

Merwin Samuel

The Road to Frontenac



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CHAPTER I

CAPTAIN MENARD HAS A LAZY DAY

Captain Daniel Menard leaned against the parapet at the outer edge of the citadel balcony. The sun was high, the air clear and still. Beneath him, at the foot of the cliff, nestled the Lower Town, a strip of shops and houses, hemmed in by the palisades and the lower battery. The St. Lawrence flowed by, hardly stirred by the light breeze. Out in the channel, beyond the merchantmen, lay three ships of war, *Le Fourgon*, *Le Profond*, and *La Perle*, each with a cluster of supply boats at her side; and the stir and rattle of tackle and chain coming faintly over the water from *Le Fourgon* told that she would sail for France on the morrow, if God should choose to send the wind.

Looking almost straight down, Menard could see the long flight of steps that climbed from the settlement on the water front to the nobler city on the heights. Halfway down the steps was a double file of Indians, chained two and two, and guarded by a dozen regulars from his own company. He watched them until they reached the bottom and disappeared behind the row of buildings that ended on the wharf in Patron's trading store. In a moment they reappeared, and marched across the wharf, toward the two boats from *Le Fourgon* that awaited them. Even from the height, Menard could see that the soldiers had a stiff task to control their prisoners. After one of the boats, laden deep, had shoved off, there was a struggle, and the crowd of idlers that had gathered scattered suddenly. Two Indians had broken away, and were running across the wharf, with a little knot of soldiers close on their heels. One of the soldiers, leaping forward, brought the stock of his musket down on the head of the nearer Indian. The fugitive went down, dragging with him his companion, who tugged desperately at the chain. A soldier drew his knife, and cut off the dead Indian's arm close to the iron wristlet, breaking the bone with his foot. Then they led back the captive and tumbled him into the boat, with the hand of his comrade dangling at the end of the chain. The incident had excited the soldiers, and they kicked and pounded the prisoners. A crowd gathered about the body on the wharf, the bolder ones snatching at his beads and wampum belt.

Menard raised his eyes to the lands across the river and to the white cloud-puffs above. After months of camp and canoe, sleeping in snow and rain, and by day paddling, poling, and wading,—never a new face among the grumbling soldiers or the stolid prisoners,—after this, Quebec stood for luxury and the pleasant demoralization of good living. He liked the noise of passing feet, the hail of goodwill from door to door, the plodding shopkeepers and artisans, the comfortable priests in brown and gray.

The sound of oars brought his eyes again to the river. The two boats with their loads of redskins were passing the merchantmen that lay between the men-of-war and the city. On the wharf, awaiting a second trip, was a huddled group of prisoners. Menard's face clouded as he watched them. Men of his experience were wondering what effect this new plan of the Governor's would have upon the Iroquois. Capturing a hunting party by treachery and shipping them off to the King's galleys was a bold stroke,—too bold, perhaps. Governor Frontenac would never have done this; he knew the Iroquois temper too well. Governor la Barre, for all his bluster, would not have dared. It was certain that this new governor, Denonville, was not a coward; but as Menard reflected, going back over his own fifteen years of frontier life, he knew that this policy of brute force would be sorely tested by the tact and intrigue of the Five Nations. His own part in the capture little disturbed him. He had obeyed orders. He had brought the band to the citadel at Quebec without losing a man (saving the poor devil who had strangled himself with his own thongs at La Gallette).

To such men as Menard, whose lives were woven closely into the fabric of New France, the present condition was clear. Many an evening he had spent with Major d'Orvilliers, at Fort Frontenac, in talking over the recent years of history into which their two names and their two lives had gone so deeply. Until his recall to France in 1682, Governor Frontenac had been for ten years building up in the Iroquois heart a fear and awe of Onontio, the Great Father, at Quebec. D'Orvilliers knew that period the better, for Menard had not come over (from the little town of his birth, in Picardy) until Frontenac's policy was well established. But Menard had lived hard and rapidly during his first years in the province, and he was a stern-faced young soldier when he stood on the wharf, hat in hand and sword to chin, watching New France's greatest governor sitting erect in the boat that bore him away from his own. Menard had been initiated by a long captivity among the Onondagas, and had won his first commission by gallant action under the Governor's eye.

In those days no insult went unpunished; no tribe failed twice in its obligations. The circle of French influence was firmly extended around the haunts of the Iroquois in New York and along the Ohio. From Frontenac, on Lake Ontario, north to Hudson's Bay, was French land. To the westward, along the Ottawa River, and skirting the north shore of Lake Huron to Michillimackinac and Green Bay, were the strong French allies, the Hurons, Ottawas, Nipissings, Kiskagons, Sacs, Foxes, and Mascoutins. Down at the lower end of Lake Michigan, at the Chicagou and St. Joseph portages, were the Miamis; and farther still, the Illinois, whom the Sieur de la Salle and Henri de Tonty had drawn close under the arm of New France.

This chain of allies, with Du Luth's fort at Detroit and a partial control over Niagara, had given New France nearly all the fur trade of the Great Lakes. The English Governor Dongan, of New York, dared not to fight openly for it, but he armed the Iroquois and set them against the French. Menard had laughed when the word came, in 1684, from Father de Lamberville, whose influence worked so far toward keeping the Iroquois quiet, that Dongan had pompously set up the arms of his king in each Iroquois village, even dating them back a year to make his claim the more secure. Every old soldier knew that more than decrees and coats of arms were needed to win the Five Nations.

When La Barre succeeded Frontenac, lacking the tact and firmness which had established Frontenac's name among foes and allies alike, he fell back upon bluster (to say nothing of the common talk in Quebec that he had set out to build up his private fortune by the fur trade). Learning that, by his grant of Fort Frontenac, La Salle was entitled to a third of the trade that passed through it, he seized the fort. He weakened La Salle's communications so greatly that La Salle and Tonty could not make good their promises of French protection to the Illinois. This made it possible for the Iroquois, unhindered, to lay waste the Illinois country. By equally shortsighted methods, La Barre so weakened the ties that bound the northern allies, and so increased the arrogance of the Iroquois, that when Governor Denonville took up the task, most of the allies, always looking to the stronger party, were on the point of going over to the Iroquois. This would give the fur trade to the English, and ruin New France. Governor Dongan seized the moment to promise better bargains for the peltry than the French could offer. It remained for the new governor to make a demonstration which would establish firmly the drooping prestige of New France.

Now the spring of 1687 was just ending. Since February it had been spread abroad, from the gulf seignories to Fort Frontenac, that preparations were making for a great campaign against the Iroquois. Champigny, the new Intendant, had scoured the country for supplies, and now was building bateaux and buying canoes. Regulars and militia were drilling into the semblance of an army, and palisades and defences were everywhere built or strengthened, that the home guard might keep the province secure during the long absence of the troops. Menard wondered, as he snapped bits of stone off the parapet, and watched the last boatload of galley slaves embarking at the wharf, whether the Governor's plans would carry. He would undoubtedly act with precision, he would follow every detail of campaigning to the delight of the tacticians, he would make a great splash,—and then? How about the wily chiefs of the Senecas and Onondagas and Mohawks? They had hoodwinked La Barre into

signing the meanest treaty that ever disgraced New France. Would Denonville, too, blind himself to the truth that shrewd minds may work behind painted faces?

But above all else, Menard was a soldier. He snapped another bit of stone, and gave up the problem. He would fight at the Governor's orders, retreat at the Governor's command,—to the Governor would belong the credit or the blame. Of only one thing was he sure,—his own half hundred men should fight as they had always fought, and should hold their posts to the end. There ended his responsibility. And did not the good Fathers say that God was watching over New France?

Meantime the breath of summer was in the air. The spring campaign was over for Menard. So he rested both elbows on the parapet, and wondered how long the leaves had been out in Picardy. Over beyond the ships and the river were waves of the newest green, instead of the deep, rich colour and the bloom of full life he had left behind at Fort Frontenac but two weeks back. The long journey down the St. Lawrence had seemed almost a descent into winter. On the way to Quebec every day and every league had brought fewer blossoms. Even Montreal, sixty leagues to the south, had her summer before Quebec.

On the wharf below him the crowd were still plucking the dead Indian. Menard could hear their laughter and shouts. Their figures were small in the distance, their actions grotesque. One man was dancing, brandishing some part of the Indian's costume. Menard could not distinguish the object in his hand. A priest crossed the wharf and elbowed into the crowd. For the moment he was lost in the rabble, but shortly the shouting quieted and the lightheaded fellows crowded into a close group. Probably the priest was addressing them. Soon the fringe of the crowd thinned, then the others walked quietly away. When at last the priest was left alone by the mutilated Indian, he knelt, and for a space was motionless.

The idleness of reaction was on Menard. He leaned on the parapet, hardly stirring, while the priest went on his way across the square and began toiling up the steps. When he was halfway up, Menard recognized him for Claude de Casson, an old Jesuit of the Iroquois mission at Sault St. Francis Xavier, near Montreal. Menard strolled through the citadel to the square, and, meeting the Father, walked with him.

“Well, Father Claude, you are a long way from your flock.”

“Yes, Captain Menard, I came with the relations. I have been”—Father Claude was blown from his climb, and he paused, wiping the sweat from his lean face—“I have been grieved by a spectacle in the Lower Town. Some wretches had killed an Onondaga with the brutality of his own tribe, and were robbing him. Are such acts permitted to-day in Quebec, M'sieu?”

“He was a prisoner escaping from the soldiers. It must be a full year since I last saw you, Father. I hope you bring a good record to the College.”

“The best since our founding, M'sieu.”

“Is there no word in the relations from the New York missions?”

“Yes, M'sieu. Brother de Lamberville brings glorious word from the Mohawks. Twenty-three complete conversions.”

“You say he brings this word?” Menard's brows came together. “Then he has come up to Montreal?”

“Yes.”

“It is true, then, that the Iroquois have word of our plans?”

“It would seem so. He said that a war party which started weeks ago for the Illinois country had been recalled. A messenger was sent out but a few days before he came away.”

Menard slowly shook his head.

“This word should go to the Commandant,” he said. “How about your Indians at the Mission, Father Claude? They have not French hearts.”

“Ah, but I am certain, M'sieu, they would not break faith with us.”

“You can trust them?”

“They are Christians, M’sieu.”

“Yes, but they are Iroquois. Have none of them gone away since this news reached Quebec?”

“None, save one poor wretch whose drunkenness long ago caused us to give up hope, though I—”

“What became of him? Where did he go?”

“He wandered away in a drunken fit.”

“And you have not heard from him since?”

“No, M’sieu. He was Teganouan, an Onondaga.”

“You would do well, Father, if I may suggest, to take what news you may have to the Commandant. You and I know the importance of trifles at such a time as this. How long do you remain in Quebec?”

“A few days only, unless there should be work for me here.”

“Do you return then to Montreal?”

