

THE ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE

BY

GRACE LIVINGSTON HILL

AUTHOR OF

“_In the Way_,” “_Lone Point_,” “_An Unwilling Guest_,” _etc._

* * * * *

GABRIEL THE ACADIAN

BY

EDITH M. NICHOLL BOWYER

PHILADELPHIA

AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

1420 Chestnut Street

Copyright 1902 by the

AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

* * * * *

Published September, 1902

From the Society's own Press

Contents

The Angel of His Presence

Gabriel the Acadian

THE ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE

BY

GRACE LIVINGSTON HILL

THE ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE

=LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS=

“_I have just discovered who you are
and felt as if I would like to shake
hands with you_” 11

“_She lingered as if transfixed before
the picture_” 23

“_He dropped it and it shivered into
fragments at his feet_” 38

“_‘Who is it?’ he asked sharply and
suspiciously_” 45

“_She stood behind his big leather
chair, her hands clasped together
against one cheek_” 55

“_He threw away his cigar and
disappeared behind the shrubbery_” 67

“_The ‘ladye of high degree’ . . . saw
them standing also_” 79

The Angel of his presence saved them.
In his love and in his pity he redeemed them.
—_Old Testament_

THE ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE

CHAPTER I

John Wentworth Stanley stood on the deck of an Atlantic Liner looking off to sea and meditating. The line of smoke that floated away from his costly cigar followed the line of smoke from the steamer as if it were doing honest work to help get Mr. Stanley to New York. The sea in the distance was sparkling and monotonous and the horizon line empty and bright, but Mr. Stanley seemed to see before him the hazy outlines of New York as they would appear in about twenty-four hours more, if all went well. And of course all would go well. He had no doubt of that. Everything had always gone well for him.

Especially well had been these last two years of travel and study abroad. He reflected with satisfaction upon the knowledge and experience

he had gained in his own special lines, upon the polish he had acquired, and he glanced over himself, metaphorically speaking, and found no fault

in John Wentworth Stanley. He was not too Parisian in his deferential manner, he was not too English in his deliberation, neither was he, that worst of all traits in his eyes, too American in his bluntness. He had acquired something from each nation, and considered that the combined result was good. It is a comfortable feeling to be satisfied with one's self.

Nor had he been shut entirely out of the higher circles of foreign society. There were pleasant memories of delightful evenings within the noble walls of exclusive homes, of dinners and other enjoyable occasions

with great personages where he had been an honored guest. When he thought of this, he raised his chest an inch higher and stood just a little straighter.

There was also a memory picture of one, perhaps more, but notably of one

"ladye of high degree," who had not shown indifference to his various charms. It was pleasant to feel that one could if one would. In due time he would consider this question more carefully. In the near future this

lady was to visit America. He had promised himself and her the pleasure of showing her a few of his own country's attractions. And,—well, he might go abroad again after that on business.

His attention was not entirely distracted by his vision of the “ladye of high degree” from looking upon his old homeland and anticipating the scenes and the probable experiences that would be his in a few hours. Two years seemed a long time when he looked back upon it, though it had

been brief in the passing. He would doubtless find changes, but there had been changes in him also. He was older, his tastes were—what should

he say—developed? He would not take pleasure in the same way that he had taken it when he left, perhaps. He had learned that there were other things—things if not better, at least more cultured and less old-fashioned than his former diversions. Of course he did not despise his up-bringing, nor his homeland, but he had other interests now as well, which would take much of his time. He had been from home long enough for the place he left to have closed behind him, and he would have no difficulty in staying “dropped out.” He expected to spend much of his time in New York. Of course he would make his headquarters at home, where his father and mother were living, in a small city within a short distance of America's metropolis.

His man—he had picked up an excellent one while traveling through Scotland—had gone on ahead to unpack and put in place the various objects of art, etc., that he had gathered on his travels. He had not as yet become so accustomed to the man that he could not do without him from day to day, and had found it convenient to send him home on the ship ahead of his own.

He wondered what his home-coming would be like. His father and mother would of course be glad to see him and give him their own welcome. But even with them he could not feel that he was coming home to a place

where he was indispensable. They had other children, his brothers and sisters, married and living not far from home. Of course they would be glad to have him back, all of them, but they had been happy enough without him, knowing he was happy. But in town, while he had friends, there were none whom he eagerly looked forward to meeting. He had attended school there of course, and in later years, after his return from college, had gone into the society of the place, the literary clubs and tennis clubs and, to a degree, into church work. He had indeed been quite enthusiastic in church work at one time, had helped to start a mission Sunday-school in a quarter where it was much needed, and acted as superintendent up to the time when he had gone abroad. He smiled to himself as he thought of his "boyish enthusiasm" as he termed it, and turned his thoughts to his more intelligent manhood. Of course he would now have no time for such things. His work in the world was to be of a graver sort, to deal with science and art and literature. He was done with childish things.

He was interrupted just here by one of the passengers. "I beg your pardon, I have just discovered who you are and felt as if I would like to shake hands with you."

The speaker was a plain, elderly man with fine features and an earnest face. Mr. Stanley had noticed him casually several times and remarked to himself that that man would be quite fine looking if he would only pay a little more attention to his personal appearance. Not that he was not neatly dressed, nor that his handsome, wavy, iron gray hair was not carefully brushed; but somehow John Wentworth Stanley had acquired during his stay abroad a nice discrimination in toilet matters, and liked to see a man with his trousers creased or not creased, as the height of the mode might demand, and classed him, involuntarily, accordingly.

But he turned in surprise as the stranger addressed him. What possible business could this man have with him, and what had he done that should

make the man want to shake hands with him?

[Illustration: “‘I HAVE JUST DISCOVERED WHO YOU ARE AND FELT AS IF I WOULD LIKE TO SHAKE HANDS WITH YOU.’”]

Mr. Stanley was courteous always, and he at once threw away the end of his finished cigar and accepted the proffered hand graciously, with just a tinge of his foreign-acquired nonchalance.

“My name is Manning. You don’t know me. I came to live at Cliveden shortly after you went abroad, but I assure you, I have heard much of you and your good work. I wonder I did not know you, Mr. Stanley, from

your resemblance to your mother,” the stranger added, looking into the young man’s eyes with his own keen, gray ones. He did not add that one thing which had kept him from recognizing his identity had been that he did not in the least resemble the Mr. Stanley he had been led to expect.

Mr. Manning owned to himself in the privacy of his stateroom afterward that he was just a little disappointed in the man, though he was handsome, and had a good face, but he did seem to be more of a man of the world than he had expected to find him. However, no trace of this was written in his kindly, interested face, as John Stanley endeavored to master the situation and discover what all this meant.

“Oh, I know all about your work in Cliveden, Mr. Stanley. I have been interested in the Forest Hill Mission from my first residence there, and what I did not learn for myself my little girl told me. She is a great worker, and as she has no mother, she makes me her confidant, so I hear all the stories of the trials and conflicts of her Sunday-school class, and among other things I constantly hear of this one and that one who owe their Christian experience to the efforts of the founder of the mission and its first superintendent. Your crown will be rich in jewels. I shall never forget Joe Andrews’ face when he told me the story of how you came to him Sunday after Sunday, and said ‘Joe, aren’t you ready to

be a Christian yet?’ and how time after time he would shake his head, and he says your face would grow so sad.” The elder gentleman looked closely at the clean-shaven, cultured face before him to trace those lines which proved him to be the same man he was speaking of, and could

not quite understand their absence, but went on, “and you would say, ‘Joe, I shall not give you up. I am praying for you every day. Don’t forget that.’ And then when he finally could not hold out any longer and came to Christ, he says you were so glad, and he cannot forget how good it was of you to care for him and to stick to him that way. He said your face looked just as if the sun were shining on it the day he united with the church. That was a wonderful work you did there. It is marvelous how

it has grown. Those boys of yours will repay the work you put upon them

some day. Nearly all of the original members of your own class are now earnest Christians, and they cannot get done telling about what you were to them. My little girl writes me every mail more about it.”

John Stanley suddenly felt like a person who is lifted out of his present life and set down in a former existence. All his tastes, his friends, his pursuits, his surroundings, during the past two years had been utterly foreign to the work about which the stranger had been speaking. He had become so engrossed in his new life that he had actually forgotten the old. Not forgotten it in the sense that he was not aware of its facts, but rather forgotten his joy in it. And he stood astonished and bewildered, hardly knowing how to enter into the conversation, so utterly out of harmony with its spirit did he find himself. As the stranger told the story of Joe Andrews there rushed over him the memory of it all: the boy’s dogged face; his own interest awakened one day during his teaching of the lesson when he caught an answering gleam of interest in the boy’s eye, and was seized with a desire to make Jesus Christ a real, living person to that boy’s heart; his watching of the kindling spark in that sluggish soul, and how little by little it grew, till one night the boy came to his home when there were guests present, and called for him, and he had gone out with him

into the dewy night under the stars and sat down with him on the front piazza shaded by the vines, hoping and praying that this might be his opportunity to say the word that should lead the boy to Christ, when behold, he found that Joe had come to tell him, solemnly as though he were taking the oath of his life, that he now made the decision for Christ and hereafter would serve him, no matter what he wanted him to do. A strange thrill came with the memory of his own joy over that redeemed soul, and how it had lingered with him as he went back among his mother's guests, and how it would break out in a joyous smile now and then till one of the guests remarked, "John, you seem to be unusually happy to-night for some reason." How vividly it all came back now when the vein of memory was once opened. Incident after incident came to mind, and again he felt or remembered that thrill of joy when a soul says, "You have helped me to find Christ."

Mr. Manning was talking of his daughter. John had a dim idea that she was a little girl, but he did not stop to question. He was remembering. And there was a strange mingling of feelings. His new character had so thoroughly impressed its importance upon him that he felt embarrassed in the face of what he used to be. Strangely enough the first thing that came to mind was, What would the "ladye of high degree" think if she knew all this? She would laugh. Ah! That would hurt worse than anything she could do. He winced almost visibly under her fancied merriment. It was worse than if she had looked grave, or sneered, or argued, or anything else. He could not bear to be laughed at, especially in his new rôle. And somehow his old self and his new did not seem to fit rightly together. But then the new love of the world and his new tastes came in with all the power of a new affection and asserted themselves, and he straightened up haughtily and told himself that of course he need not be ashamed of his boyhood. He had not done anything but good. He should be proud of that, and especially so as he would probably not come in contact with such work and such people again. He had more important things to attend to.

Not that he said all this, or thought it in so many words; it passed through his mind like phantoms chasing one another. Outwardly he was the polished, courteous gentleman, listening attentively to what this father was saying about his daughter, though really he cared little about her. Did Mr. Stanley know that she had taken his former Sabbath-school class and that there were many new members, among them some young men from the foundries? No, he did not. He searched in his memory and found a floating sentence from one of his mother's letters about a young woman who had consented to take his class till his return and who was doing good work. It had been written, perhaps, a year ago, and it had not concerned him much at the time as he was so engrossed in his study of the architecture of the south of France. He recalled it now just in time to tell the father how his mother had written him about the class, and so save his reputation as a Sunday-school teacher. It transpired that the daughter who had taken the class and the little girl the stranger so constantly referred to as writing him letters about things were one and the same. He wondered vaguely what kind of a little girl was able to teach a class of young men, but his mind was more concerned with something else now.

It appeared that the former mission where he had been superintendent had grown into a live Sunday-school, and that they were looking for his home-coming with great joy and expectation. How could such a thing be other than disconcerting to the man he had become? He had no time to be bothered with his former life. He had his life-work to attend to, which was not—and now he began to feel irritated—mission Sunday-schools. That was all well enough for his boyhood, but now—and besides there was the “ladye of high degree.”

Perhaps the man of experience saw the stiffening of the shoulders and the upper lip and divined the thoughts of the other. His heart sank for his daughter and her boys, and the mission, and their plans for his home-coming, and he made up his mind that secret or no secret, this man must be told a little of the joy of sacrifice that had been going on for him, for surely he could not have been the man that he had been, and not have enough of goodness left in his heart to respond to that story, no matter what he had become. And so he told him as much of the story his daughter had written him as he thought necessary, and John Wentworth Stanley thanked him and tried to show that he was properly appreciative of the honor that was to be shown him, and tried not to show his annoyance about it all to the stranger, and got away as soon as possible, after a few polite exchanges of farewells for the evening, and went to his stateroom. Arrived there he seated himself on the side of his berth, his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands, and sat scowling out of the porthole with anything but a cultured manner.

“Confound it all!” he muttered to himself. “I suppose it’s got to be gone through with some way for mother’s sake and after they’ve made so much fuss about it all. I can see it’s all that girl’s getting up; some silly girl that thinks she’s going to become prominent by this sort of thing. Going to give me a present! And I’ve got to go up there and be bored to death by a speech probably, and then get up and be made a fool of while they present me with a pickle dish or a pair of slippers or something of the sort. It’s awfully trying. And they needn’t think I’m going back to that kind of thing, for I’m not. I’ll move to New York first. I wish I had stayed in France! I wish I had never worked in Forest Hill Mission!”

Oh, John Stanley! Sorry you ever labored and prayed for those immortal souls, and wrought into your crown imperishable jewels that shall shine for you through all eternity!

CHAPTER II

They stood in the gallery of one of New York's most famous art stores; seven stalwart boys—young men, perhaps, you would call them—all with an attempt at “dress up,” and with them Margaret Manning, slender and grave and sweet. They were chaperoned by Mrs. Ketchum, a charming little woman who knew a great deal about social laws and customs, and always spoke of things by their latest names, if possible, and who took the lead in most of the talk by virtue of her position in society and her supposed knowledge of art. There were also Mrs. Brown, a plain woman who felt deeply the responsibility of the occasion, and Mr. Talcot, a little man who was shrewd in business and who came along to see that they did not get cheated. These constituted the committee to select a present for the home-returning superintendent of the Forest Hill Mission Sunday-school. It was a large committee and rather too heterogeneous to come to a quick decision, but its size had seemed necessary. Margaret Manning was on it, of course. That had been a settled thing from the beginning. There would not have been any such present, probably, if Margaret had not suggested it and helped to raise the money till their fund went away up above their highest hopes.

The seven boys were in her Sunday-school class, and no one of them could get the consent of himself to make so momentous a decision for the rest of the class without the other six to help. Not that these seven were her entire class by any means, but the class had elected to send seven from their own number, so seven had come. Strictly speaking, only one was on the committee, but he depended upon the advice of the other six to aid him.

“Now, Mr. Thorpe,” said Mrs. Ketchum in her easy, familiar manner, “we want something fine, you know. It's to hang in his ‘den.’ His mother has

just been refitting his den, and we thought it would be quite appropriate for us to get him a fine picture for the wall.”

The preliminaries had been gone through with. Mr. Thorpe knew the Stanley family slightly, and was therefore somewhat fitted to help in the selection of a picture that would suit the taste of one of its members. He had led them to the end of the large, well-lighted room, placed before them an easel, and motioned them to sit down.

The seven boys, however, were not accustomed to such things, and they remained standing, listening and looking with all their ears and eyes. Somehow, as Mrs. Ketchum stated matters, they did not feel quite as much

to belong to this committee as before. What, for instance, could Mrs. Ketchum mean by Mr. Stanley’s “den”? They had dim visions of Daniel and

the lions, and the man who fell among thieves, but they had not time to reflect over this, for Mr. Thorpe was bringing forward pictures.

“As it’s a Sunday-school superintendent, perhaps something religious would be appropriate. You might look at these first, anyway,” and he put before them a large etching whose wonder and beauty held them silent as

they gazed. It was a new picture of the Lord’s Supper by a great artist, and the influence of the picture was so great that for a few moments they looked and forgot their own affairs. The faces were so marvelously portrayed that they could but know each disciple, and felt that the hand which had drawn the Master’s face must have been inspired.

“It is more expensive than you wanted to buy, but still it is a fine thing and worth the money, and perhaps as it is for a church, I might make a reduction, that is, somewhat, if you like it better than anything else.”

Mrs. Ketchum lowered her lorgnette with a dissatisfied expression, though her face and voice were duly appreciative. She really knew a fine

thing when she saw it.

“It is wonderful, and you are very kind, Mr. Thorpe; but do you not think that perhaps it is a little, just a little, well—gloomy—that is, solemn—well—for a den, you know?” and she laughed uneasily.

Mr. Thorpe was accustomed to being all things to all men. With an easy manner he laughed understandingly.

“Yes? Well, I thought so myself, but then I didn’t know how you would feel about it. It would seem hardly appropriate, now you think of it, for a room where men go to smoke and talk. Well, just all of you step around this side of the room, please, and I’ll show you another style of picture.”

They followed obediently, Mrs. Ketchum murmuring something more about the inappropriateness of the picture for a den, and the seven boys making the best of their way among the easels and over Mrs. Ketchum’s train. All but Margaret Manning. She lingered as if transfixed before the picture. Perhaps she had not even heard what Mrs. Ketchum had said.

Two of the boys hoped so in whispers to one another.

“Say, Joe,” he whispered in a low grumble, “I forgot all about Mr. Stanley’s smoking. She——” with a nod toward the silent, pre-occupied woman still standing in front of the picture, “she won’t like that. Maybe he don’t do it any more. I don’t reckon ’twould be hard fer him to quit.”

Every one of those seven boys had given up the use of tobacco to please their teacher, Miss Manning.

Other pictures were forthcoming. There were landscapes and seascapes, flowers and animals, children and wood nymphs, dancing in extraordinary

attitudes. The boys wondered that so many pictures could be made. They wondered and looked and grew weary with the unusual sight, and wished to go home and get rested, and did not in the least know which they liked. They were bewildered. Where was Miss Manning? She would tell them which to choose, for their part of the choice was a very important part to them, and in their own minds they were the principal part of the committee.

[Illustration: “I HAVE JUST DISCOVERED WHO YOU ARE AND FELT AS IF I WOULD LIKE TO SHAKE HANDS WITH YOU.”]

Miss Manning left the great picture by and by and came over to where the others sat, looking with them at picture after picture, hearing prices and painters discussed, and the merits of this and that work of art by Mrs. Ketchum and Mr. Talcot, whose sole idea of art was expressed in the price thereof, and who knew no more about the true worth of pictures than he knew about the moon. Then she left the others and wandered back to the quiet end of the room where stood that wonderful picture. There the boys one by one drifted back to her and sat or stood about her quietly, feeling the spell of the picture themselves, understanding in part at least her mood and why she did not feel like talking. They waited respectfully with uncovered heads, half bowed, looking, feeling instinctively the sacredness of the theme of the picture. Four of them were professed Christians, and the other three were just beginning to understand what a privilege it was to follow Christ.

Untaught and uncouth as they were, they took the faces for likenesses, and Christ's life and work on earth became at once to them a living thing that they could see and understand. They looked at John and longed

to be like him, so near to the Master and to receive that look of love. They knew Peter and thought they recognized several other disciples, for the Sunday-school lessons had been of late as vivid for them as mere words can paint the life of Christ. They seemed themselves to stand within the heavy arch of stone over that table, so long ago, and to be sitting at the table, his disciples, some of them unworthy, but still there. They had been helped to this by what Miss Manning had said the first Sunday she took the class, when the lesson had been of Jesus and of some talks he had had with his disciples. She had told them that as there were just twelve of them in the class she could not help sometimes thinking of them as if they were the twelve disciples, especially as one of them was named John and another Andrew, and she wanted them to try to feel that these lessons were for them; that Jesus was sitting there in their class each Sabbath speaking these words to them and calling them to him.

The rest of the committee were coming toward them, calling to Miss Manning in merry, appealing voices. She looked up to answer, and the boys who stood near her saw that her eyes were full of tears, and more than one of them turned to hide and brush away an answering tear that seemed to come from somewhere in his throat and choke him.

“Come, Margaret,” called Mrs. Ketchum, “come and tell us which you choose. We’ve narrowed it down to three, and are pretty well decided which one of the three we like best.”

Margaret Manning arose reluctantly and followed them, the boys looking on and wondering. She looked at each of the three. One was the aforementioned nymph’s dance, another was a beautiful woman’s head, and the third was a flock of children romping with a cart and a dog and some roses. Margaret turned from them disappointed, and looked back toward the other picture.

“I don’t like any of them, Mrs. Ketchum, but the first one. Oh, I do think that is the one. Please come and look at it again.”

“Why, my dear,” fluttered Mrs. Ketchum disturbedly, “I thought we settled it that that picture was too, too—not quite appropriate for a den, you know.”

But her words were lost, for the others had gone forward under the skylight to where the grand picture stood, and were once more under the spell of those wonderful eyes of the pictured Master.

“It is a real nice picture,” spoke up Mrs. Brown. She was fond of Margaret Manning, though she did not know much about art. She had been elected from the woman’s Bible class, and had been rather overpowered by Mrs. Ketchum, but she felt that now she ought to stand up for her friend Margaret. If _she_ wanted that picture, that picture it should be.

“How much did you say you would give us that for, Mr. Thorpe?” said the sharp little voice of Mr. Talcut.

Mr. Thorpe courteously mentioned the figures.

“That’s only ten dollars more’n we’ve got,” spoke up the hoarse voice of one of the seven unexpectedly. It was Joe, who felt that he owed his salvation to the young superintendent’s earnest efforts in his behalf.

“I say we’d better get it. Ten dollars ain’t much. We boys can go that much. I’ll go it myself somehow if the others don’t.”

“Well, really, ladies, I suppose it’s a very good bargain,” said Mr. Talcut rubbing his hands and smiling.

“Then we’ll take it,” said Joe, nodding decidedly to Mr. Thorpe; “I’ll go the other ten dollars, and the boys can help, if they like.”

“But really Margaret, my dear,” said Mrs. Ketchum quite distressed, “a _den_, don’t you know, is not a place for——”

But the others were all saying it was just the picture, and she was not heard. Mr. Talcut was giving the address and orders about the sending. None of them seemed to realize that Mrs. Ketchum had not given her consent, and she, poor lady, had to gracefully accept the situation.

“Well, it’s really a very fine thing, I suppose,” she said at last, somewhat hesitatingly, and putting up her lorgnette to take a critical look. “I don’t admire that style of architecture, and that table-cloth isn’t put on very gracefully; it would have been more artistic draped a little; but it’s really very fine, and quite new, you say, and of course the artist is irreproachable. I think Mr. Stanley will appreciate it.”

But she sighed a little disappointedly, and wished she had been able to coax them to take the nymphs. She would take pains to let Mr. Stanley know that this had not been her choice. The idea of having to give in to those great boors of boys! But then it had all been Margaret Manning’s fault. She was such a little fanatic. She might have known that it would not do to let her see a religious picture first.

CHAPTER III

It was Margaret Manning’s suggestion that it should be presented quietly. Some of the others were disappointed. Mrs. Ketchum was one of the most irate about it.

“The idea! After the school had raked and scraped together the money, that they should not have the pleasure of seeing it presented! It’s a shame! Margaret Manning has some of the most backwoods’ notions I ever heard of. It isn’t doing things up right at all. There ought to be a speech from some one who knows how to say the right thing; my husband could have done it, and would if he’d been asked. But no, Margaret Manning says it must be hung on his wall, and so there it hangs, and

none of us to get the benefit. I declare it is a shame! I wish I had refused to serve on that committee. I hate to have my name mixed up in it the way things have gone.” So said Mrs. Ketchum as she sat back in her dim and fashionable parlor and sighed.

But the seven boys ruled things, and they ruled them in the way Miss Manning suggested; and moreover, Mrs. Brown and Mr. Talcot had gone over

to the enemy completely since the purchase, the enemy being Miss Manning. Mr. Talcot rubbed his hands admiringly, and said Miss Manning

was an exceedingly shrewd young woman, that she had an eye for business.

That picture was the best bargain in that whole store.

But Margaret went on her way serenely, not knowing her power nor enjoying her triumph. Albeit she was pleased in her heart with the picture, and she thought that her seven boys had been the true selectors of it. She wrote in her fine, even hand, that was like her in its lovely daintiness, the words the committee told her to write—which she had suggested—on a white card to accompany the picture. It read, “To our beloved superintendent, with a joyous welcome home, from the entire school of the Forest Hill Mission.”

The Stanley home stood in fine, large grounds, with turf smooth as velvet and grand old forest trees all about. The house was large, old-fashioned, and ugly, but the rooms were magnificent in size, and filled with all the comforts money could buy. On one side, just off the large library and connected with the hall, had been built an addition, a beautiful modern room filled with nooks and corners and unexpected bay-windows, which afforded views in at least three directions because of the peculiar angles at which they were set. In one corner was a carved oak spiral staircase by which one could ascend to the airy sleeping room over-head if he did not choose to go through the hall and ascend the common stair. One side of the room and various other unexpected bits of wall were turned into bookcases sunk in the masonry

and covered by glazed doors. The bay-window seats were heavily upholstered in leather, and so were all the chairs and the luxurious couch. Nearly one entire end of the room was filled by the great fireplace, the tiling of which had been especially designed for it. In a niche built for it with a fine arrangement for light, both by day or night, stood a large desk. It was a model working room for a gentleman. And this addition had been built by the senior Mr. Stanley for his son when he should return to take up the practical work of architecture, for which he had been preparing himself for some years.

It was here that the great picture was brought and hung over the fireplace, where it could look down upon the entire room. It was hung just the day before John Wentworth Stanley's man arrived with his master's goods and chattels and began to unpack and dispose things according to his best judgment.

John Stanley's mother had come in to superintend the hanging of the picture and had looked at it a long time when she was left alone, and finally had knelt shyly beside the great new leather chair and offered a silent little prayer for the home-coming son. She was an undemonstrative

woman, and this act seemed rather theatrical when she thought of it afterward. What if a servant had opened the door and seen her!

Nevertheless she felt glad she had dedicated the room, and she was glad that the picture was what it was. With that Ketchum woman on the committee she had feared what the result might be when she had had the scheme whispered to her. Somebody must have fine taste. Perhaps it was that dainty, lily-faced young girl who seemed to be so interested in John's Sunday-school class. The mother was busy in her home world and

did not go into church work much. She was getting old and her children and grandchildren were all about her, absorbing her time and thought.

The man came in from the piazza that surrounded the bay window and reached around to the long French window at the side, where he had been

unpacking a box. He placed a silver-mounted smoking set on a small mahogany table. Then he stood back to survey the effect. Presently he came in with some fine cut glass, a small decanter heavily mounted in silver and glasses to match. He went out and came back with their tray. Having dusted them off carefully and arranged them on the tray, he placed it first on the handsome broad mantel, and as before stood back to take a survey. He knew the set was a choice example of artistic work along this line. It was presented to his master while he was visiting in the home of a nobleman in token of his friendship and to commemorate something or other, the man did not exactly know what. But he did not like the effect on the mantel. He glanced uneasily up at the picture. In a dim way he felt the incongruity. He scowled at the picture and wondered why they put it there. It should have been hung in the hall or some out-of-the-way place. It was more suited for a church than anywhere

else, he told himself. He placed the decanter tray on the little table at the other side of the fireplace from the smoking set, and stood back again. It looked well there. He raised his eyes defiantly to the picture, and met the full, strong, sweet gaze of the pictured eyes of the Master. The man lowered his eyes and turned away, disturbed, he knew

not why. He was not a man who cared about such things, neither was he one accustomed to reason. He went out to the piazza again to his unpacking, trying to think of something else. It wasn't his picture nor his decanter anyway, and he whistled a home tune and wondered why he had

come to this country. He didn't seem to feel quite his usual pride this morning in the fact that he knew his business. When he finally unpacked the wicker-covered demijohn of real old Scotch whisky that had accompanied the decanter, he carried it through the room and deposited it in the little corner cupboard behind the chimney, shut the door and locked it with a click, and went out again without so much as raising his eyes. All that day he avoided looking at that picture over the mantelpiece, and he grew quite happy in his work again and quite self-satisfied, and felt with a sort of superstitious fear that if he looked at it his happiness would depart.

There were other rare articles that he had to unpack and dispose of, and once he came to a large, handsome picture, a sporting scene in water colors by a celebrated artist. That now, would be the very thing to hang over the mantel in place of the picture already there. He even went so far as to suggest to Mrs. Stanley that he make the change, but she coldly told him to leave the picture where it was, as it was a gift, and showed him the envelope to place on the mantel directly under the picture, which contained the card from the donors.

So the man left the room at last, somewhat dissatisfied, but feeling that he had done the best he could. The night passed, the day came, and with it the new master of the new room.

“It’s really a magnificent thing, mother,” he said, as he stood in front of the great picture after, having admired the room and shown his delight in all they had done for him. “I’m delighted to have it. I saw the original on the other side. And it was good taste of them to give it quietly in this way too. But there is a sense in which this is quite embarrassing. They will expect so much, you know, and of course I haven’t time for this sort of thing now.”

