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entire meal of them. D.W.]

THE TRAIL OF THE SWORD

By Gilbert Parker

EPOCH THE SECOND

- VII. FRIENDS IN COUNCIL
- VIII. AS SEEN THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY
- IX. TO THE PORCH OF THE WORLD
- X. QUI VIVE!
- XI. WITH THE STRANGE PEOPLE
- XII. OUT OF THE NET

CHAPTER VII

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL

Montreal and Quebec, dear to the fortunes of such men as Iberville, were as cheerful in the still iron winter as any city under any more cordial sky then or now: men loved, hated, made and broke bargains, lied to women, kept a foolish honour with each other, and did deeds of valour for a song, as ever they did from the beginning of the world. Through the stern soul of Nature ran the temperament of men who had hearts of summer; and if, on a certain notable day in Iberville's life, one could have looked through the window of a low stone house in Notre Dame Street, Montreal, one could have seen a priest joyously playing a violin; though even in Europe, Maggini and Stradivarius were but little known, and the instrument itself was often called an invention of the devil.

The room was not ornamented, save by a crucifix, a pleasant pencil-drawing of Bishop Laval, a gun, a pair of snow-shoes, a sword, and a little shrine in one corner, wherein were relics of a saint. Of necessaries even there were few. They were unremarkable, save in the case of two tall silver candlesticks, which, with their candles at an angle from the musician, gave his face strange lights and shadows.

The priest was powerfully made; so powerful indeed, so tall was he, that when, in one of the changes of the music, a kind of exaltation filled him, and he came to his feet, his head almost touched the ceiling. His shoulders were broad and strong, and though his limbs were hid by his cassock, his arms showed almost huge, and the violin lay tucked under his

chin like a mere toy. In the eye was a penetrating but abstracted look, and the countenance had the gravity of a priest lighted by a cheerful soul within. It had been said of Dollier de Casson that once, attacked by two renegade Frenchmen, he had broken the leg of one and the back of the other, and had then picked them up and carried them for miles to shelter and nursing. And it was also declared by the romantic that the man with the broken back recovered, while he with the shattered leg, recovering also, found that his foot, pointing backwards, "made a fool of his nose."

The Abbe de Casson's life had one affection, which had taken the place of others, now almost lost in the distance of youth, absence, and indifference. For France lay far from Montreal, and the priest-musician was infinitely farther off: the miles which the Church measures between the priest and his lay boyhood are not easily reckoned. But such as Dollier de Casson must have a field for affection to enrich. You cannot drive the sap of the tree in upon itself. It must come out or the tree must die-burst with the very misery of its richness.

This night he was crowding into the music four years of events: of memory, hope, pride, patience, and affection. He was waiting for some one whom he had not seen for these four years. Time passed. More and more did the broad sonorous notes fill the room. At length they ceased, and with a sigh he pressed the violin once, twice, thrice to his lips.

"My good Stradivarius," he said, "my peerless one!" Once again he kissed it, and then, drawing his hand across his eyes, he slowly wrapped the violin in a velvet cloth, put it away in an iron box, and locked it up. But presently he changed his mind, took it out again, and put it on the table, shaking his head musingly.

"He will wish to see it, maybe to hear it," he said half aloud.

Then he turned and went into another room. Here there was a prie-dieu in a corner, and above it a crucifix. He knelt and was soon absorbed.

For a time there was silence. At last there was a crunching of moccasined feet upon the crisp snow, then a slight tap at the outer door, and immediately it was opened. A stalwart young man stepped inside. He looked round, pleased, astonished, and glanced at the violin, then meaningly towards the nearly closed door of the other room. After which he pulled off his gloves, threw his cap down, and with a significant toss of the head, picked up the violin.

He was a strong, handsome man of about twenty-two, with a face at once open and inscrutable: the mouth with a trick of smiling, the eyes fearless, convincing, but having at the same time a look behind this--an alert, profound speculation, which gave his face singular force. He was not so tall as the priest in the next room, but still he was very tall, and every movement had a lithe, supple strength. His body was so firm that, as he bent or turned, it seemed as of soft flexible metal.

Despite his fine manliness, he looked very boylike as he picked up the

violin, and with a silent eager laugh put it under his chin, nodding gaily, as he did so, towards the other room. He bent his cheek to the instrument--almost as brown as the wood itself--and made a pass or two in the air with the bow, as if to recall a former touch and tune. A satisfied look shot up in his face, and then with an almost impossible softness he drew the bow across the strings, getting a distant delicate note, which seemed to float and tenderly multiply upon itself--a variation, indeed, of the tune which De Casson had played. A rapt look came into his eyes. And all that look behind the general look of his face--the look which has to do with a man's past or future--deepened and spread, till you saw, for once in a way, a strong soldier turned artist, yet only what was masculine and strong. The music deepened also, and, as the priest opened the door, swept against him like a wind so warm that a moisture came to his eyes. "Iberville!" he said, in a glad voice. "Pierre!"

The violin was down on the instant. "My dear abbe!" he cried. And then the two embraced.

"How do you like my entrance?" said the young man. "But I had to provide my own music!" He laughed, and ran his hands affectionately down the arms of the priest.

"I had been playing the same old chansonette--"

"With your original variations?"

"With my poor variations, just before you came in; and that done--"

"Yes, yes, abbe, I know the rest: prayers for the safe return of the sailor, who for four years or nearly has been learning war in King Louis's ships, and forgetting the good old way of fighting by land, at which he once served his prentice time--with your blessing, my old tutor, my good fighting abbe! Do you remember when we stopped those Dutchmen on the Richelieu, and you--"

The priest interrupted with a laugh. "But, my dear Iberville--"

"It was 'Pierre' a minute gone; 'twill be 'Monsieur Pierre le Moynes of Iberville' next," the other said in mock reproach, as he went to the fire.

"No, no; I merely--"

"I understand. Pardon the wild youth who plagues his old friend and teacher, as he did long ago--so much has happened since."

His face became grave and a look of trouble came. Presently the priest said: "I never had a pupil whose teasing was so pleasant, poor humourist that I am. But now, Pierre, tell me all, while I lay out what the pantry holds."

The gay look came back into Iberville's face. "Ahem," he said--"which is

the way to begin a wonderful story: Once upon a time a young man, longing to fight for his king by land alone, and with special fighting of his own to do hard by"--(here De Casson looked at him keenly and a singular light came into his eyes)--"was wheedled away upon the king's ships to France, and so

'Left the song of the spinning-wheel,
The hawk and the lady fair,
And sailed away--'

But the song is old and so is the story, abbe; so here's the brief note of it. After years of play and work,--play in France and stout work in the Spaniards' country,--he was shipped away to

'Those battle heights, Quebec heights, our own heights,
The citadel our golden lily bears,
And Frontenac--'

But I babble again. And at Quebec he finds the old song changed. The heights and the lilies are there, but Frontenac, the great, brave Frontenac, is gone: confusion lives where only conquest and honest quarrelling were--"

"Frontenac will return--there is no other way!" interposed De Casson.

"Perhaps. And the young man looked round and lo! old faces and places had changed. Children had grown into women, with children at their breasts; young wives had become matronly; and the middle-aged were slaving servants and apothecaries to make them young again. And the young man turned from the world he used to know, and said: 'There are but three things in the world worth doing--loving, roaming, and fighting.' Therefore, after one day, he turned from the poor little Court-game at Quebec, travelled to Montreal, spent a few hours with his father and his brothers, Bienville, Longueil, Maricourt, and Sainte-Helene, and then, having sent word to his dearest friend, came to see him, and found him --his voice got softer--the same as of old: ready with music and wine and aves for the prodigal."

He paused. The priest had placed meat and wine on the table, and now he came and put his hand on Iberville's shoulder. "Pierre," he said, "I welcome you as one brother might another, the elder foolishly fond." Then he added: "I was glad you remembered our music."

"My dear De Casson, as if I could forget! I have yet the Maggini you gave me. It was of the things for remembering. If we can't be loyal to our first loves, why to anything?"

"Even so, Pierre; but few at your age arrive at that. Most people learn it when they have bartered away every dream. It is enough to have a few honest emotions--very few--and stand by them till all be done."

"Even hating?" Iberville's eyes were eager.

"There is such a thing as a noble hate."

"How every inch of you is man!" answered the other, clasping the priest's arms. Then he added: "Abbe, you know what I long to hear. You have been to New York twice; you were there within these three months--"

"And was asked to leave within these three months--banished, as it were."

"I know. You said in your letter that you had news. You were kind to go--"

"Perrot went too."

"My faithful Perrot! I was about to ask of him. I had a birch-bark letter from him, and he said he would come--Ah, here he is!"

He listened. There was a man's voice singing near by. They could even hear the words:

"O the young seigneur! O the young seigneur!
A hundred bucks in a day he slew;
And the lady gave him a ribbon to wear,
And a shred of gold from her golden hair
O the way of a maid was the way he knew;
O the young seigneur! O the young seigneur!"

