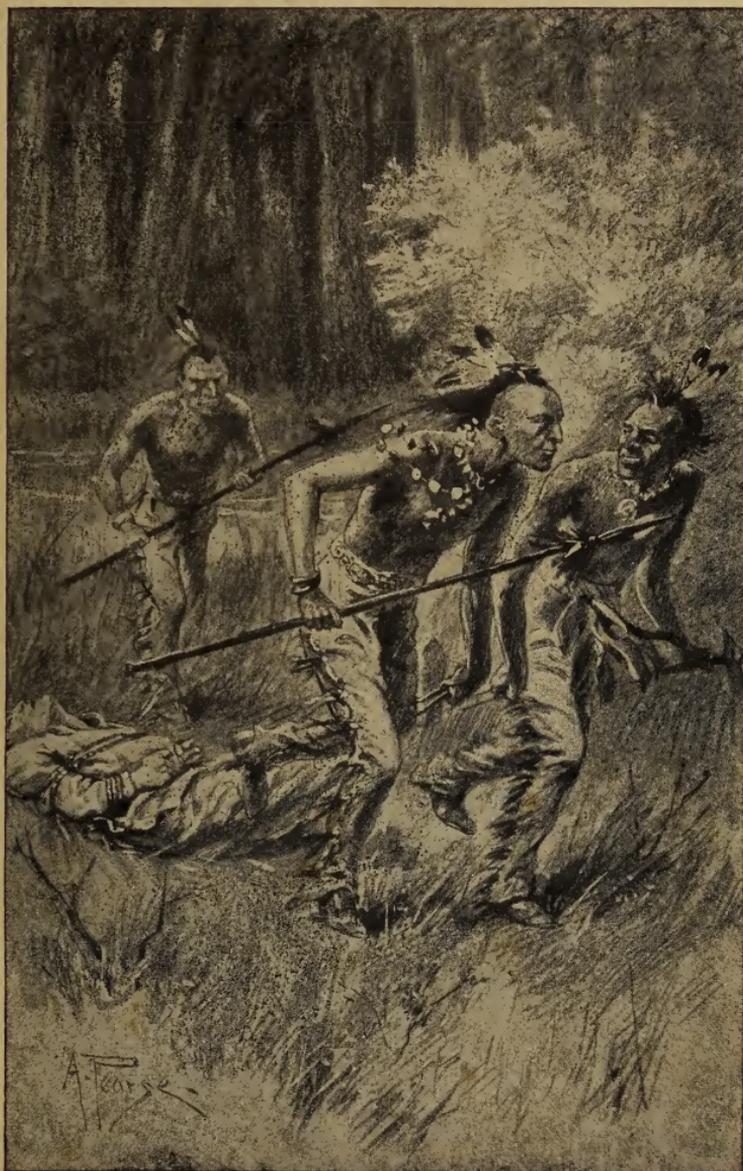


THE TRAIL OF THE IROQUOIS



M. BOURCHIER SANFORD

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THE TRAIL OF THE IROQUOIS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE TRAIL OF THE IROQUOIS

A PIONEER ROMANCE OF CANADA

BY

M. BOURCHIER SANFORD

ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED PEARSE

LONDON: SANDS & CO.
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AND EDINBURGH

THE TRIAL
OF THE IRISH

A COURT OF RECORD IN GREAT BRITAIN

IN THE COURT OF COMMONS

IN THE YEAR 1801

BY THE ORDER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

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NOTES ON THE JESUIT MISSION TO THE HURONS

THE ancient Country of the Hurons is now part of Simcoe County, Ontario. It lies within the peninsula formed by the Nottawasaga and Matchedash Bays of Lake Huron, the River Severn and Lake Simcoe. In this area the sites of more than a hundred Huron villages have been located. The Hurons were constantly harassed by hostile tribes, especially the Iroquois, and were compelled to move from place to place for safety.

The Jesuits had hoped to form permanent missions in the principal Huron towns; but in 1639 they gave up this plan and established a central station as a residence, fort, magazine and hospital. The site of this Fort Sainte Marie is near the present town of Midland, on Gloucester Bay. The Canadian Institute has taken steps to insure the preservation of the ruins.

The nearest missions to Sainte Marie were St. Ignace and St. Louis, which, with three other villages, were under the care of Brébeuf and Lalemant. These places were partly defended by palisades, but not fortified like Sainte Marie.

The site of the Mission of Teanaustayé or St. Joseph was near the present county town of Barrie.

On two sides the Fort of Sainte Marie was a continuous wall of masonry, flanked by square bastions. The sides toward the river and lake were defended by ditch and palisades. The buildings in the fort included church, kitchen and refectory, retreats for religious instruction and lodgings. A large area beyond the fort, in the form of a triangle,

appears to have been used for the protection of Indians who came in throngs to Sainte Marie, and were lodged in houses of bark.

French soldiers, trappers and traders resided in the fort or its neighbourhood; though they were laymen, they were devoted to the Mission.

The Mission of Teanaustayé was destroyed by the Iroquois on 4th July, 1648. In the year 1649, after all the fortified towns between Sainte Marie and the Iroquois country had been destroyed by the Iroquois, that fort stood alone. Missionaries had been martyred; the Hurons had ceased to exist as a nation and were scattered over the country. The Fathers were obliged to abandon Sainte Marie, and with some of the remaining Hurons, they formed a settlement on islands near the entrance of Matchedash Bay. These islands are now known as Faith, Hope and Charity. Charity is also called Christian Island. The ruins of the fort that was built there may still be seen. After brave struggles, great hardships and the massacre of Hurons who ventured to the mainland, this settlement was also abandoned, and the missionaries transported the Hurons who remained under their charge to Quebec, to form a church under the protection of that fort.

The late Father Laboreau, of Penetanguishene, not far from the ruins of Fort Sainte Marie, raised funds to build a large church at Penétanguishene to the memory of the martyred missionaries.

THE TRAIL OF THE IROQUOIS

CHAPTER I

THE EXILES

THE man who stood at the door of his log hut looked over the frozen bay and drew deep breaths of the keen winter air. A storm had raged for many days, winds had howled through the forest and snow had piled in great drifts, isolating the settler in his lonely dwelling. But on this morning the sun shone in a fair sky, the green of the pines twinkled through the fleece of snow, and crystals sparkled on shore and tree. With the frost tingling in his veins Guilbert de Keroual exultingly proclaimed that it was good to be alive.

Presently he began to sing :

“ Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman’s fair ? ”

In a time that seemed long ago, Dominique Rivard, who had learnt the song in England, had sung it mockingly, and Guilbert had bade him hold his peace ; but of late Guilbert had sung it gaily. He had

grown to maturer manhood through the discipline of peril and privation, and realized that he had acted like a petulant child. A soldier of France, he had exiled himself from his country and the service of his King at a time when men were needed for the war with Spain, and he had thought only of trying to still the pangs of memory in the rough wilderness of a new world.

His conscience had sometimes suggested that he ought to give aid to the overburdened missionaries; but he loathed the habits and the habitations of the Hurons, and, with Dominique Rivard, he had left the Indian village and had built a rough hut on the borders of the bay—an inlet of Lake Wentaron.¹ Father Daniel had warned the reckless men of their danger, for tidings had come of attacks by the Iroquois—hereditary enemies of the Hurons—upon neighbouring settlements, and he had set before them good reasons why they should remain within the shelter of the town, which was fortified by palisades; but they had persisted in their own way, promising, however, that on the first sign of Iroquois invasion, they would hasten to Teanaustayé and assist in the defence.

The day before the great storm, Dominique had set out with an Indian "runner" to carry a message to Sainte Marie, about eighteen miles away. Guilbert, snow-bound, and unable for some days to dig a path through the drifts, had been lonely and despondent. He had complained that he was of social nature, yet without society; appreciative of refinement, but encompassed by squalor, with memory

¹ Now Lake Simcoe.

of the past embittered, and hope of the future dulled by forebodings. Hunger had accentuated his despondence; his traps had been buried under the drifts, and he had breakfasted, dined and supped on the usual monotonous fare, a little maize, pounded and boiled, and seasoned with a morsel of smoked fish.

Others of Guilbert's countrymen, soldiers and traders, who had settled in the wilds, had consoled themselves in their exile by the charms of dusky brides. Such marriages were countenanced by the Fathers, who saw through them the hope of rearing the dark-skinned families in the Christian faith. But Guilbert saw no charm in any Indian maiden, and rather than take one to wife would have remained for ever unwed.

On this December morning, as the young man stood gazing far down the ice-locked bay, he saw something that appeared at first as a mere speck against the horizon; presently a number of the dark spots came in view, and, as they loomed larger, Guilbert knew that they were human. He watched with an interest not unmingled with anxiety, for these indistinct forms might represent an advance guard of the dreaded Iroquois. On second thought, he knew that this was unlikely, for the savages would have stolen through the forest, and they would not have chosen a time when the drifts impeded motion. As the strangers approached, Guilbert saw that the men, who were evidently Indians, were hauling with difficulty through the heavy snow the sleds of peculiar shape that are called toboggans. "Probably hunters who have been injured and are coming to be

treated by Father Daniel," he thought, for the missionary was skilled in surgery. To his astonishment, when the strangers came within speaking distance, a man called in good French :

" Friend, can you inform me if we approach the Mission of St. Joseph ? "

" Aye ! " shouted Guilbert. " It is but a few miles distant. I will gladly guide you there. "

" A few miles ! " repeated the man in dismay. " We had hoped it was on these shores. We are spent with long travel. "

" My hut is on the shore, " replied Guilbert. " You are welcome to tarry there as long as you will, and to partake of such poor fare as I can supply. "

The speaker was an elderly man, bronzed by exposure to the wind and sun. His companions appeared to be Hurons. In this isolated spot the arrival of a stranger from civilization was an exciting event, but the next utterance of the visitor temporarily deprived Guilbert of speech.

" For the sake of the women it is well that we may have food and shelter. They are unused to a life so rude, and their strength has been sorely tried. "

The women ! No white woman had yet ventured within hundreds of miles of Teanaustayé. Had these pioneer sisters come to devote their lives to the Huron Mission, as Madame de la Peltrie and Marie de l'Incarnation had devoted themselves to missionary work in Quebec, and Jeanne Mance in Villemarie ? If it were so, Guilbert felt sure that Father Daniel had heard nothing of their intention, and he doubted whether their arrival would please him. Teanaustayé was no fit abode for the gently reared, however willing

they might be to offer themselves as martyrs for the faith.

But whatever the good Father Daniel might feel, Guilbert had no hesitation in offering a cordial welcome. Filled with eager curiosity, he ran down the bank and hastened to meet his guests. Both women were veiled and were bound upon the toboggans by robes of fur fastened down by thongs of hide. As the young man approached, the Indian guides removed the thongs, and the women slid off the toboggans and rose to their feet. One, who lifted her veil, was middle-aged, with a kind and comely face, much tanned by the sun.

Guilbert introduced himself, and the elderly man announced the ladies as, "My wife, Madame Rochon, and Madame de Valincourt."

The taller woman bowed, but did not raise her veil. "The sun upon the snow torments my eyes," she said in explanation.

The voice was melody, and Guilbert felt sure that the speaker was young.

As the party walked to the shore, M. Rochon informed Guilbert that he was the first white man they had met since they left Villemarie, that they had been many weeks on the way and had suffered much from cold and anxiety. More than once they had lost their way in the storm, and their guides had alarmed them by stories of Iroquois. The guides had never visited St. Joseph, but had received directions from men of their tribe who had been at Sainte Marie. M. Rochon apparently hoped that he had reached the end of peril and privation, and Guilbert had not the heart to undeceive him. He did not say a word in

regard to the object of the dreary journey and the young man did not venture to inquire.

At the foot of the bank, Guilbert offered his arm to Madame de Valincourt, while M. Rochon assisted his wife. Madame de Valincourt had been silent, but as she toiled through the drifts at Guilbert's side, she said with hesitation :

"Father Daniel has not been informed of our coming. I trust it will not embarrass him to receive so many. The Indians will rest here for a short time, and return to their home at Three Rivers."

Guilbert replied evasively : " Father Daniel is of a most hospitable nature."

" We set out with a large store," continued Madame de Valincourt, " and with gifts of clothing for the women and children. But our way was so long and the appetites of the guides were so far beyond our conception, that the supplies diminished rapidly and a portion of the clothing was lost in the drifts. M. Rochon, however, will shoot and trap enough for our needs. Madame Rochon and I will assist in the work of the Mission. We would not be a burden."

The elder woman, being of portly frame, could not tread the snow with the light step of Guilbert's companion, and lagged some yards behind.

" Did M. Rochon acquire his skill as a hunter in New France ? " asked the young man.

" Oh no, not here. After landing in the new world we remained but a few days in Quebec, and tarried in Villemarie only for the arrival of our guides."

Growing rapidly bolder, Guilbert inquired : " Had

you heard in France of Father Daniel's Mission? Did you leave your country with the intent to come to a spot so isolated, and by a journey so long and perilous?"

"We had heard of Father Daniel, but we had not realized the difficulty of the journey."

"Pardon me," said Guilbert, curiosity surpassing discretion, "Father Daniel is perhaps an old friend."

"He baptized me. I have not seen him since my infancy."

Guilbert observed that though his companion had answered him, a certain reserve and dignity had come into her tone which signified that he must not transgress by further questioning. He hastened to remark: "I am sorry, Madame, that the cottage to which I bring you is so rude. Heretofore, it has not been graced by the presence of a woman; but, such as it is, I place it gladly at your disposal."

She replied with a pitiful quiver in her voice, "Your hospitality is most grateful to one who is without a home in the wide world."

At that moment they came in full view of the house of logs at the entrance to a grove of pines. Madame de Valincourt uttered an exclamation of pleasure: "It is a palace beside the wretched huts we have occupied on our way, and, embowered thus, it is beautiful."

As she stepped upon the threshold, she raised her veil, and Guilbert, unmindful of courtesy, of anything save that face that seemed to compel his gaze, stood still and looked upon her. She returned his gaze with a pathetic pleading, as if to beseech protection

and care in this strange, unknown wilderness. Her eyes were luminous and large, and at the moment they appeared to be of deepest black; afterward, Guilbert knew they were of blue, deeper than the blue of the sky, near the purple tint of violets. Her hair was of a rich brown; a tress that had escaped fell in luxuriant waves and gleamed with a red gold in the sunlight. The fairness of her skin bore no blemish from wind or sun. As Guilbert looked upon her, the colour deepened in her cheek, and he, too, blushed deeply, being reminded that he had far passed the bounds of courtesy.

He hastened to offer his visitor a seat, and began to stir the log fire, which burned on a hearth of unhewn stone.

His thoughts flew fast. She was but a girl in years, yet M. Rochon had addressed her as Madame. Was it possible that she was married? If so, why was she here without her husband? She was clad in black, perhaps she was a widow; but Madame Rochon also wore black. The title may have been used merely as a protection.

While he busied himself and wondered, the Rochons arrived at the door, and when Guilbert had welcomed them and found a rustic seat for Madame, he invited M. Rochon to accompany him to the traps. He gave Madame Rochon directions for stirring the pounded maize in a pot of water over the fire, and entrusted to the care of Madame de Valincourt some cakes of maize on the stones of an oven beside the hearth.

When he went with Monsieur Rochon to the place where he had set his traps, he found that hunger had

not tempted any wild creature through the drifts and his guests must try to be content with meagre fare.

In his walk he made many references to France, hoping to learn something of the history of his visitors; but M. Rochon soon made it plain that any curiosity was intrusive.

When the two returned to the house, Constance de Valincourt had removed her hood and veil, her face was flushed from bending over the hot stones. She looked at Guilbert with a smile of triumph.

“It is my first lesson in cookery, and I have neither broken nor burned your cakes.”

“You have browned them to perfection,” declared Guilbert. “It is well, for my larder will provide nothing else. The boiled maize serves as a porridge, to be eaten with salt, as I have no milk.”

“No milk!” exclaimed Madame Rochon. “I thought that buffalo herds grazed upon the plains! Can you not snare the buffalo cows? Do not the Indian children require milk?”

“There are cattle at Teanaustayé—that is the Indian name for the Mission of St. Joseph—but my friend, M. Rivard, and myself, have neither cattle nor poultry here. If you would prefer a buffalo cow, Dominique and I will seek the plains and capture one for you.”

“You are most obliging,” said M. Rochon; “but I fear that some months may pass before buffalo can graze on the plains.”

Guilbert laughed. “I had forgotten the snow; but the buffalo may be found, nevertheless; and, in the absence of butter, I have melted fat in a crock.”

Madame Rochon could not suppress a grimace at

this promise; but when Guilbert brought a bowl of clarified dripping from a recess in the wall, her face brightened.

On a table of unplanned boards supported by trestles the host set the two plates and knives of his modest establishment, and informed M. Rochon that he must be satisfied with a smooth stone as plate and his pocket knife. When he had split the cakes, hot from the oven, and spread them with the salted dripping, Constance de Valincourt pronounced them most appetizing, and said that she must learn the art of combining the exact quantity of finely-ground maize with water.

Guilbert begged his guests to remain at the cottage for the night, as the drifts in the forest would make walking very difficult, but when M. Rochon had talked aside with the ladies, he said that it was the earnest wish of his wife and Madame de Valincourt to reach their destination. The Indians, who had built a fire out-of-doors and boiled some maize for their meal, were also eager to reach Teanaustayé.

As Guilbert had forewarned his visitors, the path that Dominique and he had trodden in the snow had been covered since the storm; where the forest was dense, the drifts were not so deep; but in the open, the travellers were several times almost swallowed by the snow, and their strength was nearly spent before they came in sight of the Indian village.

The air had grown mild, and as the sun did not shine too brightly through the pines of the forest, Madame de Valincourt did not lower her veil. To Guilbert, who had not looked on the face of a white woman for years, the beauty of this stranger, her

hand touch on his arm for support, were bewildering. He had been a mere boy when Justine Delereau had snared his heart and betrayed his trust; he revered the memory of his mother; the treachery of one had not shattered his belief in womanhood; but he had thought that he should never love deeply again

CHAPTER II

THE COMMAND OF FATHER DANIEL

As Guilbert and Constance approached Teanaustayé, the setting sun touched that abode of squalor with unwonted beauty. Beyond the high palisades they could see the roofs of the Huron dwellings, their mantle of snow reflecting golden lights.

Madame de Valincourt paused to watch the sunset and its reflection upon the village, and she drew a breath of relief. "How wonderful it is!" she cried. "How exquisite! I had a fear—of what we might discover."

Guilbert did not answer. He feared the effect upon her of what she must soon discover.

"How quiet it is," she continued, "so solemn and still, not a sound but the rustling of the trees; truly a meet abode for this Mission."

The two in advance had come out of the wood on a cleared space, the Rochons were far behind, and the Indians had been hindered by the sleds and stores. No one had appeared from the settlement; the smoke of the fires or the barking of dogs gave the only sign of life.

"The men are absent," said Guilbert. "They have gone to the traps. It will not be so quiet when they return, or when you draw nearer."

At that moment he heard the sound of an opening

gate. "Ah!" he exclaimed. A moment later, Father Daniel, his head bent in meditation, came out on the clearing.

Constance de Valincourt gasped, and Guilbert felt her arm tremble. "Is it—is it—he?" she whispered.

"Yes, it is Father Daniel," said Guilbert. "He is often thus lost in thought. He has much anxiety and responsibility."

Constance was silent and Guilbert saw that her lips trembled. The priest did not raise his head till he had drawn near; then he started back in astonishment, with an expression almost of consternation on his pale, ascetic face.

"Ah, pardon me, Father, that I have come without announcement," faltered Constance. "Necessity compelled me to seek a shelter, and I knew of no one in the wide world to whom I would so readily turn for refuge."

"My daughter," said the priest, evidently much perplexed, "no one who seeks shelter here shall fail to find it. But why did you, a tenderly nurtured woman, come alone to this desolate place? How was it possible?"

He turned to the young man: "What means it, Guilbert? You told me nothing."

"Because I knew nothing, Father. Until this morning I had never seen Madame de Valincourt."

"De Valincourt," he repeated. "De Valincourt! I do not understand."

"Madame is not alone," continued Guilbert. "Her friends are following. But Monsieur and Madame Rochon are elderly and their movements are slow."

Father Daniel looked at Constance inquiringly :
 " There is no convent for women at this Mission, my daughter. Is it possible that you have been misinformed? "

" No, Father, I did not seek to enter a convent. I am aware that your Order has no sisterhoods in its work. I came, longing for refuge. You cannot recognize me. You have not seen me since I lay in your arms in my infancy, when you baptized me, and my mother gave me the name of Constance. It had been borne by a saintly woman of our house."

The eyes of the priest grew dim, and for some moments the silence was unbroken; then he repeated, " Constance, little Constance! But de Valincourt—why do you bear that name? Is not your father living? Why are you—in exile—seeking protection? "

She turned to Guilbert : " If Monsieur de Keroual will excuse me, I will speak with you, Father, alone."

" Pardon me," stammered Guilbert, embarrassed because he had been so slow of perception. " I should have withdrawn at once."

" Not at all," said Constance earnestly. " Your presence has been necessary. You have been most thoughtful in every way, Monsieur de Keroual."

The young man turned away and walked quickly toward the forest, to meet the Rochons.

" What matters it? " exclaimed Madame, when he had told her that his companion had already met Father Daniel. " It is fitting that she should be the first. For her sake we are here."

Monsieur Rochon gave her a warning glance, and

she continued, " I am thankful to have reached the journey's end. It is many weeks since I slept in a bed."

" I hope—you will not be disappointed," faltered Guilbert. " There is but poor accommodation in the Indian village."

" It will be delightful," declared Madame; " so full of interest, so different from anything we have known."

Father Daniel and Constance de Valincourt were waiting outside the walls, and the travellers passed through the gate eager to see the new home they had chosen.

On account of the storm that had raged for many days the villagers had remained within the palisades and the snow without was untrampled and crystal pure; but inside the gates, the spaces between the crowded dwellings were defiled with refuse; hungry dogs snarled and fought with one another on the heaps of garbage; wrinkled squaws, clad in greasy, tattered skins, with matted hair falling over their shoulders, came from the lodges to gaze curiously at the visitors; some of the bolder ones laid their grimy hands on the strangers, chattering the while in their native tongue. Younger women, who had learned a few words of French, crowded about Constance, trying to question her.

Madame Rochon made no attempt to conceal her disgust. " We cannot remain here," she exclaimed. " The filth, the odours, are intolerable! "

Guilbert tried to apologize " Father Daniel and all the missionaries have tried to improve the habits of the people, and indeed they have accomplished

much. This place was worse, far worse, on my arrival four years ago."

Constance moved aside with Guilbert, who motioned to the Indians to keep away from her. "We were warned in Quebec, in Villemarie, of what might await us," she faltered; "but we were slow to believe. I had visions of a free people, living in the forests under the pure sunlight, happy in their simplicity, free from the petty strifes, the malice and envy, of the outer world. We never dreamed of—this."

The young man sighed. "I do not know how you can bear it. Has Father Daniel told you where he will lodge you?"

"He has said only that he will make a suitable arrangement. I begged that we might live without the walls; but that, he said, would be unsafe. We tried to hide our disappointment from him; but—he understands. We ought to find contentment in working for these poor heathen. A woman can teach many things that a man cannot. If only I were good——"

"Good!" interrupted Guilbert. "Your face is your witness that your soul is goodness, truth and purity itself!"

She shook her head deprecatingly. "Alas! It is not so. I am not religious, not devout, not willing to sacrifice my own comfort for the welfare of others. I am far from the nobility of those brave women of the Ursulines at Quebec, or Jeanne Mance at Montreal. I love the world from which I am an exile and yearn for that life which I shall never know again."

“If that is sinful,” replied the young man, “you have a companion in your wickedness. Many times I have paced the shores of the bay, dissatisfied, wretched, almost resolved to return to France.”

“To return to France!” She looked at Guilbert with a pleading that made his heart beat riotously. “Ah, stay! Do not leave me!” Her eyes seemed to beseech.

He replied quickly to the unspoken word: “I have changed my mind. I have no desire now to go away.”

“I expect to remain here till my life’s end,” she said wearily.

“Ah, say not so! Rather hope that life will give you of its best and brightest in our own fair land.”

She shook her head. “It will nevermore be my land except in memory.”

While the younger ones talked apart, Monsieur Rochon had drawn his toboggan to a snow drift, which was comparatively clean, and he and his wife sat together, images of dejection.

The faces of the despondent pair brightened when Father Daniel returned and asked them to follow him to their temporary abode. It was a small house which had been built for visitors from Sainte Marie and the neighbouring Missions, but was now unoccupied. It looked bare and cheerless, but it was clean, and the tired women entered it thankfully. The Indian guides had arrived with the loads, and after Father Daniel and Guilbert had helped in the unpacking, they withdrew together. Guilbert took the opportunity to suggest that a house by the bay would be more comfortable for the ladies.

Father Daniel turned to the young man and his searching gaze made the tell-tale colour mount to Guilbert's brow.

"Not so, Guilbert," answered the priest; "not so, my son. The situation would be fraught with danger."

Guilbert knew well that the danger to which the good Father referred was for Constance de Valincourt. Yet if she were free—and surely she must have been free when she left her own land to seek a distant shore—why should anyone fear for her the love of an honest man? Guilbert could find no answer to the question then. Later he understood.

Monsieur Rochon followed presently and suggested that as a house must be built somewhere, it would be more agreeable to the ladies outside the walls. He had observed a lovely grove not many yards beyond the palisades. It was so near that the inmates could take refuge in the fort at the first sign of danger.

"An excellent idea!" exclaimed Guilbert. "An underground passage leads from the fort to the centre of that grove. The entrance is in the side of the hill and is carefully concealed. The back of the house could be built against that entrance with a sliding door, so that, in case of attack, the family could easily escape to the fort. No one knows when that passage was made, Monsieur Rochon. A part of its lining is of stones, but there are niches in the walls in which are fitted portions of human skeletons. It was probably a part of one of the ossuaries or burying-places of the Hurons. The old people of Teanaustayé believe that it was excavated hundreds of years ago, and that their deity, Jouskeha, miraculously preserved

the skeletons. The ladies need never fear any intrusion from the Indians, for they are too superstitious to go near that tunnel."

While Guilbert talked with Monsieur Rochon, Father Daniel moved away and walked to and fro, it was evident that he was much worried and perplexed. When he rejoined his guest he said that he would give his decision in regard to the new house in the morning, and that, as the drifts were deep, and it would be dark in the forest, Guilbert should remain at the fort for the night.

Soon after daybreak he sent for Guilbert. "Has Monsieur Rochon informed you whether the neighbourhood of the ancient cemetery would cause the ladies uneasiness?" he asked.

"He has assured me that it would not. They have no fear, no superstition regarding it."

"Then the grove may be the site of their dwelling; but for the present they must try to make themselves content within the fort. For yourself, Guilbert, you will find it desirable to return to the shore to-day."

Father Daniel was the law-giver at Teanaustayé. The Indians sometimes evaded his commands; but his countrymen obeyed them. At this time, Guilbert was the only Frenchman in the neighbourhood. Some soldiers and hunters lived at Sainte Marie, and one of the hunters, Gui Durosnel, often stayed at Teanaustayé. He was a friend of Dominique Rivard; but Guilbert had always mistrusted him.

As Guilbert remained silent, Father Daniel asked gently: "Why so downcast, my son? It is but a

short time since you asked leave to live by the water side."

When the young man still hesitated for a suitable answer, the missionary continued: "Madame de Valincourt is beautiful, with the rare and exquisite beauty of the women of her family, and she is very young. You, too, Guilbert, are young and—susceptible. Pardon me, my son, if I speak very plainly. A few hours have passed since you met her under peculiar circumstances, which have doubtless aroused peculiar interest, and already you have eyes, ears, thought, for her alone. For her sake, as well as for your own, you must not give way to such feeling. It would bring misery to you both."

"But why, Father?" questioned the man impetuously. "Why should it bring misery to her or to me? Is it cause of unhappiness to a woman to hold the heart of a true man?"

"Under different circumstances, it should give her the deepest happiness. But it would not be so in this case. Madame de Valincourt is not—cannot be—for you. Unless you are able to regard her as you would a sister, or the wife of a friend, it will not be advisable for you to visit Teanaustayé."

"But for what reason?" persisted Guilbert, agitated by the suggestion of hopelessness. "Why may she never be anything more to me? Is it possible that she is not free?"

"I can tell you nothing. As a man of honour you will not seek to know what she does not desire to disclose." The priest's voice took a sterner tone. "By all your chivalry, by all your honour, I demand that you show no sign of regard for Constance de

Valincourt beyond such respectful regard as man may give, for example, to one who has taken the vows of a religious order."

"Madame de Valincourt has no intention of taking vows, of that I am assured," argued the young man obstinately.

Father Daniel answered with dignity: "That is true. But she and her companions have come to this wilderness, through dangers and hardships that would test strong men, to find a sanctuary, a place of safety and seclusion. Shall their efforts be set at naught by the folly of a youth? Must they go elsewhere for a haven? Or will it suffice that I request you to restrict yourself to the place you have chosen as an abode, and come to the Mission only for the services, for which you have not hitherto shown much zeal; or on occasion when it is deemed desirable?"

There was unusual submission in Guilbert's reply. "Pardon me, Father, it will not be necessary to forbid my visits to Teanaustayé. If you permit me to help M. Rochon in the building of the house, I give you my word that I will conduct myself toward Madame de Valincourt with such reverence as I would show to one of a religious sisterhood."

"Then I trust you, Guilbert. You have ever been a man of truth. As regards the house, so long as the snow is deep and the ground hard with frost, the building cannot proceed, and your visits need not be more frequent than they have been for many months past."

Guilbert sighed. His hope of seeing Madame de Valincourt depended on his good conduct, and he meant to keep his word strictly. He was permitted

to call on her before he went away, and when he informed her that he must return at once to his cottage, and should visit Teanaustayé only to attend Mass on Sundays, his heart throbbed when her face grew downcast. She inquired: "Are the services of the Church here restricted to Sundays?"

It was evident that she did not share Father Daniel's desire for his exclusion.

"Not at all; but I have not been present on week-days."

"Does it not behove you to be more faithful in the future?"

"It does indeed," he answered; but as he walked toward the shore, conscience stung him. He was no hypocrite. He would not dare to use the Church as a cloak to cover his wish to see Constance more frequently.

Late in that night he paced the path her feet had trod. The air was keen, the sky clear, the white snow glistened in the moonlight. It was a night for joy, and it brought joy and hope to the lover. He could not believe it possible that Constance was a wife, for Father Daniel would not condone the flight of a wife from her husband. Why then should he not hope in some distant time to win her, though he might wait for years? He had given his pledge that he would not seek her now, but no one could forbid him to hope that the ban might some day be removed. He had gathered from some unconsidered words of the Rochons that her father had been a man of wealth and influence. Why was his daughter exiled to poverty and obscurity? Was she of noble, possibly of royal blood, banished because her

presence in France thwarted plans or ambitions? Or had she sought escape from an unwelcome lover? In such case, would not her surest protection be the bonds of wedlock, bonds which no man, though he were the King himself, could undo? And Louis, who was still of tender years, was in nowise to be feared.

CHAPTER III

THE SLANDER OF GUI DUROSNEL

THE Rochons and Constance de Valincourt made brave efforts to conceal from Father Daniel their discomfort in their strange surroundings; but the melancholy in the eyes of Constance grew deeper and she became thin almost to emaciation; in spite of failing strength she did her utmost to give help in the work of the Mission by teaching the women and children.

The houses of the Hurons were unlike the wigwams of the present-day Canadian Indians. Some of the lodges were very long buildings with partitions of poles and bark to separate the families; other houses had only one great chamber in which several families lodged. The frames of the dwellings were made of saplings, planted in double rows for the sides of the buildings, and bent till they met and were lashed together at the top. Other poles were bound transversely, and roofs and sides were covered with large sheets of bark. The houses had neither windows nor chimneys; light and air were supplied by openings in the roofs. In store-rooms at the ends of the lodges, casks of bark were filled with Indian corn, smoked fish and other provisions that could not be injured by frost. Deep holes in the earth,

within or without the houses, were also used for the storage of provisions. Wide scaffolds, formed of posts and transverse poles and covered with thick sheets of bark, were built along the entire length of both sides of the house. In warm weather, mats and skins were laid on these scaffolds, and the families slept on them in the open air, using the space beneath for storage. In winter they slept around the fires, which were built in a line down the middle of the dwellings. The Indians could endure an atmosphere of smoke which almost suffocated and blinded the white men. The missionaries had laboured unceasingly to improve the habits of the people, and now Madame Rochon and Constance tried to instruct the Indian women in the better care of their households. Sometimes the Huron girls came to the house that Father Daniel had lent to the Rochons, where they sat on the floor, weaving rush-mats or baskets, or making nets from twine which they had spun from hemp by rolling it on their thighs. Constance became a skilful weaver of baskets, and an adept in the art of decorating with the dyed quills of the porcupine, or the white and purple wampum beads. Under the direction of Constance three of the girls made a banner of porcupine quill work for the small hospital. The ground was of finely-cut strips of skin fastened together as a warp; the strips were bound two and two by coloured quills, wound several times and fastened ingeniously; and on this groundwork a large cross was interwoven.

But with all her brave effort to be interested and to keep a cheerful heart, Constance could not conceal

her dejection, and therefore Father Daniel suggested that Guilbert might come daily to Teanaustayé, to help in the making of furniture for the new home. By the time the ground was soft enough to permit the laying of the foundation the rustic furniture was almost completed.

The time was not spent wholly in hard labour. Madame Rochon was ready to endure any fatigue if she could give pleasure to Constance. Wherever the younger couple went, the matron accompanied them. They tried to accommodate their steps to her pace; but when, in their eagerness, they forgot, she waddled after them, panting for breath, her face purple from exertion. Then Constance was sweetly penitent for her thoughtlessness, and insisted on helping Guilbert to draw Madame on a toboggan.

When Constance learned to walk on snow-shoes, Madame must attempt the feat also; but after she had fallen head-first into a drift, from which she was drawn out with difficulty, she admitted that the exercise did not become her years and her portly person, and transferred the office of guardian to her husband. But in the bright days of early spring Madame tried diligently to do her part in the making of sugar. There had been heavy thaws and the good woman often sank more than waist deep in the half-melted snow; but she plunged onward with set purpose.

The Indians gathered the sap in troughs hewn from solid wood, and boiled it in large pots over great log fires. The skies were clear, the air was mild, and the young folk were merry-hearted. Their laughter rang through the woods as they went from tree to tree to collect the sap, or stood at night about the huge fires

in the clearing, taking turns in stirring the boiling liquid till the grain of the sugar formed, or pouring some of the syrup to make candy on the snow. When their work was done, when they piled great cakes of sugar and earthen vessels full of syrup on the sledges, they went home under the starlight to store their sweets.

The snow disappeared early that year, and by the end of March M. Rochon and Guilbert with some of the Indians were at work on the new house. It was to be built with square rooms; and great heaps of logs, hewn so they would fit one into the other, lay ready for the building.

The Indians, encouraged by promises of beads, weapons and gay clothing, worked with energy. Constance and Madame Rochon came every day to watch the uprising of their home, and, under Guilbert's supervision, Constance was able to give some assistance. With the spring sun shining on her beautiful head, a smiling curve on her lips, and her eyes sparkling with interest, she was to Guilbert a vision of loveliness. And the usually unemotional Huron men paused in their work to look at her.

One day after the foundations were laid, Father Daniel called Guilbert aside to tell him that Dominique Rivard, who had been sent from Sainte Marie with some soldiers and guides to meet a party from Montreal, would shortly return to Teanaustayé. At any other time Guilbert would have rejoiced; he had a sincere friendship for Dominique, and, until the arrival of Constance and the Rochons, he had missed him very much; but, like many another man, he believed that the lady of his heart would inevitably

win the hearts of all, and the thought of a rival, and a very attractive rival, made him uneasy. Dominique, it is true, was betrothed to a girl in France; but a man's affections, alack, are not always constant, and Anne Moreau had not the beauty of Constance de Valincourt.

On a Sunday Dominique came and with him was one whom Guilbert could not welcome. The church was filled with Hurons; some were converts, others had come from curiosity; for the building, which would have appeared poor indeed to a visitor from a civilized country, was a never-failing source of wonder to the savages. The bark-covered walls were almost hidden by tinsel and evergreen. The crucifix, the chalice of shining metal, the pictures, were objects of a certain reverence even to those who remained pagan. In the early years of his work, Father Daniel had been distressed by the chattering of the congregation; but now the children as well as the grown ones had learned to keep silence. At the moment when Dominique and his companion entered the church Constance was singing, and every ear was intent upon the hymn and the voice of the singer, so sweet and clear, and so pathetic.