“Well, I thought something ought to be done, my son,” responded the mother, “so I sent out invitations for the whole school for a reception here next week. That is, I have them ready. They are not sent out, but are waiting your approval. Tuesday will be a free evening. What do you think?”

John Stanley scowled and sighed.

“Oh, I suppose that’s the easiest way to get out of it now they’ve sent me this. It will be an awful bore, but then it’ll be over. I shall scarcely know how to carry myself among them, I fear, I’ve been out of this line so long, and they fancy me so virtuous,” and he smiled and shrugged his handsome shoulders.

“But John dear, you mustn’t feel in that way. They really think a great deal of you,” said his mother, smiling indulgently upon him.

“Oh, it’s all right; go ahead, mother. Make it something fine while you’re about it. Give them quite a spread you know. Some of them don’t get many treats, I suppose,” and he sank down in one of the luxurious chairs and looked about him with pleasure.

“This is nice, mother,” he said; “so good of you and father to think of it. I can do great things here. The room is an inspiration in itself. It is a poem in architecture.”

Then the mother left him awhile to his thoughts and he began to piece together his life, that portion he had left behind him across the water, and this new piece, a part of the old, that he had come to take up again. There hovered on the margin of his mind the image of the “ladye of high degree,” and he looked out about on his domain with satisfaction at thought of her. At least she would see that people in this country could do things as well as in hers.

Then by some strange line of thought he remembered his worriment of yesterday about that present, and how he had thought of her laugh if she should know of it. A slight feeling of pleasure passed over him; even in this she could find no fault. It was fine and costly and a work of genius. He need not be ashamed even if some one should say to her that the picture was presented to him by a mission class grateful for what he had done for it. He began to swell with a sense of importance at the thought. It was rather a nice thing, this present, after all. He changed his position that he might examine the picture more carefully at his leisure.

The fire that his mother had caused to be lighted to take off the chill of the summer evening and complete the welcome of the room, sent out a ruddy glow and threw into high relief the rich, dark gloss of the frame and the wonderful picture. It was as if the sombre, stone-arched room opened directly from his own, and he saw the living forms of the Twelve gathered around that table with the Master in the midst. But the Master was looking straight at him—at him, John Wentworth Stanley,

self-satisfied gentleman of the world that he was, looking at him and away from the other disciples. Down through all the ages those grave, kind, sad, sweet eyes looked him through and through, and seemed to sift

his life, his every action, till things that he had done now and yesterday, and last year, that he had forgotten, and even when he was a little boy, seemed to start out and look him in the face behind the shadows of those solid stones of that upper chamber. The more he looked

the more he wondered at the power the picture seemed to have. He looked

away to prove it, and he knew the eyes were following his.

The rosy glow of the firelight seemed to be caught and crystallized in a thousand sparkles on one side of the fire. He looked in passing and knew what the sparkles were, the fine crystal points of that cut glass decanter. He had forgotten its existence until now, since the day he had had it packed. He knew it was a beautiful thing in its way, but he had not intended that it should be thus displayed. He hoped his mother had not seen it. He would look at it and then put it away, that is, pretty soon. Now his eyes were held by the eyes of his Master. Yes, his Master, for he had owned his name and called himself a Christian, and no matter what other things had come in to fill his mind, he had no wish to give up the "name to live." And yet he was conscious, strangely, abnormally conscious of that decanter. His Master seemed to be looking at it too, and to be inquiring of him how he came to have it in his possession. For the first time he was conscious, painfully so, that he had never given its donor any cause to think that such a gift would be less acceptable to him than something else. His Master had understood that too, he felt sure. He was annoyed that he could frame no excuse for himself, as he had so easily done when the gift first reached him. He had even been confident that he would be able to explain it to his mother so that she would be rather pleased with the gift than otherwise, strong temperance woman though he knew her to be. Now all his reasons had fled. The eyes of his Master, his kind, loving, sorrowing Master were upon him. He began to be irritated at the picture. He arose and seized the decanter

hastily, to put it somewhere out of sight, just where he had not thought.

Now the officious Thomas, who knew his place and his work so well, had placed in the new, freshly washed decanter a small quantity of the rare old Scotch whisky that had come with it. Thomas knew good whisky when he saw—that is, tasted—it, and he was proud of a master to whom such a gift had been given. John Stanley did not expect to find anything in his decanter until he put it there himself, or gave orders to that effect. He was new to the ways of a “man” who so well understood his business.

As he jerked the offending article toward him some of this whisky spilled out of the top that had perhaps not been firmly closed after Thomas had fully tested the whisky. Its fumes so astonished its owner that, he knew not how, he dropped it and it shivered into fragments at his feet on the dull red tiles of the hearth.

Annoyed beyond measure, and wondering why his hand had been so unsteady, he rang the bell for Thomas and ordered him to take away the fragments and wipe the whisky from the hearth. Then he seated himself once more till it was done. And all the time those eyes, so sad and reproachful now, were looking through and through him.

“Thomas!” he spoke sharply, and the man came about face suddenly with the broom and dustpan in hand on which glittered the crystals of delicate cutting. “Where is the rest of that—that stuff?”

Thomas understood. He swung open the little door at the side of the chimney. “Right here at hand, sir! Shall I pour you out some, sir?” he said, as he lifted the demijohn.

[Illustration: “HE DROPPED IT AND IT SHIVERED INTO FRAGMENTS AT HIS FEET.”]

John Stanley’s entire face flushed with shame. His impulse was severely to rebuke the impertinence, nay the insult, of the servant to one who had always been known as a temperance man. But he reflected that the servant was a stranger to his ways, and that he himself had perhaps given the man reason to think that it would be acceptable by the very fact that he had these things among his personal effects. Then too, his eyes had caught the look of the Master as he raised them to answer, and he could not speak that harsh word quite in that tone with Jesus looking at him.

He waited to clear his throat, and answered in a quieter tone, though still severely: “No; you may take it out and throw it away. I never use it.”

“Yes, sir,” answered Thomas impassively; but he marveled. Nevertheless

he forgave his master, and took the demijohn to his own room. He was willing to be humble enough to have it thrown away on him. But as he passed the servant’s piazza, the cook who sat resting from her day’s labors there and planning for the morrow’s _menu_, heard him mutter:

“As shure as I live, it’s the picter. It’s got some kind o’ a spell.”

CHAPTER IV

After Thomas had left the room with the demijohn, his master seemed relieved. He began to walk up and down his room and hum an air from the

German opera. He wanted to forget the unpleasant occurrence. After all, he was glad the hateful, beautiful thing was broken. It was no one’s fault particularly, and now it was out of the way and would not need to be explained. He walked about, still humming and looking at his room, and still that picture seemed to follow and be a part of his

consciousness wherever he went. It certainly was well hung, and gave the strong impression of being a part of the room itself. He looked at it critically from a new point of view, and as he faced it once more he was in the upper chamber and seemed to hear his Master saying, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more"; and he realized that he was in the presence of the scene of the end of his Master's mission. He walked back to the fireplace seeking for something to turn his thoughts away, and passing the table where stood his elegantly mounted smoking set, he decided to smoke. It was about his usual hour for his bedtime smoke, anyway. He selected a cigar from those Thomas had set out and lighted it with one of the matches in the silver match safe, and for an instant turned with a feeling of lazy, delicious luxury in the use of his new room and all its appliances. Unconsciously he seated himself again before the fire in the great leather chair, and began to puff the smoke into dreamy shapes and let his thoughts wander as he closed his eyes.

Suppose, ah, suppose that some one, say the "ladye of high degree," should be there, should belong there, and should come and stand behind his chair. He could see the graceful pose of her fine figure. She might reach over and touch his hair and laugh lightly. He tried to imagine it, but in spite of him the laugh rang out in his thoughts scornfully like a sharp, silver bell that belonged to some one else. He glanced over his shoulder at the imagined face, but it looked cold above the smoke. She did not mind smoke. He had seen her face behind a wreath of smoke several times. It seemed a natural setting. But the dream seemed an empty one. He raised his head and settled it back at a new angle. How rosy the light was as it played on the hearth and how glad he was to be at home again. That was enough for to-night. The "ladye of high degree" might stay in her home across the sea for this time. He was content. Then he raised his eyes to the picture above without knowing it, and there he was smoking at the supper table of the Lord. At least so he felt it to be. He had always been scrupulously careful never to smoke in or about a church. He used to give long, earnest lectures on the subject to some of the boys of the mission who would smoke cigarettes and

pipes

on the steps of the church before service. He remembered them now with

satisfaction, and he also remembered a murmured, jeering sound that had arisen from the corner where the very worst boys sat, which had been suppressed by his friends, but which had cut at the time, and which he had always wondered over a little. He had seen no inconsistency in speaking so to the boys in view of his own actions. But now, as he looked at that picture he felt as though he were smoking in church with the service going on. The smoke actually hid his Master's face. He took down his cigar and looked up with a feeling of apology, but this was involuntary. His irritation was rising again. The idea of a picture upsetting him so! He must be tired or his nerves unsettled. There was no more harm in smoking in front of that picture than before any other.

"Confound that picture!" he said, as he rose and walked over to the bay window, "I'll have it hung somewhere else to-morrow. I won't have the thing around. No, it'll have to be left here till after that reception, I suppose; but after that it shall go. Such a consummate nuisance!"

He stood looking out of the open window with a scowl. He reflected that it was a strange thing for him to be so affected by a picture, a mere imagination of the brain. He would not let it be so. He would overcome it. Then he turned and tramped deliberately up and down that room, smoking away as hard as he could, and when he thought his equilibrium was restored, he raised his eyes to the picture as he passed, just casually as any one might who had never thought of it before. His eyes fell and he went on, back and forth, looking every time at the picture, and every time the eyes of that central figure watched him with that same sad, loving look. At last he went to the window again and angrily threw up the screen, threw his half-smoked cigar far out into the shrubbery of the garden, saying as he did so, "Confound it all!"

* * * * *

It was the evening before the reception. It was growing toward nine o'clock, and John Stanley had retired to his wing to watch the fire and

consider what a fool he was becoming. He had not smoked in that room since the first night of his return. He had not yielded to such weakness all at once nor with the consent of himself. He had thought at first that he really chose to walk in the garden or smoke on the side piazza, but as the days went by he began to see that he was avoiding his own new

room. And it was all because of that picture. He glanced revengefully in the direction where it hung. He did not look at it willingly now if he could help it. His elegant smoking set was reposing in the chimney cupboard, locked there with a vicious click of the key by the hand of the young owner himself. And it was not only smoking, but other things that the picture affected. There for instance was the pack of cards he had placed upon the table in their unique case of dainty mosaic design. He had been obliged to put them elsewhere. They seemed out of place.

Not

that he felt ashamed of the cards. On the contrary he had expected to be quite proud of the accomplishment of playing well which he had acquired

abroad, having never been particularly led in that direction by his surroundings before he had left home. Was this room becoming a church that he could not do as he pleased? Then there had been a sketch or two and a bit of statuary, which he had brought in his trunk because they had been overlooked in the packing of the other things. That morning he brought them down to his room, but the large picture refused to have them there. There was no harm in the sketches, only they did not fit into the same wall with the great picture, there was no harmony in their themes. The statuary was associated with heathenism and wickedness, 'tis

true, but it was beautiful and would have looked wonderfully well on the mantel against the rich, dark red of the dull tiles, but not under that picture. It was becoming a bondage, that picture, and after to-morrow night he would banish it to—where? Not his bedroom, for it would work its spell there as well.

Just here there came a tap on the window-sill, followed by a hoarse, half-shy whisper:

“Mr. Stanley, ken we come in?”

He looked up startled. The voice had a familiar note in it, but he did not recognize the two tall, lank figures outside in the darkness, clad in cheap best clothes and with an air of mingled self-depreciation and self-respect.

“Who is it?” he asked sharply and suspiciously.

[Illustration: “‘WHO IS IT?’ HE ASKED, SHARPLY AND SUSPICIOUSLY.”]

“It’s me, Mr. Stanley; Joe Andrews. You ain’t forgot me yet, I know.

And

this one’s my friend, Bert; you know him all right too. May we come in here? We don’t want to go to the front door and make trouble with the door bell and see folks; we thought maybe you’d just let us come in where you was. We hung around till we found your room. We knowed the new

part was yours, ‘cause your father told the committee, you know, when they went to tell about the picture.”

Light began to dawn on the young man. Certainly he remembered Joe Andrews, and had meant to hunt him up some day and tell him he was glad

to hear he was doing well and living right, but he was in no mood to see him to-night. Why could he not have waited until to-morrow night when the others were to come? Was not that enough? But of course he wanted to

get a word of thanks all his own. It had been on his tongue to tell Joe he was unusually busy to-night, and would he come another time, or wait

till to-morrow, but the remembrance of the picture made that seem ungracious. He would let them in a few minutes. They probably wished to

report that they had seen the picture in the room before the general

view should be given, so he unfastened the heavy French plate window and let the two in, turning up as he did so the lights in the room, so that the picture might be seen.

They came in, lank and awkward, as though their best clothes someway hurt them, and they did not know what to do with their feet and the chairs. They did not sit down at first, but stood awkwardly in single file, looking as if they wished they were out now they were in. Their eyes went immediately to the picture. It was the way of that picture to draw all eyes that entered the room, and John Stanley noted this with the same growing irritation he had felt all day. But over their faces there grew that softened look of wonder and awe and amaze, and to John Stanley's surprise, of deep-seated, answering love to the love in the eyes of the picture. He looked at the picture himself now, and his fancy made it seem that the Master was looking at these two well pleased. Could it be that he was better pleased with these two ignorant boys than with him, John Stanley, polished gentleman and cultured Christian that he trusted he was?

He looked at Joe again and was reminded of the softened look of deep purpose the night Joe had told him beneath the vines of his intention to serve Christ, and now standing in the presence of the boy again and remembering it all vividly, as he had not done before, there swept over him the thrill of delight again that a soul had been saved. His heart, long unused to such emotions, felt weak, and he sat down and motioned the boys to do the same. It would seem that the sight of the picture had braced up the two to whatever mission theirs had been, for their faces were set in steady purpose, though it was evident that this mission was embarrassing. They looked at one another helplessly as if each hoped the other would begin, and at last Joe plunged in.

"Mr. Stanley, you ben so good to us we thought 'twas only fair to you we should tell you. That is, we thought you'd like it, and anyway, maybe you wouldn't take it amiss."

John Stanley's heart was kind, and he had been deeply interested in this boy once. It all came back to him now, and he felt a strong desire to help him on, though he wondered what could be the nature of his errand.

Joe caught his breath and went on. "You see she don't know about it. She's heard so much of you, and she never heard that, not even when they

was talking about the den and all at the store, she was just lookin' at the picture and Him," raising his eyes reverently to the picture on the wall, "and we never thought to tell her afore, and her so set against it. And we thought anyway afterward maybe you'd quit. Some do. We all

did, but that was her doin's. But we thought you'd like to know, and if you had quit she needn't never be told at all, and if you hadn't, why we thought maybe 'twouldn't be nothin' for you to quit now, 'fore she ever knew about it."

The slow red was stealing up into the face of John Stanley. He was utterly at a loss to understand what this meant, and yet he felt that he was being arraigned. And in such a way! So humbly and by such almost adoring arraigners that he felt it would be foolish and wrong to give way to any feeling of irritation, or indignation, or even offended dignity on his part.

"I do not understand, Joe," he said at last, looking from one to another of the two boys who seemed too wretched to care to live longer. "Who is she? And what is it that she does not know, and that you want me to 'quit'? And why should it be anything to her, whoever she is, what I do?"

"Why it's her, Miss Manning—Margaret Manning—our teacher." Joe spoke

the name slowly, as if he loved it and revered it; "and it's that we want you to—that is, we want her to—to like you, you know. And it's the—the—I can't most bear to say it, 'cause maybe you don't do it any more," and Joe looked up with eyes like a beseeching dog.

“It’s the smokin’,” broke in Bert huskily, rising. “Come on, Joe, we’ve done what we ‘greed to do; now ‘tain’t no more of our business. I say, come on!” and he bolted through the window shamefacedly.

Joe rose and going up to Mr. Stanley laid hold of his unwilling hand and choked out: “You won’t take it hard of me, will you? You’ve done so much

fer me, an’ I kind of thought I ought to tell you, but now since I seen yer face I think maybe I had no business. Good-night,” and with a face that looked as if he had been caught in the act of stealing, Joe followed his friend through the window and was lost in the deep shadows outside.

John Stanley stood still where the two had left him. If two robbers had suddenly come in upon him and quietly stolen his watch and diamond stud

and ring and left him standing thus, he could not have looked more astonished. Where had been his usual ready anger that it did not rise and overpower these two impudent young puppies, ignorant as pigs, that they should presume to dictate to him, a Christian gentleman, what habits he should have? And all because some straitlaced old maid, or silly chit of a girl, who loved power, did not like something. Where was his manhood that he had stood and let himself be insulted, be it ever so humbly, by boys who were not fit for him to wipe his feet upon? His kindling eyes lifted unexpectedly to the picture. The Master was watching him from his quiet table under the arches of stone. He stood a minute under the gaze and then he turned the lights all out and sat down in the dark. The fire was out too, and only the deep red glow behind the coals made a little lighting of the darkness. And there in the dark the boy Joe’s face came back clearly and he felt sorry he had not spoken some word of comfort to the wretched fellow who felt so keenly the meaning of what he had done. There had been love for him in Joe’s look and he could not be angry with him now he remembered that.

Bit by bit the winter of his work for Joe came back, little details that he did not suppose he ever should recall, but which had seemed filled with so much meaning then because he had been working for a soul's salvation and with the divine love for souls in his heart. What joy he had that winter! How sorry he had been to leave it all and go away. Now he came to think of it, he had never been so truly happy since. Oh, for that joy over again! Oh, to take pleasure in prayer as he had done in those days! What was this that was sweeping over him? Whence came this

sudden dissatisfaction with himself? He tried to be angry with the two boys for their part in the matter, and to laugh at himself for being influenced by them, but still he could not put it away.

A stick in the fire fell apart and scattered a shower of sparks about, blazing up into a brief glow. The room was illuminated just for an instant and the face of the Christ shone out clearly before the silent man sitting in front of the picture. Then the fire died out and the room was dark and only the sound of the settling coals broke the stillness. He seemed to be alone with Christ, face to face, with his heart open to his Lord. He could not shrink back now nor put in other thoughts. The time to face the change in himself had come and he was facing it alone with his God.

CHAPTER V

It was the next evening, and the Forest Hill Mission had assembled in full force. They were there, from little Mrs. Brown in her black percale, even to Mrs. Ketchum, who had pocketed her pride, and in a low-necked gown with a long train was making the most of her position on

the committee. She arranged herself to "receive" with John Stanley and his mother, though she ignored the fact that Mrs. Brown and "those seven

hobbledehoy boys" were also on the committee. Occasionally she deplored

the fact that Miss Manning had not come, that she might also stand in a

place of honor, but in her heart she was glad that Miss Manning was not present to divide the honors with herself. It appeared that Mr. Stanley was delighted with the picture, had seen its original abroad, and knew its artist. Such being the case, Mrs. Ketchum was delighted to take all the honor of having selected the picture, and had it not been for those truthtelling, enlightening seven boys, John Stanley might never have known to this day Margaret Manning's part in it.

None of the central group saw Margaret Manning slip silently in past the servant at the door, as they stood laughing and chatting among themselves after having shaken hands perfunctorily with the awkward, embarrassed procession headed by Mr. Talcot and the young minister who had recently come to the place.

When Margaret came down stairs she paused a moment in the hall; but as she saw they were all talking, she went quietly on into the new wing that had been for the time deserted by the company, and placed herself in front of the picture. She had spoken to Mrs. Stanley, who had been called upstairs to the dressing room for a moment just as she came in, and so did not feel obliged to go and greet the group of receivers at once. Besides, she wanted to have another good look at the picture before she should go among the people, and so lose this opportunity of seeing it alone.

From the first view it had been a great delight to Margaret Manning. She had never before seen a picture of her Master that quite came up to her idea of what a human representation of his face should express. This one did. At least it satisfied her as well as she imagined any picture of him, fashioned from the fancy of a man's brain, could do. And she was glad to find herself alone with it that she might study it more closely and throw her own soul into the past of the scene before her.

She had stood looking and thinking for some minutes thus when she heard

a quick step at the door, not a sound as of one who had been walking down the broad highly-polished floor of the hallway, but the quick movement of a foot after one has been standing. She looked up and saw John Stanley coming forward with an unmistakable look of interest and admiration on his face.

He had made an errand to his library for a book to show to the minister in order to get a little alleviation from Mrs. Ketchum's persistent monopolization. He had promised to loan the book to the minister, but there had been no necessity for giving it to him that minute, nor even that evening. As he walked down the hall he saw a figure standing in his library, so absorbed in contemplating the picture that its owner did not turn nor seem to be aware of his coming. She was slender and graceful and young. He could see that from the distance, but as he came to the doorway and paused unconsciously to look at the vision she made, he saw that she was also beautiful. Not with the ordinary beauty of the ordinary fashionable girl with whom he was acquainted, but with a clear, pure, high-minded beauty whose loveliness was not merely of the outward form and coloring, but an expression of beauty of spirit.

She was dressed in white with a knot of black velvet ribbon here and there. She stood behind his big leather chair, her hands clasped together against one cheek and her elbows resting on the wide leather back. There were golden lights in her brown hair. Her eyes were looking earnestly at the picture, her whole attitude reminded him of a famous picture he had seen in Paris. He could but pause and watch it before either of them became self-conscious.

[Illustration: "SHE STOOD BEHIND HIS BIG LEATHER CHAIR, HER HANDS CLASPED TOGETHER AGAINST ONE CHEEK."]

There was in her intent look of devotion a something akin to the look he had seen the night before in the face of the boy Joe. He recognized it

at once, and a feeling half of envy shot through him. Would that such a look might belong to his own face. But the remembrance of Joe brought another thought. Instantly he knew that this was Margaret Manning.

With

the knowledge came also the consciousness that he stood staring at her and must do so no more. He moved then and took that quick step which startled her and made her look toward him. As he came forward, he seemed

to remember how he had sat in that chair smoking a few nights before, and how the vision of the "ladye of high degree" had stood where this young girl now was standing, only he knew somehow at a glance the superiority of this living presence.

A flush at the remembrance of his visitors of the night before and their errand crossed his face, and he glanced instinctively toward the chimney cupboard to see if the door was safely locked.

"I beg your pardon," he said, coming forward. "I hope I do not disturb you. I came for a book. This must be Miss Manning, I think. How comes it

that I have not had the pleasure of an introduction? They told me you had not come. Yes, I met your father on the steamer coming over. Is he present this evening?"

It was the easy, graceful tone and way he had, the same that had elicited the notice of the "ladye of high degree," only somehow now he had an instinctive feeling that it would take more than a tone and a manner to charm this young woman, and as she turned her clear eyes upon

him and smiled, the feeling grew that she was worth charming.

He began to understand the admiration of those awkward boys and the feeling that had prompted their visit of the night before, and to consider himself honored since he had a part in their admiration.

Margaret Manning was prepared to receive him as a friend. Had she not heard great things of him? And she knew him at once. There was a fine photogravure of him given by his mother at the request of the school—and unknown to himself—hanging in the main room of the Forest Hill Mission.

Their conversation turned almost immediately upon the picture. John Stanley told how he had seen the original and its artist abroad, and how proud he was to be the owner of this copy. The disagreeable experiences he had passed through on account of it seemed to have slipped from his mind for the time being.

She listened with interest, the fine, intelligent play of expression on her face which made it ever an inspiration to talk with her.

“How you will enjoy reading over the whole account of the Last Supper right where you can look at that face,” she said wistfully, looking up at the picture. “It seems to me I can almost hear him saying, ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.’”

He looked at her wonderingly, and saw the mark of that peace which passeth understanding upon her forehead, and again there appeared to him in startling contrast his vision of the “ladye of high degree,” and he pondered it afterward in his heart.

“‘And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.’ He said that in the upper room,” she mused, and after a moment, “was it then too, that he said, ‘For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you’? I can’t quite remember,” and her eyes roved instinctively about the elegantly furnished room in apparent search for something.

He divined her wish at once, and courteously went in search of a Bible, but in his haste and confusion could not lay his hand upon one immediately. He murmured some apology about not having unpacked all

his

books yet, but felt ashamed as soon as the words were uttered, for he knew in his heart the young girl before him would have unpacked her Bible among the very first articles.

At last he found a little, old-fashioned, fine-print Bible tucked in a corner of a bookcase. It had been given him when he was a child by some

Sunday-school teacher and forgotten long ago. He brought it now, and with her assistance found the place.

“How I should enjoy studying this with the picture,” said the girl, as she waited for him to turn to the chapter.

“And why not?” he asked. “It would be a great pleasure to have you feel free to come and study this picture as often as you like. And if I might be permitted to be present and share in the study it would be doubly delightful.”

It was with the small open Bible on the chairback between them that the file of awkward boys discovered them as they came down the hall, hoping

to find an empty and unembarrassing room where they might take refuge.

They paused as by common consent, and stood back in the shadow of the

hall _portière_, as if the place were too sacred for them to more than approach its entrance. Their two earthly admirations were conversing together, the Bible between them, and the wonderful picture looking down

upon them. They stole silent, worshipful glances into the room and were glad.

Then came Mrs. Ketchum with rustling, perfumed robes and scattered dismay into their midst and broke up the brief and pleasant _tête-à-tête_ to her own satisfaction and the discomfiture of all

concerned.

CHAPTER VI

They were all gone at last, and the house was settling to quiet. John Stanley went to his room, shut his door, and sat down to think.

It had not been the unpleasant occasion to which he had looked forward. He had not even been bored. He was astonished to find himself regarding the evening not only with satisfaction, but also with an unusual degree of exhilaration. It did seem strange to him, now that he thought about it, but it was true.

New interests were stirring within him. Or were they old ones? He had gathered that group of boys about him with their teacher, after Mrs. Ketchum had broken up his quiet talk with the teacher, and had talked with them about the places he visited in the Holy Land, dwelling at some length upon the small details of what he had seen in Jerusalem, and the probable scene of events connected with the picture.

He had grown interested as he saw the interest of his audience. He realized that he must have talked well. Was it the intent gaze of those bright, keen-eyed boys, listening and glancing now and again toward the picture with new interest, as they heard of the city and its streets where this scene was laid, that gave him inspiration? Or had his inspiration come from that other rapt, sweet face, with earnest eyes fixed on the picture, and yet showing by an occasional glance at the speaker that she was listening and liked it?

Yes, it had been a happy evening, and all over too quickly. He would have liked to escort Miss Manning to her home, but her pony phaeton, driven by a faithful old servant, came for her, so he missed that pleasure.

He found himself planning ways in which he might often meet this charming young woman. And strange to say, the mission with its various

services stood out pleasantly in his mind as a means to this end. Had he forgotten his firm resolution of a few days ago, that he would have no more to do with that mission in any capacity whatever?

If this question occurred to him he waived it without excuse. He was pledged to attend the session of the school for the next Sabbath anyway, to give in more elaborate form the talk about the picture and the scenes in Jerusalem of which he had spoken to the boys. It had been Miss Manning's work, this promise, of course. She had said how grand it would

be to have him to tell the whole school what he had told her class, and had immediately interviewed the present superintendent, who had been only too delighted to accept the suggestion.

And now he sat by his fire, and with somewhat different feelings from those he had experienced a few evenings before, thought over his old life and his new. Strangely enough the "ladye of high degree" came no longer to his thoughts, but instead there stood in shadow behind the leather chair a slender, girlish figure with an earnest face and eyes, and by and by he gave himself up to contemplating that, and he wondered

no longer that the boys had given up many things to please her. He would not find it so very hard to do the same.

How earnest she had been! What a world of new meaning seemed to be invested in the sacred scene of that picture after she had been talking about it. He had followed up her desire to read the account with it in view, and begged her most eagerly to come and read it and let him be a humble listener, offering also in a wistful tone, which showed plainly that he hoped she would accept the former, to let her have the picture at her home for a time.

It would be very pleasant to read anything, even the Bible, with this interesting young person and study the workings of her mind. He could see that she was unusual. He must carefully study the subject so as not

to be behind her in Bible lore, for it was likely she knew all about it, and he did not wish to be ashamed before her. He reached over to the table where he had laid the little fine-print Bible they had been consulting earlier in the evening. It had been so long since he had made a regular business of reading his Bible that he scarcely knew where to turn to find the right passages again, but after fluttering the leaves a few minutes he again came to the place and read: "Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."

