

THE

WHITE ROVER:

—OR—

THE LOVELY MAID OF LOUISIANA.

A ROMANCE OF THE WILD FOREST.

BY DR. J. H. ROBINSON.

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THE WHITE ROVER.

CHAPTER I.

THE HUNTER—CAPTAIN LESAGE—A LIBERAL OFFER.

It was the year 172—. Louisiana was then a French colony. In 1718, by the direction of de Bienville, fifty log huts had been erected on the west bank of the Mississippi River, to which the name of New Orleans had been given in compliment to the Duke of Orleans. Previous to that date, the site where the Crescent City now stands had been covered with a dense forest, in which the red man hunted his game and reared his lodge.

A few years had not greatly changed the aspect of the new settlement. It only numbered about two hundred cabins, although it had become the seat of government—it having been transferred thither from Biloxi after considerable discussion in regard to the propriety of the measure.

The population of New Orleans at the time we have chosen for the date of our story was composed of all kinds of people; not a small part of them being convicts shipped from France to hasten the settlement of the country, and to free prisons already overflowing.

De Bienville, the governor, was a bold and humane man, much esteemed by those under his authority.

With this brief description of the French settlement on the banks of the Mississippi, in 172—, we shall proceed at once to the opening scenes of our story.

It was a mild evening in the latter part of June. The sunlight had fallen from the green leaves of the forest, and lingered no longer on the summits of the western hills.

At that calm and delightful hour, the figure of a man might have been seen standing thoughtfully upon the margin of Lake Ponchartrain—a beautiful sheet of water not far from the new settlement. In person he was tall and exceedingly muscular. Judging from his appearance, he had not seen less than thirty summers—summers that had written lines of care upon his brow, and whose suns had left a deep brown upon his face.

He could not have been called handsome, or even good-looking, for there was something sinister in his expression—the nether lip curled with too much pride, the eyes were too fierce in their glances, and the forehead seemed contracted into a perpetual frown. His curling beard (one might suppose) had been left entirely to

nature from the period of its earliest development; and the same might be said, with some show of plausibility, in regard to his hair, which reached quite to his shoulders.

The individual's dress, to whom the reader's attention has been called, consisted of a hunting frock of dressed deer skin, breeches of the same, Indian moccasins, and a common foraging cap, probably manufactured by himself from the skins of the musk-rat, or the coon.

A powder-horn ornamented with various devices, and a ball pouch, were suspended from his shoulders and hung at his side, where a hunting-knife of large size was also visible, thrust beneath the leathern thong which encircled his waist.

In his right hand the hunter held a double-barrelled rifle, which few men of the present degenerate age would wish to carry, on account of its great weight.

Suddenly the listless attitude of the hunter changed. He had heard the sound of footsteps in the forest near him.

"Moran, I have been seeking you," said a voice; and the next moment a man of middling stature, wearing the uniform of a French officer, stood beside the person we have here been describing.

"What is your wish?" asked Moran, coldly.

"Moran," returned the other, playing carelessly with the hilt of his sword, "we have met before on several occasions."

"My memory is very good, Captain Lesage; you might have spared yourself the trouble of making that remark," replied Moran, gruffly.

"I am something of a physiognomist, my good friend," continued Lesage. "I always make a study of the human face, in order to learn something of the character of its possessor."

"And you have been studying me, captain?" said Moran, with a singular curl of the nether lip of which mention has already been made.

"You are right, Pierre Moran. I have studied you, and you are the very man I wish for under existing circumstances."

"Go on, Lesage," returned Moran.

"You are a bold and daring fellow; blest with a determined will, a strong hand and steady nerves, and love adventures of all kinds."

"Well."

"If a man," resumed Lesage, in an insinuating voice, "desired to have a bold and some- what difficult piece of work executed in a quick

and silent kind of way, you would be the man to do it, provided that your services were compensated in a liberal manner; that is, in proportion to the risk incurred."

For a moment a deeper brown than usual was visible upon the forehead of Pierre Moran; but when Lesage looked up into his face for an answer, it had passed away.

"You are very shrewd, captain," said the hunter, with a smile. "But go on; let me hear what you desire. Speak without reserve."

"I will do so," returned Lesage. "It is sometimes the case, my worthy friend, that a person has an enemy; one whom he utterly despises."

"That's very true, captain."

"Well; can you not conceive that a man who has such an enemy might possibly wish to—"

"Get him out of sight," added Moran.

"You comprehend me, exactly. I see that I have not mistaken my man. To be plain with you, I have an enemy of this description, whom I wish to remove from my path. He is very dangerous; he stands between me and my hopes and purposes. I have *gold*, Pierre Moran; *you are a good shot!*"

Lesage paused and played nervously with his sword hilt.

"I comprehend," answered the hunter, biting his lip.

"Name your reward," added Lesage, in a voice less calm than that which he had at first assumed.

"You wear a sword, captain; why not avenge your own wrongs, and *save your gold?*" said Moran, looking contemptuously at Lesage.

"I do not choose to. There are many reasons that make me anxious to entrust my vengeance to the hands of another; and *you* are the man I have selected."

"You do me honor, Lesage," replied the hunter, calmly.

"The young man whose existence endangers my happiness, is in the habit of hunting about the borders of this lake."

"His name, Lesage?"

"I will whisper it, lest these trees should have ears; it is ——" and the captain whispered the name as he had promised.

"Did you hear?"

"Perfectly well, captain; but how am I to know him?"

"That will be the easiest thing in the world. I will describe him. He is six feet in height, well formed, straight as an arrow, like as an In-

dian, and the ladies call him handsome. He is poor as a beggar, and proud as a prince. His complexion is dark, his eyes are black, his hair of the same color, and it is barely possible that a little native blood circulates in his veins. He mingles freely with the Indians, and seems to have some influence among them."

"You say he is fond of hunting?"

"It is his principal employment. He is quite as much at home in the woods as the aborigines themselves. He is an excellent shot, and carries a rifle, which may, for aught I know, be twin brother to your own. Do you think you should know him, Moran?"

"Yes, captain."

"Well; that man stands in my way," continued Lesage, while his small gray eyes flashed with intense hatred. "When you will assure me—and bring proofs of what you affirm—that he is removed from my path, two hundred pounds will be subject to your order."

"Liberal, upon my word!" exclaimed Moran, with another curl of that sinister nether lip.

"Is there more to say on this subject?" asked Lesage, anxiously.

"No more, captain."

"Then we understand each other."

"Perfectly."

"Two hundred pounds, Moran."

"I comprehend."

"It's settled, then?"

"Entirely."

"You know where I am to be found?"

"I do; good night."

"*Au revoir*. I hope we shall meet again soon." And Lesage turned on his heel and walked away.

"Senseless idiot!" said the hunter to himself, when the form of Lesage had disappeared among the trees. "A physiognomist indeed! Smooth-tongued dissembler! for once you have reckoned without your host. When Pierre Moran imbues his hands in the blood of his fellow-man, save in self-defence, may he never live to wash out the foul stain, but pass to judgment with all his sins upon his head. Go, Lesage, and find some other arm to slay one whom you dare not meet on equal terms. Pierre Moran can meet the red man two to one, and live through the fight; he can bring down the panther at two hundred yards, or he can battle successfully with the howling wolf—but a murder he cannot do," and then he added in a lower tone, "it was well for *him* that he found Pierre Moran in a calm and patient mood."

With these words, the hunter shouldered his rifle and moved away along the margin of the lake. The moon had arisen, and her silvery rays were reflected softly upon the glassy waters. Tempted by the calm beauty of Ponchartrain, Pierre Moran paused occasionally in his solitary walk, to contemplate its sleeping depths.

At length he turned from the lake and entered a dark dingle upon the right. Finding a spot suitable for the purpose, he gathered dry sticks and leaves, and by means of some powder and a flint set the heap on fire; soon a bright blaze lighted up the dingle.

CHAPTER II.

THE SURPRISE—A PRISONER—THE RESCUE—THE WHITE ROVER.

PIERRE MORAN laid down his rifle, spread his blanket upon the ground, and lighted his pipe. Seating himself by the cheerful blaze, column after column of the fragrant smoke went curling upward, and he watched the fantastic wreaths as they dissolved and disappeared in the air.

Suddenly a majestic figure seemed to rise up out of the earth and stand beside Pierre Moran. The latter sprang to his feet and grasped his hunting-knife, for the foot of the intruder was planted firmly upon his rifle.

"What does the pale face do here?" asked the intruder, in a stern voice. "Does he not know that these great forests, these fair lakes, and these broad rivers belong to the red man?"

"The red man and the white are brothers," replied Moran, calmly.

"'Tis false!" exclaimed the Indian, fiercely. "They never were brothers, and they never can be. They are two distinct races of people, and the Great Spirit has placed eternal enmity between them."

"That matters little to me," replied Pierre. "I ask no favors of white man or red. The forest is my home, and I will not be driven from it though every tree conceal an enemy thirsting for my blood. If you came to intimidate me with great words, you will lose your labor; for the heart of Pierre Moran never pulsated with fear."

The Indian drew up his majestic figure to its greatest height; he raised his red hand and pointed his long fingers fixedly at Moran, while his eyes flashed like meteors.

"'Tis proudly spoken, bold pale face; but it avails not—you are a prisoner."

"Who are you?" asked Moran, somewhat impatiently.

"I am Onalaska, the leader of the allied nations," replied the red man, with a kingly wave of the hand. "The hatchet is dug up and will never be buried. The Chickasaws are burning to avenge their wrongs; they have communicated the same contagious fire to the Choctaws, the Natchez and the Mobilians. In a few months the white man will be swept from the great valley of the Mississippi. Their cabin-fires will be extinguished forever, and their dwellings shall become heaps of ruins. The fate of the Long Knives* is sealed."

"This is a new movement," said Pierre, much wrought upon by the words of the proud chieftain.

"Onalaska has not been idle; he has been successful. The time has come to strike a blow

* The whites were frequently called "Long Knives" by the Indians, on account of their swords.

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which shall send terror to the hearts of the French dogs."

"Proud Indian, Pierre Moran is a Frenchman," said the hunter, sternly.

"And a prisoner," added the chieftain, with a grim smile.

"'Tis not true. I do not yield myself a prisoner. There is not a single arm that can conquer Pierre Moran, in a hand to hand encounter, to be found between the source of the great river and its mouth."

As the athletic hunter spoke, he drew his knife from its sheath, and struck his left foot fiercely upon the ground a little in advance of the right.

"Haughty savage, Pierre Moran is ready! Come on!"

The Indian smiled scornfully.

"I have only to shout the battle-cry of the Chickasaws, to bring an hundred warriors upon you," he said, slowly. "Pale face, put back your knife; to fight would be madness!"

Moran replaced his knife in its sheath.

"What do you intend to do with me?" he asked, fixing his dark eyes earnestly upon Onalaska.

"My warriors shall decide."

"I thought I was talking with a great chief," returned Pierre, contemptuously.

"And so you are; but a wise leader will always please his warriors when he can," said the Indian.

"Listen to me," replied the hunter. "I will tell you how we may decide this matter. You are as strong and brave as any of your warriors. Draw your hunting-knife and meet me on equal terms, foot to foot, breast to breast, and hand to hand. He that is vanquished in the fight, let him be at the mercy of his victor. Let your braves remain where they are, and not put forth their hands to decide the contest. Speak, Onalaska; is not the offer fair?"

"No, it is not," replied Onalaska. "I am a great war-chief—the leader of the allied nations, and you are without rank or title—a nameless hunter. My life belongs to my people, and why should I put it in peril, and thus endanger my great enterprise? The idea is foolish, and not to be thought of. Why should I risk so much when you are already in my power? Pale face, when you fight Onalaska, it must be in battle."

"Listen once again, proud savage," continued Pierre Moran. "If you will not meet me in the manner proposed, bring to me your mightiest

warrior, and I will try my strength with him in any way he may conquer I will be free."

For reply, the chief uttered war-cry, and instantly an hundred warriors showed their grim faces at which the hunter had kindled.

"The white hunter is a captive; what braves do with him?" said Onalaska.

There was a hurried consultation among warriors. At length a chief stepped forward and said:

"Let the pale face die according to the custom of the red man."

"He has a brave heart," said Onalaska.

"Then he will die like a man, and not like a squaw," replied the chief who had spoken.

"He has never fought against our people," continued Onalaska.

"Let him perish then, before he slays any of our warriors, as other Frenchmen have done," rejoined the chief.

Onalaska said no more; he folded his arms and allowed his people to have their own way in regard to the captive. Preparations were instantly made to put him to death. He was bound firmly to a tree. Dry fagots were brought and heaped about him. A circle was formed around the condemned, and the death-dance celebrated. The dingle, so quiet an hour before, resounded with terrific shouts.

[SEE ENGRAVING.]

Pierre Moran prayed silently for strength and courage, and resigned himself to his fate. Savage eyes flashed upon him, and sharp steel blades menaced him.

The stout heart of Pierre Moran sank within him. He beheld all the avenues of hope closed forever.

A tall savage stepped forward, waving a fiery brand that was to light the pile. He shook the blazing fagot on high, and laughed in fiendish triumph; then he fired the combustible heap in several places, and the flames leaped upward.

At that fearful crisis, there was a sudden commotion among the warriors; they gave way to the right and left, and a young white man dashed quickly through the broken circle, hurled back the savage who held the burning brand, and scattered the blazing fagots like straws in all directions; then drawing a hunting-knife from his belt, he severed the bonds of Pierre Moran in an instant.

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we grasped their weapons and
y upon the white man.

er of Pierre turned towards them,
his hand for silence and attention,
them as follows:

an is my friend. If you are resolved
destruction, you must first slay me;
one of you shall strike a blow at his life
you strike through my body. I appeal to
great chief. Onalaska, shall a man be
ain because he protects his friend?"

"No!" thundered the voice of Onalaska.
"You say the captive is your friend; it is
enough. It never shall be said that Onalaska
put to death the friend of the White Rover.
The bold hunter is free."

"I thank you," replied the daring youth, with
a graceful wave of the hand; "and if the great
Onalaska should need a friend in the hour of ad-
versity, he will know where to find one."

Pierre Moran's rifle was then restored, and
his deliverer, taking him by the arm, hurried
him away from the dangerous vicinage.

With the kind reader's permission, we will
briefly describe the young man who appeared so
opportunistically for the deliverance of the hunter.

In person he was about the size of the latter,
having the same powerful muscular develop-
ment—that unerring sign of physical strength.
He was dressed in similar style, also, and car-
ried a double-barrelled rifle of equal length and
weight; but farther than this, there was no re-
semblance, for the face of Henri Delcroix was a
model of manly beauty. His forehead was
broad and high, his eyes dark and piercing, his
lips finely chiselled, his teeth white and regu-
lar, his nose faultless, and his cheeks ruddy with
the blood of youth, though darkened from con-
stant exposure or some other cause. Join to
all these advantages, a commanding figure and
a noble disposition, and some faint idea may be
formed of our hero.

Those generous qualities of heart and soul,
those noble traits of character, ever desirable
and ever to be coveted, we trust we shall be
able to develop in the person of Henri Delcroix,
in the course of our story, as, time, space, and
circumstances may require; for, from these flow
all human acts, whether good or evil.

"You have rendered me an important service,
young man," said Pierre Moran, as they walked
onward.

"No more than common humanity demands,"
replied Henri.

"Spoken like a true man," said the hunter.
"May I be permitted to ask if your home is
near the new settlement?"

"Sometimes it is near, at others afar off,"
answered Delcroix, lightly. "At present, my
home is wherever night overtakes me. I am a
free denizen of the forest; a licensed wanderer
among hills and mountains."

"A bold heart, truly. Pardon me if I ask
your name?"

"I am called Henri Delcroix by the French;
but the red man, not unfrequently, styles me the
'White Rover.' I can tell you but little of
my history. I was born in the great valley of
the Mississippi about the time of the first settle-
ment at Biloxi. My early youth was passed
mostly among the Indians, but I was finally
domiciled in the house of a good priest, who
taught me to read and write. I remember a
French woman, also, who seemed very fond of
me, and taught me much that was useful. The
priest is still living. He has recently taken up
his residence at the new settlement, which they
call New Orleans, and I am allowed to follow
my own inclinations. This is about all I am at
liberty to tell you of my own history."

"In return for your frankness," replied the
other, "I will inform you that my name is Pierre
Moran. Like you, my home is in the woods,
for I am a hunter. I am familiar with every
acre of the country an hundred miles up the
river. I know where the deer goes down to
drink; where the fox seeks covert; where the
wolf prowls at night; and where the panther
loves best to lie in wait for its prey. I know
something of the Indian tribes, also, and of the
habits of that strange people. When you de-
sire the aid of a strong hand, and a hunter's
friendship, give the preference to Pierre Moran.
The service you have rendered me this night,
makes me your friend forever."

"I thank you for your manly proffers of friend-
ship; for in these troublous times, true friend-
ships are rare," returned Delcroix, warmly.

"And real enemies too often found," rejoined
Pierre.

"Yes; and how much it is to be regretted,"
said Delcroix, sadly.

"And now, while I think of it, permit me to
whisper these words of warning in your ear:

"Beware of Lesage!"

Henri Delcroix started at the mention of Le-
sage, as if a serpent had stung him.

"You know that man, then?" he replied,



PIERRE MORAN BOUND FOR EXECUTION.—See Chap. II, page 11.

turning quite suddenly and looking steadily at Moran.

"I do. I have, by some fatality, met him several times."

"Is he a friend of yours?"

"God forbid!" said Pierre Moran, earnestly.

"Then you are not pleased with him, Monsieur Moran?"

"I am not; and it is possible that the time is near when I will give you my reasons for disliking him. But now let us decide where we shall pass the rest of the night."

"Go with me to the settlement. Father Devion always has a spare bed for my friends."

"I accept the kind offer. I can already see the fires of New Orleans."

In a few moments, Henri Delcroix and the swarthy hunter stood in the midst of the miniature city. They entered a cabin not far from the spot where the old Cathedral now stands, and in a short time were wrapped in a profound slumber, forgetful of the toils and perils of the day.

CHAPTER III.

HELEN LEROWE—ADELAIDE—THE DECLARATION.

It was the morning following the events detailed in our last chapter. It was quite early, for the sun still lingered upon the eastern verge.

At that hour a female figure might have been seen walking hurriedly up the street, now known as Chartres street. That portion of her face which was not concealed by a veil, was sufficient to assure any one who might have any curiosity in relation to the subject, that she was quite youthful and exquisitely fair.

She was well dressed, according to the style of that period; but she was by no means indebted to mere externals for that rare beauty of outline, that graceful development of person, which was hers, and which could not fail to excite admiration in the most casual observer. So far as stature was concerned, she compared very well with the models of female perfection, esteemed by classic minds in all ages of the world.

Hers was that exalted and pure style of loveliness, pre-eminently calculated to please and bewilder all true admirers of beauty in woman.

As she moved lightly onward, there was grace and poetry in every motion; not that received from art, but that borrowed from nature herself. The fair girl turned to the left, and entered a cabin, near the present site of the St. Charles Theatre.

"Ah, mademoiselle! you have come to see

us again in the day of our afflictions," said a pale and interesting looking woman, as our heroine crossed the humble threshold. "There are very few young and fair like yourself, who love to visit the poor and needy. God will reward you, Mademoiselle Lerowe," added the woman.

"How is your husband?" asked Mademoiselle Lerowe, kindly, throwing back her veil.

"Louis is much better, thanks to your gentle ministrations, but it was an ugly wound, Mademoiselle Helen," replied the woman.

"And how is Adelaide?"

"She will answer for herself," said a soft voice, and a young girl of about seventeen years appeared from an adjoining room.

"You are looking rather pale this morning. You must go and walk in the open air. The air of a sick room does not agree with young blood like yours, Adelaide," rejoined Helen, studying the features of her young friend attentively.

"I have known young ladies to have pale cheeks without inhaling the air of a sick room," returned Adelaide, playfully.

Helen Lerowe blushed, and placed her white fingers on Adelaide's lips.

"For all your acts of kindness during my father's severe illness, I thank you most sincerely, Mademoiselle Helen," added Adelaide, in a more serious and earnest tone.

"You may leave off the Mademoiselle, Adelaide, and as for thanks, you need not say a word about them. You know that in future we are to be the best of friends," rejoined Helen.

"You forget, Helen, that I am but a poor girl, occupying a different position in life," said Adelaide, meekly.

"And you forget, Adelaide, that I am also but a poor girl, and nothing but the governor's ward. There is a great difference between a ward and a daughter, my good friend," replied Helen.

"But you are an inmate of the governor's house, and as kindly treated as if you were indeed his daughter," said Adelaide.

"Very true; and yet there are times when I feel but too painfully that I am not his daughter, but merely a dependant upon his bounty," answered Helen, sadly.

"I am not certain that you ought to cherish such feelings, Mademoiselle Lerowe. We all know that his Excellency, De Bienville, is very kind of you."

"Heaven could not have confided me to the care of a better man than De Bienville," replied Helen, earnestly; "but notwithstanding, there are moments when my heart feels the want of a father's love, and a father's counsel."

While Mademoiselle Lerowe was speaking, the door was softly opened, and Henri Delcroix entered the apartment. His eyes rested upon the fair figure of Helen Lerowe. He recoiled a step, changed color, and seemed embarrassed. His confusion appeared contagious, for Helen flushed and was quite as much embarrassed.

Henri bowed low, and said with tolerable grace:

"It gives me pleasure to meet you here, Mademoiselle Lerowe. The object of your visit, I did not ask. It is a part of your nature to perform acts of benevolence. I dare say that Madame Ridelle and Adelaide will bear witness to that I have taken the liberty to affirm."

"And so will my husband," said Madame Ridelle, warmly.

"I see you are leagued together to confuse and overwhelm me with useless compliments," replied Helen, with a smile.

"Deserved praise is by no means useless, Mademoiselle Helen," said Henri, respectfully.

And then he added quickly, in order to change the subject, which he perceived was really annoying to Helen.

"How is Ridelle, this morning? May we expect to see him out again?"

"He is doing well, Monsieur Henri. His wounds are nearly healed. In a few days he says he shall be able to take the trail again, and punish the treacherous Chickasaws," answered Madame Ridelle.

Helen turned to depart.

"Stay," said the kind matron, with a significant smile. "Be seated; we cannot spare you yet."

"Of course not," added Adelaide, and with a gentle force, she compelled her to be seated.

Madame Ridelle drew Delcroix aside, and whispered in his ear:

"Improve your time, Henri. Don't be faint-hearted. We will endeavor to give you ample opportunity. Just speak to her, and my word for it, she will not be angry."

Henri made no reply, but gave her a grateful look.

"Adelaide, did not your father call?" added Madame Ridelle, after a moment's pause.

Adelaide hastened to the bedside of her father, begging Helen to remain until she returned. Very soon Madame Ridelle followed her daughter, who called to her.

