

Jacques gladly listened.

"I was sure I heard some noise before! You see you are mistaken. He is not yet gone."

Mellow relief, powerful as sunshine, softened the swarthy pallor of Jacques's face. He caught his candle from the chimney shelf and jammed its charred wick against a glowing coral knot in the log.

"Madame, that 's m'sieur at the gate. I know his stroke and his call. I'll bring him up."

No man can surely say, with all his ancestry at his back and his unproved nature within, what he can or cannot do in certain crises of his life.

"What is it, m'sieur?" exclaimed Jacques as he let Dollard through the gate.

"We went scarce a quarter of a league. I came back because I cannot leave her without telling her; it was a cowardly act!" exclaimed Dollard, darting into the house. "She must go with me to Montreal."

XII.

DOLLARD'S CONFESSION.

IF Dollard was surprised at finding Claire standing by the fire dressed for her journey, he gave himself no time for uttering it, but directed Jacques to bring down madame's boxes and to wake Louise.

"One casket will be enough, Jacques," countermanded madame; "the one which has been opened. If there is such haste, the others can be sent hereafter. As for my poor Louise, I will not have her waked; this is but her second night's sleep on land. Some one can be found in Montreal to attend me, and I shall see her again soon."

Jacques shuffled down from his master's apartment, carrying the luggage on his shoulder and his candle in one hand. Dollard waited for him, to say aside:

"In three weeks come to Montreal and ask for your lady at the governor's house. Subject yourself to her orders thenceforward."

"Yes, m'sieur," grunted Jacques.

Again his candle on the twisted staircase caused great shadows to stalk through the cellar gloom — Claire's shadow stretching forward a magnified head at its dense future; Dollard's shadow towering so high as to be bent at right angles and flattened on the joists above. Once more were the bars put up, this time shutting two inmates out of the seigniorly house.

Dollard hurried his wife into the boat. One Indian held the boat to the beach, another stored the luggage, and immediately they dropped into their places and took the oars, and the boat was off.

It was a silent night and very little breeze flowed along the surface of the water. The moon seemed lost walking so far down the west sky. She struck a path of gold crosswise of Lake St. Louis, and it grew with the progress of the boat, still traveling down-river and twinkling like a moving pavement of burnished disks.

Going with the current, the Hurons had little need to labor, and the gush of their oars came at longer intervals than during the up-stream voyage.

Dollard had wrapped Claire well. He held the furs around her with one arm. By that ghostly daylight which the moon makes she could follow every line and contour of his face. He examined every visible point on the river's surface, and turned an acute

ear for shore sounds. Before he began to speak, the disturbance of his spirit reached her, and quite drove all mention of Mademoiselle de Granville from her lips.

Having satisfied himself that no other craft haunted the river, Dollard turned his eyes upon Claire's, and spoke to her ear so that his voice was lost two feet away.

"Claire, the Iroquois are the curse of this province. Let me tell you what they have done. They are a confederation of five Indian nations: their settlements are south of the great Lake Ontario, but they spread themselves all along the St. Lawrence, murder settlers, make forays into Montreal and Quebec; they have almost exterminated the Christian Hurons, and when they offer us truces they do it only to throw us off our guard. The history of this colony is a history of a hand-to-hand struggle against the Iroquois."

"If they are so strong," whispered Claire, "how have the settlements lived at all?"

"Partly because their mode of warfare is peculiar, and consists in overrunning, harassing, and burning certain points and then retiring to the woods again, and partly because they needed the French. We are useful to them in furnishing certain supplies for which they trade. But they also trade with the Dutch colony on the Hudson River. Only lately

have they made up their minds to sweep over this province and destroy it."

"How do you know this?"

"I know that at this time two bands of these savages, each hundreds strong, are moving to meet each other somewhere on the Ottawa River. We have heard rumors, and some prisoners have been brought in and made to confess, and the mere fact that no skulking parties haunt us shows that they are massing."

Dollard drew a deep breath.

"I shall not dread this danger, being with you," said Claire.

"This is what I must tell you. Claire, there was a man in Montreal who thought the sacking of New France could be prevented if a few determined men would go out and meet these savages on the way, as aggressors, instead of fighting simply on the defensive, as we have done so long. This man found sixteen other young men of his own mind, and they all took a sacred oath to devote themselves to this purpose."

"Sixteen!" breathed the shuddering girl. "Only sixteen against a thousand Indians?"