The young man stopped reading, looking up at the picture involuntarily, and then dropped his eyes to the fire. What was it that brought that verse home to himself? Had he in any sense betrayed his Lord? Was it only the natural inquiry of the truthful soul on hearing those words from the Master and on looking into his eyes to say sorrowfully "Lord, is it I?" or was there some reason for it in his own life that made him sit there, hour after hour, while the bright coals faded, and the ashes dropped away and lay still and white upon the hearth?

Thomas, the man, looked silently in once or twice, and marveled to find his master reading what seemed to be a Bible, and muttered "That pictur," to himself as he went back to his vigil. At last he ventured to open the door and say in a respectful tone, "Did you call me, sir?" which roused the master somewhat to the time of night, and moved him to tell his man to go to bed and he would put out the lights.

The days that followed were filled with things quite different from what John Stanley had planned on his return voyage. He made a good start in his business, and settled into regular working hours, it is true; but in his times of leisure he quite forgot that he had intended to have nothing to do with the mission people. He spent three evenings in helping to cover Sunday-school library books and paste labels into singing books. Prosaic work and much beneath him he would have considered it a short time ago, but he came home each time from it with

an exhilaration of mind such as he had never experienced from any of the whist parties he had attended. It is true there were some young men and young women also pasting labels whose society was uninteresting, but he looked upon even those with leniency. Were they not all animated by one common object, the good work for the mission? And there was also present and pasting with the others, with deft fingers and quiet grace, that one young girl around whom all the others seemed to gather and center as naturally as flowers turn to the sun. She seemed to be an inspiration to all the others. John Stanley had not yet confessed that she was an inspiration to himself. He only admitted that her society was helpful and enjoyable, and he really longed to have her come and read those chapters over with him. Just how to manage this had been a puzzle. Whenever he spoke of it the young lady thanked him demurely, and said she would like to come and look at the picture some time; but he had a feeling that she would not come soon, and would be sure he was not at home then before she ventured. This was right, of course. It was not the thing, even in America, for a young woman to call upon a young man even to read the Bible with him. He must overcome this obstacle. Having reached this conclusion he called in his mother to assist.

“By the way, mother,” he said the next evening at dinner, “I met a very agreeable gentleman on the voyage over, a Mr. Manning. He is the father of the Miss Manning who was here the other evening, I believe. Do you know them? I wish you would have them to dinner some night. I would like to show him some courtesy.”

The mother smiled and assented. It was easy for her to do nice little social kindnesses. And so it was arranged.

After dinner it was an easy thing for John Stanley to slip away to the library with Margaret Manning, where they two sat down together before the picture, this time with a large, fine Oxford edition of the Bible to read from.

That was an evening which to John Stanley was memorable through the rest of his life. He had carefully studied the chapters himself, and thought he had searched out from the best commentators all the bright new thoughts concerning the events that the imagination and wisdom of man had set down in books, but he found that his companion had studied on her knees, and that while she was not lacking either book knowledge or appreciation of what he had to say, she yet was able to open to him a deeper spiritual insight. When she was gone, and he sat alone in his room once more, he felt that it had been glorified by her presence. He lingered long before that picture with searchings of heart that meant much for his future life, and before he left the room he knelt and consecrated himself as never before.

In those days there were evening meetings in the mission and he went. There was no question in his mind about going; he went gladly, and felt honored when Mr. Manning was unable to escort his daughter and he was allowed to take his place. There was a nutting excursion for the school, and he and Miss Manning took care of the little ones together. When it was over he reflected that he had never enjoyed a nutting party more, not even when he was a care-free boy.

It came about gradually that he gave up smoking. Not that he had at any given time sat down and deliberately decided to do so, at least not until he found that he had almost done so. There was always some meeting or engagement at which he hoped to meet Miss Manning, and instinctively he shrank from having her know that he smoked, mindful of what his

evening visitors had told him. At first he fell into the habit of smoking in the early morning as he walked in the garden, but once while thus engaged he saw the young woman coming down the street, and he threw away his cigar and disappeared behind the shrubbery, annoyed at himself that he was doing something of which he seemed to be ashamed. He wanted to walk to the fence and speak to her as she passed by, but he was sure the odor of smoke would cling to him. Little by little he left off smoking lest she would detect the odor about him. Once they had a brief conversation on the subject, she taking it for granted that he agreed with her, and some one came to interrupt them ere he had decided whether to speak out plainly and tell her he was one whom she was condemning by her words. His face flushed over it that night as he sat before his fire. She had been telling him what one of the boys had said when she had asked him why he thought he could not be a Christian: "Well, I can't give up smokin', and we know He never would 'a' smoked." That had seemed a conclusive argument to the boy.

[Illustration: "HE THREW AWAY HIS CIGAR AND DISAPPEARED BEHIND THE SHRUBBERY."]

Was it true that he was sure his Master never would have done it? Then ought he, a professed follower of Christ? He tried to say that Miss Manning had peculiar views on this subject and that those boys were unduly influenced by her; and he recalled how many good followers of Christ were addicted to the habit. Nevertheless, he felt sure that no one of them would advise a young man to begin to smoke and he also felt sure about what Jesus Christ would do.

It had been a long time since he had tried himself and his daily walking with that sentence, "What would Jesus do?" He did not realize that he was again falling into the way of it. If he had it might have made him too satisfied with himself.

There came to be many nights when he sat up late looking into the fire and comparing his life with the life of the Man whose pictured eyes looked down so constantly into his own. It was like having a shadow of Christ's presence with him constantly. At first it had annoyed him and hung over him like a pall, that feeling of the unseen Presence which was symbolized by the skillful hand of the artist. Then it had grown awesome, and held him from many deeds and words, nay even thoughts, until now it was growing sweet and dear, a presence of help, the eyes of a friend looking down upon him in all his daily actions, and unconsciously he was beginning to wonder whenever a course of conduct was presented to his mind whether it would seem right to Christ.

At last the happy winter was slipping away rapidly. He had scarcely stopped to realize how fast, until one night when letters had come in on the evening mail, one from England brought vividly to his mind some of his thoughts and resolves and feelings during that return voyage in the fall. He smiled to himself as he leaned back in the great leather chair and half-closed his eyes. How he had resolved to devote himself to art and literature and leave religion and philanthropy to itself! And he had devoted himself to literature, in a way. Had not he and Miss Manning and several others of the mission spent the greater part of the winter in an effort to put good pictures and books into the homes of the people of the mission, and also to interest these people in the pictures and books? He had delivered several popular lectures, illustrated by the best pictures, and had assisted at readings from our best authors. But would his broad and cultured friends from the foreign shore, who had so high an opinion of his ability, consider that a strict devotion of himself to art and literature? And as for the despised mission and its various functions, it had become the center of his life interest. He

glanced up at the picture on his wall. Had it not been the cause of all this change in actions, his plans, his very feelings? Nay, had not its central figure, the Man of Sorrows, become his friend, his guide, his Saviour in a very real and near sense?

And so he remembered the first night he had looked upon that picture and

its strange effect upon him. He remembered some of his own thoughts minutely, his vision of that “ladye of high degree” with whose future his own seemed likely to be joined. How strange it seemed to him now that he could have ever dreamed of such a thing! Her supercilious smile seemed even now to make him shrink. The prospect of her trip to America

in the spring or early summer was not the pleasant thing he had then thought it. Indeed, it annoyed him to remember how much would be expected of him as guide and host. It would take his time from things—and people—more correctly speaking, one person who had grown very dear. He might as well confess it to himself now as at any other time. Margaret Manning had become to him the one woman in all the earth

whose love he cared to win. And looking on his heart as it now was, and thinking of himself as when he first returned from abroad, he realized that he was not nearly so sure of her saying “Yes” to his request that she would give her life into his keeping, as he had been that the “ladye of high degree” would assent to that request.

Why was it? Ah! Of this one he was not worthy, so pure and true and beautiful a woman was she. While the other—was it possible that he had been willing to marry a woman about whom he felt as he did toward this other haughty woman of wealth and position? To what depths had he almost descended! He shuddered involuntarily at the thought.

By and by he arose and put out the light preparatory to going upstairs for the night, humming a line of an old song:

“The laird may marry his ladye, his ladye of high degree—
But I will marry my true love,”

and then his face broke into a sweet smile and he added aloud and heartily, “if I can”—and hummed the closing words, “For true of heart am I,” as he went out into the hall, a look of determination growing on his face and the vision of Margaret Manning enshrined in his heart.

CHAPTER VII

The visit of the “ladye of high degree” to America was delayed by wind and tide and circumstance until the late fall, and in the meantime the people of America had not stood still for her coming.

Among other things that had been done, there had been put up and fully equipped a sort of club-house belonging to the Forest Hill Mission. It does not take long to carry out such schemes when there are two earnest persons with determination and ability to work like John Stanley and Margaret Manning.

The money for the scheme had come in rapidly and from unexpected sources. Margaret declared that every dollar was an answer to prayer.

The house itself was perfectly adapted for the carrying out of their plans of work. There were reading-rooms and parlors where comfort and a certain degree of refinement prevailed. There was a gymnasium in which the privileges and days were divided equally between men and women, and where thorough instruction was given. There were rooms in which various classes were carried on evenings for those who had no chance otherwise, and there were even a few rooms for young men or young women, homeless and forlorn, where they could get good board for a time, and the whole was presided over by a motherly, gray-haired woman and her husband, whose hearts were in the work, and whose good common sense made

them
admirably fitted for such a position.

But amid all these plans and preparations for better work John Stanley had found opportunity to speak to Margaret Manning the words which had
won her consent to make his home bright by her presence and his heart glad with her love.

Their wedding cards had traveled across the ocean, passing midway the steamer that carried a letter from the “ladye of high degree,” saying that she was about to embark on her trip to America and rather demanding

John Stanley’s time and attention during her stay near his home. She had been used to this in the days when he was near her home, and he had been
only too glad to be summoned then.

His letter waited for him several days while he was away on a short business trip, and it came about that he opened it but three days before his wedding day. He smiled as he read her orders. He was to meet her at the steamer on the fifteenth. Ah! that was the day when he hoped to be a hundred miles away from New York, speeding blissfully along with Margaret by his side. He drew a sigh of relief as he reached for pen and paper and wrote her a brief note explaining that he was sorry not to be able to show her the courtesies he had promised, but that he would be away on his wedding trip at the time. He afterward added an invitation from his mother, and closed the note and forgot all about the matter.

And so it was that the “ladye of high degree,” instead of being met with all the devotion she had expected,—and which she had intended to exact to its utmost,—found only a brief note with a paltry invitation to his wedding reception. She bit her lips in vexation and spent a disagreeable day in a New York hotel, making all those who had to do with her miserable. Then she hunted up the names of other acquaintances in America, noted the date of that reception, and made up her mind to make

her haughty best of it; at least, when she returned home there was the laird and the earl and the poor duke, if worst came to worst.

The Stanley home was alight from one end to the other, and flowers and vines did their best to keep up the idea of the departing summer indoors that night when John Stanley brought home his lovely bride.

It was a strange gathering and a large one. There were present of New York's best society the truest and best of men and women, whose costumes and faces showed that their purses and their culture were equally deep. And there were many people, poor and plain, in their best clothes it is true, but so different from the others that one scarcely knew which costume was more out of place, that of the rich or of the poor.

It had been John Stanley's idea, and Margaret had joined in it heartily, this mingling of the different classes to congratulate them in their new life.

"They will all have to come together in heaven, mother," John had said in answer to Mrs. Stanley's mild protest at inviting Mrs. Cornelius Van Rensselaer together with Joe Andrews and the mill girls from the mission. "That is, if they all get there, and in my opinion Joe Andrews stands as good a chance as Mrs. Van Rensselaer. What is the difference? It will only be a little in their dress. I think all of our friends are too sensible to mind that. Let them wear what they please, and for once let us show them that people can mingle and be friends without caring for the quality of cotton or silk in which each one is wrapped."

The mother smiled and lifted her eyebrows a little. She could imagine the difference between those mill girls and the New York ladies, and she knew her son could not, but her position was established in the world, and she was coming to the age when these little material things do not so much matter. She was willing that her son should do as he wished. She

only said in a lingering protest, "But their grammar, John. You forget

how they murder the king's English."

"Never mind, mother," he said, "I shouldn't wonder if we should all have to learn a little heavenly grammar when we get there before we can talk fittingly with the angels."

And so their friends were all invited, and none belonging to the Forest Mission were omitted. Mrs. Ketchum, it is true, was scandalized. She knew how to dress, and she did not like to be classed among the "rabble," as she confided to a few of her friends. "However, one never knew what Margaret Manning would do, and of course this was just another of her performances. If John Stanley wasn't sorry before very long that he married that woman of the clouds, she would miss her guess."

She took it upon herself to explain in an undertone to all the guests, whom she considered worthy of the toilet she had prepared, that these "other people," as she denominated the Forest Hill Mission, pointing to them with her point lace fan with a dainty sweeping gesture, were _protégés_ of the bride and groom, and were invited that they might have the pleasure of a glimpse into the well-dressed world, a pleasure probably that none of them had ever had before.

The "ladye of high degree" was there, oh, yes! Her curiosity led her, and her own pique. She wanted to see what kind of a wife John Stanley had married, and she wanted to see if her power over him was really at an end.

The rich elegance of her wonderful gown, ablaze with diamonds and adorned with lace of fabulous price, brushed aside the dainty white of the bride's and threatened to swallow it up out of sight in its own glistening folds.

But the bride, in her filmy white robes, seemed in no wise disturbed, neither did her fair face suffer by contrast with the proud, handsome

one. The “ladye of high degree,” standing in the shadow studying the sweet bride’s face, was forced to admit that there was a superior something in this other woman that she did not understand. She turned to John Stanley, her former admirer, and found his eyes resting in undisguised admiration on the lovely face of his wife, and her eyes turned again to the wife and saw her kiss the wrinkled face of an elderly Scotch woman with beautiful, tender brown eyes and soft waving hair. The neat, worn brown cashmere dress that the woman wore was ornamented only by a soft ruffle about the neck. The hair was partly covered by a plain, brown bonnet with an attempt at gala attire in a bit of white lace in front, and the wrinkled, worn hands were guiltless of any gloves, but one of those bare hands was held lovingly between the bride’s white gloves, and the other rested familiarly about the soft white of the bride’s waist. There was a beautiful look of love and trust and appreciation in both faces, and instinctively this stranger was forced to ask the other onlooker, “Who is she?”

“One of God’s saints on earth,” came John Stanley’s voice in answer. He had been watching the scene and had forgotten for the moment to whom he was talking. Not that he would have disliked to speak so to the “ladye of high degree” now, for he was much changed, but he would not have thought she would understand.

“She is just a dear woman in the church whom my wife loves very much.

She is a natural poet soul, and you may be sure she has been saying something to her which would be worth writing in a book, and which she will always remember.”

And then the “ladye of high degree” turned and looked at her old acquaintance in undisguised astonishment. John Stanley must have noticed

this and been embarrassed a moment, but Mrs. Ketchum came by just then

to be introduced, and she proved to be the kindred spirit for whom this

stranger had been searching. From her was gained much information, some of which astonished her beyond belief. She made one or two more attempts to rally her power over John Stanley later in the evening, but she too had fallen under the spell of the lovely woman whose eyes her husband's followed wherever she went, and she finally gave it up.

The final surprise came to the stranger guest late in the evening, as she was making her way through John Stanley's study to the cloak room. She had been told by the voluble Mrs. Ketchum that this room was Mr. Stanley's "den." She had also noticed during the evening at different times that people stopped opposite the picture that hung on the wall over the mantel. She had not before been in a position to see what this picture was for the crowd, but she had supposed it some master-piece that Mr. Stanley had brought home from his travels. Her curiosity, or her interest, or both, led her to pause now alone, and to look up.

As others were held under its spell, so was this woman for a moment. The beauty and expression of the work of art caught her fancy, and the face of the Master held her gaze, while her soul recognized and understood the subject. In great astonishment she glanced around the room once more and back. Could it be that John Stanley kept a picture like this in his den? It was not like the John Stanley she had known.

And then a soft, little, white-gloved hand rested on her shoulder, and a sweet, earnest voice said: "Isn't it wonderful? I'm so glad to be where I can look at it every day as much as I wish."

[Illustration: "THE 'LADYE OF HIGH DEGREE' . . . SAW THEM STANDING ALSO."]

Turning she saw the bride standing by her side. She scarcely knew how to

answer, and before she could do so she noticed that another had entered the room, and she knew instinctively that Mr. Stanley had come.

“That is one of my treasures. Are you admiring it?” he said in the strong voice that seemed so unlike his old one, and the guest murmured something about the picture, and looking about uneasily excused herself and slipped away.

They stood a moment before the picture together, the husband and wife. They were tired with the evening’s talk, and a sight of this refreshed them both and gave the promise of future joy.

The “ladye of high degree,” passing through that hall, having purposely come by another route from the cloak room rather than through the study, saw them standing also, and understood—that she did not understand, and went out into the night with a lonely longing for something, she knew not what.

As the two stood together the husband said: “Do you know, dear, that picture has made the turning point in my life. Ever since it came in here I have felt that his presence was with me wherever I went. And I have you to thank for it all. And through it I have gained you, this richest, sweetest blessing of my life. Do you know, I found a verse in my Bible to-day that it seems to me fits me and that picture. It is this: ‘The angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them.’”

GABRIEL THE ACADIAN

BY

EDITH M. NICHOLL BOWYER

GABRIEL THE ACADIAN

=LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS=

“_It is a heretic name!’ exclaimed Le
Loutre_” 3

“_Suddenly the girl raised her head_” 27

“_M. l’Abbé commands_” 42

“_But Gabriel had neither eyes nor ears
for the priest_” 69

““_Wild Deer; tell Wild Deer_”” 82

“_Far away at the mouth of the inlet
. . . lay three small ships_” 91

““_And thou wilt make me a traitor too!’
he cried_” 120

“_They sat down side by side before the
empty hearth_” 131

[Illustration: ““It is a heretic name!’ exclaimed Le Loutre.”]

There is a history in all men’s lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceased;
The which observed, a man may prophesy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life; which in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.
—_Shakespeare, Henry IV._

GABRIEL THE ACADIAN

CHAPTER I

“It is the name my mother called me by,” quoth Gabriel sturdily.

For a moment there was silence, save for a murmur of horror that ran through the assembled Acadians at the daring of a boy who thus defied the fierce priest; yet his bearing was perfectly respectful.

“It is a heretic name!” exclaimed Le Loutre.

“Pardon, _M. l’Abbé_, but it is said not. My father also bare it, and his father before him. Never willingly will I be called by any other. Did not my mother swear on the crucifix to my dying sire that his child should bear his name? And to break a holy vow—is not that of all things the most sinful, O _mon père_?”

“Thy father died unshriven.”

“My father was of the Protestant faith,” rejoined the boy quickly. “He died faithful to his own, though far from the land of his birth. He would have carried my mother to join the colonists in Virginia, where abide many of his kindred, but the prospect of leaving our Acadian land did not please her, and he loved her more than kin or country. My father was a good soldier and brave, monsieur; he was but true to the flag he served, and to which all we of Acadia have sworn allegiance, and daily break our vows!”

He raised his eyes of English blue, and looked straight into those of the Abbé Le Loutre, black and angry as a thundercloud.

A fine figure of a seventeen-year-old lad he was. At his age many an Acadian youth was beginning to dream of wife and home all his own. Tall and strongly built, his light curls tossed back from a brow whose tell-tale fairness showed through the ruddy bronze left by the suns and storms of Acadia.

This time the exclamations of horror rose louder than before, and above them was heard the piteous remonstrance of the village _curé_, “Ah, _mon fils_, submit thyself to the good _abbé_.”

Gabriel's fearless glance swept the rows of dull Acadian faces. It seemed to him as if in actual bodily fear the villagers crouched before the enraged priest, who drove, rather than led, his timid, ignorant flock, and the gentle _curé_, his subordinate. And the whip with which he goaded them was none other than the ferocious band of Micmac Indians, to whom he had been sent by the French government, nominally as missionary, but in reality that he might keep the Acadians, by fair means or foul, in a continual state of rebellion to their easy-going English rulers.

The murmurs died away into awed silence. Then, with a scornful lift of the hand, Le Loutre turned from the boy and faced the trembling villagers. His address at first was in the usual strain, only, if possible, more intolerant and fanatic than at his last visit, and Gabriel soon pushed impatiently out of the crowd, and flung himself down upon the river's bank. Presently, however, he found himself listening intently. Here were threats more terrible, even, than of old. Gabriel was brave; his father's blood did not run in his veins for naught; but for once he wondered not that his countrymen cowered beneath the lash of that fierce tongue.

"The people of Acadia are the people of my mother," he often said, "and I love them. But they are cowards."

And when he looked forth from the harbor mouth of Chebucto and swept with his eyes the wide Atlantic, there burned in his young bosom a fire that would have amazed his placid kinsmen had they known of it, content, as they were, with the daily round of humble submission to the priests, petty legal quarrels or equally petty gossip with the neighbors, and daily tilling of the soil—a fire that was kindled a hundred years before in one who sailed the seas with Raleigh, and which burned anew in

this young scion of an ancient race.

“I want to go, to see, to do!” he would cry, flinging wide his arms.

But now, as he gave unwilling ear to Le Loutre, his boyish heart sank. Could the _abbé_ in truth fulfill these threats of driving the people to French soil, whether they would or no? Could he force them, in the name

of God and the king, to forsake their pleasant homes in which the English, whatever might be their crimes against the French, at least allowed the Acadians to live in peace, unpunished too during all these years for their want of loyalty to sworn allegiance? Gabriel’s eyes traveled beyond that dominant figure, and dwelt upon the savage band of “converts” gathered behind the priest. Yes, he could, and would!

Wrapt in his own thoughts, Gabriel noticed neither the dispersion of the people nor the ominous fact that his grandfather, Pierre Gréatin, was accompanied on his homeward way by Le Loutre himself. His eyes were upon

the flowing river, and the light step of his Cousin Margot failed to arouse him. Her sweet face was close to his, and her small hand on his shoulder ere he stirred.

“Gabriel, I have somewhat to say to thee.”

“What is it, _ma mie_?”

“Wilt thou not depart to-night to thy friends whom thou dost sometimes visit without the walls of the new Halifax, by the harbor called of us Chebucto? There lives that English priest who taught thee discontent with our blessed religion and with our beloved _curé_.”

“Not with our _curé_, Margot. He is good; he makes all religion beautiful and true. But wouldst thou blame me because my heart turns to the faith of my father? That in which my mother might have found courage to rear me had she lived?”

“No, _mon cousin_, no, not blame. But grievous danger threatens all who defy the _abbé_, and thee more than others, because of thy hated English blood. But listen, Gabriel; dost thou indeed love Margot as though she were thine own sister?”

The boy was silent a moment, then he answered simply:

“That I cannot tell thee, Margot, seeing that I never had a sister. But I love thee as I love none other besides.”

“That is well,” she said with equal simplicity, “because to save thy life for my sake thou must act contrary to thy nature.”

He sprang to his feet, his blue eyes flashing so that for a moment Margot quailed before him.

“You would not have me play the coward and liar?” he cried. “That I cannot do, even for thee. I am an Acadian—yes. Yet neither of these things will I be!”

“I too am an Acadian,” replied the young girl with quiet dignity, “yet am I not false. Timid I may be, for such is the wont of my sex.”

“Pardon, _ma cousine_, pardon,” exclaimed Gabriel remorsefully.

“Thou knowest how it is with me; my heart beats, and the words rush, and it is all over.”

“Wilt thou never learn prudence?” she retorted, smiling. “We Acadians have learned it in nigh forty years of lying helpless like a lamb betwixt two snapping wolves.”

“Prudence, dost thou call it, Margot? My father called it by a harsher name; and even my mother said that was a poor thing we did, to live, a free people, under one flag; untaxed, ministered to by our own priests, the very necessities of life supplied to us, and yet intriguing, forever

intriguing, with those of the other flag.”

“The flag under which we live is an alien flag,” said gentle Margot.

“That may be; but have we ever been called upon to fight for it? And now that we are summoned to swear the full oath of allegiance, we have richly deserved this mild rebuke. The French are cruel; we go with them only through fear of the Indians.”

“The _gran’-père_, he goes with none,” interposed the girl with a flash of spirit. “He tills the soil in peace, meddling not with French or English.”

“Ah, but even he will have to choose ere many days are past; the _abbé_ does not bring here his flock for naught. And,” cried the lad, clenching his fists, “who would be a neutral? Not I!” Then more quietly: “Hast thou not heard them tell, Margot, how when France yielded Acadia to England we were free, all of us, to move within the year to French soil if we would? But we would neither go nor remain and take the oath of fealty; nevertheless we were permitted to stay unsworn for seventeen years, intriguing then even as we do now. At last the oath was won from us, and more than twenty years since then have come and gone, and once again, because of our untruth and the cruelties practised upon English settlers, the word has gone forth that we must swear anew. What kind of a people, then are we, Margot, to be thus double-faced? Thirteen thousand souls, and withal afraid of priests and Indians! Not daring, not one of us, to play the man and come out boldly for the one flag or the other. Oh, we are cowards—cowards all!”

He flung himself upon the ground and covered his face with his hands.

To simple, yet wise little Margot these bursts of passion on the part of her cousin were almost incomprehensible. Her nature was a still, clear pool, whilst his was as the young torrent leaping down the rocks, unconscious of its own power, but eager to join the strong and swelling stream beneath, upon whose bosom the great ships float down to the

deep

sea. But although she did not understand, love gave her sympathy. She kneeled beside him, and once more laid her hand upon his shoulder; but the words she would have uttered died in her throat, and instead she exclaimed in accents of terror:

“O Gabriel, Gabriel, arise. It is the _gran’-père_ who calls, and with him is still the _abbé_.”

In an instant the lad was on his feet.

“Gabriel, _mon fils_!”

The thin, cracked voice floated across the meadows from the door of the small hut, which was considered by even prosperous Acadians like Grétin

all-sufficient for the family needs. Without a moment’s hesitation Gabriel took his cousin’s hand, and led her, half crying now, toward their home, where the tall form of the priest was plainly visible, towering over that of the grandfather.

* * * * *

These were stirring times for Acadie. Lord Cornwallis was governor of the province—the Cornwallis described by Walpole as “a brave, sensible young man, of great temper and good nature.” He needed to be all this and more, for the Acadians were a difficult people to deal with.

Vacillating, ignorant, and priest-ridden, it was the easiest thing in the world for the French to hold them in actual fact, while by treaty ceding them to England, an alien power and race. Fear, however, played a

large part in French influence; and this was invariably the case throughout the long dissensions betwixt France and England. Indian savagery was winked at, even encouraged, by French authorities in their dealings both with English and Acadians; and the fair escutcheon of France was defaced by many a stain of blood cruelly, wantonly, treacherously shed. That the Acadians should be in sympathy with

France

rather than with England was natural; their wrong-doing consisted not in that, but in their readiness to accept English protection while plotting steadily with the French against the flag to which they had sworn fealty rather than move to French soil. They were now in a somewhat sorry plight.

The long-patient English government, through Cornwallis, was requiring of them a fresh oath, and better faith in keeping it, if they continued to reside in the province, whilst the governor of those French possessions, now called Cape Breton and Prince Edward's Island, was using every means in his power, hideous threats included, to induce them to come definitely under the French flag. What those means might eventually be even such young creatures as Margot and Gabriel knew only too well.

The cousins found their grandfather looking troubled and distressed, and the priest still wearing the menacing air which had all that day awed his village audience.

"It is full time you of Port Royal bethought you of your duty to your religion and your king instead of forever quarreling among yourselves, and enriching pettifogging men of law. But for thee, Gréatin, though special indulgence has ever been shown thee, it will be well that thou shouldst take thought for thy family before it is too late. Thou knowest my flock of old," alluding to his savage converts, "and the kind of lambs they are. Homes await the loyal subjects of God and the king on the Isle of St. Jean and Isle Royale, and if they see not what is best for their own souls' good I have the means to make them see it!"

Gréatin was both morally and intellectually the superior of those among whom he lived, and he was also braver than his neighbors, but of what avail is superiority when a man stands alone? It was for this reason, combined with the habit of subjection to priestly authority, that he

replied hastily:

“Yes, _M. l’Abbé_, it is even as you say.

“This boy must be disciplined,” continued the priest sternly.

“Yes, _M. l’Abbé_, so it must be.”

It was at this moment that “the boy” presented himself, his head erect, his face pale, and holding the hand of his cousin.