Mademoiselle Lerowe and Henri were left alone. An awkward silence ensued.

"Mademoiselle Helen," said Henri, seating himself at her side, "condescend to listen to me a single moment, and if in that moment I offend you, it will be the unhappiest of my whole life. I have never yet presumed to tell you with my lips what I am convinced your own penetration discovered long ago in my actions, viz., that I passionately love you. Yes, more than this;—I worship—I adore you. But, beautiful Helen, these terms but imperfectly express my heart's idolatry."

Henri's voice trembled; he hesitated, and then ventured to take Helen's hand.

"Have patience with me, dear mademoiselle; hear what I have to say, and I will not soon trouble you with the story of my unhappy love again. I know that you are an angel of goodness, and placed far above me in life. I cannot hope that you will ever become more to me than you now are; yet I have resolved to unburden my heart, in order that I might have a portion of that gentle sympathy which you are wont to bestow upon all the unfortunate."

Again Henri's emotions overpowered him. Helen's eyes were full of tears, and she trembled excessively.

"Cease to speak thus, I entreat of you," she said in a voice nearly inaudible.

"I know it wounds your gentle nature to see me consumed with a hopeless passion," continued Henri, "and I will trespass but little farther upon your time and patience. In extenuation of my folly, I would entreat you to remember, Helen, that I have known you from my boyhood; that I was the companion of your earliest wanderings over the green hills of Biloxi; that Father Davion taught us to read from the same book; that he bade me love you as a sister; that you were surpassingly beautiful, and a heart less susceptible than mine might have loved you. At length you became a ward, or rather the adopted daughter of De Bienville. Thereafter you were gently nurtured, and a greater distance was placed between us in point of condition; but the mischief was already done. I had learned to adore you, young as you were, and your dear image was engraved upon my heart, never to be effaced. I still met you often, and you usually paused for a moment to speak kindly to your former associate and companion, and thus unconsciously nurtured my passion. Helen, is my presumption to be wondered at? Is it not a natural consequence of our former companionship?"

"O, Henri, why will you thus misapprehend me. I do not reproach you—I do not blame you," replied Helen, in a voice tremulous with emotion.

"Then you are not angry because I have spoken freely; you do not too severely condemn my presumption?" exclaimed Henri, falling upon his knees, and pressing the hand of Helen to his lips.

"Ah, Henri! how blind you have been," she said, softly.

A sudden and almost overpowering light flashed in upon the mind of Henri Delcroix. His brain seemed to stagger with the weight of the truth, which his senses had received. The blood rushed tumultuously to his face; his eyes sparkled with unnatural light;—he was dizzy with happiness.

He bestowed upon Helen a thousand endearing epithets; he did not cease to kiss her hand until he heard the footsteps of Adelaide.

He arose from his knees with a face radiant with joy.

"I have been indeed blind," he said, in a low tone, "for you love me."

Adelaide saw how matters were progressing, and hastily retreated to her father's room.

The happy lover drew the tearful and blush-

ing maiden towards him, and ventured to press his lips lightly to her crimson cheek.

"Helen," he added, "now am I indeed happy. The days of my boyhood seem to be recalled. Henceforth I have something to live for. I will live to make myself worthy of Helen Lerowe. I will win a name that shall be worthy of her, or perish in the effort. Now I am but an unknown lad, without money, and I might add without parentage; but I trust it will not always be thus, for now I have as great an incentive to action as ever mortal man had."

"Nay, Henri, you overvalue me. You forget that I am as portionless as yourself, and that my parentage is involved in an obscurity as dark as your own. I have no claims to gentle birth, and am but a dependant upon the bounty of the excellent governor," replied Helen, earnestly.

"You lose sight of many advantages which you possess. You are known as the fairest of the daughters of Louisiana. There is not a man in the colony but would be proud to lay his heart at your feet, were he sure the offering would be accepted. It would be easy for Mademoiselle Lerowe to marry a fortune," replied Henri.

"Such an absurd idea never occurred to Mademoiselle Lerowe," rejoined Helen, smiling.

"Helen," continued Henri, seriously, "are you willing to sacrifice ambition to love, and remain as you now are until Dame Fortune shall enable me to claim you as my bride?"

"It will be no sacrifice, Henri; and as for ambition, I have little of the kind you refer to," said Helen.

"Your kind words render me unspeakably happy. And now, dear girl, allow me to meet you here as often as propriety will admit."

"I should be rather a poor judge of the last named commodity, I fear," answered the maiden, with a smile.

"On the contrary, you are a model of propriety," said Henri. "But there is another subject I must speak of before we part. I have often seen Capt. Lesage enter the governor's house. My heart told me that he had a motive in going there. Was I right?"

The sweet face of Helen was suffused with blushes.

"You were not wrong in your suspicions. He has persecuted me for several months."

"And you gave him no encouragement?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, Helen?"

THE WHITE ROVER.

He grew impatient, and accused me of loving nameless adventurer."

"The villain!" he said. "I think, nay, I am certain that you have much to fear from him, for by some means he has discovered your secret, and mine too, perhaps. He is a man that will not brook denial, and when once resolved upon a thing, nothing can change his purpose."

"You have not mistaken his character. He is indeed a dangerous man, and capable of any act of villany. How does he stand with De Bienville?"

"On very good terms, I believe."

"Do you imagine that the governor favors his pretensions?"

"On that subject I am in doubt. I hope not, for I most heartily despise the character of the man."

"There is still another subject upon which I must speak. There is a prospect of a long and bloody war with the Indians. Already have the savages commenced their depredations, provoking us to have reason to believe, by some overt act, the part of Capt. Lesage. Onalaska has gathered together his warriors, and sent deputations to all the neighboring nations; to the Chickasaws, the Natchés, the Mobilians, and the Apaches. The slumbering desire for vengeance has been awakened. The council-fires of the red men are burning on every hill, and in every valley, and upon every river; and unless this thing is checked at once, every white man will be swept from the great valley of the Mississippi. The settlement at Mobile, at Dauphine Island, at Pensacola, and here at New Orleans, will perish simultaneously; for, by a wonderful concert of action, all these infant colonies will be crushed in a day."

The face of Helen Lerowe grew pale.

"Merciful heaven!" she exclaimed. "Is the danger indeed so imminent?"

"It is. There is no child's play about it. You know that I have been free to go among the Indian tribes, and that I have ever been called the Indian's friend. I believe they have imbibed the idea that a goodly portion of their own red blood is mixed with the white currents that flow in my veins," said Henri, with a slight change of color. "But let that be as it may, I have

acquired considerable influence over the minds of our red neighbors. No longer ago than last night, I dared to dash into their midst, and snatch a victim from the jaws of death, even after the fires were lighted. And," continued Henri, with a flashing eye and a heaving chest, "I escaped unharmed. Not one of the horribly painted warriors pointed a feathered arrow, or raised a tomahawk against me. There is not another man in Louisiana that could have done it."

"I'll answer for the truth of that assertion with my life," said a voice.

Henri and Helen turned toward the door, and their eyes rested upon the figure of Pierre Moran.

"There is not another man in the French colony that could have done it and lived to tell his sweetheart of it. Pierre Moran says it," added the hunter.

"And he would be a bold man who would dare gainsay you," replied Henri. "Permit me to introduce you to Mademoiselle Lerowe."

Pierre bowed gallantly, and expressed the pleasure he experienced in making the acquaintance of so fair a lady.

"As you stayed much longer than you had anticipated," said Moran, turning to Henri, "I feared something unfortunate had befallen you, and came promptly to the rescue; but I perceive that you can dispense with my services."

Henri and Helen exchanged glances, and changed color.

At that crisis Madame Ridelle and her interesting daughter appeared, and Pierre Moran was greeted as an old acquaintance.

"I have hunted many a day, and camped many a night with Ridelle," said the hunter. "And I have fought the savages side by side, with him, and hope to again, for there will soon be warm work in the colony."

"Do you think so?" asked Madame Ridelle, anxiously.

"There can be no doubt of it, madame. It's a fact that might as well be known first as last. The red men are aroused to vengeance, and much blood will be shed."

Madame Ridelle sighed. Monsieur Moran looked furtively at Adelaide, and Adelaide looked down at the floor.

CHAPTER IV.

A CONFIDENTIAL INTERVIEW—FATHER DAVION—THE ARREST.

It was evening. De Bienville and Lesage were closeted together.

"Are you really in earnest," said de Bienville, "when you assure me that this young man has incited all the Indian tribes against the French colonists?"

"I never was more so, your excellency," replied Lesage.

"But what is the secret of his influence among them? Can you tell me that?" asked de Bienville, incredulously.

"The truth is he is not free from native-blood, himself. He has associated with the Indians from his childhood, and having considerable natural shrewdness, has learned how to operate upon their impulsive natures. He is known also to be the intimate friend of Father Davion, and he possesses great influence among the savages," replied Lesage, with much apparent sincerity.

"Is it possible that this boy has Indian blood enough to make him plan the destruction of all the French settlers upon the Mississippi?" exclaimed de Bienville, nervously.

"It is too true," replied Lesage, musingly. "One drop of Indian blood would be enough to contaminate the best man in the country."

"You do not like our red neighbors, captain?" rejoined Bienville, looking searchingly at Lesage.

"I plead guilty to the charge. I hate the

whole red race; and not without cause, for is not every Frenchman on the Mississippi in danger? It is not easy to guess what a single day may bring forth. To-day we rest in comparative security, but to-morrow we may be tomahawked and scalped, and our infant city laid in ashes."

"Lesage," said de Bienville, abruptly, "I have been acquainted with the various tribes on the Mississippi River for twenty-one years, and I have not yet acquired that influence over their minds which you say this beardless boy has. If what you say be true, nature has certainly intended him for a great man."

"For a great villain, you meant to say, your excellency," retorted Lesage, somewhat tartly.

"I meant as I said," returned the governor, drily. "It requires a bold and daring spirit to lay such a plan as you have been talking of. A miserable coward—a paltry knave, could not do it. But still the young vagabond must be looked to."

"You cannot attend to the matter too soon, your excellency. Already the axe is laid at the root of the tree."

"Hold!" cried de Bienville, with a smile.

"When the devil quotes Scripture, men should be on their guard."

"Ah, de Bienville, you are scarcely aware of

the danger that threatens this devoted colony. Already I seem to hear the shrieks of helpless women, and the wailings of innocent babes. Good heavens! that such depravity should be found on earth!" and the tender-hearted captain covered his face with his hands, and paced the floor in deep affliction.

"Be calm, Captain Lesage," said the governor, somewhat softened by his emotions. "Restrain your anxiety; immediate steps shall be taken to arrest the threatened calamity."

De Bienville paused, and seemed absorbed in thought.

"And this boy was the friend and playmate of Helen," he said, musingly—"the bright and intelligent youth I used so much to admire. Strange that the human countenance should be such a falsehood, and furnish no key to the character of its possessor."

Then turning suddenly to Lesage:

"Do you think Father Davion knows aught of Henri's plans, or really understands his disposition?"

"I do not. The good old man has not the remotest idea of the baseness of the serpent he has nurtured in his bosom. When the whole is made known to him, it will bring his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave."

"And some of our heads, it would seem, will be brought down to *sheol* before our hairs have a chance to grow gray. Alas, we are an unfortunate people. Lesage, I wish there were some mistake about this matter. I do not wish to think so hardly of the boy," and de Bienville walked the room with agitated and uneven steps. "Go and arrest him," he said, at length, in a sorrowful voice. "Go and arrest him," and he waved his hand for Lesage to depart.

"I never gave an order with so much reluctance," he said to himself, when the captain had gone. "I really liked the lad; but what a venomous viper he is, to be sure. And so young, too. *Mon Dieu!* I am losing all faith in human nature."

We will now, gentle reader, bend our footsteps to the humble cabin of Father Davion—one whose name is already recorded upon the page of history, as the friend and instructor of the poor and untutored savage.

The venerable old man was alone. He was engaged in the most ennobling of all human employments—prayer. But he petitioned not for himself.

Preserve us from the horrors of war," he

cried, elevating his hands and bowing his head low upon his breast. "Save my people from blood-guiltiness. Disarm the poor red man of his vengeance; protect this feeble colony, lest it perish from the face of the earth."

Father Davion arose from his knees. The door opened and Henri Delcroix entered.

"*Pax vobiscum*" (peace be with you), said the man of God.

"Under your roof," replied Henri, feelingly, "I have ever found the blessing which you have now invoked."

"*Deo gratias* (thanks be to God). It makes my heart glad to hear you say so, my son. But what are these rumors that are afloat in New Orleans? Sit down and tell me. Is there really any danger of a simultaneous rising of the Indians?"

"There is, good father. The peril is imminent, and if some decisive measures are not immediately taken by the governor to soften down the spirit of vengeance, or to meet it face to face, the French settlements will be swept away with the besom of destruction."

The holy father crossed himself most devoutly.

Deus in adiutorium meum intende! You must hasten to the governor at once, and give him due warning."

"Alas, his ears are not open to counsel like mine," answered Henri, sadly. "Other tongues are busy with him, and my bare assertion would avail but little."

"Do you mean to say, my son, that the governor's mind is already closed against you?"

"I have good and sufficient reasons for believing so; for he has dangerous counsellors. Lesage, forgetful of all but self, is constantly pouring his subtle poisons into the governor's mind, and soon there will be no room there for aught save distrust and anxiety. One Pierre Moran, a hunter, whose name you have doubtless heard, has been with de Bienville to-day, and he heard enough to convince him that I should have little or no influence with him, although I am known to have an accurate knowledge of the Indians and Indian character."

"Ah, Henri! de Bienville prides himself on his own knowledge of Indian character," said Father Davion.

"And not without reason. He is wise and sagacious in that respect, and is much esteemed by the red man; but he is not admitted into their confidence, as I have been."

"Very true, my son; you are indeed in a fearful dilemma. You cannot fight against your

people, and how can you betray the trust of the poor Indian—lift your hand against him who has fed and warmed you!" exclaimed Father Davion, with much emotion.

"Your words fill me with apprehension, holy father. I am indeed painfully embarrassed. My thoughts distract me! But *Mon Dieu!* I cannot stand still and see the savage curs shed the blood of these helpless colonists! No no! I will fly to the forests; I will present myself before the red men. I will tell them I shake off their friendship forever; that henceforth there is no bond of sympathy between us; that I will meet them in the field, and in the forest, as deadly enemies; that I cannot turn renegade to my own blood. Give me my rifle, my powder-horn, my ball-pouch, my hunting-knife, and let me away!"

"No, stay, my dear boy. Let us think calmly; let us plan deliberately; let us look the danger calmly in the face."

"And while we are doing that, the war-cry may perchance be heard all along the banks of the Mississippi."

"But reflect, my son; you must not throw away your life when your aid is so much needed by these defenceless people. Women and children claim the protection of every hand that can lift a musket or wield a sword."

"And there is one, good Father Davion, that Henri Delcroix would die to save," said the young man, in a low, impressive voice.

"What?" exclaimed Father Davion. "Is your heart then enthralled by the blandishments of woman?"

"It is; and her name is Helen Lerowe, the fairest of the fair, and for her sake I would face a thousand deaths, and my heart should not pulsate with a single fear for myself."

"Now may Heaven be merciful, Henri, for there is indeed danger before you!"

"Do you reproach me, father, for loving that noble girl—one whom you yourself taught me to love as a sister, when you taught us to read from the same book?"

"No, no! I do not reproach you. Were it not for the ruin which you will draw down upon your own young head, I would rather you should fix your love upon Helen Lerowe, than any other woman in the world. But do you not see that your relations to her are changed? She is no longer a romping girl, but an inmate of the governor's family. The guileless girl has become the accomplished lady. She has no dearth of

lovers. She can choose from the titled and the wealthy; and be assured de Bienville will exercise a parent's authority over her actions; at least, so far as it seems to him for her good."

"All you have said is true; but do not imagine that it has not occurred to me before. I have thought of it for many months; but to-day I have done more than simply to think—I have acted. Helen loves me, and our mutual vows are registered in heaven."

"Rash boy! you are rushing headlong to your ruin. You have rich and powerful rivals, who will crush you at a blow. How can a friendless, nameless, homeless youth enter the arena and do battle with such odds!" cried Father Davion, in tones of real anguish.

"Is it generous, holy father, to refer to my obscure birth? Has not the rugged iron already entered my soul? Need I another thrust to keep me humble? Would you strike the submissive dog that already crouches at your feet?"

"Hold, my dear Henri! you are too hard upon your old friend. If I probe your wound, it is that I may heal it soundly and well. Far be it from me to reproach you because your parentage is obscure. The same inscrutable obscurity also hangs over the parentage of Helen; and it were folly to affirm that she is less lovely or noble for that."

"I hear footsteps without," said Henri, starting to his feet. "It sounds like the tread of armed men. What can it mean?"

"You may well ask!" exclaimed Father Davion, "for I see the bristling of bayonets through the windows! Alas! my heart tells me but too plainly what it portends."

There was a loud rap like a blow from the hilt of a sword.

"Conceal yourself, my dear boy," whispered the holy father.

"Never," said Henri, firmly. "I will meet the danger boldly, whatever it may be. Henri Delcroix will never fly while he has the proud consciousness that he has done nothing worthy of punishment."

Father Davion opened the door, and the form of Lesage darkened the threshold.

"Henri Delcroix, I arrest you," he said, in an arrogant tone.

"By whose authority?" asked Henri, calmly.

"By the authority of his excellency, the governor of Louisiana," replied Lesage.

"For what crime?"

"I was ordered to arrest you, and not to an-

over, questions, Monsieur Henri. Men, close up round the door, and see that he does not escape through the windows."

"Did you bring the whole of the governor's army?" asked Henri, sarcastically.

Lesage bit his lips and made no reply.

"Captain Lesage, what does all this portend? Answer me!" said Father Davion, in a tone of command.

"You can ask his excellency," returned Lesage, "if you have any interest in this unfortunate young man. I can only assure that he will be dealt fairly with. It is my duty to conduct him to prison. Sergeant Dumont, march, in a file of men. Corporal Willet, bring the irons."

The captain stepped aside, and the sergeant with a file of men, with shouldered arms, entered and surrounded Henri. The corporal followed with handcuffs.

"Hold out your hands for the ornaments, monsieur," said the corporal.

With a smile of derision Henri stretched forth his hands, and the irons were placed upon them.

He was then pushed into the open air in order that the cautious captain might arrange his men in marching order.

"Close up, men. Sergeant Dumont, prick that man with your sword that laughed in the ranks! Attention the whole! eyes front! to the right about face! mark time! march!" and the chivalry of Louisiana moved away toward the prison.

"We ought to have had music, Sergeant Dumont, so that we could have taken him along to the tune of the 'Rogue's March,'" remarked the captain, facetiously.

The prison was a small stone building near the governor's residence, and thither Henri was escorted. He soon had the sorrowful privilege of hearing the locks of a prison turn upon him for the first time in his life.

A just appreciation of his position, which his better judgment enabled him to make, nearly overwhelmed him with grief and anxiety.

Not that he feared any punishment for supposed crimes, but the idea of dishonor and lasting ignominy quite unnerved him for the moment; for it was possible that even Helen might be taught to credit the tales which would be circulated in regard to him.

Leaving him to gloomy thoughts, we will return again to the house of the governor; for we scarcely dare dignify it with the title of mansion.

Immediately after the prison doors had been locked upon Henri, Captain Lesage hastened to the presence of De Bienville, who had not yet retired, but was pacing his room with a mind distracted by the most intense anxiety.

"Well, captain, what news?" he asked, earnestly, when Lesage appeared.

"May it please your excellency, our worst fears are confirmed," he said, with a low bow, and a lugubrious voice. "Upon searching the young man, I found upon his person sundry pieces of birch bark, which seem to be covered with diagrams, one of which I will lay before you and attempt to explain."

Lesage proceeded to unroll a piece of birch bark about the size of a letter sheet.

"This serpentine mark through the centre of the bark, represents, doubtless, the Mississippi winding its way along the great valley, and these two smaller ones the Tombigbee and Perdido. These round characters indicate the different French settlements. This is Natchitoches; this is New Orleans; this is Dauphine Island, and this is Pensacola."

"*Sacre Dieu!*" exclaimed the governor, lifting his hands in astonishment.

"Observe, your excellency, that these large marks represent the Natchez; this the Choctaws; this the Chickasaws; this the Mobilians, and this the Yazoos."

"The saints defend us!" ejaculated the governor.

"These arrows, your excellency," continued Lesage, with consummate art, "indicate the number of villages in each nation; while these belts of wampum represent the number of chiefs. Near each village you perceive a hatchet and a scalping-knife; showing probably that a state of warfare exists, and is to be carried forward with vigor."

"Are you morally certain that this is the work of that unhappy young man?" said De Bienville, with a lowering brow.

"What farther assurance does your excellency require?" asked Lesage, with a troubled expression.

"All that I can possibly have. It never shall be said that De Bienville, during his administration, acted hastily or without due evidence that he was in the path of duty. What are you trying to decipher at the bottom of the chart?"

"See for yourself," replied Lesage.

The governor took the birchen chart and read in legible characters the name of Henri Del-

croix, and just beneath it the name of Onalaska (sometimes styled Red Shoe), the famous Indian warrior and diplomatist.

De Bienville's hand shook while he held in it the fatal sign of Henri's guilt.

"The whole of the foul plot has not yet been developed," added Lesage, in a tone of well dissembled grief. "This hard-hearted, inconsiderate, and remorseless youth has also tampered with the Banbara negroes, and they are ripe for revolt."

The governor, upon hearing this astonishing intelligence, was for a moment speechless with surprise.

"I have heard," he said, at length, endeavoring to speak with calmness, "vague rumors of an insurrection among the Banbaras, but I have hitherto regarded them but lightly, knowing that the negroes are, as a general thing, a docile and peaceably disposed race of men, suffering wrong often, but very seldom resisting oppression."

"But now the aspect of things is indeed serious, for there are as many negroes as whites in Louisiana at the present moment. Before we proceed farther, tell me how you gained this most astonishing piece of news?"

"From my own faithful knave, your excellency."

"Call him in, Lesage."

In a short time the captain's colored servant made his appearance.

"Curly, cover up your teeth with those thick lips, and answer any questions his excellency may ask, and see that you keep nothing back," said the captain.

"Yes, massa," replied Curly, displaying a large quantity of ivory.

"Curly," said the governor, sternly, "can you tell the truth?"

"I used to could, massa," replied Curly.

"Do you know Henri Delcroix?"

"As I know my farder, massa gubernor."

"Has he ever tampered with you?"

"He tried to, but he couldn't 'kase Ise so wirtnous."

The governor could not repress a smile.

"Did he ever ask you to join the Indians in waging a war of extermination against the French?"

