THE CHAMPLAIN ROAD

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THE
CHAMPLAIN ROAD

By

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FOREWORD

The tragedy of Huronia is one of those isolated episodes of history which historians have shown a disposition to neglect. Its rapidity of enactment, religious background and remote setting from the main stream of events combined to obscure its bearing upon the trend of colonial development in North America. My interest in Huronia was aroused, more years back than I care to remember, when a master dragged my unwilling feet to his room, and placing a finger upon a map of Ontario, Canada, said: "There is where the destiny of the continent was decided. Once and for all it was determined that the New World would not follow the pattern of European nationalism but would develop into two great Anglo-Saxon nations, the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada."

The point which he indicated was the site of Fort Ste. Marie I, near Midland, one-time administrative centre of the Jesuit Mission to the Hurons and today chiefly identified with the martyrdom of those courageous missionaries Jean de Brébeuf, Antoine Daniel, Gabriel Lalemant, Charles Garnier and Noël Chabanel, who with Isaac Jogues. Lay Brother René Goupil, both identified with the Huron Mission, and Layman John de la Lande, martyred in the Iroquois country, near Auriesville, N.Y., provide the Roman Catholic Church in the United States and Canada with the only canonizations in the Calendar of Saints.

That the source material for the decline and fall of Huronia is largely confined to the Jesuit *Relations* has been responsible to a degree for considering the Huronian episode in the light of a Church incident rather than in its true phase as a great historical experiment which, if successful, might have changed the entire course of history. In brief, it was a dream of a vast Indian empire in the heart of a savage continent. It was conceived by Samuel de Champlain, founder and a governor of New France, when the existence of the struggling French colony was threatened by Iroquois aggression. He foresaw that a strong French protectorate in the Huron country, 700 miles inland from Quebec, would be an effective brake to the ambitions of the Five Nations Confederacy and, at the same time, afford the benefits of civilization to the Hurons. To this end he invoked the aid of the Society of Jesus and its members responded, to their greater glory.

Their tenure of Huronia was a comparatively short one but the mission activities which they initiated were historic in character. They created the first experimental farm in agricultural records, established the initial social service effort, instructing the natives in the fundamentals of moral conduct, sanitation

and political science. They developed a form of State medicine and education. It is also possible to discern the germ of the military protectorate, which subsequently was to become an established fact of empire expansion. The astute Iroquois foresaw the peril of a militarized Huronia and they exerted their united strength to destroy its menace.

The conquest of Huronia provided many interesting sidelights. The civilized man was permitted, possibly to his misfortune, to witness one of those hitherto unrecorded clashes between two strong races, barely advanced beyond the first stages of social thought and having only a rudimentary development in which tattoo and totem played a predominant part. That the entire Huron race virtually ceased to exist at the close of the contest makes the episode unique in that all phases were chronicled by competent observers.

I have selected the closing years of this struggle as the background for my romance; for here is to be found all the ferocity and instability of the primitive man. It was the latter basic defect which ruined the Hurons. But for this they might have snatched victory from disaster. In my reconstruction of the period I am not insensible to certain anomalies and even what the competent historian might term major defects. I am well aware that the term *Huronia* has only been coined for a few years, that Nottawasaga Bay was not so named until the Iroquois over-ran the Tobacco Nation, and that *Hodenosaunee* is the true Iroquois name for their nation, the Hurons using the unpronounceable word *Hotinnonchiendi*. There is also the famous letter written by Father Jean de Brébeuf: it was inscribed by him, in 1636, at the Huron village of Ihonatiria, when he was the first Superior of the Mission, and not a dozen years later, as I indicate in my romance.

I have taken many liberties, such as some of those recounted; but in my reconstruction of the period I have attempted to preserve the spirit that was of old Huronia. I realize that my characterization of those courageous black-robed missionaries is not as Francis Parkman would have them depicted, and I believe that my interpretation is the more correct. They were men of high culture who came to a savage world in a noble cause and with no hope of earthly reward. That the unbridled ferocity and misunderstanding which everywhere met them should turn their thoughts to compensatory channels was natural. Hence their tragic world of the present and their spiritual world of the future drew close together in Huronia, and in a normal way which in no wise merited the strictures that Parkman saw fit to indulge his pen.

In this foreword, I would be remiss did I not express my appreciation of the great assistance given me by Rev. Ronald MacKinnon, S.J., Rector, St. Stanislas Novitiate, and Rev. John Penfold, S.J., Historian, Province of Upper Canada, for so kindly reading and checking the manuscript; to Rev. T. J. Lally,

S.J., Director, the Martyrs' Shrine, for his unfailing interest and suggestion. I must here acknowledge my indebtedness to the late Rev. Arthur Edward Jones, S.J., one-time Archivist, St. Mary's College, Montreal, from whose work, *Ouendake Ehen* (*Huronia That Was*), I have drawn heavily, as I did from the work of the late Rev. Julien Paquin, S.J., *The Tragedy of Old Huronia*. Indebtedness must also be acknowledged to the Jesuit *Relations* and to Parkman's *The Jesuits in North America* from which certain material has been taken.

The Martyrs' Shrine has fallen heir to the spiritual heritage of Fort Ste. Marie. After a lapse of almost three centuries the Order returned to the land sanctified by the martyrs' blood and deeds. In the intervening decades other hands had written new pages of history. White settlers moved into Huronia. Farms were hewed out of the forests, villages and towns were built. The railways came and a line was constructed within a few yards of the ruins of old Fort Ste. Marie. Huronia, in turn, passed through the progressive phases of a great Indian empire, a wilderness solitude, a pioneer settlement, and, lastly, that of a tourist centre, as a part of the Georgian Bay District, whose lakes and 30,000 islands, where the ancient Hurons once sought refuge from the victorious Iroquois, now make the country a noted Canadian summer resort.

In 1926, the Order acquired by purchase from the Canadian National Railways much of the farmlands of the old fort, including the "Lookout" height of land, from which the Jesuit fathers once kept watch and ward over Huronia; and the Church of the Martyrs' Shrine now stands as a living memorial to their courage and sacrifice. It is to be regretted from a national standpoint that the ruins of the old fort were not owned by the Canadian National System and so were not included in the parcel of 300 acres acquired for the Martyrs' Shrine.

A generation ago the walls and bastions of Fort Ste. Marie stood four feet above the ground. An era of industrial development opened and a road to parallel the railway line was contemplated. This involved the construction of a bridge over the Wye River and contractors ruthlessly destroyed the ruins to erect two massive stone piers. A whilom pastor of the Jesuit parish of Waubaushene saw this work of desecration under way and exclaimed, "This bridge never will be used!"

His words were prophetic. The projected road was abandoned in its entirety. What were once the walls and bastions of Fort Ste. Marie now stand in inglorious uselessness—a monument to man's materialistic vandalism.

Something intangible, something that is not of this world, lingers as a fragrant memory of the past in the ruins of Fort Ste. Marie. It gives expression to that spirit which animated all pioneers and gave them their wide vision and

will to achieve. This vision and will to achieve is as important in our national life today as it was in the past. Here is where Fort Ste. Marie is timeless in its importance as a great national memorial. To reconstruct it would be comparatively inexpensive and it would give to the Dominion a priceless, historic monument. The Martyrs' Shrine, which sprung from its foundations, could be made custodian of the fort for the people, and no national memorial would receive a more devoted attention.

In the meantime, the spirit that was of Fort Ste. Marie lives on.

FRANKLIN DAVEY MCDOWELL.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

THE CHAMPLAIN ROAD, northern route of the three roads from New France to Huronia and taken by Samuel de Champlain on his trip to the Huron Country, in 1615. It commenced at Quebec, followed the St. Lawrence to the mouth of the Ottawa, thence up the Ottawa to a point close to Lake Nipissing, across the Nipissing to the French River and into what is now Georgian Bay, a circuitous route, about 700 miles of portage and waterways; but the only remaining road not permanently closed by the Iroquois.

THE IROQUOIS TRAIL, formerly the Algonquin Trail, used by Champlain and his Huron allies in their 1615 raid into the Iroquois Country. It followed the Kawartha Lakes and waterways either to the Bay of Quinté or the Trenton outlet, on Lake Ontario. Closed by the Iroquois for many years.

THE THORONTOHEN WATERWAY, used by Father Jean de Brébeuf and other Huronian missionaries on their mission to the Neutral Indians. It followed the river chain south from Lake Simcoe to Toronto Bay.

HURONIA, or the Country of the Huron Indians, a peninsula in the Georgian Bay District, of Canada, now known as the County of Simcoe, Province of Ontario. The proper Huron name was *Ouendake*, derived from the land's geographical isolation and meaning the "One Land Apart". Hence the Huron name of *Ouendat*, or "People of One Land Apart".

FORT STE. MARIE I, administrative centre and residence of the Jesuit Mission to the Hurons, situated on the Wye River, about four miles from Midland, Ont. Erected in 1639, it was abandoned and burned in 1649, following the collapse of the Hurons before Iroquois incursions.

FORT STE. MARIE II, erected in 1649, on Christian Island, on northern tip of Nottawasaga Bay. Abandoned and burned within a year, upon extinction of Huronia.

THE MISSION TO THE HURONS comprised three missions in one. The Mission of the Saints to Huronia; the Mission of the

Apostles to the Tobacco Nation, or Petuns, occupying territory west of Nottawasaga River to Lake Huron; and the Mission of the Angels to the Neutral Country, embracing what is now South-Western Ontario and the Niagara Peninsula. This mission was withdrawn owing to the hostility of the Indians to the missionaries.

THE HURON FAMILY included the Hurons proper, the Tobacco Nation, the Neutrals and the Five Nations Confederacy, or Iroquois. The four clans forming the Hurons proper were: the Cord, chief village, *Teanaostaiaë*, or the "Sentinel of the River", and mission centre of St. Joseph II; the Bear, chief village, Ossossanë, or "Where the Corn Tops Wave", and mission centre of La Conception; the Rock, chief village, *Cahiagué*, or the "Fish Spearing Place", and mission centre of St. Jean-Baptiste; and Beyond the Morass, chief village, St. Louis (no Indian name) attached to mission centre of St. Ignace.

THE JESUIT MARTYRS

In Huronia:

Father Antoine Daniel, Indian name, *Anouennen*, slain by Iroquois at Mission of St. Joseph II. during capture of Teanaostaiaë, July 4th, 1648.

Father Jean de Brébeuf, *Echon*, captured at St. Louis, died at the stake, St. Ignace, March 16th, 1649.

Father Gabriel Lalemant, captured with Father Brébeuf, at St. Louis, died at the stake, St. Ignace, March 17th, 1649.

In the Tobacco Nation:

Father Charles Garnier, *Oaracha*, slain at Mission of St. Jean, during capture of Etharita, December 7th, 1649.

Father Noël Chabanel, slain by renegade Huron on Nattawasaga River, returning to Fort Ste. Marie II, December 8th, 1649.

In the Iroquois Country:

Father Isaac Jogues, *Ondessone*, supervised construction

of Fort Ste. Marie I, captured on Champlain Road, returning to Huronia, 1642, escaped after enduring terrible tortures to return to Iroquois country to establish Mission of the Martyrs and slain at the Mohawk village of Ossernenon (near Auriesville, N.Y.), October 18th, 1646.

Lay Brother René Goupil, captured on Champlain Road with Father Jogues, slain at Ossernenon, September 29th, 1642.

Layman John de la Lande, accompanied Father Jogues to Mission of the Martyrs, slain at Ossernenon, October 19th, 1646.

OTHER PERSONAGES:

Very Reverend Jérôme Lalemant, *Achiendossé*, Father Superior, the Mission to the Hurons, 1638-1644; Superior of the Mission in Canada, from 1645, with residence at Quebec.

Very Reverend Paul Ragueneau, *Aondecheté*, last Father Superior, the Mission to the Hurons, 1644-1650.

Father François Le Mercier, *Chaüosé*, Assistant to the Father Superior.

Father Pierre Chastelain, *Arioo*, Spiritual Director.

Father François Joseph Bressani, in charge of flotilla transportation between Huronia and Quebec on Champlain Road. Tortured and mutilated when captured by Iroquois, 1644. Escape effected by Dutch traders of Fort Orange, now Albany, N.Y., same year.

Godfrey Plantagenet Bethune, *Teanaosti*, Captain of the Musketeers, Forts Ste. Marie.

Annaotaka, War Chief of the Cord Clan and foremost warrior in Huronia.

Thodatouan, War Chief of the Bear Clan.

Arakoua, the “Sunbeam”, daughter of Annaotaka.

Atondo, sub-War Chief of the Cord Clan, at St. Ignace.

Enons, sub-War Chief of the Cord Clan, at Teanaostaiaë.

Onaotaha, War Chief of the Clan Beyond the Morass, at St. Louis.

Tarontas, War Chief of the Rock Clan, living at the Bear village of Angoutenc, or "Place Beyond the Torrent", or falls, since the abandonment of clan capital of Cahiagué, in early spring, 1648, owing to danger of Iroquois attack, and clan dispersed throughout other Huron villages less exposed to assault.

Awindoan, War Chief of the One White House, a sub-clan of the Cord with chief village at Scanonaenrat, Huron name for the sub-clan, and mission centre of St. Michel.

Diana Stanley Woodville, *Hinonaia*, claimed by Iroquois to be the Daughter of Agreskoui, or the Sun War God.

THE IROQUOIS, or the Five Confederate Nations, comprising the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas and occupying, from east to west, as named, a territory now embraced by New York State. The Five Nations were further sub-divided into eight clans. Their proper Indian name was Hodenosaunee, or People of the Long House.

THE ALGONQUINS, a widely-distributed Indian family, made up of many nations, including the Abenaki, Montagnais, Nipissing, Ojibwa, and, with the exception of lands occupied by the Huron Family, occupying a territory reaching from the Maritime Provinces almost to the head of the Great Lakes, in Ontario.

THE CHAMPLAIN ROAD

[Illustration: HURONIA
Now County *of* Simcoe *Province of Ontario*]

I

THE ANCIENT pine stood in lordly solitude on the crest of the Lookout, its broom of needles outspread to the suns and storms that for a century had beaten down upon Lake Isiaragui and Matchedash Bay. Skarontat the Hurons had named this lone tree and its roots drove deep into earth that was the heart of Huronia.

On the morning of July 4th, 1648, a black-robed priest stood by its great base and stared across the rolling panorama of forest and waterways, meadow and rockland. In the outline of his powerful frame there was that quality of unbending strength to be found in the mighty pine. Straight as the mainmast of a galleon, Skarontat stood as a landmark throughout the Huron empire.

Very Reverend Paul Ragueneau touched affectionately the rough girth of the venerable tree. To him Skarontat was something more than a landmark. Its resolute struggle for survival, its solid growth symbolized that solidity of the Kingdom of the Cross which was taking form under his direction in the depths of a savage continent. The Father Superior of the Mission to the Hurons, he was not building a New World domain for a day or a year. His vision of its future permanence was to be found in the stone walls and bastions, the palisades and outwork of Fort Ste. Marie. It was at once the administrative quarters of the Society of Jesus mission centres and a strategic outpost of the struggling settlements of New France, on the far-off shores of the St. Lawrence River.

Father Ragueneau looked with shining eyes at the cluster of white crosses set above the square, log superstructures of the five bastions and towered postern, the residence within the fort, and the wooden Church of St. Joseph, in the outwork. They stood in the drench of sunshine, four-square to a cloudless sky, on the flatlands at the edge of the long slope to the Lookout, 300 feet beneath him. He turned sharply at the rasping scream of an eagle and gazed northward where the inlets of Matchedash Bay lay as sparkling, emerald fingers reaching into the enchanting profusion of islands and wooded points, to melt in breath-taking beauty into that misty background ten leagues distant.

The Father Superior eyed the glorious, golden trail made by the morning sun down the wide channel to a river, which flowed lazily past the flatlands from lake to bay. Here was the end of the Champlain Road, that long, winding highway of lake, river and portage between Quebec, rock-girt capital of New France, and Fort Ste. Marie, unofficial capital of Huronia. Father Ragueneau sighed and tapped at an outcropping of rock. He thought of that summer, back in 1615, when Samuel de Champlain, founder and governor of New France,

had journeyed 700 miles, through uncharted forest and over foaming waterways, from Quebec to Huronia, and in an evil hour linked the fortunes of the struggling French settlements with the Hurons. Champlain had never returned to Huronia, but memory of his adventurous exploration was kept alive by the Champlain Road and the implacable Iroquois hatred of all things French and Huron. For Champlain's raid to chastise the Five Nation Confederacy in their country, south of the wide waters of Ontare, had been repulsed with loss and the great explorer was forced to retreat with his defeated Huron allies to nurse their wounds in the safety of the northern woods. Now, a generation later, the victorious Iroquois had closed the Champlain Road. Fort Ste. Marie, its missionaries, laymen and detachment of Musketeers were beleaguered as effectively as though a host of those Five Nations warriors howled about the walls.

The Father Superior loved every foot of this land of the Hurons, each bark chapel of its dozen missionary centres, every palisade of its score of Indian villages. Here he had lived for more than a decade as a simple missionary and as beloved head of the mission, and here he hoped to end his days in the service of the Cross. Huronia was ideally moulded by Nature to be shaped into a Christianized protectorate of New France. Ouendake, the Hurons called their empire, or the One Land Apart, a deft turn of speech to describe a vast neck of land, shut off at the shoulder by that natural barrier, the Blue Hills. It was thought of this southern frontier which had brought lines of worry to Father Ragueneau's fine, strong face and high forehead, fringed by curls of grey hair that crept from under the edge of his black skullcap. Along this frontier Iroquois bands prowled with short-axe and firebrand, and no way had been devised to protect the Hurons against their surprise attacks.

The Father Superior rubbed a ruddy, clean-shaven cheek and fingered short-clipped, grey moustache, which bristled over full lips, humorously curved above a clean, square chin. He pivoted quickly, at the sound of scuffling feet and smiled, with a touch of apprehension, at a young, sun-browned officer, in the blue, undress uniform of the Musketeers, climbing the height of land. "Ah, Godfrey! it is so seldom you visit the Lookout these days. Any hint of trouble?"

"Only in my fears, mon père." Captain Godfrey Plantagenet Bethune removed plumed, beaver hat by its wide brim and wiped a perspiring face with a wet hand. "It's the south that worries me and we know the Iroquois are out in force."

Father Ragueneau looked across the wide acreage of the fort, sown to corn and meadow hay, and pastures wherein browsed fat cattle and sheep. "A land so fruitful and so promising, and our only road to Quebec closed." He stopped,

then gestured toward the bay. His voice was deep. “Only four weeks ago I sent Father Bressani and his flotilla of 15 score warriors out there to try and force the Iroquois blockade. Father Bressani! His mutilated hands and scarred body bear testimony to Iroquois ferocity. I wonder, if this time, I have sent each man to his death—even worse, the stake and slow fire? What is your mind, Godfrey?”

Godfrey thought of Annaotaka, war chief leading the fifteen score Huron fighting men. Unrepentant pagan, face drawn into ferocious twist by tattoo needle, with six eagle feathers rising from a ridge of bristling hair, following the centre of his plucked head, from brow to nape of neck, Annaotaka looked as he was, a warrior who gloried in war. “Annaotaka fears neither Iroquois nor Hinonaia.”

“Hinonaia! The Little Thunder of the Hurons. The Iroquois claim she is the daughter of their war-god, Areskoui. Truly she is a spawn of the evil one come to earth!” Father Ragueneau sat heavily on a bench at the base of the big pine, and studied the eight-furlong flow of the river beneath him.

“We must be on watch,” Godfrey cautioned. “The Iroquois have attacked on the east and south. On the east, they destroyed Contarea, near Couchiching Lake. We beat them off on the south; but what happened? The big village of Cahiagué, by the Fish Spearing Lake, moved away. Too exposed to attack. Teanaostaiaë is the new frontier. And they have come again—in strength. If we only had more intelligent chiefs like Annaotaka and Thodatouan, even women such as Arakoua, to watch the trails!”

“Arakoua!” The Father Superior’s face clouded at the name. He dismissed thoughts of her for more pressing problems. “The flotilla must get through to Quebec—and return. Supplies are urgently required. Axe-heads, long knives and iron barbs for arrows. The Hurons must be armed—and we require powder and lead for our own men. The hour of crisis has come. Should we not emerge victorious . . .” The sentence was left unfinished. His capable fingers crushed the worn black serge robe beneath their thick tips, eyes fixed upon dormer windows of the big, log-squared residence over the walls of Fort Ste. Marie. This was his House of Ste. Marie, the “Abode of Peace” to the missionaries, and to which they returned thrice a year to renew their strength in meditation, rest and prayer.

Father Ragueneau leaped to his feet. “No! It cannot be written that all this should pass!” The cry was wrung from the sores of his heart. “We will remain and triumph. This fortress is the stronghold of Christ in a pagan land, a bulwark of New France, whose Christian people must have time to strengthen their defences against the Iroquois.”

Instinctively his eyes focused on the threatened frontier. It lay concealed behind a dark bank of clouds that had gathered ominously from the south. As he looked a spiral of white smoke seemed to float upward and vanish. The Father Superior's voice arose in sharp alarm. "Did you see smoke in the south?"

Godfrey turned quickly. "I can see nothing, mon père. It may have been one of those heavy, white clouds that sometimes steam from the damp hills. I have seen them as thick as white smoke."

"You may be right," Father Ragueneau said slowly. "I have seen such myself. Yet, I cannot forget Father Brébeuf's vision, when he saw that vast, dark cross float over Huronia from the Iroquois country. 'Big enough to crucify all of us,' he said at the time."

"That was eight years ago, mon père."

"And the situation has grown steadily worse. I trust that my fears are without cause." The Father Superior answered heavily and sat anxiously watching the south.

Godfrey scowled. Father Ragueneau's words worried him more than he cared to admit. No one knew better than he the peril to New France once Huronia was obliterated. The Iroquois would mass their strength against the French settlements of Quebec, Three Rivers and Ville Marie de Montreal. The island outpost of Montreal, less than six years old, was an especially feeble effort of colonization and with it overwhelmed, the other two might well be ruined in a welter of blood and fire. He stared at the stump lots across the river, where Master Builder Charles Boivin and his workmen had felled elm saplings to strengthen the palisades of the fort, and then looked beyond the shadowy tangle of forest stretching to Nottawasaga Bay.

On its shores, three leagues away, was Ossossanë. That village was the home of Thodatouan, war chief of the Bear Clan, a spirited leader, second only to Annaotaka, war chief of the Cord. With Annaotaka leading 250 warriors somewhere on the lower reaches of the Ottawa River to open the Champlain Road, Thodatouan was the hope of Huron defence against Iroquois invasion. But his active assistance to the threatened southern frontier was problematical. So ineffectual was the Huron communal system of government that it was impossible to delegate supreme authority to any leader even in a time of gravest peril. Godfrey swore softly at the fatuousness of the Hurons.

He pictured Huronia as he had seen it . . . villages with unguarded palisades . . . long bark houses, roofs rounded to meet at a central opening . . . clan arms rudely painted above the vestibule entrance . . . the sign of the Bear, Cord, Rock or People Beyond the Morass . . . groups of maidens laughing and

lounging in filthy alleys . . . old women squatted in the dirt grinding corn . . . naked brats crawling in dust and refuse . . . that was Teanaostaiaë, Keeper of the River, largest village in Huronia . . . and the haughty figure of Arakoua, daughter of Annaotaka . . . Arakoua named after the sunbeam, who on ceremonious occasions wore wealth beyond dreams of avarice in white wampum . . . .

He thought of his last meeting with her and smiled cynically. She had stood before him, an uninhibited child of the forest, perfect of form, rounded of flesh and stormy of emotions. In her sight he was not Godfrey Bethune, Captain of the King's Musketeers, but Teanaosti, Guardian of the Beautiful River, a warrior to whose judgment great chiefs paid deference; and her eyes were appraising, possessive. He knew the danger that lurked behind their devouring light. A white man was an irresistible lure to Indian women and generous latitude was given them in their amours. He had only to think of the admirers—mates for a convenient season—who had adorned Arakoua with her wealth of white wampum to comprehend the easy morals of the Huron maidens.

Arakoua was no wanton to be treated lightly. She was a product of the national lack of discipline, no better nor worse than her pagan clanspeople. Godfrey thoroughly understood the Huron character, its strength and its weakness, and she was a perfect example of the national characteristics at their best and their worst. Arakoua would war to the death against the Hodenosaunee, or the People of the Long House, as the Iroquois were known, and she would battle as fiercely against her own people, did she fancy an affront given. Arakoua, he decided, must be suppressed without mercy should the necessity arise.

She was one of the two women to be considered in this hour of crisis. The second was that mysterious figure whose shadow fell over Huronia as a black blight. The Hurons associated her with the reverberating war cry of the Iroquois and spoke in bated breath of Hinonaia, or the Little Thunder. Godfrey knew not whether she was of flesh and blood, or a figment of terrified imagination. No Huron had seen Hinonaia and lived to tell of what he saw. Tales of her supernatural origin and power filtered through the length and breadth of the land and Huron sorcerers declaimed that she was a sister of Etienne Brulé, Champlain's interpreter, murdered by the Bear Clan, in 1634. To avenge his death, they averred, she took spirit form and flew over the country scattering seeds of pestilence and epidemic. Now, she had openly allied herself with the traditional enemy, as a golden-skinned maiden, whose eyes and hair burned with the fire of the sun; and nothing would placate her vengeful spirit but extinction of the entire race.

Godfrey swore under his breath at the credulity of the Hurons. He could find nothing definite which they knew of Hinonaia, except that heard from the Algonquins. From these futile chatterings weird patterns of disaster had been woven. To his mind all Algonquins, no matter what nation stemmed from their stock,—Ottawas, Nipissing, Ojibways, or any other of the numerous strain—one and all they were accomplished liars, almost as notorious as the Hurons, themselves. Both the Ottawas and the Nipissings had been driven from their hunting grounds into the maze of Muskoka waterways the year before, when the Champlain Road was closed. They had spread the Hinonaian myth, he was satisfied, to explain the ease of their overthrow.

He started at a faint shout from a sentry on the river-front palisade. The Father Superior pointed to the far corner of the stump lot, as a messenger, four feathers upright in the brush of his hair, strode from the Ossossanë trail in a long, tireless swing that ate up the leagues quickly. “A messenger from Thodatouan, a pagan but trustworthy.” Father Ragueneau frowned. “Come, we must meet him at the landing basin. I would that the chief had come himself.”

II

THODATOUAN, naked but for the breech-clout and fine traceries of blue and red tattoo lines, winding in intricate design over his muscular body, sat on a stump by the edge of the Ossossanë corn fields, scowling at the serried ranks of triple palisade points, which made an impregnable defence around the largest village of the Bear Clan. He turned to a warrior hunched on the ground, saturnine face black with reproof. “I came from my house to this silent seat, where there are no other ears, and you speak slow words.”

The other grunted defensively. “The words are slow words, O Thodatouan, because they are not good. I followed the hunting trail for half a sun and came to Scanonaenrat. It was dark when I reached this village of the One White Lodge and there I saw Arakoua, daughter of Annaotaka.”

“Had the Sunbeam her wampums with her?” the chief’s dark eyes flashed.

“No, O Thodatouan. The wampums were hidden in the forest. She and one other woman were alone. She had left her village because the sub-chief, Enons, was a fool. He kept no watch of a night. She told him the Hawk had spoken to her and said red fire would turn Teanaostaiaë to grey ashes. He, who is chief now that Annaotaka is on the long river, would not listen. So, she could stay no longer in a place that had offended the Hawk.”

“Enons is a little chief and a big fool. The Hawk spoke words of truth to her. I have felt within me that the Hodenosaunee will come and that soon.” The chief looked sternly at the warrior. “A tied tongue is a safe tongue. I would be alone with my mind.”

Thodatouan stared at the ground and the lines in his face deepened. Arakoua had been warned by her guardian spirit, the Hawk, which the Great Spirit had shown her during the traditional fast marking the transition from childhood to womanhood. Thodatouan no more doubted the Hawk as her protector than he doubted the protective influence of the Bear, which came to him in a dream at the fast of pubescence. The Hawk had spoken to her with the voice of intuition and such small voices do not lie. She foresaw disaster, otherwise she would not have spoken thus of her guardian spirit.

He slowly walked to the village gates, where a group of youths wagered on a game of odd and even straws. He beckoned to one with four feathers of a messenger tied in a knot of hair. “You know Teanaosti, chief of the fighting men at the big stone fort. Say you to him that Thodatouan hears the voice of Hinonaia from the land of Hodenosaunee. If he asks how, or why, you speak thus and so.”

The chief gave his instructions in a quick, sharp whisper and dismissed the messenger with an impatient wave of the hand. “Teanaosti is a man and a warrior,” he confided to a withered apple tree. “He will know what my words say.”

Thodatouan glanced back and frowned at the excited gamblers. “I will return to the seat of silence and mark out my trail for the coming of the next sun. There is a duty to my brother, Annaotaka, who is not here, and to Arakoua, who is here.”

Arakoua stood by a pool, beside an obscure path which cut the trail between Skanonaenrat and Teanaostaiaë, and glared at her companion. “The Clan of the One White House! They are no clan but the slops of my own people. They are as lice, pah!” She spat and wriggled her shoulders.

“I am tired. I did not close my eyes last night.” The woman whined.

“Could anyone sleep in that crawling house!” Arakoua wriggled again and stamped a moccasined foot in futile rage. “Me, the daughter of a great war chief, they treat me no better than they would a Hodenosaunee slave.”

She pulled off the deerskin dress, threw it beside her companion and sat upon it. “I will remember the One White Lodge people. Where shall we go?”

“Back to our own house?” the other ventured.

“Back to Teanaostaiaë? No! The voice within me said it was death. And there is Enons! He will not forget the words I said to him, he who licks the hands of the black-robed ondaki. What happens to a fox pup that licks a strange paw?” She looked at the woman crouching beside her. “I, Arakoua, will tell you. The fox pup will come to a bad end. So will Enons. The Keeper of the Wampums heard me tell him thus and so, and he can record my words, that the black robes have addled his mind so that he forgets the Hodenosaunee and the Thorontohen Road.”

She clasped hands about legs and fell to thinking of the Thorontohen Waterway, which followed the dip of the streams through the Neutral territory for five days’ trip to an island sheltered bay, on the wide Ontare. Here was Thorontohen that gave the Waterway name, a place of trade used by Neutral and Iroquois. Across the lake was the Seneca country, nearest of the Five Nations to Huronia; and the Thorontohen Waterway had been closed to the Hurons for years.

“Enons is a big fool,” Arakoua continued. “The Hodenosaunee will come up from Thorontohen and a great crowd shall wail as they tramp past Ekarenniondi on their way to the Land of the Shades.”

The woman nodded dully. Something of a shudder shook her thin frame.

Ekarenniondi, the Standing Rock, that grim road-mark to the Huron spirit land, had been much in her mind during the past hours. Three leagues from the end of Nottawasaga Bay, the Standing Rock reared its bulk from a desert of boulders and desolation as might a ruined keep of a once-noble castle. Scarred and pitted by the storms of centuries, its sides were painted with pictorial records of valorous chiefs who had passed that way, so that other wayfarers, less courageous, would know that great hearts had gone before them and march on undismayed. Arakoua laughed savagely. "The road past Ekarenniondi will be crowded with warriors and women on their last journey. Out of their sleep, and in their own houses, will they be awakened with the red short-axe in their eyes. They will see no more in this world."

She sneered at the crouching woman. "You are tired and frightened. I am tired and fearless. There is a sweat-box here. We will make a fire and steam. We could go to that new place, St. Ignace." She pronounced the name with difficulty, then added, "Atondo, my father's chief, there, is as bewitched as Enons, and more dangerous. Some day he will get himself killed. I, Arakoua, say this to you."

She unclasped fingers from interlocking grip about her legs and prodded the woman with a vigour that brought forth a yelp of protest. "Squeal not, O dead bones. Go get firewood to heat the stones and we will sweat and be fresh again. Then we will take a new trail to the great, stone fortress and see Teanaosti, even the great chief Aondecheté, himself."

The Aondecheté of the Hurons, otherwise the Father Superior, paused before the massive stone tower of the postern, eyed the heavy iron-braced oak gates and sighed. "Only a few hours ago Father Brébeuf passed through here on his way to St. Ignace, and just yesterday morning Father Daniel left for his mission of St. Joseph—brave men gleaning in dangerous fields and they know not what hour may bring them death, or worse." He shook his head. "These fortifications were reared under the direction of Father Jogues. What terrible agonies he endured at the Iroquois torture stake! Fingers burned away to first and second joints, and even worse than that. Truly he was a martyr of Christ; and I—"

He left the sentence unfinished until he had passed through the courtyard to the palisade gate where the heavy planks spanned the water ditch to the outwork. "I feel like the veriest coward hiding behind these defences when my brothers are braving such dangers in the field." They reached the inner landing basin, just as the messenger arrived.

"Teanaosti," the youth began without preamble, a sign that his message was of importance, "the great war chief, Thodatouan, hears the voice of

Hinonaia from the land of the Hodenosaunee."

"They live far away, seven days' journey to their first village," Godfrey said slowly.

"The voice is coming closer. The Little Thunder may be heard at any sunrise." Not a muscle of the tattooed face moved.

"Ears may hear false noises, as they may hear what is not in the forest of the night."

"There was no night and there was no forest; the ears that heard were ears that make no mistakes."

"Did the eyes that belong to the ears see the Little Thunder? Did they behold her, as one beholds an enemy standing before them?" Godfrey inquired sceptically.

The youth grunted negatively. Godfrey stared doubtfully and dismissed him with courteous words of thanks. "Thodatouan has received a warning of some sort. It's all very indefinite, and I don't know how much faith to put in it. Of course, this Hinonaia is a lie."

"I am not so sure Hinonaia is a lie." Father Ragueneau turned to retrace his steps to the fort. "There must be some substance for the general belief. The Algonquins claim to have seen her. They say she is a golden woman, a devil hot from hell who urges the Iroquois on to slaughter. They say she has a bodyguard of chiefs. Truly the powers of evil mass their attack."

"We must find a way to prove she is a lie."

"She is no lie to the Hurons," the Father Superior said and slowly ascended the ladder to the palisade defence platform.

"I wish I could get a chance at her—if she exists," Godfrey returned warmly, scaling the ladder to join him on the rampart. "If the Hurons would only forget this nonsense and unite, we could teach the Iroquois such a lesson they would be glad to let us alone for a generation."

"I know of nothing that can be done. The sorcerers wield a tremendous influence for evil and pursue us with malignant hatred. We can but place our faith in the divine will and try to soften their hearts." Father Ragueneau answered sadly and walked to the rampart curve, where the palisade turned to flank the outwork water ditch.

Godfrey glanced at the well-knit figure and felt relief that the future of the Huron mission was under such capable direction. He knew that should Huronia fall it would not be due to lack of intelligent effort, or courageous defence, but solely to exhaustion of resources against a resolute and tenacious foe. In Father Ragueneau there was another captain of the faith such as Jean de Brébeuf,

himself a one-time father superior during the pioneer years of the mission. Father Brébeuf had been succeeded by Very Reverend Jérôme Lalemant, now Superior of the Order in New France, with residence in Quebec. It was Father Lalemant, who, with practical organizing ability, had seen the weakness of decentralization in the dangerous Huron field and had concentrated the separate missions into an administrative unit, at Fort St. Marie.

Father Ragueneau had taken over direction of the Huron Mission upon the elevation of Father Lalemant to Quebec, and under a new decree that the superior of Huronia should hold office for a period of not more than three years. Godfrey knew that Father Ragueneau's time to retire was close at hand and he thought with approval of his talk with Father Brébeuf that morning, when the priest intimated that he had written to the Superior General pleading for Father Ragueneau's retention of office. "He is in truth an excellent superior," Father Brébeuf had penned. "He is accomplished in all respects, has no equal here, and may never have. The mission is much indebted to him for his prudent, firm, yet gentle government."

Godfrey was gratified at this tribute. Father Ragueneau was as a father to him. He glanced affectionately at the black-robed figure, as the Father Superior's mouth tightened. "We have Indian visitors. I see them in the outwork, over double palisades and a water ditch, just as any coward would. Why am I not out in the villages, sharing the dangers with my brothers?"

He glanced upward at the blockhouse superstructures of the twin bastions by the inner landing basin, then into the outwork, where the white Church of St. Joseph stood beside the Indian guest house and the hospital building, and, lastly, he eyed a cabin with its barred windows. One section of this was his outwork cabinet; the other, the dispensary of Apothecary Joseph Molère, whose compounds were highly prized by all but most stubborn pagans. "A prisoner!" Father Ragueneau added, in quiet desperation. "A prisoner behind stone and oak."

"A general, mon père, directing his forces in a defensive campaign," Godfrey amended. "Six years ago Huronia embraced the entire peninsula, ten leagues wide and a dozen leagues deep. Now it's shrunk to almost half that size. Teanaostaiaë is—"

"Our mission of St. Joseph!" Father Ragueneau interrupted sharply. "It's capture is unthinkable. Father Daniel and you supervised the defences. If it were smoke I saw, it could not have come from Teanaostaiaë. It could withstand any assault."

"Not a surprise attack, and it is the logical place to strike. Annaotaka is away with the best warriors. Enons is an ambitious sub-chief. I warned Father

Daniel to watch him."

"Father Daniel spoke to me of his interest in our teachings," the Father Superior said absently. "Father Daniel did not think him sincere but saw a political consideration behind—" He stopped as a tall figure in a black cassock rounded the twin bastions. "Father Chastelain has returned. I must talk over some matters with him."

Godfrey watched the two priests walk toward the House of Ste. Marie with a lighter heart. The Spiritual Director of the Mission to the Hurons, Pierre Chastelain ministered to the dozen villages attached to the residence. Godfrey feared for him when he went forth upon the lonely journey of five leagues to visit his parishioners. With small bands of Iroquois infesting the trails, life was uncertain in Huronia.

III

THE IROQUOIS would strike in strength, Godfrey knew. He hoped an opportunity would come to lead the Hurons in a ranged battle. He was confident of the Huron warriors following him, for he had led them to victory but six months before. Tall, slim and forest-bitten, his lean face, not unlike that of the war chief Annaotaka in profile, was burned to the deep brown of oiled leather by the fire of the sun and the lash of the wind. His granite nerves and cunning had won him distinction throughout the Huron clans.

He glanced at his slender hand and long fingers, flexible with the strength of steel, and laughed softly. That hand had snapped the axe-arm of an Iroquois as mid-winter frost snaps the limb of a tree. The incident occurred in the Seneca raid of the last autumn and the raiders had fled Huronia roundly trounced, leaving behind them prisoners to writhe at the Huron torture stake. Godfrey grimaced. It was not war that prisoners should be burned in slow fires or mutilated in helpless agony. To kill in the heat of battle he understood, not the diabolical acts of cruelty practised impartially by Hurons and Iroquois upon helpless victims. He had mercifully shot the captive with the broken arm and it said much for his ascendency over the victorious, howling Hurons that they had permitted such an act of mercy.

The Captain of the Musketeers thrummed finger tips against the palisade and studied the brown hardness of his hands. Soon they would be the hands of a seigneur. Five more years to serve as the Captain of the Musketeers and he could then take his rightful place as a member of the gentry of New France. The location of his seigneury did not interest him. Ville Marie, Three Rivers, or even near Quebec, where his lands might lie was a matter of no importance. He had fought the Iroquois in Huronia and bested them. He would find himself a suitable chatelaine for the stone manoir and found a family with its roots sunk deep in the soil. He struck the parapet a blow of satisfaction, then frowned. In roseate dreams he had forgotten the plight of Huronia. There was no security that Fort Ste. Marie could withstand the Iroquois for five months rather than the required five years of service. He leaned against the parapet and moodily watched the flow of the river.

Heat waves spun misty forms and figures upon its broad surface, as if an endless succession of mirrors were passing to reflect the infinite blue of a sun-washed sky. The slow drift of the water to Matchedash Bay caught up his world in a hypnotic rhythm that fascinated by suggestion of strange fantasies. The motionless pines of the far shore seemed to recede into dim distance, then

advance in sombre menace, the blue-black of their needles outthrust as countless darts held by invisible fingers. A faint undertone came to him in measured roll. The Thunder Birds of the Hurons were stirring in their invisible nests, high up where that bright lamp, the Evening Star, lights the black vault of night after the sun has passed to the Land of the Souls in the gold and crimson of its glory. Godfrey nodded indolently at this fancy of Indian mythology and waited with detached interest for the Thunder Birds to open and close their wings, so that the skies would flash with fire. A curious lethargy crept over him. He grew indifferent to immediate associations. A sense of omnipresence, of a knowledge intuitive in its exactness, was his, as surely as if a bolt from the Thunder Birds had rent an opening in the screen of the future through which he might see.

He knew that with the Thunder Birds flashing across the heavens, the Iroquois were stalking through the forest. The flames in the skies became great pyramids of fire rising from Huron villages given over to torch, the red-gold of the sun-rays on the river darkened to ugly crimson of Huron blood that stained both earth and water; and so, too, had the needles of the pines turned to arrows and they drove against the walls and bastions of Ste. Marie as rain is driven upon the thrust of the wind. He jerked upright, made to shout alarm and gaped in confused dismay.

The river moved on its unruffled way and the sun shone in unbroken calm. Only the low rumble of thunder from out over Huron's wide waters broke the summer's peace. Godfrey looked fearfully about him. It was hard to accept the reality of this security and quiet. He stared with unbelieving eyes toward the forest. He had never considered it in such ominous terms before. Always it had been friendly, sheltering him from enemies. True, there were dangers concealed, but they were dangers to be expected and he had faced them with high heart. Now, he had seen the forest in a new mood, an intangible thing, implacable in enmity, its very shadow surcharged with disaster. Despite the heat of the day he shivered. Strange things, he knew, happened in Huronia. Many were the visions seen by the mission fathers and the miracles done before their eyes; and they often spoke of good and evil spirits encountered in their daily work.

There was Jean de Brébeuf, whom Godfrey had passed through the postern gate only a few hours before, a mystical personality in a vigorous body, bearded and strong of bone and muscle as the noblest of his noble Norman forebears; and as they had taken the Cross, so did he; only his crusade carried him to the far-off wilderness of the New World. There his beard and black fringe of stiff hair had grown grey, but his great strength and massive frame defied years and hardships.

And Father Isaac Jogues, delicate of mould and retiring of disposition, was a man of deepest humility, who lived only for the good that he could do. He had come to Huronia a dozen years before, when less than thirty years old and a priest a mere seven months. Under his capable direction Fort Ste. Marie had taken form and strength, and a scant three years after its completion, he had been captured in an Iroquois ambush of a supply flotilla returning from Quebec. With him was taken René Goupil, noted Parisian surgeon, journeying to Fort Ste. Marie to take charge of the hospital. Father Jogues might have effected his escape, for accident left him concealed in a thicket of tall reeds and the way to freedom was invitingly open. A swift runner, he could have outstripped the fleetest pursuer and his capture alone was due to high ideals and fearless sense of duty. "How could I desert these poor Frenchmen, neophytes and catechumens entrusted to my care by the Lord?" he had written. "It was my duty to face even death by fire to save them from perdition. I called out to an Iroquois to come and take me. He hesitated, fearing an ambush. 'Be not afraid,' I said, 'conduct me to the French and Huron prisoners.' When I saw René Goupil, who had fought so courageously, I embraced him affectionately . . ."

There was much more that Godfrey remembered only disjointedly . . . of the journey into the Mohawk country, "sufferings of the body almost intolerable," Father Jogues had said; for upon him and Lay Brother Goupil fell the fury of Iroquois resentment and they excelled in devising atrocious tortures. Only the anguish of slow fire at the stake was spared them and in those days of torment it was as if they stood together on Calvary, one with those at the foot of the Cross. A short-axe put a period to René Goupil's sufferings, but Father Jogues was miraculously preserved, smuggled to safety by the Dutch and sent to France to be welcomed by the Queen, Anne of Austria. Iroquois ferocity had mutilated him so, that being imperfect of body, with hands mutilated, he had been deprived of the consolation of saying mass; and this Pope Urban VIII had restored by special dispensation. He was back in Canada again, courageously entering the lands of his inexorable enemies to found the new Mission of the Martyrs to the Mohawks. Well might he have written, as did Father Bressani, "I could not have believed that a man was so hard to kill."

Then there was Antoine Daniel, now at his mission of St. Joseph, in the big Huron frontier town of Teanaostaiaë—he of the thin face, skin tightly drawn over cheek bones, and mouth a straight, determined line. Godfrey admired Father Daniel's soldierly bearing. He was a fitting brother to the valiant Captain Charles Daniel, whose name was a byword for high adventure in the ports of the Old World and the New. Father Daniel's close-cropped hair and

beard, and eyes deeply-set, black and flashing, all were in keeping with the military swing of the hard, brown body, proclaiming him as true a soldier of the Cross as was his brother a sailor of the Crown. Each day held its miracles for Father Daniel and time and again divine intervention had thwarted the cherished ambition of his life, the crown of martyrdom.

It was invidious, Godfrey knew, to assign special virtues to one or three of the fine group of men labouring in Huronia, when those same virtues were common to the eighteen fathers of the mission . . . François Joseph Bressani, who wrote from an Iroquois village to the Superior General, "I do not know if your paternity will recognize the handwriting of one whom you once knew very well. The letter is soiled and ill-written because the writer has only one finger on his right hand left entire and cannot prevent the blood from his wounds, which are still open, from staining the paper. His ink is gunpowder mixed with water and his table is earth." And Father Bressani was once more travelling the Champlain Road, upon which he and Father Jogues had been captured . . . Charles Garnier, born to wealth and position and so absorbed in his rigorous pastoral duties that the letters from home lay neglected for days before he found time to open them . . . Noël Chabanel, a self-imposed exile from France and his beloved chair of rhetoric to a mode of life repugnant in every way, who each day suffered a martyrdom of the flesh but not of the spirit . . . men as diverse as the sun and the stars are diverse, and, one and all, they walked with the saints and fought the forces of darkness in all honour . . . men who lived and moved in an atmosphere which brought the supernatural to the borderline of common experience.

The Captain of the Musketeers was essentially a soldier and concerned himself little with affairs spiritual. His business was that of arms and war, not of doctrine or speculation, for by nature he was a man of action and a realist. He reviewed his disturbing experience, and found but one logical explanation. The heat of the day and rhythmical movement of the river combined to dull perception, so that submerged fears were imaged upon the mirror of consciousness. He hit the palisade a resounding thump. Its wood, at least, was stout and real, great boles of elm upstanding to defy the clutching fingers of enemies. He turned with a start. A shout came from the twin bastions. The church bell pealed out a warning to all workmen. He looked to the south and Lake Isiaragui, and saw two canoes race into the river. He swung over the palisade platform and dropped the eighteen feet to the ground, just as Father Ragueneau and Father Le Mercier, Assistant to the Superior, hastened from the residence. Godfrey growled out what he had seen. Father Ragueneau stared in anguished suspense. Father Le Mercier's thin face whitened, his angular form straightened, and arms opened in a gesture of despair.

They reached the inner landing basin, as a twist of paddle blades spun canoes into the water ditch. Two Hurons stumbled to shore, quivering from exertion. “We come from the land of death,” one gasped and threw out his hands in the act of mourning.

IV

TEANAOSTAIAË, the Keeper of the River! Ekhiondastsaan, the Place where Water is Pressed Out! They are no more," the other cried brokenly. "The sun shines as blood over—"

"St. Joseph destroyed by the Iroquois!" Father Ragueneau's voice was metallic. "You tell me this?"

"We tell you that, O Aondecheté, and the other village. The Hodenosaunee came suddenly upon them."

"Out of the forest they came," added the second, "as though the moon of the dead was full in the sky; and the Clan of the Cord sends many journeying to the Land of the Shades."

Godfrey interrupted impatiently. "What nations were in the attack?"

"We saw the warriors of the Angnieneeron," was the sullen reply.

"The Mohawks." Godfrey ignored the Hurons' resentment at the abruptness of the question.

"Anouennen! What of him?" There was a curious, flat tone in the Father Superior's voice as he spoke of Father Daniel by his Huron name that made Father Le Mercier stare in surprise.

"We know nothing of Anouennen. We heard he was at Teanaostaiaë."

"As I feared." Father Ragueneau's face was as white as chalk stone. "Do you wait, rest and eat. Our men will look after your wants."

Slowly he walked to the courtyard, lips moving almost soundlessly, as the wounds of his heart were translated into words. "Antoine Daniel! To him has come the glorious crown of martyrdom for which he prayed. And I, living in the security of this—" He sighed. "No, it is not for me to grieve, rather it is for all of us to be worthy of such a splendid sacrifice. Huronia has been sanctified by the blood of a man holy and courageous, even as the world was sanctified by the blood of Him who died upon the Cross. No, we must not sorrow—ah, Godfrey, you are here."

Godfrey and Father Le Mercier had seen the messengers squatted against the palisade, eyes fixed upon the bare earth, as warriors who mourned. He looked at the Father Superior with a thoughtful frown. "With your permission, mon père, I will take Philip Chastillen and Louis Desfosses, and see what can be—"

He stopped as Father Le Mercier cut in sharply, "We must exercise every care. The Iroquois must be in strength. St. Joseph was a town of 2,000

inhabitants, more than 400 families."

"We must have some definite information." The Father Superior fingered his chin with nervous touch. "Do nothing rash, Godfrey; but I must have more word of Father Daniel."

"I will be careful, sir. I fancy the Mohawks are in retreat, so my absence will not endanger the fort. I may yet be able to rally the Cord warriors and give them such a drubbing that they will not forget it."

"Do as you think best," Father Ragueneau said. "I cannot understand how such a strong position could be stormed so easily."

"Crass stupidity, probably no guard kept," Godfrey said shortly, and left to summon the two soldiers. "We will wear trail clothes," he ordered. "Be ready quickly."

The musketeer uniform had early been abandoned for forest use. The blue and silver of the officer and the blue and white of the men were useful for impressing visiting Indians but useless on the trail. Godfrey had substituted moccasins, leggings, knee breeches, jerkins of leather, with leather cap, to withstand both the wear and dampness of the trail. He gave instructions to the Sergeant, Robert Lausier, to take over command of the fort.

"Caution is vital," he warned Philip and Louis. "Do not use your muskets without command. If we should meet with two, or three, Iroquois we will use our long knives. You can each strike a knot in a wall at ten paces and your throwing arm will be effective up to double that distance." He thrust a pair of pistols in his belt, substituted the silver scabbard for a leather one, buckled on sword belt and was ready.

The Hurons arose as he came to the inner basin and their eyes brightened at the sight of the two men. "We will try and make speech with these people of the Long House," Godfrey said briefly. "Do you take Louis, here, in your canoe. I will go with Philip in the other."

Their course skirted the eastern shore of Lake Isiaragui. Godfrey could not but admire the recuperative powers of the Hurons, for although they had made a journey of more than four leagues, they appeared as fresh as his men, and handled their paddles as tirelessly. At the southern bend of the lake, the canoes were carried across a portage to a wide river and they swept forward, borne on the fast-running current. Some distance from the main trail to Teanaostaiaë, the leading Huron held up a warning hand and made for the shore. Canoes were carefully concealed in the underbrush and as silently as they had come, they stole over a rough and deeply-pitted trail. After the brightness of the river it was as if they had entered a land of perpetual gloom, dappled infrequently by threads of sun-rays that sifted through the canopy of foliage high overhead.

They walked with cautious feet, for where the path was not strewn with debris and stones, or pitted by dangerous holes, it wound around great outcroppings of rock, loathsome in their dank rash of pallid-green moss. The trail sharply dipped to skirt a stream and they were circling a deep pool, when the leader held out a warning hand. With a jerk of two fingers he pushed through a thin screen of underbrush to a hole filled with steaming water. Close by the nearest pole, at the edge of the slanting sides, a fire burned about a pile of stones. The Huron pointed first to a heap of women's garments and then to scarlet blotches on the ground. He touched one and looked at the smear on his finger. "Fresh!" he muttered and motioned down the trail.

Godfrey nodded understandingly. "A sweat-box," he whispered to the soldiers. "Indian girls took a steam bath out here. Dug a hole and heated the water to boiling with hot stones, then slung tunics over the stakes and sat there and sweated. After they would take a plunge into the pool. A great reviver, if one can stand the shock." He turned to the Huron who had been on hands and knees studying the trail. "How many?"

"Two maidens, three Angnieneeron." He pointed to the southeast. "They go to join the main Hodenosaunee trail. We go this way and meet them a half a league from here." His finger moved in a small arc. He smiled crookedly and touched his short-axe.

Godfrey shook his head. "Knife work," he said with finality. "You leave this to me and my men." He crooked a finger to the soldiers. "We'll each take an Iroquois. Throw your knife to kill. There must be no alarm. We don't know how many there are in the forest."

They slipped down the trail soundlessly. Godfrey whispered his plan to the leader in the Huron tongue. The Indian grunted assent. "There is a bank overlooking the trail at a sharp turn. A good throwing point from the bushes. We will stop there."

The path narrowed to a deer-run. The thick boles of the forest thinned and as the underbrush thickened, the sun streamed upon them again. Swarms of insects danced in crazy gyrations and bit ferociously at face and hands. It was with relief that they came to a stop and crouched behind a thorn thicket upon a point of high ground. The leading Huron slipped away, then he beckoned to them from a clump of berry bushes. Godfrey saw the twisting trail a few feet below him. "Ideal," he murmured, listened hand to ear, moved a few feet forward and returned quickly. "Just in time," he murmured to the soldiers. "Two girls in front and three Iroquois behind. You, Philip, take the one nearest, and Louis, the centre. I'll look after the third. Remember! aim for the heart or the neck. One throw; there must be no more."

The Hurons watched expectantly as the long, hunting knives were withdrawn from sheaths. Perfectly balanced, the heavy blades whetted to razor edge, they were deadly weapons in the hands of expert throwers. The destruction of the two Cord villages gave the Mohawks a fancied security and they beguiled their march by the subtle torture of dilating upon agonies awaiting the captives, punctuated by realistic blows of short-axe hafts. Godfrey could hear one captive weeping loudly, the other snarling defiance.

"And these pretty fingers, O daughter of a chief," an Iroquois was laughing, "one by one a clam shell will cut them off. How you will squirm and moan under the pain of it!"

"You a warrior!" Hate gave a deadly edge to her voice. "Some day the sun will look down upon me stamping on your face, spitting in your eyes."

There was the dull crunch of wood striking flesh, followed by two more, and the sharp cry of the second woman. "I will teach you respect!" the warrior snarled. "You belong to me, you and that body of yours. Some day I will burn it, a slow fire that will eat it up as a snake eats up a toad."

"That would be better than suffering you," was the scornful rejoiner. "I will not cry out. You would scream like a frightened rabbit."

There came the sound of more blows. Godfrey gasped. "Arakoua!"

She rounded the turn in the trail, naked as she came from the sweat-box, head high and eyes aflame, and beside her the cringing companion, weeping and bent of head. Behind, hair braid in hand, walked their captors, bodies daubed with vivid war paint and faces hideously streaked with congealing blood of yet other victims. They joked with a third warrior who lounged a few paces in the rear. At intervals the captives' heads were jerked back, as axe-hafts clouted shoulders and backs.

"Now!" whispered Godfrey. The startled Iroquois saw three arms swing upwards from a mesh of green, saw three knives flash from their hands, and saw no more. Godfrey leaped through the bushes, retrieved his knife and glanced at the sprawling figures with satisfaction. "A neat bit of work, if I say it myself," he commented, and cut the vine stems binding the women's hands behind them.

Arakoua whirled upon the twitching figure at her feet. "See, you son of a rabbit!" she cried. "I do as I say. I jump on your face—so! I grind my heel on your nose and flatten it—so! And I bend over and I spit in each eye—so . . . and . . . so!"

"A lovable child of the forest." Godfrey snorted and eyed with disgust the second woman, squatted on haunches, wailing as she rocked back and forth. Arakoua arose and kicked her upright. "Stop blubbering, you offspring of a

rat!" she commanded.

"And you, O Teanaosti, my brave Guardian of the Beautiful River!" She flashed him a smile with shining eyes, spread out her arms and slowly pivoted before him. "Look at me. Am I not beautiful? Is not my body wholly desirable in your eyes—my body and my charms?"

Godfrey felt the burn of his face, as it turned to the dull red of the sumac berry in autumn. "You will take this quacking duck with you and go wash the blood off your shoulders and back. Then put on your clothes and join us. We are going to Teanaostaiaë."

"There is a cross-path a few paces down the trail. I will do as you say, for where you go there shall I be also, to comfort you," Arakoua beckoned imperiously to her companion.

Godfrey shrugged as they left. "It might have been worse." He glanced at Chastillen and Desfosses. Their round and heavy faces were expressionless. "I know you're like two blown-up bladders. If you want to guffaw, now is the time—not later." He turned to the two Hurons and noted the dripping scalps hanging from their breech-clout cord. "Is that true about the cross-path?"

They grunted an affirmative. Teanaostaiaë was their goal and the fate of their families their objective.

The cross-path was a trail to be used in emergency only. Overgrown with creepers and underbrush, it wound about yawning gullies and climbed steep hills, where stunted trees grew precariously out of rock seams; and ever flies swirled about them to bite and annoy. They had gone but a short distance when Arakoua and her companion joined them. Both wore tunics of deerskin, caught about the waist by a thong, and their moccasins were as plain as their dress. Arakoua stepped beside him. "Are you not glad I came back to you so quickly?"

"Certainly. You will be safe with us."

"I am safe by myself. This is my woods."

"I thought it belonged to the Iroquois."

"Our warriors did not think the Hodenosaunee so close. Now they are dead," she answered easily. "See, I have worn my dress because you told me. If not, I would have worn my wampum belt only; it is underneath. Am I not good?" She inclined her head and laughed.

He looked at her, then voiced exasperation. "Do you realize your town is wiped out, that your people are butchered, that you only escaped by a miracle?"

"The dead are dead. They are passing Ekarenniondi on the way to the Land

of the Shades. I told them to keep watch; they were fools and did not. My father would not have done as they did, but he has gone to Te Iatontarie, the Town by the Little Great Water."

"And you do not mourn at the loss of your clan?" Godfrey stopped and stared at her.

"We can rebuild the town," she said composedly. "The foolish are gone and our women will breed more warriors. There are other clans. We will go to the land of the Hodenosaunee and many Long Houses will burn with their warriors inside them."

"Your beads, your precious wampums, they are gone." He was determined to bring realization of the calamity that had befallen her.

"No, they are safe, hidden in a hollow tree. I am not a fool as Enons is."

"What are you going to do now?" he asked for the want of something to say. "Search for your brothers, or family?"

"The Hodenosaunee sent my brothers to the Land of the Shades many moons ago." She leaned the closer to him and her white teeth glistened in a smile of invitation. "I stay with you. I am your woman now."

"You are nothing of the sort. You will stay with your own people."

Arakoua turned on him furiously. "You kick me away! Me, the daughter of Annaotaka! You treat me as if I were a stray bitch eating village refuse!"

"Nothing of the sort," he said coldly. "I tried to show you how the daughter of a great chief should act."

"You ouimchtigouches are all the same," she returned contemptuously. "You talk one way and act another."

"Men of the wooden ships, eh!" Godfrey spat. "You borrow words from the Aochraouata carelessly. Do I look as if I sailed here in a wooden ship?" He mopped his face with the back of a hand and gazed out over the leafy sea of the Cold Water Valley, thinking of the incongruity of the Algonquin name for the French.

"And you want me to say to my people that the great Teanaosti has taken me for his woman. That I now go with him?" She walked close to jostle him.

"I did not say that. I said you were to try and help your people, as your father would were he here."

"And you will say to them, 'I, Teanaosti, have come for Arakoua. She is my woman. I will take her to my arms each night.' "

"Can you realize an overwhelming disaster has occurred, that the biggest town in Huronia is wiped out and its southern frontier is gone!"

Arakoua balanced the Iroquois short-axe haft in her hand. “This came from the dead hand that beat me. The blood debt will be paid. I will lead our warriors like the Little Thunder and I will burn her.”

Godfrey sniffed. “Little Thunder! Rubbish!”

She fondled the short-axe in both hands and looked up at him. Her eyes were as two black opals, flecked with fires of reddish green. “You trail this woman?”

“I have other things to do,” he said curtly. “She doesn’t exist.”

“So!” Arakoua was silent. The short-axe dropped to her side. Her eyes searched his face from under long, dark lashes. “The Little Thunder was here today. Some day I will burn her.”

“How do you know that?” There was a conviction in her voice that surprised him.

“Without the help of an oki the Hodenosaunee could never have taken Teanaostaiaë.”

“If she is an oki how can you kill her?” Godfrey stared over the underbrush crowding the side of the trail, so that she would not see his smile.

“People kill big spirits,” she said simply. “Your Son of the Great Spirit was killed. I will burn Hinonaia!”

“She does not exist and she was not here,” he contradicted flatly.

“She was here.” Arakoua dismissed the subject with a flourish of the short-axe. “What am I to tell my people?”

“Ask them what you can do to help them.”

“And say nothing about my Guardian of the River, that I am his woman?”

“Your mind is backward,” Godfrey said desperately. “You have one code of morals, one way of doing things. We have another.”

“You have the ondaki way, not the ouimchtigouche way,” she said critically. “I do not like the ondaki way.”

“Your people call the black robes ondakis because you say they are ‘in the secret of the spirits’. Their way is the best way, the Christian way.”

“I am not a Christian,” she said hotly, “and you are not in your country. You are in my country. You should do as my people do.”

“We hope to teach your people better,” he said gravely.

“What have the ondakis done for us?” Her eyes flashed with passion. “They brought us death, disease and famine and bewitched our short-axe arm so it will not strike true.”

“The words you speak come from the tongue of a liar,” Godfrey rasped.

“You heard them from the lips of the arendiwan. You know crops are plentiful at the big stone fort, that last winter half of your nation would have died if we had not fed them.”

“Your spirits are not our spirits: only our spirits know what is good for us.”

“You have no Great Spirits,” he retorted roughly, “only some imaginary okis that you believe crawl into a hole, chunk of stone or waterfall.”

“They protected our people long before your ondakis came and we were powerful and strong of numbers.” She glanced sidewise at him. “Perhaps you will tell me about your spirits, me your woman.”

“I am no ondaki, I am a warrior; and I haven’t said you’re my woman.”

She weighed the axe in her hand. “I, Arakoua, the daughter of Annaotaka, a great war chief, am not good enough for the Guardian of the River.”

“My mouth did not say that,” he snapped. “You changed my words.”

“The howl of the wolf, then the bark of the fox.” There was a fine scorn in her voice. She lapsed into sulky silence.

V

THE CORNFIELDS of Teanaostaiaë spread out to the elbow of a deep ravine, a young growth of green stalks, leaves drooping motionless in the summer heat, as if mourning for that smouldering blot which rounded as a half-moon of ash and charred wood—the one-time Cord village that was no more.

Head bowed to chest Godfrey walked to a smoking mound. It had been a strong, log bastion. Now, there was nothing but the glow and crackle of its ruins. At the corner, a ravine fell away precipitously to the bed of the leaping stream, fifty feet below, at the cup of the spreading valley. East, south and west this valley flung its grandeur to the cloudless heavens, as far as the eye might see. His brows gathered in a frown. Only one explanation for the disaster could be accepted. It lay in the criminal negligence of the victims themselves. He glanced obliquely at Arakoua. She stood as one smitten dumb by the obliteration of her world. He glimpsed the whitened faces of the soldiers, their wide, unbelieving eyes. Only the Huron warriors stood in stoic indifference. Not by a shift of a muscle did they betray their emotion. All was silent except for the moans of the second woman. Arakoua shook herself, turned and thumped her companion with axe-haft. She subsided to choking quiet.

Godfrey walked the length of a deep trench, fronting a row of fire-gnawed stumps. The fire, he saw, raged with a fury that devoured everything in its path. This was to be expected. Bark houses, fur furnishings, and many days of hot weather made the town a torch awaiting a spark. He raised his head as Arakoua returned. “The River Sentinel was caught with closed eyes.”

“Our warriors were hunting; others were searching for the Hodenosaunee.”

“They will find where the firebrands burned—when they return.”

“And you, a fighter, stood safe behind stone walls while my people were butchered and my town burned.” Her voice shook with rage at the gibe.

“It seems I ran across you in the forest.” He smiled sourly.

“I was not hiding behind stone walls.”

“Nor was I, or some of those fingers of yours would be rotting on the ground by now. Come with me!” He led her to where the ditch was broken and ash heaps spread inward for five yards. “That was the gate: and the palisades were so high warriors could not leap to grasp the top.” He pointed to a great mound where fire glowed and flickered feebly among mangled logs. “That was one of six bastions. Four men could have defended it against twoscore. Now, can your mind see what happened?”

“No watch was kept. Your ondakis bewitched our warriors.”

“The Great Spirit give me patience with you,” he snapped. “We have tried to teach you Ouendats to defend yourselves. You will not be helped. You would sooner be massacred. Your warriors are as wrong-headed as you are.”

He stopped with a snarl. Arakoua was not listening. She was watching half a score of fugitives streaming in from the forest. Godfrey looked at the sun. It was far down in the west. He called to Desfosses. “We’ll have to stay here tonight. The ashes are too hot to make a search. There’s not enough crushed corn to feed all. I think it’s safe to discharge a musket now. With all this commotion some bear cub probably was frightened enough to take to the trees and stay there. Do you go with Philip and the two Indians and try to bag one.”

Louis grinned broadly. The opportunity to augment sagamite by fresh meat was distinctly to his liking. That sagamite was the staple of food in Huronia gave no pleasure to the garrison of Fort Ste. Marie. They regarded it as an unappetizing mess of ground corn, boiled without salt, served exceedingly thin and seasoned sparingly with pieces of dried fish or meat. Godfrey understood Louis’ dislike of the corn gruel. He dismissed the soldiers with a nod and waited for the fugitives to arrive.

They came, men and women, shaken by their fright. Arakoua eyed them in disdainful silence. Godfrey spoke. “When did the Hodenosaunee attack?”

“At the hour Anouennen’s bell rang. They came rushing from the forest as the waters of a great flood would rush. There was no time for defence and the gates were open. Some of us made stand there and were cut down. See!” The speaker pointed to a long, jagged tear in the side of his plucked head from which blood oozed through the dressing of medicinal leaves.

“Anouennen! What of him?”

“I saw Anouennen run out of the good annonchia to the gates,” a woman answered. “There was madness everywhere. He went straight to where the Hodenosaunee were attacking, shouting to us to save ourselves by flight. The old could not run and gathered about him, fell on their knees and cried out to be saved. He went back to the annonchia again.”

“There was a crowd of old men, women and children in the annonchia,” another volunteered. “They were crying for the saving water and Anouennen was shaking it over them with a cloth. I heard him say, ‘Brothers, today we shall be in Heaven.’ Then I heard a great yell and I knew the Hodenosaunee had entered. I ran for the other side, climbed over the palisade and got away.”

“I saw Anouennen fall.” A grizzled warrior, with a red gash across the tattoo symbols of his chest, spoke with pride. “He came out of the annonchia to meet the Hodenosaunee and stood before them in his white robe. His face

was bright as if a fire burned within him. They showered him with arrows. A musket ball struck him over the heart. I saw the cloth tear. He fell. The Hodenosaunee rushed at him with axes upraised. I saw no more, for I killed the warrior who came at me and fled."

Godfrey walked away. In thought he was living with Father Daniel those red minutes of slaughter. It was a black scene that he saw. Scores of victims given over to short-axe and arrow, other scores marched to groan out their lives at the torture stake. There was but one shaft of light to pierce the gloom, that white light of devotion and heroism shown by the gallant priest in his great hour out of all time—the hour of martyrdom. No one appreciated more than he the value of Father Daniel's sacrifice. Such Hurons as escaped owed their lives to his tranquil courage. Iroquois hatred of the black robes flared out afresh at the sight of him, glorious in his vestments. They would not go forward while he lived. There was a rush to vent their fury upon his defenceless body, to hack it to bits and splatter themselves with his life blood. Not until they had thrown the mangled remains to the flaming church, would they seek out new victims, a precious interlude that meant the difference between life and death to scores of fugitives. Father Daniel was one with the years that had passed. All that remained of him was mingled with the ashes of his beloved church. But his memory would never fade. It was enshrined eternally in records that recount all that is best and noble of mankind.

Deep in thought Godfrey seated himself upon an elm stump at the edge of the cornfields. His head snapped upward and fingers sought knife-haft, as a deep voice spoke unexpectedly at his ear. "That, O Teanaosti, is the way a warrior mourns, silent in grief and thoughts of revenge."

"True, O Ouendat, there will be a reckoning for this." He saw that Philip and Louis had returned, bringing two bear hams with them. "The hunt was good."

"It was as the captain said," Louis smiled. "A foolish cub took to the tree-tops and stayed there."

"And many people of the Long House will dance the dance of death in our fires." The Huron ignored the soldiers' compliment.

"In the meantime we must eat." Godfrey cut short predictions of revenge. "What of the others over there?" He flicked a thumb to where the fugitives had gathered forlornly about Arakoua.

"You think deeply and bravely, O Guardian of the River," the second warrior said with approval. "You have no eyes except those of hate, otherwise you would have seen us throw them meat."

Arakoua was haranguing the survivors loudly. She flung her arms outward

to the forest. “Out of there they came as wolves come and we were asleep. What then?” She made a downward sweep of the hand to the great heap of ash that was Teanaostaiaë. “A great array of our brothers, sisters and friends tramp sorrowfully to the Land of the Shades.”

Her fingers were raised to the skies. “Only the okis know where they go. Do you think I escaped!” She ripped open the neck of her tunic and showed the bruises and cuts on back and shoulders. “I was saved by Teanaosti.”

Her fingers moved in a slow arc to where he sat by the fire and her eyes met his, glazed with the fury that flared within her. “Think you well of our woes, O people, then act as Ouendats would act. The biggest town of our nation has been given over to fire and short-axe. Where are our warriors who went hunting for Iroquois? Where is Enons, the chief who would lead as Anaotaka would lead? Ask him and them why they went away when the Hodenosaunee came. If it were fighting they sought, it could have been found here. Are we the Clan of the Cord to suffer without retaliation? Ask Enons and his warriors this when they return!”

She stopped abruptly, as one drained of strength by the intensity of emotion. Slowly she hitched up her dress and walked over to Godfrey. “Hinonaia was here. There are those who saw her.”

He jumped to his feet. “Who saw her? Bring them here!”

Arakoua looked at him sharply. There was grit in his voice, a steel rasp that she had not heard before. “The Guardian of the River has a heart of granite,” she laughed, and called two of the fugitives. “They came from the trees when the sun dipped behind the pines.”

A withered warrior, the faded blue of tattoo marks blending into the lines etched by age, approached. “Speak, ancient, of this witch Hinonaia!” Arakoua commanded.

So shaken by fear was the elder that not so much as by a glance did he show resentment of the address. “I was by the maples, at the edge of the ravine, when I heard the war cry. There was one escape, to hide in the thick leaves of the tree. I climbed to the top. I could see the golden maiden in many wampums urging on the warriors.”

“Her form? Her face?” Godfrey snapped.

“The sun was in her hair and it shone red and gold, and golden was the skin of her. She is of the Great Spirit come to destroy our land. As many chiefs as the fingers of my hand guard her.”

“The Five Nations Confederacy, a chief of each nation,” Godfrey murmured; then aloud. “There is some trickery here. What more did your eyes see?”

“There is no trickery. I saw!” The thin voice quavered denial. “She is an evil spirit to bewitch us. My eyes saw not her face, for years have dimmed them. All my mind knows is that one of every three in Teanaostaiaë was taken away.”

Godfrey started. “It is impossible. Your eyes are playing you false.”

“It is truth,” Arakoua snarled. “Listen to this woman.”

“It is so.” The woman’s voice shook. “As many houses as the fingers of my two hands were marched away. We who marched were beaten with many blows. Some stumbled and died on the way. In the hurry I escaped. Others may have done the same. My eyes did not see.”

Godfrey was silent. Not only had Teanaostaiaë ceased to exist, and Exhiondastsaan with it, but, with 500 taken captive, the Clan of the Cord had been dispersed. The southern frontier of Huronia was wiped out. Only St. Ignace remained to the Cord. “This Little Thunder,” he asked slowly, “did your eyes see her?”

“Once and from a distance. Her hair burned as fire and her skin was of the gold of the sun.”

“Her face?”

“My eyes did not see her face.”

“You see, O Teanaosti, Hinonaia is real!” Arakoua cried.

“Yes, so real the people curl up with fright when they think of her,” he growled.

Arakoua stamped her foot in vexation and returned to her camp fire.

The hunting and scalping parties straggled back to the dead ashes of their town after dawn and with them stumbled a remnant of survivors, men, women and children. They came quietly and in single file as do people who enter the presence of death, the women and children to mourn aloud, the warriors to sit with narrowed eyes before the wide ditch that once fronted the palisades. Godfrey crossed the ditch to search the ashes of the church. He waited impassively while the soldiers prodded diligently the square on which the bark church had stood. Nothing had escaped the intensity of the fire. Godfrey was glad. Cremation was the easiest way to dispose of the victims. A warrior came to join him. “Ah, Thodatouan.” Godfrey looked with pleased eyes at the war chief of the Bear Clan.

Thodatouan’s face was blue with rage. He struck his plucked head with short-axe and made the six eagle feathers of his rank jump crazily from the round brush of stiff hair on the crown.

“I came to warn the Cord Clan, even as I sent a messenger to warn you. I,

Thodatouan, came here because the need was greater. My brother, Annaotaka, had gone to Te Iatontarie with his warriors, and those left behind are as women made foolish. Had they remained on guard, their axes would have been red not white, and their hearts rejoicing not sorrowing."

"It was to be," Godfrey answered stolidly.

"The Little Thunder!" Thodatouan snarled the name. "She bewitches us, makes us as children. Who can fight against an oki?"

"My heart does not agree to that, O Chief." Godfrey covered his irritation with an air of consideration. "I think you will find trickery behind this woman."

"There may be trickery, as you say." The chief walked toward the open fields. "The Hodenosaunee have never been defeated when she leads them."

"Does she lead or is she led?" Godfrey asked.

Thodatouan's reply was silenced by a young man saluting ceremoniously. Five feathers nodding above thick hair, falling to the buttocks in four heavy braids, proclaimed him a sub-chief and something of a dandy. Thodatouan scowled at him. "I came to warn you to guard well your palisades, O Enons, and I find no palisades to guard and no people to guard them."

The reproof was given in a harsh voice and each word of it was heard by the fifteen score survivors, gathered about them. Enons quivered with rage. Only the rank of Thodatouan and the prestige of Godfrey prevented an outburst. He smothered his passion with difficulty. "I went forth to fight the Hodenosaunee and Hinonaia bewitched me and my warriors." He waited for the chief to speak and when he did not, added more steadily. "Our houses are burned, they will stand again."

"Not here," Thodatouan advised. "This place is accursed. The souls of the old and the young, too weak to journey past Ekarenniondi to the Land of the Shades, will remain and accuse you of their deaths."

Enons scratched a paint-daubed cheek. He eyed the stolid group about him. "There is Totiri, the great arendiwan. He shall speak to the spirits and advise us."

The withered sorcerer heard the pronouncement sourly. He was of no mind to practise his art under the disapproving eyes of Godfrey. He glared defiance, shambled to where wind-strewn leaves lay upon the ground and crouched over them, thin shanks drawn up until knobby knees were even with sunken cheeks. Balanced on the ball of his feet he stared at the leaves. For a space of minutes he stared, then a black bug appeared, waved its antennae and fled to the shelter of the pile. Totiri fell back, hands clawing the earth and legs jerking spasmodically. The survivors waited tensely, apprehensively for him to speak.

At length he lay quiet, wiped the froth from his lips, and sat up. He spoke in a high, piercing whisper.

"In spirit, I was lifted high into aronhia, the place of the clouds, and from there I looked down upon the Land of the Shades. I saw Ekarenniondi, and beyond it that swift river which all must cross. And Eataentsic I saw, he who cares for our souls and who gives us this life, even as he shortens this life if we listen not to him. He saw me, and with me he came to earth. In the form of a beetle he came, so that we might see him and know how small we are in his sight. And he said to me, 'O Totiri, greatest of the arendiwans, you know my wishes as no other knows them in all Ouendake. I give you good words. You speak them to my people and say to them to be guided by the counsel of Teanaosti.' "

Totiri stretched himself to full height, a lath set upright among bronze statues of flesh and muscle, and glanced at Godfrey with eyes sparkling malicious triumph. He threw both hands toward the sky. "So says the great Eataentsic from his home in aronhia overhead, where I have been in spirit."

Godfrey eyed Totiri coldly. He saw the trap. The sorcerer with quick cunning had placed responsibility upon him. If his decision was not popular, Godfrey knew his prestige would be weakened, if favourable, then Totiri would take credit for making good magic. Either way, Totiri's shrewd move stood to benefit him.

Godfrey smiled scornfully. "My heart tells me of a fine meadowland close by waters of Isiaragui. The ground is fruitful for corn, and the woods and wild-rice for the hunt."

Arakoua spoke quickly. "The spirit was wise and just. Teanaosti's words are good."

Thodatouan grunted approval and he was joined by the survivors. Enons watched the crowd sharply. A Huron chief seldom attempted to lead. His actions and decisions reflected public opinion. Enons voiced approval. "The spirit has advised well. Teanaosti will show us our new home."

As the people dispersed, Arakoua sidled up to Godfrey, with sly smile. "Did I not stop Totiri? His mind was to ruin you."

"Your heart was good."

"My heart would not have a dried heap of bones laugh at *my* Guardian of the River. Some moon I will have him killed," she promised virtuously.

Godfrey opened lips to reprove and closed them quickly. The day might come when he could benefit by this promise. He changed the subject. "What of your wampums?"

She flashed him a smile and sped toward the forest.

The shift of an Indian village from one site to another, even that of a big town, was a simple affair. Every Huron community moved, at least once, in a decade. Exhaustion of the soil from crude agricultural methods was one cause, epidemic due to lack of sanitation was another. Bark houses were easy of construction and family possessions—fur robes, skins and rude pottery—were meagre. When a village was destroyed by fire migration was simplicity in itself. The survivors of Teanaostaiaë made a frugal breakfast of such sagamite as the warriors had not consumed in the forest, dragged canoes from concealment and were ready to leave.

Arakoua invited herself into the canoe set aside for Thodatouan and Godfrey, without a glance at Enons, who sat scowling and alone in his craft, waiting for her. “A heart of a rabbit,” she mumbled. “His feet should be pursuing the Hodenosaunee, not moving the other way.”

Godfrey grunted as she reached for paddle. Attired in white wampums and enkara of beads, the rippling surge of muscles, from shoulders to breech-clout, reminded him of the ease and grace of a fawn.

It was to be a water trip, down the River of Cold Water to Waubaushene and Matchedash Bay, a circuitous route, but one which would prevent further scattering of the survivors. The flotilla was sped by swift current. It was hot work and Godfrey soon divested himself of upper garments and paddled nude to the waist. Arakoua glanced over her shoulder, laughed approval of his brown, hair-covered chest and muscles that stood out as cord knots.

At the mouth of Ahonta, a small stream taking name from its concealment by brambled thickets, Thodatouan turned the canoe to shore. “A quick way to the big, stone house on the river,” he said. “You can save weary trails by going this way, for we will come down from the wide waters, and you have a message to give Aondecheté.”

The two Hurons, with Philip and Louis, joined him. Sped by a freezing farewell from Arakoua, they took the short road to Fort Ste. Marie. It was a tortuous route of waterway and portage. At times, trees grew outward from each bank and met above them and the air was lifeless in its heat, save for the swarm of biting, stinging insects. Portages where thorn bushes gripped and tore made the journey the more difficult. It was with glad hearts that they reached the muddy shores of Isiaragui.

VI

THE FATHER SUPERIOR awaited Godfrey at the inner basin, a tragic figure in the shadow of the twin bastions. A quick glance and his face aged ten years in a second. He placed a hand on Godfrey's shoulder. "My boy, do not speak as yet. Walk with me."

Slowly they passed through the northern gate and crossed the courtyard to the great hall of the residence. The sentry eyed them questioningly and saluted punctiliously, but the Father Superior had no eyes to see. He moved as one set apart by grief. In the great hall, its lofty beamed ceiling and oaken walls darkened by the smoke of the pine knot and the torch, he hunched forward in the high-backed chair, in the centre of the long, trestle table. He motioned Godfrey to the bench opposite him, thought for a moment, moistened his lips and spoke. "It would be fitting that Father Le Mercier and Father Chastelain should be present. Also, have a man bring you some refreshments from the kitchen."