"Shall we speak freely before him?" said the priest. "As freely as you will. Perrot is true. He was with me, too, at the beginning."

At that moment there came a knock, and in an instant the coureur du bois had caught the hands of the young man, and was laughing up in his face.

"By the good Sainte Anne, but you make Nick Perrot a dwarf, dear monsieur!"

"Well, well, little man, I'll wager neither the great abbe here nor myself could bring you lower than you stand, for all that. Comrade, 'tis kind of you to come so prompt."

"What is there so good as the face of an old friend!" said Perrot, with a little laugh. "You will drink with a new, and eat with a coming friend, and quarrel with either; but 'tis only the old friend that knows the old trail, and there's nothing to a man like the way he has come in the world."

"The trail of the good comrade," said the priest softly.

"Ah!" responded Perrot, "I remember, abbe, when we were at the Portneuf you made some verses of that--eh! eh! but they were good!"

"No fitter time," said Iberville; "come, abbe, the verses!"

"No, no; another day," answered the priest.

It was an interesting scene. Perrot, short, broad, swarthy, dressed in rude buckskin gaudily ornamented, bandoleer and belt garnished with silver,--a recent gift of some grateful merchant, standing between the powerful black-robed priest and this gallant sailor-soldier, richly dressed in fine skins and furs, with long waving hair, more like a Viking than a man of fashion, and carrying a courtly and yet sportive look, as though he could laugh at the miseries of the sinful world. Three strange comrades were these, who knew each other so far as one man can know another, yet each knowing from a different stand-point. Perrot knew certain traits of Iberville of which De Casson was ignorant, and the abbe knew many depths which Perrot never even vaguely plumbed. And yet all could meet and be free in speech, as though each read the other thoroughly.

"Let us begin," said Iberville. "I want news of New York."

"Let us eat as we talk," urged the abbe.

They all sat and were soon eating and drinking with great relish.

Presently the abbe began:

"Of my first journey you know by the letter I sent you: how I found that Mademoiselle Leveret was gone to England with her father. That was a year after you left, now about three years gone. Monsieur Gering entered the navy of the English king, and went to England also."

Iberville nodded. "Yes, yes, in the English navy I know very well of that."

The abbe looked up surprised. "From my letter?"

"I saw him once in the Spaniards' country," said Iberville, "when we swore to love each other less and less."

"What was the trouble?" asked the priest.

"Pirates' booty, which he, with a large force, seized as a few of my men were carrying it to the coast. With his own hand he cut down my servant, who had been with me since from the first. Afterwards in a parley I saw him, and we exchanged--compliments. The sordid gentleman thought I was fretting about the booty. Good God, what are some thousand pistoles to the blood of one honest friend!"

"And in your mind another leaven worked," ventured the priest.

"Another leaven, as you say," responded Iberville. "So, for your story, abbe."

"Of the first journey there is nothing more to tell, save that the English governor said you were as brave a gentleman as ever played ambassador--which was, you remember, much in Count Frontenac's vein."

Iberville nodded and smiled. "Frontenac railed at my impertinence also."

"But gave you a sword when you told him the news of Radisson," interjected Perrot. "And by and by I've things to say of him."

The abbe continued: "For my second visit, but a few months ago. We priests have gone much among the Iroquois, even in the English country, and, as I promised you, I went to New York. There I was summoned to the governor. He commanded me to go back to Quebec. I was about to ask him of Mademoiselle when there came a tap at the door. The governor looked at me a little sharply. 'You are,' said he, 'a friend of Monsieur Iberville. You shall know one who keeps him in remembrance.' Then he let the lady enter. She had heard that I was there, having seen Perrot first."

Here Perrot, with a chuckle, broke in: "I chanced that way, and I had a wish to see what was for seeing; for here was our good abbe alone among the wolves, and there were Radisson and the immortal Bucklaw, of whom there was news."

De Casson still continued: "When I was presented she took my hand and said: 'Monsieur l'Abbe, I am glad to meet a friend--an old friend--of Monsieur Iberville. I hear that he has been in France and elsewhere.'"

Here the abbe paused, smiling as if in retrospect, and kept looking into the fire and turning about in his hand his cassock-cord.

Iberville had sat very still, his face ruled to quietness; only his eyes showing the great interest he felt. He waited, and presently said: "Yes, and then?"

The abbe withdrew his eyes from the fire and turned them upon Iberville.

"And then," he said, "the governor left the room. When he had gone she came to me, and, laying her hand upon my arm, said: 'Monsieur, I know you are to be trusted. You are the friend of a brave man.'"

The abbe paused, and smiled over at Iberville. "You see," he said, "her trust was in your friend, not in my office. Well, presently she added: 'I know that Monsieur Iberville and Mr. Gering, for a foolish quarrel of years ago, still are cherished foes. I wish your help to make them both happier; for no man can be happy and hate.' And I gave my word to do so." Here Perrot chuckled to himself and interjected softly: "Mon Dieu! she could make a man say anything at all. I would have sworn to her that while I lived I never should fight. Eh, that's so!"

"Allons!" said Iberville impatiently, yet grasping the arm of the woodsman kindly.

The abbe once more went on: "When she had ended questioning I said to her: 'And what message shall I give from you?' 'Tell him,' she answered, 'by the right of lifelong debt I ask for peace.' 'Is that all?' said I.

'Tell him,' she added, 'I hope we may meet again.' 'For whose sake,' said I, 'do you ask for peace?' 'I am a woman,' she answered, 'I am selfish--for my own sake.'

Again the priest paused, and again Iberville urged him.

"I asked if she had no token. There was a flame in her eye, and she begged me to excuse her. When she came back she handed me a little packet. 'Give it to Monsieur Iberville,' she said, 'for it is his. He lent it to me years ago. No doubt he has forgotten.'"

At that the priest drew from his cassock a tiny packet, and Iberville, taking, opened it. It held a silver buckle tied by a velvet ribbon. A flush crept slowly up Iberville's face from his chin to his hair, then he sighed, and presently, out of all reason, laughed.

"Indeed, yes; it is mine," he said. "I very well remember when I found it."

Here Perrot spoke. "I very well remember, monsieur, when she took it from your doublet; but it was on a slipper then."

Iberville did not answer, but held the buckle, rubbing it on his sleeve as though to brighten it. "So much for the lady," he said at last; "what more?"

"I learned," answered the abbe, "that Monsieur Gering was in Boston, and that he was to go to Fort Albany at Hudson's Bay, where, on our territory, the English have set forts."

Here Perrot spoke. "Do you know, monsieur, who are the poachers? No? Eh? No? Well, it is that Radisson."

Iberville turned sharply upon Perrot. "Are you sure of that?" he said. "Are you sure, Nick?"

"As sure as I've a head. And I will tell you more: Radisson was with Bucklaw at the kidnapping. I had the pleasure to kill a fellow of Bucklaw, and he told me that before he died. He also told how Bucklaw went with Radisson to the Spaniards' country treasure-hunting. Ah! there are many fools in the world. They did not get the treasure. They quarreled, and Radisson went to the far north, Bucklaw to the far south. The treasure is where it was. Eh bien, such is the way of asses."

Iberville was about to speak.

"But wait," said Perrot, with a slow, tantalising smile; "it is not wise to hurry. I have a mind to know; so while I am at New York I go to Boston. It makes a man's mind great to travel. I have been east to Boston; I have been west beyond the Ottawa and the Michilimackinac, out to the Mississippi. Yes. Well, what did I find in Boston? Peste! I found that they were all like men in purgatory--sober and grave. Truly. And so dull! Never a saint-day, never a feast, never a grand council

when the wine, the rum, flow so free, and you shall eat till you choke. Nothing. Everything is stupid; they do not smile. And so the Indians make war! Well, I have found this. There is a great man from the Kennebec called William Phips. He has traded in the Indies. Once while he was there he heard of that treasure. Ha! ha! There have been so many fools on that trail. The governor of New York was a fool when Bucklaw played his game; he would have been a greater if he had gone with Bucklaw."

Here Iberville would have spoken, but Perrot waved his hand. "De grace, a minute only. Monsieur Gering, the brave English lieutenant, is at Hudson's Bay, and next summer he will go with the great William Phips--Tonnerre, what a name--William Phips! Like a pot of herring! He will go with him after the same old treasure. Boston is a big place, but I hear these things."

Usually a man of few words, Perrot had bursts of eloquence, and this was one of them. But having made his speech, he settled back to his tobacco and into the orator's earned repose.

Iberville looked up from the fire and said: "Perrot, you saw her in New York. What speech was there between you?"

Perrot's eyes twinkled. "There was not much said.

"I put myself in her way. When she saw me her cheek came like a peach-blossom. 'A very good morning, ma'm'selle,' said I, in English. She smiled and said the same. 'And your master, where is he?' she asked with a fine smile. 'My friend Monsieur Iberville?' I said; 'ah! he will be in Quebec soon.' Then I told her of the abbe, and she took from a chain a little medallion and gave it me in memory of the time we saved her. And before I could say Thank you, she had gone--Well, that is all --except this."