"Them's the werry words he said to me, Gubernor Bienville. He told me we could soon make the French run away; that is, what few of

'em wasn't scalped, and then we could make a nice—what do you call 'em—republic of our own, and some of de Banbaras would be gubernors in course of time. But it wan't my nature to commit such an act of moral turpentine!"

"Turpitude, you mean," said Lesage.

"Do you know whether he ever talked in a similar manner to other colored persons," continued the governor.

"He did. There's quite a 'telligent darkey that I'm jest been conversing with, that he talked to in the same disrespectful way."

"You may go, Curly, and if you see that intelligent colored gentleman, request him to come in," added the governor, with great gravity.

The negro referred to made his appearance almost immediately, and testified much in the same manner that his predecessor had done.

"Captain Lesage," said de Bienville, when they were alone, "I am satisfied that this is a most serious affair, and that all the French settlements are in danger of complete destruction. Your important services shall not be forgotten. You may regard your promotion as something fixed upon and certain. Any favors I can reasonably grant, you may ask without fear of rebuke. The events of the last few days have secured you a warm friend in the person of the governor of Louisiana—an office which the united voices of the colonists affirm he has never yet disgraced."

"Governor de Bienville, I thank you most sincerely for your good opinion. Permit me to suggest one thing more before I leave you."

"Speak freely, captain."

"You are aware that the worthy Father Davion is exceeding fond of this misguided youth, and will by no means be disposed to admit his guilt. He will undoubtedly seek an interview with your excellency as soon as the morning dawns. Now in order to spare yourself the pain of beholding his grief, would it not be right and proper and excusable, to plead some prior engagement, or something of that kind? Put him off by some means, in order to spare him the anguish of a direct refusal of his wishes, which would well nigh break his heart. A course like this, it seems to me, would be a mercy to him, and to yourself also."

"I will take your well meant advice into consideration. Send Dumont to me to-morrow."

"Yes, your excellency."

"And, stay; do not forget to find two or

three faithful messengers, that I may send to the Port of St. Claude, on the Yazoo River, and to the Port of St. Dennis, at Natchitoches."

Lesage retired; and the governor was again alone, afflicted about as much with real difficulties as Sancho Panzo was with imaginary ones, at the famous island of Barritaria.

As for Lesage, we will suppose that his dreams were troubled, and that his sleep was not the sleep of innocence. With consummate skill he had woven the meshes of villany about his youthful rival, and there appeared but little hope that he could extricate himself from the difficulties in which he was involved.

There was a dangerous appearance of reality in the developments which he had pretended to make to the governor. The Indians were truly forgetting their mutual animosities, and uniting their strength to crush the French.

This movement had been suspected by de

Bienville for a long time, and he now supposed that he had significant proof that Henri Deleroix was the leader and prime mover of the fatal alliance.

There had also been much discontent among the Banbara negroes, and Henri was now as deeply implicated in the embryo insurrection as in the Indian league; and it was fearfully apparent that if the whole affair was not crushed in its infancy, nothing could save the French from destruction.

It was known that our hero had been much with the Indians, and had considerable influence over them; and this fact, added to the many which Lesage had produced, afforded, in the estimation of the governor, but too evident proof of his guilt, and he regarded him as furnishing an instance of the blackest ingratitude and depravity on record. He resolved that his punishment should be speedy and summary.

CHAPTER V.

LA GLORIEUSE.

UPON the night of Henri's arrest, a birchen canoe containing two persons was floating noiselessly down the Mississippi, near its western bank. Both the voyagers were females. The one who occupied the stern of the frail vessel was a Natchez woman of about twenty years of age, uncommonly handsome, and nearly related to the Great Sun. She was in fact a princess. Her name was La Glorieuse—*The Proud*.

As the soft moonlight fell upon the face of La Glorieuse, it revealed features which would not have proved uninteresting even to the most common-place observer. The light of a lofty spirit beamed from her eyes. Firmness and gentleness seemed to have met in the expression of the mouth, and the general formation of the face.

Her hair was very long and glossy, and hung loosely, but yet gracefully over her shoulders, giving her rather a coquettish appearance.

She was dressed evidently with great care according to the Indian taste, and yet on the whole having an air of easy negligence quite agreeable to the beholder.

La Glorieuse held a light and fancifully carved paddle, which she occasionally dipped into the wave with a quick and dexterous movement. The birchen vessel, obedient to the impulse, glided on with a steady and untiring motion.

The female who sat in the bow of the canoe, was obviously descended from a different race. She was a Frenchwoman of about thirty years of age, as nearly as one could judge from her appearance. Her name was *Leona Mablois*; but she usually passed as *Madame Mablois* among the French, while the Indians had bestowed upon her the more romantic appellation of *Chatakawa*, which means *Soft-Voice*, or the woman that sings; which was given her on account of the peculiar sweetness of her voice.

Though the blushing beauty of youth had faded from the face of Madame Mablois, it had not left it without attractions. A certain degree of calm repose had fixed itself upon her features; yet they were impressed and somewhat saddened by visible lines of care and constant thought. Her features and manners were still pleasing, and calculated to inspire confidence and friendship. Though her face was somewhat darkened by exposure to the open air, it had lost little of its true delicacy, and still retained vestiges of its pristine loveliness. Her figure was good, and possessed that *embonpoint* so highly esteemed by connoisseurs in beauty as developed in the gentler sex. Her dress was in keeping with her habits, being a graceful blending of the French and Indian styles.

"Our voyage is nearly accomplished," said

Madame Mablois. "I can see the smoke of New Orleans."

"What will my white sister do when she gets there?" asked La Glorieuse, looking earnestly at Leona.

"I shall seek an interview with Father Davion," replied the Frenchwoman.

"And will my gentle sister tell him all?" continued La Glorieuse.

Madame Mablois covered her face with her hands and sighed.

"My red sister is curious," she said, at length, with a forced smile.

"It is because her heart has been touched by the sorrows of the Soft-Voice," rejoined La Glorieuse.

"I will keep nothing from you," replied Leona, after a short interval of silence. "I shall be governed by circumstances in regard to what I may reveal to Father Davion. If the proper time seems to have arrived, I shall conceal nothing. I have the papers with me, and if anything should befall me, promise me, my faithful friend, that you will secure and keep them as a sacred deposit, carrying out my plans so far as you know them. These papers, as you know, intimately concern the happiness of two persons; yes, I might with propriety say three or four. I feel that I must see Henri. I have much to say to him. If circumstances have assumed a certain aspect, I shall consider myself so far released from my promise as to make disclosures of the greatest importance; but if on the contrary, things have taken a different course, my promise will still be valid, and must be adhered to, however much I may feel disposed to murmur at the decrees of fate."

"The Frenchwoman may trust to the friendship of La Glorieuse," said the princess. "She will never desert her friend while the Master of Life gives her strength and breath."

"Thank you; you are well worthy of the royal blood which raises you above the common rank," replied Mablois.

"Ah," said La Glorieuse, with a smile, "royal blood is little esteemed by the French people when it circulates in the veins of the Indian."

"Well, let it pass; you are just as much a princess as though your blood was white as my own. Many a princess has ascended a throne of regal magnificence, and governed a people professedly Christian, with a heart far less noble than yours," added Madame Mablois.

The face of La Glorieuse lighted up with pleasure.

"The Soft-Voice flatters her simple red friend," she said, with a blush. "But here we are among your people."

As the Indian maiden spoke, the canoe touched the Levee at New Orleans—that important thing known at the present day as the Levee had not then attained a height and extent worthy of the name, though the earth had been raised to prevent the river from inundating its banks, and sweeping away all their efforts at making an inhabitable place, but we shall occasionally take the liberty to call that *then* imperfect embankment by the name by which it is now known.

Mablois stepped from the tiny vessel; La Glorieuse followed her, and together they drew it to a place of security; this effected, they walked silently towards the residence of Father Davion. Passing what is now called the Public Square, they reached the corner of Conde and Ursuline streets, where the dwelling of Davion was in sight.

Both parties paused, for it was evident that something unusual was going forward. They saw more than a score of armed men surround the place silently, and then remain motionless, waiting farther orders.

"A French officer knocks at the door with his sword," said La Glorieuse. "He enters; and now another officer with several soldiers follows him. Let us go a little nearer. There goes another man with chains for the wrists."

"Handcuffs, those are," said Mablois, in an agitated voice.

"Do you hear that voice?" added La Glorieuse.

"I hear a voice, certainly," replied Mablois.

"And does not my pale sister recognize it?" she asked, earnestly.

"It is Lesage!" almost shrieked Mablois.

"Some great evil menaces Henri. Let me fly to his assistance!"

"Hush!" said La Glorieuse, throwing her arms about Mablois, and forcibly detaining her. "You can do nothing. Woman cannot save her friends by the strength of her hands, but by cunning plans. Let us watch these movements, white sister, and we shall know what to do."

"Right, my friend, right. The feeble strength of woman cannot avail against armed men. What do you see now?"

"I see a tall young man led forth from the cabin, and he has those chains I spoke of upon his hands. It is Henri. The white warriors take their places in order; and the war chief with the

long knife commands them to march. They move away. We will follow them."

"They are going towards the prison," added Mablois.

Leona and La Glorieuse quickened their pace and kept near the parties until they reached the prison. They saw Henri enter, and the bolts drawn upon him, and the soldiers return to the barracks, leaving a sentinel posted near the door for greater security.

Lesage went to the governor's mansion, and his steps were still silently followed by Madame Mablois and her friend.

"Now is the time," said La Glorieuse, "to find out what the danger is that threatens Henri;" and taking the arm of her less composed companion, she drew her to the rear of the governor's house.

"You see a light there, Soft-Voice?"

"I do."

"The governor is in that room, and the wily serpent is with him. Here is a tree near the high fence, and another near the window. First we will climb into this, and let ourselves down into the yard by the branches; then we will climb softly into that, and listen to the words of the great father and *chef menteur* (lying chief)."

This proposal was immediately put into execution—for the indulgent reader will bear in mind that the females of that day could accomplish any feat requiring dexterity and strength, with about the same facility as the other sex.

The tree was low, and its ascent easy. La Glorieuse, more practised in the art of forest life, and more agile than her companion, was the first to let herself down into the yard (which would doubtless be called a court at the present time).

She assisted Mablois to alight safely upon the ground. Their next care was to attain a suitable position among the branches of the willow growing by the window. This they succeeded in doing with much more silence and despatch than might have been anticipated. The tree proved most favorable to their purpose, for with their ears placed close to the window, they were enabled to hear the whole of the conversation between De Bienville and Lesage, as we have given it in another place.

Having made themselves acquainted with the whole plan of the captain's villany, they descended from the place of their concealment, and after considerable exertion scaled the high fence and left the vicinity.

"Do you not see, sister, that cunning is better than strength?" asked La Glorieuse.

"Perhaps what we have done would not be called pardonable by many people," replied Mablois.

"It is a mean act to listen to the talk of others merely to gratify curiosity; but to expose a lying chief and save a brave friend, it is right," answered the princess.

"Yes, I feel that it must be so. In this case the end to be obtained must justify the means we have been forced to employ to bring about its consummation. Now tell me frankly, La Glorieuse, do you think we can do anything to save Henri from death? for, unless the truth can be proved beyond a doubt, I am well assured that De Bienville will not spare him; although it is evident that he feels a strong interest in the 'unhappy youth,' as he is pleased to call him."

Mablois spoke in a voice that bore witness to the intense anxiety which she felt for Henri.

"*Chef menteur* (he was already known among the Natchez as the lying chief) is a bad man. His plans are deep and deadly; for you know it is true that there has been a great war-council among the war-chiefs of the different nations, and it has been resolved to kill all the French. It is true, also, that many of the negroes are willing to fight against their masters, and some of them have already run away and found home among us.

"Now all this is against the brave young pal face. The great father is already of the opinion that all this trouble has originated with him; for you see that *chef menteur* has proved it by his speaking bark, and the two negroes, besides many other things which he has made use of to blind the eyes of the great father, so that he cannot see clearly."

"Yes, I understand, La Glorieuse."

"When the great chief of the French resolve to do a thing, and thinks it is right, he loses no time by unnecessary delay. If a man is to die, he does not put it off; he says in a terrible voice, 'Lead him out and put him to death.' Nobody has courage to say, 'you had better wait a little,' for the great chief would be very angry, and lightning would flash from his eyes."

"I know it! I know it!" exclaimed Mablois. "He acts with terrible decision when he believes justice requires the punishment of an offender."

"You see, then, that if we were to go to him and say, 'Great father, *chef menteur* has lied to you,' he would frown upon us, and say, 'I know my duty. I do not ask counsel of women. Henri dies on the morrow, for he has planned

the destruction of innocent babes, helpless women, and gray headed old men."

"What then shall we do?" cried Mablois, greatly distressed. "Cannot Father Davion save him?"

"Father Davion will not be admitted to the council chamber of the governor, for *chef menteur* has barred the doors against him."

"Well, Gloriense?"

"We must get the young pale face out of the stone-house."

"Assist him to escape from prison, you mean?"

"Yes."

"But that would confirm his guilt in the estimation of the governor, for it is the guilty who seek safety in flight."

"But it will save his life; for in a few weeks the dust will get out of the governor's eyes, and he will see clearly; but now he is blind, and before he recovers his sight the young Frenchman will be put to death, and then what can make him live again?"

"Upon reflection my better judgment tells me that you are right. Do you not think that Helen Lerowe might aid us in effecting his escape from prison?"

La Gloriense shook her head thoughtfully.

"The white maiden can do but little at present, because she will be closely watched by *chef menteur*," said the princess. "Pierre Moran would do better."

"What can he do, La Glorieuse?"

"Climb up to the prison window and remove the iron bars, so that the young man may escape."

"Let us seek him at once!" cried Mablois. "We shall be likely to hear of him at Monsieur Ridelle's, for it is said he is smitten with the fair face of Adelaide."

Arrived at Ridelle's, their astonishment can hardly be imagined when they were informed that a warrant had been issued for Pierre Moran's arrest, and that to avoid imprisonment he had fled to the woods.

CHAPTER VI.

RED-SHOE—THE PANTHER.

A FAINT glow in the east heralded the coming day. Onalaska, chief of the Chickasaws, stood silently by the bay of St. Louis. Revolving in his mind his own mighty plans, he had wandered away from his warriors through the pathless forest, nor stayed his footsteps until he reached the margin of Lake Borgne, at the fair bay bearing the name of the great king.

With folded arms and abstracted air, he gazed steadfastly upon the beautiful sheet of water now dimly lighted by the first crimson streaks of daylight. A shade of care and anxiety rested upon the chieftain's brow. Savage as he was, he had doubtless found the task of governing and shaping the actions of a numerous people not an easy one.

"How calmly the waters are sleeping," he said, musingly. "The red men rested as quietly among their native hills, before the pale faces came among them. But now there is no rest for the sons of the forest, once the undisturbed owners of this great country. Where now are the Indian's lakes and rivers, and hunting grounds?"

Onalaska paused. Painful thoughts agitated his bosom.

"The white man and the red cannot occupy the same country," he added. "These French dogs must be swept away, or the Indians will

perish. I feel that it must be so; something unseen and solemn seems to whisper it in my ear."

Again the chieftain was silent. When he resumed, his voice was louder and sterner, and his brow was contracted into a forbidding frown.

"If my brethren will be governed by me, if they will keep the vows made in the sight of the Great Spirit, and written upon the clouds with his finger, we shall live to see the trees growing upon the ruins of the French settlement, and the deer feeding upon the grass where cotton is flourishing."

A slight rustling among the dry leaves caused the warrior to lay his hand upon his knife. A moment he stood in the fixed attitude of attention, with his keen eyes directed towards the surrounding trees. No object was visible, and the sound did not immediately recur.

"It was the footstep of the timid hare or the sportive squirrel," said Onalaska to himself, and relapsed again into a state of reverie.

"The Africans despise their masters," he added. "The red man has wisely taught them to hate servitude, and they are impatient for the hour of emancipation. Already are they forming plans for the establishment of a republic! Fools! will the Indians destroy the French, for the sake of giving the country to spiritless cow

ards, who seem fitted by nature for no other place than that they now occupy. The blood of the red man and the black was never intended to mingle any more than that of the red and the white. Were the Banvaras to recover their freedom, they could not keep it; they were born slaves, and their hearts are not big enough to appreciate the blessings of freedom, and to govern themselves. But we will not harm them when their masters are no more. We will give them a piece of ground, and they shall dwell by themselves, when they will, no doubt, in their craven-heartedness, soon sigh for the servitude they have left. It were good that the black men return to their own country, since they are not worthy of freedom; for they cannot hunt, fish, and make war like the red men, and are not full of cunning inventions like the whites."

Again there was a rustling sound among the leaves, and a slight crackling among the dry sticks upon the ground.

Onalaska was completely aroused. He drew his tomahawk hastily from his belt, and as he did so he saw a human figure emerge from the covert of the trees and stand beside the lake at the water's edge, a few yards distant.

"Red-Shoe!" said a gentle voice.

"Is it thou, La Glorieuse?" exclaimed Onalaska, with a start of surprise.

"It is the daughter of the Natchez," replied the princess, calmly.

"And why is the proud descendant of the 'Suns' here at this hour, and alone?" asked the chieftain, anxiously.

"Listen, great warrior, and I will tell you why you see me here, near the encampment of the Chickasaw braves."

The stately chieftain bowed, and a smile of pleasure lighted momentarily his swarthy features.

"My ears are open, daughter of the 'Suns.'"

"The young Frenchman who is known among us as the 'White Rover,' is in danger," said the princess.

"And is that what brings you hither, fair princess?" asked Red-Shoe, with a smile of peculiar meaning, which did not please La Glorieuse.

"The White Rover is not my lover, chief of the Chickasaws," she answered, somewhat impatiently, and with much dignity.

"Go on, daughter of the 'Suns,'" said Onalaska, in a more kindly voice.

"The young Frenchman is accused of inciting

the neighboring red nations, and the negroes also, to deadly hostility against his countrymen. Upon this grave charge he has been imprisoned, and will be put to death before forty-eight hours, unless he be rescued by some cunning hand."

"Who has charged the friendly pale face with a crime so heinous?"

"Chef Menteur."

"The French captain is justly named the 'lying chief!' exclaimed Red-Shoe. "He is a viper—a snake creeping in the grass, and I hope some day, to crush him with my heel."

"May the Master of Life fulfil your hope," said La Glorieuse, earnestly. "Now tell me if you cannot devise some plan by which to save the White Rover?"

"That will be a difficult task," answered the chieftain, thoughtfully. "The French people are now aware of the intentions of the red men, and they will be continually on the alert. How can I approach New Orleans without being discovered and slain? When I put my life in peril, I endanger our whole enterprise; for I am (as you know) the prime mover in the contemplated warfare of extermination. The young man is accused of a grievous crime (though innocent)—for a renegade is hateful to all people and races, and justly deserves to die. He is a miscreant who betrays his own blood; and every honest heart revolts against the seller of his kindred. While a person is supposed to be guilty of a great wickedness, it is the same, while that belief prevails, as though he were really guilty; it is thus with our French friend, and when his supposed guiltiness becomes known among his people, they will drag him from the stone house, and he will die amid mad revilings and execrations; and if his imagined crime does not become generally known, there is still no hope, for he will die by the order of the great French chief."

"Onalaska, you have a fearless heart," said the princess. "Your hand is strong, your voice is terrible in battle, your feet swift to pursue an enemy, and your brain is full of cunning devices. You can, by some means, save the life of this young Frenchman. You are celebrated for the greatness of your exploits; perform yet another deed that shall add fresh laurels to your name."

"But why, beautiful princess," returned the chief, with a soft voice and a pleasant smile, "do you not apply to your own people, the Natchez? Are they not also great warriors, and are not their hearts big? Where is Strong-Serpent, the Great Sun?"

"He knows nothing of the danger of Henri Delcroix. The distance to Walnut Village is considerable, and before anything could be done by the Great Sun, the friend of the Indian might be no more. Whatever is done for his rescue must be quickly done, for the justice of the great French chief does not linger."

"You speak well, La Glorieuse. It is far to the Walnut Village, and you have done wisely in seeking me. The White Rover has the blood of a hated race in his veins, but it has become of a red color by mingling freely among us. I would not have him slain for a crime of which he is not guilty. He is my friend; and it were shame that the friend of Onalaska should die without a single effort having been made to save him."

"Your brave words make the heart of the Natchez maiden glad," replied La Glorieuse, joyfully. "She knew that Red-Shoe would not forsake the man he called his friend."

"It shall never be said of Onalaska that he ran from an enemy, or forsook his friend," replied the warrior, proudly. "In this the proud princess has not mistaken me; but she knows not how truly the heart of the warrior loves her. She turns a deaf ear to his words; she will not understand the language of his eyes and actions; yet the lodge fire of Onalaska will never burn brightly and cheerfully until she kindles it and sits beside it. It is well that the fair descendant of the 'Suns' is called 'The Proud.'"

The chieftain ceased, and folded his arms proudly, yet sorrowfully, upon his broad chest.

"There is a time for all things, great chieftain," observed the princess, with gentle dignity. "The maiden Sun did not come hither in the hour of darkness to listen to the eloquent love tales of a brave warrior. She came to appeal to his magnanimity and courage in order to save a friend from death, though that friend be of another race. It were not comely in a princess of the blood to make a journey to another nation to be wooed."

"The words of La Glorieuse are just, though they make the spirit of Onalaska sad," returned the warrior, respectfully. "Love is a sentiment so strong in the hearts of brave men, that sometimes it is hard to conceal it. With that powerful sentiment the Chickasaw chief has long struggled in vain. He will still struggle and be a man."

"The resolution is worthy of your great name and deeds of renown," said the princess, mildly.

"If the peerless Sun would cease to have me love her, let her speak less generously of my deeds; for praise is sweet indeed when it drops from her sweet lips," returned Onalaska, in a voice soft as woman's when she would please.

"Then must the subject be changed," replied La Glorieuse, with a pleasant smile. "Will the chieftain tell the daughter of the Natchez what he proposes to do for the White Rover?"

"When the night has come, and darkness has fallen upon the face of the earth, Onalaska will seek the village of the French. His step shall be soft as the falling snow. He will steal along like the crawling serpent. He will scale the prison fence, remove the bars of a window, and the White Rover shall be free."

"The war-chief will need the aid of a white man," said La Glorieuse. "There is one called Pierre Moran, who might be useful."

"He is a brave man, though a Frenchman," replied Onalaska. "He was but lately rescued from the warriors of Onalaska by the hand of the White Rover. His heart is large towards him. Red-Shoe will consider upon what La Glorieuse has said."

"The errand of the Natchez girl is done," replied the princess. "Her heart is full of gratitude. She will hasten back to speak comforting words to the woman of the soft voice."

With a smile and a graceful wave of the hand, she turned and walked quickly away. Onalaska gazed after her until her figure was hidden by the trees. The first rays of the rising sun fell along the quiet lake. With a sigh Onalaska sought the encampment of his warriors.