"Sixteen are enough if they be fit for the enterprise. One point of rock will break any number of waves. These sixteen men and their leader then obtained the governor's consent to their enterprise, and they will kneel in the chapel of the Hôtel-Dieu and receive absolution at daybreak this morning."

"Their leader is Adam Dollard!" Claire's whispered cry broke out.

"Their leader is Adam Dollard," he echoed.

She uttered no other sound, but rose up in the boat.

Dollard caught her in his arms, and set her upon his knees. They held each other in an embrace like the rigid lock of death, the smiling, pale night seeming full of crashing and grinding noises, and of chaos like mountains falling.

Length after length the boat shot on, dumb heart-beat after dumb heart-beat, mile after mile. It began to shiver uneasily. Alert to what was before them, and indifferent to their freight of stone in the boat's end, the Hurons slipped to their knees, each unshipped his oars and took one of the dripping pair for a paddle, fixed his roused eyes on the twisting current, and prepared for the rapids of Lachine. Like an arrow just when the bowstring twangs came the boat at a rock, to be paddled as cleanly aside as if that hissing mass had been a shadow. Right, left, ahead the rapids boiled up; slight shocks ran through the thin-skinned craft as it dodged, shied, leaped, half whirled and half reversed, tumultuously tumbled or shot as if going down a flume. While it lasted the danger seemed endless. But those skilled paddlers played through it with grins of delight folding creases in their leather faces, nor did they settle

down dogged and dull Indians again until the boat shot freely out of the rapids upon tame moonlighted ripples once more.

After the Lachine, Dollard lifted his head and said to Claire:

"We start on our expedition as soon as mass is done this morning. It goes without saying that I was pledged to this when I went to Quebec. I cannot go back from it now."

"There is no thought of your going back from it now," Claire spoke to him. "But, Dollard, is there hope of any man's returning alive from this expedition?"

"We are sworn to give no quarter and to take none."

The Indians, pointing their boat towards Montreal, were now pulling with long easy strokes. A little rocky island rose between voyagers and settling moon.

"O Claire! I loved you so! that is all my excuse. I meant not to bring such anguish upon you."

"Dollard, I forbid you to regret your marriage. I myself have no regrets."

"I knew not what I was doing." His words dropped with effort. She could feel his throat strongly sobbing.

"Don't fret, my Dollard." Claire smoothed down those laboring veins with her satin palm. "We are, indeed, young to die. I thought we should live years

together. But this marriage gave us nearly a week of paradise. And that is more happiness, I am experienced enough to believe, than many wedded couples have in a lifetime."

"Claire, the family of the Governor Maisonneuve will receive you and treat you with all courtesy; first for your own sake, and in a small degree for mine. I have set down in my will that you are to have all my rude belongings, and Jacques is sworn your trusty servant."

"Dollard, hear what I have to say," she exclaimed, pressing his temples between her hands. "You meant to leave me behind you at St. Bernard. You forget that the blood of man-warriors, the blood of Anne de Montmorency, Constable of France, runs in my veins. Doubt not that I shall go with you on this expedition. Do you think I have no courage because I am afraid of mice and lightning?"

"I knew not that you were afraid of mice and lightning, my Claire."

"Am I to be the wife of Dollard and have sixteen young men thrust between him and myself, all accounted worthy of martyrdom above me?"

"Daughter of a Montmorency!" burst out Dollard with passion; "better than any man on earth! I do you homage—I prostrate myself—I adore you! Yet must I profane your ears with this: no woman can go with the expedition without bringing discredit on it."

"Not even your wife?"

"Not even my wife. After absolution in the chapel this morning we are set apart, consecrated to the purpose before us."

Claire dropped her face and said:

"I comprehend." He held her upon his breast the brief remainder of their journey, prostrated as she had not been by the shock of his confession.

Mount Royal stood dome-like on Montreal island, a huge shadow glooming out of the north-west upon the little village. After shifting about from a river point of view, those structures composing the town finally settled in their order: the fort, the rough stone seminary of St. Sulpice, the Hôtel-Dieu, the wooden houses standing in a single long row, and eastward the great fortified mill surrounded by a wall. The village itself had neither wall nor palisade.

Surrounding dark fields absorbed light and gave back no glint of dew or sprinkling green blade, for the seed-sowing was not yet finished. Black bears squatting or standing about the fields at length revealed themselves as charred stumps and half trees.

