wolfe can do when he is set upon a task!”

Madame Drucour made a little sign of assent; she had learned that lesson herself very fully. The lad made her a courtly bow, for he knew her well, having been at the siege of Louisbourg, and having seen her when he had entered the fortress to view it after the surrender.

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“Madame Drucour is herself a soldier; she can appreciate the talents of the soldiers,” he said. “Well, we have Wolfe coming, and with him three gallant Brigadiers—Moncton and Townshend and Murray. They all say that each one of these is as valiant as the great Wolfe himself, and as full of ardour.”

“And then our guns!” chimed in the third. “Why, we have guns enough to batter down these old walls as children batter down their card houses! You know what English guns did at Louisbourg, Madame! Well, we have bigger and heavier ones coming from England—such guns as have never been seen in this country before; and such shells—why, you can hear the scream of them for miles. You will hear them soon singing and screaming over Quebec if you try to hold it against Wolfe!”

Corinne and Colin exchanged glances. It seemed indeed to bring the thought of war very near when this sort of talk went on. The Abbe was thoughtfully stroking his chin, debating within himself whether all this was a bit of gasconade on the part of these middies, or whether it represented the actual facts of the case. Madame Drucour made quiet answer, saying:

“But Quebec has also its guns, my young friends; Quebec can make fitting reply to English guns. And ships are more vulnerable than our thick walls. The game of war is one that both nations can play with skill and success. If you have a Wolfe on your side, we have a Montcalm on ours!”

“Oh yes; we have heard of the Marquis of Montcalm. He is a fine old fellow; I wish we could see him.”

“You have your wish, gentlemen!” spoke a new voice from the shadowy corner by the door, where the twilight was gathering.

The company started to their feet and saluted the great man, who advanced smiling, motioning them to be seated. Corinne kindled the lamp, and the General looked about him and sat down at the table opposite to the three youths.

“I hear you are from the English squadron,” he said; “I have come to ask you as to its strength. Tell me frankly and candidly what you know, and I will undertake that your captivity shall not be a rigorous one.”

He spoke in French, and the Abbe interpreted, although he suspected that the lads understood a good deal more of that language than they professed to do. They were willing enough to repeat what they had said before as to the overwhelming size and equipment of the fleet on its way from England—of the valour of men and officers, of Wolfe’s known intrepidity and military genius, and of the excellent, far-carrying guns and their equally excellent gunners.

Montcalm listened with bent brow and thoughtful mien. The lads appeared to speak with confidence and sincerity. They evidently believed that the fall of Quebec was foreordained of Heaven; but it was possible they might be misinformed as to the true strength of the fleet, and had perhaps, consciously or unconsciously, exaggerated that.

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At any rate they were not reticent: they told everything they knew and perhaps more. They gloried in the thought of the fighting to come, and seemed to take their own captivity very lightly, evidently thinking it only a matter of a few weeks before they could be exchanged or released—before their countrymen would be marching into Quebec.

“And as soon as General Amherst has got Ticonderoga, he will march here to help us, if we are not masters here first!” was the final shot of the senior midshipman. “Not that Wolfe will need his help in the taking of Quebec, but he will want a share in the glory of it. And all New England, and all those provinces which have been asleep so long, are waking up, eager to take their share now that the moment of final triumph is near. There are so many fine troops waiting to embark that Admiral Holmes will probably have to leave the half behind. But they will follow somehow, you will see. They are thirsting to avenge themselves upon the Indians, and upon those who set the Indians on to harry and destroy their brothers along the borders!”

The Abbe translated this also into French, making a little gesture with his hand the while.

“I knew that retribution must sooner or later follow upon that great sin,” he said. “Were it not for my feeling on that score, I should have firmer hopes for Quebec. But God will not suffer iniquity to go long unpunished. We have drawn down retribution upon our own heads!”

Montcalm made a gesture similar to that of the Abbe.

“I have said so myself many a time,” he replied. “I hated and abhorred the means we have too often used. It may be that what you say is right and just. And yet I know that I shall not live to see Quebec in the hands of the English. I can die for my country, and I am willing to do so; but I cannot and I will not surrender!”

“So they said at Louisbourg,” muttered one of the midshipmen to Colin, showing how easily he understood what was passing; “but they sang to a different tune when they had heard the music of our guns long enough!”

The Marquis was talking aside with the Abbe and Madame Drucour. When the colloquy was over, the Abbe addressed the midshipmen.

“Monsieur de Montcalm is willing to release you on parole, and my sister, Madame Drucour, will permit you to remain in this house during your stay in the city. You must give up your dirks, and pass your word not to try to escape; but after having done this, you will be free to come and go as you will. And if the English should take prisoners of our French subjects, you shall be exchanged upon the first opportunity. These are the terms offered you by Monsieur de Montcalm as the alternative to an imprisonment which would be sorely irksome to youths such as you.”

The lads looked at one another. It was a promise rather hard to give, since there would be so many excellent opportunities for escape; but the thought of imprisonment in some gloomy subterranean portion of the fortress, even with the faint chance of effecting an escape from thence, was too sombre and repelling. They accepted the lenient terms offered, passed their word with frank sincerity, and handed over their weapons with a stifled sigh.

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“We will show you the city tomorrow,” said Colin, when he took their guests up to the lofty where they were to sleep in company. “My sister and I are half English ourselves. I sometimes think that in her heart of hearts Corinne would like to see the English flag floating over the towers of Quebec.”

“Hurrah for Mademoiselle Corinne!” cried the lad Peter, throwing his cap into the air. “I thought you two looked little like the dark-skinned Frenchies! We shall be friends then, and when the town falls we will take care that no harm comes to you. But we mean to have Quebec; so you may make up your mind to that!”

Chapter 3: Mariners Of The Deep.

“I must go! I must go!” shouted Colin, bursting into the house, mad with excitement and impetuosity.

“My uncle, you will let me go! I must see this great and mighty fleet for myself. They say it is coming up the mighty river’s mouth. Some say it will be wrecked ere it reach the Isle of Orleans! Let me go and see it, I pray, and I will return and tell you all.”

The whole city was in a ferment. For long weeks had the English fleet been watched and waited for—for so long, indeed, that provisions were already becoming a little scarce within the town, in spite of the convoy which had arrived earlier in the year. So many mouths were there to feed that the question of supply was causing anxiety already. Still with care there was enough to last for a considerable time. Only the delay of the English vessels had upset the calculations of the men in charge of the commissariat department, and the people had to be put upon rations, lest there should be a too quick consumption of the stores.

This had caused a little murmuring and discontent, and the long waiting had tried the citizens more than active work would have done. It had given Montcalm time to fortify his camp very strongly, and make his position all that he desired; but it had been a wearisome time to many, and the Canadian troops were already discontented, and wearying to get away from the life of the camp, back to their own homes and fields and farms.

But now hot midsummer had come, and with it the. English foe. A fast-sailing sloop had brought word that the junction of the squadrons was taking place just off Cape Tourmente, and Colin was wild to take boat and go to see the great ships.

“They are saying that they must all be wrecked in trying to navigate the Traverse,” cried the boy; “but Peter and Paul and Arthur laugh to scorn the notion, and say that we do not know what sort of men the English mariners are. Some say that Admiral Durell has already captured the pilots who live there, ready to take the French ships up and down.

Let me go and learn what is happening. Let me take a boat, and take Peter and Paul and Arthur with me. They know how to manage one as well as any sailor in the town. Let us go, my uncle, and bring you word again."

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The boy was set on it; he could not be withheld. Moreover, the Abbe and Madame Drucour were keenly anxious for news.

“Be careful, my boy, be cautious,” he said; “run not into danger. But I think thou art safe upon the river with those lads. You will take care of one another, and bring us word again what is happening.”

“Oh, I will come back safe and sound, never fear for me!” answered the boy, in great delight. “We will bring you news, never fear! We will see all that is to be seen. Oh, I am glad the day of waiting is over, and that the day for fighting has come!”

“Would that I were a boy like you, Colin!” cried Corinne, with sparkling eyes. “It is hard to be cooped up in the city when there are such stirring things going on outside. But I will up to the heights and watch for the sight of sails; and you will come back soon, Colin, and tell us all the news.”

Nevertheless it was a hard task for the eager girl to remain behind when her brother and their three merry friends went forth in search of news.

By this time the English midshipmen were quite at home in their new home, and the blithest of companions for the brother and sister there. They did much to foster the sympathies of Colin and Corinne for the English cause. The boys told of England and the life there, and were so full of enthusiasm for their country that it was almost impossible not to catch something of the contagion of their mood. Both Colin and his sister had seen much to disgust and displease them amongst the French; whilst round their foes there seemed to be a sort of halo of romance and chivalry which appealed to the imaginative strain in both brother and sister.

Their British blood could not fail to be stirred within them. They saw and heard of corruption, chicanery, and petty jealousy all round them here. It was hardly to be wondered at that they inclined to the other side. England and Scotland were uniting together for the conquest of this Western world. Their mother’s countrymen were fighting the battle. They had the right to wish them success.

Corinne rehearsed all this to herself as she stood upon the lofty heights behind the town that afternoon with her uncle and aunt. They were looking with anxiety and grave misgivings at the clustering sails dimly seen in the distance upon the shining water of that vast estuary. Montcalm himself had come up to see, and stood with his telescope at his eye, watchful and grave.

“We have made a mistake,” he said to the Abbe in a low voice. “I did speak to the Governor once; but he was against the measure, and we permitted it to drop. But I can see now it was a mistake. We should have planted a battery—a strong one—upon Cape Tourmente, and bombarded the ships as they passed by. We trusted to the

dangerous navigation of the Traverse, but we made a mistake: English sailors can go anywhere!”

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The Abbe made a sign of assent. He remembered now how the General had made this suggestion to the Governor, and pressed it with some ardour, but had been met with opposition at every point. Vaudreuil had declared that it would weaken the town to bring out such a force to a distant point; that they must concentrate all their strength around the city; that they would give the enemy the chance of cutting their army in two. Montcalm had yielded the point. There was so much friction between him and the Governor that he had to give way where he could. Vaudreuil was always full of grand, swelling words, and boasts of his great deeds and devotion; but men were beginning to note that when face to face with real peril he lost his nerve and self confidence, and had to depend upon others. It was thus that he opposed Montcalm (of whose superior genius and popularity he was bitterly jealous) at every turn when danger was still distant, but turned to him in a fluster of dismay when the hour of immediate peril had come, and had been made more perilous by his own lack of perception and forethought whilst things were less imminent.

“Yet look at our lines of defence!” he exclaimed, after he had finished all the survey he could make of the distant sails crowded about the Isle of Orleans. “Where could any army hope to land along this northern shore? Let them fire as they like from their ships; that will not hurt us. And we can answer back in a fashion that must soon silence them. The heights are ours; the town is safely guarded. The summer is half spent already. Let us but keep them at bay for two months, and the storms of the equinox will do the rest. When September comes, then come the gales—and indeed they may help us at any time in these treacherous waters. You mariners of England, you are full of confidence and skill—I am the last to deny it—but the elements have proved stronger than you before this, and may do so again.”

Corinne listened to all this with a beating heart, and asked of her aunt:

“What think you that they will first do—the English, I mean?”

“Probably land and make a camp upon the Isle of Orleans, which has been evacuated. A camp of some sort they must have, and can make it there without damage to us. It will make a sort of basis of operations for them; but I think they will be sorely puzzled what to do next. They cannot get near the city without exposing themselves to a deadly fire which they cannot return—for guns fired low from ships will not even touch our walls or ramparts—and any attempt along the shore by Beauport will be repulsed with heavy loss.”

“Yet they will do something, I am sure,” spoke the girl, beneath her breath; and she was more sure still of this when upon the morrow Colin returned, all aglow with excitement and admiration, whilst the three midshipmen had much ado to restrain their whoops of joy and triumph.

“I never saw such a thing!” cried Colin, his face full of delight and enthusiasm, as he and the midshipmen got Corinne to themselves, and could talk unrestrainedly together; “I feel as though I could never take sides against the English again! If they are all such men as that old sailing master Killick, methinks the French have little chance against them.”

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“Hurrah for old Killick! hurrah for England’s sailors!” cried the midshipmen, as wildly excited as Colin himself; and Corinne pressed her hands together, and looked from one to the other, crying:

“Oh tell me! what did he do?”

“I’ll tell you!” cried Colin. “You have heard them speak of the Traverse, and what a difficult place it is to navigate?”

“Yes: Monsieur de Montcalm was saying that no vessel ever ventured up or down without a pilot; but he said that a rumour had reached him that some pilots had been taken prisoners, and that the English ships would get up with their help.”

“With or without!” cried Peter, tossing his cap into the air. “As though English sailors could not move without Frenchmen to help them!”

“Some of them took pilots aboard; indeed they were sent to them, and had no choice. But I must not get confused, and confuse you, Corinne. I’ll just tell you what we did ourselves.

“We heard a great talk going on on board one of the transport boats called the Goodwill, which was almost in the van of the fleet, I suppose because the old sailing master, Killick, was so good a seaman; and so they had sent a pilot out to her, and he was jabbering away at a great rate—”

“Just like all the Frenchies!” cut in Paul; “calling out that he would never have acted pilot to an English ship except under compulsion, and declaring that it was a dismal tale the survivors would take to their own country—that Canada should be the grave of the whole army, and the St. Lawrence should bury beneath its waves nine-tenths of the British ships, and that the walls of Quebec should be lined with English scalps!”

“The wretch!” cried Corinne. “I wonder the sailors did not throw him overboard to find his own grave!”

“I verily believe they would have done so, had it not been for strict orders from the Admiral that the pilots were to be well treated,” answered Arthur. “Our English Admirals and officers are all like that: they will never have any advantage taken of helpless prisoners.”

“I know, I know!” answered Corinne quickly; “that is where they teach the French such a lesson. But go on—tell me more. What about old Killick? and where were you all the while?”

“Holding on to the side of the transport, where we could see and hear everything, and telling the sailors who were near about Quebec and what was going on there. But soon we were too much interested in what was going on aboard to think of anything else.

“Old Killick roared out after a bit, ’Has that confounded French pilot done bragging yet?’ And when somebody said he was ready to show them the passage of the Traverse, he bawled out:

“’What! d’ye think I’m going to take orders from a dog of a Frenchman, and aboard my own vessel, too? Get you to the helm, Jim, and mind you take no orders from anybody but me. If that Frenchman tries to speak, just rap him on the head with a rope’s end to keep him quiet!’

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“And with that he rolled to the forecastle with his trumpet in his hand, and got the ship under way, bawling out his instructions to his mate at the wheel, just as though he had been through the place all his life!”

“Had he ever been there before?” asked Corinne breathlessly.

“No, never. I heard the commanding officer and some of the gentlemen on board asking him, and remonstrating; but it was no use.

“‘Been through before! no, never,’ he cried; ’but I’m going through now.’

“Then they told him that not even a French vessel with an experienced sailing master ever dared take the passage without a pilot, even though he might know it well. Whereupon old Killick patted the officer upon the back, and said, ’Ay, ay, my dear, that’s right enough for them; but hang me if I don’t show you all that an Englishman shall go at ease where a Frenchman daren’t show his nose! Come along with me, my dear, and I’ll show you this dangerous passage.’

“And he led him forward to the best place, giving his orders as cool and unconcerned as though he had been in the Thames itself. The vessel that followed, hearing what was going on, and being afraid of falling into some peril herself, called out to know who the rash sailing master was. ’I am old Killick!” roared back the bold old fellow himself, hearing the question, ’and that should be enough for you!’

“And he turned his back, and went on laughing and joking with the officer, and bawling out his orders with all the confidence of an experienced pilot.”

“O Colin! And did he make no mistake? And what did the pilot say?”

“Oh, he rolled up his eyes, and kept asking if they were sure the old fellow had never been there before; and when we had got through the great zigzag with never so much as the ghost of a misadventure, and the signalling boats pointed to the deeper water beyond, the old fellow only laughed, and said, ’Ay, ay, my dear, a terrible dangerous navigation! Chalk it down, a terrible dangerous navigation! If you don’t make a sputter about it, you’ll get no credit in England!’

“Then lounging away to his mate at the helm, he bid him give it to somebody else; and walking off with him, he said, ’Hang me if there are not a thousand places in the Thames fifty times worse than that. I’m ashamed that Englishmen should make such a rout about it!’ And when his words were translated to the pilot, he raised his hands to heaven in mute protest, and evidently regarded old Killick as something not quite human.”

“Hurrah for the old sea dog! That’s the kind of mariner we have, Mademoiselle Corinne; that’s the way we rule the waves! Hurrah for brave old Killick! We’ll make as little of getting into Quebec as he did of navigating the Traverse!”

The story of the old captain's prowess ran through Quebec like lightning, and produced there a sensation of wonder not unmixed with awe. If this was the spirit which animated the English fleet, what might not be the next move?

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It was quickly known that the redoubtable Wolfe had landed upon the Isle of Orleans, and was marching in a westerly direction towards the point three or four miles distant from the city where he would be able to obtain a better view than heretofore of the nature of the task to which he was pledged.

“Let him come,” said the Marquis of Montcalm grimly; “let him have from thence a good view of our brave town and its defences! Perchance it will be a lesson to him, in his youthful pride. He thinks he is a second Hannibal. It will cool his hot blood, perchance, to see the welcome we are prepared to accord to the invaders of our soil.”

In effect there was another sort of welcome awaiting the English fleet; for upon the next day one of those violent squalls for which these northern waters are famous swept over the great river St. Lawrence, and in the town of Quebec there were rejoicing and triumph.

“Now let the British mariners look to themselves!” cried the people, shaking fists in the direction of the invisible fleet, which they knew was anchored off the south shore of the great island. “We shall soon see what they can do against one of our Canadian tempests! Pray Heaven and all the saints that it may sink every one of them to the bottom, or grind them to pieces upon the rocks!”

“Pooh! not a bit of it,” cried the midshipmen in contempt, though they watched the storm with secret anxiety. “As though English-built vessels could not ride out a capful of wind like this! See, it is clearing off already! in an hour’s time it will have subsided. As though our anchors would not hold and our sailors keep their heads in such a little mock tempest as this!”

Luckily for the English fleet, the squall was as brief as it was violent; nevertheless it did do considerable damage to the ships at their anchorage, and flying rumours were brought in as to the amount of harm inflicted. Certainly some considerable damage had been done, but nothing beyond repair. It had not daunted one whit the hearts of the invading foe.

Montcalm came into the city that evening, and supped with the Abbe and Madame Drucour. He was not without anxiety, and yet was calm and hopeful.

“The tempest did not last long enough to serve our turn as we hoped. The Governor trusted it would have destroyed the whole fleet; but from what I can learn, nothing was really lost except a few of the flat-bottomed landing boats used in the disembarkation of the troops. The English are certainly notable sailors; but it is with her soldiers that we shall have more directly to deal. Still, I wish we could have sunk her ships; it would have placed her on the horns of a dilemma.”

“I have heard,” said the Abbe, “that the Governor talks of destroying the fleet by fire. He has made considerable preparation for such an attempt.”

Montcalm smiled slightly.

“True; he has been busy with his fire ships for some while. For my own part, I have but limited faith in them. They have cost us a million, and I doubt whether they will prove of any service; yet Vaudreuil is very confident.”

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“The Governor is wont to be confident—till the moment of actual peril arrives,” said the Abbe thoughtfully. “Well, we shall see—we shall see. When are these notable fire ships to be sent forth?”

“I think tomorrow night,” answered Montcalm, “but that is a matter which rests with the Governor. I have no concern in it; and when such is the case, I offer no advice and take no part in the arrangements. Doubtless I shall see what is going on from some vantage point; but Monsieur de Vaudreuil will not take counsel with me in the matter.”

“Fire ships!” cried the midshipmen, when Colin told them what he had heard; “do they think to frighten English mariners with fireworks and bonfires? Good! let them try and see. And O Colin, good Colin, if they are going to send down fire ships upon the fleet, let us be there to see!”

Colin desired nothing better himself. He was all agog to see the thing through. And why should they not? It was not difficult to obtain a boat, and in the darkness and confusion the four lads would easily be able to follow the fire ships and see the whole thing through. The midshipmen could navigate a boat with anyone, and Colin had learned much of their skill. All day they were often to be seen skimming about the basin of the St. Lawrence, prospecting about for news, and watching the movements of the English soldiers on shore, or of the fleet anchored a few miles farther off. They had only to steal away unnoticed, and take to their boat before the excitement began, and they could follow the phantom ships upon their mysterious way, and watch the whole attempt against the English fleet.

“Ah, but take me,” cried Corinne, when she heard the discussion—“do take me! It is so hard to be a girl, and see nothing! I will not be in your way. I will not scream and cry, or do anything like that. I only want to watch and see. I shall not be afraid. And I want so much to see something! I know I could slip away without anyone’s knowing or missing me. Only say you will take me!”

“Of course we will take you, Mademoiselle Corinne,” cried Paul, with boyish gallantry; “why should you not see as well as we? I have a sister Margery at home who would be as wild to go as you can be. She is as good as a boy any day. Wrap yourself well up in a great cloak, so that you may keep warm, and so that nobody can guess we have a lady on board, and we will take care of you, never fear!”

Corinne clapped her hands gaily; although growing to maidenhood, she had the heart of a child, and was full of delight at the thought of anything that promised adventure and excitement.

“How good you are! And pray call me not ‘Mademoiselle’ any more; call me Corinne—-all of you. Let me be an English girl, and your sister; for, in sooth, I feel more and more

English every day of my life. Sometimes I fear that I shall be hanged for a traitor to the cause; for I find myself on the side of our English rivals more and more every day!”

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The compact thus sealed was easily carried out. The Abbe and his sister, Madame Drucour, were keenly interested in the attempt of the fire ships against the English fleet, and were to watch proceedings from the steeple of the Recollet Friars. The daylight lasted long now, and supper was over before the shadows began to fall; and the excited lads were able to wait till the seniors had started forth before they made their own escape down to the harbour.

Corinne wrapped herself in a long black cloak, drawing the hood over her head, and thus disguising herself and her sex completely from any prying eyes; but indeed they scarcely met anyone as they hurried along through the narrow streets to the unfrequented wharf, where the boys had brought up the boat earlier in the day. Quickly they were all aboard, and were gliding through the darkening water, whilst the crowd gathered at quite a different part of the harbour showed where the launch of the fire ships was going on.

Colin described them as well as he could.

“There are three or four big ones, and Monsieur Delouche is in command; and then there is a great fire raft, as they call it—a lot of schooners, shallops, and such like, all chained together—a formidable-looking thing, for I got one of the sailors to show it me. I suppose they are all pretty much alike, crammed with explosives and combustibles; old swivels and guns loaded up to the muzzle, grenades, and all sorts of things like that, some of them invented for the occasion. We must give these fellows a wide berth when once they are set alight; for they will burn mightily, and shower lead and fire upon everything within reach. I only trust they may not do fearful damage to the English ships!”