He drew from his breast a chain of silver, from which hung the gold medallion, and shook his head at it with good-humour. But presently a hard look came on his face, and he was changed from the cheerful woodsman into the chief of bushrangers. Iberville read the look, and presently said:

"Perrot, men have fought for less than gold from a woman's chain and a buckle from her shoe."

"I have fought from Trois Pistoles to Michilimackinac for the toss of a louis-d'or."

"As you say. Well, what think you--"

He paused, rose, walked up and down the room, caught his moustache between his teeth once or twice, and seemed buried in thought. Once or twice he was about to speak, but changed his mind. He was calculating many things: planning, counting chances, marshalling his resources. Presently he glanced round the room. His eyes fell on a map. That

was it. It was a mere outline, but enough. Putting his finger on it, he sent it up, up, up, till it settled on the shores of Hudson's Bay. Again he ran the finger from the St. Lawrence up the coast and through Hudson's Straits, but shook his head in negation. Then he stood, looked at the map steadily, and presently, still absorbed, turned to the table. He saw the violin, picked it up, and handed it to De Casson:

"Something with a smack of war," he said. "And a woman for me," added Perrot.

The abbe shook his head musingly at Perrot, took the violin, and gathered it to his chin. At first he played as if in wait of something that eluded him. But all at once he floated into a powerful melody, as a stream creeps softly through a weir, and after many wanderings broadens suddenly into a great stream. He had found his theme. Its effect was striking. Through Iberville's mind there ran a hundred incidents of his life, one chasing upon the other without sequence--phantasmagoria out of the scene--house of memory:

The light upon the arms of De Tracy's soldiers when they marched up Mountain Street many years before--The frozen figure of a man standing upright in the plains--A procession of canoes winding down past Two Mountains, the wild chant of the Indians joining with the romantic songs of the voyageurs--A girl flashing upon the drawn swords of two lads--King Louis giving his hand to one of these lads to kiss--A lady of the Court for whom he might easily have torn his soul to rags, but for a fair-faced English girl, ever like a delicate medallion in his eye--A fight with the English in the Spaniards' country--His father blessing him as he went forth to France--A dark figure taking a hundred shapes, and yet always meaning the same as when he--Iberville--said over the governor's table in New York, "Foolish boy!"--A vast stretch of lonely forest, in the white coverlet of winter, through which sounded now and then the boom-boom of a bursting tree--A few score men upon a desolate northern track, silent, desperate, courageous; a forlorn hope on the edge of the Arctic circle, with the joy of conquest in their bones, and at their thighs the swords of men.

These are a few of the pictures, but the last of them had not to do with the past: a dream grown into a fact, shaped by the music, become at once an emotion and a purpose.

Iberville had now driven home the first tent-peg of a wonderful adventure. Under the spell of that music his body seemed to grow larger. He fingered his sword, and presently caught Perrot by the shoulder and said "We will do it, Perrot."

Perrot got to his feet. He understood. He nodded and seized Iberville's hand. "Bravo! There was nothing else to do," he replied.

De Casson lowered his violin. "What do you intend?" he asked gravely.

Iberville took his great hand and pressed it. "To do what you will commend, abbe: at Hudson's Bay to win back forts the English have taken,

and get those they have built."

"You have another purpose," added De Casson softly.

"Abbe, that is between me and my conscience. I go for my king and country against our foes."

"Who will go with you? You will lead?"

"Not I to lead--that involves me." Iberville's face darkened. "I wish more freedom, but still to lead in fact."

"But who will lead? And who will go?"

"De Troyes, perhaps, to lead. To go, my brothers Sainte-Helene and Maricourt, Perrot and a stout company of his men; and then I fear not treble as many English."

The priest did not seem satisfied. Presently Iberville, with a winning smile, ran an arm over his shoulder and added: "We cannot go without you, Dollier."

The priest's face cleared, and a moment afterwards the three comrades shook hands together.

CHAPTER VIII

AS SEEN THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY

When King Louis and King James called for peace, they could not know that it was as little possible to their two colonies as between rival buccaneers. New France was full of bold spirits who loved conquest for conquest's sake. Besides, in this case there was a force at work, generally unknown, but as powerful as the convincing influence of an army. Behind the worst and the best acts of Charles II was a woman. Behind the glories and follies of Louis XIV was also a woman. Behind some of the most striking incidents in the history of New France, New England, and New York, was a woman.

We saw her when she was but a child--the centre of singular events. Years had passed. Not one of those events had gone for nothing; each was bearing fruit after its kind.

She is sitting alone in a room of a large unhandsome house, facing on Boston harbour. It is evening. The room itself is of dark wood, and evening has thrown it into gloom. Yet somehow the girl's face has a light of its own. She is turned fair towards the window, and is looking out to sea. A mist is rising from the water, and the shore is growing grey and heavy as the light in the west recedes and night creeps in from the ocean. She watches the waves and the mist till all is mist without;

a scene which she had watched, how often she could not count. The night closes in entirely upon her, but she does not move. At last the door of the room opens and some one enters and closes it again. "My daughter!" says an anxious voice. "Are you here, Jessica?"

"I am here, father," is the reply. "Shall we have lights?"

"As you will."

Even as they speak a servant enters, and lighted candles are put upon the table. They are alone again. Both are pale. The girl stands very still, and so quiet is her face, one could never guess that she is passing, through the tragic moment of her life.

"What is your answer, Jessica?" he asks. "I will marry him when he comes back."

"Thank God!" is the old man's acknowledgment. "You have saved our fortunes."

The girl sighs, and then, with a little touch of that demure irony which we had seen in her years before, says: "I trust we have not lost our honour."

"Why, you love him, do you not? There is no one you care for more than George Gering?"

"I suppose not," is her reply, but the tone is enigmatical.

While this scene is on, another appears in Cheapside, London. A man of bold and vigorous bearing comes from the office of a well-known solicitor. That very morning he had had an interview with the King, and had been reminded with more exactness than kindness that he had cost King Charles a ship, scores of men, and thousands of pounds, in a fruitless search for buried treasure in Hispaniola. When he had urged his case upon the basis of fresh information, he was drily told that the security was too scant, even for a king. He had then pleaded his case to the Duke of Albemarle and other distinguished gentlemen. They were seemingly convinced, but withheld their answer till the following morning.

But William Phips, stubborn adventurer, destined to receive all sorts of honours in his time, has no intention of quitting London till he has his way; and this is his thought as he steps into Cheapside, having already made preparations upon the chance of success. He has gone so far as to purchase a ship, called the Bridgewater Merchant from an alderman in London, though he has not a hundred guineas at his disposal. As he stands debating, a hand touches his arm and a voice says in his ear: "You were within a mile of it with the Atgier Rose, two years ago."

The great adventurer turns. "The devil I was! And who are you?"

Satanic humour plays in the stranger's eyes as he answers: "I am Edward Bucklaw, pirate and keeper of the treasure-house in the La Planta River."

"Blood of Judas," Phips says, "how dare you speak to me? I'll have you in yon prison for an unhung rascal!"

"Ah! you are a great man," is the unmoved reply. "I knew you'd feel that way. But if you'll listen for five minutes, down here at the Bull-and-Daisy, there shall be peace between us."

An hour later, Phips, following Bucklaw's instructions, is tracing on a map the true location of the lost galleon's treasure.

"Then," says Bucklaw, "we are comrades?"

"We are adventurers."

Another scene. In a northern inland sea two men are standing on the deck of a ship: the one stalwart, clear-eyed, with a touch of strong reserve in face and manner; the other of middle height, with sinister look. The former is looking out silently upon the great locked hummocks of ice surrounding the vessel. It is the early morning. The sun is shining with that hard brightness only seen in the Arctic world--keen as silver, cold as steel. It plays upon the hummocks, and they send out shafts of light at fantastic angles, and a thin blue line runs between the almost unbearable general radiance and the sea of ice stretching indefinitely away. But to the west is a shore, and on it stands a fort and a few detached houses. Upon the walls of the fort are some guns, and the British flag is flying above. Beyond these again are the plains of the north--the home of the elk, musk-ox, silver fox, the white bear and the lonely races of the Pole. Here and there, in the south-west, an island of pines breaks the monotony, but to the north there is only the white silence, the terrible and yet beautiful trail of the Arctic.

The smaller man stands swinging his arms for warmth; the smack of the leather in the clear air like the report of a gun. Presently, stopping his exercise, he says:

"Well, monsieur, what do you say?"

Slowly the young man withdraws his eyes from the scene and turns.

"Radisson," he says, "this is much the same story as Bucklaw told Governor Nicholls. How come you to know of it?"