“I cannot say until I have made my report and delivered the relations. Brother de Lamberville thinks it important that word should go to all those who are now labouring in the Iroquois villages. If they remain after the campaign is fairly started, their lives may be in danger.”

“You think it necessary to go yourself?”

“What else, M’sieu? This is not the time to trust too freely an Indian runner. And a layman might never get through alive. My habit would be the best safeguard.”

“I suppose you are right. If I should not see you again, I must ask you to convey my respect to your colleagues at the Mission. I shall probably be here until the campaign is fairly started; perhaps longer. Already I am tasting the luxury of idleness.”

“A dangerous luxury, M’sieu. If I might be permitted to advise—”

“Yes, yes, Father,—I know, I know. But what is the use? You are a priest, I am a soldier. Yours is penance, mine is fighting; yours is praying, mine is singing,—every man to his own. And when you priests have got your pagans converted, we soldiers will clean up the mess with our muskets. And now, Father, good day, and may God be with you.”

The priest’s face was unmoved as he looked after the retreating figure. He had watched Menard grow from a roistering lieutenant into a rigid captain, and he knew his temper too well to mind the flicks of banter. But before the soldier had passed from earshot, he called after him.

Menard turned back. “What now, good Father? A mass for my soul, or a last absolution before I plunge into my term of dissolute idleness?”

“Neither, my son,” replied the priest, smiling. “Is any of your idleness to be shared with another?”

“Certainly, Father.”

“I am bringing a picture to the College.”

“I have no money, Father. I should be a sorry patron.”

“No, no, M’sieu; it is not a patron I seek. It is the advice of one who has seen and judged the master work of Paris. The painting has been shown to none as yet.”

“But you have seen it?”

“Yes, yes, I have seen it. Come with me, M’sieu; it is at my room.”

They walked together to the cell, six feet long by five wide, where Father Claude slept when in Quebec. It was bare of all save a hard cot. A bale, packed in rough cloth and tied with rope, lay on the bed. Father Claude opened the bundle, while Menard leaned against the wall, and drew out his few personal belongings and his portable altar before he reached the flat, square package at the bottom. There was a touch of colour in his cheeks and a nervousness in the movement of his hands as he untied the flaxen strings, stripped off the cloth, and held the picture up to Menard’s view.

It was a full-length portrait in oil of a young Indian woman, holding a small cross in her right hand, and gazing at it with bent head. Her left hand was spread upon her breast. She wore a calico chemise reaching below her knees, and leggings, and moccasins. A heavy robe was thrown over the

top of her head, falling on the sides and back to within a foot of the ground. In the middle background was a stream, with four Indians in a canoe. A tiny stone chapel stood on the bank at the extreme right.

Father Claude's hand trembled as he supported the canvas upon the cot, and his eyes wavered from Menard to the picture, and back again.

"It is not altogether completed," he said, nervously. "Of course the detail will be worked out more fully, and the cross should be given a warmer radiance. Perhaps a light showing through the windows of the chapel—"

"Who is it?" asked Menard.

"It is Catherine Outasoren, the Lily of the Onondagas," replied the priest; "the noblest woman that ever rose from the depths of Indian superstition."

Menard's eyes rested on an obscure signature in a lower corner, "C. de C."

"You certainly have reason to be proud of the work. But may I ask about the perspective? Should the maiden appear larger than the chapel?"

The priest gazed at the painting with an unsettled expression.

"Yes," he said, "perhaps you are right, M'sieu. At any rate I will give the matter thought and prayer."

"And the Indians," Menard questioned, "in the canoe; are they coming toward the chapel or going away from it? It seems to me that any doubt on that point should be removed."

"Ah," said the priest; "that very doubt is allegorical. It typifies the workings of the human mind when first confronted by the truth. When the seeker first beholds the light, as shown through the devotion of such a woman as Catherine Outasoren, there arises in his mind—"

"Very true, very true! But I never yet have seen a canoe-load of Indians in doubt whether they were moving forward or backward."

Father Claude held the canvas at arm's length and gazed long at it.

"Tell me, M'sieu," he said at last, "do you think it deserving of a place in the College?"

"I do not see why not."

"And you think I would be justified in laying a request before the Superior?"

Menard shrugged his shoulders.

"That is your decision, Father."

"I never can fully thank you, my son, for your kindness in looking on my humble work. I will not decide to-day. First I must add foliage in the foreground. And I will give it my earnest prayer."

Menard said farewell and went out, leaving the priest gazing at the picture. He strolled back toward the citadel, stopping now and then to greet an old friend or a chance acquaintance. When he arrived at the headquarters in the citadel he found Danton, a brown-haired young lieutenant of engineers, gazing at a heap of plans and other papers on the table.

"Well, Captain Menard," was his greeting, "I'd give half of last year's pay, if I ever get it, to feel as lazy as you look."

"You are lazy enough," growled Menard.

"That begs the question. It is not how lazy a man is, but how lazy he gets a chance to be."

"If you'd been through what I have this spring, you'd deserve a rest."

"You must have had a stirring time," said the Lieutenant. "Major Provost has promised to let me go out with the line when the campaign starts. I've not had a brush since I came over."

Menard gave him a quizzical smile before he replied, "You'll get brushes enough."

"By the way, the Major wants to see you."

"Does he?" said Menard.

He lighted his short pipe with a coal from the fire and walked out.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAID

Menard did not go at once to see Major Provost, the Commandant. He had already handed in his report at the citadel. It was probable that this was some new work for him. He had just settled his mind to the prospect of a rest, the first since that mad holiday, seven years before, when word had come that his lieutenant's commission was on the way. That was at Three Rivers. He wanted to idle, to waste a few weeks for the sheer delight of extravagance, but his blood did not flow more quickly at the wish. He was an older man by a score of years—or was it only seven?

He lingered on the square. The black-eyed children, mostly dirty and ragged (for the maids whom the King had sent over by shiploads to his colonists had not developed into the most diligent and neat housewives) tumbled about his feet. He allowed himself to be drawn into their play. They had no awe of his uniform, for it was worn and frayed. He had not yet taken the trouble to get out his fresher coat and breeches and boots. He thought of this, and was again amused. It was another sign of age. The time had been when his first care after arriving in Quebec was to don his rich house uniform and polished scabbard, and step gaily to the Major's house to sun himself in the welcome of the Major's pretty wife, who had known his uncle, the *Sieur de Vauban*, at La Rochelle. Now he was back in Quebec from months on the frontier, he was summoned to the Major's house, and yet he stayed and laughed at the children. For the Major's wife was older, too, and the vivacity of her youth was thinning out and uncovering the needle-like tongue beneath. A slim little urchin was squirming between his boots, with a pursuing rabble close behind, and the Captain had to take hold of a young tree to keep his feet. He turned and started in pursuit of the children, but caught sight of two Ursuline sisters entering the square, and straightened himself. After all, a captain is a captain, even though the intoxication of spring be in him, and his heart struggling to clamber back into the land of youth. He walked on across the square and down the street to the Major's house.

Major Provost welcomed Menard heartily, and led him to his office. "We'll have our business first," he said, "and get it done with."

Menard settled back in the carved oak chair which had for generations been a member of the Major's family. The light mood had left him. Now he was the soldier, brusque in manner, with lines about his mouth which, to certain men, gave his face a hard expression.

"First let me ask you, Menard, what are your plans?"

"For the present?"

"Yes."

"I have none."

"Your personal affairs, I mean. Have you any matters to hold your attention here for the next few weeks?"

"None."

Major Provost fingered his quill.

"I don't know, of course, how your own feelings stand, Menard. You've been worked hard for three years, and I suppose you want rest. But somebody must go to Fort Frontenac, and the Governor thinks you are the man."

Menard made a gesture of impatience.

"There are a dozen men here with little to do."

"I know it. But this matter is of some importance, and it may call for delicate work before you are through with it. It isn't much in itself,—merely to bear orders to d'Orvilliers,—but the Governor thinks that the right man may be able to do strong work before the campaign opens. You probably know that we are to move against the Senecas alone, and that we must treat with the other nations

to keep them from aiding the Senecas. No one can say just how this can be done. Even Father de Lamberville has come back, you know, from the Mohawks; but the Governor thinks that if we send a good man, he may be able to see a way, once he gets on the ground, and can advise with d'Orvilliers. Now, you are a good man, Menard; and you can influence the Indians if anyone can."

"You are a little vague, Major."

"You will go to Frontenac in advance of the army to prepare the way. La Durantaye and Du Luth are already at Detroit, awaiting orders, with close to two hundred Frenchmen and four hundred Indians. And Tonty should have joined them before now with several hundred Illinois."

"I don't believe he'll bring many Illinois. They must have known of the Iroquois war party that started toward their villages. They will stay to defend their own country. They may not know that the Iroquois party was recalled."

"Recalled?" said the Major.

"Yes. Father de Casson has the news from Father de Lamberville. You see what that means. The Iroquois have been warned."

"I was afraid of it. These new governors, Menard—each has to learn his lesson from the beginning of the book. Why will they not take counsel from the men who know the Indians? This campaign has been heralded as broadly as a trading fair."

"When should I start?" asked Menard, abruptly.

"At once—within a few days." Major Provost looked at the other's set face. "I am sorry about this, Menard. But you understand, I am sure. Perhaps I had better give you an idea of our plans. You know, of course, that we have three ships fitting out at Frontenac. Already our force is being got together at St. Helen's Island, by Montreal. Champigny is engaging canoemen and working out a transport and supply system between Montreal and Frontenac. The force will proceed to Frontenac, and embark from there in the ships, bateaux, and canoes."

"Is the rendezvous at Niagara?"

"No, at La Famine, on the southern shore of Lake Ontario."

Menard nodded. He knew the place; for by nearly starving there, years before, with the others of Governor la Barre's ill-starred expedition, he had contributed to giving the spot a name.

"La Durantaye and Du Luth, with Tonty, are to meet us there. You will instruct them to move on to Niagara, and there await further orders. We shall sail around the east end of the lake and along the south shore."

"The Iroquois will follow your movements."

"We intend that they shall. They will not know where our final landing place will be, and will have to keep their forces well in hand. And it will prevent them from uniting to attack Niagara."

"What then?"

"We will leave a strong guard at La Famine with the stores, and strike inland for the Seneca villages."

"And now what part am I to play in this?"

Major Provost leaned back in his chair.

"You, Menard, are to represent the Governor. You will move in advance of the troops. At Frontenac it will be your duty to see first that the way is clear to getting the two divisions to the meeting place at La Famine, and to see that d'Orvilliers has the fort ready for the troops, with extra cabins and stockades. Then the Governor wishes you and d'Orvilliers to go over all the information the scouts bring in. If you can decide upon any course which will hold back the other tribes from aiding the Senecas, act upon it at once, without orders. In other words, you have full liberty to follow your judgment. That ought to be responsibility enough."