“Not they!” cried Peter, with a fine contempt in his voice. “The Frenchies are safe to make a muddle of it somewhere; and our bold jack tars won’t be scared by noise and flame. You’ll soon see the sort of welcome they will give these fiery messengers.”

The night darkened. There was no moon, and the faint wreaths of vapour lay lightly upon the wide waste of waters. Corinne gazed about her with a sense of fascination. She had never before been so far out upon the river; and how strange and ghostlike it appeared in the silence of the night!

Ten o’clock struck from the clocks in the town behind them, and Colin turned back to look towards the harbour.

“They were to start at ten,” he remarked. “Let us lie to now and watch for them. We must give them a wide berth, but not be too far distant to see what they do.”

Corinne gazed, breathless with excitement, along the darkening water. The silence and increasing darkness seemed to weigh upon them like a tangible oppression. They

could hear their own excited breathing; and all started violently when Arthur's voice suddenly broke the silence by exclaiming:

"I see them! I see them—over yonder!"

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The boat in which the eager lads and equally eager girl were afloat was drifting about not very far distant from the Point of Orleans, where were an English outpost and some English shipping, although the main part of the fleet was some distance further on. The watchers expected that the ghostly ships, gliding upon their silent way, would pass this first shipping in silence and under cover of the darkness, and only begin to glow and fire when close to the larger part of the hostile fleet. Yet as they watched the oncoming vessels through the murk of the night, they saw small tongues of flame beginning to flicker through the gloom, and run up the masts and sails like live things; and all in a moment came a smothered roar and a bright flashing flame which, for the few seconds it lasted, showed the whole fire fleet stealing onwards, and the boats by which the crews of them were making good their escape.

“They have fired them too soon!” cried Colin, in great excitement. “I know they were not to have done it till they had passed the Point and got well into the south channel, where all the shipping lies.”

“Hurrah!” cried Peter, waving his cap; “did we not say that the Frenchies would make a mess of it? They may be good for something on land; but at sea—”

There was no hearing the end of the sentence; for with a roar like that of a volcano in eruption one of the ships burst into a mass of flames, whilst the rest became lighted up by the glare, and were soon adding to the conflagration—the fire racing up their masts and rigging, and showing them against the black waters like vessels of lambent flame.

“How beautiful, yet how terrible!” cried Corinne, as she gazed with fascinated eyes. “But look—look—look—look how the water is torn up with the shower of lead that falls from them! Are they not like fiery dragons spouting out sheets of fire? Oh, and listen how they hiss and roar! Are they not like live things? Oh, it is the most terrible thing I have ever seen. How glad I am that they are not running amongst the English ships! They are beautiful, terrible creatures; but I think they are doing no hurt to anything.”

“And look yonder!” cried Peter, pointing landwards in great excitement; “see those long red lines drawn up on shore! Those are our English soldiers, all ready to receive the foe should they seek to land under cover of this noise and smoke and confusion. As though our British grenadiers would be scared by false fire like yon fireworks!”

“And see, see again!” yelled Paul, still more excited—“see our sailors getting to their boats! They are going to row out and grapple those flaming monsters. See if it be not so. They are drifting down a little too near our few ships. You will see now for yourself, Corinne, the stuff of which our mariners are made!”

“Oh surely, surely they will not go near those terrible vessels!” cried Corinne.

“Yes, but they will,” cried Arthur, watching their movements keenly; “oh, would I were with them to help! See, see! they are getting their grappling irons into the boats. That means they are going to grapple these blazing ships, and tow them somewhere out of harm’s way. Hurrah for England and England’s sailors! Now you will see what our answer will be to these fiery messengers.”

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Corinne clasped her hands in mute wonder and amaze as the boats shot off from shore, bearing straight down upon the great fire raft—the most formidable of all the fleet—-which was spouting flame and lead, and blazing like a live volcano, roaring the while like a veritable wild beast, as though animated by a demon of fury.

“They never can go near it; they will be burned alive!” cried the girl, in affright.

But the midshipmen watched the tactics of the boats with eyes full of eager comprehension.

“They will tackle it somehow, you will see,” cried Peter. “See, they are getting round to the leeward of it, and they will lie off till it has finished its most deadly spouting. But it is drifting down upon the ships at anchor. They will never let it get amongst them. You will see—you will see! O brave jack tars, show the mettle you are made of in the eyes of all Quebec this night!”

Corinne could scarcely bear to look, and yet she could not turn her eyes away. The English sailors, laughing and joking the while, swarmed round the fiery monster in their boats, singing out to one another, and at favourable moments flinging their grappling irons and sheering off again.

“All’s well! all’s well!” they kept calling out, as one after another they fixed their hold; then with united and manful effort, and with a sing-song sound which came rolling over the water with strange effect, they commenced towing their blazing prize away from the ships she was nearing rather too threateningly, whilst great shouts and rounds of cheering went up from those afloat and ashore.

“Oh, well done, well done, brave men!” cried Corinne, roused to a keen enthusiasm; and in one of the pauses of the cheering, when silence had fallen upon the spectators owing to a sudden vicious outrush of flame, which seemed for a moment as though it must overwhelm the gallant English tars, a voice came from one of the tow boats, calling out to a companion in another:

“I say, Jack, didst thou ever take hell in tow afore?”

The monster raft, flaming and sputtering, together with the other fire ships beyond, was coolly towed ashore by the intrepid sailors, and all were left to burn away harmlessly upon the strand, where they could hurt nothing; whilst peals of laughter and cheering went up from the English camp.

“Poor Monsieur de Vaudreuil!” exclaimed Colin, as he prepared to sail back to the dark city, “I wonder if he has seen the fate of his vaunted fire ships?”

Chapter 4: Hostilities.

“Alas! alas!” wailed the townsfolk, when the news of the fiasco of the fire ships was made known, “those dogs of English are too much for us upon the water; but let them attempt to meet us on land, and we will show them what we can do!”

“Do they think French soldiers are the only ones who can fight?” asked Arthur, with a note of wondering scorn in his voice, as the sense of these words came to him. “Well, they will have their wish fast enough, I doubt not! Wolfe is here; and if he cannot fight, write me down an ass! They have seen what the sailors can do; now we will show them what our soldiers are good for!”

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“Don’t boast, Arthur,” quoth Peter, the eldest of the trio; “we can do without great swelling words. The French boast themselves into the belief that they hold this whole vast continent in possession. We must not be like them, and seek to boast ourselves into Quebec! We will wait till our flag is flying from yon battlement, and then it will be time enough to talk.”

“All right,” answered Arthur gaily; “I’ll wager it will not be long before we see it there!”

“Only don’t let our townsfolk hear you saying that,” said Corinne, laughing, “else they may be disposed to set you hanging there instead!”

And at that retort a laugh was raised against Arthur, who was a little disposed to gasconade, and to an unmerited scorn of the valour of their French rivals.

“Nor will Quebec be taken in a day, nor a week, nor a month,” added Corinne, “if all we hear be true. Monsieur de Montcalm has no intention, it is said, of meeting your Wolfe in battle. He means to lie behind these strong walls, and yonder formidable earthworks which protect his camp, and wear out the patience of the foe till the autumn storms force them to leave these coasts for a safer harbourage. There will be no fighting in the open, they say; all will be done by the guns cannonading us, and by ours returning the fire. It may be grand and terrible to watch, but it will not bring things quickly to an issue.”

“Yet Wolfe will contrive something to keep the foe busy, or I am much mistaken,” cried Peter. “Doubtless a pitched battle is what he would most desire; but if that is not to be, he will find a way of harassing his foes. Never fear, Corinne; you will see enough of war before long—trust my word for that!”

“Enough, and too much, perchance,” said the girl, with a little, quick sigh; “my aunt tells me that war is a fearful game to behold. Sometimes my heart sinks within me at what is about to befall. And yet I am glad to be here; I would not be elsewhere. I long to see this great struggle and watch it through. All say that Quebec is the key of Canada. Whichever nation holds Quebec will be master of the whole vast province.”

“Ay, and Wolfe knows that as well as the French themselves. His cry has always been, ‘To Quebec!’

“And yonder he is, within a few miles of his goal! Now we shall see what he can do.”

In truth they were very soon to see and feel for themselves in the city what Wolfe could and would do.

A day or two later sounds of excitement and alarm in the street proclaimed that something fresh was afoot, and Colin with his comrades darted out to learn the news. The citizens were gathering together and running for places which commanded a view over the river, and those who had telescopes or spyglasses were adjusting them with

trembling hands, pointing them all in one direction—namely, towards the heights of Point Levi opposite, where the river narrowed itself till it was less than a mile wide.

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“What is it?” cried Colin to a man with a glass at his eye.

“The English soldiers are there!” he answered; “I can see their red coats swarming up the heights. Holy Virgin protect us! They are making fascines and gabions. They are going to bring up their guns. They will be able to lay the houses of the Lower Town in ruins, even if they cannot touch the fortifications. Why did not the Governor leave a stronger force over yonder to protect us?”

That question was being passed from mouth to mouth by the anxious and frightened townspeople. They had been full of confidence and courage up till now; but the news that Wolfe had taken Point Levi, and was bringing up guns and intrenching himself upon the heights, filled them with apprehension.

“What are our guns doing that they do not open fire and dislodge them?” cried one voice after the other. “Where is the Marquis of Montcalm? Why does he not take steps for our defence?”

Montcalm was indeed coming post haste to the city, seeing clearly the menace in this action of the English General. He bitterly regretted having left the defence of Point Levi to the Canadian contingent there; for the Canadians were very uncertain soldiers, and were easily discouraged, though if well led and generalled they could be of great service in certain kinds of warfare. But it was known that the Canadians were already beginning to look upon the English as their possible new rulers; and some of them were disposed to regard a change of masters almost with indifference, so long as they were not interfered with in their own possessions. It was quite likely they had only made a very half-hearted resistance to the English foe; at least one thing was certain—Wolfe had gained possession of these heights with singularly little difficulty.

But Montcalm was not going to let him remain there if he could by any means dislodge him. Hardly had the General entered the fortress before Corinne heard, almost for the first time, the strange screaming noise of a shell hurtling through the air, and the next moment there were gushes of smoke from a dozen places along the fortifications, as the great guns were pointed and fired and the balls and bombs went flying across the great river, to fall amongst the busy toilers on the opposite height, carrying death and destruction with them.

Eagerly was the result of the fire watched and waited for. The citizens cried out to those with glasses to tell them the result.

“They take no notice,” cried one man who was commandingly posted; “they toil on without so much as a pause. The fire has not touched them yet; the guns are pointed too low. They are bringing up their own guns now; they have one battery almost complete. In a few hours they will be ready to return our fire. Can nothing be done to stop that? Our houses and churches will be knocked to pieces, and our town

destroyed! The General says that this will do them no good—they cannot touch the citadel and fortifications; but are we to have our homes destroyed about our ears? We men of Quebec will not stand that!”

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Fear and indignation were filling all hearts. Why had Point Levi been so poorly defended? Why had it been left such an easy prey to the foe? Who was to blame? Governor or General—Vaudreuil or Montcalm? The balance of opinion was in favour of the General, whose known ability and personal charm had rendered him popular with the citizens, whilst Vaudreuil commanded but little respect or confidence. Still, whoever was to blame, the fact remained. The town was in terrible danger of a ruinous bombardment, and the efforts now made to beat back and dislodge the enemy met with no sort of success.

On and on they toiled. The shot and shell certainly fell amongst them after a while, but seemed in no whit to disconcert them. The Canadian soldiers regarded with amaze this cool intrepidity. They themselves could be bold in forest warfare, with shelter all around them; but they were never steady in the open under fire, and could hardly credit how any soldiers could pursue their tasks unmoved by the leaden rain descending upon and about them.

“The devil and his angels must be protecting them!” cried the women, crossing themselves in fear; but the English midshipmen laughed aloud.

“What do they think soldiers are for, if not to do their duty in the teeth of danger and difficulty? They are a strange people, these Canadians. Surely the French troops would face peril as steadily if they were put to it?”

“Oh yes,” answered Colin; “the French regulars fight exceedingly well. Has not that been proved a thousand times on European soil? But the plaint of our General is that France sends him so few men, and that the Indians and Canadians are not of the same value, save in certain classes of warfare and in their native forests. The Governor is, however, so jealous for the honour of his Canadians, that he seeks in his dispatches to give all the credit of victory to them. So it is natural that the French minister should be chary of sending out regulars, which are so urgently needed over there for the war. Monsieur de Montcalm has told my uncle many things on this very point. He is always urging the Government to send us more men, but he can only get the half of what he needs. Perhaps, in days to come, France may regret that she did not listen better to his representations. We shall have need of good men if this city is to be held for her against the English.”

When the lads reached their home, they found the Abbe and his sister deep in talk. Corinne had been listening with attention, but now she turned eagerly to the lads, to ask what news they brought. Their tale was soon told, and all faces were grave.

“It will be a disastrous thing for the city to be bombarded,” said the Abbe. “It may not bring the capitulation any nearer, but it will harass and dishearten the citizens. I am truly sorry for them; they will certainly suffer. It should have been better managed than

that those opposite heights should fall so easy a prey to the foe. Again that is the mismanagement of the Governor."

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“Several boats have come over from the opposite shore,” whispered Corinne to her brother, “bringing news of what happened there. There has been little enough resistance to the English soldiers. A party landed at Beaumont, sending in front a band of Rangers, who had a little scuffle with some Canadians in the woods, and drove them off. The soldiers landed, and a placard was posted upon the door of the church. It was signed by Wolfe. It told the Canadians that if they would stand neutral in the coming struggle, they should have full protection both of their persons and property, and undisturbed liberty of religion; but warned them that if they presumed to take up arms against the English, their houses and goods should be destroyed and their churches despoiled. This placard the Canadians removed when the soldiers had gone, and have brought it to Quebec for the Governor to see.”

“And what says he?”

“Nay, we know not, but it has caused a great commotion in the town. If the Canadians do not stand by the French in this struggle, the English must needs be victors.”

“Ay,” spoke the Abbe, whose face was very grave, “and the case is but an evil one for them, as they begin to see. Already they are weary of the war. They love not the life of the camp or the waiting which is now imposed upon them. They are longing already to get back to their homes and their farms, and see after their crops and harvests. Yet if they refuse service under their masters the French, they are threatened with Indian raids; and if they fight the English, they are now threatened with their fury and vengeance. It is small wonder that they are perplexed and half-hearted. We shall have trouble with them, I fear me, ere the battle has been fought and won.”

Trouble was certainly menacing the town. There was no immediate danger of its falling into the enemy’s hands; but he was putting himself in a position from which he could inflict irritating and harassing injury to the town, and was making evident and active preparations to do so. The military authorities, who looked at the larger issues of affairs, regarded with perhaps a little too much coolness the prospect of the destruction of some churches and a large number of houses and other buildings, consoling themselves with the knowledge that the fortifications would not suffer greatly, and that Wolfe would be no nearer taking Quebec after he had laid in ruins the homes of the citizens. But the exasperation of these individuals was great, and their fear rose with every hour which passed. They saw that batteries were being erected, intrenchments thrown up; that their fire was no check to the activity of the foe; and that before very long the storm of shot and shell would be returned with interest, and would fall upon their city, making terrible havoc there.

Something must be done! That was the word on all lips. In warlike days even peaceful citizens are not altogether ignorant of the arts of war, and the burghers in the streets were mustering strong together, every man of them armed, their faces stern and full of

determination as they moved all together to one of the open squares in the city, and the place soon presented a most animated appearance.

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Not citizens alone, but pupils from the seminaries, Canadians from the other shore, and a sprinkling of soldiers had joined the muster. Every man carried arms, and when they had assembled to the number of between one and two thousand, a loud call was made for the Governor.

When Vaudreuil appeared, looking harassed and anxious, it was explained to him that the burghers of the city demanded leave to make a determined effort to save their houses and property from destruction. Would the Governor grant them an experienced officer to lead them? They would then cross the river at night, make a compass round the English camp, and set upon them from behind at dawn, whilst the guns from the town opened fire in front. Caught thus between two fires, and attacked front and rear, they must quickly be dislodged and annihilated; and the citizens would make themselves masters of these hostile batteries, which they would take good care should never fall into English hands again.

Their request was granted. An officer of considerable experience, Dumas by name, was told off to head the expedition, and a good many regular soldiers, who volunteered for the service, were permitted to accompany them.

Dearly would the three midshipmen have loved to be of the party, to see all that went on, but they knew they must not make such a suggestion. They were known in the town as prisoners on parole. It would appear to all that they meditated escape. But they urged upon Colin to try to see it all, and bring word again what had befallen.

Colin was nothing loth. He longed to be in the thick of the struggle. Moreover, he was well known to the citizens, and was loved for his own sake as well as for that of his uncle the Abbe, who went daily to and fro amongst the agitated people, seeking to calm their fears and to inspire them with courage and hope.

“I will go!” he cried. “Watch you from this side, and mark how the gunners do their work at dawn. If all goes well, our signal for attack will be the sound of the guns opening fire upon yonder batteries. And yet I shall scarcely wish to see the English dislodged. I do not want our town laid in ruins; yet I truly believe the English rule would be a benefit to this distracted realm. Their own colonies, if report speaks truth, are far more flourishing and strong than any France has ever planted. You have the knack of it, you Britons. Sometimes I doubt whether we shall ever learn it.”

“Don’t say ‘we,’” cried Arthur. “You are more than half an Englishman already, and we will teach you to be one of us before we have done. You neither look nor speak nor act like a Frenchie. Of course here in Quebec, amongst your own acquaintances and friends, you will feel to belong in some sort to them; but once we get you into English ranks, you will soon forget that you ever were anything but an Englishman at heart.”

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Colin was almost ready to believe this himself, though he scarcely liked to put it so broadly, lest it should seem like treachery to his own family and friends. He was possessed of a very keen admiration for British pluck and boldness and audacity. The things he had heard and seen had fired his enthusiasm, and he was quite of the opinion that were the free choice to be one day his, he would choose to throw in his lot with the English invaders of Canadian soil. To watch how this game of skill and address was to be played out between the two powers was now his great aim and object, and he was eager to be a spectator in the next scene of the drama.

His way was made quite easy; for the Abbe himself resolved to accompany the expedition, and watch from a distance the effect of the combined attack upon the English batteries. He would have been better satisfied had Montcalm been consulted; but he was away at Beauport, and if the citizens were to achieve anything, it would be better for them to strike whilst the iron was hot. Another day and the leaden storm might have opened upon the city, and the heart might be taken out of them.

All was now hurry and confusion—too much confusion for the approval of the Abbe, who, with the officer in command and the regular troops, sought to allay it, and to infuse more of discipline and organization into the arrangements.

Colin ran back to say farewell to Corinne and Madame Drucour; and they bid him be careful of himself, and come back amongst the first to bring them news. After promising this Colin departed, and the night fell upon the town—a restless night for those within its walls; for there was scarce a house but had contributed its one or more members for the expedition, and all knew that the salvation of their homes depended upon the success of the attack.

It was a hot, dark night, and there was little sleep in the city. It would be impossible to hear at that distance, even if some hand-to-hand fighting were to take place on the opposite bank. The wind set the wrong way, and only if the big guns boomed out would they be likely to know that the English had been aroused. Eagerly was the dawn waited for, when the city guns would give the expected signal; but the dawn came so wrapped in fog, and it was not quite as early as was expected that the boom and roar from the fortifications told that the gunners could sight the opposing batteries. The blanket of fog seemed then to roll up and away, leaving the glistening river lying like a sheet of silver at their feet.

But what was the meaning of that crowd of boats all making for the city as fast as oars and sails could bring them? It was hardly six o’clock in the morning, and the attack could not well have been commenced before five. What, then, were they doing, hurrying back in their boats like hunted hares?

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Those with telescopes, watching from the heights above, declared that the English were pursuing their occupations with the most perfect unconcern, that they were bringing up more guns, and that the batteries were now so well planted and defended that the city guns did no harm. Shell away as they might from Quebec, no effect was produced upon their solid earthworks; and it was abundantly evident that very soon they would he in a position to open fire upon the hapless city. Down to the river level rushed the excited people, to meet the returning boats. Such a clamour of inquiry, response, anger, and disappointment arose that at first nothing could be made out. The midshipmen cleared a path for the Abbe and Colin through the gathering crowd; and as soon as they were fairly within the walls of their home, they began to tell the dismal tale.

“It was just a fiasco from first to last!” cried Colin. “It was as our uncle said: there was no order or discipline or preparation. One might as well have sent out a pack of children to do the work!”

“What happened?” cried Corinne breathlessly.

“Why, nothing but a series of gross blunders. We got across all safe, and landed unopposed. The Seminary scholars were over first, and marched off up the hill before the rest came. We got separated in that way, and almost at once one felt that a sort of panic had got hold of the people. The burghers who were so anxious to come now got frightened, and were most difficult to get into order. Dumas and the regulars did their utmost; but it was plain that the people were scared out of their lives lest the English should suddenly appear and attack them. After a long time we got into a sort of order, and began the march, when all of a sudden there were a crash and a blaze, and everything was thrown into confusion. They yelled out that the English were upon them, and headed for the boats.”

“O Colin—the men who were so keen to fight!” cried Corinne; whilst the midshipmen doubled themselves up with laughter, exclaiming beneath their breath:

“O gallant burghers of Quebec!”

“It was disgraceful!” cried Colin hotly; “and more disgraceful still was it that the fire came from our own side—from the Seminary scholars, who had gone in advance; a thing they had no business to do. But this was not the worst—at least it was not the end of the bungling; for if you will believe me, the same thing happened three distinct times. Twice more after we had got the men formed up again, and were leading them up the hill behind the English guns, did those wretched Seminary scholars mistake them for the enemy and fire into their ranks. The last time they killed a score or more, and wounded quite a large number of others. That was too much. The men turned tail and fled helter-skelter back to the boats, and there was no getting them back after that. The scholars, too, when they heard what they had done, were seized with panic, and joined the rout.

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“I never saw such a scene in my life as the opposite shore presented just as the dawn was breaking and the first gun boomed out, and we knew that we ought to have been marching in compact order along the crest of the hill to fall upon the gunners from behind. Well, if this is how Quebec manages her affairs, she deserves to have her houses battered in. We shall soon have the answer from the English batteries, and we shall deserve it, too!”

Colin was right. The iron storm began all too soon, and proved to the full as destructive as had been feared. Churches and houses were laid in ruins, and disastrous fires broke out, consuming others. The unhappy occupants of the Lower Town fled from the smoking ruins, some to take refuge with friends in the Upper Town, which was considerably less exposed; others to fly into the open country beyond, where they trusted to be safe from the English invader. As the military authorities had proclaimed, this destruction did not materially affect the position of the belligerents—the English could not get much nearer their object by shelling the town—but it did much to dishearten the citizens, and produced a strong moral effect of depression, and murmurs even arose in isolated quarters that it would be better to surrender than to be destroyed.