Guilbert heard no footsteps, but by some power that he could not define, he became aware of a malific presence in the sacred building. He turned and saw beside Dominique the handsome, evil face of Gui Durosnel.

For a moment Gui's usual mocking expression had given place to delight, for he was a lover of music. As he looked toward the choir, vainly seeking a glimpse of the singer, his head was partially turned

from Guilbert, showing the finely-formed profile. When he was a boy someone had said he had the beauty of an angel. He had made it the beauty of a devil. Guilbert's gaze drew his eyes and a sneer replaced the temporary softness.

At Sainte Marie a number of men lodged with the Fathers and ate at their table; though these men were not in holy orders, they were, for the most part, devoted to the cause of the Mission. They traded with the Indians, and afterward sold their furs to the Company of the Hundred Associates at Quebec. Gui Durosnel was unworthy of the company he had joined. Guilbert had often wondered why a man of his inclinations had chosen to live at a mission. He learned in later days that it was no voluntary choice, that he had taken part in a disgraceful affair, and his parents had saved him from arrest by promising to send him out of the country and place him under the control of the Huron Mission. Gui had been allowed to accompany Dominique on his journey and to return with him to St. Joseph only after he had given a solemn pledge of good behaviour to the Father Superior at Sainte Marie.

While Constance was passing out of the church, Gui fixed his bold and evil gaze upon her, and she kept close by Madame Rochon's side, as if for protection. Later in the day, when she saw Guilbert, she took him aside and asked with trouble in her voice, "Why did he come, this man who is called Gui Durosnel? Something in his voice, his eye, repels me. He reminds me of one whom I knew in France. Will he remain here? Or will he return to Sainte Marie?"

“ I have heard that he will remain for some weeks ; but if his presence displeases you, Father Daniel will make his visit brief.”

“ Oh, no, no. I would not prejudice Father Daniel ; I would not deprive Monsieur Durosnel of a shelter. I fear that I am fanciful, that I permit myself to be influenced by antipathies that are not reasonable. I shall thank you if you come to Teanaustayé often and remain long, so Monsieur may have little opportunity to converse with me.”

Guilbert usually spent every day and all day at the building site, and now his heart bounded with joy at the request of Constance and her sweet trust in him. He promised readily that he would be near her for protection as often and as long as possible, and as she thanked him something in her lovely eyes sent his heart bounding again. He wondered why she turned abruptly away and said she must go to Madame Rochon. Perhaps he had spoken with unusual fervour, perhaps his voice had betrayed his feeling and thus he had broken his promise to Father Daniel ; if so, he had broken it unintentionally, he had striven to be faithful.

If the Rochons were blind, Dominique Rivard was not ; he perceived Guilbert's enthrallment and rallied him upon it.

“ Dominique, you must not think thus, you must not speak of it,” said Guilbert in evident agitation. “ Madame de Valincourt can never be more to me than a friend. There is some barrier ; I know not what it is ; but Father Daniel has told me that it will ever remain between us. I have given him my solemn pledge to think of her, to conduct myself

toward her as I would toward one of a religious sisterhood; and I have tried to keep my word, Dominique; indeed I have tried most sincerely."

"I doubt not that you have tried, my good fellow; but you have not succeeded in your heart, however faultless your actions may have been. As to the barrier, I do not believe that it is one that may not some day be broken down. Of course you are bound by your promise; but you need not give up hope; meanwhile, you may see her every day, and you are a fortunate man. As for me, I shall not see her again. I am going away. Do not ask my reason. Let it suffice that the reason is a compelling one."

Guilbert understood. Dominique, who was of susceptible nature, feared that his heart would not be proof against the charm of Constance, and he earnestly desired to remain true to Mademoiselle Anne Moreau. Guilbert wondered if duty called him to accompany his friend and banish himself from Constance for ever. A change had come over Constance; in place of her earlier frank, good comradeship, there was now a certain timidity, a downcasting of the eye, a flush upon her cheek when she met him. She was often silent and absent. Did it mean that she in her heart felt for him as he felt for her? The thought was sweet—and yet—he had no right to think of it—no right to win her. Yes; perhaps he should go away. While Dominique walked on the beach without, Guilbert paced the floor within.

In the morning he told Dominique of his intention to accompany him, and to leave Teanaustayé for ever. Dominique protested: "No, Guilbert, you ought to

remain. Your presence may be necessary for her protection. I believe, in the depths of my heart I believe, that all will come right one day for you and for her; and, in all sincerity, I wish you joy."

They talked of many things, especially of Dominique's plans; he would go to Montreal, and as soon as possible he would return to France. The talk delayed Guilbert, and when he arrived at Teanaustayé he found that Gui Durosnel had taken advantage of his absence. Father Daniel was ministering to a dying man; M. Rochon was superintending the building; Madame was confined to the house with rheumatism, and while Constance had left the patient for a time, Gui had joined her in the forest. She never told Guilbert what he had said, but as Guilbert came through the wood, he saw that Gui had seized her hand and that there was fear as well as indignation in her face. She sprang to Guilbert's side. "Oh, Monsieur de Keroual!" she gasped. "I want you, oh, I want you to—stay with me!"

"What is it?" he asked with unwonted tenderness, as he stood beside her protectingly.

She turned and faced Gui. "Monsieur Gui Durosnel, I have adopted Monsieur de Keroual as a brother; and I have need of a brother such as he has been to me."

"Permit me to congratulate you, Madame de Valincourt, upon your recently acquired relative," said Gui mockingly. "Has Father Daniel been informed of this latest addition to your family?"

Without awaiting her reply, he bowed very low and walked away.

Left alone with Guilbert, Constance drew herself away from him, and faltered, " Pardon me, Monsieur de Keroual—I—I——"

" Was the fellow rude to you? " asked Guilbert impetuously. " If he has dared to speak a presumptuous word, I will close his evil mouth effectually."

" Nay, nay, be not too hasty," she entreated. " He meant no rudeness. He believed his words and actions to be gallantry; but there is a something in his manner that offends me. I must return at once to Madame Rochon. I was wrong to leave her. I came out because I thought I needed air. If you will accompany me to the gate I will remain by her side all day."

She was evidently embarrassed by her own words and action, and to set her at ease Guilbert questioned her about the ailment of Madame Rochon and the remedies. Constance appeared to be relieved when they had reached the gate; yet she lingered and sighed as she said, " I shall not see you again to-day."

Guilbert worked on the building that afternoon and saw nothing of Gui; but when he was walking toward the shore at sundown, he encountered Durosnel in the wood. Guilbert tried to avoid a meeting, but Gui walked beside him. He was in an evil mood, and presently began to throw out vile insinuations against Constance, hinting that he had more than a well-founded suspicion that she was the person of whom he had been informed in a recent letter from France—a woman who had been banished from that country on the plea of a distinguished lady, who sought to free from the toils of the so-called Madame de Valincourt a scion of her noble house.

For the moment indignation paralysed Guilbert's action, or Durosnel would never have ended his slanderous speech. When Guilbert recovered himself his answer was a well-directed blow upon Gui's mouth, which sent him staggering against a tree. He would have followed it by another if Father Daniel had not arrived upon the scene. Guilbert did not wait for the priest to ask the cause of dispute; but in words coming fast and furious he repeated the slanders of Gui Durosnel.

The eyes of the usually gentle man blazed with anger, and Gui seemed to shrivel as he stood and listened perforce to the priest's reproof. In concluding, Father Daniel spoke in slow, forceful tones: "The effort to besmirch one whose pure soul is untouched by evil is the act of the basest of cowards. This night, sir, you may abide within the walls of St. Joseph; but early in the morning you will set out with an escort for Sainte Marie. I will not neglect to inform the Superior of my reason for transferring you."

CHAPTER IV

FLIGHT ON THE ICE CAKES

AFTER the departure of Gui Durosnel, Constance de Valincourt remained in close attendance on Madame Rochon, who was in much pain. M. Rochon came daily to work on the building of the cottage, but he was depressed and silent, and Guilbert did not like to ask any questions. One evening Father Daniel called Guilbert aside and told him that Gui had left the guards with whom he was going to Sainte Marie and no trace of him had been found.

“ I fear that he is plotting mischief,” said the priest. “ I have asked some trusty men to look out for him and make sure he is not in this neighbourhood.”

Guilbert wondered what mischief Father Daniel feared. He knew that Gui was vindictive and that he would try to take revenge in some way for his humiliation; but as Father Daniel had doubtless repeated his warning to Constance that she must not wander alone, she would be safe, and Guilbert took no thought for himself. Gui knew some plans and secrets of the Mission; but it did not occur to Guilbert that a man who had accepted the generous hospitality of the priests could be so base as to betray his hosts and serve the cause of their enemies.

The winter's cold had been severe; the snow had melted from the land; but the water was ice-bound. One night the north wind blew, and in the morning, Guilbert at his cottage door, saw the waters of the bay dancing in the sunlight. Restless in spirit and reckless of danger, he took his canoe from its winter lair and paddled down the bay, though large ice cakes were floating. A point of land projected far into the water, reaching toward a similar point on the opposite shore, and guarding the entrance to the lake beyond. In the woods back of the point vines that were very thick and strong twined and twisted about the trees, and Guilbert wanted to carry away as much of the vine as his canoe would bear to make cornices for the windows of the Rochon cottage.

He drew his canoe upon the point, and stood for a while watching the sunlight glinting in many colours from hillocks of ice. The wind had driven the ice ashore and shivered it into crystals of diverse shapes and sizes. Like a boy, Guilbert ran upon the sparkling mounds and laughed aloud as they crunched beneath his feet. His exercise on the open water, and the free, clear air had renewed him. He cast away his dejection like a discarded garment and clothed himself afresh in hopefulness, taking no heed of fear or sorrow. The birds hailing the springtime, the imprisoned waters greeting the sunshine, the young buds making ready to break out from the trees, seemed to cry joyously with him, "All is well!"

In a moment, without warning, the foe leaped upon him. Concealed in the cedar bushes, silent, watchful, awaiting the moment when Guilbert should turn his back upon the grove, the traitor, Gui Durosnel, with



. . . snatched the knife from his belt and struck the nearest man in the face.

his Iroquois accomplices, had crouched on the ground. Such precaution might seem unnecessary, for they were ten, well armed, while Guilbert had only his hunter's knife in his belt. When he heard the sound of many footsteps, he turned and saw the men close upon him, and there appeared small chance for escape. Yet he was quick of foot, an athlete, and keen of brain. He was fighting for his life and he must keep his senses clear.

He snatched the knife from his belt, struck the nearest man in the face and sprang to his canoe. The Iroquois, with eyes blinded by the blood that streamed from his wound, fell backward and the man behind fell with him. Another man had caught his feet in a tangle of underbrush, and the hindrance of a few moments gave Guilbert time to push out his canoe and paddle away.

The respite was brief. Five canoes set out with two men in each. The wounded Iroquois lay in the bottom of one canoe; but five men were free to paddle and four to shoot, and with such odds against him, Guilbert knew that he could not escape by paddling at his utmost speed. Turning quickly westward, he made for a field of floating ice cakes that had been driven back from the lake. The pursuers did not at once perceive his intention, and though they turned presently, he had made headway. He drove his canoe right into the ice floe, and leaped out on the floating cakes as the water rushed into the gash that the sharp ice had cut in the bark. He did not turn to look behind. He hoped that the men would hesitate to shatter their frail canoes or to risk drowning from the bobbing cakes. He knew well the risks he was

taking. If a cake should go down under his weight he must spring to another. If he should slide into the water amid that jarring, grinding mass, he might be caught beneath it without chance of rising, or if he should come up in an open space he might be too benumbed to hold on and clamber out. As he ran on, leaping from cake to cake, an arrow whizzed behind him and struck his fur coat. He thought he heard panting and sounds as if several were in pursuit, but dared not turn lest an arrow strike him in the face. His hood of skins protected the back of his head and neck. He had felt too warm in the heavy clothing as he paddled under the spring sun; but now he had reason to hope that the thick skins might save his life—a spear might pierce them, but the arrows the Iroquois were using seemed too blunt.

On, on he ran where the cakes lay close together, sometimes pausing before taking flying leaps over wide gaps between the floes. More than once, as his feet touched the edge of a cake, it went down under his weight, tilting up at the opposite side, and nearly throwing him into the water. He could no longer hear the steps behind him. Perhaps the men had given up the pursuit, perhaps they had come upon ice too thin to bear them. Alas! the hope was vain! Something had delayed them, but again they came on, on. Guilbert's breath came hoarsely and hurt his chest as he gasped. He began to feel, as in a nightmare, that he was striving, striving, and making no progress; yet he struggled on till he came to an open channel with the next ice floe full thirty yards away. With his heavy clothing, in his exhausted state, he doubted if he could swim long in that icy water; but

he would make the attempt; better to perish in a brave effort for freedom than to fall into the power of such enemies. He was standing, ready for the dive, when his arms were seized from behind, and turning, he came face to face with the betrayer.

He had not seen Gui till this moment, but had believed he was with the Iroquois. He tried to wrench his hands free, to strike the traitor, and to utter his rage and scorn; but Gui, with a taunting laugh, called upon his Iroquois companions. Guilbert was quickly gagged, his arms were bound to his sides with thongs, and he was driven by his captors over the floes to the place where the canoes were in readiness. So far as he could see, there were now only four canoes, and he believed that one had been damaged in the pursuit. Two Iroquois bound his feet and legs and threw him into the largest canoe, and then stepped in after Gui. There was open water for a long distance, and the men paddled quickly. From time to time, Gui, who also had a paddle, paused to inquire if his prisoner would like to know his destination and his fate, or if he would like to send a message of farewell to Madame de Valincourt, as means of conveyance could be found. He laughed derisively at Guilbert's writhings, for, useless though it was, the captive struggled to free himself, that he might seize Gui by the throat and choke his evil words.

After a time the blood surged in his head and the taunts of the traitor ceased to trouble him. Gui perceived it and made a sign to one of the men, who raised the prisoner slightly and loosened the thongs.

“This courtesy, Monsieur Guilbert de Keroual,”

said Gui with a sneer, "is not granted through love for you, but because, if you should pass away untimely in an apoplexy, we should be deprived of certain characteristic sport of the Iroquois, to which we are looking forward."

Guilbert shuddered, for he knew what his fate would be. His captors meant to carry him to the Iroquois country, to torture him, as they habitually torture defenceless prisoners. He had a faint hope that some wandering Hurons might see the canoes and put out from the shore. Nearly all the men of Teanaustayé and its neighbourhood had gone far on a great spring hunt, leaving only a few of the able-bodied to guard the old and feeble, the women and children. From the time when he left his cottage, Guilbert had not seen a human being till he had encountered the enemy, and he knew that the Iroquois were too wary to venture openly on the water if they did not feel sure that no Hurons were lurking on the shores.

From his position in the bottom of the canoe Guilbert could not see the water; but he knew the canoes had covered many miles, and he feared they would soon pass the bounds of the Huron country, when he must abandon his last faint hope of rescue. At one time, while they were crossing the wide lake Wentaron, his captors remarked that they were out of sight of land; then he overheard that they had nearly crossed the lake and were approaching the land of the opposite shore. The sun was setting when Guilbert observed signs of uneasiness among the men in the canoe. At Gui's direction, because he seemed to be suffocating, the men had raised him to a

kneeling posture, so he was able to turn and see what had disturbed them. Putting out from the shore were seven canoes, and in each canoe there were three men. Guilbert's first thought was that they were Iroquois, as the Hurons were not likely to venture on this side of the water. The actions of his captors soon informed him otherwise, for they had begun to paddle back into the lake with all possible speed. As the pursuers were two to one, the Iroquois were anxious to avoid a conflict on the water. But they were tired from the long journey and the Hurons gained on them. Perhaps the rising hope was too plainly written in Guilbert's face, for Gui turned to him with curling lip :

“ Monsieur de Keroual, your weight impedes our progress. We may find it expedient to lighten our load at your expense.”

He glanced significantly at the water, then at Guilbert's bonds, and the glance intimated that if he should choose to cast the prisoner overboard, pinioned and helpless, he must sink like a stone.

He was disappointed that Guilbert betrayed no concern. It were better to die thus than by the torture of the Iroquois, and Guilbert knew that there was a possibility of his keeping afloat till the pursuing Hurons could reach him.

The Hurons drew nearer, nearer; the Iroquois paddled desperately. Gui's breath came in hoarse gasps; sweat stood out on his brow; he gave no attention to Guilbert; all his strength was in the flight.

Guilbert began to wonder what manner of fight it would be. A canoe is a frail, unsteady craft, and

the vigorous motion of an encounter might throw both attacker and defender into the water.

He was not long in doubt. An arrow whizzing through the air was followed fast by many arrows. Half of the pursuers remained at the paddles while their companions drew the bows. One of the Iroquois fell sideways, wounded. Guilbert crouched low and dodged his head. Gui laid down his paddle and took a bow; the unwounded Iroquois did the same, for flight was useless. Darkness was gathering, and Guilbert did not observe that the foremost Iroquois had turned again and was shooting toward the shore till he saw two of the attacking canoes pass swiftly in pursuit.

Presently two torches in the bows of the attacking canoes flared out through the darkness, the dark faces of the Hurons glowing with hate and vengeance in the red light. Arrows flew faster and faster; the rocking of the canoes threatened to overturn them. Guilbert was in danger of death from the arrows, in danger of drowning; but he was hopeful, for he did not believe that the unequal combat could be long sustained. Gui and the Iroquois had laid down their bows and were paddling for dear life. They had no torches and they hoped to escape under cover of the darkness.

The Hurons came on faster; they were almost upon the Iroquois canoes when suddenly, out of the dense fog that overhung the lake, came wild shouting and cries. The sounds issued from half a hundred throats, and the Hurons knew too well the war-cry of the Iroquois! Happily for them the fog lay now as a thick blanket. Quickly extinguishing their torches,

they turned and put all their skill and speed to their paddles. The swish of their dipping paddles in the water was all that told the direction in which they had gone as they disappeared within the kindly fog. The Iroquois who had come to the rescue did not attempt a pursuit; it was enough for the present to save their comrades; later, they would have their revenge.

When the canoes had drawn to shore, two Iroquois dragged Guilbert over the rough ground to the camp. They loosened his bonds, gave him coarse food, and placed him under guard. Guilbert knew the Iroquois tongue, and understood from the conversation of his keepers that they would set out in the early morning for a large town of their nation, several days' journey distant, and that soon after their arrival they would put the prisoner to death by fire. They had not come to the Huron country to give battle at present, but to spy.

Guilbert had heard from Father Daniel of the ordeal by fire. The missionaries had succeeded in abolishing it throughout the Huron country; but in the early days of their work they had been obliged to witness the sacrifice of captive Iroquois. The priests had pleaded for the life of the brave Ononkwaya, a chief of the Oneidas; but when their pleas were unavailing, they had persuaded the chieftain to be baptized. Before he died the Hurons had severed his hand and thrown it to the Jesuits. The Iroquois were still seeking vengeance for his death and that of other prisoners from their tribe. One of their proudest warriors had been tortured in the lodge of the Huron war-chief, A'tsan. Down the centre of the large

building eleven fires had blazed. The spectators stood on the platforms on each side, while between them and the fires the young warriors held blazing pine knots or rolls of birch bark. With these they goaded their victim, forcing him to bound through the fires from end to end of the house. From night-fall till his life went out at the dawn of day, his tormentors uttered wild yells and made demoniac gestures, occasionally pausing to compliment the helpless sufferer, who bravely suppressed every expression of agony. The Fathers, powerless to save him, remained near him till the end, trying to sustain him with the hope that he would pass from his torments to everlasting joy.

As Guilbert lay in the Iroquois tent, shivering in his water-soaked clothing, he questioned whether he, of another race, could endure such torments with the stoicism of the captive Indians. Though he was very cold, and suffering in body and mind, he fell asleep from weariness, and saw in dreams the fires and the torturers; but at last he escaped from the semi-consciousness of his impending fate, and wandered with Constance through the forest, gathering spring flowers.

He had not slept long when he was awakened by a clutch on his arm and a voice roughly bidding him to rise. His limbs were stiff from cold and the pressure of the thongs, and he staggered to his feet. His captors were evidently excited and alarmed. They were taking down the tent and packing as if for instant removal, though it was little past midnight.

"The Hurons! Their scouts have seen the Hurons!" Hope shouted in Guilbert's ear.

It was possible. If a large body of men were returning from the great spring hunt, they might attack the Iroquois, outnumber and overcome them.

Guilbert was leaning against a tree for support when Gui Durosnel stood before him. Gui's face was white.

"Yes, Monsieur de Keroual," he sneered; "it is true that your friends are advancing in this direction; but we are far ahead of them and expect soon to be safe within our own borders. If you cannot keep pace with us, we may be compelled to put you out of the way, instead of reserving you for our future entertainment. It would be unkind to permit you to sustain yourself with vain hopes. Your friends will find only the semblance of the man who was once Guilbert de Keroual."

As the sneering wretch passed on, Guilbert knew that he had spoken truth. The Iroquois would not leave their captive alive.

After a time an Iroquois removed the cords from his legs; but left his arms pinioned. As the blood returned to the members from which compression had driven it, the pain was so intense that the poor captive with difficulty suppressed a moan. He tottered as he tried to walk while his jeering tormentors prodded him with pointed sticks. When his strength was almost spent, he was bound by the arms to two stalwart men who dragged him onward.

He was dimly aware of moving, moving; but hardly knew how he went or what had befallen him. Then, suddenly, through the mist of his brain, he heard the shouts and yells, the furious voices of a

great multitude. Something that had held him gave way and he fell to the ground with a sharp pain in his side, like the thrust of a spear.

When he came partly to himself, he was in a Huron camp with friendly faces beside him.

CHAPTER V

REVELATIONS

THE morning sunshine was flickering upon the floor when Guilbert opened his eyes. The walls of the room and the position of the door and small window seemed familiar; but in other respects the place was strange to him. Madame Rochon was standing by the window; he wondered why she was with him, and feebly uttered her name.

She hurried to his bedside. "Ah, this is good! You remember; you are once more yourself!"

He tried to raise himself and suddenly made a little gasp of pain. He put his hand to his side and felt bandages there, one arm was also bandaged.

"Do you suffer pain?" asked Madame Rochon anxiously.

"Not—much. I have been—wounded."

"Yes, you were brought home wounded and faint from loss of blood. You had been rash in venturing so far alone when enemies lurk everywhere."

"Ah, yes; that night, the Iroquois! I did not think—ever to return. Was it long since?"

"I have watched and waited beside you for many days; you have not recognized my presence; you have called me by other names."

"By what names?"

She hesitated: "Sometimes—Mother. That was well."

"Mother," he repeated tenderly; then turned to her. "You said, 'other names.' What other?"

When she did not answer, he half raised himself, despite the pain in his wounded arm, and demanded excitedly, "Tell me. I desire to know everything I have said."

"You are feverish still; it is necessary to be calm, otherwise you will inflame the wound."

"I am calm," declared Guilbert. "I ask you but a simple question and you refuse to answer."

The petulance of his tone belied his assertion, and the wild glint in his eyes alarmed Madame Rochon.

"Be still, then, and I will tell you," she said, laying him back on the pillow, and drawing the coverlet over his hands. "You called me Constance repeatedly. You addressed to me words that you must never dare address to Madame de Valincourt."

The hot colour mounted in his cheeks; he bit his lip. "Even in delirium," he said, "I could not have a thought of her which was not reverent; I could not utter a word that lacked respect."

"That is true; your heart is pure, Guilbert de Keroual. As I have watched beside you I have said to Father Daniel, 'He is one of whom any mother might be proud.' Alas! I have no son—no living son—only the little graves in France!"

"Then why was there wrong in the words that I said?"

"They were words of adoration, such adoration as you must not feel for her who can never be aught to you."

He drew himself up again and threw out his unwounded arm. "Tell me, I have a right to know: by what law can anyone say that I shall not adore her, or that I may not hope that she shall be all to me?"

"Because she is *Madame de Valincourt*."

"If she was ever wed, she would not leave her husband while he lived. Is she, then, a widow?"

"She is not a widow." Madame Rochon grew stern. "Have you so soon forgotten your promise to Father Daniel that you would not seek to pry into that which others fain would hide? Have you not gratitude to him who has sacrificed himself for you?"

"Sacrificed himself?"

"He has given up his convenience for your comfort. This is his own room, from which he removed so you might have good light and air. He has never sought ease for himself. The room was bare; the bed was hard; sometimes he lay upon the boards; but for you he prepared everything tenderly, and with his own hands; thus your bed is soft and easy."

As she moved to a table, to pour a liquid from a bottle, he noticed that she limped, and that as she returned with a small cup, there was pain in her face.

"You, too, are suffering," he said. "You have suffered while you waited on me."

"It is nothing, only the rheumatic pain of an old woman unused to the bitter winter of this land. I am recovering."

He put out his hand. "Forgive me. I am sorry. I am ashamed. I will ask no more, I mean no more

of that which you desire to hold sacred. I—was not myself.”

She knelt beside him and stroked his hand tenderly. “Poor boy,” she murmured, “poor boy. I understand; you are suffering and ill; the control of thought and word will return as you regain your strength. And now, take this potion, which will help to make you strong. It is not agreeable, but it is restorative.”

He made a wry face as he drank it, and handed the cup back with a smile.

She stooped and kissed his forehead, and her tear fell on his face. “My son,” she murmured, “my son.”

She sat down beside him and there was a long silence, then he asked with evident anxiety: “Did any, beside yourself, hear—my words?”

“No one who will ever repeat or—think ill of you. Two priests from St. Ignace, the Fathers de Brébeuf and Lalemant, are here and have watched you in turn. It is well, for Father Daniel has had little rest. There has been illness among the children. He is worn and in need of care; yet, when you were in peril of death, he would not leave you to seek sleep for himself.”

Guilbert’s lip quivered: “He—forgives me. He knows—I did not mean——”

“He knows you have striven to do what is right. He has no thought but of love for you. Guilbert, you are very dear to him; he will grieve to send you away.”

“Send me away! Does he——”

Madame Rochon patted his hand. “There, there; I spoke hastily; it is my foolish old woman’s tongue

betraying me again. Say naught of it to him. But would it not be well for you—a change is needful—to go for a little time to Sainte Marie? You have no companions here, and there you would find men of your own age. Father Lalemant has returned to St. Ignace; but Father Brébeuf has remained to give assistance here. If you recover in time, you can return with him; he will leave you at Sainte Marie. It is not far away; the distance, I believe, is but eighteen miles; and, when we are gone——”

He jerked himself forward. “When you are gone! Are you—is she—going away? Is it—because—of what I have spoken?”

“Only in part. Father Daniel thinks it will be more fitting—far better for everyone—that we should go to Montreal. There are other women there of our own country. Our presence here has been an anxiety to him in many ways. For myself, I shall be thankful to go. I have striven to do my duty to these poor heathen; but I am too aged, my strength is too far spent, to enable me to endure well a life of such hardship.”

“Does she—wish to go?”

Madame Rochon hesitated again. “She has not expressed the wish, neither has she uttered a word of dissent.”

“Has anyone told her what I have said?”

“Assuredly no. I do not always guard my tongue as I should; but in this at least I have been discreet.”

“Is she well? Is she—happy?”

“I cannot say that she is well. The spring season tries even the robust, and the sorrows of recent years have broken her strength. When we move to our

new dwelling, which will soon be completed, she will revive."

"The new dwelling—you will live there! You are not going to Montreal—immediately!"

The feverish tint had deepened in the young man's face.

"Our going may be delayed, no one knows how long. If Iroquois are lurking in the forests, travelling will be perilous."

Guilbert lay back on his pillow with a sigh of relief. Madame Rochon thought it was exhaustion. "You have talked too much; you are excited; you must be silent now."

"If you will answer first my question, whether she is happy, I will not speak again—for a time."

The good woman debated with her conscience. It was always her desire to speak the truth, but with discretion, and usually truth had the advantage of discretion. She knew that in the time when Guilbert's life hung in the balance Constance had not slept, that she had grown white and thin, and that the shadow of melancholy had deepened in her eyes.

"I cannot say that she is happy," admitted Madame Rochon, after a pause, "she has been very sad since—an occurrence before we left France. She smiles sometimes. She is interested in the young girls, the little children, and they love her. The women bring branches of evergreen, the cedar and the pine, to strew the floor and deck the walls; the girls gather the beautiful wild flowers of the forest, and set them in the house in those curious vessels of pottery that the Hurons make. Their kindness touches her and I hope it cheers her too. They call

her 'The Lady,' and the good Father Brébeuf has spoken of her as 'The Lady of Teanaustayé.' Madame de Valincourt has a companion now, an Indian girl who is near her own age. She was rescued in her infancy from the Iroquois and was sent to a convent in France. She was baptized there in the name of Anne; but she is called Anina; the good Sisters thought that name approached in sound some names of the Indians. She came to Teanaustayé with Father Brébeuf, in the care of an elderly woman who had also lived in France. Now, I have told you more than you asked, and you must be still, and go to sleep."

"Thank you," said Guilbert wearily. "I will try to sleep."

He appeared to be sleeping when Monsieur Rochon came to relieve his wife. Monsieur had offered many times to take a part in the nursing; but so long as Guilbert raved Madame would not admit him.

Monsieur Rochon stood by the bedside, gazed upon the patient, and feeling satisfied that he was really asleep, commented upon his appearance.

"Poor fellow, worn to a skeleton, looks ten years older! This is the critical time, when the fever has left him, and he is in danger of sinking from exhaustion. I will do my part to pull him through. Who would think this could be the stalwart man we met on that December day? She will be shocked to see him. Poor girl, poor girl! What has she ever done that she should so continually suffer? Would that I could cut their slanderous tongues!"

If Monsieur's eyesight had not been dim, he would have observed Guilbert's start and the colour that

flicked into his face at the reference to the poor girl who would be shocked by his appearance. He perceived nothing, and feeling that he had done his duty in thus inspecting the patient, he sat by the window and tried to read; but as the window was small, high, and rather dusty, and his sight was failing, he put down the book, sighed, and felt bored, while Guilbert, with closed eyes, but mind alert, wondered what slanderous tongues had said of Constance, and whether Gui Durosnel had really heard such scandal as he had spoken. He spent a wretched day and a feverish night. He dozed, and the troubling thoughts followed him into his dreams. Father Daniel had intimated that Constance was not free; but Guilbert had not realized it, had refused to realize it till Madame Rochon had told him. He was no saint; but he revered womanhood and the sacredness of marriage. In loving Constance as he had loved, in hoping to win her, to make her his own, when he had not known she was a married woman, it seemed to him that he had committed a sacrilege. Henceforth he must try to put her away from his thought, until such time, if that time might ever come, when he could bear to meet her and regard her as a sister, when he could truly be to her a loyal brother.

He wandered in thought like one in a delirious dream, yet he arrived at the conclusion that Monsieur de Valincourt was a political prisoner, and that Constance had been banished for supposed participation in the plot. He had thought that her eyes had revealed to him a feeling deeper than that of sister for brother, or friend for friend; he tried to assure himself

that he had imagined it; that she, a pure and noble woman, was true in heart and thought to the husband from whom she was separated, and he tried feverishly, desperately, to put it all out of his mind, for the realization that she was a wife with a living husband brought him a misery that seemed unbearable. He was almost thankful when his wound throbbed and acute pain shot through his body, for the physical torture forced a temporary cessation of thought.

Monsieur Rochon, perceiving that he was suffering, went out hastily for Father Daniel. The priest came in and knelt by Guilbert's side. He adjusted the pillow so that it seemed more cool and easy to the fevered head, and touched the sick man's forehead with a hand as gentle as a woman's. When he examined the wounds, he compressed his lip as if he was disturbed by what he saw. He muttered to himself, unmindful that Guilbert was no longer delirious and could understand.

"The dressings have not been renewed! I instructed Madame Rochon. Perhaps she was unable to do it alone."

He became conscious that Guilbert's eyes were fixed on him and he spoke aloud: "I fear I have neglected you, my son, but I have been sore pressed night and day; there is much illness among the little ones. Now, in removing the dressing and bandaging the wounds afresh, I must give you pain; but you will try to bear it."

"Yes, Father," said Guilbert faintly. "I know you are a skilful surgeon."

"We have need of all our lore in this wilderness," answered the priest.

The missionaries were the only physicians and surgeons of the wilds; they had studied in France in preparation for their duties among the savages. Though their instruments were primitive, and they had no merciful anæsthetic to aid them in soothing pain, they were able to save many lives, for which they devoutly gave thanks to God, by whose Grace, they believed, and not by their skill, the sufferers had recovered.

Guilbert quivered a little while the priest cleansed and dressed the wound, but he uttered no sound. When the dressing was finished, Father Daniel placed him more comfortably and knelt beside him again.

“That was bravely borne, my son,” he said tenderly; “and it was hard to bear, for you are weak. You must try to rest and sleep without thought of anything that is troubling, or that may hinder your recovery.”

A slight moan escaped Guilbert. He had a fear that the priest was going to speak of Constance. He was always sensitive and reserved in regard to anything that he held sacred, and a reference to his feeling for her would seem like a hand thrust into a gaping wound. He need not have feared. Father Daniel understood, and he, too, had delicacy of feeling. It had been painful for him to warn Guilbert and exact his promise when he had first perceived the man's devotion; but he would not refer to it again unless necessity compelled. He went away presently to attend to other patients, and the Indian woman who had been in France with Anina came to take his place. The new nurse was neatly dressed in European

fashion, and spoke French with ease, though with Indian accent. The nuns at the convent had taught her to take care of the sick, and Guilbert found her presence soothing. Her step was light and her voice soft; she knew when to speak and when to keep silence, and her talk of France and the convent life diverted the man's thoughts.

That night, while he tossed restlessly, and the nurse dozed in her chair, he made up his mind; he would go to Sainte Marie; he would bear the pain of separation as he had borne the pain of his wounds; he would not try to see Constance again; it seemed to him indeed that to see her, to meet her and talk with her, knowing what he knew now, would try him more sorely than to go far away.

CHAPTER VI

RENUNCIATION

THE May day was fair and warm when Guilbert went to say his farewell to Constance and the Rochons in their cottage. The walls were unplastered, the rough logs showing in every room; the floor was of unplanned boards; but the house was clean, the air was pure, there were wild wood flowers everywhere; in Madame Rochon's sitting-room Constance had hung draperies that she had brought from France, and the room appeared homelike and comfortable.

Guilbert's cheeks were hollow, his face was blanched; it was pitifully evident that he had not recovered strength; but he knew that he was strong enough for the meeting and the parting. He had suffered much; for the time he could suffer no more; nature had given him the anodyne of apathy. Constance could not conceal her shock in seeing him so white and emaciated, and he perceived that she, too, was frail and worn.

"Are you able to bear the journey?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes, fully able. Father Daniel says I shall bear it well, and he is a skilled physician."

"We rejoice to see you restored to health," remarked Madame Rochon.

Monsieur grunted : " We rejoice, yes ; but it is well for him and for us to keep in mind that he brought it on himself by his foolhardy pranks, wandering so far alone with these accursed Iroquois scouts prowling everywhere."

Guilbert glanced up in surprise, then he smiled, for he knew that Monsieur had spoken his rough words to conceal some deeper feeling.

" It was venturesome, I grant you," he replied, " though I had no thought of danger ; and I do not regret my venture. If Durosnel and his men had not followed me, they would not have made their presence known to our Hurons, and thus they would have escaped unharmed to their own country. They lost some of their bravest by their pursuit of me and put our men all on guard."

Monsieur muttered under his breath ; then said aloud : " Well, have it as you will, and avoid reckless ventures for the future. We have need of all our fighting men ; and no one has a right to cast away his life which may be a stronghold for others."

" The Fathers at Sainte Marie will see to it that I do not endanger my life rashly," said Guilbert ; " and now as Father Brébeuf awaits me, I must join him and go on my journey."

" So soon !" exclaimed Madame Rochon. " You have spent but a few minutes with us."

" I regret more than I can say that my visit must be so short. I am under orders, for Father Brébeuf wants to cover the first half of the journey before sundown. If I were not with him, and unable to walk far or quickly, he would arrive at Sainte Marie in that time."

“But one-half the way, nine miles; you have not strength for it,” declared Madame Rochon.

“It is true, I cannot walk very far. The Indians are hauling some stores, and when my strength is spent I will rest on their conveyance.”