The chieftain had gone but a short distance, when, emerging from the shade of some tall sycamores, he perceived a white man with a rifle on his shoulder, moving rapidly towards Lake Pontchartrain.

"Pierre Moran!" shouted Red-Shoe, in a loud voice.

The hunter stopped and looked about him. Suddenly his eyes rested on the majestic figure of Onalaska. He cocked his rifle, and bringing it to his shoulder, laid his face upon the breech and glanced along the deadly barrel.

"Hold!" cried Red-Shoe; "I have news from the White Rover."

The breech of Pierre Moran's rifle fell to the ground when the sound of the White Rover's name reached his ears.

"We did not part on the best of terms, Onalaska, but if you have aught to say concerning

Henri Delcroix, I am ready to hear you," replied Moran.

"The young Frenchman is shut up in the stone house," said the chief.

"I know," answered Moran.

"The great chief of the French will put him to death," added Onalaska.

"Is that all you wished to say to me?" returned Pierre.

"Would you not save him if you could?" said Red-Shoe.

"At the risk of my life," rejoined Pierre.

"Prisons, I have heard, have been broken and the condemned set at liberty," added the chieftain.

"That's very true," resumed Pierre, musingly.

Red-Shoe watched the countenance of the hunter in silence.

"What do you propose to do?" asked Moran, while a new gleam of light seemed to flash into his mind.

"Save the White Rover from death," replied Red-Shoe. "I have called him friend in hours of safety and peace, and now I will prove my friendship in hours of adversity and danger. He is unworthy the sacred name of friend who flies at the approach of misfortune."

"What do I hear?" exclaimed Moran. "Are these indeed the words of an Indian chief? Whence come these lofty sentiments? who taught you a code of honor so noble—so honorable both to heart and head?"

"I was educated in the great school of Nature; I have received instruction from everything you can see about you; from trees and flowers; from hills, mountains and valleys; from lakes, rivers and plains!" replied Onalaska, proudly.

"It is well spoken, savage chieftain. Your words might well put many a Frenchman to the blush."

"Frenchman!" exclaimed Onalaska, with an expression of ineffable contempt. "Talk not of Frenchmen to me; they are overrunning my country and destroying my people."

The chief folded his arms upon his breast, and his chest heaved with unutterable emotions. "Warrior," said Pierre Moran, after a short interval of silence, "are you willing to forget your hatred of the French for a night and assist me to rescue Henri Delcroix from the meshes of villainy that have been so artfully woven around him?"

"I am, and for that reason I spoke to you

when I saw you hurrying away. Meet me here to-morrow night, and we will enter the French village together."

"Most willingly; you may rely upon me. I owe the White Rover a debt of gratitude, as you know, and I will repay it at the hazard of my life."

"Take this belt of wampum," replied Red-Shoe; "wear it about your waist. If you fall in with any of my people, it will save you from their vengeance."

Moran took the belt. He was in the act of fastening it upon his person in the manner indicated, when the sharp crack of a rifle resounded through the woods, and a bullet whistled through his long beard within an inch of his chin, and passing near the head of Red-Shoe, lodged in the trunk of a cottonwood. A tuft of hair severed by the leaden messenger fell upon the hunter's bosom.

Simultaneously Pierre and Onalaska plunged into the forest and ran swiftly towards the point whence came the harmless shot. They saw a slender column of smoke curling up through the trees, and then the figure of a man running with much speed.

Pierre Moran raised his rifle and fired. The distance was long, but the shot evidently took effect. The runner faltered in his flight, swayed to one side like one drunken, and then flew on again with arrow-like swiftness towards New Orleans.

"He is wounded in the shoulder," said Onalaska, "but not mortally. It is useless to pursue him farther, for he is swift of foot."

"Do you know him?" asked the hunter.

"I know him well. He is called Ette-Actal, the Natchez renegade."

"And is doubtless in the employ of Lesage," added Moran.

"A fit companion for *chef menteur*," replied Red-Shoe.

"I now remember having seen Lesage in close conference with an Indian; he was thus engaged the last time I saw him at New Orleans. He has employed this renegade to rid him of one too deeply in his confidence. The fact is, Captain Lesage mistook his man. From certain things which he had heard, he formed the opinion that I was a sort of brigand and common assassin, ready to sell my services to the highest bidder without remorse. But he has discovered his mistake, and now knows that the tales which he heard in relation to me were false as

his own base heart, and seeks my destruction in order that I may not betray his plans. It is not safe to listen to every idle rumor, nor to write a man down a villain because his face is not a prepossessing one. That shot was aimed at me," said Moran.

"And if he does not eventually succeed in killing you, it will be because you bear a charmed life," returned Red-Shoe.

"I have often heard the name of the Natchez renegade, but never met him in my wanderings; but if chance should ever throw him in my way, he will not live to say he has seen Pierre Moran again—the hunter of the Mississippi Valley."

"If there is anything on earth that my soul turns from with loathing, it is a renegade," said Red-Shoe.

"And a coward, you might have added," said Pierre.

"It is well thought of, brave Frenchman. A renegade and a coward may be coupled together, and not be unequally yoked."

While Red-Shoe was speaking, an object met the eye of Pierre Moran well calculated to try the courage of both. The hunter's practised ear had heard a slight sound among the branches of the trees. Looking up with the quickness of a veteran of the woods, he saw a huge and well known animal crouched upon the limb of a lofty oak, not a dozen yards from the chief, who was a little in advance.

"Look!" said the hunter, in a suppressed voice, without withdrawing his fixed gaze from the terrible monster. The warrior raised his eyes and saw death staring him in the face; for it was the animal most dreaded by the red men, and called almost universally by the singular name of the "Indian Devil." *

The bravest of the brave, if he discovered the track of the panther when hunting, turned back with a shudder. He feared to encounter an animal so powerful, and endowed with a cunning almost human. He had rather meet some war party of his enemies at fearful odds, for with them he could fight with some hope of success; but who could contend with a foe that could not

*The panther has thus been styled by the Indians.

be seen until his resistless paws were rending him in pieces, or until he looked down from some stately tree in the act of springing! No; the Indian did not choose to make war upon the sagacious and all-conquering panther.

Onalaska met the gaze of the monster with Roman firmness. The fore paws of the animal were thrust out along a large limb, and the hinder legs were drawn up under him. The hair upon the back seemed to stand erect, and there was an undulating, snaky motion of the long tail. The eyes sent forth malignant fires—flashed and burned like glowing coals. The mouth was slightly open, displaying rows of white, sharp teeth, and the tongue lying within them like the sting of some monster serpent. His hot breath seemed to have infected the air and made it rank with the odor of death. The long bristling hair about the huge jaw worked and trembled with the quivering motion of the nether lip—an indication of hostility too deadly not to be well known to the observant eye of the hunter.

The hand of Red-Shoe was upon his knife. He had laid it there at the moment of looking upward; for he had left his rifle at the encampment—a neglect which now promised to prove fatal to the chief. The panther was evidently about to leap, and had chosen the nearest victim; this the proud Indian knew, but governing, with the strength of a disciplined and mighty will, the natural shrinkings of human nature, he appeared calm and self-reliant.

The panther drew himself back upon his haunches, with his fore feet still placed cat-like upon the trunk of the limb, while the motions of the tail grew quicker and more decided, and the eyes literally appeared to dart rays of flame.

The nerves of the hunter were still. There was no tremor of the hand or heart when he suddenly raised his rifle; no film of terror dimmed his eyes as he glanced along the barrel, and brought the unerring sights to bear upon the scourge of the forest.

Pierre Moran fired; the panther leaped and fell quivering at the chieftain's feet. A few throes of expiring agony convulsed its frame, and the beatings of its heart were hushed forever.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RENEGADE.

ETTE-ACTAL—the renegade—was one of the most cunning of his race, without the redeeming qualities of truth and nobleness of soul, traits of character often found among the Natchez.

Compelled to fly from his own people on account of his duplicity and wickedness, he had found a temporary home among the French, often acting as a spy, and sometimes as a guide, though not very highly esteemed by his employers, who feared to trust him out of their sight when there was any probability that another party might feel disposed to buy him over to their interest by the offer of a more liberal reward.

To a scheming and plotting man like Lesage, he was indeed a valuable acquisition, notwithstanding his well known treachery; for it was these very qualities that he wished to call into action in order to carry forward his plans.

Making the renegade a few presents occasionally, and liberal promises, he soon won him over to his service, and acquired considerable influence upon his mind. Lesage, after learning that Pierre Moran was not the man he had been represented, was filled with apprehension. He had good reason to fear that his dark plottings, for the destruction of Henry Delcroix, might transpire and come to the ears of the governor, which might result in the most serious conse-

quences to himself. In order to prevent an exposure so important, and perhaps fatal, he determined to involve Pierre Moran in the same destruction which he had so ingeniously prepared for Henri. Being now on intimate terms with his excellency, on account of the valuable service he had, apparently, rendered under circumstances of peculiar emergency, it needed but a word to procure the arrest of Moran; but the latter, as we have seen, fled to the woods in time to avoid the catastrophe.

Thus baffled, the captain resolved upon another plan of operation. He lost no time in finding Ette-Actal, who, for a trifling sum, agreed to rid him of one he had so much reason to dread. Stimulated by the hope of reward, and urged on by the natural cruelty of his disposition, the renegade had entered with alacrity upon the task assigned him. An opportunity offered itself sooner than he expected; but he had missed his mark, and received in return a painful though not dangerous wound in the shoulder. Recovering from the momentary shock, he ran forward with great swiftness, and abated not his speed until he reached the border of the French settlement. Feeling comparatively safe from pursuit, he proceeded to bind up his wound as well as the circumstances of the case would admit.

Having completed this necessary task, he sa-

down upon a mossy knoll, smarting with pain and faint with loss of blood. The renegade, like many of his race, was extravagantly fond of fire-water, and while cogitating a plan to gratify his taste for the dangerous beverage, the pain of his wound gradually ceased, and overcome with fatigue, he sank into a profound slumber. From this happy state of unconsciousness he was aroused by a gentle touch upon his shoulder.

Upon opening his heavy eyes, with a start of surprise, he beheld Lesage standing beside him with an anxious expression upon his face.

"What news?" he asked, hurriedly.

The renegade looked vacantly into his face without reply.

"*Mon Dieu!* what ails the man?" he exclaimed, impatiently. "Can you tell me anything of Pierre Moran?" he added, quickly.

"White hunter has gone long journey," replied the Indian, gravely.

"Where is he gone? Why did you let him escape?" asked Lesage.

"Gone towards the south—way very long—never come back."

"What!" exclaimed the 'lying chief,' his face lighting up with a sudden gleam of intelligence and triumph.

"The land of souls is far off," added the renegade. "When the red man goes there he travels toward the south, through great forests and over high mountains, until he reaches the river that separates the happy hunting grounds from the country of mortal men; there he finds a white stone canoe, and passes over to the country of shadows. The white hunter has gone there, and now talks with the shadowy people."

"When was the deed done, and how?" asked Lesage, in an eager and excited tone.

"Does the French chief see this?" said the renegade, pointing to his blanket, which was saturated with blood.

"I see—you are wounded," answered Lesage.

"Yes; I found the hunter in the woods. He was not alone. He was talking with Red-Shoe, the great warrior. As I stood watching him, I stepped upon a dry limb and made a noise. He looked up and saw me. The white hunter is very skilful with his rifle, and he fired before I could cock my gun, and I received a ball in my shoulder. I instantly fired. Pierre Moran fell, and I fled."

"But are you sure you inflicted a mortal wound?" asked Lesage.

"Very sure, for I took aim at his head. Neither white man nor red, can live when shot through the head," replied Ette-Actal.

For a short time the captain was silent, lost, apparently, in the mazes of his own thought.

"Are you badly wounded?" he asked, looking steadfastly at the renegade.

"Very sore; have much pain; want strong water," said the renegade.

"I have a bottle of the fire-water in my pocket," replied Lesage. "It will do you good."

The captain paused, and looked toward Lake Borgne intently.

"I thought I heard a sound," he added, with well affected alarm. "Ette-Actal, your eyes are quick and strong; look steadfastly in that direction."

The renegade turned his eyes towards the point indicated, and gazed fixedly, for he had some fears that it might be Pierre Moran himself. While he was thus engaged, Lesage emptied into the bottle he had drawn from his pocket, the contents of a small phial. When the renegade turned towards him again, the captain placed the bottle of strong-water in his hand.

"Drink," he said, with a smile. "It will make your heart big with courage; it will quiet your pain; it will make you forget all your sorrows; it will make you sleep soundly, ay, very soundly; it will cause you to feel all the joys of the happy hunting grounds, and to dream of the white stone canoe, with its shining paddles, which floats on the waters of the river of life. Drink, red man, drink."

The renegade placed the bottle beneath his blanket with a smile of satisfaction.

"You have done me an important service," added Lesage. "Come to me to-morrow, and I will give you twenty pounds." There was a smile—though scarcely perceptible—of peculiar significance on the lips of the captain as he spoke these words and turned away. In a few minutes he had disappeared among the trees, repeating to himself his last remark.

"Yes, come to me to-morrow, and I will give you twenty pounds!"

The renegade drew the bottle of strong-water from beneath his blanket, and holding it up between his eyes and the sun, thus apostrophized it:

"Great medicine art thou. The red man is strong, but thou art stronger. Thou makest lions of lambs. Thou causest the heart to beat madly with joy. Thou givest courage to the

coward, and take the strength from the limbs of the bravest warrior. A strange thing art thou, O fire-water!"

As Ette-Actal concluded his speech, he raised the bottle to his lips.

"Hold!" said a clear, ringing voice.

The renegade turned his head towards the speaker, and beheld the majestic figure of La Glorieuse regarding him with an expression of unutterable contempt, not unmingled with pity. Abashed and confounded the renegade averted his eyes, nor dared to meet the disdainful glance of the princess again.

"Contemptible traitor!" said La Glorieuse, "what would you give to feel like an honest man! But that can never be. Never again can you look one of your people in the face. You are cursed forever with the name of renegade!"

Ette-Actal lifted not his head, and attempted no reply. He was not yet so dead to honor and shame as not to feel the force of her keen rebuke. "You have turned traitor to the Natchez, and sold yourself to Chef Menteur," added the princess. "In this case falsehood has met falsehood, and treachery has met treachery. It is thus that the wicked are punished. You have served Chef Menteur, and you have deceived him also, and he has rewarded you with death—just recompense for crimes like yours."

"Death!" exclaimed the renegade.

"Yes, death," added the princess, "and it is in that bottle."

"You always said that the white man's fire-water was bad," replied the renegade, relieved of his fears.

"It were perhaps no more than just," continued La Glorieuse, in the same lofty, rebuking tone, "to let you reap the reward of your villany; but the contemplation of such a loathsome object moves me to compassion, and I will stoop to save you from the death to which the lying chief has doomed you. He has repaid you for attempting the life of the white hunter by poisoning the accursed fire-water which you were about to swallow. I stood behind yonder tree; I heard all—and to baffle a greater villain than yourself, I condescend to save you. Were you to drink the contents of that bottle, you would never see the sun go down again in the distant west; and to-morrow morning when he comes up refreshed and brighter, his beams would fall upon a dead body, and a face distorted with the protracted agony of the death struggle. Hunters passing this way would say, with a look of contempt, 'It is the body of the renegade.'"

Ette-Actal shuddered; for a traitor is invariably afraid of death.

"This fire-water you say is poisoned!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I say it, and speak truly. I saw him pour in the deadly drug, and noted the expression of his face. Do you remember what he said: 'Ette-Actal, your eyes are strong and quick; look steadfastly towards Lake Borgne.' While you were doing as you were bidden, he drugged the fire-water."

"I thank you, princess," said the renegade, with some feeling. "And though I am cast out from among my people, and wander up and down with the broad brand of infamy upon my brow, I will not forget this service. If the time should ever come when one like me can serve La Glorieuse, I shall be ready to peril my life for her sake."

"It is well," replied the princess, in a more friendly tone. "Even a renegade may have some feelings in common with others. You have rendered yourself unworthy to serve me, but I will forget it and allow you to render me an important service."

"Speak your will, princess," replied Ette-Actal, humbly.

"Hasten to the Walnut Village, and tell Stung-Serpent—the Great Sun—to send me twelve of the bravest warriors without delay. Bid him mount them upon the fleetest horses, and to send two of the best for the use of the princess," said La Glorieuse.

"But no one would speak to me, or credit my words, should I do as you bid me," returned the renegade, while his red face grew crimson with shame.

"I understand," resumed the princess, drawing a ring from her finger. "Take this, and it will save you from insult and abuse. Go boldly, and fear nothing. But I had nearly forgotten your wound; will it prevent you from travelling?"

"It will not prevent me from travelling to serve La Glorieuse," replied the renegade.

"Then away upon your journey, and remember that I have power to wipe away a portion of your disgrace. Serve me well in whatever I bid you, and I will not prove ungenerous. But mark me; attempt no deceit; I will not be trifled with, for I am a princess, and have power to crush you into the dust, were I disposed to retaliate upon one who has proved himself unworthy of his origin. Appear the same to Chef Menteur as hitherto. If he should be surprised

to see you among living men—and be assured he will—do not heed it; still manifest the same willingness to serve him; but find some way to convey to me a thorough knowledge of all his plans. Do you hear and comprehend me, Ette-Actal?"

"I hear and comprehend, daughter of the Sun," answered the renegade.

"Then obey," returned La Glorieuse, with dignity, and drawing her mantle closer about her queenly figure, passed from the sight of the renegade.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INTERVIEW.

IMMEDIATELY after the arrest of Henri, Father Davion had hastened to the residence of de Bienville. A servant assured him that the governor was engaged and could not be seen; but the good old man, stimulated by his love for his young friend, had urgently persisted in his request.

"Go back," said Davion, with dignity, "and tell your master that his old friend—a man with white hairs—demands audience."

Awed by the dignified and authoritative air of Father Davion, the attendant obeyed, and soon returned with the welcome intelligence that his excellency would grant him a very brief interview in the course of half an hour. Bidding him wait the governor's leisure in the ante-room, the servant withdrew. His heart was a prey to the most intense anxiety. He paced the apartment impatiently, indulging in a thousand conjectures in relation to the cause of Henri's arrest.

"Father Davion!" said a gentle voice.

"Helen Lerowe!" exclaimed the priest, while a momentary gleam of happiness and hope irradiated his venerable face. "I was thinking of you. Can you inform me what this strange proceeding portends?"

"I do not comprehend you. I know not to what proceeding you allude," replied Helen, somewhat confused, for at that moment she recalled to mind what had passed between herself and Henri upon the morning of that very day.

"Henri Delcroix has been arrested by the order of the governor, and is now in prison," said Davion.

The face of Helen Lerowe grew pale as marble. She recoiled a step and grasped a chair for support.

"Speak again, good father!" she exclaimed,

with emotion. "I do not well understand what you said."

"Alas! my poor girl, you comprehend me but too well, as that changing cheek and those trembling limbs confess. My dear boy has fallen under the governor's displeasure, and I know not for what, and I am here, at this late hour, to seek an interview with him. I will never leave his presence until I know of what he is accused," said Davion, emphatically.

"I can whisper a single name in your ear, Father Davion, that will furnish a key to unlock the whole mystery," replied Helen.

"Speak it, my good Helen," added the priest. "Lesage!" said Helen, impressively.

For a moment Davion made no reply, but stood lost in his own reflections.

"A light breaks in upon my mind," he said, at length. "I think I perceive some faint glimmerings of the truth. He has paid much deference to you of late, Helen. I am old, but I am not blind. Though I may not grasp a new idea with the same quickness that a younger man might, yet when a key to a train of thoughts and actions has been given me, I can follow them up with wonderful facility. Tell me, daughter, has Captain Lesage annoyed you?"

"I would that I could answer in the negative," said Helen.

"I regret that this is so," added Davion.

"And no one regrets it more deeply than myself," rejoined Helen, with a sigh.

"Save your lover," returned the priest.

Helen's eyes sought the floor, nor did she venture to raise them for sometime.

"Nay, Helen, spare your blushes. Henri Delcroix is worthy your love," added Davion.

"Then you do not reproach us?" replied Helen.

"I reproach you not, neither do I approve. Were you differently situated in life, it would make my heart glad to see my two children—I have called you children for many years—united and made happy in a mutual love; but as you both are now situated, I can see nothing before you but disappointment and sorrow. May God in mercy avert the impending calamity, and temper the winds of trouble to the shorn lamb."

"Most fervently and humbly I join in the petition," added Helen, devoutly.

"Can you tell me who is with the governor?"

"Captain Lesage," replied Helen.

"Filling his ears with poison," added Davion, with emphasis. "I must fathom that man—I must read his purposes as I would read a book. There is something wrong; it shall be mine to find it and bring it to the light."

At that moment the servant re-appeared with the intelligence that the governor was ready to see him.

"Helen," he added, in a low voice, as he passed from the room, "meet me in the ante-room, after my interview with de Bienville."

As he followed the servant he saw Lesage depart by a private entrance.

"Father Davion," said de Bienville, in a mild though firm voice, "I well know why you have sought me. Out of compassion to you, and to spare myself an ungenial task, I had thought to refuse you an audience; but you have prevailed."

"Save your compassion for another object," replied the priest. "I require it not. I have arrived at that age when I require compassion only of my Maker. I shall ask no pity for these gray hairs, of men; when I appeal for mercy for myself, it shall be to Heaven. I now ask but little of the world, de Bienville. I shall soon exchange the cow for the crown, and the domino for the white garment."

"May you be spared to us long, Father Davion," replied the governor, respectfully.

"May He spare me no longer than I am useful. When I cease to benefit my fellow-men—to love mercy, to deal justly, and to walk humbly with God, then may I cease to exist. Now, your excellency, will you inform me why Henri Delcroix has been imprisoned?"

"If you desire it, I assuredly will, however much the duty may pain me, and afflict yourself. Henri Delcroix, the young man who has been the object of your fostering care from childhood, the early companion of Helen, and the object of no little interest even to me, has been convicted

of one of the most aggravated of all crimes, the blackest of all sins—the extreme wickedness of betraying his countrymen to a cruel and remorseless enemy, selling helpless women and children to the hatchet and scalping knife. He is a traitor—forgetful of the hand that fed him, of the people who gave him a home, of the blood that flows in his veins; and by all that is sacred, were he my own son, or my own brother, he should die before forty-eight hours, were it the last act of my administration."

"No! no!" exclaimed Father Davion, trembling with the violence of his emotions. "It cannot be so; there must be some mistake. It is not in human nature to be so base."

"Father Davion," said the governor, in tones of thrilling solemnity, "there is no mistake; but I would that mistake were possible. I have proof positive of his guilt. Do not, as you love justice, and respect yourself, and me, and the authority vested in me, attempt to move me to compassion, or to shake my resolution. I tell you there is no alternative; he must die—and he shall."