Moreover, disquieting reports came from other places. The camp of Montcalm extended, as has been said, from the river St. Charles to the Falls of Montmorency. That great gorge was considered protection enough, and it was believed that no enemy would be rash enough to try to cross the river higher up; indeed, it was popularly supposed that there was no ford. Nevertheless it soon became known that Wolfe had effected a landing upon the farther shore of the Montmorency; that he was fortifying a camp there, and had found and was now holding a ford in the river above, whence, if he chose, he could cross and fall upon the camp at Beauport.

There had been some argument at first as to the advisability of dislodging him before he had made himself strong enough to resist attack. The Intendant had given his voice in favour of the attack; but for once the Governor and the General had been of one mind, and had decided against it.

“Let him stay where he is,” said Montcalm, after he had surveyed the position; “he can do us little harm there. If we dislodge him, he may find a footing elsewhere, and prove much more dangerous and troublesome. If he tries to get across to us, we shall have a welcome ready!”

So, though parties of Canadians and Indians harassed the English in their camp, and were met and routed by the gallant Rangers, who always accompanied the English forces, the soldiers remained in their intrenchments, and took little notice of the rival camp. Sometimes under flags of truce messages passed between the hostile camps.

“You will no doubt batter and demolish a great part of the town,” wrote Montcalm on one occasion, “but you will never get inside it!”

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“I will have Quebec,” wrote back Wolfe, “if I stay here till the winter. I have come from England to win it. I do not go back till my task is done.”

Some smiled at that message; but Madame Drucour received it with a little shivering sigh.

“Ah,” she exclaimed, “I have seen Monsieur Wolfe; I can hear him speak the words! Somehow it seems to me that he is a man who will never go back from his resolve. If he has made up his mind to take Quebec, Quebec will be taken!”

Book 6: Without Quebec.

Chapter 1: In Sight Of His Goal.

Wolfe stood rapt in thought beside the batteries upon Point Levi. From his own camp at the Montmorency falls he had come over in a boat to visit Brigadier Moncton’s camp, opposite the city of Quebec; and now he stood surveying the town—and the havoc wrought upon its buildings by his cannon—with a glass at his eye, a look of great thoughtfulness and care stamped upon his thin face.

Near at hand, ready to answer if addressed, was Brigadier Moncton, a brave and capable officer; and a little farther off, also watching the General and the scene spread out before him, stood a little group of three, who had come across with Wolfe in the boat, and who were, in fact, none other than our old friends, Fritz Neville, Julian Dautray, and Humphrey Angell.

It had been an immense joy to these three men to meet together in the camp of Wolfe round about Quebec. Julian had accompanied the expedition from England, Fritz had joined Admiral Durell’s contingent whilst it was waiting for junction with the fleet from England, and Humphrey had come to join them in the transport ships from New York, bringing news of friends in Philadelphia, where he had passed a portion of the time of waiting.

Now these three comrades, so long parted, and now brought together by the chances of war, were almost inseparable. Wolfe had appointed them posts about his own person, having taken for Fritz almost the same warm liking that he had from the first felt towards Julian and Humphrey, and which, in the case of Julian, had ripened into a deep and ardent friendship.

Whilst the young General was making his survey, rapt in thoughts which as yet he kept to himself, the three comrades spoke together of the war and the outlook.

“It will be a hard nut to crack, this city of Quebec,” said Humphrey; “they were all saying that in Philadelphia as I left. Yet all men say that Quebec is the key of Canada. If that falls into our hands, we shall be masters of the country.”

“And if our General has set his mind upon it, he will accomplish it,” said Julian briefly.

“He is a wonderful man,” said Fritz, with a look of admiration directed towards the tall, slim figure of the soldier; “would that his body were as strong as his spirit! Sometimes when I look at him I fear that the blade is too keen for the scabbard. That ardent spirit will wear out the frail body.”

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“That is the danger,” said Julian gravely; “but it is wonderful what he can compel that frail body to go through. He will rise from an almost sleepless night of pain and exhaustion, and do the work of a man in sound health, infusing life and energy and enthusiasm into everyone with whom he comes in contact! Truly the King’s words about him contained a great truth.”

“What words?” asked Fritz.

“Why, you know that this Wolfe of ours is but a young man, gallant enough, but far younger and less known than many another of half his capacity. You know, too, that the Duke of Newcastle, to whose blundering we owe half our misfortunes in the west, was never known to make a wise selection of men for posts of command, and was shocked and alarmed when he heard that Pitt had appointed a comparatively young and untried man for the command of such an expedition as this. He once said testily to the King that Pitt’s new general was mad.

“‘Mad is he?’ quoth His Majesty, with a laugh; ’then I hope he will bite some more of my generals!’”

Fritz laughed at the sally.

“In truth we could have done with some more of that sort of madness amongst the leaders of those border wars which have ended so disastrously for us. But in very truth the tide did turn, as the Abbe Messonnier had foretold, when Pitt’s hand was placed upon the helm of England’s government. So much has been accomplished already that I myself do not believe we shall turn our backs upon these scenes before Quebec is ours.”

“That is what they say in Philadelphia,” cried Humphrey—“that Quebec must and shall fall. If General Amherst can but capture Ticonderoga and Crown Point, he will march to our assistance by land. Then the French will be caught between two armies, and the nut will be cracked indeed! Did I tell you that our kinsman Benjamin Ashley has declared that, directly Quebec falls, he will come and visit the great city of which so much has been spoken, to see for himself the great work? If he does this, he will bring his wife and Susanna with him. You cannot think how keenly alive the Philadelphians are becoming to the glory it will be to rid Canada of French rule, and found an English-speaking colony there. The Quakers still stand aloof, and talk gloomily of the sin of warfare; but the rest of the people heed them no whit. They have furnished and equipped a gallant band to join General Amherst, and they are kindling with a great enthusiasm in the cause. Even our old friend Ebenezer Jenkyns has been talking great swelling words of warlike import. He would have joined the militia, he says, had not his father forbidden him.”

“It is well they have awoke at last,” said Fritz, a little grimly; “but it would have been better had they done so before their border was harried, and their brothers and countrymen done to death by the bands of Indian marauders.”

At which saying Humphrey’s face grew dark; for there was stamped upon his brain one scene the memory of which would never be effaced, though it should be a thousandfold avenged.

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“I would that Charles could have lived to see the day when the English should enter the city of Quebec!”

He spoke beneath his breath; but Fritz heard him, and answered with thoughtful gravity:

“Perhaps it were not true kindness to wish him back. His death blow was struck when his wife and children perished. The days which remained to him were days of sorrow and pain. The light of his life, the desire of his eyes, had been taken away. He lived but for an act of vengeance, and when that was accomplished, I believe he would have faded out of life had it not been that his own life was extinguished at the same time as that of his foe.”

Humphrey made a silent sign of assent. He could not speak much even yet of the tragic fate of his brother, or of the events which had led to it. Fritz turned the subject by speaking of John Stark and the Rangers, asking Humphrey what had been known of them since the breaking-up of the band after the disaster of Ticonderoga.

“I saw Stark,” answered Humphrey eagerly. “Have I not told you before? Ah well, we have not much time for talking these busy days. Yes, I saw Stark; he came to visit his kinsfolk of the inn when I was in Philadelphia. He has gone now with Amherst’s party. He will join Rogers, I suppose; and, doubtless, the Rangers will again do good service, as they do everywhere. He was in half a mind to come north with the expedition for Quebec, but decided that he would be of more use in country every foot of which was familiar to him. But he declared that, if once Ticonderoga were to fall, he would bring us the news faster than any other messenger. How he will come, and by what route, I know not; but this I know, that if there is a victory for English arms yonder in the west, and if John Stark be not killed, the sight of his face amongst us here will be the sign to us that the victory has been won.”

“And right welcome will be the sight of his face,” cried Fritz, “be his news what it may. John Stark is one of the best and bravest men I know. I have told our General many a tale of him and his prowess. Wolfe will have a welcome for him if he ever appears here.”

Wolfe seemed to have finished his survey. He took the glass from his eye and looked round him. Moncton was at his side in a moment. He, in common with all who fought with and under him, had a great admiration for the gallant young General.

“Moncton,” said Wolfe, in a voice loud enough for the other three to hear plainly, “I want to get some ships past the city into the upper reach of the river. The French General will not fight. I give him chance after chance against me, but he does not take it. He thinks a waiting game will serve his turn best, and perhaps he is right. But we must

leave no stone unturned to harass and perplex him. I want a footing in the upper reach of the river. I want to get some vessels past the town."

Moncton drew his lips together in a silent whistle.

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“Will not the town batteries sink them like logs as they pass?” he asked.

“They will, if they see them. They have left the river free of vessels; they trust entirely to their guns. But our sailors have done bolder deeds before this than the passing of some batteries upon a dark night. If you were to cover their advance by a furious cannonade upon the town, do you not think we could slip a few past those frowning batteries, and make a new basis of operations for ourselves in the upper reach of the river, above the town?”

Moncton’s eyes glistened. It was a daring project, but it was not without promise of success. Such things might be done, and yet there was serious risk.

“It will weaken us in one way,” pursued Wolfe, speaking in his quiet, meditative fashion. “As it is, we are divided into three camps—one here, one at Montmorency, and one on the Isle of Orleans. If we carry out this plan, we shall be divided into four; and should any pressing danger menace any one of those four camps, it might be some while before assistance could be sent. And yet I am more than half disposed to try. Montcalm does not appear to have any intention of attacking us. And if we weaken ourselves, we shall also weaken him by this movement. At present he is concentrating his whole strength in and below the city. If we get a footing on the upper river, he will have to send a contingent there to watch us. Whether we have any reasonable hope of getting at the city in that way, I cannot yet tell; I know too little of the character of the ground. But at least we shall have won a strategic victory in getting our ships past the guns of Quebec; and we shall cause consternation and alarm there, even if nothing else.”

“I will cover the movement with all the power of my guns,” cried Moncton eagerly; “and if the thing can be done, our sailors will do it; they are in no whit afraid of the enemy’s guns. And look—if the ships get through, why not let our red-coats and blue-jackets drag a fleet of boats across the base of this Point Levi, along the low ground yonder, and launch them in the river above, where they can join the ships and bring them reinforcements of men? Then we shall have means of transporting men and provisions to these vessels, and the sight of them upon their upper river will further dishearten the citizens of Quebec, who have been very well punished already by our guns.”

“Yes,” answered Wolfe. “I would sooner have shattered the citadel than the houses and convents; but we must e’en do what we can in this game of war. But your idea is excellent, Moncton. If the ships succeed in making the passage, the boats shall certainly be brought across, as you suggest. It will be a strategic triumph for us, even though we do not reap immediate fruit from it. And if once Amherst can march to join us, it will be everything to have shipping in the upper river.”

“And you are hopeful that he will?”

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“If he can make good his position upon the lakes and in the west. I have information that things are going well for us there; but so far no definite news of the capture of Ticonderoga has reached us. It is rumoured that Niagara is attacked, and is likely to pass into our hands. There is no doubt that the French all along the western boundary are in extremity. If Quebec goes, all will go; they will have no heart to hold out. But, on the other hand, if we are beaten here, and are forced to retreat unsuccessfully, it will have a great moral effect throughout Canada.”

“Canada is becoming very half-hearted towards its French masters,” said Moncton. “We hear a good deal from prisoners brought to the camp by our scouts. We had one brought in the other day—a cunning old rascal, but by no means reticent when we had plied him with port wine. He said that they were sick to death of the struggle, and only wished it over one way or the other. They would be glad enough to stand neutral, and serve either French or English according as the victory went; but their priests threaten them with spiritual terrors if they do not fight for the cause of Holy Church, as they term it, whilst the military authorities threaten them with the Indians, and we, on the other side, with the destruction of their farms and houses if they interfere in any way with us. Their case is certainly a hard one.”

“It is,” answered Wolfe; “but, all the same, I am not going to permit any infringement of the orders I have laid down. If the people will stand neutral or help us, they shall have protection and all reasonable help if the Indians attack them; but if they prefer to obey their French masters or their priestly tyrants, and harry and worry us, I keep my word, and I send out harrying parties to drive off their cattle and bring themselves prisoners to our camps. No violence shall be done them; no church shall be violated; not a finger shall be laid upon any woman or child. If outrages are committed by my soldiers, the men shall instantly be hanged or shot. But I will have no infringement of my commands. What I say I mean. I have posted up my intentions. The people know what they have to expect. The free choice is theirs. If they will not take the offered protection, they must abide by the consequences.”

Inflexible firmness was written upon the thin face of the young General. Cruelty was abhorrent to him whatever form it took; but he could be stern and rigorous in the prosecution of any plan which had been adopted after careful consideration. He knew that the greatest blessing to the Canadians would be the termination of this long and wearing war. From his heart he believed that transference from French to English rule would be the happiest possible change of fortune for them. Therefore he did not shrink from any measures which should tend to bring about this consummation; and whilst giving them every opportunity to save themselves and their property by aiding or at least not interfering with or opposing his measures, he made it abundantly plain that, if they persisted in inimical courses, they would be treated as enemies.

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The idea of effecting a passage of the city and forming a camp, or at least a flotilla, above the town was a matter which afforded much discussion and excitement throughout the English ranks. The daring of it appealed to all hearts, and the sailors when they heard it were keen for the enterprise, confident of success were only a dark night to be chosen for the attempt. Old Killick, with his hands in his pockets, rolled up and down his deck, chewing a quid of tobacco, and giving his opinions on the subject.

“Pass Quebec! bless you, my dears, I’ll undertake to pass the town guns any hour of the day or night you like to send me. What a rout they did make, to be sure, about their old river! They make just such a rout about their precious guns! What English ship ever feared to pass a French battery yet? Give me a capful of wind, and I’ll undertake to get my boat past whilst the Frenchies are trying to get their guns pointed low enough to sink me! The soldiers have been having their turn for a bit; it’s time we had one now. We’ve had nothing to amuse us since those pretty fireworks the Frenchies were kind enough to get up for us the other week! Oh that they should think to scare us with such toys as that! Oh my, what fools some men can be!”

With Wolfe resolution was speedily followed by action. No sooner had he made up his mind what he meant to do than preparations were instantly set on foot. He came down in person to inspect the fleet, and discuss with the Admirals what ships should be chosen for the service. Finally, the Sutherland was selected as the ship to run the gauntlet, on account of her sailing capacities and the excellence of her sailing master and crew. A frigate was to accompany her, and several smaller vessels, one of which, to his great satisfaction, was Killick’s; and he was permitted to lead the way, as his shrewdness and skill in nautical matters were well known throughout the fleet.

Colonel Carleton, a promising and experienced officer, was in charge of the troops. But Wolfe himself could not be far away. He was to watch everything from Point Levi, and in the event of success to superintend the passage overland of the flotilla of boats; and in one of these he purposed himself to join the expedition in the upper river, and make a careful survey of the defences there.

Dearly would he have liked to make one of the daring party who were to run the gauntlet of the French batteries, but he knew his responsibilities as General of the forces too well to expose himself rashly where he could not take the lead. He must trust to the sailors for this thing; his turn would come later.

All was in readiness. The selected vessels were lying at anchor, ready to loose from their moorings when the sun had sunk. Wolfe in his light boat, managed by Humphrey and Fritz, had made a tour of inspection, and was now speeding across the water towards Point Levi, up the heights of which several additional powerful guns had been carried earlier in the day to assist in the cannonade planned for the night.

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Little was spoken by the General or his subordinates. Wolfe had been suffering much during the past days from acute rheumatism, and from the inward malady which gave him little rest night or day. His face looked very thin and drawn, but the fire in his eyes was unquenchable, and it was plain that his mind was not with himself, but with the enterprise, carefully thought out and courageously planned, which was to be attempted that night.

“Take me as near to the town batteries as is safe,” he said; and the boat’s head was directed towards the northern shore.

“I believe it will be done,” he said, after a keen inspection of the batteries through his glass. “The guns are almost all pointed towards Point Levi. If the ships make good way with wind and tide, as they should, they will glide so fast along that, even if sighted, they will almost have passed before the guns can be depressed sufficiently to be dangerous.”

Then they made for Point Levi, and Wolfe stepped ashore, to be received by Moncton, who escorted him to the batteries to see their preparations. The three friends, released from attendance upon him, took up a position from which they could command a view of what passed, in so far as the darkness of night should permit them any view. A pall of cloud hung in the sky, and the shades of evening fell early. Yet it seemed long to the anxious watchers before the darkness blotted out the view of the distant city, and of the panorama of dancing water beneath.

Generally the guns from Point Levi boomed all day, but were silent at night, leaving the camp to repose. But though they had ceased to fire at sundown, darkness had no sooner fallen than the iron mouths opened in a prolonged and terrific roar, a blaze of yellow light glowed along the batteries, and the watchers from the strand heard the huge shells screaming overhead as they hurtled through the air, carrying with them their terrible messages of death and destruction.

The noise was terrific; the sight was terrible in its fierce grandeur. The three companions had seen many strange and fearful things during the past years, but perhaps they had never before been quite so near to a battery spouting out its leaden rain in great broad flashes of lambent flame.

Julian and Fritz could not turn their eyes from the magnificent sight; but Humphrey, after one glance, turned his upon the dark waterway, and it was his voice that spoke at last in accents of keen emotion.

“Here come the ships.”

The others could not see for a while—their eyes were dazzled; and in the roar and rattle of artillery overhead nothing could be heard of the silent advance of those darkened

hulls as they slipped like ghosts through the water. They were as close to the south bank as it was safe to keep, and followed Killick's sloop with as much precision as possible. The strong tide beneath them, and the light, favouring wind, bore them past at a rate that the spectators

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had scarcely expected. They could just descry the dark, looming objects gliding swiftly and silently along. But would the gunners in Quebec see them? The onlookers held their breath as the phantom ships sailed upon their way. They were passing the blazing batteries now, and the cannonade was more furious than ever. The guns of Quebec were blazing back. But was the fire directed only at the opposite heights? or had the flitting sails been seen, and would the iron rain pour upon the gallant vessels making the daring passage?

Fritz felt such an oppression upon his heart that he could scarce draw his breath; but moments came and moments went, and the ships glided unharmed upon their way. They had all passed the batteries now. They were in the very narrowest part of the channel, just where the town batteries commanded the passage. Humphrey could stand it no longer.

“To the boat,” he cried, “to the boat! yonder she lies! Let us follow and make sure, and bring the General word!”

In a moment the three had rushed down, and were running their boat into the water. Next minute the sail was up, and the light little craft was cutting through the black river at a gallant pace. Now she had caught up the last of the silent string of daring cruisers; now she was gliding by the large warship. All was safe, all was silent on the water; only overhead the hurtling bombs and balls roared and boomed. The gunners of Quebec had not sighted the stealthy ships. The town knew nothing of what was being done under cover of that furious cannonade. And now the batteries had been safely passed; the lights of the town upon the right were beginning to fade in the distance.

A sudden rift in the clouds let through a glancing beam of moonlight, which fell full upon the figure of old Killick as he stood upon the forecastle of his vessel, preparing to let down the anchor as arranged when a safe place had been found. The old sea-dog had convoyed the party as cleverly as he had navigated the dangerous channel of the Traverse. He pulled out his battered sou’wester and waved it in the direction of Quebec.

“Bless you, my dears! how well you do sleep! You ought to be sound and hearty, I’m sure. Good luck to you, every man of you at the guns! Bless my soul! if I were the Markiss of Montcalm, when I awoke in the morning to see the English ships in the basin above the town, I’d hang every mother’s son of them each to his own gun! But poor fellows, it would be hard to blame them. They can’t help being born Frenchmen and fools after all!”

A laugh and a cheer from those who heard greeted old Killick's sally; and Humphrey, quickly turning round the prow of the boat, sent her speeding back to Point Levi, to bring certain tidings of the success to Wolfe.

Chapter 2: Days Of Waiting.

"I am sorry that you should have to be disturbed, dear ladies, but it is no longer safe for you to remain where you were. My soldiers require the ground. But tomorrow you shall be sent in safety to Quebec, under a flag of truce. You will be safer there than at Pointe-aux-Trembles, now that my ships are in the upper river."

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Wolfe spoke thus at the conclusion of a supper party, which he had hastily got up for the benefit of the prisoners brought to Point Levi by his fleet of boats. The soldiers had landed along the upper river, and in spite of a faint resistance from Indians and Canadians, had effected a landing. Though they had not found much in the way of stores or cattle, they had taken what they could, and had brought a number of prisoners to Wolfe's camp. These were mostly French—a great number being women and children and old men who had left Quebec during the bombardment, and sought refuge in the outlying village.

The idea of being sent back to town was not exactly palatable, but it was plain that there was now no safety along the upper river; the English troops seemed to be everywhere at once.

"You are such dreadful people, you English!" sighed one lady, looking, not without admiration, towards the youthful General, who was entertaining them at his own table, and who had given the strictest orders that the humbler of the prisoners should be equally well treated elsewhere: "you seem to fly from point to point, to divide your army as you will, and conquer wherever you appear. It is wonderful, but it is terrible, too! And yet with all this, how are you to get into Quebec? For it seems to me you are no nearer that than you were a month ago."

Wolfe smiled his slight, peculiar smile.

"Madame," he answered, "we have a proverb in En gland which says that 'where there's a will there's a way.' I have been sent out by the government of my country to take Quebec, and here I stay till I have carried out that order. How and when it will be accomplished I do not yet know; what I say is that I am here to do it, and that I mean to do it. When you return to the city, present my respects to the Marquis of Montcalm, and tell him what I say."

The ladies looked at one another, and lifted eyes and hands. In the aspect of the young General, despite his physical feebleness, there was an air of such calm, confident power that they were deeply impressed; and one of them, looking earnestly at him, cried:

"You make us admire you as much as we fear you, Monsieur Wolfe. But if you are to have Quebec, pray take it quickly; for this long, cruel war wears us out."

"Madame," he answered, "I would that I could; but Monsieur de Montcalm gives me no chance of fighting. If he were not so cautious, I should greatly rejoice. I give him all sorts of chances to attack me, but he will not avail himself of them. If caution could save Quebec, assuredly it would never fall!"

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“If he take not care, his caution will be his undoing,” said a Canadian dame of sprightly turn. “As for us of the country, we are weary to death of uncertainty. They tell me that the Canadian militia will not long remain loyal if kept in such inactivity. We Canadians do not understand this sort of warfare. Quick raids, sharp fighting, quick return home is what our men are used to. They can be brave enough in their native forests; but this sitting down in camps for weeks and months together, whilst their harvests are lying uncut in the fields, or left a prey to Indian marauders—no, that they do not understand or appreciate. They are almost ready to welcome English rule sooner than go on like this. I doubt not you have heard as much from your prisoners before.”

“Something like it,” answered Wolfe, with a slight curl of the lip. “I confess I have no great opinion of the militia of Monsieur de Montcalm. His regular troops are fine soldiers; but for the rest, they would give us little trouble, I take it. Perhaps the Marquis knows that, and therefore will not fight.”

“In the woods one Canadian soldier is worth three regulars,” remarked the lady, with a shrewd glance at Wolfe, and a smile upon her face; “but in the open one regular is worth half a dozen Canadians. We do not understand standing firm under fire. Give us a tree to run behind, and we will be as valiant as you wish, and shoot down our foes with unerring aim; but we must have cover. We have been used to it, and we do not understand being without it. I am sure I well understand the feeling. I should make a good enough Canadian militiaman, but I should never have the nerve to be a regular soldier.”