Father Le Mercier came quickly, worried lines drawing down his mouth. The three sat in silence until Father Chastelain arrived. Pierre Chastelain, Spiritual Director of the Mission to the Hurons, a confessor of the members of the order, and an adviser, personal and official, of the Father Superior, was a man of learning and intellectual strength. Godfrey noted that his finely moulded features, which marked at once his asceticism and strong religious convictions, was pallid. The Father Superior motioned him to a seat on the bench, at his left. "The word is bad, as we feared. I have waited so that we may hear it together," he muttered, as Father Le Mercier took place at his right.

A serving man came, placed food on the table and noiselessly left the hall. Godfrey ignored the wooden platter and launched into his report. Father Ragueneau stared out of a window, innocent of glass, and in winter covered only by skin. Godfrey knew that while he listened he was contrasting the thickness of the stone postern he saw to the open gate at Teanaostaiaë. Father Le Mercier sat as if carved of stone, eyes set on Godfrey. Father Chastelain had slumped forward, arms on table and hands to face. "And that is the story, mon père," Godfrey concluded, "as I have reconstructed it from observation and what I heard."

The Father Superior glanced down the table to where Father Daniel usually sat at the periodic conferences of the missionaries, and his eyes, filled with pain, lingered there. "His place will know him no more, nor shall we see him again on earth." He sighed. "It has been said that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church, that the Missions to the Hurons had not received this mark

of heavenly favour. The blood of one of our most devout has now been shed. It is God's will and in His service, but none the less our hearts are heavy."

Father Chastelain raised his head, eyes wet. "This Hinonaia is a veritable child of the devil. A great blow has been given to the mission. Father Daniel's work is completely destroyed."

The Father Superior put aside his personal grief for the moment. He again became the rock upon which Fort Ste. Marie stood. Lines of age were erased as darkness is dissolved by the sun. Eyes brightened in reflection of the resolute spirit within him. He looked at Father Le Mercier, staring thoughtfully at the scrubbed, pine boards of the table. "Godfrey, as I know to my sorrow, had a better understanding of the situation than had I. In my heart there was hope that this would not come to pass. He was without hope and he was right." Father Ragueneau's fingers gripped table edge until they showed white. "We are without a southern defence—if the survivors move northward."

"There is the Clan of the Lone White House, at Scanonaenrat," Father Le Mercier remarked. "Father Chaumonot established the strong mission of St. Michel, there, before he was transferred to Ossossanë. It is a little more than a league, north and west, from Teanaostaiaë."

Godfrey nodded with understanding. He had admiration for François Le Mercier that was tinged with wonder. Slight of frame, sallow and thin of face, and stooped of shoulder, he was a battery of energy. A driving force, such as animated him, was required of the Assistant to the Superior with its multifarious duties, and it would seem that the hours of the day were insufficient for his work. His was the responsibility for all activities of the residence from observance of rules and regulations to upkeep of buildings. The ailing and the sick were his charge and he supervised the conduct of the hospital. All receipts and disbursements passed through his hands as accountant-general, and he was an official adviser to the Father Superior. More than once Godfrey had speculated upon the reservoir of strength which sustained Father Le Mercier under such a load of responsibility; and this weight had more than doubled with the closing of the Champlain Road, and the destruction of Teanaostaiaë.

"It is a matter of policy with the Iroquois," Father Ragueneau said. "They thrust as skilled swordsmen, strike at the heart and the whole body dies. Could we not persuade the people of Teanaostaiaë to settle again on the southern frontier?"

"Not at present, mon père," Godfrey answered. "It was all Thodatouan and I could do to hold them together. They are without heart and hope. They look upon Hinonaia as a goddess of destruction."

“We must not give way to despair. I am not a man of war but when our enemies are agents of evil we must fight with every weapon at our command. I do not imagine the Iroquois will attack in force again this year. This should give us an opportunity to prepare ourselves, to unite the Hurons in a common cause of defence. They must be—*will be*—united,” the Father Superior said desperately. “The life of this mission, of this outpost defence—everything—lies in our success.”

His sweeping gesture included the House of Ste. Marie, its farmlands and the broad leagues of the triple Huron Mission, itself,—the Mission of the Saints, in Huronia; the Mission of the Apostles, in the Tobacco Nation; and the Mission of the Angels, in the Neutral Country—a black-robed crusade of the Cross and the Crown reaching from the Algonquin island of Grand Manitoulin, on the northern rim of Lake Huron, to the boiling falls of Ouengiara, on the River of the Neutrals, between the great waters of Ontare and Erie, or wherever the Huron stock stemmed. Father Ragueneau’s eyes were troubled as he swept these far horizons in mind. He spoke with forced optimism. “The raid of last autumn was repulsed with many casualties.”

“Which the Iroquois have not forgotten.” There was a grim note in Godfrey’s voice. “They were busy elsewhere, harrying the Algonquins beyond the Ottawa and the Nipissing, clearing their flanks to attack us. And they remembered the lesson of last year.” Godfrey leaned forward. “There were two war parties of Iroquois. One came down from the Champlain Road, striking southward from Nipissing. The other came up the Iroquois Trail. They met at the Narrows, at the mouth of Couchiching, and united to strike at Teanaostaiaë.”

“Two war parties! The Iroquois Trail!” Father Ragueneau considered this information thoughtfully. In the background of the Iroquois Trail could be found a chapter of complete disaster to French prestige and Huron arms. He knew the story all too well in its futile detail. On September 8th, in 1615, Champlain and his Indian allies left Huronia over that trail to chastise the Five Nations. High with hope they crossed the Narrows, that neck of water connecting what the French called the Little Lake and the Algonquins, Couchiching, to Ouentaroni, the Fish Spearing Lake of the Hurons. Thence, they penetrated that region of lakes and channels known as Kawartha, the Realm of Bright Waters and Happy Lands, to where it emptied into Ontare, and then hugged the shoreline to the St. Lawrence. On the opposite shore the land of the Onondagas, geographical centre of the Five Nations Confederacy, lay open to them. Champlain and his Huron allies invaded this domain and the road terminated abruptly in a welter of blood and slaughter. Since that fateful day in late October, the Algonquin Realm of Bright Waters and Happy Lands

was a solitude of death; and the road, itself, had become known as the Iroquois Trail, so decisive had been the defeat.

"The Champlain Road over-run as the Iroquois Trail!" the Father Superior exclaimed. "All Huronia is open to attack where the Iroquois will. We must effect a consolidation of the Petuns and Neutrals in a general scheme of defence."

"The Petuns are merely a nation of tobacco growers," Father Le Mercier argued. "They will continue to grow tobacco and trade it to Huron and Iroquois alike, as offerings to propitiate the okis in pagan ceremonies; and the Neutrals will live in a belief of security. The Iroquois have been afraid to attack them because of the immense deposits of flint in the Neutral country. They had to keep peace to obtain supplies of arrows and spearheads. Now, the Dutch are supplying them with muskets and lead and they do not require flint. No," he shook his head pessimistically, "the Petuns and the Neutrals will sit back passively until the Iroquois eat them up, bite by bite, after they have swallowed the Hurons."

"The weakness of the Hurons is their lack of vision and intolerance of authority. The parent has no authority over the child and the chief only a nominal authority over the warrior," Father Chastelain said slowly. "We may persuade them to co-operate for common defence, especially when it is a matter of national survival. The Hurons are brave fighters when aroused, as we know from the last victory."

"That was gained by the warriors of one clan," Godfrey answered, "the Cord Clan, and Annaotaka was the chief. Even the most obstinate hesitate to cross him too far."

"He is a deadly man and without mercy," Father Ragueneau admitted. "I believe that he would slay his own daughter, Arakoua, should she seriously oppose him. Yet he is the only chief to win an outstanding victory—and he may win more upon his return."

"The Iroquois attack by stealth, mon père. There was Contarea, once biggest town in Huronia."

"Contarea was an iniquitous place," Father Chastelain said severely. "The Rock Clan drove our missionaries away."

"Because the sorcerers are always against us and they were particularly strong in Contarea. There was also Taenhatentaron, the Place of the Dry Pole, where we had the first mission of St. Ignace. Only this winter Father Brébeuf had it moved a league northward to the new St. Ignace for better natural defences. Not that such a move was important, except that it indicates lack of care in the selection of village sites. The new St. Ignace is one of our strongest

places.”

“That move was not important, not like that of Cahiagué, the other big town of the Rock Clan, where our mission of St. Jean Baptiste stood. We had to abandon Cahiagué because it stood on the edge of the Iroquois Trail and was too open to attack.” The Father Superior frowned. “That was four months ago.”

“I suggest that we first endeavour to unite the Huron clans,” Father Le Mercier said crisply. “Later, we may attempt a general unification of the other two Huron nations.”

“The Hurons have dwindled from 30,000 people to less than 12,000 within a generation,” Godfrey amplified.

“More through disease than war,” Father Le Mercier added. “The result of their filthy, pagan habits. Even now the clans can muster 1,500 warriors if they unite. The Iroquois never exceeded 2,500 in numbers, and some must remain to protect other frontiers and to hunt. No, not more than a thousand or so will come again to Huronia—if they come.”

“The Petuns are barbarous and cruel,” Father Chastelain said sorrowfully. “Father Garreau gave me some examples of their revolting acts in their war with the Fire Nation, of the Algonquins. After capturing one town they burned more than threescore of the best warriors without mercy, put out the eyes of the old men and cut away their lips, and left them to drag out a miserable existence. I should say they are as savage as the Iroquois.”

“The Hurons and Neutrals are as bad!” Godfrey said. “If the King would only send over a few regiments from France, we could conquer the Iroquois without trouble.”

“Impossible. There are domestic and international troubles,” Father Ragueneau explained. “And the treasury is all but empty.”

“If it weren’t for that unfortunate grant made by the King to Madame de Guercheville,” Godfrey said meditatively, “we might form an alliance with the Puritans to thrash the Iroquois.”

The Father Superior stiffened in his chair. He eyed his captain curiously. The Assistant Superior and the Spiritual Director moved uncomfortably. Godfrey impassively looked at each in turn. He had touched upon a subject generally ignored by common consent—the failure of Louis XIV, a generation before, to create a vast, spiritual empire of the Cross in North America by a blanket grant of lands from Florida to the St. Lawrence to a court favourite, conditional upon a theocratic administration of the new state and the conversion of the natives to Catholicism. Theoretically it was a magnificent conception of uniting the Church with the Crown in a colonization project;

practically it brought new difficulties to the struggling colony of New France.

Father Ragueneau stared long at his capable hands. “It *was* an unfortunate grant,” he admitted. “The resentment of the English and the Dutch was natural. Old racial sores opened. The English captured New France twice but returned it to us, and now we find ourselves isolated by suspicion and political animosities.” He shook his head and peered at Godfrey as if to read his innermost thoughts. “Do you imagine an alliance with the Puritans against the Iroquois would be effective?”

“It would be the logical one to make, mon père. I am afraid it could not be effected.”

“Ah, these wars, these jealousies among nations!” Father Chastelain twisted his sparse, greying beard. “Who knows that these New Englanders might not turn against us, as did the Virginians, in 1615, when they all but wrecked Acadia, or, in ’28, when that ferocious Kirk, with his buccaneer brother, captured Quebec and threatened to ruin the fortunes of New France.”

“New France was returned to us again, Father,” Godfrey smiled. He looked at the Father Superior. “As I remember, mon père, you were taken prisoner to England when Quebec surrendered.”

“Many incidents have happened to our order, Godfrey. Both Argall, of Virginia, and Kirk took our fathers prisoners. Indeed, Father Charles Lalemant, our first Superior and brother of our present Superior, was carried away to England and on his return trip was shipwrecked twice, narrowly escaping with his life each time. Father Brébeuf saw the inside of an English prison, with others of our brothers taken when Quebec fell.”

“I have often wondered,” Father Chastelain smoothed his beard, “the cause of the bitter hatred of the Iroquois for the Huron. They are of the same family.”

“No one knows,” Father Ragueneau answered sadly. “It is an ancient feud, so old no one can remember. Like a forgotten sin its evil lives on.”

“As you see it then, we must stand by ourselves?” Father Le Mercier asked.

“That is the difficulty, Father.” Godfrey answered. “The Hurons are a group of independent clans without sense of national unity. The Iroquois are a league of nations in the truest sense of the word, and fight as a unit. Before an attack each chief’s position is shown by sticks stuck in the ground and as the big war chief moves the sticks, so the men are moved in actual battle. Often the weakest of the Five Nations, the Onedias or the Onandagas, furnish the supreme chiefs on a campaign.”

“The Hurons are brave. They repulsed the Iroquois last autumn,” Father Chastelain remarked.

“A minor victory among many major defeats,” Godfrey told the Spiritual Director. “Do not forget the old saying, that the Iroquois are the nobles of the forest, the Hurons the burghers and the Algonquins the peasants and paupers. The Iroquois have the *élan*, the leadership.”

Father Le Mercier looked up. “At present we can do little. When Annaotaka and his warriors return from Quebec, the Hurons may recover from their fright.”

“Annaotaka is a thorough-going pagan. We can do nothing with him,” Father Chastelain said with asperity. “I consider him a menace to our work.”

“He is a pagan but also a fighter,” the Assistant Superior countered. “If he can infuse a new spirit in the Hurons it will be most helpful.”

The Father Superior dismissed the subject in a sentence. “We can only hope that Annaotaka will be able to persuade the Cord people to rebuild their village. In the meantime, they must settle where Godfrey suggested, and it would be well for us to give them the prestige of a new mission. Father Chastelain could not possibly undertake new duties: Father Garnier has just returned for a few days from the Mission of the Apostles and we will extend his absence, so that he may take over this work for the present.”

“I would suggest, mon père, that we be careful to do nothing that will make the village appear permanent. We want them to return to the south.”

Father Ragueneau regarded his captain thoughtfully. “They may insist upon palisaded protection and, if so, we must acquiesce. And they will be due to pass here in three hours, or so. We must give them no encouragement to stop.”

The Assistant Superior was quick to agree. “We have sheltered the starving and the distressed during the winter, often to the number of 6,000, but we have never done so in the summer. Were they to stop here now, they would stay indefinitely and we would not have a pig or a chicken left; indeed I should fear for our cattle. No, we dare not set such a precedent.”

The Father Superior nodded his agreement. “There is but one thing to do. Godfrey will accompany Father Garnier, with the two soldiers whom he took to Teanaostaiaë (they know many of the people, now) to await the survivors at the meadow, and we will send a raft immediately after them with sufficient food for a week. It will be issued out of the stores at once and poled down to Isiaragui. I will send the two Hurons, who came with Godfrey, to meet the party and acquaint them with the arrangements made. They can say that later I will come down to greet them.”

“It is the only possible step to take.” Father Le Mercier stood up. “In summer a horde of Indians would be as a plague of locusts. Our fields and our

live-stock would be ruined. I will give the necessary orders for the raft of foodstuff at once."

Godfrey twisted on the bench and looked glum.

The Father Superior eyed him quizzically, as Father Le Mercier bustled out. He permitted a shadow of a smile to light his eyes. "You have been having trouble with Arakoua?"

"She is not to be overlooked, mon père, but it is Totiri who worries me. Arakoua hates him for some reason, or other, and between them there may be trouble."

"I had not thought of the sorcerer." The Father Superior was serious. "He may prove to be a serious danger. You will receive good counsel from Father Garnier. He knows the Indian mind as you know it, an ideal combination to deal with any difficulty which may arise. As for Arakoua, I must leave her to your own good judgment."

A pronouncement which Godfrey heard with vague misgivings.

VII

FATHER GARNIER stood with Godfrey on the low shore of Isiaragui. Before them the shallow waters, green with splotches of wild rice beds, rounded out in a two-league circle; behind them the meadowland stretched away for a furlong to terminate in the slope of the gully. Here was the site that Godfrey had in mind for the new village. He pointed it out to the priest, eyeing him with warmth of feeling.

Charles Garnier was held in esteem by all in Huronia. To his fellows of Fort Ste. Marie he was a saint come to earth. His slender figure and beardless face suggested perpetual youth and his large, burning eyes were as lamps of his soul that glowed with the intensity of his faith; a faith which sustained him in tasks beyond his physical strength and inspired him to shape realities out of the fabric of his dreams. Godfrey glanced quickly at him and shook his head with a troubled frown. He knew that the beardless Garnier was accounted handsome by Huron standards and that many younger women of the Cord Clan showed a robust lack of respect for the cassock. The quiet, youngish-looking priest was not a man upon whom it was safe to presume. He spoke their tongue with the force and fluency of a polished orator and his soft voice could become as hard as steel in denunciation. Godfrey wished to avoid unpleasantness at all costs. He decided to take Thodatouan into his confidence and have the chief pass word around that Father Garnier was a great ondaki of the Tobacco people and must be treated with becoming respect.

All unknowing of the artifice planned for his peace of mind, Father Garnier was studying the new village site carefully. “I have seen many Indian villages with less natural defensive advantages.” He looked about. “The raft is approaching. We must prepare to unload the stores.”

Godfrey had marked a plot of ground close to the shore. Three polemen and two soldiers made quick work of the unloading, arranging the bags of crushed corn to form a miniature rampart, better to discourage the thieving instincts of the Hurons. At each end, a pole was driven into the ground and a notched crossbar lashed into place. Over this an oiled cloth was slung as protection against rain to men and foodstuffs. The polemen had barely started upon their return trip to the fort when the flotilla canoes paddled into the lake.

The journey had left marks of fatigue upon all. Even Arakoua’s shoulders drooped as she walked. Godfrey sought out Thodatouan, explained Father Garnier’s presence to him, and outlined a system of rationing the survivors. It was simplicity in itself; the people would be divided according to the houses they had once occupied and two representatives of each house would draw the

necessary food. It was an efficient means of distribution but in effect it made the refugees the more dolorous. The tremendous losses incurred were advertised for all to see. In some cases there were only one or two of a house of ten fires; in others, not a single survivor was left.

Arakoua walked slowly to Godfrey. The uprooting of the clan was as juice of the bitter root to her soul. “Some day, O Guardian of the River, the Hodenosaunee will pay tenfold for what they have done.”

Godfrey nodded absently. He was disturbed by Father Garnier going among the children, blessing and baptising them. In their embittered state the Hurons offered a fertile field for Totiri to sow seeds of dissension. Arakoua smiled maliciously. “You have brought a beardless ondaki with you. For me?”

He snapped to attention with a growl. “Father Garnier is one of the great chiefs of the mission. He did not come here for any woman to eye.”

“Yet I looked upon him, O Teanaosti.”

“Father Garnier is a man of the Great Spirit. He is not here as a target for the shafts of your pagan women.” Godfrey glared at her. “He is here to help your clansmen in their trouble.”

“That is not according to the words of wisdom which came from the mouth of Totiri.”

“He lies if he says ought else.”

“I did not look with favour upon the beardless one. I saw that the hair on his face had never grown. It was not shaved off by the cutting edge of a hunting knife. So, I looked again at my Guardian of the River and my heart said, ‘Here is a man and a warrior, not a barefaced boy’.” She looked to the rising moon with a tantalizing smile.

“My mind is not interested in what your heart said.” Godfrey grasped her roughly by the shoulders and spun her to face him. “For the last time, what did Totiri say?”

“Ah, you are a man, O Teanaosti. See! I shake as a leaf under your touch and my blood runs as hot as the sunbeam I am named after.” She stood before him, vitality and desire surging in every vein of her.

Godfrey reddened and turned away.

“I will tell you, my Guardian of the River,” she cried. “Totiri said the ondakis had bewitched the land and the okis had turned their faces from the people who sheltered them. They would be destroyed unless the black robes were driven away.”

He looked at her sternly. “You have not spoken all his words.”

“No, there is more. Totiri says another ondaki, this Ouaracha—” she used

Father Garnier's Indian name—"has come uninvited among us. He will build another house of magic and bewitch the new village. Then the okis will bring back the Hodenosaunee to punish us."

Godfrey saw the snare Totiri was laying to destroy Father Garnier and the influence of the entire order. There was an expediency which he might try as a last resort. He turned on her in sudden fury. "You have not spoken everything. There is more to tell."

"I have no more words in my mouth," she cried surprised.

"You have not told that Totiri is making magic for my death, that he said the sun would not smile upon the land while I lived."

Her eyes widened and blazed. All primitive passions arose in a red flare. "He, that worm, dared to do this *to you*, to *my* Guardian of the River!"

"He did." Nor was Godfrey's charge entirely fictitious: Totiri and he had long been personal enemies.

"I must take counsel," she said in a harsh voice. "Be not dismayed."

"I fear nothing. What is Totiri to me?" He laughed carelessly.

"You are, a *man*, O Teanaosti." She walked stiffly away to a far corner of the meadow where shadows were gathering as a dark mist settling upon the land.

Father Garnier returned to voice his worries. "I am completely at a loss. I understood Father Daniel had accomplished excellent work at St. Joseph, yet these people act as thorough-going heathen. Although we are doing our best to help them, even to the extent of feeding them, they appear to regard us with gravest suspicion."

"They may be cowed by fright," Godfrey offered with a cheerfulness he did not feel.

"I should say there is something else, something sinister."

"We will be able to judge better in the morning, Father. If you like, I will look into it on the morrow."

"Do so, Captain, by all means." Father Garnier withdrew to the camp for evening devotions.

Godfrey sat back against the bags of crushed corn and stared at the stars. Mosquitoes flitted about him but he was long immune to such annoyance. He had no conceit that Father Garnier was deceived by his evasions. Had the truth been told, the fearless priest would have insisted upon confronting Totiri, and the arendiwan, shrewd to take any advantage, would have tricked the hysterical people into accepting the truth of the charges. Not until the moon was high in the sky did Godfrey make a decision. He would leave the matter entirely to

Arakoua and act the part of a disinterested observer. That such a course would probably merit the wholehearted condemnation of Father Garnier troubled him not at all. He was pitting guile against guile.

In the morning Father Garnier's worst fears were confirmed. Less than a score of Indians attended mass. He stood sorrowfully eyeing the line drawing rations. "I know, now, that one of the sorcerers is at work. I must investigate."

"If you don't mind my saying so, Father, I should rather look into this myself. I know most of the clan personally."

"Perhaps that would be the better way. I have my report to write and one or two things to look after."

Godfrey left to seek out Thodatouan and Enons to discuss the day's work. He had gone but a short distance when he saw the warriors gather in a semicircle before the two chiefs. In front was Totiri gesticulating frantically. As he threw both hands up to the heavens, an axeman stepped behind him. His arm flashed upward. Totiri's magic would trouble no one again.

The speed of the trial and the execution astounded Godfrey. It was against all Huron usage. He knew that when a charge of witchcraft is made, evidence is heard by the village elders and the verdict long debated; and that the accused is neither notified of the charge made nor the decision reached. Only in execution did the trial of Totiri adhere to custom. Godfrey thought of these things and withdrew until a more convenient time to meet the chiefs.

He waited until men and women were scattering to the woods to fell saplings for the framework of their houses, or to rip bark from living trees to cover the framework; waited until he saw thin blades of fire licking the grass tops to clear the new site for building, then casually strolled to the shore. Thodatouan joined him and gravely watched the progress of the flames. He pointed to the centre of the meadow. "See, the red tongues dance where Totiri lay."

Godfrey looked his surprise. The body had been removed so quickly he had not seen it done. "He is now weighted down with stones, under the pine trees," Thodatouan continued. "He was an evil man and spoke with evil spirits."

"Your words are true, O Chief," Godfrey said formally. "His mouth was foul."

"It did not matter, the evil spirits speaking against the ondaki or the men from Te Iatontarie, but when he permitted them to lie about our brother, Teanaosti, then we knew that Totiri was a witch, and we put him away quickly lest he cast an evil spell upon the new village."

Thodatouan had spoken simply, as one would discuss a casual incident of

life. Godfrey knew that behind his words was the greatest compliment one man could pay another. He reddened with pride and put out his hand. “I have no words to thank you for the honour done me, O Thodatouan. My heart swells and chokes my voice.”

The chief’s dark face lightened with gratification. “It is well, O Teanaosti; you are a warrior and I am a warrior, and we are of one mind.” He raised his head as Enons came toward them. “My work is done here. I now return to my people. My brother Annaotaka cannot say that I did not do my best for him.” He ceremoniously raised his hand in a farewell gesture and left.

“The ground is purified, even as the fire of the sun purifies the aronhia above us.” Enons thus dismissed Totiri and his affairs. “It is good for the new village to arise. You will mark the place of your house of magic.”

“It is good of you, O Enons, to give me this privilege. I must say in reply that I am a warrior, not an ondaki. If your heart says I may speak to Ouaracha, it will please me.”

“My heart is one with yours. We will build from the ramparts until we know Ouaracha’s mind.”

Godfrey acquiesced with a smile which barely creased his face. Enons had told him that defences would be raised. Whether ditch and breastwork would be strengthened by palisades he could not ask. He must wait and plan against erection of strong fortifications as he might. With these disturbing thoughts he came to Father Garnier, busy with quill and paper.

“Ah, Captain, I saw you speaking with the chief. You may know the cause of our troubles!”

“Yes, Father. It was the sorcerer Totiri.”

“An evil man.” He carefully placed a stone upon the written page and arose. “I must confront him at once.”

“Totiri was executed this morning.”

Father Garnier’s burning eyes darkened to the black smoke of a fresh fire. He stared at Godfrey as one tried beyond endurance. “I need not particularize upon what has been done, no matter how laudable the motive. A soul has gone to judgment unrepentent. I should have known of this, this trial. I might have saved him.”

“I did not know of it myself until the thing was done,” Godfrey answered shortly. “He was a thoroughly bad lot. He wanted you murdered.”

“My life is of no consequence,” Father Garnier answered stiffly. “It is God’s to dispose of, how He will.”

“There are the living to consider. Enons wants you to select the site of the

church."

"It is thoughtful of the chief to make this concession. I will do so at once."

Godfrey smiled inwardly and moved to where Philip stood guard. The soldier drew himself to attention.

"I just can't help thinking how clean the ground is, Captain, and how filthy it will be after the village is built."

"The Hurons are not a clean people." Godfrey mopped his face, for the full heat of the day had come. "Those alleys of theirs are filthy things. I don't wonder pestilence comes upon them and carries off a third or more, every now and then."

He gazed at the torpid Isiaragui in hostile silence. His thoughts flitted to Arakoua. He had not seen a trace of her since she had so effectively disposed of Totiri. Doubtless she was supervising the women working in the woods. He could not imagine one of her imperious spirit stooping to manual labour except under duress. With Annaotaka at Quebec there could be no compulsion. He dismissed thought of her in the discomfort of the moment and mopped his face again. "Deerskin may be excellent for wear and tear of the trail. It's not designed for heat of the clearing."

"No, sir, it's not." Philip was all but swaying on his feet. "I had a swim this morning. In that pool the Indians call aronto, or something."

"Where the tree has backed up the water and is used as a bridge. I know the place, an excellent, secluded pool." Godfrey nodded. "There is no need to keep guard, or wear that jerkin and cap. Get rid of them and stay in the shade of the cloth. You'll be more comfortable. When Louis returns tell him the same."

"Thank you, sir. Louis has gone to the forest to keep cool."

The pool of the fallen tree was a friendly one in a sheltered nook. Cedars and black elms pressed together on its banks in neighbourly companionship, the one to form a sweet-smelling, verdant screen, the other to arch its branches high overhead in whispered confidences and cast queer shadow-dapples upon its placid surface. In springtime and through early June days, wildflowers bloomed by its waters in a profusion of blue, white and violet, and during the summer vines trailed aimlessly along its edge, dipping their leaves comfortingly in the cooling waters. From within their agreeable shelter the cricket sounded measured cadences. As Godfrey approached, he saw a scarlet tanager flitting in the high branches, scarlet tunic flashing as aerial fire in the shafts of the sunbeams. Lower in the trees bluebird mates teetered upon a stout twig and answered the blurred notes of the shimmering minstrel overhead with bursts of uncertain sentient song. It was as though one stood close to the benign Creator and sensed His presence in the peace and beauty of all things.

The discomforts of the day dropped from Godfrey as the cloak is dropped from weary shoulders. With joyous heart he tossed his clothes upon a cedar bough and plunged into the pool. He was resting happily upon a floating log when the rustle of the bushes tensed him with its warning. A second later he groaned in anguish of spirit. Arakoua tripped out on the fallen tree trunk.

"Yes, my Guardian of the River, I knew that you would seek out the best pool for cooling, so I came here too." She sat in the centre of the big bole, drew up her knees and clasped fingers about them.

Godfrey stifled a second groan. "You saw me come?"

"Your words are true. I left the slaves to labour by themselves and came to be with you."

"So my eyes see," he said bitterly. "You were not with Thodatouan this morning."

"It is no place, even for the daughter of a great chief, when a death council is held. Totiri has gone past the Standing Rock." She spoke with virtuous satisfaction.

"An accusation was made." He drew himself further upon the log in eagerness to discuss the subject.

"You have great strength in bone and muscle, my Guardian of the River," she said approvingly.

Godfrey followed the flight of a tanager to a branch above the tree-bridge. "See, the red bird is over your dark head and knows what's in your mind. He says you think one thought and speak another."

She laughed. "Totiri! He could kill all the ouimchtigouches, for me. When he made death magic for Teanaosti, he went too far. He bewitched the village."

She rocked back and forth on the log, eyeing him judiciously. "I think, O Guardian of the River, you would look the great warrior that you are if your head were plucked as my father's."

He gaped at her. In his mind arose the grim visage of Annaotaka with stiff bristle of coarse hair rising in a black ridge. "You are truly a woman of two tongues," he answered with difficulty. "I speak of Totiri and you talk of my hair."

"It is good hair and you neglect it," she said severely. "You could become the great war chief of all Ouendake if you were not a barbarian."

Godfrey slid from the log to float back, shaking his head. "You were telling me of Totiri."

"Oh, that liar!" she said impatiently. "I had Thodatouan close his mouth. Thodatouan's eyes saw Totiri strewing thorns in your path. He is a warrior as

you are a warrior."

"And Enons?"

She shrugged contemptuously and glanced upward. "Voices spoke to him that and other things. See, the red bird is gone." There was a finality in her voice that closed the subject.

Godfrey had heard enough to piece together some of the dark pattern of clan intrigue. Thodatouan and Arakoua had conspired to protect him and had forced the weaker Enons to do their bidding. He said slowly, "I thank you, O Sunbeam, you and the chief."

She laughed vibrantly. "You are a man among men, my Guardian of the River. When you saw me last I was a wolf bitten by Hodenosaunee bitches and there were blood and welts on my skin. Am I not now more beautiful?" She stood full height upon the bole, arms upraised, fingers linked above her head.

"Damn!" he groaned. "She's at it again."

Slowly she paced the log, graceful as the wild thing that she was, the bronze of her skin splashed with sun dapples which made intricate lacy patterns of light and shade, and long, black hair, parted in a straight line from forehead to nape of neck, fell in two heavy braids to thighs. "See, my Guardian of the River, it is I, Arakoua, the sunbeam from the loins of Annaotaka; and my sons will be great chiefs and rulers of our people. You and I, we will rule Ouendake and our sons after us."

Godfrey eyed the reflection of her in the pool, a sharp outline that stretched out toward him only to be lost in the mass of darker shadows. Arakoua, he reflected, spoke no idle words, for, no matter what the glory and authority of the man, in the primitive matriarchy of the Hurons, all titles and possessions were transmitted through the woman. "As our words would speak, you are a great noble," he said lamely.

"Are those the only words you have for me, I who have been desired by many and given myself to none!" Her eyes glowed dangerously.

"What of Andouch, your beaver skin?"

"He was my beaver skin, a soft skin, warm to touch." She wrinkled her nose in disgust. "Your ondaki took him from my arms. Now he wears an arensa about his neck and he is mine no longer. My mouth said to him, 'Come and we will enjoy each other,' and he ran away clutching his string of beads. Your ondaki made him as cold as andeskara."

"Why speak of ice on a day like this," Godfrey mumbled, with difficulty, stifling a laugh at Arakoua's candid recital of a new convert wearing a rosary to protect himself against her wiles. "And then there was—"

“He is gone, too,” she laughed. “He had only the form of a man. I kicked him away. There is only you, my Guardian of the River. Why is it your blood runs cold? Should I call you andeskara?”

“An icicle, eh?” he snickered. “I have overstayed my time. I must return to camp.”

“It is the river that has chilled your blood.” She dove from the fallen tree, as graceful as an otter.

Godfrey scrambled ashore. She watched him from the pool, as he rubbed himself dry and wrung out his shirt before pulling it over his head. No false sense of modesty sent him into the concealment of the bush to have his skin pinched and torn. He ignored her critical scrutiny of him but he could not close his ears to her words.

“I know now why you are as an icicle. Your skin is like an icicle when the sun strikes gold and red upon it. I am as your knife-hilt of bronze.” She leaned on the floating log, eyed her arm thoughtfully.

Godfrey methodically continued dressing.

“Yes, my Guardian of the River, you are a man among men. Your muscles, your sinews are those of a sire of men, and you are lean with the strength that is tireless on war path and hunt. I, Arakoua, can say to all that Teanaosti is truly a man of men.” She burst into a peal of laughter and ducked beneath the water. Godfrey made the best of his misadventure. With a smile and a wave of the hand he disappeared down the trail, her banter and laughter following him.

VIII

THE CONSTRUCTION of a new village was one of the few occasions in Huron community effort when a genuine spirit of co-operation was shown. Even the warriors, usually lethargic in everything except the hunt and the making of war, displayed a commendable activity. Godfrey lounged by the supply camp and watched the workers with angry scowl: such energy and unity of purpose would never be shown in defence of the village when built. Felled saplings were dragged from the forest, holes scooped out of the ground for setting them upright, and poles split down the centre lay ready to be lashed into place. Once the saplings were set upright, much as rows of gaunt backbones thrusting to the sky, the poles would be lashed crosswise by ropes of linden bark. The saplings would then be drawn down at the top, so that each side met in an unfinished arch, a space of a foot in the centre of the roof open for ventilation and light. The framework completed, there remained the comparatively easy task of lashing the thick sheets of bark into position and erecting a wide shelf, or endicha, four feet above the ground, down each side of the interior to form at once beds and, beneath, a storage space for firewood. There was required only the addition of a porch at each end, entrance and store-room for foodstuffs combined, and the building would be complete.

The house would arise without variation of design, the product of a primitive system of mass production, each of uniform height and width, on a 24-foot scale of standardization, the length only varying according to the number of fires that would burn in a straight line down the centre of the earthen floor. Godfrey remembered that in Teanaostaiaë there had been houses of 100 feet in length, with as many as 10 fires burning on the ground. The longest of the new houses, not exceeding 50 feet, stood as evidence of the losses incurred in the destruction of Teanaostaiaë.

Father Garnier, worn gown tucked about his waistline and displaying two shanks not more shapely than the split poles strewing the ground, joined him. Godfrey stifled a smile at the priest's appearance, yet, as he had seen, these thin legs, when driven by the father's indomitable will, were tireless. Worried lines marked his face. "I have been searching for you, Captain. Philip told me where you had gone and I wish that I might benefit by your example, only there remains much to be done."

"Anything amiss, Father?" Godfrey asked carelessly. The difficulties of the priests were often dismissed by him as inconsequential, as they, in turn, failed to appreciate his problems. Long ago he had learned to accept such a divergence of view-point with equanimity. Two worlds met in the House of

Ste. Marie, the finer, illimitable realm of spirit, and the grosser, earthy region of men and events. To reconcile these two worlds, fit them into a single pattern of daily life required the keen understanding of the Father Superior. “Things seem to be moving without mischance,” Godfrey said casually, nodding to the industrious workers.

“True. There is no longer the atmosphere of antagonism,” Father Garnier answered, as one vainly struggling to translate a sensory perception into words, “yet there are what might be described as currents of evil in the air. I can feel their invisible touch. I do not know what to do; it is as though the Cord Clan is as a fly caught in a spider’s web. I wonder if it could be the malign influence of that devil woman, Hinonaia the Hurons call her.”

Godfrey sniffed.

“She is a spirit of evil, there is no doubt of that,” the Father said sternly. “We must try to exorcise her.”

“I don’t know what she is,” Godfrey snapped. “I only know that after this disaster we must unite the Hurons or perish.”

“We will meet evil with the might of the Lord,” was the confident reply. “He will smite with His sword. We will be victorious.”

There was no reply. Godfrey was looking at Arakoua, as she walked nonchalantly toward them. Her eyes swept the priest with cold indifference, then lingered upon him in silent mirth. If he squirmed inwardly at what she might say, he was as impassive as a hunter watching deer approach. She looked at beads of sweat upon his face and spoke with mock sympathy, “Andeskara is melting. The sun turns the white of the icicle to gold and red.”

He ignored the pleasantry. “Tell Ouracha, O daughter of a chief, what you know of this Hinonaia?”

She flashed a glance at Father Garnier. “This black robe seeks word of her?”

“I know of no woman with more tongues than you. I did not ask what your mind says, I asked of the Little Thunder.”

The priest was shocked at the roughness of the words. Arakoua was the daughter of Annaotaka and a person of importance in her right and his. Father Garnier was surprised and relieved when she answered readily.

“Some day I will burn her: she will shriek in the slow fire.”

“Then you do not think she is an evil spirit?” he questioned.

“She came from the fire, to the fire she will go.”

Godfrey turned to Father Garnier, “We can find nothing helpful here.”

“Her skin is as gold as the sun,” Arakoua continued, as if nothing had been said, and jerked her head toward the missionary. “What does he of the leg sticks know of any woman? Now you, O Guardian of the River, your skin—”

“You are a hopeless pagan,” Godfrey cut in wrathfully. “I have a mind to give you a clout over the head.”

“An icicle beat a sunbeam!” Arakoua shrieked with laughter.

“That girl is a confounded heathen,” Godfrey mumbled, as he returned to camp with Father Garnier. “There is nothing that can be done with her.”

“She appears to be a creature of likes and dislikes,” the Father said slyly. “Perhaps her heart can be softened.”

“Only with a club.” Godfrey hastily changed the subject. “The Father Superior will be waiting for me to report. If you are agreeable, I would suggest that he send Master Builder Boivin to erect the church and your cabin.”

A suggestion which Father Garnier warmly endorsed.

The Father Superior was at work in his outdoor cabinet. The western sun was pouring its light through the iron-barred window in a golden flood as Father Ragueneau looked up from the plain table at which he was sitting. He greeted Godfrey with a pleasant nod. “Sit down upon the bench, my son.” He looked up at the iron bars of the window and frowned.

“We must have them for this cabin, mon père, otherwise the Hurons would be all over the place and raid the apothecary shop.” Godfrey’s head inclined to the frame partition separating the dispensary.

“Unfortunately that is true. Nothing wrong, I trust, in what you have to report?”

“Everything is moving in good order, mon père.”

The Father Superior eyed his captain shrewdly and wiped the perspiration from his face. “I know you have many things to speak of. Let us go to the palisades. There may be a breeze there.”

Father Ragueneau leaned against the pointed logs and eyed the river in silence. “Yes, it is a little fresher here: there *is* a breath of air moving. Now give me your report. I gathered you encountered no difficulties from the way you spoke. I am pleasurably surprised.”

“Then I am afraid I unintentionally deceived you, mon père.” He related the occurrences terminating with the execution of Totiri. “It was unfortunate but it was necessary.”

“I feared something would happen,” Father Ragueneau said sadly. “You may not uproot a people without misunderstanding and trouble. Some natures are so constituted that adversity does not soften but turns them to the hardness

of flint. I am not sure, Godfrey. I fear you have sinned."

"I trust not, mon père. A thing of evil was stamped out. For in my judgment Totiri held the fate of the venture in the balance. His influence was quite capable of undoing all our work. Thodatouan saw that when he struck."

"It is not for me to judge. You have taken upon yourself the full responsibility. I do not know what I should have done. It is not a situation I should care to face. You faced it as a soldier." The Father Superior stood as one who travels vast distances in memory. He spoke softly. "When I bargained for you, Godfrey, that day so long ago on the shores of Lake Champlain, I saw a mighty soldier in the making—a modern Godfrey de Bouillon fighting a new crusade against evil. That is why, if anything, I encouraged your natural disposition to arms. You will be a tower of strength to New France when you settle on your own lands."

"What have I accomplished, sir?" Godfrey asked despondently. "I tried to bestir the Hurons, get them to unite and attack the Iroquois in self-defence. They sit about like men frightened by a bad dream."

"It is no bad dream." The Father Superior fingered his square chin. "It is the lethargy of despair. I read despair in their eyes as surely as I read it in the eyes of your mother, that day I saw you both in the Abenaki camp."

Godfrey's mouth tightened. In thought he fled a dozen years down the corridors of time. He was no longer an officer of His Most Christian Majesty Louis XIV of France. He was a backwoods lad living precariously upon a New England frontier . . . he saw again the rude log cabin, the rough clearing . . . his mother standing beside the lever well as a neighbour's daughter sobbed out her message . . . saw his mother's drawn face as she raced to him, grasped his hand and rushed with him to the dark, dangerous forest . . . saw her slip in the slush of the early spring trails and sprawl upon the ground. "To escape the whipping post." He voiced his thoughts harshly. "A kind neighbour helped her after Father was killed felling a tree and the bigots of Salem could not understand Christian charity."

"Bitter words, my son." Father Ragueneau chided gently. "Had it not been for the magistrates thinking evil where no evil existed, had they not sent the good neighbour to the whipping post for helping your mother about the farm in his spare time, you would not now be a captain of the Musketeers in New France."

"The neighbour's girl warned Mother just in time," Godfrey mused. "We spent a month with friendly Indians, a great adventure to me, but beyond her strength. She wanted to reach New Amsterdam and sail for England; we went, instead, to trade the winter's catch of fur. And Mother was never strong."

“It was at the point of trade I found you and your mother. The Abenakis were camped close to the Iroquois band.”

Godfrey knocked his knuckles against the palisade. That day would never be forgotten . . . the arrival of the French traders and a black-robed figure with them . . . the man who was now Father Superior of the Huron Missions, then on a trip of good-will to the Mohawks . . . his keen eyes searching out mother and son, his ransoming them with gifts of powder and shot . . . and the mother, tears streaming down her face at Father Ragueneau’s kindness, drawing frail frame to full height and crying in choked voice, “You are a good man and a Christian. I have fled from shameful fanatics. I renounce their teachings and go with you; for you will be good to my boy and I have not long to be with him.”

A tender light touched the blue-grey hardness of Godfrey’s eyes, as he thought of a little churchyard on the banks of the St. Lawrence. There his mother had found that rest denied her in life; for within a year she had pined away, leaving him a ward of her benefactor, the Society of Jesus.

“She was a fine woman, Godfrey,” Father Ragueneau said quietly, “and her gallant spirit lives on in you. The Abenakis sold you and your mother: there was one I could not buy.”

“Little Diana Woodville, sir?”

“Yes, little Diana. I will never forget her. A child only, much younger than you, and a good Catholic. I often wondered how the Iroquois came by her and their refusal to accept ransom.”

“I played with her for the first few days we were together,” Godfrey said. “I think she came from Virginia. When she tried to tell about herself, the chief snatched her away. I never saw her alone again.”

“He evidently attached some importance to her. I offered everything I had to buy her and he only growled she had to go before the Council of the Sachems.” Father Ragueneau coughed. “If a gathering of great chiefs had to dispose of her, the matter was one affecting the confederacy. Poor child! She was a tender, spindly thing and no doubt is dead.”

“Yes, sir. Such a weakling couldn’t survive a year in a dirty, Indian village. She is dead and it is for the best.”

The Father Superior tapped an admonishing finger against the pointed stake of the parapet. “It is not for us to dispose, Godfrey, though her life, had she lived, would have been torture to a white child. She spoke the Iroquois tongue, I believe.”

“After a fashion, sir.”

“Children pick up a new tongue quickly. You have kept up your English?”

“Yes, sir. You helped me and there was plenty of practice at Quebec with officers who had been on foreign service. And I more or less mastered the rapier.”

“I am told you are an accomplished swordsman.” Father Ragueneau concealed a smile. “And you speak Iroquois and Huron.”

“The Mohawk dialect, mon père. Fluently, not grammatically, picked up from visiting Iroquois. The Huron was not difficult. They are of the same family as the Iroquois stock and all Huron nations use an understandable dialect.”

“Ah, yes, but we stray from pressing matters.”

Godfrey outlined in detail the progress made by the new village and concluded with a request that Master Builder Boivin and men be sent to construct the church and cabin.

“Certainly we should erect our own buildings,” the Father Superior concurred. “In a time of calamity, such as this, we cannot ask them to do otherwise.”

Layman Charles Boivin found himself leading a small flotilla of canoes to Isiaragui, rubicund face pulled in a scowl, and short, thick body jerking spasmodically, as annoyance boiled over and made long, stout arms stab a paddle into the water, to the agitation of workmen with him. The Master Builder disapproved of the plan in its entirety. Plenty of work remained to be done within the fort—palisades to strengthen, a cedar grove to be cleared away to remove the last shelter to prowling Iroquois, and the moat and water ditches to be deepened. Master Boivin heartily endorsed these suggestions of the Captain of the Musketeers and to be dragged from such important work to relieve the Hurons of their just duty in constructing a church was sheer nonsense to him. He snorted disgust and thrust at the river in a way to send the canoe dancing a crazy course.

Foreman Carpenter Jean Guiet grinned unfeelingly from the last canoe. He did not share the Master Builder’s views. To whack down a few saplings and run up a bark church came by way of pleasant relief from the distinctly tough job of preparing elm logs for the palisades. He looked at the spades and sharp axes with affectionate eyes. Foreman Guiet was minded to enjoy his holiday to the full.

The Master Builder greeted Father Garnier with sour deference, nor was he mollified by the priest’s evident pleasure at his arrival. Godfrey located Enons pacing the western boundary of the village. “Ah, my brother,” the chief said with distant formality, “I was considering defences. A double palisade, with towers at each end, or would you say something stronger?”

“It is not for me to speak, O Chief. You are wise in the ways of war,” Godfrey temporized.

“We come together as warriors. We should not think two thoughts and speak with one tongue.”

“You are generous, O Chief, to ask my mind.” Godfrey assumed indifference. “I have one thought and little voice.”

“Without the voice I cannot know the thought.”

“My thought is the Hodenosaunee are gone and will not return until the moon of the deep snow is past. The Clan of the Cord must eat and your fields are far away and soon will be turning yellow. A deep ditch and high, earthen breastwork will do until the spring rains. Palisades did not save Teanaostaiaë.”

“There is much wisdom in your words,” Enons said. “Our people must not starve. I will take counsel with the elders.”

Godfrey looked toward the south. Fitful gusts of wind came and went, and on the horizon billows of fleece scudded. “The Thunder Bird is restless. We will hear him soon. I must return to camp.”

“You say what is right and true.” Enons stamped a moccasined heel on the ground. “The earth is now hard. It will soon be easy to break.”

The far-off spearheads of the forest and pine crests tossed and bent as the sweep of the storm drove forward. Leaves of the elms were showing as silvery flakes as Godfrey and the soldiers worked quickly lashing the oiled cloth fast. Arakoua ran over as he stood back and inspected the work. “It is well done, O Teanaosti. Let us send these two away and you and I will be alone with the Thunder Birds.”

“You will have to send a third away. Here is Ouaracha.”

“He who does not pluck his beard,” she returned with distaste. “He was with my people. Why did he not stay there?”

“His place is here with me. Your place is with your people.”

“My place is with my Guardian of the River.” She stooped to enter the camp and sat down on a corn bag, demurely adjusting deerskin robe. “I do not like Ouracha.”

“It is you who are wrong-headed,” Godfrey said severely. “He is a fine man, much better than any of us here. Be courteous—”

His words were drowned in a clash of thunder. A great knife of fire cut the blackness with flaming blade. Arakoua laughed. “The Thunder Birds are flying.”

“Such things as Thunder Birds never existed.” Father Garnier entered as

the rain spattered huge drops. “Thunder is merely gases imprisoned in the skies. They explode as a musket explodes when discharged and the lightning you see is the same as the fire when a musket speaks.”

“The Thunder Bird is a man dressed like a turkey-cock living up in aronhaia. He speaks with the voice of Hinonaia.”

Father Garnier opened his mouth soundlessly. Godfrey answered roughly. “The Thunder Bird makes fire opening and shutting his wings. Why do you think such evil thoughts?”

Arakoua pointed. “Look!”

The storm beat over the land on the wild sweep of dark wings. The heavens opened their flood-gates and a water curtain enfolded forest and lake. Great blades of fire cut and stabbed in the skies and the roar and howl rocked the ground with its might. Godfrey swore softly to himself. He could imagine the Hurons scattering in terror. He glanced at his companions. Father Garnier sat in a corner, legs outstretched before him, eyes closed. His tranquil face told of peace and repose. Philip and Louis were mumbling prayers. Arakoua was hunched head on knees. For once her wagging tongue was still.

Godfrey went to the opening and peered out. In the south, the sun had broken through the low ceiling of clouds; two shafts of light dropped to earth. As he looked they widened and merged into a brilliant skyline of gold. The storm had rushed past them on its furious way. The land lay in glistening revival after the heat, giving forth those sweet, enticing smells of earthy freshness which comes after the rain. Father Garnier blinked and stood up. The two soldiers ceased their prayers. Arakoua lifted her head somewhat fearfully. Godfrey stepped outside and muttered astonishment. The new village stood as he had last seen it, bark houses reflecting the sun-rays in their wetness. He called Arakoua. “Look, O fool! The Thunder Bird has flown away. It is you who thought foolish things.”

She looked at him sideways. “My Guardian of the River calls me a fool. Was not the great Teanaosti frightened?” She fled laughing.

An exclamation from Philip drew Godfrey’s attention. Master Boivin was heading a procession of carpenters and polemen from the forest, two shoulders to a sapling and garments clinging to them as wet silk. At the camp the Master Builder stopped. “Drop your loads, men,” he ordered, “and hang up your shirts here. They can dry where these copper-coloured thieves can’t get them.”

“I do not approve of your language, Master Boivin,” Father Garnier said sternly. “It is neither just or meet to say such a thing.”

“I apologise to your reverence. I will not offend again.”

With flushed face he stripped off his shirt, removed the oiled cloth and

hung up the shirt on the cross-pole to dry. He eyed the village. “I must say those Hurons can build houses to stand up,” he commented with grudging admiration, then snapped at his brawny crew. “Come along, men, bring the spades. We’ll show these—these people how to put up a building.”

Carpenters and polemen plucked the saplings from the ground as if they were so many sticks, threw them to shoulders and trudged away. Godfrey followed to meet Enons. The chief was in high good humour. “A good oki watches over the aonchia. Never do I remember the Thunder Bird so angry and yet never a house was touched by his beak or wing. You spoke words of wisdom when you told of this place.”

Godfrey brightened at the use of the Huron noun *aonchia*. It indicated that the clan had not accepted the site as definite. St. Ignace and St. Louis, two villages of a few months old, also were without native place names and accordingly were not considered permanent, although St. Ignace was the strongest fortified village in Huronia and would not be quickly abandoned. “Your words gladden my heart, O Chief. I am happy you came here and found the place good.”

“We will make our ditch and ramparts at once, now the ground is soft. The palisades can wait, for food is more important and it must be stored for the moons of frost.” Enons looked about. “The oki of the wind has shown us that he is glad Totiri has gone to the Land of the Shades. Totiri lived too long.”

Godfrey rambled over to the site of the new church. Carpenters and polemen were labouring energetically. The framework was almost completed. Groups of Indians stood about in wonderment at the speed of construction. Such unconcealed admiration quickly caught the frayed ends of Master Boivin’s temper and wove them into a prideful humour. Godfrey smiled at the foibles of the good Master Builder and decided to return to Fort Ste. Marie. The village seemed to be firmly established.

The Father Superior received Godfrey with quiet eagerness. He was seated at the table in the great hall, with Father Le Mercier at his right and Father Chastelain at the left. There was a third at the table, Father Chabanel, who was assisting Father Brébeuf in the mission field of St. Ignace. Godfrey was surprised at his presence in the hall. Not a member of the Advisory Council, he surmised that something unusual had brought Father Chabenel to the main residence for consultation. Godfrey glanced keenly at the priest and thought of his tragic missionary experience.

But six and thirty years and a missionary in Huronia since 1645, only, Noël Chabanel’s scholarly face was pinched and drawn with lines of suffering and frustration. He had taught rhetoric in France with credit to himself, yet in

Huronia he displayed such a singular inaptitude for learning the language that even after three years' work in the field he could barely stumble through a simple conversation. This was a source of keen mortification to him and his discomfort of mind was accentuated by a natural aversion to Indian life. The smoke-filled, vermin-infested houses, the dirty food and filthy habits of the natives outraged his sensibilities, and the temptation to abandon the mission and return to the cultured halls of learning assailed him again and again, until he terminated the enticing thought by a vow of life-long servitude to the Hurons. Without hope of useful occupation and in misery of service, Father Chabanel lived a life of perpetual martyrdom and its mark was stamped in the determined glint of his eye, an index of the sterling qualities of heart and mind.

Godfrey's thoughts snapped to the present, as he heard the deep voice of the Father Superior speaking. "You did well to return so promptly, Captain. Now tell us of the storm; did it do much damage to the village?"

"None whatever, mon père." He repeated Enons' conversation. Godfrey saw the priests' faces clear as the skies had cleared after the storm.

"Your report is a great relief to us," the Father Superior said. "As matters stood it would have required little to disperse the Cord Clan; then we would be without hope of restoring the southern frontier."

"The shield of St. Michael mercifully turned aside the storm," Father Chastelain said, "for it raged here with such strength that our fields are flattened and the great pine in the meadows was blasted in twain."

"The fields will rise again, Father," Godfrey answered. He did not offer his solution that storms often vary a point or so off their course by reason of their own fury. He looked to Father Chabanel, who now spoke:

"And that bears out the vision which Father Brébeuf was privileged to see only a few nights ago."

The three priests leaned forward in rapt attention. Godfrey straightened on the bench. Of racial characteristics as different from his Latin associates as the moon is from the sun, his temperament was coldly analytical and, although he accepted the doctrines of miraculous intervention as he accepted the ordered day of existence, his inquiring mind frequently assigned natural causes to occurrences which the missionaries accepted as supernatural. It was not that Godfrey was the more sceptical or the less devout: it was the functional difference between a man reared in an intellectual atmosphere and transplanted to a wilderness of primitive forces, and a man bred and born in the backwoods, where he unwittingly absorbed the laws of nature from infancy. Godfrey's interest was no less than that of the priests, as he bent forward to hear Father Chabanel.

“The miracle happened in our church of St. Ignace,” the Father was saying. “Father Brébeuf was sitting alone meditating when the altar was transformed into a great mountain. Up it arose until it would seem that the very skies were split and the village covered by its base. The lower part of the mountain was thronged with saints and above them stood the virgins. All were clad in white and their faces were radiant with the adoration of the Holy Queen of Virgins, enthroned on the summit. So great and golden was her glory that the intense light that he had miraculously seen illuminated his face with its sublimity for hours.”

“Truly a holy man,” Father Chastelain murmured. “To him God has conferred a rare privilege of looking upon the Holy Mother and the saints.”

“It was a blessed moment,” Father Chabanel said in a whisper. “The Holy Mary, Queen of the Martyrs, and the saints were assembled to await the spirit of the martyr, Father Daniel, for even then the Iroquois and that spirit of evil incarnate, Hinonaia, were closing in on St. Joseph.”

The Father Superior had been brooding in silence. He aroused himself with an effort. “I have called Father Chabanel, even though the work at St. Ignace is heavy. He will relieve Father Garnier at the new village tomorrow.” He drew a long breath. “Truly it will strain our meagre resources to provide what is necessary but we must do what we can.”

IX

MASTER BUILDER BOIVIN returned with enthusiasm to the job of strengthening the palisades. As he remarked to Carpenter Foreman Guiet, while the men sweated over pointing logs to be driven into the triple palisade, “We are building a great stronghold of the Faith in the Huron country and it can be no stronger than its weakest point of attack. Nothing can be left to chance.”

Foreman Guiet agreed heartily, as did his workmen. The same spirit of devotion and service animated each one, priests and lay workers, alike. In all Christendom it was doubtful whether such another company of men could have been found, labouring without thought of earthly reward to transform an ideal into the concrete of reality.

In the days that passed, days that grew into weeks, life in Fort Ste. Marie moved with ordered regularity. The priests were awake before dawn and attended private devotions. At sunrise, the big bell, with its embossed scroll of the Lilies of France, and a source of wonder to visiting Hurons, pealed its deep-throated call to Mass and the day’s activities commenced. Master Shoemaker Christophe Regnaut and Layman Jacques Levrier worked over last and block in their cobbling shop. Lay Brother Louis Gauber, a heavy man with heavy beard and great knots of muscles, toiled at his forge, as Lay Brother Pierre Masson, a needle in build, divided his time in stitching and cutting in his tailoring room, hoeing and spading in the outwork garden, or taking care of the church. Apothecary Joseph Molère, his huge form squeezed within the narrow room of the outwork dispensary, or in his restricted quarters within the residence, worked among retorts, mortars and balances, preparing strange compounds such as annedda, a decoction made from the leaves of arbor-vitae and a specific for scurvy. Other medications, which he prescribed with commendable success against those perennial ills of mankind, were for dysentery, influenza and rheumatism. Of an evening he would sprawl happily on his reinforced bench in the common room, or, again, he might be found humming in thin notes as he prepared new potions for Lay Brother Ambroise Brouet, who was confined to the hospital.

Outside the walls, other workers tilled the fields and attended live-stock, and, in threshing time, flailed grain or shelled corn and brought it to the granary, where Miller Jacques Caulmont supervised the grinding. Within Fort Ste. Marie, or without, there laboured twoscore and ten manual workers, laymen, hired helpers, boys and soldiers, all, with the exception of the soldiers, under the direction of Manager Nicholas Montreuil.

Godfrey's duties were uneventful, yet not without interest. Each day brought its own responsibility. There was the guard to be kept vigilant, musket practice to be held in the meadow, and knife-throwing exercises to be judged. Repair work at the palisades required much time and thought, and it was here that the polemen, as haulers of logs and wielders of mallets, strained mightily at the windlass to hoist big logs into place and then pound them firmly into the ground.

Arakoua came to the outwork twice on different pretexts and each time Godfrey was busy elsewhere. On her third visit she purposefully loitered about Lay Brother Masson's garden, sown to cabbage and greenstuffs. Master Builder Boivin came hurrying from the dispensary, where he had been discussing the matter of a little physic for an ailing poleman with Apothecary Molère. He gave a passing glance at the Indian maiden, in modest dress of deerskin, and was about to proceed on his way when she turned to him. Master Boivin grunted surprise and displeasure. "What are *you* doing here?"

Arakoua eyed him sulkily. "I want to see Teanaosti."

"You can't. He's in conference with Aondecheté," he answered shortly in broken Huron.

Arakoua balanced herself on the ball of her feet. This was the third time she had come to the fort to find that Godfrey was engaged with the Father Superior. Her temper flared. "I want to see Teanaosti. Go and tell him that, O man of barrel body and long arms."

The Master Builder's big head set deeper on his wide shoulders. "You are an impudent hussy. Go away."

"You talk like a fool, O man who stands around and does nothing. Go and put disks in your hair and beads on your chest." She turned on her heel and left Master Boivin stuttering his rage.

Apothecary Molère had eased his eighteen stone of flesh out of the dispensary door, and was standing back, reaching over paunch with thick arm to turn the lock. Everything about Layman Molère was done in a big way, except height and even this oversight gave an impression of roundness suggestive of an animated mountain of fat. Arakoua swept down upon him, specks of fire flickering in dark eyes. "Come here, O stuffed turkey. I want you to find Teanaosti."

The apothecary was sensitive to comment upon his size. He shook the door handle vigorously and scowled at her with blood-red face. His fluent Huron came in a high-piped voice that often squeaks from vocal cords of the very fat. "Did you address me, brat?"

"I did, O reed throat that whistles. Go find my Teanaosti." She stamped her

foot.

“Go find him yourself. You need a crack on the bottom.” He glared at her.

She eyed him spitefully. “I would sweat you down in a slow fire at the stake.”

The apothecary all but turned purple in a choking wrath. He opened a wide mouth and a furious hissing came forth.

“A snake within your belly, that’s what makes you so fat!” Arakoua cried with awed interest. “I once knew an arendiwan who said he had a snake in his belly and he was a great magician. I need a magician.”

Astonishment deflected the apothecary’s rage. He stuttered. “A magician! Why do you want a magician?”

“You can help me, O great magician.” Her manner changed.

“Then be polite, O unpleasant child.”

“To you with a voice of a skeleton in a big bag! Why?”

His leather coat and breeches shook with injured dignity. A spurt of snorts came from a wide nose, stuck in a furrow between two flaming cheeks.

“You will fall apart,” she advised him.

“Say what you want, you impertinent pagan, and get out,” he shrilled.

“This place? I hate it!” she exclaimed scornfully. “Where is Teanaosti?”

“He is busy behind the stone walls where you can’t get him. Now go home!” The apothecary waddled away, puffing vigorously.

“I forgot the snake in his belly,” Arakoua cried. “You can help me, O father of magicians.”

Apothecary Molère was proud of his reputation as a dispenser of efficacious concoctions. The implied compliment touched his vanity. “After all she is an uncouth pagan,” he murmured and stopped. “What is it? Be quick and stop pestering me.”

“Totiri used to kill people from afar with magic,” she began.

“I kill no one, I cure them,” he squealed in righteous indignation.

“I want to help them, great load on the feet,” she said with annoyance. “You have not been taught to listen. When you want to kill a man from afar you make him small in mud, then you stick needles in him and split his head with a clam shell. The needles are arrows, the clam shell an axe, and he dies.”

“Nonsense! sheer deviltry!” He impatiently shuffled his feet.

“I do not want to kill. I made a man and put flowers on him, ground corn and wampum. I want him to come back to me.” She looked at Layman Molère

steadily. “He has not come.”

“Why don’t you go after him?” The apothecary was interested. He had an excellent idea of the image’s identity and regretted that the Captain of the Musketeers was a person with whom no liberties could be taken. “Are you afraid to go after him?”

“I am here and he is here, only my eyes do not see him. You can make some strong medicine for me to put on my own little man and bring him back to me.”

“You are a fool,” he squeaked. “There is no such magic. An evil spirit has entered into you. Get out!”

“You talk like a silly woman and look like one about to bring forth a child. The child will be a fat fool.” She stalked away, head high and eyes coloured as ondrachiara, the red stone.

The apothecary watched her balefully, raised a clenched fist, dropped it again and continued on his way.

From the elevation of the river palisades Godfrey caught a glimpse of Arakoua as she sped over pasture lands to Isiaragui. He glanced at the Assistant Superior, who eyed the fort with that tenderness reserved for a friend tried and true. It stood about him in compact lines. One wall, 12 feet of uprising stone topped by 4 feet of stout palisade, set in solid masonry, frowned eastward toward the forest for a length of 135 feet, protected by square bastions at each end and in the centre by a four-square stone postern, with outjutting superstructure looped for defence. A second curtain of unbroken stone faced to the north, connecting the outset sentinel bastion with the river tower, 85 feet in length. Beneath him, on the river front, set back 150 feet from the shore, was the 10-foot moat, protecting the palisade defences, 4 rows of stout, pointed logs, standing in a serried line from river bastion to water trench, separating the outwork from the fort. At juncture of moat and water ditch, the palisades curved to flank the outwork trench to the eastern bastion, constructed to give support both to fort and outwork defences. Father Le Mercier’s eyes gave silent approval to the strategy of the masons, brought specially from France to design and build Fort Ste. Marie, in erecting twin bastions within the curve of the palisades, so that they dominated not only the water trench and inner landing basin at the outwork, but formed an impregnable obstacle to enemy advance should the outwork defences be stormed.

He glanced into the courtyard, where workmen went about daily affairs, entering and leaving the big log building, with great stone chimneys rising on each end and ten dormer windows pointed from the sloping roof. Constructed of axe-squared logs and a hundred feet long, this building was the main

residency of the Mission of the Hurons, living quarters of the garrison and a place of retreat and meditation for the missionaries, capable of accommodating more than eighty men. Father Le Mercier frowned at the nodules of sweat, beading his hand to the cuff of black cassock, and his thoughts strayed to the Father Superior, in a scantily furnished cabinet, perspiring before a table deep with mission reports.

He looked beyond the crosses on the ribbed roofs of the bastion superstructures to the great cross of the Church of St. Joseph close to the eastern palisade of the pentagon outwork, a church of axe-hewn logs, and worthy of the name of St. Joseph, patron of the mission. His eyes followed the outwork palisades, reinforced by breastwork of earth, to where it swept out an the wide-flung angle, 123 feet at furthest point from the watch ditch between fort and outwork.

Father Le Mercier forgot his worries in a glow of honest pride at the splendid achievement which lay before him. The Jesuits, he told himself, had built for enduring colonization and their efforts were not to be spoken of in the same breath with that miserable New Amsterdam, log settlement of Fort Orange, in the Iroquois country, where muskets and lead were traded to the Iroquois for furs, to the great shame of the Dutch and the greater hurt of the Hurons. His heart warmed at the thought that there was not another fortress such as Ste. Marie to be found on the entire continent west of Quebec and Boston, in New England. His eyes ranged many arpents of tilled lands, sown to corn, grain and pease, and the meadows wherein pastured cattle and sheep, with hogs rooting contentedly in the shade of the stately elms growing close to the fort walls, while chickens scratched industriously about moat and water ditch.

Father Le Mercier could remember when all that he now saw was wild meadow and forest; and that was not so long ago. Only a decade before the first sod had been turned and the first tree felled. War and threat of war had made necessary a concentration of the Huron Mission into a central stronghold of the faith and out of this policy had grown Fort Ste. Marie, a refuge in time of peril to friendly Indians and the administrative centre of a projected protectorate which would make Huronia and New France impregnable to attack. It was a tremendous colonization effort, this attempt to give realization to Champlain's dream that the first defence of New France should not be on the St. Lawrence but 700 miles inland, and that religion, social service and arms should march side by side to the glory of the Cross and the Crown.

The site selected for this keystone of empire building was an admirable one. Father Le Mercier never tired of elaborating this point in conversation and correspondence. Remote from populous native villages, Fort Ste. Marie stood

where the three roads to Huronia spread out as ribs of a fan, the Champlain Road to the east, the Iroquois Trail almost a direct line to the St. Lawrence, and the Thorontohen Waterway to the south. Father Le Mercier made a wry face at the thought of those two southern roads; they had been closed to the French for years and they bore Iroquois names. The only Huron word associated with them was Isiaragui, hub of the roads. Father Le Mercier recalled his last visit to Isiaragui and there was vague implication found, in his visit that was disquietening. Literally translated the name meant "Sunbeams Dancing upon the Waters," but the Assistant Superior saw that the sunbeams, had been subordinated to great, glittering dragon flies which darted over shallow waters and wild rice clusters as aerial harbingers of death.

Here was an analogy which Father Le Mercier's prudent nature could not overlook. It drew his thoughts to the remaining Cord village of importance, St. Ignace, where Father Brébeuf had his mission of the same name. With the destruction of Teanaostaiaë, the southern frontier had moved forward to St. Ignace, within two leagues of Ste. Marie, itself. The Assistant Superior looked about him, appalled at the pressing danger to the fort and its broad acres. His voice arose in sharp indignation. "Sheer incompetence! These Hurons act as irresponsible, ungrateful children. Their imbecility has all but brought disaster upon them and us."

He looked at Godfrey, eyes bright with the smart of his thoughts. "Our efforts, the moneys of our supporters, spent so lavishly to benefit them! We would free them from the vice of pagan superstitions, teach them to grow two ears of corn where one grew before, show them how to live clean, Christian lives. Yes, stamp out visitations of epidemic and pestilence, which annually decimate their numbers; and they will not give heed to our teachings. We instructed them in building fortifications and they will not guard those fortifications when built." He bit his lip. "It is hard not to lose one's temper."

Godfrey turned his face. "The Hurons need a few more chiefs like Annaotaka and Thodatouan to knock them over the head and enforce obedience. Even Arakoua is better than most chiefs, particularly that Shastaretsi, who is recognized as the grand chief, and who hides in his precious skin on one of the remote islands when he should be rallying his people to fight to the last."

"Shastaretsi is a Christian," Father Le Mercier said shortly. "Arakoua is an outrageous pagan."

"She's a fighter, and we want fighters."

"A soldier's view, but an understandable one. And I admit you are more familiar with the situation than I am. Unfortunately, my duties, here, prevent

me from visiting the various mission centres as I would wish. I know that—" the Assistant Superior paused before he pronounced the name—"that Father Daniel and also Father Brébeuf declared Arakoua one of the most determined pagans that it had ever been their misfortune to meet—intractable, truculent and as ferocious as ever was this Hinonaia."

"At least Arakoua and Annaotaka are not afraid of the Iroquois." Godfrey stared toward the willows screening the mouth of the river. "I know the Sunbeam only too well. She is quite comely for an Indian, with ideas of her own—principally upon exterminating the Iroquois. I subscribe to them."

"Father Brébeuf spoke long and heavily of her." Father Le Mercier refused to permit the conversation to deviate. "He said she could be of considerable help to us—if she would. So far our influence extends little beyond the Bear and Rock Clans."

"The Bear Clan is the biggest in Huronia, and its fighting men the best. Without them the Iroquois would take Huronia at one bite."

"The Cord Clan is numerous and influential. To make the progress we desire we must secure the Cord support—and overcome this young woman's hostility." Father Le Mercier eyed Godfrey speculatively.

"Annaotaka is a powerful chief." Godfrey looked toward the river. "He's not unfriendly. He recently had that arendiwan, who caused so much trouble, put to death as a witch. Arakoua duplicated his feat a short time ago."

Father Le Mercier's face was severe. "Both acts were deplorable; men sent out of the world with their sins heavily upon them."

"They would have had more sins had they lived," Godfrey said philosophically. "Both were very devils come to earth. Annaotaka and Arakoua knew the danger and had them put away."

"Doubtless for other reasons as well," was the dry comment. "Now, this young woman! Father Brébeuf believes that were she married to a Frenchman it would be of great benefit to the work. It is the governor's policy to wed high-caste Indian women to responsible men and, thereby, strengthen the colony."

"We have a soldier, or two, here, who should please the most particular woman. He might as well marry a wildcat." As an afterthought Godfrey added, with some enthusiasm, "We might force her on one of those outlaw traders we sometimes catch. It would serve him right."

"Not exactly a charitable thought, Captain," Father Le Mercier hastened to soften the reproof. "These traders are a continual source of vexation, sometimes a real danger to our prestige. Usually we have a chance to apprehend them before they cause serious trouble."

“We do our best to conduct ourselves as Christian gentlemen, and; these traders rob the Indians shamefully and take their women. Not that the Hurons bother much over their women, for they are the worst rakes in the world; but they do resent being cheated.” Godfrey glanced at the Assistant Superior with a scowl. “I hope it wasn’t suggested that I marry Arakoua.”

“The Father Superior would not consider such a suggestion for a second,” Father Le Mercier quickly assured him. “I merely wanted to bring the subject to your attention. We might marry her to a soldier, or to a trader of good repute.”

“I still hold for my idea of an outlaw trader; a fitting punishment.”

The Assistant Superior shook his head. “I fear, Captain, you are more interested in arms than affairs of the spirit.”

“I am interested in the spirit shown by the Cord chiefs,” Godfrey said sourly. “Enons is a politician. Atondo, at St. Ignace, is no better, only he is more shrewd and likely to be more dangerous.”

“I suggested to Father Brébeuf that he watch Atondo,” the Assistant Superior said thoughtfully. “I fear antagonism to Annaotaka, not change of heart has made Atondo interested in our teachings. He hopes by this method to gain the Christian support.”

“He is a plotter, not a fighter,” Godfrey snorted.

“It is an incredible situation!” Father Le Mercier exclaimed, bitterly. “Here are people who think more of their petty differences and intrigues than they do of the safety of the nation. If only men could live in peace and amity what misery would be spared the world! Take the Huron Family! The Hurons, themselves, the Petuns, the Neutrals, even the Iroquois: they are all branches of the same tree, yet the Iroquois are the confirmed enemies of their brothers. Man bears the mark of Cain down through the ages. But I have overstayed my time and there is much to do.”

X

THE CHILL of the night spoke of September days and Godfrey's thoughts turned more and more to the arrival of the flotilla from Quebec. There was a small brass cannon to be brought up the long Champlain Road and mounted in the postern tower, above the great, iron-braced gates, for greater protection. Godfrey looked forward to the return of Father Bressani and his canoes with impatient anticipation. The Father Superior waited with heavy heart; for it was his unhappy task to tell Annaotaka and his warriors of the slaughter of the Cord Clan, at Teanaostaiaë.

The hour came that he dreaded. Father Le Mercier signalled the news from the Lookout and the fleet of fifty-seven canoes swept into the river, wild shouts ringing out as might a fanfare of trumpets to announce the return of a victorious host. The Father Superior had taken customary place at the inner landing basin and supporting him were the Assistant Superior and the Spiritual Adviser. Godfrey stood in front of his eight soldiers and, as the leading canoe drew into the basin, drew his sword with sharp command. Eight muskets pointed skyward and crashed out in salute. The scarred figure of Father Bressani limped ashore, followed by four missionaries. Godfrey heard their names announced to the Father Superior—Gabriel Lalemant, Jacques Bonin, Adrien Greslon and Adrian Daran. Lay Brother Nicolas Noirclair came after them. Godfrey was delighted to see eight uniformed soldiers among the twenty-six Frenchmen accompanying the flotilla, but even more delighted was he at the sight of a low-riding canoe from which glinted the copper casting of the cannon.

Father Ragueneau squared his shoulders with characteristic gesture. The tragic moment had come when Annaotaka and his warriors had to be told of the destruction of Teanaostaiaë. The chief approached proudly, followed by his warriors. Paint of victory was smeared on tattooed faces and bodies and fresh Iroquois scalps hung at breech-clout strings. Father Ragueneau noted these signs of victory and held up his hands in a sign of mourning.

"O great chief, you and your warriors, who by your bravery and the skill of arms opened up the way to the Town on the Rock and drove the enemy as chaff is driven before the wind, know not that the torch of death burned in your absence. You are warriors and I speak plainly. Teanaostaiaë is no more; our brother of the black robe, Anouennen, will be seen not again of men. Many have gone to the Land of the Souls, many were driven away into captivity and to their death. The people of Teanaostaiaë have moved to the waters of Isiaragui, where a new aonchia has arisen out of the ashes, of the old. The

sorrow within me crushes my heart but these words must be spoken. As warriors you have listened, as warriors you will grieve, even as I grieve."

Not by a twitch of a muscle did Annaotaka betray the wild fury that tore at his soul. He stood in silence, then spoke in a voice as hard as the ground beneath him. "O Aondecheté, you have snatched away the prize of victory. Black clouds blot out the sun. But you have done well to speak as man to man, and as man to man we understand. We go now to the abode of our sorrow. The time will come when we shall meet again, when our hearts are less heavy and a price has been paid. Farewell!"

That night there was subdued joy in Fort Ste. Marie. News of the outside world had come at last to this remote outpost of New France. With the closing of the Champlain Road, Huronia had been cut off from the outside world for two years. Letters, some written in France three years before, were avidly devoured, and after these there was the gossip of Quebec and Ville Marie to be retailed—the latest decrees of the Chevalier Charles Huault de Montagnais, Governor of New France, the views of the Very Reverend Jérôme Lalemant, Superior of the Mission in Canada, the adventures of Paul de Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve, founder and soldier-governor of Ville de Marie de Montreal, and the goods on display in the shops. No item of chit-chat was too small to fall upon greedy ears and stories were told which would be subject of debate so long as men were garrisoned in Fort Ste. Marie; for where men live remote from civilization the happenings of five years, or half a score, remain as fresh in thought as those of yesterday.

As the garrison gossiped in the laymen's quarters, the Father Superior called a meeting of the priests in the great hall and Godfrey, requested to attend, took his place at the end of the table. Father Ragueneau's face was grave. "I need not speak at length of the great blow which befell us in the loss of Teanaostaiaë and the death of Father Daniel. Now Father Lalemant has written from Quebec that Father Isaac Jogues two years ago received the crown of martyrdom in the Iroquois country, and with him was slain Layman John de la Lande." He sat back and stared at his hands. "God has been gracious to consecrate our work by the blood of four martyrs—Fathers Jogues and Daniel, Lay Brother René Goupil and Layman John de la Lande. It was not my good fortune to know either of the lay members, but Lay Brother Goupil was on his way to take charge of our hospital, here, when he was captured with Father Jogues and he suffered the same tortures inflicted upon Father Jogues during his first captivity. That was six years ago, and it pleased God to spare Father Jogues for further service and honours."

Godfrey studied the new missionaries while the Father Superior was speaking and his eyes ever returned to Father Gabriel Lalemant. A nephew of

two Superiors of the Missions to Canada, the Very Reverend Charles Lalemant, and the Very Reverend Jérôme Lalemant, now at Quebec, he was following in his uncles' footsteps. Although nine and thirty years, his delicate features, framed by a close-trimmed beard, made him appear much younger. Only in the fearless light of his level eyes was shown the steel of a will that sustained his emaciated body in the hardest trials. Here was a man, Godfrey decided, who would court martyrdom rather than draw back a step from his chosen course.

Godfrey straightened with a jerk. The Father Superior was speaking and he had been guilty of inattention. His face crimsoned as he saw Father Ragueneau's fingers touch his stubby moustache. His quick eye had noted Godfrey's lapse but he continued as if he had seen nothing.

"I can remember Father Jogues as though the six years since I last saw him were only six hours." The Father Superior's voice was deep with emotion. "His kindly face, strength of character and indomitable will made him a truly great servant of the Lord. Of his capture upon his return journey here from Quebec and the tortures inflicted upon him by the ferocious Iroquois, I need not dwell. Father Bressani, here,—" the Father Superior nodded kindly toward the scarred and seamed face of the missionary, one hand almost useless from being split by an Iroquois knife and fingers burned or hacked away by the dull edge of clam shells—"Father Bressani endured the same tortures as did Father Jogues and I happen to know that there is not an inch of his body not bearing marks of firebrand or knife; and as was Father Jogues in his first captivity, so was he ransomed by the Dutch and treated in all kindness."

Father Bressani bowed his head. "I am unworthy of such words," he murmured.

"It is well at this time to recall these things," the Father Superior answered inexorably. "Both you and Father Jogues were given a most unusual permission from the Holy Father, your bodies not being whole, your hands mutilated owing to Iroquois tortures, to celebrate Mass. As the Holy Father said, 'It would be unjust that a martyr of Christ should not drink the blood of Christ'."

Father Ragueneau leaned forward impressively, hands spread on the table before him. "You have just returned with Father Bressani from another trip, such as the one on which he was captured. He left here early in June full knowing that the Iroquois had closed the road the previous year. Father Jogues returned to the Iroquois country to found the Mission of Martyrs, a truly prophetic name for him, and it was he who wrote to a friend in our Order shortly before leaving Quebec on his last journey—" he bent forward, picked up some notes and read:

> “ ‘My heart tells me that, if I have the blessing of being employed in this mission, “I go not to return”; but I would be happy if Our Lord were willing to finish the sacrifice where He has begun it, and if the little blood which I have shed in that land were as the pledge of that which I would give Him from all the veins of my body and heart. . . Adieu, my dear father. Entreat Him that He unite me inseparably to Himself’.”

The Father Superior’s eyes were bright as he shuffled the notes. “What I have read is from one of the last letters written in New France by Father Jogues. Let us now read from that which he wrote the day he landed, at Quebec:

> “ ‘I do not know what it is to enter Paradise; but this I know, that it is difficult to experience in this world a joy more excessive and more overflowing than that I felt on my setting foot on New France, and celebrating my first Mass here on the Day of Visitation. I assure you it was indeed a day of the visitation of the goodness of God and Our Lady. I felt as if it were Christmas Day for me and that I was to be born again to a new life and a life in God’.”

Once more the papers rustled in the short, thick fingers. Father Ragueneau cleared his throat, looked down at a sheet yellowed with age. “I have here a notation which I treasure. It was made many years ago, as told me by Father Jogues, when the walls of this fort were rising above the ground. His words go back to that day of October 24th, 1624, when Isaac Jogues, seventeen years old, put on for the first time the habit of our Order. As he told it to me:

> “ ‘I approached the Novice-Master and confided, “Please, my Father, I would like to be sent to Ethiopia or to the Indies, where Blessed Father Francis Xavier toiled so valiantly for Christ.” The Master of the Novices looked long at me and quietly replied, “Brother Jogues, you will not die anywhere but in New France.” ’ ”

“Deep in his heart Isaac Jogues carried this prophecy, for prophecy it was, and a score of years later it was to come true. And with him another went to a glorious death, Layman John de la Lande; and both suffered excruciating agonies before their captors ended their lives with the short-axe.”