While de Bienville spoke, his eyes flashed fire, his nostrils seemed to dilate like those of the war-horse when he smells the battle afar off, and feels that he must rush into the thickest of the fight; his chest rose and fell with the violence of his emotions, and his fingers worked convulsively upon the pen which he held in his right hand.

"With this, my pen," he added, in a voice of deep energy, "I will sign the death warrant of Henri Delcroix!"

Father Davion was awed by the solemn and energetic manner of de Bienville.

"Be calm," he said, after a pause, "and let me hear what proof you have of Henri's guilt."

The governor then entered into a detailed account of the whole conspiracy, as he understood it. The testimony of Captain Lesage was adduced, bolstered up by the testimony of the negroes; and all the evidence that tended to criminate Henri was skillfully summed up.

When he had finished, he looked sorrowfully at Father Davion. The latter was confounded; for the chain of evidence was indeed very perfect, and no links appeared wanting.

"Can you now say, good father, that I have not followed the dictates of a sound judgment in condemning this young man?" said the governor.

"I see, indeed, a startling array of evidence;

but my heart is not yet convinced, though the head is somewhat at a loss. Believe me, there is some duplicity and wickedness at the bottom of all this. Governor de Bienville, I pronounce it all the work of a cunning and insidious enemy; though I confess I cannot explain it," replied Davion, with much embarrassment; but the very fact of his being embarrassed served to confirm the governor in his opinions, and afforded him an advantage.

"The young man has no enemies that I know of," replied his excellency, with a shake of the head.

"You will, at least, grant him the privilege of an impartial trial!" exclaimed Father Davion, overwhelmed with grief.

"He shall be brought before me to-morrow, and I shall examine him myself, and he shall be placed face to face with his accuser. But believe me, Father Davion, it will be a mere matter of form; for you see that it will be impossible for him to establish his innocence, and the evidence against him is directly to the point."

"Do you know, Governor de Bienville, that Helen Lerowe, your fair ward, loves this young man?" added Davion, in a low, impressive tone.

The face of de Bienville turned deadly pale. He fell back into his chair, from which he had partly arisen, as if he had received a crushing blow upon his person. For a moment he sat and looked into the face of the priest with an air of vacant wonder. By a masterly effort the governor recovered in a measure his self-possession. The color came back to his face; he passed his hand over his brow as if collecting his scattered thoughts, and then replied in a voice tolerably calm, though much changed:

"This is strange news indeed; it fills me with astonishment. How long since you were certain of this?"

"Within the hour. I had it from Helen's lips."

"Leave me, Father Davion," said de Bienville, abruptly. "I would fain be alone. I am as tired of governing as ever Sancho Panza was when he was governor of Barrataria."

"Do not act hastily," added Davion. "Remember that he is to me as Benjamin was to Jacob. If aught should befall the young man, it would bring down my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. For my sake, and for Helen's sake, be merciful, and be just also."

"Be assured that I will be just," returned the governor, somewhat coldly.

"One word more, your excellency; do not forget that I do not yet believe Henri guilty, however much circumstances may seem to criminate him."

"Who do you suspect of plotting against him?"

"Captain Lesage," replied the priest, promptly.

"And for what reason?"

"Because he regards him in the light of a dangerous rival."

"Such baseness cannot exist," rejoined de Bienville.

"Perhaps you are not aware that Captain Lesage is already known among the Indians as Chef Menteur, or lying chief," added Father Davion.

"Considering how much you love the young man, I pardon the insinuations which you are pleased to make against the character of a brave and zealous officer," returned the governor, coldly.

"He has zeal, it is true; but I much doubt that it is according to knowledge," replied Father Davion.

"We shall see; good night, Father Davion."

"Good night, your excellency, and may God grant you the excellent wisdom of a Daniel to detect the hidden wickedness of this matter."

Bowing respectfully, the priest left the presence of the governor. Helen was awaiting him in the ante-room, with pale and anxious face. The sorrowful looks of Father Davion did not tend to re-assure her. She would have gladly asked many questions, but her tongue refused to perform its office.

"You desire to know the worst," said the priest, kindly taking Helen by the hand. "I will tell you the truth and conceal nothing from you. Henri is in imminent peril."

"With what crime is he charged?" asked Helen, with a strong effort.

"The crime of selling his country to the Indians," said Davion.

"It is a base slander!" exclaimed Helen. "Henri Delcroix is not guilty of such wickedness. He is too good, too generous, too noble!"

"So I believe, my daughter; and I love to hear you speak his praise when other tongues revile him."

Father Davion then explained the nature of the evidence which was to convict the young man of so heinous a crime. During the recital, the cheeks of Helen glowed with indignation.

"The plot is deep and dangerous, and artfully

contrived," said Helen, when the priest had concluded. "But it does not shake my faith in the integrity of Henri, or the protecting providence of a just God. The mask must fall eventually from the face of Lesage, and he will be seen in all the despicable deformity of his character."

"No doubt but it will be so, my child; but we must not forget that it possibly may not be until after the sacrifice is consummated, and Henri is—"

"Speak not the cruel words, good father!" ex-

claimed Helen, "for it must not be. The governor is not cruel. I will seek him—I will beg him upon bended knee to spare Henri."

"I would not dampen the ardor of your hopes," replied Davion, sadly; "but you are aware that de Beinville is a man of firmness and resolution."

Bestowing his blessing upon Helen, Father Davion left the governor's mansion and hastened toward his own lowly dwelling, looking sorrowfully at the prison as he passed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRIAL.

ACCOMPANIED by our readers, we will now return to the hero of our story, whom we left in prison, with heavy irons upon his hands. His first emotions upon finding himself so unceremoniously incarcerated were those of indignation and surprise.

Utterly ignorant of what crime he was accused, he taxed his imagination in vain for an adequate cause for such treatment. That Lesage was the active agent of his misfortunes, he did not doubt; but the means employed was the subject that perplexed him. Guilty of no infractions upon the laws of the colony, he was far from entertaining even a suspicion of his danger.

The thought which annoyed him most deeply was a well-defined fear that he might be disgraced in the eyes of Helen Lerowe; or that by some means during his incarceration, she might be induced to bestow her hand upon Lesage. This was truly a painful subject of reflection to Henri.

Weary of thinking and forming conjectures, before morning he fell into a troubled sleep. It was a late hour when he awoke. The sun was two hours high, and his beams were streaming brightly into the prison through the grated windows. The turnkey entered with water and food; and though he waited a moment evidently with the expectation of being questioned, Henri was too proud to ask anything in relation to his imprisonment, and suffered him to depart without interchanging a single word with him.

With his foot Henri dashed the jug of water against the wall, and the coarse bread soon shared the same fate. Smiling at his own impatience, he arose and walked up and down his narrow cell, occasionally pausing to note how strangely the handcuffs looked upon his wrists.

While thus employed, the door of his prison grated once more upon its hinges and a file of men entered, headed by Sergeant Dumont. Obeying the motions of their leader, the armed men placed themselves upon each side of Henri, and he was conducted from the prison to the presence of the governor. The latter was surrounded by several of the principal officers of the colony, and the members of his council, among whom were the Chevalier de Noyan, lieutenant governor; Chevalier de Loubois, the Baron of Cresnay, Chevalier de St. Julian, De St. Ange, De St. Bassan, and de St. Dennis, beside many other distinguished personages; and lastly, Captain Lesage.

As the eyes of Henri wandered from one to another, he felt an indefinable foreboding in his heart. Why were the principal men of Louisiana present? What important crisis or emergency had called them together?

Though somewhat abashed and confounded for the instant, at finding himself before such an august body, the White Rover quickly recovered his self-possession and walked to the prisoner's box proudly erect and self-reliant.

"A princely figure, upon my word," said De

St. Ange to the Chevalier de Noyan, who sat near him.

"He carries himself like a belted knight," replied the lieutenant governor.

"A noble figure!" said St. Julian, in the same tone.

"He bears himself bravely," added the Baron of Cresnay, while a buzz of approbation ran through the court-room; for many of the principal citizens had heard of the arrest, and been admitted to witness the trial, as his excellency did not wish to conduct the unfortunate affair wholly in private. Henri was a general favorite, and he was anxious that the whole might be conducted in an impartial manner, in order that there should be no murmuring or complaint.

"He has not the face of a traitor," resumed de St. Ange.

"He certainly has not," replied Chevalier de Bessan; "but judging from appearances is not always righteous judgment, you know," he added, quickly.

The court was now called to order by the lieutenant governor, who made a few appropriate remarks something like the following:

"Knights, officers, and gentlemen exercising authority in the colony of his majesty, king of France, by the order of his excellency, the governor, you have been requested to give your opinions upon a case of extraordinary interest, inasmuch as it concerns the safety of every inhabitant of Louisiana. The prisoner at the bar is accused of a very great crime."

At this point of de Noyan's speech, Henri, who had risen to his feet, leaned anxiously forward to catch his words.

The crime of betraying one's country is without its parallel in enormity; and it is of this high misdemeanor that Henri Delcroix, the prisoner at the bar is accused. Gentlemen, I am sorry to add that the proofs which have been found upon his person, and furnished from other reliable sources, scarcely admit of a doubt in regard to his guilt; but notwithstanding all this, his excellency has thought fit to grant him a formal trial. The principal witnesses will now be called, and all the evidences against the prisoner will be adduced, together with any rebutting testimony which his friends may be able to bring forward."

When de Noyan pronounced in a clear and emphatic voice the nature of the transaction against him, the White Rover recoiled in dismay. His quick and comprehensive mind grasp-

ed the whole subject at a glance. He saw himself standing, as it were, upon the brink of a precipice, and many unfriendly hands outstretched to thrust him headlong into the abyss. He staggered beneath the terrible charge, and for a moment, it was with difficulty that he could stand without support. Crushed and overwhelmed, he sank back into his seat the moment de Noyan had ceased speaking.

"The young fellow is by no means without feeling," whispered St. Julian to de Bessan.

The latter made no reply, and Captain Lesage was called to testify. He deposed and said that it was with extreme reluctance that he arose to criminate the prisoner at the bar, he being a young man whom he had hitherto esteemed; but he would come to the point at once, and not deter the court longer than was absolutely necessary.

Recently, he averred, it had pleased his excellency, on account of the hostile bearing of the various Indian tribes, to enjoin him to uncommon vigilance in the discharge of his official duties. These instructions, as in duty bound, he had endeavored to obey to the letter, and in the discharge of his duty, it had been his fortune to discover the existence of the most alarming and dangerous conspiracy that had ever threatened and agitated that unhappy colony.

The first hints that he received of this matter were from his servant, who is a Banbara negro. Induced by love for his master, and promises of liberal reward, he revealed the startling news that all the Africans in the colony had conspired with the Indians for the total destruction of their masters, and all the French settlements in Louisiana.

He drew from him, moreover, that the whole plot was devised and perpetrated by a young Frenchman. At a given time all the Indian nations were to rise simultaneously, and, assisted by the slaves, slay the whole population indiscriminately, without regard to age, sex, or condition.

Exclamations of horror and indignation were heard in all parts of the room, at this portion of the captain's testimony. With flushed cheek and throbbing brow, Henri sat gazing steadily at Lesage. It was only by a strong mental effort that he could curb his resentment and keep it within bounds. His impulsive nature prompted him to leap from the prisoner's box and strangle the captain on the spot; but his better judgment told him the folly of such a thought.

The captain went on with much apparent feeling, and related the manner in which he had discovered that the prisoner at the bar was the leader of the conspiracy. While hunting in the woods, near Lake Pontchartrain, he had overheard a conversation between the prisoner and one Pierre Moran, known among the Indians by the name of the Hunter. Greatly to deponent's horror, he had heard the whole plan of the conspiracy discussed in the most cool and business-like manner.

At this stage of the captain's evidence, he entered into many minute and tedious details with which we shall not trouble the reader; but suffice it that his testimony was delivered with the most consummate art, and made a deep impression. At some portions, it was extremely difficult for de Noyan to maintain order, so much were the citizens excited against the accused.

The birch bark found upon his person at the time of his arrest was then produced, and the diagrams and characters briefly and ingeniously explained. Henri acknowledged his signature at the bottom.

Seven or eight of the Banbaras were then brought forward by the captain, and rendered their evidence with surprising readiness and unanimity.

The guilt of Henri seemed indeed to have been fairly proved. No rebutting testimony was offered, and the excitement among the citizens was every moment growing more intense.

The governor, in a stern voice, then asked the prisoner what he had to say in extenuation of his guilt.

With eyes flashing with scorn and indignation, Henri arose to his feet. He folded his arms upon his breast, and for a moment looked boldly around those present. His gaze at length rested upon Lesage, and his nether lip quivered with unutterable contempt. Drawing up his commanding figure until he was the most conspicuous object in the room, while every muscle seemed to work with emotion, and with a sense of the indignity which had been offered, and the wrong heaped upon him, he slowly stretched forth his arms, and pointing his finger at Lesage, said, in a calm, impressive, yet terrible voice:

"I pronounce that man a perjured villain. The aggravated charges which he has made against me, I throw back into his teeth with a feeling of scorn too great to utter." Then turning to the governor, he added, in a firm, yet respectful voice: "Your excellency, I protest that

I am not guilty, though circumstances in the possession of a villain have conspired to convict me. I see but too plainly my position. I know what awaits me. I will not consume time by reiterating my innocence; for I perceive that my ruin is accomplished, that my death is needful to one present—whose name I will not condescend to speak. It is true that there is a conspiracy on foot, but I am not, never was, and would scorn to be, its leader. It was but yesterday that I discovered its existence, though I have been free to mix with all the Indian tribes from first to last. In this important movement I was not admitted to their confidence. It has been said in evidence against me that I have power over the minds of the red men; it is true. Were I at large and so disposed, I could sweep away all the French settlements in a day, and at night there would not be a single dwelling standing, and every head would be scalped. But, thank Heaven! I love my countrymen too well to wish them such a fate; and it gives me pleasure, while I stand in this august presence, to know that I have saved them more than once from bloody reprisals. Governor de Bienville, permit me to advise you to station an efficient body of men at Natchez, and to increase the number of soldiers and the means of defence at Mobile, Pensacola, and Dauphine Island; and in return I ask but one favor (if the perjurer must have a victim), that I may die a soldier's death. I have done."

The White Rover bowed and sat down.

"What a proud and fearless spirit we are about to extinguish," said the Baron of Cresnay to St. Ange, in a low voice, as Henri resumed his seat.

"I will tell you who he reminds me of," replied St. Ange. "He makes me think of Iberville, de Bienville's brother."

The word Iberville reached the ears of the governor, and he turned quickly towards St. Ange. The latter looked towards the White Rover, and de Bienville seemed lost in reflection.

"Let the prisoner be removed from the bar for a short time," said the governor. "Good citizens, whose opinions are not required in the case, will withdraw."

Henri, closely guarded, was taken to another part of the edifice, and very soon the hall of judgment was vacated by all save the governor and his officials.

Their discussions were short. The prisoner was placed again at the bar. The crowd came

...in to hear the sentence. When order was restored, the governor ordered Henri to arise. He obeyed without any visible emotion, and looked the man who held the keys of life and death calmly in the face.

"Henri Delcroix," said his excellency, in a subdued and sorrowful voice, "a painful duty is mine, but I may not shrink from it, however much I may regret that the responsibility did not devolve upon another man. The crime of which you have been convicted is one held in detestation by all nations and races of men, and it is most heinous and unnatural. Were there any room for doubt in regard to your guilt, you should assuredly have the benefit of that doubt; but it is not so. All these honorable gentlemen, who constitute the bulwarks of Louisiana's safety, agree with me that there is but one course to pursue—that indicated by the stern finger of justice. I can only mitigate the severity of your punishment; your request is accorded; though a traitor, you shall die the death of a soldier. By the advice of my council, two days are allowed you to prepare for the solemn change that awaits you. May you improve this brief space to such advantage that your deadly sin may be forgotten in that world of which you will soon be an inhabitant. On Friday next, between the hours of nine and ten, A. M., you will expiate your crime, and," added the governor, in throbbing tones, "may the Searcher of human hearts have mercy upon you."

"I thank you," said Henri, with a bitter smile, "for the lenity which you have shown me in the mode of suffering the extreme penalty of the law. The whole has ended as I expected when I saw Captain Lesage arise to testify against me. It is well. Men die but once; and my fate is in keeping with my previous history. Thrown upon the world without name, without friends, without parentage, born in the wilds of a new country, forsaken by him who should have reared and protected me; fostered by a stranger as a deed of charity, grown to manhood still alone and friendless, the companion of the red man and a denizen of the wild forest, a thoughtful, dreamy wanderer up and down these broad

rivers and wide lakes, it is fitting that I should fulfil my destiny even as strangely as it began."

De Bienville gazed earnestly at Henri, and listened to his words with breathless attention. De Noyan (nephew to the governor) fixed his eyes upon the young man with the same eager sympathy, while the Baron of Cresnay, de St. Ange, de Bessan, de St. Dennis, the Chevalier de Loubois, and de St. Julien, shared eagerly in the interest manifested by the governor and lieutenant-governor; and there was evidently a reaction in favor of the condemned.

Henri went on in a distinct and unshaken voice:

"The French are my people, but the red man is my friend. His lodge has ever been open to me; and the White Rover never sought hospitality in vain when he presented himself at the Indian's door, cold, wet, thirsty, or hungry; but notwithstanding all this, it was never in my thought to wrong my own people. As I have previously stated, it has been my fortune to save more than one from Indian cruelty. Let me assure you that the Indian tribes will dearly avenge my death, and it will be well for you to guard ever your wives and little ones after the sun of Friday next has gone down in the west. There are two ties that death will never sever," continued Henri, with emotion.

"A gray-headed old man, a foster father, will weep for me. And there is one other who will drop a tear to the memory of the White Rover—a foster sister—a fair and loving being, whose destiny I fervently pray may never be linked with that of the lying chief." And Henri turned towards Lesage with an expression of withering contempt.

"My dear boy! my dear boy!" cried a broken and tremulous voice, and Father Davion was seen forcing his way through the crowd towards the bar. De Noyan spoke in a low voice to the governor, and then motioned to the proper officers to remand the condemned to prison. He was instantly taken from the bar, followed by Father Davion, who invoked blessings upon his head, and frantically asserted his entire innocence.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ESCAPE.

It was the hour of midnight. The sure heralds of a storm were in the skies. Dark masses of clouds were seen, at first low on the horizon's verge, and then rapidly floating towards the zenith. The low mutterings of distant thunder broke in upon the silence of the night, and fitful flashes of lightning were seen far away in the west and north.

Pierre Moran was abroad at that gloomy hour. He was moving swiftly towards Pontchartrain from the southern margin of Lake Borgne. With his trusty and inseparable companion, his double-barrelled rifle, grasped firmly in his right hand, he threaded his way skilfully through the forest.

When near the borders of the lake he paused and listened with a breathless intensity known only to the practised woodsman. Very soon he heard the shrill notes of a raven, and going forward in the direction of the sound, in a few moments stood beside the tall figure of Red-Shoe, the Chickasaw chieftain.

As Pierre joined him, a flash of lightning lit up the expanse, and threw a vivid glare upon the face of the red man; it was calm, proud, and haughty as ever in its expression.

"You imitate the notes of the raven well," said Pierre.

"I took my lessons from nature," replied Red-Shoe, with a smile.

"How do you like the night? Is it not favorable to our undertaking?" asked the hunter.

"When the voice of the Great Spirit is heard in the heavens, and his fire is seen in the clouds, men seek shelter in their lodges and cabins, and warriors relax their vigilance. The night is good," replied Onalaska.

Without farther remark, Pierre Moran and Red-Shoe moved towards New Orleans. After a short and rapid walk, they emerged silently from the forest and stood within the borders of the town. Both now halted and prepared themselves for the hazardous enterprise upon which they had voluntarily entered. They examined their rifles, tightened their belts, and carefully arranged their side arms.

"You shall lead the way, and I will follow," said Pierre Moran, who had much confidence in the skill of the chieftain.

"It is well, since my white brother requests it," answered Red-Shoe. "I shall go forward very still, as though I was going to surprise a party of my enemies while they were asleep. The great hunter will follow me very close and make no noise. When we are near the stone house where the White Rover is kept, then must we look out for the long-knives when the fire burns up bright in the skies."

"And if we find the sentinels watchful and

true to their duty, what then shall we do?" asked Pierre Moran.

The chieftain smiled grimly, as he replied.

"Do as they would if they went to surprise an Indian village, creep softly—leap upon them as the panther leaps upon its prey—let the knife do its work and reach a vital spot. I would do that, white hunter."

"They are my countrymen," said the hunter, with a sigh. "I would fain spare them, if possible. Let nothing but the most urgent necessity induce us to use violence. Onalaska, you are a brave man, and can appreciate the feeling that impels me to spare a fellow-countryman."

"I can," replied Red-Shoe, "and I will respect your wish. But if the safety of the White Rover required it, I would slay the great chief himself. Ay, the knife should find its way to his heart as easily as it passes into its sheath."

"Is my white friend ready?" he asked, after a pause.

"He is ready; lead on, chieftain, and Pierre Moran will follow if it be to death."

"Good," said Red-Shoe, and the next instant he was moving towards the settlement like a phantom of darkness. Following the general direction of what is now the Bayou road, they gradually approached St. Ann street, which was to be the scene of their operations.

With cautious and noiseless footsteps they passed many cabins whose inmates were sleeping. Once, soon after entering the town, a dog came forth and barked furiously, but fortunately the thunder, which now reverberated through the skies, either stifled his vociferation, or the elementary disturbance was referred to as the cause of his outcries, if they were heard by the townspeople. Pausing until he had wearied himself with his efforts to attract attention, the chief and Moran glided on toward the prison. The darkness was now intense, relieved only by occasional gleams of lightning.

Red-Shoe paused when they reached St. Ann street. They stood near the structure containing the object of their solicitude. The building used as a prison at that period did not much resemble those bold and frowning edifices which are now to be seen fronting Orleans and St. Ann streets. It was a low, stone building, containing but few compartments. The cells for criminals were in the basement, and those for debtors above, together with a small suite of rooms for the turnkey. The edifice was surrounded by a fence about five feet high, of stakes or piles,

driven into the earth, the projecting ends sharpened to a point to prevent it from being scaled.

Outside of this yard or court, since the arrest of Henri, two sentinels had been placed, who were relieved from duty once in three hours. This additional precaution seemed to be warranted on account of the graveness of the offence, and the peculiar circumstances of the case; for it was verily believed that the escape of the prisoner would be followed by the most serious consequences, possessing, as he evidently did, such unbounded influence over the Indians.

Like others imprisoned for capital offences, he had been placed in one of the basement cells, in that portion of the prison fronting upon Orleans street.