Wolfe smiled and made a little bow to his guests.

“I believe, Mesdames, that ladies have a higher courage than men when the hour of peril really comes. I had the honour to become acquainted with Madame Drucour at the siege of Louisbourg. I was told, and can well believe, that it was in great part her heroic example which inspired the men there to that courage which they showed, and which gave us such hard work. Courage is by no means the prerogative of the soldier or of man. The women of the world have again and again set the loftiest examples of it to those who come after.”

The ladies returned his bow, and drank to his health before they retired to their tents for the night.

“If we see you within Quebec, Monsieur Wolfe, we shall know how generous a victor we have to deal with. Madame Drucour has told us the same; but now we have seen it with our own eyes.”

“Pray give my best compliments to Madame Drucour,” said Wolfe earnestly, “and tell her that not the least pleasant element in the anticipation of getting into Quebec is the

thought that in so doing I shall have the honour and pleasure of renewing acquaintance with her."

Wolfe was on the strand upon the following morning to see his captives safely off to Quebec, whilst a flag of truce was hoisted, and the batteries ceased to fire.

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“Farewell, my dear ladies; I hope soon to meet you all again,” said the young General, with playful geniality, as he handed them to their seats. “If Monsieur de Montcalm will but give me the chance of coming to conclusions with him, I will do my utmost to bring this uncomfortable state of affairs to a close.”

“Ah, Monsieur, you are very complaisant! but the only way that you want to take is the capture of our poor city.”

“Very true, dear ladies; that is the only end I am willing to contemplate. And yet, believe me, in desiring this I desire nothing that shall be for your final discomfiture. I know what the rule of France is in these parts, and what that of England is also. Believe me that beneath English government peace and prosperity such as she has never known before will come to Canada. I believe that the day will speedily come when you will see this for yourselves.”

“I should not wonder,” answered the Canadian dame, with a light laugh; “I am half disposed to think the same myself. His Majesty of France has not endeared himself to us these many years past. I should not be broken hearted to see a change of monarch.”

The boats pushed off, and Wolfe stood watching them on their way across the river. His face was grave and thoughtful, and he turned presently to Fritz with a sigh.

“Poor ladies! I am sorry to send them back to the horrors of the siege; but it is the only safe place for them.

“And now we must think seriously of our next step. The time is flying, and we must not let the grass grow under our feet. It is true what they said last night: we are no nearer taking Quebec than when we sailed from England months ago. We have frightened and harassed the foe, but we are not one step nearer the goal.”

“And yet we have one ship and several smaller vessels in the upper river,” said Julian; “and where one ship has passed others may do so.”

“Yes; I shall try to bring up other vessels. One never knows what the chances of war will be. It is well to have the command of the river both above and below; and if Amherst should form a junction with us, we may find the fleet above the town of great use. But we are now at the end of July, and Ticonderoga, though threatened, has not yet fallen, so far as we know; and even were it to do so quickly, there will be much for Amherst to do there and at Crown Point, and a long, long march before he could reach us. We must face the possibility of having to accomplish this matter with the forces now at command; and we are in the position now that our camp is split up into four, and we have no great muster of troops at any one point. If Montcalm were to make a determined dash at any one of our camps, he could destroy it before the rest of the

army could be mustered for its defence. Why he does not avail himself of the chances given him I do not know. But his policy of inaction has its drawbacks too for us, since I would sooner face him in a pitched battle than be kept here inactive, waiting upon chances that never offer."

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The army was certainly getting rather weary of this inaction. It was not idle, for Wolfe's manifesto to the Canadians was now being enforced. Supplies were wanted for the troops, and the inimical Canadians were forced to supply them. Indeed, great numbers of these harassed and undecided inhabitants of the disputed territory were glad enough to be made prisoners by the English and sent on board their transports for safety. Their cattle, of course, fell a prey to the invaders; but they were in so much peril of robbery from the Indians that this was a small matter. When once within Wolfe's camp their lives were safe, and no ill treatment was permitted; and to some of the wretched Canadians this had become a boon. It was small wonder they were growing sick and weary of the war, and would have welcomed either nation as conqueror, so that they could only know again the blessings of peace and safety.

Yet something more definite must be attempted; Wolfe was more and more determined upon that. It was difficult to know how best to attack an enemy so strongly intrenched and so well able to repulse attack; yet his men were burning with ardour, and his own spirit was hot within him. He sometimes felt as though his feeble body would not much longer be able to endure the strain put upon it. The cracked pitcher may go once too often to the well. To die in the service of his country was what Wolfe desired and expected for himself; but he wished that death might come to him in the din and excitement of the battle, and in the hour of victory; not by the hand of disease, whilst his aim and object was yet unaccomplished.

"We must fight!" he said to Julian, as he took his way back to his camp at the Montmorency; "we must seek to bring the enemy to close quarters. We shall fight at terrible disadvantage, I well know; we shall suffer heavy loss. But I would back a hundred of our brave fellows against a battalion of Canadian militia. We must try conclusions with them somehow, and by a concerted attack, both from Montmorency and from the strand, seek to effect something, even if it be only to affright and dishearten them."

The soldiers were ready and eager to be allowed a fling at the foe. They were full of ardour and enthusiasm, for so far every attempt made had been vigorously and successfully carried out, and they began to have an idea that Wolfe could not be frustrated in any scheme of his.

To attack the city itself was obviously impossible under present conditions, They could never get a footing near those solid walls and ramparts. But the camp along the Beauport shore was more vulnerable. If they could effect a landing there, they might rush one or more of the batteries, and bring about a general engagement. It was impossible, as it happened, for Wolfe to estimate the full strength of the French position; but he knew that the task would be no light one, even though he could not see that there were batteries upon the heights above.

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It was near to the Montmorency that he designed to make the attack. The shores of the river were, for the most part, very steep here; but at one place there was at low water a strand of muddy ground about half a mile wide, protected at the edge by a French redoubt. From there the ground rose steep and slippery to the higher land above. If the men could land and take the redoubt, Wolfe had hopes of bringing men over by the Montmorency ford—the one above the cataract—and effecting a junction there, and by combining the actions of these two detachments, succeed in dislodging a portion of the French army, and effecting a firm foothold upon the north bank of the St. Lawrence.

It was a rather desperate scheme; but it was received with enthusiasm by the soldiers and sailors, both of whom would be needed for the attempt. The vessels and boats for the transport of the men were quickly made ready, whilst others were told off to hover about the basin in order to perplex the French, and keep them ignorant of the real point of attack.

Wolfe himself took up his position in the battleship Centurion, which anchored near to the Montmorency, and opened fire upon the redoubts just beyond the strand. Julian was with him, watching intently, and noting every movement made by enemy or friend. But Fritz and< Humphrey could not be denied their share in the fight. They were upon an armed transport that was standing in shore to further harass and batter the redoubt, and to be left stranded by the ebb tide, as near to her as might be.

It was at low water that the attack must be made. Boats from Point Levi were hovering around the strand all the afternoon, sometimes making for one point, sometimes for another, keeping the French always on the alert, uncertain and wondering. But Montcalm was too acute a general to be long deceived. He saw where the real attack must be made, and there he concentrated his chief force. Had Wolfe been able to see how his batteries could sweep with a crossfire the whole of the steep ascent from the redoubt to the heights above, where the men from the Montmorency camp might be able to join with them, he might have withheld his men from the bold attack. And yet English soldiers have won the victory even against such odds as these!

He stood in a commanding place upon the ship, and his eyes anxiously scanned the scene. The hot sun had gone in now beneath banks of heavy cloud. A few splashes of rain seemed to herald an approaching storm; there was a rumble as of thunder away to the right.

The tide was out; the bank of mud lay bare. Wolfe gave a long look round him and waved his hand.

It was the signal waited for. The moment after, the Centurion's guns opened their iron mouths, and a storm of shot rattled around the redoubt. The batteries from the Montmorency blazed forth, and so did the more distant ones from Point Levi. The fire of

all three was concentrated upon the redoubts and batteries and forces at this portion of the Beauport camp; and the French gave answer back from their well-placed batteries.

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Under cover of this heavy fire the boats rowed to shore, and the men in waiting upon the stranded transports leaped out and joined their comrades. The grenadiers were the first to land; and though Moncton's brigade and Fraser's Highlanders were close behind, the eagerness of the men could not be restrained. They did not wait for their companions; they did not even wait to form up in very orderly fashion themselves. They made a gallant dash upon the redoubt, and so strong was the onrush that the French, after a very brief resistance, fled; and with a shout and cheer of triumph the English gained their prize.

Julian, standing beside Wolfe on the vessel, could not refrain from a shout of triumph; but the face of the General was grave and stern.

"They are wrong—they are wrong!" he said; "they are too impetuous. Their rash gallantry will cost them dear. See, they are not even waiting now for their companions to join them; they are trying to rush the heights alone! Folly—madness! They will lose everything by such rashness! There! did I not say so?"

At that moment the batteries on the brink of the height opened their murderous crossfire. The men were mown down like grass before the scythe; but so full were they of fury and desire of victory that they heeded nothing, and pressed onward and upward, as though resolved to carry everything before them.

Had they been able to see the heights above, they would have noted that across the ford above the Montmorency a compact body of men was passing in perfect order, to fall upon the French from behind, and effect a junction with them. But at that moment, whilst the fortunes of the day seemed hanging in the balance, the very floodgates of heaven seemed to open, and a deluge of rain descended, whilst the blackness of a terrific thunderstorm fell upon the combatants.

The slippery grass no longer gave foothold, and the men rolled down the steep heights —dead, wounded, and unhurt in one medley. The ammunition grew soaked, and the guns refused their task. The glare of the lightning lit up a scene of utter confusion.

Wolfe saw all, standing with grave face and stern, watchful eyes. At last he spoke.

"Sound the retreat," he said, and then bit his lip; and Julian, by a glance into his face, knew what it had cost him to speak those words.

The retreat was made in good order, and was distinguished by a few acts of personal gallantry; for the Indians swooped down, as they always did when they saw their chance, to scalp the wounded and the dead. Soldiers risked their lives to save their fallen comrades from this fate, dragging the wounded with them, at risk of their own lives. The guns of the captured redoubt did some service in beating off the savages; and the boats were launched once more, though their load was a far lighter one than

when they had brought up their eager crews an hour before. The strand and the height above were covered with the dead who had paid for their rash gallantry with their lives. It was a scene upon which Wolfe's eyes dwelt with sadness and pain, as he ordered a boat to be got ready for him, that he might address the men on their return to quarters.

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It was with stern words that Wolfe met his soldiers. He was not a man to condone a lack of discipline because it had been coupled with personal bravery.

“Do you grenadiers suppose that you can beat the French single-handed?” he asked, eying the thinned ranks with stern displeasure in his eyes. “Such impetuous, irregular, and unsoldierlike proceedings as those witnessed today destroy all order, and make it impossible for a commander to form any disposition for an attack, and put it out of the General’s power to execute his plans. The death of those five hundred brave men who lie on the strand yonder is due, in the main, to your rashness and insubordination.”

The men were shamefaced and contrite. They recognized their error, and were the more grieved inasmuch as they saw how the check had affected their brave young General. They heard, too, that the French were full of triumphant rejoicings; that they declared this repulse to be the end of the English attempt upon Quebec. They looked upon the game as already in their hands; and although the English were fond of declaring that but for the storm they would yet have won the heights, and with the aid of their other contingent have routed the French gunners and got a footing there, they knew that, as facts were now, they had rather suffered than benefited by the action, for it had put fresh hope into the hearts of their foes; and it was possible that the disappointment had something to do with the access of violent illness and suffering which at this juncture prostrated their General.

Wolfe was indeed dangerously ill. He had long been putting the strongest pressure upon himself, and Julian had been struck upon the day of the assault with the look of suffering upon his worn face. He kept up during the next few days, but looked so ghastly that his friends were deeply concerned; and Julian, together with Fritz and Humphrey, scoured the neighbourhood in order to find a place of greater comfort where their commander could lie. Presently they came upon a little farmhouse near to the camp at Montmorency, sheltered from the wind, and pleasantly situated. It had been deserted by its occupants, who had, however, left behind furniture enough to enable them to get one room at least fit for the habitation of the sufferer. And none too soon.

That very day Wolfe, after trying to make a survey of the lines, was found in his tent half fainting with pain. He looked up at Julian with heavy eyes, and stretching out his hand to him, he said:

“I fear me I shall never live to enter Quebec. I have fought till I can fight no more. Take me somewhere that I can rest. I can do no more—yet.”

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They took him to the little farmhouse, and laid him upon the bed they had prepared. The doctors came, and looked grave; for the fever was high, the suffering keen, and the wasted frame seemed little able to withstand the ravages of disease. Yet never a murmur passed his lips; and when there came intervals of comparative ease, he would ask of those about him how affairs without were proceeding, giving orders from time to time with all his old acumen and force, and never forgetting to inquire for the wounded who had been brought off from the ill-starred assault, and had been given the best quarters which the camp afforded. He had never any pity for himself, but always plenty to spare for others.

Great gloom hung over the camp. Not only were the soldiers depressed by their repulse, and by the apparent impossibility of getting into the city, but they were in fear and trembling lest they should also lose their brave General.

“If Wolfe goes, hope goes,” was a common saying in the camp. They seemed to know by intuition that with him would expire all hope of achieving an almost impossible victory.

Fritz and Julian nursed the sick man; and never were nurses more skilful and tender. Humphrey constituted himself messenger and forager, bringing everything he could get that the invalid was likely to need, and keeping them informed of everything that went on at the different camps.

Other vessels had passed the guns of Quebec. Scouts from the interior reported disaffection toward the French cause all through Canada. English soldiers were carrying the terror of the British arms through large tracts of country. The French were becoming anxious and dispirited.

So much they learned during those days of waiting; but they could rejoice but little whilst Wolfe lay low, racked with pain which no medicine could alleviate, and in danger of sinking through the wearing exhaustion which followed.

“How will it end? how will it end?” spoke Fritz to himself one day late in August, as he stepped outside the house to obtain a breath of air. The next moment he gave a great start, and held out his hands in a gesture of amazement,

“What—who—how—is it a ghost I see?”

A hearty laugh was the answer, and his hands were gripped in a clasp that was very certainly one of flesh and blood, to say nothing of bone and muscle.

“Ghost indeed! Nay, Fritz, you know better than that! It is John Stark himself, come to fulfil his promise, and to bring to General Wolfe the news that Ticonderoga has fallen!”

Chapter 3: A Daring Design.

Ticonderoga fallen! The news was like new wine in the veins of Wolfe. Ill as he was, he insisted that Stark should be brought to his bedside, and he eagerly entreated the bold Ranger to tell him the whole story.

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“There is not so much to tell as there might be,” said Stark, “for the French made no fight, either at Ticonderoga or at Crown Point. We came with a gallant array against their fortresses, only to find that the enemy had evacuated them. They tried to blow up Ticonderoga before they left; but only one bastion was destroyed. Crown Point was deserted without a blow being struck. I waited for that, and then made good my word. I said I would be the first to take the news of the fall of Ticonderoga to General Wolfe at Quebec.”

Wolfe’s eyes were shining with excitement.

“Then is General Amherst on his way here with his army?” he asked eagerly.

Stark shook his head.

“Alas, no! there is still much work to be done. If the French have abandoned these two forts, it is only that they may concentrate all their strength at Isle-aux-Noix, where the General must now attack them. And to do this he must build a brigantine and other vessels; and though there is a sawmill at Ticonderoga, the work will still take somewhat long to accomplish. I fear that many weeks will elapse before he can advance; and meantime—”

He paused, for he scarce knew how to conclude the sentence. He had heard as he passed through the camp towards Wolfe’s quarters that the outlook was not altogether a bright one, despite the fact that success had crowned many of the enterprises hitherto undertaken.

Wolfe took up the unfinished sentence and spoke.

“Meantime the winter gales will be threatening us, and if the walls of Quebec still shut us out, we may be forced to sail to England with our task yet uncompleted, or to take up our winter quarters in one of the islands, and wait for better things next spring. Was that the thought in your mind, John Stark?”

“In truth, sir, as I came along and surveyed the position of the notable city of Quebec, it seemed to me that it would be a hard task to bring it to surrender; but then we all know that General Wolfe can accomplish the impossible if any man can.”

A slight smile crossed Wolfe’s worn face.

“I look like a man to perform the impossible, don’t I, good Stark?” he said; and the Ranger’s eyes filled with pitiful sympathy as he made answer:

“Indeed, sir, I grieve to find you so; and yet men say that Wolfe sick is better than half a dozen other generals in full health and strength. Believe me, we have faith in you, and

believe that you will win the day even single handed, though all the world should look on in scornful amaze, and say that you had set yourself the impossible."

Wolfe's eyes flashed. A flush rose for a moment in his pale cheek. Julian saw that such words as these moved him and braced his spirit like a tonic. He was half afraid lest it should be too much excitement, and he signed to Fritz to take Stark away.

"But I will see him again anon," said Wolfe; "I must hear more of these things. Let him be fed and well looked to, and presently I will ask him to come to me again."

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And when the two had left him, Wolfe turned to Julian and said:

“I see now that I have nothing to hope for in a junction with Amherst. He will have his hands full till the close of the season. If Quebec is to be taken, we must take it ourselves, unaided from without. I think I would rather die out here, and leave this carcass of mine in a Canadian grave, than return to England with the news that Quebec still holds out against the English flag!”

“Nay, say not so,” answered Julian earnestly, “for the greatest general may be baffled at some point. And think of your mother—and—Miss Lowther!”

A softer look came into Wolfe’s eyes. Upon his lips there hovered a slight, strange smile. Instinctively his hand sought for something beneath his pillow. Julian well knew what it was: a case containing miniature portraits of the two beings he loved best in the world—his mother, and the fair girl who had promised to become his wife.

He did not open it, but he held it in his hand, and spoke with a dreamy softness of intonation.

“There be times when I think that men of war should have no mothers or sisters or lovers,” he said. “We leave so sad a heritage behind for them so oft. And we are not worth the sacred tears that they shed over us when we fall.”

“And yet I think they would scarce be without those sacred memories to cherish,” answered Julian, thinking of Mrs. Wolfe’s idolization of her son, and of Kate Lowther’s bright eyes, overflowing with loving admiration. “But why speak you so, as though you would see them no more? Your health is slowly mending now, and you have been through perils and dangers before now, and have come safe out of them.”

“That is true,” answered Wolfe thoughtfully; “and yet a voice in my heart seems to tell me that I shall see those loved faces no more. It may be but the fantasy of a troubled and fevered brain; but in dreams I have seen them, tears in their eyes, weeping for one unworthy of such grief, who lies in a far-off grave beneath the frowning battlements of yon great city. I wonder ofttimes whether we are given to know something of that which is about to befall; for in my heart a voice has spoken, and that voice has said that Quebec shall be ours, but that these eyes shall never see what lies within the ramparts, for they will be sealed in death before that hour shall arrive.”

Julian had no reply ready; he knew not what to say. It did indeed seem little likely that that frail form could survive the perils and hardships of this great siege, should it be prosecuted to the end, and should some daring assault be successfully made against the impregnable city.

From the day upon which Stark arrived in the camp at Montmorency with the news from Ticonderoga Wolfe began to mend. It seemed as though the certainty that the English arms were prevailing in the west, though no help could be looked for this season from Amherst, combined to put a sort of new vigour and resolution into the heart of the dauntless young General. If anything were to be accomplished, he must now do it by his own unaided efforts; and since August was well nigh past, if he were to act at all it must be soon, or the winter storms might come sweeping down, and render his position untenable.

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He had had plenty of time whilst lying helpless in bed to think out various plans of attack upon the city. Each one seemed desperate and hopeless, whether, as before, the assault were made by means of boats along the Beauport shore, or by crossing the upper ford above Montmorency and fetching a compass behind the French position, or by storming the lower town, now almost in ruins, for it was commanded by the batteries in the citadel and upper town. In fact, the French position was so strong everywhere that it was difficult to see how any enterprise could possibly prove successful.

In his hours of comparative ease Wolfe had thought out, and Julian had written out at his dictation, a sketch of one or two alternative plans for attack, which he sent in the form of a letter to the Brigadiers commanding the various detachments of the army, asking them to take counsel together over them, and to meet at the farmhouse as soon as he was well enough to see them, and let them discuss the matter together. All Wolfe's projects were for attack from the lower river; for lying ill and helpless as he was, he had hardly realized what had been going steadily on ever since that first successful attempt to get shipping past the town guns and into the upper reach of the St. Lawrence. Every time there was a suitable night, with a favouring wind, vessels had run the gauntlet of the batteries, always covered by a heavy fire from Point Levi; and now quite a fleet of warships, frigates, and transports lay in the reach above the town, whilst Montcalm had had to weaken his camp at Beauport to watch the heights there. For though these were steep and rugged and inaccessible, it would not do to leave them unguarded.

When the Brigadiers met in the old farmhouse, Wolfe was up and dressed for almost the first time, looking gaunt and haggard, his face lined with pain and care, but full of calm and steadfast purpose, and with a mind as clear as ever. He was touched by the warm greetings of his officers, and by their tales as to the enthusiastic delight in the ranks at the news that their General was better.

The army was animated by a spirit of great courage and confidence. The news from Ticonderoga had done good. This had been followed by tidings of the capture of the Niagara fort. Even though Amherst could not coalesce with them, they were feeling that English arms were everywhere invincible, and that even Quebec would not long stand against them. It would be the greater glory to vanquish it single-handed; and had they not Wolfe to lead them?

Wolfe could not but smile as he heard this, and then the discussion began. The Brigadiers had read his alternative proposals; but they had another to lay before him which they thought more likely of success. This was to make the real attack above the town, transporting men and munitions by means of their ships now lying in the upper reach, and seeking to obtain a footing upon the heights, from whence they might bombard the upper city, or even carry it by an impetuous assault.

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“We can make a feint of attacking at Beauport, to keep the Marquis upon the alert there, and his troops from being detached to the defence of the heights. But let our real assault be on that side,” advised Moncton, whose position at Point Levi gave him considerable knowledge of affairs upon the upper river. “It is true that the heights are watched and guarded, but the force there is not large. They trust to the nature of the ground, which is inhospitable to the last degree, to hinder any attempt at landing. And our vessels in the river below are leading poor Bougainville a fine dance up and down the banks. He has some twenty miles to protect with less than two thousand men—so far as we can learn—and Admiral Holmes, who commands the fleet, takes care that he shall have no rest night or day. The men begin to know the ground; they are full of desire for the attack. It sounds desperate, we are well aware; but then so do all the plans. Yet if we are to make one great dash upon Quebec before we give up the hope of taking it this season, we must attempt the apparently impossible!”