The Father Superior sat back, his eyes flashed in turn upon each of the four new missionaries. “Father Jogues superintended the building of this residence; it is now hallowed ground. I need not disguise the dangers which the future

may hold. The Iroquois are relentless in their hate toward us, and we have received a staggering blow in the death of Father Daniel and the capture of Teanaostaiaë. Any victory which Annaotaka and his warriors may have gained in the East does not affect the situation in Huronia. Am I correct, Father Bressani?"

"Only too correct, Father." The missionary nodded his scarred head in gloomy assent. "Our Hurons discovered a large body of Iroquois waiting to surprise the garrison of Three Rivers and routed them with great loss in dead and prisoners. I should say that to the Three Rivers it was an important engagement. So far as we are concerned, if anything it will infuriate the Iroquois the more against the Hurons."

Father Ragueneau frowned. "I think it would be well to hear from Captain Bethune any suggestions which he may offer."

Godfrey: arose. "I have little to contribute of value, mon père. The Hurons, man for man, are fully equal to the Iroquois in combat, but not in organized warfare. They refuse to obey a central authority. Every victory gained by the Iroquois has been by surprising unguarded village fortifications, usually when the main body of defenders are absent. This invites the examination of the questions: How do large bodies of Iroquois invade the country without discovery? How can they approach close to large towns in perfect secrecy? How do they know the whereabouts of the defending warriors? In other words, if the Iroquois are so well informed of Huron movements, how is it that the Hurons, who are equally proficient as scouts, remain in ignorance of the Iroquois? Is the answer stupidity, apathy or betrayal? Here is the crux of the situation, as I see it."

A murmur ran about the table. Father Ragueneau held up a silencing hand. "I do not think Captain Bethune spoke to us as a group. Rather, I should say, as individuals, so that each of us, in residence and in the field, may search our mind for an answer; and, as it not infrequently happens, a newcomer may have a suggestion, which despite unfamiliarity of conditions, will prove helpful."

Such remarks from the Father Superior could be interpreted only as an unspoken command and there was silence when he paused, then rose to his feet, motioning the others to remain seated. "I will not cite the glorious work which has been done here, or dwell upon the heroism of our missionaries, who have built a glorious kingdom to Him who died on the Cross to save mankind. You have seen these buildings and know that we have built for future usefulness. Our success has aroused all influences for evil and they fight to hold this vast land of promise in their dark clutch." He pointed dramatically to the heavy beams of the roof. "I cannot conceive of those toppling amid the ruins of Fort Ste. Marie. That must not happen; shall not happen."

He stood before them, a commanding figure. Slowly he looked up and down the table. His magnetic personality radiated strength and it was as though; each one had drunk from a hidden source of energy, of a force indomitable in its vitality. The Father Superior raised his hands. “Let us pray.”

XI

THE DAYS grew shorter and as icy fingers touched the skies and turned the velvet of their blue to steel, supplicants flocked to Fort Ste. Marie to visit and seek spiritual consolation, and, more than anything else, to gulp down steaming dishes of sagamite with noisy gusto. They set up their squat, bark huts on the frozen flats about the walls and palisades and the slope of the hill to the Lookout, and drank the flow of the pure spring, which no matter how extreme the cold, never froze; and in the early dusk and throughout the night their fires flickered from the grey background of the dirt-trodden snow. The week-end was a gala occasion to the believers, for on Saturday, Sunday and Monday Mass was celebrated with all ceremony; but at all times they were welcomed with open-hearted generosity.

The villagers of Isiaragui, pagans and believers alike, came by the dozen and the score, and the Father Superior in his greatness of heart and understanding threw open the doors of the food magazines to them. He knew that a town cannot be torn up by the roots without hunger shrinking stomachs and drying up the wells of hearts. So, each day he found time to spend in his outwork cabinet and there spoke words of comfort to the women who came sorrowing and to the men; but he waited in vain for Annaotaka.

Not that he was without word of the grim Cord chief, for he had heard much; so had Apothecary Molère, as he dispensed his compounds and kept a supervisory eye upon the hospital, now never wanting for patients. From the words of those who came and went, Father Ragueneau was told that the council fire had burned in Annaotaka's house more nights than there were fingers on both hands and that between such meetings the chief and Arakoua would disappear and no man knew whence they went. Beyond these meagre crumbs of gossip, the Father Superior learned nothing until a report came from Father Brébeuf. Annaotaka had visited St. Ignace and affairs had gone badly.

Father Ragueneau called the boy, Louis Le Boesme, to summon Godfrey to the cabinet, then sat back to read the closely written pages. He soon laid the report on the table and stared into space. Memory flashed back over a dozen years spent in Huronia, of council fires whose ashes were scattered to the winds of time, of that council of Ste. Thérèse, where he and his brother priests sat by the fire as malefactors facing a charge of witchcraft and their lives were in the balance. The Father Superior nodded sadly. It was all so very old and familiar to him. He could see that which was concealed from Father Brébeuf by his impetuous zeal; look, as it were, into the solemn faces of the councillors and hear their words uttered in grave futility. He could visualize the St. Ignace

council as if he had attended it himself.

The Hatiouannens, they who are the elders, had met about the council fire of Atondo, war chief of the aonchia and second in the Cord Clan only to Annaotaka. The bark house had been cleared of outsiders, except the inescapable gagnenon, that wolfish breed of dogs, voiceless and flea-bitten, which slunk to the corners to whine and scratch industriously. About the fire half a score of principal chiefs in war and peace squatted on flat-topped rocks and squinted owlishly in the wreath of smoke. But for the absence of the Rock Clan, now dispersed among other villages, the gathering might have been representative of the Huron Nation. Thodatouan, war chief of the Bear Clan, had come from Ossossanë, four leagues distant, and Onaotaha, war chief of the Clan Beyond the Morass, came from St. Louis, a league away. Annaotaka was the last to arrive, to be received with a guttural welcome of *Shay*!

His shrewd eyes flashed about the circle of coppery faces, touched by red from the leaping fire of cedar logs in the centre of the earthen floor. He seated himself upon a vacant rock, opposite Atondo. Arakoua, in plain deerskin dress, slipped through the hide-covered doorway and sought a convenient corner. Her presence was tactfully ignored by the council. Annaotaka was a law unto himself and Arakoua's fearless spirit and implacable hatred of the Iroquois made her a congenial companion to the chief. She cracked a couple of scratching dogs over the head and leaned back to hear the council deliberations with sulky attentiveness.

Thodatouan was speaking. "My brothers, behold the gathering of the three clans. The war chiefs are assembled. We are here to consider the evil spirit which hangs over the land and showers death from the skies."

Atondo turned his round, tattooed face, set off by a circle of short, thick hair, toward Annaotaka. The supreme war chief was staring unwinkingly at the fire. Atondo cleared his throat. "A thunderbolt strikes with fire and the voice of a thousand muskets. The Little Thunder is in our ears and her magic touches our hearts. What can we do? The earth has opened to receive our blood."

There was an applause of "ho! ho!" and striking of fists upon the ground. Only Annaotaka and Thodatouan remained silent. They glanced at each other and Annaotaka stared back into the fire. Thodatouan opened his lips and closed them, as Onaotaha brushed at a flea on the side of his plucked head and spoke. "There is truth in the words of Atondo. Hinonaia has bewitched us. We are a skeleton hung upon a thread. Once the thread breaks, our bones will be scattered along the road to the Land of Souls."

"We are drifting on waves of death," Atondo grunted.

Annaotaka's eyes glinted. "Onaotaha has spoken, Atondo has spoken. Their words are not the words of Thodatouan or Annaotaka."

"The people of the Bear have not heard the voice of the Little Thunder, they have not felt the burn of her bolts." Atondo barely concealed a sneer.

Thodatouan's dark eyes flamed. Annaotaka gestured for silence. An insult had been given by the Cord Clan, as supreme war chief of the Cord it was his duty to chastise. Annaotaka's voice was as cold and hard as the night frost. "I ask you, O Onaotaha, have the People Beyond the Morass gathered up the bones of those smitten by the Little Thunder? Have you seen the blackened stakes of the torture fires? I do not ask Atondo. At the first rumble of Hinonaia he left his great village of Taenhatentaron as a fox leaves its burrow to the wolf. Atondo does not speak for the Clan of the Cord, if his tongue says this he lies."

Atondo's flat face contorted into a mask of rage. "The great war chief went afar to win a victory," he snarled. "While he was hunting the Hodenosaunee, they came to the Keeper of the River and the keeper was away."

Not by a wink of the eye did Annaotaka acknowledge the deadly affront. His voice was even when he replied, "I have spoken."

Thodatouan knew that Annaotaka was never so deadly as when coldly contemptuous. He intervened quickly. "Echon is here. He is a great ondaki. He moved the aonchia from the Place Where the Dry Pole Blocks the Way to here. He may have words of wisdom."

Onaotaha and the peace chiefs welcomed the suggestion with fist thumping on the ground. Atondo gave grudging assent. Without movement Annaotaka spoke to Arakoua. "Find He who Pulls the Heavy Load and bring him here."

Father Brébeuf, "He who Pulls the Heavy Load", was seated on a log before a fire in the centre of his cabin. The doorway was scantily covered by deer hide and smoke from a pine knot fire scattered before a score of eddies flowing in from inch-wide chinks in the bark walls, before it swept upward to disappear through the foot of open space down the centre of the roof. His heroic face shone redly in the play of the fire that was caught up and reflected in the blue of his mystical, fearless eyes. He hunched over a tablet, now and then to dip quill pen in a mixture of water and black muck used for ink. As he wrote, left hand would stray to twist the long droop of a grey moustache, which otherwise was lost in the curl of the beard.

Arakoua jerked aside the deerskin flap and stamped inside. He gave her a quick look which conveyed neither censure nor welcome and continued writing. She seated herself upon thin bark sheets of the endicha and forgot her furious hate of Atondo in watching the quill make magic lines on the paper, for

the thought that speech could be set down by strokes of the pen never failed to intrigue the Indian mind. Arakoua was interested for a dozen minutes, then attention wandered. She eyed the furnishings, a locked box, firewood and a few logs to sit upon. There was nothing to interest her further. She clicked tongue against mouth. “O Echon, the great war chief Annaotaka bids you come to the council fire of Atondo. The great chief, my father, did not invite you, himself—it was Thodatouan.”

The message delivered in her most offensive way, she sat back to stare defiance. Father Brébeuf did not raise his head. “I heard your words.” He laid aside his quill and with a trace of a frown, commenced to read what was written, nodding approval as his eyes moved from line to line.

Arakoua contained herself as best she could until the last page was turned. “It is long magic you make with those black marks,” she complained. “If you are such a big magician, you can tell me of Teanaosti.”

“Is the council fire burning to discuss Teanaosti?” Father Brébeuf gathered up the sheets of his letter, quill and ink to place them in the box. “Or is it the Hodenosaunee that are important?”

“What does the council fire matter to you, O black robe? The great Annaotaka did not ask you to come.”

The priest carefully locked the box with key hanging from his girdle. He stood up and regarded her gloomily from shadows that lay heavy in that corner of the cabin. “You are impudent, imprudent and vicious,” he said in a deep, stern voice, “and your feet are set hard on the road to hell. Unless a new voice speaks in your heart, you will spend eternity in perdition.”

“It is Teanaosti who speaks in my heart.” She wrinkled her nose.

“It is a heart black with evil spirits.” He stepped forward a pace, threadbare cassock giving greater proportions to his thick, tall figure. “Your conduct is a disgrace. You must mend your ways or your end will be vile.”

She laughed scornfully. “An ondaki is neither man nor woman. He is a cow moose with a bell. What do you know of women? Teanaosti is a man and a warrior.”

“Teanaosti is a soldier of the Cross.” Father Brébeuf’s tones were sharp in angry reproof. “He is not for a wanton. Your sins have made your heart as black as a moonless night. Repent while you may.”

“A cow moose with a bell,” she gibed, stroking her chin in derision of his beard. “You know nothing of me!”

The priest strode to face her. A log broke and embers glowed, its warmth of colour spreading upward and outward in the dusk of the cabin to make a

flare that touched with flame the black outline of his robe. For a full minute he stood as if carved of the ironwood tree and stared at her with eyes that glowed as did the fire, but with an intensity of light which was not of this world. Arakoua gripped hands and set shoulders defiantly under the piercing scrutiny. His voice was inflexible in its hardness when he spoke. “You forget the miseries of your own people in your own wretched self. You stand at the fork in the trail. Beware of following your evil okis of lust and selfishness. If you do they will lead you to a stroke of the short-axe and perdition. I see the two trails, as clearly as if you stood before them, and their end. Renounce your false okis and flee from their evil influence while the way is yet open, or you die in your youth.”

The curious light died out of his eyes. He passed a hand across his forehead. “You heard the spirit speak from within me,” he said with a touch of compassion. “I sorrow for you, you are so young and so evil of heart. There is yet—”

“Your eyes were the eyes of a wolf when the fire strikes them,” she said fearfully.

“The wolf was the destroying image of the evil spirit within you,” he answered sternly. “It will devour you, if you do not believe in the true Great Spirit and keep His commandments, if you do not remember—”

The word *remember* brought her to the present with a start. “The council!” she exclaimed. “We have kept them waiting!”

“True. I had not given it a thought.” He hurried from the cabin.

Father Brébeuf was received with ill-concealed annoyance. “We have put new wood on the fire,” Atondo said surlily.

“The wood was put on by a proper hand,” Annaotaka grunted.

Atondo’s face turned black. He swallowed as rage choked his throat. The priest’s mouth tightened. No deadlier insult could be given than to liken a war chief to a hewer of wood. One glance at Annaotaka, lips curled in contemptuous sneer, and Father Brébeuf’s nerves chilled. The threatened break between the war chief of the Cord Clan and his lieutenant had come. The missionary in him bade support of Atondo, the soldier in him clove to Annaotaka. Father Brébeuf drew himself to full height, a warrior among warriors, deep of chest, broad of shoulder and fearless as the bravest of them. “I am late because a spirit spoke words to me and I listened. And, now when I am here, what do I find? A house divided against itself. Is that good?”

“True, O Echon, we are of two tongues,” Thodatouan agreed gravely. “That is nothing now that you are here.”

“It was Echon who chose the site for our new aonchia,” Atondo said

mischievously to Annaotaka. “He awaits your questions.”

Wise in the ways of Huron intrigue, Father Brébeuf did not await a question. “It is true that we moved from Where the Pole Blocked the Way, but the palisades were bad and there was pestilence. Death dropped upon us from the skies.”

“The Little Thunder is rumbling,” Annaotaka said viciously.

“I thought not of death,” the priest retorted sternly. “I thought of the people. It is not a virtue in the eyes of the Great Spirit that they should die needlessly. They must live, work in His cause and honour His name, otherwise the sin would be mine.”

He faced Annaotaka, eyes hard. “Do not think that I, Echon, fear death,” he thundered. “I *know* how I shall die. The Great Spirit has foreordained that it shall be at the Hodenosaunee torture stake and I shun it not. As a young man across the wide waters I saw the future. I saw myself tied to this stake. It did not stop my coming here, and since I came I have seen that stake—not once, but thrice—yet I do not fear it.”

Annaotaka raised his head. “He who Pulls the Heavy Load has the heart of a warrior. I did not speak those words to him.”

“Nor should they ever have been spoken,” the priest cried relentlessly. “What are we, O chiefs, to talk with bitter tongue when we talk in the shadow of death?”

Annaotaka shrugged. His eyes shifted to Atondo.

Father Brébeuf saw into the chiefs mind. “What is the profit if we think murderous thoughts against each other when we should unite in thinking to save our people? The Hurons are groaning under the wrath of the Great Spirit; He is punishing them, for their ways are evil and their lives are of sin and shame.”

“The Hodenosaunee have not forsaken the old okis and the voice of Hinonaia speaks for them,” Thodatouan said bitterly.

“Hinonaia is a thing of evil. The evil spirits fight against us but they cannot conquer.”

“The ouimchtigouches know how to build fortifications,” Annaotaka added sourly. “Teanaosti is a warrior, Aondecheté a man of wise words. We did not guard our defences. We did not listen to his words. We listened to the wind of our own voices.” He looked again to Atondo.

“What does your heart say, O Echon?” Onaotaha asked diplomatically.

“You must give up your sinful ways. Believe in the Great Spirit and keep His commandments,” he replied sternly. “Give up your superstitious feasts,

stop eating captive warriors, banish the lying arendiwan and unite to defend your land and fight for His Kingdom of the Faith. Only then will the Great Spirit fight with you and deliver you from the Hodenosaunee."

"Our aonchia foreswore the evil spirits, we moved to safety and built stronger palisades. Teanaostaiaë was of two tongues in honouring the Great Spirit and it was destroyed," said Atondo virtuously.

"Then guard your palisades better than Enons did and hunt not for wolves in the woods when they are not at your door," Thodatouan retorted sharply, "or the Great Spirit in the Skies will not save you."

Annaotaka said nothing. He watched Atondo with flinty eyes and when Thodatouan closed his lips, signed Arakoua to leave, bidding the chiefs a courteous farewell. He had another and a more pressing question to consider than the state of the nation; the matter of Atondo's bid for supreme clan leadership.

XII

THE FATHER SUPERIOR read again the report, glanced at a second small sheaf of papers, and laid them aside as Godfrey entered. “Bad news from St. Ignace,” he said heavily, and outlined in a few words what Father Brébeuf had written. “These Hurons!” he murmured, “I am fearful. When we urgently require unity and common effort they must fight among themselves.”

“Atondo is a curious combination of guile and stupidity,” Godfrey said thoughtfully, “and he is very careful of his skin. He must expect some immediate gain in this quarrel.”

“His attitude is inexplicable unless he imagines he can consolidate both Christian and pagan support against Annaotaka. He has always been ready to stand up against the Iroquois; now he appears to have collapsed morally.”

“I think his attitude is dictated by ambition, mon père. He saw an opportunity to curb Annaotaka, only he overlooked Thodatouan and the Bear Clan. A serious oversight for him.”

“Atondo has courage of a type, or he never would dare to challenge Annaotaka,” Father Ragueneau said slowly. “What do you suggest?”

“I do not know of anything we can do. It is a private quarrel between Annaotaka and Atondo. Interference on our part would probably offend both. I fear for Atondo.”

“I agree with you; and it is not our quarrel.” The Father Superior sighed. His fingers strayed to the second sheaf of papers. He looked at the first page and brows drew together in rapt attention. Slowly, carefully he read, placing each sheet in abstract exactness upon the other. When he laid the last one aside, he spoke more to himself than to Godfrey. “A godly man, Father Brébeuf, a man of fine intellect, a scholar of great attainments and a true servant of his fellow men.” He stroked his chin reflectively. “I would that I had been favoured with the same remarkable gifts as Father Brébeuf, that I might use them to become such a choice worker in God’s vineyard.”

The Father Superior tapped the pages lightly with forefinger. “Here is an open letter to those in France contemplating the Huron mission field. A missive which touched me deeply, for it shows the indignities that men suffer gladly so that they may be of service to the Lord and do His will wherever He may send them.” For the space of a minute Father Ragueneau eyed the papers in deep thought, then slowly took them up. “It is nothing confidential and I am sure that Father Brébeuf would not mind if I read them to you; I know that you

would enjoy his words as I did." He cleared his throat and read in a low, deep voice:

> " 'To use the words of St. Paul, "I will show you how much you will have to suffer for the Name of Jesus." I will say nothing of the voyage that will bring you here; you have heard of it. If you have the courage to undertake it, when you arrive in the Huron country, in spite of our joy and charity, we shall receive you in such a wretched cabin that there is no hovel in France lowly enough to compare with it. However much harassed and worn out you may be, we shall have no other bed to offer you but a mat spread on the ground; a skin is a luxury we cannot always afford. Fleas and mosquitoes will torment you for three or four months of the summer. At meal-time we will serve you a kind of gruel made of crushed corn, sometimes seasoned with smoked or dried fish; and if, perchance, we can offer you a piece of venison or fresh fish, you shall have to share your portion with some uninvited guest.
>
> " 'You may be a learned theologian or grand preacher in France, but here you shall have to go to the school of savage men, women and children, and learn to lisp their language, submitting meekly to their mockeries, because of your ignorance of what they know so well. For months you shall be a dumb man among barbarians.
>
> " 'And what of the winter? For fully five months you shall be confined to a bark cabin open to sky, breathing a smoky atmosphere, benumbed with cold, with a number of Indians annoying you from morning till night. And now that we have Christians in almost every village, you shall have a tramp for miles along unbeaten trails to reach them, carrying on your back whatever luggage you wish to bring along. There you shall have to stay two or three weeks and share an Indian family's cabin with its inconceivable wretchedness and inconvenience.
>
> " 'You shall have, literally, to carry your life in your hands day and night, for a malcontent, giving vent to his anger, or a dreamer in obedience to his dream, may split your head with his hatchet, at any time and at any place. And woe to you if there is a drought in the land, or an excess of rain, or an epidemic, for you shall be held responsible. Add to these possible attempts on your life the ubiquitous Iroquois prowling along the trails, in quest of human flesh for a feast.
>
> " 'What a fund of piety you must bring with you to persist in the

fervour of your spiritual life, assailed with so many distractions and without the aids of a well-regulated community! For days you will be deprived of the consolation of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and when you do enjoy this blessing you will feel that the Lord found a more decent temple in the stable of Bethlehem than the one you can give Him in these wilds.

" 'Now, if in spite of all these hardships, and many others which you will learn from experience, you are still ready to come to us and share our labours, come. You will find the Cross here and with it the sweetest consolation the Lord has in store for His servants. Why, in the midst of so many trials, all of us are happy and sound of soul and body. We know not the meaning of a stomach-ache, or a headache, or a cold. If we have sometimes to repeat the words of the Lord to His Father, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" we often have reason to cry out with St. Francis Xavier, in the abundance of our consolation, "Enough, O Lord!" ' "

The Father Superior laid the pages aside and looked toward the crucifix above the table with meditative eyes. " 'The abundance of our consolation,' " he murmured. "Truly we have been blessed beyond our deserts, even in the midst of these troubles."

Godfrey sat silent. Though not of a scholarly order, the unusual circumstances of his wardship had given him opportunities to acquire an education seldom accorded to any but the most studious and his appreciation of letters had been carefully fostered. He knew that Father Brébeuf, in his rude cabin in St. Ignace, had penned a letter which would live down through the centuries by its simple delineation of life in Huronia, and its dangers and spiritual rewards; a human document that brought the untutored savage to the cultured cloisters of the Old World and, all unwittingly, preserved for the generations yet to come something of the intrepid spirit and solid virtues of these black-robed crusaders of the Cross.

"A magnificent mind in a magnificent man, and absolutely fearless." Father Ragueneau shook his head. "If we could only infuse some of his sterling qualities into the Huron leaders."

Godfrey smiled bleakly. "I doubt if there are many men to be found who could equal Father Brébeuf, in a number of ways."

"Yes, yes, I know that, Godfrey. It was but a vain wish, and one which I should not have made." The Father Superior stared into space, then smiled sadly. "As the Lord said, 'for where your treasure is there will your heart be also.' My heart is in Huronia where a treasure of souls is awaiting salvation."

“My heart is here, also, sir.”

“No, Godfrey, your heart is in your future seigneury, and that is right. You are of pioneer stock, a builder.” He frowned. “If the Hurons were only builders, working for the national good. If Annaotaka and Atondo only—” He shrugged helplessly. “We can but wait and hope for the best.”

It was not for a month, or more, that further word was received, then a brief paragraph in Father Brébeuf’s report announced that Atondo was missing. A fortnight earlier he had gone into the forest to hunt and he was seen no more. The Father Superior laid aside the letter with gloomy forebodings. He had no doubt as to Atondo’s fate; nor had Godfrey.

There was no time for profitless speculation. The Christmas season was upon them. Christian Indians crowded the mission fort during the festival and the little Church of St. Joseph was gay with decorations, candles and the scene of the Nativity. To the Hurons the church was a fairyland, a cathedral of beauty which only the magic of the black robes could create. “Their pleasures are simple ones,” Father Ragueneau remarked to Godfrey, “for with all its apparent riches, our church would not be thought anything but impoverished in France.”

“Pardon me, mon père,” Godfrey replied, “I have never been in France, as you know, yet I think the church is beautiful, the more beautiful for the labour and sacrifice that went into its building.”

“Yes, my captain, I understand.” The Father Superior’s voice was tender. “You, also, are a simple soul. The gold and the glitter are not for you; otherwise you would not be immured here, in this outpost.”

It was evening and they were standing at the entrance to St. Joseph’s after the service had closed. The sky above them was agleam as if dusted with diamonds, and over the pines, on a distant ridge, the pale disk of the moon shone coldly. The world that they knew was a stern one and only the stoutest could withstand its rigours. Father Ragueneau watched his breath weave strange patterns in the motionless air, then shiver and vanish without touch or trace. There was no other movement, no sound save their voices and a sharp crash from the forest where a branch of a tree snapped under the inexorable grip of the frost and went tumbling to the ground. The outwork was empty, there came no warmth of light from the skin-covered windows and no living thing moved; overhead was illimitable space, and about them a white pall of snow. To Godfrey the night gave a curious illusion that they stood in the presence of the living dead and that the dead thing which they saw was the world that they knew. He started as a long-drawn whine arose in tremulous crescendo to make grimly articulate the grim land. The wail wavered, strangled

in choked sob, to swell out in fresh volume of menace. The grey wolf was howling his hunger to the night.

Father Ragueneau raised his head. “Yes, my captain, only the strong hearts are simple of soul. They look for no reward beyond that of knowing that they have built well and truly in the sight of God and man, and, yet, disinterested service sometimes brings its own reward.” He glanced at Godfrey with inscrutable smile, to add, “Come, the night indeed is cold to freeze the stoutest heart!”

At the door of his residence cabinet the Father Superior stopped. “Still no word of Annaotaka nor his plans; and Atondo missing. The weeks are passing and much remains to be done, if we are to preserve all this.” His voice was casual, only in his eyes was that anxiety of the soul expressed.

“I know, mon père.” Godfrey was discouraged. “I have spent hours considering plans, only to discard them as impracticable.”

“Do not despair. Often the best ideas spring to life at the last minute; and do not forget that Christ and His saints have intervened more than once to save us, here in Huronia.”

They were not to be kept long waiting for word of Annaotaka. A few days later, as Father Ragueneau and Godfrey sat discussing plans in the outwork cabin, the sentry knocked at the door. “If the captain will pardon me, a man and a woman approach on snowshoes.”

Godfrey looked out. “I imagine, sir, some of our questions may be answered. Annaotaka and Arakoua are here.”

The Father Superior left his cabinet briskly. “My eyes are glad at the sight of you, O Chief, and your daughter, Arakoua.”

“It is well, O Aondecheté, for I come on account of her. She says there is a great snake in here.” Annaotaka diagnosed the complaint by putting a massive hand on his stomach. “It bites her with teeth of fire.”

Arakoua said nothing. She smiled at Godfrey.

“It is well, Annaotaka, that you should bring her here. I will send for our maker of good medicine at once.” The Father Superior spoke in all gravity. Only in the depths of his eyes did amusement flicker. “Do you come with me and we will speak as brothers. Teanaosti will remain with Arakoua until the maker of good medicine arrives.”

Annaotaka assented with a grunt and he and Father Ragueneau crossed the planks, spanning the water ditch, now frozen, and entered the fort. Arakoua watched them go, then turned to Godfrey. “By what right is it that my Guardian of the River ignores me as though I were whitened bones on a winter

trail? Has he not looked upon me as I am, not this way!" She slapped her dress with disgust.

"I have been guarding the river," he returned cautiously, "and I hear Arakoua has been many times away from her fire."

"Ah, so Teanaosti has not forgotten." Her dark eyes softened. "He has been thinking of me."

"You have been many times in my thoughts," he answered truthfully. "I feared there might be dangers in your path. There is Atondo."

"And you looked upon me as I am and found me fair?"

"I spoke words that you did not hear."

"You speak as the Hodenosaunee, say much and mean nothing." She pouted. "As for Atondo he is nothing."

He looked at her sharply. Her face was an expressionless mask. "And the snake that bites within you?"

"It is nothing. I wanted to see my Guardian of the River, to see if his eyes would gladden at the sight of me—and they did not." Her voice was bitter.

"There are many shadows in them," he said craftily, "the shadows of enemies who hide in the forest."

"There are no enemies in the forest. I have been over many trails to many towns. The only enemies are our councillors. They are as is Teanaosti, indifferent, full of talk, and lies." She spat contemptuously. "That for them all. My father is a warrior and so is Thodatouan. The others are as a rabbit chased by a weasel. They sit shivering, waiting for death to strike."

Godfrey's eyes narrowed. She had never spoken in this way to him before. Was it pique, or had hate come into her heart? He dismissed the question for the nonce, as Master Molère came waddling out of the fort palisade. His rotund face quivered above black beard when he saw her. "You here again!" he shrilled.

Arakoua shook with laughter at the apothecary's crossing of the planks. Stout though they were, they sagged under his bulk. "What does this woman want, Captain?" he squeaked in French.

"I don't think she wants much of anything," Godfrey replied in the same tongue. "Her illness is an excuse to come here. Give her some raisin water." He continued in the Huron. "The daughter of the great chief, Annaotaka, has a snake within her belly. I would ask you, O man of wisdom, that you slay it for her good."

Arakoua, who understood nothing of the French, put a hand to her stomach, opened her mouth until it yawned a red cavern, spiked by white

ivory, and closed it again. She considered sufficient attention had been paid the apothecary and turned her back on him. “And now, as for you, Teanaosti,” she commenced harshly.

Master Molère interrupted with gruff words born of outraged feelings. “If you have a belly-ache, woman, come with me. The captain has no time to waste with you. The Father Superior asked him to come to his day room.”

Arakoua looked at the apothecary as she would a torture stake. “You are a fool. Words fall out of your mouth empty as a sucked egg. What do I know of your magic?”

“You can take it or leave it,” he squealed, rolled to the outwork dispensary, unlocked the door, wrenched it open and slammed down the barrier to keep the patients standing outside. “I would give you nothing, only I have my orders.”

She ignored him. “You must go. Teanaosti. The big black robe called you. I do not like these black robes, they are as Atondo, no good. I may speak to you again—later.” She scowled.

He swept hat from head in a courtly bow and left. She watched him until he passed behind the palisades, and drew a deep breath. The apothecary placed a mug of raisin water on the barrier. She sniffed her contempt of his wares. “Am I here, O fat worm, for this!”

The Father Superior was regarding Annaotaka, seated across the table from him, with serious eyes. The chief was speaking. “My words withhold nothing. There are no thoughts hidden in my mind.”

“It is regrettable, O Chief.” The Father Superior looked at the table and mused aloud. “The Huron people wait in an apathy of despair and are incapable of concentrated effort.”

Godfrey spoke to Annaotaka. “Can you do nothing, O Chief?”

“The moon changes as the seasons change. Perhaps in the month of the hard frost, who knows?” Annaotaka grunted and arose. “I go, now, there is nothing more to be done.”

Father Ragueneau saw the chief to the door and returned to drop back into the chair. His shoulders sagged. “Atondo is no more. He hangs in some unknown spot in the forest from a limb of a tree, snared as a rabbit. Annaotaka was quite frank about the murder, said that he had no other course or the Clan of the Cord would be split into factions. It was a terrible thing to do, but quite in keeping with his philosophy.”

“Atondo was not a bad fighter.”

“I touched upon that.” Father Ragueneau shook his head. “Annaotaka pointed out, and not without justice in his mind, that a good fighter who was

willing to spread dissension was infinitely worse than the veriest coward."

"I am worried, mon père. This is a bad hour to be changing chiefs at St. Ignace. We do not know who may be chosen."

"I drew Annaotaka's attention to that very point and his reply was better an incompetent leader than a traitor. I imagine the capture of Teanaostaiaë was at the root of the trouble. Annaotaka could never forgive Atondo for making capital of his absence on the trip to Quebec. I am helpless when chiefs conduct private feuds." Father Ragueneau drew himself straight in his chair, lines of determination set his mouth. "Things may look black but I do not despair. We will fight on to the glory of God whose work this mission lives to perform. There must be some way to arouse the Hurons to united action, only we have not thought of it. From what Annaotaka said we have a month, or two, of grace. We will canvass our minds for a plan." His voice was resolute to succeed. "We will think this out and triumph: we *must* triumph."

XIII

IT WAS shortly before the advent of Lent that a new torch of hope was lighted and the gloom of the future dispelled in its golden flame. The twenty-two fathers had gathered at Fort Ste. Marie for one of the general mission meetings held twice, or thrice, a year. They came by snowshoe, over trails rough and deep, Claude Pijart and Joseph Poncet trudging weary league after weary league from Lake Nipissing and Grand Manitoulin, in the Algonquin country, Charles Garnier and Leonard Garreau from the Clans of the Wolf and the Deer, in the Tobacco Nation.

They were a noble company, these crusaders of the Cross, returning from perpetual warfare against paganism and savagery. No blare of trumpets, no acclaim of the crowd greeted them. They came by ones, or twos, to the grey stone walls that made their stronghold, their only armour a tattered black robe, their only weapon the white flame of devotion and service that burned within them, a flame so pure, so noble that time will never dim its light nor men cease to honour its purpose.

But there was one who would come no more. The dauntless Antoine Daniel had fought his last fight and in all honour had vanished with the dust of yester-year. Not again would he sit about the council table in the great hall and see the kindly eyes of the Father Superior glance up and down the board. For Father Ragueneau was justly proud of those who gathered in conference, their faces scarred and bitten by wind and sun, and, some, by fire and knife of the Iroquois. The reports which they presented were such as to kindle the spark of admiration in even the sternest of minds, and the Father Superior's shrewd eyes read between the lines of dangers faced and sufferings endured without record. As he sat in the centre of the table there was a shadow which darkened his thoughts, the shadow of the Iroquois menace. He leaned back with characteristic gesture of placing palms of hands upon the table. The Fathers hitched forward upon their benches.

He looked up and down the board. For a second he eyed the place once occupied by Father Daniel, left vacant as though by common consent. On the one side sat Father Brébeuf, on the other Father Garnier, and directly opposite Fathers Lalemant and Chabanel. The Father Superior's eyes lingered upon the little group, then travelled to the last man at the board, Joseph Marie Chaumonot. He studied the heavy features for a second, and lowered his eyes in momentary reflection.

Peasant-born, Father Chaumonot was a man of great sanctity and throughout his life the world of the spirit and the world of the flesh met within

the confines of his mind. Visions of the unseen realm about him and guidance from unseen lips came to him by day and by night. Though his aspiration had been to spend life as a hermit in France, this had been denied him and he had journeyed a thousand leagues to Ossossanë. Now that the red cock had crowed at Teanaostaiaë, his village, Where the Corn Tassels Droop to the Water, was the largest town in Huronia.

The Father Superior thought of these things as Godfrey entered the hall. He looked up, nodded to the bench close to the door. "Good afternoon, Captain. We are about to consider the future of the missions. If you would be seated, I will throw the meeting open to a general discussion."

Father Ragueneau sat back. He was waiting for a voice to rise above the general murmur of suggestion, when attention was drawn to a sudden silence at the opposite end of the table. There the Fathers were as in a trance, eyes riveted upon Father Chaumonot. Face aglow with exaltation, eyes shining as live coals, he stared at Father Daniel's empty place and then to the great fireplace where cedar logs burned and gave off flame and smoke tongues. Father Chaumonot's lips were moving soundlessly, and his hand went forth, as though to stay a departing guest. The motion aroused him. He looked about, and arose uncertainly to his feet. In a voice trembling with emotion he addressed the Father Superior. "God in his goodness has honoured us beyond our humble desserts. The saintly martyr, Father Daniel, came to us, sat in his accustomed place and has gone." He crossed himself devoutly.

"A great favour has indeed been conferred upon us," Father Ragueneau said slowly, reverently, "and one which we are all unworthy to receive. You, Father Chaumonot, who were given this mark of divine favour, tell us something of the saintly Father who returned."

"I was watching the play of the fire and the smoke." The voice began hesitatingly, faintly and grew in strength until the tones swelled in rich vibrancy. "And I thought of the evil spirit which guides the Iroquois in their work of destruction. I must confess that my thoughts were without hope, and it was then that the memory of Father Daniel and his glorious martyrdom flashed into my mind. With this thought I saw his face take form as though out of the fire which had reduced it to ashes." He paused. "I cannot explain exactly what happened, it is all so inexplicable, only that the vision grew clearer and I could see nothing save the smiling, happy eyes. Then he was seated in his accustomed place."

"He was happy, smiling with the joy of his heart?" The Father Superior asked the question, not for the answer, but that Father Chaumonot was shaking with the depth of his emotion.

“Truly, Father, that is so. He was the Father Daniel whom I knew when I came to Huronia. The years had dropped their lines from his face. It was that of a man of perhaps three decades, not of eight and forty years, and it was radiant in his new-found happiness and glory.”

Father Chaumonot bowed his head. A new energy seemed to surcharge the air and the Fathers drew a strength and consolation from it which they had not known since the Iroquois menace became acute. The Father Superior looked about him with sparkling eyes, looked to Godfrey and then away. The Captain of the Musketeers alone was unmoved.

“His face was so animated, so beautiful and kindly,” Father Chaumonot continued, “that I made bold to speak to him. ‘Ah, my Father,’ I said, ‘you are truly favoured of God.’

“He made no answer but I read the words that spoke in his mind. He had come to inspire us in our deliberations, to give us new heart for the future. ‘Speak to me, my Father,’ I pressed him. ‘What may we do to find favour in the sight of God?’

“He answered and never have I heard such music in a voice; it was as the music that comes to us in those rare intervals when we lie between wakefulness and slumber, when strains of heavenly harmonies cross the borderline to the living, are heard for an ecstatic moment and are gone again. So entranced was I that all his words do not remain to me as sentences but rather as the sweetness of thought. I do know that he encouraged us with strong counsels not to falter in our work of bringing God’s word and grace to the unfortunate people of Huronia—” Father Chaumonot’s face was suffused with light—“and now some of his words come to me. He said, ‘Never forget your holy task of bringing souls to God.’ I asked him why his body was permitted to be so utterly destroyed that not even the ashes could be gathered, and he replied, ‘Great is God and admirable beyond all conception. He beheld this humiliation of His servant and granted him compensation of many souls from Purgatory to accompany him in his heavenly triumph.’ With these words his face slowly faded. I would have detained him, begged him to tarry a while with us, but he had gone.”

The silence was broken by the deep voice of Father Brébeuf. “Ah, that I should have been so favoured, I who am all unworthy of such an honour.” A deep pain was in his fearless eyes. “I, who sat by Father Daniel’s place and yet did not see him.”

“It is a rare mark of divine favour.” Father Garnier’s thin face was as marble in its sublimity. “We who have doubted about the future, about the success of our work, need doubt no longer.”

The Father Superior nodded gravely. “I would hear from one of our newer Fathers. What does Father Lalemant have to say? He sat opposite Father Daniel’s accustomed place.”

Father Lalemant’s delicate features were agleam in the flush of his happiness. “I felt a great force enter into me, Father, and it was as if I had the strength of a giant. I knew that no evil could prevail over us. I must have felt as Father Brébeuf felt when he defeated the evil spirits which attacked him in the forest.”

Under the questioning eye of the Father Superior, the noble face of Father Brébeuf coloured in embarrassment. “It was nothing; you will recall the great storm, just after the martyrdom of Father Daniel. I was walking alone in the forest and a troup of demons came up from the Iroquois country, riding the rush of the wind. In the images of wild stallions and lions they were and they drove about me with howls and snarls, but I was unafraid. ‘Do to me whatever God wills,’ I said, ‘for without His will, not one hair of my head shall be harmed.’ It was nothing; I have seen demons rush at me before.”

“It was a divine manifestation,” Father Chaumonot declared. “God has apportioned out our work, each to do His will, nor shall any be harmed until this work be done. We may resume our tasks with courage and hope for the future.”

There was an enthusiastic murmur of assent. The Father Superior arose. “We have been privileged this day beyond all men with God’s goodness and favour. Let us give our thanks to Him.”

That evening Father Ragueneau sent for Godfrey and received him in his sleeping quarters, hunched upon a bunk which ran the length of the room. A washstand, chest of drawers and table completed the furnishings. Godfrey seated himself upon a small bench, beneath the skin-protected window, and eyed the flickering light of the lamp, from which a single candle burned dimly. The Father Superior smiled faintly. “I am anxious to hear the soldier’s mind speak its thoughts.”

Though no mention was made of the conference in the great hall, Godfrey accepted the subject. “It impressed me, mon père, that the Fathers who live in the most exposed residences sat closest to Father Daniel’s place at the board.”

“I was not insensible to that.” Father Ragueneau frowned. “Father Brébeuf, at St. Ignace, without a frontier to the south; and Father Lalemant has been assigned to that mission. Then there are Fathers Garnier and Chabanel, in the Petun country—a treacherous nation under the influence of sorcerers.” He thought a second. “St. Ignace is only a couple of leagues from here. In the spring we should be able to establish a new frontier town in the south.”

“If the Iroquois wait that long, sir.”

“I spoke to Father Brébeuf on that subject. He does not anticipate a renewal of hostilities for some time, at least.”

Godfrey thought the vision during the storm might have influenced Father Brébeuf’s mind. “I remember that storm, mon père. It was a terrible one, dark as night, and wind and rain in the forest take strange forms. Besides, there are no lions and horses in Huronia; and the Iroquois are not to be beaten off by words.”

The Father Superior shook his head. “If I did not know to the contrary, Godfrey, I might think you as great a pagan as Annaotaka. It must be your stubborn, materialistic English mind, cold, unaccepting that which you cannot explain. But about Annaotaka. I have been thinking of him. It might be we’ll for you to pay a visit to his village in the near future. I will speak to you about that later.”

A week was to pass, two weeks and more, before Father Ragueneau brought up the subject again. Then, when the moon of the cold wind poised as a faint thread in the eastern sky, Godfrey paid his deferred visit to Annaotaka. Louis accompanied him and at the bend of the lake they hunched in their thick, leather coats and stopped to stare at the village. Above the low ramparts, open doors of the houses flared red and figures all but nude stood out in broad relief against the fiery background. Louis snorted. “Just like the pictures of hell. Devils every one of them. As soon burn a man as look at him.”

The chief welcomed Godfrey warmly. Louis he dismissed with a wave of the hand to the rear of the house, where a group of maidens, heavily coloured with the red juice of berries and ochre, laughed and jested with young warriors, tossing plum stones from a bowl and wagering heavily whether they would fall white side up or black. Godfrey gave a start of surprise as Thodatouan came forward. “It is pleasing to my heart to see two great chiefs, where I expected only one.”

“It is well that there are now three of us,” Annaotaka answered. “There are many thoughts in my mind.”

“It is a council that will be wiser for your words, O Teanaosti,” Thodatouan added, and Godfrey flushed with pleasure.

“I will send for Onaotaha,” Annaotaka said. “He came from his aonchia before the sun went out and is visiting in another house.” The chief raised his voice and a boy ran from a centre fire where aged women, skin warped and wrinkled about their bones, crouched with younger children. Godfrey’s mouth straightened as he looked at them; but for the eyes gleaming with malignant life, it would seem that the grave had given up its dead. He turned quickly and

gazed upon the vigorous lines of Arakoua.

“So the Guardian of the River pondered my words and came to see me.”

Crimson juice that daubed cheeks and lips gave her vital animation, and white wampum belts, lavishly displayed upon her glistening body, swayed sinuously before him.

Annaotaka glowered. “Begone. We are here to talk words of wisdom.”

“Teanaosti came to see me!” she flared.

“Take him when you can get him,” the chief growled. “The ouimchtigouches take our women, so you take him. But not now. Begone!”

“I will take him when I want him,” she retorted, and returned to her fire to stare moodily into it.

“We will not await Onaotaha.” Annaotaka ignored Arakoua’s defiance. “Teanaosti has come to hear our words. We will speak to him as we would to ourselves.”

“That is good,” Thodatouan agreed, “and you, O Annaotaka, will speak for the Bear and the Cord Clans.”

Onaotaha joined them. Annaotaka looked to Godfrey to speak.

“It is the month of the cold winds, the big winds,” Godfrey said slowly. “My heart fears that the big wind may blow the Hodenosaunee to Ouendake.”

The quick glance between Annaotaka and Thodatouan convinced Godfrey that his anxiety was not without cause.

“I have spoken of this at the council fires, Thodatouan and I, together, and our people will not listen.” Annaotaka raised inscrutable eyes to Onaotaha. “We are but two voices in a wind of words that mean nothing.”

“The wind of words ask what may be done when the Hodenosaunee are led by the Little Thunder,” Onaotaha replied with care. “The arendiwans point to the black robes and we are powerless to fight against them, for the people believe what they say.”

Godfrey nodded solemnly.

“You know that they lie and we three, here, know that they lie, but our warriors do not know that they lie. They remember the pestilence and that many fires are cold,” Onaotaha finished.

“The fires would have burned out, the houses would have been empty.”

“True, O Teanaosti,” Thodatouan said. “It happened before the ondaki came; it will happen after they have gone.”

Godfrey sat upright. “My ears do not hear back of your words.”

“Once our people lived by the great river; now we are here.”

Godfrey smiled uncertainly. The chief had alluded to the periodic upheaval of national boundaries and the claims of those historians, the Keepers of the Wampums, that the ancient hunting grounds of the Hurons were once the Island of Montreal. Now they were the waters of Nottawasaga Bay. Thodatouan's words carried no hope for the future.

"It is not the black robes who bewitch our people; it is our people who bewitch themselves," Annaotaka said angrily. "They do nothing and talk with five, six tongues. When the time comes I will lead such as are warriors and we will fight the Hodenosaunee to the death."

Arakoua could restrain herself no longer. In defiance of all ceremony and the glare of Annaotaka's eyes, she crossed to the council fire. "Our warriors are as rabbits. They let the black robes bewitch them, they shake before the voice of the Little Thunder. If we are to die, let us die fighting. Let us take the trail now to the land of the Long Houses, burn their old men, burn their women, slay their warriors!"

She drew herself up defiantly. Thodatouan leaned forward and poked at the fire with a stout stick. The flames leaped to fresh life and played redly over her oily body and wampum belts. Godfrey stared at her unbelievable insolence and inspiration came to him. He grasped Annaotaka's wrist, as the chief reached for the stick to belabour her. "Hold your anger, O Annaotaka!" he cried. "A voice has spoken; it says look well at your daughter."

The chief grunted. "If you want her, Teanaosti, take her after the council fires are out. We talk of war, not of women."

Arakoua rippled her muscles. Teeth glistened behind blood-red lips. Eyes danced, to cloud with indignant protest as Godfrey spoke.

"It is of war I talk, not women," he said impatiently. "Look upon those wampums, O Chiefs; upon the fire burning without heat on that skin. Is it not even as that which they say happens to the Little Thunder? Here is a daughter of a great chief; she is of the war stock, herself. Should she not lead her warriors as does this Hinonaia and slay the enemy with the breath of death?"

Annaotaka's eyes shone as twin slits in his face. It was a simple bit of strategy that appealed to his cunning. He eyed Arakoua speculatively. Thodatouan's less agile mind clogged at the thought. He shrugged disinterest. Onaotaha's lips curled in disgust. The fancied slight by the two chiefs fanned the sparks of Arakoua's rage. "Why should I lead our warriors to help the black robes? They have plagued the land enough."

"It is nothing." Godfrey concealed vexation behind indifference. "If the daughter of the great chief will not save her own people, I have no more words. The council fires are out."

Annaotaka arose with courteous inclination of the head. Only by his eyes did he betray the fury raging within him at Thodatouan's lack of imagination, Onaotaha's stupidity, and Arakoua's pique; but great war chief that he was, he could not go counter to the will of the council. His eyes gleamed such a depth of passion that Arakoua shrank back as he escorted Godfrey to the door. "Your words were deep, O Teanaosti," he said in parting. "Too deep for the minds of the others. It may be that your words will speak again in their hearts. Who knows?" He paused and glared into the night. "It was the plan of a resourceful warrior. The Hodenosaunee might have been beaten back for good."

"The time to strike is at once," Godfrey answered. "The full moon rises too late. Farewell, O Annaotaka."

Louis reluctantly left the entertaining maidens at his fire and, once, on the homeward trail ventured a remark. "I never saw a woman quite so mad and scared as that Arakoua, sir."

"She is a wolf bitch," Godfrey said so savagely that Louis made the remainder of the trip in silence.

Though the hour was late, the Father Superior was waiting. "I am afraid, mon père, there is no hope at the present. The clans will take no concentrated action, and, as usual, the sorcerers are attempting to stir up trouble."

"That is nothing new," Father Ragueneau said wearily. "We have been through all that before. Now for your report."

At the conclusion, the Father Superior smiled sadly. "She may change her mind."

"I am afraid it will be too late, sir. March is already here. If the Iroquois strike, they will strike shortly."

"I know you hold to that belief. I have asked Father Brébeuf to come here at his earliest convenience. His residence is quite exposed, now that St. Joseph is destroyed. I think we should discuss the matter with him."

Not until some days later did Father Brébeuf arrive. A thaw had set in and the trails were deep with sodden snow. Though he had stumbled through slush and ice for two leagues, there was nothing in the tireless swing of the great frame to show fatigue.

One would have searched far to bring together two finer sons of the Church than those separated by a plain table in the depths of the wilderness. Magnetic, powerful of frame and iron of purpose, both were crusaders who had looked death in the eye with contemptuous indifference. There similarity ended. Paul Ragueneau was the leader, the St. Louis of the New World Crusade, the man who combined deep religious conviction with genius for organization. His was the mind to plan, to guide and to order each effort to united purpose. Jean de

Brébeuf was the captain in the field. The flame that burned within his soul was the flame of action. He revelled in the danger of the battle and courted the hour when he might die for his Faith and his Saviour.

"I could have come earlier, Father, or later, as your instructions left the time to my discretion." Father Brébeuf hesitated, then continued with apparent unwillingness. "Had I come earlier I would not have known what I do now; had I waited, I might not have offered up my obedience."

Father Ragueneau looked up quickly, apprehensively.

"Yes, it is so." Father Brébeuf smiled as a man might smile who had achieved his heart's desire. "God in His mercy has seen fit to accept my martyrdom—in three days."

The Father Superior swallowed soundlessly. "If it is the Divine will that you should be called to His glory, to sit among His saints—" The sentence was never finished. His throat tightened, for he loved this courageous assistant of his.

"It is so. As I lay in the darkness of my house, only the fire smouldering on the floor, the blessed St. Michael came to me. Three days have I to do my work on earth."

Father Ragueneau did not press the subject. "But the end?" he asked. "Will the Iroquois come in force and make fire and slaughter throughout the land?"

"I know not that. I only know the manner of my leaving." He looked thoughtful. "I might be taken on the trail. Small raiding parties lurk by the trails. No, I cannot believe the Iroquois will come in force so soon."

"Captain Bethune fancies they will." The Father Superior was unconvinced.

"A small band could easily come; but an invasion in strength I doubt. The trails are abominable. Now as to Father Lalemant and the work—"

The two sat far into the night, the one speaking as a priest who had passed from his parish, the other accepting this and planning for the future without him. In the two days which followed much was done by stealth, so that no word of that to come would disturb the garrison. By order of his Superior, Father Brébeuf was bled by Surgeon Louis Pinar and the blood dried, for Father Ragueneau knew within himself that the gallant missionary would meet martyrdom at the hands of the Iroquois, and that all trace of him might well be destroyed. There was a second order given, that all visions and spiritual experiences should be set down upon paper, and by virtue of his obedience Father Brébeuf did these things also.

There came the eve of his departure. The Father Superior called Godfrey

aside. “I am anxious that nothing be left undone to awaken the Hurons to their peril and to protect them. Do you accompany Father Brébeuf to St. Louis, where he is to meet Father Lalemant, then continue on to St. Ignace. Take what time you consider necessary and examine the defences of the villages carefully. Father Brébeuf is not convinced of an immediate, strong Iroquois incursion, though I do not subscribe to his views.” Father Ragueneau leaned the closer to Godfrey and his eyes were serious. “It may be that Father Brébeuf will speak of things other than this life. If this be so, listen to his words and mark them carefully.”

That night Godfrey paced the bastion until a late hour, alone with his thoughts. New France, he mused, was a typical product of the European policy of empire expansion which had sent caravels and galleons sailing westward in a wild grab for overseas possessions. He looked southward over the black blot of naked forest. Under warmer skies the Spaniards had claimed Florida; there were Cavaliers and Roundheads settled in Virginia; the Swedes in New Sweden, by the Delaware River; the Dutch in New Netherland; and between their capital of New Amsterdam, on Manhattan Island, and the French, on the banks of the St. Lawrence, were the Puritans of New England. A motley collection of Old World enemies, he thought, and a transplanting of old feuds that some day would flare out anew. In his score and four years of life, Godfrey had tasted the fruits of the Puritan theocratic government and had not forgotten the bitter taste. It was comforting to him that of all the nations seeking colonial spoils, not even the serious-visaged Puritans excepted, none had been given opportunity of rivalling the French. Before their eyes floated a mirage of possession that would satisfy the most covetous heart; and it was but a step from desire to possession. For the keystone of this triumphal arch of expansion was Fort Ste. Marie.

The establishment of a strong French protectorate over the Huron, Tobacco and Neutral nations would make Fort Ste. Marie administrative centre of a new world dominion of all lands lying north of Ontare and the other four Great Lakes. Nor need that be the end of westward extension. Godfrey and French officers had heard tales of an unknown prairie far in the interior of the continent. It was, wandering Indians described, a table-land which faded away for countless leagues to the setting sun and touched two great oceans on the north and the west. Such was the prize which domination of the Hurons offered, and with this ascendency yet to be established, Iroquois aggression threatened to turn this future of splendid promise to ashes of dead hopes. Godfrey thought of these things and planned against the hour of peril.

Father Brébeuf’s seclusion had aroused uneasy speculation in minds other than Godfrey and old apprehensions returned with the force of conviction. An

unusually vivid display of northern lights intensified misgivings. In crimson, gold and blue the lights marched across the sky, wave after wave, joined as advancing armies in aerial battle, and separated again to attack. It was a sight of savage beauty unknown to memory of the oldest missionary. Godfrey thought of its effect upon Huron *morale*, and swore softly. He could picture them crouching in bark houses, abject fear deadening heart and mind. To them there was one interpretation of the fearsome lights and one only—the drenching of Huronia in Huron blood.

Father Brébeuf and Godfrey left for St. Louis shortly after the midday meal. The Father Superior bade farewell to them at the eastern postern. He smiled sadly, as he saw Godfrey carried the flintlock musket, so recently received from Quebec. His eyes searched Father Brébeuf's face, as if to engrave every rugged feature, every deep-etched line upon the plate of memory. Godfrey marked the incident. It confirmed his surmise.

At the edge of the forest, Father Brébeuf turned and gazed at Fort Ste. Marie as a man whose eyes are hungry for the sight of it, the stout stone walls, the stubble of corn and grain fields, snow-flecked and black of earth—a drab scene but a loved one. He turned quickly and strode over the trail.

Godfrey never was to forget that journey to St. Louis. A strange exaltation from hidden sources of spiritual vigour radiated from his black-robed companion. It was as though Godfrey trudged the trail with one who had already died within himself, a giant frame of a man in which the spirit tugged at bonds already loosened and glorified in the thought of near release. For the first time he had a true understanding of the ecstasy of martyrdom, of the oneness with God of a soul which went unfalteringly to death, already at peace in the spirit world and living with conscious unconcern in the present.

They walked in silence. The going was rough and it was made the rougher when sleet fell in misty fineness and cast a veil over the woods. At a clearing Father Brébeuf stopped. His hand gripped Godfrey's arm. He pointed to trees, indistinct on the opposite side. Godfrey fancied that as he looked a shadow melted into the opaque curtain. A stag, he thought, or a doe, surprised and slipping into the sheltering underbrush. He waited for the crash of wild flight: there was none.

The priest turned and the happiness of his heart sang in his voice. "Even as the blessed martyr appeared to Father Chaumonot, at the council board, so has he now appeared to me. Yes, his faith was radiant in his face, and he beckoned me onward. He knows, as I know, that I shall meet him in Heaven, shortly. What a glorious meeting that will be, and the hour draws close."

Godfrey stood mute.

“You saw Father Daniel, did you not, Captain?” Father Brébeuf suddenly was aware of his surroundings.

“I saw something, Father,” Godfrey answered; “a shadow, and it vanished as I looked.”

“It was Father Daniel, as I knew him many years ago, and his gown was of the finest silk. He beckoned me forward to St. Louis.” Father Brébeuf walked slowly, beard on chest. “It may be, Captain, that I was wrong and that you are right—the Iroquois may come in full strength.”

He walked a hundred paces in silence, stopped and bent his burning eyes upon Godfrey. “I would counsel you, Captain, to return to Ste. Marie. If the Iroquois attack, you should be at your post. It matters not about me; but the mission must be preserved.”

“My post is where the Father Superior orders,” Godfrey returned steadily. “My instructions are to inspect the defences at St. Ignace and the neighbouring villages, and to try and arouse them to common action.”

“True,” Father Brébeuf nodded. “I had forgotten. Your obedience!”

XIV

ST. LOUIS stood upon a height of land in the elbow of a small river. On two sides of the palisades, the ground sloped in natural defence to the river bed. Other palisade defences fronted the open fields, seeded in season to corn and pumpkin. It was not a strongly fortified village, although a place of more than 90 fires and the chief stronghold of the Clan of Beyond the Morass, with a population of not less than 700 men, women and children. "Welcome, Echon!" they cried to Father Brébeuf, "you come with Teanaosti on the day death danced in the sky."

The priest raised his arms, and pride in the sincerity of the greeting gave a softer light to his glowing eyes. "Death walks with us by day and sits by us by night; but we do not fear it."

A voice at once melodious and of a quality which carried to the ear a perfect enunciation, spoke in French. Father Lalemant had joined them. Godfrey smiled his pleasure. He had thought more than once of this slight, stooped missionary facing the hardships and privations of Indian life and he was gratified at what he saw. There was a touch of colour to the sallow cheeks, the dark eyes had a new alertness and the thin lips were curved in the smile of a man who enjoys his work and had won mastery of it. There was a decisiveness in his voice. "I was hopeful you would come tonight, Father. Sickness has broken out in three houses and I am worried. Some will not arise again."

"I will go with you at once." Father Brébeuf spoke to Godfrey. "You see I have much work to do. You know the house of the chief."

Onaotaha was seated by his fire with the Keeper of the Wampums. The chief arose courteously. The ancient Keeper of the Wampums scowled more wrinkles into his parchment skin. Godfrey's eyes flashed at the insult. "You who know the deeds of your nation," he snapped, "will tell me when the Ouendat elders forget their manners."

Onaotaha's jaw dropped at the reproof.

"By what authority is Teanaosti here?" The ancient spat his hate. "What have the ondakis done for us? Since they came our people melt away as the snow runs before the sun, our warriors drop as the leaves fall before the autumn winds. Soon the tree of our race will be bare and it will die and fall to the earth. The snake of death is coiled about it and there is no hope. What evil spell brought the snake from the bowels of the earth we do not know. Our wise men are of two minds."

Godfrey's fingers opened and closed about the musket barrel. Back of the ancient's words was the revival of the old myth of the big serpent, which lived under the earth and stirred only to bring disease and death to the Huron people. The Keeper of the Wampums had deliberately accused the missionaries of arousing it to destructive activity. "Your mouth speaks lies. We are trying to save your people and they refuse to be saved."

"He is of the old faith and the old order," Onaotaha said. "Nothing can be done with him."

"What can be done against the Little Thunder?" The ancient huddled closer to the fire.

Godfrey turned away in disgust. "The Keeper of the Wampums is a fool. Warm the chilled bones, they will soon be dead bones."

He left the ancient cackling his wrath and went to the mission cabin. Father Lalemant had thoughtfully banked the fire and prepared some sagamite. Godfrey ate and threw himself upon the sleeping shelf to await the arrival of the fathers. He was awakened by terrifying confusion of noise. The priests leaped from their shelves and rushed from the cabin. Godfrey seized his musket and followed them into the village lanes. In the haze of sunrise all was tumult and fear. Three warriors from St. Ignace, naked save for breech-clout, bounded their height in terror. "Our aonchia is taken!" they screamed. "The Hodenosaunee are at our heels! Flee! flee! Save yourself while there is time!"

They rushed through the open gates, followed by a torrent of fugitives, women and children, warriors and youths. An appealing crowd surrounded the two missionaries. "Come, O Echon, come with us," a woman cried with streaming eyes, "you and your brother!"

"Do not wait and die, Echon!" another voice screamed. "Escape! The way is open!"

Father Brébeuf's voice rang in fearless command. "Away, my children! Save yourselves! We remain with the old and the ailing, remain to baptize, to shrive and console those who stay with us. Fly at once, you and your families. We will meet again—in Heaven."

His face was bright with that light which was the white flame of his soul. The path of duty lay before him. What matter should it lead to death? And fearless of spirit was Father Lalemant, even though he trembled as his superior spoke; for in the words his imagination felt the crunch of dripping short-axe, or worse, the excruciating pains of the torture stake. The courage of Father Lalemant was that of a mind singularly strong and devout, and not for an instant did he shrink from the ultimate fate that awaited him. He waved the fugitives onward and ran to the palisades, as Father Brébeuf turned to seek the

aged and sick in their houses.

Godfrey watched the wild rush to safety and sucked in his breath as a man who plunges into a carnage of death. The Iroquois had come. He ran to the palisades to sell life dearly when Onaotaha jumped to the platform by the gate. His voice rang shrill with the war cry of the Hurons. “Hear my voice, O warriors!” he shouted above the din. “How can we abandon our brothers who are giving their lives for us? Have our hearts died a coward’s death within us? Or are we men and fighters? Who will stay and fight with me, with Teanaosti, to the end?”

Fourscore warriors rushed to man the defences. Onaotaha laughed and his voice swelled out in a war song of defiance. Fourscore other voices took up the shrill chant. Onaotaha threw short-axe in the air and caught it by the haft. Godfrey laughed grimly. He knew that more than 500 had deserted the village in flight and among them were fivescore, or more, able-bodied warriors. If St. Louis was to be successfully defended their fighting strength was indispensable. He laughed again as Onaotaha came to him, eyes dancing. “You did not like me, O Teanaosti,” he shouted, “but we fight and die together.”

“And we die as men die, O Onaotaha.” From the palisade platform Godfrey looked out over the village for the two priests, as war cries from the Iroquois came loud from the forest.

Father Lalemant ran to station himself by a ladder to the palisades. It was a point of danger, where arrows would fall as hail once the attack opened. The narrow-shouldered priest had no thought of self. He called up to the defenders to stand firm and beat back the Hodenosaunee, as they would ravening wolves. The Hurons answered with full-throated war cries and Godfrey waved a cheering hand, with black despair clutching at his heart. Only he of that thin line of defenders realized that the Iroquois had come in full strength and that a rabbit might as well defy the talons of an eagle as eighty Hurons brave the Five Nations’ strength.

In that instant the Iroquois rushed into the clearing, screaming their piercing cry of victory. The defenders’ cries of defiance were caught up and lost amid the roar of a thousand throats, as bent behind thong-bound shields, the Iroquois dashed forward in headlong attack. Some fell before the arrows and few muskets of the defenders, as they hacked desperately with short-axes to breach the defences. Twice they were beaten back to charge again with unabated fury. Godfrey noted threescore warriors, armed with muskets just beyond arrow range, sniping the defenders as they fought above the breastwork.

Unmoved by the battle raging about him, he crouched against the parapet.

He had a duty to perform, as the fathers had their duties to do in shriving the dying and giving aid to the wounded; and his duty was to slay Hinonaia before he should be struck down. He awaited his chance, calm and inexorable of purpose. He had not long to wait. A group circled the fringe of arrow flight, six figures, five great chiefs from their war paint and eagle feathers. It was the centre figure which fixed his attention, a figure that stood as a sapling might stand amid the shelter of great pine boles. Slowly he raised his musket, eye trained down the long, black barrel and finger curved to the touch.

It was as though Godfrey lived an eternity in a hell of slaughter and death as he waited. Resolved to kill Hinonaia he marked each line of that golden body, covered with purple wampums and satiny with oil of the sunflower. The Little Thunder, he grudgingly admitted, was as magnificent as a goddess come to life, and the granite beauty of her even features were crowned by a mass of coppery hair that fell below her shoulders in two wide braids. As she moved the purple of her wampums glistened in the dull light.

Godfrey waited in feverish anxiety. He sensed rather than knew that the palisades had been breached, that both missionaries were now working over the wounded and that the number of the defenders left were pitifully few. He feared that the end might come before he could accomplish his purpose and slay her as a menace to Huronia. Of a sudden the clouds parted and the sun streamed fairly upon her, as if upon a statue of gold, throwing into burning relief the barbarous figure that was to Godfrey the symbol of Iroquois ferocity. The Little Thunder raised herself upon the ball of her feet and gave a shrill scream of victory. His fingers tightened about the touch-spring of the flintlock. He saw a flash of fire and knew no more.

When consciousness returned a Mohawk warrior stood over him, dripping short-axe in hand. Godfrey leaned upon an elbow and put a hand to his throbbing head. A tear on the top of his leathern cap told that he had been creased by a bullet, stunned but not seriously hurt. The warrior kicked him to his feet and the fate that awaited flashed across his mind with devastating clarity. He raged his bitterness in vivid English, as a rain of blows drove him down the ladder to where Hinonaia stood. Her deep contralto command stopped further persecution. “Hold your hands, O warriors. The Great Spirit Agreskoui, who controls the world and men, has need of this man.”

Godfrey glared. She lived and Huronia was doomed, even as he was doomed to the stake and the agonies of the slow fire. His head cleared and he stared at her venomously. Behind the hate that distorted vision, he saw that she was good to look upon. Tall and upstanding, in the prime of magnetic youth, she was a bronzed woman born to be a race mother. Her eyes, imperious to command and hard as the steel of the March skies, studied him critically, as

François Malherbe at the fort, might appraise a hog about to be slaughtered. The hate of her flared hot in his heart. His mouth vomited English oaths of defiance.

A Huron apostate stood before the Little Thunder in savage awe. “O Daughter of Agreskoui, may we not caress this prisoner a little? He is the Guardian of the River, the great chief of the white warriors.”

“I have spoken.” She turned to a grizzled chief beside her. “O Atotarho, it is my mind that honour is due to my father, the Great Agreskoui. He has given us strength and the will to victory, yet he clouded his face from us in this hour of triumph. For the flight of an arrow he frowned and in that flight Scanastan fell dead beside me.”

“The great chief of the Nundawa was killed by a ball from the musket of Teanaosti, here.” The Huron apostate slavered his rage. “With my own eyes I saw him fire.”

“Be quiet, O offspring of a snake, else we clip your tongue,” she ordered angrily. One of the chiefs raised his short-axe. The apostate hastily withdrew.

“We must appease my father, the Great Agreskoui,” she continued. “He speaks in my heart and his words say, ‘Save this warrior for my honour at the big ceremony at the great council fire. Let him be taken there, bull-fighter that he is, without hurt or bruise. Let him be in the dress he wore when Scanastan was slain and let his weapons be by him, so that he may render to the full all things which men render to the Great Agreskoui.”

Atotarho stared at her in silence. His quick mind saw the political advantages that were hidden in her words. A council of the sachems would be held in the Valley of Onondaga. The principal chiefs in war and peace of the Five Nations would gather, twoscore and ten, and the bonds of the confederacy would be further strengthened by this sacrifice to the Supreme Spirit of War. He gave sober consent. “You have spoken the words of the Great Agreskoui and they are good.” He looked to the three chiefs beside him. “You have heard, O my brothers. What do you say?”

The Mohawk chief answered. “Our ears hear, O Atotarho, and our hearts rejoice.” He turned to the Mohawk warriors crowding about him. “You heard the words of the Great Agreskoui. Do you, O Omomani—” he singled out a sub-chief—“keep guard over Agreskoui’s choice. See to it that this man be not touched nor harmed, neither in body nor goods.”

As the Mohawks surrounded Godfrey there came the snap of fire as it bit at the bark houses, and the acrid smell of smoke tanged the air. The flames roared in a fury of destruction. Smoke billowed upward, white then black, and warriors rushed out of doorways, arms filled with loot. Within the blazing

inferno that had once been their homes came shrieks as the sick and the aged died in torment.

Once, from a distance, Godfrey glimpsed Father Brébeuf and he caught his breath at what he saw. Stripped of clothes, hands bound behind him, the gallant priest stood in front of twoscore Iroquois warriors and blows were rained upon his head and shoulders as the march into captivity began. Father Brébeuf was indifferent to the sticks and clubs that rose and fell. His lips moved and though Godfrey could not hear the words, he construed them to be those of encouragement to Huron prisoners, urging them to stand firm by the faith in their hour of suffering.

Godfrey's mouth tightened to a thin line when an opening in the Iroquois ranks showed Father Lalemant. Shoulders and back a mass of blood and bruises, his meagre frame, so wasted that it might well have fallen apart with the clatter of bones under the brutal Iroquois flail, stood out in contrast to a countenance that was as serene as if he were walking by himself in pleasant reverie. He passed from sight as a club struck with savage force, almost felling him to the ground. Godfrey thought of the road to Calvary, of Christ stumbling under the weight of the Cross, and the thought gave him comfort.

Omomani grunted an order and Godfrey was prodded to march. The apostate in the exuberance of his hate took advantage of the movement and brought his club upon the prisoner's back with full-armed strength. Godfrey was almost knocked headlong. The chief snarled, his axe flashed and the warrior sagged to the mud. The party went forward in silence.

A confusion of thoughts whirled in Godfrey's mind. Gradually they dropped into orderly sequence and one astounding incident engrossed attention. By the barest breath of chance he had been snatched from the fires of the torture stake. It was merely respite, it was true, but even this doubtful consideration was a gain. The journey to the fires of the Confederation Council was a long one and on a trip of fivescore leagues opportunity to effect escape should surely arise. Once it came, he would seize it and fight to the death before recapture. In the meantime, he was set aside as a sacrifice to Agreskoui, without hurt in body or goods. The painful caress of the Iroquois, often as excruciating as the torture fires, was not to be his. There would be no mutilation, no burning away of fingers or amputation at the joints by clam-shells. All this was of distinct momentary advantage, he assured himself; and there remained the unpredictable future.

A wild shout of victory aroused him. The party had arrived at St. Ignace. Godfrey looked his surprise. The village stood on the familiar knoll as he had last seen it, three sides of high palisades rising from the edge of the deep ravine, impregnable to attack, and the fourth, fronting the fields that he now

crossed, so guarded by blockhouses that it could have defied indefinitely the united strength of the Five Nations.

His anger grew to white heat. St. Ignace had fallen to a surprise attack. He cursed the Hurons virulently. But for their stupidity and gullibility two of the finest men in New France would not now be staggering naked through the snow and slush of the trail, shoulders and backs raw beneath Iroquois stripes.

Within the defences, the village was unchanged and, except for the dead, lying where they fell, and moans and cries from captives within their bark houses, it was difficult to realize that one of the mightiest strongholds of Huronia had fallen. There was no sympathy in his heart for the captives. Had a tenth of the 400 villagers kept watch through the night this disaster would have been averted.

The chief led him to the furthermost house, by the palisades overlooking the ravine, and motioned him to lie down. Godfrey obeyed at once. He knew the heinous offence that he had committed by killing the great Seneca war chief and he appreciated the gentleness with which he was treated. Two warriors stretched out his arms and legs and in a trice he was pegged out, hands and feet roped to thick staves hammered deep into the earthen floor. The Mohawks quickly left, one warrior alone remaining to protect him from others who did not know the will of Agreskoui. From the alacrity with which the warriors ran from the house he knew that another expedition was under way. He feared an attack was planned on Fort Ste. Marie.

XV

SERGEANT ROBERT LAUSIER was in charge of the guard at Fort Ste. Marie. The morning of March 16th had dawned dull and chill and at 9 o'clock a shift in the wind brought the clinging dampness from Matchedash Bay to make him thoroughly miserable. With a shiver the sergeant turned his back to the wind and stared toward the south. Threads of smoke were weaving upward from the forest, a darker grey than the grey of the sky. As he watched they turned black and took the shape of a huge bier. The sergeant shouted an alarm. Father Ragueneau ran to the palisades. "I fear St. Louis is burning, sir," the sergeant said.

The Father Superior eyed the smoke cloud in frowning silence. Fingers of scarlet touched its lining, fingers that plucked quickly and withdrew again. His voice was dead when he spoke. "It is the end . . . the end of those brave souls, Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant . . . the end of Godfrey, a soul of promise . . . the threshold of life and service . . . and I here . . . stone walls . . . palisades . . . moat and water ditches . . . cannon."

Father Ragueneau stood as one who looks into the past and finds from the goodness thereof the bitterness of the present. His lips moved, almost soundlessly. "O God, Who in Thy wisdom did place me in this Mission to the Hurons, I am a man grown old, with the best years of my life given to Thy cause. Could it not have been that I should have suffered, not the youth of my hopes? Why should I live on, the crown of martyrdom denied me when others are so favoured, the great soul Father Brébeuf, the gentle Father Lalemant, who tarried with us so fleetingly, and . . . and . . . the courageous Godfrey!"

He passed a hand over his eyes and bowed in prayer, alone with his grief. "Forgive me, O my father. In my deep sorrow I spoke as one who might doubt, doubt and rebel. I doubt Thee not nor rebel against Thy divine wisdom. I am a man grown weary and am left alone, in sadness and humility."

The Father Superior's face was grey. The sergeant looked at him with compassion, and tried to conceal his emotion behind a soldierly crispness of voice. "There are fugitives on the river, sir. Fortunately, the ice is still hard and will bear good weight. There are fourscore, no, five, sir, and they are bringing as much goods with them as they can carry."

"I will meet them at the outwork, Sergeant. Do you remain here. We know not what may happen." Father Ragueneau walked slowly down the stone steps.

Fear put wings to the fugitives' feet. They arrived as the bell clanged out an alarm to man the walls. The Father Superior and Father Le Mercier watched

them stream into the outwork, men, women and children, and Father Le Mercier's eyes lighted at the sight of Arakoua running at the head of twoscore warriors and Annaotaka bringing up the rear. With him were two men from St. Louis. Father Le Mercier surmised that they had given the alarm. Annaotaka raised his arm in salutation. "We come with these men from the Clan Beyond the Morass. Their minds know nothing but that the Hodenosaunee have taken their houses and their people."

"You bring us sad tidings which we suspected; now they are only too true," the Father Superior said evenly. "We welcome you and your people, O Chief, in our hour of trouble. Your warriors and your knowledge of war will be of great use to us, for, alas, Teanaosti is out there where the smoke blots out the sky. I know no more."

Annaotaka was quick to perceive the dead quality of Father Ragueneau's voice. He saw that his eyes were dry in sorrow and that when he spoke they flashed to Arakoua in silent accusation. She drew stiff under their reproach. The pupils of her eyes widened, then contracted to points of fire and the tear of her heart twisted her mouth. She drew a long, hissing breath. Annaotaka heard the menace of it and stopped her as he would stop a snake about to strike.

"Be silent, O wretch! Think well of the council fire before you speak. Think of the evil within you that killed the words of wisdom." He stripped off his beaver robe and hurled it with such violence that the impact all but threw her backward. "Take that and your own to the fat brother, who makes good medicine, to keep for us. Begone, else I slay for the life of my brother, Teanaosti, that you have taken. And away with your wampums. You are a woman who mourns with ashes on head and face. Begone!"

He growled a step toward her. Arakoua grabbed the robes and fled.

"The Mosaic law; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," Father Le Mercier mused. "It has been the curse of Indian warfare since the memory of our oldest missionary."

"Regrets are vain thoughts, O Annaotaka," the Father Superior said slowly. "There are pressing things to be done: to secure the safety of your people, of my people. Let us take words of council."

They walked in silence into the courtyard. Father Ragueneau looked at the ramparts. They were manned to war strength, yet even then there were great gaps on the walls and palisades where no men stood. "Only five and forty combatants," Father Ragueneau murmured in French. "Twoscore warriors could be pressed into service and, if necessary, the outwork could be abandoned. Yes, we can withstand a siege and beat off attack."

The council was of few words. Annaotaka demanded action, not speech. "I

will take my warriors and search the trails," he declared without waiting for the Father Superior to speak. "If the Hodenosaunee come we will give battle. We are men, not women, and we will blood our short-axes."

"Not a fight to the death, O Chief," Father Ragueneau advised. "I have sent word to Thodatouan, and while I did not ask him, I know that he will come with his warriors by the morning's sun. Is it not better to live for the span of a night and lead men to victory than to die and not know the joy of triumph?"

"Your words are those of a wise man, O Aondecheté," Annaotaka acquiesced. "We go this day to blood our axes. With the next sun we fight as warriors who seek nothing more in life."

A great weight was lifted from the Father Superior's mind. Twoscore warriors were vital to him at the moment, for with their additional strength behind the walls of Ste. Marie the Iroquois would hesitate to attack the fort. Annaotaka stopped outside the hospital, where Arakoua sat hunched against the wall. "You will remain here, O wretch, until I return, outcast that you are."

Father Ragueneau raised his hands in silent benediction as the warriors left the outwork. He sought the two survivors from St. Louis but from them he could learn little. They had seen Echon and the other black robe urging the villagers to escape, and Teanaosti was with the fighting men on the palisades. The Father Superior straightened himself slowly and walked toward the church. He would seek solace within its tranquil stillness. He passed a huddled figure in deerskin dress and saw it not.

Nor did Arakoua raise her eyes as he passed. She was living in her private hell. At a single blow fate had laid her world desolate and only tortured memory remained, memory of that night at the council fire when she stood before the Guardian of the River in prideful perverseness and vetoed his plan which might have saved—. A cry that was a moan of terror aroused her. A smoke column was rising to the skies from her own village on the shore of Isiaragui. There was a second wail and fingers pointed to yet another billowing smudge upon the horizon. The firebrand touched yet a third village.

Arakoua's mouth twisted in the turmoil of emotion. Despair was inundated by a flood of ungovernable rage, against herself, the Father Superior who had sent Teanaosti to his death, and the fates which had conspired to ruin her life, a protective rage which for the moment alleviated the pains of a heart torn beyond endurance. She looked wildly about, trembling with the excess of her fury.

Father Ragueneau was slowly crossing the outwork. In the peaceful calm of the church he had found that solace which he had sought. Again he was the inspiring leader firm in the faith and resolute to turn disaster to victory. He

opened the door to his cabin work room when Arakoua rushed up to him. “It is you and your black robes, O destroyers of our people, who have brought these woes upon us. You came to us uninvited, you stayed unwanted, and you offended the spirits of our hunting grounds. The Hodenosaunee drive at us and our short-axes no longer strike true, our arrows no more bite with death. We are helpless and it is witchcraft that has made us so. Oh that I were a great chief and I would kill you. By the slow fires of the torture stake would I kill you.” She stamped her foot in impotent rage.

The Father Superior was terrible in reproof. His eyes were steeled in hardness, his voice chilled in relentless denunciation. “You speak wicked words, O child of evil, and they come from a vicious, unrepentent heart. Unrepentent because you know in your own, black soul that you would not help your own people. You will be called to account for what you did in your stubborn wrong-headedness.”

“It was your people who bewitched my people: you who sent Teanaosti to the torture fires.” She raised clenched fists above her head, eyes blazed her passion. “Even now he may be in the flames. And you! you bewitched him with your teachings. He would not come to me. Now, it is too late: he is gone and I have nothing. No child to take his place as the great chief of my race. You and your magicians! What have you done for me? You have killed my people, you have killed my man, and you have killed the great war chief that I might have borne him.”

The Father Superior’s eyes became almost tender, the grim lines about his lips softened. When he spoke his voice was gentle with the surprise of one who has seen hidden beauty flower where ugliness only had been known. “So you loved him, my child, with such a love as that.” He sighed. “I, likewise, loved him with a great love. Come in and sit down and we will talk together.”

He motioned her to the bench and sat back in his chair. In that instant he was again the sorrowing man, aged and weighted down with his troubles.

“You loved him and sent him to his death!” She cried her protest.