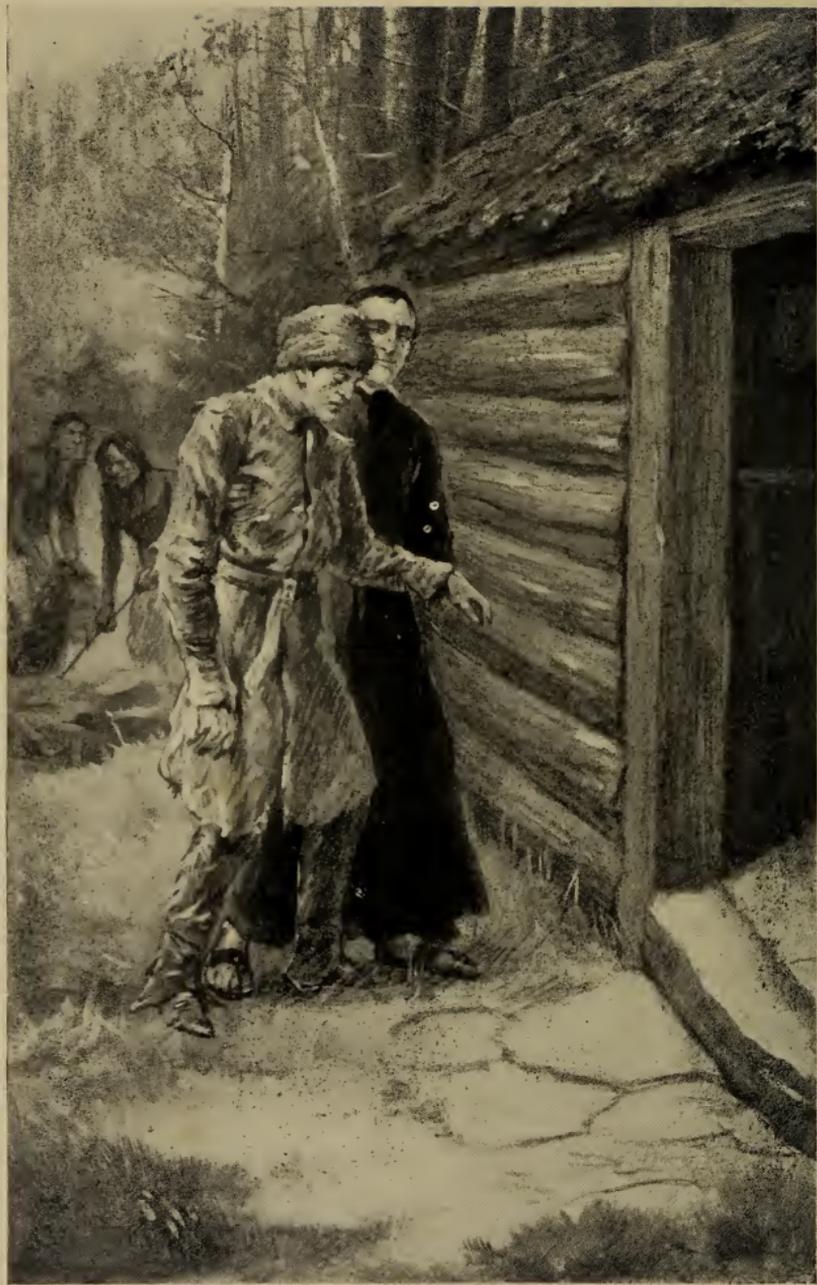
Guilbert had judged rightly that he could not walk far. For a little time he tried to keep the pace of Brébeuf and the Indians; but his breath came in quick pants and pains shot through the wounds that were still tender. He was thankful to lie back on some skins that covered a portion of the stores—a consignment from Montreal that had been left at St. Joseph to be transported to other stations.

The air was soft and the forest was beautiful, with the trees in their young greenery, the carpet of flowers, and the fragrance of pines. Brébeuf sent half the band of Indians in advance to Sainte Marie, while he followed more slowly with four of the men and Guilbert.

“I am sorry, Father,” said the young man. “I detain you when your time is of value.”

“Do not distress yourself, my son,” said Brébeuf kindly. “As you must see, and also, I am afraid, feel, the way is very rough; there is no good road; we are hindered by dense wood at times, and growths of vine and bramble, and as some of our stores are fragile and perishable, we must convey them as carefully as possible. Our journey to-morrow will be on a better road, and we should arrive before midday.”

Guilbert said no more. As he lay back on his pile of skins, it seemed almost incredible that he should be so weak and helpless. But a little while ago he could



. . . half carried him into the hut.

have run over that forest road, and regarded its fallen logs, its muddy hollows, its many rough places, as trifling obstacles that gave him delight to overcome; and now, after a paltry nine miles, he felt bruised and sore from the jolting, utterly exhausted and weak, and craving nothing but rest.

Brébeuf put a strong arm about him, and half carried him into the hut where missionaries and traders sometimes halted for the night. Guilbert sighed as the priest laid him gently down on a small platform that served as a bedstead.

“Do you suffer, my son?” asked the priest. “The men will build a fire out-of-doors, then I will warm for you some strengthening soup that Madame Rochon has made for you.”

“I am only a little weary,” said Guilbert, and he closed his eyes; to speak seemed an effort too great for his feebleness.

The soup strengthened him, and he watched Brébeuf as he moved about the hut, his giant frame seeming to fill the little room. As he watched, he wondered. Like some of the young men of his set in Paris, though he respected the clergy, he had inclined to the opinion that a man who devoted his entire life to teaching and practices of religion was perhaps not of a nature so virile as the men who followed other vocations. After his arrival at St. Joseph, he had readily conceded that Father Daniel was a man among men; but he was probably exceptional. Now here was Brébeuf, the Ajax of the Mission, tall, finely-proportioned, erect and vigorous, fifty-five years of age, with beard and moustache sprinkled with grey; yet youthful in appearance, clear

of skin and bright of eye. Brébeuf, as Guilbert knew, had come of a noble race—a race from which it was said the English Earls of Arundel had sprung. He had given up much to come to this wilderness; he might have had place and power in the old world; he would have been a model as a soldier; yet he had chosen—this. Guilbert could understand his choosing the danger and even the drudgery as an outlet for his energies; he himself had come to the new world hoping for peril and excitement; but always with the thought that he might some day return to France. The priests had no hope of returning to the refinements, the scholarly associations of their earlier years; in their place they had only the squalor of the Indian huts, the daily, disheartening endeavour to uplift the savages; they had submitted to exile almost with the certainty that the exile would end in their death.

When Brébeuf brought the hot soup, he propped his patient on some skins so he could take it with more comfort, smiled when the young man said it was very good, and carried away the bowl to wash. He returned presently and Guilbert shrank with the old dread that he would speak of Constance and the reasons for this visit to Sainte Marie. It was a relief that he made no reference to Guilbert personally, except to express the hope that he would sleep well and feel stronger in the morning. He talked of life in France and of his own young days; then, in graver strain, he came back to life in the wilderness, and the many rumours that the Iroquois were preparing for a descent upon the Missions in overpowering numbers. He expressed anxiety for the Hurons, especially the

women and children; but not a trace of fear for himself or his colleagues. Far from it; Guilbert watching, saw his face illumined, his eyes shining with the light of the spirit within him; to the young man, he seemed, like his Master, to be transfigured; and as he went on to speak of almost certain death at the hands of the enemy, Guilbert thought again of the Master, who spake of His death that He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Guilbert was deeply stirred, conviction came upon him that Brébeuf's words were prophetic, that martyrdom, a martyrdom of agony, awaited this valiant soldier of the Cross.

When Brébeuf had left him, he lay awake, thinking, trying to make a resolve. The missionaries had given up voluntarily; they were ready to face torture and death without a qualm. He was giving up perforce, because there was no other way; but he had protested, had complained, had striven rebelliously against his fate.

He was lying with wide-open eyes when Brébeuf came back.

"Father," he said, "I think it is your right to know. I shall never ask to return to Teanaustayé. I am—willing—to remain at Sainte Marie, or with you at St. Ignace, if I can give you any help there, until I go to France. I think I ought to go to France, where there is much need of soldiers."

"Yes, my son," said Brébeuf slowly, "France has need of soldiers; but I think there is greater need of soldiers here."

CHAPTER VII

SAINTE MARIE

THE Jesuits had hoped to establish permanent missions in the principal towns of the Hurons, but on account of the incursions of the hostile tribes they had been obliged to abandon this plan; the Hurons had built more than a hundred towns in their country, but were often obliged to move from place to place for safety; the missionaries had therefore abandoned the original plan, and had established at the central station of Sainte Marie a fort, magazine and hospital, with temporary missions in other towns.

Two sides of Fort Sainte Marie were protected by a continuous wall of masonry flanked with square bastions. The sides toward the river and lake were defended by a ditch and palisade, which were also flanked with bastions. The church, the missionary residence and the places of retreat for religious instruction were within the fort.

On the day when Guilbert arrived at Sainte Marie with Father Brébeuf, the missionaries had come from their scattered towns to attend a council and were in the refectory for the midday dinner. They sat at an upper table which was made of rough boards; another

very long table accommodated the members of the household—soldiers, traders and labourers.

The young Frenchmen had caught many fish in the river and neighbouring streams in honour of this festival, and large dishes of fried fish, smoking hot and savoury, were placed on each table. Coarse cakes of pounded maize took the place of bread; the vegetables were baked squash, and a mixture of corn and beans, like succotash. The missionaries rarely dined so well; the usual fare was sagamite, consisting of pounded maize, boiled, and seasoned with scraps of smoked fish.

Among the directions issued by the Jesuits of Paris to the missionaries was the counsel, "Try to eat their sagamite as they cook it, bad and dirty as it is. . . . You should love the Indians as brothers with whom you are to spend the rest of your life. . . . Do not make yourself troublesome, even to a single Indian. Do not ask them too many questions. Bear their faults in silence, and appear always cheerful. . . . Be not ceremonious with the Indians; take at once what they offer. . . . Take a flint and steel to light their pipes and kindle their fires at night; for these little services win their hearts. . . . Remember that it is Christ and His Cross you are seeking, and if you aim at anything else, you will get but affliction for body and mind."

The previous day had been mild, a change in the weather had come at night, and though it was early May, some snow had fallen; therefore, to cheer this festive occasion, great logs blazed in the stone fire-place. In their earlier, poorly built houses, or in the bark lodges of the Hurons, where the smoke of

the fires had no outlet but a hole in the roof, the missionaries had spent many evenings trying to study in spite of inflamed and streaming eyes. They recalled their experiences as they sat about the table, and devoutly gave thanks for the comfort that had been granted them.

Some of the Indians had shown gratitude and affection toward their teachers, but they could not understand the duty of love and forgiveness toward their enemies. "Why did you baptize that Iroquois?" asked some converts of a priest. "He will get to Heaven before us, and try to turn us out."

One of the Fathers recalled stories that had been circulated by intractable Indians, who believed that the litanies were charms and incantations, and that baptism was a precursor of death. A report had been spread through the towns that a young girl had returned to life, and had described the Heaven of the French as a place of torment. She had declared that the object of the Jesuits in trying to convert the Indians was to torture them in their Heaven after death. When the villages of Wenrio and Ihonatiria were attacked by a pestilence, the Indians had raged against the missionaries, Garnier and Jogues, and accused them of uttering incantations to bring down the plague.

Charles Garnier was now a missionary at St. Jean, with his colleague, Noël Chabanel. Garnier was the favourite child of wealthy and noble parents, and had been brought up in luxury. His constitution was delicate, but he contented himself with poor fare, and in times of famine had lived on roots and acorns.

More than once he had gone thirty or forty miles on foot through the forest, alone, and in danger from lurking enemies, to baptize some dying Indian. He had passed nights alone in dense woods and in the depth of winter when he had journeyed on errands of mercy. It was well known that he would have rejoiced to fall into the hands of the Iroquois, that he might preach to them, even out of torturing fires.

The visitor, Guilbert, who had been invited to the table of the priests, sat almost in silence, but listening eagerly, and watching. The Father Superior, Paul Ragueneau, was of course in the place of honour; at his right sat Father Bressani, whose scarred face bore witness to his trials as a pioneer of the Faith. Jean de Brébeuf and the gentle Gabriel Lalemant were near, and the scholarly Noël Chabanel.

There had been rumours that a large force of Iroquois, chiefly Senecas and Mohawks, had lurked in the forests all winter; that they had come from their country on snow-shoes, and were biding their time for a favourable attack. Through all the spring days the missionaries had watched anxiously, and had counselled and warned the Hurons, but in vain; the men had remained idle in the villages, or had gone off on hunting parties in the woods; the missionaries with their assistants, the soldiers and traders, the lay brothers and hired men, had borne all the anxiety and the labour of preparation for defence.

They spoke of possible danger to St. Ignace. This station, with St. Louis and three other villages, was under the charge of Brébeuf and Lalemant. St. Ignace was defended on three sides by a deep

ravine, and strengthened by high palisades; on the fourth side it was protected by palisades alone, which were often unguarded. A large part of the population, who thought the town was too much exposed to the enemy, had removed to a more sheltered position; the warriors, who made the place their headquarters, were frequently absent on long hunts, and the women, children and old men relied only upon the missionaries.

Guilbert observed with interest that though the Fathers expressed anxiety, it was for their helpless charges alone; for themselves, they had no fear. They felt regret and disappointment. They had hoped that their mission would be the beginning of a glorious work, that the savage tribes would become sons of the Church, and their land, by peaceful conquest, the heritage of France. If they grieved in prospect of the failure of their hopes, they did not complain; they bowed themselves to bear the Cross, and waited the future in calmness.

They spent their time in strenuous work. Their beds were sheets of bark, from which they rose at four. At eight o'clock they admitted the Hurons for instruction; the guests were permitted to smoke their pipes at intervals while they squatted on the floor. The children were far more tractable than their elders. Father Daniel had translated the "Our Father" into Huron rhymes, which the children learned readily. The Indians had sweet voices and musical ear; the women as well as the children learned to sing some hymns. Sometimes, as reward for good conduct, a few beads or two or three prunes or raisins were given.

The missionaries gave heed to the bodily as well as the spiritual needs of their flock. To make provision for the many who depended on them, the priests of Sainte Marie and of the other stations cultivated tracts of ground, where they raised Indian corn, pumpkins, beans, and other vegetables. The cattle, swine and poultry were within the walls. Outside the fort, and beyond the canal which opened on the river, there was another large enclosure, surrounded by a ditch and palisades. It was used for the protection of Indian visitors who came in throngs to Sainte Marie, and who were lodged in the large houses of bark, after the Huron fashion. Here also was the hospital, which was placed without the walls, so that Indian women as well as men might be tended there; and here was a place of comparative safety for the women and children, in case of attack by Iroquois; for the numbers would probably exceed those that could possibly be accommodated in the fort. The women and children, the feeble old men, had been repeatedly told what they should do in case of danger; the boys had been drilled by the soldiers.

The talk that Guilbert heard sank deep into his mind. He had known Father Daniel's work, his endurance and his faith, so far as he was capable of understanding; but here were many men, differing in ability and in temperament, but united in one endeavour, animated by the same spirit; watchful, alert, solicitous to be prepared for whatever might befall; yet, though they knew themselves and their flock to be surrounded by many and great dangers, there was no evidence of unrest; far from it; the young man saw in every face a symbol of repose,

the evidence of that Peace of God that passeth understanding.

Before he parted from Brébeuf that night, he said earnestly : “ Father, send me wherever you will ; ask me to do anything for which I am able ; I have been an idler ; I want to be of use.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORY OF CONSTANCE

IN the new surroundings, with young men of his age as companions, and with constantly varied work, Guilbert was too busy all day and too physically weary when night came, to spend time in brooding thought. When his wounded leg became sound and his strength permitted, he was chosen as the messenger of the Fathers to go from one station to another and deliver despatches. He had always been a swift runner; but had feared that the wound would make his leg permanently stiff; whether it was due to the skill of his surgeons, or to his good constitution and clean living, the muscles had become limber again in a marvellous way, and despite the great drain that his strength had undergone, he was soon able to endure with his comrades. When he delivered a message at St. Ignace, Jean de Brébeuf, noting the brightness of his eye, the smile upon his lips, inwardly rejoiced; he was too wise in the ways of men to make any comment on his visitor's good cheer, lest the thoughts of the young man should return to the cause of his sorrow. He said only, "Let us give thanks to God, Guilbert, for the restoration of your health. He has permitted the ministrations of our

good Father Daniel and your nurses to work together in a wonderful way."

Then, when all was going well, when Guilbert was striving to forget, and apparently succeeding, came a shock in the form of a letter from Dominique Rivard.

Dominique was probably now well on his way to France; but he had written the letter from Montreal, where he had waited long for a ship. The ship in which he would sail had brought over a man whom he had known in France, and who had given him the information that he communicated to Guilbert.

He assured Guilbert that he did not believe a word of what vile, slanderous tongues had said against Constance de Valincourt; but he felt that he ought to tell Guilbert what they had said. His informant did not believe it; he had declared that Constance was pure as the angels; but her husband, Count Antoine de Valincourt, a dissolute fellow, had avowed that she had been unfaithful, and had driven her from his house. She had married him when she was only seventeen. The marriage had been arranged by her father, who had wasted his property and was in embarrassed circumstances. Antoine de Valincourt was rich and had promised to help his future father-in-law. Constance's mother had died at the birth of her child; the aunt who brought the little one up had also died, and the governess, Madame Rochon, was far away at the time when the marriage was broached. Constance had a chaperon, but she did not confide in her, and had submitted to the marriage because it was her father's will. Antoine de Valincourt was a handsome and fascinating man; but, according to Dominique's informant, he had no redeeming moral

quality. He had broken his pledge to Constance's father, who, in debt and dishonoured, had broken his heart. Constance had been too dignified to utter a word in disparagement of her husband, and had held herself above reproach; but she could not conceal the evidence of unhappiness that stole the colour from her face, and perhaps her failing beauty had angered the Count de Valincourt. Some gossips thought that he had tired of her; that the marriage bond was irksome to him, and that he wanted to be rid of her so he might feel free from any restraint. He had surrounded her with spies, who knew that their reward would depend on their finding proofs of guilt, not of innocence. One of the spies, with a tardy awakening of conscience, had confessed this after her flight; but those who chose to believe evil of her had never altered their opinion. The false witnesses had sworn that they had evidence of her unfaithfulness, and that her lover was her cousin, Victor Carazeau, who had been brought up with her since her infancy as a brother.

“It is abhorrent to me to tell you this,” wrote Dominique; “the mere repetition of the odious slander seems an insult to her. But I owe it to you as a friend and as one who may shield her. The cousin is said to be a fine fellow, and very devoted to the Countess de Valincourt. My friend thinks he may have loved her; but he is a chivalrous, high-minded man, incapable of doing her a wrong. She was attached to him as to a brother, and he is her only near relation living. He was absent from France when the accusations were made, or he

would have cast their lies in their teeth. They appear to have waited till he was safely out of the country before they dared to utter their scandal. When her husband drove her from the house, she sent for the Rochons and disappeared with them. They concealed their movements so well that the Count de Valincourt did not know, or professed that he did not know, where they had gone; but their departure for Canada was rumoured, and for that reason my friend asked me if I had heard anything of them.

“This was hard for me to hear, Guilbert; it will be harder for you. I know that our Church does not sanction divorce, yet, in a case where a pure woman is bound to a dissolute beast, there can be nothing sacred in the marriage; even if he had not driven her away, the Church might have granted a separation; but that would have left her alone, and she needs a husband’s protection. She was brought up in ignorance of the world, and then cast helpless into the world of her husband’s associates, wallowing in wickedness. It is a horrible tangle, Guilbert, and I am not able to see any way out of it—for her; I hope that you may.”

Guilbert had paused many times in the reading, and then had snatched up the letter again, to read on feverishly. He was thankful that he was in his own little room at Sainte Marie when he opened the letter. Indian “runners” had brought it from Montreal with despatches for the Mission. It had come at breakfast-time, but he had put it aside to read in private. If he had begun to read when he

was surrounded by his companions, he could not have concealed his agitation. Now he felt that he could not bear the narrow confines of his room; he must have air, space; he felt as if he were suffocating and wanted to tear something away that hindered his breathing. To outward appearance he had recovered strength; yet he still suffered from the shock of his wounds, and kept his balance with more effort.

He hurried out into the forest, walked on, heedless of obstacles, as if trying to escape a foe in pursuit; then suddenly stood still, clenched his hands and ground his teeth savagely. A heavy piece of wood, club-shaped, lay on the ground. He seized it and beat it with all his force against a sapling. "Brute, beast, demon!" he exclaimed savagely, battering the small tree as if he wanted to beat it down; then he threw down his club and burst into hysterical laughter at the futility of his rage against this proxy for Antoine de Valincourt.

He was quieter now; his childlike fury had spent itself; he sat down upon a log, bowed his head in his hands and tried to think. Out of the tumult of his thoughts one thought presently shaped itself. He must see Jean de Brébeuf. With him alone could he discuss this intolerable situation. Even if he were free to go to Teanaustayé, he would shrink from speaking of it to Father Daniel. The Father Superior was a stern man, perhaps Guilbert misunderstood him, but he believed that he would have little sympathy with human weakness; and he, writhing in his distress, needed a counsellor who could sympathize and understand. He was still

holding Dominique's letter crushed in his hand when he sought Father Ragueneau. He was breathing quickly; his face was pale when he entered the Superior's room, then a hectic flush rose in his cheeks.

The Superior looked at him inquiringly. He had been much engaged, and he felt some annoyance at the interruption, yet he would not refuse Guilbert's request for an interview.

"I ask your pardon for disturbing you, Father," said Guilbert humbly. "I have come to beg permission to go to St. Ignace. I wish very much to see Father Brébeuf. It is—important to me."

The Superior glanced at the letter that the young man seemed to clutch convulsively.

"You have had bad news?"

"It is disquieting news, Father."

Again Father Ragueneau turned his keen, searching eyes upon his visitor, and Guilbert felt as if he were shrivelling under the gaze. He expected a rebuff, but the Superior said quietly, "If you think that Father Brébeuf can help you, I have no objection. Do you wish to go at once?"

"At once, if you please, Father."

"I will send a letter with you. It will be ready in a few minutes. If you are to remain at St. Ignace for the night, you will require a short time for preparation."

Ragueneau dismissed him and turned to his writing again; but his expression was disturbed. He, too, had received a long letter from Montreal, and he had reason to believe that he knew the nature of Guilbert's disquieting news. Whatever it was, it

had apparently undone the good of the young man's visit to Sainte Marie. His face seemed to have grown hollow again. He walked as if his limbs had lost their strength.

As Guilbert walked on his way to St. Ignace, his thoughts bounded rebelliously. Why should he, a man grown, be required to ask leave to go where he chose, as if he were a child? It was all very well and necessary for members of the Order, who had vowed obedience; but he was not a Jesuit and he had no intention of becoming one. Deep down in his heart he knew that under the conditions in which the missionaries lived, with perils surrounding them on every side, obedience to a supreme authority was a necessity, not only for the priests, but for the soldiers and traders at the fort and the stations. The director must know, at all times, the whereabouts of his people.

Guilbert resented also at this moment the domination of the Church over marriage and domestic life. What did these celibates know of the trials and the difficulties of many who had been joined in what the Church declared as an indissoluble bond, yet whose lives were in reality a continual disruption? Dominique was right. It was intolerable that a pure woman should remain bound to a dissolute beast; the Church ought to break the bond and set her free.

From time to time, as he went on, he kicked viciously at the obstacles in his path, which might be supposed to represent the dissolute beast, and he was still raging when he arrived at St. Ignace. His rage did not diminish when he heard that Father

Brébeuf had been at St. Louis, but was expected to return at any moment. From his present unreasonable point of view, Father Brébeuf should have been in his office, eagerly awaiting the arrival of this unexpected visitor. As he was tired, though he would not admit it, he sat down on a bench outside the residence, and swung his feet.

It seemed to him that Brébeuf was hours on the way; but in truth he had waited only a short time when the priest opened the gate of the palisades and came up the path. Guilbert rose to meet him; and, considering his previous impatience, he moved forward slowly.

“ Ah, Guilbert, my son,” said the priest heartily; “ this is a pleasure indeed, the greater for being so unexpected. But—how is this? Have they been working you too hard at Sainte Marie? You are not so well as you were when I saw you last week.”

The young man’s face flushed. He who had come so hurriedly hesitated and did not know how to state his case.

“ I—I wanted to see you, Father,” he stammered. “ Father Ragueneau was willing that I should come. I have brought you a letter from him; I have brought you also—for your—because I wanted—to—speak to you about it—a letter to myself from Dominique Rivard.”

“ From Dominique? I am glad to hear of him. Dominique was always a favourite of mine—a fine fellow—honest and earnest. You were kind to bring it to me, Guilbert.”

Guilbert glanced uneasily at the people who were passing through the enclosure. He did not want

to discuss Dominique's letter in the public view. Father Brébeuf knew that he was disquieted, and that Dominique's letter was the cause. He had spoken lightly to set him at his ease.

"Come into my study, my son," he said presently, "where we may talk it all over quietly. There are so many wants, so many petitioners here, one has little time undisturbed."

He led the way to the bare little room that he called his study. It contained only a pine table, two chairs, two or three books and writing materials. He sat down by the table and motioned Guilbert to take the other chair.

"Now, my son, what is the trouble?" he asked kindly. "I hope that Dominique is well."

"Yes, he is well, Father, or he was well when he wrote. He was about to sail for France. He—said little about himself. The letter was—for me—about—another matter. I think it is better—that you should read it for yourself. You will understand—more fully."

He handed the letter to Brébeuf, and turned away his head. His attention was apparently occupied in watching an intrusive spider on the wall; but he was all the while straining his ears for the slightest sound or movement. The silence grew tense after a time and he turned again to look at Brébeuf.

The priest had read to the end, but his eyes were still upon the page when Guilbert looked toward him; Brébeuf became instantly conscious of the gaze, and turned to his visitor.

"My son, this is evidently disturbing news for you."

“Disturbing!” broke out Guilbert. “It is intolerable, unendurable, that she should be bound for life to that seething abomination, that foul pit of corruption, that monster of iniquity, that——”

Brébeuf held up his hand with a gesture for silence.

“In this matter, my son, you have heard only the report of one man, and at second hand, for Dominique has never met the Count de Valincourt. Would it not be well to reserve your epithets till you know whether the subject deserves them all?”

Guilbert sprang to his feet, his eyes flashed. “Do you mean to say that you believe for one moment the vile allegations against her?”

“I believe not one word against her honour.”

“Then what do you believe against her?” The tone was aggressive.

“You forget yourself, my son. Would it not be well to sit down and conduct this discussion more temperately?”

Guilbert reddened to the forehead and sat down heavily in his chair. As he remained silent, Brébeuf continued: “Because the Count de Valincourt cruelly wronged his wife in giving heed to scandalous tales, he is not necessarily a monster of iniquity. On the contrary, we are credibly informed that he has many admirable qualities.”

“Admirable qualities!” The words sounded like a hiss of scorn through the indignant man’s teeth. He was unmindful for the moment that he was talking to the priest whom he revered; in his indignation he was putting Brébeuf in the place of the slanderous Gui Durosnel.

“ Yes, Guilbert de Keroual, the Count de Valincourt has admirable qualities. But as your present mood does not permit you to speak temperately and—respectfully, I propose to leave you to think it over. I have many demands upon my time; but I can see you again later in the day.”

“ Pardon me,” said Guilbert, but without much apparent contrition. “ I did not intend any disrespect. If you can spare the time now, Father, I should like to go back very shortly to Sainte Marie.”

“ You should not return without rest and some refreshment.”

“ I thank you; but I want nothing. If I return as quickly as I came, I shall reach Sainte Marie soon after supper-time.”

“ Have you eaten since your early breakfast? ”

“ No, Father; but—I am not hungry. One walks better when fasting.”

“ You are not well enough yet to endure much fasting; but we will speak of that later. You came from Sainte Marie to see me; and I am glad to have your confidence. In what way can I help you? ”

Guilbert hesitated. His thoughts were in a whirl. He could not adjust his mind to this unforeseen estimate of the Count de Valincourt. He said rather lamely: “ I understand, Father, that you have heard all of this story before.”

“ Yes, my son, all, and very much more on both sides.”

“ Does everyone at the Mission know that—she—has been so grossly insulted? ”

“ Not unless others have been informed by friends

as you have been by Dominique. Madame de Valincourt wished that my colleague and myself should hear her story when we were at Teanaustayé, and the Father Superior of course was fully informed."

Guilbert clenched his hands. "I am thankful at least that it is not known to others; that she is not besmirched in the eyes of any who might think evil of her."

His manner made it evident that he regarded Constance de Valincourt as one peculiarly entrusted to his care. Brébeuf answered quietly: "I do not think that anyone who knows her well could believe evil of her."

"The man whom she married, the man who should have protected her, not only believed it, but befouled her name to the world."

"He believed evil, unhappily, yes; but it was not he who published the story to the world. He is a very proud man, and even if he had no regard for her, he respected his name, which she bore, far too highly to cast dishonour on it."

"Then is it not true that she was sold by her father to pay his debts, and that this man broke his pledge?"

"It is not true. It is a difficult and delicate matter to discuss; but as you have heard so much it is better that I should tell you the truth, and this I can do without violating any confidence. The story was openly discussed in France, and it has come to us from several sources. We had hoped that it would not be known here. Madame de Valincourt had come to this wilderness in the belief that here

she would be safe from the tongue of slander, and Father Daniel, knowing what she had suffered, desired to protect her in every way that he could. Few ships set out from France for this destination, and nearly everyone who sails is known. Poor Madame de Valincourt thought she had come secretly; but the news spread among friends and enemies alike."

"Is it not true that her husband is a dissolute man?"

"We are informed upon the best authority that he is a man of integrity. He, too, has suffered from the tongue of slander, in that the wild doings of his young cousin, Claude de Valincourt, have been ascribed to him."

Guilbert was silent for a few moments, then he stamped his foot in rage. "Oh yes, he may be a model of rectitude; but he is nevertheless a brute, utterly devoid of any human feeling; and she should not, she must not, have all her beautiful life crushed out by that unnatural bond! If the Church will not set her free, some law of the land may be more merciful!"

"Have you any reason to believe that Madame de Valincourt desires to be released from her marriage bond? And even if it were possible that she could be freed, has she ever intimated a desire to find any other protector?"

"She—no—of course—she could not."

"She could not, and if you should suggest any such possibility to her, you would very soon perceive that you had subjected her to the cruellest of insults."

“ I—did not intend—to do so; but it is surely a cruelty, a wrong, to make such a marriage as that indissoluble.”

“ Whom therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder,” repeated the priest. “ Madame de Valincourt was not coerced into the marriage, as people have said. She married the man who was her father’s choice for her; but he loved her too well to force an unwilling union upon her. She was very young, only seventeen, and the Count de Valincourt was forty. He was a grave and serious man, and seemed older than his years. He meant to be kind to her; but he did not understand. She was high-spirited, full of life and the joy of life; her mother had died in her infancy, and her father indulged her in every way. Her husband kept her under a restraint that galled her. Because she was so young, he thought she must be constantly under watch and ward; she believed that he did not trust her, and that was humiliating to a proud and honourable woman. No doubt she was very unhappy; she pined and grew ill and thin; she feared her husband and avoided him, grew pale and trembled in his presence, and he, unhappily, imagined that she was deceiving him in some way, hiding from him some fault or mistake. In those early days, before vile insinuations had been whispered to him, he had no suspicion of the sin of unfaithfulness; but he, too, became very unhappy, and the breach between them grew wider.”

“ She never loved him at any time,” declared Guilbert with evident satisfaction. “ If she had cared for him, even but a little, she would have gone

to him and asked him why he was cold to her. It is well for her that the ocean is between them."

"For a time—only for a time—perhaps it is well for both."

Guilbert started up. "Do you mean—that you think it possible—that she could return to—that brutal man—that the Superior—that Father Daniel—would permit it—or enforce it?"

"They would not enforce it; they have given her shelter; they will not turn her away; the Count de Valincourt would not wish her to be coerced into an unwilling return."

"Does he dare to ask her to go back to him, to be insulted again, watched, spied upon, suspected?"

"If—when—she goes back, they will understand one another better. I am telling you now only what all Paris knows, what Dominique will know when he returns. The Count de Valincourt has learned that he was deceived by false witnesses; he knew it before she had reached these shores. He has suffered deeply for the suffering he laid upon her. He had been absent from France for a long time; he had gone away because they two were not happy together. I do not think there had been at that time any disputes, accusations or recriminations; but there was anguish of mind. In his absence, her cousin, Victor Carazeau, who was dear to her as a brother, came to see her; his presence comforted her, and they were much together, beyond doubt, innocently; but, under the circumstances, unwisely. Then the evil tales began; they reached the Count de Valincourt in a distant land, and he returned to France in haste. He is a jealous man. He realized very

bitterly that he was old and that Victor was young and fascinating. It appears that he believed the vile tales too readily; when he accused her, she was so shamed and insulted, so overwhelmed indeed with indignation and distress, that she could find no words to reply; he ordered her to depart from his presence, and she, not waiting to attempt to justify herself, desiring only to go far, far from him, fled in the night to the Rochons. They, rash as she, yielded to her wishes, and caught the boat that was about to sail over the ocean. The Count de Valincourt had never meant to drive her from his house; had never meant the world to know of the breach between them; he would have provided her with every comfort, under strict guardianship. It was her own action that roused suspicion, set gossiping tongues a-going, and led at last to all manner of wild tales that far exceeded the truth."

Father Brébeuf looked at Guilbert as if he would ask, "What have you to say?" but Guilbert's only answer was to bow his head upon his hands. Presently he sighed, a deep sigh that was nigh to a moan; then he lifted his head. The leaden rings under his eyes made his face appear the more colourless, and Brébeuf realized with anxiety that his determination to try to be well, to struggle with his passion, had made him appear stronger than he was, that he was still physically weak and in need of care. When he spoke, his voice sounded flat and lifeless. "With your permission, Father, I will return now to Sainte Marie. I—thank you. You have been—very patient with me."

Brébeuf's smile was full of tenderness. "You are

so young, my son, only twenty-three. I am twice your age and ten years, and my Father in Heaven has still need of patience with me."

Guilbert started up, his face working convulsively. "Oh, Father, she is so young, so pitifully young, only a girl! Life has been too cruel to her! Why should all the joy be crushed out from one of nineteen years? Why should she be asked to go back to what is—what must be—a bondage?"

"Let us hope that all joy will not be crushed out—that in the path of duty she may find—blessedness. If she should choose the wrong way, she might find pleasure of a sort, but never true happiness. My son, the way of duty is the way of the Cross, and though it bring pain and trial, it is—always—the way of Peace."

"A-a-h!" The word came from the young man's lips in a quivering sigh. He looked into Brébeuf's face, and in that strong face, he saw that this man too had suffered. What the suffering had been, of what nature, he could not tell; but—he had suffered, and because of it he was able to understand.

"It is hard for one so hot-blooded and impulsive as you are, my son, to bow himself and lift the Cross," continued Brébeuf very earnestly; "but those very qualities, that impetuous energy, that stormy force, transformed, may give you the more strength to bear that Cross bravely, by the Grace of God."

Again Guilbert bowed his head and clenched his hands. He stood long in silence, and the priest did not break the silence by a movement. When Guilbert looked up again, he said, in a voice that

was tense and low: "Father—I will take the way of the Cross—I fear I do not take it gladly nor willingly—yet—but—I choose to take it."

"God bless you, my son," said Brébeuf. "You will bear it bravely, nobly now, of that I have no doubt; and in the time to come, you will bear it willingly and gladly. Again I say, God bless you."

As Guilbert went out of the room, Jean de Brébeuf stood in the doorway, opening on the court. The young man looked back and saw the priest still standing there, with his eyes glowing, his hands raised as in benediction. In that moment, Guilbert little thought that he should never look upon that face again.

CHAPTER IX

A GRUESOME FESTIVAL

THE immediate danger of an Iroquois attack had apparently passed; the scouts who ranged the forest had reported that they could not discover a sign of the enemy; but the missionaries feared that the relief was only temporary, and that the wily foe was making ready to return.

Some of the Hurons decided that this would be a favourable season to hold one of their great Feasts of the Dead. At varying intervals, each of the four nations of the Huron Confederacy had gathered the skeletons of the dead from widely distant places, and deposited them with many strange rites in an enormous pit. Many of the warriors asserted that peace would continue; but the thoughtful believed that war was near, and for that reason they desired to pay honour to their dead while they had opportunity.

The men went far into the forests and to old battle-fields, and collected hundreds of skeletons from shallow graves and from scaffolds. They brought these remains to a cleared space near Teanaustayé, and those who were appointed for the purpose arranged them in rows and removed their coverings. The relations claimed their own, caressed the

remnants of mortality with expressions of affection, and wrapped them in skins with pendants of furs. The skeletons were then removed to the largest house in the town and hung to the cross poles that supported the roof. A chief addressed the assembly and the squaws distributed food.

After this ceremony, the corpses of those who had died recently were laid on litters, bundles of bones were slung on the shoulders of relatives, and the various processions started toward the place of sepulture. The Hurons believed that the relics possessed feeling and consciousness, and as the long lines went on their dreary way, the relations wept and howled, with the idea of comforting the departed by the knowledge that they were missed and lamented.