"You have not told me the route your expedition goes," whispered Claire.

"We go in that direction—up the Ottawa River." Dollard swept out his arm indicating the west.

"There is one thing. Do not place me in the governor's charge. How can I be a guest, when I

would lie night and day before some shrine? Are there no convents in Montreal? A convent is my allotted shelter."

"There are only the nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu," he murmured back. "They, also, would receive you into kind protection; but, my Claire, they are poor. Montreal is not Quebec. Our nuns lived at first in one room. Now they have the hospital; but it is a wooden building, exposed by its situation."

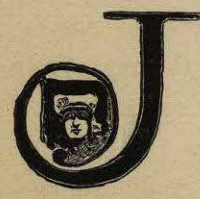
"Let me go to the nuns," she insisted. "And there is one other thing. Do not tell them who I am. Say nothing about me, that I may have no inquiries to answer concerning our marriage and his reverence the bishop."

"Our nuns of St. Joseph and the Sulpicians of Montreal bear not too much love for the bishop," said Dollard. "But every wish you have is my wish. I will say nothing to the nuns, and you may tell them only what you will."

A strong pallor toning up to yellow had been growing from the east to the detriment of the moon. Now a pencil line of pink lay across the horizon, and the general dewiness of objects became apparent. The mountain turned from shadow into perpendicular earth and half-budded trees. Some people were stirring in Montreal, and a dog ran towards the river barking as the boat touched the wharf.

XIII.

THE CHAPEL OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU.

OUANEUX, the retainer of the hospital nuns, though used to rising early to feed their pigs and chickens, this time cast his wary glance into the garden while it was yet night.

The garden held now no tall growths of mustard, in which the Iroquois had been known to lurk until daylight for victims, but Jouaneux felt it necessary that he should scan the inclosure himself before any nun chanced to step into it.

The Sisterhood's dependent animals were quartered under the same roof with themselves, according to Canadian custom. Jouaneux scattered provender before the cocks were fairly roused to their matin duty of crowing; and the sleepy swine, lifting the tips of their circular noses, grunted inquiringly at him without scrambling up through the dusk.

Scandal might have attached itself even to these nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu for maintaining so youthful a servitor as Jouaneux, had not the entire settlement of Montreal known his cause for gratitude towards them and the honest bond which held him devoted to their goodness.

He was not the stumpy type of French peasant, but stood tall and lithe, was rosy-faced, and had bright hair like a Saxon's. A constant smile parted Jouaneux's lips and tilted up his nose. He looked always on the point of telling good news. Catastrophe and pain had not erased the up-curves of this expression. So he stood smiling at the pigs while Indian-fighters were gathering from all quarters of Montreal towards the hospital chapel.

"Jouaneux!" spoke a woman's well-modulated voice from an inner door.

"Yes, honored Superior," he responded with alacrity, turning to Sister Judith de Brésoles, head of the Sisterhood of St. Joseph, to whom he accorded always this exaggerated term of respect. She carried a taper in her hand, its slender white flame casting up the beauty of her stern spiritualized features.

Bound at all times to the duty of the moment, whether that duty was to boil herbs for dinner, to ring the tocsin at an Indian alarm, or to receive the wounded and the dying, Sister Brésoles conferred briefly with her servitor.

"Jouaneaux, is the chapel in complete readiness?"

"Yes, honored Superior; everything is ready."

"The Commandant Dollard has arrived, and he brought his young relative with him to place her in our care."

"His sister who lives on his seigniory?"

"Certainly. Could it be any other? His sister Mademoiselle Dollard, therefore —"

"Pardon, honored Superior,"—the tip of his nose shifted with expressive twitches, and he had the air of imparting something joyful,—*"Mademoiselle de Granville. She is but half-sister to Monsieur Dollard."*

"The minutest relationships of remote families are not hid from you, Jouaneaux," commented Sister Brésoles. "But I have to mention to you that the parlor fire must be lighted now and every morning for Mademoiselle de Granville, if she choose to sit there."

"It shall be done, honored Superior."

"And that is all I had to tell you, I believe," concluded Sister Judith, turning immediately to the next duty on her list.

Early as it was, the population of Montreal was pressing into the palisade gate of the Hôtel-Dieu. Matrons led their children, who mopped sleep from their eyes with little dark fists and stood on tip-toe to look between moving figures for the Indian-fighters. Some women had pale and tear-sodden cheeks, but most

faces showed that rapturous enthusiasm which heroic undertaking rouses in the human breast. Unlike many meetings of a religious character, this one attracted men in majority: the seignior, the gentil-homme, the soldier from the fort, the working-smith or armorer.