“Yes, even as did you. In my case it was duty, my duty, his duty, to try and help your people in their peril, to strengthen their defences, to see that they kept proper guard against surprise. They would not help themselves, or us, and now four villages are ashes.” He moistened his lips and continued in a voice firm, yet gentle. “In your case it was petulance. You wished to thwart the great chief, your father, and the man whom you loved, to hurt them who had done you no wrong. My heart was heavy when I heard what you had done. Yet, I do not blame you as you blame yourself. Time was short and I doubt if the plan would have succeeded. No, it is quite conceivable that it would have failed.”

“You say nothing of Teanaosti, of him and of how your coming ruined my people!” A note of stubborn defiance succeeded the hysteria of fury.

“Were it not for us, the black robes whom you revile, Teanaosti would not have come here.”

“It would have been better had my eyes not seen him,” she answered bitterly. “He would not have come and gone, and the snake of death would not have coiled about my heart.”

“No, you are wrong, Arakoua.” Father Ragueneau spoke with deep sympathy. “Every life is the better, the richer for knowing a great love. It is to the greatest love that mankind has known that this world owes its salvation, its highest ideals of living.” He held up a silencing hand. “Hear me out, O daughter of a chief. Only two suns ago Teanaosti sat where you are now sitting and we talked together as men talk who know each others’ heart.”

He paused thoughtfully. Arakoua sat back in a way that was almost possessive. The Father Superior continued with visible effort. “I can also see him sitting as you are sitting. We spoke of many things, of your people. There was a small matter of record known to your Keeper of the Wampums, that when our ships first sailed the big river, your nation lived on an island above the Village on the Rock. We went away and did not return for almost a thousand moons and then your people had gone. Disease, war, failure of crops and such things intervened. When we next heard of your people, they had found new hunting grounds, here, a hundred leagues inland.”

The Father Superior watched her with meditative eyes. Arakoua stared at the rough board floor. The story was not new. He cleared his throat. “There was a general shifting of Indian nations. Your people moved to new lands and flourished. Now, the Hodenosaunee are trying to drive you away, as you drove away the owners you found here, and we are trying to help you defend yourselves, to show you how to live better, happier lives, to live in comfort during the long winter months, not dying from starvation and sickness.”

“And we die by aonchia and aonchia!” she cried. “The spirits are offended and you offend them more.”

“What did your okis do to help you when your people were driven from the big river?” he asked sternly. “What will they do to keep you from the red fires of the—”

His denunciation broke off abruptly. From the forest came the sharp crack of muskets, the shrill quaver of the war cry. Father Ragueneau jumped to his feet. “Come!” he ordered, locking the door and hurrying to the stone postern. His face whitened as warriors came dashing across the fields, less than a score in number; and Annaotaka not with them. The big gates swung open and the

wooden shutter over them opened to reveal the brass cannon, as victorious Iroquois broke from the forest in pursuit. There was a blast from the cannon's mouth, and a burst of fire came from what the Father Superior had taken to be brown outcroppings of earth. The Iroquois ranks crumbled. Panic-stricken, the warriors fled with loud shouts of dismay. Annaotaka and his men ran through the gates. "Welcome, O Annaotaka," the Father Superior cried with relief. "That was a ruse worthy of the great war chief."

"The Hodenosaunee came hot to kill and they had many killed," Annaotaka said proudly. "They will hold council before they come again."

Father Ragueneau looked into the outwork and saw Apothecary Molère and Surgeon Pinar dressing wounds of the injured. The chief nodded his satisfaction, and held up his left hand. "We lost only this many and by the return of the sun more warriors will come. Then we will go and; find the Hodenosaunee and death will bite hard."

XVI

LAMPS burned throughout the night in the Church of St. Joseph and the Father Superior and the priests prayed without ceasing to God and his saints for the protection of Fort Ste. Marie and its mission centres. Invocations especially were made to St. Joseph, patron of the church, whose festival was but two days away, and vows were made to say a mass in his honour each month for the space of a year.

On the walls, in the cold of the moon and the stars, the garrison stood ready throughout the long, night hours, musket in hand and the small cannon freshly primed and match burning for instant firing. As Annaotaka had predicted there was no attack. His skilful manoeuvring of the twoscore warriors made the Hurons appear as a strong force and the Iroquois hesitated to give immediate battle. In the morning the defenders were heartened by the arrival of Thodatouan with 300 fighting men from the Bear Clan villages of Ossossanë and Arenta. Annaotaka's dark face lighted with joy at the sight of them. "Ah, my brothers," he cried, "you come in good season. There is work to be done by short-axe and bow!"

Thodatouan made a gesture of resignation. "My mind was asleep that night by your council fire, O Annaotaka. I did not see into the mind of Teanaosti as did you; and I am to blame for the death of my brother, the Guardian of the River, for without me the Sunbeam would not have raised the voice of rebellion. The blame is mine."

"The blame is that of my blood and of my flesh," Annaotaka growled. "You are not of my house. You acted as a chief may act."

"It is the duty of a chief to apportion blame and praise," Thodatouan answered, simply. "I apportion my own blame. But come, O great chief, I waste time. Let us hold a council of war."

The council fire was barely lighted. The Hurons would divide into two war bands and take the trails to St. Louis and St. Ignace and waylay any prowling Iroquois they might meet. They were ready to depart when Arakoua ran to where Annaotaka and Thodatouan stood. "O my father, may I, your daughter, speak a word?" Her eyes looked imploringly into his.

Gruff refusal rose to his lips; inherent caution checked it even as the lips opened. "Speak in few words."

"I was a wicked, foolish woman," she cried. "I would now come and die with you."

Annaotaka scowled his indecision. He glanced at Thodatouan. The Bear

chief grunted. “With the Hodenosaunee in numbers we may need every stratagem.”

Arakoua smiled for the first time in the course of a sun and a moon. She turned anxiously to her father. “It is well.” He scowled. “I was of three minds. One that you are unworthy to live. One that I should disown you forever. One that you may come and retrieve yourself, if you can. The last is my decision. You will wear your wampums beneath your dress.”

“I have the wampums on now, O Chief.”

“Silence!” he snarled. “You will obey me in everything if you will live. Go, put the paint of war on your face. We will wait only until the sun moves the space of a finger.”

Warriors and women stared amazement when Arakoua ran from the hospital door, face stained crimson and painted in ochre. Annaotaka gave her short-axe, knife, and bow and arrows. “Stay by me,” he ordered and made no explanation of her presence.

The party plunged into the forest gloom and slush. Annaotaka took the main road to St. Ignace, Thodatouan that to St. Louis. Silently and in single file, Annaotaka led his warriors along the trail for five-and-twenty minutes, when he held up a warning hand and stopped. From a distance came the war cry of the Iroquois, shrill in victory. There was a sharp report of musketry. Annaotaka’s hard eyes brightened with a fierce light. “Come!” he cried, and sped through the bush. The course of battle veered, the shouts grew closer, more furious. He disposed his force in ambush on either side of the neglected trail. Bow-strings were fitted to arrow notches, muskets primed and matches ready. Arakoua shook with expectancy.

There was a crash of underbrush and the men of Arenta came rushing in headlong flight. Annaotaka stopped them, motioned to concealment, and waited until more than tenscore Mohawks rushed into the trap in mad pursuit. His mouth opened to the long sharp war cry of the Hurons. Bows snapped, muskets roared and the Mohawks stumbled in the sudden flood of death. In that instant the Hurons were upon them, short-axe and war club in hand. Arakoua, revelling in the thrill of the charge, fought at Annaotaka’s side. The Mohawks quickly rallied and, even with the help of the men of Arenta, Annaotaka’s warriors were greatly outnumbered. Their war cries arose defiantly and they fought with furious desperation, but weight of numbers forced them back. They might have been put to a second flight had not Thodatouan and his Bear Clan from Ossossanë converged upon the battle from two sides. The Iroquois surged forward in frenzied recklessness. The Hurons were staggered by the unexpected onslaught. Arakoua was knocked into the

undergrowth, even Annaotaka was beaten to his knee.

When the Huron ranks reformed the Mohawks had their fill of profitless fighting and were in full flight. So quickly did Annaotaka and Thodatouan take up pursuit that their warriors raged at the Iroquois heels. Bows twanged and long knives flashed through the air with deadly aim.

The clearing of St. Louis opened against the forest. Although the village was reduced to ashes, the palisades stood. The fugitives rushed to the breaches and there turned to bay. In the turmoil of attack that followed a few Iroquois escaped; but of the 200 Mohawks who started forth from St. Ignace to invest Fort Ste. Marie, only a dozen prisoners remained alive in St. Louis' battered palisades.

Victory had been bought at high cost by the Hurons. Of the 340 warriors who had left Fort Ste. Marie spoiling for a fight, fully a third had been slain or wounded. Annaotaka was red from a dozen hurts. Thodatouan had a gash that laid the side of his head bare. Beyond bruises and scratches Arakoua was uninjured. The chief grunted approval of her. "You handle axe and bow well. I saw you lay four Hodenosaunee to earth."

Under Annaotaka's command the prisoners were tossed in a careless circle for a less perilous hour of entertainment, and a Cord warrior, unable to curb his passion, was brained for gnawing off a Mohawk's finger. "We will rest, eat what we have and be gone," said Annaotaka, wiping red short-axe clean. "When we have more men we will come and fight again."

The Hurons squatted by the dead ashes of the village and vented their hate by predicting the dire fate awaiting the prisoners. Their pleasant interlude was protracted beyond bounds of safety. Unknown to Annaotaka the main force of 700 Iroquois, on the march to attack Fort Ste. Marie, turned in furious haste to St. Louis when Mohawk fugitives brought word of disaster. Their infuriated shrieks echoed from all sides of the forest.

Annaotaka leaped to his feet. The joy of battle rang in his fierce laugh. He faced his warriors. "It is the end, O men and sons of men. Our enemies speak from throats that are as a roaring storm, and there is no escape. Nor do we seek one. Our fields are black, our villages are ashes and our hearts are desolate. Now we make ready to march to the Land of the Shades. Do we go as cowards go, heads bowed in shame? Or do we go as, warriors go, red-handed with the blood of our foes, eyes shining with the lust of slaughter? That is the way warriors go. Let us hold our heads high, O sons of men, and our short-axes red in our hands."

A shout answered him, a shout that was killed by the howl of fury from the forest. Annaotaka acknowledged it with uplifted hand to the skies. "Behold us,

O Sun!" he cried. "We will do no shame in your sight."

A prisoner snarled defiance. "And now, O snakes, we will live to see you writhe and scream in the flame."

The chief turned on him. "It is well that you remind us of yourselves. We shall not be accused of cowardice, even in death." He motioned to Arakoua. "As we ask no mercy, we will give none."

Arakoua grabbed her short-axe with a flourish and a laugh. "A name for the dead village to wipe out our shame," she cried and ran to the helpless captives. "The okis made you fall in a circle, and so will this place be called Katdaria."

And in the hour of its passing St. Louis ceased to be known to the Hurons as aonchia, a nameless village, but became Katdaria, the Little Circle of the Slain.

Thodatouan was at the palisades. He waved short-axe derisively, as the Iroquois halted at the edge of the clearing. Annaotaka disposed his men in the breaches, those with muskets on the platforms, where they could shoot downward over the ramparts. "We see before us the strength of the Hodenosaunee," he shouted. "We glory in our will to kill. Look well at those in front of you. They come to their death."

Of the doomed Hurons, trapped in the ruins of Katdaria, he gave no thought. His was the mind that rose to its heights when there was no hope and inevitable death awaited. The flames of battle burned as red fire in his warriors' hearts and though small in number, their voices rang with the urge to kill. Arakoua put something of their spirit into words: "O great chief, my father, my heart is glad that I am here. It is good to die in this way, and you and I will go smiling past the Standing Rock together. In your happiness you will permit me, your daughter, to lead our warriors in my wampums of war?"

His eyes shone as he denied her plea. "Our enemies are many, our warriors few. The fight will be long and to the death of the last man; and no one knows when his end will come. Do you await as time passes. It is right that the blood of Annaotaka should lead until the last."

Arakoua flung war-axe happily in the air. She had been honoured as she dared not hope. Back of the words was the command that she should hold herself in readiness to lead when Annaotaka fell. In such a struggle as this leadership would be short. She, the heart of his heart, the spirit of his spirit, would pick up his short-axe and in her he would fight on to the last against the hereditary foe. "It is well, O great chief, my father!" With a war song on her lips she ran to the palisade platform.

Led by a Mohawk chief, the Iroquois rushed across the clearing. It was a

quick dash but many warriors fell. Arakoua could only draw bow twice before the battle joined in wild fury at the breaches. She fitted a third notch to bow cord and circled the gallery. Below she saw the Mohawk chief and Annaotaka slashing and guarding, guarding and slashing with fierce intensity, and about them, and at other openings in the defences, the struggle raged in scores of personal combats. She awaited her chance, bow-string drawn to cheek, arrow notch to cord. The Mohawk jumped upon the bodies and paused for a split second, axe uplifted to leap down on Annaotaka. The arrow hissed. He fell back, transfixed with a shaft beneath armpit, to sprawl among his men. The fall of the chief sapped the Iroquois courage. They fled in disorder. The Hurons pursued, but in the open Onondaga muskets drove death at them. Annaotaka quickly withdrew his men behind the palisaded protection.

"We are too few in muskets and men to fight this way," he gasped. "Our weapons will not reach the cowards with the muskets!"

He stood in the breach and shook a fist at the Onondagas just beyond bow range. "Our weapons are men's weapons," he taunted, "come and fight with them."

The Iroquois answer was a shriek of rage and a mad race to attack. The astute Annaotaka did not attempt to defend the breaches. He massed his warriors and drove forth in counter-attack. The Iroquois horde was brought to a stop with an impact that threw them into yelping confusion. The first line tumbled before the slash of merciless axes. The second rank withered away. Mad with blood lust, the Hurons cut and thrust with reckless ferocity and again the fiercest fighters of the Five Nations broke in flight. Annaotaka, bleeding from a dozen wounds, recalled his warriors before the leaden death from the Onondaga musketmen could find its billet.

The sun crept across the forest and dipped from sight. The moon rose and the stars winked, and the dark mantle of night shrouded the carnage of the clearing, yet the struggle waged with relentless fury. The Iroquois would not withdraw, the Hurons could not cut their way to safety. A score of times Mohawks, Senecas and Onondagas raged to the palisades and a score of times they recoiled before the savagery of the defence. Other war parties, the Cayugas and the Oneidas, answered the howl and turmoil of the fight and their warriors replenished the depleted ranks of the Five Nations. There were no reinforcements for the Hurons. As the red hours passed their numbers withered away. Only their courage remained unimpaired. This was no season for caution, no hour to think of the morrow; for there would be no sunrise for them. Nothing but the reeking present could be theirs. Their spirits rose as hope died and from out of the embers of their lives fires of ferocity flared in devouring passion. Annaotaka reviewed the depleted ranks of his fighters with

unabated enthusiasm. He called Arakoua from the parapet, where she had arrowed many an Iroquois chief.

“This is a valorous hour, the last hour,” he cried in ringing voice. “Never has there been such a battle fought in all the history of our race. The Keepers of the Wampums will keep our fame alive down through the ages. It is necessary that one shall live to tell our deeds, so that they be known and not perish this night as we perish. You, O daughter of my sinews and courage, I am well pleased with you, and you shall tell the story. Away with that skin of the deer! Stand forth in the wampums of our victorious hour!”

He waved her to strip off the dress.

The warriors gathered the closer, threescore of them and no more, and all pocked with wounds. Annaotaka lowered his voice to a fierce whisper. “We will charge as one man would charge. The Sunbeam will charge between Thodatouan and an axeman from Arenta, and I will fight in the front. Thus, all three villages will have equal glory in this great adventure. Thodatouan and the Arentan will fight through to the last line of the Hodenosaunee, I will lead until I fall. Arakoua shall speed into the forest. She will go to the great stone fortress and tell our people of this day, of the biggest fight of all Ouendake.”

“It is good,” Thodatouan muttered. His breath came in gasps. His strong frame was hacked by axe and knife. He stepped back into the shadow of the palisade, to stumble and fall. He looked at that which had tripped him, stood up and there was fresh strength in his voice. He pointed a finger to his feet. “Listen well, O spirit of Onaotaha in the Land of the Shades. I go out this time not to return and Arakoua goes with me to carry word of our valour, as I will carry word of it to you in the world of the spirits.”

Annaotaka looked across a breach of hacked palisades. The clearing showed pale in the moonlight, nondescript mounds rising where short-axe and war club had joined in the ebb and flow of battle. He smiled slowly, deadly, as he gazed over the mounds to where the Onondaga musketmen stood all but concealed in the shadows, ready to fire as the Hurons manned the breaches. The next Iroquois attack was to be an irresistible assault, he surmised, with three consecutive waves of warriors to sweep forward in overwhelming smash. It was never made.

Annaotaka ran back and marshalled his men in the formation of a rough triangle. He stood at the apex. Behind him was Thodatouan, Arakoua and the axemen of Arenta. By virtue of necessity, his genius had evolved the principle of the wedge in his greatest fight, and this wedge, solid with the threescore warriors, would charge through the three Iroquois ranks and fan out in flashing lines of flaying axes. It was a masterly piece of stratagem and Annaotaka

waited until the last second to put it into effect, waited with steel nerves until the Iroquois waves were rushing across the clearing in frenzied charge.

He gave a loud shout and the Hurons, a compact body of fighters, drove forward in a smashing, hacking offensive. Irresistible of weight, flaming of fury, the wedge crumbled the Iroquois lines in its desperate thrust. Those who raged on each side to attack involuntarily drew back at the sight of the wild-eyed chieftainess, short-axe in hand and white of wampums, racing at them. In that instant Arakoua bounded to freedom. From the corner of her eye she saw Thodatouan stumble, strike out and stumble again. It was the end.

XVII

ST. IGNACE rocked in an eruption of hate. It was incredible, thought Godfrey, that the human mouth could spew out such snarls of fiendish cruelty. The sickening crunch of stakes pounding flesh told him that the captive priests had been driven through the village gates. There came silence. Some place, not far from where he lay, Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant were pegged out on the earth, helpless as was he, and his heart went out to them in pity. Naked, their bodies torn and bleeding, they lay twitching under the smart and ache of a thousand stripes, awaiting a greater agony to come. The stake, the slow fire, all the refinement of torture that a diabolical ingenuity could devise, would be their portion of the bitter chalice from which they must drink.

Godfrey groaned in soreness of spirit and remembered other unfortunates who lay trussed as so many birds for roasting, in the adjoining houses. How many villagers were captured, he did not know, for they were too cowed by the fate awaiting them to make noise. He raised his head to glance at the guard lounging at the doorway, grunting explanatory refusals to warriors who would have entered, then closed his eyes in helplessness. The knowledge that he had been set apart, spared the ordeal of his companions, made his sufferings the keener. Had he been condemned to die with them, he would have borne with such fortitude as he possessed the pain and torment. Yet even this had been denied him. He was to be the spectacular sacrifice on the altar of the Five Nations' solidity in the Onondagan Valley. The robust, fearless Brébeuf, the retiring, tranquil Lalemant, they who suffered so close to him, he would never see again. "God!" he cried. "If I only had Annaotaka and tenscore warriors here, I'd give these devils hell."

"Who is it that swears in English?" a steady voice asked.

He opened his eyes. The Little Thunder stood before him. A magnificent robe of beaver covered her from shoulders to moccasin tops. In her hand was a bowl of food. "You are cold," she said.

She glided, more than walked, to the end of the house and brought back a chief's beaver robe, which she threw over him. He saw that the sentry had gone. "I will guard you myself." She drew a knife, with silver haft, and cut free the cord binding his right hand. "Move your fingers and wrists," she advised.

"You are English," he said, then scorn touched his tongue. "And you are here with these, these—" He stumbled in search of words to express his loathing.

"I am here," she returned calmly, "and so are you—because of me. Be

thankful."

"Here for a time."

"And for a purpose. What is your name?"

"Godfrey Bethune, Captain of the Musketeers, at the fort."

"I guessed as much. Now eat. Time is pressing."

"But Father Brébeuf! Father Lalemant! Can't you do something for them?" There was pleading insistence in his voice.

She eyed him stonily. Strange eyes they were, amber flecked with green, and the sun seemed to lie in their depths. "I saved you, one out of three. I can do nothing more. And the others—priests? No one can save a priest. Eat some of this food."

"Who are you?"

"Your people call me the Little Thunder," she said contemptuously. "Do not talk. I am trying to help you. Eat: time is pressing."

He ate. There was the finality of quiet assurance which commanded obedience.

"You hate me," she said simply. "I do not blame you. Sometimes I hate myself."

"You have ruined Huronia. You killed thousands of people who did you no harm."

"The Hurons ruined themselves." She watched his fingers move. "The blood has come back. I will cut the other cord." She retied the first rope much looser and unknotted the bonds of his legs, replacing them so that they appeared untouched, though in reality they were little better than no bonds whatever. "Do not do anything foolish. I have plans. In the meantime, I trust you."

She removed the empty bowl and stood at the doorway. Godfrey glimpsed three chiefs stop. They spoke briefly, looked within and went away. As the shadows of early dusk gathered, the full-throated roar of a thousand throats shook the bark walls. He saw her shiver. The hour of the stake had come.

Yell after yell swelled in hideous clamour. Godfrey ground his teeth in impotent fury. Once Hinonaia stole away. She crept back, her face a mask of suffering and stood at the door. She looked toward the church, and her mouth twitched. A minute later she slipped into the house, sure and soundless as a wolf in even stride. He saw her snatch a bundle and glide past him, quickly to return. There were four motions of her wrist and he was free. "Follow me," she whispered.

He stood for a second, flexing wrists and ankles. She picked up the beaver robe that covered him and threw it over his shoulders. “Come,” she urged, and led him to the palisade ladder. “There is a yard of ground at this point. The drop is only a dozen feet, if you hang by your fingers. Your weapons are down there.”

Godfrey obeyed mechanically. Events had moved so rapidly that he was all but stupefied. As he swung over the pointed palisade a great yell cleft the air and riding on its volume he fancied there was a shrill scream of agony. He dropped and landed with a jolt beside a bundle. There was a second thud and she stood beside him. “You lead,” she ordered. “This is your country.”

Close by them a black ridge showed above the grey of the frost-coated slush, where a shoulder of earth hunched out of the ravine and offered them a quick, sloping descent. They stole down it to the shadowy shelter of a cedar grove. Godfrey glanced upward. More than fivescore feet above him the village palisades thrust defiantly upward from the edge of the sharp drop, a black mass in the dark world of silhouette. He muttered angrily. Within those fortifications, which a few score resolute warriors could have held out against an army, two gallant men were to die in unspeakable torment. Hinonaia plucked insistently at his sleeve. “Come quickly. You can grieve on the morrow. We must make haste.”

A frenzied yell pitched into the night. He jumped. “A terrible act has been done,” he groaned. “We will go to St. Louis. There’s nothing left there for them to hunt out.”

“Yes, yes. Let us go.”

They sped along the ravine, two shadows merging into the darker shadows of the trees. At the point where the ground sloped upward and broke into jagged depressions of earth and rock, they turned into the forest. Soon the main trail stretched before them, beaten wide by many Iroquois feet. They followed it cautiously, pausing every few rods to listen. Godfrey raised a hand. The crunch of careless moccasins was heard. They turned back to where the snow had been tramped out by a search party and crouched in the thick underbrush. A score of Iroquois sped past to the blood revel at St. Ignace.

Godfrey’s trigger finger itched but he made no move. The two waited for a space of minutes to be certain no stragglers followed. When they crept back to the trail he voiced the question uppermost in his thoughts. “Have they attacked the fort?”

“Not yet,” she murmured in his ear. “Scouts have been sent out twice. An attack may be made on the morrow.”

He breathed relief. There had been no surprise. “By morning,” he

whispered, “so many fugitives will have arrived, we can drive them off.”

They moved over the trail slowly, carefully. An unexpected noise in the bush, the crack of a stick, or snap of the snow crust would send them into hiding for long minutes. With roving bands of Iroquois converging on St. Ignace, no risk was too small to be overlooked. The night was advanced when they completed the league trip and skirted the familiar palisades of St. Louis, standing, breached and broken, as so many black skeletons in the white light of the moon. He stopped in the shadows, at the far bank of the river. “We can go no further without danger. The woods about Ste. Marie will be alive with scouts. I know a cave close by. We can hide in it during the day.”

A steep, rocky slope led to the refuge. Natural drainage to the ravine had cleared its approach of snow. They circled the hedge of thorn bushes that grew in front, as a screen, and stood below its ledge. “Hope no big cat’s using it,” Godfrey growled, and hoisted himself to the entrance. It was empty. Hinonaia joined him. Low of arch, the cave had width and depth, and the Little Thunder wasted no time in idle conversation. She wrapped the robe about her and lay down, pillowing her head on an arm. “Time to sleep,” she advised. “We have no food. Sleep is best for an empty stomach.”

Godfrey recognized the soundness of her words. He was fagged out and nerves were frayed and raw. In a day and night he had entered the gates of hell and come forth alive. In the dawn of the last sun, a sun remote indeed to him and all but lost in the haze of the inferno from which he had escaped, he had seen St. Louis a populous village of 700 people. Now it stood less than a furlong away, a scarred and empty shell. Its people were slain and scattered, its mission was obliterated by torch and short-axe, and its priests gone—whence? He hoped they were mercifully out of their suffering. It was the kindest wish that he could make. He lay down, wrapped in the soft, warm folds of the beaver robe, and a review of the day’s events seemed to him impossible, unreal. Such things could not happen; they were fantastic. Yet the Little Thunder was real, vividly, surprisingly real. He could hear her heavy breathing in the cave; and that, too, was as positive as the fact that he lay within it.

His thoughts whirled about Hinonaia, all but chaotic in the questions which arose. She was no blood woman, despite the stains of her face. Her white parentage was patent at a glance. Nor was she an ordinary maiden adopted into a nation, even though she spoke the Mohawk tongue. The deference displayed by the principal chiefs had verged upon veneration. Otherwise, he would not be in this cave this night. His thoughts reverted to that fetid hell at St. Ignace and he gritted his teeth. She had saved him from that. What was the motive behind this? And her apparent detestation of all Indians? Godfrey fell asleep pondering these riddles.

He awoke, every sense alert. Hinonaia, chin resting on palm, was listening intently. War cries were arising in discordant uproar from the forest behind them. They grew fainter, then swelled stronger. He looked at her. “A fight,” she said. “Many Iroquois: few Hurons.”

“It is well we hid,” he growled. “The place is crawling with them.”

“Stay here!” she commanded, as he made to rise. “You can see nothing. Hidden eyes may see you.” She put a finger to her lips.

Godfrey paid a silent tribute to her caution. The scream of battle would draw the Five Nations warriors from every point of the forest. They sat back to speculate silently upon the shift of the struggle. She smiled uncertainly, reached for snow that had sifted through the cave opening and fell to rubbing the war paint from her face. Godfrey drew a piece of lint from his pocket. She accepted it with a nod. Under her vigorous treatment the marks disappeared. To his surprise, Godfrey found her even more attractive. Her eyes, though unyielding, were round and expressive and gave a liveliness and warmth to a face that otherwise would have been hard in chiselled evenness of features. Her mouth, he decided, was neither too large nor too small, full and rounded in a way to complement the straight, classical nose. He was studying the coppery silkiness of her hair, braided in Indian fashion and wound about her head, when she looked up, red of face from her scrubbing and lips curved in a smile. The smile was caught up by her eyes and it was as if the sun shone full upon her face.

Godfrey reddened in sudden embarrassment. She was studying him with the open scrutiny of the Indian. It was a detailed examination of each feature, each line of his face, and all done with a naiveté that left him squirming inwardly in an awkward attempt to simulate a nonchalance which he was far from feeling. The verdict was apparently favourable, for she smiled a friendly smile. He was grateful that circumstances prevented comment. He doubted not that these would have been as candid as her critical appraisal of him. He started as a storm of noise blew up.

The tide of war swept nearer. Iroquois cries were fainter; Huron shouts louder. He smiled his satisfaction. Fort Ste. Marie was safe. The battle raged southward, circled through the bleak woods toward St. Louis. There came a crescendo of yells, of triumph and desperation surging upward from scores of throats, then silence. Godfrey stirred. “It is the Bear Clan’s war cry; they must have driven a party of Iroquois behind the palisades and wiped them out.”

She stared thoughtfully at the gaunt bones of the thorn thicket. “We will stay here,” she decided. “I know my people. They will never let the Bear Clan escape. Soon the forest will be filled with warriors. Even now they will be

coming from all winds."

Godfrey winced at the words, "my people". She might as well have reached out her hand and struck him. Yet, the blow had been unintentional. The habits of years, the forms of thought, are not to be changed in a day, or a month. He looked obliquely at her. She was sitting back with eyes closed. He recognized many Indian characteristics, such as that displayed at the minute. She had spoken; there remained nothing more to be said.

He thought of the difficult days of transition that lay before her. She must enter another life, with new ideals, different values and strange customs. Even a third language must be mastered, for he gathered that she spoke only English and Mohawk. Latent animosity was obliterated by a great understanding. In her tragic past, whatever it was, she had died spiritually and come to life in a new world, the primitive world of the Indian. Now, she must die again to take her rightful place in that civilized world which had been denied her. Her return would be dangerous and difficult. Not only would she be as a stranger in a strange land, but there would be Huron enmity to overcome. Their resentment, inexorable hatred, would demand revenge. She had been a leader of those who had wrecked their empire, slain those nearest and dearest, often with most hideous tortures. They could not be told that she was a victim of circumstances, one driven by a goad of relentless fate. In their eyes there was a blood price to be paid; and they would demand it. Some scheme must be devised to prevent persecution, or worse. He sat back against the cave and lost himself in thought.

The forest trembled to a howl of fury. Godfrey's lips tightened. The Iroquois had arrived in full strength to slake their blood thirst. He could follow the course of battle by its throat beats. There was the mad rush to attack, the recoil and the derision of the Hurons as the foe broke under a counter-attack. Throughout the afternoon, into the evening and then night, he listened to the surge of the fight, marvelling at the stubborn courage of the fighters. Had the Hurons shown the same unwavering spirit in meeting the invasion, as they did now in dying, he could see the Iroquois slinking home with wounds that would have taken a generation to heal. He looked quickly at Hinonaia. She sat unmoved. Not until the trees merged as a black drop across the river did she stir. "Now is the time to go," she said. "All are at the battle and none are in the forest. Come quickly before the end."

They stole from their hiding-place. Speedily and cautiously they slipped over the trail to Fort Ste. Marie. Only a faint echo of the hate that blazed in unabated ferocity at St. Louis reached them on the rise of the night wind. Otherwise, the forest closed about them, a silent thing, without movement, without form. They made light of the short league before them. Soon the trees

thinned. Ahead were the bare fields and stubble of Ste. Marie. Godfrey's heart leaped in happiness. The walls and bastions of the fort arose in sturdy strength.

They stole forward for fifty paces. The moon picked out their forms and stood them in dark relief. Sharp eyes of the sentries caught them and the voice of Sergeant Lausier challenged. There came a shout of joy when Godfrey answered. No longer needing to be furtive, the two hurried to the stone postern. They passed through the gates, under the frowning brass cannon, where the sergeant and two men waited with eyes that doubted. "Not a word, Robert," Godfrey whispered. "Do you take my companion to the outwork entrance and stand guard with your two men. Let no one approach, particularly Hurons. I must speak with the Father Superior."

He turned to Hinonaia. "Do you wait for a short time. These soldiers will keep guard. I will be back."

"The Father Superior just left the church and went to the residence, sir," the sergeant said.

He ran to the residence to meet Father Ragueneau at the door. The Father Superior embraced him tenderly. "Ah, my Godfrey," his voice shook. "What miracle is this? St. Joseph, our blessed patron, whose festival even now is at hand, has brought you back safe and sound to me—to us."

"I have returned, mon père, with another, but for whom I would have been consumed in the torture flame."

"Bring him hither, at once!" Father Ragueneau commanded. "He shall be welcomed fittingly and fed. I know you have not eaten for many hours. You erred on the side of useless ceremony, Godfrey, for no matter what he might be, he saved your life, saved you to the service of God and the mission."

"I do not think I have erred, mon père," Godfrey answered in a low voice. "My companion is Hinonaia."

The Father Superior stood as a man bereft of strength, of speech. Twice he opened his mouth. His voice was all but lost when he spoke. "The Little Thunder! You say she saved you, came with you here!" He stared at Godfrey anxiously. "It is incredible. Your sufferings must have turned your mind. She is an arch-devil, a fiend among fiends."

"She is an English girl, sir. She did not come with me, rather she escaped with me. I would have,—" he hesitated, did not wish to mention Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant at the minute—"would have been maimed and burned had she not protected me."

"The Little Thunder here, in Ste. Marie. All but impossible!" He looked searchingly into Godfrey's face. "Yet so you say. And you have not mentioned Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant."

“The news, I grieve to say, is of the worst.”

“I feared it could be nothing other than that.” The Father Superior’s head bowed. He spoke after a brief interval. “We must protect this girl. She may be more unfortunate than evil.” He detached a key from the ring at his sash. “Do you let her sleep in my room in the outwork. Put two soldiers to stand guard. I will send food for you both, there. She will be in strange surroundings and no matter what she has been, we must treat her with consideration. I go to my cabinet and your story can wait.”

Hinonaia was leaning as composedly against the palisade as if she had known nothing but Fort Ste. Marie all her life. The sergeant was eyeing her curiously. He came to attention upon Godfrey’s approach, without comment. “She will occupy the Father Superior’s room, in the outwork, Robert. We will have to place two men on guard over her for every minute of the day and night. For your information—” Godfrey bent close to the sergeant’s ear—“she is the Little Thunder.”

Sergeant Lausier jumped and crossed himself.

“She saved my life,” Godfrey continued. “Had it not been for her, I should have gone to the torture stake. Guard her as you would your life. She’s an English girl.”

“She saved your life, sir. That clears her slate,” the sergeant answered quickly.

“Not only that, Robert, she escaped with me.” Godfrey spoke to Hinonaia in English. “You are safe. The Father Superior, the captain of this fort, has given you his special room.”

“I thought you were the captain.”

“I am the captain of the soldiers. He is the great captain in charge of everything. Something to eat will soon be here.”

“I am hungry,” she said simply.

He unlocked the door of the outwork cabinet. A sentry put fresh logs on the fire. A few sticks picked up the smouldering embers to flames. Hinonaia looked about the rudely furnished interior with interested approval. “It is a lovely house,” she said and sat back on the bench.

“How is it you kept your English up?” Godfrey pulled out the chair.

“Many traders and some missionaries came and went,” she said slowly. “A chief was always with me who could understand something of what was said. I think the sachems wanted me as a translator.”

“Weren’t the traders and missionaries surprised to see you?”

“They never said anything. They had to be friends with the Mohawks to live.”

“Of course. I had forgotten that.”

A soldier came with food. Hinonaia grabbed for the bowl and wolfed it with noisy gusto. “This *is* good!” She looked up and saw Godfrey’s frown. “You don’t like me?”

“No, that’s not right. I do like you. Only you do not eat that way. An Indian can, not a white lady.”

“Oh, is that so?” she smiled. “Then you will teach me?”

“Oh, yes,” he answered, vaguely. “There are so many things you will have to learn; but it will be fun to learn them,” he interjected quickly. “Can you sew?”

“Oh, yes.” She looked surprised.

“Can you make a dress?”

She nodded.

“Splendid!” he said enthusiastically. “We will get you some cloth in the morning. You don’t want to go around in wampums, you know.”

“A cloth dress!” Her eyes glowed with pleasure. “I never had a cloth dress. That will be fine.”

Godfrey finished eating. “You stretch out here when you feel like it. There is a bar on the door. Drop it in place. Here is the other robe. One will make you a soft couch, the other a warm covering. Try and get some sleep. I will see you in the morning.”

“I am tired,” she answered. “I will go right to sleep.”

The two sentries were at their posts. “Remain right here, men, until relieved in the morning. This woman is most important to us.” He reported to Father Ragueneau and gave him a detailed account of the tragic mishaps. The Father Superior’s eyes were luminous as Godfrey spoke of the priests.

“No, she could not have saved them,” Father Ragueneau agreed. “She was quite right in her stand. She would only have endangered you. This young woman, whoever she may be, is not without native wit. She knew that the wrath of the Iroquois is directed at us with a ferocious intensity. She did all that was possible and I, we, are not ungrateful, as she will presently know. But I interrupt.”

“There are a number of significant things to be considered, mon père,” Godfrey continued. “I should say that she is used for political, rather than war purposes, and the fact that she is here, at all, is particularly significant,

especially when we remember that she was with the Mohawk, Onondaga and Seneca strength, three nations from the eastern, central and western regions of the confederacy. It would seem a national effort of the Iroquois to wipe out Huronia."

"I fear you are right." Father Ragueneau shook his head sorrowfully. "Yet even that does not detract from her influence and importance. The mere fact that she was able to intervene in your behalf after you had killed the supreme Seneca war chief speaks volumes for her influence. I imagine her disappearance will be extremely disconcerting."

"I am of the same opinion, mon père."

The Father Superior listened in silence until Godfrey had finished his tale. "Your decision to make for St. Louis was wise," he said. "Scouts were about the woods all night and you would never have got through. That battle you heard must have been with the warriors from Ossossanë and Arenta. There were about eighteen score and we could hear them, in the morning, as they drove the Iroquois before them." He drew a long breath. "Alas, sorrows fall heavily upon us. They are gone and Annaotaka is gone. He was a brave warrior and true to his people, heathen though he was."

"He was a man, sir," Godfrey answered warmly. "I wish we had more like him."

A challenge came loudly from the walls. They jumped to their feet and hurried to the courtyard.

XVIII

A FIGURE was dashing across the open lands, a ghostly figure of black, streaked with white circles. Godfrey looked once from the postern loophole, drew hissing breath in startled recognition and ran to the inner landing basin. Father Ragueneau arrived just before Arakoua rushed past the water ditch, and hand sought his chin in amazement at the scarlet blotches congealed on her face, shoulders and wampum belts. “Child, are you hurt?”

She did not hear him. Eyes dilated with fear were fixed upon Godfrey. She clasped both hands to her bosom and staggered back. “You here, O Guardian of the River! You return from the Land of the Shades!”

“Not so. I escaped from the Hodenosaunee. My feet took me here.”

She stood gaping at him. Hands fell to her sides. She swayed, then drew herself straight. “My heart flew apart, then rushed together in great gladness. Now that I see Teanaosti, I can smile again,” she gasped.

“You show blood! Are you injured?”

“The blood of enemies.” She spoke unsteadily. “I come from a mighty battle.”

“Then come with me to—” The Father Superior stopped. He recalled that his room in the outwork was occupied.

“To the hospital,” Godfrey suggested quickly. “You can clean your face and shoulders there. It is empty, unless the two old women from Contarea remain.”

“They are still there.” Father Ragueneau spoke sadly. His mind had leaped back six years to when the Rock Clan capital stood near the Little Lake. Now its eight acres of palisades and houses were a meadowland. Only a few scattered cabins in the fields were reminiscent of its forty houses, of ten fires each, and these two withered women had come on a journey of seven leagues from Couchiching’s waters to try and cure the ache of their old bones with the black robe’s magic. “They will be no hindrance to conversation,” he added, and at the door of the hospital spoke to the orderly. “Arakoua has come far without food. Do you bring some to her, here.”

The Father Superior glanced to where the two rock women lay on a pallet, sleeping almost as soundly as did their clansmen in the Contarea bonepit. He motioned Arakoua to sit by the wall and himself sat on a pallet opposite her. “We heard the cries of the warriors even here. The fight must have been hard and long.”

She disregarded the basin of water which Godfrey had brought her, and her eyes gleamed pridefully. “It was a battle of warriors, O Aondecheté. The great chief, my father, is no more. Thodatouan is no more. Of the warriors that fought I alone am here.”

Both Father Ragueneau and Godfrey made exclamations of distress. Their hearts were heavy. The fighting men of Ossossanë and Arenta were annihilated and the two foremost war chiefs of the Huron nation dead. The blow was a staggering one, a disaster as great as that of St. Ignace and St. Louis.

Arakoua watched Godfrey as though she feared he would vanish before her eyes. “We fought from mid-sun until the moon was in the centre of the aronhia, and I killed many men.” With relish she carried out Annaotaka’s injunction to “tell our deeds so that they shall be known and not perish”, even to the slaughter of the prisoners.

Father Ragueneau’s face darkened as this was related with zest. He shook his head in sorrowful displeasure but without comment. “And so,” she finished, “we fought our way to the forest, I broke through to come here.”

“And you came without trouble?” Godfrey asked.

“With little trouble, O Guardian of the River. Nothing much.”

“We will go with you every step of the way,” he insisted. “Tell what the trees said, the sounds your ears heard. Overlook not a branch, not a stick on the trail.”

Surprise was in her eyes. She considered his words foolish. She said so, curtly.

“The child is tired,” Father Ragueneau said, in French.

“There is a reason, mon père. When the Iroquois saw the end was in sight, a band, or two, might have detached themselves to try and surprise the fort.”

“Ah, yes. That is true.” The Father Superior turned to Arakoua and by much patience and many words he and Godfrey were able to piece together the story of her flight.

Thodatouan stumbled and lay unmoving. A Mohawk chief rushed at her to trip in sudden stop at sight of a woman warrior in white wampums. He died then and there by the edge of her short-axe. She raced into the forest as a wild, hunted thing would run, then inherent caution returned. Once she stopped, as a great scream of triumph arose to be followed by a blanket of silence. She knew that the Huron warriors had struck their last blow. She wasted no time in grieving. That could be done at a convenient hour. Annaotaka had died as a war chief should die, at the head of his men and red short-axe in hand. Hers

was the task to go forward, to tell of the valour shown. She sped along the trail, eyes questioning every shadow, ears sharp for the stir of the underbrush.

A blot moved in the shadows of a cedar grove. Every muscle in her body grew taut. She grasped short-axe haft tightly and whirled as it launched a flying leap. There was a cutting smash and a gushing spray. The blot disappeared with a strangled groan. She raced the last two furlongs to Fort Ste. Marie.

The Father Superior regarded her in silence. Godfrey scowled.

"Have I not conducted myself as a warrior?" she asked petulantly.

"You have done heroic deeds," Godfrey answered.

The retainer came with food.

Father Ragueneau stood up. Tired lines furrowed his face. "You must be famished. Eat well and sleep. Teanaosti and I will see you at sun-up."

Outside he sorrowed for the dead Bear warriors. "Their loss is irreparable, the bravest of Huronia have fallen. I fear we cannot withstand this blow."

"They did not die entirely in vain, sir," Godfrey consoled. "With this bloodletting, the Iroquois have had more than enough of fighting. And Hinonaia is gone from them. I think they will retreat."

"Ah, the Little Thunder. And now Arakoua. Both here. Two high-headed heathen in the mission at the same time." He groaned. "And Ste. Marie the 'Abode of Peace'! The imps of Satan attack us in force."

"The greater the victory, sir," Godfrey suggested.

"The voice of a soldier." Father Ragueneau smiled faintly, and clasped Godfrey's shoulder with strong fingers. "We must concentrate on obtaining some definite intelligence of the Iroquois on the morrow."

"I was considering looking into the situation myself, sir."

"No. You will remain at your post." There was a decisive note in the voice which forbade question. "We have almost sixty score refugees here, and the possibility of a strong force threatening us. A steady head and hand is needed to preserve order and organize a proper defence. Alas, had I been more alive to the danger—" Father Ragueneau's mouth tightened. He walked with head bowed.

"It was the will of God, mon père," Godfrey said. They walked to the courtyard in silence. Godfrey glanced back to the outwork gate. "Arakoua may wish to search for her father. There will be no enemies near St. Louis by now."

"An idea worth consideration."

"And she may find a Huron on the trail."

“You think she killed one of her own people?” The Father Superior stopped.

“I am fairly sure of it. No Iroquois would be alone that close to the fort.”

“It is regrettable. I know that in this case there are extenuating circumstances. In the slaughter of the prisoners at St. Louis, there can be nothing but strongest condemnation.”

“That is true, sir. The best that can be said is that the prisoners died quickly. The Hurons were where their clansmen had been massacred.”

“I am not dealing with the ethics of murder—the slaying of body and soul.” The Father Superior’s voice was deep. “It was a deliberate act and done by a woman.”

“Arakoua is vicious, no denying that, sir.”

“A savage of the savages,” Father Ragueneau amended. “I am worried. I can foresee trouble when she hears of Hinonaia. She is bloody of heart and mind.”

“I am not exactly sanguine myself, mon père.” Godfrey scowled.

The Father Superior stared into the darkness. “I think that there is merit in your suggestion that she should pay last respects to her father. The fury of a woman in the wrong,” he mused. “I am afraid that this will direct her hate the more to the Little Thunder. That she saved your life will drive the hate the deeper. By all means see Arakoua the first thing in the morning and, if uninjured, get her away. Before she returns we will have reached some decision to straighten out this tangle. In the meantime, we must get what rest we can.”

Godfrey was up before cock-crow and his eyes were gladdened by the sight of twoscore warriors of the Rock Clan, headed by their war chief, Tarontas. A grizzled veteran of threescore winters, the Rock chieftain walked with the spring of youth and his long, tattooed face and wiry frame had neither shrunk nor stiffened with age. He greeted Godfrey with a grim smile. “We heard the shouts of the Hodenosaunee on the south wind, O Teanaosti, and we came to you from our place Beyond the Rapids.”

“My heart grows warm at your words, O Tarontas, and it the warriors you bring from your village of Angoutenc. We welcome you.” Godfrey called a retainer and ordered sagamite be served them at once. He knew that they had tramped two rough leagues from the Bear country to the west, where they had settled after Cahiagué had been abandoned the previous year. He was anxious that after the disasters on the southern frontier they should be received in all honour. He turned to seek Arakoua and straightened with a start.

Three Cord warriors straggled past the inner basin. The leader was Enons. He looked at Godfrey with suspicious eyes.

"I had wondered, O Enons, what trail you had taken," Godfrey said. "I wondered many times whether it was the trail to the Land of Souls or that to the Hodenosaunee torture stake."

Enons' eyes cleared. If there was no word of welcome, there was none of censure. It was assumed that he had been in the heat of battle. "I was on another trail, O Teanaosti," he answered, "as these warriors can attest. The wind of the forest said that ouimchtigouches were among the islands in the big waters to the north. We went to ask why they came here when our trade was done with your people."

Godfrey looked at him closely. Behind Enons' words was information that outlaw fur traders from Quebec again had entered Huronia. "Did you see any trace of them, O Chief?"

"We found a dead fire, nothing more. We might have gone further only the smoke of burning villages came to us and we returned."

"You have come far and nothing within you. Do you join Tarontas and his men and eat." Godfrey walked away. He was not greatly concerned about the poaching voyageurs. Enons had intended to rob their camp. The traders had no recourse had he done so. If they were working their way southward along the shores of Matchedash Bay, it was improbable that they escaped the Iroquois scouting parties. He dismissed them from his thoughts, as he saw Arakoua sitting by the hospital wall, staring in hostile silence at the sentries pacing before the cabin. She glared at him. "Who is that woman in the anonchia?"

He was not surprised at the question. He anticipated that the subtle sixth sense of the Indian would pierce the mystery surrounding Hinonaia's arrival. "She is the woman who saved my life."

"Who is she? Your woman?" Her eyes contracted to points of fire.

"She is a white woman."

Arakoua laughed icily. "Alone out here? She is some wench you have looked upon. I will kill her."

"She saved me," he said harshly, "when your vile temper made possible my capture and the death of the great chief, your father."

She leaped to her feet in a blaze of fury. "So the Guardian of the River would cast me off! He will cast me off for the dead!"

"You are a fool!" he snapped. "I will probably have to cast you forth as a coward."

Arakoua drew herself up in offended pride. "I a coward! I who fought in

battle and killed many men!”

“You, the woman who would not help your people, because your heart was filled with evil spirits. You act as a witch acts.” He accused relentlessly.

“I a witch!” She cried out an indignant protest. “Who dares say I am a witch?”

“I do. I come to ask you, the daughter of a great chief, to lead warriors to search for the body of your father. You opposed his plan and now he and your people are dead. Only a child who is bewitched could be as vile as you are.”

“Who dares say I refuse!” She shook in a transport of rage. “You had not asked me. I will gather the warriors. I will lead them, I, Arakoua, of the blood and bone of chiefs!”

She stamped her foot, whirled and sped to where the men of the Rock Clan were sitting over their food bowls. Enons and the two warriors of the Cord she ignored. “Listen to my words, O Tarontas, O warriors of the Rock! You came here to search for the Hodenosaunee. I will lead you to them. Or is the daughter of Annaotaka, who fought by the great chief’s side and killed many men, not worthy to lead those whose axes are clean?”

Tarontas eyed her in stern disapproval. He saw the white wampums spotted with dried blood, the dried brown blots on her face and shoulders, and grunted. “Your words come from a tongue of thorns. We look at you and what we see makes us forget. Where will you lead us, O woman warrior?”

“To the aonchia of the Clan of the Silted Lake, where the great chief, my father, journeyed to the land of the Shades. Many warriors of the Bear and Cord went with him, and the brave war chief, Thodatouan.”

Tarontas grunted approval. “Your axe has been red many times. Our people are now scattered, but we warriors of the Rock who are here will go with you. Come, O daughter of Annaotaka, you will lead with me.”

“And we will burn the Little Thunder as she burned our people,” Arakoua cried in a ringing voice.

“Ho! ho!” shouted the warriors, pounding the ground with their fists.

“We go axe in hand!” Enons sprang to his feet.

“This is no hunt to *look* for enemies!” She turned on him in cold fury. “We go where the enemy *are*.”

“The Sunbeam lives because warriors died to save her.”

“Fool with a heart of a rabbit!” She gasped in high tide of passion.

“Do we fight the Hodenosaunee or ourselves!” Taronta’s voice was dry as a withered leaf. “Enough! We start at once.”

Godfrey watched from a distance. His face was drawn with serious lines. The fever of Huron hate against Hinonaia was at a death pitch. He realized the urgency of some expedient to assure her safety. What this might be he did not know. Thoughtfully he eyed the departing war party and glanced about to see the Father Superior enter the outwork and walk toward the cabin. He joined him at the door and entered.

Hinonaia had finished her morning bowl of food. She pushed it aside, looked curiously at the Father Superior, then past him to where Godfrey stood in the doorway. Father Ragueneau stopped at the table in surprise. His fingers twitched at his white moustache. He made to speak once, twice. His voice was one of incredulous surprise when words came. “Why, Diana Woodville! You have come to us at last!”

She looked at him in startled confusion.

“I forgot,” the Father Superior smiled and continued in Huron. “You naturally did not understand my tongue and only recognized your name. So you have come back to us, Diana, at last.”

Her words stumbled, as she answered in English. “You are the black robe who tried to buy me.”

“The Father Superior speaks our language slowly,” Godfrey interjected. “Why not use Mohawk.”

“I use English to white people.”

“Let her be, Godfrey,” Father Ragueneau commanded, in French. “She is strange and we will get on as best we may. Where necessary you translate.” He spoke to Diana. “Yes, I tried to rescue you that day long ago by Lake Champlain. Did you know Godfrey, here, when you saw him?”

“I thought of the big water,” she said slowly, “and I was not sure. How did you know me?”

The Father Superior sighed and seated himself at the table. He waved Godfrey to the far end of the bench. He disregarded her question. “And you saved him. That was good of you, Diana. You will not find us ungrateful.”

Her eyes became misty. She stared into the smouldering fireplace. “It was dreadful!” she murmured. “Dreadful! I wished I could have saved the other two.”

“You wanted to save the others?” Father Ragueneau stroked his chin.

“I saw them once. It was awful. They suffered so much.” She put a hand to her eyes.

“They suffered, I know, Diana, but theirs is the greater glory for that suffering.” Father Ragueneau’s voice held a depth of compassion. He stood by

her and put a hand on her shoulder. “Now, do not try to talk: we can talk later.”

“I want to talk.” Her words were muffled. “That big black robe. He was so brave and his eyes, his eyes—”

“Yes, his eyes reminded you of someone?” he prompted gently, as she stopped.

“. . . the last time I saw him . . . so bright . . . so, so . . . fearless.”

“I understand.” Father Ragueneau drew the chair to the corner of the table, close to her. “It was a terrible experience.”

“I did want to save them.” She looked up. Her eyes were dry, as the Father Superior’s eyes had been dry in sorrow. “I was powerless.”

“I know you wanted to save them, or you would not have saved Godfrey, here.”

“The only thing I could do was set him aside for the big sacrifice. I could do nothing for the black robes. The Mohawks hate them.” She hesitated and spoke quickly. “They killed a black robe before. I was outside the palisades and did not know it. It was hateful.”

“They killed many Hurons.” The Father Superior eyed her shrewdly.

“What are Indians to me!” Her voice was hard. “I hate them, all of them. Let them kill themselves, not white people and black robes.”

The Father Superior did not press for an explanation. “You will remember, Diana, you once called the black robes, ‘Fathers’. That is their name.”

“Yes, I remember—Fathers.”

“And you have come back to us,” he mused. “We are happy.”

“You are glad?” She brightened. “I thought you would hate me.”

“No, Diana. We are glad you are with us.”

“I wanted to get away,” she said earnestly. “They wouldn’t let me. I could only talk to the English who came.”

“Now you are away and safe.” He smiled slightly. “As I remember, Diana was the goddess of light.”

“No, the daughter of Agreskoui,” she corrected. “That was what they said.”

“I would have thought one of the chiefs should have married you.”

“Those animals!” There was deep scorn in her voice. “I was sacred. No man dared touch me. I had my own section in the great chief’s house.”

“That is unusual.” Father Ragueneau lowered his eyes to conceal his satisfaction.

“The sachems would have burned anyone by slow fire who dared touch

me. The young warriors knew it."

"And you led them to victory," he said sadly. "I fear the Huron nation is no more."

"Their own fault," she said contemptuously. "They went to sleep."

"Why do the Iroquois hate us so much?"

She looked at him in indecision. "You went to help the Ouendats many moons ago. You killed their warriors and they were afraid of you. Then you came again and were beaten back. They were no longer afraid. They only hated you the more."

"I know." Father Ragueneau nodded. "The first was Champlain's invasion of the Iroquois country with the Hurons and the Algonquins. The Iroquois met them at Lake Champlain and were beaten. That was in 1609. The last was our defeat six years later. Those days are past. All we ask is to live in peace."

"You would build a big nation, here," she answered. "They know it. So they conquered the people on the east and north. Now come the Ouendats and after the other Ouendat people, the—"

"The Neutrals and Petuns, or Tobacco Nation," Godfrey helped her.

"Yes, that is it." She flashed him a glance. "Then the Cat Nation, or the Eries, as you call them, on big Erie water, and then the French."

"A big plan. It will be different when they come to Quebec."

"The Five Nations are different to the Ouendat trash," she returned. "They fight as one warrior. The Dutch sell them muskets to make war on you."

"I know that. We can do nothing." The Father Superior shook his head. "We do not believe in trading muskets."

She looked at him with the same curious candour that Godfrey had found so disconcerting. "You are a lot older. Tired and grey. You have suffered."

"What about Godfrey, here?" Father Ragueneau's fingers twitched his moustache.

"I like him in that blue and silver dress, and the big boots, and the white feather in his hat. It's a nice feather. And I like him, too. He's handsome. So brown, thin and strong."

Godfrey reddened. The Father Superior indulged in another concealed smile. "You have changed, yourself, Diana."

"How did you know me? You never told."

"By your eyes. No one could see those eyes, as I saw them, and forget them."

"The sachems said the sun burned in them."

“That is so. Why was it the sachems kept you, and you so young?”

“The Dutch offered many muskets for me; but the sun was in my eyes.”

“Superstition,” he murmured. “Fortunately, you are now free.”

“I was a prisoner,” she said passionately. “I want to get rid of these!” She touched the wampums with a grimace.

“There will be cloth here for you, directly.”

“And you will take these things? They are good for trade.”

“They are the pearls and diamonds of the forest,” he smiled. “You carry a king’s ransom on you, child. Yes, we will take your wampums gladly. Not your two beaver robes. They are priceless and you will need them.”

“One was mine,” she exclaimed. “The other belonged to the great Atotarho. I have given that to Godfrey.”

Godfrey half rose in surprise. “But, but—”

“Now, I understand the value of the robes.” Father Ragueneau spoke as though Godfrey had not stammered. “By all means give the robe to him, only at the minute I think that you should use both. I will send you some blankets for the night; the beaver skins are too valuable to sleep in.” He stood up. “We must go. As soon as you have made up your dress, Godfrey may take you for a walk. We will see you in a short time.”

“Are you not afraid someone will steal those robes?” Godfrey asked, as they left. “These Hurons are a thieving lot.”

“Not with two sentries on duty and I have no intention of removing them, at present.”

“You do not mean to give up your room to her?” Godfrey was shocked.

“There is nothing else to do. She must be protected.” The Father Superior walked a few feet in silence. “I fear we must dispossess Master Molère. We can provide a new dispensary for him by partitioning off the large porch, at the end of the hospital. I will instruct Master Boivin to arrange for it at once.”

Godfrey repaired to the ramparts. He looked with affection upon the brass cannon, glistening in the sunshine, its mouth threatening the forest approaches. He moved to his post by the twin bastions, as Lay Brother Masson came from the residence with a bundle of cloth under an arm and needle and thread in hand. Godfrey was pleased that blue had been chosen from the scanty stores and not black. Then came Master Builder Boivin and Foreman Carpenter Guiet. Behind them waddled Apothecary Molère, red of the face and fat quivering in ireful ripples. All three went toward the hospital, the Master Builder and Foreman Carpenter in animated conversation; the apothecary in wrathful silence. Godfrey laughed silently. He could imagine the turmoil of

thoughts tumbling in Master Molère's mind at giving up his carefully-planned outwork dispensary.

He looked up quickly. An Indian woman had stopped a sentry at the cabin. She pointed to the sky, barred window and ground. It was the age-old sign language and its threat was clear even to the sentry. She was about to make death magic for the Little Thunder. He waved to the inner landing basin and she trudged away to the camping grounds beyond the outworks.

Godfrey swore under his breath. He thought of Arakoua and her promise to burn Hinonaia. Not yet did she know that the Little Thunder was at the fort. He shook his head at the problem presented by her return. Diana was but one part of it: there was Enons. That astute sub-chief would aspire to Annaotaka's place as supreme war chief. Arakoua would resist him. Godfrey could foresee open war between them. A rupture in the Cord Clan must be avoided whatever the price paid. He smiled sourly at the cold comfort that both antagonists were on the war trail with Tarontas and his Rock warriors, somewhere near St. Louis.

XIX

THE TREES thinned on the St. Ignace trail. Tarontas raised a warning hand and the warriors stopped. Arakoua stole forward, seeking shelter in every clump of underbrush, behind every tree. About her was the churned snow, stamped by fighting feet to a blackish grey and touched with sinister, brownish stains. Dark figures lay in grotesque sprawls, symbols of the dead land into which she had ventured. Step by step she moved to the cluttered carnage at palisade breaches. There short-axe and war club, musket and hunting knife had built a rampart of the slain in an implacable orgy of slaughter. Her eyes shone pridefully as she viewed the horror of those heaped breaches. They had not been thus when the way was hewn for her through the Iroquois horde. The Huron warriors were small in numbers but great of heart in death. She stood up and waved the party forward. "Look, O warriors," the sweep of her arm took in palisades and fields, "this is the way the men of the Cord and the Bear die."

Tarontas grunted his surprise. "A fight of men. They go in honour to the Land of Souls."

Bows ready for arrow notch, short-axes convenient to grasp, the Rock warriors walked over to the battle-field. Enons stood by the choked breaches as one frozen by the carousal of death before him. Arakoua brushed past him, mounted the breastwork of the slain to where the last of the Hurons had made their stand. Each man lay as he fell, gashed by axe and knife, and a circle of Iroquois was strewn about them. She gazed with brooding eyes at the concentrated hate that twisted each face, then called to Tarontas. "There, O Chief, is where I should be, not standing here." She did not so much as glance to where the bound prisoners were pathetically stretched in death.

The men of the Cord grunted admiration. Enons joined them. "A mighty battle. A warrior's death."

She glared at him. "We looked for the enemy where they were."

He stepped toward her with a snarl. Tarontas stopped them. "Enough! We came here for a purpose, not to fight among ourselves." He scowled, then looked at Arakoua, a strange light in his eyes. "Annaotaka is not here."

"The great war chief not here!" She caught her breath. Her voice was shrill. "We must find him. See where he slew his last rabbit of the Long House."

They scattered in search. Thodatouan they saw, lying where Arakoua saw him stumble, yet hunt as they might Annaotaka was not to be found. Arakoua faced them, as they gathered in the centre of the field. A fling of her hand

encompassed clearing and palisades. “O warriors of the Rock, you see how Ouendats die. The great chief, my father, is not with his men. We know not where he is, unless he be wounded and a prisoner. I fought beside these warriors and my axe and arrows were red. They lie there, I stand here. If the great chief is captive I go after him.”

The warriors eyed her in startled silence. She purposed taking the trail to St. Ignace, where the Iroquois horde was concentrated. Tarontas laughed mirthlessly. “Your words come from a brave heart. We will go with you, even though we cannot fight a nation.”

“It is as Tarontas would speak,” she answered. “I do not go to fight a nation. I go to surprise Hinonaia, or a Hodenosaunee chief, to burn as Annaotaka will burn.”

“We go as warriors go.” Tarontas spoke for his men.

“And fast as warriors go.” She turned to Enons. “Not slowly as your words come.” She spat at his feet.

Enons shook, in silent fury. He opened his mouth, jerked his head toward Tarontas and shut his jaw with a click.

They had gone no more than half a league when a sharp hiss brought bows up, arrows to cord. The bushes parted soundlessly and Annaotaka, head bound with healing herbs, shoulders and chest red with wounds, came forward.

Arakoua swayed, axe dropped from hand. Enons jumped backward with a startled yelp. Tarontas alone was unmoved. He raised a hand in ceremonious greeting.

“I come not from the Land of the Shades,” Annaotaka said composedly. “I come from the war camp of the Hodenosaunee.”

“Welcome, O Annaotaka,” Tarontas said. “We feared you had gone to the stake, and we followed the daughter of your spirit, here, to seize a great chief to burn in revenge.”

Annaotaka’s dark eyes lighted as they flashed toward Arakoua. “The Sunbeam pleases me. She fought as a warrior should fight. She slew many men. Had she been a man she would have been a great war chief.” He looked sternly at Enons. “I see that you have returned again.”

Enons swallowed before he ventured a reply. “Tell us of your escape, O Annaotaka.”

Annaotaka studied Enons’ face, searching back of the words for hidden meaning. “It was nothing. Many moons ago I saved a chief of the Hodenosaunee. An axe bit at me, here,” he touched bandage with finger, “and I fell into darkness. I would have been burned only the chief took me, helped me

and let me go. Thus he paid the debt of his life."

Tarontas made no comment. The practice of war chiefs aiding each other was a common one. He listened intently as Annaotaka continued. "The warriors of the Long House are ready to return to their own land and they go with captives. Even now they may have left, for they have no heart for more fighting. They should pass close to Scanonaenrat and there are many men of the One White House. My brother of the Bear, Thodatouan, is watching from the Land of the Shades. We will show him our axes bite as hard as they did when he fought with us."

Arakoua watched Annaotaka. A journey of two leagues, or more, over early spring trails was one to test the endurance of the strongest. Only an iron will could sustain him on such a trip. She feared the cutting edge of his temper did strength fail him. She dare not voice opposition openly. "Teanaosti's mouth will shout with joy at the sight of the great chief, my father."

Annaotaka's face contorted with rage. "Teanaosti is in the Land of the Shades at your bidding, O—"

"Teanaosti lives," she cried. "He is at the big stone fortress."

His fingers clawed, as if to grasp her neck. "You lie, O daughter of a snake. Teanaosti is dead."

"The Sunbeam speaks words of truth," Tarontas confirmed. "These eyes of mine, the eyes of my men, here, saw Teanaosti since the sun has moved a hand's space in the sky."

Annaotaka drew himself to regal stature, raised a hand to the sun. "Oh hear me, Great Light! I am clean in your sight."

He turned eyes of fire to Arakoua. All the dormant venom, all the smothered resentment at her defiance of him surged in his stormy heart. "You will speak all your thoughts. Your tongue will conceal nothing."

Arakoua shrank back. Such an outburst of passion was beyond comprehension. She stood on the trail and told, word for word, all that she knew, or surmised, of Godfrey's capture and escape. "And he brought back a wench he says is a white woman and this white woman, his mouth said, made magic to save his life."

"Your thoughts are the thoughts of an evil oki," he snarled. "If you would live, speak no more of them. Touch one hair of this woman who saved my brother and you die in torment."

Tarontas' eyes were questioning. What drama lay concealed behind the sudden flare he did not know, but drama it was, stark, primitive, deadly. He watched Annaotaka curiously. His lips curled as Enons moved unobtrusively

to the outer edge of the warriors.

Annaotaka stared at Arakoua hard of eye. His shrewd mind saw that which she could not see. “Teanaosti is a great warrior and he has returned with another great warrior,” he said cryptically. He looked broodingly at Enons and Enons stirred uneasily. Annaotaka grunted to Tarontas. “My brother Teanaosti is grieving for me. His heart is heavy. He should know where I go and that my heart rejoices at his escape and cunning.”

The Rock chief instructed a youthful warrior to return to Fort Ste. Marie, then, with Annaotaka, took the southern trail. Although the Cord war chief had fought off the Iroquois from a midday sun to a midnight moon, had been wounded a score of times, taken prisoner and permitted to escape, he showed no sign of fatigue. The trip was one that tapped Arakoua’s reserves of energy. Even Tarontas floundered more than once in the slush and snow-covered dips of the trail. But Annaotaka never so much as faltered in his even stride.

The party crossed the long, shallow lake close to the mission village of St. Denis. Unfortified by palisades, a black splotch spotted the snow where once houses had stood. Annaotaka grunted his rage. Another town had been razed by the invaders. Hatred swelled his heart almost to the bursting. The open sweep of the ice made the going fast. Not until the forest pressed on each side of him did he slacken his pace to that of the trail. He was soon to increase it again. A crossway brought him to the River of the Big Fish. He swept downward, over its even surface, to, Scanonaenrat.

The palisades of the One White House stood on a high bank. Second now to Ossossanë in importance, its defences, more than thirty feet in height, were imposing to the eye. He made for the steep footpath leading to the gates.

Headed by the war chief, Awindoan, the men of the One White House swarmed out to meet the party. With them went Father Simon Le Moyne, who lived there in the mission centre of St. Michel. Awindoan greeted Annaotaka with grave misgivings. He had only heard of the Hodenosaunee incursion, he explained, for although Scanonaenrat lay but two leagues from St. Ignace, its trails had been closed by the wily invaders, and it was not until an old woman sought shelter with them that alarm had been given. She had told the crowning act of implacable ferocity, of how prisoners unable to make the march into captivity were bound to stakes within their houses and left to roast as the bark walls flared in a fierce heat. This last and greatest agony she had escaped. Flames seared her bonds and she rushed through a wall of fire to safety. Would the great war chief’s words tell more?

Annaotaka grimaced. He had been in a small skirmish with the Hodenosaunee. He believed that they were now hurrying to their own country

with captives and booty.

Father Le Moyne, unable to withstand the polite inconsequentialities, burst forth with a direct question. What was the fate of Echon and his brother ondaki?

“My words are bad,” Annaotaka answered impatiently. “The great Echon and his brother went to the stake. A multitude marched to the Land of the Shades.”

The priest’s shoulders drooped. “Alas, I feared such.”

Tarontas raised his voice. “The great war chief, Annaotaka, speaks with but half a tongue. Never was such a battle fought as he fought. Of those warriors who fought with him, only he and his daughter, the Sunbeam, live. The others died and with them died two Hodenosaunee for each one. Listen, O warriors of the One White House, I speak words of valour!”

In the centre of the bare field, with thirty-five score men crowding around, Tarontas shouted his tale of the forest Thermopylae and St. Louis. “So long as tongues will speak, so long as warriors gather about the fire, so long will this greatest of all battles live.”

Annaotaka heard Tarontas impassively. His dark eyes were watching Enons with baleful glitter. The sub-chief gave stare for stare until he could no longer endure their bright penetration. He lost himself in the crowd, drooling with his depth of fury. Arakoua’s laugh completed his discomfiture.

A roar of acclaim went up at the end of Tarontas’ tale. Annaotaka lifted a silencing hand. “O warriors of the One White House, I have few words to say. The Sunbeam beside me wears wampums of victory. Her axe has dripped red with the blood of our enemies, and that blood flowed as white water flows from the spring. We follow the Hodenosaunee. They brought death to us. We will bring death to them. There are many warriors here. They are neither weary nor wounded. This is the hour of a warrior’s rejoicing, for there is red work to be done by short-axe and bow. Many will go to the Land of the Shades. Many will live to boast of great deeds. Are my words good, O warriors?”

There was a howl of joy. Awindoan’s lean, pocked face, sunken of cheek, long of jaw, was pulled to a laugh. “We have short-axes, war clubs and stinging arrows for the Hodenosaunee, O Annaotaka. You, Tarontas and I will lead our warriors. Come, we will hold council of war.”

XX

MARCH 19th was the festival of St. Joseph. In the past, Christian Hurons looked forward to it as a joyful event. A year ago that "Village of Believers", Ossossanë, had moved to Ste. Marie, as a camp on the flats about the fort. Other communicants had been as devout. They came from Huronia's dozen towns to honour the blessed St. Joseph, foster-father of the Child Jesus and patron of the mission; and His Holiness Pope Urban VIII granted spiritual indulgence to all who came to pray at the little Church of St. Joseph on that day.

It was but a short twelve months before that the Father Superior had looked with rejoicing heart upon the bronzed pilgrims and he had been moved to write, in all humbleness of spirit, to the Superior, in far-off Quebec:

> "We are here, in this wilderness, with a truly apostolic zeal, all determined to shed our blood, if need be, for the conversion of the heathen. I may say in truth that this is a House of God and the Gate to Heaven, wherein reign supreme the peace, the joy and the love of the Holy Spirit.
>
> "It is a boon to our Christians, as well. Here the sick find a hospital, the travellers a resting place, and all a refuge in danger from the enemy. During twelve months, more than 3,000 persons have sought shelter under our roof, as many as 700 calling in the course of a fortnight. This means giving them at least three meals a day. I might add a number of uninvited guests, who spend the whole day here, and to them also is assistance given. Therefore, besides dispensing to the Hurons the Bread of Spiritual Life, we feed their bodies, as well.
>
> "Now, lest you imagine we are rolling in wealth, since we are able to dispense so much food to our visitors, it may be well to give you the menu of our hostel—crushed corn boiled in water and seasoned with powdered smoked fish, in lieu of salt and pepper. Such frugal fare goes a long way in feeding crowds. It is our usual fare, as well, and, wonderful to say, we are enjoying better health than we ever did in France. Indeed, nature is satisfied with but little."

The year had passed. Fort Ste. Marie was no longer in the heart of Huronia. Two savage thrusts by the Iroquois had stamped out its frontiers; and the victorious foe had prowled to the open lands and gazed with eyes of

implacable hate upon the stronghold of the Cross itself.

The Father Superior sighed wearily, as he stood above the postern and thought of these things. With sad eyes he looked out upon the dispirited fugitives, Christian and pagan alike. He saw great gaps in the ranks of the pilgrims. The villages of the believers was missing. Their warriors lay about the palisades of St. Louis. Father Ragueneau feared that the entire people of Ossossanë were even then in wild flight to Algonquin lands, far to the west. His eyes were dry with a sorrow beyond the soul to express, as he reconciled the radiant faces that he once knew with the weeping, wailing supplicants he now saw. “The solitude of desolation touches Ste. Marie,” he whispered. The cry that arose from his lips was wrung from the depths of his heart. “It is not the end! The Lord Jesus would never permit such to happen!”

Godfrey withdrew his gaze from the shadows of the forest rim. “I do not know what to answer, mon père. God’s understanding is so vast, so infinite, that it is not for me to speak.”

“An unintended rebuke, Godfrey,” Father Ragueneau said softly. “No, I knew you did not intend it as such, my lad, but it was a rebuke well made. I should not have doubted. If we must leave here, Godfrey, there are other vineyards to cultivate. We may mourn, we do not despair. The blessed St. Joseph has protected us before. His intercession will suffice again.”

“I see a messenger coming. He is travelling fast, sir.” Godfrey pointed to where the bend of the shore turned behind the treeline. “He may bring word from Tarontas.”

“I will go to my new quarters in the outwork,” the Father Superior decided. “Do you meet him, Godfrey, and bring him there.”

Father Ragueneau’s face lightened when the messenger gasped out his story. The Hodenosaunee were in full retreat, with captives and booty, and there was hope of overtaking them. The Rock warriors would join the men of the One White House and pursue. Tarontas would lead them with Annaotaka.

“Annaotaka lives!” a cry of joy came from Godfrey.

The Father Superior started to his feet. “The great chief has been spared to us. Tell me of him.”

“It is as Annaotaka’s mouth said,” the messenger answered with gratification. “His words were, ‘My brother Teanaosti is grieving for me. His heart is heavy. He should know where I go and that my heart rejoices at his escape and cunning.’ ”

Godfrey accepted Annaotaka’s words without comment. Indians were noted for retentive memories and messengers were specially trained to repeat without error long communications. “My heart is a new heart, light with

happiness," he answered. "Do you now tell Aondecheté, here, of the great chief's escape."

"It verges on the miraculous," the Father Superior said at the close of the story "And the Iroquois retreat on the festival of St. Joseph. The blessed saint has not failed us. We must give thanks." He rose to hurry to the church. Godfrey stayed his departure.

"I do not understand Annaotaka's rejoicing at my cunning, mon père," he said in French. "I think he surmises what has happened. Arakoua would undoubtedly speak of the white woman. The chief's brain searches every act, as his eyes search every twig on the trail."

"He must know eventually, in any event," Father Ragueneau said anxiously. "I wonder what stand he will take?"

"I will probe this matter further." Godfrey spoke in Huron to the messenger. "Your ears heard much. What did the great chief's mouth say about me?"

" 'Teanaosti is a great warrior and he has returned with another great warrior.' "

Godfrey smiled and dismissed the messenger. "Annaotaka will stand firmly beside us."

"A curious man," the Father Superior mused. "I should have thought he would resent Diana's presence."

"His values are based entirely upon courage and cunning. He appreciates those qualities in a foe as quickly as a friend. And he is far-sighted. He will see the advantage of our holding the Little Thunder."

"You understand him better than I do." The Father Superior pinched a lip between thumb and forefinger. "I would that he and Arakoua were Christians." He hurried to the church.

It was later that he spoke his mind 'to Godfrey. "With the sunrise we must hasten to St. Ignace and see for ourselves what terrible things have happened there. I will send Father Bonin, with two of your men and four laymen. It may have pleased God to have preserved for us the remains of the two saintly martyrs. I think a party of seven will suffice."

"I shall be ready at cock-crow, mon père."

"Not so, Godfrey. You have had your share of adventures and I need my captain here. Father Bonin and Sergeant Lausier can lead the party. Now that the Iroquois are in retreat, doubtless they will be joined by other fugitives. No, you remain at your post. We know not what the sun will bring forth and your advice will be needful. There is the matter of Diana. What of her?"

“Father Le Mercier sent a Christian maiden with her food, sir. She reported Diana was busy sewing and contented.”

“That is good,” Father Ragueneau said with relief. “You have no thought of reducing the sentries, I hope. I should not do so. There are many bitter hearts here. I must see her soon and give her some instruction. She has forgotten much of her early faith. After Father Bonin leaves, on the morrow, should her frock be finished, do you take her for a walk. She must not be cooped up, a prisoner.”

Shortly after cock-crow, Father Bonin and his little party of Frenchmen were ready to take the St. Ignace trail. Bearded and round of face, with alert eyes, Father Bonin was a newcomer to Huronia the last autumn and he walked with the vigorous stride of youth. Godfrey noted Sergeant Lausier, old to the ways of the forest, frown with disapproval at the quick steps of the priest. Godfrey smiled. He knew that the slush and muck of the trail would soon make those feet feel encased in lead. He turned reluctantly to the outwork. The two sentries before the cabin came to attention. He knocked diffidently upon the door. Diana opened it with a smile. “See my new dress!” she cried. “Don’t you think I’m a skilled seamstress?”

“Splendid, Diana. Most skilfully done.” Caught about the waist by the narrowest of wampums, the simple frock gave a dignity to her carriage that was entirely becoming. Godfrey thought that he had never seen a maiden so attractive; but what he said was, “We must have the cobbler make you a proper pair of shoes. Not those beaded things.”

“Such a man! Here you do not say a kind word about my dress, which I think very well done and quite pretty. Instead, you talk of shoes. I think these moccasins are nice and they don’t hurt my feet. And while I’m complaining, must I stay cooped up here all the time?”

“Oh, no. We’ll have a stroll, now.”

“Let us go, then,” she smiled. “I feel like a prisoner.”

“And I shall try to teach you some French.”

Diana’s dissent was immediate. “I can talk to the black robes in Mohawk. I want to talk to you in English.”

“You mean the Fathers,” he corrected smilingly.

“Another reason why I should take new trails slowly,” she argued. “I get confused. I can learn French any time.”

They walked to the inner basin. For the first time Diana saw the strength of Fort Ste. Marie. She drew a long breath. “What a wonderful place! I see now why the Onondagas and Senecas didn’t want to attack. It could stand against

the fighting men of the whole Five Nations. I think you are capable of anything when you build this, away up here."

"Let us go to the Lookout." Godfrey saw with concern the black looks of the Hurons and their snarling mouths muttering threats. For the present he chose to ignore such demonstrations. He guided her to the steep hill, where the sentinel pine towered toward the skies. "What is that soldier following us for?" she asked. "Are the black—the Fathers—afraid I will vanish with you into the woods?"

He faced her and saw contempt in her eyes. His voice grew hard. "Let us understand each other. You saved me from the stake and hideous torture. I, the Father Superior, everyone in the fort are grateful to you. But there are the Hurons. They believe you led the Iroquois to destroy them. Their husbands, wives, children were killed, burned or marched away in captivity to be tortured at leisure. Their villages have been turned to ashes and places of death. Good God, woman, do you understand that hundreds of people have died and that you are blamed for it!"

"The Hurons aren't warriors," she laughed. "They are women. I don't fear them."

"You are no longer with the Iroquois. You must not identify yourself with them."

"I forgot. I am sorry," she said contritely.

The change of mood was so rapid that he eyed her suspiciously. "Had the Hurons fought back, as I admit they could have and should have, what would you have done? What would have happened to you?"

She wrinkled her brows. That was a new thought. She spoke hesitatingly. "I know what you mean. It would have been awful. Had the Hurons not tortured me to death, then I would have been a slave to a sachem. That might have been worse. I know that two great chiefs wanted me and one of them would have had his way."

She paused for him to speak. When he said nothing, she added, "That was why I determined to escape, even before they killed the first Father, at Teanaostaiaë. But to do so seemed impossible. The only place I wasn't under guard was in the enemy country and there was no place to go."

"The Hurons are a brave people," Godfrey continued. "The reason they were defeated was lack of organization. They are just foolish enough and vindictive enough to get killed trying to kill you; and that's the last thing we want to happen for a number of reasons."

No more was said until the Lookout was reached. "What a glorious place!" she cried. A bull bellowed from the stables. "Cattle!"

“Yes. We have cattle and sheep, and pigs.”

“Marvellous. How did you bring them?”

“As sucklings. Carried them over portages on our shoulders.”

“And built that fort so far away from everything! There’s nothing you people can’t do. Could I see the cattle and pigs, sometime? I haven’t seen anything like that since—” She bit her lip.

“Yes, since?” Godfrey encouraged.

“And you are Teanaosti.” She looked at him from under long lashes. “You look quite, quite—what is the word?—oh, yes, quite handsome and gallant in your soldier’s dress. Why do you not wear a black robe?”

“I am an officer in the army of New France, a captain of the Musketeers. You didn’t finish what you were going to say.”

“It is forgotten,” she said with Indian simplicity. “Tell me what happened to you when the Father took you and your mother away from the Indians that day so long ago.”

She listened, glowing eyes fixed upon his face. “And your poor mother died.” She stared at her long, thin fingers. “She died in bed and you were at her side. And you know where your father lies. Life touched you lightly.”

“Life!” he looked at her quickly. “You mean death struck and passed me by.”