Menard stretched his arms. "All right, Major. But when my day comes to taste the delights of Quebec, I hope I may not be too old to enjoy it."

"The Governor honours you, Menard, with this undertaking."

“He honoured De Sévigné with a majority and turned him loose in Quebec.”

“Too bad, Menard, too bad,” the Major laughed. “Now I, who ask nothing better than a brisk campaign, must rot here in Quebec until I die.”

“Are you not to go?”

“No. I am to stay behind and brighten my lonely moments drilling the rabble of a home guard. Do you think you will need an escort?”

“No; the river from here to Frontenac is in use every day. I shall want canoemen. Two will be enough.”

“Very well. Let me know what supplies you need. You mistake, man, in grumbling at the work. You are building up a reputation that never could live at short range. Stay away long enough and you will be a more popular man than the Governor. I envy you, on my honour, I do.”

“One thing more, Major. This galley affair; what do you think of it?”

“You mean the capture at Frontenac? You should know better than I, Menard. You brought the prisoners down.”

“There is no doubt in my mind, Major, nor in d’Orvilliers’s! We obeyed orders.” Menard looked up expressively. “You know the Iroquois. You know how they will take it. The worst fault was La Grange’s. He captured the party—and it was not a war party—by deliberate treachery. D’Orvilliers had intrusted to him the Governor’s orders that Indians must be got for the King’s galleys. As you know, d’Orvilliers and I both protested. I did not bring them here until the Governor commanded it.”

“Well, we can’t help that now, Menard.”

“That is not the question. You ask me to keep the Onondagas out of this fight, after we have taken a hundred of their warriors in this way.”

“I know it, Menard; I know it. But the Governor’s orders—Well, I have nothing to say. You can only do your best.”

They went to the reception room, where Madame de Provost awaited them. Menard was made to stay and dine, in order that Madame could draw from him a long account of his latest adventures on the frontier. Madame de Provost, though she had lived a dozen years in the province, had never been farther from Quebec than the Seignory of the Marquis de St. Denis, half a dozen leagues below the city. The stories that came to her ears of massacres and battles, of settlers butchered in the fields, and of the dashing adventures of La Salle and Du Luth, were to her no more than wild tales from a far-away land. So she chattered through the long dinner; and for the first time since he had reached the city, Menard wished himself back on Lake Ontario, where there were no women.

Menard returned to the citadel early in the evening. Lieutenant Danton was drawing plans for a redoubt, but he leaned back as Menard entered.

“I began to think you were not coming back, Captain,” he said. “I’m told the Major says that you are the only man in New France who could have got that trading agreement from the Onondagas last year. How did you do it?”

“How does a man usually do what he is told to do?” Menard sat on a corner of the long table and looked lazily at the boy.

“That wasn’t the kind of treaty our Governors make; you know it wasn’t.”

“You were not here under Frontenac.”

“No. I wish I had been. He must have been a great orator. My father has told me about the long council at Montreal. He said that Frontenac out-talked the greatest of the Mohawk orators. Did you learn it from him?”

“My boy, when you are through with your pretty pictures,” Menard motioned toward the plans, “and have got out into the real work; when you’ve spent months in Iroquois lodges; when you’ve been burned and shot and starved,—then it will be a pity if you haven’t learned to be a soldier. What is this little thing you are drawing?”

Danton flushed. "You may laugh at the engineers," he said, "but where would King Louis be now if—"

"Tut, my boy, tut!"

"That is very well—"

Menard laughed. "How old are you, Danton?" he asked.

"Twenty-two."

"Very good. You have got on well. I dare say you've learned a deal out of your books. Now we have you out here in the provinces, where the hard work is done. Well send you back in a few years a real man. And then you'll step smartly among the pretty officers of the King, and when one speaks of New France you'll lift your brows and say: 'New France? Ah, yes. That is in America. I was there once. Rather a primitive life—no court, no army.' Ah, ha, my boy—no, never mind. Come up to my quarters and have a sip of real old Burgundy."

"Are you ever serious, Menard?" asked Danton, sitting on the Captain's cot and smacking his lips over the liquor.

Menard smiled. "I'm afraid I shall have to play at composure for an hour," he said. "I must see Father Claude. Settle yourself here, if you like."

Menard hurried away, for it was growing late. He found the Jesuit meditating in his cell.

"Ah, Captain Menard, I am glad to see you so soon again."

Menard sat on the narrow bed and stretched out his legs as far as he could in the cramped space.

"How soon will your duties be over here, Father?"

"There seems to be no reason for me to stay. I have delivered the relations, and no further work has come to hand."

"Then it may be that you can help me, Father."

"You know, my son, that I will."

"Very well. I have been ordered to Fort Frontenac in advance of the troops. I am to bear orders to d'Orvilliers and to Du Luth and La Durantaye. It is possible that there may be some delicate work to be done among the Indians. You know the Iroquois, Father, and our two heads together should be stronger than mine alone. I want you to go with me."

The priest's eyes lighted.

"It may be that I can get permission at Montreal."

"You will go, then?"

"Gladly. It is to be no one else—we two—"

"We shall have canoemen. To my mind, the fewer the better."

"Still, Captain, you cannot depend on the canoemen. Would it not be well to have one other man? You might need a messenger."

Menard thought for a moment.

"True, Father. And if I am to have a man, he had best be an officer; yes, a man who could execute orders. I'll take Danton. You will be ready for a start, Father, probably to-morrow?"

"At any time, my son."

"Good night."

There was little work to be done in preparing for the journey (Major Provost would attend to the supplies and to engaging the canoemen), and Menard still was in the lazy mood. He stood for a while at the edge of the cliff and looked down at the wharf. It was dark, and he could not see whether the body of the Indian had been removed. The incident of the afternoon had been gathering importance to his mind the longer he thought of it. Five years earlier Menard had been captured by the Onondagas during a fight near Fort Frontenac. They had taken him to one of their villages, south of Lake Ontario, and for days had tortured him and starved him. They had drawn out cords from his arms and legs and thrust sticks between them and the flesh. His back was still covered with scars from the burning slivers which they had stuck through the skin. They had torn the nails from his left

hand with their teeth. Then Otreouati, the Big Throat, the chief who had led his followers to believe in Frontenac, came back from a parley with another tribe, and taking a liking to the tall young soldier who bore the torture without flinching, he adopted him into his own family. Menard had lived with the Indians, a captive only in name, and had earned the name of the Big Buffalo by his skill in the hunt. At last, when they had released him, it was under a compact of friendship, that had never since been broken. It had stood many tests. Even during open campaigns they had singled him out from the other Frenchmen as their brother. He wondered whether they knew of his part in stocking the King's galleys. Probably they did.

It was late when Menard took a last sweeping look at the river and walked up to the citadel. His day of idleness was over. After all, it had not been altogether a wasted day. But it was the longest holiday he was likely to have for months to come. Having made up his mind to accept the facts, he stretched out on his bed and went to sleep.

Danton took the news that he was to be a member of the party with enthusiasm. Menard had hardly finished telling him when he swept the tiresome plans and specifications into a heap at the end of the table, and rushed out to get a musket (for a sword would have no place in the work before them). The start was to be made at noon, but Danton was on the ground so early as almost to lower his dignity in the eyes of the bronzed canoemen. He wore his bravest uniform, with polished belt and buttons and new lace at the neck. His broad hat had a long curling feather. He wore the new musket slung rakishly over his shoulder.

About the middle of the forenoon, as Menard was looking over his orders, memorizing them in case of accident to the papers, he was found by Major Provost's orderly, who said that the Commandant wished to see him at once.

The Major was busy with the engineers in another room, but he left them.

"Menard," he said abruptly, "I've got to ask you to do me a favour. If I could see any way out of it—"

"I will do anything I can."

"Thank you. I suppose you know the Marquis de St. Denis?"

"Slightly."

"Well, I shan't take time to give you the whole story. St. Denis has the seignory six leagues to the east. You may know that he went into debt to invest in La Salle's colonizing scheme in Louisiana. St. Denis was in France at the time, and had great faith in La Salle. Of course, now that La Salle has not been heard from, and the debts are all past due without even a rumour of success to make them good—you can imagine the rest. The seignory has been seized. St. Denis has nothing."

"Has he a family?" asked Menard.

"A daughter. His wife is dead. He came here after you left last night, and again this morning. We are old friends, and I have been trying to help him. He is going to sail to-day on *Le Fourgon* for Paris to see what he can save from the wreck. My house is crowded with the officers who are here planning the campaign; but St. Denis has a cousin living at Frontenac, Captain la Grange, and we've got to get Valerie there somehow. Do you think it will be safe?"

"It's a hard trip, you know; but it's safe enough."

"I shan't forget your kindness, Menard. The girl is a spirited little thing, and she takes it hard. Madame has set her heart on getting her to La Grange. I don't know all the details myself."

"I think we can arrange it, Major. We start in an hour."

"She will be there. You are a splendid fellow, Menard. Good-bye."

Menard's face was less amiable once he was away from the house. He knew from experience the disagreeable task that lay before him. But there was nothing to be said, so he went to his quarters and took a last look at the orders. Then taking off his coat and his rough shirt, he placed the papers carefully in a buckskin bag, which he hung about his neck.

Everything was ready at the wharf. The long canoe lay waiting, a *voyageur* at each end. The bales were stowed carefully in the centre. Father de Casson met Menard at the upper end of the dock. He had come down by way of the winding road, for his bundle was heavy, and he knew no way but to carry it himself. Menard good-naturedly gave him a hand as they crossed the dock. When they had set it down, and Menard straightened up, his eyes twinkled, for young Danton, in his finery, was nervously walking back and forth at the edge of the dock, looking fixedly into the canoe, apparently inspecting the bales. His shoulders were unused to the musket, and by a quick turn he had brought the muzzle under the rim of his hat, setting it on the side of his head. His face was red.

Sitting on a bundle, a rod away, was a girl, perhaps eighteen or nineteen years old, wearing a simple travelling dress. Her hands were clasped tightly in her lap, and she gazed steadily out over the water with an air that would have been haughty save for the slight upward tip of her nose.

Menard's eyes sobered, and he handed his musket to one of the canoemen. Then he crossed over to where the maiden was sitting.

"Mademoiselle St. Denis?"

The girl looked up at him. Her eyes seemed to take in the dinginess of his uniform. She inclined her head.

"I am Captain Menard. Major Provost tells me that I am to have the honour of escorting you to Fort Frontenac. With your permission we will start. Father Claude de Casson is to go with us, and Lieutenant Danton."

The bundle was placed in the canoe. Menard helped the girl to a seat near the middle: from the way she stepped in and took her seat he saw that she had been on the river before. Danton, with his Parisian airs, had to be helped in carefully. Then they were off, each of the four men swinging a paddle, though Danton managed his awkwardly at first.

CHAPTER III.