When Sister Brésoles received Claire she had given her directly into the hands of a white, gentle little nun, the frame-work of whose countenance was bare and expressive. She took the girl's hand between her sympathetic and work-worn tiny palms.

They stood in the refectory, the dawn-light just jotting their outlines to each other.

"I am Sister Macé, dear mademoiselle," said the little nun. "Do you wish me to sit by you in the chapel?"

"I cannot sit in the chapel, Sister."

"Then let me take you to our parlor. My Sister Brésoles will have a fire lighted there. On these mornings the air from the river comes in chill."

"No, Sister," said Claire, her eyes closed. "Thank you. Be not too kind to me. I wish to retain command of myself."

Sister Macé let a tear slip down each cheek hollow and took one hand away from Claire's to tweak her dot-like nose and catch the tears on a corner of her veil. The Sisters of St. Joseph were poorly clad, but the very fragrance of cleanness stirred in Sister Macé's

robe. She glanced about for something which might comfort Claire by way of the stomach; for stomach comfort had gained importance to these gently bred nuns after their Canadian winters on frozen bread.

"Sister," said Claire, "is there any hiding-place about the walls of the chapel where I can thrust myself so that no weakness of mine may be seen, and behold the ceremonies?"

"There is the rood-loft," replied Sister Macé. "And if you go directly to it before the chapel is opened for the service, nobody would dream you were there."

"Let us go directly," said Claire.

Directly they went. Sister Macé paused but to close with care the chapel door behind them. The chapel was dark and they groped across it and up the stairway, Sister Macé talking low and breathlessly on the ascent.

"Ah, mademoiselle, what a blessed and safe retreat is the rood-loft! How many times have my Sister Maillet and I flown to that sacred corner and prostrated ourselves before the Holy Sacrament while the yells of the Iroquois rung in our very ears! We expected every instant to be seized, and to feel the scalps torn from our heads. I have not the fortitude to bear these things as hath my Sister Brésoles,—this way, mademoiselle; give me your hand,—but I can appreciate noble courage; and, mademoiselle, I look with awe upon these young men about to take their vows."

The sacrament and its appendages had been removed from Sister Macé's retreat to the altar below. There was a low balustrade at the front of this narrow gallery which would conceal people humble enough to flatten themselves beside it, and here the woman bereft and the woman her sympathizer did lie on the floor and look down from the rood-loft. Before many moments an acolyte came in with his taper and lighted all the candles on the altar. Out of dusk the rough little room, with its few sacred daubs and its waxen images, sprung into mellow beauty.

Claire watched all that passed, sometimes dropping her face to the floor, and sometimes trembling from head to foot, but letting no sound betray her. She saw the settlement of Montreal crowd into the inclosure as soon as the chapel door was opened, and a Sulpitian priest stand forth by the altar. She saw the seventeen men file into space reserved for them before the altar and kneel there four abreast, Dollard at their head kneeling alone.

The chapel was very silent, French vivacity, which shapes itself into animated fervor on religious occasions, being repressed by this spectacle.

Claire knew the sub-governor Maisonneuve by his surroundings and attendants before Sister Macé breathed him into her ear.

"And that man who now comes forward," the nun added as secretly—"that is Charles Le Moyne, as

brave a man as any in the province, and rich and worthy, moreover. His seigniory is opposite Montreal on the south-east shore."

Charles Le Moyne, addressing himself to the kneeling men, spoke out for his colleagues and brethren of the settlement who could not leave their farms until the spring crops were all planted. He urged the seventeen to wait until he and his friends could join the expedition. He would promise they should not be delayed long.

Claire watched Dollard lift his smiling face and shake his head with decision, against which urging was powerless.