The plan which Red-Shoe and Pierre Moran intended to pursue, was to surprise the sentinels on their post, secure them, awe them into silence, enter the prison, awaken the turnkey from his slumbers, corrupt him to lead the way to the prisoner's cell, free him from his irons, and then depart as quickly as possible, seeking safety in the boundless forests of the Mississippi Valley.

The moment of action had now come—a moment requiring all the habitual cunning, coolness and courage of the Indian and backwoodsman. They stood within a few yards of the prison; but no sounds were heard indicating that the sentinels were on duty. They waited patiently until the next flash of lightning should reveal the outlines of the prison and the surrounding palisade. The rain poured down in torrents. A heavy burst of thunder made the ground shake beneath them. The terrible explosion was instantly followed by a red glare of electric flame, revealing every object near them with fearful distinctness, and in that lurid and momentary gleam, a portion of the person of a sentinel was seen standing, statue-like, in the sentry box. Awed by the din of the warring elements, he had ceased to walk his rounds; and his musket was resting against the wall beside.

Passing to the other side of the prison, the second sentinel was found in the same condition, though apparently somewhat more comatose, for it was the last part of the watch.

"Now," said Pierre Moran to Red-Shoe, in a whisper, "you secure one, and I will the other, and do not shed blood if you can help it."

"It is good," replied the chief, "and we will see who shall effect his object with the utmost silence and despatch."

With these words Red-Shoe glided back to

that side of the building looking towards Orleans street, where the first sentinel was posted, while Moran was left to deal with the other who did duty on St. Ann street.

The hunter divested himself of his hunting frock, and wrapping it about the breech of his rifle (which he had hitherto kept dry beneath it), laid both carefully upon the ground in the most sheltered spot he could conveniently find. His preparations were made with all requisite caution, and when the deafening thunder warned him that the lightning was about to illumine the heavens, he remained motionless until the bright and blinding glare no longer rendered surrounding objects visible. Pierre Moran with a few quick and noiseless steps reached the palisade, and stood within a few paces of the sentry box, which he did not wish to approach directly in front, but in a lateral direction, a proceeding which would greatly lessen the chances of discovery.

With stealthy step he moved on. His bold heart beat with unwonted quickness when he found himself standing but a single pace from the narrow building containing the unconscious soldier. With a rapid and decided movement he threw himself forward, and quick as thought his powerful hand lay upon the sentinel's shoulder. At the very instant of doing so, a tremendous peal of thunder broke with violence over their heads, and almost simultaneously with the deafening explosion, a sheet of flame blazed athwart the heavens, and revealed to the astonished sentinel the stern and threatening face of Pierre Moran, and the blade of the suspended weapon. He made a convulsive effort to wrench the bayonet from his musket, but the tightening-grasp and deep tones of the hunter struck terror to his already trembling heart and fear-palsied arm.

"Yield—be silent, and you are safe—resist, and you die!" exclaimed Moran.

Full of consternation, and astounded by the sudden and unexpected onset, the soldier was unable to speak, and stood quaking in the nervous grasp of the hunter.

"Do you hear and comprehend, man!" added the latter, shaking him, in order to restore in some measure his scattered senses.

"Gather up your faculties and do as I bid you, and no personal violence shall be offered you."

By this time the sentinel began to understand his situation and what was required of him, and suffered his hands to be bound without a mur-

mur. Pierre then emptied the priming from his musket, took off the bayonet, thrust it into his belt, and taking his prisoner by the shoulder, led him passively into Orleans street. Pierre was not suffered to remain long in ignorance of the success of his comrade. He descried the dim outlines of two human figures, which proved to be Red-Shoe and the other sentinel, who had been secured in the same manner, and at the same time.

"I have not forgotten your wish," said Onalaska; "no blood has been shed."

"I feel that it is best thus," replied Pierre, and then added immediately, turning to the two prisoners, "our object is to release Henri Delcroix, now under sentence of death. Do as we shall direct you, and you need be under no apprehensions, and shall suffer no bodily harm. To resist, you perceive, would be madness, and would result in no good to you whatever. Now lead the way to the prisoner."

The firm though suppressed tones of Moran, the presence of the tall Indian, whose grim and threatening visage was often revealed by constantly recurring flashes of lightning, all had their due effect upon the soldiers. Without a word they moved sullenly toward the prison. They paused at the gate of the prison yard.

"How shall this gate be opened?" asked Moran, in a whisper, of the soldiers. There was no reply. Red-Shoe laid his hand suddenly upon his tomahawk, and drew it from his belt. The movement did not escape the attention of the prisoners. An expression of fear passed over their faces, and with a shudder they drew nearer to the hunter.

"Produce the key if you have it," added the latter, hurriedly. "There is no time to lose. Do not hesitate, as you value your lives."

By a singular piece of good fortune, the key to the gate was really in possession of one of the sentinels. In a moment it was in the lock, and they passed into the court. The party now stood on the stone steps of the prison.

"Ring the turnkey's bell furiously," added Pierre, to one of the soldiers; "when he asks who rings, and what is wanted, tell him your name, and that you come with another prisoner by order of the governor. Your safety depends upon the manner in which you perform this service. If you use any artifice, if your voice shakes or betrays any anxiety, if you speak not promptly, I will not answer for the consequences." And Moran looked significantly at Red-Shoe.

The soldier to whom the hunter had addressed himself, put forth his hand and rang the turnkey's bell violently, nor discontinued his efforts until his voice was heard demanding the meaning of such peremptory summons.

"It is I, Corporal Rion. The governor has made an important arrest, and the prisoner is now at the door. Hurry yourself, my good fellow, for it rains as it never rained before, and I am wet to the skin!"

"Excellent!" whispered the hunter. "You have done yourself credit. You shall lose nothing by it."

Very soon the steps of the turnkey were heard approaching. The features of Red-Shoe and Pierre Moran lighted up with satisfaction. The key grated in the lock and the door swung open. "Step in quick," said Pierre, and he pushed the soldiers forward over the threshold, and speedily followed them.

"Here are two prisoners," said the turnkey.

"Yes," said Moran, promptly, "and you to the number, makes three." As the hunter uttered these words, he laid his hand upon the jailor's arm, and Red-Shoe closed the door.

"You're quite a joker," said the turnkey, with a laugh.

"There is no joke about it, my fine fellow," replied Pierre. "Look at these men a little closer. You perceive that they are soldiers—the very ones posted at your doors as sentinels. To be brief, we have come to set Henri Delcroix at liberty. Lead the way to his cell without a moment's delay."

The jailor recoiled in unspeakable amazement. He looked first at one, and then at another, and his face grew ashy pale as his eyes rested upon the Indian chief, who, standing erect and haughtily, impatiently motioned him onward with his hand.

"Gentlemen," said the trembling functionary, in a faltering voice, "I should be pleased to see your authority."

Pierre Moran touched the handle of his knife, and the proud chieftain made a significant motion towards his hatchet.

The jailor hesitated no longer. Overwhelmed with fears in regard to his own safety, he led the way towards the cell of the condemned as fast as his limbs could carry him. Urging the soldiers along before them, Onalaska and the hunter followed. There was a little indecision in the movements of the keeper when he reached the door of the prisoner's cell, but a fierce ges-

ture, and a threatening scowl from the chieftain quickened his motions and banished his irresolution.

He applied the key and threw open the door with as much alacrity as his trepidation would permit. Henri was awakened from his uneasy slumbers by the creaking of the hinges and the sound of footsteps. He started from his recumbent position, and cast his eyes with an inquiring expression toward the door. His vision rested upon Onalaska and Pierre Moran, and a gleam of gladness and surprise passed over his pale visage.

"What do I see?" he exclaimed, arising to his feet, and stretching forth his manacled hands.

"The White Rover sees his red brother and another friend," replied Red-Shoe, calmly.

"And *how* and *why* have you come?" continued Henri, with increasing wonder.

"We have come," said Moran, "to set you at liberty. Jailor, knock off those disgraceful irons. They were never forged for the wrists of a man of honor."

"I understand all," returned Henri, glancing at the two soldiers, bound and powerless. "You have risked your lives to save mine: I thank you from the profoundest depths of my heart; but I have committed no crime worthy of death, and I cannot fly like a criminal to save my life."

"Nay, Henri Delcroix, you must not fall a victim to so nice a sense of honor," replied the hunter, earnestly. "We have considered all. We know that there is but one chance for you to vindicate your innocence, and re-establish your good name, and that one chance is in flight."

"I am resolved not to fly from my fate," returned Henri, firmly.

"Would you die, young man, with such a burden of guilt upon your shoulders. Who will take the trouble to establish your innocence after you have suffered the doom of a felon? Who will believe you innocent when the law has pronounced you guilty, and the word of justice has sealed the decision with blood. I ask and wait in vain for a response; none is given, nor can be. The world will speak and think of you as a traitor. But if you escape, and thus gain time, your innocence can be fully and completely proved."

"Pierre Moran, you argue well, perhaps justly; you shake my resolution," rejoined Henri, much wrought upon.

"And there is yet another object that requires

your thoughts—Helen Lerowe. Will she not weep when you are no more? Will she not cease to be happy when you cease to live?"

"*Mon Dieu!* you move me!" said Henri, with a sigh.

"And think of the frantic grief of Father Davion," added Pierre.

"And of the sorrow of the Soft-Voice," said Red-Shoe.

Henri held forth his hands, and the jailor knocked off the irons.

"You have conquered," he said, in a voice rendered unsteady by emotion. "Do with me as you will."

"Good," said Onalaska. "The friend of the red man shall be saved. The White Rover shall be seen again in the forest, and his rifle shall be heard upon its rivers and lakes."

The chief took the lamp from the hand of the

turnkey and passed out, together with Henri and Moran. The two soldiers and the jailor were left in the cell. Pierre turned the key upon them, and the three were prisoners.

With rapid steps they hurried from the prison, locking the door after them, and the gate of the court precisely as they had found them. The violence of the storm had passed. The rain was still falling, but less plentifully. The thunder was heard with fainter vehemence, muttering afar off in the distance; the lightning flashed at more lengthened intervals, and with diminished brightness.

Red-Shoe and Pierre Moran caught their rifles from the ground, and in a few moments they and the White Rover were lost in the depths of the forest, where they could safely laugh at the false claims of justice, and the weakness of prison bars.

CHAPTER X.

A DISSEMBLER'S AVOWAL OF LOVE.

THE morning succeeding the escape of Henri dawned clear and bright. The only traces of the late storm were found in the wet grass and pools of water standing by the wayside. Since the condemnation of her lover, the heart of Helen Lerowe had known no respite from sorrow; but being firm in the opinion that he was innocent, and that by some means he would be saved, she had struggled hard to temper down the violence of her grief to a calm and unconcerned demeanor; but this she found it hard to do, and so she let the storm of her first real grief pass in the solitude and silence of her own chamber. Feeling at length that the sympathy of one true heart would indeed be precious, she resolved to visit Adelaide Ridelle, and seek a momentary relief in the companionship of a nature so purely feminine and so gentle.

Hastily putting on her bonnet and shawl, she silently left the mansion of her guardian and took the way to St. Charles street. Her chagrin cannot well be described, when after walking a few yards she was joined by Captain Lesage. Helen's aversion for the man had increased until it had grown to an absolute horror of his presence. Scarcely deigning to notice him she hurried forward.

"You are abroad early, Mademoiselle Le-

rowe," he said, with much suavity. "But you are doubtless desirous of breathing the air purified by the shower of last night."

"You are right, captain, and I desire to breathe it alone," replied Helen, with dignity.

Lesage bit his lips, and was rather confused by this home thrust.

"Nay, fair maiden, such a thought were selfish. The air of heaven is designed for all to respire, and to me it is rendered purer and sweeter by the presence of Helen Lerowe."

"Captain Lesage, such words from some men would please me, but when spoken by others they offend," returned Helen.

"You are hard with me, Mademoiselle Lerowe; and I can perhaps conjecture why it is so," rejoined Lesage. "If in the discharge of my duty, I have been forced to witness against one whom I am informed you knew and esteemed in childhood, I am rather to be pitied than condemned. I do assure you, mademoiselle, that I have suffered not a little on account of this misguided young man."

Here the captain paused and evinced much emotion.

"Gladly would I have saved him, and I have spent an hour with the governor in earnest entreaty that his life might be spared, but alas! his excellency is inexorable. He admired my

generosity, but grew angry at my pertinacity. You can never know the agony I suffered when I stood up to testify against Delcroix. And why did I suffer? Because I knew that he was esteemed by Helen Lerowe. Believe me, if there is aught I can do to mitigate the fate of this young man it shall be gladly done. All the return that I ask is, that I may be placed in the list of your friends—thought of with kindness, and ultimately with pleasure. Am I overweening, mademoiselle? Do I ask too much? Do I overstep the bounds of decorum?"

As Lesage went on, his voice grew soft, subdued, and humbly respectful.

"Is it possible that I have judged this man wrongfully?" thought Helen.

"Mademoiselle Lerowe," resumed the captain, "I beg of you when this unhappy tragedy has been enacted to the end, and the grave has closed over that misguided youth, whose thoughtlessness has well-nigh baptized this colony in blood, to think less harshly of one who would willingly have spared the offender at the risk of everything, in order to save you a single tear, or a sigh of sorrow. Were it not for this unhappy affair, I would even now venture to report the story of my unrequited love. But I may not tell the tale. My motives would be doubted, my actions misconstrued, and my integrity called in question. But were Henri Delcroix at large, and unsuspected of crime, I would upon bended knee tell you such a story of unchanging, fathomless love as living woman never heard. The history of my passion must remain untold. I can only think of your supernal beauty, and dream of your angelic goodness; all I may ask is your pity, a small boon for Helen Lerowe to accord to a hopeless man."

With low and solemn earnestness of tone, the consummate dissembler breathed forth these honeyed words.

"Captain Lesage," replied Helen, seriously, "your presence is not agreeable to me. I know not well why it is, but your words are to me like the hissing of a serpent. My soul turns instinctively from you with loathing and fear. Your looks are sorrowful, and your speech subdued and grief-like, but you fail to touch my heart. It seems to me (God knows whom I wrong and whom I do not) that when the sacrifice of my foster brother shall have been consummated, the Judge of all human hearts will require his blood at your hands. Go, Captain Lesage, and when you have made your peace with Heaven,

will be the proper time to speak of earthly matters. My spirit is too sorrowful now to brook patiently the presence of the man who has been an active agent in the conviction of my foster-brother. I wish you a good morning."

"To your sorrow, then," replied Lesage, bowing deferentially, "will I attribute your unkindness to one who would sell his best blood to serve you, and think the sacrifice a pleasure. Heaven sustain and keep you, mademoiselle."

With another bow, humbly respectful, sad, apparently, and grieved, the captain left Helen to pursue her way to the St. Charles.

"Be of good courage," said Madame Ridelle, as our heroine entered the house. "I feel within me a good assurance that an all-wise Providence will yet interpose to prevent this sacrifice. Weep not, faint not, despair not, cease not to trust in Him who dispenses life and death, punishes the guilty and rewards the righteous."

"I will struggle hard to do so," replied Helen, weeping. "Do not reproach me, nor deem it unmaidenly to shed a few tears for the fate of my foster-brother—one so good, so loyal, and yet so basely maligned."

"My poor child," said a gentle voice, which proved to be that of Madame Mablois, to whom the reader's attention has before been called. "Let the noble consciousness that Henri Delcroix is innocent, impart fortitude to your soul, and uphold your sinking spirit."

Helen turned towards the speaker with an expression of the liveliest satisfaction.

"Are you here, good mother!" she exclaimed, embracing her warmly. "I am indeed glad to see you in this hour of sorrow. Appropriately have the red men of the forest named you Soft-Voice. When you speak so gently and hopefully of Henri, your tones are indeed musical and soft."

"There are," said Mablois, in a suppressed yet earnest voice, "active agents at work for the liberation of Henri, and they will succeed at whatever hazard. Even now," she added, prophetically, "he may be at liberty."

"Speak on, Madame Mablois. Your words fall like healing dews upon my heart!" cried Helen. And then she added in a more serious tone, "Yet it is not well to foster false hopes; it would but entail more bitter woe at last."

"Pierre Moran," said Adelaide, appearing at that moment, "knows much; he assures me of the wickedness of Lesage."

"And Pierre Moran speaks the truth," added Mablois.

"He told me upon the night on which the warrant was issued for his arrest," continued Adelaide, with a blush, "that the captain had laid more than one plan for the destruction of Delcroix."

"And the truth of the case is that Pierre is too deeply in the captain's confidence to be safe," added Madame Ridelle. "It was on this account that Lesage thought it best to have him imprisoned so that he could not testify at the trial of Henri."

"I perceive that you do not yet know all," said Madame Mablois. "The captain has employed an agent to rid himself of Pierre Moran also."

The cheeks of Adelaide grew pale.

"But fear not," continued Mablois, "he has failed in this, and the very agency he has employed threatens to prove fatal to himself ultimately."

"It is thus that our Heavenly Father punishes the wicked!" exclaimed Madame Ridelle, piously. "The evil they propose for others not unfrequently falls upon their own heads."

After some further conversation of a similar nature, Helen returned home more hopeful, and stronger in the faith that something would transpire to avert the doom of Henri.

As she passed toward her chamber, she observed that de Bienville, her guardian, was in the parlor and alone. She resolved to speak with him upon the subject uppermost in her thoughts. Laying aside her walking apparel, without delay she returned and entered the apartment.

The governor was pacing to and fro, absorbed in thought. He paused and seemed somewhat embarrassed when his fair ward made her appearance. He fixed his penetrating eyes full upon her, but, to employ the words of another, "more in sorrow than in anger."

"Methinks you look pale to-day, Helen," he said, slowly.

"And is there not sufficient cause?" replied Helen, with averted gaze.

"What mean you?" asked de Bienville, quickly.

"Is not my foster-brother doomed to death?" returned his ward.

"Call him not by the endearing name of brother," rejoined de Bienville, somewhat sternly. "He has forfeited all claims to your sympathy."

"My dear guardian! my good, kind friend, do not say so!" exclaimed Helen, earnestly. "He is not guilty of the crime for which he has been unjustly condemned."

"Do you accuse me of injustice, Helen?" said the governor, sadly.

"Pardon me, my best and most generous friend and benefactor; but if your conscience has not already told you that you have acted with too much precipitancy, far be it from the child of your bounty to be your accuser," answered Helen.

"You take an ingenious way to accuse, Helen," rejoined de Bienville, mildly. "I have no malice against that young man. I have done—with extreme reluctance—what I have thought my duty. I grant that he appears truly noble and innocent; but facts are fearfully against him. I would that there had been some pretext for sparing him, for he impressed us all in his favor. But the plot was truly a horrible one."

"It fills my heart with pleasure to hear you speak thus in favor of the unhappy Henri. Listen still further to the dictates of your better judgment, and save him. Believe me," continued Helen, with increasing earnestness, "he is innocent of the crime charged upon him. Lesage has perjured himself. He has before attempted the life of Henri; but fortunately he failed."

"Can you prove what you affirm?" asked the governor, eagerly.

"I could, if Pierre Moran could be found," answered Helen, quickly.

"Pierre Moran," said de Bienville, thoughtfully. "I know him; a dark, sinister-looking man, but possessed of a fearless heart, and I believe him honorable. I must sift this matter to the bottom. But it is difficult to believe, for a moment, that a man so smoothly spoken, and apparently so candid and forgiving withal, can be guilty of what you accuse him. If it should prove so, woe be to him."

De Bienville spoke the last few words in that firm and deep toned voice which characterized him in moments of excitement, and indicated a fixed and unchanging purpose.

Helen sank upon her knees, held the governor's hands in her white and trembling fingers, and shed grateful tears upon them.

"What is this young man to you?" asked de Bienville, sorrowfully.

"If you have fathomed my secret, be still generous, my benefactor," replied Helen. "Deem

me not unmaidenly. Deal not too sternly with your poor girl."

"God forbid, Helen, that I should deal sternly with you," returned de Bienville, with emotion. "It is not in my heart. I could not be stern with you if I would. Cease to weep, child; your tears move me."

"Then will I continue to weep!" cried Helen.

"Nay, my girl, arise. I will investigate this matter more deeply; for I tell you in confidence I wish to save this man. He interests me in spite of myself. You should have seen him when on trial. How his noble figure dilated with the conscious pride of manly strength to bear the worst! what indomitable energy of spirit flashed in his eyes; with what heroic fortitude and courage he bore his fate. But where is this Pierre Moran? Can he be found?"

"An order was issued for his arrest, and he fled for safety to the forest."

"Ah, yes, I remember about the warrant."

"It was a part of the policy of Lesage that he should not testify at the trial of Henri," added Helen.

"And why not?" asked the governor.

"For the very good reason, as I have just learned, that Captain Lesage had offered him two hundred pounds to take the life of Henri."

"Helen, are you sure that there is no mistake about this?" asked de Bienville, with solemn earnestness.

"I feel very sure that I have not been misinformed. And this is not all; I heard that he is even now plotting with some of your enemies to have you recalled to France."

"My dear Helen, you astonish me beyond expression: I must attend to this. I feel that you are not altogether wrong," rejoined the governor, hurriedly, and considerably excited.

Helen kissed the governor's hand, and arose from her knees with her face glowing with new hope.

De Bienville gently put back the dark masses of her dishevelled hair, gazed earnestly and tenderly into her face, and then bending forward, gravely kissed her fair brow.

Helen inclined her head and received the salute gracefully.

"Go, my child, and by the help of Heaven, I will do my duty by you," he said, in an agitated voice. "I know not why my heart turns towards you with an affection so pure, so deep and fatherly, but I know it is thus."

While the governor was speaking, a messenger

ger rushed into the apartment with breathless haste, dispensing with all the forms of etiquette.

"I come to inform your excellency," he cried, in hot haste, "that Henri Delcroix has escaped. The two sentinels, and the jailer, were found this morning locked into the cell which he had occupied. Captain Lesage is almost frantic with fury, and has despatched men in every direction to find the prisoner; but everybody that has heard of the escape says it will be of no use, because long before this time he is in the depths of the forest, and surrounded by a thousand warriors."

With a cry of joy Helen sank fainting upon the floor.

"I thank you for your promptness in bringing me the important news," said the governor. "I will attend to it."

Waving his hand for the messenger to go, de Bienville raised his ward in his arms and placed her in an easy chair, and in a few moments she recovered.

"Escaped!" she cried, with a smile of joy. "Escaped! gone! safe! Heaven be praised!"

"One thing you have forgotten," said the governor. "His escape and flight proves his guilt."

"By no means. It seems to me the only way to establish his innocence; for no man can prove his own innocence after his death," returned Helen.

"A very ingenious argument," answered de Bienville, with a smile. And then he added immediately in a low voice, "Were it not treason to my king and country, I would say—on your account—I am not sorry that he has thus escaped."