“Men are stupid,” she confided to the crest of Skarontat, spreading high above her. “Even great warriors are stupid, even the great Teanaosti, himself.”

“Tell me about yourself?” he asked in confusion. “How you came to be with the Iroquois.”

“It is enough that I am here, that I was present when you needed me. You said something about getting an estate, will that soldier, over there, get one?”

“No. He is not an officer. He will get a good farm on some seigneury, a better one than settlers would.”

“And you will take a wife and settle down?” She fingered her wampum belt. “Will you like that kind of life?” She looked up at him and there was laughter in her eyes.

“Why not?” He was vaguely uncomfortable.

“No, you will not like it. You couldn’t settle down. And remember what you said to me of the Five Nations—they were not my people.”

“The French are different,” he protested. “The only kindness I have ever known I received from them.”

“They are not your people. Some day you might have to fight against your

own people. You wouldn't like that."

"Nonsense. There is plenty of land for all."

She smiled at him pityingly. "You should have sat by the Five Nations council fires. They knew what you would have done. Build up a great nation of warriors, and conquered an empire for France. So Ouendake had to die."

He stared at her in astonishment.

"I am right," she said earnestly. "The Five Nations hated what you call the Hurons. They would have killed them, anyway, but your people made it necessary to do so, at once."

"They have not done it, yet. We will fight many more battles."

"Your Huronia is dead. I know the Five Nations and I know your Hurons. The only clan the Iroquois feared was the Bear. We heard the Bear warriors die before the palisades of St. Louis, that night from the cave. Huronia died with them. As they would say, 'Ouendake Ehen', Huronia is no more."

The sentry spoke. "The captain's pardon, but there are people approaching."

From the curve of the shoreline a dozen, or more, figures were straggling over the ice. Their dragging feet showed that they had come far. Godfrey jumped from the bench. "I think we had better return. We don't know what bad news they bring."

"You will take me out again, today?"

"The Father Superior will probably want to talk with you, later. If I may, I will take you out."

"Oh, the big, serious man." She pinched her nose.

"He has suffered much. He has had his priests killed and his mission devastated."

"Oh, yes, that brave, big Father, with the fearless eyes." She bit her lip and walked by his side without speaking.

The Hurons gathered in sullen groups as they entered the outwork. Hatred tore at their faces, threats spewed from their mouths. Some spat their insults. She ignored them as completely as if walking alone, looking neither to the right nor to the left. Godfrey could not but admire her nerve and poise. He made a sudden resolution. Annaotaka suspected the truth, why not proclaim it boldly and rely upon Indian love of the dramatic to win their support? He escorted her to the steps of the church and called the refugees to him. They came, muttering evilly.

"O clans of the Ouendats, I speak to you as Teanaosti, but the words are

the words of Aondecheté, the great white father of this stone fortress. You are here with us. You mourn and we mourn. We both suffer from the warriors of the Long House." Godfrey eyed the twentyscore of men and women before him intently. They were listening in hostile silence.

"I was a prisoner of the Hodenosaunee. I, too, would have died with Echon and his brother ondaki, only this brave maiden, here, saved me and escaped with me." He glanced quickly at Diana. She was standing coldly defiant, as one who pitted her strength against the massed enmity of the mob. "You knew her as Hinonaia, the voice of the Little Thunder. You believed her the daughter of Agreskoui. I told you she was not and you said my words were false. My words were true and your words were false. She befriended me at the risk of her own life. She was stolen as a child by the Hodenosaunee."

"That is a lie," Diana said without moving her lips.

"Shut up!" Godfrey snapped and raised his voice in Huron. "She is of the East, as I am of the East, and she was a prisoner, even as I was a prisoner. Together we escaped and together we came here. Her Great Spirit is the Great Spirit of the black robes."

He drew himself to commanding posture and raised a hand. "She has nothing but good in her heart for Ouendake. Behold! when she came to us the warriors of the Long House fled to their own country. They may return. If they do, they know a new force will fight against them. The Little Thunder will help the Ouendats."

Godfrey stopped. His eyes narrowed at the angry grunt which greeted his words. He had not expected acclaim, nor did he anticipate the subdued hostility openly expressed. It was with relieved surprise that he found the Father Superior standing in the church doorway, behind him. Father Ragueneau took in the situation at a glance. "O my brothers," his deep voice rang out, "it is I, Aondecheté, who speaks to you. The words Teanaosti has spoken are good words. Whoever strikes at Hinonaia strikes at me, at us. Are we as children who speak idle words? Have we opened our hearts so wide to evil that we hold hate to one whom the Great Spirit has sent to us to work His will? Let us not make our lot the harder by defying the Great Spirit and His work."

He stopped and stared at them with eyes strong in reproof, eyes that seemed to seek out each one of the men and women before him, and peer to the soul. Where Godfrey's appeal to their emotions had failed, the dominating personality of the Father Superior overpowered, stilled them into awed silence. His voice was as iron when he continued. "Had not the Ouendats been stiff-necked in their defiance to the Great Spirit's own words, this scourge would not have come upon us. It was your own arendiwans who bade you defy the

Great Spirit and you listened to them, evil magicians that they are. You listened and you refused our help. You slept while the Hodenosaunee short-axes dripped red with the blood of your brothers and sisters. The Great Spirit turned His face from you for your sins. Think back to the past and you will know my words do not lie. Hinonaia is under the Great Spirit's protection. Strike at her and you strike at us—and at the Great Spirit."

There was silence, followed by a murmur of approval from many warriors. These were sub-chiefs and fighting men who had urged united action and had heard their words mocked by the fanatical sorcerers. Father Ragueneau frowned. If he had not obtained security for Diana, at least he had attained a measure of success. "We will by no means remove the sentries," he said, as the three walked to the cabin.

The speech of the newcomers was made with words of despair. They told that the five villages of the St. Ignace Mission were destroyed. Ste. Anne and St. Jean were as St. Denis and St. Louis in ashes of oblivion. When they spoke of the martyrdom of Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant, of necklaces made of white-hot axeheads and tortures endured past belief, the Father Superior asked had they been at St. Ignace and seen those things of which they spoke. As they had not, he closed his ears to their talk. "I shall wait until Father Bonin returns," he said. "I must have a clear, circumstantial account and I will hear no rumours, no idle tales. This is a matter of greatest importance to our Order." He dismissed the fugitives to the guest house for food and rest.

Diana received Godfrey with a happy laugh that afternoon. "I'm so glad you came!" she cried. "Must I stay here in this cabin? The day is fine."

"It's a very comfortable place," he observed.

"Yes, better than anything I had with your Iroquois."

"Why *my* Iroquois?"

"You won't let them be mine, so I gave them to you."

"Thank you," he returned, dryly. "Once I gave myself to them, only you took me away. But the Father Superior wishes to speak to you. We will go to the Lookout."

"I like the Lookout and the Father Superior. Will you come?"

"Yes. And the sentry."

"Always the sentry." She wriggled her nose at him.

Godfrey looked at her angrily. "What did you mean by saying I lied, when I was trying to save your life?"

"What you said was not true. The Mohawks did not steal me."

"How did I know that? You never told me. You threatened to ruin

everything."

"They couldn't understand English. And, anyway, you were very rude to me. You were quite mad." She giggled. "You were much better mad. More, more important than you were before."

"It was a very foolish thing to do. Now, you can tell me just how they did get you."

She shook her head. "Not even the Guardian of the River can speak with two tongues. You said what you said. Let it be."

"You refuse to tell me?"

She glanced at him sidewise. There was pain in her eyes. "Some day I may tell, not just now. Anyhow, the Hurons are fools."

"Only they don't know it," he answered shortly. "Come. Father Ragueneau is waiting."

From the flatlands they could see him sitting on the bench, beneath the sentinel pine. "How did the hill come to be cleared?" she asked.

"It was before my time. I heard, that when the fort was built many logs were needed, so they took them from the hill. Big trees grew there. See, some stumps are not yet removed."

"A terrible lot of work. If you had only the Five Nations instead of the Hurons, things would be different. Tell me, why do you call the Five Nations, Iroquois, and the Ouendats, Hurons?"

Godfrey laughed. "Champlain's sailors named the Hurons. When they saw the ridge of stiff hair sticking up from the plucked scalps, as so many of the warriors wear their hair, they thought they looked like bristles of a boar's head. So they exclaimed, in French, *Quelle hure*! 'What boar heads!' "

"Boar heads!" she laughed. "A very good name. And *Iroquois*?"

"A descriptive compound word," he explained shortly. "*Hirokoué*, from the usual end of Iroquois harangues, 'I have spoken' and their shrill war cry, *Koué*."

"I think it silly," she said. "The people of the One Land Apart and the people of the Long House are much better."

"Perhaps," he returned disinterestedly, "our way is shorter."

Diana inclined her head to Father Ragueneau with true Indian courtesy. "You treat me as a great chief." He forced a smile. "You must look on me as your friend, not as the chief of this fort. You were our friend, you know, when you saved my captain, here. I have received bad word. The five villages of the St. Ignace Mission have been burned."

“I knew that, Father. It was all planned.”

“The Iroquois plan their attacks carefully, then?”

“They plan out every campaign. They even closed the road to Scanonaenrat, so no alarm could be given. They were going to attack it after they had taken the fort, only they did not take the fort.”

“And Annaotaka interfered with their plans,” Godfrey added.

Father Ragueneau shook his head. “I fear the damage they did is irreparable. Now, my child, let us forget such dreadful things for the time and speak of the more serious matters.”

Godfrey moved to the southern side of the Lookout, where he could command the road to the south. Diana’s spiritual welfare was under the Father Superior’s capable direction. An hour later he saw a large party approach on the river ice. Two groups of four men, each, trudged slowly in front, carrying litters, and beside them walked a black-robed figure. Godfrey turned to the Father Superior. “Your pardon, mon père, a sad homecoming approaches. I think you would want to receive them.”

Father Ragueneau stood and shaded his eyes against the glare of the sun. “They have found them, as I had hoped they would. Do you escort Diana to the cabin, then meet me at the postern.”

“Shall I mount the guard, sir?”

Father Ragueneau sighed. His voice was gentle. “A sad homecoming, as you said, Godfrey, yet not without its joy. No, do not mount the guard. We will receive the blessed martyrs in all humility and thankfulness, as they would have desired. There was no pomp and ceremony when the Lord Jesus was brought to the sepulchre; and they would not desire anything greater than He.”

XXI

HUMBLE in life, seeking only to serve and to be of service, so the martyred priests returned to Fort Ste. Marie, humble in death, their funeral trappings a bark litter and a blanket, to cover their seared flesh and shattered bones. Their work was done; their crown of martyrdom attained. To Godfrey, standing at attention, as the solemn procession of priests, laymen and soldiers passed through the postern gates, it was as though he had entered a world of illusion. It was unreal that he should stand thus and see in those pathetic bundles all that remained of Gabriel Lalemant, weak of body but with a tranquility of spirit that had made him a man of sublime courage, and Jean de Brébeuf, the rugged, fearless soldier of the Cross, who but a few days before had strode through those same gates in the full vigour of manhood and usefulness of service.

The bell of St. Joseph's tolled. The Father Superior flinched as if struck by its clapper. A sorrow that was beyond the mind to accept gave infinite depth to his eyes, a pain that was not without its exaltation of soul. His great understanding had given to him a profundity that saw at once the past, with its dark canvas of savagery, stupefying in unleashed passion, and the future that was to take the pitch of the pigments and transform its blackness into the enduring splendour of pure gold: for, out of the smoke and smudge of those two fires at the St. Ignace torture stake would come in refulgent glory a New Calvary to a New World. The Cross would be a stake and the Crown of Thorns a collar of white-hot axeheads, a martyrdom worthy of those who would follow footsteps which had left their imprint imperishably upon the heart and mind of mankind.

All these things the Father Superior knew with that depth of intuition which is given to men sparingly and then only to those of the truly great in spirit. Slowly he walked at the head of the little party, thoughts divided between the sombre past and the lucent future, and behind him, two by two, walked Fathers Le Mercier and Chastelain, Fathers Bonin and Bressani. Godfrey saw that Father Bressani's scars showed white and ridged, as if he were living over again those interminable hours he had spent at a similar torture stake; but the crown of martyrdom had been snatched from him. Then, the doors of the House of Ste. Marie closed. The melancholy homecoming was over.

Godfrey crossed the courtyard to the outwork entrance. Within its triangle of palisades he could see the newly-arrived Indians, men and women, fresh of scars from firebrand and knife. Escaped prisoners of the Iroquois they were

and he watched Lay Brother Noirclair escort them to the hospital. A thin voice aroused him. Apothecary Molère was puffing his way to the dispensary. “Terrible! terrible!” A groan fluted from his puckered lips. “Christophe Regnaut is now examining the bodies. The Father Superior has given orders for the witnesses to be kept in the hospital until their wounds are dressed and depositions taken. I must go and prepare some ointments at once.”

“I am afraid I did you an ill turn in the matter of Diana and the Father Superior taking your old room.”

“Not at all, Captain,” he wheezed. “You did me a good turn, after all. The new place is fixed up much better than the old one.”

“If you had not lost your old place, there would have been three bodies brought back, not two,” Godfrey added. “I gained a life.”

“Terrible! terrible!” Master Molère repeated, and grasped his rolling sides. “I was glad to give up my room to that white girl. We saved an innocent soul from perdition. I must hurry! My ointments will be needed.”

Father Le Mercier, then Father Chastelain repaired to the hospital, writing materials in hand, and that night light burned far into the morning hours in the Father Superior’s room, as he sat alone, quill in fingers, penning a report of unparalleled martyrdom. The feeble light threw strange shadows about the room, shadows that moved with the flickering flame and took the form of mantles fallen from shoulders that would need them no more. They accentuated the deep lines of compassion drawn upon Father Ragueneau’s face. At times he let fall the quill, as if nerveless fingers refused to pen more, and eyes would seek new courage and new consolation from the crucifix on the rough wall above the table.

The hours passed. The quill squeaked on, setting down bold, uneven letters, indicative of the iron will which refused to bend under misfortune’s stroke. The writing was disjointed, as the stories of the witnesses were disjointed. Pieced together, they made a catalogue of horrors such as only could be conceived by minds festering in the poison of their hate. Although the night was cold Father Ragueneau’s forehead was beaded with sweat. He laid aside his pen and sat back to look at what he had written:

> “On the 16th of March, as soon as the Iroquois could give attention to the prisoners, after the capture of St. Louis, they stripped them naked, tore off some of their finger nails, and marched them to St. Ignace. There the prisoners were received with a storm of blows, inflicted with clubs upon every part of their bodies. In spite of this terrible beating, Father Brébeuf, forgetful of himself, gave all his attention to the scores of victims he found there.

“ ‘My children,’ he said to them, ‘in the midst of our torments let us raise our eyes to Heaven. Remember that God is a witness of our sufferings, ready to give us a reward greater than we imagine. Let us keep our faith and await the fulfilment of His promises. I have more pity on you than on myself. Stand courageous to the last. Our sufferings will end with our life, and then will begin the bliss that will last forever.’

“Thereupon, some apostate Hurons, former captives of the Iroquois and now traitors to their race and intense haters of the Christian faith, took the two missionaries in hand and became their torturers. They fastened each of them to a post, set firmly in the ground. They cut off the hands of one of them. They pricked the other’s body with sharp awls and iron points. They burned their armpits and their loins with red-hot axes. They made collars of these glowing axe-heads and set them around their necks. They encircled their waists with bark belts filled with pitch, set fire to them and scorched their whole upper bodies. While their flesh was thus roasting with an acrid smell, Father Lalemant, overcome by the intensity of the pain, was often seen raising his eyes to heaven and heaving sighs of prayer for help in his great agony. Father Brébeuf remained as immovable as a rock. He even found strength to exhort his torturers to repentance and encouraged his Christian witnesses to persevere until the end.

“Exasperated by Father Brébeuf’s zeal, the renegades endeavoured to silence him by cutting off his lips and nose, but his tongue continued to exhort all within hearing. They had often heard the instructions of the missionaries and were well informed about the Christian doctrine and its practices. They now made this knowledge serve their wickedness. They heated water to the boiling and jeeringly poured it over the bruised bodies of their victims at three different times.

“ ‘We baptize you,’ they cried, ‘that you may be happy in your heaven, for without a good baptism you could not be saved.’ Others added derisively, ‘We are your best friends. You should thank us for helping you to deserve happiness after your death.’

“But this was not the end. Their limbs were lacerated with knives. Hot axes were thrust into their wounds. Pieces of flesh were cut off from their arms and legs, and roasted and eaten before their eyes. Father Brébeuf had his scalp torn away, his feet cut off and his jaw split by a blow of an axe. Father Lalemant had his head split

open and eyes gouged out. Both had their tongues burnt with glowing coals and flaming pitch, so that they should cease preaching the word of God and cease praising His Holy Name. Finally, through an opening in their breasts, the fiends tore out their hearts from their bodies, drank the blood dripping from them in the hope of inheriting the admirable courage of their heroic victims."

"No connected story can be given of their martyrdom. Only a list of their torments can be inscribed. Nor did they suffer both at the same time. Father Brébeuf's ordeal lasted for about three hours, until late in the afternoon, when he breathed his last. Father Lalemant was tortured for fifteen hours, from early evening until the next morning."

Father Ragueneau sighed and sat back. His eyes closed, as if to shut out the words of horror which he had penned. Yet they were authenticated words, not one unsubstantiated by fact in them. That poor, blackened frame, which once held the courageous spirit of Jean de Brébeuf, lay in an adjoining room, where in a happier hour he used to meditate and pray. With it were the mangled remains of Gabriel Lalemant.

As one grown old before his years, Father Ragueneau raised himself to his feet. Unseeing of eye, he groped his way to the little Church of St. Joseph. There, within its quiet sanctity, he would renew his strength in communion with that Divine Will which ruled the universe. With a sigh that was of thankfulness and supplication he sank upon his knees. In the east the skies grew golden with the promise of a new day.

That morning two rough boxes stood beside freshly-dug graves in the courtyard. The Father Superior stood, head bowed, following with his eyes the pine boxes slowly sinking from sight. They were precious boxes, for they contained that which he had loved. His thoughts turned back to a scant eight months ago. The dust that was Father Daniel mixed now with the earth of the forest. Only the spirit remained and that spirit, he knew, was as close to him as were the spirits of the two courageous missionaries whose remains were being given to the soil which they had so often trod.

It was merely an invisible step to cross the borders of one world to another. The Father Superior's eyes glowed. Lines of sorrow and care were wiped away as though by unseen fingers. Never had the three priests been nearer to him than at that moment. Not even that afternoon when Father Daniel had sat in spirit at the conference table in the great hall had he been so close. Father Ragueneau's face took on a new illumination of the soul. He lifted his eyes to the pure light of the sun and the infinite depth of the cloudless sky.

That afternoon Foreman Carpenter Guiet erected crosses over the fresh earth of the two graves. A simple inscription was painted on each, varying only in name and date:

Master Builder Boivin removed his cap and read in a low, husky voice:

The Father Superior sat in his residence cabinet grieving. Another smashing blow had been struck the Huron Mission. The great Bear Clan stronghold of Ossossanë was abandoned and burned. He raised his eyes as Godfrey entered.

"You sent for me, mon père?"

"Yes, Godfrey." Father Ragueneau touched some sheets of bark on the table. "Here is a communication from Father Chaumonot. He writes that when the extent of the Iroquois inroad and the death of the warriors at St. Louis became known, the clan was seized with a wild panic. Some fled to the Petuns, the majority to Ahouêndoë, a distance of more than three leagues. Father Chaumonot has wisely gone with them to the island."

"Ahouêndoë, the Island of the Lake," Godfrey said slowly. "The Hurons may be safe there. But those who went to the Tobacco people!" He shrugged.

"You believe the Petuns will shortly be attacked. Fathers Garnier and Chabanel are among those with the Mission of the Apostles."

"Had Thodatouan only lived this break-up of Ossossanë would never have __"

"We must labour with such tools as it pleases God to give us, not criticize. Had we been given another decade to complete our work; but, alas, it was not to be."

"Your pardon, mon père. I did not mean to—'

"No censure was implied, Godfrey. It was the soldier's mind that spoke." He fingered his moustache. "It has occurred to me that in our troubles we have overlooked Diana. The child must not feel a prisoner. Do you take a sentry and walk with her to the Lookout."

"Very good, mon père." Godfrey left filled with admiration for the bigness of a man, who, amid the wreckage of his life's work, could stop to remember a mere detail such as an outing.

At the outwork he came to a startled stop. Arakoua, in all her vanity of wampums, stood before him. "When did you arrive?"

"The Little Thunder is here!" Her voice was shrill.

"That is old talk. She was here when you left. Where is the great chief, your father?"

“I would speak with this Hinonaia!” She stamped her foot.

“You will speak with me first,” he snapped. “How is it you came back with clean axe-heads?”

Her eyes blazed at the taunt. “The One White House are rabbits! For two suns they searched for the enemy where they were not. They made fools of the great chief, my father, and of me. Where is this witch?”

Godfrey watched her sharply. Not a twitch of the mouth, the clutch of fingers at belted axe-haft missed him. A meeting between the two was inevitable. He would force the issue. “You want to meet her! Very well. Go to the foot of the Lookout hill. I will bring her there.”

She glared at him, then sped across the fields.

Diana opened the door. Her face was drawn. “So the two brave Fathers were brought back, as you said. It is dreadful. My heart chokes me.”

“And the Hurons are dispersing. The work of years is undone.”

“I feel so sorry for poor Father Ragueneau.” She looked at him with a touch of defiance. “The Hurons never were anything. I am not sorry for them.”

“It is beyond what you think, what I think. And there is another matter. Arakoua, daughter of Annaotaka, has returned. She fought with her father, at St. Louis.”

“Father Ragueneau told me about that fight. She hates me.”

Godfrey smiled at the Father Superior’s precautions. “I think there will be another war.”

“It is good!” Diana’s eyes flashed. “Where do I meet her?”

“By the Lookout hill. There’ll be no crowd there.”

“I will meet her any place. I do not fear her.”

“I am thinking of the peace of the fort.”

“I forgot. I’m sorry.” Her smile was a pretence.

Godfrey saw Louis on sentry duty. He spoke to him in French. “You will accompany us. It is the Father’s orders that you will speak to no one of what you may see or hear. Not even in your sleep!”

Louis walked behind in bewilderment of the strange command. He saw Arakoua and understood. His smile was one of joy.

Arakoua greeted Diana with a sneer. “So the great voice of the Little Thunder must rumble from behind two ouimchtigouches!”

Diana’s eyes glowed so red that Arakoua drew back. She saw a ferocity in their depths that could be translated only in terms of death. Diana laughed icily. “The Ouendat crow tries to dress as Hinonaia, but she can only caw.”

Arakoua jumped in rage. “You a warrior!” she screeched. “You hid behind the chiefs. I fought. I killed scores of your fighters. I will burn you!”

“You killed prisoners with their hands tied.” Godfrey gaped at the accuracy and completeness of Diana’s knowledge. She opened her arms, as an Iroquois expressing contempt. “When I came the Ouendats ran as rabbits run.”

“You came here to be safe, O coward. You will die the death of many torments. I will—”

“You will talk with another tongue, if you stay here,” Godfrey said sternly. “And you will think other thoughts.”

“There is a crow in her throat,” Diana looked at her witheringly. “Let it caw.”

“And you would turn the Sunbeam away for that . . . that—” Arakoua stuttered.

“Pay no attention to the fool,” Diana eyed Arakoua in cold contempt. “You wanted him, didn’t you, O Sunbeam without light, and the evil crow in you sent him to his death. I, I the Daughter of Agreskoui, saved him from the stake and brought him back to his people. What are you for anyone to turn away? Pah! I spit upon you.”

Arakoua leaped back, hand to cheek, snarling. “You, you who slept by the Hodenosaunee! Even the dogs bit at you. Now you want white flesh. I will burn you!”

Godfrey opened his lips to interrupt and closed them again. A deadly insult had been given by Diana. He looked at her with amusement not untouched by apprehension.

Again her eyes flamed with such an intensity of fire that Arakoua caught her breath. Diana drew herself up proudly. “I was the Daughter of Agreskoui. I was set apart from all men. Now, listen to me, O strumpet, and I will give you wisdom. I will tell you why your people were turned out by the Hodenosaunee, driven into exile. Why the war began.”

“You call me a strumpet!” Arakoua’s voice quavered, fingers closed about axe-haft. “You a woman of many—”

“Peace!” Godfrey growled. He toyed with the point of his hunting knife. Arakoua subsided. Never before had she heard that depth of menace in his voice.

“I know you. I know your kind. It was a harlot such as you who destroyed your people of the One Land Apart. Now, O Sunbeam with the heart of a crow, you shall hear the tale.”

Arakoua fidgeted under the double-barbed insult. Curiosity damned a flood

of vituperation. Diana smiled derisively. “The Sunbeam would shine on death. Very well. So be it. The Ouendats and the Hodenosaunee were all of the same family and the Ouendats lived on an island in the big river. Close to them, even where they live now, was the Ganeagaono.”

Diana stopped as Godfrey grunted his surprise. Ganeagaono was the Mohawk name for their nation. He looked up abashed. “My tongue slipped. You were speaking.”

“It is nothing.” Diana did not remove her eyes from Arakoua. “There was a daughter of a great Ouendat chief, even as you are the daughter of a great Ouendat chief, and she wanted a chief of the Ganeagaono. But he knew her evil ways and he spurned her advances. This daughter had an evil heart, and listen well to what I now say, O strumpet, for she bewitched her own people and they were made foolish. They made war and war axes were red. The Ouendats were many, the Ganeagaono few, and the chief she coveted was captured.”

Diana drew a long breath. Arakoua took a step nearer. “You call me a strumpet again and I will kill you. Here, now!”

“Be silent, O strumpet, I am speaking.”

Godfrey weighed his hunting knife in his hand, as Diana spoke. Arakoua stepped back, a cry of rage strangling in her throat.

“The Great Sun Spirit had given the Ouendats a place to smoke the pipe of peace,” Diana continued in the same cold, even voice. “The captured chief would not be burned. He would be adopted into the nation and given to the woman who wanted him. The woman was away and her father took the prisoner for her. The Ganeagaono chief agreed. It was his price of life, an accepted price among the Hodenosaunee.

“A great feast was prepared to adopt him and the woman returned. But her heart was filled with evil. She turned on the man she had wanted and ordered him to the stake. Her people begged her to be of another mind. They brought the wampums of the nation and laid them before her. They were hers if she would take the man. For they knew that the death of their nation would follow the death of this Ganeagaono chief. They told her that the other four nations of the Hodenosaunee would join in destroying them, yet her heart would not change. It was her right to burn this man and burn him she did. Now, look at your nation, today. And you, O strumpet that call yourself a Sunbeam, you are that woman living today.”

“You lie, O woman of many men, you lie! You have bewitched my man from me. I will—”

“Of what man do you speak, O liar,” Godfrey growled, face crimson as

fresh blood. “I have been no man of yours.”

“She speaks with a tongue of a snake.” Diana laughed mockingly. “Her heart is as stinking as a wolf dead a moon. Away, O snake of death!”

Arakoua jumped. Her face was a livid mask of fury, fingers snatched at the short-axe. “You speak your last—”

Godfrey moved with a spring of a lynx. He faced her, knife to the throw. His eyes were as threatening as the steel he held. “Begone, fool!”

Short-axe in hand, she stared defiantly, saw his wrist flip upward and, with gasping scream, fled.

Diana’s eyes rounded. “You would have knifed her!”

“Certainly I would have. She was set to kill you.” There was surprise in his voice.

“You are a strange man.” Diana looked at him as if her ears heard false. “She knew you would have knifed her. I do not know you.”

“She is a fool,” he said gruffly. “Now, tell me, was there any truth in that story?”

“Every word of it was true. I had it from the Keeper of the Wampums.”

“That explains many things,” he said thoughtfully. They walked to the Lookout before he spoke. “You had a long talk with Father Ragueneau.”

She smiled, as she sat on the bench. “He is lovely, so gentle and thoughtful. Tell me, would you really have thrown that knife?”

“Why not!” he answered grimly. “Do you remember that chief who was shot beside you, at St. Louis?”

“You mean Scanastan of the Senecas. Yes.”

“I shot him. If he hadn’t stepped in front of you when he did, neither of us would be here, now.”

“I knew you shot him.” Her eyes widened. “Did you mean that ball for me?”

“I did—for you.” Godfrey nodded slowly. “It was the only shot I fired during the whole fight. I meant to kill you, if I had to wait until the last second. And I did. They were on us before you got close enough.”

“The white killer’s mind,” she murmured.

“I considered it necessary, then, that you should die. With you out of the way Huronia might have been saved. With you alive it was impossible. Had I been given only a few minutes more!” He stopped.

“I understand what you say. But I don’t understand you.” She looked at him curiously.

“In what way?” He looked toward the fort. Down by the river bank he could distinguish Arakoua by her wampums. She was sitting hunched, brooding.

“You are so, so—what shall I say?—so unmoving. You know what I mean. So hard of temper to do what you will. Just like a piece of steel—as deadly.”

“Not so,” he smiled. “I do what I conceive to be my duty.”

She stared at the new shoes on her feet. “These things hurt.”

“You will get used to them,” he assured her cheerfully. “Anyhow, I didn’t know you when I waited that time, at St. Louis.”

“It would have made no difference. I like you the more for it. I am sorry your Hurons are running away. I knew from the first they would do so. They have no idea of fighting together. Arakoua is no different from that other woman. Only the years change, not the Hurons.”

“What would the Iroquois have done in a similar case?”

“They would have called a council, declared the woman a witch and killed her,” Diana explained. “But, then, the woman would not have dared to go against the common good. That would have been bred into her.”

Godfrey sought out the Father Superior without delay and his story omitted nothing. When he spoke of the knife episode, Father Ragueneau’s fingers found it necessary to twist the short-clipped moustache. “I think you did right in having the two meet at once.” He frowned. “This situation cannot be permitted to continue. I will see Annaotaka. Ordinarily, I would be loath to interfere in a domestic affair, such as the conduct of his daughter. However that may be, this is no time to hesitate. Do you ask him to come and see me.”

Annaotaka came promptly. He greeted the Father Superior with that courteous deference which men use who meet upon a common ground of admiration and respect. “My heart is glad to see you, O great chief,” Father Ragueneau smiled. “Much was spoken in praise of your brave fight. Then came silence and our hearts were heavy. When we knew that you had escaped, gladness came to us again.”

“I am here with bad words, O Aondecheté, for they are words of failure.”

“Not failure of your own making, O Annaotaka. I have heard the words and they are good words of you, and of Thodatouan, who, alas, is no more.”

“Thodatouan was my brother, as you and Teanaosti are my brothers.” Father Ragueneau inclined his head at the compliment. Annaotaka nodded. “Tarontas and the men of the Rock would have gone with us. So would Awindoan, but his men of the One White House would not go. Their feet froze to the war trail. Their hearts were as cold as the heart of Enons.”

“Enons not with you?” The Father Superior concealed his surprise.

The chief’s eyes glittered. “Atondo was a fool and he is dead. Enons is a fool and he ran away. His feet have taken him to the people of the Blue Hills.”

“To the Petuns?” Father Ragueneau corrected himself in the Huron. “The Tinnontate. There are many evil hearts among them.”

Annaotaka smiled grimly. “Enons feared the journey to the Land of the Shades. He cried to Ouane to save him.”

“Father Moyne baptized him!” The Father Superior exclaimed. He glanced sharply at Annaotaka. “Enons was convinced that he would die.”

The chief shrugged. “He had no mind to fight, only to steal and hunt. The Tinnontate may show him the way to the Land of the Shades.”

“And Tarontas?” Father Ragueneau did not pursue speculations as to Enons’ ultimate end.

“The chief went to his place Beyond the Rapids, with his men. He would not come here. He had no victory to bring.”

“There was no sight of the enemy, then, O Annaotaka.”

“Of the Hodenosaunee nothing, of what they did, everything.” The chief’s mouth formed a soundless snarl. “My eyes saw where the Hodenosaunee had tied prisoners to trees, when they could go no further, and burned and roasted them by the slow fire. My eyes saw the village where Echon was done to death, the ashes of its houses and within those ashes stakes where the old, the young and the sick had been tied to roast and burn, even as their houses burned. Many captives done to death I saw, but of the Hodenosaunee not the head of an arrow.”

Annaotaka stood up from the bench and drew himself to full stature. “The Hodenosaunee went fast. We went slow. Not even I, Annaotaka, great war chief of the Cord Clan, could take command of the men of the One White House, people of the Cord as they are, without their consent. And that consent they would not give.”

The Father Superior had sat before the table, head resting on hand, as Annaotaka spoke of the Iroquois atrocities. He looked up. “It is a matter of much sorrow to me, O chief, that the Ouendats are not organized as are the Hodenosaunee. Every clan would have followed you.”

“Your words are true, O Aondecheté. I would have spoken and my commands been obeyed. We are different. We are scattered in word and act, as leaves are scattered by the winds.”

“It was ever thus,” Father Ragueneau answered sadly, “even in the beginning of the strife between your people and the people of the Long

House.”

“My ears have not heard that story, O Aondecheté.” Annaotaka’s eyes asked the question which his lips were forbidden to form.

“I had it from Hinonaia.” The Father Superior smiled faintly. “She is nothing but a white girl whom the Hodenosaunee secured as a child. They lied about her being the daughter of Agreskoui. She saved Teanaosti from the torture stake and escaped with him. Her heart was glad to come to us.”

“It was good magic the sachems made with the Little Thunder.” Annaotaka’s face brightened at the thought of the Iroquois strategy, as though it had not been used to destroy his nation; then it grew dark. “The same magic was made by Teanaosti, and Arakoua turned her head. Our villages might have been saved. Many people would not have cried aloud in agony. Our hearts are brave and our minds are foolish, even as my tongue is foolish clacking when you would speak of something my ears would hear.”

The Father Superior talked with an eloquence and a circumlocution which he seldom affected.

The chief listened intently. His shrewd mind saw the analogy which Father Ragueneau refused to draw. At the end he grunted. “As it was in the past, so it is today, O Aondecheté. A woman!”

“My heart pains me to admit it, O Annaotaka. Your words are true. A perverse woman would make war here, in our House of Ste. Marie—over another woman.”

“My mind is as the sun at midday,” the chief said gravely. “A woman is as a dog that bites back. She needs the club. In my aonchia, I could only say, ‘O Sunbeam, I would not do this.’ As the wicked woman your tongue spoke of, she would do as her evil heart dictated. Here the Sunbeam is not in her village. She is making the heart of my brother heavy. I can say, ‘O Sunbeam, I may not stop you from ruining our people as another bewitched woman once did *but* I can stop you ruining the place of my good brother, Aondecheté.’ All this is as done, O Aondecheté, and with a glad heart.”

Annaotaka left with many expressions of good will. Father Ragueneau observed that he struck at the palm of his hand with axe haft, as if it were a cudgel.

XXII

THE YEAR 1649 was the year of the early spring. Warm winds blew up from the south and snow-fed freshets made white water on rivers and lakes. The drab, dead-brown of fields and meadows were brightened by the virginal haze of awakening earth life. Buds bursting threw a cheery mist over forest and wooded shores, and migrating, feathered songsters livened the air with their fluid notes. Even the furtive folk of forest and field forgot caution in their joy of the new world about them. The days of iron cold and nights of frozen stillness had gone. With the moon of big waters had come those magical hours when life took on new moods and new meanings.

These days, which should have been so bright and full of promise in summer work to be planned, were dark days at Fort Ste. Marie. Each week, almost each hour, brought distressing messages to the Father Superior. Tarontas came, expressionless of face, and spoke words of despair. His few people of the Rock lived alone in a solitude. The Bear Clan had fled. He threw arms wide in a hopeless gesture. Ouendake was empty to the west. Awindoan came, mouth pulled with the bitter juice of his fighting men's cowardice. The fires of the One White House were cold. The fortyscore warriors were scattered with women and children. Panic had given them fleetness of the deer. To the south the land was without people. Whichever way he looked, to the north, the south, the east or the west, the Father Superior found Huronia empty. It was with a heart torn with pain that he penned:

> "The Huron country now lies desolate. Villages have been abandoned, their inhabitants dispersing, going where they could, in the thickets and forests, on the lakes and rivers, in the islands, the most unknown to the enemy. Others have taken themselves to the neighbouring nations better able to bear the stress of war. Our House of Ste. Marie has found itself stripped bare on every side. Those who have forsaken their former dwellings have set fire to them, themselves, lest they should serve as a shelter and stronghold to the Iroquois."

Fort St. Marie stood alone amid the wreckage of the once-great empire. The Ouendake of the Hurons had become, as Diana had said, *Ouendake Ehen*, the Huronia that was. Ever more it was spoken of as such.

Great empires may perish quickly but memory of greatness lives on in the hearts of their people. So it was with the Hurons in their misery. Those who

mistrusted a possible safety to be found in flight crept back to Fort Ste. Marie, the one solid fact in their world of insecurity. They besought Aondecheté to hear their words and he listened.

No longer were they stiff-necked in their heathenism and high-bellied to scorn. The words of wisdom that had fallen upon deaf ears when they were of use, they now begged when useless. The saving hand which they had spurned when strong to help them, they now sought when weak. Yet words could advise and the hand could be of help. Father Ragueneau was of one mind with them in that the Mission to the Hurons must not perish. The residence of Ste. Marie should be moved to a remote district, where nature would combine with stone walls and provide defences for both missionaries and fugitives. Under such conditions Huronia might be revived and, in time, regain something of its former strength and prosperity.

The decision to abandon Fort Ste. Marie was not made without that poignant grief which comes to those whose hopes are dashed to the ground when fulfilment seemed certain. Yet to renounce the Hurons in their hour of extremity was unthinkable. No other course was left than that of trying to rebuild to best advantage upon the ruins of the old.

The Father Superior sent forth missionaries to minister to the scattered bands of fugitives wherever they might be found—among the 30,000 islands, in the forest, or on secluded shores and points of Nottawasaga Bay. All Hurons who remained in the open lands were largely encamped about the stone walls of the fort, 1,500 men, women and children who knew not whither to go.

Father Ragueneau's kindly face had aged during these troubled days. Weary lines had been drawn where no lines had shown before. But his eyes were as alert, his heart as undaunted as ever, and there was purposeful determination in the set of his figure and the stride of his walk.

Nor was the future without hope. There was that morning when a messenger came from Father Chaumonot. He reported the Mission of St. Joseph as firmly established on Ahouêndoë. More than 300 families had come to the island, the missionary wrote, and he was hopeful of gathering the remnants of the Bear Clan about him at this new citadel of the believers. All was not lost. A new sanctuary might be found among the islands in Huron's waters. The council debated the move with a new confidence. Two voices, invaluable for their words of wisdom and guidance, would speak no more. The Father Superior, from the centre of the table, missed sorely the counsel of Fathers Brébeuf and Daniel. He had conferred at length with Godfrey and received small consolation.

"I am sorry, mon père," Godfrey said, "I see little hope for the future. The

Hurons, even the Neutrals and Tobacco people, are incapable of united effort. They have learned nothing. And the Iroquois will soon return."

"I admit their communistic form of government is futile, that there is no central power to enforce obedience." Father Ragueneau sighed. "That does not preclude realization of their position, that only in a common effort lies salvation."

"Assume we did move to one of the islands. We could go to Father Rivière's Algonquin Mission of St. Pierre, on the Grand Manitoulin, or join Father Chaumonot, on Ahouêndoë. Water freezes and ice joins the mainland in winter."

"You believe the Iroquois would attack us in the winter?"

"I believe they will hunt out the Hurons wherever they go. I also believe we will be attacked here, if we do not move quickly. With the Hurons scattered they can bring their full force against us." Godfrey drew a deep breath. "If we remain here much longer, I think they will come against us at once. We are the only settlement left in the country."

"That is logical," the Father Superior mused; "and the Iroquois are nothing if not logical—and co-operative. Yes, our first consideration must be the safety of the refugees here." He looked up. "We must guard Diana carefully. No matter with whom she walks, the sentry must be present. He represents order to the Hurons. And I wish you would make a point to go out with her today, Godfrey. Young people like young company."

Diana received him with laughing eyes. "I am becoming quite a French woman. No, please don't speak French to me. I used to talk to myself to keep up my English. Now I can talk to you. Anyhow, Father Chastelain speaks much purer French than you do."

"How do you know that?"

"He warned me against your idioms. And how is poor Father Ragueneau? Do you know with all his worries, he came to tell me how sorry he was he couldn't see me more often." From the corner of her eye, she saw Arakoua watching them walk to the flats. "I don't think that Huron strumpet likes me any better."

"You must not use such words." Godfrey snorted.

"Why not! She is a strumpet, isn't she?" Diana was surprised.

"It doesn't matter what she is. There are certain words you may use and certain ones you must not. Strumpet is one of the words not used. Also, Arakoua has been quite subdued since Annaotaka went after her with his axe-haft."

“She’s a fool and always will be. It’s all right to say that, isn’t it?”

“I’m not quite sure, but it’s better than the other. We will let it go for the time.”

Diana grinned unfeelingly, and clasped her hands at the fresh beauty to be seen at the Lookout, with Matchedash Bay glistening in the sun—a blue-green beryl in the filmy spread of the budding woodlands below them. Godfrey glanced toward the fort. Arakoua was leaning against an elm tree, watching them with the endless patience of an Indian. Diana plucked at his sleeve and pointed. “Look!”

A canoe, so distant as to be little more than a dark stick, was moving toward them. “What is it?” she whispered.

“Not an Indian, that’s certain.” He watched it for a second. “It must be one of those fur poachers Enons spoke about. If so, how did this fellow get away?”

“He must have hidden for some time,” she suggested.

“So would anyone in his right senses, and fur traders know Indian ways. They have to, if they would live. I will go and intercept him.”

“I’ll go with you.”

“No. Stay where you are.” He smiled and shook his head. “I wouldn’t dare take you in the woods. It would be dangerous. Also, I must get into my trail clothes.”

“I’m going to ask Father Chastelain if I can’t make a deerskin dress. It would be much more useful than this.”

“The very idea. Do that. Try and get it ready before we move. You’ll be on the trail, then.”

Arakoua had missed nothing of the momentary excitement on the Lookout. She saw Godfrey speak to the sentry and hurry to the postern. She casually skirted the outwork and circled to the forest. As Godfrey struck out on the north trail she followed. He went quickly for five furlongs, then followed a pathway to an incline. From the bushes he could see the canoe, little more than a furlong away. He stole silently to a point where the shoreline rose sharply above the river and crouched in the underbrush. Once he turned quickly as a twig snapped. He saw nothing and resumed his waiting. The canoe, heavily loaded, came toward him, hugging the river bank. The voyageur who so tirelessly stroked it against the sluggish current, was as clean and as hard as himself, and not much older. He was obviously a stranger to the country, Godfrey thought, though not to the forest. There was that easy rhythm of the paddle, the alertness of the keen, brown eyes and that watchfulness which senses danger in the unseen. The voyageur felt his danger at that second. He

swung to twist the canoe outward with a quick thrust. Godfrey leaped to his feet, hunting knife ready for the throw. “Stop!” he cried.

The stranger dropped paddle and reached for knife in the one movement. Godfrey’s hand flashed. The man crouched forward, blade stuck in the muscle of his throwing arm. Godfrey drew a second knife. “Make no move,” he warned, and waded to the canoe to drag it ashore. With utter disregard of the wound, he ordered the man out, tied hands behind him, and slit the sleeve of the deerskin tunic. “Now, I’ll look at your arm.”

There was a crash of underbrush and Arakoua glared at him. “A great war chief, the Guardian of the River!” she sneered. “He fights like the warriors of the Long House fight. A stab from the bush.”

“The Sunbeam followed the trail like a frightened doe.” Godfrey did not look up from bandaging the wound. “My ears heard her feet scattering the sticks.”

She jumped at the insult. “Teanaosti the mighty warrior is—”

“Peace!” He cut her shrieking words short. “An enemy could hear you at Ossossanë.”

“What do I care for enemies,” she cried. “Only one as low as Teanaosti would fight as the Hodenosaunee.”

Godfrey tied the bandage and strode over to Arakoua. He slapped her face with resounding cracks. “I said peace,” he growled. “Be silent!”

The voyageur’s jaw dropped. “What is the fight about. I could only get a word or two.”

“What’s your name?” Godfrey ignored the question.

“Gilles Joinville, from Quebec,” he answered sullenly. “Who are you?”

“Godfrey Bethune. Captain of the Musketeers, at Fort Ste. Marie. Outlaw trader?”

“Yes.” Gilles’ face cleared. “Heard of you. New in this country. Was trying to get to the fort. Who’s the cabbage over there?”

“Arakoua. She’s the daughter of the war chief Annaotaka.”

“Heard of him, too.” Gilles eyed her with interest. “Not bad to look at.”

“What does the big warrior say?” Arakoua found her tongue again. “He is a man. He could have killed you.”

“He said you were a fool. I said be quiet,” Godfrey growled. He turned to Gilles. “You had better be careful about the fort, especially with women and talk. The Iroquois have over-run Huronia and no one feels any too gentle.”

“So I have noticed,” Gilles returned ironically. “Thanks just the same. I

understand."

Godfrey stared at him critically, then cut his bonds.

"That was decent of you." Gilles spoke gratefully. "I'll remember that."

"Better get in the canoe. I'll sit in the back." He glanced at Arakoua. "Does the daughter of the chief wish to paddle, or are her arms weak?"

"I will paddle the handsome stranger," she answered with dignity. "If the Guardian of the River were a warrior he would give him to me."

"Were he my prisoner I would say, 'O beautiful maiden, he is yours. Take him and do as you will.' But he is not my prisoner and I must take him to the great Aondecheté. Him I will tell of your desires, O Sunbeam."

Her face brightened. "My heart is light with forgivingness of you, O Guardian of the River. Only a great warrior would have spoken as you did." She scrutinized Gilles as she talked. "My heart takes to him, his black hair, thin face and wide shoulders. Yes, my heart takes to him." She smiled on the captive and stepped into the canoe, well satisfied with herself.

"What does her heart say?" Gilles sat on the cargo, in the centre.

"She asked that we deal leniently with you." Godfrey picked up a paddle.

"That was decent of her. What did you say?"

"I said it might be a good idea for you to have a rain-proof story to tell the Father Superior—and as much truth in it as you can afford."

"You shoot to centre." Gilles looked his surprise. "I heard you are as tough as ironwood."

"I can be that." It was hard work taking the loaded canoe against the current. Conversation ceased. At the palisades the Indians were gathered to meet them. Godfrey had difficulty in smothering a laugh at the importance assumed by Arakoua. He jumped out at the inner basin and spoke to Sergeant Lausier, who was waiting with four soldiers. "Have the canoe taken, as it is, into the fort. Is the Father Superior in his cabinet?"

"Yes, Captain, he went there when your approach was reported."

Godfrey escorted the captive to the main residence. Gilles walked in silence, surveying the substantial buildings and fortifications with unconcealed surprise. Father Ragueneau's eyes were stern. They overlooked no detail. "I observe there has been some trouble."

"Very little, mon père," Godfrey answered quickly. "I was taking no chances."

"A misunderstanding, Father, and my fault," Gilles said. "I did not know he was from the fort and I reached for my knife."

“How came you in the country of the Hurons and why?”

“May I tell my story, Father?”

“From the beginning.” The Father Superior’s face was set. “And do not deviate from the truth.”

“It is only the truth you shall hear, sir,” Gilles assured him. “I left Quebec in the winter, with Jacques Lemaine and three others. We intended to trade with the Nipissiriniens. We went early to be the first to trade. After we reached their country, Jacques said that he would go on to trade with the Hurons. I knew it was against the law but Jacques’ two partners were with him and there was nothing left except to go along. Anyhow, Jacques said the profits would be worth the risk.”

Gilles stopped and raised his eyes to the black-robed figure behind the table. Father Ragueneau’s face was expressionless. “Continue.”

“We knew nothing about the Iroquois and arrived in the bay just before the break-up. We built our canoes about ten leagues away from here. I went out one morning to scout around and was gone for two days. I thought it strange there were no Hurons about and when I returned I found the camp burned and my party gone. One cache was overlooked. I took that and, being in a strange country, hid out in the islands until I made my way here.”

Father Ragueneau looked at Godfrey. His eyes were inquiring.

“I surmise, mon père, that this is the same party Enons reported to me. He said he found only cold fires.” Godfrey smiled grimly. “I think it was just as well. Enons had a couple of warriors with him and no doubt intended killing the traders while asleep and making off with their goods.”

Gilles stared at Godfrey with startled eyes.

“Traders are on dangerous ground in Huronia,” Godfrey assured him. “The Hurons know they are outlaws and have no standing. We would never have heard of you, except Enons found your fires cold. He knew pretty well what had happened. So did I. The Iroquois got them.”

Father Ragueneau looked long at Gilles. “You are a fortunate young man,” he said, at last. “There are men here who will tell you what happened to your companions. It is also fortunate for you that you told the truth, for I am sure that you did. I know something of the reputation of this Jacques Lemaine and it is not the first time he has played this trick with young men, such as you, even though it will be the last. You will, of course, have to remain here, for the present, at least.”

Layman Daniel Carteron passed the open door. The Father Superior spoke to him. “You will please take this man to the kitchen and see that his wants are

satisfied. He will be attached to—”

Godfrey spoke in Huron, “May my tongue say with my men?”

“Very well,” Father Ragueneau agreed; “he will mess with the soldiers.” He waited until Gilles had been removed, then asked sharply, “Why did you want him, Captain?”

“He is a forest man, mon père, and, if I am any judge of men, a good one. He should be more valuable with me, under present conditions.”

“A reasonable explanation. What do you think of his story?” The Father Superior nodded affably and motioned Godfrey to be seated.

“I think, he told you the plain truth, as near as he could. I most strongly advised him to do so. He was in a panic when I stopped him.” Godfrey outlined the story of the capture.

“Arakoua, again,” Father Ragueneau murmured. “I thought that she had shown some signs of improvement.”

“She has been only subdued, sir.”

“If she does not keep so, advise me at once and I shall speak to Annaotaka. As for this man, I am turning him over to you.” The Father Superior’s fingers strayed to his upper lip. “I look to you to keep him in order by whatever means you may find desirable.”

“I do not anticipate trouble, mon père.”

“Nor do I, Godfrey.” Father Ragueneau looked his approval of the strong, young face before him; then shook his head. “It is strange that at such a time as this, we should have two white fugitives thrust upon us. Not that I doubt the wisdom of their presence,” he added hastily. “There is a definite purpose behind it, which will be unfolded in due course.”

XXIII

THE CHILL of the spring night crept through the small, uncovered windows into the great hall of the House of Ste. Marie. The pine knots in the wide, stone fireplace flared fitfully and cast shifting shadows of the high-backed chair in the centre of the big trestle table. Its flame caught up and reflected in silhouette the black-robed figure that sat on the massive chair, white hair fringing skull cap and head lowered in gloomy reverie. The strong face, inclined to roundness, was furrowed with sorrow, drawn by weariness. The Father Superior looked up to the heavy beams, faintly outlined in the blackness of the vaulted roof. His shoulders squared in their curious gesture of strength, the firm mouth turned in a ghost of a sad smile. It was a penalty of responsibility, he reflected, that of all the twoscore Frenchmen, at the moment gathered in Fort Ste. Marie, the Father Superior must remain a lonely man in his grief.

From a remote niche of memory the words of a forgotten sermon awoke to inspire him. “To each in this life there comes his Gethsemane, and those who are weak both of the flesh and the spirit, fall by the wayside; those who are strong of spirit continue on their way, undaunted to the very end.” The Father Superior nodded gravely. Those words were as spectres of the past. They brought to him the dead that had lived when they were spoken. Isaac Jogues, Jean de Brébeuf, Gabriel Lalemant and Antoine Daniel—and René Goupil and John de la Lande, whom he knew by their heroism. They all gathered in the cloisters of his mind, as familiar shadows in the darkness. And with them came the intrepid missionary Anne de Nouë, who had gone to Huronia with Father Brébeuf, in the first days of ’26, when the two priests so well and truly laid the foundations of the Mission to the Hurons.

Father Ragueneau’s brows knitted in momentary dismay. Father Nouë, a pioneer of Huronia though he was, had become a vague fragment of the years that had gone. Yet, despite his brief service of less than twelve months in the Huronian field, he was the first of that brave band to meet death in the service of the Cross. It was the same year that Father Jogues won his martyrdom. Father Nouë had been lost in the woods in the iron frost of a February night. He was found the next day, close to Fort Richelieu, kneeling in prayer, bared of head, hands to breast and sightless eyes turned upward to the canopy of the heavens. The Father Superior smoothed his grey hair. He remembered Teientoen, a Huron, who had been one of the party which had found Father Nouë. He made mental note to question the Indian on the matter the next time he saw him. Teientoen lived (or did he live?) at Ossossanë.

So the Father Superior meditated. Ossossanë was gone, as Fort Ste. Marie must go. As the great Cardinal Richelieu, who had given his name to Fort Richelieu, himself, had gone. The slim figure, with aquiline nose and fine features, moustache and pointed beard, imperious in red robes of a prince of the Church, was impressed upon Father Ragueneau's memory. The Cardinal had laid aside his dignity and state the same year that Fathers Nouë and Jogues had put away breviary and missal. All three had closed life far from Huronia, yet all three had been closely identified with the Mission to the Hurons. The Great Cardinal, it was true, had never set foot upon the New World, but his gold had served for him. The solid massiveness of Fort Ste. Marie was due to the generous way in which he had opened his purse and made its stone walls and bastions possible.

The Father Superior looked into the darkness and smiled with infinite understanding. The night had grown friendly. It was peopled with memories dear to him. Could he but lift that veil through which he might not see! He would stand face to face with those courageous souls who gathered about him. Their stuff was the stuff of his House of Ste. Marie. It was a comforting thought, this gathering of those whose work was done and who had returned to stand with him. His blood ran warm. A peace that was not of this world came to him and with it a power that he had not known before. His lips moved soundlessly. "While the others slept!"

He looked up sharply. The door opened at the end of the hall. His voice had a new resonance when he spoke. "Yes! Who is it?"

"It is I, Godfrey, mon père. I feared something was amiss."

"No. Nothing is amiss. Come in, lad." There was affection in the deep voice. But for the goodness of St. Joseph, the Father Superior reflected, there would have been one more member of the gallant company which had supported him this night. He did not speak until Godfrey stood by the table before him. "And there was one whose eyes were not overcome by weariness," he murmured; then aloud, "sit down, my boy. You should not keep such long hours. I believe I have spoken of this before."

"There is much to be done, mon père." Godfrey eyed Father Ragueneau in concealed surprise. The tired lines had been wiped from his face. The eyes were bright in their freshness. "I know of no one who works harder than you, sir."

"It is necessary that I should do so, Godfrey. Time is pressing and nothing must be left undone to re-establish the mission upon a sound and safe basis. It can be done. I know that as surely as I know you. It came to me this night." His voice was vibrant with assurance.

Godfrey was silent.

“You doubt my words?” The Father Superior placed both hands on the table. He watched Godfrey sharply.

“It is not for me to doubt you, mon père. You have knowledge of which I know nothing. I can only look at the facts as I see them.”

“Yes, I have knowledge, Godfrey, of which you do not know. Nor do I disagree with what you call facts.” Father Ragueneau shook his head. “It is your lack of faith I chide.”

“It is not that I fear,” Godfrey said earnestly. “As you know, I will fight to the last. It is merely that I cannot see the Hurons winning against the Iroquois.”

Father Ragueneau spoke slowly, as if weighing every word uttered. “There are things, Godfrey, sacred beyond speech. I will content myself by saying that we have powerful intercessors about us. All is with God and I do not doubt for the future. If it is His will that we should not succeed, as you fear, then be it so. We must prove our faith in Him by doing out utmost, no matter what the cost.” He walked around the table. “Nor do I doubt your courage, Godfrey. You see through one glass, I through another. You are a man of war, I a man of peace. I would, though, that your faith were as a man of peace.”

“I thank you, mon père.” Godfrey flushed. “I do the best that I can.”

“I know that, my lad.” The Father Superior placed a kindly hand upon his captain’s shoulder. “Each must work according to his light. That reminds me. I understand you have assigned our young trader to scout duties with Gilles Bacon.”

“Yes, mon père, it was dangerous work for one man. An ambush on the trail and the fort was open to surprise attack. With two scouts in contact, this danger is removed.” Godfrey smiled at the whimsy of the two Gilleses ranging the woods. He knew that Gilles Joinville, the voyageur, was the more wary man of the forest than Gilles Bacon, the hunter.

Godfrey had come to have a genuine respect for this lean, dark, outlaw fur trader. His astuteness was such that he readily realized compliance was to his advantage. Godfrey had refrained from mentioning that he had suggested to Layman Gilles that he defer to the voyageur’s greater experience when on the trail. “To avoid confusion we have one Hunter Gilles and you, Beaver Pelt Gilles,” he added.

“Beaver Pelt Gilles!” The young fur trader scowled. “That’s not fair. I know I came up here against the law, and you know I couldn’t do anything else.”

“We didn’t name you,” Godfrey assured him with a faint smile. “It was

Arakoua. She has more or less adopted you. Calls you Andouch. That is beaver skin. So what better than to call you Beaver Pelt Gilles? The Indians have named you that, anyhow."

Gilles digested this information in silence. "That woman's a fool. Why did she name me that?"

"It's like this, Beaver Pelt," Godfrey smiled genially, "as you know, a beaver skin is the most precious thing the Indians can get for trade. So, Arakoua has named you her beaver skin."

"I will say a few words to her," Gilles growled, fire touching his cheeks. "This thing can't go on."

"It will do no good. You should really be flattered. If the Hurons think anyone of importance they give him their own name. We have an unfortunate English girl here, who escaped with me from the Iroquois. Her name is Diana Woodville. She is called Hinonaia, the Little Thunder."

"The Little Thunder!" Gilles gasped. "You don't mean she's here! And she helped you escape. Then the Iroquois captured you. Tell me about it, Captain."

This was the moment for which Godfrey had waited. He wanted Gilles to hear Diana's story for himself, so there would be no misunderstanding of her background and standing in the fort. He made a pretence of hesitancy. "Come along to the palisade and I shall tell you."

Gilles slapped a hand against his deerskin coat when Godfrey had finished. "I would battle the devil himself to help a maid like that."

"So would I. To the moment I have been chiefly battling Arakoua." Godfrey glanced at him quickly.

"You needn't warn me against that clip, Captain." Gilles looked into Godfrey's eyes squarely. "I know the kind. I have traded in the Algonquin country. She wants a white man, no matter how she gets him. She's a daughter of a friendly chief and that makes it worse. I'm not going to get the Fathers in trouble. They're in trouble enough. Just watch me keep clear of her. Beaver Pelt, huh!" He snorted.

Gilles kept his word. He was pleasant to Arakoua and gained a moderate proficiency in the Huron tongue under her tuition. Arakoua tried all her wiles and they were smilingly, artfully avoided. In Godfrey's presence she spoke loudly of a proprietary interest in her Andouch. Gilles squirmed at her attitude toward him and the endearment she used; but Beaver Pelt he was named and he accepted it with such a grace as he could command.

Diana made good-natured banter over Arakoua's transfer of affection. "I simply can't understand it, Godfrey," she said solemnly. "Here she has

deserted you entirely, you a captain of the musketeers. For nothing more than a fur poacher. And she calls him her precious beaver skin!"

"I'm damn glad!" he returned fervently. "She had me worried."

Diana stared at him in grave disapproval. "I resent it. She has treated you with the utmost contempt. Why, you even captured him! Here she tosses the conqueror away for the conquered."

"His arm's about right. Only a flesh wound," Godfrey said carelessly. "And he abominates the name she gave him. No, I don't think he likes her any too well."

"A wise man in the ways of men!" Diana raised her hands as in hopeless despair. "The poor fellow. He doesn't understand anything. He has been insulted. He has been thrown away as a useless corn husk. Kicked about by a Huron moccasin. And he doesn't know it. He's hopeless!"

Godfrey laughed. "Now that's over, you can stop. Arakoua hasn't been bothering you?"

"Not since your successful rival came around."

"That's good. Things have been pretty bad. Not enough hours in the day to keep going."

"I know that, Godfrey." Her manner changed swiftly. "Sometimes, I get terribly worried about you. If you should get sick, or something happen."

"I'm all right." Godfrey frowned. "Just worried."

"About what?" She grasped his arm. "Please tell me."

"About everything. What will happen," he evaded.

"You are thinking about the Iroquois coming again. You know they will and I know they will. They will attack as long as any Hurons or French stay here."

"I think they will wait a bit," he returned with forced cheerfulness. "In the meantime, Father Bressani will have left for Quebec, where he will spend the winter, so he can take advantage of an early return when the ice goes out next year. You can go down with him and be safe."

She stepped backward. Her face drained white, eyes blazed with those hidden fires. "You mean that, Godfrey?"

He was startled at the change he saw in her. "I certainly do mean just that," he said firmly. "Next winter, here, is going to be hell on earth. Do you think I want to see you stay here and suffer? Don't you think it will be bad enough going through it alone?"

The flames died out of her eyes. The blood rushed a vivid crimson to her

face. “If you are going to hell, Godfrey, I am going with you.”

“The Father Superior. What about—”

“The finest, biggest man I ever knew. You leave dear Father Ragueneau to me and his own deep understanding. Now promise not to say a word about any of this to him. He has enough to trouble him now, and I will speak to him in good time. Now promise!” Her intensity moved him. He promised.

That night the Father Superior had a private meeting with Father Le Mercier and Godfrey. The hour was late and the only light in the great hall was given by a single candle. Its thin flame showed the face of the Assistant Superior grey and sunken. He had not the vital force of Father Ragueneau, Godfrey decided. The Father Superior placed his fingers on the edge of the table. “We have decided upon our new home. It will be on the Island of Ste. Marie,—Grand Manitoulin, as the Ottawas call it—about sixty leagues from here, at the top of Lake Huron.”

“The Ekaentouton of the Hurons,” Father Le Mercier murmured, “the Island of Castaways. A prophetic name.”

“It is close to the end of the French River, a logical place when the Champlain Road is considered,” the Father Superior continued. “Many Algonquin live on the island and the adjoining islands and mainland. Thus we may have an opportunity to extend further our work among them.”

“The natural defensive position, sir?”

“Excellent, my captain. In a day, or so, we will summon our Master Builder and you and he may proceed to draw up the plans for the new fort. In the meantime,—” he raised hands and replaced them upon the table—“we will prepare for the move. Father Le Mercier will consult with Master Boivin on general matters in the morning. What do you suggest, Captain, so that we may commence our work without unduly exposing men working outside the walls to enemy attack?”

“It is essential that we work fast, sir. Long hours and speed. Constant patrolling of the woods.”

Father Le Mercier opened his mouth. The Father Superior forestalled him. “We are dealing with an emergency. What were you going to say, Godfrey?”

“I would suggest, sir, that we use the inner, outwork palisades to make rafts. They are logs twenty feet long and thoroughly dried out. They would have a greater buoyancy than fresh timber and there would be no cutting.”

“Excellent idea, and will save much unnecessary work,” Father Le Mercier’s eyes brightened. “There is the personnel to be sent to the island. You have the eight additional men who came up from Quebec. Could you spare

them?”

“Yes, Father, and I would send Sergeant Lausier and Gilles Joinville with them.”

“The outlaw trader?” Father Le Mercier raised his brows.

“Why not, Father! He is a forest man. We might even persuade Annaotaka to lend some of the men. I would make as good a showing of strength as possible.”

Father Ragueneau nodded agreement. “On second thought, I think we may as well complete our plans, here and now. Do you, Godfrey, seek out the Master Boivin, ask him if he would leave his couch and join us.”

White fingers of dawn streaked the eastern sky before the conference broke up. Although he had been without rest for the past eight and forty hours, Father Ragueneau had no thought of sleep. This was the hour of private devotions, after which mass would be celebrated in the little Church of St. Joseph, filled as often as three, or four, times by the Huron fugitives camped on the flats.

Much had been accomplished during the night. The Master Builder rubbed calloused hands in satisfaction. His heavy face was smiling. He stood by the stone postern, more the genial worker who had arisen from a bed of peaceful slumber than one who had spent the night planning against time to save the Mission to Huronia. He smacked his lips and ticked off the various jobs to be done on his fingers.

“I must look up Annaotaka and persuade him to lend some warriors.” Godfrey spoke as one who did not relish his task. “I know he will want to go along.”

“His Reverence was cleverer than you there, Captain. He said, ‘If you don’t persuade him to stay home, he will get as far as the island and then vanish. Go looking for scalps and like as not lose his own.’ I said to myself, ‘Keep Annaotaka here, if you can.’ That’s your job, Captain, not mine.” Master Boivin walked away, chuckling.

Godfrey found the chief at the spring, slaking his morning thirst. To his surprise, Annaotaka took immediate and violent objection to transferring the fort to the Algonquin island of Grand Manitoulin. “The ondaki came to the Ouendats, not to the Aochraouatas,” he growled. “There are no words of wisdom in what you say.”

“The new mission can help both peoples.”

“They are fools,” the chief declared ambiguously. “I must think out good words to take the place of bad ones.”

A short time later Godfrey saw a dozen messengers of the Cord Clan

vanish into the forest. He had little time to ponder Annaotaka's opposition. Under the drive of Master Builder Boivin men were levering logs from the outwork palisades. Gilles ranged the woods to guard against surprise attack by prowling Iroquois. Godfrey had sent him off in a smarting mood. "If you should stumble across Arakoua on the trails give her a crack with your musket and send her home."

"I will do that," Gilles promised.

"And you might tell her that she might have thought up a new term of endearment for you," he added casually.

"What's that, Captain?" Gilles reddened.

"Oh, beaver pelt isn't new. She had another one. A young warrior. The Iroquois got him at Teanaostaiaë, when they surprised the village. She called him her Andouch."

"I hope they did a job of work on him before he died," Gilles snorted. "If I ever get tangled up with her, I hope they get me."

"Well, watch out, that's all," Godfrey said cheerfully. "Just remember the Algonquins are as babies on the trail compared to the Iroquois."

From the twin bastions the Father Superior looked down upon the workmen demolishing the outwork palisades. He saw Godfrey speed Gilles on his way with Gilles the Hunter, saw the live-stock browsing on the fresh green of the fields. His eyes sought out the church, then deliberately swept the stone and bastions of the fort, the iron-bound gates of the postern, and, lastly, the main residence. All this must be abandoned. A pang struck his heart with its poignant sorrow. As if it were but yesterday and not a score of months ago, he recalled word for word, the beautiful pen-picture which he had given of the community of Ste. Marie.

> "The piety, humility, obedience, patience and charity of our missionaries hardly leave room for improvement. The same may be said of the observance of the rules. All are, indeed, of one heart, one soul, and imbued with the spirit of our Society. What is still more remarkable, servants, boys, soldiers, in spite of the diversity and condition of their character, are all attending closely not only to the salvation of their souls but even to their spiritual perfection. Hence, all vice is banished to make room for virtue. This is a house of holiness. Here is the source of our joy, peace and security in the midst of our tribulations. Whatever Divine Providence may ordain for us, in life or death, God is with us and with Him we hope to be forever."

A veritable Idyll of the Spirit written not by a poetic pen but as a glorious episode in history, set down by mortar and stone, Father Ragueneau reflected. For the House of Ste. Marie was one of those finer works wrought by God that men might see themselves at their best, realize to what great heights they might rise in their holy conception of service. From its walls had gone forth a brave company to suffer revilement, pain and sometimes death, to bring a new Brotherhood of Man to earth, even as did the Man of the Cross suffer sixteen centuries before them.

All these things the Father Superior knew and his knowledge was without bitterness or dismay. He looked across the brief space of weeks to the time when a new Fort Ste. Marie would arise again, four-square to the skies, to take up the work which adversity had temporarily put aside.

XXIV

IN THOSE difficult days of transition the Father Superior stood as the rock upon which the new House of Ste. Marie was to be founded. Despite the many demands made upon his time, differences to be composed, and direction to be given, wherever he went, he brought peace and co-ordination of effort. His certainty of purpose inspired both garrison and fugitives and, although each night the light burned late at the conference table in the great hall, no detail was too small for his attention; no problem too insignificant to receive helpful advice. At all hours he was available for consultation.

It was to the Father Superior that Master Builder Boivin took his troubles when Godfrey insisted upon consulting Diana about the plans of the new fort. He listened to the Master Builder with the same attentiveness as though the subject were of major importance. "I should not worry unduly." Father Ragueneau's fingers tugged at his stubby moustache. "No one knows Iroquois psychology better than she. We may obtain some helpful suggestions."

"She is only a chit of a maid, your Reverence."

"She knows what the Iroquois favour. What they favour, we disfavour." The Father Superior regarded his Master Builder shrewdly.

Diana had given Godfrey much good advice. "Bastions are what the Iroquois fear. They are afraid of being trapped in a cross fire. I would build bastions about the outwork; and make the fort entirely of stone. The Iroquois imagine malignant spirits hide in stones."

The Father Superior received the report with satisfaction. "She is a clever young woman. I do not think that we can do better than incorporate her suggestions in our plans."

It was not until some days later that the plans were completed for the fort and the main residence. Master Builder Boivin regarded them fondly. "Much more scientific than this present one," he commented. "With those four stone walls, bastions at each corner and a moat running completely around, I don't think we need fear the Iroquois."

"No, not for a direct attack," Godfrey agreed. "Do not forget we have a big stone square to defend. If they try a siege we will have to call the Hurons in to defend the walls."

"If the Iroquois attack in force, we couldn't keep the Hurons out," the Master Builder grinned. "Anyway, we could accommodate a lot of them. Each wall is 123 feet long and there would be plenty of room for men."

“And fourteen feet high,” Godfrey reminded him. “That will make the Iroquois hesitate. I think we can probably plan the outwork so that the Hurons will be safe in their own quarters.”

The Master Builder shrugged. “Lots of other jobs waiting,” he grumbled. “Must get along.”

Much outside work had already been done, and the rafts to carry the party to Grand Manitoulin Island were awash by the shore. On the morning that the Father Superior was ready to embark, with Father Le Mercier, audience was demanded by the highest Huron chiefs. The presence of Shastaretsi, grand chief of the Hurons, who presided over the great council, indicated that a political crisis of the first magnitude had arisen. They were formally received in the guest house.

Shastaretsi stepped forward, a strongly-knit figure of fifty winters, eyes dark and piercing, an elder noted throughout the nation for his subtlety and oratory. “We have come, O Aondecheté, to speak words of sadness. The waters of our women’s eyes are dried up, for there are no more waters to flow. The warriors’ hearts are as lead, for there is no hope within them. Why are these things so? Our ears hear that you will leave us and go among the Aochraouata. What have they done for you? Did you not stay with us when the earth was benign, the waters calm and the sky unclouded? Now the sky is black, the waters covered with the ashes of our towns and the earth red with our blood, you would go from us, go to a country of a people who know us not.”

The Father Superior answered slowly, carefully, explaining the policy which dictated the choice of Grand Manitoulin Island as the logical selection of the new House of Ste. Marie. The chiefs listened to him without conviction. One after another they spoke. Without the help of the Fathers, they said, the Hodenosaunee would burn and slaughter at will. Let the ondakis join them on Ahouêndoë and the scattered remnants of their people could be brought together. They would forego their evil ways and embrace the true faith. Not only that, Shastaretsi spoke up quickly, but they would make the new mission of Ste. Marie an island of Christians, a bulwark of the Cross impervious to pagan attack.

Father Ragueneau’s eyes shone admiration as Annaotaka spoke. “My brothers’ words come from true hearts,” the Cord war chief said. “Only in ignorance did they say what was not so, and that was only the once. I, Annaotaka, shall go to join my forefathers in the Land of the Shades; and not to escape the slow fires of the torture stake will I be moved. My tongue will say this to all my warriors, ‘Go and be a true believer if you will. I care not what you do, so long as your heart does not change once you have done that

thing.' But beyond that I will say no more. Otherwise, I remain here and perish, with my enemies lying about me as they lay that night about the palisades of Katdaria."

"You are a brave man, O Annaotaka," Father Ragueneau nodded gravely. "You fought for the Cross and the Cross will not deny you wherever we may go. You have a daughter."

"I have, O Aondecheté, and she will give no trouble whether or no she becomes a believer."

Father Ragueneau's face expressed doubt. Shastaretsi again stepped forward. "We did not know the heart of the great war chief, Annaotaka, when we spoke, O Aondecheté. It is not as our hearts are." He drew out ten wampum belts. "To these we have been reduced. They are our only wealth. We ask you to have mercy upon us, as your Great Spirit has had mercy in Heaven upon Echon. We are poor, we are desolate. We ask you to accept these wampums and to let us help in building a great stone fortress on Ahouêndoë."

Such a plea could not be resisted. Father Ragueneau, doubting the wisdom of changing plans, left the same morning for Ahouêndoë, accompanied by Foreman Carpenter Guiet and his workmen. Arakoua stood by Godfrey to see them depart and her eyes never left the tall form of Gilles, standing musket in hand on the first raft. "Why could I not go with my man?" she asked.

"He is not your man, O liar, and there is much work to be done. Think you could swing one of those axes?"

"I can use a war axe," she said proudly. "Is it hard to be a believer?"

"For you, O maiden, very hard."

"My heart tells me to be a believer."

"The great chief, your father, told you to speak those words."

"You lie," she said promptly. "My heart told me to speak them. Now, I will say to an ondaki, 'Make me a believer and my heart will be glad.' "

"It will be harder than that to become a believer, O Sunbeam." Godfrey looked at her suspiciously.

"I have killed many warriors of the Long House. I can kill many enemies of the ondakis."

"Better kill the evil spirits in your heart," he advised and left her abruptly.

Diana smiled when he told her of Arakoua's conversation. "Poor Father Chastelain! He will have a time with that barbarian."

"Why did she change her mind?" Godfrey puzzled. "She said Annaotaka didn't speak to her, although I believe he told her to give over her wampum

belts."

"You poor stupid!" Diana's eyes were dancing. "When Annaotaka speaks to her it will be with his club. No doubt all men are as dense as you are!"

"I only asked a simple question."

She shook her head dismally. "With a simple answer, you poor thing. The answer is Gilles. Arakoua wants him. If she has to be a Christian to get him, then a Christian she will be."

"What about Gilles?"

"Arakoua isn't interested in what Gilles thinks. She's only interested in Arakoua. Tell me, what do you think of this new move?"

"If anything, less secure than Manitoulin. Not that I think it makes a bit of difference where we go."

"Nor do I, Godfrey," she said softly. "Yet, we must not give up."

Necessity had modified the original plan. A messenger from the Father Superior advised Father Chastelain that hundreds of fugitives had gathered about the new mission of St. Joseph. "I have given the name of St. Joseph to the island," he wrote, "and a big village stands close to the church. Father Chaumonot is most encouraged."

The Master Builder scowled. "We can scrap our outwork and all that," he grumbled. "A village has already been built. We must concentrate upon a system of log bastions to defend it." He gnawed at his beard. "We will put a big bastion close to the fort. It can be divided three ways, a cabinet for his Reverence, quarters for the young lady and a guard for the soldiers. It will be a fine outwork defence, for the fort."

"What about Molère?" Godfrey asked.

"Oh, him!" Master Boivin shrugged. "He can have a dispensary in the adjoining bastion. We will have to build quite a few to protect the village. Only protection it has," he added thoughtfully. "The Iroquois won't face enfilading fire, and we must give them plenty of it."

The Father Superior passed the plans upon his return. With the site of the new fort selected, he bent all energies toward an early evacuation of the old Fort Ste. Marie. Layman Malherbe superintended the slaughter of such beeves, sheep and swine as could not be removed; for, as Father Le Mercier had said, "The grain we can bag and save against time of need. The meat will not keep. Therefore, let us consume it and conserve less perishable stores." Only the chickens escaped. They could be penned upon the rafts without difficulty.

The saddest duty fell to Tailor Christophe Regnaut and Shoemaker Jacques Levrier. To them was given the privilege of exhuming the remains of the

martyrs, Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant. It was unthinkable that their relics should be abandoned in a savage land. Carefully, reverently, they cleaned and packed the bones in two small caskets and returned the flesh to the earth which the priests had loved in life.

On the afternoon of June 14th, 1649, Fort Ste. Marie stood awaiting the torch. It was a mere shell of former strength. The palisades of the outwork had gone to make rafts and the buildings were stripped bare of vestments, furnishings and stores. Even the lush meadowlands were empty. Live-stock and household goods, bell and cannon had been loaded on the flotilla, stirring uneasily upon the waters of Matchedash Bay.

The Father Superior stood on the Lookout, a lonely figure, heart heavy and head bent. His face drew in pain as the first rope of smoke curled upward. It was the end. "Ouendake Ehen!" he muttered. "Huronia is no more." And with these words something went out of his life. A new House of Ste. Marie would arise, as it were, upon the ashes of the old. About its walls the Huron race might gather, prosper and grow to some semblance of their former nationhood. A new outpost of New France might be created and Champlain's magnificent dream of a great New World empire reaching from the St. Lawrence to the head of the Great Lakes, or beyond, realized. Yet, should all these things come to fulfilment, the old fort would remain the place of tenderest associations, of cherished memories. His shoulders heaved in a deep sigh. He turned to Matchedash Bay.

A black pall soon hung low over Fort Ste. Marie. It was lined with grey and upon the lining the fury of the flames reflected, touching its feathery surface with scarlet that lengthened and faded as arrows shot by the sun at dawning. Father Ragueneau stood on his raft to ponder this rare beauty to be found in destruction, and his troubled spirit found encouragement in the sight. Might it not, he asked himself, be a message conveyed by its very beauty?

A curious trick of the afternoon sun caught the undercoating of the cloud. It was as though a golden blade had cut through the pall of smoke to touch the red of its flame. The Father Superior's lips trembled. "And the bush burned with fire and was consumed not," he murmured. His lips moved again. "A land flowing with milk and honey." Even as he looked the gold and red faded away. Only a cloud grey and black remained. It was the smoke of his dreams.

The rafts, each with sail set and polemen at oars, moved across the long reaches of Matchedash Bay. Early that evening Father Ragueneau sat penning a report of the day's events. His eyes raised to Skarontat, now a faint outline rising from the crest of the Lookout. He sighed as he wrote:

"In less than an hour we saw the fruit of ten years labour go up in

> smoke, and it was not without a feeling of regret. We gave a last look at the fields which had fed us for a decade of years and embarked with all our belongings on rafts of logs, on our way to St. Joseph's Island. The distance to travel is about seven leagues and the route, from point to point, lies across deep bays. Thanks to the care of Divine Providence, the weather is favourable and we trust to land, after a few days' hard rowing, on the shore of our new home and in the midst of a rejoicing population."

During the night hours Godfrey and Annaotaka circled the flotilla in canoes. At dawn their places were taken by the two Gilleses. Godfrey paddled to the raft to which Diana, Arakoua and the widows of five chiefs had been assigned. He smiled as he remembered Father Ragueneau's shrewd move in asking Annaotaka to arrange for Diana's transportation. The chief was highly pleased by this mark of confidence, coming as it did upon his refusal to accept Christianity. He acquiesced with grave pleasure, and marched Arakoua to the forest. When they returned she was subdued and morose.

Annaotaka had climbed aboard the raft and in the best Indian fashion had ignored everyone except Diana. He unbent with her so far as to grunt a word, or two. "I almost wish that the chief would treat me as he does the other women," Diana whispered to Godfrey. "It simply infuriates Arakoua, and she will not forget it."

"What does he say?"

"That's the worst part of it," Diana protested. "He uses me to humiliate her. Says I'm a fine young warrior and know how to make war, even if against his own people, that if the Hurons only had sense enough to make war the same way, they would have held their hunting grounds. He just goes on like that and stares at Arakoua."

Godfrey smiled tightly. He saw beyond Diana's words. Annaotaka was deliberately chastising Arakoua for her obstinacy and wilfulness. "Rather an unhappy fellow, that chief," he observed.

"As hard as a rock," Diana went on; "and that girl is as deadly as a rattlesnake. I would hate to worry Father Ragueneau."

"She's too busy chasing Beaver Pelt Gilles to bother much with you. She's a woman of a single idea. And one other thing," he continued, cheerfully, "just remember she knows her father. He would think no more of killing her than he would an Iroquois, if necessary."

"Arakoua is of the same breed."

"You will have no trouble with her, at least on this trip," he promised. In

this Godfrey was correct. Arakoua remained docile. She did what was required of her, though grudgingly and in silence. Routine was kept with military precision. Each morning, at cock-crow, a stop was made and the night's fast broken with a sparing dish of sagamite. The crews, which had laboured throughout the night at the oars, slept for a few hours and the journey was resumed. At eventide came another break. Never were the rafts beyond sight of land and constant vigilance was necessary.