The pit had been dug in light soil in a large clearing. It was surrounded by a high and strong scaffolding, with many upright poles and cross poles, to support the remains and the funeral gifts. Upon arriving at the burial place, the chiefs gave the order to prepare, and the mourners laid the skeletons and bundles of bones upon the ground. Amid dismal wailings, the relations removed the coverings for the last time, each took up his bundle again, and moved to the place assigned near the pit, either on the scaffold or below it. Darkness had gathered, and the great piles of wood that had been laid in readiness were lighted and soon blazed high. The bearers scaled the scaffold by rude ladders, and hung upon the poles the skeletons and the funeral gifts—some gifts were furs of great value. Men lined the pit with robes of beaver, while chiefs from



. . . flung the remains of the dead into the cavity.

the scaffold addressed the crowd. Those who had been chosen from the multitude flung the remains of the dead, which were adorned with beads and feathers, into the deep cavity, accompanying the action with dreary and discordant cries. In the gruesome cavern men were standing with long poles to arrange the bones and skeletons in their places. Copper kettles, in which large holes had been knocked with tomahawks, had been placed in the middle of the pit, and copper and stone axes, pipes and pottery, wampum, glass and copper beads, were strewn amid the relics.

Since the establishment of the Mission the priests had buried the bodies of their converts with the rites of the Church; but a large majority of those among whom they dwelt were not converts and continued to practise their pagan ceremonies. Nevertheless, the missionaries regarded the display of mortality at the solemn Feasts of the Dead as so edifying that they desired their soldiers and assistants to attend the ceremony and profit by the warning.

In some of the earlier Death Feasts, the mourners had gathered in one place from many distant towns; but for this last solemn festival of Teanaustayé few had come from a distance.

Father Daniel had not urged Constance and the Rochons to witness the rites. Constance was very sensitive, and the priest feared that the repulsive scene would harm rather than benefit; but she had begged permission to attend; troubling thoughts had pursued her, and she welcomed any distraction that might help her to escape them; she had a place on the scaffold with the Rochons, and watched the

spectacle, listened to the dismal wails, with a strange and horrible fascination. The flaming fires against the background of the surrounding forest, the deep pit, the dark forms moving far below, appeared like a weird scene from some other world. Suddenly Constance gasped; horror overtook her; she felt that she was in the midst of an unreality—vague, awful, incomprehensible—that she was struggling to awake and could not grasp her consciousness; that she was trying to shriek aloud and her voice was mute. Then, far from her, on the other side of the pit, but clearly defined in the light of a fire, she saw Guilbert de Keroual.

CHAPTER X

MADAME ROCHON RELIEVES HER MIND

FATHER DANIEL had seen Guilbert and had hastened to meet him.

“ I had not expected you, my son,” he said, “ but you are always welcome.”

The warmth of the tone cheered Guilbert; he had been doubtful of his welcome; he had believed that the priest wished to banish him from Teanaustayé; but Father Daniel knew the human heart too well to pronounce any sentence of banishment; Guilbert should not live at Teanaustayé, where he would be constantly in the society of Constance de Valincourt; but he should be at liberty to come and go, and there should be no suggestion to Constance that there was any restriction upon her meeting him.

“ My coming was unexpected by myself, Father,” said Guilbert. “ Men from Sainte Marie desired to attend the Death Feast and the Father Superior saw a favourable opportunity for me to bear letters to you. At the present time he thinks that a strong guard is necessary in crossing the forests.”

The priest looked up inquiringly. “ Has the Father Superior reason to believe that there is unusual danger? Last week an Indian ‘ runner ’ came from Sainte Marie alone.”

“ He has heard disquieting rumours, Father. Yesterday a body of scouts brought word that they had seen Iroquois lurking near the shores of Wentaron, not many miles from Teanaustayé. That is one of the matters on which the Superior has written to you; he said he had advised you on other subjects; but of them he did not inform me.”

“ Ah! That is disquieting indeed! Have our men been blind? Or is it possible that the scouts from Sainte Marie were mistaken? A number of hunters came in yesterday and they declared that there was not one Iroquois within many days' journey. They have arranged to set out on a great hunt to-morrow, very few will be left in the town beside the feeble, the women and the children.”

“ If they are so blind, can you not make them see? Will they not believe this report? The mere suspicion of such danger should be enough to make them abandon the hunt and remain at Teanaustayé for defence.”

“ Alas, my son, the Hurons seldom abandon any purpose on which they have set their minds. That is an excellent quality when it is guided by discretion. They magnify our knowledge in many ways, and look upon us as wonder workers; but they scorn our advice in regard to their enemies or to any perils of the forest. This ceremony is nearing the end; but when the multitude has dispersed, when the visitors have gone on their way, or have been housed in the neighbourhood, the night will be late. I will try to bring some of the chief men together and talk with them; but I fear it will be useless, and that they will go out before the dawn.”

“ And for myself, Father, shall I return to Sainte Marie in the morning ? ”

“ You will follow the instruction of the Superior.”

“ He left my movements entirely in your discretion.”

“ In that case I prefer that you remain here till later in the day. If I have a conference with these Hurons to-night, I shall require time in the morning to consider the reply to the Superior’s letter.”

Guilbert’s face did not show any pleasure. He had no desire now to see Constance or to talk with her. She was the wife of the Count de Valincourt; if it was her duty to return to him—of that duty Guilbert was yet doubtful—his own hope of peace was in forgetfulness. He did not attempt to make his way through the crowd to the opposite side of the pit; he hoped that Constance and the Rochons had not seen him.

In the morning a Huron boy brought a message from Madame Rochon. She wished to see him at her cottage. He believed that Constance would be there, and the old hopes and fears, the questionings, the longing for her presence, that he had so sternly bade to depart, leaped up defiantly to mock him.

Madame Rochon was alone. She explained: “ I have sent Madame de Valincourt with Monsieur to the river. She will paddle the canoe and Monsieur Rochon will fish. They will not return before midday.”

“ I understood that you wished to see me,” said Guilbert. His tone was impassive.

“ I sent for you with that purpose. I wished to see you alone.”

"I am honoured," replied the young man somewhat stiffly.

"We have heard—that is to say, I have heard—that you received a letter from Monsieur Dominique Rivard in relation to the affairs of the Count de Valincourt."

Guilbert started. Was it possible that Father Brébeuf had betrayed his confidence? No, that was not possible; he would not dishonour the noble man by such suspicion.

"I am at a loss to know how you have been informed of the nature of my correspondence."

"I was informed by Dominique Rivard himself. After writing to you and despatching his letter, he had an opportunity to send a messenger to Teanaustayé. He had learned that the Count de Valincourt and many other persons were aware of the residence of the Countess here, and he desired to warn me; he then informed me that he had written to you of the evil deeds and cruelty of the Count."

"And—and you wished to confirm this?" stammered Guilbert.

"Far from it. I sent for you in order that I might deny it—in large part. The Count de Valincourt is a very noble gentleman. He behaved toward his wife at all times with dignity and courtesy."

"For what cause, then, did she fly from him, with your connivance and under your protection?"

"Alas! We were too hasty; we have bitterly regretted that haste and folly. It is true that he had believed false witnesses against her; and she, proud and imperious as ever, one who had never borne

contradiction, was too insulted, too overflowing with indignation even to deny it; she left his presence and said she would never look upon his face again. We, who adored her, were bitterly enraged against him, and readily consented to her pleading; thus it came that we plunged ourselves headlong into the perils of this wilderness."

"And now, what would you ask of me?"

"Nothing but to absent yourself from this place and to bear in mind that your friend has informed you falsely; though of that he was not aware."

"The Father Superior desired me to bring messages. And why should I not come here?"

"Come as you will when we have gone, but not again till that time."

"Do you expect to go very soon to Montreal?"

"Very soon, as the forest is said to be free from Iroquois. At Montreal we will await a boat to France."

Guilbert turned white. "You mean—that she—will return to him?"

"I trust that she will do her duty."

"It cannot be her duty. She does not love him. A marriage without love is not hallowed."

"Who has said that she does not love him? Who knows her heart so well as to inform you of that, Monsieur Guilbert de Keroual?"

"No one has told me, but no woman who truly loved her husband would have left him so; and if he had loved her, he could not have accused her so vilely, he could not have believed such evil against her."

"In that you are mistaken, Monsieur de Keroual;

because he loved her so madly, he believed that every man who saw her must love her; that he was jealous no one can deny, nor that his jealousy led him to wrong her deeply; but he has deeply repented; he has written to me, so beautifully, so humbly, confessing his fault. He, a proud man, so humiliated himself in his love for her. He did not write to her; he feared that she would refuse to read; but through me he implored her to forgive him and to return; he promised that he would trust her evermore, and that he would try to repay by tenderness, by every consideration, for the wrong that he had done."

"Why have you told me this? I would not try to dissuade her from her duty, whatever that may be."

"In that I believe you; but when—she is almost persuaded—the presence of—of anyone—not a missionary, or of our household, might divert her thought from its rightful course."

The young man's face lighted with an unholy joy. Madame Rochon had admitted that Constance would think of him, that such thought might delay her return to her husband. He knew that he had resolved to renounce her—even in thought—he meant to keep his resolve—but—no man can foreknow the subtle temptations of his own heart.

Madame Rochon observed his expression and said mockingly: "You may not flatter yourself, Monsieur de Keroual. When the Countess de Valincourt has returned to her husband, she will remember you—as Monsieur Rochon and I will remember—as one who was of kindly assistance to us all in the early

days of our sojourn; but as the time goes by, you will become one of the dreamlike shadows of the past, of these days of trial that we would all fain forget. We are not ungrateful; but we will escape most thankfully from this terrible wild."

"In that case I do not understand why you should fear my presence."

"I would fear the presence of any visitor, of anyone who might turn her thoughts from contemplation. I desire that she should be, as it were, in a retreat, for prayer and meditation. This place is not like Sainte Marie, where there are many young men; you have been the only one." Madame Rochon felt that she had expressed herself ambiguously; but she decided that it would be better policy to drop the subject.

"Monsieur Rochon is delighted to go," she went on; "yet he has found some pleasure in the life; it has been more supportable to him than to me. He has fished; he has shot and trapped, and he is proud of the work in his garden. As you will have left Teanaustayé before he returns with the Countess de Valincourt, he would wish you to see his garden, and I will now take pleasure in showing it to you."

Guilbert followed Madame in silence, while she commented on the diligence of Monsieur Rochon, on his quickly acquired skill as a gardener, though he had never taken spade in hand till he came to Teanaustayé. The ground was rough, for the space had been cleared from the forest, and stumps showed here and there among the beds. The fence was of roughly-split logs; but it served to keep out the Indian children, the cows and swine. There were

beds of peas and beans, which would soon be ready to eat, and larger beds of corn, which would ripen later; an enclosure beyond showed a field of turnips.

"Yes, he will regret to leave it," said Madame. "His heart is divided between the joy of seeing his beloved France again and sorrow in parting from that which has given him interest. In his separation from his old-time companions, he has found companionship of a sort in his cow and his pigs, his poultry and his dog. The companionship of a dog one understands; the little dog will accompany him to France."

She ceased her prattle with a start. She thought she had caught a glimpse of Monsieur Rochon and Constance coming through the wood. She was as eager to dismiss Guilbert as she had been to summon him.

"Pardon me, Monsieur de Keroual," she said hurriedly. "I have detained you. I was unmindful that Father Daniel had said he wished you to set out before noon, so you might arrive at Sainte Marie in daylight. I will not delay you longer. Farewell. We shall not meet again. Forgive me if what I have said has appeared as a lack of hospitality; I am burdened by a sense of my responsibility, my duty to the Count de Valincourt and the Countess; my thoughts of you will always be most kindly; I shall remember your courtesy, your solicitude for our welfare, with gratitude."

Guilbert, too, had seen the approaching figures, and for a moment he was tempted to delay, to have one last word with Constance before he parted from her for ever. The remembrance would be sweet to

him, something to carry through all his life; he knew that by his speech he would not betray his promise; yet the thoughts of his heart might reveal themselves in his eyes, and that would be a betrayal. He would hasten away and see her nevermore. As he turned his face westward to Teanaustayé, blotting from his sight that gracious womanhood that seemed to him more precious than anything in life, he felt that he had lost all; yet—he had kept his honour. She had not seen him, of that he felt sure, and Madame Rochon would not tell her that he had visited the cottage.

CHAPTER XI

THE TRAGEDY OF TEANAUSTAYÉ

THE men of Teanaustayé had paid no heed to Father Daniel's warning and pleas. They declared that their sight was as keen, their hearing as good as that of any scouts of Sainte Marie; they had not found a trace of their enemies for many weeks; they had made preparations for the great hunt, and go they would.

The Father Superior was much disturbed by the report that Guilbert brought to Sainte Marie; other scouts had seen a large force of Iroquois approaching from the east, the men of Teanaustayé had gone westward to hunt, and the Iroquois might descend at any moment upon an unguarded town.

"I cannot send help from Sainte Marie," said the Superior anxiously. "St. Ignace and St. Louis may be in peril, and we have promised that any men who can be spared shall go to their defence. The warriors of Teanaustayé are sufficient for that place if they can be persuaded to return. A swift runner must set out at dawn and give them another warning."

"I will go, Father, willingly," said Guilbert, "with your permission. I will bear your second

message to Father Daniel, and then follow the men. I know the way they have gone; if they have found much game, their shooting will have delayed them; I can overtake them."

"You have so recently come in, my son; you have not rested."

"I could go to rest at once and wake before the dawn. A Huron might loiter on the way. I have no consciousness of fatigue. I feel strong and able. A very brief rest will be sufficient. Ah, pray permit me this, Father! I could have no peace if they were in danger and I did not do my part to save them."

The Superior considered for a moment, then he said gravely: "I think you are right, my son; an Indian 'runner' might be diverted from his course; but you will not fail. Go, and God speed you."

Guilbert rose in the night after a very short sleep, and set out on his return. The warriors from Sainte Marie did not think that the Iroquois could reach any of the Huron towns for some days; therefore Guilbert hoped that he could deliver his message at Teanaustayé, overtake the hunters, and persuade them to return in time to defend the town in case of attack. A number of men had gone some time ago with a trading party to Villemarie and Three Rivers; there was a possibility that they might return soon, or that they might meet the Iroquois and engage them on the way.

He had expected to reach Teanaustayé in the early morning; but when he was not more than half way, he heard low voices and a rustling of branches, and perceived three men moving stealthily through the

underbrush. He dropped to the ground, crept softly through some long grass, and secreted himself in a clump of cedars. He feared that the men were Iroquois, and presently felt sure they were, for they squatted so close to the cedars where he was hiding that he hardly dared breathe lest they discover him. He could not distinguish their words; but he knew by a difference in voice and accent that they were not Hurons. It seemed to him that they sat there for hours till two companions joined them, and they moved away. He, too, waited long to give them time to go beyond sight and hearing. He would have risked danger for himself; but he must be cautious for the sake of others, to deliver his warning.

When he crept out, he proceeded carefully, watching, listening; he saw no further sign of Iroquois, but the sun was high when he left the forest and came out upon the clearing.

He had made his way through the forest with a great dread upon him. If the men that he had seen were an advance guard to report to a force beyond, his message might come too late. His heart leaped with relief when he looked over the clearing and saw the palisades of Teanaustayé unharmed, the spire of the church glistening in the sun.

It seemed strange at first that there was no sign of life, no woman or child straying on the green; the silence struck him as ominous; but he remembered that at this hour the Rochons and the Hurons who were converts were probably in the church, and others were busy in their houses.

Suddenly—the silence was broken! With wild and horrible yells that chilled the blood of the

listener, hundreds of men rushed out of the forest to the south! Guilbert knew too well the war-cry of the Iroquois, the death knell of the Mission!

He had barely time to dart back into the wood and turn northward; then, running, stumbling over fallen logs, rising again and running on, he made his way to the back of the Rochon cottage, crept through the field of corn and into the door, and moved the panel that concealed the entrance to the tunnel. Inside the tunnel he returned the panel carefully to its place. The Iroquois might enter and wreck the empty cottage; but it was not likely that they would discover the secret of the tunnel. When he reached the end of the passage, he removed the stones that covered the entrance from the town but there he discovered that the way was blocked by a pile of rubbish—sticks, broken pottery, old bones, evidently the rubbish heap of some Huron family. He fought his way through it; but the delay might cost life. He was too late to warn, the horrible cries had done that; but he might not be too late to save.

When he came into the open, some of the Iroquois had broken down a part of the palisades and entered the town. He learned afterward what had happened.

Father Daniel had finished the Mass, the congregation still knelt at their devotions, when shrill cries of terror from the Hurons without mingling with the yells of the advancing Iroquois announced the coming doom. The dauntless priest ran from the church, rallied the few men who were left for defence, and directed them to catch up whatever weapons they could reach. Some of them did so

and hurried toward the breach in the palisade; others, stricken with panic, ran to and fro without purpose. Father Daniel, retaining perfect self-control, ran from house to house and besought the women who were unbelievers to repent and be baptized. Many crowded about him, imploring him to save them. He immersed his handkerchief in a bowl of water, and shook it over them, baptizing them by aspersion. Pursued by a frantic multitude, he returned to the church, where women, children and feeble old men had gathered as in a sanctuary. He found the Rochons in the church with Constance, though he had begged them to fly to the tunnel, and had handed them weapons of defence. Amid wailings of despair some of the women held out their children for baptism, others begged for absolution. Once more the missionary shook the drops of water from his handkerchief, and tried to calm his terrified flock. "Brothers!" he said to the men. "Brothers, to-day we shall be in Heaven!"

While they stood together in the church the fierce yelling sounded close at hand. Once more the priest besought them, as he had besought them before, to use measures of defence, to try to escape.

"My place is here," he declared without flinching; "for you escape may be possible. We shall meet in Heaven!"

Some escaped through an opening in the palisade opposite that by which the Iroquois had entered; but the missionary felt that he had duty to do, and he would not follow. He had prepared himself for this hour and he felt no fear. He went forth from the church to meet the Iroquois. The savages saw him

clad in his priestly vestments, his countenance radiant as if he greeted life and joy rather than a cruel death, and they paused in their work of destruction to gaze in amazement.

At that moment Guilbert reached him. He had passed through the town, mingling with the Iroquois, and yet unharmed. There was not a scar upon him when he came to the spot before the doors of the church where Constance stood. There was no fear on her face. She had loved life and shrunk from death; she had longed for earthly happiness; yet now she stood near her teacher, willing and unafraid. Her eyes were shining; within them had been kindled as within the eyes of the devoted missionary, the inspiration of an exalting faith; and the priest who had counselled her to flee had accepted her decision to remain. If she should die, God had willed it, that she should be spared from the stress and trial that life held for her. She had come from a line distinguished for valour; courage was hers by inheritance. Her hands were outstretched as she pleaded with the shrieking women to fly to safety if they could; if they could not, to stand bravely. Before Guilbert reached her she had bent to the ground and lifted a little child, whose mother had been killed or had forsaken it. She hushed its cries on her breast; her bright hair, escaping its coils in the jostling of the human mass, fell over the babe's dark head. Madame Rochon was standing near; her face was blanched; her limbs tottered; with quavering voice she tried to comfort the frightened creatures beside her. When she saw Guilbert she cried out that her husband had rushed with the

defenders to the palisade in a vain effort to stay the onslaught of the Iroquois.

“He has been overpowered and slain!” she said. “I know it! I shall follow him. We shall be united in Heaven.” Her voice grew firmer. “If I seemed harsh, forgive me. Take care of her—give her back—you know what is right. I trust you.”

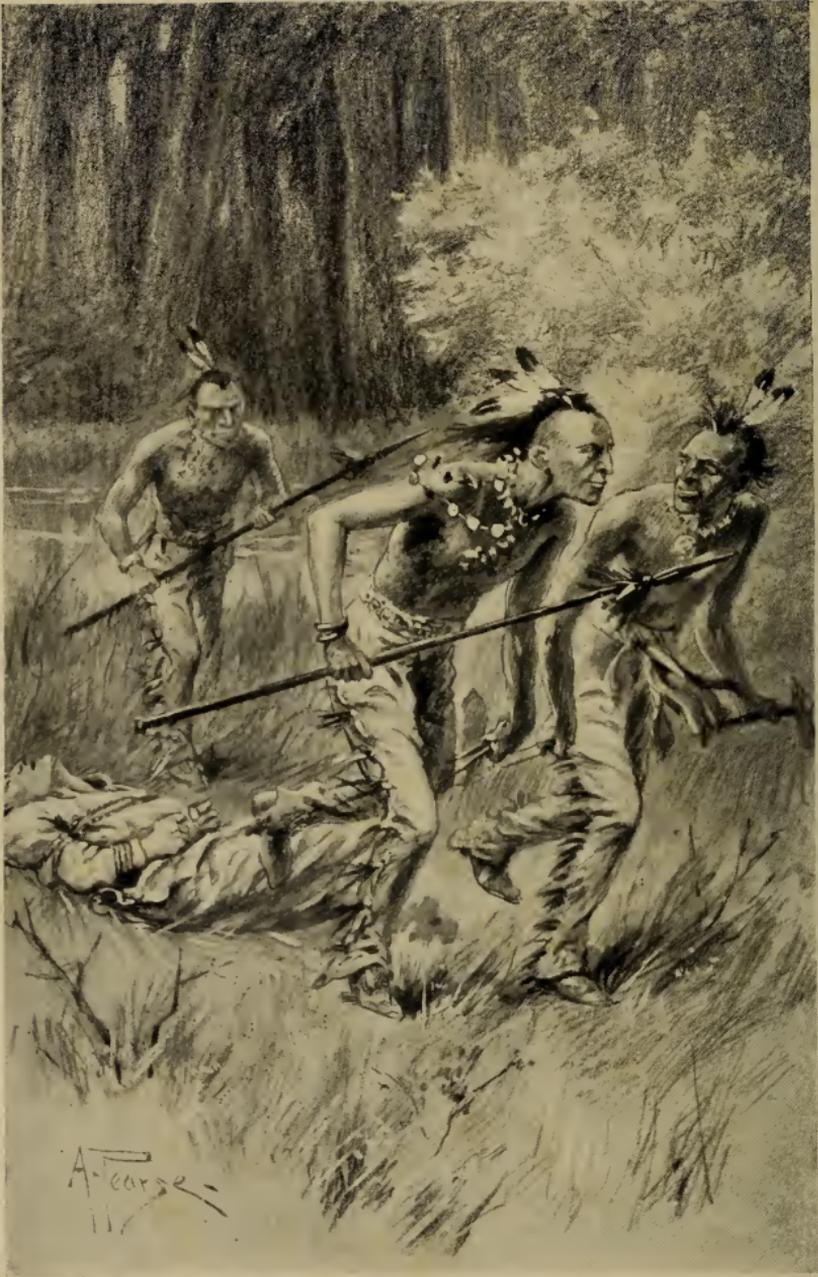
Guilbert turned to Father Daniel. “The Superior sent me, Father, to warn you. If I am too late to save you, let me die with you.”

It was too late to save Constance, too late to save anyone, to do anything but to stand steadfast.

The arrows of the enemy were flying fast around the little group, for the savages had recovered their self-possession. Guilbert knelt with Constance and Madame Rochon to receive absolution and the devoted priest’s last blessing.

The Iroquois came nearer, for a time they had held back, as in dread, daring only to shoot from a distance; now they used their spears. The sharp points tore the robes of the priest; he was bleeding and faint, but his face was illumined. A gun was fired—the savages had learned the use of these weapons—the ball pierced the heart of the priest, and he fell, gasping the name of his Master. With yells of triumph, the warriors rushed upon him, mangled the lifeless body, and bathed their faces in the blood of a hero.

Guilbert could not guard Constance from that sight. He held her with one arm, with the other he tried to guard her by dealing blows with his spear. The savages tried to pierce him with their knives and to take her captive; and he fought desperately in the



. . . dragged him at their heels.

effort to save her from such a fate. She understood and whispered that she did not dread death; but prayed for deliverance from such a life.

An Iroquois pressed forward and aimed at Guilbert's heart, but Constance interposed her body and received the stroke. Guilbert did not understand what had happened, for another had thrust a knife into his side. At that moment a great outcry arose in another quarter of the town and the savages rushed away to discover the cause. The wounded ones fell together.

When Guilbert's consciousness returned, he saw that Constance was breathing, but there was blood upon her dress. Madame Rochon lay dead. Her face was calm, as though she had died on the instant of her wounding, without a pang. The body of Father Daniel was so hacked and gashed as hardly to be recognizable. That day, when the Iroquois returned, they set the town ablaze, and flung the martyred priest into the flames of the church he had loved, a fitting funeral pyre; though his foes had no intent to do him honour.

For a time Guilbert believed that Constance must die with him, but as strength began to return, he thought of the underground passage to the Rochon house. He little cared for life now; but his duty was to try to save her and himself.

He never remembered how he reached the tunnel. Faint from his wounds and sick at heart, he tottered on, without meeting a single Iroquois. It was evident that they had encountered some force, for the din of fighting reached Guilbert's ears. On his way he passed many dead and some who were dying; but

feeble as he was, and bearing Constance in his arms, it was not possible for him to give any help.

Near the entrance to the cavern a part of the wall of the town had fallen, making a pile of stones and débris. Guilbert feared that it would be impossible to remove this obstruction; but when he had laid his precious burden upon the ground, he discovered that the heap of rubbish directly in front of the entrance had held back this later accumulation, and that the passage he had made was still open. He had barely time to crawl through the narrow opening and conceal the entrance when he heard the shouts of the returning warriors; their tramping assured him that they were very near and their cries of triumph that they had overcome their opponents.

He feared to move till the sounds assured him that the enemy had passed on; then, groping his way, dragging the unconscious woman, for he had not strength to carry her, he came to a spot where the cavern was wide, and where dim light and better air was admitted through a hole in the rock side, concealed from discovery by a clump of cedars. When he had reached this place of comparative safety, he, too, lost consciousness.

When he came to himself, Constance was gasping, as if in a struggle for breath.

“Madame de Valincourt?” he said feebly. “Are you suffering?”

She seemed bewildered. “It is dark. Where am I?”

He could not long conceal the truth from her, recollection would soon come, and he would help her to remember.

“ In the tunnel,” he said simply. “ I brought you here for safety—from—the Iroquois.”

“ O-o-o ! ” she moaned and put her hands before her face. “ Are they all—gone? Are we alone in the world? ”

“ I fear that those whom you love best are gone—the Rochons, Father Daniel—whether any have been left alive, I do not know.”

“ O-oh ! ” she moaned again; but she was too weak from physical suffering and loss of blood to understand clearly or feel acutely.

“ You are wounded ! ” cried out Guilbert suddenly, remembering the stain of blood upon her sleeve.

“ My arm,” she said, and held it up to him as if asking for aid.

The wound was not deep, though it had bled freely, and that was a chance for safety, if there had been poison on the spear.

“ Let me leave you here for a few moments,” said Guilbert. “ I will go for water to wash the cut.”

“ But—you will be in danger.”

“ I will not put myself in danger. I will try to enter the kitchen at the back of the cottage, and draw water from the well. I will listen; I will be careful; if there is sound of anyone, I will not venture.”

The tunnel was not long and there was sufficient light from apertures here and there—apertures that were always carefully concealed—to enable him to grope his way. He moved the stone from the entrance to the cottage and then listened carefully before he moved the panel. He was convinced that it was safe to do so, as he did not hear a sound. There was a deathlike silence as he entered the

kitchen. He found a bucket, and removing the wooden cover from the well in the floor, he filled the bucket with water. Then he looked for food and found some cakes of maize and fried fish. He had put the provisions in a basket and lifted the bucket from the floor when he heard a sound as of men entering the front door. In breathless haste, but not without some noise, he slipped through the opening and shut the panel. That secret entrance had been ingeniously made, so as almost to defy discovery; but Guilbert feared the men had seen him before he escaped. He heard them in the kitchen and they were evidently searching; he dared not move the stone to cover the panel lest a sound should betray its position. As he crouched there he felt the pain of his wound. He believed that it was only a flesh wound, and that the blood, drying upon it, had staunched the flow.

Keeping his ear close to the panel, he heard the men moving about the kitchen and sounding the walls; then he felt sure they had seen him and were looking for his way of escape; at any moment they might discover it, their senses were so keen and trained. He had ceased to feel alarm; it seemed as though he were watching the fate of some man to whom he felt indifferent.

A muffled howling rose from beneath the floor of the kitchen, a weird, unearthly sound. Guilbert heard the savages step back from the wall. The sound continued: the men stood as if in fright, then they rushed out of the house. Guilbert believed that a little dog had crawled into the narrow space under the house; but the savages evidently took the sounds

for some supernatural omen. He quickly moved the stone back to its place, completely filling the narrow entrance. If the men should return, though he believed they would not, there was a possibility that they might take the stone for a part of the solid rock, as it appeared to be; and a further possibility that if they did move it, they would be terrified by the skeletons near it.

He hurried back to Constance and found her sitting crouched upon a stone. He explained to her what had detained him, and as he talked he washed the wound and bound it with strips of linen that he had brought from the cottage. He had learned from Father Daniel how to dress and bind wounds.

Afterward, he dressed the wound in his side. It was painful, but not deep, and he believed that it would soon heal.

He persuaded Constance to eat, against her inclination. He had found the cold baked fish in a pan, as if Madame Rochon had intended to warm it again for the midday dinner. He hoped Constance would not think of that. If she thought, she said nothing; her face showed her misery, but it was a torpid misery. He was silent too; he could think of nothing to say. As the hours wore on, that silence of desolation became unbearable to him. He must move, do something, even though the doing were reckless.

He knew that night had come, for the tunnel was now in total darkness, no one ray of light came through the small apertures; he could not see the face of Constance though she sat near him. It was long

since she had spoken or made a movement that he could hear. She might be ill, she might die in the dark, and he could not help her.

“Madame de Valincourt,” he said gently, “I am going to find something to make you more comfortable; you must rest.”

“Do not put yourself in danger for my sake,” she said; but there was no entreaty in the tone; it was as if something without life had been made to utter sound.

Once more he groped through the tunnel; now, as there was no light whatever, he sometimes stumbled. He entered the kitchen cautiously; but could hear nothing; he stumbled there too, but found the way to a cupboard where he had seen a lantern and candles. He put the candles in a basket with more cakes of maize and some baked beans, then entered a bedroom and took from the bed two pillows and a warm quilt. He dropped his bundles into the tunnel, and then, very recklessly, walked toward the front door, having turned his lantern so low that he saw with difficulty. He hid the lantern where its light could not be seen and stood in the open doorway, looking out. He had thought it possible that the Iroquois had left the place, either to speed to other conquests, or to avoid Hurons who might be returning from their hunt; but the demoniac yells and the blaze of many fires told him that the savages were indulging in an orgy of victory. As he stood there, he saw three men approaching with lanterns. He was not sure they were coming to the cottage; but he lost no time in hurrying back and closing the entrance to the tunnel. He listened, but heard no sound, and after waiting for

a short time, he thought it was safe to return to Constance.

She seemed to be in a stupor; but she thanked him when he placed the pillow and quilt for her, and lay down as if in exhaustion. He heard her sigh, but she did not speak again, and after a time he knew from her breathing that she had fallen asleep.

He slept, fitfully; but woke very often. The night of horror seemed interminable.

CHAPTER XII

VENGEANCE OF FIRE

LIGHT was flickering through the apertures of the tunnel when Guilbert woke from an uneasy dream. Constance was lying in a recess of the rock not far away. He called softly :

“ Madame de Valincourt, are you awake ? ”

“ Yes, Monsieur de Keroual. ”

“ From the way in which light enters the tunnel, I think the sun is high. It is not the custom of the Iroquois to remain in the towns they have destroyed. If they left Teanaustayé in the early morning, they will be far away now. I will venture into the town to see. ”

“ As you will, ” she said indifferently.

“ We should leave this place as soon as it is possible. If any Hurons have escaped, we may overtake them and reach Sainte Marie in their company. ”

She sighed heavily, a despairing sigh. “ Those we loved did not escape. It were better if we had died with them. ”

“ It was the will of God that we should live. ”

She did not answer, and he, not knowing how to comfort her, went on to the entrance of the cavern and removed the stones.

He crept through the heap of débris and crouched for a time, listening. About him was the stillness

of the grave, but presently a bird sang cheerily. That fifth day of July, 1648, was a lovely summer morning, the sun shining in the clear heaven over the desolation upon earth. It was so silent that Guilbert was convinced the Iroquois had gone far away, and he stepped out into the sunlight.

Teanaustayé lay in ruins. Here and there light gleamed from a smouldering pile amid heaps of ashes. Guilbert saw few of the dead; for the most part the bodies of the slain had been consumed in the fires of the town.

As he wandered, he came upon a bag, which had perhaps been cast away by someone in flight. It contained dried meat and parched corn, and he remembered that he had eaten nothing that morning. He felt no hunger, but he ate as he walked to renew his strength. He hoped that Constance would eat of the food that was beside her in the tunnel. On the spot where the church had been, he saw the smouldering ruins. No bodies lay near, and he understood—they had been thrown upon the flames. Close by the palisade opening that he had striven to defend he found the body of Nicholas Rochon. He covered it reverently with great branches of cedar from a tree that stood by unharmed and said a prayer for burial.

When he returned to the cavern, he said nothing of the sights he had seen, and she asked nothing.

“If you have strength, Madame de Valincourt,” he said, “we should set forth now.”

“I will do what you think is best,” she answered lifelessly.

He ventured on a word of consolation: “Those

whom we have lost are happy. They died fulfilling their duty. The life that Father Daniel saw by faith was more real to him than is this mortal life of ours. He had no care for this world except to do in it all that lay in his power for good. His hopes, his desires, were in that world beyond that seemed to him so near. As I looked upon his face but yesterday there was a radiant joy upon it as if it were reflected from a light we could not see."

"Yes; for him we should not mourn; but those who gave up all for me loved the brightness and joy of life here; and, but for me, they would have been happy now together in their beloved France."

"With all my heart I believe that they are happy now—together." He paused for a moment and then said abruptly: "I have not been a religious man, Madame de Valincourt. I loved this life so well that I did not wish to think of another, I tried to put the thought of it far from me; perhaps that is natural to the young; the world is very beautiful; God made it so; I do not think that He wills that we should not love it; but, since yesterday, since those who are dear to us have entered into that other life, it seems nearer, very near; I do not shrink from the thought of passing there; I think I should be glad to lay this—trial—down; but if God wills that we should live, we must strive to preserve our lives; we may have great work to do."

She sighed again, that dreary sigh that gave him pain. "Yes, I have a work to do; I must try to make right a wrong."

"Have you eaten anything this morning?"

"No, I had forgotten."

“ Try to eat, or you will not have strength for the journey, and it may be hard. If the cottage has not been destroyed, we may find food and clothing there. I did not see beyond the town.”

She ate some maize cake and drank a little water and said she was ready to go. He dreaded the effect of the ruined town upon her, and when they had passed out of the tunnel, he warned her. You will find only desolation here. The fires have left nothing but smouldering logs.”

“ Can we find—them? ” she asked in a low voice.

“ Can we give them—burial? ”

“ Their burial was in the cleansing fire—the fires of the Church. They would not wish for any more pure and beautiful.”

“ Come with me to the place,” she said. “ We will say a prayer.”

He knew that she would have been thankful to die, for yesterday, in the near presence of death her eyes had glowed with a strange exaltation. He left her standing alone near the spot where the door had been, where she had stood beside the martyred priest and her beloved guardian; his presence in that sacred moment would seem an intrusion. He did not go far, he must be near her for protection; she understood, and when she had whispered her prayers, she turned to seek him. Her face was calmer now; it did not express the uplifting of yesterday, but a measure of resignation.

“ The little one, the babe, that I held in my arms,” she said inquiringly. “ I have a recollection that someone took it from me; but I do not remember clearly.”

“ An Iroquois warrior snatched it away. It is probable he will adopt the little fellow and bring him up as his own son. They seldom destroy boy babies.”

“ Ah, but what a fate! He were better dead than to live as such a savage.”

“ They are not all equally cruel; there is a possibility of the child’s falling into the hands of one with some good qualities. Let us hope the best.”

A wild bird began to sing in a tree that the fire had not consumed. Madame de Valincourt lifted up her eyes.

“ I wonder,” she said, “ I wonder, in the Heaven where they have gone, can they hear any songs of earth, can they behold us whom they have left behind? ”

“ Who can tell? To us of lesser faith, it seems hidden and afar; but to Father Brébeuf, to all these men who give themselves up for the work, it is near, as if their gaze had penetrated the enshrouding veil.”

“ Father Brébeuf! ” she exclaimed. “ Oh, I would that I could see him. He would help me to go where my duty lies.”

“ I will try to take you to him. Where do you wish to go? ”

She did not answer, and Guilbert said quickly: “ Pardon me; I spoke hastily. Forget that I asked if you do not wish to tell me.”