MADEMOISELLE EATS HER BREAKFAST

The sun hung low over the western woods when Menard, at the close of the second day, headed the canoe shoreward. The great river swept by with hardly a surface motion, dimpling and rippling under the last touch of the day breeze. Menard's eyes rested on Father Claude, as the canoe drew into the shadow of the trees. The priest, stiff from the hours of sitting and kneeling, had taken up a paddle and was handling it deftly. He had rolled his sleeves up to the elbow, showing a thin forearm with wire-like muscles. The two *voyageurs*, at bow and stern, were proving to be quiet enough fellows. Guerin, the younger, wore a boyish, half-confiding look. His fellow, Perrot, was an older man.

Menard felt, when he thought of Danton, a sense of pride in his own right judgment. The boy was taking hold with a strong, if unguided, hand. Already the feather was gone from his hat, the lace from his throat. Two days in the canoe and a night on the ground had stained and wrinkled his uniform,—a condition of which, with his quick adaptability, he was already beginning to feel proud. He had flushed often, during the first day, under the shrewd glances of the *voyageurs*, who read the inexperience in his bright clothes and white hands. Menard knew, from the way his shoulders followed the swing of his arms, that the steady paddling was laming him sadly. He would allow Danton five days more; at the week's end he must be a man, else the experiment had failed.

The canoe scraped bottom under a wild growth of brush and outreaching trees. The forest was stirring with the rustle and call of birds, with the breath of the leaves and the far-away crackle and plunge of larger animals through the undergrowth. A chipmunk, with inquisitive eyes, sat on the root of a knotted oak, but he whisked away when Menard and the canoemen stepped into the shallow water. Overhead, showing little fear of the canoe and of the strangely clad animals within it, scampered a family of red squirrels, now nibbling a nut from the winter's store, now running and jumping from tree to tree, until only by the shaking of the twigs and the leaf-clusters could one follow their movements.

The maid leaned an elbow on the bale which Danton had placed at her back, and rested her cheek on her hand. They were under the drooping branches of an elm that stood holding to the edge of the bank. Well out over the water sat one of the squirrels, his tail sweeping above his head, nibbling an acorn, and looking with hasty little glances at the canoe. She watched him, and memories came into her eyes. There had been squirrels on her father's seignory who would take nuts from her hand, burying them slyly under the bushes, and hurrying back for more.

Danton came wading to the side of the canoe to help her to the bank, but she took his hand only to steady herself while rising. Stepping over the bracing-strips between the gunwales, she caught a swaying branch, and swung herself lightly ashore. Back from the water the ground rose into a low hill, covered with oak and elm and ragged hickory trees. Here, for a space, there was little undergrowth, and save under the heaviest of the trees the ground was green with short, coarse grass. Danton took a hatchet from the canoe, and trimmed a fir tree, heaping armfuls of green boughs at the foot of an oak near the top of the slope. Over these he threw a blanket. The maid came slowly up the hill, in response to his call, and with a weary little smile of thanks she sank upon the fragrant couch. She rested against the tree trunk, gazing through the nearer foliage at the rushing river.

For the two days she had been like this,—silent, shy, with sad eyes. And Danton,—who could no more have avoided the company of such a maid than he could have left off eating or breathing or laughing,—Danton, for all his short Paris life (which should, Heaven knows, have given him a front with the maids), could do nothing but hang about, eager for a smile or a word, yet too young to know that he could better serve his case by leaving her with her thoughts, and with the boundless woods and the great lonely spaces of the river. Menard saw the comedy—as indeed, who of the party did

not—and was amused. A few moments later he glanced again toward the oak. He was sharpening a knife, and could seem not to be observing. Danton was sitting a few yards from the maid, with the awkward air of a youth who doubts his welcome. She still looked out over the water. Menard saw that her face was white and drooping. He knew that she had not slept; for twice during the preceding night, as he lay in his blanket, he had heard from under the overturned canoe, where she lay, the low sound of her sobbing.

Menard walked slowly down the slope, testing the knife-edge with his thumb, his short pipe between his teeth. He sheathed his knife, lowered his pipe, and called:—

“Guerin.” The two men, who were bringing wood to the fire, looked up. “Where has the Father gone?”

Guerin pointed around the base of the hill. “He went to the woods, M’sieu.”

“With a bundle,” added Perrot.

Menard walked around the hill, and after a little searching found the priest, kneeling, in a clearing, before the portrait of Catharine Outasoren, which he had set against a tree. His brushes and paints were spread on the ground before him. He did not hear Menard approach.

“Oh,” said the captain, “you brought the picture!”

The priest looked up over his shoulder, with a startled manner.

“I myself have stripped down to the lightest necessities,” said Menard, with a significant glance at the portrait.

The priest lowered his brush, and sat looking at the picture with troubled eyes. “I had no place for it,” he said at last, hesitatingly.

“They didn’t take it at the College, eh?”

Father Claude flushed.

“They were very kind. They felt that perhaps it was not entirely completed, and that—”

“You will leave it at Montreal, then, at the Mission?”

“Yes,—I suppose so. Yes, I shall plan to leave it there.”

Menard leaned against a tree, and pressed the tobacco down in his pipe.

“I have been doing some thinking in the last few minutes, Father. I’ve decided to make my first call on you for assistance.”

“Very well, Captain.”

“It is about the maid. Have you noticed?”

“She seems of a sober mind.”

“Don’t you see why? It is her father’s losses, and this journey. She is taking it very hard. She is afraid, Father, all the time; and she neither sleeps nor eats.”

“It is naturally hard for such a child as she is to take this journey. She has had no experience,—she does not comprehend the easy customs and the hard travelling of the frontier. I think that in time—”

Menard was puffing impatiently.

“Father,” he said, “do you remember when Major Gordeau was killed, and I was detailed to bring his wife and daughter down to Three Rivers? It was much like this. They fretted and could not sleep, and the coarse fare of the road was beneath their appetites. Do you remember? And when it came to taking the rapids, with the same days of hard work that lie before us now, they were too weak, and they sickened, the mother first, then the daughter. When I think of that, Father, of the last week of that journey, and of how I swore never again to take a woman in my care on the river, I—well, there is no use in going over it. If this goes on, we shall not get to Frontenac in time, that is all. And I cannot afford to take such a chance.”

The priest looked grave. The long struggle against the rapids from Montreal to La Gallette had tried the hardihood of more than one strong man.

"It is probable, my son, that the sense of your responsibility makes you a little over-cautious. She is a strong enough child, I should say. Still, perhaps the food is not what she has been accustomed to. I have noticed that she eats little."

"Perrot is too fond of grease," Menard said. "I must tell him to use less grease."

"If she should be taken sick, we could leave her with someone at Montreal."

"Leave her at Montreal!" exclaimed Menard. "When she breaks down, it will be in the rapids. And then I must either go on alone, or wait with you until she is strong enough to be carried. In any case it means confusion and delay. And I must not be delayed."

"What have you in mind to do?"

"We must find a way to brighten her spirits. It is homesickness that worries her, and sorrow for her father, and dread of what is before and around her. I'll warrant she has never been away from her home before. We must get her confidence,—devise ways to cheer her, brighten her."

"I can reason with her, and—"

"This is not the time for reasoning, Father. What we must do is to make her stop thinking, stop looking backward and forward. And there is Danton; he can help. He is of an age with her, and should succeed where you and I might fail."

"He has not awaited the suggestion, Captain."

"Yes, I know. But he must,—well, Father, it has all been said. The maid is on our hands, and must be got to Frontenac. That is all. And there is nothing for it but to rely on Danton to help."

The priest looked at his brushes, and hesitated. "I am not certain," he said, "she is very young. And Lieutenant Danton,—I have heard, while at Quebec,—"

Menard laughed.

"He is a boy, Father. These tales may be true enough. Why not? They would fit as well any idle lieutenant in Quebec, who is lucky enough to have an eye, and a pair of shoulders, and a bit of the King's gold in his purse. This maid is the daughter of a gentleman, Father; she is none of your Lower Town jades. And Danton may be young and foolish,—as may we all have been,—but he is a gentleman born."

"Very well," replied the priest, looking with regret at the failing light, and beginning to gather his brushes. "I will counsel her, but I fear it will do little good. If the maid is sick at heart, and we attempt to guide her thoughts, we may but drive the trouble deeper in. It is the same with some of the Indian maidens, when they have left the tribe for the Mission. Now and again there comes a time, even with piety to strengthen them,—and this maid has little,—when the yearning seems to grow too strong to be cured. Sometimes they go back. One died. It was at Sault St. Francis in the year of the—"

"Yes, yes," Menard broke in. "We have only one fact to remember; there must be no delay in carrying out the Governor's orders. We cannot change our plans because of this maid."

"We must not let her understand, M'sieu."

Menard had been standing, with a shoulder against the tree, alternately puffing at his pipe and lowering it, scowling meanwhile at the ground. Now he suddenly raised his head and chuckled.

"It will be many a year since I have played the beau, Father. It may be that I have forgotten the rôle." He spread out his hands and looked at the twisted fingers. "But I can try, like a soldier. And there are three of us, Father Claude, there are three of us."

He turned to go back to the camp, but the priest touched him.

"My son,—perhaps, before you return, you would look again at my unworthy portrait. I—about the matter of the canoe—"

"Oh," said Menard, "you've taken it out."

"Yes; it seemed best, considering the danger that others might feel the same doubts which troubled you."

"I wouldn't do that. The canoe was all right, once the direction were decided on."

“Above all else, the true portrait should convey to the mind of the observer the impression that a single, an unmistakable purpose underlies the work. When one considers—”

“Very true, Father, very true,” said Menard abruptly, looking about at the beginning of the twilight. “And now we had better get back. The supper will be ready.”

Menard strode away toward the camp. Father Claude watched him for a time through the trees, then turned again to the picture. Finally he got together his materials, and carrying them in a fold of his gown, with the picture in his left hand, he followed Menard.

The maid was leaning back against the tree, looking up at the sky, where the first red of the afterglow was spreading. She did not hear Menard; and he paused, a few yards away, to look at the clear whiteness of her skin and the full curve of her throat. Her figure and air, her habits of gesture and step, and carriage of the head, were those of the free-hearted maid of the seignory. They told of an outdoor life, of a good horse, and a light canoe, and the inbred love of trees and sky and running water. Here was none of the stiffness, the more than Parisian manner, of the maidens of Quebec. To stand there and look at her, unconscious as she was, pleased Menard.

“Mademoiselle,” he said, coming nearer, “will you join us at supper?”

The maid looked at him with a slow blush (she was not yet accustomed to the sight of these men to enter into the routine of her life). Menard reached to help her, but she rose easily.

“Lieutenant Danton is not here?”

“No, M’sieu, he walked away.”