Into Wolfe’s eyes had sprung the battle light. Desperate it might be to scale almost perpendicular cliffs and plant batteries on the top whilst exposed to the fire of a sleepless enemy there, who could send for reinforcements by thousands when once aware of the threatened peril. And yet now that he knew his strength in the upper river, and the wishes of his officers, he hesitated not one instant.

“It shall be tried,” he said, “and it shall be tried quickly. The issues of life and death, of battle and victory, are in higher hands than ours. It is for us to do our utmost to brave all. We can do no more, but we can do that!”

The meeting broke up. The Brigadiers went back to their respective stations to announce the decision and to make preparation. Eager enthusiasm prevailed throughout the ranks of the army, and the question in all mouths was, would the General be fit to lead them in person.

This was Wolfe’s own great anxiety. His physician shook his head, but received this characteristic admonition:

“I know perfectly well you cannot cure me; but pray make me up so that I may be free from unbearable pain for a few days, able to do my duty by my brave soldiers, That is all I ask or want.”

As soon as ever he was able, Wolfe visited the Admirals on their ships and discussed his plan with them. They were all becoming rather anxious at the lateness of the season, and were thinking of moving away. But they consented to remain till this attempt should be made; Wolfe, on his part, agreeing that if it failed he must abandon the hope of reducing Quebec this season, and not expose his soldiers to the needless hardships of a winter in these inclement latitudes,

As it was, there was a good deal of sickness amongst the men, and the number of able-bodied soldiers was considerably reduced. Wolfe visited those in hospital, and spoke kind and cheering words to them. He knew what it was to be laid aside from active service, and how hard inactivity was when there was work to be done.

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The camp on the Montmorency was broken up first. Wolfe wanted his soldiers elsewhere, and he thought it no bad move to take this step, as the French would probably think it the first move in the evacuation of the whole position. Montcalm, indeed, would have fallen upon them in the rear and inflicted heavy damage, if Moncton at Point Levi had not seen the danger, and sent a number of men in boats to make a feint of attacking Beauport; upon which the troops were hastily recalled.

All was activity and secret industry in the English lines, A whole fleet of baggage boats was laden and smuggled past the town guns into the upper river; more craft followed, till quite an armament lay in that wider reach above; and yet the French were not permitted to have any exact notion as to what was to be done, nor that any serious attack was meditated in that direction.

Wolfe himself was taken up the river in one of the vessels. He was still weak and suffering, but he could no longer give any thought to his own condition.

“I can rest when the battle is fought,” he said to Julian, who would fain have bidden him spare himself more; and it seemed to his friend as though there were more in those words than met the ear.

News was daily brought in of the strength of the French position. Montcalm, very uneasy at the action of the English fleet, sent as many reinforcements as he could spare to man the heights and gorges of the upper river. Batteries were planted, and every step taken to guard against the danger of attack. Rain and wind hindered the English from putting their plan into immediate execution, and the men suffered a good deal from close crowding on the transports, and from various brushes with the enemy which enlivened the monotony of those days of waiting.

Wolfe’s eyes were everywhere. He was in the Admiral’s vessel, and although sometimes hardly able to drag himself upon deck, he would note with all his old keenness every nook and cranny in the precipitous shores, every movement of the enemy, every natural advantage which could possibly be made use of in his attempt.

All this time the ships were drifting to and fro with the tide from the basin of the upper river, just above Quebec itself, right away to Cap Rouge, where the French had their headquarters, and were always ready for an assault. This action on the part of the ships was a very politic one, for it kept the French troops ceaselessly upon the march and the watch, wearing them out with fatigue; whilst the English soldiers on board their vessels were at their ease, save that they were rather uncomfortably crowded.

The long delay was over at last. The weather had improved; Wolfe had made up his mind as to every detail of the attack; the troops at Point Levi and on the Isle of Orleans had been instructed as to the parts they were to play in drawing off the enemy’s attention from the real point of attack.

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“I should like to address the men once more,” said Wolfe to Julian, upon a still September morning. “I should like them to take one last charge from my own lips; perhaps it may be the last I shall ever give them!”

For Wolfe seemed to have upon his spirit the presentiment of coming doom. He looked round upon the eager, expectant faces, and his own kindled with a loving enthusiasm. He had loved these men, and they loved him. The sight of his tall, gaunt form and thin, white face evoked cheer after cheer from soldiers and sailors alike. He had to wait till the tumult subsided before he could speak, and then his voice rang out clear and trumpet-like as he briefly described to the listening host the position of affairs and what was expected of them.

“The enemy’s force is now divided, great scarcity prevails in their camp, and universal discontent among the Canadians. Our troops below are in readiness to join us, all the light artillery and tools are embarked at Point Levi, and the troops will land where the French seem least to expect it. The first body that gets on shore is to march directly to the enemy and drive them from any little post they may occupy; the officers must be careful that the succeeding bodies do not by any mistake fire on those who go before them. The battalions must form on the upper ground with expedition, and be ready to charge whatever presents itself. When the artillery and troops are landed, a corps will be left to secure the landing place while the rest march on and endeavour to bring the Canadians and French to a battle. The officers and men will remember what their country expects of them, and what a determined body of soldiers, inured to war, is capable of doing against five weak French battalions mingled with a disorderly peasantry.”

Cheer after cheer rent the air as these words were heard. The enthusiasm of the men had suffered no diminution during the days of waiting. They loved their General; they respected and admired their officers. They were full of eagerness to find themselves at last face to face with the foe. They knew that upon the issue of this enterprise hung the whole fate of the long campaign. If they failed in their design, they must return to England with a story of failure so far as Quebec was concerned; and no one would understand the full difficulties of the situation, or appreciate all the solid work that had already been accomplished towards the attainment of that object.

Everything that could be done had been done. Admiral Saunders, in the Basin of Quebec, was deceiving Montcalm by preparations which convinced that General that the real point of attack was to be along the Beauport shore, where he therefore massed his troops in readiness; whilst Admiral Holmes, with his bateaux and flat-bottomed troop boats, was deluding Bougainville with the notion that his camp at Cap Rouge was to be the immediate object of the English assault. But all the while Wolfe and a few of his officers—only a few—were in the secret of the real basis of action; though the men knew that all was decided upon, and that they would be led with consummate skill and address.

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In the grey of the morning, Julian, too excited to sleep, heard the soft plash of oars alongside the Sutherland, and raising his head to look over the bulwarks, he heard his name pronounced in a familiar voice.

“Humphrey, is that you?”

“Yes,” he answered. “I have gleaned some news. I want to impart it to the General.”

Wolfe was lying on deck looking up at the quiet stars overhead, worn out with the long strain, yet free from acute pain, and thankful for the boon. He heard the words, and sat up.

“Bring him to me,” he ordered; “I will hear his report.”

The next minute Humphrey was on deck and beside him. Humphrey was often employed to carry messages from ship to ship. He had built himself a light, strong canoe; and could shoot through the water almost like an Indian. He stood beside Wolfe’s couch and told his tale.

“I went up to the French camp as close as possible. I heard there that some boatloads of provisions were to be sent down tonight upon the ebb to Montcalm’s camp. They have done this before, and will do it again. Later on I came upon two Canadians, seeking to escape from the French camp. I took them across to our vessels for safety. They confirmed what I had overheard. Boats laden with provision will be passing the French sentries along the coast tonight. If our boats go down in advance of these, they may do so almost unchallenged.”

Wolfe’s eyes brightened before he had heard the last word. He instantly perceived the advantage which might accrue to them from this piece of information luckily hit upon. He grasped Humphrey’s hand in a warm clasp, and said:

“You bring good news, comrade. I think the star of England is about to rise upon this land. Go now and rest yourself; but be near to me in the time of struggle. You are a swift and trusty messenger. It is such as you”—and his eyes sought Julian and Fritz, who were both alert and awake—“that I desire to have about me in the hour of final struggle.”

Then, when Humphrey had gone below with Fritz, Wolfe turned to Julian and said, speaking slowly and dreamily:

“There is something I would say to you, my friend. I have a strange feeling that the close of my life is at hand—that I shall not live to see the fruit of my toil; though to die in battle—in the hour, if it may be, of victory—has been ever the summit of my hopes and ambition. Something tells me that I shall gain the object of my hope tomorrow, or today perchance. I have one charge to give you, Julian, if that thing should come to pass.”

Julian bit his lip; he could not speak. He was aware of the presentiment which hung upon Wolfe's spirit, but he had fought against it might and main.

The, soldier placed his hand within the breast of his coat, and detached and drew out that miniature case containing the likeness of his mother and his betrothed. He opened it once, looked long in the dim light at both loved faces, and pressed his lips to each in turn.

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“If I should fall,” he said, “give it to Kate; I think she will like to have it. Tell her I wore it upon my heart till the last. I would not have it shattered by shot and shell. Give it her with my dying blessing and love, and tell her that my last prayer will be for her happiness. She must not grieve too much for me, or let her life be shadowed. I am happy in having known her love. I desire that happiness shall be her portion in life. Tell her that when you give her that case.”

He closed it and placed it in Julian’s hands, and spoke no more; though throughout that day of preparation and thought a gentle quietude of manner possessed him, and struck all with whom he came in contact.

Even when at last all was in readiness and the General in one of the foremost boats was drifting silently down the dark river, with the solemn stars overhead, it was not of battles or deeds of daring that he spoke with those about him. After the silence of deep tension his melodious voice was heard speaking words that fell strangely on the ears of the officers clustered about him.

“The curlew tolls the knell of parting day” spoke that voice; and in the deep hush of night the whole of that “Elegy” was softly rehearsed in a strangely impressive manner, a thrill running through many at the words:

“The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

When the recitation was over there was a long, deep silence, broken at last by Wolfe himself, who said:

“Gentlemen, I would rather have written that poem than take Quebec!”

Chapter 4: In The Hour Of Victory.

“Qui vive?”

It was the French sentry upon the shore, as the boats glided slowly by in the darkness. Julian was waiting for the challenge, and was ready with the answer.

“France!”

“A quel regiment?” came the voice again.

“De la Reine,” answered Julian, who had not spoken in vain with the deserting Canadians, and knew a good deal about Bougainville’s camp. Then afraid of being asked the password, he hastily added, still speaking French, “Have a care; the English will hear us! The provision boats from the camp!”

That hint was enough. The sentry knew that provision boats were expected, and that English vessels were anchored not far off. He let the fleet of English boats pass by in the darkness.

The strong current swept them along. Now they had reached the appointed place—-passed it, indeed before they could get out of the current; but there was a narrow strand, wide enough for disembarkation, and the band of picked men who had volunteered for the task were already out, preparing to scale the lofty heights and see what lay beyond.

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Up they went in the close darkness of the autumn night, the four-and-twenty selected men leading the way, closely followed by a larger band of comrades. No word was spoken, no cry was raised. The tense excitement of the moment seemed to preclude any such demonstration. It was believed that at this point there would be little resistance. There was no sentry on the shore, and no appearance of any camp along the top. It was believed that the French officer Vergor, with a small detachment of troops, was somewhere in the vicinity; but the renown of that worthy was not such as to check the ardour of the English troops.

Wolfe remained below, silent and motionless. His hands were locked together, and his pale face upturned towards the towering heights above. The gurgle and plash of the river was in his ears, mingled with those other sounds—the sounds of scrambling as his soldiers made their way up the rugged heights in the uncertain light of the waning stars. It was a moment never to be forgotten in his life. The presentiment of coming death was forgotten—everything was forgotten but the wild, strong hope of victory; and when from the top of the gorge there came at last the ring of a British cheer, the sound of brisk musket firing, and then another ringing shout as of triumph, the blood rushed into his white face, and he sprang from the boat on to the strand, exclaiming:

“They have won the foothold. Form up, men, and follow. We have England’s honour in our keeping this day. Never let her say we failed her at the moment of greatest need.”

It was a precipitous gorge up the sides of which the men had to climb. Julian looked anxiously up it and then at Wolfe, and said:

“It is too steep; do not try it. Let me find an easier path for you if I can.”

He smiled as he scanned the sides of the gorge.

“I doubt if I shall get up,” he answered; “but I mean to try.”

And so strong was the resolution which inspired him that he found strength to drag himself up the steep declivity, with only a little assistance from Julian; and found himself, with the first breaking of the dawn, breathless, giddy, exhausted, upon the summit of those Heights of Abraham which today he was to make famous.

Instantly he took the command of the situation. Cannon were heard opening fire close on the left. It was the battery of Samos firing upon the English boats in the rear, now just visible in the broadening daylight.

“Silence that battery!” said Wolfe to an officer whose men were just forming up.

Their response was a cheer, as they moved away in orderly array; and when the distant battery of Sillary opened its mouth and uttered its menacing roar, there was another battalion ready to start off to capture and silence it. Soon the great guns uttered their

voices no more. The English were masters of the coveted heights, and still their troops continued to land and clamber up to join their comrades upon the top.

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The hearts of the soldiers beat high with pride and joy; but the face of Wolfe was inscrutable as he stood surveying the plain which formed a sort of tableland on the western side of the city of Quebec.

The town itself he could not see, though he knew where it lay, and how beyond it extended the camp of Beauport, from which Montcalm could march battalion after battalion to meet him in battle. He knew, too, that behind him lay Bougainville and his thousands, who, by joining in a concentrated action with Montcalm, could hem him in between two fires, and cut his gallant little army to pieces. He realized all this right well, if others did not, and knew that victory or death—even annihilation—lay before them. And knowing this, he made his survey of the place with a concentrated attention, and issued his orders without hesitation or delay.

The grassy plain was pretty level. Quebec bounded it on the east, the precipices on the St. Lawrence on the south, the declivities to the basin of the St. Charles on the north. In one place the plain—called the Plains of Abraham, from the old settler who once made a home there—was little more than a mile wide. When Wolfe reached it, he halted, and after a careful survey said:

“This will be the place to make our stand. Here we will meet our foe in battle. Fight they must now; and if heaven will grant us the victory, let the praise and glory of the day be to God above. If He think well to withhold His countenance from us, let us sell our lives as dearly as may be, and die sword in hand, with our face to the foe!”

Then the orders were issued. The brigades and battalions were marshalled into position. The Brigadiers received their orders from their young General, and took up the positions allotted to them. Each of them grasped him by the hand before quitting his side. To each one he spoke a word of praise for his gallantry during the tedious campaign, and of thanks for the personal friendship shown to one who felt so unworthy of it, having been so often a care and a trouble instead of a source of strength to those about him.

Julian stood near, a strange mistiness before his eyes; and as Fritz turned away to take up his position at the head of his men, he said in a husky voice to his friend:

“You will stay beside him and guard him from ill. I know not why, but my heart is full of misgiving. Quebec will be dearly won if it lose us the gallant Wolfe!”

“He will not think so,” said Julian. “And his life has been so full of trouble and pain. I think few know how he has suffered. Perhaps there is some truth in the old heathen saying, ’Those whom the gods love die young.’ Perhaps it has a better fulfilment and significance now that the Light has come into the world, and that there is no sting now in death.”

They pressed each other by the hand, and Fritz swung away. It was a moment of deep though suppressed emotion. Both men knew that they might have looked their last upon the face of the other, and after many years of close and brother-like companionship such partings cannot be without their thrill of pain and wonder.

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“Why must these things be?” spoke Julian, beneath his breath. “Why must men stand up to kill and be killed? How long will it be before the reign of the Prince of Peace, when all these things shall be done away?”

Light showers were scudding over the landscape, sometimes blotting out the view, sometimes illumined by shafts of golden sunlight, which gave a curious glory to the scene. The battle was set in array. Every disposition which military genius could suggest had been made to avoid surprise or outflanking or any other peril. Puffs of smoke from over the plains denoted the presence of ambushed Indians or Canadians, and skirmishers were scouring hither and thither to dislodge any parties who approached unpleasantly near.

The soldiers were bidden to lie down, to be safer from accident, and to rest themselves in preparation for what was coming. The main body of the army was quiet, but to the left, where some woods and houses gave cover to the enemy, the fire be came galling, and some light infantry were sent out to make an end of the foes there, to take and burn the houses and scatter the marksmen.

This was successfully done, and again there was quiet. Wolfe, who seemed to be everywhere at once, went round the field once again, cheered lustily wherever he appeared; grave, watchful, with the air of a man who knows that the crisis of his life is at hand, and that upon the issue of the day hang results greater than he can reckon or comprehend.

It was about ten in the morning before his quick eye saw signs that the enemy was at last advancing to take up the gage of battle so gallantly thrown down. Hitherto the French had succeeded in avoiding a pitched encounter with their foe; now they must fight, or have their city hopelessly cut off from the basis of their supplies. Wolfe knew that at last the hour had come, and his pale face flushed with a strange exultation as he saw the first white lines advancing towards him.

“At last!” he exclaimed—“at last! We have waited many months for this moment; now that it has come, pray Heaven we may strike a blow for England’s honour which France shall never forget!”

Julian’s attention was distracted by the sight of a little knot of men coming slowly towards the rear, where the surgeons were stationed to care for the wounded, who were to be carried there when possible.

“It is Fritz!” he exclaimed; “he has been wounded!”

Wolfe uttered an expression of concern, and stepped forward to inquire. It had been the regiment in command of Fritz which had been sent to silence the sharpshooters in the farms and copses. John Stark had gone with him, their former life as Rangers having

well qualified them for this species of warfare. Fritz was now being led back, white and bloody, one ball having lodged in his shoulder, and another in his foot. He walked with difficulty, supported by two of his men.

“I am grieved to see you so!” cried Wolfe, with the ready concern he showed in any sufferings not his own.

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“It is naught,” answered Fritz, faintly but cheerfully; “I would care no whit but that it will keep me from the fight.

“I have left John Stark in command, sir,” he added to the General; “the men are perfectly steady when he directs their movements.”

Wolfe nodded. He knew the intrepidity and cool courage of the Ranger. There would be no blundering where Stark held the command.

“Care for your patient well,” said the young General to a surgeon who came hurrying up at the moment; “Captain Neville is too good a soldier and officer for us to lose.”

Then turning to Humphrey, who was acting in the capacity of aide-de-camp, he said in a quick undertone:

“If anything should happen to me in the battle, let Brigadier Moncton know that I recommend Captain Neville for promotion.”

Then he turned his attention towards the oncoming tide of battle, knowing that the great crisis for which he had been waiting all these long months was now upon him.

The French were forming up along the opposite ridge, which hid the city from view. Wolfe took in their disposition at a glance, and a grim smile formed itself upon his lips. He saw that though the centre of the three bodies forming up into order was composed entirely of regular troops, both flanks were regulars intermixed with Canadians; and for the Canadian militia in the open he had an unbounded contempt. Moreover, he noted that instead of waiting until they were in good and compact order, they began almost immediately to advance, and that without any of the method and precision so necessary in an attack upon a well-posted and stationary foe.

He passed along the word of command to his own officers, instructing them how to act, and stood watching with the breathless intensity of a man who knows that the crisis of a mighty destiny is at hand.

The moment the French soldiers got within range they commenced to fire; not as one man, in a crashing volley, but wildly, irregularly, excitedly, uttering cries and shouts the while—a trick caught from their Indian allies, who used noise as one of their most effective weapons.

“Bah!” cried Wolfe, with a sudden exclamation of mingled contempt and amusement; “look there! Saw you ever such soldiers as these?”

Those about him looked, and a hoarse laugh broke from them, and seemed to run along the ranks of immovable red-coats drawn up like a wall, and coolly reserving their fire.

The gust of laughter was called forth by the action of the Canadian recruits, who, immediately upon discharging their pieces, flung themselves down upon the ground to reload, throwing their companions into the utmost confusion, as it was almost impossible to continue marching without trampling upon their prostrate figures.

“I would sooner trust my whole fate to one company of regulars,” exclaimed Wolfe, “than attempt to fight with such soldiers as these! They are fit only for their native forests; and were I in command, back they should go there, quick march.”

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Yet still the oncoming mass of French approached, the dropping fire never ceasing. Nearer and nearer they came, and now were not fifty paces distant from the English lines.

“Crash!”

It was not like a volley of musketry; it was like a cannon shot. The absolute precision with which it was delivered showed the perfect steadiness and nerve of the men. Upon Wolfe’s face might be seen a smile of approbation and pride. This was the way English soldiers met the foe; this was the spirit in which victory was won.

Another crash, almost as accurate as the first, and a few minutes of deafening clattering fire; a pause, in which nothing could be seen but rolling clouds of smoke; and then?

The smoke rolled slowly away, and as the pall lifted, a wild, ringing cheer broke from the English ranks, mingled with the yell of the Highlanders beyond. The ground was covered with dead and wounded; the ranks of the oncoming foe were shattered and broken. The Canadians had turned, and were flying hither and thither, only caring to escape the terrible fire, which in open country they could never stand. In a few more seconds, as soon as the regulars saw that the red-coats were preparing to charge, they too flung down their muskets and joined the rout.

“Charge them, men, charge them!”

Wolfe’s voice rang like a clarion note over the field. He placed himself at the head of one of the columns. Julian and Humphrey were on either side of him. The yell of the Highlanders was in their ears, and the huzzah of the English soldiers, as they dashed upon the retreating foe.

Their line had been a little broken here by the fire of the foe, and still from ambushed sharpshooters hidden upon the plain a more or less deadly fire was kept up. Wolfe led where the danger was greatest and the firing most galling and persistent.

“Dislodge those men!” was the order which had just passed his lips, when Julian noticed that he seemed to pause and stagger for a moment.

“You are hurt!” he exclaimed anxiously, springing to his side; but Wolfe kept steadily on his way, wrapping his handkerchief round his wrist the while. The blood was welling from it. Julian insisted upon tying the bandage, finding that the wrist was shattered.

“You are wounded—you will surely go back!” he said anxiously; but Wolfe seemed scarcely to hear.

The next moment he was off again with his men, directing their movements with all his accustomed skill and acumen. Once again he staggered. Julian dashed to his side; but

he spoke no word. If he would but think of himself! But no; his soul was in the battle. He had no care save for the issue of the day.

A sudden volley seemed to open upon them from a little unseen dip in the ground, masked by thick underwood. Julian felt a bullet whiz so near to his ear that the skin was grazed and the hair singed. For a moment he was dizzy with the deafening sound. Then a low cry from Humphrey reached him.

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“The General! the General!” he said.

Julian dashed his hand across his eyes and looked. Wolfe was sitting upon the ground. He was still gazing earnestly at the battle rushing onward, but there had come into his eyes a strange dimness.

“He is struck—he is wounded!” said Humphrey in a low voice, bending over him. “Help, Julian; we must carry him to the rear.”

Julian half expected resistance on the part of Wolfe; but no word passed his lips. They were growing ashy white.

With a groan of anguish—for he felt as though he knew what was coming—Julian bent to the task, and the pair conveyed the light, frail form through the melee of the battlefield towards the place where the wounded had been carried, and where Fritz still lay. A surgeon came hastily forward, and seeing who it was, uttered an exclamation of dismay.

Wolfe opened his dim eyes. He saw Julian’s face, but all the rest was blotted out in a haze.

“Lay me down,” he said faintly; “I want nothing.”

“The surgeons are here,” said Julian anxiously as they put him out of the hot rays of the sun, which was now shining over heights and plains.