“ I will tell you. I want to go back to France, to my husband, my duty. That was the wish for me of Father Daniel, of my dear Madame Rochon, and of Monsieur. I will try to fulfil their desire; I will

try to be true to what they have taught me. Perhaps in the Heaven where they are they may know that I am trying."

"I think—I hope—they may know—that—*we* are trying."

She turned to him, her lip quivering: "Monsieur de Keroual, will you help me to find the way—to go back to him? Ah, I need not ask it; I know you will; for you are—noble."

"There are many perils on the way—many difficulties; but so far as it is in the power of man to surmount them, I will do it; I will try to take you safely to Father Brébeuf at St. Ignace, and with his aid you may be able to return to—France."

She bowed her head. "I thank you; Oh, I do most deeply thank you."

CHAPTER XIII

PERILS BY THE WAY

WHEN she looked up again he said very simply, as if he had passed through no stress of emotion, no trial of strength, "Let us go to the cottage, and if it is standing, we may find there clothing for you and food for the journey. It was unharmed last night. This morning I did not look beyond the town."

A grove of pines hid the house from view of Teanaustayé, but an ominous smoke curled above the trees.

"Look!" she said. "I think it has shared the fate of all of Teanaustayé. It contained many things that were precious to me, but we could not have taken them with us, and it is well if they have perished in the fire."

Guilbert knew that the savages would leave nothing that was of value to perish in the fire; but he did not say it.

When they drew near to the place they saw that nothing of the house remained but the charred logs that had been the walls, with here and there little jets of flame shooting up from the ruin. Guilbert thought of the little dog that he had heard in the

night and hoped that he had died without much pain.

Madame de Valincourt went down on her knees and Guilbert stood by her in silence. He knew that she was thinking of those who had lived there with her and who would never return, and that she was seeking strength to walk upon a way that was hard. He regarded her with a great reverence, as one who was set apart for a noble destiny. The memory of yesterday's martyrdom had purged him for the time of all that was ignoble; he desired only to live as the noble priest who had given himself in sacrifice for others would wish him to live; he, too, would learn the way of sacrifice. No temptation of the flesh assailed him now; the realm of the spiritual world, pure and beautiful, was for him too, in this time of chastening, the Great Reality.

He moved a few steps apart, and when Constance rose, she turned to him. "Shall we go on now, Monsieur de Keroual? I am ready."

"Will you come back with me to the ruins?" he asked. "I was thoughtless. I should have remembered. I may find some food that we shall need on our way; and you will need a knife or some weapon of defence."

She shuddered and clenched her hands, but did not speak.

"Forgive me," he said gently. "It hurts you, but it is necessary. When we have found it, we will go."

"Leave me here," she begged. "There is no sound of anyone near. I will look; I will listen; and if there is sign of anyone approaching, I know a

hiding-place beneath the upturned roots of a fallen pine. The shrubs have grown above the old trunk; you know the place and can find me; the strangers do not know."

"As you will," he said. "I will return quickly." He was uneasy in leaving her alone, yet he would make more haste if she were not with him.

He was not long in finding what he sought, a folding knife of sharp blades in the pocket of Nicholas Rochon. If she had been with him, it would have seemed a desecration to remove the coverlet of cedar from that mangled body and take away any possession. Guilbert did it reverently, and murmured to the deaf ears a word of excuse. Constance would know to whom the knife belonged; but perhaps she would not speak of it. Near by, buried to the hilt in the earth at the roots of the cedar tree, he found the dagger that he had seen in the hand of Nicholas as he ran toward the palisade. Whether he had flung it away in his death struggle, or whether someone had buried it there, intending to return for it, Guilbert could not tell. In haste, but with reverence, he covered the body again, and looked about him for food to give strength for the journey. In the ruin that had been the store-house of the Mission, he found a small portion of smoked fish and a bag of pounded maize. Everything else had been burned or taken away. He put the fish with a cup and a small bowl into the bag and slung his burden over his shoulder. The wound in his side throbbed; the heat of the July day inflamed it and made him feverish; he would have been thankful for rest in the shade; but for the sake of Constance,

he must not linger; if there was danger of inflammation, the more need to take her quickly to a place of safety.

He found her sitting where he had left her, supporting her wounded arm with her free hand.

“Does the wound give you pain?” he asked.

“Yes, it is painful; but when we are travelling I may forget it, as you forget, or feign to forget, your wounded side. It is well that my right arm is sound.”

“I am but a poor apology for a surgeon,” he said penitently. “I should have arranged a sling for you. I will make amends at once and you will be more comfortable.”

They began their journey when he had put the sling in place, and in the long walk through the forest and over the hills, across swamps where the swarms of mosquitoes stung and harassed them, and over open plains where the hot sun beat upon them, their words were few. The horrors of the previous day and their present suffering left them little strength to talk or to think; they could merely plod onward. They stopped to eat the dry maize and a portion of fish and they were refreshed by cool water from a bubbling spring. When the sun was setting, Guilbert halted.

“Madame de Valincourt, it will not be possible to reach St. Ignace to-night. You are exhausted; you must not attempt to go further. Here is a pleasant grove; the grass over which we have passed is untrodden; neither Iroquois nor Hurons have come this way; I believe we shall be safe.”

She sank down upon a mound. “Yes, let us rest;

I know I cannot go on. If the enemy were behind us, I feel that it would not urge me one step forward."

"Lean against this tree and rest and I will go to find water. If you can close your eyes and sleep, you will be better."

He put down the burdens he had carried, and set forth with the bucket and a small basket. He thought he had seen not far away a clear stream and a field of wild strawberries. He knew she had eaten the unappetizing dry fish and maize to satisfy him; but she had not been able to conceal the effort.

His face lighted when he found the fruit. He forgot his fatigue, forgot the pain that stooping caused in his wound; he lined the basket with green leaves and bent himself to gather the luscious red berries; she should feast upon them and they would cool her fever; he would come out in the early morning and gather more. When he went back to her with his bucket full of cool water and the basket heaped with berries, his eyes were bright, his lips were smiling, the note in his voice was jubilant.

"I have brought you something fresh and sweet and beautiful. Hold out your hands."

He removed the large leaf that covered the basket and held before her the ripe, rich fruit. She caught her breath and tears rushed to her eyes; she could not hold them; they flowed down her cheeks—the first tears she had shed since the horror of yesterday—for only on yesterday morning Madame Rochon had gone out early to pick berries for breakfast, and the three had eaten and made merry together.

She saw that Guilbert's face fell; he had expected

to please her; he was disappointed. She looked up at him and smiled bravely.

“It was kind of you to bring them, so kind. I shall enjoy them. My mouth is parched; they will be refreshing. There is a nice flat stone, a seat for you. Will you not eat with me? You have more need of refreshment than I.”

His solicitude for her was comforting. She tried to speak cheerily for his sake, of the beauty of this wood that he had chosen for the resting-place, and of the good hope of reaching St. Ignace on the morrow.

Before the darkness fell, he dressed her arm again and found that it was not much swollen; then he made her a bed of cedar boughs in a little grove of maples, and found a place for himself in a clump of firs not far away, so he could spring to her side in a moment if she were alarmed.

Her voice quivered as she bade him good night. “You are kind to me,” she said, “so kind. Soon the ocean will divide us, but I shall never forget.”

He tried to lie awake so he might keep watch over her. He knew the wiles of the Iroquois too well to feel any confidence that danger was past. Iroquois scouts were probably lurking in many places; if one had seen him and Constance, he would give the signal to others, and signals could be sent quickly to long distances; the Iroquois were as cunning and keen as they were cruel. But in spite of anxiety and determination, physical weariness overcame him and he slept. He was awakened by a flash of light; even in his dreams he had been conscious of danger, and he was instantly very wide

awake. Flash followed flash, and the lights were accompanied by a tramp of feet. The fugitive understood: a body of Iroquois were passing and at any moment they might discover him. He could not warn Constance, for his movement might betray her hiding-place. He sat up, numb with dread lest she should hear and call to him; but she slept and the men passed on. He knew from their talk that they were in pursuit of a considerable number of Huron refugees, who were supposed to be going in the direction of St. Ignace.

When they had gone so far that he could not hear the faintest echo of their tread—and his ears had been trained by his forest life till they were almost as keen as those of the woodland born—he crept out from his shelter and laid himself down in the grass on the border of the little grove of maples where Constance slept. In that moment of extreme peril he knew that it would have been more prudent to keep close by her side; but he had felt that he must sacredly guard her privacy; the more so because she had been so utterly thrown upon his protection; every chivalrous instinct in him rose to shield her even from a glance, from a thought, that might intrude.

The Iroquois did not return. Half awake, half dozing, Guilbert passed the hours till dawn, when he returned quietly to his grove. He had intended to rise early and gather strawberries for Constance; but he dare not risk now being seen in the open field. He rested till he thought he heard Constance stirring, then he called softly to ask if she were awake.

“ Thank you, I have been awake for some time,” she replied; “ but I slept nearly all through the night.”

“ May I come to you? ” he asked. “ It is necessary—to be careful—not to speak aloud.”

“ Oh, come. I am ready. Is there—new danger? ”

He thought she looked better for the night's rest, though she was very pale and her eyes were heavy. He told her quickly of what had happened in the night and asked her to remain amid the firs in silence. He would scout in the neighbourhood, and if there was sign of the enemy he would try to find a better hiding-place for her.

He presently discovered a dingle, very thickly wooded, in which there was a small and deeper hollow, over the top of which vines had grown. If he had not thrust forward a stick on which he had been leaning to relieve the strain on his side, he would have fallen through the vines into the hole. He chuckled boyishly. It was unlikely that a similar accident would happen to another person in this unfrequented glen, and without such means of discovery the place was most effectually concealed. There was room enough for two people to sit and move about comfortably, and the floor and sides were covered with moss. Almost light-heartedly he ran to bring Constance to her new abode.

He found two flat stones for seats, and placed the pillows and quilt on the larger one to make an easy chair for his liege lady. The hollow was dark; but it might not be necessary for her to remain in it all the time. When he was with her, she could

wander in the dingle; but when he was scouting in the forest, she must be concealed.

They did not venture to continue the journey that day. Guilbert did not see or hear the Iroquois again, but he feared they might not be far away. He spent nearly all the day in searching the neighbourhood, returning from time to time to Constance to report, to cheer her, and to take her for a change from her narrow quarters. He dressed her arm, brought her cool water, wild flowers, and, late in the day, a basket of strawberries. He had found the berries in small, grassy plots amid the woods and not in the exposed fields, and thought he ran no danger in gathering them. If the night should pass without alarm, he believed it would be safe to venture onward in the morning.

He slept very well that night under some thickly growing shrubs, guarding Constance's hollow, and was surprised to find himself awaking refreshed and hopeful. Was it heartless to feel hope and cheer so soon after that tragedy of Teanaustayé? He was about to call to Constance when he heard her voice in prayer. He bowed his head and was silent.

When they had breakfasted very sparingly on dried fish and maize, leaving small portions for dinner and supper in case they should be delayed in reaching St. Ignace, they set out on what they hoped would be the final stage of their journey.

At noon they halted to rest and eat. After their meal Guilbert left Constance on the bank of a forest stream while he went to look ahead. He returned in a few minutes. His face was white.

“What is it?” she gasped.

“They have seen me. Quick! I will hide you!”

“But—you! What—will you do?”

“Be still!” he said roughly. “Do as I tell you without a word!”

He dragged her to a hollow in a great tree and thrust her in.

“Stay there. Do not move or make a sound for hours. If all is quiet to-morrow go on to St. Ignace. You know the way. You cannot miss the path.”

She made as if to leave the tree. “If you are going to die, let us die together.”

He lifted his arm. “Do what I say or I must strike and stun you. There is no other way.”

She knew that he would do it. The determination blazed in his eyes. It was brutal, but it was to save her.

“Go, go,” she moaned. “I will—do whatever you—ask. Save—yourself.”

As he went away, he heard a very low, quivering wail, “Guil—ber-r-t!” Then she was still.

He hurried as far from her as he could, away from the place where they had lunched, and from the bundle of pillows and quilt, which, if discovered, would lead to suspicion that he was not alone. If he had been alone, he might have hidden himself and escaped; but he knew the Iroquois scouts would search long and well, and in seeking him they might discover her. He intended that they should see him again while he was leading them away from her. If, after that, he could evade them, he might save himself and return to her. If he could not escape their vigilance, they would slay him or take him prisoner;

but he would have put them off her track, and she would have a chance of reaching St. Ignace in safety. He believed that there was a considerable body of Huron refugees in advance and she might overtake them.

CHAPTER XIV

ALONE IN THE FOREST

WHEN Guilbert had left her, Constance stood as if paralysed; she could neither move nor utter sound. For a few blinding moments she felt that she had received her death blow. In her anxiety for him, she rallied quickly, and, regardless of his caution, she looked out from the hollow tree. She saw him running at a speed that seemed incredible in view of his wound and his fatigue. In a few moments he disappeared into a jungle. While she watched, three Indians dashed along the cleared space by the river bank and followed him into the wood. She knew that he could not escape them, and she sank down cowering in the hollow.

In illuminating flashes of thought she saw what he had done, and his reason. The men had caught a glimpse of him from a distance; he had evaded pursuit; they had lost sight of him for a time, and that reprieve had enabled him to place her in safety. He had not attempted to hide; he had deliberately exposed himself to view, to lead them away from her; they would capture him, and he would give his life for hers.

The agony was intolerable till her senses grew numb and she could neither think nor feel. She did

not know how the hours passed; sometimes she aroused to poignant anguish, then the merciful stupor came again. Darkness gathered; she was alone by night in a wilderness, but she was not afraid; she would have welcomed discovery and death.

She slept as many sleep who are worn by grief and anxiety. More than once she woke and felt some wild thing of the wood crawling over her—a loathsome spider perhaps or a centipede. On the previous night black ants from a nearby ant-hill had run over her bed; she had moved the bed quietly to another place, so she should not disturb Guilbert, and if the creatures had come again she had not known it. He had been so near that her lightest word would have summoned him to her aid, therefore she had not feared. She did not fear now; but the awful solitude deepened the horror.

She dozed again and awoke with a start. Light flashed into the hollow tree, the feet of many men tramped past. Fugitives from Teanaustayé would have women and children with them; the Iroquois might take some captives; but they would not burden themselves with many on the march. The watcher peered out; even if those who had passed should look back, they could not see her when the tree was in darkness; but she could see them by their lantern light. No women were with that company. The men whose voices rose with a note of triumph were undoubtedly Iroquois. She started as if to run after them. They would kill her and end it all. She had her own knife and dagger; but her teaching forbade self slaughter. But if she should seek death

recklessly, would that not be self slaughter? Guilbert had died that she might live. She would be unfaithful to him if she made his sacrifice of no avail. He had said she must try to live for duty; he had believed that her life would be preserved; he had said so more than once; for his sake she would live, and try to live nobly.

In the morning her lips were parched; she felt no hunger, but she was faint for need of food. She stole out and drank from the river. She found the small bag that he had carried placed carefully under a shrub by the bank. It contained four little cakes of maize and a piece of smoked fish; she knew that he had hidden it in the hope that she might find it, and she ate though it seemed to choke her.

She did not venture far from the hollow tree that day. She watched continually, returning to her shelter whenever she heard a crackling of the bushes or any sound that might indicate an enemy. The second dreary night passed in the comfortless shelter; when morning came she was cramped and numb; her limbs ached; her undressed arm was stiff; if she did not go on and find St. Ignace she would perish in the wilderness.

A drink of the cool water refreshed her; she bathed her face and hands and ate what was left of the food in the bag. Before she sought the track, she went to the entrance of the jungle into which he had disappeared. Branches were broken down, grass was trampled; there was a stain of blood upon the ground; but, living or dead, he was not there. If he had lived and escaped the Iroquois, he would have returned to her; she had no hope that he had

lived; she wanted to find his body; to cover it with evergreen, and to say a prayer.

She turned and went in the direction that he had told her, and she found the track. It was a well-beaten track through the forest, and unless she should be discovered by the enemy, she would reach St. Ignace. It seemed to her that she had walked miles when she came to an open place with grassy hills, and at the foot of the encircling hills she saw a little lake with a shore wooded to the water's edge. Wild ducks and other water-fowl skimmed about or darted among the reeds and water-lilies. The blue waters rippled and sparkled in the sun. Guilbert had told her of that lake; he had paddled on it in his canoe; he had shot the wild ducks, in the autumn he had picked nuts in a wood not far away, when he and Dominique Rivard had camped upon the shore.

“ Oh, Guilbert, Guilbert! ” she cried, and went down upon her knees. “ Father in Heaven, forgive me if it is sin to love him! He was so noble, so true; he helped me to be good! ”

She resolved that when she went back to France she would tell the Count de Valincourt about Guilbert. Surely he could not condemn her if she kept the memory of her protector in her heart. She would rather keep it shrined there, hidden from everyone; but if it was her duty to tell her husband, she must do it, and he, too, must learn to reverence that memory. There was no wrong to tell; never by a word or a glance, by a touch of the hand or an evil thought that showed in the face, had that chivalrous knight passed the bounds of reverence for her as a married wife, and she had thought of him as of a

tender brother until now, when he had gone for ever, and she felt that life without him in the world was a desolation. She could not blot from her thought his handsome face, the clean-cut features, the dark, clear eyes. She heard again his gentle, compassionate voice; she remembered his care for her, his forgetfulness of himself; and she bowed her head in her hands and moaned. She must get on. She must not stay by this water that he had loved.

She rose and gathered some strawberries on the hillside. She ate the fruit and drank a little water, and was about to go on her way, when, on the opposite side of the lake, peering out from the bushes, she saw two dark forms. She did not know whether the men had seen her, for she was partly concealed by some sumach trees. If they had seen her, they would soon run around the shores and reach her. Presently she perceived that they were watching some wild ducks. She crouched lower, and one of the men took aim at and killed a duck. They had no canoe, but the hunter, who wore little clothing, jumped into the water and swam for his prey. Her first thought was to crawl among the reeds that grew from the water; but as the ducks also sought that refuge with their young, whose wings were not strong enough yet to carry them far, she decided that it would not be a secure hiding-place. She had believed that she longed to die; but when the prospect of death at an Iroquois hand was near, she shrank from it. She lay flat with her face to the ground and crawled through the long grass under the sumachs to a tangle of raspberry bushes farther up the bank. The thorns tore her hands, but she

did not heed that. The growth was so dense that she would not be visible unless someone stooped to look, and she drew the branches together again to cover her entrance. The fruit was still green, so there was no danger that anyone would stop to pick it. She could hear the shouts of the men, and from the confusion of voices she knew that others had joined them. She had thought it was possible they were Huron hunters, but she knew now from their speech that they were Iroquois. She wondered at their daring, for they were nearing the Huron towns that, so far as she knew, had not been attacked. They had either come over in much larger force to attack other towns, or they had grown so confident from the destruction of Teanaustayé that they paid no heed to the fact that they were wandering in the country of the enemy. What if they had destroyed St. Ignace and St. Louis, Sainte Marie, and all the towns of the Huron Mission? What if all those noble men had died like Father Daniel? Would God let all their work and sacrifice come to naught? The questioning perplexed her; but she was too weak to dwell long on any thought, and she had to be listening for the departure of the enemy.

She could hear the splashing of the water, the shouts and the laughter. As the men were shooting with bow and arrow, there was no report as with a gun; but she knew from the expressions of delight that all the shots hit their mark. The Iroquois had some guns for use against their enemies, but they could not afford to waste any ammunition in duck shooting.

The splashing, the shouts and laughter ceased;

there was no sound but the hum of insects or the note of birds. Constance believed the men had gone away; but she dared not venture out of her hiding-place for a long time; when she crawled out from the bushes, she did not rise; but crawled down the bank to the sumachs and peered out. Wildfowl were swimming again upon the water; feathers from the birds that had been killed were clinging to the reeds; but there was no other sign of the destroyers. There was danger in going on; the hunters might be lurking in the neighbourhood; but there was danger of starvation in the forest, for she had no food left and must depend upon finding strawberries. There were other wild fruits in open places—plums, cherries and huckleberries; but they were unripe. Her arm was becoming more stiff and painful, and she could not dress it with only one hand free; she knew that the wound might poison her blood; she had helped Father Daniel to care for Indian children whose blood had been poisoned. She ventured to the lakeside and bathed her face and hands and drank water from a tiny stream that rippled down the hill, then she found the track again and walked on.

She had walked for some distance without seeing or hearing anyone; she had grown confident enough to stop to pick some strawberries, for her mouth was parched; she was growing hopeful of reaching St. Ignace before night, when she was startled by a low growl. She had heard that sound before when she had fled in terror from a wood near Teanaustayé. She knew it was the growl of a bear. She dropped her handful of berries and ran for a great birch

tree. She had a vague idea that a bear could climb a tree; but she was very sure that this big black creature could not bring its bulky body through the thickly growing branches of that particular birch. She had practised tree-climbing in private with Madame Rochon, as the accomplishment might be a measure of safety amid the perils of the wilderness. Poor Madame had never succeeded; but Constance had learned to mount to the tree top with much agility. She excelled her former performances on this occasion, and when she arrived at the top, or as near to it as the slenderness of the branches would admit, she peered down and saw the bear quietly feasting on strawberries with her cub beside her. Nevertheless, it did not seem safe to descend, and she remained not uncomfortably resting in the branches waiting for the departure of the animals. It was well that she did so, for a half-hour later several Indians passed almost directly beneath her tree. Each man had several ducks slung over his shoulder, and she had no doubt these were the men who had shot on the lake. She dared not move lest a rustling might betray her; but happily the men passed without looking up and went on into the deeper forest. The bear had moved away and she had thought of descending, but now she must remain perched in the tree. The sun set and she grew drowsy; she could not venture on to St. Ignace this night; but she feared to stay in the tree lest she fall asleep and lose her hold. She slipped down, picked more strawberries, and tried to satisfy her hunger with the fruit. She saw not a sign of the bear, but in looking for a resting-place she must



. . . fell senseless before the gates of St. Ignace.

be mindful of bears as well as Indians. She found a shelter in a hollow under a huge stone with another stone nearly covering the hollow; there was barely room for her slender body to enter; an Indian might discover the place, but the bear at least could not intrude. Anxious thought entered with her; the complete absence of Hurons from all the forest through which she had passed was ominous; the fear that the other towns had been destroyed came upon her again; perhaps the entire Huron country had been desolated.

In the morning she went on again, very weak, stiff and sore; she moved mechanically, scarcely knowing what she did. She did not look about her; bears might be seeking to devour, Iroquois might be lurking to seize her; if so, she could not escape them; her mind was too weary to make plans for safety, and if she had been able to make them, she was too weak to accomplish them. She had prayed earnestly, she had done her best, and now she must submit to whatever might come. She kept the track, for it lay directly before her, and she went stumbling on, on, though the ground seemed to heave and her head turned giddily. Late in the afternoon she saw a great wall before her that reminded her of the palisades of Teanaustayé; she made a desperate effort to hold herself up, to keep going on, and so she tottered onward till she fell senseless before the gates of St. Ignace.

CHAPTER XV

AT ST. IGNACE

ON a sultry August day Constance was lying on a rug in the shade of soft maples. It was a pleasant grassy spot surrounding the cottage where she lived at some distance from the lodges of the Huron families. The Indian girl Anina and her mother occupied the cottage with her. They had returned to Sainte Marie a few days before the destruction of Teanaustayé, and had come to St. Ignace to nurse Constance, who had been very ill since that day when she fell at the gates of the town. No one knew how she had escaped. She had been unconscious and had muttered in a low voice, but her words were not intelligible to the watchers. Since she had recovered consciousness, she had shuddered and put up her hands as if in protest against questioning when anyone asked her to recall what had happened. Brébeuf was not sure whether she remembered clearly; but he believed she could remember, and was too weak yet to bear the horror of it. He warned Anina who was inquisitive not to distress her by any references to the tragedy, to leave all inquiries to him; and he would wait till his unhappy visitor was much stronger before he tried to learn the truth.

The heat for several days had been suffocating. The forest had been on fire for miles around and the fires still blazed. The first warning of them had been an intense darkness that had hidden the sunlight and the face of the sky; ashes had fallen into the town and smoke had penetrated everywhere. The alarm had gone out that Sainte Marie, St. Louis and all the towns were ablaze, and that the fires were the work of the Iroquois; but "runners" brought word that the towns were unharmed and the fires were in the forest. No Iroquois had been seen for several weeks and the fires had probably been started accidentally by Huron signallers. There had been a long drought, everything had been dry and the flames had spread rapidly. The darkness around St. Ignace had been followed first by a distant glare of light on the sky, then by vivid patches and bursts of flame as the fire drew nearer, and now on every side the forest was ablaze, with smoke and flame ascending to the heavens. There was danger for the towns that were surrounded by forest with no water near. St. Ignace was comparatively safe, as it was built on the river-side and with a cleared space around it.

Constance gasped for breath; the heat and smoke parched her throat; she coughed and felt that she must strangle if she could not get pure air. An Indian mother passed with her flock of little ones. The children were laughing and jumping about as if neither heat nor smoke disturbed them. The mother called out that she was taking them to bathe in the river and advised "The Lady" to bathe too and be cool; it would help her to be well. The

thought of a bath in that rippling water was alluring, but the Lady knew she had not strength enough to toddle to the water-side. She heard the merry cries of the children as they plunged in the water, and she smiled wistfully; she was thankful some joy remained in the world.

As she rested Father Brébeuf came over the grass and sat on a bench near her. He told her cheerfully that he thought she looked better, that she would soon be able to walk and to go beyond the palisades for a little change.

“I hope I may, Father,” she answered; but there was little hopefulness in her voice. “I want to be able to work, to help you, to do something to repay for giving so much trouble.”

“You have not given trouble, my daughter. It is a joy to Marie and Anina to wait upon you.”

“Oh, Father,” she broke out; “I cannot understand, cannot understand!”

“What is it that you do not understand, my child?”

“The horrible cruelty, the torment. If God is love, and if He has all power, why does He let it be? The question comes over and over to me, and I cannot drive it away. I know what the Church teaches and all that I learned in my youth of the way that sin and sorrow came to the world; but that does not satisfy the questioning. The world is God’s world; yet it is filled with evil and hopeless misery.”

The laughter of the children came ringing up from the river.

“Listen!” said Brébeuf. “That is not evil. They are good children. Theirs is a pure gladness.”

“ Yes, it is comforting to hear them laugh; but their joy is for so short a time. They will grow up to fight, to slay or be slain. I can see no hope for them nor for all your sacrifice. If all this Huron Mission is destroyed, if all the towns follow Teanaustayé, your labour will have been in vain; you will have given your lives for naught.”

“ We may give our lives; I believe that we shall give them; but not for naught, my child. When the disciples who had forsaken their Lord beheld His cross, they doubtless feared that He had given His life for naught. They could not foresee that afar down the ages millions of men would rejoice in His resurrection. We who try to follow Him and do work in His Name may have many sorrows, many failures; the Mission may be destroyed—all the outward walls of it and many of its people—but the work and the prayers will remain and bear fruit in the lives of generations to come.”

She was silent; the words were quieting, though they had not answered all the questions that clamoured in her mind; chief among them was the one that repeated itself so often, “ Why did God allow the Iroquois to live and commit such hideous cruelties ? ”

A toddling child came up from his bath with a kitten in his arms. His mother laughingly called out that he had wanted to take it into the river with him; the kitten had escaped but had come back to watch the children bathing. It leaped from the child's arms now, but darted around him playfully.

“ That is a sweet child,” said Constance. “ I

should like to take him to France with me; but it would not be right to part him from his mother."

"You wish to return to France, my daughter?"

She looked up in surprise; she forgot that she had never spoken a word of what she wished or thought until that day; she had been so weak, so broken with misery that the priest had not thought it wise to trouble her with questions, he had waited till she was ready to speak.

"Oh yes, Father," she said in a low voice. "I think—it is—my duty to return. Do you not wish it?"

"Yes, my child, but I would not seek to persuade you against your will."

"Do you think—my husband—would object if I took a little child back with me—one whose parents were killed at Teanaustayé? I heard that some orphans had been brought here. I would try to educate him, to bring him up to be a good man."

"I think I can answer with assurance that the Count de Valincourt will be glad to have you do anything that will add to your happiness."

"Happiness!" she repeated. "I do not look for happiness. When I was with him I felt that I was in a prison; I could not in any way express my life, my young life, without his disapproval. It was a continual criticism of my words, my acts, my lightheartedness. I know now that he did not mean it unkindly, that he was old in mind—older than his years—that he wanted to teach me, to discipline me, to lead me up to what he thought I ought to be. I will bear it better now; I am no longer young, and I shall be able to understand him. He is too old to

change, but I have changed. I will try to be a good wife, a helpful wife, to be all that he desires."

"I know you will, my child, and though you may not think it is possible now, I hope that you will be happy as well as good. You will have at least the comfort that comes from duty faithfully done."

"Ah, I will try—never to falter—in the duty. I owe it to—him."

"To your husband, to the Count de Valincourt?"

She made a negative gesture. "To him who gave his life for me. I—promised."

She had grown very white; her lips quivered; she trembled and bowed her head. Brébeuf would not question her further; she was not strong enough to bear such distress. He was relieved to see a trader, Louis Boileau, leading his little son toward Constance. Boileau had married an Indian woman and the boy was a handsome half-breed.

"My little Victor is going to bed, Madame," he said, bowing to Constance; "but he thinks he will sleep better if you hear him say the prayer you taught him. He is a good scholar, he can repeat it without a mistake so soon."

Constance smiled and drew the child toward her. "Yes, he has been very good, very quick; I began to teach him only the day before yesterday. But is not this an early bedtime, Monsieur Boileau? The sun has not set."

The trader looked whimsically toward the sky. "One cannot tell by the appearance where that sun is or what it may be doing. Pierre Deschamps says that he saw clouds and that there will be rain; but with the smoke so thick, who can tell? The little

ones are wearied by the great heat; they are glad to lie down and sleep—if sleep is possible. Last night my wife walked by the river with the baby in her arms to try to get a breath of cooler air from the water; but the poor mite cried constantly. It is teething and feverish.”

Victor tugged at his father's hand. “My prayer,” he said in his baby accents, and he knelt by the side of Constance.

He clasped his hands as she had taught him and said his simple child's prayer very earnestly. Constance placed her hand on his head as if in blessing; she looked down on him with a tender light in her eyes. Hers was a mother heart; all the children felt it; she drew them by the magnet of her love. “Ah, if she has children of her own,” thought the priest, “they will bring her comfort, and make a bond between her and their father.”

When Constance had given the little fellow his good night kiss and his father had led him away, she turned to Brébeuf: “The faith of a little child is so sweet, so wonderful.”

“We are all but little children, my daughter. We cannot understand our Father's plans; but we must trust Him as a little child trusts his father through what seems to be evil and pain as well as in what we see to be good and happiness.”

“Yes, Father,” she murmured, “I will try.”

She did not speak of her doubts again, though she knew he would be very patient with her, that he would not condemn her for her questionings. The priests of the Mission were accustomed to deal with the perplexities of the Indians, to which they

listened with great patience. They did not condemn the doubting or the scoffing savage, but tried to lead him gently to understanding.

A gentle rain fell that night and continued to fall for several days and nights. When the sky cleared and the sun shone again all the fires had been extinguished.

Constance looked out upon a blackened forest. "Its beauty is gone," she mourned. "Here again are ruin and desolation!"

Skeletons of trees stood up black and bare or lay charred upon the ground; the leaves had been shrivelled; the grass in many places had been burned.

"It will bloom again," said Brébeuf, "though years may pass before these blackened trunks have gone and the strong young trees have grown in their places. The grass will be green next spring and the mosses and the flowers will grow as if no blight had come upon them. I know it, for I have seen the forest renewed after devastating fires."

"It is not burned everywhere," said Louis Boileau. "Large tracts have escaped unharmed. The open spaces between the woods checked the fires."

The air was cool and sweet. Constance appeared much stronger and was able to sit up and work under the trees. She was making a pretty dress for the Boileau baby. Louis had sent furs to Montreal, and had received in exchange provisions and materials for clothing.

Brébeuf hoped she was strong enough to bear to speak of Teanaustayé and the manner of her escape.

He would not force it upon her; but if she should speak of it he would ask her of some things that he greatly longed to know. Fugitives had told him of the heroic death of Father Daniel and of the destruction of the church and the town; but of the Rochons and Guilbert they could not tell. Constance had spoken of some of the incidents of the later stage of her journey, while she was alone. Brébeuf did not think it probable that she had spent all the days alone and unassisted. Her reference to one who had given his life for her set him wondering. Was it Guilbert?

He joined her now as she sat with her sewing in hand, and expressed his pleasure that she was well enough to enjoy her work.

"I am thankful to be of some use," she said. "I shall soon be able to help the women and the children."

"You have helped them, my daughter. They have learned to love you; they will miss you when you go away."

"Is it possible that I may go soon, Father?"

"I think it is. The Iroquois have apparently left our country for the time. The men who have come from Montreal report that they saw no trace of their recent occupation of any part of the land; reports from other directions confirm this. Under these circumstances the Father Superior thinks you should begin the journey as soon as you are strong enough. A party will set out next week; as you are gaining strength so quickly, I hope you may be able to go at that time."

"I fear I should hinder them. I cannot walk far."

“No, you cannot walk. We will construct a vehicle for your conveyance. Anina and her mother will go with you, and, if you still wish it, an orphan boy.”

Her face lighted. “Oh, yes, Father, I do wish it. May I not take two boys, very little ones? They would be companions.”

He smiled. “The Count de Valincourt will have need of patience with two lively little Indians running about his chateau.”

“They need not remain in the chateau if he does not wish it. There are cottages in the grounds. I can find a nurse.”

“As you will,” he said. “We shall be thankful to know these poor children have loving care, and the Count de Valincourt will be thankful if they help to make you—content. You are very dear to him, my child. He is reserved, perhaps he did not know how to express to you what he felt, how to make you understand; but he will know better now, and you, too, will understand him better.”

“I hope—I believe—I shall. There is nothing left in life for me but to try to do my duty.”

“What more would you ask, child? After the love and duty you give to your God, your love and duty to your husband should bring you deepest happiness.”

She put her hand over her eyes and sighed heavily. Presently she looked up, she was very pale and her eyes were troubled.

“Father, is it sin for a wife to hold in her heart the memory of a noble man, one of the purest and the bravest that ever trod the earth? Is it sin if the

memory ever uplifts her to try to be noble, too, to be faithful as he was, to be true wife and true woman according to the beautiful vision he held of her? ”

Brébuef hesitated before he replied. “ It cannot be sin to remember such a man, my child, and to revere his memory; but—the husband should hold the first place in the heart of a wife.”

She did not answer, and after a few moments silence, he asked: “ Who is this noble man, my child? ”

“ Guilbert, Guilbert de Keroual.”

“ And he is dead? ”

“ He died for me.”

Brébeuf drew a quivering breath. “ He was very dear to me; but I am thankful if he died nobly. Can you tell me about it, my daughter? ”

“ I will try, Father. I want you to know—everything.”

She told her story, sometimes with words that rushed quickly, sometimes with faltering and the sound of a sob in her throat, though her eyes were dry; as she ended a moan of pain came from her lips; she lifted her head and looked at Brébeuf, and the writhing soul seemed to look out from her eyes in a pleading for help.

He was deeply moved. “ Yes, my child, he was noble. I loved the lad; but I can—rejoice—in his death; better a thousand times such death and all the pains of it than life that is unworthy.”

“ They would torture him, Father.”

“ If they tortured him, he endured it with courage; he passed from the pains of death to Paradise.”

She lifted up her eyes to the heavens and he

thought that her lips muttered a prayer; the anguish had passed from her eyes when she turned to him, they shone with a light of peace.

“Father,” she said very softly, “I would rather keep the memory sacred in my own heart, unspoken; but I will tell Antoine—my husband—all I have told you; then, if he will share the thought of him with me, if he will revere it too, there can be no wrong. Once I was different, Father, I wanted all the joy and the delight of life that I could take to myself; but now I think I want only to try to be good—to try—I will fail sometimes—but I will surely try.”

“You will not fail. The life of the wilderness has been very hard for you, very agonizing; but it has brought you to a noble womanhood; some day that change that has been wrought in you may help you to understand that the sufferings that have seemed to you so harsh and cruel are only the discipline of our Father’s school to teach us the lesson of life.”

CHAPTER XVI

REUNION

ON a sunless day of late November Antoine de Valincourt was alone in his study. He had always been a man of solitary mood, but in the old days he had enjoyed his solitude, now he sought to be alone with his dejection; sometimes when his thoughts goaded him, he turned to society in the hope of oblivion.