They sat about a log. Danton had not strayed far, for he joined them shortly, wearing a sulky expression. Menard looked about the group. The maid was silent. Father Claude was beginning at once on the food before him. The twilight was growing deeper, and Guerin dragged a log to the fire, throwing it on the pile with a shower of sparks, and half a hundred shooting tongues of flame. The Captain looked again at Danton, and saw that the boy’s glance shifted uneasily about the group. Altogether it was an unfortunate start for his plan. But it was clear that no other would break the ice, so he drew a long breath, and plunged doggedly into the story of his first fight on the St. Lawrence.

It was a brave story of ambuscade and battle; and it was full of the dark of night and the red flash of muskets and the stealth and treachery of the Iroquois soul. When he reached the tale of the captured Mohawk, who sat against a tree with a ball in his lungs, to the last refusing the sacrament, and dying like a chief with the death song on his lips, Danton was leaning forward, breathless and eager, hanging on his words. The maid’s eyes, too, were moist. Then they talked on, Danton asking boyish questions, and Father Claude starting over and again on a narrative of the wonderful conversion of the Huron drunkard, Heroukiki, who, in his zeal,—and here Menard always swept in with a new story, which left the priest adrift in the eddies of the conversation. At last, when they rose, and the dusk was settling over the trees, the maid was laughing with gentle good fellowship.

While they were eating, the *voyageurs* had brought the canoe a short way up the bank, resting it, bottom up, on large stones brought from the shore. Underneath was a soft cot of balsam; over the canoe were blankets, hanging on both sides to the ground. Then Mademoiselle said good-night, with a moment’s lingering on the word, and a wistful note in her voice that brought perhaps more sympathy than had the sad eyes of the morning. For after all she was only a girl, and hers was a brave little heart.

The three men lay on the slope with hardly a word, looking at the river, now shining like silver through the trees. This new turn in the life of the party was not as yet to be taken familiarly. Father Claude withdrew early to his meditations. Menard stretched out on his back, his hands behind his head, gazing lazily at the leaves overhead, now hanging motionless from the twigs.

Danton was sitting up, looking about, and running the young reeds through his fingers.

“Danton,” Menard said, after a long silence, “I suppose you know that we have something of a problem on our hands.”

Danton looked over the river.

“What have you thought about Mademoiselle?”

"I don't understand."

"Father Claude and I have been talking this evening about her. I have thought that she does not look any too strong for a hard journey of a hundred and more leagues."

"She has little colour," said Danton, cautiously.

"It seems to me, Danton, that you can help us."

"How?"

"What seems to you the cause of the trouble?"

"With Mademoiselle? She takes little impression from the kindness of those about her."

"Oh, come, Danton. You know better. Even a boy of your age should see deeper than that. You think she slights you; very likely she does. What of that? You are not here to be drawn into a boy-and-girl quarrel with a maid who chances to share our canoe. You are here as my aid, to make the shortest time possible between Quebec and Frontenac. If she were to fall sick, we should be delayed. Therefore she must not fall sick."

Danton had plucked a weed, and now was pulling it to pieces, bit by bit.

"What do you want me to do?"

"Stop this moping, this hanging about. Take hold of the matter. Devise talks, diversions; fill her idle moments; I care not what you do,—within limits, my boy, within limits."

"Oh," said Danton, "then you really want me to?"

"Certainly. I am too old myself."

Danton rose, and walked a few steps away and back.

"But she will have none of me, Menard. It is, 'No, with thanks,' or, worse, a shake of the head. If I offer to help, if I try to talk, if I—oh, it is always the same. I am tired of it."

Menard smiled in the dark.

"Is that your reply to an order from your superior officer, Danton?"

The boy stood silent for a moment, then he said, "I beg your pardon, Captain." And with a curious effort at stiffness he wandered off among the trees, and was soon out of Menard's sight.

Menard walked slowly down to the fire, opened his pack, and spreading out his blanket, rolled himself in it with his feet close to the red embers. For a long time he lay awake. This episode took him back nearly a decade, to a time when he, like Danton, would have lost his poise at a glance from the nearest pair of eyes. That the maid should so interest him was in itself amusing. Had she been older or younger, had she been any but the timid, honest little woman that she was, he would have left her, without a second thought, in the care of the Commandant at Montreal, to be escorted through the rapids by some later party. But he had fixed his mind on getting her to Frontenac, and the question was settled. His last thought that night was of her quiet laughter and her friendly, hesitating "good-night."

He was awakened in the half light before the sunrise by a step on the twigs. At a little distance through the trees was the maid, walking down toward the water. She slipped easily between the briers, holding her skirt close. From a spring, not a hundred yards up the hillside, a brook came tumbling to the river, picking its way under and over the stones and the fallen trees, and trickling over the bank with a low murmur. The maid stopped by a pool, and kneeling on a flat rock, dipped her hands.

The others were asleep. A rod away lay Danton, a sprawling heap in his blanket. Menard rose, tossed his blanket upon his bundle, and walked slowly down toward the maid.

"Mademoiselle, you rise with the birds."

She looked around, and laughed gently. He saw that she had frankly accepted the first little change in their relations.

"I like to be with the birds, M'sieu."

Menard had no small talk. He was thinking of her evident lack of sleep.

"It is the best hour for the river, Mademoiselle." The colours of the dawn were beginning to creep up beyond the eastern bank, sending a lance of red and gold into a low cloud bank, and a spread of soft crimson close after. "Perhaps you are fond of the fish?"

The maid was kneeling to pick a cluster of yellow flower cups. She looked up and nodded, with a smile.

“We fished at home, M’sieu.”

“We will go,” said Menard, abruptly. “I will bring down the canoe.”

He threw the blankets to one side, and stooping under the long canoe, carried it on his shoulders to the water. A line and hook were in his bundle; the bait was ready at a turn of the grass and weeds.

“We are two adventurers,” he said lightly, as he tossed the line into the canoe, and held out one of the paddles. “You should do your share of the morning’s work, Mademoiselle.”

She laughed again, and took the paddle. They pushed off; the maid kneeling at the bow, Menard in the stern. He guided the canoe against the current. The water lay flat under the still air, reflecting the gloomy trees on the banks, and the deepening colours of the sky. He fell into a lazy, swinging stroke, watching the maid. Her arms and shoulders moved easily, with the grace of one who had tumbled about a canoe from early childhood.

“Ready, Mademoiselle?” He was heading for a deep pool near a line of rushes. The maid, laying down her paddle, reached back for the line, and put on the bait with her own fingers.

Menard held the canoe steady against the current, which was there but a slow movement, while she lowered the hook over the bow. They sat without a word for some minutes. Once he spoke, in a bantering voice, and she motioned to him to be quiet. Her brows were drawn down close together.

It was but a short time before she felt a jerk at the line. Her arms straightened out, and she pressed her lips tightly together. “Quick!” she said. “Go ahead!”

“Can you hold it?” he asked, as he dipped his paddle.

She nodded. “I wish the line were longer. It will be hard to give him any room.” She wound the cord around her wrist. “Will the line hold, M’sieu?”

“I think so. See if you can pull in.”

She leaned back, and pulled steadily, then shook her head. “Not very much. Perhaps, if you can get into the shallow water—”

Menard slowly worked the canoe through an opening in the rushes. There was a thrashing about and plunging not two rods away. Once the fish leaped clear of the water in a curve of clashing silver.

“It’s a salmon,” he said. “A small one.”

The maid held hard, but the colour had gone from her face. The canoe drew nearer to the shore.

“Hold fast,” said Menard. He gave a last sweep of the paddle, and crept forward to the bow. Kneeling behind the maid, he reached over her shoulder, and took the line below her hand.

“Careful, M’sieu; it may break.”

“We must risk it.” He pulled slowly in until the fish was close under the gunwale. “Now can you hold?”

“Yes.” She shook a straying lock of hair from her eyes, and took another turn of the cord around her wrist.

“Steady,” he said. He drew his knife, leaned over the gunwale, and stabbed at the fighting fish until his blade sank in just below the gills, and he could lift it aboard.

The maid laughed nervously, and rested her hands upon the two gunwales. Her breath was gone, and there was a red mark around her wrist where the cord had been. The canoe had drifted into the rushes, and Menard went back to his paddle, and worked out again into the channel.

“And now, Mademoiselle,” he said, “we shall have a breakfast of our own. You need not paddle. I will take her down.”

Her breath was coming back. She laughed, and sat comfortably in the bow, facing Menard, and letting her eyes follow the steady swing and catch of his paddle. When they reached the camp, the *voyageurs* were astir, but Danton and the priest still slept. The first red glare of the sun was levelled at them over the eastern trees.

Menard made a fire under an arch of flat stones, and trimming a strip of oak wood with his hatchet, he laid the cleaned fish upon it and kept it on the fire until it was brown and crisp. The maid sat by, her eyes alert and her cheeks flushed.

Danton was awake before the fish was cooked, and he stood about with a pretence of not observing them. The maid was fairly aroused. She drew him into the talk, and laughed and bantered with the two men as prettily as they could have wished from a Quebec belle.

All during the morning Danton was silent. At noon, when the halt was made for the midday lunch, he was still puzzling over the apparent understanding between Mademoiselle and the Captain. Before the journey was taken up, he stood for a moment near Menard, on the river bank.

“Captain,” he said, “you asked me last night to—”

“Well?”

“It may be that I have misunderstood you. Of course, if Mademoiselle—if you—” He caught himself.

Menard smiled; then he read the earnestness beneath the boy’s confusion, and sobered.

“Mademoiselle and I went fishing, Danton. Result,—Mademoiselle eats her first meal. If you can do as much you shall have my thanks. And now remember that you are a lieutenant in the King’s service.”

CHAPTER IV. THE LONG ARROW

Menard allowed a halt of but a few hours at Three Rivers. The settlement held little of interest, for all the resident troops and most of the farmers and *engagés* had gone up the river to join the army which was assembling at Montreal. The close of the first week out of Quebec saw the party well on the second half of the journey to Montreal. As they went on, Menard's thoughts were drawn more deeply into the work that lay ahead, and in spite of his efforts at lightness, the work of keeping up the maid's spirits fell mostly to Danton (though Father Claude did what he could). As matters gradually became adjusted, Danton's cheery, hearty manner began to tell; and now that there was little choice of company, the maid turned to him for her diversion.

On the morning of the second day after leaving Three Rivers, the two *voyageurs* were carrying the canoe to the water when Guerin slipped on a wet log, throwing the canoe to the ground, and tearing a wide rent in the bark. Menard was impatient at this carelessness. The knowledge that the Three Rivers detachment had already gone on to Montreal had decided him to move more rapidly, and he had given orders that they should start each day in the first light of the dawn. This was a chill morning. A low, heavy fog lay on the river, thinning, at a yard above the water, into a light mist which veiled what colour may have been in the east.