“They can do nothing for me,” said Wolfe, in the same faint, dreamy way; “let them look to those whom they can help.”

A death-like faintness was creeping over him. The surgeon put a stimulating draught to his lips; and when a part had been swallowed, proceeded to make a partial examination of the injuries sustained. But when he had opened the breast of his coat and saw two orifices in the neighbourhood of the heart, he shook his head, and laid the wounded man down to rest.

Julian felt a spasm of pain shoot through his heart, like a thrust from a bayonet.

“Can you do nothing?” he asked in a whisper.

“Nothing,” was the reply. “He has not an hour to live.”

“To be cut off in the very hour of victory!” exclaimed Humphrey, with a burst of sorrow. “It is too hard—too hard!”

“Yet it is what he desired for himself,” said Julian, in a low voice. I think it is what he himself would have chosen.”

“He has suffered more than any of us can well imagine,” said the surgeon gravely. “We can scarcely grudge to him the rest and peace of the long, last sleep.”

Humphrey turned away to dash the tears from his eyes. In his silent, dog-like fashion, he had loved their young General with a great and ardent love, and it cut him to the heart to see him lying there white and pulseless, his life ebbing slowly away, without hope of a rally.

A sign from somebody at a little distance attracted his attention. He crossed the open space of ground, and bent over Fritz, who lay bandaged and partially helpless amongst the wounded, but with all his faculties clear.

“What is it they are saying all around?” he asked anxiously. “How goes the battle? how is it with our General?”

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“The battle truly is won—or so I believe,” answered Humphrey, in a husky voice. “God grant that the gallant Wolfe may live to know that success has crowned his efforts—that the laurel wreath will be his, even though it be only laid upon his tomb!”

“Is he then wounded?”

“Mortally, they say.”

A spasm of pain contracted Fritz’s face.

“Then Quebec will be dearly purchased,” he said. “Humphrey, help me to move; I would look upon his face once again!”

Humphrey gave the desired assistance. They were bringing in the wounded, French and English both, to this place of shelter; but the spot where Wolfe lay was regarded as sacred ground. It was still and quiet there, though in the distance the din of battle sounded, and the sharp rattle of musketry or the booming of artillery could be heard at this side and that.

Fritz limped slowly across the open space, and halted a dozen paces from where Wolfe lay; half supported in the arms of Julian, whose face was stern with repressed grief.

The ashen shadow had deepened upon the face of the dying man. He seemed to be sinking away out of life. The long lashes lay upon the waxen cheek; the deep repose of the long, last sleep seemed to be falling upon the wasted features. Fritz felt an unaccustomed mist rising before his eyes. He thought he had never before seen a nobler countenance.

The few standing about the wounded General looked from him to the distant plain, where the battle tide was rolling farther away, and from which, from time to time, arose outbursts of sudden sound—the wild screech of the Highlanders, the answering cheer of the English, the spattering, diminishing shots, and now and again a sharp volley that told of some more determined struggle in one place or another.

“Look how they run! look, look—they run like sheep!” cried Humphrey, breaking into sudden excitement, as his trained sight, without the aid of glasses, took in the meaning of that confused mass of men.

Julian felt a thrill run through the prostrate form he was holding. The eyes he had never thought to look upon again opened wide. Wolfe raised his head, and asked, with something of the old ring in his voice:

“Who run?”

“The enemy, sir,” eagerly replied those who stood by. “They are melting away like smoke. They give way everywhere. The day is ours!”

The young General half raised himself, as though he would fain have seen the sight; but his dim eyes took in nothing.

“Tell Colonel Burton,” he said, speaking with his old decision, “to march Webb’s regiment down to the St. Charles, and cut off their retreat from the bridge.”

Humphrey was off almost before the words had left his lips. He would be the one to carry the General’s last message. Wolfe heard him go, and smiled. He knew that Humphrey was the trustiest of messengers. He looked up into Julian’s face.

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“Now lay me down again,” he said faintly. “Farewell, my trusty friend and comrade. Take my love to those at home; remember my last messages. God be thanked; He has given us the victory. I can die in peace.”

He drew a long sigh, and his eyes closed. A little thrill ran through the worn frame.

Julian laid it down, and reverently covered the peaceful face; whilst a stifled sob went up from those who saw the action.

James Wolfe had gone to his rest—had died the death of a hero upon the victorious battlefield.

Book 7: English Victors.

Chapter 1: A Panic-Stricken City.

It had come at last! The long delay and suspense were over. The English had stormed the Heights of Abraham. Their long red lines had been seen by terrified citizens, who came rushing into the town at dawn of day. The supposed attack at Beauport had been nothing but a blind. Whilst Montcalm and Vaudreuil were massing the troops to repel the enemy here, the real assault had been made behind the city, and the English foe was almost upon them.

Colin had dashed out when the first grey of the dawn had stolen in at their windows. There had been no sleep for Quebec that night. The whole city was in a state of tense excitement. Confidently had the Generals declared that the enemy were bent upon their own destruction; that they were about to tempt fate, and would be driven back with ignominy and loss.

“Let them come! Let them taste of the welcome we have to offer them! Let them see what Quebec has to give them when they reach her strand!”

These words, and many similar to them, were passed from mouth to mouth by the garrison and townsfolk of Quebec. None would admit that disaster was possible to “the impregnable city;” and yet its shattered walls and ruined houses, the crowded hospital and the deserted buildings, all told a terrible tale. The upper town had suffered lately almost as severely as the lower had done at the commencement of the bombardment. It was a problem now where to find safe shelter for the citizens. Great numbers of them had fled to the country beyond, or to other Canadian settlements; for not only was this terrible bombardment destroying their homes, and inflicting fearful hurt upon those exposed to it, but provisions were becoming very scarce; and if the English once got foothold on the west side of the town, they would be able to cut off Quebec from her source of supply.

Colin dashed out for tidings so soon as the dawn crept into the sky; and Madame Drucour and Corinne sat very close together, so absorbed in listening that they could scarce find words in which to reassure each other.

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They were no longer in the little narrow house where once they had dwelt. That had been shattered at last by some of the heavier guns which the enemy had brought to Point Levi, and they had been forced to abandon it. They were in a house which so far had not been touched, sheltered as it was behind some of the fortifications. It belonged to Surgeon Arnoux, a clever and competent man, who was at present with the army of Bourlemaque; but his younger brother, Victor, also a surgeon, was still in the city, and he had generously opened his house to several of the unfortunate citizens who had been rendered homeless by the bombardment.

At present the house contained as its residents Madame Drucour, with her brother the Abbe, and Colin and Corinne. The Bishop, Pontbriand, who was dying himself of a mortal disease, but was still able to go about amongst the sick and wounded, was another inmate, beloved of all. The party was waited on sedulously by an old servant of the Ursulines, Bonnehomme Michel, as she was called, who was the most faithful, hard-working, and devoted of creatures, and displayed the greatest ingenuity in contriving, out of the scantiest of materials, such dishes as should tempt the appetite of the sick Bishop, and make the rest forget that they were in a beleaguered city.

Corinne had learned by this time what the horrors of war were like. Her fair face was both thinner and graver than it had been in past days. She had known the terrible experience that leaves its mark upon the witnesses: she had been one of more than one company when a bursting shell in their midst had brought death to some amongst those with whom she was sitting. She had seen men—yes, and women too—struck down in the streets by shot or splinters. She had worked side by side with Madame Drucour amid the sick and wounded, and had seen sights of horror and suffering which had branded themselves deeply into her soul.

She could never again be the careless, laughing Corinne of old; and yet the soldier spirit in her burned stronger and ever more strong. If war was a fearful and terrible thing, it had its glorious side too. She heard, with a strange thrill of mingled pain and pride, of the gallant doings of the English troops. She regarded the cautious policy of the French with something like contempt. She and Colin would sometimes steal down to the margin of the water, and look at the English vessels which had braved the guns of the town, and were riding safely at anchor in the upper basin; and would feel a thrill of admiration at the dauntless bravery of the British sailors and soldiers. After all, if Quebec were to fall to such gallant foes, would she suffer much after the first shock was over?

They had lost their three merry midshipmen. When General Wolfe had sent over several boatloads of prisoners taken in the unguarded villages of the upper river, it had been agreed that any English prisoners in the town should be given in exchange; and the lads, cheering lustily the while, had been rowed away by the returning boats.

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Colin and Corinne had missed their companionship, but had been assured of a meeting before so very long. They knew what that had meant, yet they could not resent the suggestion. Constant companionship with the English middies had intensified their interest in the English cause. They did not speak of it much except to one another, but in secret they had no fear of the unknown foe. They felt a certain exultation and triumph in the stories they were always hearing of English prowess and valour.

And now it was known to all that the crucial moment had come. The English had made a great coup. They had landed; they had stormed the heights; they were said to be intrenching themselves and bringing up their guns; and although this was not true at the moment, the very thought struck terror into the hearts of the citizens and soldiers.

Unless they could be dislodged from their present commanding position, the town was lost. That was the word in the mouths of all. A mounted messenger, followed by others, had been sent flying to Montcalm and Vaudreuil. It was certain that the General would be quickly on the spot, and surely he and his army together would suffice to drive back or annihilate this audacious intruder!

So said the people; yet none dared to make light of the peril. Madame Drucour's face was very grave as she sat looking out into the street, her arm about Corinne. It was not even safe for them to try to go out to the hospital that morning—the hospital which had been moved out of the town and erected upon the plain of the St. Charles, out of reach of the enemy's guns. Hitherto the Heights of Abraham had been like a rampart of defence; now they were alive with the battalions of the foe. The plain might at any time become the scene of a battle or a rout.

"Here is Colin back!" cried Corinne, suddenly starting to her feet. "Now he will tell us!"

"It is all true!" cried the lad, bursting into the room. "It is wonderful to see them; it is marvellous what they have done. They must have scaled the cliffs at almost impossible places; and now they are forming up in a splendid way! The whole plateau is alive with them!"

"The first rays of the sun striking across it were dyed red with the scarlet uniforms. It was magnificent to see them. I cannot tell whether they have any guns there. I saw none. But it is not easy to get a good view of the plain; the ridge above the town hides it."

"But what is our General doing?" asked Madame Drucour, with clasped hands.

"They say he is coming; they say he is on his way from the Beauport camp with the whole army at his back. If he has also sent a message directing Bougainville to advance at the same time from Cap Rouge and fall upon the English rear, it might well be that the invaders would be cut to pieces. But no one here knows what is ordered.

Some say one thing and some another. One thing alone is certain—the Marquis is on his way."

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The Abbe, who had been out to gather news, came back now with much the same tale that Colin had to tell. There was no manner of doubt about it. The English army had, as by magic, appeared upon the Heights of Abraham, and had set themselves in battle array upon the best piece of ground for their purpose. The sight of the compact red lines filled the French with dismay and fear. If an enemy could do this in a single night, what might they not have the power of achieving?

“We are in God’s hands,” said the Abbe to his sister, as they hastily, and without much appetite, partook of the meal which Bonnehomme Michel spread for them; “but truly I fear me that disaster is in store for the arms of France. There seems no reason why we should lack power to drive back the English to their ships; yet I have that within me which speaks of calamity and disaster. Canada has become helpless and corrupt. When that has befallen a country or a community, it has always fallen. I fear me that the days of French rule are numbered. I only pray that if the English reign here in our stead, they may prove themselves merciful masters, and keep their promise not to interfere with the exercise of the true faith in which the people have been brought up.”

“If the English have pledged their word to that, they will keep it,” answered Madame Drucour; “and if Canada must fall, we may rejoice that it should fall into hands as merciful as those of our English rivals.”

“That is true,” said her brother: “they have set us many a noble example of clemency and honour. Yet their hands are not altogether free from blood guiltiness. There have been acts of violence and cruelty committed even during these past weeks along the shores of the river.”

“Yes,” answered Madame Drucour: “houses have been burned and families turned adrift, and much suffering has resulted therefrom. War is ever cruel, and the track of it is marked with fire and blood. Yet we must remember that the persons thus molested had fair warning given them. They might have remained in safety had they submitted to the conditions imposed by General Wolfe. Perhaps they showed more spirit by resistance; but they drew down their fate upon themselves. And no woman or child has been hurt; no cruelties have been inflicted upon prisoners. No Indians have been suffered to molest them. Would we have been as forbearing—as stern in the maintenance of order and discipline? The only acts of cruelty committed on the English side have been by Rangers not belonging to the regular army, and those only upon Indians or those degraded Canadians who go about with them, painted and disguised to resemble their dusky allies. For my part, I think that men who thus degrade themselves deserve all that they get.”

“It is well to seek to find consolation in time of extremity,” said the Abbe, “and I do rejoice very heartily in the knowledge that we have a merciful foe to deal with. If this city is forced to open her gates to the English, I verily believe that no scenes of outrage will

disgrace the page of history upon which this day's doings shall be recorded. There is help in that thought at least."

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But it was impossible for either Colin or his uncle to remain within doors upon such a day. He insisted that Madame Drucour and Corinne should not adventure themselves beyond the city walls, though he did not condemn them to remain within doors. But he, for his own part, must go forth and see what was befalling without; for the Abbe, in spite of his vows, was half a soldier at heart, and had done some fighting in his young life, and knew the sound of the clash of arms.

He was not going to adventure himself into the battle, or to suffer Colin to do so either; that would be useless. Indeed the boy had no desire to enter the lists against the English, being more than half on their side as it was, although the infection of the feelings of the townspeople rendered it difficult for him exactly to know his own mind.

He and Corinne were alike consumed with an overpowering sense of excitement. It was the thought of the battle about to be waged that filled the minds of both—the imminence of the coming struggle. As for the result, that was less a matter of concern to them. The crisis was the overwhelming consideration in their minds.

The Abbe and Colin had gone. The streets were beginning to fill with excited people. The storm of shot and shell was not falling upon Quebec today. The guns had been directed upon the Beauport camp, to cover the real enterprise being carried on above. Also the river had to be watched and guarded. Everything spoke of a change in tactics. There was a tense feeling in the air as though an electric cloud hung low over the city.

Then came a burst of cheering. Montcalm had been seen spurring on with only a small band of followers over the bridge of the St. Charles towards the scene of danger; and now the army itself was in sight, making its way after him across the bridge and towards the city, through whose streets they must pass to gain unmolested those heights where the English were awaiting them, drawn up in close array.

Montcalm's face was full of anxiety, and yet full of courage, as he returned the plaudits of the citizens. He knew that affairs were serious, but he hoped and believed that he should find but a small detachment of the enemy waiting to receive him. He could not believe that very much had been accomplished in one night. A little resolution and courage and military address, and the foe would be dislodged and driven ignominiously down those precipitous heights which they had scaled with such boldness a few hours before.

It was a fine sight to see the troops pouring in by the Palace Gate, and out again by the gates of St. Louis and St. John—the white uniforms and gleaming bayonets of the battalions of old France, the Canadian militia, and the troops of painted Indians following, cheered by the citizens, reinforced by the garrison, their hearts animated by lust of conquest and an assurance of victory, which assurance was not altogether shared by the citizens themselves, whose scouts had brought in alarming tidings concerning the strength of the English position.

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And now the soldiers had all marched through; the last of the bands had disappeared from the streets; the garrison had taken themselves to their own quarters; the men of the town had flocked out of the city in the hope of seeing something of the fight; and the streets were chiefly thronged by anxious women and wondering, wide-eyed children—-all crowding together in groups, their faces turned towards those heights above where they knew the struggle was to be fought out.

“Hark to the firing!”

A deep silence fell upon the crowds in the streets—the hush of a breathless expectancy. The rattle of musketry fell upon their ears, and then a sound almost like a cannon shot. It was the volley of the English, delivered with such admirable precision. An involuntary scream arose from many as that sound was heard. Had the English got their artillery up to those inaccessible heights?

But no; there was no further sound of cannonading, only a fierce and continuous fusillade, which told of the battle raging so fiercely up yonder on the heights.

Some women crowded into the churches to offer prayers at the shrines of saint or Virgin; but the majority could not tear themselves away from the streets, nor from the open space near to the gate of St. Louis, by which gate news would most likely enter.

And it did.

How the time went none could say, but it seemed only a short time after the firing had commenced before white-faced scouts from the town, who had gone forth to see the battle, came running back with gestures of terror and despair.

“The English are shooting us down like sheep. The French give way on every side. Their terrible fire mows down our ranks like grass before the scythe! They are charging upon us now! We are scattered and fleeing every way! Alas, alas! the day is lost. Quebec will fall!”

“Lost! it cannot be lost in this time,” cried pale-faced women, unable and unwilling to believe. “Where is the Governor? he will come up with the reserves. Where is Bougainville? surely he will fall upon the English rear! Have we not twice the force of the English? We cannot be conquered in this time! it would be a shame to France forever.”

So cried the people—one calling one thing, and another another, whilst every fresh scout brought in fresh tidings of disaster. There could be no doubt about it. The French army had been routed at the first onset. Where the fault lay none could tell, but they were flying like chaff before the wind.

Corinne stood close beside her aunt, silent, with dilated eyes, her heart beating almost to suffocation as she sought to hear what was said, and to make out the truth of the thousand wild rumours flying about.

Colin came dashing through the gate. His face was flushed; he had lost his hat; he was too breathless to speak. But he saw Corinne's signal, and came dashing up to them. He flung himself down upon the ground, and struggled for breath.

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“O Colin, what have you seen?”

In a few moments more he was able to speak.

“I have seen the battle!” he gasped; “I have seen it all. I could not have believed it would have been fought so soon. I have seen something that these people would rejoice to know, but I shall not tell them. I have seen the fall of General Wolfe!”

Madame Drucour uttered a short exclamation of dismay.

“General Wolfe killed! Colin, art thou sure?”

“Not sure that he is dead, only that he fell, and was carried away by his men. He was heading the charge, as a brave General should. Oh, had you seen how that battle was directed, you could not but have admired him, whether friend or foe! It teaches one what war can be to see such generalship as that.”

“He is a great man,” said Madame Drucour softly; “I have always maintained that. Pray Heaven his life be spared, for he will be a merciful and gallant victor; and if he fall, we may not meet such generous, chivalrous kindness from others.”

“Here come the soldiers!” cried Corinne, who from a little vantage ground could see over the battlements. “Ah, how they run! as though the enemy were at their heels.

“Are you men? are you soldiers? For shame! for shame! To run like sheep when none pursues! Now indeed will I call myself French no longer; I will be a British subject like my mother. It is not willingly that I desert a losing cause; but I cannot bear such poltroonery. When have the English ever fled like this before us? Oh, it is a shame! it is a disgrace!”

“Ah, if you could have seen the English soldiers!” cried Colin, with eager enthusiasm; “I never heard a volley delivered as theirs was! They never wasted a shot. They stood like a rock whilst the French charged across to them, firing all the time. And when they did fire, it was like a cannon shot; and after that, our men seemed to have no spirit left in them. When the smoke of the second volley cleared off, I could scarce believe my eyes. The dead seemed to outnumber the living; and these were flying helter-skelter this way and that!”

“But did not the General strive to rally them?”

“Doubtless he did. Our Marquis is a brave soldier and an able General; but what can one man do? Panic had seized the troops; and if you had heard the sound of cheering from the ranks of the English, and that strange yell from those wild Highlanders as they dashed in pursuit, you would have understood better what the soldiers felt like. They ran like sheep—they are running still. I saw that if I were to have a chance of bringing

you the news, I must use all my powers, or I should be jammed in the mass of flying humanity making for the city; and since the English are not very far behind, I had need to make good my retreat."

It was plain that Colin was only a little in advance of a portion of the defeated army, whose soldiers were now flocking back to the city, spreading panic everywhere.

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Suddenly there ran through the assembled crowd a murmur which gathered in volume and intensity, and changed to a strange sound as of wailing. Corinne, who had the best view, leaned eagerly forward to see, and her face blanched instantly.

A horseman was coming through the gate, supported on either side by a soldier; his face was deadly white, and blood was streaming from a wound in his breast.

Madame Drucour looked also and uttered a cry:

“Monsieur le Marquis est tue!”

It was indeed Montcalm, shot right through the body, but not absolutely unconscious, though dazed and helpless.

Instantly Madame Drucour had forced a passage through the crowd, and was at his side.

“Bring him this way,” she said to those who supported him and led the horse; “he will have the best attention here.”

Montcalm seemed to hear the words, and the wail of sorrow which went up from the bystanders. He roused himself, and spoke a few words, faintly and with difficulty.

“It is nothing. You must not be troubled for me, my good friends. It is as it should be—-as I would have it.”

Then his head drooped forward, and Madame Drucour hurried the soldiers onward to the house where she now lived; Colin running on in advance to give notice of their approach, and if possible to find Victor Arnoux, that the wounded man might receive immediate attention.

The surgeon was luckily on the spot almost at once, and directed the carrying of the Marquis into one of the lower rooms, where they laid him on a couch and brought some stimulant for him to swallow. He was now quite unconscious; and the young surgeon, after looking at the wound, bit his lip and stood in silent thought whilst the necessary things were brought to him.

“Is it dangerous?” asked Madame Drucour, in an anxious whisper, as she looked down at the well-known face.

“It is mortal!” answered Victor, in the same low tone. “He has not twelve hours of life left in him.”

Chapter 2: Surrender.

“Is the General yet living?” asked the Abbe an hour or two later, entering the house to which he knew his friend had been carried, a look of concentrated anxiety upon his face.

Madame Drucour had heard his step even before she heard his voice. She was already beside him, her face pale and her eyes red with weeping.

“Ah, my brother,” she cried, “thou art come to tell us that all is lost!”

“All would not be lost if the army had a head!” answered the Abbe, with subdued energy. “We could outnumber the enemy yet if we had a soldier fit to take command. But the Marquis—how goes it with him?”

“He lives yet, but he is sinking fast. He will never see the light of another day!” and the tears which had gathered in Madame Drucour’s eyes fell over her cheeks.

“My poor friend!” sighed the Abbe; and after a pause of musing he added, “Is he conscious?”

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“Yes; he came to himself a short while ago, and insisted upon knowing how it was with him.”

“He knows, then?”

“Yes—Victor Arnoux told him the truth: but I think he knew it before.”

“And what said he?”

“That it was well; that he should not live to see the surrender of Quebec; that his work was done on earth, and he ready to depart.”

“Then he thinks the cause is lost?”

“Those are the words he used. Perchance he knows that there is no one now to lead or direct them. You know, my brother, that the brave Senezergues lies mortally wounded. He might have taken the command; but now we have none fit for it. You have seen what is passing without the city; tell me of it! What does the Governor? They say that when the battle was fought he had not yet appeared upon the scene of action.”

“No,” answered the Abbe bitterly, “he had not. Yet he had had notice four hours before the fighting commenced, and was nearer than the Marquis, who brought the army up. He came too late to do anything. He is always late. He comes up at the end of everything—to claim credit if the day is won, to throw the blame upon others if fortune frowns. He is saying now that it was a deplorable mistake on Montcalm’s part to attack before he had joined issues with him; as though his raw Canadians had ever done any good in the open field!”