More than a year had passed since he had summoned Constance to this room to be accused and judged. She had gone out from his presence with head high and eyes glowing, and he had mistaken the red flag of indignation in her face for a badge of shame. He had learned the truth since then, had learned that those who had borne witness against her were false witnesses and that he had wronged an innocent woman. He had sent letters across the ocean begging for forgiveness and pleading for her return. She had sent no answer back; but those who were with her had sent a hope—he believed now that it was a delusive hope—that she would forgive and do all that he asked. Since that time, months had passed, and not a word had come to him.

He heard a knock on the door, a faint knock like that of a timid woman, and he wondered what woman servant had dared to disturb his privacy. Pierre

alone had access here, and should have brought to him any message or complaint.

“Who is it?” he asked impatiently.

No one answered, but he thought he heard a sound like a sob.

“Come in, then,” he said, and his voice was softer. Perhaps one of the women servants was in some trouble, and he had more sympathy with trouble since he had suffered.

The door opened and a woman entered. She was heavily veiled, but he saw instantly that she was not a servant; she had the dignified carriage of one in authority, yet she seemed to shrink from him while she approached. Her movements reminded him of Constance; she was the height of Constance; but—it could not be. Then she lifted her veil and he saw.

“Antoine,” faltered the visitor, “do you not—know me?”

He had risen from his chair, but he made no advance; his hands fell by his side and his tongue faltered.

Could this be Constance? It was not the Constance that he had loved and hoped that he had won. That Constance had been a girl of rounded cheeks tinged with the rose, a girl of laughing eyes and curving lips, one who had been dowered with gifts of love and joy. This was a woman whose face had been blanched by sorrow, a woman divided by ages of grief from that girl with the dower of joy; yet in the eyes of this woman, in their depths of sadness, there was a beauty that he had never seen in the eyes of the Constance that had gone; this woman

of sorrows was more beautiful than the girl of the merry heart.

“Antoine,” she said again, “they—told me—that—you wished me to return to you. If—it was a mistake—let me—let me—go back. I will never trouble you.”

Still he made no step toward her, he only said pitifully, “Constance, have you forgiven me?”

“Let us forgive each other, Antoine.”

“You have nothing to forgive. The fault was mine, all mine. I have no blame for your leaving me. I had insulted you, and—you were right.”

“You—appeared surprised—as if you had not expected me. They wrote—Father Brébeuf wrote—that I was coming.”

“No letter came, not since one month ago from Madame Rochon. Did she return with you?”

“She is dead.”

“Ah!” He had not felt kindly toward the Rochons for taking his wife away, yet they had been kind to Constance; they had sacrificed themselves for her sake, and their intentions had been good though their judgment was mistaken.

“You speak of Father Brébeuf, I thought you were with Father Daniel.”

“He is dead, everybody is dead.”

He started. Had her troubles affected her reason?

“Pardon me,” he said, “I forgot that you were standing.”

He placed a chair for her and she sat down.

“I will try to tell you,” she said. “It happened not long after Madame Rochon wrote to you.”

She knew that he had heard from Madame Rochon

and from Father Daniel of the life at Teanaustayé, and she did not speak of that. She told only briefly, but in words that blanched his face with horror, of the destruction of the town and the massacre of the priest and people.

“And I escaped,” she ended. “I escaped to St. Ignace.”

“Alone!” he exclaimed. “I understood the towns were miles apart! Did you escape alone?”

“No, there was another with me. He—saved me.”

Something in her voice, her face, the quiver of her lip sent again to his heart the old pang of jealousy. He leaned forward and looked at her searchingly.

“Where is he now?”

“He, too, is dead.”

“But you said—that he had escaped.”

“From Teanaustayé, yes. For a part of the way we were together; then—he gave his life for mine.”

Her head drooped, she clasped and unclasped her hands; he saw that her face was quivering.

“Do not tell me now if it distresses you,” he said kindly. “Wait till some later time.”

“I want you to know everything. I want to begin our life together with everything understood, so there may be no more mistakes; but I need not tell you. Father Brébeuf has written it all to you. I asked him. I thought—perhaps—I could not—talk of it—so—you will find it all in his letter.”

She drew a letter from her cloak and rose from her chair. “I think I should like to go away now to rest for a little while. We have travelled far; it was a long and dreary journey.”

“Forgive me,” he said; “I should have remembered. I will ring for some one to take you to your room, your old room; it is as you left it; and you must have some wine, or a little soup, whatever you need to refresh you.”

It seemed very strange and unreal, this coming back to her home. She had been parted from her husband for a year, and he had not even taken her hand; he was making arrangements for her as for a stranger. Did he mean that they should live so—apart?

She went out of the room with the old housekeeper, and he sat down by the table and bowed his head. A long time passed before he took up the letter of Father Brébeuf to read.

He had not read far before he rang a bell.

“Have these people who came with your mistress been fed and cared for?” he asked. “I understand there are two—ladies”—he hesitated over the word,—“and two little boys.”

“Two Indian women are here, Monsieur, and two children; we have done for them as Madame la Comtesse ordered; they have eaten and they have gone to their rooms.”

“That is well. Other arrangements will be made for them later.”

Brébeuf had begun his letter with an explanation of his reasons for sending the children; the Countess de Valincourt had been devoted to them and he thought they would add to her happiness; he hoped the Count would allow her to keep them. The Count replied as it were to Brébeuf’s pages that he would consent to their remaining if they would make

Constance happier, less lonely; but he hoped they would keep out of his way, as children were very disturbing. Then he continued his reading.

When Constance returned to him long afterward, he still sat by the table, his body stooped, his head bowed. She had changed her travelling dress for a brocaded gown that he had admired in what seemed the long ago. She had taken little of her clothing with her in her reckless flight, and only such as she had thought would be suitable for the wilderness. As everything except what she had worn in her escape from Teanaustayé had been destroyed, she had obtained some material for a travelling dress in Montreal, and it had been made up in the convent where she remained for a few days before sailing. It was a black stuff and very stiff and prim in fashion. It had suited her mood; she had wished it so, and the good Ursuline sisters had thought it very becoming. She had thought that now she would seem more like her old self to Antoine if she put on a dress that he knew. It was not so; the lighter, gayer gown accentuated the change in her.

And the change in him! She saw it more distinctly now than on their first meeting, for then she had been struggling with the difficulty of speaking, of explaining. His hair had been streaked with grey when she left him, now it was white. His face was deeply lined; his temples were hollow, and his eyes looked heavy with unshed tears.

He rose courteously as she entered. "I, too, should have dressed," he said; "but I have grown careless since I have been alone."

She sat down and he knew that she was waiting for him to speak.

“ I have read the letter,” he said with difficulty.

“ And—what——” she faltered and broke off.

“ Did you see it? Did you know what Father Brébeuf wrote? ”

“ I did not see it. I asked him to tell you all that I had told him. I knew—he would say what was right—because—he loved him too.”

The words had fallen from her unawares. “ He loved him too! ” She had spoken them in all innocence, but they cut to the heart of the man beside her; and he said aloud the thought of his heart, and did not know that he had spoken it. “ He was young and I am old, yes, I am—old.”

She heard and a great pity for him rose within her. In that time that seemed ages ago she had pitied herself only; now she felt for him.

“ You have suffered, Antoine,” she said gently. “ We have both suffered. Shall we try to help each other? ”

“ We will try,” he said, and more than before she realized how broken he was.

“ And do not think you are old, Antoine,” she responded, longing to cheer him. “ Father Brébeuf at fifty-six is full of vigour, in the prime of life. You are only forty-three.”

She talked of the children and her wishes for them, that she might keep and educate them; that they might live with Marie and Anina in a cottage on the grounds, and he said nothing.

“ Are you willing, Antoine? ” she asked. “ They must not remain if you are not willing.”

“ I am willing. I want you to do everything that will help to make you happy.”

He was a stranger to her, this broken man; still more was she a stranger to him, the broken, submissive woman.

When they went in to dinner, they talked, in the presence of the servants, of affairs of the nation, of people who were in the public eye. In her isolation, she had heard little news of court or politics. She asked him about the books he had been reading, of his researches, and he observed that though the pitiful melancholy of her face remained, she listened with intelligence.

After dinner she asked him if he would see the children, and he consented to please her. They were handsome little boys of three and four years. Their suits of black cloth trimmed with red, which had been made in Montreal, were becoming to their dark skins. They were full of life and interested in everything, and chattered in broken French and words of their native tongue. They had no thought of shyness, and as Constance could not take both on her knee, Paul, the elder, clambered up on the arm of the Count de Valincourt's chair, while Noël sat in the lap of the Countess. Constance put her arm around him and held him close to her; as she bent toward him, the mother light in her eyes drove out the sadness; for the moment she was almost happy. Antoine had never seen her so beautiful. He had never cared for children; he had always said they worried him. He had wished for an heir, merely as a person to succeed him; but he had never thought of the heir as a son to be loved; now a great yearn-

ing came upon him for a child of hers—his child and hers—to be loved by her, to make her happy, to make a bond between them.

Noël's head drooped, his eyes closed, and he leaned drowsily upon Constance.

“ Ah, we have forgotten,” she said. “ At home and on the sea, they went early to bed; but here, where everything was new to them, they said they could not sleep.”

Anina bade Paul say good night, and Constance rose with Noël in her arms to carry him away. Antoine sprang forward, “ No, he is too heavy; you will harm yourself! Give him to me.”

She laughed. “ I have carried him many times.” But she yielded the child to her husband's arms.

He wanted to clasp them both, to hold her close to him; but he only loosed the little arms that clung to her neck and took the boy. As the soft body lay against his breast, as the dark head sank on his shoulder, something thrilled him that he had never known before, something of the protecting tenderness of fatherhood.

He carried the boy upstairs and gave him to Marie who had waited in the room that had been hastily made ready as a nursery. He descended slowly, a mist in his eyes seemed to blind him. He entered his study and took up a book, but he did not read; the vision of the child on Constance's knee came between him and the printed words.

Pierre knocked on the door. When he came in, he hesitated in delivering his message, as if he doubted how it would be received. Little Paul had turned rebel; he had declared that he would not say

his prayers and he would not go to bed unless the kind father would come up to hear him. To Pierre's surprise Antoine de Valincourt rose at once as if the summons had pleased him. He remarked that children must be taught obedience; but these were such little fellows, there was time enough to train them to good habits.

When he entered the nursery, Paul ran to him and cried gleefully, "Paul did say kind father come."

"My little boys call every man 'Father,'" explained Constance. "They heard the priests addressed as 'Father,' and they thought it was a name for all men."

"I hope I shall be a good father to them," said Antoine soberly, "and one of the first duties of a father is to teach obedience."

Constance gasped, something of her old fear of the austere man who had exacted obedience from her came back upon her. "But—you will not be stern with them," she faltered. "They are so little; they do not understand yet; and—he wanted you—because—he thought you loved him."

Antoine's face clouded; he compressed his lips; in the old days, her shrinking dread of him had always angered him; he had never understood how harsh and stern his manner was.

Paul tugged at his knee and pointed to a chair. It was evident that the child did not know fear. Antoine sat down and the boy knelt beside him. As the child repeated his simple prayer, Antoine laid his hand on the dark head, his lips moved as if he were praying too. Constance wondered, for there had been little place for prayer in her husband's

philosophy. He had attended Mass and his deportment had been outwardly reverent and correct; he had desired her to be faithful in religious duties and had exacted regular attendance from his household; but she had overheard some strange opinions from him and visitors of his kind—they had not known that she could understand—and she had heard a name applied to him and his friends that signified they were unbelievers.

When Paul had finished his prayer, he demanded a kiss. Antoine kissed him, looking a little shamefaced, then he left the room. Constance followed him, but he made a gesture of dissent.

“You are tired, Constance,” he said; “you need not come down again. Good night.”

His voice sounded hard, and she was troubled. Was he angry because she had not taught the children to be obedient, or because she had asked him not to be stern? He did not even take her hand. Was this a beginning of the old misunderstandings and chidings? How often she had gone to her room in tears because he had been so cold and hard in his displeasure. Yet he had been kind to the boy—and—perhaps—he did not mean unkindness now.

She met him in the morning with the old shrinking, the old dread of his displeasure, and the wondering, as of old, what she had done and why he was displeased. At first he had seemed so different from the Antoine of those dreary days, and she had dared to hope that he had changed in every way.

“You act as if you were afraid of me, Constance,” he said irritably. “One would think I was some monster, some ogre. I have tried to be kind to you,

to do everything you wished. What more is it possible for me to do? ”

“ You have been kind, Antoine. Indeed, I do not ask, do not wish you to do more than you have done, and I want to do and to be all that you desire. Perhaps we shall understand each other better, then I—shall have no fear—and you will not be angry.”

“ I am not angry. Why should you imagine I am angry? What have I said or done? ”

The voice sounded menacing, as if he had demanded, “ How dare you accuse me unjustly? ”

She was still weak and she had not rested from the fatiguing journey. Her face grew white and her head reeled.

The words were upon his lips, “ If my presence is so very disturbing to you, it were better to have remained away from me; ” but he did not speak.

A sound of flying feet came from the hall, a peal of merry laughter, as the two little ones broke away from Anina and darted to the dining-room. Constance hurried to the door, to send them away, but Antoine commanded, “ Let them come in.”

“ Good morning, kind father,” cried Paul, and Noël lisped the words after him.

Antoine caught Noël in his arms and reached down to hold Paul’s hand.

“ Come good mother too,” said Paul. “ Come all together.”

The man turned to Constance and said pitifully: “ See how they trust me; but—you——”

“ I do trust you, Antoine. Oh, yes, I do,” she said.

In many days that followed he tried to be very

gentle and she tried to be very careful not to offend; but he often misunderstood and spoke sternly or with sarcasm; yet she saw daily more plainly that he had softened; if he had hurt her, it pained him and he tried to make amends by speaking very gently, or by doing something that might give her pleasure.

She was able to be helpful to him. His sight had failed; he had some trouble with his eyes that the physicians did not understand; he could read, but his eyes ached and his sight was blurred if he read long. Constance had been better educated than the women of her time. Her father had been proud of his clever child and had employed a tutor for her. She had read aloud to him and he had talked with her of his favourite books, and now when she offered to read aloud to Antoine, and he had expected a child-like rendering of the work—for he believed that the minds of womenkind were of very limited capacity—he was surprised by her intelligent grasp of the subject. Though she read from scientific books which she could not fully understand without more study, she understood enough to read clearly and intelligently. She was able to write for him too, at his dictation, and, unmindful of her little strength, he sometimes kept her in his study, reading or writing for him when she was wearied to the point of exhaustion. One afternoon when she had been helping him for hours, her voice faltered and her head drooped.

“Pardon me, Antoine,” she faltered, “I cannot go on. I—am—very—tired.”

“Ah, forgive me,” he exclaimed penitently. “You should have told me. I have been selfish.

Go, lie down and rest, and do not come back to-day. Hereafter you must work for not more than one hour in the morning and as long in the afternoon, no more. That will help me. Thank you, Constance."

As the time passed on, she was much with him, she became more necessary to him in his work; he missed her more and more when she was with the children or otherwise absent from him; yet her presence pained him for the change in her; he would have rejoiced in some evidence of the old petulance as token that this was in reality the girl bride he had loved. This Constance was always submissive, self-abnegating, thoughtful for everyone about her; distressed often, but never angry. The old Constance had a merry laugh; this woman smiled and tried to speak cheerfully, but the voice sounded lifeless, and he moaned aloud sometimes when he thought that the very life of her had been buried with the man who had died.

One day he returned from a brief visit to Paris and called her to him. He asked her to sit by his study table and handed her a document of many seals. She glanced at it and saw the name "Guilbert de Keroual." She looked up at him startled, bewildered.

"Do you not understand, Constance?" he asked in a voice that trembled. "Father Brébeuf had written that you hoped—that I—would revere—the memory of your young knight—the brave man who died for you—to give you back to me. I am trying to—show a reverence for it. I have endowed a little home and school for orphan Indians—such as our little Paul and Noël. I thought that Marie and

Anina with some Sisters of the Church could take charge, and Father Brébeuf could send the children to us. Do you——”

He stopped suddenly; Constance had spread her arms upon the table and bowed her head upon them. She was sobbing convulsively. He had not seen her shed a tear till this day; Brébeuf had said she had never wept.

He laid his hand gently on her head, and she sobbed out: “I—Antoine—I cannot help it.”

“Child,” he said, “I understand. Weep; it will bring you solace. I do not ask you not to mourn for him. He was very noble.”

“You are noble too, Antoine. Yes, you are very noble.”

He went away and brought her a glass of water; and presently she rose and turned to him. “I thank you, Antoine,” she faltered, “with all my heart I thank you.”

She moved unsteadily and he held out his arms. “Come to me, Constance,” he said, and she saw the pleading in his face. “Come to me.”

She put out her hands and he caught her and held her close. “Child,” he whispered, “I know what you hold in your heart; but I will be grateful for a little place in it. You have all of mine.”

She lifted her head; she could say no word; but her eyes were dim and her lips were quivering.

He stooped to kiss her. In the old days, she had seemed to shrink from his kiss; now, at least, she did not shrink, and he must try to be grateful for that. She would try to give him affection, and perhaps she would learn to be happy again. He

could not feel jealousy for that young Knight of Teanaustayé who had taken a place that he had never held; he would guard his memory reverently, and that would draw her closer to him.

As she rested her head upon him, she understood why he had not even taken her hand before; he would give her his all, but he would not ask from her anything that she did not give willingly. And once more she whispered, "Antoine, I will try to be to you all that you can wish, for you are very noble."

CHAPTER XVII

AWAITING DEATH

GUILBERT had not put many yards between himself and Constance's hiding-place before a shout of triumph told him that the Iroquois had sighted him again. He ran a zigzag course to mislead them and then darted into the jungle where Constance had watched him disappear. He knew there was little chance that he could escape, but he would fight for her life by drawing them farther away. He beat his way through the tangle, tearing apart vines, thrusting his hands into dense growths of thorny bushes; sometimes creeping under a thicket, sometimes darting across an open space, and disappearing again; panting hoarsely for breath, his head reeling; but still eluding those keen-eyed scouts. He came at last to the shore of the little lake that he had described to Constance, not far from the Huron trail. He could neither see nor hear his pursuers; he began to hope they had lost his track, that he might hide and return to her when the men had gone. But strange noises were ringing in his head, his eyes were dim from fatigue and the dust of the flight, and perhaps he could not trust his senses, perhaps his foes were nearer than he thought. He turned quickly and saw no man, then he dropped down and crept

down the bank through the sumach trees that afterwards sheltered Constance, then down into the tall reeds that grew near the shore. He lay in the water among the reeds with his head only above water. The cool water refreshed him, his strength was nearly spent, he could not have run farther even for his life. The wound in his side, which he had almost forgotten, was hot and throbbing, and the water eased the pain. The ringing in his ears grew louder; the reeling of his head seemed to make the waters rise up to envelop him and the heavens to swim above him; he tried to raise himself on his arm, to save himself from the suffocating flood, and then he remembered no more. When he came to himself again he was lying on the shore with his captors jeering at him.

They bound him hand and foot and dragged him at their heels. They informed him that they did not mean to put him to death at present; they would take him to their own country with other honoured captives and place him at the disposal of their chief. He had little recollection afterward of the journey. He had a delirious remembrance of being dragged for a long distance and then partially unbound and loaded with bundles, so the savages might make sport of his tottering steps. Sometimes he waded with his captors through matted swamps or shallow streams, sometimes he helped to carry a canoe over a portage, sometimes he was in the dense forests, stooping under half fallen trees, or clambering over logs. The men who had captured him joined a larger body, in order that all might cross together the great Lake Ontario, to the south of which lay the country of the five

Iroquois nations. Though he could not escape, the savages kept him closely bound in the canoe in crossing the lake, and by night on land he lay bound between his guards in a smoky tent. The forms of his tormentors seemed to perform grotesque dances before him; the earth appeared to slip beneath him, and when he was unbound by day, to continue the journey, he put out his feet as if they were treading the air, not knowing where they could rest; he was scarcely conscious of anything but the aching of his swollen limbs and the pitiless beating of the sun on his fevered head.

One afternoon when the sun was low he was roused by a babel of sound. The barking of dogs and the cries of children mingled with the shouts of warriors, and he knew the end of the journey was at hand.

Women and children came to hail the returning braves who had brought the scalps of many Hurons. Some of the destroyers of Teanaustayé had returned in advance and had told the story of the town. The braves led forth their captive and a mocking crowd surrounded him; the women and even the little children mocked him and spat upon him; they bespattered him with mud and refuse and wounded him with stones. He could not put up a hand to ward off the missiles, for though his feet had been freed to enable him to walk, his hands were tightly bound. But he uttered no cry, and at last an old warrior complimented him on his fortitude, addressed him as nephew and commanded the tormentors to desist.

The rescuer led him to a bark lodge and gave him

to the care of his daughter. The girl seemed to be of more gentle nature than the other Iroquois women. Seeing his exhaustion, she unbound his arms, told him to lie on a mat, and brought him water. When he had partially recovered she set food before him, and when she saw that his arm was almost powerless, from the bonds and the bruising of the stones, she fed him with her own hand. Presently the old Iroquois brought in a noted sorcerer to dress the wounds of the prisoner; but all this care did not deceive Guilbert. He knew that such mockery of kindness towards prisoners condemned to death was customary both among Hurons and Iroquois. He heard the girl pleading with her father for his life; but the old man answered that any attempt to save him would bring ill repute upon the family; death would be deferred for some weeks so the prisoner might recover strength to bear the ordeal by fire in a manner befitting a brave; meanwhile he must be well fed, allowed as much rest as he chose to take, and be treated with every consideration. On the last day the prisoner would act the part of host at a farewell feast, and invite to the spectacle of his torment not only the Iroquois of the town, but others from neighbouring places. The old Indian did not know how well the captive understood his language, or he might have been more guarded in his speech, though Guilbert had feigned sleep. The news of his approaching fate was not a shock to the prisoner; he had heard much about the death feast and the ceremonial of torture while he lived in the Huron country, and he had but a faint hope of escape. The old warrior did not show any sign of pity; but the

girl was distressed, and Guilbert thought there was a chance that she could help him. He determined to eat and drink, to rest and renew his strength, and to watch continually for an opportunity of flight.

The lodge in which he was confined under the guard of three Iroquois adjoined the house of his host, Mishimish. He was allowed two days of complete rest, and Mishimish, who had unfortunately discovered that he knew the Iroquois language well, came in to talk and smoke with him. On the third day he was encouraged to walk, in order that his maimed limbs should not become stiff from disuse; afterward he was allowed to roam as he pleased within a prescribed distance from his prison, but he was well aware that a close watch was kept on his movements. No one attempted to molest him or treat him discourteously. On the contrary, an elaborate and ominous politeness marked the words and actions of every one who addressed him—a politeness which would continue till the close of the death feast announced the beginning of his torture.

More than once he thought he saw Gui Durosnel at a distance, and then believed he had been mistaken; for if Gui had been present when he was brought in as a prisoner, he would not have lost an opportunity to taunt him. One day he was sitting on a mound not far from his prison, trying to find some comfort in his pipe. He was alone, for his appearance no longer aroused curiosity. He started up, for now he was sure that Gui was approaching, but quickly sat down again; he would not do the traitor the honour of rising.

Gui bowed low with mock deference; but Guilbert

would not bend his head in return. Sitting erect, he looked the traitor full in the face with a gaze so steady that even the bold eyes of the intruder fell before it.

“Why so cold, Monsieur Guilbert de Keroual?” asked Gui softly. “My visit is in your interest. I have come from a conference in relation to you, and I have been privileged by Orononeka, the Chief, to offer to you the hand of the girl Miratik, whose heart you have so quickly won. It is sad indeed that one with such power to charm should perish untimely. Let me congratulate you on your various conquests, and advise you to accept what your captors so generously bestow.”

“I have apparently become dull of comprehension,” replied Guilbert stiffly, “for I fail to understand.”

“Are you not aware that among the Iroquois as among the Hurons, it is customary to offer to one who is about to die the solace of leaving behind him a widow? While I was spending some time in Teanaustayé—before your arrival if I remember correctly—an Iroquois who met his death by passing through the fire was united in marriage to a Huron maiden. The men of Mayinggun will not permit their enemies to surpass them in courtesy. Miratik is not coy. She has avowed her affection for you and has pleaded with her father to give his consent to the wedding. If it is your wish, the ceremony will take place to-morrow.”

Guilbert made no reply, but puffed at his pipe as if he had not heard.

“Perhaps some memory of the fair Constance

holds you from the fleeting bliss that might be your portion," remarked Gui. "As I have not heard either of her death or capture, and as I have been well informed of the fate of others who were at Teanaustayé, I take it that she escaped the destruction of the town and its people. But why should you remain faithful to one whom you will never see again? Of course if you were privileged to rejoin her, the marriage bonds to the Count de Valincourt which she found so irksome would prove no obstacle in her relations to yourself; for, as is very well known, the lady has belied her name, and has been no model of Constancy."

The words had barely passed the lips of the tormentor before Guilbert sprang at him and would have thrown him to the ground if he had not jumped lightly aside.

Gui laughed derisively. "Bonds and brooding on your approaching fate have not tamed your impulsive spirit. Accept my congratulations. You will bear your part in the spectacle in a way that will honour our beloved France. Alack, that I alone should represent our country as beholder on that occasion! But I must bear an answer to the Chief. Do you spurn a maiden so loving and so—lovely?"

"You may answer that if Orononeka wishes to know my decision he must send another ambassador."

"As you will," returned Gui; and, bowing again, in his taunting manner, he walked away.

At the time Guilbert did not believe that Gui was the bearer of a message from the Chief; he learned later that in accordance with long established custom, Orononeka had declared that a wife should be chosen

for him, probably with the idea that the grief of the woman who must behold the torture would add zest to the ceremony. On the following morning Mishimish informed his prisoner that he had consented to give him Miratik as his bride, and that if he wished he might be married on that day. The position was difficult; but as Mishimish had yielded with reluctance to his child's appeal, he was well pleased when Guilbert said that he appreciated the honour, but would not permit the sacrifice; that Miratik, who had a tender heart, might suffer through all her life if she were forced to witness the death scene. Mishimish thanked his intended son-in-law solemnly and said he would announce that he had withdrawn his consent. He suggested that so long as Guilbert remained in the lodge as his guest, Miratik would bring him food and serve him and that she would become more attached to him; therefore he must remove at once to the lodge of Wabim-inuk, and Miratik should see him no more.

The transfer was arranged as Mishimish desired. Miratik was with some Iroquois women in another lodge, making preparations for the wedding. More than once in the following week Guilbert saw her from a distance; she looked at him sorrowfully; he feared she would come to him, and he moved away out of her sight.

One night he heard Gui conversing with some men outside his lodge, and learned that the date of his death was set for the third night following. On the next afternoon he sat in solitude, thinking deeply. He wondered why his enemies left him so often alone; perhaps they wished to inflict greater suffering by

giving him opportunity to dwell on his approaching fate. If that were so, they failed; he had grown apathetic and could contemplate the approaching ordeal without fear. His only anxiety was for Constance; if he could know that she had escaped, that she was safe, he would die content. He believed that she had been saved; though he had little faith in any words from Gui; he felt almost sure from his manner that he really knew nothing of her fate; and if she had been killed or taken captive, the news would have circulated through the Iroquois country. He had thought of her tenderly and sadly, and his thought turned again to Gui Durosnel; he prayed that Gui might never see her again, that he might never have power to work her harm. He wondered if Gui was the victim of some diabolic possession. He could understand that a man should slay another in a moment of jealousy or vengeance; but long meditated, continuous gloating on the torment of a fellow-man was inconceivable. The savages, fiendishly cruel though they were, had manly qualities. Anyone of them would have borne with fortitude the death to which they had doomed their prisoner, and they would have scorned to betray one of their own people to the hands of a foe.

While he sat alone thinking, Gui approached him. The two had exchanged no words since the day when Gui had suggested that Guilbert should give Miratik the distinction of widowhood. On this occasion, Guilbert did not see the traitor till he was near. He started, but controlled himself and turned unflinching eyes upon the renegade.

“Monsieur Guilbert de Keroual,” began Gui with

some hesitation, " I have the honour to inform you that the ceremony in which you will bear the chief part will take place within two days; great preparations have been made, messengers have been sent to all the towns in the neighbourhood; as there is no lodge in Mayinggun large enough to accommodate all the visitors, the festival will be held outside the walls."

He paused to observe the effect of the announcement, and was disappointed that Guilbert received it with apparent unconcern. He continued: " Oroneka will take every precaution against escape. His men are erecting an enclosure which will be well guarded. I fear therefore that your keenness of observation and your well-known agility will fail you in any attempt to elude your fate."

Guilbert inclined his head in mock deference. " I thank you for your interest, Monsieur Gui Durosnel. I had not expected to elude my fate; on the contrary I am prepared to meet it, and to act the part as becomes a soldier of France; I will even accept that most distasteful of hospitalities, the reception of yourself as my guest on the occasion of my death feast."

Gui spoke with deliberation. " I regret that my presence will be offensive, especially as I had come to you as a friend to point out a way by which you may save your life."

He paused for some moments, and then added: " There is no love between us; if I were privileged to meet you in open fight I would thrust you through with pleasure; but I would not see a dog tortured from nightfall till dawn by these human devils if I

could save him. Shall I show you the way? Or do you refuse to listen?"

Guilbert deliberated. "No," he answered presently, "I do not refuse to listen. Life is dear; I will hold it if I may without dishonour."

"Then hear me with patience, hear me without interruption to the end. There is only one way to save yourself and that is by marriage with the girl Miratik." He made an angry gesture as Guilbert drew himself up proudly. "You are mad—a fool—if you spurn the offer. The girl is pining because you have forsaken her. Old Mishimish has prevailed with Orononeka to spare your life if you marry his daughter; he will adopt you as his son. You must give your pledge not only to marry her, but to remain with her; then all will be well with you."

Guilbert's head throbbed; his breath came quickly, but he answered with outward calm: "The people of the neighbouring towns have been bidden to the spectacle. Will they be satisfied if the death feast is transformed to a marriage festival?"

Durosnel hesitated; he knew that the question had been discussed. "If they are not satisfied, some one may be found to take your place."

"Ah. So it has been settled already! May I ask who I am to give to the sacrifice to save my own skin?"

Gui remained silent.

"I demand to know the whole truth."

"Possibly a Huron prisoner."

"Otaking?"

"You have guessed well. It would be Otaking."

"His freedom was promised. He was told that he might live and be a son to Abwi whose own son

has been killed. Will Abwi consent? Will Orononeka also break his word? The Iroquois are very devils of cruelty; but they are not liars. These wild tribes of the forest have some notion of honour; they keep their solemn pledges."

"We will promise Abwi to bring him another son, the next one captured in battle. As to Orononeka, he is weak and easily persuaded."

"If that is his character, he would be as readily persuaded to break his pledge in regard to myself. You ask me to sacrifice Otakinging that I may go free—though you said a moment ago that you would not see a dog undergo the Iroquois tortures—you propose that I bring Abwi and Orononeka to shame by dishonouring their word, and that further, I should be false—but of that I will not speak—" He paused for a few moments, and then answered slowly, giving every word its weight: "Monsieur Gui Durosnel, you betrayed your countrymen and those who sheltered you in your need; you treacherously aided the Iroquois in their way through the forest to the attack on Teanaustayé—the place that you knew so well, and where you had received so many kindnesses—you did it to save your life when they had caught you, for you have no love for these people; you would escape from them if you could. They do not trust you; they watch you, as they watch me. Let me assure you that my life and my honour are too dear to me to permit me to save them at such a cost."

Gui had started up in a rage; his cheeks were aflame, his hands were clenched; Guilbert knew that the truth had struck to his heart and brought out upon his face the brand of his treachery. Neverthe-

less Gui answered with a sneer : " The cost which it pleases you to set on the head of Otaking and the honour of the Iroquois is merely, if you would utter plain truth, the price you place on the regard of the Countess de Valincourt, the fair un-Constant. But why sacrifice yourself for such folly ? The marriage bond among these heathen is not a permanent obligation ; and for yourself, it would be no bond, even Father Brébeuf would not hesitate to wed you to another ; he would not recognize a union by pagan rites with an unbaptized savage as a true marriage ; and the fair and frail lady would surely give you no blame for preserving your life by any means so you might return to her service."

Once more Guilbert sprang forward with clenched fist as if to strike, then he drew back again and let his arm fall. He answered, restraining his indignation with evident difficulty : " It seems an insult to the Countess de Valincourt to speak her name in your presence ; but I would have you know the truth. If my life were spared now ; if I were free to return to the Mission, I should not expect to see her there. If no ill befell her on the road to St. Ignace, I trust that she is now well on her way to rejoin the Count de Valincourt, who is awaiting her return. Every evil word that vile tongues spoke against her has been proven false, as anyone who was privileged to know her purity and nobility of character might have foretold. Her husband has bitterly repented that he ever gave heed to slanderous lies, and he will try to make amends for the wrong that he did her. It would be my highest joy to be of service to her. I trust I have been of service in doing what I could to enable

her to go back to her husband and her home. And now, as further discussion would be fruitless, may I ask you to oblige me by relieving me of your presence."

Gui gave a long, low whistle. "Wh-e-e-w! What chivalry! Alas, but it is grievous that a knight so devoted, so self-sacrificing, should perish ignominiously at the hands of barbarians! It may afford you some solace to be assured that if it is ever my privilege to meet the fair lady again, I will give her a very expressive description of your last moments. And now, at your desire, I will take my leave. You have rejected my friendly offer, and hereafter you can look for no favour at my hands."

As he turned away, Guilbert thought there was a look of shame on his face, and that his shoulders drooped as if he could not stand upright. He wondered if Gui had approached him only to mock him, or if he had felt some belated remorse for his treachery. He had hated Gui, but in this moment when he was standing almost in the presence of death, he would have been glad to believe that this man, his fellow-countryman, was not wholly vile.

CHAPTER XVIII

ESCAPE AND CAPTURE

THE guards who surrounded Guilbert in the lodge of Wabiminuk were sleeping heavily. The night was warm and the prisoner had sought relief from the fetid atmosphere by placing his head near a crack in the bark wall, through which he could breathe a purer air. He believed it was the last night of his life and he lay thinking of many things, of his boyhood, his mother. Should he meet her in that unknown world to which he must pass so soon? He had not lived as she had taught him and he must die unshriven. He had not, like Gui, mocked at religion, or scoffed at faith in God and the life hereafter; but in the pride of his youth and strength he had often put the thought of the spiritual life away, and soon the strength of his youth would avail him nothing. In the silent darkness he confessed his failures and said a prayer of penitence.

The night had been unusually still, even the dogs, so easily awakened, had been overcome by the heat and were sleeping quietly. As Guilbert lay, his head close to the slit in the bark, he heard a sound without, a footstep on the grass. He peered through the narrow aperture and saw a figure in a woman's dress.

The woman moved close to the lodge, pausing from

time to time, as if listening keenly. Guilbert contrived to enlarge the opening so that he could watch her after she passed. She stopped before the porch that covered the doorway and appeared as if about to enter. The Iroquois still lay as if in deep sleep, and Guilbert stepped lightly to the door. The woman put her finger to her lip as a sign for silence and beckoned him to follow.

Under the starlight he saw that the woman was Miratik. He followed her for a few steps beyond the lodge, fearing that if he refused she would speak and awaken the guards.

"What is it, Miratik?" he whispered. "You are in danger here."

"I come to save you," she answered in her Iroquois tongue. "I have no fear."

He had heard of the Indian girl Pocahontas who years before in Virginia had risked her life to save the white captive, John Smith, and Miratik would as bravely give her life now to save him. Savage though the Iroquois were, there must be good in a tribe that could rear such a woman.

"No, no, Miratik," he protested. "It is not possible for me to escape. The guards will awake and find you here. Leave me, I pray you."

"I will not leave you," she answered firmly. "You shall not die. I know the way."

"I refuse to take it," he answered with like firmness. "I will not sacrifice you. I am ready to die."

"If you do not come I will call aloud and wake everyone. Then they will kill me too. Choose which you will have."

He perceived that she was determined, and reckless of danger, and he signed to her that he would follow.

The night had been dark and clouds once more covered the rift through which stars had shone. Guilbert dreaded stumbling over some obstruction and rousing a sleeper or a guarding dog; but Miratik took his hand and led him through the crowded town. More than once the barking of dogs startled the fugitives; but the barking ceased and no pursuer appeared.

They reached the outer wall but were far from the gates. Miratik began to ascend the embankment, and Guilbert thought she expected him to scale the high palisade. The fortification consisted of trees bare of branches planted on the embankment in four concentric rows, each row inclining toward the others and intersecting near the top. The entire palisade within was lined with sheets of bark. At the crossing near the top ran a gallery of timbers. Guilbert had been very agile, but his free movements had been hampered by his wounds and bonds, and he feared he could not scale the wall. Miratik stooped at the top of the embankment, and removing a portion of bark and some loose sticks from the palisade, she placed Guilbert's hand on an opening in the wall, which he could not see in the darkness. She whispered that on the outer side there was a sheer descent into the ditch that encompassed the town. She had made footholes in the earth, and if he could cling to the trees of the palisade after he had passed through the hole, he could turn and let himself downward slowly. He answered that he would be careful, and when she had crept through the breach he followed.