While Guerin and Perrot were patching the canoe under Menard's eye, Danton found some dry logs under the brush, and built up the dying fire, which was in a rocky hollow, not visible from the river. Then he and the maid sat on the rocks above it, where they could get the warmth, and yet could see the river. Menard and his men, though only a few rods away, were but blurred forms as they moved about the canoe, gumming the new seams.

The maid, save for an occasional heavy hour in the late evenings, had settled into a cheerful frame of mind. The novelty, and the many exciting moments of the journey, as well as the kindness of the three men, kept her thoughts occupied. Danton, once he had shaken off his sulky fits, was good company. They sat side by side on the rock, looking down at the struggling fire, or at the figures moving about the canoe, or out into the white mystery of the river, talking easily in low tones of themselves and their lives and hopes.

The mist, instead of rising, seemed to settle closer to the water, as the broad daylight came across the upper air. The maid and Danton fell into silence as the picture brightened. Danton was less sensitive than she to the whims of nature, and tiring of the scene, he was gazing down into the fire when the maid, without a word, touched his arm. He looked up at her; then, seeing that her eyes were fixed on the river, followed her gaze. Not more than a score of yards from the shore, moving silently through the mist, were the heads of three Indians. Their profiles stood out clearly against the white background; their shoulders seemed to dissolve into the fog. They passed slowly on up the stream, looking straight ahead, without a twitch of the eyelids, like a vision from the happy hunting-ground.

Danton slipped down from the rock, and stepped lightly to Menard, pointing out the three heads just as they were fading into the whiteness about them. Menard motioned to Guerin and Perrot to get the newly patched canoe into the water, took three muskets, and in a moment pushed off, leaving Danton with the maid and the priest, who had retired a short distance for his morning prayers. For a minute the heads of the three white men were in sight above the fog, then they too were swallowed up.

"I wonder what Menard thinks about them?" said Danton, going back toward the maid.

She was still looking at the mist, and did not hear him, so he took a seat at the foot of the rock and rubbed the hammer of his musket, which had been rusted by the damp. After a time the maid looked toward him.

"What does it mean?" she asked.

"I don't know," Danton replied. "They were going up-stream in a canoe, I suppose. Probably he thinks they can give us some information."

In a few minutes, during which the mist was clearing under the rays of the sun, the two canoes together came around a wooded point and beached. The Indians walked silently to the fire. They appeared not to see Danton and the maid. Menard paused to look over his canoe. It was leaking badly, and before joining the group at the fire, he set the canoemen at work making a new patch.

"Danton," he said, in a low tone, when he reached the fire, "find the Father."

Danton hurried away, and Menard turned to the largest of the three Indians, who wore the brightest blanket, and had a peculiar wampum collar, decorated in mosaic-like beadwork.

"You are travellers, like ourselves," he said, in the Iroquois tongue. "We cannot let you pass without a word of greeting. I see that you are of the Onondagas, my brothers. It may be that you are from the Mission at the Sault St. Francis Xavier?"

The Indian bowed. "We go from Three Rivers to Montreal."

"I, too, am taking my party to Montreal." Menard thought it wise to withhold the further facts of his journey. "Have you brothers at Three Rivers?"

"No," replied the Indian. "We have been sent with a paper from the Superior at Sault St. Francis Xavier to the good fathers at Three Rivers. Now we are on our return to the Mission."

"Have my brothers eaten?" Menard motioned toward the fire. "It is still early in the day."

The three bowed. "We are travelling fast," said the spokesman, "for the Superior awaits our return. We ate before the light. It will soon be time for us to go on our journey."

Menard saw Father Claude and Danton approaching, and waited for them. The face of the large Indian seemed like some other face that had had a place in his memory. It was not unlikely that he had known this warrior during his captivity, when half a thousand braves had been to him as brothers. The Indian was apparently of middle age, and had lines of dignity and authority in his face that made it hard to accept him as a subdued resident at the Mission. But Menard knew that no sign of doubt or suspicion must appear in his face, so he waited for the priest. The Indians sat with their knees drawn up and their blankets wrapped about them, looking stolidly at the fire.

Father Claude came quietly into the group, and with a smile extended his hand to the smallest of the three, an older man, with a wrinkled face. "I did not look for you here, Teganouan. Have you gone back to the Mission?"

Teganouan returned the smile, and bowed.

"My brother has told the white man of our errand?"

"Yes," said Menard, "they have been sent to Three Rivers by the Superior, and are now returning. I have told them that we, too, are going to Montreal."

The priest took the hint. "We shall meet you and your brothers again, Teganouan. They are newcomers at the Mission, I believe. They had not come when I left."

"No, Father. They have but last week become Christians. The Long Arrow" (inclining his head toward the large Indian) "has lost a son, and through his suffering was led to take the faith."

The Long Arrow, who had seemed to lose interest in the conversation as soon as he had finished speaking, here rose.

"My brothers and the good Father will give us their blessing? The end of the journey is yet three days away. I had hoped that we might be permitted to accept the protection of the son of Onontio,"—he looked at Menard,— "but I see that his canoe will not be ready for the journey before the sun is high." He looked gravely from Menard to the priest, then walked to the shore, followed by the others. They pushed off, and shortly disappeared around the point of land.

Menard gave them no attention, but as soon as they were gone from sight, he turned to the priest.

"Well, Father, what do you make of that?"

Father Claude shook his head.

"Nothing, as yet, M'sieu. Do you know who the large man is?"

“No; but I seem to remember him. And what is more to the point, he certainly remembers me.”

“Are you sure?”

“He recognized me on the river. He came back with me so willingly because he wanted to know more about us. That was plain. It would be well, Father, to enquire at the Mission. We should know more of them and their errand at Three Rivers.”

Menard called Danton, and walked with him a little way into the wood.

“Danton,” he said, “you are going through this journey with us, and I intend that you shall know about such matters as this meeting with the Onondagas.”

“Oh, they were Onondagas?”

“Yes. They claim to be Mission Indians, but neither the Father nor I altogether believe them.”

In a few sentences Menard outlined the conversation. “Now, Danton, this may or may not be an important incident. I want you to know the necessity for keeping our own counsel in all such matters, dropping no careless words, and letting no emotions show. I wish you would make a point of learning the Iroquois language. Father Claude will help you. You are to act as my right-hand man, and you may as well begin now to learn to draw your own conclusions from an Indian’s words.”

Danton took eagerly to the lessons with Father Claude, for they seemed another definite step toward the excitement that surely, to his mind, lay in wait ahead. The studying began on that afternoon, while they were toiling up against the stream.

In the evening, when the dusk was coming down, and the little camp was ready for the night, Menard came up from the heap of stores, where the *voyageurs* had already stretched out, and found the maid sitting alone by the fire. Danton, in his rush of interest in the new study, had drawn Father Claude aside for another lesson.

“Mademoiselle is lonely?” asked Menard, sitting beside her.

“No, no, M’sieu. I have too many thoughts for that.”

“What interesting thoughts they must be.”

“They are, M’sieu. They are all about the Indians this morning. Tell me, M’sieu,—they called you Onontio. What does it mean?”

“They called me the son of Onontio, because of my uniform. Onontio, the Great Mountain, is their name for the Governor; and the Governor’s soldiers are to them his sons.”

“They speak a strange language. It is not the same as that of the Ottawas, who once worked for my father.”

“Did you know their tongue?”

“A few words, and some of the signs. This,”—raising her hand, with the first finger extended, and slowly moving her arm in a half circle from horizon to horizon,—“this meant a sun,—one day.”

Menard looked at her for a moment in silence. He enjoyed her enthusiasm.

“Why don’t you learn Iroquois? You would enjoy it. It is a beautiful tongue,—the language of metaphor and poetry.”

“I should like to,” she replied, looking with a faint smile at Danton and the priest, who were sitting under a beech tree, mumbling in low tones.

“You shall join the class, Mademoiselle. You shall begin to-morrow. It was thoughtless of Danton to take the Father’s instruction to himself alone.”

“And then, M’sieu, I will know what the Indians say when they sit up stiffly in their blankets, and talk down in their throats. They have such dignity. It is hard not to believe them when they look straight at one.”

“Don’t you believe them?”

“The three this morning,—they did not tell the truth.”

“Didn’t they?”

“Why, I understood that you did not believe them.”

“And where did Mademoiselle learn that? Did she follow the conversation?”

“No; but Lieutenant Danton—”

“He told you?”

She nodded. Menard frowned.

“He shouldn’t have done that.”

The maid looked surprised at his remark, and the smile left her face. “Of course, M’sieu,” she said, a little stiffly, “whatever is not meant for my ears—”

Menard was still frowning, and he failed to notice her change in manner. He abruptly gave the conversation a new turn, but seeing after a short time that the maid had lost interest in his sallies, he rose, and called to the priest.

“Father, you are to have a new pupil. Mademoiselle also will study the language of the Iroquois. If you are quick enough with your pupils, we shall soon be able to hold a conversation each night about the fire. Perhaps, if you would forego your exclusive air, Mademoiselle would begin at once.”

Danton, without waiting for the priest to start, came hurriedly over and sat by the maid.

“You must pardon me,” he said, “I did not think,—I did not know that you would be interested. It is so dry.”

The maid smiled at the fire.

“You did not ask,” she replied, “and I could not offer myself to the class.”

“It will be splendid,” said Danton. “We shall learn the language of the trees and the grass and the rivers and the birds. And the message of the wampum belt, too, we shall know. You see,”—looking up at Menard,—“already I am catching the meanings.”

Menard smiled, and then went down the bank, leaving the three to bend their heads together over the mysteries of the Iroquois rules of gender, written out by Father Claude on a strip of bark. It was nearly an hour later, after the maid had crept to her couch beneath the canoe, and Perrot and Guerin had sprawled upon the bales and were snoring in rival keys, that Danton came lightly down the slope humming a drinking song. He saw Menard, and dropped to the ground beside him, with a low laugh.

“Mademoiselle will lead my wits a chase, Menard. Already she is deep in the spirit of the new work.”

“Be careful, my boy, that she leads no more than your wits a chase.”

Danton laughed again.

“I don’t believe there is great danger. What a voice she has! I did not know it at first, when she was frightened and spoke only in the lower tones. Now when she speaks or laughs it is like—”

“Like what?”

“There is no fit simile in our tongue, light as it is. It may be that in the Iroquois I shall find the words. It should be something about the singing brooks or the voice of the leaves at night.”

The lad was in such buoyant spirits that Menard had to harden himself for the rebuke which he must give. With the Indian tribes Menard had the tact, the control of a situation, that would have graced a council of great chiefs; but in matters of discipline, the blunter faculties and language of the white men seemed to give his wit no play. Now, as nearly always, he spoke abruptly.

“Have you forgotten our talk of this morning, Danton?”

“No,” replied the boy, looking up in surprise.