"You remember, I was proclaimed four years ago? Well, afterwards I fell in with Bucklaw. I sailed with him to the Spaniards' country, and we might have got the treasure, but we quarreled; there was a fight, and I--well, we end. Bucklaw was captured by the French and was carried to France. He was a fool to look for the treasure with a poor ship and a worse crew. He was for getting William Phips, a man of Boston, to work with him, for Phips had got something of the secret from an old sailor, but when he would have got him, Phips was on his way with a ship of King Charles. I will tell you something more.' Mademoiselle Leveret's--"

"What do you know of Mademoiselle Leveret?"

"A little. Mademoiselle's father lost much money in Phips's expedition."

"How know you that?"

"I have ears. You have promised to go with Phips. Isn't that so?"

"What then?"

"I will go with you."

"Booty?"

"No, revenge."

"On whom?"

"The man you hate--Iberville."

Gering's face darkens. "We are not likely to meet."

"Pardon! very likely. Six months ago he was coming back from France. He will find you. I know the race."

A sneer is on Gering's face. "Freebooters, outlaws like yourself!"

"Pardon! gentlemen, monsieur; noble outlaws. What is it that once or twice they have quarreled with the governor, and because they would not yield have been proclaimed? Nothing. Proclaimed yesterday, today at Court. No, no. I hate Iberville, but he is a great man."

In the veins of the renegade is still latent the pride of race. He is a villain but he knows the height from which he fell. "He will find you, monsieur," he repeats. "When Le Moyne is the hunter he never will kennel till the end. Besides, there is the lady!"

"Silence!"

Radisson knows that he has said too much. His manner changes. "You will let me go with you?" The Englishman remembers that this scoundrel was with Bucklaw, although he does not know that Radisson was one of the abductors.

"Never!" he says, and turns upon his heel.

A moment after and the two have disappeared from the lonely pageant of ice and sun. Man has disappeared, but his works--houses and ships and walls and snow-topped cannon--lie there in the hard grasp of the North, while the White Weaver, at the summit of the world, is shuttling these lives into the woof of battle, murder, and sudden death.

On the shore of the La Planta River a man lies looking into the sunset.

So sweet, so beautiful is the landscape, the deep foliage, the scent of flowers, the flutter of bright-winged birds, the fern-grown walls of a ruined town, the wallowing eloquence of the river, the sonorous din of the locust, that none could think this a couch of death. A Spanish priest is making ready for that last long voyage, when the soul of man sloughs the dross of earth. Beside him kneels another priest--a Frenchman of the same order.

The dying man feebly takes from his breast a packet and hands it to his friend.

"It is as I have said," he whispers. "Others may guess, but I know. I know--and another. The rest are all dead. There were six of us, and all were killed save myself. We were poisoned by a Spaniard. He thought he had killed all, but I lived. He also was killed. His murderer's name was Bucklaw--an English pirate. He has the secret. Once he came with a ship to find, but there was trouble and he did not go on. An Englishman also came with the king's ship, but he did not find. But I know that the man Bucklaw will come again. It should not be. Listen: A year ago, and something more, I was travelling to the coast. From there I was to sail for Spain. I had lost the chart of the river then. I was taken ill and I should have died, but a young French officer stayed his men beside me and cared for me, and had me carried to the coast, where I recovered. I did not go to Spain, and I found the chart of the river again."

There is a pause, in which the deep breathing of the dying man mingles with the low wash of the river, and presently he speaks again. "I vowed then that he should know. As God is our Father, swear that you will give this packet to himself only."

The priest, in reply, lifts the crucifix from the dying man's breast and puts his lips to it. The world seems not to know, so cheerful is it all, that, with a sob, that sob of farewell which the soul gives the body,--the spirit of a man is passing the mile-posts called Life, Time, and Eternity.

Yet another glance into passing incidents before we follow the straight trail of our story. In the city of Montreal fourscore men are kneeling in a little church, as the mass is slowly chanted at the altar. All of them are armed. By the flare of the torches and the candles--for it is not daybreak yet--you can see the flash of a scabbard, the glint of a knife, and the sheen of a bandoleer.

Presently, from among them, one man rises, goes to the steps of the sanctuary and kneels. He is the leader of the expedition, the Chevalier de Troyes, the chosen of the governor. A moment, and three other men rise and come and kneel beside him. These are three brothers, and one we know--gallant, imperious, cordial, having the superior ease of the courtier.

The four receive a blessing from a massive, handsome priest, whose face, as it bends over Iberville, suddenly flushes with feeling. Presently the others rise, but Iberville remains an instant longer, as if loth to

leave. The priest whispers to him: "Be strong, be just, be merciful."

The young man lifts his eyes to the priest's: "I will be just, abbe!"

Then the priest makes the sacred gesture over him.

CHAPTER IX

TO THE PORCH OF THE WORLD

The English colonies never had a race of woodsmen like the *coureurs du bois* of New France. These were a strange mixture: French peasants, half-breeds, Canadian-born Frenchmen, gentlemen of birth with lives and fortunes gone askew, and many of the native Canadian noblesse, who, like the nobles of France, forbidden to become merchants, became adventurers with the *coureurs du bois*, who were ever with them in spirit more than with the merchant. The peasant prefers the gentleman to the bourgeois as his companion. Many a *coureur du bois* divided his tale of furs with a distressed noble or seigneur, who dare not work in the fields.

The veteran Charles le Moyne, with his sons, each of whom played a daring and important part in the history of New France,--Iberville greatest,--was one of the few merchants in whom was combined the trader and the noble. But he was a trader by profession before he became a seigneur. In his veins was a strain of noble blood; but leaving France and settling in Canada, he avoided the little Court at Quebec, went to Montreal, and there began to lay the foundation of his fame and fortune, and to send forth men who were as the sons of Jacob. In his heart he was always in sympathy with the woodsmen, and when they were proclaimed as perilous to the peace and prosperity of the king's empire, he stood stoutly by them. Adventurers, they traded as they listed; and when the Intendant Duchesneau could not bend them to his greedy will, they were to be caught and hanged wherever found. King Louis hardly guessed that to carry out that order would be to reduce greatly the list of his Canadian noblesse. It struck a blow at the men who, in one of the letters which the grim Frontenac sent to Versailles not long before his death, were rightly called "The King's Traders"--more truly such than any others in New France.

Whether or not the old seigneur knew it at the time, three of his own sons were among the *coureurs du bois*--chieftains by courtesy--when they were proclaimed. And it was like Iberville, that, then only a lad, he came in from the woods, went to his father, and astonished him by asking for his blessing. Then he started for Quebec, and arriving there with Perrot and Du Lhut, went to the citadel at night and asked to be admitted to Count Frontenac. Perhaps the governor--grand half-barbarian as he was at heart--guessed the nature of the visit and, before he admitted Iberville, dismissed those who were with him. There is in an old letter still preserved by an ancient family of France, an account of this interview, told by a cynical young nobleman. Iberville alone was

admitted. His excellency greeted his young visitor courteously, yet with hauteur.

"You bring strange comrades to visit your governor, Monsieur Iberville," he said.

"Comrades in peace, your excellency, comrades in war."

"What war?"

"The king makes war against the coureurs du bois. There is a price on the heads of Perrot and Du Lhut. We are all in the same boat."

"You speak in riddles, sir."

"I speak of riddles. Perrot and Du Lhut are good friends of the king. They have helped your excellency with the Indians a hundred times. Their men have been a little roystering, but that's no sin. I am one with them, and I am as good a subject as the king has."

"Why have you come here?"

"To give myself up. If you shoot Perrot or Du Lhut you will have to shoot me; and, if you carry on the matter, your excellency will not have enough gentlemen to play Tartufe."

This last remark referred to a quarrel which Frontenac had had with the bishop, who inveighed against the governor's intention of producing Tartufe at the chateau.

Iberville's daring was quite as remarkable as the position in which he had placed himself. With a lesser man than Frontenac it might have ended badly. But himself, courtier as he was, had ever used heroic methods, and appreciated the reckless courage of youth. With grim humour he put all three under arrest, made them sup with him, and sent them away secretly before morning--free. Before Iberville left, the governor had word with him alone.

"Monsieur," he said, "you have a keen tongue, but our king needs keen swords, and since you have the advantage of me in this, I shall take care you pay the bill. We have had enough of outlawry. You shall fight by rule and measure soon."

"In your excellency's bodyguard, I hope," was the instant reply.

"In the king's navy," answered Frontenac, with a smile, for he was pleased with the frank flattery.

A career different from that of George Gering, who, brought up with Puritans, had early learned to take life seriously, had little of Iberville's gay spirit, but was just such a determined, self-conscious Englishman as any one could trust and admire, and none but an Englishman love.

And Jessica Leveret? Wherever she had been during the past four years, she had stood between these two men, regardful, wondering, waiting; and at last, as we know, casting the die against the enemy of her country. But was it cast after all?