“Drop the maiden’s hand and follow me!” was the _abbé’s_ harsh salutation. “I have that to say which is not for feminine ears.”

Gabriel obeyed, but there was something in his air which, though promising submission, meant submission within definite limits.

Le Loutre entered the hut and closed the door on the peaceful, pastoral scene without, lit up by the rays of the declining sun. Then seating himself on a bench, rude and plain as were the furnishings of all the homes of the frugal and industrious Acadians, however rich in land and stock, he addressed Gabriel standing respectfully before him.

“What is thine age?”

“I shall be eighteen at the Christmastide.”

“Humph! a well-grown youth! Dost thou call thyself boy or man?”

An irrepressible smile curled Gabriel’s fresh lips, but he answered demurely:

“Neither, _mon père_.”

“Dare not to trifle with me, son of a heretic!” broke out the priest, his imperious temper rising. Accustomed to see all men cringe before him, this lad’s fearless demeanor was particularly galling to Le Loutre. He controlled himself again, however, and proceeded with that

persuasiveness of which when it suited him he was master:

“It is as man, not boy, I call upon thee this day to serve God and the king, and to prove thyself worthy of the confidence I would repose in thee. I give thee thy just due, thou hast a good courage, and it is men of such mettle that Louis requires, _men_, hearest thou?”

Gabriel’s frank, yet searching, gaze was riveted on the priest’s face; and so keen were those blue eyes that Le Loutre shifted his, momentarily disconcerted. For perhaps the first time in his remarkable career he was conscious of difficulty in explaining the righteousness, according to his creed, of “doing evil that good may come.” Not that he himself doubted; he was too honest a zealot for that; but in this case explanation was somehow not easy.

“Thou knowest,” he said at length, “of this new oath that the heretics would extort from God’s people. To keep them in the fold and preserve their souls alive at any cost is my priestly duty; but in order to accomplish this I must have loyal aid. My Micmacs waver, they have even made a treaty with the English. This cannot be permitted to endure. It is therefore the king’s wish that they be secretly encouraged to break it, and to this end loyal Acadians in disguise must accompany them when they go to Halifax. Later these same faithful subjects will continue their work for the holy cause in the old way.”

Le Loutre paused and regarded Gabriel fixedly. The boy’s face was alight with sudden comprehension. It was not the priest’s custom to speak openly of his plans, but he was fully aware that he was now dealing with no ordinary dull-witted Acadian peasant. What an invaluable ally this half-heretic lad would be could he only mold him to his will.

Gabriel had not lived his brief span of life in Port Royal for nothing. He already knew that Le Loutre was quite capable of using force to drive

the Acadians from their thriving farms to make new homes for themselves

on French soil, rather than that they should pledge their word to the English again, even though that pledge might be broken as before. And there was evidently some scheme more serious in process of hatching than

the well-worn one of painting and disguising Acadians and sending them out with the Micmacs to plunder and slay English settlers. The ancient farce of "Indian warfare" was to wear a new face. The existence of peace between the two countries had never been any hindrance to French scheming. Gabriel had only too vivid recollections of the fate of certain Acadians, who had been cajoled or frightened into joining those Indian war-parties, and who, when taken prisoner by the English, had been disowned by the French and declared to have "acted of their own accord."

The lad's heart was heavy within him. If he defied the priest and refused to stoop to that which in his eyes was baseness and treachery, his life would be made a torment, nay, perhaps forfeited, none could foretell where Le Loutre would stop. And worse, far worse than this, the _gran'-père_, hitherto well regarded by the bigoted priest and granted many indulgences, would be ruthlessly hunted from the dear home to the bleak, uncleared shores of Isle Royale, or, as the English named it, Cape Breton. The _gran'-père_—he was old—he would certainly die without the strong grandson to help him. And Margot? Ah, it was too bitter! In spite of himself Gabriel covered his eyes with his hand as if to shut out the frightful vision.

The face of Le Loutre glowed with triumph. He had not expected so easy a

victory. To his present scheme this youth, with his knowledge of the English tongue and the customs of the fort, was well-nigh indispensable; moreover, his intelligence and his sense of honor were alike keen, and once pledged to him, the priest knew that he would never turn traitor. Under pretense of trading in furs a French vessel had brought to Acadie guns and ammunition enough to arm both Acadians and Indians, and the

latter were already being secretly bribed by the Intendant at Louisburg through Le Loutre; for a signal act of treachery was now required of them.

But the priest had triumphed too soon. When at length Gabriel raised his head, though his young face looked almost ghostly in the dying light, his eyes were shining with high resolve. Not that the path of duty was as yet perfectly clear before him, or that he knew whither it might lead, but he was resolute to take no other. Nevertheless he understood that mere defiance would not help either himself or those far dearer than self. Therefore he controlled himself and said quietly:

“_M. l’Abbé_ has without doubt heard of that _prêtre_ from the New England who instructs a flock outside the walls of Halifax?”

Le Loutre scowled darkly.

“Art thou a heretic already? I feared as much.”

“No, _M. l’Abbé_,” replied the boy in the same restrained tones; “yet I confess that the faith of my fathers holds much of interest for me. And he is good, _monsieur_, oh, good! like our own beloved _curé_.”

Here he hesitated; then took courage, and went on rapidly:

“He bade me always to remember, even if I should not in the end turn to my father’s faith, that one of its noblest commands is: Never do evil that good may come. Also that my father obeyed that command. O _mon père_, choose some one else for thy purpose; one who is not divided in heart as I, but who hates the English as my blood will not let me do, and to whom the Holy Catholic Church is the only church!”

For a moment it seemed as though the priest would strike the pleading face upturned to his, so fierce a flame of wrath swept over him, but instead he said with a sneer:

“And thou wouldst thrust the words of a heretic down the throat of a priest of God and the king? There is but one explanation, boy, thou art a coward!”

The hot blood surged into Gabriel’s cheeks. All his prudence was tossed aside beneath the lash of that tongue. Flinging back his head he confronted Le Loutre with an air which compelled, as it never had failed to do, the reluctant admiration of the man to whom courage seemed the best of God’s gifts to mortals.

“_M. l’Abbé_,” said the boy, in the low tones of an unbending resolve, “I am no coward; but I should be both coward and liar were I to do your bidding.”

For a breathing space the two pairs of eyes held one another like wrestlers. Then:

“As thou wilt,” rejoined the priest coldly. “But forget not that no traitors to God and the king can dwell at ease in Acadie. Mine are no empty threats.”

He flung wide the door and called to the waiting Micmacs. As they stepped out of the surrounding gloom, the pine torches carried by them illuminated their ferocious countenances. Margot sprang forward and cast herself upon her knees before the priest.

“O _mon père, mon père_, do with me what you will, inflict on me any penance that seems unto you good; but spare, oh, spare my cousin, if only for the sake of the _gran’-père_!”

The girl’s agonized pleading rang out into the night. Then, in a voice rendered tremulous by years and infirmity, but still not devoid of dignity, Grétin himself spoke.

“_M. l’Abbé_,” he said, “the boy is of heretic blood—yes. But also is he of my blood—mine, who am a faithful servant of the true church. If

he has been led astray, I myself will see to it that he returns to the fold. For he is a good lad, and the prop and staff of my old age.”

Le Loutre turned on the _gran’-père_ his piercing eyes.

“Thou hast reason, Gréatin. Thou hast indeed been a faithful servant of the church, but art thou that now? Do not thy religion and thy king demand of thee that thou shouldst leave, with all that is thine, the air breathed by pestilential heretics, and dost thou not still linger, battenning in their green pastures, yea, feeding from their hand? Art thou, therefore, fit to be the guide of erring youth? It may be too, that thou wilt have to suffer for his sin if he repent not.”

The old man bowed his head, and a low moan escaped him.

“Hurt not the lad,” he murmured. “He is as the very apple of my eye.”

“My Micmacs will look to his repentance,” retorted the priest grimly. “In the saving of the soul the body may have to endure somewhat, but holy church is merciful to the penitent.”

As he spoke Gabriel sprang from the detaining hands, of the Indians, and kneeling at the feet of the old man, lifted the shriveled fingers and laid them upon his own fair head.

“Bless me, even me, O _mon père_,” he cried.

But the _gran’-père_ fell upon his neck and wept.

“Oh, Gabriel, my son, my son!”

Before he could so much as speak to Margot, the Indians, at a sign from Le Loutre, relentless always in the performance of what he believed to be his duty and now enraged by defeat, seized the youth and disappeared with him into the forest. Lingerling only to make the sign of the cross over the helpless and bereaved pair, Le Loutre himself followed.

CHAPTER II

Gabriel, hurried along through “brake, bush, and brier,” each arm grasped by a brawny Micmac, had no time for thought. A grown man of settled convictions might have found his situation a very labyrinth of difficulty. How much more, then, a growing lad, unavoidably halting betwixt two nationalities and two forms of religion?

After what seemed endless hours, but which in reality was but a short time, the party arrived at the settlement of wigwams on the bank of the Shubenacadie. The priest was no longer to be seen. “Am I then to be left to the mercy of these savages?” thought Gabriel. Yet close on the heels of the thought flashed the consciousness that the Indians’ violence had considerably slackened since the disappearance of Le Loutre. The bonds with which they had tied their prisoner were so loose that he easily slipped out of them, and approaching the squaws who were gathering wood

for the fires, he addressed them in their own language and proceeded to help them. The braves merely turned their heads and glanced at him indifferently. “Not enough gold!” he heard one mutter to another. He had

already heard that the Micmacs had grown shrewd enough to put their own

price on the harassing of recalcitrant or timid Acadians, and the taking of English scalps; and like all ignorant or savage races had quickly learned to overestimate their services and become insatiate in their demands. Gabriel’s chances, therefore, depended to some extent on the condition of the priest’s treasury; also on the fact that he was personally acquainted with certain members of the band, to whom by reason of his skill in woodcraft and familiarity with the habits of the forest game he had not only occasionally been of service, but whose respect he had won.

“This is the white boy who knows even as does the red man the lair of the wild deer and where in the noonday heat they turn their steps to drink,” observed one to the other, as Gabriel, restraining every symptom

of fear, quietly joined the group around the now blazing fire and helped himself out of the common pot.

“Yes,” he put in coolly, “and I can tell you more than that if you will.”

There are natures, those of women as well as of men, whose vitality quickens in the face of actual danger. They may be even cowardly in the mere anticipation, but the trumpet-call of duty, honor, or sacrifice, or the less high-sounding clarion of self-preservation, sets them on their feet, face forward to the coming foe. In Gabriel all these forces were at work, though Margot’s sweet, pale face and the _gran’-père’s_ bowed gray head, were the strongest influences. And behind all these was that irrepressible spirit of adventure, never wholly absent from the normally healthy young mind.

Drawing on his store of woodland stories, and occasionally pausing to give ear to those furnished by the now interested Micmacs, an hour passed in total oblivion by the captors of the commands laid on them concerning their prisoner; and when at last a tall dark form suddenly appeared within the circle of light, and a well-known terrible voice broke forth in objurgation; it was plain that the owner of both was scarcely more welcome to his “lambs” than to the prisoner.

“What is that I behold?” exclaimed Le Loutre. “Where is your Christian service, vowed to God and the king? Instead, I find feasting and foolish gabbling, with a traitorous captive in the midst!”

The faces of the Indians clouded in sullen silence. The lash of the priest’s tongue went unsparingly on. At length the leader growled out, “The pale faces from over the sea bring no more gifts. The red men grow weary of taking the scalps of friendly white men who are at war with your people but who do the Indian no wrong. They at the new fort have treated us well. And as for this boy, you give us not enough to take the scalp of so mighty a hunter and true a tracker.”

Le Loutre's face paled with baffled rage. True it was that owing to some at present unexplained delay the customary large remittances from France

for the bribing of Indians who were friendly to the English were not forthcoming, and with a heart-leap of joy Gabriel saw the truth written in his eyes.

“Fools! Did I bid you take his scalp? Did I not bid you rather to chasten him for his faithlessness and force him back to his duty? This you know well enough how to do without my guiding presence. Yet I come to find——”

With a gesture of unutterable scorn he waved his black-robed arm.

But his personal influence was on the wane, and he knew it. It was money, gifts, that were needed, and for these he must wait. Yet were there still a few whose greed was of the kind that will take anything rather than nothing, and on these he depended, and not in vain.

Stealthily, like dark spirits, two or three Indians glided from behind their companions, and took up their station beside the priest. Strengthened by these mute allies he once more faced the group at the fire, and proceeded to pour forth in fervid eloquence alternate persuasion, threat, and glowing promise of future reward. Gabriel soon discovered that he was not the central figure in this tirade—that larger projects than the fate of one boy were being held before the now attentive Indians, who uttered guttural notes of assent or dissent.

“A hundred livres for each scalp—a hundred livres, mark you! This boy knows, as you cannot do, the plan of the fort at Halifax, and the number of its defenders. If he be so mighty a tracker, let him track these English dogs to their lair and fire them out of it, or in it, it matters not which, so that to God and the king are restored what is rightly theirs. But remember, a hundred livres is yours for every English scalp! My people may not do this thing, for they have signed a

peace with their enemies, but for your people it is otherwise.”

“Have we too, not set our totems to a solemn treaty?” growled one dissenting voice.

Once more from the priest that gesture of contempt.

“And what is that for such as you?” he said. “What is a broken treaty to the Indian?”

Gabriel, unable longer to contain himself, sprang to his feet.

“_Mon père!_” he cried, his heart in a flame, a blaze of sudden illumination in his soul. “Nay, never more _mon père! M. l’Abbé_, is this, then, the Christianity, the fealty to God and the king, to which you would have me faithful? Then, God willing, faithless will I be.”

For a long minute there was dead silence, broken only by the quick breathing of the excited boy. The Indians, though not fully understanding the words, realized their daring, and gazed upon him with all the admiration of which their anger was capable.

“Do your work,” said Le Loutre at last coldly, signing to the Micmacs at his side.

In a moment Gabriel was thrown to the ground, his arms bound to his side, his feet tied. A hole was dug in the ground, a post placed in it, and around the post fresh logs were heaped.

Such scenes, alas! were not uncommon under the despotic rule of Abbé Le

Loutre, and though no instance is recorded of actual sacrifice of life, owing perhaps almost as much to Acadian timidity as to priestly forbearance, much terror and temporary suffering were caused by his blind fanaticism. But in this boy of mixed race there was stouter stuff to deal with, and his English blood was to the priest as a thing accursed.

* * * * *

Days passed, and Pierre Grélin and his granddaughter could obtain no news of Gabriel. Tossed and torn by conflicting emotions, communal as well as personal, the old man's strength seemed to be ebbing from him. Yet never did he need it more. The village of Port Royal (now Annapolis), nay, all Acadie, was in the confusion of helpless distress. What should they do, these poor ignorant habitants? To whom should they listen? In their hearts they knew that every word of Cornwallis' proclamation was true, that under English rule they had enjoyed freedom, both secular and religious. On the other hand, Le Loutre swept down upon them continually with the firebrand of his eloquence. "Come to French soil," he cried, "seek new homes under the old flag! For three years _le bon roi_ will support you. You are French at heart—what have you to do with these English? Refuse, and the consolations of religion will be denied you and your property shall be given over to the savages."

True, they were French at heart, the most of them, but not all; and their tranquil, sluggish lives had drifted so peacefully on the broad river of the English governor's indulgence. It was almost worth while to renew the oath of allegiance to these foreigners and sleep quietly once more under their own rooftrees. But would they sleep quietly? Ah, there was the rub! Le Loutre had ever been a man of his word.

Therefore it came to pass that French ships passing to Isle St. Jean, now called Prince Edward Island, and Isle Royale, now Cape Breton, had for two years many hundred Acadians for passengers, some willing, more reluctant, destined to semi-starvation and unutterable misery in the new and desolate country in which their small stock of courage was to be so grievously tried, and in which few of them plucked up spirit sufficient to clear new land for their subsistence, but existed, or ceased to

exist, on such meagre supplies as the French government furnished them.

“_Gran’-père_,” said Margot one evening, as bereft of most of their near neighbors they clung almost alone to their humble home, “_mon gran’-père_, what think you, has become of our Gabriel?” Her eyes were heavy with weeping, her round cheeks pale.

Grétin, in yet worse case, had scarce strength to take his turn with her behind their yoke of oxen at the plow. He sat on a bench at the door of the hut, both hands leaning heavily on his staff. For a while he answered nothing, but his sunken gaze wandered along the banks of the river, from one desolated home to another. In scarcely more than two or three still burned the sweet fires of home, and those that were forsaken had been plundered by the Indians, fresh traces of whose presence were daily visible. The good village _curé_, beloved of all, and the influence of whose noble life and teachings represented all that was best in the Catholic church, was gone too. Torn by contending duties he had decided that the forlorn exiles needed his ministrations more than those still remaining in their homes, and had followed them to French soil.

“_Le bon Dieu_ knows, my child!” Grétin answered at last, in the dull tones of hopeless old age.

“Surely _M. l’Abbé_ would not permit that—that——” her voice broke.

“That his fair young life should be destroyed by those savages? No, my child, no—that can I not believe. Moreover, Jean Jacques, Paul Pierre—they were his friends among the Micmacs. And _M. l’Abbé_—no, he would bend but not break the boy.”

There was a long silence. The evening dews, tears of the soil for the banishment of her children, sparkled on the wide meadows beneath the now rising moon.

“Margot, we can no longer resist the priest’s will,” he said again, “and alone we are not able to till the land, so that it may bring forth crops for our sustenance.”

But a burst of tears from the girl interrupted him. Flinging herself at his feet, she threw her arms around him and hid her face in his breast.

“_Gran’-père, mon gran’-père!_” she cried, “I will work! I can plow—I can dig! I am young it is true, and small, but we women of Acadie are strong. You shall care for the house—it is I who will till the land. Let us not leave Acadie. Gabriel may return—sick, wounded, who knows?

and we gone, the house desolate! If _M. l’Abbé_ sets his Micmacs on us to drive us forth, I will plead with them. They have hearkened to me before now, they will again. If not, then we must go forth indeed, but not yet, not yet!”

[Illustration: “Suddenly the girl raised her head.”]

Weeping they clung together. Suddenly the girl raised her head. A moment more she was on her feet, gazing intently into the black depths of the forest.

“_Gran’-père_,” she whispered, “do you hear?”

“Only the night-hawk, my daughter.”

“Ah, but the night-hawk! Many a time have I heard my cousin call thus in the woods in our happy play times. There, again!”

Like an arrow from a bow she was gone, speeding through the long grass, but keeping well in the shadows.

The old man rose with difficulty. He was weary and cramped with the long day's work, of which since his grandson began to grow toward manhood his share had until these evil days been slight. As the minutes crawled by and Margot did not return, anxiety swelled to terror. The Indians—they did not all know her. With shaking hand he took his ancient-fowling piece from the peg where it hung.

His vision was dim, and as he started blindly on his way, he found himself arrested, gently pushed back into the hut, the door barred, the small windows shuttered. All was done quickly and quietly, as by an accustomed hand. Pine cones were thrown upon the half-dead fire, there was a blaze of light, and Pierre Grétin fell into the arms of his grandson.

But joy sobered as Grétin and Margot surveyed their recovered treasure by the additional illumination of home-made tallow dips. Gabriel, indeed, was but the ghost of his former buoyant, radiant self. Only the blue, brave light in his eyes betrayed the old Gabriel. His cheeks were hollow, his frame gaunt, his home-spun clothing torn to rags.

"That I can soon remedy," said the little housewife to herself, as she thought of the new suit in the oaken chest, set aside for his first communion.

Strange scars were on his legs and hands, and these Margot soon fell to examining, a growing dread in her face, though he strove to draw his fingers from her clasp.

"Heed them not, _ma cousine_, " he said tenderly. "I have weightier matters to speak of with thee and with the _gran'-père_."

"Speak on, my son."

"Nay," said the girl quickly, "let him rest and eat first."

Glancing into the pot, which hung, French fashion, over the fire, she added to it shredded meat and vegetables until the whole was a savory mess. While she prepared it, the boy sat with his head in his hands, a man before his time.

The meal ended and the kitchen restored to its wonted order, Margot, in whom, as in all Acadians, the frugal spirit of the French peasant prevailed, extinguished the tallow dips; then, taking her seat on a cricket at her grandfather's knee, she eagerly awaited Gabriel's story.

This story of Gabriel's was no easy one to tell; this he felt himself. In the brief time that he had been absent from his home, brief in actual duration, but to himself and to his loved ones so long, life had acquired for him a wholly different meaning. Hitherto his nature had been as plastic material prepared for some mold, the selection of which had not as yet been made known. He knew now for what he was destined, and was conscious that the boy was rapidly hardening into the man he was intended to be. The fanaticism permitted in one of its most potent instruments had upset his faith in the form of religion in which he had been reared, and he was too young for the tolerance that is often the fruit of a larger experience. Moreover, strange as it may seem, there was in this generous, tender-hearted youth elements not unlike those in the relentless and vindictive priest. The fanatic and the enthusiast not seldom spring from the same root. But how to explain to these two, who, dear to him as they were, could not be expected to share his convictions? At last he roused himself.

"First, dear _gran'-père_,” he said, “I must learn how it fares with you and with _ma cousine_. God grant that you be left here in peace!”

There was a pause. They too had their difficulties. How could they tell him that Le Loutre might even yet have spared them their home had it not been for what he called “the contumacy of that young heretic”? Margot's

woman's wit, however, came to the rescue and she told simply and truthfully the tale of the gradual banishment of their people. "We still are spared," she concluded, "but it cannot be for long."

"Then my sins were not visited on your head," said Gabriel eagerly.

"As others fare, so must we in the end," was the somewhat evasive reply.

"But come, my cousin, to thy tale."

So Gabriel began, but when he came to the scene of the torture, hesitated. Margot's indignant sympathy, however, divined what he would not tell.

"Was it very bad, dear cousin?" she cried, the tears in her dark eyes, as she pressed his hand.

"No, not so very bad," he replied with forced lightness. "The friendly Micmacs rebelled, and I do not believe _M. l'Abbé_ ever pushes things to extremes at first. He strove only to scare me into submission to his will, and I have got a bit of tough English oak somewhere in me that doesn't bend as do tender Acadian saplings." He smiled down into his cousin's wet eyes. "Don't weep, little cousin. See, I am well; none has hurt me."

"Oh, but thou art thin, thou art pale, thou art changed," she cried, breaking down completely. "Oh, _mon gran'-père_, is it that we must love and obey so cruel a priest?"

The old man's trembling hand smoothed her hair; he could not speak yet.

"_Mon gran'-père_, Margot," Gabriel said bravely, "I have that to tell you which may grieve your hearts; but my mind is made up. I have,

indeed, changed since we parted. I am no longer a Christian as your church holds such.”

“Your church!” This could mean but one thing—their Gabriel was then, in truth, a heretic! But the low-breathed “*Helas, _mon fils_*,” which escaped the old man was not echoed by his granddaughter. She raised her head and looked at her cousin, who had sprung to his feet and was pacing the floor like a young lion.

“No,” he cried. “If to do such in the name of the Father and the gentle mother of a gentle Saviour is to be a Christian, then am I none! If to be a missionary of the church is to spur poor savages on to be more cruel, more treacherous, than in their ignorance they were, then heaven grant that no holy church may ever receive them! If to be false to every given vow, to strike the enemy in the back, to hate even as do the devils in hell, is to be a Christian, then no Christian am I!”

He returned to the fireside, and sinking upon the high-backed settle, relapsed into reverie so profound as to become oblivious of his surroundings.

“And if thou dost proclaim thyself a heretic, *_mon fils_*,” observed Gréatin at length fearfully, “what is to become of us?”

“Alas, at best what can I do for you, honored *_gran’-père_*? Is not even now that vindictive priest on my track? And may it not be that he may yet take my life because I will not aid him in his treacherous plot? I have escaped him once, but only by the aid of Jean Jacques, and now that gold has come from France, Jean Jacques will love French crowns better than my life.”

“*_M. l’Abbé_* never takes lives, my son,” said the old man rebukingly.

“And why not, _mon gran’-père_? May it not have been because none dared oppose him?”

Gréatin sighed heavily, but made no reply, and Gabriel continued:

“All here are his tools, the Acadians from fear, the Indians for gold. I am no tool, and for that, if needs be, I must suffer. But you—ah, my beloved and dear!” He sank impulsively upon his knees, and throwing his arm around his cousin and leaning his head on his grandsire’s knees, yielded himself to an abandonment of grief.

Finally Margot spoke, quietly and decisively.

“Dear Gabriel, thou canst indeed do nothing for us and thou art in peril here. Thou must make thy way with all speed to thy friend, the New England _prêtre_; he will succor and aid thee. Thou art like the Huguenots and the Puritans; thou wilt have to suffer for conscience’ sake.”

She smiled bravely, but her lips trembled.

“But you,” Gabriel groaned, “you!”

The poor boy was passing through that bitterest trial of all, experiencing what to all martyrs is worse than any fiery stake, the helpless, incomparable anguish of bringing suffering on those dearer to him than life. What if in the saving of his own soul alive he should have to trample over the bodies of the beloved? Might not his course be the very acme of self-seeking? What recompense could the martyr’s crown confer for this mortal agony of vicarious suffering?

But Margot’s steady, quiet voice went on; her soft touch was on his head. Timid she might be, but ah, brave, brave too!

“He will not hurt us, the _abbé_,” she said. “Do not fear, my cousin. If thou dost stay with us, thou wilt have to act a lie every day. Even should he refrain from pressing thee into his schemes, he will watch thee, and not one single ordinance of our church wilt thou be permitted to elude. He can be very hard, our _abbé_. No, dear Gabriel, vain is it to strive to serve two masters; if of our faith, thou must remain here and profess it; if of the other, thou must go.”

She averted her head and further speech failed her.

At that moment there was a violent knocking on the door. Gabriel was on his feet at once, alert, resolute once more.

“I knew he would track me,” he said, “but I had hoped not to be found here, and neither will I. Adieu, _mon gran’-père_. God in very truth keep you! Margot, the small door into the cowpen.”

At a word from the girl, Grétin crept into his covered bed in the wall, while she and Gabriel slipped noiselessly away through a back entrance.

“Let us go with thee, dear cousin,” implored Margot, as they paused for an instant among the cows, her fears for him making her once more timid.

“_Ma chérie_, no! Ah, my best beloved!”

He clasped her to his breast, kissed her passionately, as never before, on brow, cheek, and lips, and was gone.

On the house door the knocking continued, and the _gran’-père’s_ voice was heard in the accents of one aroused from sleep. Margot, hastily composing her features and trusting that the traces of tears would not be visible in the light of the dying fire, re-entered the kitchen and, after much fumbling and delay, opened the door. Without stood Le Loutre, accompanied as usual by his “lambs.” Without deigning to address her,

he

snatched a torch from one of the Indians and, striding into the small house, explored every corner. Even the cowpen was not left unsearched. On pretense of arranging the bed-covering, Margot bent over her grandfather.

“Delay him if you can,” she breathed; “every moment is precious.”

But the priest was already at her side.

“Where is the malicious heretic, at last avowed?” he thundered.

“Ah, where is he, _M. l’Abbé_?” exclaimed Gréatin, raising himself on his

elbow, endued with a sudden excess of courage at the thought of Gabriel wandering alone through the perils of the forest. “Where is the boy, the son of my loved and only daughter, my heart’s treasure? Where is he, Gabriel, staff of my old age?”

For a moment the furious priest was confounded. The color mounted to his

dark cheeks and he hesitated. The old man’s aspect was almost threatening, and if fanaticism had left Le Loutre a conscience, it surely spoke then. But the momentary weakness passed.

“And thou wouldst shelter a heretic,” he said sternly, “recusant son of Mother Church that thou art! But she chastens, if in love, yet she chastens. Hope not for further grace. As for the boy, he must be brought back into the fold. This I have ere now told thee, and I repeat it. Me, the chosen instrument of God and the king, he cannot escape. Faithless as thou mayst be, thou canst not keep him from me. This very night he shall be forced back to his duty. As for thyself and the girl——”

He paused, the terrible look in his eyes. But it was enough. Further words were unnecessary. And as the torches danced away like fireflies into the forest shades, Margot, now completely exhausted, flung herself down beside the old man and, with an arm about his neck, wailed:

“_Gran’-père_, my _gran’-père_, they will find him!”

And the hopeless response came: “_Ma fille_, they cannot fail to do it. Let us pray.”

Feebly he arose, and hand in hand the helpless pair kneeled before the image of the sorrowing Christ.

CHAPTER III

Concealed in the branches of a wide-spreading oak, Gabriel hoped against hope to remain hidden from the Micmac trailers, now close on his heels. White men his woodcraft would enable him to elude, but Indians hardly. His very breathing seemed as if it must betray him.