The night had none of the dampness that had left a white veil over the morning just gone. The moon was half hidden behind the western trees. The sky, for all the dark, was blue and deep, set with thousands of stars, each looking down at its mate in the shining water.

“I spoke of the importance of keeping our own counsel.”

Danton began to feel what was coming. He looked down at the ground without replying.

“To-night Mademoiselle has repeated a part of our conversation.”

“Mademoiselle,—why, she is one of our party. She knows about us,—who we are, what we are going for—”

“Then you have told her, Danton?”

“How could she help knowing? We are taking her to Frontenac.”

“Father Claude has not told her why we go to Frontenac—nor have I.”

“But Major Provost is her friend—”

“He would never have told her.”

“But she seemed to know about it.”

“Then you have talked it over with her?”

“Why, no,—that is, in speaking of our journey we said something of the meaning of the expedition. It could hardly be expected that we,—I fail to see, Captain, what it is you are accusing me of.”

“You have not been accused yet, Danton. Let me ask you a question. Why did you enter the King’s army?”

Danton hesitated, and started once or twice to frame answer, but made no reply.

“Did you wish a gay uniform, to please the maids, to—”

“You are unfair, M’sieu.”

“No, I wish to know. We will say, if you like, that you have hoped to be a soldier,—a soldier of whom the King may one day have cause to be proud.”

Danton flushed, and bowed his head.

“I offered you the chance to go on this mission, Danton, because I believed in you. I believed that you had the making of a soldier. This is not a child’s errand, this of ours. It is the work of strong men. This morning I told you of my talk with the three Onondagas because I have planned to take you into my confidence, and to give you the chance to make a name for yourself. I made a point of the importance of keeping such things to yourself.”

“But Mademoiselle, M’sieu, she is different—”

“Look at the facts, Danton. I told you this morning: within twelve hours you have passed on your information. How do I know that you would not have let it slip to others if you had had the chance? You forget that Mademoiselle is a woman, and the first and last duty of a soldier is to tell no secrets to a woman.”

“You speak wrongly of Mademoiselle. It is cowardly to talk thus.”

Menard paused to get control of his temper.

“Cowardly, Danton? Is that the word you apply to your commander?”

“Your pardon, M’sieu! A thousand pardons! It escaped me—”

“We will pass it by. I want you to understand this matter. Mademoiselle will spend a night in Montreal. We shall leave her with other women. A stray word, which to her might mean nothing, might be enough to give the wrong persons a hint of the meaning of our journey. A moment’s nervousness might slip the bridle from her tongue. All New France is not so loyal that we can afford to drop a chance secret here and there. As to this maid, she is only a child, and by giving her our secrets, you are forcing her to bear a burden which we should bear alone. These Indians this morning were spies, I am inclined to believe, scouting along the river for information of the coming campaign. The only way that we can feel secure is by letting no word escape our lips, no matter how trivial. I tell you this, not so much for this occasion as for a suggestion for the future.”

“Very well, M’sieu. You will please accept my complete apologies.”

“I shall have to add, Danton, that if any further mistake of this kind occurs I shall be forced to dismiss you from my service. Now that I have said this, I want you to understand that I don’t expect it to happen. I have believed in you, Danton, and I stand ready to be a friend to you.”

Menard held out his hand. Danton clasped it nervously, mumbling a second apology. For a few moments longer they sat there, Menard trying to set Danton at ease, but the boy was flushed, and he spoke only half coherently. He soon excused himself and wandered off among the trees and the thick bushes.

During the next day Danton was in one of his sullen moods. He worked feverishly, and, with the maid, kept Father Claude occupied for the greater part of the time, as they paddled on, with conversation, and with discussion of the Iroquois words. The maid felt the change from the easy relations in the party, and seemed a little depressed, but she threw herself into the studying. Often during the day she would take up a paddle, and join in the stroke. At first Menard protested, but she laughed, and said that it was a “rest” after sitting so long.

They were delayed on the following day by a second accident to the canoe, so that they were a full day late in reaching Montreal. They moved slowly up the channel, past the islands and the green banks with their little log-houses or, occasionally, larger dwellings built after the French manner. St. Helen’s Island, nearly opposite the city, had a straggling cluster of hastily built bark houses, and a larger group of tents where the regulars were encamped, awaiting the arrival of Governor Denonville with the troops from Quebec.

Menard stopped at the island, guiding the canoe to the bank where a long row of canoes and bateaux lay close to the water.

“You might get out and walk around,” he said to the others. “I shall be gone only a few moments.”

Father Claude sat on the bank, lost in meditation. Danton and the maid walked together slowly up and down, beyond earshot from the priest. Since Menard’s rebuke, both the lad and the maid had shown a slight trace of resentment. It did not come out in their conversation, but rather in their silences, and in the occasions which they took to sit and walk apart from the others. It was as if a certain common ground of interest had come to them. The maid, for all her shyness and even temper, was not accustomed to such cool authority as Menard was developing. The priest was keeping an eye on the fast-growing acquaintanceship, and already had it vaguely in mind to call it to the attention of Menard, who was getting too deeply into the spirit and the details of his work to give much heed.

Menard was soon back.

“Push off,” he said. “The Major is not here. We shall have to look for him in the city.”

They headed across the stream. The city lay before them, on its gentle slope, with the mountain rising behind like an untiring sentry. It was early in the afternoon, and on the river were many canoes and small boats, filled with soldiers, friendly Indians, or *voyageurs*, moving back and forth between the island and the city. They passed close to many of the bateaux, heaped high with provision and ammunition bales, and more than once the lounging soldiers rose and saluted Menard.

At the city wharf he turned to Danton.

“We shall have to get a larger canoe, Danton, and a stronger. Will you see to it, please? We shall have two more in our party from now on. Make sure that the canoe is in the best of condition. Also I wish you would see to getting the rope and the other things we may need in working through the rapids. Then spend your time as you like. We shall start early in the morning.”

Menard and Father Claude together went with the maid to the Superior, who arranged for her to pass the night with the sisters. Then Menard left the priest to make his final arrangements at the Mission, and went himself to see the Commandant, to whom he outlined the bare facts of his journey to Frontenac.

“The thing that most concerns you,” he said finally, “is a meeting I had a few days ago with three Indians down the river. One called himself the Long Arrow, and another was Teganouan, who, Father de Casson tells me, recently left the Mission at the Sault St. Francis Xavier. They claim to be Mission Indians. It will be well to watch out for them, and to have an eye on the Richelieu, and the other routes, to make sure that they don’t slip away to the south with information.”

“Very well,” replied the Commandant. “I imagine that we can stop them. Do you feel safe about taking this maid up the river just now?”

“Oh, yes. Our men are scattered along the route, are they not?” Menard asked.

“Quite a number are out establishing Champigny’s transport system.”

“I don’t look for any trouble. But I should like authority for one or two extra men.”

“Take anything you wish, Menard. I will get word over to the island at once, giving you all the authority you need.”

CHAPTER V. DANTON BREAKS OUT

When Menard reached the wharf, early on the following morning, he found Father Claude waiting for him. The new canoe lay on the wharf, and beside it was a heap of stores. Perrot and the two new *engagés* sat on the edge of the wharf. The sun had just risen over the trees on St. Helen's Island, and the air was clear and cool.

"Well, Perrot," said Menard, as he unslung his musket and horn, "is everything ready?"

"Everything, M'sieu."

"Where is Guerin?"

"I have not seen him, M'sieu."

Menard turned to the priest.

"Good-morning, Father. You are on time, I see; and that is more than we can say for Danton. Where is the boy?"

"He has gone for Mademoiselle St. Denis, Captain. He was here before the sunrise, checking up the stores."

"Learning to work, is he? That is a good sign. And how about yourself? Did you pick up anything yesterday?"

"Yes," replied the priest. "I enquired at the Mission about Teganouan and his companions."

"Well?"

"Nothing is known of them. Teganouan had been one of the worst drunkards among the Onondagas, and his conversion, a year ago, was thought to be one of our greatest victories for the faith. His penances were among the most complete and purging ever—"

"And the others?"

"Just before I left the Mission for Quebec, Teganouan went on an errand to the city and fell among some of our fellow-countrymen who were having a drinking bout. For a few days after that he wavered, and fell again. Once afterward he was seen in company with two low fellows, *coureurs de bois*, who have since been confined under suspicion of communicating with the enemy."

"He has returned to the Mission, then?"

"No, he disappeared some time ago. They do not know the Long Arrow. I described him to Brother de Lamberville—"

"Oh, he is here now?"

"Yes. It seems, further, that all the other workers among the Iroquois have had word and are returning. That much of my labour is removed."

"How do they get this word?" said Menard, impatiently. "That is the old question. It is enough to make one wonder if there are any secrets kept from the enemy's country."

"No one seems to know, M'sieu. The Superior told me last night that they had not been sent for, so it would seem that the information must have reached them through the Indians."

"The folly of these new governors!" Menard strode back and forth. "Oh, it makes one sigh for old Frontenac. He never walked blindfolded into such a trap as this. But go on. You were speaking of Father de Lamberville."

"It was only that I described the Long Arrow to Brother de Lamberville. He seemed to remember such a wampum collar as the Long Arrow wore. He could not recall exactly."

"Then we may as well forget the incident. It seems that we are to know nothing of it. Here is Danton."

The lieutenant and the maid were walking rapidly down to the wharf. Mademoiselle was in a gay mood after her few hours of enjoyment among the comforts of a city.

“Good-morning,” she called, waving her hand.

“Good-morning,” said Menard, shortly. He did not look a second time, to see her smile fade, for Guerin had not appeared, and he was rapidly losing patience. He walked up and down the wharf for a few moments, while Danton found a seat for the maid and the two talked together.

“Perrot,” he said, “do you know where Guerin was last evening?”

“Yes, M’sieu. He was at the inn.”

“What was he doing? Drinking?”

“A little, M’sieu.”

“Go up there, on the run. If you don’t find him there, come right back, for we can’t wait much longer for anyone.”

Perrot ran up the street and disappeared. In a few moments he came in sight, striding down between the row of houses, holding Guerin firmly by one arm. The young fellow was hanging back, and stumbling in limp fashion. He was evidently drunk. Danton, who had joined Menard when the two men appeared, said, “Heavens, he must have started early!”

Some distance behind Perrot and Guerin came a ragged crowd of woodsmen, singing, jeering, and shouting, and bearing broad traces of a sleepless night.

Menard stood waiting with a look of disgust. When they came upon the wharf Guerin laughed, and tried to get out a flippant apology for his tardiness; but Menard seized him before the words were off his lips, and dragging him across the wharf threw him into the water. Then he turned to Perrot, and said, “Pull him out.”

The two new men stood uneasily near, with startled faces. Behind them the maid was sitting, a frightened look in her eyes. Danton had risen.

“Clear away from here!” Menard called to the drunken rabble, who had collected a few rods away, and were now hesitating between laughter and fright. They stood looking at each other and at Menard, then they slunk away.