When they stood out by the mouth of Penetanguishene Bay, that historic waterway which knew the canoe of Champlain, Father Ragueneau's eyes gleamed as he glanced down its long neck of water. On those shores had landed that peerless soldier of the Cross, Jean de Brébeuf, with Anne de Nouë, to found the Mission to the Hurons, at Toanché, "the Good Landing Place". The priests had come and gone away, when for a brief season the English held Quebec. But they had returned when New France was restored to its rightful owners; and again Father Brébeuf had threaded the waterways back to Penetanguishene Bay and Huronia. There had been good years and bad for the mission since that quarter of a century. Both Jean de Brébeuf and Anne de Nouë had passed to receive the reward of service. The Father Superior's thoughts returned to that night in the great hall, itself was now a memory of the past, when he had felt the presence of those pioneer missionaries and others of the brave, martyred band about him, and in that past he found a new strength and inspiration for the work to come.

The rafts slowly swept past wooded shores and innumerable islands. The scenery grew more rugged. Great faces of rock thrust upward to the skies, and behind everything the fugitives saw the forest wall, dark and gloomy, an unknown, verdant waste. The southern tip of Schiondekiaria, the "Land which Appears Floating from Afar", appeared and receded into distance. They were now in the turbulent Bay of the Thunder Waters. St. Joseph's Island, the site of the new Fort Ste. Marie, was only a few leagues away.

Only once was the uneventful trip broken and that was when a small flotilla of rafts, high-riding in emptiness, passed, returning to the scorched walls of the old fort to remove belated fugitives. Father Ragueneau's eyes brightened when they sighted Ahouêndoë. The grand chief Shastaretsi had kept faith. Foreman Guiet had finished many of the blockhouses. The site of the new fort, close to the shoreline, had been cleared, foundations and moat dug. The Indian village had arisen to more than twoscore houses and others were being erected. Land had been sown to corn and meadows fenced for live-stock.

The Father Superior at once assigned responsibility for the fort to Godfrey and Master Builder Boivin. The haggard and weakened fugitives, who continued to arrive, kept the spectre of famine constantly before Father

Ragueneau's eyes. The day was late to plant new crops and he feared that the coming winter would be one of starvation and death unless the stores of corn and grain could be augmented. His apprehensions grew when Tarontas came with the last flotilla. The scarred face of the grizzled chief was tight with rage, as he reported that the Iroquois had returned and over-run the land. "Not even the people who remained on the flat ground escaped, O Aondecheté," he finished. "There were a few fools who would not listen to words of wisdom. They stayed to their sorrow."

Father Ragueneau tugged at his chin. "And the land of the Bear Clan?"

"The land of the Bear Clan has been taken over by the Hodenosaunee. With short-axe and hunting knife they took it over and no Ouendat lives. Not even Teientoen owns his life."

The Father Superior gazed to the mainland shoreline, a league away. It was there that the Bear village of Tondakhea, "the Place Where the Land Fades Out," once stood. Tondakhea was a great town when Father Nouë had known Huronia. It had vanished with the years and now the Iroquois were camped there. Father Ragueneau's lips drew tight. Time had severed Father Nouë's last link with Huronia. Teientoen, who had found the missionary's frozen remains on the banks of the distant St. Lawrence, had passed into the hereafter, himself. The Father Superior bit his lip. As the association of Father Nouë with Huronia was now confined to the written record, so must the association of Father Brébeuf, of himself, grow dim with the change of the seasons. His thoughts wandered. He speculated vaguely as to the close of his identification with Huronia. Would it be the end of Huronia? Such idleness of thought brought him to the present with ill-concealed confusion. "Teientoen was a true believer," he said. "He would meet death as such."

"As a believer he died, O Aondecheté," Tarontas answered. "He was surprised on the trail to that great stone fortress that is gone. He was on his knees, as one saying words to the Great Spirit, and when the axe fell he leaned forward against a stump and remained thus. I know, for I was one who found him, and his hands were clasped before him, palm to palm, and his eyes that saw not were looking into the aronhaia."

"As he had seen Father Nouë in death, leaning forward against a bank of snow," Father Ragueneau whispered; then aloud, "As a true believer he had lived and as a true believer he had died. What more could be asked."

"Truly it is so, O Aondecheté," Tarontas said, indifferently, fingers playing with the haft of his short-axe. "I go to seek Annaotaka."

"Should he be in the village, you will find him in the far log bastion, facing the clearing nearest the forest," Father Ragueneau directed.

Annaotaka had immediately appropriated the blockhouse most exposed to attack. There he would live and defend his sector of the line. The Father Superior concurred. He had no doubts as to the chief's watchfulness and fighting qualities. A secondary and an important consideration was Annaotaka's position as head of the pagan element. The non-believers would gather about him and thus they would be left to their own devices upon the edge of the village. Arakoua alone disputed the choice. She preferred the roominess of the big house, with its open fires and young warriors lounging about. Annaotaka heard her objections. When she had finished, he propelled her into the new abode by his foot.

To her further disgust, Godfrey assigned Gilles to scout duty. With four warriors selected by Annaotaka, he patrolled the narrow waters between island and mainland. Annaotaka and a band of chosen men scouted in the forest. "There is no good in the words you speak," she complained. "Why send warriors to the water and the forest?"

Godfrey frowned. "What affair is it of yours, O wilful woman? The words were said by the great chief, your father. Go and speak to him."

Arakoua considered his reply. "Of what good is it?" she asked, finally. "There is death in the air." Her glance wandered to where Diana sat sewing a deerskin dress.

"If the snake of death bites here, O fool, take care it does not strike you down," Godfrey said sharply.

She gave him a hard, brittle smile. "If the snake of death strikes at me, O Guardian of the River, I strike with it."

"And I strike with the swiftness of the Thunder Bird," he promised.

She made a movement of her finger, as lightning flashes to earth, laughed and left him.

XXV

AHOUÊNDOË, the "Island in the Lake" of the Hurons, had become St. Joseph's Island, and now it was to receive its third name in as many months. The Island of the Christians, the Father Superior would speak of it, for he cherished the dream that on Ahouêndoë would be sown that seed of Christianity which would spread throughout the country. It was a noble conception of future promise and he clung to it doggedly. Godfrey, with true Anglo-Saxon directness of speech, simplified the new name to Christian Island; but he held no hope of Father Ragueneau translating his dream into terms of actuality.

Each week Iroquois outposts closed the tighter about Christian Island. Annaotaka doubled the number of scouts upon the narrow waters as the enemy were seen prowling the mainland coast. Then came the day when scouts paddled frantically to the fort water-ditch. A big flotilla of canoes had been sighted. The bell clanged sharp alarm from the crossbar in front of the church and the garrison rushed to man the walls and unfinished bastions. Annaotaka gathered his Cord warriors at the blockhouses. Muskets were primed, match was ready to the touch-hole of the brass cannon, when a glad shout went up from every throat. The canoes were those of the One White House.

Awindoan jumped from the first craft to beach and with grave courtesy saluted the Father Superior. He had come from the people of the Blue Hills, whither his villagers had fled after the rape of St. Ignace. "There is no safety among the Tinnontate," he said. "The shadow of the Hodenosaunee lies over them."

Father Ragueneau glanced significantly at Godfrey. "And you were not troubled on the journey, O Awindoan?" he asked.

"We saw many warriors of the Long House, O Aondecheté," he answered with pride, "and they saw our fighting men. They did not venture on the waters against us."

Annaotaka grunted. He left to order his scouts back to duty.

The Father Superior looked with a touch of wistfulness at the sturdy figures of the newcomers and at the leanness of the island Indians. "I see you came from a land of plenty, O Chief. I trust you brought corn with you."

"There is much corn from whence we came and the harvest was heavy. No, O Aondecheté, we brought little corn with us. Only what we needed on the way."

"You are welcome, O Awindoan, to what we have," Father Ragueneau

said, briefly, “and there are houses to be had for the building.”

He spoke no more until he and Godfrey were alone. “The Hurons are ever improvident. Awindoan, Christian chief as he is, brings us thirtyscore mouths to feed and there is a shortage of food.”

“There is one bright spot, mon père.” Godfrey spoke with a cheerful smile. “He brings with him fivescore warriors and they are well fed. They would make a splendid convoy for the Quebec trip.”

The Father Superior nodded absently. “More mouths to feed! I saw you speaking to Awindoan. Did he say anything of importance?”

Godfrey hesitated.

“If what he said was bad, I should be the first to know it.”

“He said that the sorcerers were trying to stir the Tobacco people against us. That they were blaming us for the dispersion of the Hurons.”

“The sorcerers seize every opportunity to blame us for their own faults, to disrupt their own people.” There was an undertone of bitterness in his voice. “Have the chiefs given their support to this campaign?”

“He did not mention any, sir. He did say that he recognized Enons as one of the leaders. Enons has taken the Tobacco name of Honareennhak. It did not stop Awindoan recognizing him, although Enons at first denied his identity, for some reason.”

“An apostate. I fear for the future.” Father Ragueneau’s eyes were anxious. “The apostates are always the most vindictive, the most vicious.”

“Enons always was a coward,” Godfrey snorted.

“The more dangerous for that,” the Father Superior answered slowly. “He is probably attempting to build a new political career. I must consider the entire question of the Mission of the Apostles.”

A more immediate peril was to be found on the island. The spectre of famine was even then rattling its bones. There was little food to be had from the earth in the season of plenty. It was suicide for the refugees to try to augment the scanty stores of corn from former village fields. Mohawk and Seneca bands ravaged the mainland, killing by stealth adventurous gleaners. Dispirited, the Hurons withdrew to the safety of Ahouêndoë to await with a stoic calm whatever fate might hold for them.

Father Ragueneau foresaw with sad heart that his land of promise threatened to waste away and become withered desolation. Not by a single word did he betray these apprehensions. His shoulders were squared, mouth determined and spirit as unconquerable as ever. Only in unguarded moments did clouds gather in the depths of his eyes.

Under the urge of necessity, fort and out-buildings were pushed rapidly forward. Both hospital and residence were completed and the bark mission church of Father Chaumonot had given place to the new Church of St. Joseph, substantial as that which had stood in the outwork of old Fort Ste. Marie. The Father Superior was gratified at the work done and so expressed himself to Godfrey, as the two sat in the blockhouse cabinet of an evening to discuss the day's activities. "Father Bressani will go down to Quebec, shortly," he added. "I should send Diana with him, only the road may be closed. I would not care to risk her being captured by the Iroquois."

"It would be the worst misfortune that could happen to us, mon père. If the Mohawks were to appear with the Little Thunder again the Hurons would be completely demoralized."

"If worse did not happen to her. It is a difficult decision to make. I must be guided by both my duty to her and to the Huron nation. There is Gilles Joinville." The words implied a question.

"I would retain him here."

"You speak emphatically. Your reasons must be sound ones."

"He is the only forest man we have, if we except the Indians. He is worth his weight in corn to us."

"Ah, yes, corn. When I think of our rich fields at old Ste. Marie and the lean ones here, my heart troubles me." Father Ragueneau pushed back his chair and walked slowly to the fort.

Godfrey rounded the blockhouse to find Diana sitting at her door. "Well, solemn face," she smiled. "You and Father Ragueneau were having a long conference. You look quite wilted."

"I was scared." He sat on a stump beside her.

"He was scared." Diana nodded at the dark form of the sentry. "What scared the Captain of the Musketeers?"

"We were discussing Father Bressani's return to Quebec."

"And my going with him?" Her smile was a merry one.

"Exactly. I was afraid you would be sent away. I am not quite sure now you won't go."

"The Captain of the Musketeers is scared a second time." She nodded toward the outline of the forest, black and forbidding in the flood of the moon.

"It's nothing to laugh at," he said tartly. "I tell you it was touch and go for a time. I wasn't exactly comfortable, and not yet, for that matter."

"The Captain of the Musketeers is scared for a third time." She nodded to

where the narrow waters shone as pure, liquid silver. “It is the captain’s night to be scared.”

“Can’t you do something beside nod your head and say I’m scared!” he demanded irritably.

“Certainly. I can laugh and ask why you are scared.”

“Think of the dangers of the road. Do you imagine I want you to be captured or killed?”

“He does not want me to be captured or killed.” Diana raised her head to the starry dome of the night. “Oh, I forgot! I may not nod.”

“Do you want to go to Quebec and be among strangers?” he asked sourly.

“Now we are learning something. He doesn’t want me to be among strangers. Is that all?”

“What are you quizzing me for like this?” he snorted.

“I’m quizzing you because I want to find out.” Her eyes were as bright as the stars above them. “You didn’t answer me. Is that all?”

“No. It is not.”

“Now, we are getting some place,” she assured the long shadow of the bastion. “What else?”

“Do you think I wouldn’t miss you?”

“I wasn’t sure.” She simulated surprise. “Would you?”

“Why not!” he snapped. “Haven’t I got used to you?”

“Ah, he’s got used to me.” Her attempt to smother her mirth was poor. She could feel his resentment and changed the subject. “I think, Godfrey, you worry unnecessarily.”

“I don’t think so. I can tell you it was a matter of chance for a minute. Is yet, for that matter.”

“Oh, no, it isn’t.”

He looked up sharply at the confidence in her voice. “Why not?”

“Well, in the first place, dear Father Ragueneau won’t send me away; and, in the second place, I won’t go.”

“You would refuse to go!”

“No need to glower at me like that. I’m not one of your soldiers. And besides, I might be useful here. Is Beaver Pelt going back?”

“No. I asked that Gilles remain.”

“Perhaps you are right.” She grew thoughtful. “If he stays, keep Annaotaka close by. Don’t forget Arakoua. I think she may try to make trouble.”

“If she tries anything like that—” Godfrey commenced.

Diana stopped him with a warning finger. “I’m not afraid of her,” she said slowly. “It’s not that. Only I’d hate to grieve Father Ragueneau by having to kill her some day.”

“Diana! What do you mean!” Godfrey jumped to his feet.

“Just what I said—that I’d hate to grieve Father Ragueneau by having to kill her some day.” She stood facing him, eyes burning with hidden flares, mouth set in a cold line. “Now, I’m going to bed.”

Godfrey gaped into the darkness. He had forgotten that Hinonaia had existed. Now, she had stood before him, cold, calculating, implacable in enmity. For the first time he sensed the steel that lay behind her demure ways and smiling eyes. It was with something of a shock that he set forth upon a desultory inspection of the blockhouses and sentries, not from sense of duty, but to seek solace in action. He pictured Diana as troubled in spirit as was he. It was an unnecessary consideration. She was quite pleased with herself—and with life.

As the first week of August approached excitement increased on Christian Island. The time for the expedition to Quebec was at hand. The more adventurous of the garrison, not associated with the Order, were hopeful of being selected to go. At the fort there remained only the prospect of long, monotonous, winter months on reduced rations. The Huron warriors were equally anxious to volunteer. It was an opportunity to escape the threat of famine and enjoy the excitement of the trail, with the comparative plenty of Quebec awaiting them at the end of the Champlain Road.

To Godfrey’s surprise, Annaotaka was not interested in the expedition. “It is here that danger will come to my people,” he said. “It is here that my warriors of the Cord and I will remain. I went down the long road once and what was the fate of my town of Teanaostaiaë? The Keeper of the River slept and many went moaning on their last journey to the Land of the Shades.”

Godfrey saluted him as he would have saluted a great war chief after a victorious battle. “Your words, O Annaotaka, come from a heart that knows nothing other than valour. The scars that mark your body speak of deeds done and nothing said of them. Could they speak, they would say here is a warrior and a man.”

Annaotaka’s cold eyes lightened with gratification and friendship. “My ears hear your words, O Teanaosti, and they know you speak what your heart dictates. My heart says to me, he is my brother. He will stay as I stay and he will fight by my side. We will sing the war song together.”

A conception of duty and conduct which might have been conceived by a

Saint Louis or a Roland, Godfrey thought. He had gone a short distance when Gilles stopped him. “Captain,” he asked hesitatingly, “do you know when we start for home?”

“Who are we?” Godfrey asked sharply.

“Well, I meant me.” Gilles reddened.

“I was just speaking to Annaotaka,” Godfrey said irrelevantly; “he refuses to go. He knows the danger will be here. What made you think you were going home?”

“Why not, Captain?” The voice held a tinge of defiance. “I didn’t volunteer to come here.”

“But you came, nevertheless,” Godfrey answered dryly. “I imagined you intended to remain and engage in the fur trade. You say you are a trader. Aren’t you called a Beaver Pelt?”

“There will be no trade this winter.” Gilles looked his disgust.

“Then you don’t intend to marry Arakoua?”

“Marry her!” Gilles shouted. “Why should I marry her? How did you hear that?”

“I hear many things. You would not be the first trader to marry an Indian for greater trade.” Godfrey’s voice hardened. “Now, listen to me carefully. I am not interested in your marrying Arakoua. I am interested in your position here. You were captured an outlaw trader. You know the penalties. You are now serving your sentence and it is not yet served. You will remain here until next year.”

“I kept my word with you,” Gilles objected, “why keep me here?”

“Because you are a prisoner, and you will conduct yourself as you should —or else!”

“Or else what?” There was a touch of a sneer in the question.

“Or else, Beaver Pelt,” Godfrey answered so softly that Gilles whitened at the congealed sweetness of the venom, “or else Annaotaka and I will kill you —and it won’t be an easy death.”

Gilles bit his lip. There was no way out for him. He forced a smile. “You are as hard as they said you were—and harder. I am ready to obey orders, Captain.”

“That is much more reasonable,” Godfrey said. “Continue that way and it will be easier for everyone.”

On August 14th, Father Bressani left for Quebec. The Father Superior and Father Bressani sat long in consultation the night before. It was two

courageous spirits talking across the table and there was nothing concealed in their hearts. Both knew the perils that beset their way and neither knew if they should see the other again. It was not until the hour of private devotion that they parted, so much was there of which to speak.

Eight soldiers and a dozen hired men accompanied Father Bressani, with twoscore warriors of the One White House, under command of Awindoan. Annaotaka grunted as the flotilla swept out on the narrow waters. “The men of Scanonaenrat are wise on the trail,” he growled to Godfrey. “They can smell the enemy far enough to keep out of their way. There will be no fighting on this trip.”

Godfrey made no reply. He sensed that the old wound made in the proud chief’s heart by the refusal of the One White House warriors to pursue the Iroquois after the burning of St. Ignace had reopened. He came to attention as the Father Superior approached. “Come with me, Godfrey. We will go to the bastion.”

It was to Diana’s door that he went. “How was it you did not come to wish Father Bressani farewell?”

“I saw them leave, Father. I did not want to be in the way.”

He studied her face. Slowly his fingers crept to his moustache. “There was no reason for you to go to the forest and climb that tree. You would have been in no trouble with me.”

Diana’s eyes sparkled. “You knew where I was?”

“All the time. I notice your French is improving.”

“It should, mon père. Fathers Chastelain and Bonin are very patient with me.”

“Ah, yes, of course.” The Father Superior’s sturdy fingers strayed to his stubbly moustache again. “I thought, perhaps, my captain might have helped.”

“Oh, Godfrey.” She was surprised. “We always talk English. You see, Father, I do not want to forget my English.”

“A splendid idea.” He smiled. “A splendid thing for the both of you. Please keep it up.” He nodded pleasantly and joined Annaotaka.

Diana looked at Godfrey. “Why did Father Ragueneau say that?”

“Oh, nothing particular. Just a word of encouragement.”

“How long have you known him? I mean since you came here.”

“It’s four years since he succeeded Father Lalemant as superior. I came up that year.”

“Four years!” She regarded him seriously. “You may be a good soldier,

Godfrey, but beyond that you aren't very bright. I have learned, even in my short time here, that Father Ragueneau never says anything without a reason. What is the reason?"

Godfrey made a negative gesture.

"That's no help. I want ideas." She spread out her hands in the Indian fashion of query. "Father Ragueneau is a dear and he is also a very able man. Now why should he ask, yes, even order, us to keep up our English when we are away out here?"

"We aren't going to be here all the time," he reminded her. "English might be handy in Quebec."

"So might Dutch. The Dutch are selling the Iroquois muskets. We might have to deal with them, if your Puritans don't. No, there's something else. I must think it out."

"If I were you, I'd think how lucky I was to be here, instead of with that flotilla which just left," Godfrey advised.

"We shan't be here long."

"Why not?" He struck fist to palm.

"It's written up there—in the stars. It's going to be dreadful," she whispered fiercely. "I know what will happen. Look at those fields. Look at those people. What will they have to eat? Nothing! A Mohawk village this size would have four times our amount of corn ready for harvest. More people will come. There will be no food. It will be hideous, here."

"I didn't let myself think it out. I was afraid to," he said slowly. "I was a fool. You should go down to Quebec. I can still catch them and make room for you."

Her fingers gripped his arm as bands of steel. Her voice was low, cold, commanding. "You will attend to your own affairs, which are to guard the fort, Captain Bethune. I know what I am facing better than you do, much better; and my place is here, where I can be of some service."

Godfrey gaped at her. She smiled at him. The flame had died out of her eyes. "You forget the Iroquois," she said slyly.

"I have given them much thought," he said stiffly.

"No use getting insulted about it," she laughed. "I had to impress you that I was running my own affairs, and you are a bit dense, you know. Now about those Iroquois. They are determined to wipe out the entire Huron stock. It doesn't matter where they are, Tobacco people, Neutrals, or right here. We will hear from them as soon as the frosts come and the water freezes over."

"I know that," Godfrey muttered. "We are preparing for it now."

She leaned forward and touched Godfrey's arm with a finger. "Do you know what I saw in Father Ragueneau's eyes?" she whispered. "It was the shadow of death. Not for himself, he does not fear death, but his people. He knows what will come and he is preparing for it. Yet what can he do? His resources are so small."

XXVI

THE WOODS flared with the colours of the sunset. Father Ragueneau would stand for an hour at a time gazing upon the glorious foliage and draw strength from the beauty of it. In those golden hours of silence and meditation God seemed to draw close to him. It was as though he stood at the door of an inner room within himself wherein lay treasures of the soul yet untapped, truths so ancient, so basic that they were old when the earth was without form and void.

In the symphonic tones of the forest the Father Superior found an echo of that timelessness of the infinite. Each year throughout countless centuries, he mused, the forest had reflected the glory of God in its autumnal raiment. It was a supreme, all-embracing love, touching the most lowly of His creations and weaving the vast, sublime pattern with the humblest of His things, the leaves of the woods. To Father Ragueneau it was as if he looked with reverent eyes at the glowing colours of a great cathedral window, alive with the invisible fires of the sun, but of a grandeur and perfection which only the Great Architect of the Universe could design. New prayers came to his heart, new ideas were born in his rich mind.

The Father Superior spoke to no man of those pensive hours upon the ramparts, yet all drew assurance from the vitality which he radiated. They turned to him as men who are groping their way turn to an inspired leader and his genius was such that be the matter one of the spirit or of administration, he saw its source and solution. He devoted much time and effort to augment the inadequate food supply. Tarontas and his Rock warriors were called to the conference table and they agreed to escort messengers to the northern Algonquin nations to buy smoked fish. As Father Ragueneau said to Diana, with a sad smile, “Your wampums are now being put to their true worth. They will save many valuable lives this winter: for men and women must eat to live and your beads will buy much extra food.”

The Hurons he persuaded to gather acorns in the woods. They went forth and returned with a mere 600 bushels. In their weakened condition they had little stomach to face unknown dangers to garner this rough fare. They could glean only where Annaotaka and his fighting men ranged, and the peril of the Iroquois surprise was real.

Gilles spent long hours patrolling the narrow waters and the sight of Mohawk and Seneca chiefs studying the fortifications of Ste. Marie became a familiar one. Arakoua grew restive under his enforced absence. She had met a situation which neither ingenuity nor wilfulness could overcome. Godfrey

watched her with growing concern. He noticed that she frequented the vicinity of the blockhouse and that her beady eyes followed every movement of Diana with vindictive gleam. He had a high opinion of Arakoua's capabilities as a trouble maker. He decided to broach the subject cautiously to Annaotaka. The chief grunted. "Women are women, O Teanaosti. The great oki made them that there might be more warriors to make war. The warrior is born to understand war, not women."

"Andouch is a fur trader, not a warrior."

"A fur trader is almost a warrior," Annaotaka decided. "He may be a warrior: who knows?"

"Your daughter, O Chief, has fought in battle and slain her foes."

"The Sunbeam has the blood of warriors in her veins, so that she may bring forth more warriors. But she is a woman," the chief pronounced sententiously. "There are women who screech as an owl, because the moon shines not with the brightness of the sun. They carry envy in their hearts because they are not warriors. They forget the great oki said to them, 'I give you to warriors so that you may bring forth more warriors, not to be warriors.' These women produce great chiefs—if they live."

"The great chief speaks with the tongue of wisdom."

"Annaotaka knows many things. He knows that it is not good for the fox to have the heart of a wolf. No! there will be no vixens with the heart of a wolf bitch." He glared at Arakoua, where she lounged by the water-ditch.

Arakoua was ignorant of Annaotaka's pronouncement and had she known, her stubborn heart would not have changed its way. She waylaid Gilles, as his canoe came to land. "O Andouch, you wound me with arrows that I cannot see. Come with me and we will speak words of truth and there will be no guile in them."

Gilles saw her fingers twitching upon the short-axe. He must acquiesce or face a rowdy scene at the fort. He went with her of necessity. On the fringe of the village she sat on a stump. "Do you sit beside me, O Andouch," she invited. "Many questions come to my tongue."

She faced him. Her eyes were intent, searching. "My heart asks me, O Beaver Pelt, when the Captain will strike seven times for us."

"The Captain that strikes seven times for us!" He was bewildered.

"The Captain that goes tick, tick and stops striking a bell when the ondaki say 'Stop!' "

"You mean the clock!" Gilles laughed. He had heard, and disbelieved, the story told in the guard room of the Hurons' amazement at the first clock

introduced by Father Brébeuf. They named it the “Captain” and would sit by the hour waiting for it to strike. “What does the Captain say?” they asked. “When he strikes twelve times, it is time to hang the kettle over the fire. When he strikes four times, it is time to get up and go home.” By this harmless subterfuge, Echon was able to get rid of his uninvited guests, who, otherwise, would have stayed indefinitely. “Is that what you mean?”

“Yes, the Captain, O fool,” Arakoua answered impatiently. “When he strikes seven, the ondaki says you belong to me.”

“Oh!” Gilles’ heels beat a roll against the stump. His eyes narrowed craftily. “You forget, O desirable Sunbeam, Aondecheté has not taken you by the hand at the altar, no water has been spilled. You do not go to his annonchia.”

“Then he will not give you to me?” Her eyes were as two polished bloodstones. “Those are not good words. I will say to the black robes, ‘Throw your water on me. I will be a believer.’ What more?”

“I have no words to say. Aondecheté says the words.”

“Aondecheté may be the chief of the black robes; he is not my chief. He does not say to me, you do this and I do it.” She stood in front of him, eyes and mouth set. “I will bring you a dish of sagamite and an armful of wood for our fire.”

Gilles leaned back so far he nearly tumbled off the stump. “What you say is bad!” he cried. “I could not take you by your ceremony. Aondecheté would not permit it. *He* is my chief.”

“And your chief says this and you say that! You a warrior! I, a woman, do as I please. Not even the great chief, my father, not even the grand chief, Shastaretsi, may say to me, you do this and you do that. *I* do as *I* please!” She leaned over to him, eyes dilated with a fury of frustration. “Your ears are filled with the voice of the Little Thunder. Some day I burn her. Some day I burn you!” She spat into his face and fled to the forest, a cry of hate choking her throat.

Gilles remained as motionless as the log on which he sat. Slowly he straightened, glanced about to see had he been observed. In the village life was moving in its slow rhythm of monotony. Women and girls were sitting in the small warmth of the late afternoon sun. There was no laughter or talk from their lips. They stared into space with dull eyes, as if their spirits had already begun that slow, solemn march past the Standing Rock to the Land of the Shades. They had no eyes for Gilles and his affairs. Relieved of mind, he left to stop at the blockhouse, where Diana sat outside, fashioning a deerskin tunic.

“There is trouble in your eyes, Beaver Pelt,” she greeted him, and pointed

to the ground beside the stump which she used as a bench. “Sit there and tell me about it all.”

“Your French is good.” Gilles was at a loss to open the conversation.

“I am improving. How is your Huron? I saw you and that precious Sunbeam having a war talk.”

He scowled. Diana had been overlooked in his quick survey. “There was nothing wrong in that.”

“No, not if you think the way she played with her axe-haft was loving.” Diana held the tunic out for critical inspection. “When I finish this, I must make a second pair of leggings. Women’s life is just sew, sew, sew.”

Gilles regained something of his assurance. His eyes had not betrayed him. Diana had seen only the meeting at the water-ditch. “I think Arakoua is annoyed with me,” he ventured.

“Then watch out. Something may happen to you. She’s as deadly as a rattlesnake.”

“She said she would burn you.”

“She said that before.” Diana shook the garment. “I didn’t make a good job of this.”

“You don’t seem interested,” he snapped. “What would you say if I said she accused me of deserting her for you.”

“I would say tell me about it—every word.”

Gilles seized the opportunity. He gave his account almost identical with the words used. Diana was silent for a time. “I would not breathe a hint of this to anyone,” she finally advised. “I shall think it over. Come and see me about it on the morrow.”

That evening she dismissed Godfrey with a brief nod and waited for the Father Superior to leave his cabinet. “It will be a hard winter, mon père,” she commenced. “If you will give me some skins, I will help Brother Masson by stitching them.”

“Do we need them, Diana?” Father Ragueneau was faintly amused.

“Yes, Father. This will be a winter of hard frosts and little food. Warm clothes will keep sickness away.”

“It is good of you to think of us, Diana.” He looked down at his worn and faded cassock. “Your offer is very helpful, and there will be many to make. I will have Brother Masson cut them, ready for sewing.”

Diana fought back a laugh, as Godfrey approached, eyeing her curiously. “Thank you, sir. It will help me justify my existence.”

“No need to do that, my child,” the Father Superior said kindly. “Your knowledge of the Iroquois has already done that. Two Hurons, who were captured and escaped, just reported that the enemy is now massed in strength, undecided whether to attack the Petuns or us.”

Diana shook her head. “The Tobacco people are done. In a moon they will be no more. They are Hurons and will act as Hurons. They will be tricked, their men and women slaughtered and those who escape driven into strange lands.”

“Your forecast is bad.” Father Ragueneau showed his distress. “You and Godfrey must have talked this over.”

“Godfrey knows the Huron mind, Father. I don’t want to make things hard, I want to make them easier by preparing you for what will come.”

“I appreciate that, Diana.” As he spoke Annaotaka joined them, and she withdrew. The chief’s outlook was the more black. He agreed with Diana that the Iroquois would turn their fury upon the Tobacco people. Once the blockade was lifted, there would be hundreds of fugitives stream across the ice to the island. Annaotaka pointed to the snow and to his mouth.

The Father Superior frowned. “There must be something which we can do. We must not stand idly by and permit these people to starve.”

“If the Hodenosaunee attack the people of the Blue Hills, O Chief, could not your warriors surprise them?” Godfrey suggested.

“Your words are good, O Teanaosti. It is what the people of the Long House would do. Yet, great chief as I am, I may not, this moon, say to my warriors ‘You do thus and so.’ My own men of the Cord would go with me: they are too few.”

Godfrey subsided. There was nothing to be done. The council was over.

Diana was brightness and smiles when she saw Gilles the next evening. “Sorry I haven’t thought of anything new,” she laughed. “Perhaps an idea will come to me. Now, sit down here and tell me something of your Quebec. I have never seen it, you know.”

Gilles’ eyes warmed. To talk of that far-away capital of New France would alleviate the ache in his heart for it. A racy speaker, his graphic sentences sprinkled with the idiom of a trapper, he made Quebec, its Upper and Lower Towns, take form before her eyes. When Godfrey had spoken of Quebec, it was a small place, grey and cold as its stone walls. Under Gilles’ magic words the fourscore homes, shops and warehouses of Lower Town, by the river’s edge, became as real to her as the bark houses of Ahouêndoë’s village. She could walk with him past the walls of Upper Town, see the stone bulk of the fort and the residence of the Governor, the Chevalier Charles Huault de

Montmagny, a Knight of Malta and a great gentleman, the cathedral-like churches, Jesuits' College and convents. The 550 inhabitants, from Governor to the lowliest tiller of the soil, became flesh and blood and moved and worked as he spoke.

On the wings of Gilles' words she ranged the whole of New France. Ville Marie, where its Governor, Paul de Chomeday, the Sieur de Maisonneuve, a great soldier who had consecrated his sword to the Church, fought the Iroquois and guarded the fort and palisades of the hospital against attack. Then there was Three Rivers and the new Fort Richelieu. Diana listened with rapt attention of the decisive battle fought about the half-finished fort and of how the great Chevalier de Montmagny, himself, led a handful of troops against the Iroquois horde to victory and the salvation of the colony. Her mouth tightened as she remembered that Godfrey knew all these tales and had not told them to her.

The autumn had quickly passed and frost rode the hard air. Trees made skeleton lines against the sky and the ground was white in death. November, the most sombre of all months, had come when Tarontas and his party returned to Christian Island. His men had brought back much dried fish, more than they could conveniently carry. Tarontas felt no elation over the success of his trip. He and the Father Superior knew that triple, even six times the quantity would be insufficient to meet the requirements of the winter. Godfrey eyed the bundles of dried fish with detached interest. He was puzzling over Diana's distant attitude to him. It had all happened one evening and he assured himself that his intentions were transparently honest. They were not accepted as such. "I would keep a careful eye upon Arakoua," he said. "She has been threatening you."

"She has done that before." Diana looked up from the deerskin coat she was sewing. "I'm not worrying about her."

"She thinks she has reason," he answered gravely.

"She does? What is the reason?" Diana sat straight.

He smiled but only with his lips. "She thinks you are reaching out for her man."

"Oh, does she!" Diana's voice was frosty. "And who is her man, please? Once he was you."

Godfrey's eyes went hard. "I heard that before. It was not true, and you know it."

"Me! How should I know it?"

"There is no need for us to fight," he said stiffly. "If you doubt me, I shall not trouble you again."

Diana smiled coldly and permitted him to stalk away in hot rage. Arakoua, hovering in the distance, manoeuvred to meet him on the outskirts of the village. “My heart prepares a fire for Hinonaia. She will burn.” Her voice trembled.

“Then two will burn, O witch, for I will burn you.”

“You—you want that woman!” she hissed. “O fool! You look with fawn’s eyes. I, Arakoua, will tell you. First, she takes you and cracks you as a nut. The shell she throws away. Now she takes my Andouch. I will burn her.”

He laughed.

“You laugh and your laugh is a shell that she has tossed aside. I will tell you more.” Her mouth twisted. “First she lies with you, then she lies with my man. Next she will—”

Godfrey calmly knocked her down. “That is for a liar. If your tongue lies again, I will hit you again.”

She scrambled to her feet, hand to jaw and eyes blazing as live embers. “You, too, will roast for that, roast in a slow fire.”

He smiled grimly and walked toward the fort. He felt the better for his exercise. At the postern he was directed to the blockhouse cabinet. There he found Father Ragueneau in conference with Tarontas. The priest nodded gravely as he entered. “Your judgment was correct, Godfrey. The Iroquois are leaving to invade the Petuns. I have just received word of their intentions. I am sending the chief, here, with a few of his warriors, to recall Fathers Garnier and Chabanel. I want no unnecessary bloodshed.”

He picked up the letter from the table and gave it to Tarontas. “You are sure, O Chief, that you can escape the Hodenosaunee? I would not endanger the lives of yourself and your men.”

Tarontas grunted. “I have lived many seasons, O Aondecheté. I know the ways of the Hodenosaunee as I know the ways of the wolves. They will go silently through the woods, hiding as wolves hide. They will await their time for a surprise rush. I and my men will go openly, swiftly, as a deer runs, over the ice. We will go to the Place for Curing Tobacco, deliver your message and come away again.”

Father Ragueneau nodded agreement. “I concur. Etharita is the logical point of attack and I would counsel you not to remain there.”

He stood in grave courtesy, as Tarontas took the letter and left. “Etharita, the Place for Curing Tobacco,” he murmured, “the most exposed village of the Petuns. And Fathers Garnier and Chabanel are stationed there.” He looked significantly at Godfrey as he sat back again.

Godfrey bit his lip. His thoughts reverted to the council table in the great hall of old Fort Ste. Marie that day when Father Daniel had crossed the borderline of the spirit world and returned to the place he had occupied in life. Of the four who had sat closest to this place, Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant were now as the great hall in which they had met, ashes beneath the snows of the mainland. Fathers Garnier and Chabanel were at the Mission of St. Jean, at Etharita. He frowned. "You have done what you could, mon père. You have recalled them."

The Father Superior sighed. He sat staring at the table.

As Annaotaka predicted, once the Iroquois withdrew, fugitives joined in a mad rush to Ahouêndoë. Where there had been insufficient food to feed the 3,000 already huddled in the village, that number was now doubled. The newcomers came pinched of face, weak of body and dull of mind. For weeks they had trembled in hiding places, starved and ailing from exposure. Many reached their refuge only to die, some on its snow-touched shores, others, less fortunate, to crawl to the shelter of the bark houses and babble out their delirium by cold fires.

Priest and layman laboured by day and by night to minister to the living and bury the dead. The demands made upon the meagre resources were tremendous. More than 6,000 Hurons were dependent for life upon threescore Frenchmen. The Father Superior realized that only by severe regimentation could any survive the winter. All men able to work were set to fishing through the ice, or following the hunting trails of the mainland. Only Annaotaka and his score of Cord scouts were exempt from these duties. Women were assigned to gather firewood. Children were set to piling the wood under sleeping shelves in the houses, against the hour when the respite was over and the Iroquois returned.

To marshal a people noted for their independence and indolence into a highly efficient unit required patience, firmness and tact. The Father Superior advanced one irrefutable argument to which the most obdurate had to yield. It was fish and gather wood, or starve and freeze in the weeks of iron frost to come. Only Arakoua remained surly and defiant. Father Ragueneau drew Annaotaka's attention to her rebellion and the chief methodically and dispassionately beat her into sullen obedience with his war club.

Tarontas returned without mishap. He entered the blockhouse cabinet apparently as fresh as the youngest Rock warrior of his party, despite his years and a journey of a dozen leagues, each way, over ice and snow and against wind and cold. He saluted the Father Superior decorously.

"I prayed for a good journey and a safe one for you, O Chief," Father

Ragueneau said, as Tarontas handed him two letters. “My prayers have been graciously answered. You found the people of the Blue Hills well and of good spirit?”

“The Tinnontate know no fear, O Aondecheté.” The chief smiled grimly. “The warriors of the Wolf Clan, at the Place for Curing Tobacco, are sharpening the war axe, filling quivers with arrows, and singing war songs. Their hearts are filled with joy that the Hodenosaunee are coming.”

The Father Superior stared at the two letters on the table before him. He understood the unstable Huron character perfectly, its wild outbursts of valour and impatience of restraint. “I trust that there is no danger of an attempt to intercept the enemy on the trail.”

“Enons, or Honareennhak as he is now known, has spoken words of a surprise attack.” Tarontas twisted his mouth in contempt.

“Enons again,” Father Ragueneau murmured. “When will he cease to give foolish counsel?”

“He is a fool,” Tarontas growled. “He spoke thus, because Ouaracha gave words of wisdom for warriors to wait for the Hodenosaunee to attack. My mouth was closed, for Enons had marked me and he has a following. Had I said words against him, I would not now be here.”

“I understand, O Chief.” The Father Superior leaned back in his chair, mouth in a tight line. He saw the depths of the plot. Enons was subtly attacking Father Garnier at the council fire. He looked up quickly. “Enons will lead the people of the Blue Hills to disaster.”

“Many will go to the Land of Souls,” Tarontas grunted and departed.

The Father Superior opened the letters. He nodded approval at that written by Father Chabanel. He would leave for St. Joseph’s Island within a day or so, as soon as his affairs were arranged. The answer from Father Garnier aroused apprehension. Father Garnier pleaded for permission to remain at his mission. An Iroquois incursion was hourly expected and all Christian warriors would be in great need of his ministrations. “Besides,” he added, “I might lose the opportunity of laying down my life for the Lord.”

The Father Superior sat letter in hand, his thoughts back in the great hall of his old House of Ste. Marie.

XXVII

THE CHRISTMAS festival drew near and with its approach death again struck at the courageous band of missionaries. It was in the third week of December that a Christian Petun tramped wearily to the great gate of the fort and gasped that he carried a message for Aondecheté. At the blockhouse cabinet he handed the Father Superior a bark missive. Father Ragueneau glanced rapidly over the closely written sheets and his face grew white as he saw the double signature of Leonard Garreau and Adrien Greslon, of the St. Mathias Mission. He passed a trembling hand across his forehead, and dismissed the messenger to be fed and to rest. "I will speak with him on the morrow," he said.

Slowly, as one forcing himself to a painful duty, the Father Superior bent over the bark sheets and read with lips tight-drawn:

> "On the 7th of December, toward three o'clock in the afternoon, the Iroquois appeared at the gates of Etharita, where our Mission of St. Jean was, spreading immediate dismay and striking terror into all the poor villagers. They acted as those bereft of their strength, finding themselves suddenly vanquished, when they thought their warriors had met the enemy in the forest and had been victorious. Some took to flight. Others were slain on the spot. So sudden did the disaster come upon them that the flames consuming their cabins gave first alarm.
>
> "Father Charles Garnier was alone in the mission and when the enemy appeared was in one of the houses instructing the people. At the alarm, he ran to the church, where he found a group of Christians seeking refuge. 'We are dead men, my brothers,' he said to them. 'Pray to God and flee by whatever way you are able to escape. Trust the Almighty God and wherever you go carry your faith with you; and may death find you with God in mind.'
>
> "He gave those in the church his blessing and left hurriedly to help other victims. He hastened everywhere, to give absolution to the Christians, to seek children in the burning houses, or to baptize the sick in the midst of the flames, his own heart burning with no other fire than the love of God. It was while thus engaged in his holy work that he met death, which he had so often faced without fear. A ball from a musket struck him, penetrating a little below the breast, another from the same volley tore open his stomach, lodging in the

thigh and bringing him to the ground.

> "The good Father was seen to clasp his hands, offering some prayer. He then looked about him, and saw, ten or twelve paces away, an Indian dying on the ground. Love of God and zeal for souls were stronger than death. With murmured words of prayer, he struggled to his knees, and with difficulty dragged himself toward his fellow sufferer. He made but three, or four, paces when he fell again. For a second time he raised himself upon his knees and strove to move forward; but his body, drained of its blood, had not the strength of its courage. For the third time he fell. Further than this we have not been able to ascertain."

The Father Superior slumped in his chair. In such a way had the intrepid Father Garnier closed his life in his forty-fourth year, to die in that sanctity in which he had lived. Father Ragueneau resolutely looked again at the bark sheet. He noted dully the reported retreat of the Iroquois after their victory. Then his mouth turned in pain at the usual catalogue of atrocities which marked the capture of the village, the dead piled one upon another, where they fell in a hideous revelry of blood-lust. All these things Fathers Garreau and Greslon saw, and at last they found Father Garnier's body lying in a pool of blood, beneath a shroud of ashes, naked and head twice cleft by war axe. Reverently the two priests carried it to where the mission church had stood, and there all that remained of Father Garnier was buried in the place where he had laboured until death.

Father Ragueneau's eyelids lowered. He could picture Father Garnier as clearly as though he stood in the room. His deeds arose in the Father Superior's mind as a glorious chronicle of selflessness and devotion. Father Garnier had lived for nothing but his beloved Indians. He would carry the sick on his back for miles and many were the nights he passed lost in the woods after ministering to the ailing until the early morning hours. His indifference to danger, his spotless life won for him the respect of the Wolf Clan. And there were those who deposed that they had seen an angel stand by his side while preaching. "A saint come to earth and returned to Heaven again," Father Ragueneau murmured.

He absently fingered the bark sheets and his eyes opened. There was a sixth strip which he had not read. His brows raised as he glanced at it. "It pleased God that Father Chabanel should have left St. Jean on the morning of December 7th, in obedience to your recall," Father Garreau had written, "and so escaped by a few hours the destruction of Etharita. Father Chabanel stopped for a while with us, at St. Mathias, even while the burning of St. Jean was

under way. He had left us the next morning before we heard of the attack and hastened to Etharita."

The Father Superior stared at the black lines as a man who foresaw a new disaster. He walked to the door in time to beckon a boy who was passing. "Ask Captain Bethune to come at once, please."

He motioned Godfrey to the bench and briefly outlined the tragic report. "Was not Father Garnier one who sat beside Father Daniel's vacant place?" he asked, knowing well the answer.

"Yes, mon père, he was."

"And whom did you note sat across the board?" Father Ragueneau glanced at the bark sheets.

"Father Chabanel, mon père." Godfrey glanced at the missive with vague fear.

"Father Chabanel left St. Mathias on the afternoon of the seventh for here. He has not arrived."

Godfrey stared solemnly at the table. Father Ragueneau spoke for him. "I see you think as—as I fear."

Godfrey twisted. "As I see it, sir, Father Chabanel would travel a distance of not more than fifteen leagues. I do not like the delay."

"Nor do I. Would you be good enough to ask Fathers Le Mercier and Chastelain to meet me?"

Godfrey made an inspection of the blockhouse defences in thoughtful silence. He placed no reliance upon the report that the Iroquois were in retreat to their own country. At any time he was prepared to see the flare of their fires on the mainland shore. He walked slowly. Reduction of the garrison to accompany the flotilla to Quebec had made serious inroads upon men available for guard duty. Hired men were pressed to act as sentinels on the ramparts and defence of the blockhouses was entrusted to tried warriors, with the exception of the key log bastion, where Diana lived. She eyed him carefully. "Twenty hours a day is too much, Godfrey. Can't you take some rest?"

He shrugged. "Thanks for your interest. I know even a single man down is disaster, now. It can't be helped. Long hours are imperative. The hired men are not soldiers. Their eyes may keep watch and yet see nothing."

"Quite true," she returned seriously. "Still I don't see the necessity for you being on your feet every minute. The Iroquois are in the Tobacco Nation."

He stepped back. "You know, then?"

"Nothing, except I know the Iroquois. What *has* happened?"

“St. Jean is burned. Father Garnier’s killed.”

“Etharita gone.” She studied the glistening expanse of the ice covering the narrow waters. “The biggest Tobacco town burned. The Iroquois repeat their tactics.”

“A town of 500 families,” he added glumly. “The Tobacco Nation is finished. It will break up as did Huronia.”

“Tell me about it, everything,” she invited, and when he had told her she murmured, “Poor Father Chabanel. He was a great noble in France and came out here and hated it all.”

“Not exactly right.” Godfrey corrected. “He wasn’t a great noble. He was a professor of rhetoric. Father Garnier belonged to a noble house. And, besides, Father Chabanel didn’t hate the Hurons. He loved them and he knew the good work that he was doing, in spite of his difficulties. He took a vow of perpetual service to the Indians. He was the finest type of man and, like Father Garnier, grieved that he was not worthy to suffer with Father Brébeuf at the stake.”

“It must be nice to belong to the nobility and have a family, even away out here. To know you are somebody and not a waif,” she said meditatively, then changed the subject. “Do tell me something of Father Garnier. You were with him for a while.”

Godfrey spoke of the days spent on the shores of Isiaragui. “Father Garnier was truly a saint in life. I know he wore a spiked belt to mortify his flesh.”

Diana was moved to speak, then checked herself. “Arakoua is waiting for you.”

Godfrey nipped a round English oath. Diana wrinkled her nose. “They call the Iroquois pagans, yet they never swear. Think that over, Captain Bethune!” She laughed and slammed the door behind her.

Arakoua eyed him with quiet menace. “The moons are small, then large and small again, O Guardian of the River, and as they grow and wane many things happen. So the moon has come where there is no river for the Guardian to guard and he guards the Little Thunder. Guard well, O Guardian, while you may, for moons will come and go and there will be no Hinonaia to guard and no Teanaosti to guard her. I have said my words.”

“The Sunbeam cannot shine in the night,” he retorted significantly. “Nor in the Land of the Shades.”

She gave him stare for stare. “The Sunbeam will find peace with her Andouch and she will have her own warriors of the Beaver Pelt. No one will dare knock her down for words she says.”

“The Sunbeam thinks with a mind upside down,” Godfrey warned. “She

may find herself without a mind. Teanaosti advises Arakoua to be as careful as a rabbit in the time of great famine."

She smiled scornfully and walked away.

The sentinels of Fort Ste. Marie each day watched the lifeless expanse of the ice and snow for sight of a weary black-robed figure pulling a sleigh on which were carried the meagre possessions of a Huronian missionary, and the figure never came. Other figures were seen with tragic frequency, those of tottering, starved fugitives, skin stretched over their frames as a drawn bow-string, and they came as wraiths come, to be seen as they died. The Father Superior's eyes were pained as he watched them stagger to him. They were his people and he could do nothing for them, save the last rites of the Church and reverently close their staring eyes.

He would stand upon the ramparts and look to the clear, cold skies and the stars that shone as lamps from within their depths. In those silent hours of meditation it was as though angel wings brushed him on the light drift of the night. His spirit was lifted upward above the gnarled branches of the forest that reached away as a grey tangle of skeletons against a black shroud. Only on the ramparts, while the others slept, could the Father Superior find consolation and peace.

Here it was that he stood upon the dawning hours of Christmas Day and alone communed with those stars which had shone down in their undefiled splendour upon the Inn Stable of Bethlehem. It was a cheering thought to Father Ragueneau that in those immeasurable spaces, so high overhead, time was not, that the same stars to which he turned his eyes had, in turn, looked down upon the Child Jesus. Time ceased to exist for him that early morning. The years rolled away as a scroll is opened and again he walked the roads of his native France. Great churches and humble would be crowded with the devout commemorating the birth of the Saviour of Mankind. He glanced to the cross over the little, wooden church of St. Joseph, gleaming as silver in the moon-rays against the drapery of night. It was indeed a church among the humblest but to its dutiful congregation the equal of the finest cathedral in the Old World. The Father Superior lifted his eyes upward. His quiet courage and tranquil faith was worthy of those who stood on Calvary—a generation separated from Bethlehem.

"The Star of the City of David," he murmured, ". . . shepherds abiding in the field . . . keeping watch over their flocks by night . . . the angel of the Lord . . . the glory of the Lord which shone about . . . tidings of great joy to all people . . . this day there is born a saviour, Christ the Lord."

He looked to the white sheet of the frozen narrows before him and nodded

gravely. He would preach a sermon on his meditations that Christmas morning. For when men and women live out each day with death marking time at their shoulders a new understanding is born within them. Values of life take on a truer meaning. Trivialities, once of importance, recede to proper insignificance and truths, before ignored, assume their rightful place in the scheme of living. It is not that life, itself, has changed, he reflected. It flows onward, as immutable as the stars that shine. It is human souls that change. They come to the bedrock of existence.

"The bedrock, the iron of the soul," he muttered. "Things as they are, not as we would have them. St. Jean destroyed. Father Garnier martyred, Father Chabanel missing. The Mission of the Apostles all but gone. Only Fathers Garreau and Greslon left and one is ailing." He stood grieving, then his shoulders set back. He turned and walked to the blockhouse cabinet.

Gilles met him at the door of the guardroom. "Anything wrong, Father?"

Father Ragueneau shook his head. "Nothing amiss, Joinville. Do you send a messenger for Tarontas."

The Father Superior was stirring the smouldering fire to a flame when Tarontas entered, blinking at the unexpected summons. "You spoke my name, O Aondecheté?"

"I did, O Chief. You are a man of true heart and true faith. There is a new ondaki at Ekarenniondi. He came to Ouendake only a few moons ago and he is sick. If he comes here, he will receive good medicine and be made whole. My messenger must be a man of courage and cunning on the trail. Would you go, O Tarontas, and take your men of the Rock, so that my message will be delivered?"

"I will go, O Aondecheté, when and where you say." The chief's eyes brightened at the compliment.

"At sun-up, then, O Tarontas, and my heart is glad at your words."

Father Ragueneau returned to the residence and sat before the table, in his chill room, penning a recall to Father Greslon, at St. Mathias Mission. On account of ill-health he was to report at once to the House of Ste. Marie. Only one missionary would now be left to face the uncertain future of the Mission of the Apostles to the people of the Blue Hills.

XXVIII

ALONE figure came out of the night. Bent forward over snowshoes against the beat of the wind and pull of a sleigh, as one spent with toil of the trail, the leather-garbed man moved slowly toward the island. Gilles challenged sharply. “I have a message for Aondecheté,” the newcomer answered.

The Father Superior was summoned to the blockhouse cabinet. He eyed a priest’s hat, a blanket and a bundle of papers on the table before him. They had come from the bag of Father Chabanel. Father Ragueneau did not raise his eyes when he spoke. “So Honareennhak and Enons are one, Enons, the professed believer, Honareennhak, the apostate, and the two return as the same —with these.” His fingers pointed out each article.

Enon’s mouth turned with insolent defiance. “I have come from the people of the Blue Hills. I am Enons no longer, and I brought these to you from your ondaki.”

Father Ragueneau’s face was set. His eyes hardened as they took in each detail of the strong, vigorous figure before him. Not in months had he looked upon such hearty manhood. “I see you come from a land of plenty,” he said dryly. “If you have words for me, then say them.”

“My words are short as a young thorn.” Enons smiled mockingly. “I met the ondaki by a river when the sun first rose upon the ashes of Etharita. His heart was cold and his words many. He said his Ouendats had fled when they had heard Tinnontate prisoners singing their songs on the trail. The Ouedendats fled and he could not keep pace with them. The ondaki cast to the ground his pack, so that he might run faster. I brought them here when I came. I have no more words.”

“You have many words of truth not spoken,” the Father Superior said coldly.

He summoned Godfrey and they heard the story told again. Enons was questioned shrewdly without result. Godfrey scowled and spoke to Father Ragueneau in French. “The man is lying, mon père, that much is certain. With a little persuasion we could make him tell what he knows.”

“I cannot countenance such a step,” Father Ragueneau said sharply. “There will be no compulsion used. If he will not tell of his own accord, then I must remain in ignorance. We shall give him a few days to rest, and question him again.”

Godfrey scowled at Enons. The Indian was watching each face with

glittering eyes for a clue to their words. He might as well have searched the face of a stone. “It is as you order, mon père. He will naturally join the pagan group. I will ask Annaotaka to see that he does not escape.”

“An excellent idea. Take him to the chief at once.”

At the postern, Godfrey saw Annaotaka and Father Le Mercier talking. He escorted Enons to them. “I have to report that Enons, here, who calls himself Honareennhak, has brought back Father Chabanel’s belongings. He has told a lying story about them. That is all I know at the moment.” He turned to Annaotaka and spoke in Huron. “Aondecheté has asked me, O Chief, for you to look upon this man, once known as Enons and of your Clan of the Cord. He came here with the goods of a murdered ondaki and lies in his heart.”

Annaotaka’s eyes held such concentrated venom in them that Enons shrank within himself. “He is a traitor to the old spirits and the new spirit. There is no truth in him. What does your heart say, O Teanaosti?”

“It is the heart of Aondecheté that speaks, O Chief. It says he will stay in the house of your warriors. It would be very bad should he run away.”

“He came, he will stay, O Teanaosti. We will watch him as we would a Hodenosaunee prisoner, or a wolf that kills from behind.”

Enons shoulders drooped. He looked wildly about.

“He has no heart and many tongues,” Godfrey growled. “If he speaks a true tongue, you will know, O Annaotaka. So do you keep watch over him and his mouth, take such action then as your heart dictates and send word to Aondecheté of what words he says.”

“He will remain with my warriors until he speaks.” Annaotaka glowered at the cowed Enons with cold ferocity.

“And the words of Aondecheté are ‘No man’s hand must be raised to make him speak.’ ”

The chief checked his stride and spat his disgust. “He will speak because he is a rabbit in a wolf’s den.”

Father Le Mercier shuffled uneasily, as Annaotaka marched Enons away. “You couldn’t have been more explicit, Captain. It is your affair, of course. Were I in your place, I should go and report to the Father Superior what has happened.”

“It might be well, Father, were you to come with me. I am sure that both you and Father Chastelain will be required.”

“Then we will go together.” Father Le Mercier stopped a boy and sent him to summon Father Chastelain. The Father Superior heard Godfrey’s report with approval. “I am pleased you made it clear to Annaotaka that no compulsion

was to be used. He is an excellent man, most trustworthy. Unfortunately his philosophy of living is not as we would desire."

"He was never very pliable, sir." Godfrey smiled.

"He suffers from being a man of intelligence among stupid people. He is endeavouring to establish absolute authority to try to save his people. Pagan though he is, his motives are pure, if severe."

"The only type of correction the Hurons understand," Father Le Mercier observed.

"I fear so," Father Ragueneau agreed. "Annaotaka is no more bloody-minded than other chiefs. It is only that he is capable of analysing motives and has the strength of character to enforce a certain obedience to his will. Now about this Enons—"

Godfrey excused himself. From the ramparts he saw Gilles and Arakoua. The stamp of Arakoua's foot showed that the meeting was not an amicable one. "So the Beaver Pelt thinks to throw me away as a scraped marrow bone," she stormed. "He now sits as an old woman and listens to the Little Thunder. He would leave me for her, a woman of the Long House, of many houses."

"It is nothing—"

"Lying words!" she blazed. "When you were overpowered by Teanaosti, who came to help you? Who spoke words of the heart? Was it the Little Thunder? Hear me, O Andouch, my man that you are. I will burn this Hinonaia and Teanaosti. Here, or in the Land of the Shades, I will have you."

Her fierce intensity frightened him. It was with relief that he heard the bell ring to change the guard.

The end of the year tailed out with dismal forebodings of that to come. Upon the Father Superior's squared shoulders fell the responsibility of organizing against the perilous future.

His was the staff to lead. He was as a second Moses come to life in another wilderness and all eyes were turned to him for guidance. Nor were they eyes that saw as one. Famine and disease, dissension and false gods arose in new guise to confront Father Ragueneau. The most pressing problem was to create a machine to combat famine and epidemic and he resolutely bent his energies to defeat these twin engines of destruction.

Shastaretsi was summoned from decorous seclusion to the council table. The Father Superior awaited him with Fathers Le Mercier and Chastelain. "We have asked you, O grand chief, to sit with us that something may be done, so that hunger pains may not gnaw your people to death, and that pestilence may not rear its ugly head and devour them."

“It is a talk of life or death for your people,” Father Le Mercier said. “There is little corn left and each day more people than there are fingers on many hands are carried out of their houses to be returned to the earth that once nourished them.”

Shastaretsi’s shrunken frame moved uneasily upon the bench. He looked opposite him to Father Ragueneau and saw such misery in the priest’s eyes that he looked away again. “The arrows of death fly fast,” the chief admitted, “and our people do not understand what they should do. They do not save their food. What they get this sun, they eat at once. They do not remember that with the next sun the belly has emptied itself and will turn to stone so that they die.”

“Exactly. Some way to help them must be found,” the Father Superior answered. “They must be given only so much food each day, so that they may live.”

Father Chastelain cleared his throat. Horror edged his voice when he spoke. “It has come to my ears that some have filled their pot with the bones of those who died in their houses, even dug up those who have been placed in the ground.”

“There is no food left in the houses.” Shastaretsi looked at his thin hands. “What was not eaten was stolen in the night when those who had fed slept. Even the acorns in the houses are gone. My people are as bones that walk.”

“Voices have whispered to me that even dead babies were snatched from the breasts of dying mothers and taken to the food kettles.” Father Chastelain’s denunciation was shrill.

“All the dogs are eaten, all corn is gone.” The chief spread his hands in a gesture of helplessness. “My people must live. I may not say ‘You do this and that,’ not even I, the grand chief.”

The Father Superior’s mouth tightened. He spoke in French. “The incidents which Father Chastelain has given are exceptional ones and must be regarded as reversion to type. They must be stamped out now, at their inception. Here we have a people all but driven insane by their misery. They realize their peril. They know that if they become incapacitated through hunger or disease, the Iroquois will attack and the torture stake, with its slow fire, awaits. We must reassure them in a substantial way. I would advocate a general system of rationing from our scanty stores.”

“Captain Bethune devised an excellent system when the new Cord village was built at Isiaragui,” Father Le Mercier suggested. “I know the details. We might pattern one after that.”

“True,” Father Ragueneau agreed. He spoke to Shastaretsi in Huron. “We will open our stores to everyone, instead of the few as we have done, small

though our supply of corn is, but there must be order in giving it out. When Teanaostaiaë was destroyed and a new aonchia built by Isiaragui, we distributed food to the starving. We can do so again in that way."

"There were few of the Cord Clan, there are many here," the chief objected. "I do not think my people will accept it."

"They must accept it or die," the Father Superior said sternly. "We are not children to fight over pebbles."

"There is the danger of Huron dishonesty in the drawing of rations," Father Le Mercier lapsed into French. "That must be overcome, or our stores will be gone in a month."

"That should not be difficult. We might adopt the token system of rationing. It has been done before. Jacques Levrier could cut tokens from deerskin and Brother Gauber could make iron symbols and stamp them hot on the leather."

"Each token would entitle the individual to so much food for his family. I could distribute them and," Father Chastelain shook his head at the thought, "and change the tokens as required."

"The very idea." Father Ragueneau laid fingers on the edge of the table. "I will convey our proposal to Shastaretsi."

The grand chief received the decision with gloomy dissent. "My people will not bow to authority. They will be of another mind."

"They will be of one mind or no mind," Father Le Mercier said sharply, "and there is another matter they must accept with one mind." He outlined the necessity for enforcing a uniform system of sanitation. "In past moons," he concluded, "whole villages have died as flies die from the filth about your homes, and your towns became so foul you had to move to clear the ground. Now, there is no place to go for clean land. The village must be kept clean or pestilence will slay everyone."

Shastaretsi grunted. "Your words mean nothing. My people will not hear them."

"Your people must listen or return to the mainland—and the Hodenosaunee torture fires." Father Ragueneau's voice was hard.

"We have kept our word with you, O Aondecheté," Shastaretsi said with dignity. "Now you speak of casting us out. Remember that we are many and you are few. We are a nation arrayed against a handful."

The Father Superior spoke a sentence in French to Father Le Mercier. "Do you bring the great war chief to me." To the sullen Shastaretsi he said, "If your people do not do as I say, their numbers will be reduced to a handful. The

situation is like this." He was explaining the ravages of disease upon a weakened people when Father Le Mercier returned accompanied by Annaotaka. The war chief glanced sourly at Shastaretsi. "You wait for me, O Aondecheté?"

"We need words of wisdom from your mouth, O Annaotaka. It is a matter of the good, of the survival of your nation." Father Ragueneau briefly outlined the plans for rationing the people and the sanitation measures proposed. "The grand chief fears the people will rebel and attack us."

"Your words are good, as they are always good, O Aondecheté." Annaotaka sniffed contemptuously at Shastaretsi. "The grand chief thinks he sits in his council house. There is no council house, because he did nothing but speak empty words. If his mind could listen to your words, he would know that a sick warrior is no good, that a warrior in his blanket is no warrior at all. His way is a bad way, O Aondecheté; your way is the good way. We are living at your place, we will go your way." He turned from the scowling Shastaretsi and raised a hand. "I, Annaotaka, and my warriors of the Cord will see the people do thus and so, as you say, O Aondecheté. Speak your words without fear."

"A pagan and a man," Father Ragueneau muttered, as Annaotaka stalked from the room without a second glance at the futile grand chief.

Lay Brother Gauber was ordered to forge the iron stamps, Shoemaker Levier to cut the leather tokens. To Shastaretsi fell the task of advising the refugees of the new rationing and sanitation policy. He did so with apologetic circumlocution and the Hurons were as one against the regulations. Annaotaka spoke a few grim words and open opposition gave way to sullen compliance. There was much murmuring in private and Enons led the undercurrent of opposition.

Father Ragueneau conferred with Annaotaka. Had the chief heard further words of Father Chabanel's death? The chief grunted knowingly. "My brother need not sit by the night fire thinking of this outcast. Enons is a liar and a boaster, and he can do no harm. He lives only because you want him to speak. Some day his tongue will speak and his mind will be turned inside out. Then I will arise from my fire and act."

"You will send a messenger to me, O Chief?" Father Ragueneau asked anxiously.

"When brother deals with brother messengers are not required. I will speak the words myself."

The new year had been ushered in by service and by prayer. The Father Superior was standing in front of the little church, breathing in the cold, pure air and looking up to the skies. The stars shone with that vividness which

comes only on an iron-hard, mid-winter night. To Father Ragueneau their apparent closeness, their brightness, was a good omen. Should disaster come, it would be through no omission of his. He drew a deep breath, as the boy, Louis, came running to him. Annaotaka would meet Aondecheté at the blockhouse cabinet.

Father Ragueneau glanced quickly about and saw Godfrey passing on inspection duty. He called him and the two repaired to the cabinet. Godfrey had barely stirred the fire to a blaze when Annaotaka arrived. His eyes narrowed, as he saw the chief's axe-hand at his back.

"Greetings, O Aondecheté, O Teanaosti," Annaotaka said gravely. "You came to me, O Aondecheté and said, 'My brother, I would know true words of who killed my black robe.' I said to you, 'Some day his tongue will speak and his mind will be turned inside out. Then I will arise from my fire and act.' Those very words I said to you, O Aondecheté, and I have kept them, as a great chief should keep them. Behold the hand that killed your ondaki!"

Annaotaka's axe-wrist jerked. A hand thumped to the table as lead might fall. It lay there, a clawing thing, curled fingers reaching to clutch at the air. Godfrey bit his lip. It was symbolical of Enons as could be nothing else, of that restless, vindictive mind grasping at an empty illusion of power and seeing hopes and aspirations come tumbling about him in deadly disarray.

Father Ragueneau looked once at the grim mark of Annaotaka's justice, then to the chief. His eyes were as hard and as cold as the frost outside. "What you have done, O Annaotaka, says that you have set yourself to administer the justice which belongs to the Great Spirit. Those acts are not good acts. They come from a heart that is proud and unrighteous."

Godfrey held his breath. Only the bravest of men would dare censure the great war chief of the Hurons in words that would bite and sear. He waited a second that seemed interminable for a furious outburst. To his surprise Annaotaka smiled.

"I expected my brother, the great Aondecheté, to speak as he spoke. He would be a mighty warrior were he not chief of the black robes. He spoke as he did because his heart was sore. He did not think, because his mind was red with anger. I was not angry and I thought in this way. I said. 'Enons is a man of two minds and neither are good. He spat upon the okis of my people and looked to your Great Spirit. He turned his face from you and came back to us, as a wolf returns to his den. But he is no longer one of us. He is nothing. He only claims us and claiming us, he leaves himself to our justice.' Therefore, I, Annaotaka, will deal with him as I would deal with anyone who speaks with two tongues that are vile."

The Father Superior sat considering Annaotaka's defence, eyes fixed upon the ghastly claws that once were fingers. Much as he deprecated the act done, he saw that he could lay no claim to Enons. The Huron had renounced his faith and returned to his old life. Annaotaka had a clear claim to him. Father Ragueneau forced a smile. "I have pondered the words my brother spoke. There is much that I could find wrong with them, only I know that they come from the heart of a friend. My tongue is silent because my heart is full."

"My brother thinks as a man." Annaotaka was gratified. "Come with me and you will hear true words of your black robe. Enons will speak with one tongue."

The chief plucked the hand from the table as if it were claws of a hawk. The Father Superior and Godfrey followed him in silence. At the last house, he pushed aside the bark door-covering and entered. Father Ragueneau gulped in the acrid smoke that swirled from ten fires. Godfrey wiped his eyes and stared at the men and the women, naked except for breech-clout, who lay about the leaping flames, ribs thrust out as if to pierce the tightly drawn skin, arms and legs thin as an arrow shaft, and faces sunken as a death mask. Annaotaka threw off his fur robe and he was even as they.

Father Ragueneau saw with sudden clarity that no other course was offered Annaotaka than to deal with Enons as he had done. It required only a spark to start a conflagration that would destroy the Huron people and Enons would have struck that spark. He looked to where the apostate cringed by a stake driven into the ground, stump of wrist, tightly bound, dripping blood to his feet. Fear of death was in his eyes and he gazed fearfully at the red stump and shivered.

Annaotaka looked once and grunted his anger. His eyes blazed at Arakoua, beside Enons, red-pointed awl in hand. Red blotches showed that she had amused herself prodding the prisoner. "I spoke words and you did not listen," the chief growled, and knocked her spinning into the crowd.

Enons saw Father Ragueneau. He leaned to him with pitiful eagerness. "O Aondecheté, I have been a weak creature of the forest and I have been punished. Take pity on me in my weakness and I will return to your belief."

"Be still, O liar," Annaotaka growled. "If you would escape these fires, if you would not run up and down—" he pointed to the leaping flames down the centre of the house—"you will speak with the speed of the wind and empty your mind of lies. Tell how you killed the ondaki from behind his back."

Enons' eyes glittered hate and indecision. The chief stooped and plucked out a blazing brand. Enons shuddered and words tumbled forth.

"It was the night of the outburst of the Hodenosaunee. I stopped by the

river. When the moon was as a bent straw the ondaki came to me. He was lost. The Hodenosaunee marched close to his fire and the guides had run away. He stopped to unload his pack and an evil spirit spoke to me. It said, 'This is one of the ondakis that brought misery and ruin upon my land. Kill him.' The evil spirit guided my hand." Enons looked upon the red stump where that hand had been and trembled. "I struck him on the back of his head with my axe and he died."

"Where is the body?" Godfrey spoke. Father Ragueneau stared at Enons as one who is stunned by the wickedness of a soul bared of its sin.

"The ondoki lies where he fell."

"It is not the black robes but snakes such as you who ruined my country," Annaotaka said savagely. He raised his hand for silence in the house. "Listen well, O people of the Cord. My short-axe is sharp. It bites this Enons not alone for slaying the black robe, it bites him for lying words, such words as delivered us to the Hodenosaunee."

Father Ragueneau stepped forward. "Hold your hand, O my brother. What you say of this man may be true, yet forget not mercy. Would you kill the soul with the body? Spare him time to repent, to save his soul, if the body must perish."

"O Aondecheté, I am a great sinner," the words splattered from Enons' lips as rain in the wind, "yet I once believed. I have followed the wrong paths. In your mercy my feet—"

"Silence, O liar!" Annaotaka struck him across the mouth. "You once aspired to be war chief of the Cord! You who were left to guard my village of Teanaostaiaë! I ask you, where is Teanaostaiaë? It is ashes beneath the snow. I ask you, where are our hunting grounds? They belong to the people of the Long House. Did you fight to save them? No, you ran away with the feet of a rabbit! You went to the people of the Blue Hills. The Hodenosaunee came and you ran back to us. Now, I will kill you!"

The axe flashed. Even as Enons' face contorted in a frenzy of fear, it bit into his skull. He had paid the penalty of his sins.

Father Ragueneau turned from the slumped figure, suspended from the stake, as a bear carcass might hang from a paw. Head bowed he walked slowly into the fresh cold of the night. Renegade and murderer though Enons was, a soul in torment had been denied the last consolation of the Church in its hour of need. Black with its sins and red with the blood of a martyr, it had been sped to eternity and judgment.

The Father Superior raised his troubled eyes to the heavens. He saw the stars glint golden as of old, the moon fling silvered beams to earth with cold

serenity. It was a touching proof to him of the boundless love of the Master Creator, that He should bestow with lavish bounty the beauty He had wrought upon such a savage land; for savage it was and something of its steel hardness and iron hate had torn Father Ragueneau's heart. He hurried to the quiet sanctity of St. Joseph's Church to ease a mind harassed by anxiety and care in prayer.

XXIX

TO THE Father Superior it was as though the New Year had dawned in a flare of scarlet skies. He recognized that this was inevitable when two civilizations meet and clash. In the houses of Annaotaka and his pagan clansmen was to be found the highest development of the primitive man, lingering on the border of the Stone Age, with customs and beliefs that had been preserved from the earliest days of tribal organization. In the House of Ste. Marie, with its threescore Frenchmen, was the ultimate attained by man in his climb to cultural heights, with new sanctions of conduct and a philosophy of living bearing the imprint of the Cross. Father Ragueneau sought diligently for an answer to that enigma of fate, conspiring, as it were, to turn the churning waters of Thunder Strait into a flowing Stream of Time, so that a thousand centuries were caught up in the rush and cast upon Ahouêndoë's shore.

As the hard winter days came and went, the two modes of life provided strong studies in contrast. Priests and lay brothers were awake hours before the grey touch of dawn and they laboured with unabated zeal until long into the night ministering to their fellow-men. The humble Church of St. Joseph was filled and emptied half a dozen times of a morning to meet the spiritual requirements of the Christian Indians. Shastaretsi, grand chief of the Hurons, had done as he had promised. Ahouêndoë was all but an island of Christians. Misfortune had bent the Huron neck. The okis of the old belief offered no support to weary souls on that last, mournful march to the Land of the Shades. The light that shone from the Cross came as a divine ray to pierce their hour of darkness. Men and women in their despair found solace in the Man of Sorrows. The Hurons had broken the gyves that shackled them to the past.

Only about Annaotaka's blockhouse did the old gods of the Heroic Age endure. There men and women invoked the aid of okis strong and fierce, and in the ferocity of their gods was reflected the lusty passions of themselves. Indian maidens lounged about the fires, displayed their charms with abandon and made shameless overtures to young warriors. Men gambled the day and night away, risking their few possessions upon the fall of painted, wooden disks. The aged whispered to the young tales of gnomes and giants, of spirits evil and implacable that frequented rocks and trees, water and air and took their toll of man when angered. The arendiwan alone was missing. Annaotaka sternly forbade all sorcerers the shelter of the village. Rightly, he laid the blame for the Huron ruin upon the dissension which they had fostered. He would have none of them, nor their lewd and obscene rites. He said with fairness that everyone, pagan and believer, alike, was living on the bounty of

the priests and he would countenance no observances that would be distasteful to them.

Through this twilight, primitive world moved the vital figure of Arakoua. She gave no thought to the dangers which threatened her people. Their misery made no impression upon her heart of flint. With that relentless urge which goaded the first men upon possessive quest, she drove forward to the object of her desires, Gilles.

A forest man, Gilles had been assigned to night duty at the main blockhouse when the river patrol was disbanded at the freeze-up. His highly specialized training made him the logical choice for this important post and he was given command of a guard of six trusted, Cord warriors. Although Godfrey rarely visited the blockhouse until after Diana had retired of an evening, he frequently saw her and Gilles sitting in the doorway, silhouetted against the fire. He waited until he was alone to caution her. “It is none of my business,” he commenced with a wan smile, “except that I have certain responsibilities for the safety and order of this place. I wish you and Gilles would not take such risks. You make perfect targets when you sit against the light.”

“Is that an order?” she asked lightly.

“I do not wish to make it an order. I ask you to remember that our numbers are small enough, as they are, and no one could foresee what might happen were some overt act committed.”

“Oh, it is a garrison order.” Diana laughed. “I thought at first you might be afraid for me, not Beaver Pelt.”

“Apart from anything else, I *am* afraid for you. I heard rumours that you are here to help the Iroquois and will betray the Hurons at the right time. You are offering yourself as a Huron target in the firelight. Arakoua is a venomous animal.”

“Meaning that I have snatched Beaver Pelt from her,” Diana said calmly. “Well, I didn’t. When he found there would be no fur trade, he dropped Arakoua like a hot stone. She won’t admit it, that’s all.”

“She intends to have Gilles whether he will or no.”

“And it would serve her right if she got him,” Diana said with savage candour. Then she smiled, her old self for the moment. “You are a good boy, Godfrey, and very, very stupid. We shan’t sit in the light again. And thanks for telling me about that precious Sunbeam. It confirmed something I surmised.”

Godfrey left in an emotional whirl. He smiled at her summation of Gilles, then frowned at her cultivation of him. Was she deliberately driving Arakoua to desperation? It did not make sense, he told himself; nothing about Diana

made sense. He snapped his fingers in angry bafflement. White blood and red training had made her an impossible problem. As he strode to the fort he saw Arakoua step from behind the blockhouse to confront Gilles.

“When you were away Teanaosti and Hinonaia talked much together and laughed. They spoke words I did not know. Does that sting your heart?” She eyed him shrewdly.

“They can say all the words they like.” Gilles grinned.

“Then why is it you have no words for me? What is it your Sunbeam has done to you?”

“I have been keeping watch with the moon. When the Sunbeams are out I am deep in the sleep world. Even now I return to duty.”

“You have time to hear the Little Thunder laugh in your ears, and you tell me it means nothing to you. I do not believe your words.” Her voice was low with hidden menace. “Some day I will burn this Hinonaia, then she will see you no more.”

“I speak with Hinonaia, yes. She is close by. It is nothing, nothing more than the wild fowl gabbling in the rice fields.”

“Mate calls to mate in the rice fields and your nests are in the same house.” A deadly light flickered in her eyes. “Do not forget, O Andouch, that I have put the mark of the Cord upon your brow, and on her brow I have put the mark of the snake.”

“Hinonaia has done nothing against you.” His voice toughened. “Do not forget, O Sunbeam, that I can put the mark of death on you.”

“I am as the Thunder Bird that lives in the sky. I see all. I see the snake on her and the mark of the Cord on you. Think you, O Andouch, that you can change what the okis say is to be? What is to be will be.”

The subtle thrust worried him. She was deadly in poisonous sweetness. He shot a bolt at random. “More black robes are returning from the mission fields. You know the ondakis. They are given that name because they are in the secrets of the spirits and they are strict and good. Their rule prevails here, not the rule of your people. The Sunbeam may ruin the Clan of the Cord if she permits unjust anger to blacken her mind.”

“What care I for my people? I care for my Beaver Pelt, for the way he acts toward me. He has turned from me to the Little Thunder. There will be no Little Thunder and he will turn back to me. And Andouch lies because his heart is cold with fear. There are not many ondakis coming. There is only one, the new black robe who went to the people of the Blue Hills. The Sunbeam knows and she knows Andouch’s heart.” Arakoua laughed wildly and was

gone.

Father Greslon had returned to Fort Ste. Marie in response to the Father Superior's recall, brought to him by Tarontas at the Deer Clan village of Ekarenniondi. So wasted was he by illness that Father Ragueneau marvelled at the iron will which had supported his dragging feet on the long journey from the Mission of St. Mathias, in the Tobacco country. The story he had to tell of those December days spent with Father Garreau, after the destruction of Etharita, gave Father Ragueneau material to inscribe another page of serene courage in the annals of Huronia.

The Father Superior had heard that sorcerers had been indefatigable in stirring up trouble. No sooner were they certain that the Iroquois raiders had withdrawn beyond the Blue Hills than they sought to convince smarting warriors that the ondakis were magicians plotting with the enemy to destroy the nation. The death of the two priests was decreed at a secret council and the infuriated warriors gathered about the mission shouting threats. When Fathers Garreau and Greslon appeared the traditional death lane was formed through which prisoners are beaten on their way to the stake. The two missionaries treated this demonstration with contemptuous indifference. Despite the war clubs and short-axes brandished over their heads, they walked the gauntlet unharmed. As Father Greslon expressed it, the protection of St. Joseph stayed murderous hands. So he came to the House of Ste. Marie, to be nursed back to health, leaving Father Garreau alone in his perilous field, as much in danger from deluded parishioners as from the ferocious Iroquois.

The Father Superior stared at the frost-touched skin hanging motionless in the cold, still air over the open window. The story was not new. Huron ingratitude was as old as the Huron Mission. A dozen years passed before Father Ragueneau in quick review. There was that year of 1638, when measles cut a swath of death through populous villages. Out of this black hour there emerged the misshapen form of Ontitarac. The dwarfish arendiwan accused the missionaries of putting a curse upon the land. Other sorcerers were quick to spread the slander. It was a time of insane fear, of murderous passions unchained. So certain were the priests that they would be sacrificed to appease superstitious frenzy that they followed the Huron custom of those condemned to die and gave a "Death Feast" to the villagers. Father Ragueneau's report of persecutions endured was published in the Jesuit *Relations* and, to his embarrassment, created a tremendous stir in France. He had written:

> "The unbelievers suit their actions to their thoughts, closing their houses against us, or running away when we enter unexpectedly. One young man feigned for a while to listen to our teachings.