"Ever kind, ever indulgent, ever generous," replied Helen. "You overwhelm me with goodness, you fill me with admiration."

Saying these words our heroine retired to her chamber, with her heart lightened of its burden of sorrow. Providence had indeed interposed its saving hand to shield the innocent.

The light steps of Helen had scarcely ceased to be heard, when the tall and majestic figure of the princess, La Glorieuse, swept unannounced into the apartment. Unabashed and self-possessed, she paused before the governor.

"Great chief," she said, calmly and distinctly, and in good French, "I have come to bring this speaking bark from the White Rover."

"Be seated, daughter of the Sun," said de Bienville, courteously recovering from his sur-

prise at the unexpected appearance of the princess. "Be seated, while I talk with the 'speaking bark.'"

The governor unrolled the scroll of bark which La Glorieuse had given him, and read as follows:

"GOVERNOR DE BIENVILLE:

"Though doomed to a felon's death, and forced to fly from my own people for safety, I have not yet learned to be the enemy of the French. But could I so far forget myself as to harbor a traitor's thoughts, at the expiration of a single week I could appear before New Orleans at the head of three thousand warriors. Such is not my purpose, for I would not forego the claims of humanity for the sake of punishing a single enemy, though an enemy who has well-nigh effected my ruin.

"I do not reproach your excellency for the part you have taken in my disgrace. I can read human nature well enough to know that you acted conscientiously, and according to the dictates of your best judgment, and I even read sympathy for me in your earnest eyes. I forgive you freely, and with real sincerity, though deeply regretting that a lofty and honorable mind should be deceived by a perjured villain. My conscience, Governor de Bienville, almost accuses me of injustice to the friendly though savage people whom I am among, for what I am about to tell you; but his is a hard and cruel heart indeed who would not sacrifice something to save his countrymen from destruction.

"Allow me to respectfully urge upon you the propriety, and necessity even, of sending more men to Natchez. That part of the French colony will soon have need of brave and determined defenders. Let the slaves be well watched, for you have much to fear from them. There is one among them called Samlea—a man of much resolution and courage—who is a leading spirit in the insurrectionary movement. You will perhaps form some idea of how much you have to fear, when I inform you that Red-Shoe, the celebrated Chickasaw chief, is at the head of the hostile demonstration on the part of the Indian tribes. The object of this alliance and conspiracy, of which I am accused as being the prime mover, is the total extinction of the French colony, as has already been represented to you by Lesage, who by some means really obtained information concerning the projected movement.

"But even Lesage has no idea of the real danger which now menaces the French. Much of that which he has made oath to, was mere mat-

ter of guess-work with him; and the peril is ten years, an hundred times more imminent than he imagines. I am doing all in my power to avert this cloud of destruction hovering over Louisiana. Heaven knows how earnestly I hope that my efforts may be crowned with success.

"Sorvidal is stationed among the Chickasaws, ostensibly as an agent, but really as a spy. He had better be recalled. The Indians have fathomed his purpose, and he is not safe a single hour. I shall advise him to leave when I see him. He can effect nothing by staying among them, for they are too shrewd to admit him to their councils or confidence. If the destruction of the colony can be averted in no other way, I shall endeavor to produce hostilities between the Chickasaws and Choctaws, and thus turn the tide of battle in that direction. If it be true that you have a secret and even active agent or spy, who is unceasingly hovering with silence and secrecy among the various Indian tribes, he will assure you that I have spoken truly, and advised you for the best, as time will prove.

"If the tongue of rumor speaks not falsely, there is one in your employ whose mysterious movements, whose flittings from place to place, almost entitle him to the faculty of ubiquity. Seek his counsel, and learn whether Henri Delcroix is a friend to his people. I send this 'speaking bark' by the hand of one whom you know, the proud daughter of the Sun, who is my friend, and a friend of peace. Begging as a favor that you will assure your ward—my foster-sister—that I am in safety, I remain your humble servant.

HENRI DELCROIX."

The surprise of de Bienville upon the perusal of this missive was extreme. If he had previously felt any misgivings in regard to the honesty of Lesage, they were now increased, while his interest in Henri grew in proportion as his doubts of the captain's honesty increased.

"Daughter of the Sun," said de Bienville, turning to the princess, "do the Natchez desire peace, or are they preparing for war?"

"My people love peace, if it can be had on honorable terms," replied La Glorieuse.

"They shall have them," answered the governor. "You may tell the Great Sun that the French chief will do them justice. If they have been wronged they shall be righted. Since I have exercised authority in the colony I have been friendly to the Natchez."

"The words of the wise chief shall be repeated to the Great Sun," replied the princess.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PLOT—THE ABDUCTION.

WITH the reader's permission we shall now return to Lesage. After leaving Helen Lerowe, he was joined by a man about thirty-five years of age, well proportioned, and of good address. It was Monsieur Hubert, the king's commissary—a person appointed by his majesty to observe the conduct of all the colonial officers and report the same.

This was not an enviable office, but it accorded well with the disposition of Hubert, who was a man of no principle, ever plotting and designing, knowing no higher ambition than the gratification of self. He cared not who sank or who swam, so long as he floated safely upon the tide. The conversation which passed between the commissary and Captain Lesage, will give the reader a better idea of his true character than aught we could write by way of description.

"Well, captain," he exclaimed, with a free and easy air, "how speeds your wooing?"

"But indifferently; and in fact I may as well say it speeds not at all," replied Lesage.

"She is still obstinate then," replied the commissary.

"Ay, more wilful than ever. I am convinced that I can never woo her by fair and gentle means," answered Lesage, impatiently.

"Then you must resort to more summary proceeding, *mon cher ami*," rejoined Hubert.

"Quite true, Hubert; but how do you prosper in wooing?" said Lesage.

"No better than yourself, and possibly not so well. Why, would you believe it, she scorned me with the air of a princess," rejoined the king's commissary.

"A spirited girl is Mademoiselle Adelaide," answered the captain, with a smile; for he was secretly rejoiced that his companion in wickedness had succeeded no better than himself.

"Spirited enough, I admit; but she's a splendid girl, Lesage. A defeat would mortify me not a little. The pride of Mademoiselle Adelle must by some means be humbled. My good captain, let us devise some effectual means for the speedy accomplishment of our mutual wishes," added the commissary.

"It is done!" exclaimed Lesage, promptly. "I have plotted too deeply, and risked too much already to be baffled at last. M. Hubert, what do you propose?"

"That we abduct both the young ladies," replied the commissary, with energy.

"I have thought of the same, and it is feasible. By what agencies shall we effect our purpose? Have you resolved upon any plan?" said the captain, anxiously.

"I have thought of several schemes, but the more intricate part of the plotting I shall entrust to you," answered Hubert, with a light laugh.

"Of course we must not be known in the matter ourselves," returned Lesage.

"Certainly not. We must employ men less scrupulous," retorted the commissary, with a significant look. "I have, you are aware, recently visited the region of the Sabine river. By numerous presents, and as many promises, I have made myself quite popular among the Camanches, a bold and warlike nation. I have thought they might be made useful in the accomplishment of our object."

"Happy circumstance! felicitous thought!" exclaimed Lesage, joyfully. "If by any means Mademoiselles Helen and Adelaide could be conveyed to the country of the Camanches with secrecy and despatch, what would hinder us from following them at our leisure, and enjoying the reward of perseverance. Who would suspect us of being concerned in the sudden disappearance of the mademoiselles! I stand high in the esteem of the governor, and you are in equal repute with the ministry and the king."

"I confess," rejoined Hubert, "that I can think of nothing better. The plan indeed seems perfectly practicable. Moreover I am daily and hourly expecting a visit from a party of Camanches, with whom I am driving a close bargain for a tract of land. I will look to it that they are put in the best of humor by liberal presents of beads, pipes, knives, hatchets and guns. The king can well spare some of his treasures, and afford to pay a high premium for the friendship of this powerful tribe."

"But will this deputation enter the town openly?"

"No; a trusty messenger will warn me of their approach. They will encamp on the other side of the Mississippi."

"Nothing could be more fortunate. But now arises another difficulty to be considered. By what means shall we entice the young girls far enough from the town to render their abduction safe and certain. If by an ingenious expedient we could induce them to venture to the borders of the town, the rest might be easily managed."

"Put your wits at work, Lesage," returned Hubert.

"If I could imitate the handwriting of Pierre Moran, I think it could be arranged to our wishes," said the captain.

At this juncture Lesage looked up and saw Sergeant Dumont approaching with much haste.

"What has happened now, I wonder?" said the commissary.

"Captain Lesage!" exclaimed Sergeant Dumont, hurriedly, "the prisoner has escaped."

"*Sacre Dieu!*" cried Lesage, turning deadly pale. How did it happen? What gross carelessness caused such a catastrophe?"

"He was liberated by some friends who came from the forest. One of them was an Indian, the other a white man, as I am informed by the jailer, whom I found locked into the prisoner's cell, together with the two sentinels."

"Good heavens! My plans are—" The captain checked himself. "In the name of wonder, Sergeant Dumont, how came the sentinels in the cell?"

"They were surprised, captain, during the storm of last night, and bound. The rest you can readily imagine," returned Dumont.

"Send parties of men in every direction, and endeavor to recapture the offender," added Lesage, recovering himself somewhat.

"But he has gone to the forest, captain, most probably, and pursuit will be utterly useless."

"There is reason in what he affirms," said the commissary.

"There is," replied the captain, "but nevertheless, make some efforts to retake him, Dumont."

The sergeant touched his cap and withdrew.

"My plans are defeated, Hubert; ruin stares me in the face!" exclaimed Lesage. "This Henri Delcroix will not rest until he has established his innocence. The governor will mistrust me and I shall be cashiered, and perhaps worse than that; for de Bienville is summary in his proceedings when thoroughly aroused."

"Fear nothing from him," said the commissary. "I have written to the ministry as I promised you, and de Bienville will be recalled, or I am no prophet. If it becomes too warm for you here before that time, you can absent yourself for a period until the storm blows over."

"I thank you for these drops of comfort, M. Hubert. If you can throw around me the ægis of your protection, I can easily carry out our plans in relation to the Mademoiselles Helen and Adelaide, for I can forge the handwriting of Henri Delcroix to perfection. I will forge a note to Helen Lerowe, requesting her to meet her lover in the outskirts of the town, in the edge of the forest. Pierre Moran, the lover of Adelaide, shall also be spoken of in the note, and the two will go to the place of meeting together to enjoy a charming *te-te-te* with their chosen swains. What more can be desired than this?"

"I pronounce the plot nearly perfect!" cried the commissary, joyfully. "The details of the scheme we will arrange at our leisure. In the meantime borrow no trouble about de Bienville and Henri Delcroix. I flatter myself that I have influence enough to protect you. It shall be my care to keep you admonished of the state of the governor's feelings; so make yourself easy. After you have written the note, show it to me."

The king's commissary paused and looked eagerly towards the Levee.

"The saints be praised!" he exclaimed, joyfully; "for there comes my messenger. The deputation of Camanches has arrived. Fortune favors us, my dear captain. The mademoiselles are ours. Write the tender *billet-doux*, and I will hasten to arrange all with my red friends. I will be with you before night."

With these words Lesage and the king's commissary parted.

If Helen Lerowe had wished for sympathy in the hour of her sorrow, before night she as ardently desired to share her joy with the same faithful friends. The sun was low in the heavens when she walked with light and bounding footsteps towards Ridelle's for the second time. The consciousness that Henri was at liberty was that which made her happy, and changed the whole current of her thoughts and feelings. The immediate peril being past, she felt assured that his innocence would ultimately be proved.

As Helen turned into Bourbon street, a stranger came up from the direction of the Levee, who paused and regarded her a moment with much earnestness. He then passed her, placing a folded paper in her hand, saying, as he did so:

"If I am not much mistaken, this is for you."

The stranger walked hastily on. Our heroine glanced at the paper and saw her name written upon it in the well-known characters of Henri. With a blush of pleasure she placed the precious document in her bosom and quickened her pace. When she reached M. Ridelle's, and after the first congratulations, she drew the paper from the place where it had been so carefully deposited, and read as follows:

"DEAREST HELEN:

"Before this hour, doubtless, you have heard of my escape from prison. Yes, I am free, and in the boundless forest again. I can again hunt upon the margin of the beautiful lakes, and repose on the banks of the running rivers. I can inhale the pure breezes of heaven, and listen to the songs of the gleesome birds.

My blood is no longer chilled by prison damps and there are no fetters upon my limbs:

"Would you see me, Helen? Would you say a gentle word to one doomed to a felon's fate? Would you render lighter the burden of wrongs that bear me down? Come, then, to the cypress tree where we met once some months since; come during the half hour after sunset to-night. It is possible that you can prevail on Adelaide Ridelle to accompany you, and by so doing confer a favor on the gallant Pierre Moran, who will be with me. Do not deem me bold in making this request, for I do not urge you to confer so great a pleasure upon me; but I should ever be grateful for your condescension. The satisfaction of seeing you again would banish from my mind the memory of half its recent wrongs. If I do not see you to-night beneath the shade of the cypress, I will be at the same spot to-morrow night, and please myself with a faint hope that you are coming, but that your footsteps linger to try my love."

"Dear Helen, I have room to write no more. Offering you the best homage of my heart, I remain,

Yours truly,

HENRI."

Mademoiselle Lerowe read this note with a pleasure known only to the woman who truly loves. She felt the blood mantling her cheeks, and her pulses confessed a quicker motion. With a bashful smile she handed the paper to Adelaide.

"Shall I read, mademoiselle?" she asked.

"You may, undoubtedly," replied Helen, with a smile.

Adelaide availed herself of the liberty thus given, and read the note with evident pleasure.

"Who cares for Pierre Moran?" she exclaimed, with affected contempt.

"Mademoiselle Ridelle cares for him," said Helen.

"Not at all; nevertheless I will consent to go with you for company," returned Adelaide.

"I have not said that I should go," answered Helen.

"But of course you will," added Adelaide.

"It does not necessarily follow that because a person is requested to do a thing she will do it," rejoined Helen.

"Yet it does usually happen that young mademoiselles go to meet their lovers by moonlight," said Adelaide.

"Let us speak seriously, Adelaide."

"With all my heart, mademoiselle."

"I will seriously assure you, then, to begin with, that I do not feel as though I ought to comply with Henri's request. I doubt whether it would be maidenly to grant him an interview under such circumstances. My heart, Adelaide, tells me to go, but there is a secret monitor within my bosom that bids me stay."

"Would it not give you pleasure to see him, mademoiselle?"

"Why do you ask, Adelaide? Do you not read your answer upon my glowing cheeks, and in my earnest movements? Most gladly would I fly to meet my foster-brother."

"How convenient it is for you to call him brother. Ah, Helen, what a nice excuse for loving him!"

"And what excuse have you for loving Pierre Moran?" asked Helen.

"I have never said I loved him, Mademoiselle Helen."

"Not with your lips, but your actions have been telling me so this long time."

"Why, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Adelaide, with a blush.

"I think I shall not go to the cypress tree," said Helen, after a pause.

"That would be cruel, after Henri has suffered so much."

"It might seem so at the first thought."

"He risks his life every time he comes near New Orleans, you know, Helen."

"Too true, Adelaide."

"Then it is evidently your duty to see him to-night, and prevent him from coming again."

"You use powerful and convincing arguments, Adelaide, especially when the heart is already prompting me to that course," said Helen, with a smile and a blush.

"It is near sunset; let us go before you return home. I love to watch the sun go down behind the distant hills, and see his last beams lingering among the branches of the trees, as if caressing them before retiring. Come, do not say no, because I know you admire the beauties of a ruddy sunset as much or more than I do. You are all ready—no excuses—away to the cypress shade," said Adelaide.

"Where are you going, girls?" asked Madame Ridelle, when she saw Helen and Adelaide leaving the house.

"To see the sun set," replied Adelaide, gaily.

"Whose son?" returned Madame Ridelle.

"That's a pun, mother; it is wicked to play upon words," replied the daughter.

"Well, do not go far, or you will be running into danger. Several Indians have been seen hovering about the outskirts of the town lately. Do not go out of sight of the house, for we have had sorrow enough, recently, and if anything should happen to you and Mademoiselle Helen, it would quite unnerve me," returned Madame Ridelle, with true motherly earnestness.

"We will be very cautious, dear mother," answered Adelaide, and then Helen walked slowly away towards what is now known as St. James's street; a spot which was then covered by a heavy growth.

As Helen moved on, enlivened by the conversation of her companion, she felt her spirits reviving, and the mental depression which she had felt for the last half hour, leaving her. The sun was setting when they reached the cypress named in the note. Its burning disc glowed fiery red as it sank gently and almost imperceptibly in the far-off west. Its departing beams fell with undimmed splendor upon the cypress boughs over the heads of the young girls.

"Let us sit down, mademoiselle, upon this mossy knoll," said Adelaide.

The fair mademoiselle sat side by side. Soft and fragrant breezes fanned their brows, and set the green leaves in motion. The continuous roar of the rolling waters of the Mississippi, modulated to a dreamy and pleasant monotony, was borne to their ears. Birds sang gaily from the pendant branches.

"Am I not a prophetess, mademoiselle? Did I not assure you that the sun would set gloriously, to-night?" said Adelaide, enthusiastically.

"It is indeed a calm and lovely hour. The ruddy glow of the setting sun, the gentle sighing of the scented winds, the sweet song of the untiring birds, together with the agreeable murmur of the Golden River, has a bewildering charm for me," replied Helen, earnestly. "To me there is sweetest music in the voices of nature; they have power to attune my spirit to responsive harmony. I would that my life could pass on in an even current, amid scenes and sounds like these, far away in the dense green wood. It seems to me that one might grow better, if not wiser, and more fit for the world to come. To commune with nature is to cultivate an agreement with all terrestrial things. No really bad men, I am inclined to believe, have ever been true lovers of nature."

"I agree with you," said Adelaide. "I have often had such thoughts, but I have not often had

the companionship of a friend to whom I could express them. Look! the sunbeams are getting lower upon the cypress; they already fall upon the trunk, and will soon be to the ground. It is nearly time for Henri to be here."

"Why did you not say Pierre Moran, instead of Henri?" replied Helen.

"Because I seldom speak of him," said Adelaide.

"I do not wonder that the red men love the forest," continued Helen. "It would indeed be singular if they did not. Born in the forest, reared in the forest, they know no fitting home save that."

Helen paused.

"I thought I heard a sound," she added.

"It was but the echo of your own voice," said her companion.

"There is something noble in an Indian. He is true to his instincts, and true to his friends," resumed Helen.

"Hark!" interrupted Adelaide. "I am quite certain I heard footsteps."

"It is near the hour," replied Helen. "The sun's disc is now hidden by those distant ranges of hills. It is the transition hour—the birth of twilight."

Adelaide uttered a piercing shriek, as at that instant the dark, tall figures of two Indians stood beside them. Adelaide continued to send forth shriek after shriek; but Helen Lerowe was speechless with terror. One of the savages laid his tawny hand upon Adelaide's arm, and motioned her to silence.

"White squaws go with us," he said, in indifferent French.

"No! no! we cannot!" cried Adelaide, in an agony of terror, attempting at the same time to free herself from her captor. But the powerful hand that was upon her held her fair, round arm as though it had been a feeble infant's.

"Must go with us—mount fine horse—ride a great way—cross rivers and valleys—find another country, full of great prairies, where the sun shines always—where are many fine lakes—where game is plenty."

While the savage was speaking, two more appeared, leading horses. He who had spoken, lifted Helen in his arms and placed her upon one of the animals, and the other performed the same service for Adelaide.

The former, who had somewhat recovered her presence of mind, now besought their captors in the most moving terms to suffer them to return

home in safety; but she might have spared her eloquence, for her words fell upon ears seldom moved to pity by touching appeals.

With emotions which no pen can describe, she saw the red sons of the forest mount their horses. One took the steed upon which she had been placed, by the bridle, another rode up to her side to keep her steady in her seat, and to prevent her from attempting to escape; two more assumed the same position in relation to Adelaide, and in this order they struck into the forest, slowly at first, but increasing their speed as the fair captives became inured to the motions of the horses.

Adelaide still continuing to utter piercing cries, the savage who rode by her side sternly bade her be quiet, and pointed significantly to his scalping-knife. The poor girl shuddered, and her fears were still more keenly excited.

Knowing that her outcries arose unheard by those who would gladly assist them, Helen entreated her to be silent (since resistance was useless), and submit passively to her fate.

"God," she added, "is able to protect us in all places. Our friends will surely attempt our rescue."

Although our heroine struggled to comfort her companion and hide her own fears, her sufferings were not the less intense. She beheld before her a long and tedious journey, and all the horrors of captivity; and finally, doubtless, a death of whose agonies she shuddered to think. She perceived at a glance, that their captors did not belong to any of the neighboring tribes, and she was not long in concluding that they were Camanches, a nation of whose prowess she had heard much. They were as numerous as the leaves of the forest, and bold and warlike in their habits. She had, on many occasions, heard the governor and St. Dennis talk of their daring exploits, and of their cruelties; but little did she dream at that time of ever falling into their hands. She felt assured (providing they were really Camanches) that they would cross the Mississippi before morning, and then pursue their journey in a north-western direction.

Helen was correct in her conjectures. After going forward about an hour, they halted on the banks of the river. The horses were taken over in a flat-boat, and they passed over in a canoe. "It is singular," said Helen, "that they should have a flat-boat. It is not the kind of craft they make use of, and they manage it rather awkwardly."

"It is one they have stolen from our people, probably," replied Adelaide. "They steal horses, and why should they not appropriate other things not belonging to them, to their own use?"

"After we re-commence our journey upon the other side," added Helen, in a whisper, while they were crossing the river, "endeavor by every ingenious expedient to leave some indications that we have passed along. When occasion offers, drop portions of your scarf, or handkerchief, or ribbons upon your bonnet, gloves—anything to mark the course we may take; for be assured all such indications will be sought for with eagerness by those who may attempt to follow us."

"How thoughtful of you," replied her companion. "I will follow your instructions. And if I could contrive to hang this green ribbon upon the branch of a tree, it could scarcely fail to attract attention, and Pierre Moran would know it, I am sure. When he learns what our fate has been, he will shoulder his double-barrelled rifle, and forests and lakes, mountains and running rivers will not be able to stop him. He is an experienced woodsman, and can follow a trail like a bloodhound. More than one of these red savages are doomed if he takes their trail. His deadly rifle will speak more than once, and my father says it never cracks in vain, for his aim is unerring."

"But you do not love Pierre," returned Helen, smiling sadly, though the smile cost her a severe effort.

"I love him now, Helen," replied Adelaide.

"And while Pierre is upon the trail, Adelaide, where do you think the White Rover will be?" asked Helen.

"Sure enough! Ah, they will both follow us!" exclaimed Adelaide, in a more hopeful tone, pleased with this new idea; and our heroine felt a ray of comfort in seeing her friend thus comforted.