Immediately after she made a certain solemn promise, recorded in the last chapter, she went once again to New York to visit Governor Nicholls. She had been there some months before, but it was only for a few weeks, and then she had met Dollier de Casson and Perrot. That her mind was influenced by memory of Iberville we may guess, but in what fashion who can say? It is not in mortal man to resolve the fancies of a woman, or interpret the shadowy inclinations, the timid revulsions, which move them--they cannot tell why, any more than we. They would indeed be thankful to be solved unto themselves. The great moment for a man with a woman is when, by some clear guess or some special providence, he shows her in a flash her own mind. Her respect, her serious wonder, are all then making for his glory. Wise and happy if by a further touch of genius he seizes the situation: henceforth he is her master. George Gering and Jessica had been children together, and he understood her, perhaps, as, did no one else, save her father; though he never made good use of his knowledge, nor did he touch that side of her which was purely feminine--her sweet inconsistency; therefore, he was not her master.

But he had appealed to her, for he had courage, strong, ambition, thorough kindness, and fine character, only marred by a want of temperament. She had avoided as long as she could the question which, on his return from service in the navy, he asked her, almost without warning; and with a touch of her old demureness and gaiety she had put him off, bidding him go win his laurels as commander. He was then commissioned for Hudson's Bay, and expected, on his return, to proceed to the Spaniards' country with William Phips, if that brave gentleman succeeded with the king or his nobles. He had gone north with his ship, and, as we have seen, when Iberville started on that almost impossible journey, was preparing to return to Boston. As he waited Iberville came on.

CHAPTER X

QUI VIVE!

From Land's End to John O' Groat's is a long tramp, but that from Montreal to Hudson's Bay is far longer, and yet many have made it; more, however, in the days of which we are writing than now, and with greater hardships also then. But weighed against the greater hardships there was a bolder temper and a more romantic spirit.

How strange and severe a journey it was, only those can tell who have travelled those wastes, even in these later days, when paths have been beaten down from Mount Royal to the lodges of the North. When they

started, the ice had not yet all left the Ottawa River, and they wound their way through crowding floes, or portaged here and there for miles, the eager sun of spring above with scarcely a cloud to trail behind him. At last the river cleared, and for leagues they travelled to the north-west, and came at last to the Lake of the Winds. They travelled across one corner of it, to a point where they would strike an unknown path to Hudson's Bay.

Iberville had never before seen this lake, and, with all his knowledge of great proportions, he was not prepared for its splendid vastness. They came upon it in the evening, and camped beside it. They watched the sun spread out his banners, presently veil his head in them, and sink below the world. And between them and that sunset was a vast rock stretching out from a ponderous shore--a colossal stone lion, resting Sphinxlike, keeping its faith with the ages. Alone, the warder of the West, stormy, menacing, even the vernal sun could give it little cheerfulness. But to Iberville and his followers it brought no gloom at night, nor yet in the morning when all was changed, and a soft silver mist hung over the "great water," like dissolving dew, through which the sunlight came with a strange, solemn delicacy. Upon the shore were bustle, cheerfulness, and song, until every canoe was launched, and then the band of warriors got in, and presently were away in the haze.

The long bark canoes, with lofty prows, stained with powerful dyes, slid along this path swiftly, the paddles noiselessly cleaving the water with the precision of a pendulum. One followed the other with a space between, so that Iberville, in the first, looking back, could see a diminishing procession, the last seeming large and weird--almost a shadow--as it were a part of the weird atmosphere. On either side was that soft plumbless diffusion, and ahead the secret of untravelled wilds and the fortunes of war.

As if by common instinct, all gossip ceased soon after they left the shore, and, cheerful as was the French Canadian, he was--and is--superstitious. He saw sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, and the supernatural in everything. Simple, hardy, occasionally bloody, he was ever on the watch for signs and wonders, and a phase of nature influenced him after the manner of a being with a temperament. Often, as some of the woodsmen and river-men had seen this strange effect, they now made the sacred gesture as they ran on. The pure moisture lay like a fine exudation on their brown skins, glistened on their black hair, and hung from their beards, giving them a mysterious look. The colours of their canoes and clothes were softened by the dim air and long use, and there seemed to accompany each boat and each person an atmosphere within this other haze, a spiritual kind of exhalation; so that one might have thought them, with the crucifixes on their breasts, and that unworldly, distinguished look which comes to those who live much with nature, as sons of men going upon such mission as did they who went into the far land with Arthur.

But the silence could not be maintained for long. The first flush of the impression gone, these half-barbarians, with the simple hearts of children, must rise from the almost melancholy, somewhat religious mood,

into which they had been cast. As Iberville, with Sainte-Helene and Perrot, sat watching the canoes that followed, with voyageurs erect in bow and stern, a voice in the next canoe, with a half-chanting modulation, began a song of the wild-life. Voice after voice slowly took it up, until it ran along the whole procession. A verse was sung, then a chorus altogether, then a refrain of one verse which was sung by each boat in succession to the last. As the refrain of this was sung by the last boat it seemed to come out of the great haze behind. Verses of the old song are still preserved:

"Qui vive!
Who is it cries in the dawn
Cries when the stars go down?
Who is it comes through the mist
The mist that is fine like lawn,
The mist like an angel's gown?
Who is it comes in the dawn?
Qui vive! Qui vive! in the dawn.

"Qui rive!
Who is it passeth us by,
Still in the dawn and the mist?
Tall seigneur of the dawn:
A two-edged sword at his thigh,
A shield of gold at his wrist:
Who is it hurrieth by?
Qui vive! Qui vive! in the dawn."

Under the influence of this beautiful mystery of the dawn, the slow thrilling song, and the strange, happy loneliness--as though they were in the wash between two worlds, Iberville got the great inspiration of his life. He would be a discoverer, the faithful captain of his king, a trader in provinces. . . . And in that he kept his word--years after, but he kept it. There came with this, what always comes to a man of great ideas: the woman who should share his prowess. Such a man, if forced to choose between the woman and the idea, will ever decide for the woman after he has married her, sacrificing what--however much he hides it--lies behind all. But he alone knows what he has sacrificed. For it is in the order of things that the great man shall be first the maker of kingdoms and homes, and then the husband of his wife and a begetter of children. Iberville knew that this woman was not more to him than the feeling just come to him, but he knew also that while the one remained the other would also.

He stood up and folded his arms, looking into the silence and mist. His hand mechanically dropped to his sword, and he glanced up proudly to the silver flag with its golden lilies floating softly on the slight breeze they made as they passed.

"The sword!" he said under his breath. "The world and a woman by the sword; there is no other way."

He had the spirit of his time. The sword was its faith, its magic.

If two men loved a woman, the natural way to make happiness for all was to let the sword do its eager office. For they had one of the least-believed and most unpopular of truths, that a woman's love is more a matter of mastery and possession than instinct, two men being of comparatively equal merit and sincerity.

His figure seemed to grow larger in the mist, and the grey haze gave his hair a frosty coating, so that age and youth seemed strangely mingled in him. He stood motionless for a long time as the song went on:

"Qui vive!
Who saileth into the morn,
Out of the wind of the dawn?
'Follow, oh, follow me on!
Calleth a distant horn.
He is here--he is there--he is gone,
Tall seigneur of the dawn!
Qui vive! Qui vive! in the dawn."

Some one touched Iberville's arm. It was Dollier de Casson. Iberville turned to him, but they did not speak at first--the priest knew his friend well.

"We shall succeed, abbe," Iberville said.

"May our quarrel be a just one, Pierre," was the grave reply.

"The forts are our king's; the man is with my conscience, my dear friend."

"But if you make sorrow for the woman?"

"You brought me a gift from her!" His finger touched his doublet.

"She is English, my Pierre."

"She is what God made her."

"She may be sworn to the man."

Iberville started, then shook his head incredulously. "He is not worthy of her."

"Are you?"

"I know her value better and prize it more."

"You have not seen her for four years."

"I had not seen you for four years--and yet!"

"You saw her then only for a few days--and she was so young!"

"What are days or years? Things lie deep in us till some great moment, and then they spring into life and are ours for ever. When I kissed King Louis' hand I knew that I loved my king; when De Montespan's. I hated, and shall hate always. When I first saw this English girl I waked from youth, I was born again into the world. I had no doubts, I have none now."

"And the man?"

"One knows one's enemy even as the other. There is no way but this, Dollier. He is the enemy of my king, and he is greatly in my debt. Remember the Spaniards' country!"

He laid a hand upon his sword. The face of the priest was calm and grave, but in his eyes was a deep fire. At heart he was a soldier, a loyalist, a gentleman of France. Perhaps there came to him then the dreams of his youth, before a thing happened which made him at last a servant of the Church after he had been a soldier of the king.

Presently the song of the voyageurs grew less, the refrain softened and passed down the long line, and, as it were, from out of far mists came the muffled challenge:

"Qui vive! Qui vive! in the dawn."

Then a silence fell once more. But presently from out of the mists there came, as it were, the echo of their challenge:

"Qui vive! Qui vive! in the dawn."