Listening thus, every nerve an ear, he heard a slight sound in the deep glade beneath. To the novice it might mean anything or nothing; to his practised understanding it was the crack of a twig beneath a human foot.

Carefully he surveyed his position. The moon, though near its setting, still afforded light sufficient to betray him should its rays fall on face or hands. Then, for the first time, he perceived that, as he lay face downward on a branching limb, the hand with which he sustained himself was palely illuminated; the moon, in her swift course, had penetrated the sheltering foliage. What should he do? To move meant certain discovery. He resolved to lie still, the chances being slightly in favor of absolute stillness. Then he became aware that some one was standing beneath the tree. Now in actual fact he held his breath; for though his sight could not pierce the leaves, every other sense told him that it was an Indian. But his hopes were vain. Another moment and he knew the tree was being climbed.

As the green grasshopper clings, even after detection, blindly to the leaf that it so closely resembles, so Gabriel clung instinctively to his branch, and even when a sinewy hand grasped his ankle, made no sign. The

forest-bred boy obeyed the instinct of all woodland creatures; besides, there was one hope left, faint as it was, and were he to move or speak he might lose even that.

“Wild Deer?”

“Jean Jacques?”

Wild Deer was the name by which the friendly Micmacs called him. Now for the test. Was the Indian true?

“Wild Deer, the great medicine man of your tribe is on the trail.”

“I know. What wilt thou do? Betray me to him?”

The low-breathed question and answer swept quickly back and forth.

“The red man betrays not him who is skilled as himself.”

“What wilt thou do then?”

“Let Wild Deer descend and follow his friend.”

Gliding to the ground with a noiselessness and rapidity equal to that of the Indian, Gabriel, at a sign from his companion, followed him on his sinuous track. Was he his friend? He had dwelt too long with the red men

not to dread the treachery which is the inevitable consequence of centuries of savage and relentless warfare, tribe with tribe, red man with white man. Nevertheless, he pushed on; what else could he do?

The gray dawn peered beneath a veil of cloud before they paused on the edge of the forest. Gabriel's powers were well-nigh spent; ill treatment and privation had sapped his young strength. The spot where they had halted was the last camping-ground of the Micmacs. Going to a hollow tree, Jean Jacques drew from it some strips of sun-dried beef and a few

dried leaves, which Gabriel recognized as those of the coca plant, on which, when unable to obtain food, the red man makes arduous journeys, lasting for days together.

“Eat,” he said with native brevity; “then put these leaves in thy mouth and chew them as we go. The strength of the pale face will come back to him as that of the young eagle.”

Gabriel obeyed, imitating the taciturnity of the Indian. When at length, refreshed and strengthened, he arose to prosecute his attempt to reach Halifax, Jean Jacques, with a grunt, declined not only to be thanked, but to leave him.

“I too go to the new fort,” he remarked calmly.

“Thou wilt go?”

A sudden suspicion overwhelmed him. Could it be that his apparent rescue

was one of the priest’s deep laid plots? That Jean Jacques, heavily bribed with French gold, was but carrying out some scheme of treachery which should involve the defenders of the fort as well as himself? The supposition was an only too plausible one, given such a man as Le Loutre

and such lucre-lovers as the Micmacs. The Indian’s impervious countenance revealed nothing. To question him would be vain. Well, he must go forward and hope for the best; no other course was open to him.

Silently, at the steady Indian dog-trot, the pair pressed on. As mile after mile was covered, Gabriel’s strength seemed to renew itself, even, indeed, as that of the young eagle; hope revived within his breast, ministering to his keen vitality; and when at last the Indian paused, and kneeling, examined in ominous silence a bent twig here, a crushed blade of grass there, and finally laid his ear to the ground, Gabriel was inclined to scout Jean Jacques’ fears and his own suspicions.

“Feet have passed this way,” muttered Jean Jacques, “feet of red men, with them a white man. Let Wild Deer put his head to the ground, and he will hear them yet. But our trail they have lost. They wander, seeking it.”

Striking in the opposite direction, they proceeded cautiously. Then again the Indian stopped and listened after his manner.

“They come,” he said, as he once more arose, “many of them. They go to the fort; but they will not go until they find Wild Deer to carry him with them. But Jean Jacques will be his guide, he shall escape them.”

At nightfall they crept beneath a pile of brush and leaves, concealing the deserted lair of a gray fox, and Gabriel, worn out now, and happy in the thought of at sunrise being free to abandon the circuitous route and making straight for the fort, but a few miles distant, soon fell asleep.

But there is many a slip, etc. It seemed to him that he had slept but five minutes when he was aroused by a flash of light in his eyes, and he opened them to find himself in the grasp of half a dozen Micmacs, behind

them Le Loutre. Jean Jacques was nowhere to be seen. Speechless, he looked from one dark face to another; every one of them he knew to be unfriendly, or at least corrupted by French gold. His young heart felt nigh to bursting. So near the goal and to be thwarted thus! So near the new life, in which, in his youthful enthusiasm, he believed he could be true to the highest that was in him, true to his grandfather and Margot, vaguely but ardently hopeful that he could save them. And Jean Jacques? Had he indeed betrayed him?

It was one of those moments of discouragement in which even the falsity of an untutored savage can pierce the very soul.

“Bind him, and bring him on!” was the priest’s stern command.

Bewildered by fatigue, sick with disappointment, Gabriel offered no resistance, uttered no word. He was dragged about a mile and then dropped rudely by the embers of a camp-fire. Waving his "lambs" to a distance, Le Loutre addressed him in accents cold as steel and merciless as the hand that drives it home.

"Have I not told thee that thou canst not escape me, I, the chosen instrument of God to bring stragglers back into the fold? My duty is clear. He who will not bend must break."

He paused, but his hearer made no sign.

"Thou knowest what is demanded of thee. This day my converts go on a friendly mission to the new fort. Must I instruct thee yet again in thy duty?"

He waited for the response that came not. Gabriel lay as if life itself were already crushed out of him; every drooping finger of his strong, right hand nerveless, hopeless. Yet must there have been something of tacit resistance in his air, for Le Loutre continued in tones of exasperation:

"Opposition will avail thee nothing, and for thy grandfather and cousin it will mean suffering and privation beyond their wildest dreams. Every Acadian is rewarded according to his loyalty to the king and to the true church. Hitherto I have spared them, but it is I alone who have the ordering of their going, and of the new home to which they journey. The gran'-père is old, Margot more tender than is the habit of Acadian maidens, yet must the church not stay her hand when the saving of souls is in the balance. She must make example, she must discipline. I am no man meting out man's justice," continued the fanatic, raising his hands solemnly, "but chosen of the church to execute her righteous will. This being so, thou wilt find me relentless in my duty."

Gabriel's benumbed senses, together with the spirit that in some natures never slumbers long, were reawakening. He found himself wondering why

this autocratic priest, before whom all trembled, should find it necessary to explain his conduct to a mere boy. Then, as mental vigor returned more fully, he drew his exhausted body into a sitting posture, and said:

“_M. l’Abbé_ commands that I shall go with these savages?”

“Converts to the true church,” interrupted Le Loutre imperiously. “Who dares call baptized Christians savages?”

“I name them according to their deeds,” continued Gabriel, with a certain manly dignity which had come to him of late. “Holy water on the brow does not change the heart.”

“It doth not!” cried the priest in the same tone. “Jean Jacques is a pervert—perverted by thyself from the true faith.”

“Yet he has played me false,” exclaimed Gabriel bitterly.

“Dull-witted boy! Knowest thou no better than that?”

Could it be? Was Jean Jacques faithful? Not only that, but free to help him again? Hope kindled once more within his breast. Then he rose to his feet and looked straight into the eyes of Le Loutre.

[Illustration: “_M. l’Abbé_ commands——.”]

“It is the will of _M. l’Abbé_,” he said again, “that I should go to Halifax on this ‘friendly’ mission? The Micmacs will camp without the fort, I shall be received within, and can then learn more than I know already of its defenses and of the habits of its defenders. The Indians, being friendly, will pass in and out with me, two or three perhaps only; I am to guide them with what secrecy I may from one portion of the stronghold to another, and they in turn will pass on their knowledge to the waiting horde concealed within reach, and then at a given signal the attack is to be made, and, they and I alike familiar with the weak

points of the fort and other matters, they will easily gain entrance, and put all to fire and sword? Is this the will of _M. l'Abbé_?"

Le Loutre looked back at him consideringly. Keen-sighted, as he was, he scarce knew what to make of this boy. Then he said:

"You swear it in the name of the Holy Mother of God?"

"I promise nothing," said Gabriel steadily.

"Then," cried the priest with a sudden burst of fury, "remember this: If thou dost play the traitor——"

"He can be no traitor," Gabriel interposed, with a calm which compelled a hearing, "who gives no promise, except that if it be within his power he will defeat the plot laid."

"No matter what thou art," burst forth Le Loutre again, "thou art false to the faith in which thou hast been reared. But forget not that thy course will be watched, and that if my commands are not obeyed thy grandfather and cousin will pay the forfeit—yes, with their very lives. Dost hear me?"

Gabriel, pale before, whitened now to the lips. But he kept his steadfast eyes on the priest's face as he replied:

"I hear, _M. l'Abbé_."

* * * * *

The blue waves of the harbor of Chebucto leaped gayly landward before the strong south wind. On the wooden ramparts of Halifax the sentinels kept watch, specks of scarlet betwixt the blue of sea and sky, moving, automaton-like, on their appointed rounds. But the automatons possessed eyes, nevertheless, and those directed north were riveted on a band of Indians who, since sunrise, had been busy getting into camp about half a mile from the post.

The British colony at Halifax was now, counting those within and without its walls, over three thousand strong, and though the settlers without had been sorely harassed by Indians—whom the governor was beginning at last to suspect were set on by the French, despite the peace nominally existing between the two nations—they continued to thrive and increase. The Indians at present camping so near were soon recognized as Micmacs, who had made a solemn treaty with the British the previous year, consequently their appearance created but slight interest.

In his own simple apartments the “brave, sensible young man, of great temper and good nature,” was writing, with what for him was unusual irascibility, a letter to the Bishop of Quebec. But his patience had been sorely tried. “Was it you,” he wrote, “who sent Le Loutre as a missionary to the Micmacs? And is it for their good that he excites these wretches to practise their cruelties against those who have shown them every kindness? The conduct of the priests of Acadia has been such that by command of his majesty I have published an order declaring that if any one of them presumes to exercise his functions without my express permission he shall be dealt with according to the laws of England.”

Having finished his letter he gave orders that the French priest, Girard, should be invited to a final audience. Obedient to the summons, an elderly man, of strong and gentle countenance, made his appearance. Bidding him be seated, Cornwallis addressed him courteously in French.

“_M. le Curé_,” he began, “you know that you are one of very few who have been required to take the oath to do nothing contrary to the interests of the country I serve. Is not that so?”

The priest bent his head with quiet dignity.

“I believe now that of you it was not necessary to exact it.”

“Pardon, _M. le Gouverneur_, of me it was not exacted. I rendered it.”

“Pardon, _M. le Curé_, you are in the right. I owe you an apology.”

“_Monsieur_ has nothing for which to make amends. He is all honor and generosity.”

Cornwallis bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment, then continued:

“There are many, however, of whom it would be as well for these simple Acadians as for helpless English settlers that the oath of allegiance to my king were demanded. This Abbé Le Loutre, for example, he is a very firebrand. Nay, rather a wolf in sheep’s clothing, working havoc in the poor, silly flock. Know you him, _M. le Curé_?”

The priest lowered his eyes.

“_M. le Gouverneur_,” he replied in a constrained tone, “it is contrary to the habit of my order to say of our superior, He is wrong or he is right.”

“Once more, pardon!” cried the younger man frankly. “I made an error. Tell me, M. Girard, on your return to Cobequid, what course will you pursue?”

“In accordance with my oath, _M. le Gouverneur_, I shall inform M. Longueuil that I can make no effort to prevent my people from submitting to you, according to their own desires.”

“And what, think you, your governor will reply?”

“I know not, _monsieur_, but it is probable that I shall be compelled to retire from my position.”

The two men, of different creed and antagonistic blood, looked each other full in the face. Then, with manifestations of mutual respect, clasped hands.

“Adieu, _M. le Curé_.”

“Adieu, _M. le Gouverneur_. The saints have you in their holy keeping, and bring you to the shelter of the true fold.”

But as Girard turned to go, Cornwallis spoke again:

“M. Girard, there is a lad here, half Acadian, half British, know you aught of him?”

“Gabriel—ah, the hard name! I cannot call it.”

“Yet did the name and he that originally bore it sail once with your own conquering William from the land of your birth. Champernowne—it is a Norman name—and you, you yourself come from _la belle Normandie_, is it not so, _M. le Curé_?”

“It is true, _monsieur_. But this boy, I have heard of him from the _curé_ at Port Royal. He is a good boy, though, alas, no longer of our faith.”

“He is to be trusted?”

“So I have been assured, _monsieur_.”

Meanwhile another scene was being enacted under the eastern rampart.

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Gabriel, I baptize thee.”

The brief ceremony was at an end, and the few witnesses departed.

Feeling somehow encouraged by this open profession of his inward convictions to thread the difficult maze that lay before him, Gabriel joined the New England minister at his frugal meal, and then at his advice betook himself to an upper chamber to rest his weary body. But rest to aching heart and tired brain would not come. In whom should he confide? What should he do? Even his knowledge of the English tongue was

limited, though it fitted readily to his own, and he felt that he would soon be master of it. Of but one thing was he certain; come what would, he must now cast in his lot with his father's race. There were ways by which he could earn his bread—he, active and vigorous and accustomed to

labor. And the colonists, they would need defenders; he could handle a musket with the best, and endure long marches. Then, with a groan he turned his face to the wall. Margot—the grandfather! Like a knife turning in his heart the harrowing dread would not be stilled. Nothing could be done, no revelation of intended treachery made, until these two were beyond the reach of Le Loutre and his terrible threats. And the days would slip past as the hours were slipping now. Could, would, the English governor help them? Then slowly, like swallows sailing circlewise ever nearer and nearer their resting place, his revolving thoughts settled down upon their nest. Yes, there was one hope. He sprang from the bed and was out of the house in less time than it takes to write the words.

“M. Girard, M. Girard,” he said to himself as he hastened along. But when he arrived at the priest's lodging, he was informed that _M. le Curé_ had started two hours before for Cobequid.

The woman of the house, mother herself of stalwart sons, felt her heart stir in pity for this splendid-looking youth, with the “air noble” and the sad face. She was a former parishioner of M. Girard, an Acadian come hither from Cobequid.

“But see,” she said, following him out of the door, “_M. le Curé_ was to tarry awhile at the Indian camp. Maybe he is still there.”

With a word of thanks Gabriel hastened away. Yet back to the Indian camp, that nest of traitors. There was, however, no help for it. In any case he would have to return to the camp at nightfall, for he was closely watched, and his plans were not yet ripe for defying his dusky guardians, two or three of whom on the morrow expected to be conducted

within the walls of Halifax. To obtain private speech with the _curé_ would no doubt be difficult, but it must be done. Fortune favored him. As he skirted the low hills to the eastward of the camp, watching his opportunity, he beheld a man in priestly garb, escorted by some Cobequid

Acadians, who had voluntarily visited Halifax to take the new oath of allegiance, making his way across the levels in the direction of the forest. Girard’s adieu to Le Loutre’s “lambs” was, then, made. Weary and

spent as he was, Gabriel put forth his last remaining strength and ran swiftly forward to intercept the party. He accomplished his object, and standing respectfully before the priest returned his gentle greeting.

“And who art thou, my son?”

“My name, _mon père_, is Gabriel, grandson of Pierre Grétin, habitant of Port Royal.”

A long-drawn “Ah!” escaped M. Girard’s lips. Then taking the boy by the arm he led him out of earshot, and seating himself on a small hillock, said kindly:

“Rest, my son. The sun is yet some hours high, and thou art weary, and hast a tale to tell.”

“Oh, _mon père_!” cried Gabriel, then stopped, unable to proceed.

This son of a mixed race could be steadfast as well as brave, but that intense vitality which sends the warm life-blood coursing through the veins like a torrent instead of as a calm and sluggish stream, even while acting as a spur to noble endeavor and keeping the heart forever young, exacts also its penalties. Now that the moment had arrived on which all his hopes hung, Gabriel was past speech. He lay face downward on the short turf, struggling with a burst of passionate tears that would not be repressed.

“Weep, my son, weep,” said the kind old man, laying his hand on the fair head, “thou hast endured much, and thou art but a lad. Moreover, thou hast this day solemnly abjured thy mother’s faith. I reproach thee not, but for a youth such as thou, thou didst take upon thyself a grave responsibility.”

But Gabriel was pulling himself together, and presently he sat up and shook the curls back from his eyes.

“_Mon père_,” he said, still clinging to the old loved title familiar to him from earliest childhood, “that I know; I considered long; and forget not that the faith to which I have turned was the faith of my father. But it is not of myself I would speak, it is of those dearer to me than life.”

Then briefly he narrated the events that had occurred, his forced abandonment of his grandfather and cousin, their desolate and helpless condition, and the _abbé’s_ threats should he fail in the task demanded of him.

“And this task I cannot and will not fulfill,” concluded Gabriel firmly; “then should I be traitor indeed.”

M. Girard’s face had grown very sad. The conduct of Le Loutre had caused him and many another gentle-hearted priest much sorrow. Yet he was

the

superior; his authority could not be questioned. He remained silent for a while; then spoke, not without hesitation.

“My son,” he said, “there is a way, but even that way is not without difficulties. Thy cousin—Margot—our Acadian youth are often householders at thine age. Yes, I know, those of English blood are more backward in such matters, but there must be true affection betwixt you, and for thy wife she is altogether suitable. Thus thou couldst protect her and the _gran’-père_ also. The saints forbid that I should encourage a union betwixt a heretic and a daughter of the church were there any other way, and did I not hope much from her influence. Wives have brought erring husbands back to the true fold ere now, and thou art scarce experienced enough to have embraced for reasons that will endure another faith. It was resentment, not conviction, that led thee astray.

“Among the Acadians protected by the fort the followers of the Holy Catholic Church dwell in peace, ministered to by priests who have taken the oath of allegiance to the English king. There, with Margot for thy wife, thou wilt return to the true faith.”

The good old priest, pleased with the future his imagination had created, rambled on. But after the first Gabriel hardly heard him. _Margot his wife!_ The hot blood flamed to cheek and brow, then the flash faded, leaving him paler than before. Who was it that dared thus to handle the sweet familiar affection, from whose leaves the delicate bud, destined in the fullness of time to expand into the radiant flower of a strong man’s love, peeped forth so timidly that he himself had not yet ventured to do more than glance at it and then avert his eyes? When had he first known that those cool, green leaves held for him such a pearl of price? It was at his last parting from Margot, when forced to flee and leave those so helpless and so dear to the mercy of Le Loutre. The remembrance of this parting had never left him, despite danger, suffering, dread, not for one little hour. But that any one should speak of that of which he had never yet spoken to himself! Gradually, however,

the sense of shock, of desecration, faded; and when after a long and patient waiting M. Girard addressed him almost in the very words once used by the _abbé_, but with very different intention, his answer this time was prompt and decisive.

“_Mon fils_, art thou boy or man?”

“I am a man, _mon père_.”

“Well, think on what I have said.”

The priest gathered up his skirts and arose.

“But, Margot, _mon père_? Her desires may be quite other——”

Gabriel’s cheeks were hot again. He faltered in his speech. The old man looked him up and down. Yes, he was a goodly youth. A queer little smile

flickered on the priest’s thin-lipped mouth, but all he said was:

“My son, these things arrange themselves.”

He turned to go. Gabriel stood where he had left him, dreamy-eyed and quiet. Then, with a start he came to himself. He was allowing M. Girard to go, and nothing was settled. This was no time for dreams impossible of immediate fulfillment; there was work to be done, and that quickly. With one bound he had overtaken the priest and laid his hand on his arm.

“But soon—in a day, two days—the _abbé_ will know me disobedient here,” he cried. “I cannot go to Port Royal, neither can the _gran’-père_ endure the toilsome journey hither. O _mon père_, advise, counsel me.”

The priest paused, irresolute.

“My son, in this matter of the fort I cannot advise thee. For the _gran’-père_ and the little Margot I will give them what protection I

may. _M. l'Abbé_ visits Cobequid on matters concerning the oath I have taken, and I will represent to him that thou art one whom to drive is vain, but that thou canst be led. Put thy faith in the Holy Mother, _mon fils_, she will intercede for thee and thine. Ah, I had forgotten, thou art no longer of the faith. Adieu, then, poor youth."

With a cold chill at his heart, and a sense of desolation such as never in his young life he had felt before, Gabriel watched the figure of him who represented his last hope disappear into the now darkening shades of the forest.

But sometimes it happens that hope is never so near us as when we deem her fled. As Gabriel slowly bent his steps toward the settlement by the way that he had come, a dusky form glided out from the hills and confronted him.

"I have sought Wild Deer long," said a well-known voice, "and at last I find him."

"Jean Jacques."

"It is he. But say not that Jean Jacques was faithless to the paleface boy. He was not. Let Wild Deer clasp hands with the Micmac, and all may yet be well."

CHAPTER IV

Night had closed in around the new fort of Halifax and upon the houses clustered about its walls. With a beating heart Gabriel leaned against the postern, waiting for the expected summons from the lambs of Le Loutre. What if his plans should fail? What if the governor's trust in the word of a mere boy should falter? What if the feet of Jean Jacques should waver ere the goal was reached?

Gabriel had followed that rarely misleading impulse which impels one soul of honor to confide in another, no matter what the dividing line between them, whether of sex, age, or degree. Cornwallis knew all, and Jean Jacques was on his way to remove the _gran'-père_ and Margot to a place of safety, if yet there might be time.

Time! Yes, time was all that Gabriel needed for the escape of those whom he loved, happen what might to himself. Yet on his own safety theirs in part depended, he thought. How should the riddle be solved?

The peace and well-being of those two once secured, he would spread his untried wings and do more than merely dream of a new life beyond the bars of the narrow cage in which his life had hitherto been passed. He longed to lead a man's life,—worthy of Margot, worthy of his dead father,—not that of a dull steer hitched to a plow!

He had not told Cornwallis that among the Micmacs incited to this deed of treachery there were in all probability some of his own countrymen disguised as Indians. It was the policy of Le Loutre to induce by threats or bribes the more or less reluctant Acadians to perform such services. It was easy for the priest to protest in case of the capture of the Acadians that it was not the French who had broken the peace, but the inhabitants themselves, of their own free will. The Acadians were useful for the encouragement of the Indians; therefore were they used. Gabriel reasoned that not until the presence of the Acadians was discovered would the time arrive to plead for them. The governor was a man of kind heart as well as of good sense, and the boy would represent to him the simplicity and ignorance of these his country-people, who, although not loving those of alien blood, would assuredly have lived peaceably under their rule, had it not been for their priest's threats and their terror of eternal damnation. Gabriel knew, but would never add, that the cowardice of weak natures was allied with its almost inevitable comrades, deceit and untruthfulness.

Whilst Gabriel waited without, Cornwallis sat in his room, the tallow candles in the silver sconces brought from England shedding their flaring light upon his bowed head. He had dismissed his council and was alone with his secretary. His kind, manly face was clouded with dejection. His term of service was drawing to a close, and despite his efforts, the Acadians were no better off than before. Presently he arose and began pacing the floor.

“Poor, unhappy people!” he exclaimed. “Why cannot they understand that France but uses them as in the ancient fable the monkey used the cat? They were contented enough before this priest came to scare their small wits out of them.”

“Yet, my lord,” put in the secretary, “I have heard that the Acadians were ever a contentious race, given to petty strife and over fond of the law.”

The governor smiled.

“And who would deny them those simple joys in their dull lives? Their harmless disputes kept the sluggish blood moving in their veins and serious trouble was rare. Now all is changed. If by their vacillation they drive us to stern courses, sad, alas, will be their fate. We have borne much treachery, but the end is at hand.”

“It will be well for them, my lord, if your successor is as forbearing as yourself,” observed the secretary gathering up his papers.

There was a knock at the door, and Gabriel’s fair head appeared.

“They are here, my lord,” he said in a low voice.

“Do you retire, then, my son,” replied the governor; “your safety demands that you should not know too much if it be that you still desire to go with these savages.”

“It is my only hope, my lord.”

“And if you fail?” Cornwallis added, laying his hand kindly on the boy’s shoulder. “What then? Remember, that if you find neither Jean Jacques nor those dear to you, the country to whom your father proved his allegiance owes you in turn something.”

“Whether my quest be vain or no,” and Gabriel’s voice faltered, “God sparing me, I shall return to serve under the flag for which my father fought and died, and in the faith that was his.”

“God keep you, then,” said the governor fervently, and turned aside.

Great, indeed, was the astonishment of Jean Baptiste Cope, the favorite chief of Le Loutre, when he found himself ushered into the presence of the governor. He knew that the priest had commanded Gabriel to take advantage of his knowledge of the fort and of the habits of the sentries to admit the Micmacs into the building at the dead of night, while all save the sentries slept; yet here was the dead of night and here stood the governor himself, cool and grave, and the fort was alive with wakeful and armed men.

Cornwallis held in hand a treaty of peace, to which these same Micmacs had solemnly affixed their totems less than one year before. He was empowered by his government to go to almost any length in the matter of

bribes and presents to bind the Indians to peace, as by such means alone was peace for the whole unhappy country to be secured. Le Loutre, deprived of his lambs, would be practically powerless to stir up strife. Already Cornwallis foresaw the tragic outcome of this long-continued trouble. The vacillations and treachery of the wretched Acadians rendered justice, law, and order alike impossible, and peace and prosperity were out of the question so long as they hesitated betwixt two masters. That Le Loutre was well paid for his services Cornwallis was assured. As the French minister wrote to Prévost, the intendant at Louisbourg, a French possession in Acadie: “The fear is that the zeal of

Le Loutre and Maillard,” another equally bigoted priest, “may carry them too far. Excite them to keep the Indians in our interest, but do not let them compromise us. Act always so as to make the English appear as aggressors.”

Bearing these things in mind, Cornwallis bent all his energies to winning over the Micmac lambs, and after a long pow-wow, the pipe of peace was again smoked and “Major” Cope, as he called himself, swore for

his tribe allegiance to the English government. Laden with gifts and escorted by the governor in person, they forsook their camp the following afternoon and embarked on a small schooner, manned by an English crew which outnumbered the little band of savages. With them went Gabriel.

Four weeks later Prévost wrote to the French minister: “Last month the savages took eighteen English scalps, and M. Le Loutre was obliged to pay them eighteen hundred _livres_, Acadian money, which I have reimbursed him.”

And the _gran’-père_ and Margot, where were they?

Jean Jacques, with the subtlety of his race, did not go direct to Annapolis. He was aware that many of the Acadians had been induced by Le

Loutre to leave the river valley and had betaken themselves to the larger settlement of Beaubassin; and later rumors had reached him that the English were about to lay claim to their own and send a small force under Lawrence—destined to be governor of the province—to quell the constant disaffection created by the French troops at Beauséjour, across the Missaguash. It was to Beaubassin, then, that the Micmac turned his steps.

He arrived to find a scene of wild terror; that which has been termed the first expulsion of the Acadians was in full progress.

It was evening, and the western sky was dark with clouds, but as Jean Jacques, at the rapid Indian dog-trot, stole swiftly toward the settlement, he observed to himself that the villagers would have scant need of their tallow dips that night. In huddled groups—the women and children wailing, the men almost equally demoralized—the unfortunate Acadians watched the destruction of their homes; not only so, but what was worse to the many devout among them, the same devouring flames consuming their church. And the moving spirit of this tragic scene was their own _abbé_—he whom they had revered and wholly feared.

The imposing figure of Le Loutre stood out in bold relief against the blazing edifice. Crucifix held aloft, he incited his Micmacs, genuine and spurious alike, to the dreadful deed.

Jean Jacques mingled unremarked with his tribe.

“It is for the good of your souls, my people!” thundered the enthusiast. “You refused to obey the gentle voice of the true church and follow where she leads. Now your salvation must be wrought for you; to live at ease under the protection of heretics will bring damnation on your souls.”

“Charlot, what does the priest to the palefaces?”

At the sound of his own name the Acadian, disguised in paint and feathers, started violently, but peering into the face of Jean Jacques his fears were quieted.

“‘Tis for the good of their souls,” he repeated, as a sullen boy reciting a lesson.