In all an hour had gone before they were ready to start. Guerin was weak and shivering from his plunge, but Menard ordered him into the canoe. The incident drew a cloud over the maid’s spirits, and altogether depressed the party, so that not until afternoon did they get into conversation. By that time they were past the Lachine Rapids and the Sault St. Louis, where the men made a portage, and Danton led the maid along the bank through the tangled brush and briers. When at last they were ready to push on across Lake St. Louis the maid’s skirt was torn in a dozen places, and a thorn had got into her hand, which Danton carefully removed with the point of his knife, wincing and flushing with her at each twinge of pain. During the rest of the day, they had an Iroquois lesson, and by the end of the afternoon when the sun was low, and Menard headed for the shore of Isle Perrot, the maid was bright again, laughing over Danton’s blunders in the new language.

They spent the next day on the island, for what with wind and rain the lake was impassable for their canoe. The men built a hut of brush and bark which sheltered the party from the driving rain. Menard’s mood lightened at the prospect of a rest, and he started a long conversation in Iroquois which soon had even Father Claude laughing in his silent way. The rain lessened in the afternoon, but the wind was still running high. Menard and the *engagés* went out early in the afternoon and repacked all the supplies, in order that the weight might be distributed more evenly in the canoe. With this and other work he was occupied until late in the afternoon. Father Claude took the occasion for a solitary walk, and for meditation. When Menard entered the hut he found the maid sitting with her head resting against one of the supporting trees. She wore a disturbed, unsettled expression. Danton evidently had been sitting or standing near her, for when Menard entered, stooping, he was moving across the hut in a hesitating, conscious manner. The Captain looked at them curiously.

“I’m afraid we’ll have to take away a part of your house to pay for your supper,” he said. “Everything is wet outside that might do for firewood. Lend a hand, Danton.” He gathered logs and

sticks from the floor and walls, and carried them out. Danton, after a quick look toward the maid (which, of course, Menard saw), did the same.

The Captain was the first to reenter the hut. The maid had not moved, and her eyes were puzzled and wearied, but she tried to smile.

“Has it stopped raining?” she asked.

Menard gave her an amused glance, and pointed to a sparkling beam of sunlight that came slanting in through an opening in the wall, and buried itself in a little pool of light on the trampled ground. She looked at it, flushed, and turned her eyes away. He stood for a moment, half minded to ask the question that was on his tongue, but finally held it back. In a moment Danton came back, looking suspiciously at each of them as he stooped to gather another armful of wood.

Menard was thoughtful during the evening meal. Afterward he slipped his arm through Father Claude’s, and led him for a short walk, giving him an account of the incident. “I didn’t say anything at the time,” he concluded, “partly because I thought I might be mistaken, and partly because it would have been the worst thing I could do. I begin to see—I should have foreseen it before I spoke to him about the girl—that we have trouble ahead, Father, with these precious children. I confess I don’t know just what to do about it. We must think it over. Anyway, you had better talk to her. She would tell you what she wouldn’t tell me. If he’s annoying her, we must know it.”

Father Claude was troubled.

“The maid is in our care,” he said, “and also in that of Lieutenant Danton. It would seem that he—”

“There’s no use in expecting him to take any responsibility, Father.”

“Yes, I suppose you are right. He is a child.”

“Will you go to the maid, Father, and get straight at the truth? You see that I cannot meddle with her thoughts without danger of being misinterpreted. It is you who must be her adviser.”

The priest acquiesced, and they returned to the camp, to find the maid still sitting alone, with a troubled face, and Danton puttering about the fire with a show of keeping himself occupied. They ate in silence, in spite of Menard’s efforts to arouse them. After the meal they hung about, each hesitating to wander away, and yet seeing no pleasure in gathering about the fire. Menard saw that Father Claude had it in mind to speak to the maid, so he got Danton away on a pretext of looking over the stores. But he said nothing of the episode that was in all their minds, preferring to await the priest’s report.

After the maid had gone to her couch beneath the canoe, and Danton had wandered into the wilderness that was all about them, Father Claude joined Menard at the fire.

“Well, Father, what word?”

“Softly, M’sieu. It is not likely that she sleeps as yet.”

“Well?”

“I have talked long with her, but she is of a stubborn mind.”

“How is that?”

“She was angry at first. She spoke hastily, and asked me in short terms to leave her in solitude. And then, after a time, when she began to see that it was her welfare and our duty which I had in mind, and not an idle curiosity, she was moved.”

“Did she speak then?”

“No, M’sieu, she wept, and insisted that there was no trouble on her mind,—it was merely the thought of her home and her father that had cast her down.”

“And so she has pride,” mused Menard. “Could you gather any new opinions, Father? Do you think that they may already have come to some understanding?”

“I hardly think so, M’sieu. But may I suggest that it would be well to be firm with Lieutenant Danton? He is young, and the maid is in our trust,”

“True, Father. I will account for him.”

There seemed to be nothing further to do at the moment, so the priest went to his blanket, and Menard drew a bundle under his head and went to sleep, after a glance about the camp to see that the sentry was on watch. Now that Montreal lay behind, and the unsettled forest before, with only a thin line of Frenchmen stretched along the river between them and Fort Frontenac, he had divided the night into watches, and each of the four *engagés* stood his turn.

The following day was all but half gone before the wind had dropped to a rate that made the passage of the lake advisable. Menard ordered the noon meal for an hour earlier than usual, and shortly afterward they set out across the upper end of Lake St. Louis to the foot of the cascades. Before the last bundle had been carried up the portage to Buisson Pointe, the dusk was settling over the woods across the river, and over the rising ground on Isle Perrot at the mouth of the Ottawa.

During the next day they passed on up the stream to the Coteau des Cedres. Menard and Father Claude were both accustomed to take the rapid without carrying, or even unloading, but Danton looked at the swirling water with doubt in his eyes. When the maid, leaning back in the canoe while the men halted at the bank to make fast for the passage, saw the torrent that tumbled and pitched merrily down toward them, she laughed. To hold a sober mood for long was not in her buoyant nature, and she welcomed a dash of excitement as a relief from the strained relations of the two days just gone.

“M’sieu,” she called to Menard, with a sparkle in her eyes. “Oh, M’sieu, may I stay in the canoe?”

Danton turned quickly at the sound of her voice, and a look, half of pain, half of surprise, came over his face as he saw her eagerness. Menard looked at her in doubt.

“It may be a wet passage, Mademoiselle.”

“And why not, M’sieu? Have I not been wet before? See, I will protect myself.” She drew the bundles closely about her feet, and threw a blanket across her knees. “Now I can brave the stream, Captain. Or,”—her gay tone dropped, and she looked demurely at him,—“perhaps it is that I am too heavy, that I should carry myself up the bank. I will obey my orders, Captain.” But as she spoke she tucked the blanket closer about her, and stole another glance at Menard.

He smiled. He was thinking of Madame Gordeau and her fragile daughter, who had shuddered with fear at a mere glimpse of the first rapid. “Very well,” he said, “Mademoiselle shall stay in the canoe.”

“But it is not safe”—broke in Danton, stepping forward. Then, conscious of the blunder, he turned away, and took up the rope.

“Lay hold, boys,” said Menard.

Perrot and one of the new men waded into the water, and laid hold of the gunwales on each side of the bow. Menard himself took the stern. He called to Danton, who stood awkwardly upon the bank, “Take the rope with the men.”

Guerin made the rope fast and set out ahead, with the other men and Danton close behind. Father Claude rolled up his robe and joined them.

“Wait,” called Menard, as the rope straightened. “Mademoiselle, I am sorry to disturb you, but if you will sit farther back you will have less trouble from the spray.” He waded along the side, and helped her to move nearer the stern, placing the bundles and the blanket about her as before. Then he shouted, “All right,” and they started into the foaming water.

They toiled slowly up the incline, catching at rocks to steady their course, and often struggling for a foothold. Once Menard ordered a halt at a large rock, and all rested for a moment.

When they started again, the men at the bow of the canoe had some trouble in holding it steady, for their feet were on a stretch of smooth rock, and Menard called Danton back to help them. The boy worked his way along the rope, and reached the bow.

“Come around behind Perrot,” said Menard.

Danton reached around Perrot’s body, and caught hold of the gunwale. At that moment his foot slipped, and he fell, dragging the side of the canoe down with him. The men at the bow did their

best to prevent a capsizing, but succeeded only in keeping half the bundles in the canoe. The others, the muskets, and the maid went into the river.

Menard moved forward as rapidly as he could against the current. The maid was unable at once to get her feet, used as she was to the water, and was swept down against him. He caught her, and, steadying himself with one hand, by the water-logged canoe, raised her head and held her while she struggled for a footing and shook the water from her eyes. Before she was wholly herself, Danton came plunging toward them.

“Give her to me!” he said huskily. “I’ve drowned her! My God, let me have her!”

“Stop,” said Menard, sternly. “Take the men, and go after those bales—quick!”

Danton looked stupidly at him and at the maid, who was wiping the water from her face with one hand, and holding tightly to the Captain. Then he followed Perrot, who had already, with the two new men and Father Claude, commenced to get together the bales, most of which had sunk, and were moving slowly along the bottom. Menard still had his arm about the girl’s shoulders. He helped her to the shore.

“Keep moving, Mademoiselle,—don’t sit down. In a moment we shall have a fire. Father Claude,” he called, “bring the canoe ashore.” Then to the maid, “There are yet some dry blankets, thank God.”

Mademoiselle was herself now, and she protested. “But it is only water, M’sieu. Let me go on with you, beyond the rapids.”

Menard merely shook his head. The canoe was soon on the bank, and emptied of water. The other men were beginning to come in with soaked bundles and dripping muskets. Each bale was opened, and the contents spread out to dry, while Guerin was set to work at drying the muskets with a cloth. Perrot and Danton built a rough shelter for the maid, enclosing a small fire, and gave her some dry blankets. Then each man dried himself as best he could.

This accident threw Danton into a fit of gloominess from which nothing seemed to arouse him. He was careless of his duty, and equally careless to the reprimands that followed. This went on for two days, during which the maid seemed at one moment to avoid him, and at another to watch for his coming. In the evening of the second day following, the party camped at Pointe à Baudet, on Lake St. Francis. The supper was eaten in a silence more oppressive than usual, for neither Menard nor Father Claude could overcome the influence of Danton’s heavy face and the maid’s troubled eyes. After the supper the two strolled away, and sat just out of earshot on a mossy knoll. For hours they talked there, their voices low, save once or twice when Danton’s rose. They seemed to have lost all count of time, all heed of appearances. Menard and the priest made an effort at first to appear unobservant, but later, seeing that their movements were beyond the sight of those unheeding eyes, they took to watching and speculating on the course of the conversation. The night came on, and the dark closed over them. Still the murmur of those low voices floated across the camp.

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