Except at the roadway near the gates there were deep trenches outside the walls of the entire town; light poles covered with brush were laid across the tops of these trenches, so that a body of men, stepping on them unawares, would break through and fall to the bottom. The hole through which the fugitives crept sloped gradually downward, and they were able to enter the trench below the brush covering. As there was not a ray of light, Guilbert missed one of the footholes that Miratik had made and dropped to the floor of the trench; but Miratik had removed the stones with which it had been lined and he was not hurt by the fall. She whispered that there were many secret openings in the palisades which were known only to the chief warriors; she had overheard this in a discussion between some of the leading men, and ever since she had learned of Guilbert's fate, she had been searching for the way of escape. She had crept out night after night, had made the footholes in the trench and placed food and water for the journey.

She took the captive's hand again and guided him through what seemed impenetrable darkness till they reached a wider part of the trench. "Here," she said, "we ascend. We see the light once more. We cross the plain and enter the forest."

"But, Miratik, you must not come with me," he protested. "The peril is too great. If we should be discovered, it might cost your life. Go back, I pray you go back as quickly as you can. Creep into your father's lodge and no one will know that you aided my escape. I alone will know it and remember you in gratitude for ever."

She answered passionately : " I care not for my life if you die ; where you go, there I go with you."

" Miratik, it is madness ! " he declared. " I have not one chance in a thousand for escape ; but my life is dear to me, and I will try for that chance ; you must return to your father's house before it is too late."

" I know the ways of the forest, the hiding-places, the trails," she said. " Alone, you would be lost ; with me to guide, you can find the shelter. We will go to the town of the pale faces beyond the borders of the Mohawks and there we will dwell together ! "

He believed that she referred to Fort Orange, a settlement of the Dutch people, where Father Isaac Jogues had found a refuge after his escape from the Iroquois.

Again he pleaded with her to go back, and for answer she seized his hand and tried to draw him on. " Come, for I will not return. If we lose time the dawn will break and they who follow will be upon us."

As further parley was useless, he went on with her. A cleared space surrounded the town ; within it was the enclosure that had been built for the torture of Guilbert on the morrow. The fugitives had reached the border of the forest when a great cry arose from the town—a cry of many voices ; sentries appeared on the top of the palisades, and Guilbert knew that his flight had been discovered.

Miratik panted : " Fall upon the ground, creep low upon the grass, and follow me."

He did as she directed and thought she would creep as far as possible into the forest ; but instead she crept along the edge outside the trees till she reached a slight elevation into which she disappeared. She

put out her hand, caught his and tugged at it. He could not see her, but he heard her low voice: "Come, I will save you."

The mound appeared to be covered with small bushes; but as Guilbert crept forward at Miratik's direction, he felt that there was an entrance among the bushes, and he presently found himself with his rescuer in a hollow place under the mound.

"Few who are living know of this place," she whispered. "My brothers who have died in battle and the boys who played with them and died with them made it long ago, and once when I was good and pleased them, they showed it to me. It is small; but there is room."

She put out her hands and replaced the sticks and stones that she had removed, leaving only a narrow space for air.

She drew close to him and put her hand in his. "In your presence I have no fear," she whispered softly. "If we remain in this darkness all through the day and far into the night, before it is safe to go forth, the time will not be long to me, for you are with me."

They sat for a long time in silence, listening for sounds of the pursuers, and though they could not hear very distinctly in this cavity, it appeared from the muffled noise that came to them that the men had gone in another direction. Miratik grew drowsy; she had not slept that night; she had slept little for many nights; her head drooped and she rested on Guilbert's shoulder. He put his arm about her to support her and she slept peacefully, unmindful of danger and distress.

He was deeply touched by her devotion. He felt that if he should escape by her aid his honour must bind him to her, he must make her his wife; he could not be guilty of the cruelty of repelling her tenderness again. He sighed as he made his decision; he could not forget the lady of his heart.

A trampling of feet and an outcry not far away aroused Miratik. Guilbert feared that, awaking suddenly, she might speak aloud. He put his hand over her mouth and bent low to her.

"Hush, Miratik, hush!" he whispered. "They are very near!"

She caught the hand that he had withdrawn and held it against her; she nestled closer to him and spoke low: "They cannot—take us. Your God—the Huron captives have told me of Him—will keep you safe. He will not, He will not, give you to death, to the spears and the terrible flames."

The shouts, the tramp of feet sounded nearer, the flash of a lantern showed through the trees that concealed the entrance. Guilbert, with his ear close to the opening, could hear the hoarse breathing of those who had run far; and yet the men passed on.

Miratik raised her head. "I knew," she whispered, "I knew—it would be so—your God led them away—they will not return—you will be saved."

She was quiet for a long time, then anxious thought stirred her heart and she asked in hushed voice: "Tell me that you will not leave me; tell me that when you are saved I may be with you still."

He did not answer at once. He knew that he would not forsake her; he knew that Constance, the

wife of another man, must be no more to him than a revered friend; yet she held his heart and would always hold it; he could give Miratik tenderness and gratitude, but he could not love her as he felt he should love his wife.

He felt her trembling as she leaned upon him; he heard her voice broken by a sob: "You do not speak. Is it that you will cast me away when I have guided you to safety?"

He spoke with an effort; he would be a callous brute to refuse to comfort her. "Miratik, I will not leave you. If we are saved and find that town of the white men of which you spoke, I will find a priest of our Church and we will marry as the white men and women marry; until that day you will be to me as my sister."

She put her arm about his neck. "I am happy; there is a full joy in my heart; I have trust in your word. You will be my husband through all my life. I know—the husband among your people does never forsake the wife—I have heard it. Your God makes the marriage and He has said that the husband must be true to the wife so long as he lives. A priest of your God told it to a woman of our tribe who was a prisoner with the Hurons. She fled away and came back to us."

"Yes, Miratik," he said gently, "we are taught so. I will try to be good to you; I will try to make you happy."

Her hand was slender and long, as she was slight and tall; but she caught his hand so tightly that the pressure hurt him, and he wondered at her strength.

“ You have promised me,” she said, “ but you love me not. You have promised me because I have prevailed with you when I said you must never leave me. Is it that a woman of your own people loves you—that you would return to her if I would set you free? I will not let you go—I will not give you to any woman—I will hold you to myself—but—answer me.”

“ I will tell you truly, Miratik. I love a woman of my own people; but I shall never see her again; the great ocean divides us. I will not cross it to go to her and she will not come to me.”

She uttered a strange cry: “ I thank the great water that lies between her and you. If you would enter the boat that would carry you to her I would pray that it perish in the storm.”

He sat erect and put her hands from him. “ Miritak, I have promised; I do not break my word. I have said I would make you my wife, therefore I have not hid the truth from you. You must not speak to me so; and of her, you must never say again one word of what I have told you. If you dare to do it, instead of bringing my love you will kindle my anger against you.”

She bowed down her head on his hand. “ I will be good; I will not speak it again. I will love you and serve you as no woman of your people could love and serve; and when I bear you a son, a little son who will grow handsome and strong and brave as you, then you will love me for him.”

She waited for him to speak, and when he made no reply, she said pitifully: “ The anger is in your heart, but you do not strike me as a husband of

our tribe would strike in anger. I have no fear. I would love you though your hand smote me."

"Miratik, be still!" he commanded. "They—are coming back!"

Yes, the pursuers had returned, and in the end, it was Miratik's little dog, her pet, who led them to the hiding-place. He had run to and fro seeking her tracks till he discovered the spot where she was concealed. When he began to tear at the covering of the entrance, men ran to the place and soon dragged forth the refugees.

The dog, not knowing the evil he had done, leaped upon his mistress. She gave no heed to him; she moved as if in a dream, and did not seem to hear the taunts of the men nor their threats that she should share the fate of the prisoner. The clouds had passed from the sky; the beauty of the dawn illumined the land. At that moment of the glorious awaking of day, life and the living earth seemed dear to Guilbert, and before the dawn of another day his life would close.

Amid the yells and jeers of the awakened town he was led with Miratik to the place of judgment. Gui approached him and asked with mocking voice what wiles the Charmer had employed to overcome the chivalrous captive's conscience and constancy.

Though Miratik did not understand French, she had heard her own name, and she evidently divined Gui's meaning. Her face had worn that strange pallor that comes to the dark-skinned; but now red flushed her cheeks, and she declared with quick, passionate words that she alone was blameworthy. She raised her voice so all the men might hear.

“In the silence of the night,” she said, “I awakened and saw what was to come. I saw his flesh quiver and scorch in the devouring fires; I saw him writhe in his pain; but I heard no cry from his lips, for he is brave. My heart cried out for him as the heart of a mother cries for her child. I went to the lodge where he lay and I called him forth while his keepers slept. He commanded me to return to my father’s lodge; he refused to flee with me; he said he would not bring my life to danger. He was brave, but I could be brave too for him. I told him if he did not go with me, I would shriek aloud and awake the town, and thus he would bring death upon me. For my sake only, to save me, he did my will. If that was sin, the sin was mine. If he must die, I die with him.”

When the two accused stood before the judges, Miratik’s aged father pleaded for her life. He told how all his sons had died for the Iroquois nation, and the daughter alone remained to him. He said that she who would have sacrificed herself for love of a stranger would be a loving and obedient wife for a man of her tribe; he would make that man his son and the inheritor of all his possessions.

The offer caused much excitement and discussion. Miratik was the comeliest maiden in Mayinggun; but she had heretofore disdained all who sought her hand. In a tribe where licence prevailed, she had kept herself as pure as a maid of the Algonquins, and her favour was highly prized. Several youths went forward and pleaded their claims to her regard; but she turned from every one. In the end, her father, deaf to her entreaty, chose for her a stalwart

warrior named Wisniwago. She drew away from the suitor when he tried to approach her and fixed her eyes on the chieftain while he passed sentence. Orononeka began with the remark that the night had been disturbed and everyone was weary; and a ray of hope shone in poor Miratik's darkness. Perhaps the ordeal would be postponed and she might have opportunity to aid Guilbert to escape! The respite was only for a moment. Orononeka went on to declare with much solemnity that as visitors would soon arrive from the neighbouring towns, the festival must proceed as had been arranged; the prisoner had permission to rest for some hours to gain strength; then he must act his part as host until the nightfall gave the signal for his passing through the fires. As a punishment for her treason, Miratik must sit between guards in the foremost row of spectators, and all through the night she must gaze upon the tortures of the man she had tried to save. Early on the day following the prisoner's death, she must wed Wisniwago.

Miratik listened in silence to the words of doom; then she rose and looked into the pitying face of Guilbert; when the guards seized him and led him away, she uttered a great cry of anguish and threw herself upon the ground.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DAY OF DOOM

GUILBERT was led from the place of judgment for a period of rest. He had not the endurance of an Iroquois warrior, and, wearied by the adventures of the night, he slept heavily. When he awoke he spent the remaining time in meditation and prayer. The guards who were near him remained silent while he knelt. Barbarians though they were, they were faithful to such religion as they knew; they worshipped a great, invisible Spirit, and while the white man was speaking to his God, they permitted no interruption.

In the afternoon, the prisoner was prepared for the death feast. Up to this time he had worn the clothing in which he had been brought to Mayinggun; now he was stripped to the waist, clad in short buckskin leggings, and painted with ochre and red dye.

When he reached the lodge appointed for the feast, he was greeted by the cheers of a great multitude from the neighbouring towns. The largest dwelling in Mayinggun, which was usually occupied by many families, had been given up for the occasion. It was five hundred feet in length by about forty in breadth, and was packed nearly to

suffocation. Guilbert loathed the food, but to maintain an appearance of courage, he ate and drank, and urged his guests to eat heartily.

At nightfall, when nearly all the provisions had been devoured, shouts and yelling announced that the fires were ablaze. The horror with which Guilbert had thought of his ordeal had given place to a measure of apathy; as his fate was inevitable, he had disciplined himself to meet it with apparent tranquillity; but when he saw the glaring fires, the lines of painted men with spears or lighted knots of pine to goad him through the flames; when he heard the savage yells, his knees bent under him, and if his guards had not urged him forward, he would have fallen. He felt weak and dizzy, strange noises sounded in his ears, lights danced before his misty eyes; then everything seemed faint and far away; but the hisses and jeers that greeted his momentary fright aroused his failing senses; he braced himself, thrust away the arms that held and goaded him on and walked erect and unaided to the place of torture.

The fires had been built on an oblong elevation in the plain below Mayinggun. Great platforms had been erected on all sides, and the spectators had taken their places before Guilbert was led out. The men were standing, most of the women were seated. The seats had not been arranged with any idea of chivalrous attention to the weaker sex, but in order that the heads of the taller ones should not interfere with the view of the warriors. Miratik was seated above and apart from the crowd. She was alone except for the guards who stood on each

side of her to compel her to look on Guilbert's suffering if she should try to turn away. Wisniwago was standing near enough to watch her every movement. She was decked for a festival. She wore a kilt from the waist to the knees. Her breast and arms were decorated with strings of wampum, woven into necklaces, belts and bracelets; her long hair was gathered behind at the neck and ornamented with disks of copper. When Guilbert raised his eyes to look at her he saw the agony in her face, and the horrible cruelty of men to this tender girl filled him with such rage that he had difficulty in restraining himself from an attack on his guards. Some of the women were apparently looking forward without dismay, and even with delight, to the spectacle of a fellow-creature in torment; but there was pity in some faces, and one old wrinkled creature gave a faint cry and held out her arms as Guilbert passed; she would have given him protection if she could.

On the way to the platform, Guilbert passed directly before Miratik's seat, and his guards yielded to his plea that he might pause for a moment. He stood before Miratik and raised his hand in military salute. All who saw it understood that it was a mark of distinction, and applauded in their savage way. Miratik tried to struggle out of her place and leap down to him; when the guards held her back, she moaned piteously, and stretched her arms, striving to reach him.

"Miratik," he cried, "oh Miratik, be still! You cannot help me; your cries will but harm me and yourself. I thank you for your pity. Be comforted;

do not grieve for me. I can bear the torture; I do not fear to die. Do not think my God has forsaken me. When it is past, He will receive me, and I shall suffer no more."

At the moment Guilbert was exalted by a spirit that enabled him to look on death not only with composure but almost with welcome. He had meditated on the devotion of the Fathers to their cause; he had thought of the aged and saintly Father Anne de Nouë, who had given up his life in an act of kindness and self-sacrifice, of the sublimity of Father Daniel's dying, and of the long continued tortures of Father Isaac Jogues, the first martyr of the Canadian Mission. Guilbert had no such regard for the heathen as would have led him to lose his life for the salvation of their souls; but he had gained sufficient understanding of their savage hearts to enable him to make excuse for their barbarity; he did not desire revenge upon them. Gui had knowledge of better things; and even in that hour that seemed the very hour of death, as Guilbert looked upon his cruel, mocking face, hatred surged in his heart; he felt that he could not forgive.

Miratik tried to speak in reply to Guilbert; but her voice failed and no one heard her words. Wisniwago, jealous even of a rival who would soon be far out of the way, started forward with angry gesticulations and demanded that Guilbert be led quickly to the sacrifice; some young men shouted that Guilbert should be released and given a chance to fight for Miratik; if he should conquer Wisniwago, another victim could be provided for the fires; but

the crowds at a distance from this group, who could not see what had happened, had become impatient and clamoured at the delay; the guards accordingly seized their prisoner and bade him haste.

Upon the elevated mound eleven fires blazed, with intervals of several feet between them. Eleven great heaps of resinous wood were at hand with men beside them to feed the flames. On each side of the row of fires lines of stalwart youths stood with torches in their hands. Guilbert looked at their pitiless faces, their ferocious gestures; he turned again and saw Miratik, then he looked upward to the sky, cloudless and beautiful, glowing with stars, and he felt he could see beyond to the eternal—Peace.

The young warriors at the head of the lines, thinking that he drew back from terror, touched his back with their blazing pine knots; two others pricked him with their spears, and he leaped into the flames.

A wailing, piteous cry broke from Miratik, and Guilbert was unaware for the time of his physical pain in his pity for her distress.

The flames scorched his flesh, the red coals burned into his naked feet, as he leaped quickly from fire to fire. But the torture was not long continued. The cry of Miratik had scarcely died upon the breeze, when other cries, shriller, louder, wilder, sounded out a note of fear and warning. The distant cries were from the forest beyond; they betokened that an enemy was at hand.

The scene was instantly one of hurry and confusion; men shouted, struck at anything that impeded them,



The flames scorched his flesh.

jumped from the platforms and stumbled over one another, heartless, heedless, caring for nothing but to rush back into the town, and arm.

No one gave a thought to Guilbert. At the first signal that diverted attention from him, he bounded aside beyond the flames and was apparently unobserved in the crowd. When he reached the platform where Miratik had sat, he struggled out from the mass of pushing, striving creatures, and looked for her. Her place was empty, and he hoped that she was safe.

Men issued from the forest and hastened to the town; they were scouts who had been stationed in many places. They shouted as they came that a great force was advancing—an army of the Erie nation, the implacable foes of the Iroquois.

So stealthily had this Erie or Cat people marched onward that neither guests nor hosts at Mayinggun had felt a suspicion of danger. The specators had attended with knives of iron or copper in their belts, but were otherwise unarmed. They rushed into the town in wild excitement and armed themselves with hatchets, war clubs, swords, bows and quivers, whatever they found first at hand. Feeling sure that no one would molest him or try to recapture him while danger threatened, Guilbert entered the town and made his way to the lodge of the old woman who had looked on him with pity. She was an aged widow who had lost all her children. She lived in a house with several families, but when Guilbert entered she was alone. He showed her his blistered feet and limbs and asked for help.

“Mother,” he besought, “think of me as your

son. Give me food and clothing that I may flee and preserve my life."

She held up her hand in warning that someone was coming, and concealed him in the porch behind a pile of casks made of bark, in which provisions were stored. The men entered, searched for arms and went away, and old Washkeshi prevailed on the women and children who had accompanied the warriors to follow them and watch for the enemy. As soon as the lodge was cleared, she brought water, washed the dust and ashes from Guilbert's body and covered his burns with a soothing ointment; she bound soft skins spread with the ointment on his feet and limbs, put on him a pair of moccasins and gave him a light tunic and long leggings. While he was dressing, she filled a bag with smoked fish and dried corn, and added a pot of ointment. She hung the bag over his shoulder and fastened about his waist a belt from which hung a long knife of copper with a handle curiously carved. "Take it, my son," she said in her quavering voice. "It was the knife of my last son who died. Why should I keep it? I will never bear another son to wear it."

Guilbert stooped and kissed the wrinkled forehead, and the old woman gave a low, guttural laugh of pleasure. She laid her hand on his arm and murmured with much feeling:

"Son, pale-faced son, I would you might dwell with me and be mine own; but you must flee while there is time. If our people win the fight, they will return and put you to death. There is a place at the left hand of the wall beneath the western gate; you may creep under it if the gate is closed. In the

darkness of the night no man will see that your face is pale and your head is shorn. You came to me naked, now you are clothed; you will not be known. If any seek to hold you back; say these words."

She said a sentence in a low voice, and Guilbert repeated it after her several times till she was satisfied that he could pronounce it as an Iroquois. Then she bade him hasten away and speed as far as he could in the night. She felt no fear for herself or for the town.

"But, mother," he said, "someone accosting me may see that my head is shorn. I pray you give me that which hangs above yonder spear, so I may pass unknown."

He pointed to a wig of black hair that had been made from the scalps of enemies. The hair was long and loose on one side and braided on the other, after the fashion of some warriors. It would cover his neck, and as his face had been stained for the spectacle, like the faces of many of the Iroquois, in red black and yellow, his fair skin would not be visible. The old woman hesitated. The wig had been wrought from scalps taken by her son and was a precious trophy; but when she heard sounds without, she took it down quickly, fastened it on Guilbert's head and bade him hurry away.

As the house was of great length, he was able to steal out of the door at one end before some women and children entered at the opposite door. He heard them say they had been commanded to remain in the house, and that a few women would stay by the walls to help the warriors.

He passed groups of old men, women and children

hastening to shelter, but he walked as quickly as his tortured limbs would permit, and they did not speak to him. He could not refrain from limping when no one was in sight, but when anyone was near he tried to put his feet firmly on the ground. He had hoped that the warriors would go forth to meet the foe, but they remained on the defensive. He dared not venture near the western gate to seek the opening of which Washkeshi had told him, as the gate was probably strongly guarded and closed; he preferred to attempt the outlet through which he had passed with Miratik; that part of the palisades was probably without guards, as the enemies were advancing on the opposite side of the town.

As he drew near the wall four men who were lurking in the shadow of a house called to him. He repeated the words that Washkeshi had taught him and no one detained him. Guilbert thought that she had been present at a hurried meeting of the chiefs when certain pass words were chosen for the occasion. On account of her reputed wisdom and the services of her husband and sons to the nation, much honour was given her. The women of the Iroquois occupied a higher position than their sisters among the Hurons, and the matrons had no little influence in the councils.

Guilbert presently perceived to his dismay that this wall at the back of the town was also guarded. He knew that if he crouched he would arouse suspicion; if he assisted in the defence of the town he might win pardon and freedom; he therefore advanced boldly, and was hailed by a guard who stood with companions on the gallery of timbers at the top of the palisades.

The man called Guilbert to climb up. The fugitive knew that obedience to the command might mean recognition and recapture; but he obeyed without hesitation and without sign of pain, though it seemed to him that his scorched flesh writhed in agony as he ascended. Fortunately his hands had been little injured, so he was able to hold on.

Though he spoke with ease the Iroquois tongue, he feared that his voice would betray him. The guard, however, asked no questions. He handed Guilbert a large bow, pointed to the position on the fortification which he should occupy, and resumed his outlook.

The guards were partially hidden and sheltered by the cross poles, in the angle of which the gallery of timbers was laid. The spot where Guilbert knelt was near a corner of the wall, overlooking a part of the forest which was not seen by his companions. He had been watching for some time in silence; and exhausted by his sufferings and the awful strain, he had almost fallen into a stupor, when he drowsily perceived that the wood before him had taken the appearance of a multitude of moving trees. It seemed as a part of a dream, and he struggled to rouse himself. In changing his position, he bruised a tender place on his knee; the stinging pain almost wrung a cry from him, and fully awakened him; then he perceived that the movement of the forest was no dream, but a reality. In that moment of danger he remembered Dominique's description of a play that he had seen in England in which a great wood moved. Now, in this wilderness, silently, stealthily, a host was drawing near, bearing aloft

trees of the forest. Had they cut the trees to cover their approach, or to enable them to scale the palisades? That question Guilbert could not answer; but he was sure that the enemy had divided into two bodies, one to attack the town from the front, the other, making a wide detour, to approach the rear.

He moved silently toward the man nearest to him, touched his arm, and pointed to the advancing force; the man communicated the intelligence to his neighbour, and, almost instantaneously, the guards below were apprised of the imminent danger. Messengers rushed swiftly to summon help, for, excepting the few sentries, the whole force had been concentrated where attack was expected. Guilbert doubted whether Mayinggun contained enough warriors for defence against two such armies; palisades of wood are inflammable, and the destruction of the fortifications by fire would probably result in the massacre of the inhabitants. From anxiety for the women and children and with the natural instincts of a fighter, Guilbert became eager for the success of his late enemies, and when a volley of arrows came from the foe, crippled though he was, he did his part vigorously in returning fire.

If the crossed poles had not afforded some protection, every sentry on the palisades would have been riddled. The men might have dropped down on the inner side of the wall, but not one abandoned his post. Each worked with all his strength and skill to keep the besiegers at bay and prevent the firing of the walls.

A number of the enemy, deceived by the brush-wood over the trench, stepped upon it, broke through,

and fell struggling to the bottom. For a few moments their companions appeared to be in a panic, and the sentries on the palisades took advantage of the confusion to discharge a shower of arrows, under which many fell; but the assailants quickly rallied, advanced, tore the brushwood covering from the trenches, filled the trenches with it, and, piling their trees upon it, climbed the palisades. Guilbert was seized by a powerful warrior, and tried to throw him back, but instead fell himself to the outer side of the wall. He was trampled by many feet, and believed he must soon be crushed to death; but falling into a hollow place between the heaps of trees, he lay there, half stunned, till the foe had scaled the wall. When he recovered himself he crept close along the side of the trench between the brush and the earth wall till he came to a part that had not been disturbed, and where the brush still screened the top; there he crouched, listening to the distant sounds of the fray, till, utterly spent, he fell into oblivion.

CHAPTER XX

THE FATE OF GUI DUROSNEL

WHEN Guilbert came to himself he heard the cries and clamours of battle, but they sounded far away. He crawled out of the trench and looked about him. He did not see a living being, but many lay dead. The battle was now on the other side of the town, and this was his time to escape.

He had no distinct recollection of his tramp in the hours of darkness; he was many times so overcome with pain and weakness that he longed to fall upon the earth and remain there, no matter what might follow; but some strength of the spirit upheld the frailty of the flesh and forced him on. Dawn was near when he saw through the trees that the sky above him was painted with a red that was not of the coming sun. It betokened a vast conflagration and the destruction of Mayinggun. It was evident that the Iroquois had been vanquished. Guilbert thought anxiously of the fate of Miratik and Washkeshi; but he could not help them, and he went heavily on his way before he sought a place of rest.

The reflection from sunlight on the water guided him to a small lake with trees overhanging its banks. He determined to wade or swim across it

to hide his trail. As an additional precaution, he walked in the water by the shore for many yards and then turned to cross the lake. Toward the middle it was so deep that he was obliged to swim, and his sore and stiffened limbs nearly failed in the attempt. On the opposite side of the lake, in a dense thicket, he found a deep excavation that had evidently been made by the hand of man, but was now overgrown with long grass, ferns and underbrush. He cleared a space so he could lie at full length, and when he had removed his wet clothing and put it in the sun to dry, he dressed his burns with Washkeshi's ointment and lay down to rest. Pestered by insects, sore and weary, he slept fitfully till the sun's rays, falling through the trees, troubled his fevered eyes. He was hungry and thirsty, and after rising with difficulty, he limped to the lake side and filled a bottle with the clear water. When he had eaten of Washkeshi's provisions and drunk from the bottle's mouth, he was more hopeful; but he knew that he could not continue his journey, that he must rest for the healing of his wounds.

He was still near the lake side when he heard voices, and his keen ear told him that the speakers were on the farther side of the water. He crept into a close covert where he lay screened by leaves and branches. He feared that the pursuers had found his trail in the forest and observed that it was lost at the water's edge; yet it was possible that the leaves that lay on the ground had hidden his steps. There had been a drought; though it was early autumn, the parched trees had shed many leaves which mingled with the pine needles and covered

the earth; and the breeze, raising and scattering the leaves, might have removed any trace of footsteps.

His heart sank when the splashing of water told him that the men were crossing the lake, and he grew weak with dread when he perceived that they had landed close by the spot where he had swum ashore; but it became apparent that they could not discover any trace of human passage, for, after searching for a while, they turned and recrossed the lake.

Hours later, when the sun had set, another body of men passed near Guilbert's hiding-place. He had not heard any splashing of water, and concluded that they had walked around the lake shore. They were driving before them women and children, who were doubtless captives from Mayinggun. Guilbert heard the cries of the little ones and the lamentations of the mothers, and peering through the bushes, he was able to see them quite plainly. Female prisoners and their children were sometimes tortured and killed with hideous cruelties; but as these had been spared so long, it was probable that they would be adopted by their captors if they could endure the long march. If the women were good-looking and the children strong, they would be treated as well as the women and children of the tribe. If they were not strong enough for the journey, they would be slain by the way or left in the forest to starve.

One woman halted for a moment and turned her head in the direction of the bushes where Guilbert crouched. A man sprang from the rear and spoke to her sternly, and as she moved out from the crowd as if to reply to him, Guilbert saw that it was Miratik. Was it possible that by some intuitive

sense she knew that he was near? He was convinced that she did not see him with the seeing of the eye. It was torture to him that she who had tried to save him, who would have died for love of him, should be driven like a beast or a slave. He wanted to spring forth and seize her in his arms and try to shield her with his life. But what a folly that would be! He could not save her; he would only bring trouble upon her. If the man had struck her, or in any way sought to harm her, Guilbert, watching, could not have restrained himself; but the captor, though he spoke sternly, did not appear to be unkind. Guilbert could not hear his words; but he saw him hold her with his arm while she limped to a log and held up her foot for his inspection. When he had examined the foot, he patted her arm as if to reassure her, and called to a burly warrior from the rear. At his direction the warrior took Miratik in his arms and walked beside the women. She would not be treated unkindly; the man was evidently one in authority; he would care for her, would probably marry her, and in that she would be allowed no choice; though he was an enemy of her tribe, she would probably be happier than she could have been with Wisniwago, who would have been a bully and a tyrant. Guilbert watched till the tragic procession had passed from sight, then he crept back to his hollow.

To economize his small stock of provisions, he tried to satisfy his hunger that night by gnawing the soft inner bark of trees. In the morning he found eggs of wild waterfowl on the shore, and felt that he was not in danger of starvation. If he could rest

till his sores were healed, or partially healed, the longer delay would diminish the risk of capture by the victorious Eries. He had hoped to avoid the victors by taking the forest at the rear of Mayinggun; some of the force had apparently come this way in pursuit of escaping Iroquois; but they would turn westward and join the main body of warriors, which would make it safer for Guilbert to travel east.

He dared not make a fire, but the raw eggs strengthened him. When he took courage to explore, he saw many fish in the lake, and speared several with the knife Washkeshi had given him, which he had attached to a pole. On that evening he ventured to kindle a fire in the Indian fashion, and baked a fish in the hot ashes.

He remained near the lake for several days and prepared fish for his journey by smoking and drying; he also packed eggs in moss so he could carry them without breaking; blackberries and huckleberries that had ripened late varied his fare. His burns were healing, his position appeared more favourable than at any time since his capture, but he was still in great peril; he had, however, become so oppressed by the solitude that the voice of an enemy would have fallen on his ear with a certain welcome. He had often passed days of solitude in the forest and felt lighthearted; but in those days if he had been lonely he could have sought a friend at Teanaustayé; in this unknown wild, he was far from any friend, and his thoughts tormented him—thoughts of those he had loved who had suffered so cruelly, and anxiety for Constance. The devoted missionaries were not oppressed by the solitude of

the wilds; to them the divine Friend and Guide seemed very near; they were comforted and uplifted by their spiritual communion. As Guilbert thought of the beloved Father Daniel and his vision of the eternal life, he said an earnest prayer for guidance, and it seemed to him that an answer came, bidding him hope and fear no evil.

On a fair morning, he renewed his journey. He had walked till he felt the burns, not yet healed, begin to throb; he was about to rest and eat a midday meal, when he was startled by a piteous moaning. It came from a clump of bushes. He stood still and listened, then moved in the direction of the sound.

Lying beneath a cedar, only partially screened from the glare of the sun, his limbs drawn up as if from agony, lay the body of a man. His back was turned, his moans had ceased, and, for the moment, Guilbert thought that life had passed. The naked body was painted in divers colours; but in places the paint had been washed by the red blood that had flowed from many wounds, and which was now crusted and dried. Over the apparently unconscious form crawled wild things of the forest. Guilbert, though he had been long used to horrors, shuddered and prayed that the poor wretch had come to the end of his misery. He thought this was one of the captive Iroquois; but when he stooped he saw the distorted face of Gui Durosnel. Though it was mutilated and scarred, every trace of beauty destroyed, it was unmistakable.

Guilbert had believed that he hated this man, that he would rejoice in his downfall; but when he saw him lying helpless and agonized—for he was not

dead—pity surged in his heart and swept away all resentment.

He had a bottle of water in his bag, precious water that he might not be able to replace. He poured some in his hand and bathed the dust-covered lips and brow. The poor fellow gave a quivering sigh, but when Guilbert raised his head and put the bottle to his mouth, he could not drink.

“Try to drink it, Gui,” urged Guilbert gently. “It will do you good.”

The dying man shivered when he heard his name, and turned his almost sightless eyes upon his helper.

“Your voice,” he faltered, “I—know—but—I cannot see.”

“I am Guilbert, Guilbert de Keroual, your friend.”

“Friend! No—that cannot be—I sinned——”

“Drink,” pleaded Guilbert, “and do not trouble yourself for what is past. I have forgiven it—altogether.”

Guilbert hesitated before he uttered the last word, for he remembered the slanders against Constance; but surely it was not this dying man who had spoken them; it was some demon who had possessed him, whom he had now cast out.

He was able to take a mouthful of the water, and it gave him some relief.

“How did it happen?” asked Guilbert. “Have you been here long?”

“I cannot count the days. It seems—long ages.”

“Was it the Cat people—the Eries—those who destroyed Mayinggun?”

He slowly shook his head. “Not they—but—the Iroquois. When—they were—defeated—they said

I—had betrayed them. Some who were left behind—turned on me for revenge.”

Guilbert was silent. Gui who had betrayed others had paid the penalty for his treachery; those whom he had aided could not trust him.

The tortured man moaned feebly; he tried to speak, but could not say intelligible words; he slightly raised his head which Guilbert had placed again upon the grass, and tried to see through his dimmed eyes. “Stay,” he faltered, “do not—leave me.”

Guilbert sat down beside him and took his hand. “No, Gui, I will not leave you. I will hold your hand so you may know that I am here.”

The parched lips quivered. “Guilbert—she is good. I spoke—falsely. I regret—forgive.”

“I have forgiven, Gui, utterly. I have no anger against you, only love and kindness.”

“Tell her—that I repented—and my mother—tell her. Pray for me, Guilbert—I must—die.”

“If I am spared to return to France, I will find your mother, and tell her, Gui, and I will say a prayer for you now; say it with me, if you can.”

Very slowly and distinctly Guilbert said a prayer for the dying, and Gui, gasping for breath, repeated it. When he had ended, he lay, panting, while Guilbert moistened his face and hands with water, and put a few drops of water in his mouth. He spoke once more.

“God—sent you. May He bless—reward. You have comforted—I—am not—afraid.”

Guilbert stooped and kissed the poor scarred face. “That is for your mother,” he said, “as she would kiss you if she were with you; and for myself, Gui,

in token of friendship. God bless you and receive you into peace."

As if the prayer had been answered, the contorted face softened to peacefulness; the tortured body struggled no more; Guilbert believed that it no longer felt pain. He sat very still, holding Gui's hand, and sometimes moistening his lips till he knew that his life was ended.

For the rest of that day and the night he stayed near him who had been his enemy. In the morning he prepared the body as for burial. He had not strength to make a grave; but in a wooded hollow near the spot where Gui had died, he laid the body and covered it with earth and stones, so no wild beast of the forest should disturb it. He stood there long with bowed head, and then went on his way.

CHAPTER XXI

THROUGH MANY PERILS

ON the second day after Guilbert had laid Gui in his grave, he was thinking deeply as he walked, though with eyes and ears alert for sign of danger. As he drew near a group of maples, red and golden in their autumn dress, a peculiar sound made him stop short and listen. The forest had been very still, and the fugitive at once recognized the cry of an infant. He looked about cautiously before he approached the grove; but when he heard no other sound he took courage and went on. Upon the ground, in the bag in which it had been strapped on its mother's back, lay a male child, scantily clothed.

Many questions flashed through Guilbert's mind. Where was the child's mother? Had she abandoned it or would she return? How had she wandered so far from any encampment? He had seen no evidence of Indian trail. Fearing some trap, he searched the grove and its neighbourhood and discovered foot-steps and evidences of a struggle. Farther on, where the ground was soft, he found tracks of three persons, apparently of a woman and two men. It seemed probable that the mother had been lost, and in wandering through the forest had been captured

by enemies. Perhaps the child had impeded her progress and her captors had compelled her to leave it. If so, the child had not been long abandoned or it would have perished from starvation. The footprints in the soft earth had apparently been made several hours ago. When he had sought further and felt satisfied that danger was not very near, Guilbert returned to the babe, broke the egg of a wildfowl into the bowl that Washkeshi had given him, beat it to a froth with a piece of stick, and tried to pour it into the mouth of his charge. He had little experience as a nurse; the poor child began to choke, and the fugitive's fatherly efforts for its sustenance nearly resulted in its death. When it had recovered he tried another way with better success. On the infant's body was wrapped a piece of soft cloth of European manufacture, which the mother had probably received from a missionary. Guilbert cut off a piece of the cloth, gathered it into a bag with a piece of string, and poured into the bag the beaten egg. The child eagerly sucked at the bag and ceased its cries, and Guilbert sat down to eat some of his smoked fish and reflect on his new problem.