Seizing him by the arm, the Micmac drew him out of the throng. A brief colloquy ensued, punctuated by Jean Jacques with grunts of disapproval; then, releasing the Acadian, he made his way unheeded in the commotion toward a small hut, as yet beyond the reach of the flames. Pushing open the door, he entered.

Upon a couch of moss in a corner lay an old man, evidently dying.

Beside

him knelt a priest performing the last sacred offices of the Catholic Church, and a young girl, the tears upon her pale, worn cheeks. At a glance the Indian perceived that he had found those he sought—Pierre Grélin, Margot, and the good priest of Cobequid, M. Girard. Had the priest not been too much absorbed in his solemn duty to notice the newcomer, the significant fact that the so-called ‘convert’ failed to cross himself would not have passed unobserved. Jean Jacques knelt down, however, reverently enough.

All that night the circle of fire slowly widened, spreading ever more slowly because the clouds broke in heavy showers; but at length, soon after the poor old man had breathed his last and the bright dawn was illuminating the clearing sky, Jean Jacques saw that another place of refuge must be sought from the fire. Gathering up the few articles the miserable hut contained, he sped with them to the shelter of the near-by woods, and then returning he wrapped, with characteristic taciturnity, the body of the _gran’-père_ in the blanket and, followed by the priest and the weeping Margot, bore it also away.

“For the sainted _gran’-père_ there is no consecrated ground!” moaned the girl, casting a backward glance at the smouldering ruins of the church.

“Weep not for that, my daughter,” said the priest in soothing tones, as he led her forward, “for the faithful servant holy ground shall be found.”

He drew from beneath his robe a tiny vial of holy water and in due form consecrated the spot of earth in the forest in which the _gran’-père_ was to rest. Then seizing one of the two mattocks brought from the hut, he set to work with the Indian.

Few, indeed, were the tools or other possessions Pierre Grélin had contrived to save in their compulsory flight from the pleasant home in

the Annapolis Valley—a flight which had taken place shortly after Gabriel’s departure. Even then they might have held on longer had not an ancient grudge on the part of a neighbor served to keep their obstinacy ever before the eyes of Le Loutre; for it has been said that the Acadians were a people given to petty squabbles. At Beaubassin they had found refuge with many others of their race, but on English ground, and it was on this account that the bigoted priest sought to remove them. Long had the Acadians tacitly resisted, not out of love for the English, but out of love for the peace so dear to their sluggish natures and which they were permitted to enjoy under British rule, so long, at least, as they refrained from meddling or from bearing arms.

“No coffin, _mon père_?” said Margot timidly at last.

For answer the priest stuck his spade into the ground; the work was done. Then he pointed to a white sail upon the waters of Chignecto Bay.

“The English!” she murmured awestruck; and then again, “And no coffin, _M. le Curé_?”

“The English are heretics, my daughter, but they do not desecrate graves. The body of God’s servant will be as safe here as in his loved Annapolis.”

Then Jean Jacques and M. Girard laid the body in the grave, and as the priest took out his breviary and began to read the first words of the office for the dead, the Micmac slipped away to the hut, thence to remove the scanty remains of Margot’s possessions. The short service over, Margot herself helped M. Girard in the filling of the grave.

But even as they worked the mingled sounds of lamentation and exultation drew nearer, and just as the grave was filled, the imperious figure of Le Loutre, his face alight with religious fervor, stood beside it.

“What doest thou here, brother?” he said sternly.

“What thou seest, _M. l’Abbé_. I lay in consecrated earth the remains of this our brother in the faith.”

“In consecrated earth,” cried Le Loutre. “What earth is consecrated trod by the feet of heretics? M. Girard, I exhort thee, in the name of the holy mother of God, to remove to uncontaminated soil the body of this servant of the true church.”

He pointed as he spoke to the crowd of hurrying fugitives pressing across the water in boats and on rafts.

M. Girard faced his superior calmly. Well he knew that when, for the sake of his flock as also for the sake of right, he had taken that oath at Halifax, he had incurred the suspicion, nay anger, of his clerical superiors; but in the mild eyes which he raised to the fierce ones of the _abbé_ there was no fear—only the firmness which has led many as gentle a martyr to the stake.

“_M. l’Abbé_ knows,” he said quietly, “that the ground consecrated by a priest of the church becomes holy ground, and that to disturb the dead laid therein is profanation.”

It seemed a long time to the anxious Margot before the silent duel was decided, for some moments elapsed ere either spoke again. Then the hand of Le Loutre slowly fell, and he averted his eyes. Not even his arrogance could forswear the tenets of the church for which he fought so zealously.

“But this maiden?”

He spoke with forced indifference.

“She would go under my protection to Cobequid.”

“That shall never be!” exclaimed Le Loutre violently. “Is not one of the most rebellious of my flock her near kinsman, and shall that dangerous and seditious youth have access to her? If thou dost desire so great a wrong, _M. le Curé_——”

But before M. Girard could reply Margot was on her knees.

“_M. l’Abbé_,” she cried, “only tell me that Gabriel—_mon cousin_—is alive and well, and I will ask nothing further.”

Le Loutre looked down upon the girl in silence, a contemptuous pity in every line of his strongly marked features.

“If he is alive? that I cannot tell thee, maiden. One last chance have I given the would-be renegade lest he become ere his time an outcast. How he hath borne himself, I as yet know not.”

But M. Girard laid his hand kindly on the bowed dark head.

“My daughter, it is the wish of _M. l’Abbé_ that thou shouldst seek the French shore. Louis Herbes, thy neighbor, crosses even now with his wife; it would be well for thee to go with these kind friends.”

“And may I not pray one little hour beside the grave of him who was all of father and mother I ever knew?” said Margot in stifled tones.

Le Loutre shrugged his shoulders; then crossed himself piously.

“As thou wilt, daughter. One little quarter of an hour will I give thee.”

He linked his arm in that of the curé and walked away with him.

Scarcely had the priestly pair disappeared than the bushes at Margot’s side rustled and Jean Jacques crept into view. Seizing her wrist in his sinewy fingers he led her toward the shore, close to which was now

anchoring the English ship.

“The Micmac will find thee a refuge, maiden,” he said. “Follow Jean Jacques, and all will be well.”

But the timid Acadian girl shrank from the Indian.

“To go among those redcoats—and alone, Jean Jacques? Oh, I cannot.”

“Did not Jean Jacques swear to Wild Deer that he would save his kinswoman from the cruel priest?” said the Indian with stoicism, “and will he not do it even with the strength of his arm? Neither do the white braves harm women.”

“Yes—no—oh, I know not,” faltered Margot; “oh, leave me, Jean Jacques!
Yet tell me first, where is Gabriel?”

The Indian grunted.

“The Great Spirit knows, not I. But, maiden, while we waste words the priest comes, and Jean Jacques is no longer of his faith; the faith of the Micmac is the faith of the Wild Deer. Wilt thou come, or no?”

Margot started. “Then Gabriel is in truth a heretic!”

Whilst she hesitated, Jean Jacques, who was in no mood for delay, led her deeper into the woods.

Now Margot, though, as we know, possessed of that kind of courage which will bravely choose and do the right, and even be physically brave for those she loved, was naturally timid, and now she was worn and exhausted and scarcely mistress of herself. Her inborn terror of Indians got the upper hand, and she uttered a piercing shriek, promptly stifled by the Micmac’s hand upon her mouth. Then he suddenly released her.

“Maiden,” he said, “Jean Jacques can do no more. Thou wilt not seek safety? So be it then. The priests come—Jean Jacques goes.”

The girl made a great effort, and though still very pale, held out her hand with a smile to the Indian.

“Forgive me, Jean Jacques,” she said in tones which would have won forgiveness anywhere; “my heart is sick, I know not what I do. Take me whither thou wilt—whither Wild Deer wills.”

“And it shall not be to the redcoat braves,” said the Indian, as together they sped through the undergrowth. “Down beside the crimson Missaguash there are homes in which thy race still dwells in peace, even as those who remain beside the Annapolis. Thither will the Micmac take the maiden of Wild Deer.”

“Halt!” thundered a familiar voice. “A straying lamb, indeed—a lamb in sore need of chastisement.”

But for once the fierce priest had reckoned amiss. Quicker than the lightning’s flash the hand of the Indian went to his tomahawk, his eyes glittering balefully. With a motion almost as rapid the whistle wherewith Le Loutre summoned his lambs was at his lips, while with his disengaged hand he held a crucifix aloft. But that almost might have ruled betwixt life and death had not Margot sprung forward and placed her slight body as a shield for the priest.

“Jean Jacques,” she cried, “is this thy new faith? to strike the anointed of God?”

The upraised tomahawk dropped, and the Indian grunted sullenly. But Le

Loutre, the full violence of whose fanaticism was aroused by the ‘perversion’ of one of his lambs, was not to be so easily pacified, though life itself were at stake; and the influence of the paleface maiden might not have availed to save him, so irritating was the language he used toward the already enraged Micmac, had not Margot,

aghast at the prospect of beholding the _abbé_ murdered before her very eyes, hastily promised to go with him whither he would, if so be he would permit the Indian to depart in peace.

“Swear upon the crucifix,” insisted Le Loutre, “that you will follow me back to the true fold.”

Scarcely realized by herself, the girl’s heart and sense, and perhaps also the recollection of Gabriel’s persecution, were combining to lead her in spirit away from that fold; and now she drew back.

“I will take no oath, _mon père_,” she said gently, “but I promise to go with thee now; more I cannot promise.”

Then she turned to Jean Jacques, holding out her hand in grateful farewell.

[Illustration: “But Gabriel had neither eyes nor ears for the priest.”]

“Seek thine own safety,” she said hurriedly, “and if _mon cousin_ lives, tell him——”

Her voice broke, and she started to follow the already moving priest.

“If Gabriel lives!” cried another voice, and in a moment she was in the arms of its owner.

What matter that he wore the scarlet coat of the British soldier, that he had forsworn the faith of their common forefathers? Was he not Gabriel still, the playmate of her childhood, and now, as she suddenly understood, the lover of her youth?

It was but for a moment, and then the priest tore them asunder.

“Heretic boy!” he exclaimed, regardless of the Micmac, who once more approached threateningly, “release this maiden, unworthy as thou art to touch the hem of her garment.”

But Gabriel had neither eyes nor ears for the priest. He freed Margot from his embrace indeed, but held her hand firmly in his, and flushed and smiling gazed upon the small, downcast face bright with rapture.

“It is with me thou comest, is it not so, _ma cousine_?” he said softly, bending over her.

She lifted her dark eyes, and for a long minute they rested on his, heedless of the objurgations of Le Loutre. Then she remembered, and her face grew suddenly so pale that its wanness struck Gabriel with a great fear. How much, ah, how much, she had suffered. He seemed to see it all now.

“I have promised—I dare not break my sacred word.”

Her voice was barely audible.

“It is true,” cried the priest, thrusting himself so abruptly betwixt the cousins as to compel Gabriel to drop the hand of the girl, “she has promised to return to the true fold, and as the daughter of mother church the touch of the heretic is defilement.”

Gabriel lifted his fair head with the old fearless air that had ever exasperated the priest, while winning his reluctant admiration.

“It may be that I am no longer a boy,” he said coolly, “at least I am no longer of your church; and by all laws human and divine, she being my next of kin, this maiden has a right to my protection. Also, _M. l’Abbé_, you are upon English ground.”

He pointed to the thin line of redcoats deploying upon a low hill some distance away.

The face of Le Loutre was convulsed with hatred.

“The more reason that we swiftly depart,” he said. “Come, daughter, bear in mind thy vow.”

Gabriel’s blue eyes flashed as Margot had so often seen them do in the past. She pressed by the _abbé_, and taking her cousin’s outstretched hands, said in a low, persuasive voice:

“Gabriel, _mon ami_, it is even so. I promised to go with _M. l’Abbé_ in order to save his life; there was no other way. But the promise was only for the day; I would make no further vow.”

Le Loutre watched the girl uneasily, for had she not refused to swear upon the cross, and what was a mere promise without some appeal to superstition? He could not comprehend the force of a higher influence than that of mere symbolism.

Pale now as Margot herself Gabriel moved aside with her, holding her hands, and looking down into the pathos of those dark eyes which possessed, even as in the days when they were children together, power to still the tumult in his breast—the rebellion of a nature more passionate than her own.

“It is but for this one day, _mon_ Gabriel,” she murmured.

“But for this one day!” he repeated. “And our force is small, and God alone knows where we may be on the morrow. Margot, must it be?”

“Gabriel, it was thou who didst first tell me, when thy heart began to change toward our church, that to break the promised word was to lie, and that to lie was deadly sin. Oh, _mon cousin_, dost thou not remember?”

“I do, I do!” he groaned, passing his hand over his eyes in unbearable anguish.

“The priest will not harm me,” she went on, “and I shall be with friends—Louis Herbes and his good wife. They will build them a hut close beside the water, so that if chance offer they may return to English soil—dost hearken, Gabriel?”

Gabriel’s face cleared.

“Yes, yes, sweet cousin. I will take a boat—to-morrow—toward the sunsetting—remember.”

“It is well. But, Gabriel, go. See the lambs—they come.”

“I fear them not,” he cried, the warrior spirit awake in an instant; “let them come. Have I not baffled them already many times? I would bear thee through a host of them, my Margot.”

“Go, I beseech thee!” she implored, a prayer in her eyes.

“God keep thee in his holy keeping then, until we meet again,” and seizing her in his arms he pressed his lips to her brow, and was gone, followed by Jean Jacques.

CHAPTER V

In that hurried meeting and parting Margot had been unable to learn from

Gabriel the history of his life since they had looked upon one another last. Of his conversion to the Protestant faith she already knew, and of his sojourn in the fort of Halifax, but of the rest nothing. Most of all, nothing of his miraculous escape from the treacherous Micmacs during the voyage from Halifax. Le Loutre, too well acquainted with his lambs to repose trust in them, and writhing under the knowledge that he could not bend the white boy to his will, had made use of a well-known half-breed spy to keep him informed of the doings at the fort. This man was instructed, should the murderous plot fail or the Micmacs be once more won over to the English, to offer the savages yet higher bribes, so

that they should at the last moment turn again to France. These higher bribes of course prevailed, and reinforced by members of their own tribe, who boarded the vessel under cover of the darkness, the English crew was overpowered, and all, with one exception, massacred. The exception, needless to say, was Gabriel. When the priest heard of the boy's escape he scarce knew whether to mourn or to rejoice; for, until he had seen him actually in English uniform, he had still hoped to win over this choice spirit to his service.

Gabriel, being an expert swimmer, had contrived to make his way to the shore, and from thence by a toilsome route to the fort. Arrived there, all hesitation was at an end. Once and forever he threw in his lot with his father's race; and chiefly in the hope of rescuing the gran'-père and Margot, but also because his natural bent was to a soldier's career, he offered his services to the government. Cornwallis accepted them gladly, placing him advantageously from the first, and recommending him

strongly to his successor, to make way for whom he shortly after crossed the ocean. Cornwallis carried with him at best a heavy heart, but it was in some degree lightened by the gratitude of the many to whom he had shown kindness.

It is doubtful whether the French government invariably approved of the lengths to which the zeal of Le Loutre carried him. At all events, the home ministers occasionally found it advisable to shut their eyes to his method of interpreting their instructions; which were, in brief, to keep Acadie at any price, or rather to keep their share of the unhappy country and take all the rest that was not theirs.

When Jean Jacques told Gabriel of the gran'-père's death, and of the privations he and the girl had endured, even the new hope for Margot could not keep back the tears. For Gabriel had loved and revered the good old man; therefore he wept and was not ashamed. But doubly necessary was it now to carry Margot away, though where to bestow her in the English camp he hardly knew—only he felt sure that a way would be

opened. Major Lawrence was acquainted with his story and would certainly aid him. Moreover, the smallness of the force caused him to believe that their stay on the Missaguash would be brief, and once at Halifax, Margot would find refuge with her country-people assembled there. Perhaps there too, she might learn to love his faith and be turned wholly from the Romish Church, and then perhaps—perhaps—who could say?

But Gabriel's daydreams were rudely dispelled, and the struggle betwixt love and duty was not yet at an end.

The very next day, when he, with the aid of the faithful Micmac, was about to carry out his carefully laid scheme, Major Lawrence, having satisfied himself that his force was too small for the work it would have to accomplish, gave orders for immediate re-embarkation.

"The fortunes of war, my lad," he said, with a shrug, and gave the matter no further thought; for Lawrence was made of very different stuff from Cornwallis, as the Acadians were to discover when he became governor of the province soon after. Not by nature a patient man, such patience as he had acquired soon vanished when appointed to direct a people who, it must be confessed, were not without trying characteristics. Already he marveled at the leniency of Cornwallis. To plead with Lawrence for a few hours grace, therefore, Gabriel knew to be

unavailing; probably it would have been so with Cornwallis also, for after all "discipline must be maintained." But at least the governor would have shown some sympathy. There came a moment when the young

soldier was inclined to rebel, then duty triumphed, and he had learned his hardest lesson in self-restraint, which if a man fails to learn he becomes little better than a castaway. So duty and honor prevailed, and Gabriel confided his cousin to the care of Jean Jacques for as long a time as the Protestant convert dared to remain in that dangerous neighborhood; thereafter, if possible, the Indian was to convey the girl

to the fort at Halifax, where were gathered many of her countrymen. Nevertheless, Gabriel leaned with straining eyes and an almost breaking heart over the bulwarks of the vessel that bore him rapidly away from all he loved best on earth, his only consolation being that he was keeping faith and doing his duty, and that the God of love and faith would not forsake either him or Margot.

And, indeed, he was to be yet further tried. Upon his arrival at Halifax he found great changes. Cornwallis had departed, and his place was already taken by Hopson, his immediate successor. In the excitement of new arrangements, heightened by the information that the French were invading the colonies, the recruit was suddenly plunged into another existence. By the special recommendation of the late governor he was attached to a lately arrived regiment marching south, and thereupon his boyhood's dreams of escaping from the dull Acadian round, and of making

himself of some account in the world, began to show signs of future fulfillment. Courage, fidelity, and intelligence, were virtues then as now sure to make their mark. The day came when the young soldier served

under Washington himself, sharing with him the failure that made the fourth of July, 1754, the darkest day, perhaps, of his whole eventful life. But Gabriel's relations with the Father of his country belong to a part of his career with which Acadie had nothing to do, and which therefore does not belong to this story. For him the long separation was in truth less hard than for the girl. He at least could drown the torturing sense of powerlessness to aid her in constant activity, and in a succession of duties and dangers; and the hours of his saddest thought were often interrupted by some stirring call to arms.

Far other was poor Margot's lot. Hers was that of endurance—the hardest of all.

The day of her parting from Gabriel went heavily by; and when in the waning afternoon she crouched in the long marsh grass while the tide

fell lower and lower and still no craft appeared upon the waters, she wrung her hands in helpless anguish, knowing that in two short hours neither boat nor canoe could pass up or down the river; for of the Missaguash nothing would remain but deep red mud. Yet Gabriel came not, and the precious minutes flew.

The Herbes and herself, pressing far into the woods in the hope of returning ere long to peaceful English soil, had missed the weighing of the anchor at early dawn and the skimming seaward of the white-winged ship bearing Margot's fondest hope with it. So the girl crouched in the grass and waited, while the wife of Louis built a fire upon the firmer land and cooked from their scanty store of provisions.

Then at last, breasting the falling tide, a canoe came creeping up the Missaguash; and though it came not down, as it should have done from the

English camp, Margot rose to her feet, and shading her eyes from the westering sun, watched it with beating heart and a prayer on her lips. Nearer and nearer—but that was no bright head bending over the paddle, but a dark and swarthy one—the head of an Indian; and it was Jean Jacques who presently grounded his little vessel, and slipped through the long grass toward Margot, who was waiting sick at heart. The Micmac spoke first.

“Maiden,” he said, “Wild Deer has sailed toward the setting of the sun. The braves of his nation commanded and it was for Wild Deer to obey. But the Micmac has found for thee a shelter until the youth comes again. Let us go quickly, ere the river too follow the sun.”

Bitter indeed was the disappointment, but Margot faced it bravely. After all, though their fashion of faith was no longer the same, were not she and Gabriel both in the hands of the one God?

“I will go with thee, Jean Jacques,” she said, after a moment’s struggle with her grief; “but Louis and Marie, they too desire to go. Whither do we follow thee?”

The Indian pointed down the Missaguash, where upon the opposite shore,
removed from the burned settlement some two or three miles and
concealed
from it by a bend in the river, pleasant farmhouses and cultivated acres
brooded in the hush of evening.

“And those good people will receive me?”

The Indian nodded.

“And I can work,” she added eagerly. “I can work well, Jean Jacques.”

It was true. The slender, dark-eyed maiden, though of a frailer build than the majority of Acadian women, possessed the ambition they so often
lacked.

“Come, then,” urged Jean Jacques. “The white man and his squaw they must
wait. The waters of the Missaguash droop in their bed.”

“Wilt thou come for the white man and his wife at the rising of the
tide?”

The Indian grunted in acquiescence.

“And thou, Jean Jacques, whither wilt thou go?”

He pointed southward.

“Ah, to the new fort! There thou wilt be safe.”

“And thither am I to bear thee, maiden, when the trail is safe for thee.”

“It is well. And now, wait but the flashing of an arrow,” cried the girl, and was gone.

Then, as Jean Jacques squatted in the marsh grass, there was borne to him a sound which caused him to fall prone upon his stomach and crawl as the snake crawls toward the woods. For the sound was the cry of the paleface maiden, and had not Wild Deer delivered her into the faithful keeping of the Micmac?

Now it was not sweet to the heart of Jean Jacques to turn his hand against those of his own tribe, well as he knew that the lambs of Le Loutre, with whom he had before his conversion, slain and pillaged many a time, were in disposition rather birds of prey than lambs.

On the edge of the marsh he paused, lifting his head and gazing. To see was to act. With the swift and silent motion of the true Indian the arrow was on the string, and in a moment more buried in the heart of the feathered brave with whom Margot was struggling. In the background knelt a woman, clasping a crucifix to her bosom; beside her the prostrate form of a white man—Louis Herbes and Marie, his wife.

As Jean Jacques sprang forward Marie screamed again, whilst Margot uttered a cry of joy.

“Jean Jacques! It is our good Jean Jacques! Hasten, Marie! We will lift Louis, and bear him to the river. He is but wounded, he is not dead.”

With the taciturnity of his race at a crisis Jean Jacques spoke not. Wiser than Margot, he knew that the Micmacs never hunted singly, and that if their coveted prey reached the river in safety—well, the attempt could at least be made. As for the wounded man, he also knew

that, though enjoined by Le Loutre to do the Acadians no injury, the lambs constantly employed means more in keeping with their savage natures than persuasion.

Motioning to the women to take the feet of Louis, who was unconscious, he raised him by the shoulders, and the small party began a hurried retreat through the marsh grass. Instinctively they all stooped as they walked, and well it was for them that they did so, for more than one arrow whistled over their heads.

“The brave is now alone,” grunted Jean Jacques in tones of satisfaction. “Alone he fears Jean Jacques.”

Margot, panting and breathless, made no reply, but she rejoiced, knowing that the Indian spoke truth. So doughty a warrior as he would not be attacked single-handed.

The canoe was already stranded by the falling tide, and the red mud was over ankle deep. Plunging into it, Jean Jacques, ably assisted by the strong, thick-set Acadian Marie, laid Louis in the canoe, and all three proceeded to push it toward the sluggish, ever-narrowing river.

“God and the Holy Mother be praised,” ejaculated Marie, as impelled by the paddle of the Indian the little vessel glided at last down the stream.

The words had scarcely left her lips when the air at her ear was cut by an arrow, which swept on to bury itself in the back of Jean Jacques.

The women uttered an exclamation of dismay, but the Indian, though his swarthy face went ashen gray, said not a word; only when Marie would have extricated the arrow, muttered, “Touch it not.”

Fortunately there was a spare paddle in the canoe, and both women in turn put their whole strength into the work, so that aided by the tide they made rapid progress. And well that so it was, for as the canoe bore

up against a green promontory, upon which houses and groups of people were visible, Jean Jacques fell forward on his face, the life-blood gushing from his nose and mouth. Willing arms lifted him and laid him upon the green turf, for the habitants had for some time been anxiously watching the approaching canoe, and were ready with their aid. But Margot's first and only thought was for the faithful Micmac. Carefully as the arrow was withdrawn, the shock was too great; and as the girl bent weeping over him, it was but glazing eyes he raised to hers.

“Wild Deer; tell Wild Deer.”

Then he fell back upon her arm and spoke no more.

Faithful unto death, indeed, was this poor Indian. And, heretic though he was, they laid him in consecrated earth, blessed by one of the priests who, French assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, were always permitted to minister to their flocks upon English soil, unless detected in acts of treachery.

* * * * *

[Illustration: “Wild Deer; tell Wild Deer.”]

So for a time poor, little, hunted Margot found peace and a refuge with her country people, but only for a time. When in a few months news of Lawrence's return with a larger force reached the ears of Le Loutre he sent forth his Micmacs to destroy the cluster of homes yet remaining on the English side of the water. The Acadians, caring not much for fighting any one, refused to obey his mandate and take arms against the redcoats, so fled in helpless terror, some to Halifax and Annapolis, but the larger number across the Missaguash. Whether Le Loutre honestly desired to found a settlement in this locality, or merely desired to vent his hatred for the English, cannot be rightly known; at all events his calculations were at fault regarding a new settlement. The French shore was already crowded, and if he really entertained hopes of filling up the marsh and turning it into fertile land for the benefit of the refugees, these hopes were defeated by the corrupt practices of his own

government, which cared not at all for the welfare of the unhappy Acadians, but used them merely as tools. Half clothed and half starved, the men were at once put to hard, labor, with scanty or no remuneration. The strong new fort of Beauséjour, built in opposition to the less imposing one of Fort St. Lawrence, was the handiwork of Acadian refugees. Even then they might not have fared so ill had the supplies actually sent by the French government ever reached their rightful destination, but this was far from being the case. Official corruption, bad as it was throughout New France, was worse, probably, at Beauséjour than elsewhere. One of the most incompetent and unworthy of the numerous “office seekers,” to use a modern term, was in command there, and the “spoils system” was at its height upon the shores of the Missaguash. Vergor, the commandant, applied but a small portion of the food and clothing to the uses for which they were intended, and sent the large remainder back to Quebec, or to Louisbourg, where his confederates sold them, greatly to his and their profit, but not at all to that of the poor Acadians.

Terrified at Le Loutre, Vergor, the Micmacs, and French soldiers, not naturally loving the foreign race across the water, yet craving peaceful homes with them, the refugees dragged on a miserable existence, finding themselves becoming daily more of a burden to their countrymen in the settlements about Chipody. At length they resolved to inquire secretly of the English whether they would be allowed to return to their homes, could they make their escape? The answer was that they could return if they renewed the oath of fealty to the English crown, the oath they had so often broken in their weakness and vacillation. They would not be required by English law to bear arms, but if on the contrary they were found fighting for, or aiding the French, they would be dealt with as traitors. Among those who joined in this request were Margot’s guardians, the Herbes, also the family with whom the fugitives had found shelter on the south bank of the Missaguash close to the Pont-à-Buot.

Furious, indeed, was the anger of the _abbé_ when he heard of the backsliding of his people. His ravings were rather those of a lunatic than of an anointed priest, as he flung himself hither and thither in the pulpit, calling down the wrath of God upon his recreant flock. And Le Loutre was a man who never stopped at mere words. So one night two things happened; one, however, which had nothing to do with him.

The people for whom Margot worked in return for bare sustenance were not unkind, but they found Louis and Marie of more service to them, being stronger and stouter, and little Margot, in losing heart and hope, was losing physical strength too. That night, as she crossed the meadows behind the home-going cows, she was very sad. Slowly, very slowly, her faith in the church of her fathers was being dragged up by the roots, and the fury of the _abbé_, his cruel words in the sacred building a few hours since, had uprooted it yet more. Yet she had no other spiritual guide but him—none to direct her in new, untrodden ways. Gabriel, who could have helped her, was far away. M. Girard she had not seen since the burning of Beaubassin, and she feared that the good old man was in trouble. It was working and waiting in the dark for Margot.

As she neared the marsh a sound struck on her ear.

“Tst!”

She glanced around fearfully, and her eyes fell on the head of an Indian, stealthily upreared.

Terror of the Micmacs amounted to an inborn instinct among the Acadians, and common sense alone intervened to stay Margot’s flying feet. Perhaps the man had some message for her, a message from him who was ever in her thoughts. She paused, therefore, with as fair a show of courage as she

could muster.