“You have seen him, then?”

“Yes; he and a part of the routed army have taken possession of the redoubt at the head of the bridge of boats across the St. Charles, and so completely are they cowed and terrified that it was all that a few of the cooler-headed ones of us could do to prevent the men from cutting in pieces the bridge itself, and thus cutting off the retreat of half the army, who are still pouring back over it, pursued by the English.”

“Then the fight is not yet over?”

“The battle is, but not the rout. And yet there is a sort of fighting going on. The Canadians, who in the open field show themselves so useless, are redeeming their character now. They have spread themselves over the low-lying lands by the river, hiding in bushes and coverts, and shooting down the English in a fashion which they little relish. Those fierce Highlanders suffer the most from this sort of warfare, for they always throw away their muskets before they charge, and so they have no weapon that is of any service against a hidden marksman in the bushes. But all this, though it may

harass the English, does not affect the issue of the day. We have suffered a crushing defeat, although the number of the slain is not excessive. It remains now to be settled whether we accept this defeat as final, or whether we yet try to make a stand for the honour of our country and the salvation of Canada."

"Ah, my brother, if Quebec goes, Canada goes!"

"That is so; but there are many of us who say that Quebec is not yet lost. It is not lost; it might well be saved. And yet what think you of this? They say that within the hornwork the Governor and the Intendant were closeted together drafting the terms of capitulation of the whole colony, ready to submit to the English General!"

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“So soon?”

“So they say. I know not if it be altogether true, but all is confusion worse confounded yonder. The soldiers are pouring back to their camp at Beauport in a perfect fever of panic. I heard that Bigot would have tried to muster and lead them against the enemy once more, and that the Governor gave his sanction, but that the officers would not second the suggestion. I think all feel that with only Vaudreuil to lead fighting is hopeless. He knows not his own mind two minutes together; he agrees always with the last speaker. He is always terrified in the moment of real crisis and peril. His bluster and gasconade desert him, and leave him in pitiful case.”

“What, then, is to be done?”

“That I cannot tell. I have come with a message from the Governor to the Marquis. He sent me to ascertain his condition, and if possible to ask counsel of him. His word would still carry weight. If he is sufficiently himself to listen for a few minutes to what I have to say, I would then put the case and ask his opinion upon it.”

Madame Drucour drew the Abbe softly into the room where the dying man lay. Montcalm’s eyes opened as he heard them approach. At the sight of the Abbe he seemed to try to rouse himself.

“You have brought news! Tell me, how goes it?”

The Abbe repeated in some detail the after events of the battle and rout, Montcalm listening to every word with the keenest interest and attention.

“Where is the Governor?” he asked at the conclusion of the narrative.

“He was still at the hornwork when I left,” answered the Abbe; “but many were clamouring around him, declaring that the place would be carried by assault almost immediately, and all of them cut to pieces without quarter; and that they had better surrender the city and colony at once than lose all their lives in an unavailing struggle.”

Montcalm’s face, upon which death had already set its seal, remained immovably calm and tranquil.

“What said the Governor?” he asked.

“He appeared to agree with this view of the case. He is much alarmed and disturbed. He is preparing to return to his own quarters upon the Beauport road, and will there hold a council as to the next step to be taken. It was he who asked me to go back to the city and see you, my General, and ask what advice you have for us. We are in a sore strait, and there seems none to advise us; but any word that comes from you will have its weight with the army.”

Montcalm lay silent a long while. Physical weakness made speaking difficult, and his mind no longer worked with the lightning quickness of old days. He seemed to find some slight difficulty in bringing it down to the affairs of earthly battles and struggles.

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“Tell the Governor,” he said at last, speaking faint and low, “that there is a threefold choice before him; and that though were I at the head of the army, I should say, Fight, I do not offer him counsel to do so; I only tell him the alternatives. The first of these is to fight—to join forces with Ramesay’s garrison and the sailors from the batteries here, and to gather in all the outlying Canadians and Indians of the neighbourhood. With such an army as could be quickly gathered, and by acting in concert with Bougainville from Cap Rouge, there is at least a very fair chance of vanquishing the foe in open fight. The next alternative is for him to retire upon Jacques Cartier, leaving Quebec with an efficient garrison, and from there to harass the enemy, cut off supplies, and otherwise prolong the siege till the approach of winter forces them to take to their ships and go. The third is to give up the colony to English rule. Let the Governor and his council take their choice of these three plans, for there is no other.”

“I will take the message myself,” said the Abbe, pressing the hand of his friend, and stooping to imprint a kiss on the pale brow. “God be with you, my friend, in the hour of trial; and may He receive your soul when He shall have called it! I shall pray for the repose of your gallant spirit. Peace be with you. Farewell.”

Montcalm was too much exhausted for further speech, but he made a slight gesture with his hand, and the Abbe left him, Madame Drucour stealing after him for a last word.

“You will not run into peril yourself, my brother?”

“Nay,” he answered, with a touch of bitterness in his tone; “I shall be safe enough, since my errand is to the Governor. Monsieur de Vaudreuil is never known to put himself into danger. Oh that we had a Governor who thought first of the honour of France and second of his own safety!”

“But surely they will fight! they will not give up Quebec without a struggle? Look at the walls and ramparts, untouched and impregnable as ever! Our town is shattered, it is true, but that has long been done. Why should we give up the city because a few hundred soldiers have been slain upon the Plains of Abraham? We have still a great army to fight with.”

“We have; but where is the General to lead us? Nevertheless, we may still show ourselves men.

“Colin, my boy, is that thou? What, dost thou want to come with me? So be it, then. Thou shalt do so, and take back word to thy aunt here as to what the council decides.

“I may find work over yonder with the sick and wounded. I may not return tonight. But Colin shall come back with news, and you will know that all is well with me.”

They went together, and Madame Drucour returned to her watch beside the sick and dying man. The surgeon stole in and out as his other duties permitted him, and Corinne shared the watch beside the couch where Montcalm lay.

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The Bishop, who in spite of his feebleness had been abroad in the city, seeking to console the dying and to cheer up the garrison, depressed by rumours of the flight of the army, came in at dusk, exhausted and depressed himself, to find another dying soldier in need of the last rites of the Church.

It was a solemn scene which that dim room witnessed as the night waned and the approach of dawn came on. Without all was confusion, hurry, anxiety, and distress, none seeking sleep in their beds, all eagerly awaiting tidings from the army—the news which should tell them whether they were to be gallantly supported or left to their fate. Within there was the deep hush which the approach of death seems ever to bring. The short, gasping confession had been made; the Bishop stood over the dying man, making the sign and speaking the words of absolution. A young priest from the Seminary and an acolyte had been found to assist at the solemn rite; and Madame Drucour, with Corinne and the faithful old servant, knelt at the farther end of the room, striving to keep back their tears.

It was over at last. The words of commendation had been spoken; the last labouring breath had been drawn. Corinne, half choking with her emotion, and feeling as though she would be stifled if she were to remain longer in that chamber of death, silently glided away out of the room into the open air; and once there, she broke into wild weeping, the result of the long tension of her pent-up emotion.

“Mademoiselle, mademoiselle! Corinne!” cried a familiar voice in a subdued tone from some place not far distant. “Is it indeed you? Nay, do not weep; there is not need. We shall not harm you; you and yours shall be safe whatever comes to pass in Quebec.”

Corinne gazed about her in astonishment. Who was speaking to her? The next house to theirs was deserted, because the roof had been blown off, and a shell had fallen through, breaking almost every floor. Yet the voice seemed to come from a window within that house, and in the dim and uncertain moonlight she saw a head—two heads—protruding from a first-floor window. Next minute she was further astonished by the rapid descent of three figures, who seemed to clamber like monkeys down the shattered wall; and behold the three merry midshipmen were grouped around her, holding her hands and seeking to cheer her.

“Peter—Paul—Arthur! How came you here? Surely Quebec is not taken yet!”

“No, but so nearly taken that we thought to steal a march. We have been working since evening in dragging up cannon upon the plain yonder, where the army is intrenching itself; and when our task was done, we felt a great wish to see what was passing in the city where we had many friends, and which we knew so well. In the confusion it was not difficult to get in under cover of the dusk; but we found we could not get out again—at least not when we tried. But we cared little for that. There are plenty of empty houses to hide in, and we had bread in our pockets. We heard of you and Madame Drucour,

and have been watching and waiting in hopes of seeing you. But, Corinne, are you weeping because the English are about to take Quebec? We looked upon you as an ally and a compatriot."

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“I am weeping because our good General, the Marquis of Montcalm, is just dead,” answered Corinne, wiping her eyes. “He lies within those walls, sleeping the last sleep. He will never see his wife and his mother and his mill at Candiac again. And he has talked so much to us of all those things, and of the children he loved so well. Oh, war is a cruel thing! Pray Heaven it may come to a speedy end!”

The sound of flying footsteps up the street caused the midshipmen to look at one another, and meditate a return to their hiding place; but Corinne said:

“That is Colin’s step; he comes back with news.”

And, in truth, the next moment Colin stood amongst them, so full of excitement himself that the sudden appearance of the midshipmen, whom he instantly recognized, did not at once strike him with astonishment.

“I will never call myself a Frenchman again!” he panted, his eyes gleaming with wrath. “What think you, Corinne? They are flying from the camp at Beauport as sheep fly before wolves. It is no retreat, it is a rout—a disgraceful, abominable, causeless rout. There is no enemy near. The English are up on the heights, intrenching themselves no doubt, and resting after their gallant enterprise. Our uncle has exhausted his powers of persuasion. He has shown them again and again how strong is their position still, how little it would even now take of courage and resolution to save Quebec and the colony. They will not listen—they will not hear. They are flying like chaff before the wind. They are leaving everything behind in their mad haste to be gone! And the Indians will swoop down directly the camp is empty, and take everything. Oh, it is a disgrace, a disgrace! Not even to take a night to think it over. If the English did but know, and sent out a few hundred soldiers upon them, they might cut the whole army to pieces in a few hours!”

Colin, Colin! oh, is it so?”

“It is indeed; and all that the men say when one speaks to them is that Wolfe and his soldiers are too much for them. They will not stay to be hacked to pieces.”

“Alas!” said Paul gravely, “the gallant Wolfe is no more. If you have lost your General, so have we. Wolfe fell early in the battle, and Moncton is dangerously wounded. We are robbed of our two first officers; but for all that we will have Quebec and Canada.”

“And you deserve it!” answered Colin, fired with generous enthusiasm. “If our French soldiers and officers fling away their courage and their honour, let us welcome those who have both, and who are masters worthy to be served and loved.”

It was a strange, sad day. The confusion and despair in the town were pitiful to behold. With the first light of day it was seen that the camp at Beauport was still standing, and hope sprang up in the hearts of the townsfolk. But when, shortly after, it was known that

though standing it had been abandoned, and that the night had seen the indiscriminate flight of the whole army, the deepest despondency fell upon the town. This feeling was not lessened when it began to be whispered that the Chevalier Ramesay had received instructions from the Governor not to attempt to hold the town in face of a threatened assault, but to wait till the scanty provisions had been exhausted, and then raise the white flag and obtain the best terms he could.

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The Abbe had stayed to bring this last letter from the flying Governor. His own soul was stirred to the depths by indignation and sorrow. It seemed to him the crowning disgrace in a disgraceful flight. Ramesay had sought speech with the Marquis a few hours before his death, but could obtain no advice from him. He had done with worldly things, and could only wish well to those who were left behind. It was a desperate state of affairs, and all the town knew it.

So great was the confusion that no workman could be found to make a coffin for the body of the dead General. The old servant of the Ursulines, faithful to the last, went hither and thither and collected a few planks and nails, and the midshipmen and Colin assisted her to nail together a rude coffin in which the body was presently laid. It must be buried that same evening, for none knew from hour to hour what was in store for the city. But no pomp or circumstance could attend the funeral; and indeed no one could be found to dig a grave.

Yet a fitting grave was found in the chapel of the Ursuline convent, now little more than a ruin. An exploding shell had made a deep cavity in the floor not far from the altar, and this hollow was soon shaped into the similitude of a grave.

No bells tolled or cannon fired as the mournful procession filed through the streets; yet it did not lack a certain sombre dignity. The Bishop and the Abbe headed it, with a few priests from the Cathedral in attendance. Ramesay was there with his officers, and Madame Drucour, with Colin and Corinne, the three midshipmen (who no longer feared to show themselves), and the old servant, brought up the rear. As the cortege passed through the streets, numbers of citizens fell in behind, together with women and children, weeping for one whose name was dear, and who they all averred would have saved their city had he lived.

Torches were lit before the procession filed into the ruined church, and sobs mingled with the chants that were rehearsed over the grave.

“Alas, alas!” sobbed the women; “we have buried our hopes in that grave. We have lost our General; we shall lose our city, and all Canada will follow.”

“It is no wonder they feel so,” said the Abbe to his sister that night; “we are abandoned by the army that might have saved us. We have scarce provision to last a week, even on half rations—so I heard today—and all the merchants and townspeople are for immediate capitulation. It is possible that when our army finds itself at Jacques Cartier, thirty miles from the scene of danger, and in an impregnable position, they may rally their courage and reconsider the situation; but unless I am greatly mistaken, that resolution will come too late—Quebec will have already surrendered.”

Things had come to a desperate pass. Only one out of all the officers was in favour of resistance; the rest declared it impossible. The English on the heights were intrenched,

and were pushing their trenches nearer and nearer. Though Wolfe was dead and Moncton disabled, Townshend, the third in command, was acting with the energy and resolve which had characterized the expedition all along.

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Three days after Montcalm's death matters reached a crisis. Troops were seen approaching the Palace Gate from the St. Charles meadows, and the ships of war were slowly nearing the town with evident intention of opening fire.

All the city was in a state of uncontrollable fright and agitation. The officers crowded round Ramesay's quarters declaring that they could do nothing with their men; that the men said they knew that orders had been given to avoid assault, and that they were threatening to carry their guns back to the arsenal, and desert bodily to the English. So disgusted and disheartened were they by the action of the Governor and his army that they had no fight left in them.

"Raise the white flag then!" said the Commander, in brief, stern tones.

Was it a cheer or a groan which arose from the town as the symbol of surrender was seen floating above the battlements? Once it was torn down by some more ardent spirit; but again it floated high, and the people gazing up at it gesticulated and wept, though whether for sorrow or joy they could scarce have told themselves.

It was known that a messenger had gone forth to confer with the English commander, and the negotiations were drawn out hour after hour, in the hope of some succour from without; till a stern message came back that if they were not signed within an hour, the assault would be ordered.

Then Ramesay signed, having secured more favourable terms than he had dared to hope for. The capitulation of Quebec was an accomplished fact!

Yet even whilst the people were still thronging the streets and open places by the gateway, a band of weary horsemen were seen spurring towards the city. As the foremost entered he cried:

"Courage, good friends, courage! Help is at hand! The army is marching to your defence! Quebec shall yet be saved!"

Alas! Quebec had fallen. Sobs and groans went up from the women, and curses from the men. There was a rush for Ramesay's quarters to tell the news and ask what could be done; but the Chevalier's face was stern and hard.

"Nothing can be done," he said. "You have had your own will. You have signed away your city. Honour will not permit me to break my word. Besides, how can we trust an army which has basely deserted us once? If they would not attack the foe before he had had time to intrench and fortify himself, how can we hope that they will have courage to brave the assault of a formidable intrenched camp defended by artillery?

"Go back whence you came, sirs, and tell the Governor, if you will, that his cowardice and desertion have done their work. Quebec is lost to France for ever, and Canada will

follow. He could have saved it four days ago had he had the heart of a soldier or the head of a statesman; now it is lost irrevocably!”

Chapter 3: Friendly Foes.

Quebec was taken; it had surrendered without a blow when once the battle upon the heights above had ended in the overthrow of the French army.

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Julian and Fritz exchanged glances of wonder when it was known beyond all doubt that the capitulation had been signed. It was marvellous to them, who knew the full peril of their own position, that the French should be so blind. A concerted attack from the two armies of the immediate locality could scarcely have failed to drive them from their vantage ground back to their ships; and once there, the Admirals would have had no choice but to put to sea once more; for already the season was closing, and it would then have been madness to think of any further operations for that season.

And yet sadness rather than joy was the main feeling in the hearts of these comrades as they prepared themselves to be of the number to march into the city.

Fritz was still somewhat lame from the effect of his wound; but his splendid physique had made light of the injury, and in other respects he was sound and strong. Humphrey walked beside him, giving him a little assistance over rough ground, and Julian was on his other side. They were full of curiosity to behold the city which it had cost them so much to take, and Fritz was anxious to find again those friends who had shown him kindness in past days. Julian, too, was very desirous to meet Madame Drucour once more, and renew with her those pleasant relations which had commenced within the fortress of Louisbourg.

Townshend, the Brigadier now in command, had granted easy terms to the place. He knew too well the peril of his position not to be thankful for having Quebec almost at any price. The garrison and the sailors, who formed a considerable portion of the force in the city, were to march out with the honours of war, and were to be shipped to France with what speed they might. The promised protection offered by Wolfe to all peaceable inhabitants was to be assured to all, together with the free exercise of their own religion.

To Townshend had been carried upon the very day of the capitulation a letter written by Montcalm only a few hours before his death, the feeble penmanship of which showed well how difficult it had been to him to indite it. In effect it was the last thing he ever wrote, and the signature was nothing but a faint initial, as though the failing fingers refused the task before them.

“Monsieur,” ran the missive, “the well-known humanity of the English sets my mind at peace concerning the fate of the French prisoners and the Canadians. Feel towards them as they have caused me to feel. Do not let them perceive that they have changed masters. Be their protector as I have been their father,”

It was probable that Montcalm believed himself addressing Wolfe when he wrote this last charge. It was not known with any certainty in Quebec that the English General had fallen, Some had heard he was wounded, but no certainty prevailed. Indeed it was with no exultation that Quebec heard of the death of the dreaded Wolfe. If he were redoubtable in the field of battle, he was known to be a merciful and generous foe in the hour of victory. Madame Drucour had shed tears when told for certain of the hero’s fall;

the Abbe had sorrowfully shaken his bead, and had told the citizens that they had nothing to rejoice over in that.

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So the garrison marched out with as much bravery and martial show as they could under the circumstances, and the citizens crowded the streets and ramparts to cheer them as they went, and watch with mingled feelings the entrance of the English troops into the town and the hoisting of the English flag. Sobs broke from many, and a deep groan rose shudderingly upon the air; and yet there were very many in the city who cared little for the change of masters, if only they might be rid of the horrors of war.

Life had long been very difficult under the French rule. So much official corruption existed, especially in the matter of supplies of food and other necessaries, that the unhappy people were forced to pay double and treble value for almost everything, and were being slowly bled to death, that a few functionaries like Bigot and Cadet might fatten and grow enormously rich. They had begun to know that the English colonies were very differently governed; that they grew in strength and independence, and were encouraged, and not thwarted and hindered, in their internal development. Although much smaller in extent than Canada, their population was double that of the French colony. It was indeed the growing strength and prosperity of the English provinces which had excited the jealous animosity of the French, and had quickened their resolve to pen them in between mountain and sea, and hinder their development. And this resolve had been followed by the commencement of that border warfare to which this was the sequel.

England knew better than let herself be penned within narrow limits. She had broken through the bonds which held her back. Now she was mistress of the key and capital of Canada. It could only be a matter of time before the whole colony fell to her.

“It may be better for them in the end,” said Madame Drucour, heaving a long sigh as she watched the departure of the garrison, and saw the scarlet uniforms of the English flooding the streets of Quebec, “And yet it is hard to see it. I knew it must come, but my heart is heavy within me. If only we had made a more gallant fight, I should have felt it less.”

“There he is! there he is!” shouted Colin suddenly; “there is Fritz Neville!”

“Ah,” cried Madame Drucour, with a quick look of pleasure, “and there is Monsieur Julian Dautray too! Get speech with them if you can, Colin, and bring them to supper at our house. There is much I should like to ask them; and if some of the officers are to be billeted amongst us townsfolk, I would gladly have those two to care for.”

“I’ll go and see about it,” cried Colin.

“Take us with you,” cried the midshipmen, who had viewed the procession with swelling hearts, uttering now and then a British cheer, which mingled oddly with the sighs of the people. However, since they had cheered the retiring troops as lustily as their own countrymen, no one took this amiss. Indeed the young middies had made themselves

popular in the town by this time, and had done something to promote a feeling of confidence in the goodwill and clemency of the victors.

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Corinne and her aunt returned homeward. The girl was in a state of great excitement, sorrow for the regret of others mingling with her own secret triumph and joy in the victory of the English.

It was no use trying to disguise from herself that she was glad the English had prevailed. She had come to have a contempt and distrust of the French and their ways and their rule. She admired the English, and believed in them. They had shown courage and resolution and heroism—had accomplished a feat which had hitherto been deemed impossible. She was proud of the British blood running in her veins, and was ready to welcome the victors with all her heart.

So she decked the supper table with green leaves and grasses, and a few flowers culled from the convent garden, where it had not been torn to pieces by shot and shell. The viands were not very plentiful, it is true, since scarcity still prevailed in the city; but that would come to an end now, for the English were already making arrangements for throwing in ample supplies.

Then she ran upstairs to don her best holiday gown, feeling a wonderful rebound of spirit after the depression and anxiety and horror of the past days. She sang a little to herself as she flitted about her room, and was only just ready when she heard Colin's voice from below summoning her to come.

She ran down the staircase and glided into the supper room, to find it (as it seemed) quite full of company. It was too dusk to distinguish faces by that time, but Bonnehomme Michel appeared at the moment, bringing in two lamps, and the faces of the guests were instantly revealed to her.

Her face lighted as she met the friendly glance of Fritz Neville, and she extended her hand with a pretty welcoming grace. The next minute she found herself exchanging greetings with an officer in British uniform, a dark-eyed, dark-haired man, with a very clear-cut, handsome face. Nor did it surprise her to hear that this was Captain Dautray, who had played a romantic part in the siege of Louisbourg.

"My aunt, Madame Drucour, has often spoken of you, sir," she said, "and told us how you disguised yourself and adventured yourself into the heart of the enemy's fortress. In sooth, I wonder you could ever dare such a deed. Suppose you had been found out?"

"Then I should have been shot as a spy, I do not doubt," answered Julian, "and should never have known the pleasure of making the acquaintance of the brave Madame Drucour—'Madame le General,' as she was called in Louisbourg—nor of being presented in Quebec to Mademoiselle her niece."

And as he spoke he bowed over Corinne's hand and raised it to his lips.

The girl blushed and smiled. Such a salute was not uncommon in those days, and there was nothing free in Julian's manner; indeed there was a grave dignity about him which distinguished him in whatever company he found himself, and his recent military training had done much to increase the natural advantages which had always been his.