> Suddenly there appeared on the scene another young man in a furious mood and he commanded us to leave the house. The apparent listener then wrenched my crucifix from my neck and seizing a short-axe, raised it over my head and struck at me so hard I was surprised to find myself alive. Some unseen hand undoubtedly diverted the blow. He tried a second time to split my head but a woman grabbed his arm and stopped him. I confess that I never was so close to my death. I appealed to the chief of the village for the restitution of my crucifix, which my assailant restored to me on the condition that I should save the town from the contagion."

"Ten years past," the Father Superior mused; "the year before the old fort was built. Father Jogues was then a missionary here. It was he who first warned us of the stories circulated by that sorcerer, a broken fellow with a spirit of evil dwelling within his twisted frame. That was before the Iroquois captured Father Jogues."

"It was at St. Thérèse, a Bear village," he murmured so low that Father Greslon could not catch the words, "and with me were Fathers Le Mercier, Chastelain, Brébeuf and Garnier. Fathers Brébeuf and Garnier—they are with Father Jogues and the saints. Yes, even as are Fathers Lalemant and Chabanel. And I—" He looked up with a sigh.

Father Greslon bent forward. "You were speaking, Father?"

"It was nothing." The Father Superior straightened. "You are far from well. You must rest and regain your strength. Father Le Mercier will take you under his personal charge."

It was only his obedience that kept Father Greslon in the hospital. Father Ragueneau saw that impatience was as great an enemy toward recovery as weakness. He reluctantly decided to put him on light duty.

"I have been troubled about Diana," the Father Superior said one day. "She is working hard among the women who are ailing—or worse. She is assiduous in her ministrations, knows no hours, no duties too arduous. She grows more silent each day, withdraws more and more into herself. It may be that she has some gnawing worry. She consistently refuses to speak of her early life."

"All this misery she sees may have weighed her down." Father Greslon moved wearily.

"No motive such as that would move her." Father Ragueneau shook his head. "She is utterly impervious to Indian suffering. She only does what she is doing, because she conceives it her duty to help us. I believe if you could persuade her to talk of her early life, it would relieve her mind."

Father Greslon entered upon his work with the zest of a man unemployed for weeks. He found Diana in one of the Christian houses, bending over a woman dying of influenza. Across the fire from her, Father Bonin was giving the last rites to one whose spirit even then was fluttering to be free. About them expressionless eyes looked out from pinched, impassive faces. No one knew who would be stricken next, and there was no hope in their hearts.

Diana leaned the closer to the shrunken form on the rough bark shelf. The blue lips barely moved, the voice was hushed, as that which spoke from far away. "My hour has come, and I bless you, O maiden, once enemy, now friend. I go to the new world, the better world above the sun. I praise the Great Spirit that He has taken my man, my sons and my daughters. Now He gives me his last blessing. I go to join them in Heaven."

The eyelids fluttered and the head settled in the crook of the arm. Diana drew a thin, bark sheet over the still form. Father Greslon spoke softly. "It is a weary work, heartbreaking that we can do so little for them."

"You are Father Greslon." Diana's voice was grave. "You should not be here. This house has sickness and I can see that you are yet very weak. Come with me. We can do nothing more."

He looked at her thin lines and lean face. "I should not say that you are exactly robust, yourself, Diana."

"I have dropped about three stone. That's nothing. We all pinch our belts together and share alike. When we know we have done the best we can, then we don't feel so badly, do we?"

Father Greslon smiled, then shivered. Diana took quick alarm. "You must not stay out in the cold. Come to the log bastion. Father Ragueneau has a cabinet there and he's not using it."

"Are you not afraid yourself?"

"Why should I be? I'm young and strong. Three stone means nothing to me." She opened the cabinet door. "Yes, it's warm in here. Do sit down, Father, and tell me all about poor Father Garnier. You and Father Garreau found him."

Later, Father Greslon was making his report to the Father Superior. "I am not sure that we are correct about Diana," he said. "She seems quite a modest, retiring young woman. I do not think that she is insensible to the suffering about her. Rather, it is a magnificent self-control."

"Yes, she has self-control," Father Ragueneau conceded. "You did not succeed in your effort, then?"

Father Greslon looked at his hands. "A complete failure. I do not know her

secret. She holds it to herself."

"It must be brought to light. Its memory is as a festering wound. In the meantime, I am greatly pleased with her. She is a true angel of mercy to these unfortunate women."

That night Iroquois fires blazed upon the mainland and black figures could be seen passing before them. The Father Superior dismissed the affairs of Diana for more pressing business. He could not know that in the secrecy of her room she sat rubbing down a war bow, and that as she worked her eyes would stray to a quiver on the wall, filled with iron-tipped arrows.

When Gilles came on duty, she drew him aside. "I had a most interesting talk with Father Greslon. He told me about the Petuns wanting to kill him and Father Garreau, because someone started the report that they were plotting with the Iroquois."

Gilles jumped. His mouth hung open.

"I know what that slut of a Sunbeam has been saying," Diana continued calmly. "I don't intend to get an axe in the back of my head. Now, this is what I am going to do. The Iroquois are camped over there on the mainland. The first night the weather is right, I'm going over and kill some, just to prove Arakoua a liar."

"You couldn't do that. They would kill you," he gasped.

"If I don't go, I'm going to get my skull smashed in, anyhow."

"I will tell the captain," he declared. "He will lock you up."

"What about you? You've been talking to me a lot. I might be safe locked up. You are on night duty. Those Huron axes are messy things." She shrugged indifferently and waited for the threat to take effect.

"I never did anything!" he cried. "Why should they think that?"

"Why should they think at all? A Huron doesn't think often, when he does, he thinks wrong, and there's trouble. Of course, I don't count Annaotaka when I say this. He's a real warrior. Now listen to me!" she lowered her voice to a whisper, as she saw resolution weaken. "If we do nothing, we get killed without fail. If you follow my plan, we'll both get through. I know the Iroquois. They feel safe. We'll steal into their camp and axe those nearest us, then run for the fort. I can shoot an arrow with the best. You have a flintlock. Load it with half a dozen balls. They'll be surprised and just grab their axes. Once they are in the open, they won't face us. We will prove our good faith to the Hurons and raise their morale."

Gilles was stricken cold. It was not fear which stunned him. It was thought of the wrath of Father Ragueneau and Godfrey. Against this was the possibility

of a smashing blow of an unseen axe. Stout as was his courage, Gilles quailed at such a death. Diana's last words decided him. Neither the Father Superior nor Godfrey could discipline him for a successful expedition. He roundly cursed Arakoua and gave reluctant consent. Diana returned to her room with an enigmatic smile and fell to working over the arrows.

She had spent much time studying the fires on the mainland shore. They were grouped about a point, with one exception. That was a big fire, opposite the fort, a distance from the main camp of about a furlong. An outpost of a great chief, she decided, at a place convenient to divert attention when a mass attack was launched. She studied the figures as they moved about the fire and numbered them at a score. Twice she fancied she saw the outline of eagle feathers against the flames. It was there that she would strike the first night skies were overcast.

She laid her plans before Gilles. He concurred with enthusiasm, once that he was committed to the scheme. His was not the nature to wait patiently. He understood the sudden dash, the thrill of combat. The careful planning, the stalking of foes by day and by night were foreign to his nature. He prayed fervently for dark skies and storm clouds. As if in direct answer, they came two nights later.

XXX

THE WIND drove in wild thrusts over Thunder Strait. To Godfrey, watching from the eastern bastion, its howl and snap was as a thousand packs of timber wolves rushing through the black night and its bite as the slash of a fang. Eyes shaded by hand, he glanced anxiously toward the north. Fine snow stung his face. He looked toward the mainland, where the faint glow of a fire touched the drive of the storm. It was to be a night of doubt and alarm, watching, he feared, against a sudden rush of Iroquois from out of its furious depths.

Godfrey swore in dual tongue, slipped deerskin cloak over leather jerkin and commenced an inspection of the blockhouses. At the guardroom he stopped, slipped two pistols in a belt and slung snowshoes to back. Hand on musket, he turned to Sergeant Lausier. “Do you take my place on the ramparts, Robert. Now is the hour to warn the warriors, before danger of attack.”

From the postern he glanced toward the strait and blinked surprise. Two vague shapes seemed to move as spirits of the storm and merge with it. A fleeting glance he had but it aroused quick fears. He hurried to the salient blockhouse. Gilles was not there. He had left a short time before, the Hurons said, with musket and short-axe. Godfrey darted to Diana’s door. It was closed but unbarred. In the glow of the fire he saw that bow and quiver had been taken from the wall. With a lusty English oath, he ran back to the Huron guard. “You and you,” he pointed out the two most dependable men, “run as frightened deer to Annaotaka and say to him that I go to beat up the Hodenosaunee. Say I go to the fire by itself and that I do not expect to see him again unless he comes as the wind with his warriors.”

The Hurons uttered a deep “ho!” of admiration and were gone. Godfrey strapped on snowshoes and drifted into the welter of snow. Shoulders hunched, he cut diagonally across the ice to the mainland point. He was grateful to the push of the wind. It clawed quick rents in the opaque curtain so that he could see. He cursed and prayed alternately. Cursed the idiocy of Diana and Gilles in undertaking the mad venture and prayed that the full force of the blizzard would not strike until he had found them. To Annaotaka he gave no thought. He knew that the war chief would follow as he had asked.

Godfrey stopped suddenly, musket in crook of left arm, ready for instant use. From out of the crimson mist that was the chief’s fire came a wild yell. It sounded as if the Iroquois were high-running in blood-lust upon the storm’s wings. Two shadowy figures sprang before him and raced toward the island. As Godfrey leaped to join them, a muffled report was cut off by the smash of

the wind. He saw one stumble and fall. The other stopped. Godfrey cursed in impotent fury. His breath came in a gasp of relief as the second form straightened, bow in hand. The wind was with him. He gave a shout. “Run, Diana, run, I’ll hold them off!”

The bow was lowered. She made no move. A minute later he joined her. “Run!” he cried. “Escape! I’ll look after Gilles.”

She laughed a wild, throaty laugh that the wind caught up and sheered off, and the two stood guard over the figure sprawled at their feet. The snow beat with savage lash, and within its churning folds, shadowy forms crept close, as wolves closing in to kill. Two against twoscore, or more, Godfrey estimated. The odds were impossible. It was the end of the trail. He smiled bitterly. His mind was razor keen to kill, as sharp as on the palisades of St Louis, when he withheld fire to slay the Little Thunder. Now, he was searching the storm for the chief of the six eagle feathers. He laughed grimly at the jest fate had played on him. The life which he had once sought would go out with his; but the chief of the six eagle feathers would go with him.

His keen eyes marked him. The musket jumped to the shoulder. There was a spurt of flame, a red blast. The six eagle feathers dropped in a flurry of snow. Diana’s full-throated laugh came with a second flash and smothered report. Godfrey spun and dropped. A shrill cry spurred him to titanic effort. He rolled sidewise and with right hand plucked first one pistol, then the other from his belt. Arm outthrust on the ice in deliberate aim, he fired two rapid shots, and the two Iroquois musketmen disappeared. That much Godfrey saw and no more. He slumped beside Gilles.

A wild cry strangled in Diana’s throat. For the first time in her turbulent life she had consciously known fear. Not fear for herself, but for the man inert at her feet. She looked down once at his head, turned in a queer twist and an icy rage chilled her with the intensity of her hate. Under its cutting edge, mind and muscle co-ordinated into a ruthless fighting machine. She stood waiting to kill, a primitive warrior in a primitive world, the unleashed elements raging around her. Two arrows snarled in the wind as they flashed past. She laughed frostily and in a single motion raised bow and arrow notched to cord. There was a snap as cord touched bow, fingers again sought quiver for a new shaft. In an effortless rhythm that split each second to speed she launched a storm of death into the turmoil of the storm. It was marksmanship unexcelled, unerring judgment of wind and movement. In twoscore seconds a dozen shafts found their shifting marks. She exulted with bitter joy at the slaughter she had made, shouted with furious glee until the Iroquois recoiled before the winged death, broke and fled behind the drive of the swirling snow. Annaotaka found her bent over Godfrey, thoughtless of storm and foe.

Godfrey stirred at the crunch of many feet upon the snow, then struggled to sit up. “Give me an arm,” he gasped.

“No, Godfrey, no!” Diana cried. “We will carry you back.”

Annaotaka grunted surprise. Godfrey looked at him and the warriors about. “Knew you would come, my brother.” His voice grew stronger. “My heart is sad I cannot fight with your men of the Cord, O Chief.”

“We will fight the Hodenosaunee another moon, O Guardian of the River. A warrior will carry you to the great stone fortress.”

“My feet will carry me there. How is Gilles?”

Diana shook her head.

“I thought so from the way he fell,” Godfrey muttered. “Lend me a hand.”

“Should you,” she protested, “should you walk?”

“Ever have an Indian carry you on his back?” he asked in English. “It’s hell. Hurry, or we’ll have to fight our way out.”

“Where are you hit?” Diana helped him to his feet.

“Here.” He pointed to his left shoulder.

Despite protests, she quickly bound arm to side with her girdle, calling a warrior to adjust snowshoes. “And pick up my musket and pistols,” Godfrey added. “I would not lose them.”

Annaotaka returned from a quick survey of the battle-field. “The Beaver Pelt will fight no more.” He pointed a significant finger to the centre of the forehead. Then he held up three fingers. “These of the Hodenosaunee killed by lead. Four times these killed by arrows. The Little Thunder speaks as would a great war chief and her words are death. Not even the strongest warrior could have slain more.” There was deep reverence in his voice.

“By the fire on the point, O Chief, you will find other people of the Long House who know the edge of our short-axes. But this matter is urgent, O Annaotaka. Do you give me warriors to help us back to the fort.” She pointed to where Gilles lay in the snow. “Then do you follow and stand between us and the mainland.”

The chief grunted orders rapidly. The limp figure that was Gilles was hoisted to the back of a warrior and, with Diana by his side, Godfrey stumbled slowly toward the island. Annaotaka and a small party moved to where the Iroquois fell. The main body of threescore warriors sifted through the storm to the flare of the point camp.

A score of Hurons surrounded Diana with grunts of approval. The Hinonaia whom they had once feared was now one of them, and alone had

inflicted, a crushing defeat upon their hated foes. They muttered delight. Diana stared at Godfrey's drawn face with dismay. The full force of the blizzard broke upon them. No wounded man could battle his way against its raging drive. She was about to countermand his orders when he fell insensible against her. Snowshoes were cut from his feet and in a thrice he was on the back of a warrior. The party moved forward at a rapid pace.

Diana plodded beside Godfrey, a windbreak against the onslaught of the storm, peering with pain-touched eyes into his white face. To her the journey was an endless one, an eternity of doubt and suffering, as though she moved through a frightful dream, racing against death through a seething waste of grey phantoms that blocked her way. All sense of direction was lost. She went on blindly. It was not until she had given up hope of reaching shelter before Godfrey should perish from exposure that the leader gave a glad shout. The fort stood out a white mass before them.

With utter disregard of her protests the warriors laid Godfrey on the wide bench in the blockhouse cabinet. Gilles they dumped in the snow by the door. Diana had no time to berate their stupidity. She stirred up the fire and commenced to unlace Godfrey's jerkin. "Do one of you go at once to Aondecheté," she cried, "and say that Teanaosti is wounded and here."

To another she called. "Andouch was a warrior and he died as one, face to the enemy. Put him with the warriors by the next fire."

Action was a stimulus to her. Again she was the cold, calculating machine which had stood off the Iroquois. She eyed the blood-stained shirt without emotion and with hunting knife prepared to cut it away. So concentrated was her purpose that she did not hear Annaotaka enter the room. He grunted disapproval. "A wound given by an enemy should be seen at once."

He stooped, raised Godfrey and she drew off the shirt. Extreme cold had closed the wound quickly. Annaotaka pointed to the blue ridge back of the shoulder. Beneath it showed the outline of a slug. The chief reached for her knife. There was a cut, a twist of the blade and the slug flopped into his hand. The prod revived Godfrey. He opened his eyes. "Knew I could make it." He blinked at bare chest and arms. "Didn't do it."

The door opened and the Father Superior entered. Behind him came the sergeant, carrying dressing kit and steaming water pail. Father Ragueneau bent over Godfrey in deep concern. "An attack in the storm and you wounded, Godfrey! Not seriously, I hope."

"My brother is the bravest of warriors, O Aondecheté. He is second only to the Little Thunder. No, the people of the Long House have not hurt Teanaosti to death. Their muskets spoke fire and a lead stone went in there." Annaotaka

pointed to a round, blue and red hole in Godfrey's shoulder. "Here is the lead stone."

"That is good." The Father Superior examined the slug. "The shoulder is broken."

"It is nothing." Annaotaka shrugged disinterest.

Surgeon Pinar and Apothecary Molère arrived. Father Ragueneau nodded to them. "We will clean the wound and set the shoulder in a few minutes." Diana was sent for a beaver robe and fresh water. When she returned the dressing was finished. The sergeant spoke up. "Shall I send a litter, sir?"

The Father Superior saw Diana's face harden. "Not just yet. Bring some warm broth from the pot."

Godfrey stirred uneasily, opened his eyes and took a sip of water. "Feeling better, Godfrey?" Diana asked.

He nodded and closed his eyes. Father Ragueneau looked at Diana in silent interrogation. "It was all my fault. Gilles lies in the guardroom—dead."

"Gilles dead!" The Father Superior sank back on the bench. "Tell me all."

Diana was coldly quiet. Her story omitted nothing. Father Ragueneau heard every detail of the Huron plot against her, of the raid made on the Iroquois camp and of the fight waged in the blizzard. Only Arakoua's name was omitted.

Annaotaka stared at her with unblinking eyes.

"There was no other trail to take, my brother, Aondecheté. My people are fools, even as the people of the Blue Hills. They are bewitched by evil spirits. The Little Thunder did not kill Andouch. She is a great warrior. Behold!" He touched a grisly cluster of fresh scalps at his girdle. "She killed as a great war chief kills and she put fresh heart into my people."

"I can see the advantages," Father Ragueneau said in French. "What you did, Diana, was apparently necessary. It is regrettable. I am hurt that you did not take me into your confidence. All this might have been avoided."

"It was a private war, Father. If Gilles had not bungled there would have been no fight."

"I do not accept your explanation." Father Ragueneau saw Annaotaka watching him curiously. He spoke in Huron. "My mouth was saying that while your words were good, my brother, the Little Thunder should have spoken her mind to me. I am angry with her."

Annaotaka smiled cynically. "When a great war chief makes war he does not ask should he wet the short-axe. He asks who will come with him and wet them." He looked at Diana with sharp eyes. "Some snake among my people

spoke evil words against you, O Little Thunder. I, Annaotaka, war chief of my people ask you the name of that snake."

She slowly shook her head. "I am sorry, O great chief. My mouth may not accuse where my eyes did not see."

"The answer is well given." Annaotaka nodded. "You speak as a chief should speak."

The sergeant returned with the broth. Father Ragueneau glanced at Godfrey. He was sleeping. "We will not awaken him. Do you bring a litter, Sergeant. Gilles Joinville lies dead in the guardroom. Take his body to be prepared for burial. Then return here and we will remove the captain."

Diana's face went white. "Mon père, you would not take Godfrey away. He needs nursing and I will be his nurse. If you take him away, I may not be his nurse. You could not do that to me."

"What other can I do, my child?" The Father Superior's voice was filled with compassion. "I may not leave him alone."

"I understand that, Your Reverence," she said desperately. "There is one way out."

"I understand what you suggest." The Father Superior studied her with kindly eyes. He marked the hard-drawn face, the determined, thin line of the mouth, but more than anything he marked what he saw in the depths of the glowing, burning eyes. "My poor daughter, what am I to do? Do not think me harsh. I understand you better than you do yourself. I understand even those terrible thoughts you are concealing from me."

She laughed softly, mirthlessly. "Yet you will not marry us! You could order that he be kept under guard in this room. Then I could look after him. If Godfrey is here, Annaotaka will see that this bastion is guarded so closely not even a rat could get in."

Father Ragueneau looked from Diana to Godfrey, to Annaotaka and about the room. He saw the force of her reasoning. The chief watched him closely. He did not understand the French that they spoke, but he did understand the language of the eyes. He strode to Godfrey, and deaf to the Father Superior's wrathful injunctions prodded the sleeper awake. "Listen well, O Teanaosti," he bellowed. "Words of counsel are being spoken. Open your ears!"

He turned to Diana with a grim smile, as Godfrey blinked his eyes. She took quick advantage of his wakefulness. "Listen, Godfrey! Father Ragueneau is going to move you to the fort. I'm not going to stay here, if he does. You can remain in this room, if you insist. Suit yourself."

Father Ragueneau looked into Diana's eyes and shook his head in sorrow.

“That was not quite fair, what you did, my daughter.”

Godfrey moved his head. Faint colour touched his cheeks. “I would ask, mon père, that I be left in this bastion.”

The Father Superior eyed him thoughtfully. “Are you quite sure you wish to remain here, Godfrey? You are a sick man and this is a most exposed position. I speak now as one who holds you in the light of a son.”

“Thank you, mon père,” Godfrey said weakly. “I would feel more contented here.”

Father Ragueneau sighed, shook his head, and sighing smiled. “So be it then. We will not move you.”

XXXI

IT WAS the beauty that comes after the storm, the peace which follows strife. Diana peered through the narrow, musket slit in the blockhouse wall and saw Ahouêndoë as a fairyland wrought in crystal. In the dark night hours, the blizzard had raged its way across Huronia, leaving in its wake a miracle of glistening beauty. Each bush, each tree, even the lofty crests of the ancient pines, were weighted down with a clinging load of snow. Palisades were cloaked in fresh whiteness, blockhouses mantled in pallid splendour.

The sun crept above the skyline, and its cold light was caught up and reflected as a shower of star-dust fallen upon the earth, turning the white world into a thing of unreal, unearthly beauty—a divine touch of the Great Architect, so that perverse man might glimpse something of the glories concealed from him and not go through life unaware of that which is his spiritual inheritance. Diana caught her breath. "God," she murmured, "how wonderful, how—" She thought of the swirl of the storm, the turmoil of death and bloodshed that bore this peace and beauty—and of Godfrey. She drew a hissing breath.

Apothecary Molère shifted his bulk drowsily and blinked an eye at her from the corner of the bench, as she bent over Godfrey. She saw his mouth tighten in pain and a quick revulsion seized her. That jewelled world, which had so stirred her, was nothing but a sham. It was treacherous, deadly in hidden menace.

Godfrey's lids fluttered and he smiled. Her breath caught in her throat. Nature, itself, might be merciless, she thought, but there was a divine providence which was not without compassionate understanding. Otherwise, Gilles might not have been the one taken. In his infinite mercy God had protected Godfrey, and He had made the morning bright with a beauty beyond the finest craft of man. She grew humble and contrite. Tears coursed down her cheeks, as Godfrey looked up. He stared at her and made to rise. "No, No!" She laid a restraining hand on his forehead. "Lie still, please."

"You are crying," he muttered. "What for?"

"I'm crying because I feel happy you are here." She smiled through her tears.

Godfrey closed his eyes, then opened them again. "Why did you go out like you did?" His voice was stronger.

"I had to." She dropped to her knees by his side. "Surely, you are most stupid, Godfrey, just as all men are stupid."

It was then that Sergeant Lausier came to relieve Master Molère, bringing

with him hot gruel for Godfrey. He curled his long frame upon the bench to ply Diana with questions. “Do you wait a minute, Robert,” she said, “and I will get some fresh water. And remember, I’m captain in this room. Private Bethune isn’t to speak. He must conserve his strength.”

When she returned Godfrey was sleeping again. “He’s completely exhausted. Long hours and worries have worn down his resistance. Nothing left, that’s what I am afraid of. When is Gilles—” She stopped, and looked anxiously at the sergeant.

“Just over. Came here at once.”

“It’s terrible,” she whispered. “Yet, if we hadn’t done what we did, both Godfrey and I would have been killed.”

“I know it; so does the Father Superior. He and Annaotaka sat up talking until His Reverence went to private devotions.” Sergeant Lausier squinted out of the musket slit. “Here comes that imp of hell, Arakoua. I’m sure she’s at the bottom of this.”

“You keep watch. I want to see her.” Diana opened the door and stepped out. Arakoua walked slowly through the deep snow, head bowed, eyes unseeing. “O Sunbeam that no longer shines,” Diana commenced without pity, “you would have an axeman cut open my head and the head of the Guardian of the River. And what did your wicked acts do? They skinned your Beaver Pelt. He was a brave warrior and now he is dead, put away in the cold ground to freeze.”

Arakoua stood hand over heart. Her eyes dilated with the hate that consumed her. “You lie, O wolf bitch that you are, you lie! You bewitched him. You wanted him and he is gone from you.”

“Words from a lying tongue,” Diana answered contemptuously. “I never wanted Beaver Pelt. I wanted the Guardian of the River and I have him in that room. Beware, O Sunbeam that shines no more! You tried to kill me and my man, and you killed one whom you did not want to kill. My mouth says beware again, lest my axe be red with your blood. Harm one hair of my man’s head, and much as I love your father you die.”

“I will burn you both!” Arakoua shrieked her threat and fled.

“That girl acted as if you cut her to pieces,” the sergeant commented.

“I did.” Diana answered harshly. “I cut her heart out; and I intended to do it.”

“I understand enough Huron to get what you said.” Sergeant Robert eyed her curiously. “Didn’t you think she was suffering pretty badly, as it was?”

“Not nearly enough. She was a traitor and she’ll be one again. I wanted to

warn her."

"You did that," he admitted with feeling. "You jarred her right to the soul."

"If she has one. You might tell Father Ragueneau what I said."

"You tell him." The sergeant sat back on the bench, shaking a disapproving head. There was silence in the room.

Not one of the three had seen Annaotaka come to the corner of the bastion, stop and listen. When Arakoua fled, he moved noiselessly and met her at his forest blockhouse. He clutched her arm and eyed her in cold rage. "I heard words that were as arrows to my heart," he snarled. "I, your father, say to you thus and thus say I: twice evil spirits have bewitched you and twice you have killed men. The first time, when the Hodenosaunee burned the ondakis, I spoke in this way: I said, 'I am of three minds. One that you are unworthy to live. One that I should disown you forever. One that you may come and retrieve yourself, if you can.' That last was my mind. I say this time that you deserve to die, that you are no longer of my blood. I say that the next time you die."

"You will give my place to the Little Thunder!"

"Silence, wretch!" He slapped her across the face. "The Little Thunder is a great chief. She fights her enemies to the face. Remember Enons! You will go to the long house. My annonchia is closed to you." He slapped her again.

She fled with a strangled sob of despair and defiance. Annaotaka watched her with eyes of granite, then strode into the forest where he studied a cluster of snow-laden cedars, glanced wanly about and saw no one, except the Father Superior at the postern gate.

Father Ragueneau slowly walked to the sentinel blockhouse and knocked ceremoniously upon the door. "Ah, good morning, Madame Chatelaine. How is Monsieur le Capitaine, this morning?"

"He had some gruel a short time ago, mon père, and went to sleep again. He has just awakened."

"You mean when I knocked?"

"Oh, no, Father. It was before you came."

"So this is the patient." Father Ragueneau held up a restraining hand, as Godfrey moved. "Lie still, my lad, no need for formality. You must submit to orders without question."

He nodded to Diana. "If you are to keep up your strength, you must have fresh air. Take a walk. The sergeant and I will see your patient keeps quiet. No, do not thank me. Just slip on your cloak."

The Father Superior stared at Godfrey and fingered his short moustache. "You know, my boy, you should be in the hospital."

“I would sooner be here, mon père.”

“I am pleased at that. I was in somewhat of a dilemma. Diana is a wilful woman. She was determined to nurse you, or—” He hesitated. “Annaotaka was equally determined that she should.”

Godfrey grinned faintly. “He nearly poked his finger through my ribs.”

“Against my positive orders. The chief is a good friend and a reliable ally, even if, at the same time, he has a deadly disposition. When he acted so obstinately I imagined he had a good cause, so I put my scruples aside and let you remain.”

“I wish you would tell me what happened, mon père. I will never get the story from Diana.”

Father Ragueneau’s brows wrinkled. “It was a magnificent example of courage, though I confess that I would rather it had been less bloody in conception and execution. From what Annaotaka tells me, Diana duplicated one of his feats. In the storm she and Gilles stole upon the sleeping Iroquois and killed ten of them while they slept. Gilles was not expert at that sort of work. He made a false blow with his short-axe and the outcry of the victim awakened the camp. They had also under-estimated their number. Annaotaka said he never saw such a splendid fight as she put up with her bow.”

“It was a reckless thing,” Godfrey muttered. “Why did she do it?”

“Primarily, I imagine, to prove to the Hurons she was no ally of the Iroquois. I fancy, she also saved the entire community from disunity.” The Father Superior stopped impressively. “Someone was spreading lies which might have resulted in a situation similar to that of St. Mathias.”

“Arakoua is the guilty one. She has been trying to stir up trouble.”

“Annaotaka had the same thought, I know. Diana studiously suppressed her name and I did not press her. If as I suspected, her answer could only cause embarrassment to the chief.”

Diana returned, cheeks red from the nip of the frost. “I have something to tell you, Father,” she said. “I met Arakoua and told her what I knew.”

When she finished, Father Ragueneau shook his head sorrowfully. “You did not show a Christian spirit, even though I admit provocation, and that the success of our work was in the balance. Yet, that does not justify your open malice and this must be painful to Annaotaka. Though not of our faith, he is a stout prop in the mission’s defence. I only wish the Christian chiefs had more of his spirit and enterprise. Then they would not sit by their fires but would give their people true leadership. Your foray raised their spirits as would a feast, and, alas, nothing is more precious than food.”

The door was flung open with a crash. Annaotaka stalked in, bark bundle under an arm. He grunted in the general direction of Father Ragueneau and Godfrey. Sergeant Robert he ignored, to raise a ceremonious hand before Diana. “O Little Thunder, I, Annaotaka, speak to you as a daughter whose spirit is of my spirit, whose arm so strong in war is of my arm, whose heart so resolute to fight is of my heart. Your tongue spoke words of truth to a woman known as the Sunbeam. I, Annaotaka, heard these words you spoke, and I spoke my words to this woman as the supreme chief of the Cord Clan. My words were just words, as were your words. There is no more to say, my daughter, O Little Thunder.”

Diana gulped in her surprise. The Father Superior and Godfrey listened in stupefied amazement. Annaotaka held out the package to her. “For you to use, O Little Thunder. When you fight for one life, the lives of others are as nothing to you. You fight as a daughter of my spirit should fight. With short-axe and arrow you fight, and a warrior has need of his strength. Behold this! One of my best dogs and ready for the pot. You take him. Hide and freeze what you would keep against other suns. Meat will make you strong. It is for you and my brother, the Guardian of the River.” He paused at the door. “The spirits turned their faces from us when you came on the earth.”

Father Ragueneau stared at the log wall. “A modified form of adoption, such as the chief thought would be acceptable to us,” he murmured. “He has cast Arakoua forth and taken Hinonaia in her place.”

Diana stared at him. She said nothing.

“A great honour.” Godfrey smiled weakly. “Why not? He can appreciate a good fighter better than anything else. And both are somewhat deadly.”

Father Ragueneau’s fingers twitched at his upper lip.

Diana ignored the pleasantry. “What did he mean when he said that about the spirits turning away when I was born?”

“He was trying to say you should have been born a Huron,” Godfrey murmured.

The Father Superior glanced toward the package. “A gift of princely generosity.”

In the days that followed Diana had reason to be grateful to Annaotaka for his bounty.

Sickness had forced the door of the blockhouse and Godfrey tossed in delirium upon his pallet. Diana, hard of face, eyes burning with intensity of purpose, stood ready at all hours of day and night to administer herbal preparations concocted by Apothecary Molère. Father Ragueneau, gaunt of face, heavy of eyes, would steal what time he could to sit beside the wasted

form, tied to a bench to protect the injured shoulder. He glanced to the drawn face of Diana and gently said, “It is better this way, my daughter. Had it been otherwise, he would surely have weakened himself by over-work, and would not have given up until the disease might well have progressed to a point where it could not be checked.”

Diana forced a smile. She knew that no one worked longer hours than the Father Superior himself, or took greater risks of contracting the epidemic.

For, in such a season of tribulation were men’s faith tempered and the Father Superior wrote, with a glow of humble pride, reports of service which considered neither disease nor death in their giving:

> “There are but few among the living who do not exist by our aid, hardly one among the dead who was not grateful to us for our charity. Indeed, we are hailed as the fathers of this country and the Faith has found a great support, there being as many as 2,700 conversions during the last 13 months. It is true that our scanty provisions could not have kept alive more than one out of 10 refugees. Even though everything should fail, never, God helping, shall courage, patience and hope be wanting. For love can do all things and endure all things. This solemn assertion I can make of all the fathers living here. Their hearts are ready for any venture, and they dread neither cross, danger or torture.”

Then Father Ragueneau laid aside the quill, closed weary eyes, only to open them with a frown. There was more to be written:

> “Could I picture our misery in its true light, one could not refrain from weeping at the mere thought of it. Even though we seek out the most urgent cases for help, the best we can do is to prolong life for a few more days. It is a familiar sight to see nursing children dead on the breasts of their mothers, who lack strength to push them into a grave. Or a living child still sucking at the cold breast of its mother. All these things we have seen and more.
>
> “It is reported that some, driven wild with hunger, have devoured rotten carcasses of dead dogs, human refuse, and have even dug out corpses from the ground and eaten them. Worse still, in some houses, when death occurred, the body was cut up and thrown into the kettle to keep the others alive.”

The Father Superior dropped his quill and stared at the wall. He recalled that there had been few burials from the houses of the pagan Cord Clan. His

frown deepened into a scowl. If such a condition existed, it should not be tolerated a day longer. He arose and paced the floor in his agitation. He would visit the houses of Annaotaka and his people on the morrow and inspect their food pots.

XXXII

ANNAOTAKA met the Father Superior at the forest blockhouse. Father Ragueneau eyed him sternly. He spoke with the edge of condemnation on his voice. “O great chief, my heart has sent me here to ask if you and your people are offended; for my eyes tell me that neither you, nor your warriors will share our simple food. It is not that you no longer eat, for I know that even now there is food stewing in your kettles over the fire.” Father Ragueneau nodded significantly to one of the long houses of ten fires, which stood close to the forest blockhouse.

The chief’s eyes narrowed. “My heart bids my tongue speak sad words. It would say that Aondecheté doubts my friendship. I will answer by inviting Aondecheté to come and look at our food pots. He will go first to the big house where he desires and his own eyes will behold what they shall see.”

Silently and with doubt questioning his mind, the Father Superior accompanied Annaotaka. There he noted with grave misgivings that warriors and women, though lean, showed none of the inertia of the emaciated Christians. They were alert, eyes were bright. He moved to the nearest pot, simmering over the fire. Arakoua laughed and shrugged her derision. Annaotaka was at her side in two strides. “You are a woman of this house, nothing more,” he rasped. “No one gives the insult to my guest.” He knocked her down.

Father Ragueneau ignored the unpleasantness. He stooped over the pot. “And the meat is?”

“The meat is gagnenon.” Annaotaka took a wooden ladle and scooped up some joints. “I ordered them all killed when the hard frosts came. I saw that they would fade as my people did fade. Why let them grow lean when the frost will keep them as they are? My people have enough left for five suns.”

“My heart rejoices at your words, O great chief. I was afraid, for there have been no burials from your houses. Were there no sick?”

“There were sick and there are people who now live in the Land of the Shades. We did not keep them, for they were more use to us in the pot. They helped us save our dogs against time of want.”

“My heart bleeds that you and your people should eat of forbidden flesh.” The Father Superior spoke with stern accusation. “Why is it that you should put this insult upon me and my village? Is that an act of a brother?”

Annaotaka’s face grew black, then lightened. “My brother speaks words that my ears did not expect; but they were words that should have been said. I

see that my thoughts were not good thoughts. They forgot we are guests in his aonchia. Had we remembered this, we should not have eaten such food. We shall do so no more."

Father Ragueneau looked at Annaotaka with searching eyes. He mistrusted such quick acquiescence. "My brother speaks good words and they close the hurt in my heart. I know that such a thing will not occur again."

The chief pointed toward the door. "Outside, O Aondecheté, there are covered holes that run as the sun moves. In them are your people who once were my people. Our stomach was not easy when we ate our own people. We only did so because it is the year of the great famine. We shall not do so again."

"I am satisfied, O Annaotaka. My heart grieves that we should not all live and die in the true faith, together."

"It is not to be, O Aondecheté. My people hold to the ancient faith, and we will eat and live. I am not finished, O my brother. Hear my words out," he added, as Father Ragueneau would have protested. "We will go forth, take our enemies and them we will eat. No, do not raise your hand as one who would say unjust words. I know my mind. There will be no torture fires, for this is your aonchia. We will knock them over the head, as we would knock over a wounded buck; and they will keep us alive to kill more of their people."

"Do you think, O Chief, that these words are such as my ears would hear?"

"They are words that are spoken," Annaotaka said with cold finality. "We have not deserted your belief, for we never accepted it. We do not bow our heads, for we live by our ancient laws. We eat to fight and we fight that your people may live."

With these words the Father Superior had to be content. That night Annaotaka came to the salient blockhouse. He crashed the door open and with a jerk of the hand dismissed the indignant Master Molère to outer darkness. Diana noted with subdued excitement that he wore six eagle feathers and was painted for war. Short-axe hung at belt, long knife was bared at thigh. He raised his hand as one salutes an equal, then stared at Godfrey, motionless on his pallet. "With you, O my daughter, we could make great slaughter. But your place is with my brother, the Guardian of the River. You stay and fight for him. I bring you something for this fight that is better than arrows."

He grunted an order over his shoulder. Arakoua entered, head high, eyes glittering. She deposited the frozen carcasses of two dogs on the bench and with slow, defiant steps walked from the room.

Diana gasped. "O, great chief, your big heart makes my small one sing. Yet you bring ashes with your gift. You came with an unwilling bearer."

“You have the heart of a warrior. She has the heart of a bewitched woman.” He scowled blackly. “My brother, the great Aondecheté, came to her house and she treated him as an unwelcome guest. She came here an unwelcome messenger. She is treated justly.”

“It is a gift of a great heart, O my father.” Diana said gratefully. “Your last gift made new blood in his veins. You are plundering yourself for us.”

“My last gagnenons,” he said proudly. “It is nothing. I go for fresh meat. Will my brother soon take the trail again?”

Diana glanced toward Godfrey and raised clenched hands in quick alarm. Annaotaka’s boisterous entrance, his stentorian voice had not aroused him. She ran and put her face close to his, eyes wide with anxiety that surged upward. He was breathing heavily. She touched his face. It was hot, burning. The chief stepped to her side. He put a hand on Godfrey’s forehead and scowled. “The fire inside him has flared up. It will burn out again. My heart knows that, for my eyes have seen it done. It burns and consumes nothing.”

“Your words hearten me,” she replied, touched Godfrey lightly and stood to face Annaotaka, eyes aflame. “Hear well what I say, O supreme chief,” she whispered fiercely. “My heart would sing if I could go on the same trail with you. I would take short-axe and arrows and pay my debt to him.”

“The axe and the arrow and the heart strong in hate,” the chief applauded. “My daughter, the Little Thunder, would go and pay a blood debt for her man. The Sunbeam will not pay a debt for the man whom she had killed. She is a daughter of mine no longer.” His face twisted in rage. The door slammed and he was gone.

Diana glanced at Godfrey, then ran outside. An Indian boy was shuffling past, a skeleton that moved with feet of lead. She bade him summon Master Molère from his dispensary in the adjoining blockhouse. The apothecary came, ample folds of face puckered with rage. All thought of Annaotaka’s affront vanished before Diana’s rush of words. He waddled over to Godfrey, stared at him with serious eyes. “The chief summed it shrewdly,” he wheezed. “I have seen many cases such as this.”

“And they recovered?”

“Some did. I have a medication that may help.” He made ponderous way to the dispensary to prepare it, saying as he went, “We were fortunate to catch this at the beginning.”

Diana felt weak. She dropped to the bench and sat staring at Godfrey. Slowly she straightened. Her strength returned. She carried Annaotaka’s gift to the platform by the upper loopholes, where the intense cold of the outer air would preserve it until required. Master Molère returned, cup in hand, as she

climbed down the ladder. By dint of persuasive persistence, he aroused Godfrey to stupefied effort and made him swallow a draught of medicine. Diana was surprised at its soothing qualities. A new respect was born in her for the apothecary.

"Nothing more to be done for the present," he whispered shrilly, seeing her questioning eyes. "I will give him another dose in three hours. In the meantime, hope for the best." He slumped on the bench.

Diana sat by Godfrey and held his hot hand in hers. She was more grateful to Annaotaka for his kindness than the chief knew. Father Ragueneau had sent her chickens to make broth for Godfrey and herself, and those chickens were precious beyond their weight in gold. Slowly live-stock were being slaughtered to augment the daily ration and the extra supplies issued to Godfrey and her came out of the common pot. She did not wish that others should suffer deprivation that she might enjoy even a rough luxury.

The additional demands upon the meagre food resources grew as the corn bins emptied. There was the return of Father René Ménard when his parishioners of St. Charles, on the east shore of Lake Huron, scattered to seek greater measure of food and safety. Numerous Huron fugitives had set out with Father Ménard, on a sixty-league journey from the Algonquin country to Christian Island and they arrived shadows of men in direst straits. Here were fourscore more mouths to feed, with but a pittance to distribute among them.

Diana had protested to Father Ragueneau that she should not share the same fare as prescribed for Godfrey and he had denied her protest. "We are all fighting for his recovery, and we are depending on you to do your share. If you do not keep up your strength the battle may be lost. No, my daughter, you must accept the duties which you assumed and be governed accordingly."

Annaotaka's generosity had made her free of the fort larder for the time, and she was relieved by the thought that Annaotaka would replenish his supplies with food in the moccasin. Her attitude would have grieved Father Ragueneau to the depths of his being; but he would remain in ignorance of what she thought. Diana was a realist. She considered it futile to observe the niceties of mere convention. A definite condition existed. It must be met in a decisive way. The ancient Indian way was the effective way. Early in the morning hours, when she heard voices raised in Iroquois songs, she smiled. They told her that Annaotaka's foray had been successful. He had brought back prisoners and they were defiant to prove their courage.

Later that morning, her face was set and hard. Godfrey lay in a stupor. Frantically she sent for the Father Superior and he came at once. "It is exhaustion," he diagnosed. "The result of days and weeks of over-work,

overtaxing his strength. Nature demands her own cure. The influenza has run its course, I hope. We must try to give him nourishment. He has strong recuperative faculties to assist him."

When Father Ragueneau told heavily of Annaotaka's raid and the score of prisoners which he brought back, Diana ceased to listen. Something within her had hardened to granite and that something was her soul. She watched without emotion while Apothecary Molère administered a new concoction and as a woman of stone saw him shake his head. By the hour she tended the fire, chafed Godfrey's hands or sat and stared at him. That night she took her new supply of arrows and worked industriously, scraping them to perfectly balanced messengers of death.

The days came and went. Godfrey showed no sign of improvement. Master Molère had gone to the dispensary to mix a new prescription and Diana was rubbing grease into her bow, when Annaotaka stamped into the room. He gave a quick, comprehending look and grunted. "The way of a warrior, O my daughter. Only women weep. There will be a great slaughter, you for your man, I for a brother."

She nodded, hard of eye. "You speak wisdom, O my father. You and I, together. We will take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—yes and more will we take."

"The law of our people. By the moon we paid the blood debt for Beaver Pelt. Many killed and prisoners taken." He scowled, strode to Godfrey and raised a hand. "My brother, I say this to you, I, Annaotaka. If you go to the Land of the Shades many warriors of the Long House go with you, as your slaves."

"And I go with him," Diana said evenly.

"With your warrior slaves, as a great war chief should go. That is right and good," Annaotaka grunted approval. He passed Master Molère and Arakoua with contemptuous indifference.

The apothecary was eyeing Arakoua with sour hostility. "Why should I be burdened with you, O wretched woman?"

"The reed is not frozen." Arakoua cocked her head at his fluted piping. "It is the fat squeezing out his voice. It makes it thin like a stretched skin."

Master Molère shook. His eighteen stone trembled in a vast upheaval of anger. "You are a hussy. Go away."

"Do not leave me, O mountain of a man!" she cried. "I want words of wisdom about Heaven."

The apothecary's ample mouth opened. Arakoua examined it critically. "A

jaw that could bite as a wolf."

His teeth clicked shut. "I have no time to listen to fool words. Teanaosti lies sick, perhaps to the death. I go to make medicine for him. What do you want to know?" He scowled.

"Is my Andouch in Heaven?"

Master Molère snorted. "He should be. How do I know?"

"He is there," she said with conviction.

"Then why did you stop me?" The thin voice soared in protest. "You are a perverse woman."

"Be still, O fat sack!" Arakoua stamped her foot. "I have things to ask."

"Ask quick, then, O idiot. I have work to do and the air is cold. I give you three breaths of the Captain."

Arakoua came to the point. She knew how rapidly the clock ticked off each second. "When I go to Heaven do I have my Beaver Pelt to myself?"

The apothecary's bulk rippled with a jerk of surprise. His jaw dropped. "When you go—go where?"

"To Heaven," she snapped. "Remember the Captain is breathing."

"I will give the Captain a few more breaths." He eyed her curiously. "What makes you think, O wilful woman, that you will go to Heaven?"

"Andouch is there. I go to get him."

"Is that all, the only thing you go for?" He rubbed his great hands against a greater girth.

"It is enough. I want my Beaver Pelt."

"Why go to Heaven? You won't get him there."

"You said he was in Heaven. I will go there and get him."

"Getting to Heaven isn't as easy as that." He wrinkled his thick lips. "And another thing, there is no marriage, or giving in marriage, in Heaven."

Arakoua jumped. "No taking a man in Heaven! Who said that?"

Master Molère looked at her with quiet satisfaction. "It was said by the Great Keeper of the Wampums. What else does your mind ask?"

"I put my mark upon him. Andouch has the mark of the Cord," she said fiercely.

"I saw no mark." The apothecary snorted. "You say words. They mean no more than the wind."

"He believes I am his woman. His spirit knows it."

"You lie, O fool. He did not believe that. And you cannot put a mark upon

a spirit.” Master Molère made to turn away.

“He bears my mark, O fat worm with wind in his belly,” she snarled.

The apothecary’s face was a red smudge. He squealed at her. “O bitter wench that knows everything, do you know that the Great Keeper of the Wampums says that on Judgment Day the earth shall give up its dead, that they shall arise from the grave whole? Where will your mark of the Cord be then? Go from me, O woman without a mind.”

“Hinonaia? Will she go to Heaven?”

“I should think so. What is it to you, O curious one?”

“And Teanaosti?”

“Most certainly.”

“And she will meet Andouch and Teanaosti, there?”

“Who? The Little Thunder! Why not?”

“And Andouch won’t have my mark on him?”

Apothecary Molère scowled at her. “Listen, O fool, I have many things to do. You have nothing to do because you are a fool. Now, go you and do nothing.” He puffed away, leaving Arakoua staring thoughtfully after him, fists clenched in front of her.

XXXIII

THE BELL of St. Joseph's clanged. Diana awoke with a start, every nerve taut at the resonant note of danger. In effortless motion she swung to the floor. Fully clothed, she was ready at all hours to slip into the adjoining cabinet where Godfrey lay.

She saw that the heavy oak door was ajar. Involuntarily as the hissing breath which she drew, her hands snatched the ice-club beside the water bucket and she rushed into the room. In the firelight Arakoua was standing over Godfrey, hunting knife in hand. The club flashed in a perfect throw. Arakoua slumped over the unconscious form before her.

Diana threw herself forward, spinning a foot-bench across the room to bash a pair of stout legs. Master Molère stirred in the corner. He groaned his eyes open, blinked and saw Diana grab at Arakoua. There was a crash. Pallet spilled to the floor in a tangle of arms and legs. The apothecary let out a rousing yell, scrambled to his feet and caught a glimpse of a muscular hand about Arakoua's throat before a foot drove into his ample paunch. He doubled to the ground with a thin whistle of agony. A voice snarled, "Get away, you fool; I'm going to kill this slut."

Shouts came from the door. Louis Desfosses and five Cord warriors rushed from the guardroom. Louis looked once, saw Godfrey stretched beneath Arakoua with Diana sprawled across her, slowly choking out her life. He gave an expert tap on the wrist with knife-handle and Diana's fingers opened nervelessly. Her eyes flared into his with such devouring fire that he jerked back. The Hurons grunted and drew together. Apothecary Molère sat up, pain plucking his mouth, eyes bright with ire. He gazed into Diana's and shut his own. "Lamps of hell," he groaned and crossed himself.

Diana scrambled to her feet, kicked the unconscious Arakoua and gave a sharp cry. The bronze hilt of the hunting knife stood up from Godfrey's side. Louis saw it at the same second. He gave Arakoua a savage tug. "Don't touch it!" he cried to Diana. "This is Molère's job."

He pointed to the warriors. "Do you go at once to Aondecheté and bid him come with hot water and lint. And you! do you say to Annaotaka to come with the speed of an arrow. And you, and you, and you! Keep watch by the door and see no one leaves here."

As he spoke, Diana turned to the apothecary and dispassionately kicked him thrice. Thoroughly cowed by the flaming fury of her eyes, he puffed to his feet without protest. The pallet was hurriedly remade and under his directions

Godfrey lifted upon it. His eyes fluttered and opened. “Where am I?” he whispered. “Oh, yes! I have been asleep.”

Diana’s hands went to her heart. She swallowed. Louis spoke quickly. “Lie quiet, sir. You rolled off the bench, and a knife stuck in you. It’s not much. Don’t move, sir.”

Godfrey raised his head and saw Arakoua lying inert on the floor. He grinned at Diana. “Has guts, that girl; wager on you to win.”

Diana laughed with a touch of hysteria. “The best wager is that you are yourself again.” She turned her head quickly. “Keep an eye on her, Louis, she’s coming out of it.”

“I’ll keep her, don’t worry,” Louis growled.

Arakoua sat up, explored throat and head with careful fingers. She glared at Diana as the Father Superior entered. He measured the situation in a glance. “Has Annaotaka been summoned?”

“Yes, Your Reverence. I sent for him at once.” Louis came to attention. “The same time I sent for you, sir.”

Father Ragueneau stood over Godfrey, placed a hand upon his forehead and smiled. “That is fine, my lad. There is no sign of fever and you are yourself again.” He bent down to examine the knife with Apothecary Molère. “What do you make of this?”

“I see no damage, Father. Just a flesh wound. The blade stuck in his jacket.”

Surgeon Pinar entered with hot water and bandages. The Father Superior waited in silence until the dressing was finished, then dismissed all from the room, except Diana, Arakoua and Master Molère. The knife he ordered left on the bench to await Annaotaka. The chief arrived, stony of eye. “I come, O Aondecheté, as the supreme chief of my people.” He raised a hand in solemn ceremony.

The Father Superior’s mouth lost its grim line. “Your words, O Annaotaka, are words that I expected your heart to say.”

“I say such words because my heart is good.” Annaotaka’s eyes flashed from the hunting knife, to Arakoua, standing sulkily apart from the others, then to Godfrey. “To see your eyes open, O Guardian of the River, is as sunshine to my eyes. You are well once more.”

“Not well, O great chief, but soon to be well,” Diana answered for Godfrey, hands clenched, white knuckles showing.

“It is the same to a warrior.” Annaotaka looked from Arakoua fingering her throat to Diana’s twitching fists. He smiled ironically. “My eyes tell me you

have been on the war trail, O Little Thunder. You made war against the Sunbeam and lo! she no longer shines. Will you, O Aondecheté, speak words that I may understand."

"My ears have heard nothing, O Chief. I waited that you might sit in council with me."

"The way of a warrior." Annaotaka was pleased. He turned to Master Molère. "You, O maker of good medicines, were keeping watch. What does your heart say?"

The apothecary turned a deep sloe colour. "I closed my eyes but lightly, after working the sun around. There was a flash of light, then blackness."

The chief stared at the speaker in open contempt. "My daughter, the Little Thunder, is a great warrior. She will speak words of sense."

"My words are few, O Aondecheté, O Annaotaka. I saw the Sunbeam bent over Teanaosti with knife blade bare. I threw a club and it struck true. I pulled her to the floor and the Guardian of the River fell with us. I wanted to kill the Sunbeam. That . . . that maker of medicine, there," she flecked a thumb toward the indignant Master Molère, "he gave an alarm, so the Sunbeam lives. Why not, O great chief, have her speak? You can judge her heart by her words."

The Father Superior had followed Diana's words with shocked eyes. He shook his head in dismay, as Annaotaka grunted satisfaction. "You speak as I, the supreme chief, would speak, O Little Thunder. To kill for your man is good." He looked at Godfrey and back to Diana. "My heart is glad and my heart is sad. Teanaosti is himself again and now the Little Thunder will not take the war trail with me. So gladness and sadness meet in my heart. What slaughter we should have made on the same war trail, my daughter, the Little Thunder, and I, Annaotaka! The Hdnenosaunee that would go as slaves to the Land of the Shades! The dead that lay before the palisades of Katdaria would have been as nothing."

Father Ragueneau straightened at Annaotaka's eulogy of Diana, of his acceptance of her as an equal. His mind shrewdly drove to the furthermost depths of Diana's plans and there was a dreadful analogy to be found in the sanguinary breaches of St. Louis. He saw she was nodding hearty assent as Annaotaka spoke.

Arakoua's eyes had grown bright with fear. At the chief's public adoption of Diana into the Cord Clan, defiance shrank within her. She shivered, as Annaotaka turned on her in cold ferocity. "We await what words you say, O Sunbeam. You will speak them to Aondecheté, grand chief of this aonchia, and to me, supreme chief of your people. And let there be nothing found behind your tongue!"

Her eyes searched the room in fear and defeat. The sight of Diana, coldly indifferent, drove fear from her heart in a burst of fury. She had been humiliated before the Little Thunder, made to tremble for her contemptuous amusement. Pride drew Arakoua to full stature. She faced her inquisitors in outward calm, inwardly a seething pit of fire. “And why, O great chief, should I not take my stand over Teanaosti, knife in hand? I claimed him before this Hinonaia came here to bewitch him. He was on his way to the Land of the Shades and I would put the mark of the Cord upon him. In the Place of the Hereafter he would be known as my man.”

She threw back her head and glared at Diana with eyes as hot as firebrands. Father Ragueneau spoke in a soft, slow voice. “My mind can see your mind in this act. It cannot see what you would gain.”

Arakoua pointed to Master Molère, tenderly feeling a lump on the side of his head. “That big bag, with a reed in his neck, told me that the dead would arise whole on Judgment Day. Teanaosti would arise as my man.”

The Father Superior nodded gravely. He looked questioningly at the purple-faced apothecary.

“It is as her words say, your Reverence,” Master Molère piped. “The Sunbeam came to me with a foolish tongue. I told her there would be no marrying, or giving in marriage, in Heaven. She spoke more foolish words and I, said the dead would arise on Judgment Day.”

“It is just and so.” Father Ragueneau eyed Arakoua, proud and challenging in her stiffness. His voice was compassionate. “You were foolish, O maiden. You acted not with love but with a heart made evil by jealousy.”

“He would have been mine. My mark would have been upon him,” she insisted.

“It is the Lord who gives and the Lord who takes away. No one knows when his time is come.”

Diana smiled at Godfrey. Arakoua saw the smile and it was as bitter root to her soul. She stamped her foot in futile rage. “Think you I would lose him in the Land of the Shades! My heart would keep him even there.” She whirled upon Diana, arms thrown wide. “You would have him here. I would go with him to the Land of the Shades. Past the Standing Rock, into the Place of the Hereafter. I would go with him, my man.” She gave a strangled cry and sped into the night.

“She has no more words left,” Annaotaka grunted.

“Her heart has spoken truly,” Father Ragueneau agreed. He contemplated the play of the fire and sighed. “My heart is sad, O great chief, my brother. The Sunbeam has brought her pagan acts into my house, my own place. She treats

my man who makes good medicine—" he regarded Master Molère with inscrutable eyes—"as an enemy, and she would put such wounds upon Teanaosti that the shock might have slain him. It is not good deeds that the Sunbeam did, O Annaotaka."

"Her heart was bewitched, O Aondecheté. She acted as a wildcat might act and as a wildcat she shall be treated."

"But not as a wildcat who sees the hunter's knife, O great chief, my father," Diana said quickly. "She is a woman and as a woman she fought."

Annaotaka stopped at the door. "As a warrior you speak, O Little Thunder. She shall be treated as a woman who would be a wildcat."

The Father Superior looked carefully at Godfrey. It gladdened his heart to see the liveliness of his eyes. "You need some nourishment, my lad."

He dispatched Apothecary Molère for a dipper of soup, then eyed Diana in sad reproof. "I am not going to ask you, my daughter, of the bitter thoughts your mind harboured, nor of the terrible things you planned. They were evil in the sight of God and man. I do not know what should be done. You have had a strange training. I must try to reconcile the one to the other."

"I am truly sorry, mon père, if I have offended." Diana's voice was low, her eyes were deep, dark. "You are so kind, so good and I do love you for everything you have done for me. But I would do it all over again. And I must tell you one thing more. I had intended to kill Arakoua. I would have done so only Louis clipped my wrist with his knife."

The Father Superior stared broodingly into the fire. "A brave confession and a terrible sin committed in the spirit. Why would you have put such a crimson stain upon your soul?"

"She was standing over Godfrey with knife upraised. Why should I not kill her?" Diana asked in surprise.

"With knife upraised. The situation takes its true form. Had you known her real intentions, what would you have done?" He looked at her sharply.

"I would have beaten her insensible."

"A truthful reply, if not a charitable one. Annaotaka will quite possibly do the same. I must consider what should be done. And you have not told me what brought you here at this particular time."

"The church bell rang."

"Yes, I heard it. There was a single stroke. I wondered what was the cause. Whatever the cause, it was providential. And the affair apparently did much to revive Godfrey."

"I feel better than I have for weeks, mon père. My shoulder is completely

healed. I should be able to return to duty again."

"You mean you have had a much-needed rest. You will remain on the invalid list until further orders. The break-up of winter should soon come and were you to stumble on the ice—" The Father Superior stopped as the door opened.

Father Le Mercier entered, eyes unnaturally bright. He spoke crisply, with suppressed excitement. "I was called to the church and I thought you should know of my experience at once." He appeared to be aware for the first time of Godfrey "I see that you have improved greatly, I am not surprised."

With this cryptic sentence, the Assistant Superior smiled. "When I arrived at the church door, I found Mary Chiwatenwa. Poor woman, she was sinking fast. She whispered to me that she had seen Arakoua stealing to the log bastion, knife in hand. She feared some devilish work and with superhuman effort staggered out to try and alarm the fort. Her strength failed her and falling she was able to grasp the bell rope. She lay unconscious until a second or so before I arrived."

"A truly great Christian spirit has passed, and the blessed St. Joseph guided her footsteps to the end. Yes, his intervention again has protected us—this time Godfrey." Father Ragueneau sighed. "Mary Chiwatenwa, a heart true to death, even as there are hearts implacable in hate, as cold as these north winds that blow without ceasing."

The year 1650 was to be called the Year of the Long Frosts. March days passed in their drear chill and the wretched Hurons grew the more wretched. Death rode the icy breath of the air and slew without mercy. Those who lived sat despondently in the thin warmth of the sun and watched the ice honeycomb with exasperating slowness. In the coves of the mainland were fish, in the forest acorns; on the island was death.

Annaotaka and his people waited the veering of the wind with the same impatience. They suffered less than their Christian clansmen and although fangs of hunger might tear at their stomachs, the virus of famine entered not to kill. Once the treacherous ice would split open, canoes could be launched and a sudden night raid on the Iroquois camp would replenish their pots with meat.

With the arrival of the first warm days, the reckless courage of the Hurons surged upward in a fierce thrust for survival. By twos and by scores they threaded their way across the water-spotted ice. Many died on the venture. Others scrambled to the mainland to separate into parties of a half-score to a hundred, to fish and seek acorns.

Godfrey and Annaotaka watched the exodus with misgivings. They saw nothing but death at the end of the trail. The chief sternly forbade his warriors

to leave the island. “The Hurons will repent their folly when they see the stake,” Godfrey said to the Father Superior. “Then it will be too late.”

“Have you no suggestion which might help us?” Father Ragueneau looked up from the table and pushed aside his report. He saw Diana hesitate at the door and beckoned her to enter. “You heard what I said, my daughter.”

Diana shook her head. “If I know the Five Nations rightly, Father, even now reinforcements are on their way to assist those who wintered here. And more will yet come. By summer they should be as a great horde. I can see no hope. The Huron people are doomed.”

“It is inconceivable.” The Father Superior’s voice was dead. “It is inconceivable that this vineyard of the Lord should be torn up, root and branch. The Iroquois have other enemies. We may obtain a respite. Much can be done in a year.”

The days passed and Father Ragueneau took fresh hope. His eyes grew brighter. “It is possible that the Iroquois may have changed their plans,” he said one afternoon to Godfrey and Diana, as they talked in the blockhouse. “We have heard nothing from the mainland for so long that I am almost persuaded to permit myself a slight hope, for the future.”

“Others have also ventured across the strait,” Godfrey commented, “but not any of Annaotaka’s warriors.”

Diana looked at her narrow, moccasined feet. “The Iroquois are following a definite campaign. The Tobacco Nation is wiped out. The Hurons up here come next. Then the Neutrals and after that—”

“You mean New France?” Father Ragueneau said quickly.

“New France, mon père, will probably defeat them. Nothing else can.”

“Cunning, arrogance, ferocity. Is there to be no end to these wolves of the forest? Surely God’s justice—”

A guard opened the door and saluted. He spoke with dreadful simplicity. “A survivor from the mainland, sir.”

XXXIV

THE FATHER SUPERIOR stepped to the door. A Huron came staggering toward him. Blood stained his breech-clout, the snapped shaft of an arrow stuck from a shoulder, a crease of crimson dripped from his head. Father Ragueneau set his shoulders, put a hand under the armpit of the tottering warrior. "Come with me to the place of the sick. We will put healing ointments upon your wounds; then we will talk."

Godfrey watched the two move slowly away with rebellious eyes. Orders kept him to the sentinel blockhouse and fort. Until convalescence was over, the village was as much out of bounds to him as the forest. That night the light burned late in the Father Superior's room. His quill moved stiffly across the paper as if guided by frozen fingers:

> "On Annunciation Day, a fresh band of Iroquois, having marched almost 200 leagues, over ice and snow, through the forest and across a mountain range of their own hunting grounds, surprised the encampments of the Christian Hurons on the mainland and made a cruel butchery of the starving fugitives.
>
> "It would seem that the forces of evil sat by the Iroquois council fires and that a malignant Spirit of Darkness guided their feet over obscure paths, for they disposed their numbers with such cunning that in less than two days they had hunted out every band of Christian Hurons. These covered a wide territory, separated one from another by six, seven or eight leagues, some bands as large as a hundred people, another 50, and a few consisting of families by themselves.
>
> "These starving fugitives had chosen their locations with great care and skill. Only places little known and far from the frequented roads of travel had been selected, yet this care availed them nothing, so cunning were the enemy and so swiftly did they strike. And the strangest thing of all was that of the victims, dispersed as they were over such wide expanse of territory, only one man escaped. He came to us bearing the sad tale of this tragedy."

It was then that Annaotaka struck. He had heard the story of the mainland massacre with an impassivity that gave no hint of the fury writhing within him. A sudden shift of wind opened a channel in the strait and under the cloak of black skies his warriors launched a flotilla of canoes to fall upon the

unsuspecting Iroquois with a ferocity that carried them to complete victory. The victorious Hurons retreated to the island, carrying with them, a dozen, or more, captives.

The refugees rejoiced at the Cord warriors' success and the Father Superior grieved. Here was a form of cannibalism which he was unable to suppress. It was born of custom and necessity and indulged in by pagan warriors over whom he had no control. Soon the refugees were grieving with him. The Iroquois, incensed by their defeat, fell upon such Hurons as ventured upon the mainland and put them to revolting tortures as hitherto had been reserved for Jesuits or captives of note.

Slowly, inexorably the Five Nations closed on Christian Island as a vise. The famine-goaded Hurons knew not which way to turn. On Ahouêndoë they faced a lingering, inevitable death. On the mainland there awaited a terrifying end at the stake, offering a fortunate few the possibility of outwitting their persecutors in a quick dash to freedom and life. As a desperate gambler stakes his all upon the last cast of the dice, so other starving bands prepared to set forth upon this hopeless chance, for no one knew but that he, or she, might be favoured by fortune.

On Easter Sunday special services were held in St. Joseph's for those who would leave before the next sun-up. To the Father Superior their eyes looked, as it were, from between two worlds—the world of the living and the world of the dead which awaited; and he preached with a depth of understanding that made his words reach out and touch the hearts of the people as one friendly hand touches another. The drooping spirits of the Hurons were cheered by his words. They left the church with a new hope to heighten their courage, a new exultation of the soul.

In the grey hours of the dawn Father Ragueneau stood with those who remained behind and watched the migrants steal away to the mainland. His face was drawn, as he watched, and to his ears came the lamentations of sister for brother, of mother for daughter. To one side stood Shastaretsi and Tarontas, with the Christian men, silent and heads bowed as though in mourning for those who yet lived. Father Ragueneau sighed. He knew that those who had gone would return no more, that it would be but a short time before he must chronicle another page of red savagery in his report. His soreness of spirit was such that in mind he was thinking those lines which inevitably he would write:

> "My pen has no ink black enough to describe the ferocity of the Iroquois. As hunger will drive wolves from the forest, so our starving Christians were driven out of their villages which had become an abode of horror. It was the end of Lent. Alas, if these

poor Christians could have had but acorns and water to keep their fast upon! On Easter Sunday we caused them to make a general confession. On the following morning they went away, knowing well that they were near their end. And, in fact, only a few days passed before we heard of the disaster which we had foreseen. They were overwhelmed by sudden onslaughts. Some were killed on the spot. Some were dragged into captivity. Women and children were burned without mercy. Other bands were overtaken by the same fate. A few made their escape and spread dismay and panic everywhere.

"The Iroquois spread slaughter and death on every side of us. Our hopes were dashed to the ground as a cup broken. Thus, out of a land of sanctuary, watered by the blood which has been poured out for Christ's love of His people, our land of promise and blessed peace was made a place of horror and doom. Look where we might, we saw nothing but an amphitheatre of cruelty, a sepulchre of bodies ravished by famine and desecrated by short-axe and firebrand. Nor was our cup of misery yet filled to overflowing. The wretched survivors brought word that two great armies of the Iroquois were on the way to exterminate them. Despair was universal."

It was the end. Shastaretsi, sad of eye, set of face, came to the Father Superior as grand chief of the Hurons. With him were Annaotaka, inscrutable and grim, and Tarontas, bleak of eye, defiant of years in spite of famine and disease. Annaotaka looked coldly at the grand chief. He wasted no words in preliminary courtesies. "I am even as you, O Aondecheté, a man whose heart is as a sky without light. Ouendake is as ashes that are cold. There is nothing left to burn."

Father Ragueneau's face whitened. Tarontas glanced quickly at Shastaretsi. The grand chief was stiff with resentment. The war chief of the Rock Clan spoke quickly, with diplomatic words. "My tongue repeats what my brother Annaotaka has said but in another way. The council fire from which we came is even now warm, and as it is, so are the people of the One Land Apart. All is not dead ashes and many tongues have spoken the thoughts of many minds. Some would find shelter in the forest, some would set the course of their canoes to the Isle of the Castaways." Tarontas' face grew black. "Some are without heart and would even be slaves of the Hodenosaunee. My elder brother, Shastaretsi, has words of wisdom for your ears, O Aondecheté."

The grand chief stared once at Annaotaka with lofty disdain, then addressed the Father Superior. "My words are not the words that some would utter, O Aondecheté. They are not words without the light of day. You can

save us, if you but step boldly. We are not the spectres, the spirits of departed beings that you see in your aonchia. We are living men. If you look toward the land of the rising sun you will see Te Iatontarie, the stone fortress by the great little waters. There in the shadow of the big rock we can gather together what remains of our people. We can build anew our nation and our faith will not be extinguished in the sight of the Great Spirit and man.

"Do not wait before you step, O Aondecheté." Shastaretsi's voice grew the deeper. "We are in your hands. The people of the One Land Apart, have gone no one knows whither. Only this aonchia remains. If you sit long, the very ground beneath your feet will open and swallow us with you, and we shall be as those who are with us no more. You, my brother, carry the Ouendats in your heart. Wait not until they all are as white bones to the skies. Save them while they may yet see the sun."

The Father Superior slowly looked from one to another, last to Annaotaka. A smile twisted the war chief's mouth. "The Hodenosaunee will not see the backs of my warriors, not this moon or the next. I, Annaotaka, and my men of the Cord will stay. We will eat to kill and kill to eat."

Father Ragueneau's eyes hardened. He ignored Annaotaka to address Shastaretsi. "Your words have been heard by friendly ears. To burn this stone fortress here," he waved toward where Fort Ste. Marie stood, "is a matter for the council fires of my brothers. They must come here and speak with me. In a moon I shall answer you with true words."

"In a moon. I will tell my people. It is well." The grand chief left the room with a cold stare at Annaotaka.

"And you, O Tarontas, would you and your men of the Rock go again to the people of the Blue Hills and carry there a message to him at Ekarenniondi?"

"I will go, O Aondecheté, and I will return with him."

"And your mouth will not hold back words of danger from me, as they did when the people of the Blue Hills would have slain my black robes?" The Father Superior looked sharply at Tarontas.

"They did not harm your brothers," the Rock chief grunted. "Their hearts were only sore. There were no words to say."

Father Ragueneau thought of the death line formed for Fathers Garreau and Greslon, of the flourish of short-axes above their heads. He frowned. To him the danger was real and only the intervention of the blessed St. Joseph prevented two more martyrdoms. Father Greslon was now safe in the House of Ste. Marie. He would write a recall to Father Garreau for Tarontas to take to him. He thought of Father Joseph Poncet, at the Mission of St. Pierre, on

Grand Manitoulin Island, and Father Claude Pijart, at his Mission of St. Esprit, on the east shore of Lake Huron, and sighed. “I must send more messengers,” he said. “One to Ekaentouton, the Isle of the Castaways, at the top of the great fresh waters, and another to Endarahi, the Place of the Painted Beaver Robe, on the east shore of the great fresh waters.”

“Messengers will be provided,” Tarontas promised. “I and they will be ready to take the trails at sun-up.”

Annaotaka turned at the door. “My heart touched your heart this night, O Aondecheté. Your heart would stay and fight with me but your mind said, ‘No, I must take these Ouendats who are rabbits to a safe burrow.’ ”

The Father Superior did not hear Annaotaka speak. He did not see him depart. He sat straight in his chair, head bent forward. To write a recall to the missionaries came perilously close to signing a death warrant of the Huron Missions.

There was a long wait for the missionaries to return. In his hour of trial, the heart of the Father Superior stoutly beat. It was true, as Shastaretsi intimated, that 10,000 Hurons had vanished since the destruction of St. Louis and St. Ignace, thirteen months before; but hope stubbornly refused to yield. By some device, by some miracle victory might yet be plucked from defeat. In Huronia, the powers of darkness had more than once drawn back at the eleventh hour in fluttering confusion before miraculous forces. Might they not do so at the twelfth hour? Father Ragueneau thought of these things and his shoulders squared, his eyes shone as dauntless as of old. In that land of despair he remained the one solid rock which stood against the tide of disaster. It was characteristic of him that he would arouse no false hopes in the hearts of the others. Only Godfrey and Annaotaka knew his mind, were permitted to see flashes of his intrepid soul, a torch of leadership which neither adversity nor death could extinguish.

“We speak here as men speak;” he said early one evening in the privacy of his cabinet, “and there are no words hidden behind our tongues. My eyes see black skies, now. Then the sun rises and there is light. We will not run from the night. We will await the light.” He looked at Godfrey, who said nothing, then turned to Annaotaka, “and you, my brother, though you know not our Great Spirit, what says your heart?”

“I say that my warriors of the Cord have no darkness in their hearts. We will fight as the wolf pack fights.”

“Ah! You speak good words, my brother. I will stand here with you. Our people will fight as a single pack. The Hodenosaunee will fear our bite.” The Father Superior glanced quickly at Godfrey, whose face was an expressionless

mask.

The chief grunted dissent. “My brother dreams of the Thunder Bird when snow is upon the ground.”

Father Ragueneau bit his lip. For a long second he stared at Annaotaka and the chief gave him eye for eye. “My brother, the great chief, forgets that the Thunder Bird rubs his wings in the snow clouds. He rubs his wings in the spring rains. No victory is impossible to a warrior who fights, not even the saving of Ouendake.”

“A man on the war trail must fight or be slain,” Annaotaka answered with a contemptuous jerk of the hand. “Your people will not fight. They will die.”

“Once they were warriors, they can be made warriors again,” the Father Superior said quickly. “You and I, O great chief, can save Ouendake in spite of itself. What say you, Teanaosti?”

“The chief has more words to speak, O Aondecheté.”

“Teanaosti is a warrior of wisdom,” Annaotaka grunted. “He knows the fighting men of Ouendake have gone to the Land of the Shades. He asks what magic will turn grouse into eagles. He asks what will the eagles feed upon if there are no grouse.”

He walked to the door and threw it open. “Behold, O Aondecheté, chief of peace with a heart of a warrior, behold that which you see and hear! The dark clouds come upon the land. Soon they will crow blacker and blot it out; but will they blot out the smell of death that is in the air? The thoughts of those people that are in the Land of the Shades?”

Head sunk upon chest, the Father Superior eyed the open doorway. Annaotaka had gone. In the distance, by the gathering blackness, stood the skeleton of a balsam, white of shaft with branches that spread out as clutching finger bones. From their mildew of green, crows cawed raucously, birds of ill-omen gloating over the misery bared stark to the moon and the stars. Something of its desolate imagery entered into his being to mock him with a sense of futility.

Father Ragueneau’s soul sickened within him. Annaotaka’s words came back to him in full force of devastating simplicity. It was as though the sun had died in the noonday sky and the moon glittered cold and brittle from a crepe-hung arc of night. He shook his head as the eerie cry of a loon came over the watery strip of the strait. In its strident, wavering scream Father Ragueneau heard the wail of the lost land. Godfrey looked once on the stricken face, the pain-turned mouth. He quietly left the room. The Father Superior sat unseeing, alone with his dead.

XXXV

DIANA stepped from the blockhouse. She saw Godfrey, a stooped outline in the dusk, hunched upon a stump at the edge of the clearing. A log cracked in the Father Superior's cabinet and she glanced through the open door. In the faint firelight, Father Ragueneau was bent over his table, staring into space. His was the greyed face of an aged man and in its lines were drawn all the suffering and sorrow of the pain-torn land about him. The slump of the shoulders, the worn and scuffed deerskin garb reminded her of an aged woodsman injured upon the trail and brought to his cabin a broken shadow of himself. Tears swam in her eyes.

The Father Superior looked up slowly. He shook his head and sighed. "Ah, my child, my grief brings new troubles to you."

"It was a sudden thought, mon père." Her words fluttered. "I was so sorry. Your hopes, your life wrecked by these—"

He stayed her bitter words with uplifted hand. He was again the strong personality which had arisen above defeat, that had faced danger and death with unabated courage. "Nothing is wasted in the sight of God, my daughter. Nothing is too small to be overlooked, too big to be fitted into His pattern. It is only the finite mind that doubts, and doubting questions, inadvertently, it is true,—" he hesitated, spoke softly, slowly—"yet, who am I to say this . . . I, too . . . unwittingly . . . I, too, am not guiltless . . . who am I to blame?"

Diana's heart tightened at the pain in his eyes. The Father Superior was suffering as only those spirits that dream of great things can suffer. Something within her snapped as a lute string might snap. She fell upon her knees before the tired, indomitable priest and wept.

He placed a kindly hand upon her head. "My child, my child, this is no way to accept defeat: God made us to rise above the trials and adversities of life. This world is as a crucible in which we are refined by suffering, tempered by fire and purified for the world to come. The greater the cross, the brighter the crown. Weep not for me, my daughter, rather weep for those who have been deprived of an opportunity to prepare themselves for a life of future service."

Diana retired abashed. She moved slowly, quietly, to where Godfrey sat, indifferent to everything except the emptiness of Champlain's imperial dream. He looked up, startled. She touched him lightly on the shoulder. "Come. Godfrey, let us go to the bastion."

They walked in silence to the blockhouse. She motioned him to a bench by

the door and sat down upon the step. “So Ahouêndoë is finished,” she said softly.

He nodded.

“I know it’s hard,” she went on, “just like losing an old friend. But it had to come. You knew it and I knew it. The Hurons could never win. To remain is to die.”

“Father Ragueneau,” he said huskily. “I just left him. He realizes everything is over.”

“Ah, yes. Poor Father Ragueneau,” she murmured and leaned back against the door post. “It is as if he died himself. You were there. Tell me what happened.”

She shivered as Godfrey told of Annaotaka and his morbid imagery. “The taint of death in the air! I know it myself; it will grow worse. Yes, we must get away.” She peered at him, frowned and changed the subject. “Will Arakoua go with us? She is about again.”

“Arakoua! I had forgotten about her.” Godfrey looked up. “She has kept about her house since that night you fought with her.”

“I haven’t forgotten about her,” Diana said sharply. “Nor has Annaotaka.”

Godfrey scowled. “He gave her an awful beating. She was insensible when he stopped. I doubt if she can move comfortably now.”

“He broke three ribs,” Diana informed him promptly. “Give her time and she will cause trouble, serious trouble.”

Godfrey’s mouth tightened. His voice was cold. “Let us understand one thing. You will make no more private wars. None whatever.”

Diana jumped to her feet. Her voice was hard. “Let us understand another thing, Captain Bethune. I am not going to have my brains splattered by any Huron axe. If I start a private war, I start it, and you can’t stop me. And if I kill that slut, I kill her. No matter what you or Father Ragueneau think. So you can go and give your orders to the moon.”

She stood before him rigid in steel purpose, eyes swimming as molten gold and as hot. He stared into their swirling depths and bowed before what he saw there. “If you must start a private war, start a decent one and don’t get any more of my men killed.” He smiled crookedly and touched his shoulder. “I can do without having that cracked again.”

The fire died in her eyes. She was all contrition and smiles. “Oh, your poor shoulder. That *was* a bad war. Gilles did bungle things. I was so sorry about him.”

“It was your own idea,” Godfrey answered with a touch of sternness. “You

picked Gilles yourself."

"I had to. There was no one else."

"And I never could see why you made Arakoua insane with jealousy over him," Godfrey grumbled.

"What else could I do?" She asked with a mocking smile. "I always said, Godfrey, you are a fine soldier but a stupid man. Now, don't worry about me. There will be no bungling on my next war trail. I will take it alone." She waved a hand and entered her room.

Father Pijart was the first missionary to return. He came tired of body and spent of strength, for his mission was an itinerant one and followed the wanderings of the Indians, on the east shore of Lake Huron, in search of food and safety. His altar was a convenient rock, his church the forest. Only a fortunate hunting excursion with the Hurons saved him from martyrdom. In their absence the Iroquois surprised the remote camp and slaughtered or dispersed his Algonquin parishioners. Father Pijart and his Hurons arrived at Fort Ste. Marie, weak from their journey of twenty leagues and as skeletons that started at their own shadows.

There was Father Poncet, who came from his mission of St. Pierre, after a dangerous trip of forty leagues. The Father Superior's heart sorrowed afresh when he considered the abandonment of this outpost on the north shore of the Huron, serving alike Hurons and Algonquins and those nomads of the snows, the Ojibways. Father Ragueneau recalled the year of his second return to Huronia. It was in that September, of 1641, that Father Isaac Jogues explored the extreme northern tip of the lake to Sault Ste. Marie, a journey of seventeen days, and with Father Charles Raymbault visited the Nation of the Ojibways. Father Ragueneau thought of this promising western extension of mission work, and sighed. It was as though a blight had then struck the Mission to the Hurons. The next year Father Jogues had taken Father Raymbault to Quebec in a litter and he died there even as the gallant Isaac Jogues suffered unspeakable tortures in the Mohawk village of Ossernenon. Father Raymbault slept beside the immortal Champlain, a fitting tribute to one who had journeyed to the shores of the greatest of the Great Lakes, whose western rim the genius of Champlain had set as a boundary of the New World kingdom he hoped to hew out of the forest. The Father Superior hunched his shoulders. With the return of Father Poncet there remained only Father Garreau to report and the wreckage of the Mission to the Hurons would be one with the ashes of Huronia. He walked to the Church of St. Joseph as an aged man might walk.