“Be not afraid, maiden,” said the Indian in broken French. “Come nearer.

Bent Bow carries a message for thee from one whom Jean Jacques called ‘Wild Deer.’”

Margot’s eyes brightened, and oblivious of fear she approached the Indian, who she now perceived was no Micmac. He held toward her a little

billet which she eagerly took. Now the good _curé_ at Annapolis, at Gabriel’s earnest entreaty, had taught the cousins to read and write, and never was Margot more thankful than at this moment for the blessed privilege, though she had often times found the lesson hour a toilsome one.

“Ah!” she cried. “I have nothing to give thee, Bent Bow, to reward thy faithfulness. The poor Acadians have not so much as a handful of beads.”

“It is enough that I bring thee the billet,” replied the Indian, “and that I serve Wild Deer. Together, many moons from here, we drove before

us the foreign devils, and there came a night on which the paleface youth saved the life of the Indian brave.”

“Wilt thou see him again?” cried the girl eagerly.

Bent Bow shook his head, and with a sign of farewell began to crawl away through the marsh grass.

“Is it well with Wild Deer?” she called after him.

“It is well.” And she saw the messenger no more. Still walking behind the cows, she read the precious letter:

MA COUSINE: Would that I knew it was as well with thee as it is with me. But, alas! this I cannot know. Yet Jean Jacques is faithful, and he has vowed to care for my pearl of price. Long ere this he will have told thee why I failed to meet thee. Margot, I have for leader one of the noblest young men God ever created. It was a happy day for me when, through my father's name, I was appointed to serve under such an one. Sad it is that a soldier's life takes me far from thee, but I shall come again, sweet cousin, to find thee safe and sheltered beside the Missaguash, far from the cruel priest. The family to whom Jean Jacques was to carry thee are known by me, and will protect and cherish thee.

“Ah, Gabriel,” said Margot to herself, the tears upon her cheeks, “well is it that so much is hid from thee.”

For I am coming back. Little is said, but Washington himself thinks that some great move is to be made, and that the men of New England are gathering, and that the governor of Massachusetts and the governor of our poor distraught country are planning alike against the French. Then I and others who came southward with me will return. Till then, _ma cherie, mon amie_, adieu. In English, though I have grown to like my father's tongue, methinks these words are not so sweet.

GABRIEL.

And all the way along the meadows her heart sang, “He is coming back.”

But at home a scene of confusion and distress awaited her.

Le Loutre, not content with thunders from the pulpit, had been making a house to house visitation of those whom he considered the most rebellious members his flock. Among these were classed Louis Herbes and his host, François Marin. Banishment to Isle St. Jean, where many exiled

Acadians were already in a fair way to starve, was the priest's usual punishment; and should any man refuse to obey, refusal was met by a threat to permit the Micmacs to carry off, and possibly kill, his wife and children. A yet worse fate than banishment awaited Herbes and Marin.

That morning in the church Le Loutre had assured the signers of the two documents of appeal—to the French and to the English governments—that

if they did not take their names from both papers they should “have neither sacraments in this life nor heaven in the next.” What could the poor, hunted Acadians do but obey? And even with obedience came banishment for many. As for Herbes and Marin, they were given the grievous permission to proceed to Quebec as deputies on behalf of the Acadians who desired to return to the English side of the river.

Grievous permission, indeed! For even slow-witted Acadians were bright

enough to understand that the _abbé_ would prepare the way before them

in such a manner as to make their mission not only useless, but terrifying. And truly they were correct in their anticipations, for after the visit Duquesne, the governor, wrote Le Loutre as follows:

“I think that the two rascals of deputies whom you sent me will not soon recover from the fright I gave them.”

Such was the heartlessness with which this unhappy race was treated.

CHAPTER VI

The last sad scenes in the sad story of the Acadians in Acadie are now drawing near. Possibly had those two patient gentlemen, Cornwallis and Hopson, continued in command of the country, such scenes might never have come to pass, or at least might have been long delayed. But, as we know, Governor Lawrence was soon worn out by what he described as “the

obstinacy, treachery, and ingratitude” of the Acadians, and he and Shirley, the governor of Massachusetts, determined to settle this troublesome affair once and for all. The two governors knew, moreover, that the French were merely waiting for a good excuse to attack the English, whose defenses in Acadie were of the feeblest, and that if they hoped to be successful they themselves must strike the first blow.

The result of their decision was an act which has been well described as being “too harsh and indiscriminate to be wholly justified,” but which is explained by the fact that the Acadians “while calling themselves neutrals, were an enemy encamped in the heart of the province.”[1]

[1] “Montcalm and Wolfe.” Francis Parkman.

The first step was to lay siege to Beauséjour; and to the aid of the regulars flocked volunteers under the command of that warlike farmer, John Winslow. These men enrolled themselves under the orders of General Monckton, having responded to the call of the New England governor.

It was the afternoon of a June day when the two deputies wearied, cowed, and helpless returned home. Their passage through the settlements had been greatly delayed by the questions showered upon them by anxious habitants, and it was late ere they arrived. Then again the tale of failure had to be told, and listened to with tears and lamentations.

“If the Acadians are miserable, remember that the priests are the cause of it,” wrote a French officer to a French missionary.

News had quite recently come to Chipody, the adjacent settlement, that many of the Acadians banished by Le Loutre to Isle St. Jean had found their way to Halifax, had taken the oath of allegiance to the British, were reinstated in their former homes, and were being provided temporarily with supplies by the English government. Yet it was not

love

for the English that had drawn them back again—simply the love of home

and peace. The returned deputies had scarcely finished their tale when the women began to try and persuade them to remove to Halifax, immediately if possible.

Margot alone neither wept nor argued. There was a hope within her breast

that would not die, a hope aroused by Gabriel's letter. She stole away from the clatter of tongues down to the edge of the marsh-grass. The sun was near its setting, as it had been when she had waited in vain for Gabriel so long, so very long, as it seemed to her, ago. Where was he now? When would he—— Then suddenly her heart stood still, to beat again with mingled dread and expectation.

[Illustration: "Far away, at the mouth of the inlet . . . lay three small ships."]

Far away, at the mouth of the inlet, where it broadens into Chignecto Bay, lay three small ships, English beyond a doubt.

For a minute Margot lingered, giving herself up to speculation. Then like a bird she flew back to one of the rude and simple dwellings of the kind which even in happier days fulfilled the frugal Acadian's highest idea of home. Flinging open the door without ceremony she cried, "English ships in the bay!" and sped upon her homeward course.

Herbes and Marin and their wives were still planning and discussing, but the words on their lips were checked by Margot's breathless ejaculation. In silence they gazed at one another, with the characteristic slowness of their race. What was now to be done?

Margot, whose mind moved more swiftly than those of most of her country-people, soon spoke again, with as much impatience as the habit of respect for her elders permitted.

“What shall we do, you say? Oh, good friends, let us escape to the English ships, they will help us to Halifax! But oh, quick, quick!”

“You forget, maiden,” said Marin with pompous rebuke. “There is the oath of allegiance in the way.”

“And what of that?” cried all three women this time. Marie Herbes continuing:

“What hurt did the oath do us in the past? Did we not till our own land and gather in our crops unaffrighted and undisturbed?—untaxed too? Did not our own priests minister to us?”

A crafty gleam crept into the little eyes of Marin.

“Yes,” he said, “and if we broke faith with our rulers for our good or advancement, why—pfui! What matter!” He shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands. “A small matter! Let the habitan take the oath anew, said the governor. But now—now it is otherwise. As we came through the settlement the new proclamation was made known to us. Should the French—and verily are they not of our own blood? make fair offers, such, for instance, that under their rule too, we should live in peace, and it became the duty of a good habitan to give ear to them, what then? Then would we be called traitors, and meet the fate of such!”

Marie lifted her eyebrows, and made a little sound of dissension in her throat.

“It is true,” he persisted doggedly.

“The good friend is in the right,” put in Herbes, speaking for the first time. “This Governor Lawrence is not as the others, he is not to be cajoled.”

“But why should we break faith with the English?” It was Margot who spoke in a low voice. “With the Acadians the French have never yet kept faith.”

“What knows a young maid of great affairs such as these?” growled Marin;
while his wife added with a taunting laugh:

“But thou must remember, *_mon ami_*, that the child has an English lover;
what wouldst thou, then?”

The color dyed Margot’s cheek, then fled, leaving her very pale. But she was, as we know, no moral coward, so she quickly controlled herself, and
replied quietly:

“Pardon, madame, thou hast forgotten that my cousin’s mother was an Acadian, even as we are, and that he himself was my cousin ere he was my
lover. The country of his birth is dear to him, though whether he be yet alive I know not, or whether I shall ever see him more.”

Her voice choked, and her dark eyes filled. The good Marie clapped her briskly on the shoulder crying vehemently:

“Be of a better courage, *_mon enfant_*! Thou and thy heretic will meet again, never fear!”

“Sometimes it misgives me that our Margot is already part heretic herself,” said Louis with a suspicious glare.

“Shame on thee, shame on thee!” protested his wife. “And hast thou so soon forgotten to be grateful? Could the maiden not have left us that day on the banks of the Missaguash—you a mere helpless burden hindering
her flight?” Then, while Louis hung his head in abashed silence, she

hastily brought the conversation back to its former subject. It was finally decided that the whole party should proceed to the house of the neighbor whom Margot had warned of the arrival of the ships, there to discuss the advisability of further action. Thus slowly did the minds of Acadians work. The result was that the commandant at the fort received no notice of the enemy's approach until the small hours of the morning. The attacking force was then at the very doors, and all was confusion and alarm. Messengers were sent in hot haste to Louisbourg for aid, and by alternate threats and promises the poor Acadians, who so much preferred to have their fighting done for them, were forced either to assist in the defense of the fort, or worse still, oppose the enemy in the open.

It was a case of English regulars and provincials against French regulars and Acadians—on the one side the whole heart, on the other but half a heart; for the French soldiers corrupted by corrupt officials, were no match either in resolution for the stout New Englanders, or in discipline for the British troops. The Acadians and Indians sent out of the fort were as mere puppets in the path of Monckton's army, and the second night beheld the invaders safely across the river and encamped within a mile of Beauséjour.

Herbes and Marin had of course been pressed into the service, but unlike their neighbors had decided to leave their families in the farmhouse instead of hiding them in the woods. The crafty Marin declared that the home was far enough from the scene of the conflict to insure safety, but in truth he depended far more upon the almost certain hope that Margot's English lover would take care that she, therefore they, would not be molested. By this it may be seen how vague were his notions concerning army regulations, discipline, and so forth. Depending on this hope, however, the women and the two half-grown sons of Marin were left behind, to listen to the distant roar and rattle of the bombardment of Beauséjour,—for the attack was not long in beginning. The wives told their beads, weeping and praying for the safety of their husbands, while Margot, pale and still, and alternating betwixt hope and fear, turned

now consciously in her petitions to the faith of him whom she loved. For Margot's nature like that of Gabriel, was clear and straightforward; and now that the forms of the Catholic religion were getting to mean little to her, she faced the knowledge bravely, dropping these forms one by one, striving to wait patiently until light and help should come; and this lonely waiting amounted to heroism in a timid Acadian maid. But the length of the loneliness, the yearning for counsel and support, was forming the girl's character, and ripening it as the seed ripens within the pod. It was Margot, the woman, who now awaited the return of Gabriel, and such a woman as she might never have become had she led the effortless, unaspiring existence of the average Acadian peasant, without mental struggle or any higher object than that of living from day to day.

News of the siege came but fitfully to the three women, bereft as they were of neighbors and the usual neighborly gossip; for the inhabitants of the scattered houses, or rather huts, within reach had all fled to the shelter of the woods. Now and then some head of a family, wearied of what seemed to him profitless combat, having succeeded in eluding the unwelcome task, paused at the farmhouse to drink a cup of milk on his way to rejoin wife and babes, and shake his head over the news he brought; or a fugitive Indian, prowling along the river's bank, bade the paleface squaws make ready for flight, declaring that the great medicine-man could not much longer induce the braves to hold the fort against the foe. But secure in their simple faith that Marin would contrive to see Gabriel, and that Gabriel would protect them, the women refused to face the perils of the forest.

The day was the sixteenth of June. For several days they had heard nothing, and growing hourly more anxious, the three would once and again drop their household tasks, and stepping one by one to the door, call to the boys perched upon the tall trees to know if aught might be seen or

heard. When at last a shout went up, it chanced that all the women were in the house. As they ran out into the open, young François cried:

“They come, they come! a host of them!”

“Who come?” inquired his mother impatiently. “Speak, boy!”

“I cannot yet tell, _ma mère_; but yes, yes!”

And little Jules took up the cry:

“Yes, yes! It is our own dear Acadians. And they laugh, they are glad, they carry bundles and shout!”

“And see the _bon père_, Jules; he waves his cap, he espies us!”

And sliding down the tree, François was off and away, deaf to his mother’s calls and commands, followed as promptly as the shortness of his legs would permit by his little brother.

What did it all mean? The three women left behind looked into one another’s eyes, with the unspoken query on their lips. Then, with an air of determination, the wife of Marin threw her homespun apron over her head and went after her sons. Marie Herbes dropped upon the rude bench

before the door, and began rapidly telling her beads, tapping her foot upon the ground meanwhile in an agony of impatience and anxiety.

And Margot? For the lonely girl how much was now at stake! Leaning against the wall of the house, her hands idle for the reason that she no longer owned beads to tell, her dark lashes resting on her pale cheeks, and a prayer in her heart for resignation if the worst was to be, she waited.

Then it was that for the first time she fully understood that she was ever hoping and praying for the success of the alien race; that she had ceased merely to tolerate them for the sake of the peace they gave, but

that she had in very truth gone over,—as a few others of her race had done, and were doing,—heart and soul to the enemy.

Undoubtedly the siege of Beauséjour was at an end; the question trembling on the lips of the waiting women was, In whose hands was the victory? For peaceful Acadians, released from the perils and toils of war, would for the moment rejoice in either victory or defeat; both would sound alike to them.

Without, the sun burned more and more hotly. Within, the soup in the iron pot, hung above the crackling sticks, boiled—presently boiled over. None heeded.

Half an hour dragged by, the minutes ticking slowly along in the old clock in the corner. Then Marie sprang to her feet.

“They come!” she cried.

Verily they came—a strange spectacle. Out of the woods and across the bridge poured a little horde of Acadians—all Acadians, Margot saw in one swift glance, many of them excited by the red French wine, but every man of them singing and shouting, as they tramped along laden with what was evidently plunder from the fort.

“Beauséjour has fallen—has fallen!”

Thus they sang, as if exulting in the defeat of an enemy.

The wife of Marin, almost as wild as the men, had loaded herself down with part of her husband’s burden, and her voice rang shrill above the tumult in response to Marie’s vociferous queries:

“Beauséjour has fallen, I tell thee. And the English have pardoned our men because they said they but fought under compulsion. All is well.”

“But whence came this, and this?” persisted the more practical Marie, pointing to the motley collection of food, wearing apparel, wines, and even furniture, with which the ground was now littered.

Questions for long brought no coherent reply, and it was not until late in the afternoon, their comrades having scattered in search of their respective families, that either Herbes or Marin was able to give a clear account of all that had happened.

It was significant of the religious dependence and docility of the Acadian nature that one of the first questions asked and answered should be concerning the fate of Le Loutre. At the query the two men, who since their vain trip to Quebec had wavered somewhat in their allegiance to the tyrannical _abbé_, shrugged their shoulders and spread their hands as those who knew nothing.

“But, Louis,” Marie cried, “it is important that we know, for without him are we not but lost sheep in the wilderness?”

“As to that, good wife, I cannot tell thee,” answered Louis. “When we left that villainous fort _M. l’Abbé_ was nowhere to be seen. Depend on it, he was with the commandant. All was hurry and confusion from the moment the shell fell upon the officers’ table while they sat at meat, killing six of them, yes, six!” Here he crossed himself, shuddering, and Marin took up the tale:

“Yes, and the _bon Dieu_ alone knows how great was the wonder of the English, who expected to fight many more days, when the white flag flew from the ramparts. _M. l’Abbé_ I beheld everywhere then. He ran from one to the other, pleading that the flag of the coward, for so our brave _abbé_ called it, be taken in. Well, we Acadians know that he hath the gift of speech, but now it was in vain. The French were glad to cease this foolish killing of men for naught, glad even as we were. So

presently it was arranged that they should march out with the honors of war,—whatever honor there be in slaying and quarreling,—and proceed at once to Louisbourg. Then the officers fell to drinking and plundering ere they departed, and we gathered up what little we could lay hands on, and so took leave with our pardon. Of the priest I saw no more. That is all that has happened.”

Margot, who during this recital had been leaning forward with clasped hands, at last ventured timidly, addressing Louis Herbes:

“And _mon cousin_, of him you saw nothing?”

“No, little one,” replied Louis kindly; “but, I learned that one Gabriel, with another name that cracks the jaws even to think of, was much spoken of during the attack by reason of his valor, and that he fought well. Rather he than I,” he concluded with a grimace.

Margot fell back and said no more. She had all for which she had dared to hope; again she must wait, it was true, but this time not wholly uncheered.

The sun sank and the moon rose and the wearied household was wrapped in slumber, all but Margot, who leaned from the window of the shedroom she occupied apart from the common sleeping apartment, which according to Acadian custom also served for a kitchen. She had tried to sleep and had failed.

Secure in the pardon granted them by the English, heedless of the future, the Acadians were once more collected under their own rooftrees, and as Margot’s eyes roamed along the banks of the Missaguash they rested with a sense of sympathetic peace upon the little farmhouses containing so many re-united families.

Yet it was strange how constantly on this night of apparent peace her mind reverted to the relentless priest who had caused herself and others so much misery. Involuntarily her mind strayed backward to the days when

they had all hung on every glance of that strong, imperious man, whose word was law to a weak and vacillating people, and who represented to the simple villagers salvation here and hereafter. Now, in his hour of defeat, how would it be? His influence had already waned, she thought.

Her window was raised only a few feet from the ground and, unseen by her, a figure came gliding along in the shadow of the wide eaves.

Another moment and her quick ear had caught the sound of hushed steps,

but before the flashing thought had had time to concentrate in the cry, "Gabriel!" a grasp of iron was laid upon her shoulder and a hand crushed down upon her mouth.

There was a hideous interval before a word was spoken, after her terrified eyes had taken in the fact that she was in the clutches of one of the dreaded Micmacs. Then, was it with increased horror or with relief that she recognized the voice which at last spoke?

"Margot! maiden!" The whisper was harsh. "It is thy priest and father in God who commands thy service."

The shock temporarily deprived the girl of power to reply, but finding that she made neither struggle nor outcry, Le Loutre, for it was indeed he, released her.

This man was her enemy, so ran her swift thought; he had robbed her of all that made life dear.

Now Margot, though gentle in heart and deed, was human and intolerant, as the young usually are. Forgiveness of cruel wrong could only come through prayer and striving. She remembered the destroyed and abandoned

home, made desolate by this man; the beloved _gran'-père_, dead from

exposure and want; the beloved cousin, an outcast and a wanderer; and it was this man who had done it.

Yes, she guessed what the priest wanted. He was a hunted fugitive. But why did he come to her, whom he had so greatly wronged?

Then she remembered also the words Gabriel had once read to her from an ancient printed page treasured by his mother as having been the property of his father: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us."

She was so long silent that the voice of Le Loutre had in it a quaver of apprehension when he again addressed her, and when she looked up and saw, even in the moonlight, how almost craven were the glances the once arrogant priest cast over his shoulder into the dim, wide-stretching woods, compassion as well as higher emotions was aroused, and her resolve taken.

"_M. l'Abbé_," she said simply, "there are none here who would harm their priest, even should they awake. As for me, I will do what I can, and God will teach me to forgive you."

At the sound of such words from one of the least of his flock, the priest's imperious temper sprang to his lips. But the situation was too perilous for anger.

None here who would harm him? He was not over sure of that. The men, did not they both believe he had harmed them? Yet all that he had done had been for their souls' good. And of a surety he knew his dear Acadians, who for the sake of peace and freedom from alarms would hesitate, even though the life of the guardian of those souls were at stake. But this maiden, with her it was otherwise. True, she was half-heretic, but she was made of sterner stuff than most of her compatriots. Her he felt sure that he might trust.

Minds work quickly in hours of danger, and it was but a minute before he replied:

“I will pray for the salvation of thy soul, maiden, if yet it may be won. But now,” his voice in spite of him trembling with anxiety, “where wilt thou conceal me until such time as my trusty Cope arrives to go with me to Baye-Verte? There tarries my brother in God, Manach, and together we seek safety at Quebec.”

At the name of Jean Baptiste Cope, the Micmac at whose hands Gabriel had endured so much, Margot’s heart contracted with something like hatred. There was a short, sharp struggle within her. This, then, was what forgiving your enemies meant? Oh, it was hard, hard! And this priest and this Indian had injured so many, was it right to help them to escape?

Little did she guess the thoughts pouring forth from the _abbé’s_ fertile imagination as he watched her—new thoughts, new ideas.

Anxiety

for the maiden’s soul, he would have said, was the mainspring of his intended actions, the desire to make one final effort to save her from perdition. Like many another too sure of his own holiness, the taint of personal malice, personal revenge, ran like a dark and dirty thread through the whiteness of his own soul’s garment. Le Loutre was as honest

with himself as he was able to be, and certainly his fanaticism was real and true.

Yet he judged Gabriel entirely by himself, by his own capacity for righteous (?) hatred: Gabriel was at the head of the party searching for him betwixt Beauséjour and Baye-Verte, and it was for this reason that he had made a wide détour, appointing the meeting with his factotum, Cope, at a house where dwelt one who could be depended upon not to betray him. Her influence over the young heretic, he believed, could also be depended upon, should the fugitives be intercepted by him in

their flight. Honor, loyalty to duty, counted for nothing in the estimation of the religious fanatic.

“It is for her soul’s salvation,” he repeated to himself with pious emphasis. From the woods near by floated the quavering cry of a night owl.

“Await me here, Margot,” exclaimed the priest authoritatively, and stepping backward was lost in the shadows.

Force of habit was strong, and still leaning from the window she instinctively obeyed.

A few minutes elapsed, and then the terrifying Indian, who no longer had
terrors for her, re-appeared.

But this time no words passed. A brawny arm seized her by the waist, while at the same time a cloth was pushed into her mouth. Unable to utter a sound, she was dragged from the window, and borne away.

CHAPTER VII

When Gabriel, two or three days later, rode up to rejoin Monckton’s command under the walls of Beauséjour, his heart—despite his failure to capture the fugitive priest—beat high with joyful anticipation, for Monckton had promised that upon his return he should be given a few hours to visit his cousin and assure himself that all was indeed well with her. The general himself was subject to the orders of Governor Shirley, and Gabriel had come to him with a letter of recommendation from George Washington. Washington, himself a Virginian, rightly guessed
that the young soldier, of English birth and bound to Virginia by ties of blood and sympathy, would not harmonize comfortably with the New England Puritans under Winslow.

“The maiden were best at Halifax,” had been Monckton’s comment on hearing Gabriel’s briefly told tale. “There abide many of her people.”

Best! Yes, how far best! But wishes were vain.

The general, when Gabriel arrived in camp, was busy in his tent, and merely waved his hand hurriedly as the young man saluted and began to make his report.

“I know, I know!” he exclaimed. “The rascally priest has slipped through our fingers, disguised as one of his infernal Micmacs, I understand. Well, the country is well rid of him. I shall soon have other work for you.”

Chancing to glance up, something in his lieutenant’s face struck him—something in the tense eagerness of the fine, soldierly figure.

“Speak,” he said kindly, “what is it?”

Then suddenly he remembered, and a smile illumined his anxious, rather worn face, while that of Gabriel flushed in response.

“Ah, I bethink me. Well, rest and eat, and then go to the house on the Missaguash where dwells the cousin. Ere long I will have less pleasant work for you.”

The color ebbed from Gabriel’s face. He longed to inquire further; to ask if the rumor were true that in consequence of persistent refusal to take the oath of allegiance the Acadians were to be expelled from English soil, from the places of refuge still left them by the French after forcing them from their former homes. Poor, unhappy people; driven

like sheep before the wolves! But discipline forbade anything but prompt and silent obedience. And, as an hour or two later, he swung at a gallop toward the home of Herbes and Marin, of whose precise locality he had been informed by a friendly Acadian, his high hopes of the morning

were
tinged with gloomy forebodings.

One by one the French forts were falling into English hands, and in a few days Acadia would once more be an English province. Already the land
over which he rode—called the Chignecto district—belonged no more to France.

Across the bridge he thundered, and there in the midst of the meadows stood the rough cabin and outlying sheds inhabited by those he sought. Faster and faster flew the horse, conscious of his rider's impatience, and Marin, lolling on a bench before the door, arose in mingled alarm and curiosity. To the women and children, crowding to the front at the sound of galloping hoofs, the young soldier was a splendid apparition as he sprang from his excited steed and greeted them bareheaded, the glory of the May sun in his ruffled blonde curls, and his eyes shining blue as the waters of far Chignecto Bay.

Then of a sudden knowledge came to Marie.

“Ah, the cousin!” she ejaculated; and then could say no more. How could she tell him?

“Yes,” he cried, “I am Gabriel. Where is Margot?”

“Ah, *_la pauvre petite_*! Who knows?”

And the kind-hearted woman threw her apron over her head and burst into
loud sobs, in which she was joined by Julie, the wife of Marin.

Frantic as he was with anxiety, Gabriel could extract nothing coherent from either the women or Marin, the latter a stupid fellow at best, with just enough brains to be suspicious and obstinate; but fortunately Louis Herbes arrived on the scene, and from him the sad tale was forthcoming.

“Nevertheless he was no Indian,” concluded Louis shrewdly, glancing over his shoulder and speaking in a whisper; “it was _M. l’Abbé_ himself.”

“How knowest thou that?” growled Marin.

“I do know it,” asserted Herbes with quiet confidence. “There were some who also knew and told. I have spoken aloud and sorely of the loss of our Margot.”

“Yes, _bon ami_,” sneered Marin. “Now tell it all. Give _le bon prêtre_ into the hands of the heretics.”

“Whom I may trust, that also I know,” exclaimed Louis vehemently, turning upon his friend. . . Then more calmly, “No matter for that. _M. l’Abbé_ is out of Acadie ere now, and we, say I, are well rid of him. Only grief and trouble did he bring us.”

He glanced around defiantly, but the little group remained passive. Gabriel stood apart, his face hidden in his horse’s mane. At length he spoke:

“And thou knowest no more, good Louis? Thou hast no clue?”

“This only: that from Baye-Verte _M. l’Abbé_, and his brother priest made sail for Quebec, and it was said that he would leave our Margot at Isle St. Jean, where is a goodly colony of our people, driven out of Acadie long since and living miserably.”

Gabriel groaned. Julie stepped forward and laid a kindly hand upon his shoulder.

“Better that than the Indians,” she exclaimed in the sanguine tones habitual to her. “And something tells me that _la petite_ escaped. Who knows? She may have made her way to Halifax.”

“Impossible!” returned Gabriel sadly. “All alone, those many leagues?”

“But,” put in Herbes confidently, “there was a party of our country people landed at Baye-Verte from that melancholy isle, on their way to Halifax to take the oath of allegiance. One party had already done so, with the result that they were reinstated in their old homes and furnished by the heretic English with provisions for the winter. This second party looked for the same indulgence, if not too late. Who knows?

the maiden may have joined them. One coming hither from Baye-Verte vowed that he saw her not with the priests.”

“And I?” exclaimed Gabriel, in a sudden burst of anger with himself, “why did not I capture that man, who over and over again has brought misery into my own life and the lives of all dear to me? From Beauséjour to Baye-Verte it is but twelve miles, and meseemed I rode with my company over every inch of it, yet saw neither priest nor Indian.”

The face of Louis took on a peculiar expression.

“_M. le Capitain_,” he said, “it hath been related of us that we, the Acadians, love gold. And why not?” shrugging his shoulders and spreading

his hands. “Gold, it is good, and we are poor. _M. l’Abbé_ has gold always, and so there are those who would hide and help him, even though

he be shorn of his strength. Also, is he not our father in God?” Here his expression became devout, and he crossed himself. “Also, there are some who have wearied of his rule—worse, say I, than that of a dozen kings—and would speed him in his flight.”

But Marie interrupted her husband:

“Yes, Halifax,” she cried, whirling on the two men; “and was it not your wife, she who knows nothing, and the wife of the good friend, and _la

petite_ herself, women all, who gave you the wise counsel to go to Halifax while yet there was time, and take the honorable oath of allegiance, and live in peace in the fair Annapolis meadows, and you would not? What have the French done for us, I ask thee once more? What matter the flag? I tell thee once again. Give us peace in the homes of our fathers.”