The paddles stilled in the water and a thrill ran through the line of voyageurs--even Iberville and his friends were touched by it.

Then there suddenly emerged from the haze on their left, ahead of them, a long canoe with tall figures in bow and stern, using paddles. They wore long cloaks, and feathers waved from their heads. In the centre of the canoe was what seemed a body under a pall, at its head and feet small censers. The smell of the wood came to them, and a little trail of sweet smoke was left behind as the canoe swiftly passed into the mist on the other side and was gone.

It had been seen vaguely. No one spoke, no one challenged; it had come and gone like a dream. What it was, no one, not even Iberville, could guess, though he thought it a pilgrimage of burial, such as was sometimes made by distinguished members of Indian tribes. Or it may have been--which is likely--a dead priest being carried south by Indian friends.

The impression left upon the party was, however, characteristic. There was none but, with the smell of the censers in his nostrils, made the sacred gesture; and had the Jesuit Silvy or the Abbe de Casson been so disposed, the event might have been made into the supernatural.

After a time the mist cleared away, and nothing could be seen on the path

they had travelled but the plain of clear water and the distant shore they had left.

Ahead of them was another shore, and they reached this at last. Where the mysterious canoe had vanished, none could tell.

Days upon days, they travelled with incredible labour, now portaging over a stubborn country, now, placing their lives in hazard as they shot down untravelled rapids.

One day on the Black Wing River a canoe was torn open and its three occupants were thrown into the rapids. Two of them were expert swimmers and were able to catch the stern of another canoe as it ran by, and reached safe water, bruised but alive. The third was a boy, Maurice Joval, the youngest of the party, whom Iberville had been at first loth to bring with him. But he had remembered his own ambitious youth, and had consented, persuading De Troyes that the lad was worth encouragement. His canoe was not far behind when the other ran on the rocks. He saw the lad struggle bravely and strike out, but a cross current caught him and carried him towards the steep shore. There he was thrown against a rock. His strength seemed to fail, but he grasped the rock. It was scraggy, and though it tore and bruised him he clung to it.

Iberville threw off his doublet, and prepared to spring as his boat came down. But another had made ready. It was the abbe, with his cassock gone, and his huge form showing finely. He laid his hand upon Iberville's arm. "Stay here," he said, "I go; I am the stronger."

But Iberville, as cries of warning and appeal rang out around him, the drowning lad had not cried out at all,--sprang into the water. Not alone. The abbe looked around him, made the sacred gesture, and then sprang also into an eddy a distance below, and at an angle made his way up towards the two. Priest though he was, he was also an expert riverman, and his vast strength served him royally. He saw Iberville tossed here and there, but with impossible strength and good fortune reach the lad. The two grasped each other and then struck out for the high shore. De Casson seemed to know what would happen. He altered his course, and, making for the shore also at a point below, reached it. He saw with a kind of despair that it was steep and had no trees; yet his keen eyes also saw, not far below, the dwarfed bole of a tree jutting out from the rock. There lay the chance. Below this was a great turmoil of rapids. A prayer mechanically passed the priest's lips, though his thoughts were those of a warrior then. He almost enjoyed the danger for himself: his fear was for Iberville and for the motherless boy.

He had guessed and hoped aright. Iberville, supporting the now senseless boy, swung down the mad torrent, his eyes blinded with blood so that he could not see. But he heard De Casson's voice, and with a splendid effort threw himself and the lad towards it. The priest also fought upwards to them and caught them as they came, having reserved his great strength until now. Throwing his left arm over the lad he relieved Iberville of his burden, but called to him to hold on. The blood was flowing into Iberville's eyes and he could do nothing else. But now came

the fight between the priest and the mad waters. Once--twice--thrice they went beneath, but neither Iberville nor himself let go, and to the apprehensive cries of their friends there succeeded calls of delight, for De Casson had seized the jutting bole and held on. It did not give, and they were safe for a moment.

A quarter of a mile below there was smoother water, and soon the canoes were ashore, and Perrot, Sainte-Helene, and others were running to the rescue. They arrived just in time. Ropes were let down, and the lad was drawn up insensible. Then came the priest, for Iberville, battered as he was, would not stir until the abbe had gone up--a stout strain on the rope. Fortunately there were clefts and fissures in the wall, which could be used in the ascent. De Casson had consented to go first, chiefly because he wished to gratify the still youthful pride of Iberville, who thought the soldier should see the priest into safety. Iberville himself came up slowly, for he was stiff and his limbs were shaking. His clothes were in tatters, and his fine face was like that of a warrior defaced by swords.

But he refused to be carried, and his first care was for the boy, who had received no mortal injury.

"You have saved the boy, Pierre," said the priest, in a low voice.

"Self-abasing always, dear abbe; you saved us both. By heaven, but the king lost a great man in you!"

"Hush! Mere brawn, Pierre. . . . By the blessing of God," he added quickly.

CHAPTER XI

WITH THE STRANGE PEOPLE

After this came varying days of hardship by land and water, and then another danger. One day they were, crossing a great northern lake. The land was moist with the sweat of quick-springing verdure; flocks of wild fowl rose at all points, and herds of caribou came drinking and feeding at the shore. The cries of herons, loons, and river-hens rose with strange distinctness, so delicate was the atmosphere, and the blue of the sky was exquisite.

As they paddled slowly along this lake, keeping time to their songs with the paddles, there suddenly grew out of the distance a great flotilla of canoes with tall prows, and behind them a range of islands which they had not before seen. The canoes were filled with men--Indians, it would seem, by the tall feathers lifting from their heads. A moment before there had been nothing. The sudden appearance was even more startling than the strange canoe that crossed their track on Lake of the Winds. Iberville knew at once that it was a mirage, and the mystery of it did

not last long even among the superstitious. But they knew now that somewhere in the north--presumably not far away--was a large band of Indians, possibly hostile; their own numbers were about fourscore. There was the chance that the Indians were following or intercepting them. Yet, since they had left the Ottawa River, they had seen no human being, save in that strange canoe on Lake of the Winds. To the east were the dreary wastes of Labrador, to the west were the desolate plains and hills, stretching to the valley of the Saskatchewan.

Practically in command, Iberville advised watchfulness and preparation for attack. Presently the mirage faded away as suddenly as it came. For days again they marched and voyaged on, seeing still no human being. At last they came to a lake, which they crossed in their canoes; then they entered the mouth of a small river, travelling northward. The river narrowed at a short distance from its mouth, and at a certain point the stream turned sharply. As the first canoe rounded the point it came full upon half a hundred canoes blocking the river, filled by Indians with bended bows. They were a northern tribe that had never before seen the white man. Tall and stern, they were stout enemies, but they had no firearms, and, as could be seen, they were astonished at the look of the little band, which, at the command of De Troyes, who with Iberville was in the first boat, came steadily on. Suddenly brought face to face there was a pause, in which Iberville, who knew several Indian languages, called to them to make way.

He was not understood, but he had pointed to the white standard of France flaring with the golden lilies; and perhaps the drawn swords and the martial manner of the little band--who had donned gay trappings, it being Iberville's birthday--conveyed in some way his meaning. The bows of the strangers stayed drawn, awaiting word from the leader. Near the chief stood a man seven feet in height, a kind of bodyguard, who presently said something in his ear. He frowned, then seemed to debate, and his face cleared at last. Raising a spear, he saluted the French leaders, and then pointed towards the shore, where there was a space clear of trees, a kind of plateau. De Troyes and Iberville, thinking that a truce and parley were meant, returned the salute with their swords, and presently the canoes of both parties made over to the shore. It was a striking sight: the grave, watchful faces of the Indians, who showed up grandly in the sun, their skin like fine rippling bronze as they moved; their tall feathers tossing, rude bracelets on their wrists, while some wore necklets of brass or copper. The chief was a stalwart savage with a cruel eye, but the most striking figure of all--either French or Indian--was that of the chief's body guard. He was, indeed, the Goliath of the tribe, who, after the manner of other champions, was ever ready for challenge in the name of his master. He was massively built, with long sinewy arms; but Iberville noticed that he was not powerful at the waist in proportion to the rest of his body, and that his neck was thinner than it should be. But these were items, for in all he was a fine piece of humanity, and Iberville said as much to De Casson, involuntarily stretching up as he did so. Tall and athletic himself, he never saw a man of calibre but he felt a wish to measure strength with him, not from vanity, but through the mere instincts of the warrior. Priest as he was, it is possible that De Casson shared the young man's feeling, though

chastening years had overcome impulses of youth. It was impossible for the French leaders to guess how this strange parley would end, and when many more Indians suddenly showed on the banks they saw that they might have tough work.

"What do you think of it, Iberville?" said De Troyes. "A juggler's puzzle--let us ask Perrot," was the reply.