With Father Garreau came Tarontas. He spied Diana and came striding toward her prideful as a cock bird in mating time. "Behold, O maiden, I,

Tarontas, have seen things which no Ouendat eyes have beheld!”

Diana inclined her head. “My ears await your words, O great chief of the Rock Clan.”

“They are words of wondrous things, O Little Thunder, and they were shown to me and my warriors, the true believers. We saw the Great Spirit come from the aronhaia,” he pointed to the sky, “and His breath blew away the storm and His hand made flat the angry waters.”

Diana’s lips parted. “And you saw all that, O Chief? Truly the Great Spirit favoured you.”

“The Great Spirit came down to us.” Tarontas’ lips smacked with relish at what he had to tell. “We were out on the wide waters of Nottawasaga and the sky was blotted out. The rain beat against us, and the wind blew so that we could do nothing. We used strength in paddling as men would use in a sun and a moon, and our arms were weak. We could do no more and our eyes looked up into the Land of Souls.”

Tarontas paused. His hard, old eyes stared at Diana, as he lived again those perilous hours amid the fog and storm on the bay. “The ondaki made us ready to enter the Land of Souls. We were cold, tired and contented to go there. Then the Great Spirit came down to earth. He breathed and the blackness blew away. His hand was put upon the waters and they became as flat as the head of a short-axe. The sun smiled on us and there was no wind. We were as men dead and the Great Spirit came to us and gave us life. I have no more words to say.”

He walked proudly away to tell his story to the Father Superior and that night the light again burned late in the residence cabinet.

Many meetings were held by the missionaries about the council table. All were of one mind, that nothing could save the Mission to the Hurons. In those days of plenty, when late spring merged into the flush of summer, no food was to be had. So vigilant were the Iroquois in their investment of the island that no Huron dared venture upon the mainland. Roots and rodents had become the main food of the Christian Hurons.

Diana seldom visited the bark houses of the village. She sat in front of the blockhouse and her eyes missed nothing. Arakoua, she marked, was silent and morose. She would sit by the hour by her old trysting place with Gilles, and stare at the fort and the mainland. Once Diana passed close to her and she saw death in her glittering eyes. That night Diana spoke to Godfrey. “There is an evil spirit abroad in the village. Unless we watch every minute there will be death.”

Godfrey smiled.

“It is true,” she persisted. “The evil spirit is Arakoua. She is crazed by hate.

Think what would happen if she fired the village. With the many sick, it would be as bad as if the Iroquois came."

Godfrey scowled. "A fire would be serious. The strongest have left. We have only a few believers capable of fighting a fire. Even with Annaotaka's men it would be difficult to save the village."

"And the Iroquois might make a sudden attack and all would be lost." She grew insistent. "Something must be done, if we are to leave here before the summer ends. The men are only working a few hours a day at their canoes. They will find themselves trapped here before they finish."

"Not so bad as you say. Still their *morale* is gone. I will see what can be done."

Diana dismissed Godfrey with a shrug, and walked to Annaotaka's blockhouse. Arakoua's eyes blazed with savage intensity as she passed. The chief welcomed Diana as she approached and unceremoniously waved two sub-chiefs away. "You are a warrior, O my daughter, and you come to a warrior. My men are warriors. There are no others."

"The other chiefs will not take up the war axe." Diana stated a fact, rather than asked a question.

"They had no stomach to fight when they could, now they have nothing in their stomachs to make them fight."

"Empty stomachs make weak arms," she observed.

Annaotaka scowled. "When the believers' arms were strong, their minds were many. Now they are weak, their minds are as one. They will run as rabbits run."

"If I were to follow my heart, O great chief," Diana said persuasively, "I would say, 'Here stays the Little Thunder to make war with the men of the Cord; and there would be great slaughter.' "

"Great slaughter there would be, O Little Thunder."

"But Aondecheté says we must save the weak and the true believers, so I must go with him."

Annaotaka grunted disdainfully.

"The believers have no heart, O Chief. They need something to awaken their sleeping spirits, even as your warriors, O Annaotaka, need something to put into their stomachs." She nodded to the mainland.

The chief eyed her closely. "My ears once heard Aondecheté say that my last war trail turned the Hodenosaunee into evil spirits which blew the slow fires into life."

She met his stare with unwinking eyes. “Aondecheté is a man of peace with a warrior’s heart. The Hodenosaunee *are* evil spirits. If the slow fires burn, they cannot be lighted again.”

“Words of wisdom, O Little Thunder.”

“The Ouendats need Annaotaka to strengthen their hearts. Annaotaka needs the Hodenosaunee for his food pots, so that his warriors may fight another sun.”

“The Hodenosaunee do not sleep.” The chief watched her narrowly. “There will be cold fires in my houses.”

“Empty bellies make cold fires,” she argued.

Annaotaka held up a hand in ceremonious agreement. “My heart is as the heart of the Little Thunder. We are warriors who speak the same words. It is well.”

In the grey hours before dawn, Iroquois prisoners sang war songs of defiance to their captors. Annaotaka came to Diana with grim satisfaction. “The Little Thunder spoke with the tongue of victory. More prisoners than the fingers of both hands await the pots. One got away.”

“It is good news, O great chief,” she smiled. “Were the short-axes red?”

“They were red.” He held up a hand. “These Cord warriors have passed the Standing Rock.” He held up both hands, fingers outspread. “That many and five fingers that many Hodenosaunee slaves attend them. Your words were good, O my daughter.” He turned, then stopped. His eyes were hard. “That prisoner! The ropes were cut.”

Diana stiffened. The hate-glazed eyes of Arakoua seemed to burn into her mind.

XXXVI

ARAKOUA leaned against the balsam, watching the course of the sun. Her thoughts were back in the early grey hours of the morning, when the prisoners, securely bound, had been flung in the porches of the bark houses to shiver on the damp ground. One warrior, lean of flesh, strong of frame, such a man as the first Andouch, whom she had known in those carefree days of Teanaostaiaë life, was carelessly tossed by the entrance. Arakoua stared at him with appraising eyes. Here was a warrior to delight the heart of any Indian maiden and no rosary could snatch him from her.

She looked furtively about. The guard was sleeping by the inner doorway. She crept close to the prisoner. Mouth to ear she whispered, "O warrior, if you would live you will speak words to your great chief."

His dark eyes gleamed with new hope, lips barely moved. He breathed, "I promise."

"Will you go to your chief and say my words, that if he brings his fighting men here, I will put his feet on the trail to victory?"

"Again I promise, O maiden."

"And he must do thus and so, as I say." Her eyes glittered. "A man and a woman, white of skin, belong to me."

"It shall be, thus and so." His eyes looked into hers as sharp points of steel.

"A man and a woman!" she whispered fiercely. "If alive I burn them. Do you say more words to your great chief. If he be of my heart to send three smoke bags into the aronhaia when the sun is behind the great pine on the point, over the waters from his camp. If he does thus and so, I will meet him there when the moon is as the sun."

"I promise, O maiden of my delight."

She touched him lightly, drew a knife and slashed his bonds. He stretched his arms and legs and slipped away into the forest, a shadow floating on the hazy waves of dawn. The rage of Annaotaka at the escape was diabolical in cold fury. It was with difficulty that he was dissuaded from consigning the guard to the stake and the slow fire.

The crest of the giant pine was framed golden in the sun's rays when three smudges of smoke drifted upward from the Iroquois camp. Others than Arakoua saw the signal. Diana, casually watching the play of birds in the trees, saw a black streak break lazily in the sky. There came a second, then a third. She stared with widening comprehension, ran to the guardroom and drew aside

a warrior. “Do you go at once to Annaotaka, take him where there are no ears and say my tongue has words for him.”

The chief grunted when she had finished her story. “What you say is the difference between death and life, O Little Thunder. You have eyes and you see. My people have eyes and they did not see. Some saw one bag, some another, none all bags. They were asleep. My warriors will be ready when the moon is low in the aronhaia. I go to take council with Aondecheté and Teanaosti.”

The Father Superior was in consultation with Godfrey when Annaotaka kicked open the cabinet door and entered. “I come to speak of treacherous hearts. The warriors of the Long House will cross the narrow waters tonight. It is to be such an attack as ruined our people. When traitors meet two minds act as one, so many souls march to the Land of the Shades without warning.”

“An attack by treachery!” Father Ragueneau was appalled. “This is war not to my liking.”

Godfrey sat straight in his chair.

“We know. The Hodenosaunee do not know what we know. The eyes of Little Thunder are sharp, her mind clear as spring water. When the moon is low I will come with my warriors. Some will go to the place where you make good medicine. Some will come here. They will be everywhere. It will be war to my liking. Many men of the Long House will meet their fathers and forefathers. That is good. Ho!” Annaotaka struck the table a resounding blow and departed.

The Father Superior sat as one stunned. “Incredible!” he whispered.

“But true, mon père,” Godfrey returned harshly. “I fancy I know the chief point of attack. I will set the cannon, at once.”

“As you will. I do not understand Diana’s action. Why did she not come to me with her suspicions?”

“If it is as I think, she had no other course. Any other would have given deadly insult to the chief.”

“You think so? While you are attending the defences of the walls, I will speak with Diana.” Father Ragueneau strode quickly from the room.

“I have received most disturbing information,” he said to Diana. “I am disappointed that you did not confide in me.”

“I am sorry, Father,” she returned with a set smile. “I did what I considered best. The signals came from the Iroquois camp. I know that a prisoner escaped and I think Arakoua freed him. If that is right, then it is Annaotaka’s affair.”

“True, Diana, quite true. Yet the fault is not wholly mine. You are a wilful

young woman. In this instance I can find no blame. Annaotaka puts a serious interpretation upon the signals. I shall have a special guard for you. Godfrey will attend to that."

"He will be in command of the fort, Father?" she asked quickly.

"I understand your question," the Father Superior smiled wanly. "Yes. He has not yet recovered and I intend that he shall have no opportunity to expose himself unnecessarily."

"Thank you, Father," she said gratefully.

Late that afternoon Apothecary Molère, heavy scowl upon wide face, waddled to the blockhouse dispensary and puffed indignantly as he stowed utensils beneath the bench. He did not approve of Annaotaka's strategy in crowding the room with warriors. The chief made no move until the clock struck two of the morning, when he slipped lightly as a night spirit into the adjoining long house and saw that Arakoua had gone. Cautiously he awoke his warriors and they moved to the fort on silent feet. The gates swung open. Father Ragueneau and Godfrey stood in the courtyard.

Annaotaka touched three warriors and motioned to Sergeant Lausier. They joined him and the four sped to Diana's room. Others were dispatched with equal efficiency to various blockhouses, the hospital and key positions. Within a space of minutes Annaotaka stood alone. He raised his hand in farewell and melted into the darkness. Father Ragueneau returned the salute sadly. He had seen leadership that had it been acknowledged earlier would have saved Huronia. He turned as other feet lightly passed him. Tarontas was leading his warriors of the Rock to the walls.

An hour passed, then another. In fort and blockhouse warriors waited in unmoving patience. Diana sat quietly upon a bench, bow in hand, quiver slung from shoulder. She could hear the breathing of Sergeant Robert and the three Hurons. As their outlines took indistinct form, she saw the warriors mount the ladder to the platform commanding the upper loopholes. The sergeant was standing on a bench before a lower slit. He motioned her to the other.

It was then that the dread war cry *Koué* burst shrill from scores of throats. Diana smiled tightly. She had penetrated the Iroquois strategy. Under cover of darkness they had slipped through the woods, skirted the village to concentrate their force upon the salient blockhouse and the fort postern. A sound of furious commotion arose from the bark houses to be blacked out by an outburst of musketry and the thunderous blast of the cannon. The Iroquois sprawled under the deadly hail of slugs and arrows. Diana glimpsed a woman shrieking in front of a chief with axe upraised. Its edge crashed into her skull as Diana's bow twanged. The chief pitched on his face. The Iroquois wavered. A second

chief of six eagle feathers sprang forward to rally them.

The Huron war cry arose from the far bastion of the fort. Godfrey dashed around the stone base at the head of the Christian warriors. As Diana saw him, he tumbled to the ground and lay still. The believers stopped before a storm of arrows, broke and fled. With a moan she leaped from the bench, threw open the door, and arrow notched to cord raised her bow. Three Iroquois rushed forward. Her bow-string snapped thrice. The third Mohawk fell as he raised short-axe above Godfrey. She laughed icily. Sergeant Robert was beside her as she laughed. A shout brought down the Cord warriors. “You cover us with your arrows!” he cried to Diana and they ran to the rescue. Two of the warriors fell. Diana helped carry Godfrey to the blockhouse bench. She stood over him with granite face. Her mouth tightened. She saw no wound. Robert aroused her with a prod of the finger. “His pistols are on the hand bench beside him,” he said roughly. “You must watch the two slits alone. Our only protection against fire is from above. I must go up.”

With the flight of the believers the Iroquois war cries arose in a triumphant crescendo. “Get ready!” the sergeant called down from the upper loophole, “they are going to make a massed attack.”

Diana ran to grab a pistol. She checked herself with a low cry. Godfrey was rubbing his eyes. He sat up. “Lie down!” she screamed. “The Mohawks are attacking.”

His hand flashed to a pistol. “Jump!” he shouted. There was a spurt of fire. “Back to the loophole! I shot a face out of it. Quick!” he snapped, as she hesitated. “See that shaft on the floor!”

Diana sprang to the slit with a strangled cry. Her anxiety had brought them both close to a feathered death. Bow in hand, she peered out. Annaotaka and the main body of his warriors had joined with the Iroquois. Mohawk and Seneca were locked with Hurons in a merciless struggle. War club and short-axe rose and fell, slashed and struck. Diana watched her moment in frigid calm. It came. Bow snapped. A second chief of six eagle feathers fell clutching at the barbed death in his throat. Godfrey stood at the other slit, pistol in hand. Diana saw him from the corner of an eye and her heart sang as her bow twanged. There came a thump overhead. Godfrey’s voice was sharp. “The platform, quick! They got the Huron up above.”

She looked at him piercingly. “Pistols loaded?”

“Yes. I can take care of these two slits. Hurry for God’s sake! They may try to fire the walls.”

She glanced at the warrior on the platform. A bullet had found its way through the pierced floor and centred between the eyes. A thread of smoke

spiralled through a slit in the overhanging floor. She shouted to Sergeant Robert—grabbed a water bucket and ran to the long wide slit. Below she could see fire licking at a pile of brush. She doused it with water.

Huron yells came triumphant. The Iroquois attack ceased as suddenly as it began. In place of sleep-dazed victims they had been met by a foe as ferocious as themselves. They had been tricked. They fought furiously to escape the trap which closed about them. The sergeant stood guard until the cries of the fighters receded in the distance. He shrugged and dumped the dead Huron to the blockhouse floor. At a word from Godfrey he dragged the body outside. The Father Superior and Annaotaka were inspecting the field of battle. “Fivescore killed, including two great chiefs,” Father Ragueneau was saying, “and a score wounded. This is a defeat they—”

He stopped with a gasp. At his feet lay the crumpled form of Arakoua, short-axe buried in skull. Annaotaka reached down and wrenched it loose. He eyed the red cutting edge. “So! Iron finished what the tongue began. It is well, else my arm would have given the blow.”

“Her mind saw a grudge that was not and she turned against her people. The Hodenosaunee believed she had betrayed them,” the Father Superior said sadly. “Yes, it is better this way.”

“A good axe.” Annaotaka thumbed its edge and slipped it into his belt. He ordered two youths to carry the body of the chief to his forest blockhouse. “And see nothing is touched,” he warned sternly.

Father Ragueneau frowned. He opened his lips to remonstrate as Annaotaka faced him. “My warriors fought this battle, O Aondecheté, and they made good war. By right I claim for my warriors all arms and goods of our enemies.”

“Your claim is just, O Chief.”

“And for myself, I claim the prisoners.”

The Father Superior frowned. “There will be no torture stake.”

“I have given my word.” Annaotaka was offended.

“I give the prisoners to you in that I may not refuse,” Father Ragueneau said slowly. “Nor did I doubt your word when I spoke.”

“The words were said to make your heart plain. That is well.” The chief was mollified.

“The dead my men will bury.”

“The dead are useless.” Annaotaka grunted and took charge of assembling the prisoners.

Father Ragueneau turned to the sentinel blockhouse with clouded face. He

was unable to intervene further in behalf of the captives. Huron custom decreed that they were the property of the victors. To forbid torture was his prerogative by right of accident. Beyond that he might not go. He sighed and instructed a Father, administering last rites to dying believers, to alleviate where possible the lot of the prisoners. Through the open door he saw Godfrey sitting on a bench and Diana binding his shoulder.

"What is this! Your shoulder broken again?"

"No, mon père. Just cracked up a bit."

"A wound? Where?" Father Ragueneau bent over him anxiously.

"He led a sortie," Diana said shortly, "and was nearly killed."

At the Father Superior's surprised interrogation she outlined what she had seen, then turned to Godfrey in hurried fear. "You *must* be hit some place. I saw you drop unconscious."

"I told you before, I tripped!" he exploded impatiently. "Hit the side of my head on a rock. You can see the lump. Just like the clout of a short-axe."

"You are sure your shoulder is not broken." Father Ragueneau shook his head.

"Just bruised, mon père. I could use a pistol as well as ever." He grinned. "As lively a little fight as I ever saw."

"A little fight!" the Father Superior exclaimed in pained surprise. "It was a pitched battle! At least fivescore Iroquois killed and fully threescore Hurons, mostly Christians. And Arakoua was slain by the Iroquois chief, under suspicion of treachery I imagine."

"I saw her killed," Diana said. "I shot the chief out of that loophole."

"It is best she died as she did. It saved the sin of homicide upon Annaotaka's soul, justified as he might consider such an act." Father Ragueneau eyed Godfrey somewhat sternly. "I am surprised that you left the walls to lead an attack in person. It was a rash act in more ways than one."

"It was sound strategy, had I led warriors, not sheep," Godfrey said gruffly. "A single charge at that time would have given us victory at once."

"The great Teanaosti trusted in rabbits," Diana gibed.

The Father Superior looked at her in sharp reproach, then thought of Annaotaka's stricture, "Your people will not fight." He turned to Godfrey. "Tarontas and his men! Where are they?"

"On the walls, mon père. I was sure of them and they could beat off any attempt to take the fort." Godfrey's smile was acetous. "I thought the Hurons would follow me."

The Father Superior eyed the crimson spread of dawn in the sky and sadly shook his head. “Do you have Master Pinar examine your shoulder, at once.”

He hurried toward the church. Diana moved to the door. Father Le Mercier was superintending the removal of the dead and the dying. Godfrey stood beside her. “That is three times you have saved me,” he whispered.

She averted her face.

XXXVII

IT WAS the fourth hour of June 10th, 1650. The Father Superior stood on the shore of Christian Island and watched with pain-ridden eyes a thread of gold light up the eastern skies. Behind him the ruins of St. Joseph's Church smouldered as a burned-out pyre of dead hopes. From the spread of the clearing, smoke fluffed as thistledown from the charred wreckage of Ahouêndoë's village. Ashes and black destruction to his back, the dawn of a new day before him. Thus, Father Ragueneau stood as Moses might have stood in the wilderness, his dispirited people crowding about intent upon word of the Promised Land.

Slowly, as one whose thoughts turn backward, he looked to the south. Somewhere amid the wild tangle of waterways and forest ran the Thorontohen Waterway, once the road to the Mission of the Angels in the Neutral Country. It had known the footprints of the heroic Jean de Brébeuf, but for these many years the thorn and woodland ivy had grown undisturbed over the portages that he had trod. The Father Superior's thoughts flashed from the year 1641 to the present, and he turned to the distant spread of Nottawasaga Bay. On its far shores, twelve leagues away, had flourished the Mission of the Apostles, and there had died the noble Charles Garnier, the brave Noël Chabanel. And with them, likewise, had died the Mission and the Tobacco Nation to which it ministered. Deliberately he swung about and, lips tightened in grief, stared past the cowed Hurons to where the House of Ste. Marie had stood, headquarters of the Mission of the Saints to Huronia and administrative centre of the far-flung Mission of the Hurons to the Huron peoples. The ruins of the House of Ste. Marie symbolized the common ruin of the hopes and sacrifices of a quarter-century of labour to found a Christian empire in a pagan wilderness. The Father Superior's mouth twisted. It was his farewell.

Father Le Mercier stared at the crowding Hurons with gloomy eyes. He turned to Father Chastelain and pointed a finger over water and forest to where the blackened ruins of old Fort Ste. Marie lay under the shadow of the Lookout, four leagues away. His crisp voice was the crisper with a dry harshness. "We go and leave behind that which is our heart blood; but others will come and reap the joy from the dregs of our sorrow. Our labours, the treasure and time expended, will await them. New corn will be sown to the fields; new herds of live-stock will graze in the meadows; and a new church to the glory of God will arise in the name of St. Joseph and our Order. Yes, we will return to honour the martyrs. A land of sacrifice and promise such as this cannot perish in barbarism."

As Father Chastelain bent his head in grave concurrence, the Assistant Superior gave signal for the flotilla to embark. Men, women and children, the Christian Hurons scrambled into canoes.

Annaotaka strode to the Father Superior with raised hand. “You go as a warrior should go, O Aondecheté, not as these scurrying women who call themselves Ouendats.”

“You speak bitter words, O Annaotaka,” Father Ragueneau reproved, “and they come from a bitter heart.”

“They come from cold ashes, O Aondecheté, from the dead fires of Ouendake.” The chief scowled at the launching of the canoes. “Those people ran from the short-axes of the Hodenosaunee. They now run from their war cries.”

“Tarontas and his men of the Rock did not run.” The voice of the Father Superior was stern.

“The great war chief of the Rock carries a red axe and his men are men. But where are the other men of the Rock, the many men who did not go with him?” Annaotaka asked. “Tarontas commands but few.”

“And you, O Chief, you will stay for many moons?” Godfrey tactfully changed the subject.

“I fight as a bear fights for his hunting grounds, O Teanaosti. As the great Bear chief, Thodatouan, would have fought for this, the Bear hunting ground. The Hodenosaunee will come and they will feel my claws and the claws of my men. They will know that the warriors of the Cord do not run.”

Annaotaka stamped over to Diana. “And you, O my daughter, what death we could have made, you and I, and many Hodenosaunee slaves we could have sent to await us in the Land of the Shades!” He grunted to a boy, took from his hand a bark package. “This, O Little Thunder, I give to you, a gift from a warrior to a warrior. You will keep it and think of the great war I am making until I come to your fire and we live over again our victories.”

“When I see this, O great chief, my father, my heart will be as sunlight at thoughts of the great battles he fights; and my mind will ask when shall I look upon his face again?”

“When the axe-arm is tired and the cutting edge is dulled by red work, then Annaotaka will come.”

“It will be moons of joyous work, O my father,” Diana laughed.

“And red suns of joy. And now, O Little Thunder, my daughter, my heart would speak to your heart and no ear hear my words.” In high good humour, he drew her aside, whispered briefly, then sought out Tarontas for further

instruction. Shastaretsi stood to one side, in silent dignity as grand chief of the Hurons. Annaotaka passed him and saw nothing. He raised his voice to address the Father Superior. “My men of the Cord go to the point of land. There they will watch you, O Aondecheté, as you pass the Hodenosaunee camp.”

“Your heart is a good heart, O great chief. In a sun to come you will come to us?”

“I will come when I go from here; I go from here when I choose. My heart sorrows for you, O Aondecheté, a man of peace with a heart of a warrior, who must leave else white rabbits become white bones on the ground. I salute you as one warrior salutes another!”

Head erect, six eagle feathers of his rank pluming above him. Annaotaka led his warriors past the ashes of his village to the point of land, ready for battle should the Iroquois venture to intercept the flotilla. It was his farewell gesture of respect and good-will.

More than 300 Hurons and sixty Frenchmen left Christian Island. Godfrey, sitting in Tarontas’ canoe, reflected sadly that formidable as the flotilla appeared, in reality it was but a scattered band of fugitives—all that remained of the once-powerful Christian empire of Huronia. The canoes rode the flow of the Straits to the wide stretches of the Bay of the Thunder Waters. No Iroquois dared to trouble them and at the night camp Godfrey stopped by Tarontas’ fire, where Diana sat with the chief’s wife and family. “A dreadful day,” she said sympathetically. “You are quite done out. So are poor Fathers Ragueneau and Le Mercier. I saw them by their fire and they might have been men of stone, so still and grey were they.”

“The end of their world, our world. Everything gone.” He looked at the fires burning about the shoreline and forced a smile. “Annaotaka remembered his adopted daughter.”

“He is a proud man and he suffers greatly.”

“Yes, his heart is torn by the death of his nation. I saw him tell you that.”

“Then you saw more than I heard.” She covered a smile with a hand. “What I heard him say was not to show his gift, or speak of it, until a certain time. And that time is not come.”

“I might look in your packs.”

“You might try—or you might not.” She picked up a heavy stick, hefted it for balance and laughed.

He sat beside her. “Just a day out and you would clout me over the head. You know, when I was sick, I thought I heard you tell Arakoua that I was your man and, now, you would leave me by the trail.”

Diana looked to where Sergeant Robert paced the beach in front of the canoes. “Whatever Arakoua heard, she knows the truth, now.”

“And the truth is?”

Diana snatched away her hand. “We would never have got away if Annaotaka hadn’t made his last big raid.”

“You gave him the idea?” Godfrey looked at her curiously.

“He had the idea. He didn’t want to annoy Father Ragueneau.”

“And you encouraged him. Now I understand. Still, though, you couldn’t have counted upon Arakoua’s treachery.”

“There was no need to. Didn’t it occur to you that the Iroquois chiefs needed only an excuse to lead their men to attack?”

“A great piece of warcraft.” He touched his shoulder. “The Father Superior won’t permit me to do a thing, not even take a paddle. I’m just excess cargo.”

“But very important cargo,” a deep voice said from behind them.

They jumped to their feet. Fathers Ragueneau and Le Mercier had stopped at the fire upon an inspection of the camp. The Father Superior’s tired eyes held a twinkle in their depths. “Just what was this warcraft, by the by?”

“We were speaking of the Iroquois attack frightening the Hurons into action, mon père,” Godfrey answered quickly. “Otherwise, they might have dallied until it was too late.”

Diana looked at the deep lines of fatigue drawn into the grey faces. “Ahouêndoë is behind us, Father. It is a day that is gone.”

“The past is that which is part of us.” The Father Superior spoke slowly, sadly. “It is something peculiarly our own. It makes us what we are.”

“And what we will be in the days to come,” Father Le Mercier added. “If there were no living past, my daughter, there could be no true religion.”

Her lips parted. She was confused by the serious turn to her words. “I only meant Huronia, Your Reverence. It is something over and done with, just as I am done with the Iroquois. They are forgotten.”

The Father Superior shook his head in grave negation. “No, Diana, you have not forgotten your Iroquois days. They recur in a hundred different ways. They tinge your whole life.”

“But *I* look upon them as behind me,” she protested. “Quebec is ahead and a new life.”

“A new life approached with valuations and prejudices acquired by past experience,” Father Le Mercier said solemnly.

The Father Superior looked up to see Tarontas and his Rock, warriors

launch scout canoes to reconnoitre the coves and inlets of Matchedash Bay. He pointed to them. “See over yonder. Tarontas has profited by the Iroquois invasion of Christian Island. It gave him a new sense of responsibility. Something that was not there before has been stamped upon his mind, as a mason’s mark is stamped upon cement when his building is finished.”

Diana stiffened. “I do not understand, Father.”

“Will not understand, you mean,” Father Le Mercier said. The Father Superior nodded with a faint smile and accompanied by his Assistant moved away.

She sat back against the packs. “I haven’t forgotten our beaver robes,” she smiled wryly. “I’m leaning against them. That much for my Iroquois days.”

Godfrey prodded the ground with a stick. “I think Father Ragueneau’s right”, he commenced. “Nothing is be—”

“Not even prying words,” she cut in coldly, and waved him to leave.

A melancholy journey awaited the fugitives. To Godfrey the beginning of the Champlain Road, at Quebec, would be the end. Its threescore portages and twoscore of foaming rapids and thundering falls would vanish into the past, as had Champlain’s great dream of New France’s inland empire. It was with a bitter heart that he saw the flotilla skirt the east shore of the vast bay of 30,000 islands, past rocky islets and cliff-lined coves to the northern tip of the great waters and the mouth of the swiftly-flowing French River. Diana’s eyes widened in surprise as day followed day. Such savagery of nature was new to her. Its desolation crept within her, and there seemed no surcease from the pain of its utter loneliness. The shores of Lake Nipissing were as empty of Indian villages as those of the French, and the noble Ottawa was as a solitude. The northern Algonquin nations had ceased to exist. For the first time the implacable savagery of the Iroquois was seen by her in a complete panorama of ferocity. It remained for the Father Superior to sketch the dark contrast of the destruction wrought along the Champlain Road, as he sat one night by the devastated site of a once-populous Ottawa town:

> “When I came to this great river only 13 years ago, I found it bordered with Algonquin nations who knew no God, and in their infidelity thought themselves gods on earth. For they had all that they desired—abundance of fish and game, prosperous trade with allied nations, and little fear of their enemies. Since then they have become a prey to misery, torture and cruel death. In a word, they are broken and dispersed, and are as a people swept from the face of the earth. Our only consolation is that, as they died Christians, they have a part in the inheritance of the true children of God, who scourgeth

every one whom He receiveth."

The brooding spirit of the country found reflection in the bruised spirits of the Hurons. Their boisterous speech sunk to whispers. Dejection outstripped the bounds of safety, until, one night, Father Ragueneau stopped at Diana's fire. "I do not know what steps to take. I can only rely upon my own men to keep watch and they are largely novices in woodcraft. Were the Iroquois to attack, I fear it would be another surprise and slaughter."

Diana gazed up at the black bluff rising back of the fires to a jagged tree-crest outline. "The Iroquois won't come, Father. They will stay to fight Annaotaka."

"You think that, that he sacrificed himself to save us?"

She smiled ironically. "No, Father, he has not sacrificed himself. He stayed because he had a blood-debt to pay."

"I see you believe that he will be victorious. I sincerely trust so. I wish he were here, now, to infuse some of his iron spirit into these Hurons. They have apparently lost all hope."

"It is the voices of the land they hear. They frighten them."

"The voices of the land! What is this you are saying! Are we heathen here?" His face was stern.

"They do not know that they hear them; but the voices speak and they listen."

"Explain yourself!" he said shortly.

"They see the wild land about them. It is more savage than was their own. And it is a dead land. Ashes of villages, bones for people. Only ghosts of what was, of those who lived, remain. Their minds hear the cries of the dying, the shrieks of the torture stakes." Diana drew a deep breath. "The sounds we fear we carry with us. They come back to make cowards of us all. The Hurons hear these sounds when asleep, awake. They hear them, only they do not know it."

"The sounds that make cowards of us all." Father Ragueneau walked a few paces to return, eyes thoughtful. "I imagine you have got to the root of our trouble. The association of sound with experience. Thank you, Diana."

The Father Superior was as a man who had seen a great light. That night he sat staring into his fire until it all but burned to white ash, and the next day he hunched in his canoe, head sunk in contemplation, until the deep voice of the Falls of the Kettle came to him as a roll of muffled drums. The flotilla put to shore.

XXXVIII

THE LONG portage of the Chaudière Falls had come. Father Le Mercier remained to supervise the conveyance of goods over the portage trail. The Father Superior walked the trail slowly, hands clasped at back. Father Chastelain and Godfrey followed him in silence. A thinning of trees gave a view of the great, pounding waterfall. Father Chastelain stopped with a sharp exclamation. On a rocky ledge, high above the churn of the boiling cauldron, stood Tarontas, be-feathered and painted for war. For a second he stood, arm extended outward and upward. His hand opened and a haze was brushed from his fingers by the wind. Father Ragueneau looked to where a rainbow hung in shimmering fragility before the mist-covered ledge. "The glory of the Lord and the evil works of man." He sighed. "The tobacco sacrifice. I do not understand."

"A reversion to paganism," Father Chastelain commented. "We must ask Tarontas to explain such conduct."

"There may be a reason," Godfrey suggested.

"You think so? I trust you are right." The Father Superior glanced to the ledge. Tarontas had gone. "Come. We must not tarry overlong."

At a point opposite the lesser Falls of the Curtain and the source of the Rideau River, a scout waited. The footprints of many men had been seen, and there were no prints of white men among them. Camp was hastily pitched at the point of portage and a barricade of trees thrown up. Throughout the afternoon and night soldiers and warriors stood on guard.

The Father Superior drew Tarontas aside. "My eyes saw a sight, O chief, that made my heart sad."

Tarontas shrugged. "It was as the snap of the fingers, O Aondecheté. My brother, the great Annaotaka, spoke to me as we left and his words said, 'Do you, O chief of the Rock, make sacrifice for me to the oki, the Beaver of Power, who dammed the rivers and made the earth, who tore apart the rocks and made the waters fall in wild rage, so that my enemies, the Hodenosaunee, will fall before my warriors and victory be mine.' "

Father Ragueneau's face was severe. Tarontas hurried his story. "My tongue spoke a pledge. So I went to the Rock of Offering and I said, 'Heaven, here is what I offer you in sacrifice, not for me, Tarontas, for I come with empty hands, but for my brother, Annaotaka. This thing I do for him and I say his words: "Heaven have mercy upon me. Heaven help me." This, I, Tarontas, do for Annaotaka and speak for his heart.' My words are done."

The Father Superior was silent for a time. He spoke slowly. “My tongue has few words to say. If you did rightly there will be no harm. If you did wrongly the Great Spirit will act so that you will be punished. We have the safety of your people to consider. No more time must be lost in words.”

In the grey mist before dawn Tarontas and half a score of warriors crept over the barricades and vanished into the forest. Noiseless as a leaf that sinks to the ground, the chief slipped through the woods, his men spread out on each side. So velvet were his feet that he came within a stride of a slumbering rabbit before the timid eater of shoots took alarm and bounded away in wild confusion. Tarontas froze, a vague mark in a land of shadows. His sharp eyes questioned each bush, each bole. He saw six eagle feathers sway in a thicket, a hand turn with a knife in its clutch. For a split second the feathers stood from the screen of needles, then dipped from sight.

Tarontas circled as a stalking lynx, and crept upon the thicket from the rear. Short-axe flashed and a crouching figure doubled to its knees and slid to the ground. The chief bent forward to draw back with low grunt of surprise. He had looked into the pocked and sunken face of Awindoan. His head raised and from circled lips came the eerie call of a screech owl. Five men of the Rock joined him. “The great chief of the One White House has gone to the Land of Souls,” he whispered rapidly. “Do you, and you, find his warriors and say thus and so, and you that remain see that this, what was his, is brought to Aondecheté.”

He strode back to camp. “I bring words good and bad, O Aondecheté,” Tarontas said curtly. “The enemies that we found are not enemies. They are the men of Scanonaenrat, and the great chief Awindoan has made his last trail.”

The Father Superior’s jaw dropped. “It is the flotilla of Father Bressani coming to our help,” he said in French to Godfrey, “and Tarontas slew Awindoan. A terrible accident!”

Godfrey turned to Tarontas. “There was a meeting in the woods and war axes were red, O Chief.”

“One axe was red, O Teanaosti.” Tarontas told of the encounter. “And here, O Aondecheté, come my warriors with the great chief who died.”

The Father Superior looked frowningly at Tarontas. “You offended the Great Spirit. Your offering of Tobacco was an abomination in His sight. The Great Spirit chastized you for that sin. In your wrong-headedness and wilfulness you took the life of your other brother, Awindoan. There are two sins upon your soul.”

Tarontas backed away with a scowl.

“I must meet Father Bressani at once,” the Father Superior said. “There

must be no more regrettable accidents."

"I would suggest we proceed slowly, mon père," Godfrey advised. "We have been mistaken for an enemy, as well as taking them for one. The Rock men will get in touch with Father Bressani's men and he will soon arrive."

Within an hour Father Bressani came, accompanied by Jean Feuville. New to the Huron Mission field, the lay brother raised eyebrows in astonishment at the tattered deerskin garb of the priests. The Father Superior and Father Bressani embraced affectionately. "But you have been injured!" Father Ragueneau eyed the missionary's bandaged head.

"Brushed by death," Father Bressani smiled. "Two days ago my party of twoscore French and a score of Hurons made a camp in what we imagined to be perfect security. Our Indian guards drowsed, as usual, and the woods seemed to rain Iroquois. Seven of our people were killed, before we succeeded in surrounding the enemy. Our men killed eight Iroquois. Two cut their way to safety."

"Only half a score! Where were the others?"

"There were no others. We discovered later that they had built a bastion of trees and were lying in wait to intercept parties on the river. I received three arrow wounds in the head. Nothing more."

"Truly the fury of the Iroquois is beyond expression." The Father Superior sorrowed. "Half a score against threescore and yet they attack. And now Awindoan is slain."

"A good chief and a brave Christian." Father Bressani nodded. "A sad error but a natural one in these days of strife."

"Ah, yes, these days of hatred and strife!" Father Ragueneau sighed. "I sometimes feel that the very forest is watered by blood."

The portage around the Chaudière was arduous. The Father Superior and Godfrey walked to Father Bressani's camp. They heard that the Chavalier de Montmagny was no longer governor of New France. He had sailed for home. The governorship had been offered to the Sieur de Maisonneuve, but he was wedded to his governorship of Ville Marie, and the vice-regal office was accepted by His Excellency Louis d'Ailleboust de Coulonges, a pious gentleman of Champagne and a figure of note on the Island of Montreal.

"A skilled soldier and one versed in the art of fortification," added Father Le Mercier, as he joined them. "He did much to fortify Ville Marie and was of great help in building the hospital."

"A splendid soldier." Father Ragueneau agreed. "He will upheld the honour and peace of New France. Her Excellency is firm in the faith and

labours day and night to bring the pagan Indians to Christ."

"Ville Marie is a particularly dangerous outpost," Father Le Mercier observed. "The colonists have to work with their weapons to hand."

Godfrey saw Diana come down the trail. "We have a new governor," he said, joining her.

"Then I shan't see the grand old knight?"

"No. But you'll see Maisonneuve. He's a great soldier and could have been governor of New France."

"Tell me about the new governor. You haven't even mentioned his name."

"Oh, M. d'Ailleboust, a member of the Company of Montreal which founded the settlement. He's a skilled engineer of fortification. That's the most important qualification for any governor at present."

She looked at him with infinite contempt. "The poor captain. His tongue is sick. I will find out for myself, thank you. Now, I must help load the canoes."

The additional strength of Father Bressani's party made the flotilla impregnable to attack and the trip to Ville Marie was quickly made. The voyageurs skirted the Island of Montreal to sight a low group of buildings on the flat lands by the river, with Mount Royal rising majestically in the background, its tree-clad heights surmounted by a great white cross. Godfrey pointed it out to Diana. "That was carried up by Maisonneuve less than a year ago. The river overflowed and threatened to sweep away the fort. He vowed that if the waters receded without doing further damage he would carry that cross himself up the mountain and plant it there. The river fell back and he carried out his vow."

Diana wrinkled her nose at the squat fort, with its stone and earthen bastions and walls. "Not nearly as fine as our first Fort Ste. Marie," she grumbled, and looked beyond to the hospital, guarded by earthen ramparts, the stone windmill and scattered log houses. "I do not like your village. It is a mean place. And those people waving and shouting, they are quite wild."

"They probably think we are," Godfrey grinned, glancing at his patched deerskin clothes. The Sieur de Maisonneuve, bewigged and imposing in uniform, welcomed the Father Superior with great warmth. Godfrey saluted with military precision. The Governor smiled. "Ah, yes, Captain Bethune. I hear that you threaten to outdo the best of us in deeds of war."

Diana approached. The Sieur de Maisonneuve swept plumed hat with courtly flourish. "And Mlle. Woodville. This is indeed an honour."

Diana inclined her head after the Iroquois fashion. A surprised murmur came from the crowd. Father Ragueneau spoke quickly. "I would suggest that

a member of the staff escort Diana to the hospital. Mlle. Mance will see to her comfort and I will speak later with her, myself."

Diana gave an enigmatically look at Godfrey and went to shoulder her sacks, only to straighten in disapproval when two lads ran forward and swung them to their backs. She walked away with an officer, glancing over her shoulder to make sure that the boys did not make off.

That night the rough fare of the fort was as a choice banquet to Godfrey. He heard much of frontier warfare and the increasing boldness of the Five Nation Confederacy. "Now the Hurons are dispersed, we can look forward to an even worse time," the Governor predicted. His sun-browned face drew in gloomy foreboding. "The western Iroquois will over-run the Neutrals and the eastern nations, the most ambitious, will mass their strength against us. It will be a hard fight to beat them off."

"I fear Your Excellency is right," Godfrey answered. "The strategy was to fight it out in the Huron country and we fought until we could do no more."

A mutter of approval arose from the table. "A gallant episode." The Governor took a quick gulp of wine. "Sixteen soldiers, more often just six, and undependable allies. Your stand deserves to go down in the history of arms. You gave New France a precious decade to prepare herself to fight to the death. But for the men of Fort Ste. Marie I doubt if there could be a New France."

"Your Excellency is too kind." Godfrey flushed. "I feel ashamed we did not do better."

"I think we are better judges of what you have done. You quit only because you could continue no longer. You will find that New France is not—" He checked himself, frowned warningly up and down the table, to add, "There is a rumour that we may come to an understanding with the Puritans. If so, we could easily beat the Iroquois into submission."

Godfrey set down wine cup in surprise. He could not envision stranger allies. In New England the Roman Catholic was proscribed. In New France Huguenots were prohibited. Such an alliance would be as artificial politically as an eagle and a hawk drawing up an agreement to share the same nest. He thought of Diana cooped in the hospital of Jeanne Mance, another eagle sharing an alien nest, and consoled himself with the thought that her stay at Ville Marie would be a short one.

That night the council fire was lighted outside the fort gates. On one side sat the Governor, the Father Superior, Father Le Mercier and Godfrey. On the other side, Shastaretsi, Tarontas, and the elders of the Huron nation. They listened impassively to the Sieur de Maisonneuve offer them lands on the

Island of Montreal. The grand chief of the Hurons arose in reply. He pointed toward Huronia. “We come from the abode of the dead, where our blood and our bones were taken back by the earth that turned against us. When we left the war cries of the Hodenosaunee were in our ears, the death rattle of our people in our throats. We stay here and the Ouendats will vanish from the earth. Aondecheté spoke words to us of a great stone fortress with many walls of stone. My eyes behold here a fortress not as great as that on the river in Ouendake; and, lo, it was destroyed! No, O Aondecheté, we will not stay here. We will go with you to your great stone fortress and be safe.”

Tarontas grunted and arose. The chiefs and elders raised their right hand in salute and stamped away. The Island of Montreal was too exposed to Iroquois attack.

Jeanne Mance escorted Diana to the waiting flotilla. Godfrey concealed a smile at the change two days had wrought. Under the capable direction of Mlle. Mance, Diana had been cleaned as an efficient nursemaid would scrub a neglected child. Her hair was brushed and combed to a sparkling coppery sheen and drawn to the sides of her face in an unruly way that indicated a thorough washing. Gone with the accumulation of travel was the stained and tattered deerskin dress. Diana wore a modest black gown and tight-fitting white cap, the gift of her generous hostess.

Mlle. Mance walked beside Diana with quiet pride. Her serene face and placid eyes mirrored that deep spiritual conviction, which, at the tender age of seven, had brought her to the life of a nun while still without cloistered walls and had later sent her to New France upon a dangerous mission of charity. On the short walk from the hospital to the landing basin, she radiated the satisfaction of one who had completed an agreeable task.

Diana accompanied her in sulky silence, eyes pools of fire. Apothecary Molère made the error of opening an ample mouth in astonishment at the transformation which he beheld. Diana’s fiery eyes seared him in such a hot glare that he withered visibly. Godfrey held the canoe for her, then sat behind. “Never knew you could look so wonderful. What happened?”

She did not answer until Ville Marie was lost behind a curve of land. Then she leaned back and spoke in cold fury. “A miserable place! Questions, prying questions! Orders, nothing but orders! How to behave, how to eat, how to dress! If Quebec is like this I will go back to the Mohawks. I will tell Father Ragueneau that tonight.”

Godfrey kept discreet silence.

XXXIX

IT WAS the end of the Champlain Road. The terraced heights of Quebec thrust upward from the blue-green of the St. Lawrence in grey-stone challenge to man and Nature. The little trading post of Three Rivers had been left far behind, and now, the capital of New France stood before the voyageurs. Godfrey forgot the hurt of the great road's passing in his pride at the sight of Quebec. He noted each detail of the wooden houses, the shops of Lower Town and the warehouses clustered about the quays. His eyes followed the climb of the cliff, the stone walls, buildings and gardens of Upper Town, rising to the fort, with background of church spires, and the towers and open belfry of the Ursuline Convent, where the Mother Superior, Marie de l'Incarnation, whose charity and administrative talents made her beloved of the colony, resided with Marie Madeleine de Chauvigny, Mme. de la Peltrie, foundress of the convent.

The infant capital, when seen from the mighty St. Lawrence, was a place of charm. It was wrought upon a grand scale from enduring rock and peopled by stout-hearted men and women, the devout and the sinner, together, who worked under the protection of substantial battlemented walls and lived in houses of oak and cemented stone. Godfrey smiled fondly and glanced over his shoulder at Diana. She was staring with eyes wide and somewhat frightened. "You never said Quebec could be so beautiful and so strong. Not even ten nations could capture it. Is it really as big as it looks?"

"Not nearly as many people as a big Mohawk town."

"A strong fortress." She lapsed into apprehensive silence.

People, spots that moved from afar, could be seen scrambling down the thin, dark lines that marked cliff paths. They gathered with others from the Lower Town at the quay. "The scarecrow brigade arrives," Godfrey said with heavy sarcasm.

Diana made no reply.

The waiting crowd parted as the flotilla approached and a group of officers and priests stood forward, to be joined by a figure in a flowing black dress. Godfrey recognized His Excellency M. d'Ailleboust, the Very Reverend Jérôme Lalemant, Superior of the Missions to Canada, and Mme. Peltrie. He spoke sidewise to Diana, "When we land don't forget that curtsy Mlle. Mance taught you. The great and the near great are here and you're the only respectable thing we have to show."

The party was received with open-hearted warmth. Diana, outwardly a

model of composure, was presented to the members of the Council and gravely inclined her head to each one. At a quick nod from Father Ragueneau, Mme. Peltrie promptly escorted her to the convent; while Father Le Mercier took charge of unloading the goods and Father Chastelain guided the Hurons to a camping ground close by the walls. Godfrey gave a lingering look at Shastaretsi. He harboured bitter recollections of the grand chief and trusted that he might never see him again. Godfrey had difficulty in concealing his ill-humour when a staff officer came to summon him to the Governor.

His Excellency's serious face, tipped by short-clipped, grey beard, was wrinkled by a smile. His dark eyes concealed a twinkle as they surveyed him. "You will be quartered at the fort, Captain, and we must see if we cannot outfit you more in the keeping of a gentleman and an officer of His Most Christian Majesty."

He waved aside words of thanks to address Father Ragueneau. "If you could attend the meeting of the Council tonight, at the hour of eight, with Captain Bethune."

It was a command. Godfrey withdrew puzzled at the strange order. At his quarters, he found a new uniform waiting. "There must be some mistake here," he said to an orderly, "this uniform is of the staff." He touched the heavy gold lace.

"With the captain's permission, there is no mistake. The uniform was ordered by His Excellency for the Captain only two days past."

"I am honoured beyond expectation."

That night the Governor walked about Godfrey as he would a lay figure. "You are a rare soldier, Captain," he observed, "and never was an appointment merited more. But we have other and more pressing business waiting."

The Governor and his Council sat at the massive oaken table in the great hall. Behind them stood the staff in dress uniforms of blue, white lace and gold. It was a scene of pomp and splendour that signally failed to impress Ononkwaya, supreme chief of the Mohawks, and the three warriors who attended him. A magnificent figure of a man, robed in the choicest of beaver pelts and eagle feathers of his rank swaying above him, Ononkwaya stepped to the centre of the table, raised a hand slowly, as one saluting an equal.

"Give ear to my words, O Onontiio," he commenced, addressing the Governor by his Iroquois title of the Great Mountain, first given to Champlain. "It is I, Ononkwaya, the mouth and tongue of my nation, who speaks, and when you listen to me you hear the words of my people. We have many war songs in my country but you may hear the song of peace if your hearts say thus and so. We come to speak words of the Ouendats who are here. We know that

they ran from their village in the Bay of Many Islands. We know their trail. We know the numbers of their feet. We know all."

He paused to eye the staff with insulting curl of the lip.

"We know that as I speak these words, the great war chief, Annaotaka, with his fighting men of the Cord, makes war to kill our men. We honour him and his warriors for their heart to make war; and we will slay them. But those who ran away—" he made a gesture of contempt—"what of them? They are of no use to you, for there are no Ouendat warriors among them to breed warriors. We need men for slaves, women to breed warriors. I, Ononkwaya, demand for my people that they be given to us. We will take them or we will sing our war songs with one voice against you. I have spoken."

The supreme chief stood back, arms folded, prideful in his strength and arrogance. The Governor stared at him, contemptuous of the insolent demand. "My ears have heard your warriors sing their war songs at our villages. They sang and they died."

"They were not warriors, O Onontiio," Ononkwaya sneered. "They were white axes, young men who hoped to become warriors. When our warriors come singing their war songs the grass no longer grows, the trees wither and die. I have spoken."

Godfrey had been watching one of the three warriors closely. He whispered to Father Ragueneau. When the supreme chief had finished, the priest stepped forward. He pointed to the centre warrior. "O Ononkwaya, is not that man an Ouendat? Has he not been with you but a moon?"

The man opened his mouth in denial. The supreme chief stayed him with a grunt. His eyes smouldered at Godfrey as he spoke. "The white warrior has seen that which was concealed. The man was once our enemy. He is now one of us."

"The man is of two tongues," Godfrey said coldly. "My heart knows his heart and it is black as night skies. He betrayed his friends only a day's journey from here and he led your men to surprise and slay them. He comes here to betray us."

"Your tongue spoke of what is only a moon past." Ononkwaya sought to identify Godfrey. The fire in his eyes flared. "You are Teanaosti! You were on the long river a moon ago."

"My ears hear many things. They heard this traitor's name. My eyes have seen him in his own village of Cahiagué, by the Fish Spearing Lake. He came down the long river six moons ago." Godfrey's voice was harsh. "Hear me well, O supreme chief. This man of two minds went out to fight you, and your warriors netted him. His words were that he came to you because his nation

was as dead bones. He led your warriors to his brothers and they died—and this only a moon ago. Are my words just?"

"Your words are just. I have spoken."

The Governor barked a command to the guard. "Seize that man. He is of the Rock Clan. Have Tarontas split his head this night."

Ononkwaya stepped back a pace. "My ears do not understand your words but my eyes tell me what you said. I ask you, O Onontiio, did not your tongue say that I and my men came in safety?"

"You, O supreme chief, you and your warriors are here in all honour. That traitor," M. d'Ailleboust pointed to the trembling Huron being led away, "that traitor is not of your people. He dies."

"Your words are just. He does not belong to us." The astute sachem disowned that which he could not save. "I have spoken."

"And that which you have spoken about, the place of the fires of the Ouendat people, that requires a council. We will say more to you by the next sun." The Governor arose in dismissal.

No one, not Ononkwaya, himself, expected the demand to be granted. It was made to test the mettle of the French, and the death sentence pronounced with such rapidity upon the renegade Huron showed the Mohawks that the mettle of New France was as razor-edged steel. His Excellency said as much to the Council, then nodded to Godfrey. "You have sharp eyes. Captain, and a long memory. You gave us an excellent opportunity to give Ononkwaya a much-needed object lesson."

"I heard the story at Ville Marie, Your Excellency, and I recognized the traitor when I saw him here."

"It was a foolhardy act of his to come on such a mission," Jean Paul Godefroy, one of the Council, observed.

"I fancy the Iroquois forced him," Father Ragueneau said. "He was to mix with the Hurons and spy out what he could of future plans."

"Then his usefulness is over," Councillor Godefroy answered with satisfaction.

"Unfortunately, there are men such as he, but at least we can dismiss him from our thoughts," Father Ragueneau turned to Godfrey. "I would suggest that you call upon Diana in the morning. She is in strange surroundings and your visit may cheer her."

At the mess that evening Godfrey was stopped by a young ensign of the militia. "I say, Bethune, you picked that fellow out smartly. The whole place is talking about it."

Godfrey regarded him with some disfavour. “If you knew the Hurons as I do, you wouldn’t be surprised at anything they did.”

“From what I saw of them this morning they looked pretty well done out. You won’t see so many now that you are on the staff. I suppose that means a seigneury?”

“The appointment was a great surprise,” Godfrey said shortly.

“No more of a surprise to you than that young woman was to us.”

“Mlle. Woodville is a ward of the Order,” was the cold reply.

“So I gathered, when I saw Mme. Peltrie take her away. The convent is close by.”

Godfrey reddened and turned away. “Who is that young fox cub?” he asked of a captain of the artillery.

“Fox cub is a good description. Name is René Vaulette. Father came out here a youngster and went into the fur trade. He was useful to the old Council and was made a seigneur a couple of years ago. It sort of went to the cub’s head. Imagines himself quite a blade and forgets pater was an outlaw trader. Some day he will go too far.” The captain’s eyes bored into those of Godfrey. “I would be very glad to act for anyone who feels that my services are necessary.”

“Thank you, Captain. I don’t want any trouble, nor will I avoid it.”

The captain of the artillery smiled hopefully.

Godfrey felt strangely stiff in the newness of his staff uniform, as he strode along the pathway by the stone wall of the convent garden. He turned a corner and stopped at the sight of René Vaulette lounging within a few yards of the main gates, long stick held in a hand partly concealed by the flowing lace ruffles of his cuff. René bowed. “If you are calling upon Mlle. Woodville, I would ask to be presented.”

“You seem well informed as to my engagements.” Godfrey eyed him stonily. “You must then be aware that I was not asked to bring a visitor.”

“Quebec is a small place.” René ignored the incivility. “I decided there should be no harm were I to go with you.”

“How do I know the lady would be interested in you?” Godfrey smiled mirthlessly at his presumption.

René drew himself up, as if on parade with his militia company. “You are speaking to a gentleman, Captain Bethune, I am interested in her.”

“A progressive love suit, eh?”

“Why not?” René asked complacently. “I am a landed gentleman. She has

nothing. You might do a good turn by presenting me."

"I do not understand."

"That is better." René fingered the neckband of his lace collar. "The pay of a staff captain is little and I knew you would be reasonable."

"And you would augment that pay?" Again the wicked smile played upon Godfrey's lips.

"A gentlemen's agreement." René did not sense the danger of the smile.

"You a gentleman! Mon Dieu!" Godfrey slapped him across the face with a white-gloved hand.

"You will give me satisfaction for that!" René trembled.

"At any hour you name. There is the captain of the artillery. He will be happy to act for me." His voice grew silky with menace. "It will be a great pleasure to kill you."

Diana was sitting close to the wall. Her eyes were dark pools of trouble. Mme. Peltrie sat on the bench beside her. She smiled quizzically as Godfrey swept off plumed hat and bowed low. He surmised that every word of the encounter was wafted over the stone wall on the wings of the air. Diana plucked at her black dress. "Your shoulder, Godfrey?"

"As well as ever."

Mme. Peltrie's face, comely despite her twoscore and seven years, was flushed with excitement. She glanced quickly toward Diana. "It is time for the fitting of your new dress. Possibly Captain Bethune could return in the late afternoon."

He bowed and smiled, as they arose. "And, Captain," she added, "I have been worried as to how the poor Hurons are faring."

"Thank you, madame. I will visit them at once." He bowed again.

Father Ragueneau stepped briskly through the convent gates a short hour later. He was worried by an urgent message from the Mother Superior. He saw her sitting in the familiar threadbare dress, on a bench in front of the stone cloister, shaded by a huge ash tree. Diana sat beside her, looking with unseeing eyes over the lawn and flower beds of the garden. She curtsied as Father Ragueneau approached.

The Mother Superior looked up, clasped her hands, rough and red from the heavy work that she insisted upon doing. Her kindly, rounded face was grave. "I am so glad that you could come so quickly, Father. A dreadful affair has happened."

Father Ragueneau shook his head when he heard the story. "What a child

you are," he smiled at Diana. "Here only a score of hours and yet the cause of trouble."

"Something must be done at once," the Mother Superior said. "Diana tells me the matter is really serious."

"I could not imagine Godfrey embroiled in anything very serious. I know him too well. A little unpleasantness, perhaps, but that can be smoothed away."

"Godfrey will kill him," Diana said.

"Kill him! Nonsense! What are you saying, child!" Father Ragueneau started.

"Captain Bethune will kill René Vaulette," the Mother Superior added decisively. "He promised René that he would. Mme. Peltrie said she had never heard such concentrated death in a human voice before."

"I do not understand this." Father Ragueneau tugged at his chin. "It is not like Godfrey."

"This René Vaulette is a most offensive young man," the Mother Superior explained. "I expected that he would make trouble, but nothing so serious as this."

"It must be stopped, mon père," Diana said in quiet desperation. "Godfrey will kill him. He is deadly when aroused. You have not seen him, as I have. You were not at St. Louis, out on the ice in that blizzard, in the log bastion when the Iroquois attacked. Godfrey is all steel, hard, merciless."

"It is difficult to believe all that," Father Ragueneau doubted. "I do think this has gone far enough. At the very best it could only do the lad harm." He stared out across the garden, then looked at Diana. "I hear you are having a new dress made."

The Mother Superior smiled. "It is finished. She is a striking lady in it."

Father Ragueneau nodded. "She must look her best," he said, absently.

Godfrey was surprised to receive an invitation to eat the noonday meal with the commandant of the fort and surprise turned to bewilderment when an aide-de-camp courteously informed him that the Governor would receive him in an official audience that afternoon. He spent the intervening time in scrutinizing his uniform, thankful for its faultless correctness.

Diana awaited him, with Mme. Peltrie, at the closed doors to the audience chamber. Mme. Peltrie's full lips were turned in a proud and slightly-amused smile, pride was reflected in the eyes of Father Ragueneau, who was standing to one side of the corridor until Godfrey should arrive. Under Mme. Peltrie's skilled direction Diana had been transformed from a careless child of the forest into a great and gracious lady, severe of beauty, stately of carriage.

Godfrey swept off hat and bowed low and the bow concealed the love of her which shone in his eyes. Never had he seen Diana so overwhelmingly desirable. The flush of her cheeks, the glowing excitement of her eyes were accentuated by the lace-trimmed velvet gown, which spread in flowing lines from the tightly-drawn bodice. Her coppery hair was set in lustrous ripples by a narrow-banded cap of black velvet and white lace, caught by a curiously-fashioned copper knot that sparkled as red gold.

Diana's eyes rounded as he had seen them round only once before—that day now all but lost in the turbulent past when Arakoua had fled the Lookout hill before the threat of his throwing knife. Diana's voice was hushed, as she touched the heavy, carved oaken chair, with tapestry upholstering, upon which she sat, and eyed the big tapestry hanging on the end wall of the waiting room. "I never knew that men's hands could make such beautiful things."

Mme. Peltrie, smiling, touched Diana's pointing finger. "You forget, my dear!" She tapped the offending finger lightly. "And many beautiful things are made by women."

"That is a big castle in France, one of many," Diana said to Godfrey, oblivious of the admonition. "Even Quebec is small beside it. I know so little!"

"A noble fortification." Godfrey studied the great mass of stone and cement, dominating a steep hill in rising walls and turrets. "If we had only a few of the soldiers who guard such forts over here, then—"

His words were stopped by the creak of the doors to the audience chamber. Two soldiers stood smartly to attention. Godfrey gripped plumed hat until knuckles showed white. With Diana he stepped into the chamber, supported by Mme. Peltrie and Father Ragueneau. Diana gave formal court curtsy and Godfrey bowed low to the far dais, where sat His Excellency the Governor and Her Excellency his lady. Louis d'Ailleboust de Coulonges was a regal representative of Europe's Most Christian Majesty in the New World, as he posed stiff as a guard on duty in his chair of state, resplendent in scarlet and gold embroidery and white lace, with Her Excellency, a queenly figure in maroon velvet and cloth of silver, classical features as set and as cold as if sculptured from marble. About them waited the members of the Council, their ladies, in velvets and silks, the members of the staff and the seigneurs.

As one might hear in a dream, Godfrey heard the Governor pronounce the name of Diana Stanley Woodville, speak of the service which she had given to the state at St. Louis and St. Ignace, of the fortune in wampum which she had bestowed upon the Mission to the Hurons, and, lastly, of the debt owed her by New France. A long parchment, besealed and beribboned, was handed to His Excellency, from which he read in a low, droning voice. They were presented

to Diana, with a kiss on each cheek and an embrace by Her Excellency. She stepped back with another court curtsy, cheeks and eyes aglow. She held the lands of a seigneury in New France.

Godfrey's fingers tightened on his hat when his name was spoken. There came a summary of his career which left his face scarlet as the Governor's coat. The vice-regal hand gave him two documents, with their great lead seals and gold, blue and white ribbands. He had been ennobled and made a seigneur.

Very Reverend Jérôme Lalemant stepped slowly forward. His thin, ascetic face, lined by responsibility and years, was lighted by an inner flame reflected in his dark, serious eyes. His voice was that of the scholar. "His Most Christian Majesty, through His Excellency, has fittingly rewarded Captain Bethune for his services to the Crown. There is a service equally worthy of recognition, a service prompted by the spirit and given without consideration other than that of a high conception of duty."

The Superior of the Canada Missions drew his lean form to full height and a subtle transformation took place. He stood there as a giant among men. The greatness that was of his heart and mind, that had made him at once a fearless apostle of the Cross and a gifted administrator of the Order, radiated throughout the room. There was a subdued quality in the crispness of his voice that thrilled. Godfrey was caught up by the measured beat of sentences as one is caught by the surge of the tide. He remembered but vaguely the rise and fall of the words, in which fragmentary sentences stood out in broad relief, as ". . . a service such as might have been conceived by a Godfrey de Bouillon . . . Godfrey the Humble of Spirit, who refused the Crown of Jerusalem and took the lowly title of Baron of the Holy Sepulchre . . . Godfrey the Perfect Knight, who victoriously led the First Crusade and shortly after the capture of the Holy City from the Infidel, founded the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the oldest order of knighthood known to Christendom."

As one would put together the shattered bits of a dream, Godfrey recalled that Father Lalemant turned to the Governor and said, "I now request that His Excellency will do the honour of conferring upon Captain Godfrey Bethune the recognition of his services so graciously bestowed by His Holiness, Pope Innocent X, the investiture as a Chevalier of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre."

Two staff officers stepped to Godfrey's side and with a bow received sword and hat. He remembered dimly the stately investiture, the formality of the draping upon his shoulders of the white silk cloak with the badge of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, a crimson Jerusalem Cross, the placing of the golden collar, the belting of the golden-hilted sword, and presentation of the plumed, gold-trimmed, white hat. It was as though he moved in an unreal world, with an unreal setting, wherein there were obligations to be taken and

felicitations to be heard.

He accepted with a preoccupied courtesy the congratulations of Their Excellencies, the members of the Council and the officers and seigneurs. Even the hurried apology of René Vaulette was received with a disinterest which sent the ensign of the militia, uniform, sword and pistol, scurrying into a far corner, harried by conjured fears.

It remained for the captain of the artillery to stir Godfrey from his maze. That officer approached, long face pulled the longer by disappointment. “I can’t congratulate you,” he muttered. “I had that Vaulette fellow as good as dead. Then you are stepped so far above him in rank that you simply can’t stoop to kill him. It is most depressing.”

Godfrey laughed heartily.

Father Ragueneau put a hand on his shoulder and guided him into a private room. There Mme. Peltrie, Father Lalemant, and Diana were gathered. Diana approached and made a deep curtsy. “I bid you good fortune, Sir Godfrey Bethune.”

Father Ragueneau smiled. “The Bethune family is beyond banter. It is very old, so old that an ancestor of Godfrey’s went to England with Henri d’Anjou, in the twelfth century.”

“As the Woodvilles have no family, I am going to stay where at least they amount to something.” She laughed shortly.

“The Woodvilles are an old and an honourable family,” Father Lalemant said dryly. “In Virginia they are held in high esteem.”

“In Virginia!” Diana coloured under the reproof. “In Virginia they are only —” She closed her mouth in determined silence.

“There is another matter, a pressing one.” Father Ragueneau looked from Godfrey to Diana and smiled. “As Chevalier Bethune is wearing the cloak of his Order, I would suggest that Mlle. Woodville wear her beaver robe and come with us.”

Diana stared suspiciously as the robe of Hinonaia appeared as if by magic and was slipped over her shoulders.

XL

THE SUPREME chief of the Mohawks once more flaunted his arrogance before the council table. Behind him, immobile as two bronze figures, were his warrior attendants, impassive of face, arms folded over fur robes. Ononkwaya stared at Diana, as she stood in stiff dignity beside Godfrey at the end of the table. The chief's hands swept forward, palms down in an act of mourning. His words were addressed to the Governor and Council.

"Black clouds obscure the sun and the land is covered with the shades of night, for the spirit of one of my warriors, adopted into my nation, took flight to the Hereafter. By the red short-axe of the Rock chief was his spirit set free and he is no more of this earth. My eyes once more look into the darkness and what is it they see? The Daughter of Agreskoui in the house of our enemies and as one of our enemies. Behold! she wears that in her hair which it is forbidden to wear, the badge of the great Atotarho, he who was slain by those who ran before our warriors as rabbits run."

Diana was stung to the quick by the ringing denunciation. Her eyes flared a thousand needles of fire. "The supreme chief leaves his memory in the Long House. The war chief Annaotaka and his men of the Cord are not vanquished. The great Atotarho came to meet him. With short-axe and long-knife he came and, lo! he remained. This of his that I wear—" she touched the copper knot —"the victorious Annaotaka plucked from the ground. I wear it in the presence of Onontiio, as my words promised, so that he, the Great Mountain, would know the bravery of the Cord warriors."

The eyes of the supreme chief glittered. There was a second gesture of mourning. "The Daughter of Agreskoui is dead. She died that night when her heart turned over and she stole Teanaosti. I have spoken."

"Her heart turned not over. It was always one way, only she did not know it." Diana was frosty in her suppressed rage. "The Guardian of the River is at my side. You would have made of him charred bones."

"As he made white bones of my people, once your people. My eyes look into the past, to moons long dead, to that sun forgotten, when I, Ononkwaya, and my warriors paid a blood-debt." He stared at her, eyes blazing in cold fury, his arms flung out wide. "My eyes see a great river that runs in a land where the sun shines hot. They see a woman-child standing by the white water and the sun was in her hair and in her eyes. They see a great eagle, the badge of war and of victory, fall from the skies beside her, seize its prey and rise to the Realm of the Sun. I, Ononkwaya, go to this woman-child and her words are the

words of a blood-debt owed by her enemies, the men of the river lands, for her family that is slain. I, Ononkwaya, and my warriors pay that debt. With the mark of the Eagle and the Sun this woman-child came to us and her blood-debt was made our blood-debt." He pointed an accusing finger. "Behold one who forgets a blood-debt! One who turns back on a dead trail! I have spoken."

"The supreme chief speaks with two tongues, as do all people of the Long House," Diana retorted, tight of throat. "One tongue says thus and so. The other tongue says this and that. It does not say that the blood-debt was repaid, that the Daughter of Agreskoui was guarded as prisoners are guarded."

"The trail is a dead trail. I have spoken," Ononkwaya said with cold finality.

"And it is a dead trail that your feet come upon, O supreme chief," the Governor answered crisply. "The Ouendats are under the protection of the great King across the salt waters. He will guard and keep them."

"The warriors of the Long House will come for them. They will come as snow water comes, sweeping all before them. With fire and iron will they come and death will come with them. I have spoken." Ononkwaya touched his short-axe and strode from the room in slow defiance.

That evening Mme. Peltrie and Father Ragueneau sat in the château garden with Diana and Godfrey. The stars hung bright overhead, the moon glowed as a disk of luminous silver against the deep velvet of the night. Father Ragueneau sighed. "The Iroquois mean trouble. Ononkwaya came here to declare war upon us and New France must bear the brunt of the attack alone. A shrewd move to demand the Huron fugitives. It will unite the Confederacy in a general offensive against us."

"They will rue it." Godfrey was confident. "They will find they aren't attacking disorganized Hurons."

"Our settlements will burn and many valuable lives be lost. No, Godfrey, New France cannot afford such a war. It urgently needs peace to consolidate its position. After you and Diana left, the Governor and the Father Superior spoke of a decision made by the Council to send a diplomatic mission to the English Colony of Massachusetts, in connection with the proposed treaty of trade. We will attempt to extend this to include an offensive and defensive alliance against the Iroquois. I do not hold out much hope for success, but in our present position there is no expedient that we can afford to overlook." Father Ragueneau tugged at his square chin with thumb and forefinger and stared into the shadow-deepened garden. "Father Gabriel Druillettes is appointed envoy and the thought was entertained that it might be advantageous if you, Diana, and you, Godfrey, were to accompany him, as former English colonists who

have attained position and honour in New France."

"Is there no peace and rest in this world?" Diana asked in a small voice of protest.

"There is a duty of citizenship and an obligation to the State," Father Ragueneau answered, without censure. "You do not return as Diana Woodville, the little backwoods girl who left Virginia under such tragic circumstances. You will go under official auspices, and the Chevalier Bethune will accompany you, a seigneur of an adjoining estate."

"I have never had a home." She glanced at Godfrey and realized from his silent resignation the futility of opposition. "Now, when I have lands, I have to leave again."

"Not permanently. You are on a mission, a diplomatic mission."

"It is hateful," she said despondently. "Why should I have to go back to all the things I want to forget?"

Father Ragueneau smiled understandingly. "You may remember what I once said, Diana. No one may escape the past."

Mme. Peltrie twisted at her fingers. "There are no closed roads to the past," she murmured, "not even the Champlain Road."

"We will return. It will be opened again," Godfrey said.

Father Ragueneau's voice was gentle, yet strong in its sincerity of faith. "As the former, I might even say the last, Superior of the Mission to the Hurons, I agree entirely with what you say, Godfrey. It is not for us to speculate upon the disposition made by the Divine Will. We are but finite of understanding and instruments of His will. All that we know is we are permitted to walk in the footsteps of Him who died upon the Cross and that such sacrifices lead to glorious fulfilment of His will."

"We think of the Champlain Road as the last, narrow road to Huronia," Mme. Peltrie said softly; "but it is not a closed road. The very means used to try and close it will cause a greater road to be opened in the future. You too, Father, must have suffered greatly."

Father Ragueneau glanced at her sharply. The darkness hid the reproof in his eyes. "Father Brébeuf's service in Huronia covered a span of almost a quarter of a century. He was the first superior and laid the foundations upon which the Mission to the Hurons stood."

"And you, too, Father, await the opening of the new road for greater service."

Godfrey smiled into the night. He appreciated Mme. Peltrie's delicate turn of conversation. He knew that any allusion to the great responsibility assumed

by Father Ragueneau during his term as Superior of the Huron Mission was extremely distasteful to the modest priest.

Father Ragueneau's voice was little more than a whisper when he spoke. "Ouendake Ehen! Huronia that Was! It has been a matter of regret to me that I was not among the chosen of the Lord to work in the field, as did the gallant martyrs, to face the same perils and suffer as they suffered. That was not to be, but, perhaps, in the future, who knows!" He sighed again. "Truly the past is a part of us."

Diana drew a long breath. Godfrey could see the outline of her set face. "It would have been easier if Ononkwaya had told the whole story. We lived at the edge of the Virginian settlement and the Indians were ugly. They made a surprise raid when Father was at work clearing the land. I saw him killed with short-axe and scalped. My brother and I were by the cabin. Mother fought off the Indians until they arrowed her. Brother was killed by a long knife, and I was captured."

She drew a second deep breath. "I was only a child and when we were deep in the forest they made no attempt to guard me, for there was no place to go. I knew something of their tongue and I heard them say that a war party of Iroquois had come down the river and were not far away. I waited until they were asleep and crept into the woods. I wanted to get the Iroquois to avenge Father and Mother and I was glad the next morning when Ononkwaya found me. He said that I was a good omen and the sign made by the golden eagle was that the Great Otki had sent me to lead them to victory."

"That explains many things, Diana." Father Ragueneau's voice was persuasive. "Did you not think of someone that day you saved Godfrey at St. Louis and St. Ignace?"

Her eyes widened. She was fearful of his deep insight. "You knew that?" she breathed. "Yes, my own father. His eyes, just as I saw him standing alone, looking at death. Father Brébeuf had his eyes. And what a death Father Brébeuf saw!"

Father Ragueneau spoke to Godfrey. "Do you take Diana to the walls and show her Quebec by night. It is beautiful and she has never seen it. We have some small things to take up about your journey." He turned to Mme. Peltrie.

Diana looked out over the capital. In the night it was not unlike the spread of a vast tapestry woven in threads of grey-green, black and silver, falling away to the broad St. Lawrence, a silvered moon path against the black spires of the forest on the opposite shore, spires that arose as those of a thousand churches and formed a mystical pattern against the star-studded blue of the heavens. In their design something was caught of the spirit and the

unchallenging faith that was Quebec. The simplicity of life in New France, the struggle of its hardy people for existence against the savage forces of the unknown continent were imaged by the faint glaze of candle-light against the dull oil-papered windows of houses by the waterfront. Diana felt this mysterious symbolism of the night. Her eyes were serious, as she whispered to Godfrey, “We are so small and the world and the skies so big.”

“But we, the people of New France, are here to stay. All this, the traders’ houses of Lower Town, under the bluff, that we cannot see, will remain.”

“You said nothing about my story. Weren’t you surprised—and disgusted?”

“No. I knew the most of it.” He smiled.

“You knew the most of it!” She stared at him in disbelief.

“That is, I had thought it out. You weren’t the only white child taken by the Indians, particularly the Iroquois. It was not hard to guess the truth.”

“He is so stupid in some ways and so clever in others.” She eyed him intently. “You do not hate me?”

“Hate you! why I—” He stopped as she turned her head. His hand dropped to his side.

“I do not know,” she murmured.

Godfrey straightened with a deep breath. His voice was low. “Let me put it this way. Our lands are side by side. Why not make them one? That would be a fine estate for a knight and his lady.”

“I do not know what to think. I am in a strange world. This! This!” She touched her tightly-laced bodice and full-flowing skirts. “I do not know how I shall like these things and those silly people who say, ‘Do not do this; do that.’ It may be I can’t stand this life.”

“It will soon come back to you,” he said comfortingly.

“I never knew them. Perhaps, because everything is so strange to me and this world so new, I can see things more clearly.”

“A bystander looking on,” he laughed. “It is the strangeness of everything which makes you feel that way.”

“And I seem to make trouble wherever I go,” she added with a touch of sorrow. “I have only been here a few hours and you nearly fought over me. How do I know that I would not make more trouble for you?”

“That ensign is a young fool,” he snorted.

“Father Ragueneau stopped that duel by making you a great man here, a knight. The next time it might not be stopped so easily.”

“Then I would fight,” he said cheerfully.

“I know it. That’s what I am afraid of. I have seen so much bloodshed.” She shuddered and looked to the stars. “You have seen so little of the world, and I even less. You might see someone you like much better than you like me.”

“That I will never do,” he denied softly. “You would see someone much better than I am.”

“What a clever man you are!” she scoffed; then her mood grew tender. “Your heart is in the old fort by the beautiful river. The old fort is gone. It can never return.”

“The Fathers will return,” he declared stoutly. “Then, Fort Ste. Marie will rise again.”

“Not in our time, Godfrey. No, we will never go back there. A moon that has gone cannot shine again.”

Godfrey frowned and glanced along the embattlemented walls. A cannon thrust its thick muzzle through the embrasure. There were other cannon which he could not see, giants of iron compared with the little brass sentinel that stood in the postern tower at Fort Ste. Marie. But this was Quebec; and its citadel was as solid as the rock upon which it stood, a symbol of a new law and order to come.

He looked quickly at Diana. She was silently watching the river. He leaned against the parapet and scowled at the St. Lawrence. It flowed as a magical river through a dark, forbidding land, whose very shadows, he thought, mercifully concealed the tragedy and suffering of the savage world stretching away about him. Godfrey’s mind flashed back to that morning of the arrival at Quebec. With a privileged few he had waited at a secluded basin, as laymen from Fort Ste. Marie drew a lone canoe to shore and removed two small, iron-bound caskets. He had stood to attention as they were borne past him with reverent care. So the bones of Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant came back to the modest stone residence of their Order, which the missionaries had left in all honour and selflessness to serve the Cross in Huronia.

A picture of the blackened ruins of Fort Ste. Marie, by the banks of the sluggish river at the end of the Champlain Road, formed on the screen of memory. Behind those gaping bastions and postern tower the flesh of Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant lay within the earth that they had loved unto death. It was consecrated ground, even though it lay in the heart of a brooding, desolate solitude. That courageous leader of the Mission to the Hurons and last Superior, Very Reverend Paul Ragueneau, had blessed the hallowed spot just before the House of Ste. Marie was given over to the torch. That was exactly a

year and a day before the melancholy return to Quebec.

Godfrey drew a long breath. Not far from where he stood, on the slopes of the incline, was the residence of the Canada Missions to which the two caskets had been solemnly carried. He recalled a story told him only that morning of how, a short twenty-three months ago and on the eve of departure to Huronia, Father Gabriel Lalemant had sat in his little room and transferred to paper the outpouring of his heart:

> "If it is reasonable that one should, even at the cost of a thousand lives, try to bring souls to God, you will find no one more prompt than I. Silence, then my soul! Lose thyself in this holy work."

Godfrey looked meditatively at the stars. Father Lalemant in truth had lived a thousand lives, for during that last hideous night in St. Ignace he had died a thousand deaths in one. Such was the spirit of service which actuated that choice Company of the Cross—Jean de Brébeuf, Antoine Daniel, Charles Garnier, Noël Chabanel, men who had consecrated their blood and lives to the work and motto of their Order, *To the Greater Glory of God*. Godfrey could envision the gallant five, as he knew them in life, against the backdrop of the night, Chevaliers of the Wilderness, *sans peur et sans reproche*.

In a flash of realization he knew with a certainty not to be questioned that the sacrifices and sufferings of the martyrs were not without purpose and no more signified defeat than did their deaths mark the close of their mission upon earth. For beyond every great drama of events was the divine pattern of life, so vast in conception that only in the retrospect of generations could man comprehend its tremendous sweep.

In the light of intuition Godfrey glimpsed something of the years and centuries to come. He saw a people yet to be cradled which would penetrate the dark depths of the continent, reopen the Champlain Road and push ever forward, even to the unknown coast of the wide Pacific. Then the short-axe would be beaten into the ploughshare, the warrior transformed into the husbandman, and cathedrals and churches would arise upon village sites where the blackened stake had stood. And the House of Ste. Marie, too, would endure as the "Abode of Peace", so that those generations of the distant future might look back across the ebb-tide of time and in the tranquil courage of the past find the divine touch of God's finger upon the land.

There came a melodious note from a neighbouring belfry. Godfrey started as a sleeper rudely awakened. Memory sharpened perception. On another day, in far-off Huronia, he had stood by the palisades of old Fort Ste. Marie and with tragic prescience had foreseen the impending destruction of the Huron

empire. That was two years ago, the morning that the Iroquois had destroyed Teanaostaiaë and Father Daniel, the first of the five martyrs of the House of Ste. Marie, had fearlessly awaited certain death before the door of his chapel of St. Joseph. Now, on the battlements of Quebec, a greater revelation had come to him.

Godfrey stood immovable as the stone merlon beside him, as he tried to comprehend a spiritual development so immense, so different in thought and action from the period in which he lived. He perceived dimly that it was his privilege to make some contribution, however small, to this tremendous life plan, even though he must live upon the remote fringe of the new age to come. His lips moved and his voice was hushed as the night sounds were hushed about him. “A collar of white-hot axe-heads and a charred stake—a Crown of Thorns and the Cross.”

Diana drew close to him. Her fingers lightly touched his hand. “Huronia!” she whispered. “Strange things happened in Huronia.”

He turned to her, face alight with the vision that he had seen. Her glowing eyes smiled understandingly into his. In them he read destiny. Spirit was calling to spirit, heart was calling to heart—and neither would be denied.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected.

Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Champlain Road* by Franklin Davey McDowell]