And at the thought, Marie wiped the tears of memory from her eyes.

Louis continued silent, and Marin it was that answered with a shrug.

“No need to weep, _bonne femme_! There is yet time. The English are a dull race. They permit themselves to be deceived once and yet again.”

“But not again,” put in Gabriel sternly. “Look you, Marin, and you too, friend Herbes, you would have done well to listen to the sage counsel of your wives, and of the little Margot,” here his voice faltered, “who was ever wise, and for whose safe keeping so long I owe you all thanks which

may not be measured. Yet I tell you, England’s lion may sleep long, but he wakes at last; so hath it ever been. Our governors, Cornwallis, Hopson, were men of large and tender heart; they forgave and forbore. With this governor it is otherwise; with Governor Shirley is it also otherwise; these are men who will not forbear; they strike, and they strike hard. Greatly I fear me that naught will avail you now; yet I know nothing absolutely.”

He mounted his horse, and held out his hand to the group, all the brightness gone from his young face. But they clung to him, unwilling to part from their last hope, beseeching him to intercede for them, promising that if he succeeded they would start for Halifax at once, searching constantly for the maiden by the way.

“Alas, good friends!” replied the young man sadly, “I am insignificant. No word of mine has weight with general or governor, although it is true that Monckton favors me somewhat. My time, my person, are at the

disposal of my superiors. I cannot even go myself to search for and rescue the beloved! Even with you, my friends, I have lingered too long.”

He pressed each hand in turn.

“But you will try, _M. le capitain_?” they cried in chorus.

“I will try. But I am not even a captain!”

He smiled kindly upon them, but in his eyes was a sorrow akin to despair. Another moment, and the thunder of his horse’s hoofs sounded upon the bridge.

It was as he foretold. The long years of indulgence were at an end. The storm so slow in gathering broke at last with the fury of the long-delayed. Winslow and Monckton, the New England and the British generals, their tempers ruffled by distasteful duty, were already inclined to fall out; and Gabriel soon saw that in order to intercede successfully for his Acadian friends he must bide his time. But the peremptory orders sent by Governor Lawrence neither general was in a hurry to carry out; and so it happened that one day Gabriel perceived his chance and seized it.

“They are friends of yours, you say?” said Monckton, “and cared for the cousin in her time of need? How came it, then, that they gave her not better protection now? They tell you she is safe, but how know they? How know you?”

“Ah, if I did but know!” broke from the young soldier involuntarily. Then controlling himself, he proceeded: “General, the women of the household have long striven with the men that they should return to live under the English flag. Herbes and Marin were among those who signed the petition to the French and English governments that they should be allowed to do so, thereby grievously displeasing Le Loutre, so that he

selected these men to go to Quebec as deputies, well knowing the reception that awaited them there. Thus did he punish them; and my lord can guess that it was punishment indeed!”

Monckton half smiled; then rubbed his forehead in weariness and perplexity. Finally he said:

“Well, lieutenant, go! But bid them do quickly that which they desire. The order has gone forth, and in a day or two at farthest I may spare none.”

So once more Gabriel flew across the Missaguash, and although he could

hear nothing more of Margot, he at least had the consolation of feeling that he had saved her benefactors, and that there was always hope she might be found at Halifax, whither the party started that same night in their ox-wagons, driving their milch-cows before them.

CHAPTER VIII

And now followed bitter days indeed. A merciless guide and shepherd might Le Loutre have been, but at least in him the helpless flock had found a leader; he had forsaken them, and like silly sheep they ran hither and thither, halting more than ever betwixt two opinions. Looking vainly to the French for assistance, they shilly-shallyed too long with the oath of allegiance to the English government, and began to reap the terrible harvest accruing from long years of deceit and paltering with honor. It has been written that a man may not serve two masters, and too late the unhappy Acadians realized the truth of these words.

Gabriel gave thanks that it was the New England troops that were sent out from Beauséjour, re-christened Fort Cumberland, to gather in all the male Acadians in the vicinity, since but a small proportion had obeyed the summons to report themselves at the fort. But he rejoiced too soon. Winslow was soon ordered to the Basin of Mines, and especially requested that the lieutenant who had distinguished himself during the siege might

accompany him with a few regulars.

The entire Basin of Mines, including the village of Grand Pré, having been left comparatively undisturbed by Le Loutre and his “lambs,” still continued to be prosperous Acadian settlements; and it was therefore upon them that the storm broke most destructively, and it was there, perhaps, that the saddest scenes in this sad history took place. Yet it was here too, that the people had benefited most by the lenient English rule, and had shown themselves most unreliable and treacherous; or, to speak more accurately, had yielded with the greatest weakness to the _abbé’s_ instigations, in particular as regarded the disguising of themselves as Indians that they might plunder English settlements. By this means they had saved their own skins, so to speak, and had been spared many persecutions at the hands of Le Loutre. And now these unhappy peasants, too dull of brain to thoroughly understand what they were bringing upon themselves, refused to sign the oath of allegiance “until after further consideration.” Already six years of such “consideration” had been granted them by the indulgence of former governors; and instead of considering, they had been acting,—acting the part of traitors. As has been said, the present governors of New England and Nova Scotia were in no mood for longer dalliance, even had they been able to afford it. If more time were given, the French, whose forces were the stronger, might regain all they had lost. The Acadians were aware of the superior strength of France, and this knowledge was one of the causes of their suicidal tardiness.

It was with a gloomy brow, therefore, that Gabriel stood one bright September morning at the window of the vicarage at Grand Pré, gazing forth upon the rich farms and meadowland spread before him, backed by the azure of mountain and water. Winslow was a thorough soldier, if a rough man; and, like every officer, regular or colonial, loathed his task, though convinced of its necessity. At Fort Edward, farther inland, he had found both sympathy and good fellowship in the English lieutenant stationed there; but sociabilities had to end now, although a friendly

intercourse was kept up, Winslow and Murray remaining on the best of terms throughout their detested work.

The two officers had decided not to interfere with the farmers until the crops were gathered; but as Winslow's force was greatly outnumbered by the Acadians, he put up a palisade around the church, graveyard, and vicarage, thus making a kind of fort. Before doing so, however, he had directed the Acadians to remove from the church all sacred emblems lest through the bigotry and fanaticism of the Puritan soldiers these revered treasures should be destroyed.

The New Englander expressed his own feelings thus, in a letter to his commanding officer: "Although it is a disagreeable path of duty we are put upon, I am sensible it is a necessary one, and shall endeavor strictly to obey your excellency's orders."

Winslow and Murray arranged to summon the habitants at the same day and hour, in order that the stunning blow might fall on their respective districts at once. A natural antipathy, needless to say, existed betwixt the Puritan soldiers of New England and the habitants of Acadia. The former, moreover, were hardened by a life of struggle and difficulty in a climate and with a soil less genial than that of Acadie; and these soldiers belonged to the same age and race that put to death helpless women for witchcraft and hanged harmless Quakers for the crime of refusing to leave the colony of Massachusetts. Yet even they must at times have felt some pity for the unfortunate peasants, driven from their peaceful homes. Le Loutre, however, had felt none during all the years he had been at the same work.

When the hour arrived in which the assembled Acadians were to be told that they were prisoners, Gabriel had begged of Winslow's clemency that he might be absent from the church; and now, as he stood sadly at the window of the vicarage parlor, the door of the room was softly pushed

open, and Marin stood before him. His little eyes were restless with fear, and his naturally crafty countenance was drawn and pale.

Gabriel uttered an exclamation, and sprang forward.

“Tchut!” The peasant put his finger to his lips. “I was in Halifax, eh, _M. le Capitain_?” he whispered. “Nay, but here am I at Grand Pré—and so much the worse for a good Catholic! I said, I have tricked these heretics before and I will trick them again. It is a good deed—but this time the holy saints were not with me.”

The young officer made a gesture of despair and disgust.

“But, friend Marin, what of thy given word? Didst thou not promise me that if I obtained permission for thee to go to Halifax, thither thou wouldst go?”

The man shrugged his shoulders.

“Assuredly. But what of that? One more or less—what matters it? At Grand Pré no foolish oath was then required—at Halifax, yes!”

“But how didst thou escape from the church?”

“Oh, that was not difficult. We were caught, we men, as rats in a trap; but the general yielded to our tears and prayers, and we are to choose daily twenty to go home and console the wives and children. I am among the first lot chosen, and——”

Gabriel interrupted him impatiently.

“But Louis Herbes, is he also at Grand Pré?”

“Alas, no! the wife, she was too strong. They proceeded to Halifax. I too desire to go thither now if thou, who art of Acadie, wilt aid me.”

“When thou needest help before, I was of the hated English,” retorted the young man grimly. “But be I what I may, English or Acadian, I serve honor first—and so bethink thee!”

“Honor? Assuredly, _M. le Capitain_! Yet listen.” He came nearer, lowering his voice to a whisper. “I come not back, hearest thou?”

“And what of thy countrymen here? Of a certainty they will be held answerable for thy treachery.”

“That will be thy part to arrange,” observed Marin coolly.

Gabriel, ever quick to act, sprang upon the peasant and seized him by the collar of his blouse. For a moment anger deprived him of the power of speech. Then—

“And thou wilt make me traitor too!” he cried. “Almost I could wish that no blood of Acadie ran in my veins!”

“And Margot—is she not Acadian?”

Marin was quite unabashed, and there was a leer in the small eyes he turned up to the young giant who held him as a mastiff holds a rat.

At the name of Margot, Gabriel loosed the man, covered his eyes with his hands and sank into a chair.

“Ah, Margot!” he groaned.

“Yes, Margot, I say again. Thou wilt let me go, and thou wilt swear that thou knowest of a truth that I overstayed my time, and was drowned in the marshes hurrying hither in the darkness of the night, that thou didst strive to save me and failed. The salt marshes receive the dead, and cover them kindly. All this thou dost know, and my good character also. Who will doubt the word of a brave soldier?”

“A clumsy plot, indeed, even were I willing to forswear my honor for thee!”

Gabriel had his friend by the collar again.

“Release me, or I will not tell thee what I know!” ejaculated Marin sullenly.

“Tell, and be done!”

The young man let go of his prisoner so suddenly that the fellow nearly fell upon the floor.

“Not so fast, my brave _captain_!” Marin was eying him now from a safe distance. “Not a word of the _belle cousine_ dost thou win from me until I have thy promise to aid me to escape.”

[Illustration: “‘And thou wilt make me traitor too,’ he cried.”]

Gabriel was silent.

“It is as I say. I know where Margot is to be found, but——” Marin paused expressively.

Gabriel still did not answer. When at last he spoke, his voice was low and stern.

“Marin, I owe thee somewhat in that thou didst open thy doors to my cousin and her friends in their time of stress. Thou hast said that I am Acadian. True! But also am I English, and an English soldier and a Protestant. There is my faith and my honor—both forbid a lie. Not even for Margot can I do this thing.”

His voice broke, and he turned away. Well, he knew the combined obstinacy and ignorance of the typical Acadian peasant, such as in some sort Marin was, and he hoped nothing. Marin, on the contrary, not

understanding the situation, would not give up, and, in the few remaining minutes left uninterrupted, worked his hardest. The temptation was sore indeed, and by the time his tormentor was summoned to accompany the deputies, Gabriel's young face was pale and drawn with the struggle.

"Tell me but one thing," he said ere they parted, "is it well with her?"

"Well? How know I?" retorted the Acadian, surveying the result of his work with mingled complacency and disgust. "Perhaps!"

But for the tremendous pressure already being put upon his unhappy commander by the events of this fifth day of September, Gabriel would have gone directly to him, and despite his gratitude to Marin for past services, would have requested that he be detained until he should reveal the whereabouts of Margot. But Winslow, New England Puritan though he might be, was finding, in common with his English brother-in-arms at Fort Edward, "things very heavy on his heart and hands"; so Gabriel forebore to trouble him with his own matters.

And if his superior's heart was heavy, how much heavier was his—born and reared an Acadian of the Acadians, and now with personal loss and grief added to his other sorrows!

Marin, though crafty and self-seeking, had not the daring to break his word, unsheltered as he was by Gabriel from the righteous wrath of his compatriots; so night saw him back within the stockade. He kept his secret, nevertheless, and neither persuasion nor threats prevailed with him. The rest of the prisoners were all strangers to Gabriel, and had never heard of him before; and for reasons of his own, Marin kept their previous acquaintance dark.

As the days went on, and the prisoners increased in number both at Fort Edward and Grand Pré, the commanding officers grew uneasy. The transports that were to bear away the Acadian families with their household goods were slow in arriving, and it would have been easy for

the prisoners, had they been men of courage and resolution, to overpower their guards and escape. Unfortunately the Acadian character possessed none of those qualities necessary for the preservation of freedom, or for the reclaiming of it if lost. Gabriel's duties kept him constantly within the stockade; and the small force having no horses with them, and the village of Grand Pré, together with the other settlements, straggling for many miles, he had never been within a league of the house of Marin or encountered any chance acquaintance. The times were too strenuous, the crisis too tremendous, to permit of the least relaxation on the part of a loyal officer.

But although the transports delayed, ships from Boston came and anchored in the Basin. Winslow thereupon resolved to place about half of his prisoners upon these ships, and keep them there for better security until the transports should arrive. To Gabriel, because of his complete understanding of the language and the nature of his fellow-countrymen, the general left the hard task of explaining to the prisoners what was required of them, and of persuading them to submit quietly.

All were very silent as they stood in the churchyard guarded by soldiers. Winslow himself kept rather in the background, leaving his subordinate to enact the part of principal in this trying scene. The general, though a good soldier and popular with his men, had hitherto passed for a person somewhat ignorant and over-much addicted to self-satisfaction. But in the last few weeks he had had little opportunity for satisfaction even with himself. "This affair is more grievous to me than any service I was ever employed in!" was his constant lament. And now, as he stood quietly watching Gabriel, he observed for the first time the change in the young man. He was pale and wan, and his eyes wore the look of one who is forever seeking and never finding.

In a low, clear voice he announced the decision of the general, assured them of their perfect safety, and also that the wives and children of

the married would soon be restored to them.

For a while a great murmuring prevailed, which Gabriel was powerless to subdue; it seemed as if, despite every effort, bloodshed must be the result of the manifesto. The New England soldiers, as has been said, had little sympathy with the “idolaters,” and were ready at a word to make short work of them. But Winslow was reluctant to say that word, and ere long Gabriel had the prisoners once more under control. A given number of unmarried men were then selected, these being sent off under guard to the ships; after them were to follow a smaller number of married men.

Gabriel stood like a figure carved in stone at the head of his handful of soldiers, whilst the commanding officer himself selected the Acadian husbands and fathers. Suddenly, before the guard could interfere, a figure hurled itself out of the chosen group and precipitated itself upon Gabriel, while a voice shrieked:

“Thou, thou who art an Acadian, thou canst save me! me, who took the cousin into my house and fed and sheltered her! Answer, dost hear?”

But Gabriel was on duty, and made as though he neither heard nor saw. Shaking Marin from his arm, he motioned to his men to replace him in the ranks.

Winslow’s curiosity, ever active, was, however, aroused, and seizing his opportunity, he drew his subordinate to one side and questioned him. Gabriel replied with his customary brevity and straightforwardness.

“And why did you not come at once to me, sir?” rejoined Winslow, puffing and mopping his fat, red face.

The young man stated his reasons, adding that though Marin might possibly know where Margot was, no reliance was to be placed upon the word of a man who was concerned only for his own comfort and had no

respect for truth.

“That may be, that may be,” fussed the kind-hearted general. “But, lieutenant, you will now conduct these men to the ships. Their women will of a surety line the way along which you have to pass. Assure them of my permission to visit their men-folk daily until this troublesome job be at an end—as God grant it may be ere long. Your eyes may be on the women as well as on your duty, eh? You are young, yet I have proven you worthy of trust.”

So saying, the general bustled off, and shortly after the gates of the stockade were again opened and the procession started for the shores of the Basin.

For one of Gabriel’s years and position the task set him, though kindly intentioned, was a heartbreaking one. But a few miles distant, near the mouth of the Annapolis River, he and Margot had been born and reared. In spite of his manhood, or perhaps because he was so true a man, the hot tears rose to his eyes, kept from falling only by the might of his iron will; for all along the wayside toward the water’s edge kneeled or stood the wives and children of the men tramping beside him through the late summer’s dust, gazing as they passed not merely on those wives and children, but upon the wide and fertile meadows whose harvests they should never gather more.

At intervals as he walked Gabriel proclaimed the general’s behests and promises; and one or two women, who knew now for the first time of his presence in the neighborhood and recognized him, pressed forward to clasp his hands and cover them with tears, and plead with the man who, as a little babe, they had held upon their strong knees and pressed to their broad Acadian bosoms. Unable longer to endure in silence, on his own account he at length called a halt, and in loud, ringing tones spoke these words:

“Fellow-countrymen, I serve my general, and him I must obey. But his heart, even as my own, is heavy for your sufferings, and again I tell you that your husbands and fathers are not being borne away from you. They will remain on the ships but a short distance from the shore, and every day you can visit them until such time as the transports arrive and you all sail away together, you and your children and your household goods. Grieve not, then, for loss which is not yours.”

Concluding his brief address he stepped down from the low mound upon which he had mounted, and confronted the wife of Marin. Evidently she belonged to the class of women whose indifference had so greatly astonished the English lieutenant; for her face was calm, and she smiled as she met Gabriel’s eyes. It was impossible for him to pause longer, but although her husband’s malevolent gaze was riveted upon her, Julie extended her hand and caught that of the young officer as he swung past on the march.

“Look for me at the church,” she whispered, “at the hour of vespers.”

Gabriel’s impulsive heart leaped within him, and in an instant a thousand wild hopes and imaginings were seething in his brain; and the women, being appeased and many of them hurrying homeward to prepare meals to carry to the ships, he was left unmolested. He concluded his task without further difficulty, and returned to the church.

The general, relieved from pressing anxiety, was in a mood to satisfy his natural curiosity, and having received his lieutenant’s formal report, began to ply him with questions respecting his personal affairs. Gabriel answered without reserve.

“Mark me, sir!” exclaimed Winslow delightedly, “the maiden comes hither this night with the woman. Then will we have some romance in these melancholy times.”

And forgetting his dignity, he clapped his subordinate violently on the shoulder. And Gabriel found nothing to say.

CHAPTER IX

But Winslow was in error. The wife of Marin came alone, and Gabriel's yearning eyes traveled in vain beyond the sturdy figure of the Acadian peasant woman for the slight one of his cousin.

The meeting took place in the general's private parlor.

"Ah, you expected *_la petite_!*" began Julie volubly, "but that may not be—not yet."

"Where is she, friend Julie?" interrupted the young man impatiently. "How did she escape from the priest? Is she well? Is she happy? Does she think of me? Only tell me."

"But that is much to tell, my brave boy," laughed Julie. "Listen now to me, who am indeed thy friend. Thou shalt see her, and she shall answer those many questions with her own lips, but on one condition: the marriage must be at once—on the instant. Otherwise, Marin——" she shrugged her shoulders expressively. "It is not well, seest thou, to fall out with a husband. Now, Marin is a prisoner, therefore am I a weak woman left alone to deal with a young man of violence, seest thou?"

Thou

dost seize thy bride, thou dost carry her to thy priest, who am I? But shouldst thou delay, and I bring *_la petite_* to visit thee once, twice, many times, Marin, he will say, 'Thou, *_bonne femme_*, wast the guardian

of this child, and thou didst take her to visit a heretic, allowing her also to neglect the duties she owes thee.' But once thy wife, *_M. le Capitain_*, and all is over."

Gabriel listened to this harangue with eyes upon the ground and the red color slowly flushing to his fair face. He continued silent so long that

the woman lost patience.

“_Mon Dieu!_” she ejaculated under her breath, “is it the English blood that makes him so dull?”

At last he spoke hesitatingly:

“Good friend, thou sayest, ‘Seest thou?’ I reply, ‘Seest thou not also?’ There has been no talk of marriage betwixt Margot and myself. Truly do I desire it,” his eyes flashed, and he raised his head. “I desire it with all the strength that is in me, but with Margot, the maiden, it may be otherwise.”

Again the wife of Marin laughed. So loudly did she laugh that the general, pacing the vicarage garden, paused at the open window to acquaint himself with the cause of her mirth.

“It is the brave _garçon_, my general. He knows nothing. Let him but arrange for the marriage, and I, even I, Julie, will answer for the maiden.”

Then, on being questioned by Winslow, she went over her tale once more, and the two gossips would have promptly settled the whole affair out of hand had not one of the principals interposed.

“Let me but see her once—only once—first,” implored Gabriel.

The general, promptly won over to the side of Julie, hesitated, in such haste was he for the pleasurable excitement of a wedding; but finally it was resolved that the young lover should go the following morning to Julie’s little cabin, and there win his fair young bride for himself.

As Julie drew on her hood preparatory to departure, Winslow inquired of her how it fared with the women, remarking that she herself seemed to bear her fate with much cheer.

“For the others—well, while many lament, all do not. For myself I care not. I weary of the French rule and the fighting and wandering and the savage Indians. Anywhere I go willingly where there is peace, and the soil is fruitful—_v’ là tout!_”

So she went; and the early sun was glistening on meadows yet dewy when

Gabriel, forgetful for the moment of the sorrows around him and his own

distasteful duties, strode along the same dusty road he had traversed the previous day, arriving in the course of an hour or so at the small hut inhabited by the Marins. Julie, hastening forth to milk, greeted him with a broad smile, and waved to him to enter.

Enter he did, and in a second, neither knew how, he held Margot close to his heart.

It was long before a word was spoken. It was enough that they were together; and when at length Gabriel found voice, it was at first only for expressions of pity and endearment for the frail little creature who seemed lost within his large embrace.

[Illustration: “They sat down side by side . . . before the empty hearth.”]

“But I am not so frail, _mon cousin_,” she protested. “I can work and endure, ah, thou knowest not how much!”

“But never again, _chérie!_” was Gabriel’s reply; and grown strangely and suddenly bold, he added: “and remember, it must be ‘_mon cousin_’ no

longer, for from this very day there shall be an end of ‘_cousin_’—it will be ‘wife’ and ‘husband.’ Hearst thou?”

Yes, Margot heard, but had nothing to say. Finally she remarked in a low voice:

“I would be baptized into thy faith first.”

“What?” cried Gabriel joyfully. “Is that really so, my Margot? What glad news! Now is all indeed well with us! There is a chaplain at Fort Edward; he will baptize thee, and marry us.”

They sat down side by side upon the rude bench before the empty hearth, and talked and made plans as lovers have done since lovers first began. Gabriel’s mind, as we know, worked quickly, and he soon had beautiful schemes mapped out for being transferred to Washington’s command in Virginia, that rising young general having been recently appointed commander-in-chief of the army there.

“My noble captain is now stationed at Winchester,” he concluded, “and with him is that grand old soldier Fairfax, the lord lieutenant of the county. They are engaged in subduing the Indians. At Winchester we will live, and then shall I be ever at hand to protect my wife.”

News traveled slowly in those days, and Gabriel had heard nothing of the panic at Winchester, and with the confidence and faith of youth believed that his hero, George Washington, could accomplish even the impossible.

But duty called, and Julie returned, and Gabriel had to depart; yet not before it was arranged that, with Winslow’s permission, assured in advance, Julie should bring Margot that evening to the church, there to meet the chaplain from Fort Edward, who would perform the two sacraments of baptism and marriage.

Winslow, naturally of a cheerful disposition, rejoiced in this break in the monotony of misery, hastily dispatched a messenger to Fort Edward, and but for Gabriel’s entreaties would have made the marriage as jovial an affair as Puritanical principles admitted of. Discipline forbade that

a woman could be received as an inmate of a fortified camp, neither could Gabriel be spared often from duties destined to become daily more onerous and troublesome; but to the two, scarcely more than boy and girl, who stood that evening with bowed heads before the chaplain, there was more than common comfort in the solemn words: "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

Joy and thankfulness, deep and unutterable, swelled the heart of the young husband as, from the gate in the stockade, he watched the slight form of his girl-wife disappear into the gathering shades of night. She was his now—his to claim, to protect, to have and to hold till death did them part.

In the excitement and rapture of meeting, Gabriel had hardly bethought him to ask her how she had escaped from Le Loutre. The fact that she had escaped, that she was alive and well and with him, filled his mental horizon. The tale, however, was short. The priest, hard pressed, had been compelled to give her up to a party of fugitives hastening to Halifax to take the oath. This party had come upon the Marins, and thinking they also were bound for Halifax, Margot had willingly joined them, finding out when it was too late Marin's change of view.

In those last sad days for her country-people Margot showed of what stuff she was made. Consoling, upholding, encouraging, she seemed to have arrived suddenly at a noble womanhood. This, however, was not the case. She had been growing toward it slowly but surely through years of adversity.

The continued delay in the coming of the transports bred trouble betwixt the soldiers and the Acadians. "The soldiers," we are told, "disliked and despised them," the Acadians, and the general found it necessary not only to enforce discipline more sternly among his troops, but to administer the lash also on occasion.

At last, one October day, Winslow had four transports at his disposal. Orders and counter-orders, lamentation and weeping, disturbed the clear, still air. Villages had to be arranged to go together in the same transport as well as families; and this, with so few troops at his command, was no easy task for the general, who naturally was possessed of very little experience as regarded organization. Gabriel, who while under Washington had received of necessity some training, was his right hand man. The male prisoners were removed from the ships to land while the mustering went forward.

As the women filed past the spot where for a moment the harassed general and his subordinate had come together, and the pair gazed upon the melancholy confusion of young and old, and household belongings in carts, Winslow groaned: "I know they deserve all and more than they feel; yet it hurts me to hear their weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!"

At Fort Edward, as well as at many other places in the province, the same terrible scenes were being enacted—those in command, without one single authentic exception, carrying out the stern decree as mercifully as possible. Beside the long train of women walked the priest of each village, encouraging and upholding his flock. A few of these priests accompanied the exiles, but most of them returned to Canada.

Not all the women, however, were "weeping and wailing." Some, as has been remarked, appeared to be wholly undisturbed. Among these latter was Julie, in the cart with whom was Margot, bound to see the last of her benefactress. As they passed, both women waved their hands to the two officers, Julie calling gayly to Gabriel:

"It is well, _M. le mari_! Our ship goes to Virginia, where we shall again meet. Is it not so?"

For weary weeks the misery was prolonged, and it was the close of the year before Winslow's and Murray's bitter task about the Basin of the Mines was completed. But improved organization rendered even difficult

things easier, and by the last of October the general was able to part, though with extreme reluctance, with his most efficient subordinate. Gabriel, promoted to a captaincy, set sail with his wife on one of the transports for Virginia.

The poor exiles, with comparatively few exceptions, were scattered around in the various States from Massachusetts southward, meeting with

no cruelty certainly, but also with no welcome from the struggling colonials, and only in Louisiana thriving and becoming a permanent colony. Canada, and even France and England, were also forced to receive

them, and in Canada, among the people of their own faith, their lot was the hardest. Help in their own church they found none, and indeed in many instances implored to be taken back to the English Colonies, where

at least they were not treated with actual inhumanity. The war at last at an end, many, the Herbes amongst the number, found their way back to

their own country. A large portion of the fertile province lay waste, however, for years, the New England soldier-farmers refusing either part or lot in it, and English settlers finally being brought from over sea.

It is doubtful if the Acadians ever learned the fate of their leader and tyrant. Captured on the ocean by the English, Le Loutre died in prison, after having been nearly assassinated by one of the soldiers of the guard, who swore that the holy father had once in Acadie tried to take his scalp!

And Gabriel and Margot? Their lives were happy, although the pain of separation was sometimes theirs, and they were often exposed to perils and dangers. As an officer under Washington through stirring times,

both

in the Indian wars and the war of the Revolution, Gabriel's could not be other than the life of sacrifice and self-devotion demanded by the life of a true patriot. Margot seconded him bravely, cheering him on at the trumpet-call of duty and never restraining him by selfish fears and interests. She kept around her a few of her country people; and there in Virginia she reared a family of brave boys to follow in their father's steps.

* * * * *

Transcriber's Notes:

List of Illustrations for Gabriel the Acadian was moved from the front of the book to the start of the novel.

A few obvious punctuation and typesetting errors have been corrected without note.

A cover has been created for this ebook and is placed in the public domain.

[End of The Angel of His Presence by G.L. Hill and Gabriel the Acadian by E.M.N. Bowyer]