Perrot confessed that he knew nothing of this tribe of Indians. The French leaders, who had never heard of Indians who would fight in the open, were, in spite of great opposing numbers, in warrior mood. Presently all the canoes were got to land, and without any hostile sign the Indians filed out on the centre of the plateau, where were pitched a number of tents. The tents were in a circle, surrounding a clear space of ground, and the chief halted in the middle of this. He and his men had scarcely noticed the Frenchmen as they followed, seemingly trusting the honour of the invaders that they would not attack from behind. It was these Indians who had been seen in the mirage. They had followed the Frenchmen, had gone parallel with them for scores of miles, and had at last at this strategic point waylaid them.

The conference was short. The French ranged in column on one side, the Indians on the other, and then the chief stepped forward. De Troyes did the same and not far behind him were Iberville, the other officers, and Perrot. Behind the chief was the champion, then, a little distance away, on either side, the Indian councillors.

The chief waved his hand proudly towards the armed warriors behind him, as if showing their strength, speaking meanwhile, and then with effective gesture, remarking the handful of French. Presently, pointing to his fighting man, he seemed to ask that the matter be settled by single combat.

The French leaders understood: Goliath would have his David. The champion suddenly began a sing-song challenge, during which Iberville and his comrades conferred. The champion's eyes ran up and down the line and alighted on the large form of De Casson, who calmly watched him. Iberville saw this look and could not help but laugh, though the matter was serious. He pictured the good abbe fighting for the band. At this the champion began to beat his breast defiantly.

Iberville threw off his coat, and motioned his friends back. Immediately there was protest. They had not known quite what to do, but Perrot had offered to fight the champion, and they, supposing it was to be a fight with weapons, had hastily agreed. It was clear, however, that it was to be a wrestle to the death. Iberville quelled all protests, and they stepped back. There was a final call from the champion, and then he became silent. From the Indians rose one long cry of satisfaction, and then they too stilled, the chief fell back, and the two men stood alone in the centre. Iberville, whose face had become grave, went to De Casson and whispered to him. The abbe gave him his blessing, and then he turned and went back. He waved his hand to his brothers and his friends,--a gay Cavalier-like motion,--then took off all save his small clothes and stood

out.

Never was seen, perhaps, a stranger sight: a gentleman of France ranged against a savage wrestler, without weapons, stripped to the waist, to fight like a gladiator. But this was a new land, and Iberville could ever do what another of his name or rank could not. There was only one other man in Canada who could do the same--old Count Frontenac himself, who, dressed in all his Court finery, had danced a war-dance in the torch-light with Iroquois chiefs.

Stripped, Iberville's splendid proportions could be seen at advantage. He was not massively made, but from crown to heel there was perfect muscular proportion. His admirable training and his splendidly nourished body--cared for, as in those days only was the body cared for--promised much, though against so huge a champion. Then, too, Iberville in his boyhood had wrestled with Indians and had learned their tricks. Added to this were methods learned abroad, which might prove useful now. Yet any one looking at the two would have begged the younger man to withdraw. Never was battle shorter. Iberville, too proud to give his enemy one moment of athletic trifling, ran in on him. For a time they were locked, straining terribly, and then the neck of the champion went with a snap and he lay dead in the middle of the green.

The Indians and the French were both so dumfounded that for a moment no one stirred, and Iberville went back and quietly put on his clothes. But presently cries of rage and mourning came from the Indians, and weapons threatened. But the chief waved aggression down, and came forward to the dead man. He looked for a moment, and then as Iberville and De Troyes came near, he gazed at Iberville in wonder, and all at once reached out both hands to him. Iberville took them and shook them heartily.

There was something uncanny in the sudden death of the champion, and Iberville's achievement had conquered these savages, who, after all, loved such deeds, though at the hand of an enemy. And now the whole scene was changed. The French courteously but firmly demanded homage, and got it, as the superior race can get it from the inferior, when events are, even distantly, in their favour; and here were martial display, a band of fearless men, weapons which the savages had never seen before, trumpets, and, most of all, a chief who was his own champion, and who had snapped the neck of their Goliath as one would break a tree-branch.

From the moment Iberville and the chief shook hands they were friends, and after two days, when they parted company, there was no Indian among all this strange tribe but would have followed him anywhere. As it was, he and De Troyes preferred to make the expedition with his handful of men, and so parted with the Indians, after having made gifts to the chief and his people. The most important of these presents was a musket, handled by the chief at first as though it were some deadly engine. The tribe had been greatly astonished at hearing a volley fired by the whole band at once, and at seeing caribou shot before their eyes; but when the chief himself, after divers attempts, shot a caribou, they stood in proper awe. With mutual friendliness they parted. Two weeks later,

after great trials, the band emerged on the shores of Hudson's Bay, almost without baggage, and starving.

CHAPTER XII

OUT OF THE NET

The last two hundred miles of their journey had been made under trying conditions. Accidents had befallen the canoes which carried the food, and the country through which they passed was almost devoid of game. During the last three days they had little or nothing to eat. When, therefore, at night they came suddenly upon the shores of Hudson's Bay, and Fort Hayes lay silent before them, they were ready for desperate enterprises. The high stockade walls with stout bastions and small cannon looked formidable, yet there was no man of them but was better pleased that the odds were against him than with him. Though it was late spring, the night was cold, and all were wet, hungry, and chilled.

Iberville's first glance at the bay and the fort brought disappointment. No vessel lay in the harbour, therefore it was probable Gering was not there. But there were other forts, and this one must be taken meanwhile. The plans were quickly made. Iberville advised a double attack: an improvised battering-ram at the great gate, and a party to climb the stockade wall at another quarter. This climbing-party he would himself lead, accompanied by his brother Sainte-Helene,

Perrot, and a handful of agile woodsmen. He had his choice, and his men were soon gathered round him. A tree was cut down in the woods some distance from the shore, shortened, and brought down, ready for its duty of battering-ram.

The night was beautiful. There was a bright moon, and the sky by some strange trick of atmosphere had taken on a green hue, against which everything stood out with singular distinctness. The air was placid, and through the stillness came the low humming wash of the water to the hard shore. The fort stood on an upland, looking in its solitariness like some lonely prison-house where men went, more to have done with the world than for punishment. Iberville was in that mood wherein men do stubborn deeds--when justice is more with them than mercy, and selfishness than either.

"If you meet the man, Pierre?" De Casson said before the party started.

Iberville laughed softly. "If we meet, may my mind be his, abbe! But he is not here--there is no vessel, you see! Still, there are more forts on the bay." The band knelt down before they started. It was strange to hear in that lonely waste, a handful of men, bent on a deadly task, singing a low chant of penitence--a Kyrie eleison. Afterwards came the benediction upon this buccaneering expedition, behind which was one man's personal enmity, a merchant company's cupidity, and a great nation's lust

of conquest! Iberville stole across the shore and up the hill with his handful of men. There was no sound from the fort; all were asleep. No musket-shot welcomed them, no cannon roared on the night; there was no sentry. What should people on the outposts of the world need of sentries, so long as there were walls to keep out wild animals! In a few moments Iberville and his companions were over the wall. Already the attack on the gate had begun, a passage was quickly made, and by the time Iberville had forced open the doors of the blockhouse, his followers making a wild hubbub as of a thousand men, De Troyes and his party were at his heels. Before the weak garrison could make resistance they were in the hands of their enemies, and soon were gathered in the yard--men, women, and children.

Gering was not there. Iberville was told that he was at one of the other forts along the shore: either Fort Rupert on the east, a hundred and twenty miles away, or at Fort Albany, ninety miles to the north and west. Iberville determined to go to Fort Rupert, and with a few followers, embarking in canoes, assembled before it two nights after. A vessel was in the harbour, and his delight was keen. He divided his men, sending Perrot to take the fort, while himself with a small party moved to the attack of the vessel. Gering had delayed a day too long. He had intended leaving the day before, but the arrival of the governor of the company had induced him to remain another day; entertaining his guest at supper, and toasting him in some excellent wine got in Hispaniola. So palatable was it that all drank deeply, and other liquors found their way to the fo'castle. Thus in the dead of night there was no open eye on the Valiant.

The Frenchmen pushed out gently from the shore, paddled noiselessly over to the ship's side, and clambered up. Iberville was the first to step on deck, and he was followed by Perrot and De Casson, who had, against Iberville's will, insisted on coming. Five others came after. Already they could hear the other party at the gate of the fort, and the cries of the besiegers, now in the courtyard, came clearly to them.

The watch of the Valiant, waking suddenly, sprang up and ran forward, making no outcry, dazed but bent on fighting. He came, however, on the point of Perrot's sabre and was cut down. Meanwhile Iberville, hot for mischief, stamped upon the deck. Immediately a number of armed men came bundling up the hatch way. Among these appeared Gering and the governor, who thrust themselves forward with drawn swords and pistols. The first two men who appeared above the hatchway were promptly despatched, and Iberville's sword was falling upon Gering, whom he did not recognise, when De Casson's hand diverted the blow. It caught the shoulder of a man at Gering's side.

"'Tis Monsieur Gering!" said the priest.

"Stop! stop!" cried a voice behind these. "I am the governor. We surrender."