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The remaining guest, who was a stranger to her, was presented as Humphrey Angell, and she looked with quick interest at him, recollecting how Fritz had told her the tale of that terrible Indian raid, and how he had found the two brothers, almost distracted by anguish and despair, amid the blackened ruins of their once prosperous settlement. This was the brother of the strange, wild-looking man whom she and Colin had seen in the forest long, long ago, and who had perished in the hour of vengeance. How interesting it was, she thought, to see all these men of whom she had heard and thought so much! She let her glance wander from one face to the other, and she was not ashamed of the feeling of keen admiration which awoke within her.

The three midshipmen were also of the company. Discipline had been somewhat relaxed in the hour of battle and victory, and they had obtained leave of absence from their ship for a while. Colin had brought them back for a farewell repast. They seemed almost like sons of the house by this time; and they had brought with them, from one of the provision transports, a supply of good victuals which had made Bonnehomme Michel's eyes shine and her wrinkled visage beam.

The scent of coffee pervaded the house, and soon a savoury mess such as had not been seen for long upon that table was set down, and the guests, in excellent spirits, took their places. Corinne found herself seated next to Julian, with Arthur on her other side. The Abbe took the foot of the table, and Madame Drucour the head. She looked pale and grave, but showed a gentle dignity and courtesy of bearing which was very impressive; and everyone showed her all possible deference.

Corinne spoke to Julian in a low voice.

"I want to ask of your General, the great Wolfe. Were you with him when he died?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle; he died in my arms. I have had the honour of calling myself his friend for above a year."

At that word Madame Drucour looked up and said:

"Ah, let me hear of Monsieur Wolfe! I had hoped to see him again myself. Such a hero, such a sweet and courteous gentleman! Frenchwoman though I be, I could have welcomed him as the victor of Quebec!"

All listened with deep attention as Julian related in considerable detail the story of the last hours of Wolfe, and Madame Drucour wiped her eyes many times during the recital.

"Ah! if he had but lived to see the city of his hopes, I would myself have been his nurse, and would have brought him back to health and strength.

"You smile, sir; but yet I have seen much of sickness. You will hear that the doctors themselves give me the credit for saving many lives."

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“I can believe it, Madame; indeed I have seen something of that skill with mine own eyes. But, alas! I fear that the case of our friend was beyond human skill. I think that, had he had the choice, he would have chosen to die as he did in the hour of victory. To wear out a life of suffering in uncongenial inactivity would have been sorely irksome to his unquenchable spirit; and yet, after the hardships through which he had passed, I misdoubt me if he could ever have taken the field again. He would have endured the peril and pain of another long voyage only to die upon shipboard, or at his home if he lived to reach it. The hand of death was surely upon him.”

“And to die in the hour of a glorious victory is surely a fitting close to a hero’s life,” said Corinne softly to Julian, when the tide of talk had recommenced to flow in other quarters. “But tell me, does he leave behind many to mourn him? Has he parents living, or sisters and brothers, or one nearer and dearer still? Has he a wife in England?”

“Not a wife, Mademoiselle, but one who was to have been his wife had he lived to return, and a mother who loves him as the apple of the eye. I shall have a sad task before me when I return to tell them of him whom they have loved and lost.”

“Are you then going back to England?” asked Corinne; “are you not born in these lands of the West?”

“Yes; and I think that my home will be here when my duties to my friend are done. But first I must return to his home and his mother, and give to them there his last loving messages, and those things he wished them to possess of his. Indeed, his body is to be taken back, embalmed; the officers have decided upon that. I must see his mother and Miss Lowther again; then I think I shall return to these Western shores once again, and make my home upon Canadian soil.”

“Tell me more about Mrs. Wolfe and Miss Lowther,” said Corinne, with keen interest in her eyes and voice.

So Julian told her much of the events of those months which he spent in England by the side of Wolfe, and at last he drew forth the double miniature containing the likeness of the two who loved the hero so well, and gave it to Corinne to look at.

The tears came into her eyes as she gazed at the two faces. He saw the sparkle on her long lashes as she returned him the case, and he loved her for them.

“It is a beautiful face; both are beautiful faces,” she said. “How sad for them—how very sad—that he should return to them no more! Do you think Miss Lowther will ever love again? Or will she go mourning all the days of her life for him whom she has lost?”

Julian shook his head doubtfully.

“I cannot tell; yet time is a great healer, and Wolfe himself sent her a message bidding her not mourn too long and deeply for him. She is still young, and the time they spent together was not very long. I trust and hope that comfort will come to her when her grief has abated and the wound has healed. Life would become too sorrowful a thing if death were able to make such lasting havoc of its hopes and happiness.”

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Corinne drew a long sigh. She had seen much of death and disaster those last months of her young life. It would indeed be too cruel if the hand of time held no healing balm in its clasp.

The next days were full of interest for Corinne. Julian took her and Colin under his special protection and care. Fritz was kept to the house and its vicinity by his lameness, which the march into the city had rather increased; and Humphrey was busy in a thousand ways. But Julian, though he had sundry duties to perform, had plenty of leisure on his hands, too; and he gave up a great portion of this leisure to taking Corinne and her brother a regular tour of the various ships, and of the camps where the English had settled themselves whilst attacking Quebec—showing them exactly how the Heights of Abraham had been scaled, how the plain had been reached and the battle set in array there; and the spot where Wolfe had fallen, and that where he had died.

The bright-faced girl, with her French name and English sympathies, was feted and welcomed everywhere. Brigadier Townshend gave a dinner to some of the residents, and the Abbe and Madame Drucour, with their nephew and niece, were invited. Corinne's health was proposed and drunk amid acclamation, greatly to her own astonishment; and wherever she went she met with nothing but kindness and respect.

She was given a number of trophies of the recent war—a small dagger that had belonged to Wolfe being the most prized of them all. She daily visited the hospital with her aunt, and cheered by her bright presence both the English and French who lay there.

All was busy in and about the city. The garrison was being shipped off to France, according to the terms of the capitulation; and a number of residents whose homes had been destroyed, and who had no mind to remain in the place now that the English were the masters, were eager likewise to be gone. The French ships in the upper reaches of the river were permitted to come down, take up their crews again, and transport the fugitives to France.

But the Abbe and his sister remained on, uncertain of their future, Madame Drucour waited for news of her husband, and the Abbe lingered to know if he could serve his countrymen any longer. They had friends in France, but were not much disposed to return to that land. Colin and Corinne were burning with desire to see England at least, even if they did not remain there; and Madame Drucour was disposed to wish the same thing for herself.

One day Humphrey brought them news. He had had news of the ex-governor of Louisbourg. He had fallen into the hands of the Indians, but had been rescued by the English, and had been sent, with a number of other prisoners, to England in one of their returning ships. The news had been brought by a sloop from New York.

Vessels were beginning to arrive in the harbour now from the enthusiastic English provinces. Those in Quebec heard how joy bells were ringing and bonfires blazing throughout New England and the provinces. Far-seeing men saw in the fall of Quebec an augury of a new and splendid empire in the west, over which England should rule. So far, at least, there was no thought of anything else, although the spirit of independence had taken deep root which another day would bring forth a different sort of fruit.

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“Madame, your husband is safe,” said Humphrey when brought to her to tell his tale; “I have heard it from one who saw him. He has not suffered any severe hurt at the hands of the Indians. They were of those who were wavering betwixt loyalty to France and loyalty to England, and who made captives of white men wherever they could, hoping to get a ransom for them. He was rescued by the English and brought to New York, put safely on board a home-sailing vessel, and doubtless he is safe on shore there by this time. He will be well treated; have no fears as to that. The brave Governor of Louisbourg will find many friends in England.”

“Where I will join him!” cried Madame Drucour, clasping her hands. “Yes, that settles my hesitation. If my husband is in England, I will go thither and join him; and these children shall go with us, and make acquaintance with their mother’s kindred in Scotland.

“Captain Dautray, can you help us in this matter? Can you secure for us a passage in one of your many noble ships so soon to return? You have been so true a friend to us that we appeal to you with confidence and courage.”

“It rejoices me that you should do so, Madame. I will see to it at once. If possible, you shall sail in the same ship as I do myself. I think there will be little difficulty. Each vessel will transport a certain number of those who desire to return to France or to be carried to English shores.”

Corinne clapped her hands; her whole face lighted up.

“Oh, I shall see England! I shall realize the dream of my life!

“Colin, do you hear—do you understand? We are going to England—and in Captain Dautray’s ship!”

“Hurrah!” cried the boy; “hurrah for old England! And if we go in Captain Dautray’s ship, we shall have our middies for our companions, for they are to belong to the Royal William, too. Ah, that will be something to live for indeed! When do we sail? and where shall we go when we get there?”

“The Admirals want to leave as soon as possible,” answered Julian; “they have already stayed far beyond the time they intended. But there is much to arrange, and they will not go till they have sufficiently victualled the town, and settled the new garrison as comfortably and securely as may be.

“Still it will not be long now, And as for the rest, I can only beg of you to come first, upon landing, to the house of Mrs. Wolfe, where I myself am bound. Madame Drucour’s name is known to her.

“Her son spoke much of you, Madame, and of your kindness to him at Louisbourg. And they know too how kindly others were treated—your humble servant being one. Believe

me, it will be the greatest pleasure to Mrs. Wolfe to welcome anyone who has known and loved her son, I have to visit her immediately; come at least with me so far. After that we will learn where Monsieur Drucour is to be found, and I will seek him out and bring him to you."

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So the matter was settled, and the Abbe gave his approval. He himself would remain in Quebec, the friend and counsellor of the victorious English, whom he could not but regard with affection and respect.

Of the Brigadiers in command, Moncton was too much shattered to do aught but go home to recover of his wounds; Townshend was resolved to sail back, to receive the compliments and honours of the victory (since Wolfe had passed beyond these things); and Murray was left in command of Quebec.

There had been some talk of destroying it rather than facing the perils of keeping it in its shattered condition, and with a French army so near. But English pluck had scorned this policy, and already the men were hard at work repairing its defences, and storing away a sufficient supply of provisions for the long, inclement winter that lay before them.

“We may have to fight for it yet,” spoke some as they cheerfully worked at their fascines; “but we have got Quebec, and we mean to keep it, let the French storm and rage as they will. If we could take it from them almost without a blow, surely we can keep it now we have it!”

Chapter 4: The Last.

“Fritz, Fritz! what do you think? Who do you think has come to Quebec? Why, my brother-in-law, good Benjamin Ashley, together with his wife and daughter. They have come in charge of a trim little vessel, laden with provisions, sent as a gift from the citizens of Philadelphia to the victors of Quebec. He has charge of the cargo, I mean, not of the sloop; and he says he has come to stop, but I had no time to hear all his story. Others were flocking about him, and he had letters for the commanding officer. I hastened away to find you and tell the news. Let us go back together and learn more of this thing.”

Into Fritz’s face there had leaped a look of quick and keen interest.

“Benjamin Ashley,” he repeated, “with his wife and daughter! Is little Susanna actually here in Quebec?”

“Yes, and my sister,” cried Humphrey eagerly, “looking but little changed from the day I left her in Philadelphia months ago. And their first inquiry after kissing me was for you, Fritz. Had you escaped the perils of the war? how were you? and were you here in the town also?”

“Let us go and see them,” cried Fritz, seizing his stick; “I would be one of the first to welcome them. It is true that you said Benjamin Ashley spoke of coming to Quebec if it should fall to us, but I never thought to see him here so soon. He must have a stout heart, for the perils of the place are not ended yet, I fear.”

“He has a stout heart, in truth,” answered Humphrey; “and right glad am I to see him. Quebec will be more of a home to us if Benjamin Ashley and his wife and daughter are dwelling within its walls.”

“Indeed it will,” answered Fritz eagerly; and forthwith the pair started off together in search of their kinsfolk and friends.

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On the way they encountered John Stark, who was the head of the band of Rangers to be quartered in Quebec during the winter as part of the garrison, and he was greatly excited by the news.

“Hurrah for brave Benjamin Ashley! It is like the stout-hearted fellow he always was to join his countrymen in times of peril rather than wait till all was smooth sailing. We shall want stout-hearted citizens of English blood within the city walls, to people the empty houses, and save us from being too much surrounded with half-hearted Canadian residents. If we are beleaguered by a French army, as is likely enough, we shall want citizens as well as soldiers if we are to hold our prize against them.”

This was, indeed, very true, and therefore it was that any settlers from New England were warmly welcomed by the officers in charge of the fortress and city. They could depend upon their soldiers in the garrison well enough; but every commander knows how much harm can be done to a cause by discontent and half-heartedness in the city.

At Louisbourg it was the voice of the citizens that had turned the scale and forced the capitulation, and the same thing had, to a great extent, happened at Quebec, The citizens had been discouraged and rendered desperate by the way in which the town had suffered, and this feeling had reacted upon the garrison, and had rendered them far less willing to try to hold out than they might otherwise have been.

It was some little time before Humphrey and his comrades could find Ashley. He had been taken to the commander of the fortress to deliver up his papers and have a personal interview with him; and it was said that he was being entertained by him at table, and his wife and daughter also.

Presently the news came that Mr. Ashley from Philadelphia was inspecting the premises of the Fleur de Lye, which was the most commodious and important inn in the lower town. It had been a good deal shattered by the bombardment, and the proprietor had been killed by a bursting shell. His family had been amongst the first of the inhabitants to take ship for France and now the place stood empty, its sign swinging mournfully from the door, waiting for some enterprising citizen to come and open business there again.

“Doubtless the Commander has given him the offer of the house and business,” said Fritz when he heard. “Ashley is just the man to restore prosperity to the old inn. Let us go and seek him there, Humphrey. A stout-hearted English-speaking host will be right welcome at the inn, and our fellows will bring him plenty of custom.”

The comrades hurried along the now familiar streets, and reached their destination in due course. The inn stood at no great distance from the harbour, and was in its palmy days a great resort both for the soldiers of the fortress and the sailors who navigated the great river. It was a solid building, and though its roof had been much damaged, and

there was an ugly crack all down the front, its foundations were solid, and a little care and skill would soon repair the damage.

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Fritz followed Humphrey into the big public room close to the entrance, and there he came face to face with Benjamin Ashley, who was just saying farewell to Brigadier Murray, and whose honest face lighted with pleasure at the sight of the stalwart soldier.

“It shall be seen to at once, Mr. Ashley,” the Commander was saying. “I will set the men to work tomorrow, and in a few days the place will be habitable. You shall have immediate possession, and the sooner you can start business the better for all. We want Quebec to be a town again, and not a ruin. We want to make friends of the inhabitants, and show them that the conditions of life are not altogether altered. We want them to trust us and to think of us as friends. I am sure you will help us in this. Nothing like good wine and a jovial host to set men’s tongues wagging in a friendly fashion, and lighten their hearts of any load of fear and despondency.”

Murray strode out, returning the salutes of his subordinates, and the next minute Fritz and Ashley were exchanging a warm greeting.

“Welcome to Quebec, my friend; it does the heart good to see you here. Humphrey declared you had promised to come soon; but I had not dared to think it would be this side of the winter season.”

“Why, yes; I have been ready and waiting this long while. To tell the truth, I have had enough of Philadelphia and its Quaker-ridden Assembly. Why, when once the war had broken out and was raging in good earnest, I longed for nothing so much as my own youth back again, that I might fight with the best of them. And the peace palaver of the Quakers sickened me. I came near to quarrelling with some of my old friends, and I grew eager to see fresh places, fresh faces. I turned it over in my mind, and I thought that if Quebec fell into our hands, English-speaking citizens would surely be wanted to leaven the French and Canadians who would remain. And if so, why should not I be one to take up my abode?”

“Why not, indeed?” cried Fritz, whose eyes were eagerly straying round the room in search of somebody he had not seen as yet. “It was a happy thought, as our Commander has just told you, I doubt not.”

“He has been a capital friend—he has put me in possession of this place; and I can see that there will be the making of a fine business here. And I have not come empty-handed. I sold the old tavern over yonder, and I have a fine store of wine and ale and salted provisions stored away on board, enough to set me up for the winter.

“I must have that old sign down,” added Ashley, stepping into the street and looking up at the battered board crazily hanging from the beam above; “we must have another one up instead. I’ll set up a wolf’s head in its place, in memory of the gallant soldier who fell on the Plains of Abraham. And I will call my inn the Wolfe of Quebec.”

Fritz laughed, still looking round him with quick glances.

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“And what said your wife and daughter to such a move?”

“Oh, the wife is a good wife, and follows her husband; though I won’t say she did not feel the wrench of parting a good bit. As for the maid, she was wild to come! She has done nothing but think of the war ever since it began. She is half a soldier already, I tell her, and is making herself only fit to be a soldier’s wife. She might have had the pick of all the young Quakers in Philadelphia; but you should have seen her turn up her pretty nose at them. “’A Quaker indeed!’ quoth the little puss; ’I’d as lief marry a broomstick with a turnip for a head! Give me a man who is a man, not a puling woman in breeches!’

“The sauciness of the little puss!”

But Ashley’s jolly laugh showed that he encouraged the maid in her “sauciness,” and Fritz and Humphrey laughed in sympathy.

“Where are Mrs. Ashley and Susanna to be found?” asked Fritz when the laugh had subsided.

K “Oh, somewhere in the house, poking and prying, and settling the things in woman’s fashion. Anything in the house is to be ours, and we may buy cheap a quantity of the furniture which is being taken out of the houses which are too much shattered to be rebuilt. We have brought things of our own, too. Oh, we shall do well, we shall do well. It was a capital thought to come here. Canada in English hands will have a great future before it.”

But Fritz was off already, leaving Humphrey to discuss the situation with his brother-in-law. He was off in search of Susanna, and presently came upon her sitting upon a wide window ledge which commanded a view of the quay and harbour, and of the heights of Point Levi opposite. Hannah was taking housewifely notes on the upper floor; but the view from this window had fascinated the girl, and she sat gazing out, lost in thought, a thousand pictures flitting through her imaginative brain.

“Susanna!” spoke a voice behind her.

She started to her feet, quivering in every limb; and facing round, found herself confronted by him whose face and form had been the centre of each of her mental pictures, whose name had been on her lips and in her heart each time she had bent her knees in prayer for two long years, and who she knew had come at last to ask the fulfilment of that promise she had given him when last they had parted.

Her hands were in his; his face was bent over hers. He disengaged one hand, and put it round her shoulders, drawing her towards him gently.

She did not resist; she gave a happy little sigh, and stood with her fair head close to his shoulder.

“Susanna, I have done what I hoped. I am a captain in the English King’s army. I have won some small reputation as a soldier. I have a position sufficiently assured. You have come to live at Quebec. I am quartered there for the winter. Many of our officers and soldiers have wives who follow them wherever they go. I would not ask you to come to me to share hardship and privation; but I ask you to be my wife, here in this city, where your father’s house will give you shelter if I should be forced by the chances of war to leave you for a while.

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“Susanna, will you be brave enough for this? Can you make up your mind to be a soldier’s wife, even before the war has closed? I had not thought to ask you so soon; but year after year passes by, and though nearer and ever nearer to the goal of peace, the clouds still hang in the sky, and there is still stern work for the soldier to do. But we seem now to see the end of the long, long war, and that a happy end; and so I ask if you can marry me, even with the chances of one of those separations which wring the heart and entail so much anxiety and sorrow upon the wife left at home.”

She was clinging to him even before he had done, shedding tears, and yet half laughing as she looked with dewy eyes into his face.

“O Fritz, Fritz, don’t you understand yet what a woman’s love is like? As though I would not rather a hundred thousand times be your wife, come what may in the future, than live the safest and most sheltered life without you! As though I should not glory and delight to share the perils and hardships you are called upon to endure! As though being together would not make up a hundredfold for everything else!”

When Benjamin Ashley, together with Humphrey and John Stark, came in search of the others, they all saw at a glance what had taken place. Susanna’s blushing face and Fritz’s expression of proud, glad happiness told the tale all too plainly. But all had been prepared for it; and Ashley laughed as he took his daughter’s face between his hands and kissed it, though he heaved a quick sigh, too.

“Ah me! so all the birds leave the nest at last. And nothing but a red-coat would serve your turn, my maid! That I have known for long enough. Well, well, I cannot blame you. We owe a debt of gratitude to our brave soldiers which we must all be willing to pay.

“Take her, Fritz my boy; take her, and her father’s blessing with her. She will not come to you empty handed; she has a snug little fortune from her mother ready for her dowry. But you have wooed her and won her like a man; and her love will be, if I mistake not, the crown of your manhood and of your life.”

“Indeed it will, sir,” answered Fritz fervently, and possessed himself of Susanna’s hand once more.

Barely a week later, and the party stood upon the quay to say farewell to their friends and comrades who were sailing away for England. October was waning. The departure of the ships could no longer be delayed. Many had already gone; but today the mortal remains of the gallant Wolfe had been conveyed on board the Royal William, and all the town had come forth to pay its last tribute of respect to one who was mourned by friends and foes alike. Flags hung half-mast high, the guns had boomed a salute, and the bells of the city had tolled in solemn cadence as the coffin was borne to the quay and reverently carried to the place prepared for it upon the ship.

Now all was bustle and animated farewell as the sailors began to make preparations for unfurling the sails and hoisting up the anchor. Julian and Fritz stood together a little apart from the crowd; their hands were locked in a close clasp. The tie which bound them together was a very strong and tender one.

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“You will come back, Julian? you will not forsake these Western lands, which must always seem to me more like home than any country beyond the seas—even England, which we call our home. You will come back?”

“Yes, I shall come back; the lands of the great West ever seem to be calling me. I do but go to make good my promise to him that is gone; then I shall return, and cast in my lot with the English subjects of Canada.”

“They say you are to receive promotion, Julian. You will rise to be a man of place in this colony. I am certain of it. You have talents, address, courage; and you are always beloved of French and English alike. I have heard men talk of you, and point you out as a rising man. They will want such over here when Canada has passed into English keeping.”

“They will find me ready to do my best if ever they should desire to use me. I want nothing better than to serve my country, and to heal the wound between the two nations who have struggled so long for supremacy in the West.”

“You will come back—I am sure of it—a man of place and importance. But you will be the same Julian still, my brother and friend. And, Julian (am I wrong in thinking it?), you will not come back alone?”

A slight flush rose in Julian’s face; but he answered quietly:

“I hope not; I believe not.”

“Mademoiselle Corinne—” began Fritz, but paused there; for the girl was close beside them, having come up with her aunt, Madame Drucour, to say goodbye to the group of friends gathered to see them off.

Fritz saw the quick glance which flashed between her and Julian as their eyes met, and he felt that he had got his answer. When Julian came back to Canada, he would not come alone.

The last farewells were said; the deck was crowded by those who were to sail away; the musical call of the seamen rose and fell as the sails unfurled to the breeze, and the gallant vessel began to slip through the water.

“A safe voyage and a joyous return. God be with you all!” cried those upon the quay.

The Abbe lifted his hands, and seemed to pronounce a benediction upon the departing ship, and those who saw the action bared their heads and bent the knee.

Then the sails swelled out, the pace increased; a salute boomed forth from the fortress behind, and was answered from the vessel now gliding so fast away; and the Royal

William moved with stately grace through the wide waters of the St. Lawrence, and slowly disappeared in the hazy distance.

The end.