She witnessed the oath which they took neither to give quarter to nor accept quarter from the Iroquois. She witnessed their consecration and the ceremonial of mass. The kneeling men were young, few of them being older than Dollard.* They represented the

* The following list may be found in the parish register of Villemarie, June 3, 1660:

1. Adam Dollard (Sieur des Ormeaux), commandant, âgé de 25 ans.
2. Jacques Brassier, âgé de 25 ans.
3. Jean Tavernier, dit la Hochehère, armurier, âgé de 28 ans.
4. Nicolas Tellemont, serrurier, âgé de 25 ans.
5. Laurent Hebert, dit la Rivière, 27 ans.
6. Alonié de Lestres, chafournier, 31 ans.
7. Nicolas Josselin, 25 ans.
8. Robert Jurée, 24 ans.
9. Jacques Boisseau, dit Cognac, 23 ans.
10. Louis Martin, 21 ans.

colony, from soldier and gentilhomme down to the lower ranks of handicraftsmen. Whatever their ancestry had been, a baptism of glory descended upon all those faces alike. Their backs were towards the crowded chapel, but the women in the rood-loft could see this unconscious light, and as Claire looked at Dollard she shuddered from head to foot, feeling that her whole silent body was one selfish scream, "He is forgetting me!"

Lighted altar, lifted host, bowed people, and even the knightly splendor of Dollard's face, all passed from Claire's knowledge.

"It is now over, dear mademoiselle," whispered

11. Christophe Augier, dit Desjardins, 26 ans.
 12. Étienne Robin, dit Desforages, 27 ans.
 13. Jean Valets, 27 ans.
 14. René Doussin (Sieur de Sainte-Cécile), soldat de garnison, 30 ans.
 15. Jean Lecomte, 20 ans.
 16. Simon Grenet, 25 ans.
 17. François Crusson, dit Pilote, 24 ans.
- Also cited in "Histoire de la Colonie Française," II., 414, 416:

"À ces dix-sept héros chrétiens, on doit joindre le brave Annahotaha, chef des Hurons, comme aussi Metiwemeg, capitaine Algonquin, avec les trois autres braves de sa nation, qui tous demeurent fidèles et mourirent au champ d'honneur; enfin les trois Français qui périrent au début de l'expédition, Nicolas du Val, serviteur au fort, Mathurin Soulard, charpentier du fort, et Blaise Juillet, dit Argnon, habitant."

Of the ambush in which these last-mentioned three men were slain, and the subsequent volunteering of others in their places, this romance does not treat.

Sister Macé, sighing. "Do you see?—the men are standing up to march out four abreast, headed by the commandant. Ah, how the people will crowd them and shake their hands! Are you not looking, my child? O St. Joseph! patron of little ones, she is in a dead faint. Mademoiselle!" Sister Macé began to rub Claire's temples and hands and to pant with anxiety, so that the rood-loft must have been betrayed had not the chapel been emptying itself of a crowd running eagerly after other objects.

"Let me be," spoke Claire, hoarsely. "I am only dying to the world."

Sister Macé wept again. She patted Claire's wrist with her small fingers. The girl's bloodless face and tight-shut eyes were made more pallid by early daylight, for the candles were being put out upon the altar. Sister Macé in her solicitude forgot all about the people pouring through the palisade gate and following their heroes to the river-landing.

"Oh, how strong is the love of brother and sister!" half soliloquized this gentle nun. "These ties so sweeten life; but when the call of Heaven comes, how hard they rend asunder!"

The trampling below hastened itself, ebbed away, entirely ceasing upon the flags of the Hôtel-Dieu and becoming a clatter along the wharf.

"Is the chapel vacant now, Sister?" her charge breathed at her ear.

"The last person has left it, dear mademoiselle."

"Presently I will go down to lie on that spot where he knelt before the altar."

"Shall I assist you down, dear mademoiselle?" said Sister Macé with the solicitude of a sparrow trying to lift a wounded robin.

"No, Sister. But of your charity do this for me in my weakness. Go down and stand by the place. I have not known if any foot pressed it, and I will not have it profaned."

Sister Macé, therefore, who respected all requests, and who herself had lain stretched on that cold stone pavement doing her religious penances, descended the stairs and stood near the altar; while her charge followed, holding by railing or sinking upon step, until she reached the square of stone where Dollard had knelt.

As a mother pounces upon her child in idolatrous abandon, so Claire fell upon that chill spot and encircled it with her arms, sobbing:

"Doubt not that I shall find you again, my Dollard, my Dollard! Once before I prayed mightily to Heaven for a blessing, and I got my blessing."

While she lay there, cheer after cheer rose from the river-landing, wild enthusiasm bursting out again as soon as the last round had died away. The canoes had put out on their expedition. Those who watched them with the longest watching would finally turn aside to other things. But the woman on the chapel floor lay stretched there for twenty-four hours.