There was nothing else to do: in spite of Gering's show of defiance, though death was above him if he resisted. He was but half-way up.

"It is no use, Mr. Gering," urged the governor; "they have us like sheep in a pen."

"Very well," said Gering suddenly, handing up his sword and stepping up himself. "To whom do I surrender?"

"To an old acquaintance, monsieur," said Iberville, coming near, "who will cherish you for the king of France."

"Damnation!" cried Gering, and his eyes hungered for his sword again.

"You would not visit me, so I came to look for you; though why, monsieur, you should hide up here in the porch of the world passeth knowledge."

"Monsieur is witty," answered Gering stoutly; "but if he will grant me my sword again and an hour alone with him, I shall ask no greater joy in life."

By this time the governor was on deck, and he interposed.

"I beg, sir," he said to Iberville, "you will see there is no useless slaughter at yon fort; for I guess that your men have their way with it."

"Shall my messenger, in your name, tell your people to give in?"

"By Heaven, no: I hope that they will fight while remains a chance. And be sure, sir, I should not have yielded here, but that I foresaw hopeless slaughter. Nor would I ask your favour there, but that I know you are like to have bloody barbarians with you--and we have women and children!"

"We have no Indians, we are all French," answered Iberville quietly, and sent the messenger away.

At that moment Perrot touched his arm, and pointed to a man whose shoulder was being bandaged. It was Radisson, who had caught Iberville's sword when the abbe diverted it.

"By the mass," said Iberville; "the gift of the saints!" He pricked Radisson with the point of his sword. "Well, Monsieur Renegade, who holds the spring of the trap now? You have some prayers, I hope. And if there is no priest among your English, we'll find you one before you swing next sundown."

Radisson threw up a malignant look, but said nothing; and went on caring for his wound.

"At sunset, remember. You will see to it, Perrot," he added.

"Pardon me, monsieur," said the governor. "This is an officer of our company, duly surrendered."

"Monsieur will know this man is a traitor, and that I have long-standing

orders to kill him wherever found. What has monsieur to say for him?" Iberville added, turning to Gering.

"As an officer of the company," was the reply, "he has the rights of a prisoner of war."

"Monsieur, we have met at the same table, and I cannot think you should plead for a traitor. If you will say that the man--"

But here Radisson broke in. "I want no one to speak for me. I hate you all"--he spat at Iberville--"and I will hang when I must, no sooner."

"Not so badly said," Iberville responded. "'Tis a pity, Radisson, you let the devil buy you."

"T'sh! The devil pays good coin, and I'm not hung yet," he sullenly returned.

By this time all the prisoners save Gering, the governor, and Radisson, were secured. Iberville ordered their disposition, and then, having set a guard, went down to deal with the governor for all the forts on the bay. Because the firing had ceased, he knew that the fort had been captured; and, indeed, word soon came to this effect. Iberville then gave orders that the prisoners from the fort should be brought on board next morning, to be carried on to Fort Albany, which was yet for attack. He was ill-content that a hand-to-hand fight with Gering had been prevented.

He was now all courtesy to the governor and Gering, and, offering them their own wine, entertained them with the hardships of their travel up. He gave the governor assurance that the prisoners should be treated well, and no property destroyed. Afterwards, with apologies, he saw them bestowed in a cabin, the door fastened, and a guard set. Presently he went on deck, and giving orders that Radisson should be kept safe on the after-deck, had rations served out. Then, after eating, he drew his cloak over him in the cabin and fell asleep.

Near daybreak a man came swimming along the side of the ship to the small port-hole of a cabin. He paused before it, took from his pocket a nail, and threw it within. There was no response, and he threw another, and again there was no response. Hearing the step of some one on the deck above he drew in close to the side of the ship, diving under the water and lying still. A moment after he reappeared and moved-almost floated-on to another port-hole. He had only one nail left; he threw it in, and Gering's face appeared.

"Hush, monsieur!" Radisson called up. "I have a key which may fit, and a bar of iron. If you get clear, make for this side."

He spoke in a whisper. At that moment he again heard steps above, and dived as before. The watch looked over, having heard a slight noise; but not knowing that Gering's cabin was beneath, thought no harm. Presently Radisson came up again. Gering understood, having heard the footsteps.

"I will make the trial," he said. "Can you give me no other weapon?"

"I have only the one," responded Radisson, not unselfish enough to give it up. His chief idea, after all, was to put Gering under obligation to him.

"I will do my best," said Gering.

Then he turned to the governor, who did not care to risk his life in the way of escape.

Gering tried the key, but it would not turn easily and he took it out again. Rubbing away the rust, he used tallow from the candle, and tried the lock again; still it would not turn. He looked to the fastenings, but they were solid, and he feared noise; he made one more attempt with the lock, and suddenly it turned. He tried the handle, and the door opened. Then he bade goodbye to the governor and stepped out, almost upon the guard, who was sound asleep. Looking round he saw Iberville's cloak, which its owner had thrown off in his sleep. He stealthily picked it up, and then put Iberville's cap on his head. Of nearly the same height, with these disguises he might be able to pass for his captor.

He threw the cloak over his shoulders, stole silently to the hatchway, and cautiously climbed up. Thrusting out his head he looked about him, and he saw two or three figures bundled together at the mainmast--woodsmen who had celebrated victory too sincerely. He looked for the watch, but could not see him. Then he drew himself carefully up, and on his hands and knees passed to the starboard side and moved aft. Doing so he saw the watch start up from the capstan where he had been resting, and walk towards him. He did not quicken his pace. He trusted to his ruse--he would impersonate Iberville, possessed as he was of the hat and cloak. He moved to the bulwarks and leaned against them, looking into the water. The sentry was deceived; he knew the hat and cloak, and he was only too glad to have, as he thought, escaped the challenge of having slept at his post; so he began resolutely to pace the deck. Gering watched him closely, and moved deliberately to the stern. In doing so he suddenly came upon a body. He stopped and turned round, leaning against the bulwarks as before. This time the watch came within twenty feet of him, saluted and retired.

Immediately Gering looked again at the body near him, and started back, for his feet were in a little pool. He understood: Radisson had escaped by killing his guard. It was not possible that the crime and the escape could go long undetected; the watch might at any moment come the full length of the ship. Gering flashed a glance at him again, his back was to him still,--suddenly doffed the hat and cloak, vaulted lightly upon the bulwarks, caught the anchor-chain, slid down it into the water, and struck out softly along the side. Immediately Radisson was beside him.

"Can you dive?" the Frenchman whispered. "Can you swim under water?"

"A little."

"Then with me, quick!"

The Frenchman dived and Gering followed him. The water was bitter cold, but when a man is saving his life endurance multiplies.

The Fates were with them: no alarm came from the ship, and they reached the bank in safety. Here they were upon a now hostile shore without food, fire, shelter, and weapons; their situation was desperate even yet. Radisson's ingenuity was not quite enough, so Gering solved the problem: there were the Frenchmen's canoes; they must be somewhere on the shore. Because Radisson was a Frenchman, he might be able to impose upon the watch guarding the canoes. If not, they still had weapons of a kind--Radisson a knife, and Gering the bar of iron. They moved swiftly along the shore, fearing an alarm meanwhile. If they could but get weapons and a canoe they would make their way either to Fort Albany, so warning it, or attempt the desperate journey to New York. Again fortune was with them. As it chanced, the watch, suffering from the cold night air, had gone into the bush to bring wood for firing. The two refugees stole near, and in the very first canoe found three muskets, and there were also bags filled with food. They hastily pushed out a canoe, got in, and were miles away before their escape was discovered.

Radisson was for going south at once to New York, but Gering would not hear of it, and at the mouth of a musket Radisson obeyed. They reached Fort Albany and warned it. Having thus done his duty towards the Hudson's Bay Company, and knowing that surrender must come, and that in this case his last state would be worse than his first, Gering proceeded with Radisson--hourly more hateful to him, yet to be endured for what had happened--southward upon the trail the Frenchmen had taken northward.

A couple of hours after Gering had thrown his hat and cloak into the blood of the coureur du bois, and slid down the anchor-chain, Iberville knew that his quarry was flown. The watch had thought that Iberville had gone below, and he had again relaxed, but presently a little maggot of wonder got into his brain. He then went aft. Dawn was just breaking; the grey moist light shone with a naked coldness on land and water; wild-fowl came fluttering, voiceless, past; night was still drenched in sleep. Suddenly he saw the dead body, and his boots dabbled in wet!

In all that concerned the honour of the arms of France and the conquest of the three forts, Hayes, Rupert, and Albany, Iberville might be content, but he chafed at the escape of his enemies.

"I will not say it is better so, Pierre," urged De Casson; "but you have done enough for the king. Let your own cause come later."

"And it will come, abbe," he answered, with anger. "His account grows; we must settle all one day. And Radisson shall swing or I am no soldier --so!"

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Often called an invention of the devil (Violin)

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