In his enfeebled state, the weight of the child would impede him, and its cries might betray him to the enemy. Yet he could not forsake the little helpless creature. He thought of the tiny orphan whom Constance had often held in her arms, and whom she had tried to save from the destruction at Teanaustayé. She had never appeared more lovely than when she bent over the little one with the sacred light of motherhood in her face. No; though it were to save himself, Guilbert knew that he would not leave the

child in the wilderness, to be devoured by wild beasts, or to sob away his life in slow starvation.

That night, as the babe slept on his arm, the tiny hands clutching their protector, Guilbert's heart yearned over him as the heart of a father yearns over the child of his love; he drew the little one closer and kissed his brown cheek. Constance would have sacrificed her life for such a babe as this, and he would do this deed in her name. On the following day, as he journeyed, he forgot that the child was a burden, and lightly prattled to him words that he could not understand.

No alarm of enemies occurred on that day, but in the night Guilbert was awakened by the whimpering of the child, and heard a sound of low voices and the movement of bodies through the bushes. He tried to smother the baby's cries by holding him close against his breast; but the little one suddenly moved his head aside and gave a loud, startled scream. Guilbert crouched low and tried to creep away; but it was too late; the savages had discovered the hiding-place and dragged forth their captives.

Guilbert knew by their speech that they were of the Iroquois confederation, and in answer to his question, they told him they were of the Mohawk tribe, and were on their way east to a Mohawk town. He tried to gain their favour by telling them that though he had been a prisoner at Mayinggun, he had assisted in the defence of the town against the Eries, and had escaped from the Eries into the forest. He learned afterward that though Mayinggun had been set on fire and almost totally destroyed, its warriors had rallied, and had pursued and defeated one body of

the Eries; the other Erie force had escaped with many prisoners. Unfortunately for Guilbert, his captors did not believe his story, and he found himself again a prisoner to a pitiless people. They gave him permission to carry the child, who was a strong boy, and might be adopted. After two days' travel eastward, they reached a large encampment, where a woman gladly took the babe in place of her little one who had died.

On the following day Guilbert's captors set out again, taking him with them. The burns on his feet, which had nearly healed, became inflamed by the long forced marches, and when the Iroquois saw that he faltered, they told him they had determined to put him to death as he hindered them by his slow pace. When he asked what the manner of his death would be, they said they would inform him on the dawn of the morrow; they were weary and must rest that night.

In accordance with a custom of some of the Iroquois, Guilbert was stretched on his back with limbs extended, and wrists and ankles bound to four stakes that were driven into the earth. As he lay there, he remembered a story he had heard in Teanaustayé of an Algonquin woman, who had been similarly bound and who had escaped. On previous nights he had vainly tried to loose his wrists; on this occasion he tugged at the stake to which his right arm was fastened, and felt to his joy that it moved; it had not been driven into solid ground. By persistent effort he was able to pull up the stake, bring his wrist to his mouth and gnaw through the thong that bound his hand. Partially raising

himself, he succeeded in freeing the other wrist, and unfastened the cords that bound his feet without much difficulty.

His guards and everyone in the encampment appeared to be sleeping heavily; but all the time he had a terrible fear that some were only feigning sleep, and would pounce upon him as he tried to steal away. But it was not so. He passed over the slumbering forms, and made his way into the depths of the forest.

He had not gone far when whooping and cries told him his flight had been discovered. Like the Algonquin fugitive, he sought a hollow tree, feeling for it in the darkness. He found a large tree just in time, for he had scarcely secreted himself in the hollow trunk before he heard his pursuers, who soon passed his hiding-place. He remained very still for a long time; but when every sound of pursuit had died, he crept out and went as far as he could in a direction opposite that which his captors had taken. As they would probably renew the search in the morning and follow his tracks, he tried to confuse them by moving to and fro, doubling and circling, and finally, having come upon a swamp, he hid his trail by stepping over the mounds of moist earth and walking only in the pools. Unfortunately, though the swamp was surrounded by a dense forest, it contained only a few scattered shrubs, and anyone on its borders could easily see him. Dawn was breaking when Guilbert had nearly made his way to the farther side, and he had hopes of escaping into the forest when he heard distant cries. Despite his precautions, he feared that the enemy had come upon

his trail. The swift runners might reach the edge of the swamp in a few moments, then escape would be impossible. In this swamp, which was miles in extent, there were large pools, with tall growing reeds and grass, and as he had once before hidden in the lake, he now crouched in the rank growth of rushes and water plants. He heard the pursuers on the banks, but after searching in the swamp for a while, they apparently gave up the pursuit and went away. They were anxious to get to their journey's end and could not afford to give up too much time for the tormenting of an escaped prisoner. But Guilbert could not take chances, and remained shivering in the swamp for hours, though the day was warm. At last, feeling sure that his foes had relinquished the search, he crawled out, stiff, cold, and very hungry. He had no food and no weapon of defence, but he found some edible roots and a few belated berries.

In days that followed he was often near starvation, and appeased his hunger in some degree by chewing the inner bark of trees. He had grown weak for lack of food when he reached a place where the forest was less dense and where many wild plum and cherry trees grew. The fruit was ripe, but rather bitter, and the cherries had an acidity that in later years, among the English, gave them the name of choke cherries. He found also, in this fertile tract, beechnuts and butternuts, but only a few of these were yet ripe enough to eat. Several times he came upon the trails of Indian hunters, and caught glimpses of the men; as he had little hope that any Iroquois would be merciful to him, he hid himself till he felt

some hope that the danger had passed for the present.

After many days of wandering, with increasing weakness and weariness, he reached a plain of several acres in extent, and near the centre of the plain he saw what appeared to be piles of old logs and mounds of earth. There was no smoke, such as is usual from Indian encampments, and no sign of human life; but he would not take risks, and kept within the shelter of the forest, but near the border, so he could peer out. After completely skirting the plain, he concluded that the wood and mounds were the ruins of an Indian town, and when he had walked cautiously toward them, he saw the evidences of destruction. One house of logs, constructed much like the lodges of the Hurons, was standing amid the ruins; yet the site of the town had apparently been abandoned for years, for grass had grown over the heaps of earth, and long grass, shrubs and ferns had sprung up among the logs, or were growing out of them.

In his interest at this discovery, Guilbert became unmindful of fear and caution, and moved about among the ruins examining eagerly. Under one heap of half charred logs he found a knife, an axe of a hard and close grained stone, a number of arrows tipped with flint, a serrated flint several inches in length that had been used as a saw, and some pottery. He had seen beautiful specimens of the pottery work of the Hurons; but one bowl of clay that he drew forth from the log pile surpassed anything he had seen of Huron manufacture. It was of a rusty brown colour, of graceful shape, and

ornamented with bars and lines in a finely executed pattern. His first thought, on discovering the implements and pottery, was that some recent visitors had left them; but further examination convinced him that they, too, had lain undisturbed for years. As he peered about, he found many other evidences of hasty abandonment. Pots and kettles, knives and fishing tackle, many flint-tipped arrows, other saws and axes were lying in the open, and but slightly screened by the grass and weeds that had grown about them. From one of the kettles, into which earth had fallen, a vine had grown, climbed out, and trailed on the ground. It became evident that Indians had deliberately avoided the place; perhaps some plague had stricken the inhabitants and caused them to flee after setting fire to their town; or, more probably, some omen connected with the destruction had caused a superstitious people, both victors and vanquished, to believe that a curse had been laid upon the place. Whatever the cause might have been, Guilbert had a reasonable assurance that he might take up his abode there in safety; even if disease had ravaged the people who had dwelt there, the cleansing fires, the sun and winds of many years, had purified the place from taint. He sorely needed rest. The knives and the flint-tipped arrows would help him to defend himself and to procure food. He had entered the ruins from the rear; but when he had made his way to what had been the entrance to the town, where a part of a gate and some mouldering palisades were standing, he saw that an abundance of food was at hand. Large, irregular patches of maize were waving in the breeze. The ripe grains

of corn had probably been gathered by chipmunks or squirrels and dropped; the grains had then penetrated the ground and the young corn had sprung up year after year. He went eagerly to the patch of corn, plucked a full ripe ear, and ate it raw. It was sweet and tender, and to the hungry, almost starving man, it was delicious. Corn was not the only food that flourished in that wilderness; pumpkin vines grew luxuriantly, with the yellow fruit ripe and ready to eat. Guilbert laughed aloud with joy. He might live at this place, provided with food and shelter, till he had recovered strength. He was so well acquainted with Indian superstition that he felt almost a certainty that no one would attempt to follow him to the ruined town, probably no one would even set foot on the plain. If he went beyond the plain, he would be watchful and ready to return at any sign of danger. He found a spring of pure water near the town, and not far within the border of the forest a running stream that led to a small lake, which was well stocked with fish. He hurried back to the ruins, found a fishing rod and line, and as the fish were eager to bite, he had soon caught a trout for his supper. He was careful to light his fire behind the shelter of a wall and to keep the blaze low. He baked his fish in the ashes and roasted his corn for the first satisfying meal he had eaten for many weeks. He covered the coals with ashes, and slept near on a bed of cedar boughs. This, also, was a luxury. In his wanderings he had slept on the hard ground, wherever he could find cover.

In the morning he examined the house that was standing. It was a long building, and though a

part of the roof at one end had been burned, a large space remained covered and sheltered from snow and rain. He could mend the roof and stay here comfortably for the winter if it should seem advisable. He spent a part of the day in clearing rubbish out of the place to prepare it for habitation, and when he was tired of his house-cleaning, he explored the neighbourhood. In another small forest lake, and in a swamp adjoining, he found wild rice; and in an open, grassy tract, he came upon wild fruit trees—prickly wild gooseberries and plums. He wondered what catastrophe had driven all human life from a place where nature had given so abundantly. Waterfowl frequented the lakes; partridges and quail were numerous on the plains. To the south of the town, the country was open and very beautiful, varied by hill and dale and acres of grassy plain. Many beech and butternut trees gave sustenance to the squirrels and chipmunks. Guilbert caught and tamed a chipmunk as a companion of his solitude. He found another companion. One day a dog ran out at him from a wood, yelping and barking. It sprang upon him fiercely and fastened its teeth in his clothing; but when he addressed it with expressions that he had learned from the Iroquois when speaking to their dogs, it ceased to molest him and allowed him to pat its head. Presently it trotted by his side, and though it was evidently a very wild creature, it had not forgotten former human companionship. Whether it had lived in the wilderness since the destruction of the town, or had wandered away from some later encampment, its new master could not

tell; but it readily attached itself to him, followed him home, and slept near him.

He fared sumptuously every day on fish or game, with corn, pumpkins, or stewed wild fruit, and he made provision for a time when the lakes would be frozen and fish difficult to catch, by smoking and drying fish, and by laying in a store of rice, corn, pumpkins, and nuts.

He made large traps and caught two bears as well as smaller creatures. The bear meat was a very welcome and sustaining change of diet and a valuable addition to his winter store, and the bear skins, dressed in the way he had learned from the Hurons, would provide warm clothing. He contrived rough needles of bone, and made a bed and coverlet with skins stuffed with the feathers of the birds he had shot. The life was very lonely and often very dreary; but in spite of loneliness and sad memories, he grew strong and his burns and wounds completely healed. He had been so wonderfully preserved that he felt confident of a safe return to the Huron land; but it seemed wise to remain in his solitude till the spring. Apart from the danger of capture by the Iroquois, there was much danger of being frozen or starved in a winter journey through the forest. He no longer took precautions with his fires; he let them blaze and send their smoke and glare to the sky without any fear. He had seen Iroquois trails; he had caught glimpses of men on the march; he was sure they had seen the smoke from his fire, and he was confident now that no hope of capturing the inhabitant would induce one of them to approach; probably they believed

the place was inhabited by some creature of evil. He would be in danger only if he ventured too far and crossed the path of the enemy. He tried to relieve the monotony of the long winter evenings by writing a diary of his adventures with a finely pointed charred stick on birch bark, and as he had learned to draw and paint, he made pictures in the same way, either with the charcoal stick, or with coloured paints of wilderness manufacture. He had no difficulty in making brushes of many sizes. Another occupation was the manufacture of bags, baskets, hats and mats; the mats were to cover the floor and keep out draughts and the bags and baskets for use when he should begin his travels. He also constructed a rough vehicle on wheels to carry his stores. When the March sun set the sap flowing, he made a welcome addition to his provisions by tapping the maple trees and boiling the sap for sugar and syrup.

Spring had come; the young trees were in leaf; birds were singing, and the earth rejoiced again in the renewal of life. The young man, too, felt the renewal of hope and joy; the spring hailed him; told him that he must not waste his youth and strength in the wilderness; that he must summon courage, take his life in his hand again, and go forth to join his fellow-men; therefore he packed his cart with corn, with meat and fish smoked and dried, with cakes of sugar, writings and drawings, tools and weapons of defence, and early on a fair morning of May, he set forth on his journey, guiding his course by the sun. He travelled all day and rested for the night without disturbance. On

the afternoon of the second day a man sprang from some bushes, stared at the fugitive for a moment, started back as if from fear, and held up a finger for silence and warning. Guilbert recognized a guard from whom he had escaped after his recapture, one who had known him at Mayinggun. The man pointed to the west.

“ Be still ! They go there ! ”

“ Who go there ? ”

“ Many of my people. I will not tell them I have seen you ! ”

“ You wish me to escape ? ”

The man made a gesture of assent. “ When you lay bound, I saw and Minatog saw that you rose in the night, that you drew the stake from the earth and broke the thongs with your teeth. You are a brave man ; you were brave then and at Mayinggun ; we wished you to live and not die, and we told one another to keep silence.”

Guilbert took the man's hand and shook it warmly, and the Iroquois grinned in appreciation of the token of friendliness. He quickly gave Guilbert directions to go to the south and east, sketched on the ground a plan of the towns and places to avoid, took from his own arm a coloured band and fastened it on Guilbert, and in a low, mysterious voice spoke three words which the fugitive must repeat if anyone should try to do him harm ; then he bade him hurry eastward till he came to the great oak by the lake, where he should turn south to a trail through the forest. He said an Iroquois word of farewell and darted off to follow his comrades.

The evidence of kindness in one of a savage tribe cheered the wanderer, and he tried to follow the instructions carefully; but he was obliged to walk in another direction to avoid a band of hunters, and thus he lost the trail. He was often in danger; he passed close to towns of the Onondagas, and later he was near the settlements of the Oneidas; he saw bands of Indians; but escaped capture. His goal was the settlement of the Dutch at Rensselaerswyck; to reach it he must pass through the territory of the Mohawks. Father Isaac Jogues had been secreted at Fort Orange in that settlement five years before, and had received much kindness from the minister, Dominie Megapolensis, from a trader named Van Curler, and other inhabitants. These good friends had placed Father Jogues on a vessel in the river, on which he had travelled to the Island of Manhattan, where the people spoke eighteen different languages. At Manhattan, Father Jogues had embarked on a small vessel and landed at Falmouth in England, thence he afterward found his way to France.

After many hardships and dangers, Guilbert arrived at Fort Orange in the evening of a June day. The fort, the church and other buildings were log structures. A number of houses built of boards and roofed with thatch stood at intervals on the river side above and below the fort. When Guilbert knocked on the door of one of these buildings, the woman who opened the door was much alarmed by his appearance. He could not speak the language of the Dutch, but the woman understood the Iroquois tongue, and when Guilbert told her of his need, she received him hospitably. She called her husband, who promised

to guard the fugitive in spite of his fear of Mohawk neighbours. The Dutchmen dwelt in peace with the Indians, and some of them had married Mohawk squaws; but they dreaded arousing the anger of the savages by secreting one who had been a captive. As the house Guilbert had entered was small and poor, the farmer led him to the home of a neighbour, a barn-like structure with only one great room about a hundred feet long. This was the house that had sheltered Father Jogues. Cattle were kept at one end; the other end was the sleeping place of the farmer, his Indian wife and their children; a place was made for the stranger in the middle of the apartment. When Guilbert referred to the visit of Father Jogues, his host asked how the good priest had fared, and though he was of another race and religion, he was deeply distressed when his guest informed him that the missionary had returned to Canada and had suffered death by martyrdom.

Early in the morning Guilbert was removed to a house containing several rooms, separated by board partitions. He remained there for some days waiting for a band of friendly Indians who were going to the banks of the great lake that he had crossed with his captors a year ago. There were perils on the way from hostile tribes; but the party reached the lake safely early in July. On its shores the guides wished their companion farewell, presented him with a stout canoe and a store of provisions, and gave him careful directions for his safety.

A canoe is a frail craft in which to brave the storms of a vast lake, with waves running as high as those of the ocean, and Guilbert knew that he was

still in the territory of his foes and might encounter Iroquois on the water; but as he had been led through so many perils, he trusted that he would reach the Huron country in safety, and thereafter, he would have little difficulty in making his way to St. Ignace and his beloved friend, Father Jean de Brébeuf.

While crossing he caught glimpses of canoes and had little doubt that they were manned by Iroquois; yet he escaped capture. He landed on the farther shore, where he constructed a cart on which to haul his canoe. He had provisions enough for several days, and he picked berries by the way. Soon after he entered the Huron country he met a band of men who recognized him as one who had lived at Teanaustayé. He told them of his capture and escape, and questioned them eagerly regarding events in their country; but they could tell him nothing, for they, too, were escaped captives returning. They had heard rumours of invasions by the Iroquois, of the destruction of Huron towns and the flight of the surviving inhabitants; but they knew nothing with certainty. Guilbert parted from them on the borders of the beautiful bay that he had crossed so often with Dominique. The Hurons went eastward, and Guilbert paddled across the water to the shore where he had lived with Dominique and where their cottage had stood.

CHAPTER XXII

THE TRAGEDY OF THE MISSION

As Guilbert approached the shore of the Wentaron Bay, he looked through the pines for the roof of the little cottage where he had first seen the face of Constance, and where he had spent happy days with Dominique Rivard. The Iroquois had spared the cottage as a shelter in future incursions; but there was no smoke, no sign of human occupancy. The wanderer felt desolate as he drew his canoe ashore and ascended the bank.

He had lived alone in the cottage after Dominique had gone; but friends had been near at Teanaustayé. In his year of wandering, the ever-present perils and privations had driven away broodings on the past; but now, close to the scene of tragedy, recollection brought poignant pain.

He opened the door and drew back in disgust. Charred wood, ashes, and the remnants of feasts were strewn on the floor. The rustic table was covered with old bones, corn cobs and grease. Squirrels that had been nibbling at the cobs darted away as Guilbert entered. He looked about for a few minutes, made a gesture of repulsion, and returned to the purer air. He had thought of spending the night in the cottage

and setting out in the morning for St. Ignace; but now he resolved to begin the journey to St. Ignace and spend the night on the way.

He ate his midday meal out-of-doors—a little dried beef from the store the friendly Mohawks had given him and strawberries that he had gathered on the bank. He hid his canoe in a dingle and set out manfully toward his goal. Spite of wounds and burns and sore privations, he had regained much of his former vigour and could walk and run as of old. As he pictured his arrival at St. Ignace, the meeting with old comrades, the joy of Father Brébeuf in beholding alive one whom he had mourned as dead, he quickened his pace and broke into a run. How much he would have to hear and how much to tell! Through all his hardships and perils, he had held fast the belief that Constance had reached St. Ignace in safety and had later returned to France. He longed unselfishly for her happiness. He would always love and reverence her; he felt that he could never love another woman; but he had disciplined himself to think of her as the wife of Antoine de Valincourt—a devoted wife. Jean de Brébeuf, the saintly man, had helped him to overcome self, and to turn the strength of his love for one woman to devoted service for humankind.

It seemed strange to him after a time that he heard no sound, saw no sign, of human life. He heard the hum of insects and the singing of birds, saw squirrels and chipmunks darting among the branches, and other wild creatures of the forest moving in the grass. During his sojourn in the ruined town, he had become accustomed to loneliness; but in this forest, where he

had expected to meet Frenchmen or Indians, the intensity of the solitude grew ominous. About dusk, he reached the hut where he had spent the night with Brébeuf, and he had not met a human creature.

He felt more hopeful after a night's sleep. The day was fair; he should reach St. Ignace before sundown. Once more his reviving hope made glad pictures of the meeting with old friends.

He reached a great stretch of woodland that had been swept by forest fires. It had been a beautiful wood. Now it was a blackened waste. Not one leafy tree remained. Nothing was left but charred trunks or fallen logs. With sinking heart Guilbert stood gazing at the desolation. He tried to rally his spirit by assuring himself that he had seen other ravages of forest fires. The Hurons were careless. They had often left smouldering fires amid dense woods, and had thereby caused the destruction of valuable timber. This was only an additional evidence of their childish thoughtlessness.

When he had passed through the burned tract and had come out upon a plain, where the grass was green, where flowers bloomed and birds sang, and the rippling of a stream sent out a pleasant murmur, Guilbert brightened; but yet the silence, the absence of human life, seemed ominous.

He came to the wood where he had left Constance hidden in the tree—the last bit of woodland before his goal. His long walk had tired him; but it was no weariness from that exertion that caused his steps to lag. A dread had come over him—a dread of reaching the edge of the forest and looking forth over

the plain beyond. He was near St. Ignace now, and he saw no sign of man, not even a trampling of the grass.

At the edge of the forest he stood, and it seemed to him as if he had always known that which his eyes must behold. In place of the fair town of St. Ignace, he saw only a blackened ruin, houses and palisades burned and broken. No one was in the ruins, no one moved on the plain beyond. Guilbert sat down and buried his head in his hands.

A crackling of branches and a human voice roused him. He who approached might be an Iroquois; but Guilbert felt no fear. When the man came in sight, Guilbert perceived that he was a Huron who had been at St. Ignace. He rose with some hope reviving. The man halted and looked startled.

“Do not fear, Wionteh!” cried Guilbert. “It is I, Guilbert de Keroual!”

Wionteh turned as if to flee. The Indian believed that he had been killed by the Iroquois and had come back in spirit form. He called reassuringly, “Come back, Wionteh! I am a living man!”

The Indian stood motionless and trembling. Guilbert grasped his hand. “Look, Wionteh,” he said, “look and feel that I am as much alive as yourself. Tell me of my friends. Father Brébeuf—is he well?”

Wionteh put his hands before his face. “He is gone, gone! He and the good Father Lalemant!”

“Gone, man! Where?”

“To their heaven. The Iroquois have done it.”

Guilbert bowed his head. “I loved him and he is gone! Would that I had never returned!”

As Wionteh was silent, Guilbert spoke again.
“Did they—suffer?”

“They tortured him—the Iroquois. We saw it. We could not save him. Afterward, we fled to Sainte Marie.”

“Is Sainte Marie safe? Are the Fathers there?”

“That also is no more. Sit and I will tell you.”

Guilbert sat down heavily. Wionteh sat beside him and related his tale of horror.

The Iroquois had come on snow-shoes through the forest in the silence of the night. St. Ignace was defended on three sides by a deep ravine and palisades, on the fourth side by palisades alone. The Iroquois had entered by the weakest side, and as there was no exit through the ravine, only three Hurons had escaped. The conquerors smeared their faces with blood, left a guard to hold the town, and rushed in the early dawn toward St. Louis, three miles away. St. Ignace, St. Louis and three other villages had formed the mission of which Brébeuf and Lalemant had charge; the two priests were at that time in St. Louis. When the three Huron fugitives from St. Ignace arrived to give warning of the approaching foe, some warriors stayed in the town to defend it; some inhabitants fled for safety; but the sick, the old and decrepit remained helpless in their lodges. The converts of Brébeuf urged him to escape; but he refused to forsake his people. The delicate and sensitive Lalemant trembled, but remained at his post.

In the meantime, three hundred warriors from La Conception and Sainte Madeleine had heard of the Iroquois invasion, and had come well armed and

eager to fight for the defence of the missions. They had halted at Sainte Marie and reported that comrades would follow. Some remained to defend Sainte Marie, others took posts by the passes of the forest in the hope of waylaying the enemy. Two hundred Iroquois, who had hastened from St. Ignace to attack Fort Sainte Marie, came upon one of the Huron bands, slaughtered some and put the rest to flight; but the cries of the vanquished brought many to their rescue; the Hurons in turn routed the Iroquois, who ran for St. Louis with the victors at their heels. An advance host of Iroquois had already entered St. Louis, burned houses, killed many of the helpless, and returned to St. Ignace with prisoners in bonds. The pursuing Hurons overtook the Iroquois whom they had routed, but some who escaped joined the main body at St. Ignace; then the enraged warriors from St. Ignace hastened back to St. Louis for revenge. The palisades of St. Louis were breached and broken, and so many Hurons had been killed or disabled that only one hundred and fifty were available for defence. They were armed with bows and arrows, war clubs, hatchets, knives and a few guns. In the larger force of the Iroquois most of the men had guns. The Hurons fought with the courage of despair, and drove back their assailants many times. The battle, which was one of the fiercest in the history of the Hurons, continued far into the night; but at last the Iroquois prevailed. Their only prisoners were twenty wounded and exhausted Hurons; the others lay dead about the broken palisades. The Iroquois set the town on fire and burned the sick and feeble in their dwellings.

Guilbert had listened without a word to the tale of horror. When Wionteh paused he lifted his head. "You have told me that they tortured Father Brébeuf. Did he suffer—long?"

Wionteh had been sent to France in his boyhood. On his return he had continued under the instruction of the missionaries. He had learned to speak French with ease, and had acquired the gestures and manner of the French traders and soldiers.

"Alas!" he exclaimed. "It was a barbarity that only devils such as they could have wrought! They stripped and bound the two brave Fathers and drove them from St. Louis to St. Ignace, beating them all the way. They left them in St. Ignace, bruised and bound, while they went away to burn other villages and hunt for those who had fled. In the afternoon—I remember it was the sixteenth day of March—they came back for the torture. They led the good Father Brébeuf apart and bound him to a stake; and all the while, when he knew what he must suffer, he took no thought for himself; he cried aloud to the men who must suffer too and prayed them to be patient; he told them the pain would soon be over and the bliss of Heaven would be theirs. He spoke to the young lads whose lives would be spared, the lads who would be adopted by the Iroquois. 'My sons,' he said, 'stand fast in the Faith! Wherever you go, whatever may befall, remember my last words to you, trust in God and keep yourselves pure!' The Iroquois scorched him from head to foot and tried to silence him; but he prayed still for those men that he loved that they might be steadfast. The fiends cut away his lip, they thrust a hot iron

down his throat, and he could speak no more; but he would not yield a sign of pain. They tied strips of bark smeared with pitch upon the body of Father Lalemant and led him forth to torment Father Brébeuf by the sight of his brother's sufferings. Father Lalemant threw himself at the feet of his friend and cried aloud: 'We are made a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men!' He was not so strong, the poor Father Lalemant. When the devils bound him to a stake and set fire to the bark that covered him, it seemed that he could not bear the pain. He threw up his hands and cried aloud to Heaven; but afterwards, he uplifted his hands again, and offered his sufferings as a sacrifice. They poured hot water on his head and on the head of Father Brébeuf. A wicked Huron who had been adopted by Iroquois urged them on, and they all cried as they poured the water, 'We baptize you that you may be happy in Heaven, for no one can be saved without a good baptism.' They hung about the neck of Father Brébeuf a collar of hatchets, red hot, and cried with the evil Huron, 'We wish to make you happy! You have said that the more one suffers on earth the happier he is in Heaven! We torment you because we love you, and you ought to thank us!'

"Through all the dreadful hours the good Father would not show that he suffered. We know that he prayed for his people to the end. We have hoped that because he would not think of himself he did not feel so great an agony. Those of us who were near him have said we would never forget; we would try to live as he taught us, and teach our brothers also."

“What was the end?” asked Guilbert through whitened lips.

“When he was almost dead, the devils laid open his breast and drank his blood, that they might drink with it his brave spirit. The poor Father Lalemant lived a longer time, until an Iroquois, perhaps with mercy in his heart, made an end with a blow of a hatchet.”

The listener bowed his head. Wionteh tried to comfort him. “It is over; they suffer no more. He had looked for death. He was ready. He would rejoice to die if it would help the men who saw to believe what he had taught and try to follow him.”

“Yes; it is true; for his sake I should be thankful; but—I loved him—and I shall see him no more.”

“He loved you; he spoke of you as he stood bound and tortured. He cried to us to tell you if ever we should behold you again, that his last thoughts were with you; that he rejoiced you had done nobly, and had chosen the way of the Cross. He said you would understand.”

When Guilbert raised his head again, he said quietly: “I thank you, Wionteh, for bearing his message on your heart. It has comforted me. Do you know if the Lady—she whom they called the Lady of Teanaustayé—is safe?”

“She came to St. Ignace. She had escaped through many perils when Teanaustayé was destroyed. She was ill and nigh to death; but she recovered, and when there was opportunity she returned to France. She took with her Marie and Anina and two little Huron boys who were orphans. It has been said among my people that she had a

husband who is living, that he had sent her to Father Daniel for safety from great dangers that threatened in France. That may not be truth. It may be a tale that came to the mind of one who did not understand why a lady so lovely should come to this wilderness. Father Brébeuf would say nothing if any asked him questions. A soldier said that the husband was a Count de Valincourt. It is strange that a man of the nobles should not be aware of the perils of the wilderness with the Iroquois always at hand! Yet otherwise, why should she have come? A lady of France would not leave her husband without a great reason."

Wionteh turned and looked at Guilbert with a questioning expression. He believed that Guilbert knew more about the Lady than anyone else except the missionaries.

Guilbert answered warily: "I am sure she would not leave her husband without good cause, and that whatever she may have done was right."

"I have not doubted that," said Wionteh. "No one who beheld her could think a wrong of her."

"And now, tell me of Sainte Marie. You said that it is no more. Do you mean that all the missionaries have been put to death, that all the towns have been destroyed?"

"Not all. Hear me to the end and I will tell you."

"I will not interrupt you, Wionteh. I will sit here quietly and listen."

"It was on the nineteenth day of March, the festival of Saint Joseph, that some who had escaped from St. Ignace arrived at Sainte Marie and said that the Iroquois had been seized with panic and

believed the Hurons were coming upon them in force for vengeance; their chiefs could not control them, and they would abandon the place. Before they went away they planted stakes in the bark houses and bound to them the feeble prisoners, the old men, women and young children; they set fire to the town and yelled with joy when they heard shrieks from the burning buildings.¹ When that was over, they loaded the strong prisoners whom they wished to preserve alive with the plunder and drove them southward through the forest.

“ Some escaped from the flames. An old woman went through the forest to St. Michel and set seven hundred warriors on the track of the Iroquois. But, alas! Those Hurons were not braves! They said they could not overtake the Iroquois, and slunk back like cowards! ”

The Indian had paused, but Guilbert kept silence and Wionteh continued :

“ A number who had fled from the ruined towns went through the melting snow to Lake Huron. They were starving and cold, and they risked their lives all day and all night upon the breaking ice till they reached the towns of the Tobacco Nation in the Blue Mountains.

“ When it was known at Sainte Marie that the Iroquois had left the place, one of the Fathers went

¹ “ The site of St. Ignace still bears evidence of the catastrophe in the ashes and charcoal that indicate the position of the houses, and the fragments of broken pottery, and half consumed bone, together with trinkets of stone, metal, or glass, which have survived the lapse of two and a half centuries. The place has been minutely examined by Dr. Taché.”—Parkman.

with seven soldiers to St. Ignace, where they found only burned houses and the bodies of the dead. They lifted the bodies of their noble martyrs Brébeuf and Lalemant, and with their hearts nigh to breaking, they carried them with reverence to Sainte Marie, and buried them in the cemetery, except the skull of the Father Brébeuf which they kept as a relic.

“ It is sad to tell. Very soon Sainte Marie stood alone; for, two weeks after St. Ignace was burned, my people had abandoned fifteen of their towns. They had not the brave heart. They would not till their fields; they would not strive to overcome; they roamed the wilderness and took no thought for what would follow. Some sought refuge on the rocky islands; some followed those who had fled to the Tobacco Nation; others wandered away to the Neutrals on the north shore of the Lake Erie. My people are no more a nation; they will vanish from the face of the earth ! ”

Wionteh sighed heavily. He had loved his kinsmen; he had held the Indian's tribal pride; now his country was desolate and his people were scattered.

As Guilbert did not speak, Wionteh said pitifully : “ When all about them was ruin, the Fathers at Sainte Marie knew that it would be folly to remain; but their hearts were sore when they had resolved to abandon the place they loved.”

He drew from his bag a little book formed of leaves of birch bark. “ I have written here the words of the Father Superior. They are brave words.”

He held the book to the light, though he knew every word, and read aloud : “ Since the birth of

Christianity, the Faith has nowhere been planted except in the midst of suffering and crosses. Thus this desolation consoles us; and in the midst of persecution, in the extremity of the evils which assail us, and the greater evils which threaten us, we are all filled with joy; for our hearts tell us that God has never had a more tender love for us than now."

"It was hard," said Guilbert. "They had hoped so much. They had believed that their mission was the beginning of a great work. Then they saw it desolated and their people scattered. Where have they gone?"

"Some went with my roving people through the thickets and mountains and shared their hardships. One embarked alone in a canoe and found many of those whom he had taught among the rocks and islands of Lake Huron. Those who remained at Sainte Marie said they would make a new mission on the Grand Manitoulin Island, which my people call Ekaentoton. They thought it would be a better place than any other; it would bring them nearer the Algonquins on the borders of the lake and the French settlements by the Ottawa River. The soil is fertile; there is good fishing. But when they had made the plans, chiefs of our people came and begged to be heard. They said that many Hurons had resolved to make a settlement on the Island of Ahoendoé, which the Fathers call the Isle St. Joseph. All conferred together for three hours, when the Fathers yielded to the desires of our chiefs, and said they would go to Ahoendoé.

"The old, the women and the children, protected by soldiers and Hurons, went first in many canoes

and with a large raft for stores. The Fathers removed from Sainte Marie the sacred vessels and all that the church had contained, also furniture and weapons, cattle and poultry and the corn that they had stored. When everything that was of use had been carried to the raft and the large vessel, fire was set to destroy the buildings of the fort.

“ Three islands are together at Ahoendoé. The largest will be the home of the Mission. The good Fathers are trying to rouse my people to build houses, to plant corn; but they are sunk in idleness and gloom. They feel that they are a doomed nation, and that they can do naught to set aside the doom.”

Guilbert sighed drearily. He felt, like the disheartened Hurons, that nothing could avert the fast-coming doom. “ Where is your home, Wionteh? ” he asked. “ What are you going to do? ”

“ Ten are on their way from Ahoendoé to bear messages from the Fathers to those who dwell in Villemarie. I wished to see this spot again, therefore I hastened here, to await my brethren. When we have delivered our messages in Villemarie, and made a sufficient rest, then we will return to the aid of the Mission.”

The blackness of despair began to pass from Guilbert's spirit. The Indian's loyal words brought him a new hope and a brave determination. “ You are right, Wionteh,” he said firmly. “ I will go with you to Villemarie and send some messages to France. Then I will return with you to the islands; gladly will I give my life for the memory of my father in God, Jean de Brébeuf.”

CHAPTER XXIII

TIDINGS OF CONSTANCE

NOT long after his arrival in Villemarie de Montreal, Guilbert hastened to the convent of the Ursulines. He had heard that the convent had sheltered the Countess de Valincourt while she was awaiting the departure of a vessel for France.

The Mother Superior seemed startled when she heard his name. After a word of greeting, she remarked, while her eyes searched his face: "You are as one risen from the dead, Monsieur de Keroual. Already a monument to your memory has been erected in Paris—a home for orphans of the Hurons."

The young man's face flushed. "Ah! To whom am I indebted for that kindness—that honour?"

"To Monsieur the Count de Valincourt and his Countess."

The flush deepened. Guilbert made an effort to reply; but the words failed at his lips. The Mother Superior continued: "The Countess de Valincourt tarried with us until she went to France. She returned there to make her best endeavour to be a true, devoted wife."

The Mother was known to be a prudent and reserved woman. Therefore her words, which seemed to be in the nature of a confidence, perplexed

de Keroual. He stammered: "I am very thankful that she was spared to return in safety. She had been brave in encountering many perils."

"Yes, she had suffered much and borne herself nobly. She, too, was thankful that she had been spared to return to her duty."

A silence followed. Guilbert sought in vain for speech. The Mother spoke again: "To some it is given to know the joys of home and family—the joys of this earthly life; others joy in the blessedness of the spiritual. It is now the desire of the Countess to enter a convent."

Guilbert drew a gasping breath. If Constance had been unhappy, if she had left de Valincourt, his sacrifice had been in vain. He faltered out: "Her husband! Where is he? Are they—not—together? Why—should she—leave him?"

Again the Mother Superior regarded him searchingly. She answered very slowly, giving every word its weight. "Monsieur de Keroual, Constance de Valincourt is once more alone. Her husband, the Count de Valincourt—is—dead."

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