"My father, too, is skilled in wood craft. His wounds are healed, and he will never remain quietly at home while we are in the power of savages. But there is one thing which I had not thought of, how will Pierre Moran and Henri Delcroix learn our sad story?"

"By some means, assuredly," answered Helen, with a sigh.

"Ah, you sigh, my dear mademoiselle; you see that it is impossible that either of them should learn anything in relation to our fate. We shall perish in the wilderness," and Adelaide wept afresh.

"Exercise more fortitude, my companion in affliction," said Helen, mildly. "Do not despair. Whatever our sufferings may be, let us remember that repinings or self-reproaches will not avail us anything. Patience, fortitude, courage, and watchfulness are the qualities that we are called upon to exercise, and the only traits of character worthy of us at present, or that can serve us in this emergency. Set the example for me, Adelaide. Let me see how strong your heart is; how much noble heroism you possess."

"Dear Helen!" exclaimed Adelaide, "that noble heroism which you speak of, you display in your own character. Your gentle admonitions bring me to my senses. It was myself that was the author of your misfortunes, and yet I am the first to repine. Forgive me, my friend, and in future I will strive to emulate your heroic conduct."

In a short time the river was safely passed. The captives were again placed upon the horses, and the whole party moved on in the same order as before, in a north-western direction, as Helen had anticipated; but they went forward at much greater speed.

It was a long and dreadful night to the captives. Though reared in a new country, they had never been subject to hardship, yet often in peril. Their powers of endurance were tested to the utmost. They were forced to ride through a tract of country still encumbered with its primeval forests, sometimes lying in gentle swells, often broken and rugged, and cut up by small streams, traversed by lonely valleys, and not unfrequently rendered pleasant by an unclouded moon, and before morning the fair captives were far from New Orleans. Leaving them to pursue their dreary way through the trackless wilderness, we will now turn our attention to other characters.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SECRET AGENT—THE DISCOVERY.

At the time of the abduction of Mesdemoiselle Helen and Adelaide, de Bienville was sitting in his study in earnest conversation with a personage whom we have not yet introduced to the reader, and who is worthy of some description.

He was a man just in the prime of life, and rather above the medium size. His features were regular, and somewhat stern in their expression; the eyes dark, deep-set and piercing; the forehead high, and the perceptive faculties strongly marked. The formation of the mouth expressed much determination of character and firmness of purpose. He was obviously a man who had seen much of life, and one who would not shrink from danger when convinced that he was pursuing the path of duty.

"Boisbriant," said the governor, "I am glad to see you. I have been much perplexed since your absence, and now perhaps you can advise me how to act. What of this Indian alliance?"

"Since I saw you," replied Boisbriant, "I have passed through the territories of the most powerful and most to be dreaded tribes of Indians. No matter what disguise I have assumed, or how I have obtained any information, or how many hair-breadth escapes I have had, suffice it that I have learned about this dangerous movement among the red men. There is danger before us. The French colony is threatened with destruction."

"Can you inform me who is the leader of this hostile demonstration?" asked de Bienville, earnestly.

"Onalaska—most commonly called Red-Shoe—the Chickasaw chief," answered Boisbriant, promptly.

"Do you know whether the slaves have really joined in this movement, or more properly, whether they intend to rise against their masters when the Indians attack the different settlements?"

"That is truly their intention, your excellency," replied Boisbriant.

"Will you do me the favor to read this," said the governor, taking the scroll of birchen bark from the desk, which Henri had sent by La Glorieuse.

Boisbriant read the missive with great apparent interest.

"Should you say that the writer of those lines speaks the truth?" asked de Bienville, anxiously.

"Most undoubtedly. With me the name of the writer would be a sufficient guarantee of the entire truthfulness of every word," returned Boisbriant, without hesitation.

"You have doubtless heard of the young man's arrest, imprisonment, trial, condemnation, &c.?" continued his excellency.

"I have," said Boisbriant, drily.

"And what do you think of it?" faltered the governor.

"That it was a most wicked affair from beginning to end," said Boisbriant, decidedly.

"What is your opinion of Captain Lesage?" resumed his excellency.

"That he deserves hanging as much as ever a man did!" retorted the secret agent of de Bienville, promptly.

"Is it possible that you really regard the young man as wholly innocent?" added the governor, musingly.

"Entirely so. Perhaps you will think me hasty in my decision, but I attribute the whole affair to the agency of Lesage. I grant that the evidence against the White Rover was seemingly conclusive, and that you acted as most other conscientious men would have done; but you were all wrong. Lesage is a villain, and you will find it so. I have excellent reasons for believing that he is plotting with M. Hubert, the king's commissary, for your recall."

"I thank you for your candor, Boisbriant. I feel a strange interest in Henri, and I am glad to hear a man like yourself speak in his favor. In regard to Lesage, I shall keep a watchful eye upon him."

"Do the same by the commissary," added Boisbriant.

"They shall both be looked after."

"The office of the commissary is a very pleasant one," added the secret agent, with a smile. "He watches the king's officers in this colony, but who will watch him?"

"And keep the ministry assured of his honesty," rejoined his excellency, in the same ambiguous manner.

"As he does of yours," said Boisbriant, ironically. "And, by the way, it has come to my knowledge that he has written a long letter to the ministry recently, and your name occurs in it more than once. It will be well for your excellency to remember that M. Hubert and this Captain Lesage are on the most intimate terms. When two such rogues get together, some mischief is being deliberated. Before I leave you I must not forget to speak of one other individual—Pierre Moran."

"You know him, then?" exclaimed de Bienville, quickly.

Boisbriant smiled.

"There are few men in Louisiana that I do not know. Pierre Moran is a true and tried heart. He knows much more of the affairs of

Louisiana than men give him credit for. Suffice it that he is very useful to me, consequently to you, and the whole colony; and he is a man who can keep a secret. We have met often, and we shall meet again. He has dared much peril, and is ready to risk his life again for his countrymen; and yet men do not mistrust that there is one tie to bind him to the race of mankind. I saw him to-day in the forest, and learned from him the particulars of Henri Delcroix's arrest and escape, and some things that would make the ears of Lesage tingle."

"You tell me strange things," said his excellency. "Do you know Henri personally?"

"I know something of him by means of Pierre Moran and the Indians, much more by seeing and observing him often, and by a knowledge of his conduct on several occasions; but I never exchanged a word with him, or at least since he was a mere boy. But nevertheless, rest assured that I know him well."

"Come to me again with de Noyan and St. Ange, and we will discuss this matter at our leisure, and take such steps as may be deemed expedient in order to do justice to all parties," replied de Bienville; and Boisbriant withdrew.

* * * * *

"Alice," said Louis Ridelle to his wife, "I feel quite restored to health. I think I shall venture into the woods to-morrow. I can't live away from the forest, you know."

"The force of habit is strong," replied Madame Ridelle, with a sigh. "I wish, Louis, you could content yourself at home until these Indian troubles are over."

M. Ridelle made no reply, but appeared thoughtful.

"It is time for Adelaide to return," said Madame Ridelle, at length.

"Where is she gone?" asked her husband.

"She and Mademoiselle Helen went away together."

"I hope they have not gone far. Which way did they go?"

"Up the river, towards the cypress grove."

"That was very imprudent. It is no time for girls to be out. I am sorry they went. It is quite dark now."

"I have been thinking about them for the last half hour," replied Madame Ridelle. "To tell the truth, I feel uneasy about them. I fear something has happened."

"I hope not, Alice. Perhaps I had better take my rifle and go after them," returned Ridelle.

His good wife did not oppose his design; and so Ridelle took his rifle and left the house, following the course which she had indicated as having been taken by the young girls.

After he had been gone a short time, Madame Ridelle opened the door and looked anxiously out, in the hope of seeing the object of her solicitude approaching. But she saw nothing save the clear blue sky, and the dim outlines of the surrounding forest. When she had gazed long and attentively, she was in the act of closing the door, when she perceived a folded paper lying near the threshold. She stooped and secured it, and impelled by a pardonable curiosity, opened and read its contents.

It was the note which Helen had received from Henri. The fears of Madame Ridelle subsided.

"If the girls are with Henri and Pierre, they are safe," she said to herself.

After the lapse of half an hour, Louis Ridelle returned alone. His wife immediately showed him the note, remarking as she did so, that she presumed they were in no great danger.

"So it would seem," replied Louis, with a smile.

Another half hour passed. Both Ridelle and his wife arose often and went to the door; but the same blue expanse met their gaze, the same dark outline of forest.

"This suspense is growing painful to me!" exclaimed Ridelle, at length. "Something has happened to the girls. Adelaide was never absent at this late hour before. I will walk to the spot indicated in the note."

"I think you had better, Louis, for I don't feel right," replied his spouse, in a tone betraying much anxiety.

Ridelle took his rifle and left the house with more haste than before. With a foreboding sense of some new misfortune, he walked rapidly towards the cypress grove, and soon stood within the sombre shade of the identical tree where the fair mesdemoiselle had sat and watched the setting sun.

He called upon the names of Adelaide and Helen, softly at first, and then more loudly. But the sweet voices of the maidens gave back no response. The loved names were only repeated in mocking echoes. Ridelle walked along the margin of the wood, still iterating the names of the young ladies, but with no better success. The idea now occurred to him that both had possibly gone to the governor's residence, and

that he should either find or hear from them there.

Accordingly he hastened thither without delay. He learned that they were not there, and that Mademoiselle Helen had not been at home since dark. Louis hurried back to his own house, still buoyed up by the hope that they had already returned. The door of his dwelling was open, and Alice stood upon the steps.

"Have they come?" asked Ridelle, hastily.

"No, Louis; have you not seen them?"

"No, wife; I can find no traces of them. I have been to the forest, called them in a loud voice, and searched all along the woods skirting that part of the town. I have been to the governor's residence, and Mademoiselle Helen has not been there since dark," replied Louis. "Bring me the lantern, wife, and I will go to the woods once more. I scarcely know how to account for my sensations, but my heart is full of the most painful apprehensions. Make haste, Alice."

Large tears stood in the eyes of Madame Ridelle, as she placed the lantern in the eager hands of her husband.

"Don't weep, wife; my fears may be groundless, after all," continued Louis. Seizing the lantern he ran to the forest with a speed that bore testimony to the extent of his fears. When he had reached the cypress tree which he believed was mentioned in the note, he held the light near the earth and examined it attentively. With the ready tact of a veteran woodsman, he discovered the prints of human feet in the displaced moss and leaves, upon the bent grass and birchens.

"This is the impress of a female foot—small and daintily formed—Mademoiselle Helen's, or my good Adelaide's. They evidently sat here upon this mossy mound. It is easy for one who has followed an Indian trail to discriminate between the light, small footstep of a woman, and the large, heavy step of a man."

The forester paused, and held the lantern still closer to the ground.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "here is a track never made by the dainty feet of Adelaide or Helen. The toes incline in, and the heels out; the owner of both wore moccasins, and was an Indian. Just Heaven! I shudder to think of the fate of my poor girl, and my sweet friend and benefactress. Here are more Indian tracks; and here are some footprints which do not turn in—a white man with moccasins on, doubtless. Where were Pierre and Henri?"

Louis Ridelle ceased, overpowered by his emotions. Recovering his self-possession, he resumed:

"On this spot are signs of a slight struggle. The poor things tried to escape. Vain attempt; one of those strong red hands were sufficient to subdue the feeble strength of half a dozen such girls. But what is here? horse tracks, as I live! The dear lassies are being borne swiftly away to the Indian country at this moment. And what may this be? a small bracelet which Mademoiselle Helen wore upon her pretty arm. In the name of Heaven, where were Pierre and Henri at this time! I ask again?" exclaimed Ridelle, frantically.

"I hope," he continued, solemnly, "they had no agency in this matter. And yet the note was from Henri, and Pierre's name was mentioned in it, by his consent and approval, most likely. It is bad enough to have my dear girl torn from me, and borne I know not whither; but it adds a double poignancy to my grief to be obliged to suspect two such men of such cruelty and double dealing."

After tracking for a short distance the horses that had borne away his earthly treasure, Louis Ridelle sadly returned to his now desolate home. Alice, pale, tearful and trembling, waited his coming.

"Bear yourself heroically," said the forester, sorrowfully. "Our dear child and our loved Helen have been carried away by the Indians."

Madame Ridelle lifted her hands to heaven in speechless grief, and then fell senseless into her husband's arms.

"Do not sink under this cruel blow," added Louis, as his wife slowly opened her eyes. "My own heart feels as desolate as yours, Alice; be brave, or it will break. It is a time for action, not a time to give way to useless grief."

"O, Louis! to think that our darling is thus cruelly torn from us!"

"I know it, wife; it comes home to me with terrible force."

"And where were Pierre Moran and Henri Delcroix?" asked Madame Ridelle, with startling earnestness.

"I have asked myself that question many times within the last half hour, Alice; but I haven't answered it yet; nor can I answer it, Alice; it will do no good. Time will clear up the mystery, and explain all that seems dark and dreadful."

"They can't be guilty; no, no! Louis, they

cannot be guilty!" exclaimed Alice, wild with grief.

"Be quiet, wife," said Louis, soothingly. "I must now go and inform the governor of what has happened to his sweet ward."

"Don't tell him about the letter," replied Alice, with an imploring look. "It might make them think less kindly of Henri."

"I will try and act for the best, Alice," replied the forester, as he left his now solitary cabin.

Louis rang violently at the door of the governor's mansion.

"Tell the governor that Louis Ridelle would speak with him immediately," he said, in a husky voice, to the servant who appeared in answer to the bell.

"His excellency is about retiring," replied the servant.

"I care not. I must see him, even if he were already in bed and asleep."

Awed by the imperative manner of the forester and his evident excitement, the servant carried his message to the governor without delay.

In a few moments Louis stood face to face with de Bienville.

"I come to you the bearer of bad news," faltered Ridelle. "Helen, your ward, and my benefactress, has—"

"What has happened to her?" exclaimed the governor, impatiently.

"She and my daughter have been carried off by the Indians."

De Bienville grew very pale.

"When did this happen?" he asked, quickly.

"This very night."

"Tell me the particulars so far as you know them," added the governor.

The forester related the manner in which they had left the house, suppressing the fact that there had been a previous appointment by Henri.

"And have you no knowledge of their object in going to the forest at so late an hour?"

Ridelle was much confused by this question, and his confusion did not escape the prying glance of de Bienville.

"It was not very late, your excellency. The sun had not yet gone down when they left the house," stammered Louis.

"There is something you would conceal from me, Monsieur Ridelle. I must know every particular in order that I may know how to act. I command you, no, I entreat you, to tell me all. Was there not some previous appointment, and was there not a note or something of that kind in the affair?"

The honest forester could evade the governor no longer, and he answered with some hesitation:

"There was a note, your excellency."

"Did you see it, or have you got it?" demanded de Bienville.

"I have got it," said Ridelle.

"To whom was it directed?"

"To Helen—your ward."

"Give it to me instantly, Monsieur Ridelle. I have a right to know everything that relates to her," added the governor, somewhat sternly.

With a sorrowful heart the forester drew the note from his pocket where he had placed it after its perusal, and put it into the trembling hand of the governor.

De Bienville's brow grew dark and stormy as he read it.

"The knave, the double villain!" he exclaimed, angrily, stamping violently upon the floor. "Would that he had been hanged before this wickedness had been consummated."

Then turning sternly to the forester, he said, in a reproachful voice:

"Do you affect not to understand all this, Monsieur Ridelle? Are you so blind that you cannot see whose hand has brought this sore calamity upon us? Tell me no more of the innocence of that young dissembler. He is guilty—guilty as—"

De Bienville checked himself.

"This note is in Delcroix's hand-writing, Monsieur Ridelle, is it not?" he asked.

"I am forced to confess that it is," answered Louis.

"It is the same as that upon the birchen scroll, and he acknowledges that to be his," added the governor.

"It's too true, your excellency," replied the forester, sadly.

"I have recently been striving to convince myself that Lesage is a villain; but this affair cannot well be laid upon the shoulders of Lesage, as broad as they are. This is undoubtedly the chirography of the Rover. Stay, I will compare it with some of his writing that I have in my desk."

The governor produced the scroll he had received from Henri, and compared the two together.

"I can detect no difference, Monsieur Ridelle," he said, after looking at the characters attentively.

"There is possibly something about this yet to be discovered," added the forester. "There is still a chance for Pierre and Henri to be innocent."

"I hope so, most sincerely. My poor, poor Helen! I loved her, Monsieur Ridelle, as well as though she had been my own child. Her amiable disposition, her beauty, her many graceful and endearing ways, have entirely won my love. This is a severe blow to me. Alas, and for you, also, my friend. But what shall be done?"

"I must take to the trail and follow the dear girls until I find them, or die in the attempt. I am an old woodsman, your excellency, and there is no living thing in the forest that I fear, whether it be savage, or wild beast. Yes," he continued, with increasing energy, "I shall go after them, and if they have suffered wrong at the hand of any white man, that man shall die; I, Louis Ridelle say it, and will say it until I make my word good."

"Noble heart!" exclaimed de Bienville. "Heaven, I feel assured, will reward your efforts with success. But you shall not go alone. I will give you as many men as you choose, to be under your command."

"I thank you," replied the forester, "but I do not want them. One experienced hunter is worth a whole army of raw soldiers on the trail. They won't do; they would do more harm than good. Trust the whole matter to me. A father's love will not sleep, and will leave no means untried to rescue his darling."

"I do, and will trust it all to you," said the governor, earnestly, "and feel that I could not entrust the important business to better hands. I know that you will not be idle or inactive; for a daughter's safety claims all your energies of body and mind. If you want arms, ammunition, or men, come to me, and all shall be at your command."

As nothing further could be said or done in relation to the unhappy affair, the forester took leave of the governor to make preparations for following the abductors of his daughter. Upon his way to his cabin, he met Captain Lesage. He was hurrying past him, when the captain addressed him:

"Good evening, Monsieur Ridelle. Whither away so fast?"

"Excuse me, captain. I have urgent business to attend to at this time," replied Louis.

"My dear friend, you seem afflicted. What has happened?" exclaimed the captain, in tones denoting the deepest interest.

"My daughter, captain—my daughter has—"

"Speak, Monsieur Ridelle! Tell me what

has happened to Mademoiselle Adelaide?" cried Lesage, earnestly.

"She has been seized by the Indians and carried away," added the forester, looking searchingly at Lesage.

"*Sacre Dieu!* Is it possible! You curdle my blood with horror!" exclaimed the captain, with well acted sincerity. "How long since this sad occurrence?" he added, apparently astounded at what his ears had heard.

"Alas! this very night," said Louis.

"Are you well assured that the savages have indeed robbed you of your fair girl?" continued Lesage, in the same sympathizing, anxious tone.

"She is gone, and Mademoiselle Lerowe has shared the same unhappy fate."

"No!" exclaimed the captain, recoiling with horror. "No! you but jest. The savages dare not commit an act of such uncalled-for cruelty. By my soul, Monsieur Ridelle, your intelligence seems more like some horrible nightmare! We have indeed fallen upon troublous times."

During this interview the forester had watched the features of Lesage attentively, and his well acted surprise and horror had its effect upon him as the keen dissembler intended.

"I pity you from the deepest recesses of my soul," added the captain, in that low, subdued, and sad voice which he could simulate so well. "How did it happen that they should both go to the forest at the hour of evening, when it is so unsafe for even men to venture there?"

"It is very singular," said Louis, evasively.

"And very melancholy," added Lesage.

"A strange thought has just occurred to me," he resumed, in a musing tone, "but I fain would dismiss it. The governor's ward, it is supposed, was but too partial to that misguided youth but lately escaped from the hands of justice. Think

you, Monsieur Ridelle, that she went to the forest to meet him?"

"It is possible," said the forester.

"I hope, Monsieur Ridelle, that there has been fair play—that the Rover knows no more of this melancholy transaction than he should. It is possible that I am speaking to one of that person's best friends; but if I am, I really cannot help it. I beg your pardon, but I truly cannot altogether repress my emotions, more especially as I see by your own manner that you have your suspicions. Yes, you cannot disguise it; you have suspicions, and I know which way they point. I sympathize with you deeply, and am ready to assist you all in my power. I think I can, in some measure, understand the feelings of a kind and devoted parent under such a dispensation as you have been called to suffer. My emotions are getting the better—I—I—excuse my weakness; but my feelings towards the author of this unparalleled outrage are far from pacific and forgiving. I ought to exercise Christian charity, but, by all the saints in the calendar, I can't do it! Good night, friend Ridelle, good night. I will see the governor, and something shall be done immediately."

Captain Lesage wiped his eyes, grasped the hilt of his sword fiercely, and strode away.

He left the forester standing in the street, quite confounded, at the exhibition of so much eloquence and sympathy. He resumed his homeward way, absorbed in thought. Just as he entered his own door, he exclaimed, half aloud:

"Hang the fellow! he's too sympathizing. His heart isn't apt to overflow so suddenly. The captain has either been serving the devil lately, or is going to immediately; I must find out which it is."

CHAPTER XIV.

SUCCESSFUL VILLANY—TO THE RESCUE.

"I AM weary of staying here with these savages," said Pierre Moran, upon the morning succeeding the events just related.

"I confess I am not greatly pleased with having my movements so much restrained," replied the Rover.

"Let us leave our red friends, then, for a few hours, and walk towards New Orleans," added the hunter.

"The proposal suits me well," answered Henri. "I long to look once more upon the spot containing the object of my love."

"You have expressed my own emotion," said Pierre. "Look! the sun is just trembling upon the rim of the horizon. A smart walk of an hour will take us to the margin of the wood bordering New Orleans, from whence we may see the dwellings which contain those so dear to us. And yet when I think of it, so near an approach to the town may be attended with danger to both, more particularly to you."

"Brave men and true lovers heed no danger," answered the Rover, with a smile. "Take your rifle and let us go."

The two foresters walked rapidly towards the new settlement.

"I hope the day will come," resumed Henri, "when I may approach New Orleans as an honest man should—without a single stain upon my name and character."

"That day will most surely arrive, my friend," replied Moran. "I feel in my heart that it will. Lesage will yet be exposed, and suffer the penalty ever due to wickedness. If human justice does not reach him, God's justice will."

"My spirit grows sad within me," said the Rover, "as we approach New Orleans. I cannot forget the bitter wrong that has been done me there. It makes my blood burn with indignation and shame to think of it. The period shall come when I will prove to the whole colony that I despise a traitor, and love the French."

"I doubt it not, gallant Rover," responded Pierre.

The lengthened strides of the foresters soon brought them to the borders of New Orleans.

"Beneath this cypress," resumed Henri, sadly, "I once met Helen Lerowe, by the merest accident; but I have reason to suppose that it was a pleasurable meeting to both. I know it was to me. While standing exactly here where we do now, Lesage, like a bird of evil omen, passed us. I saw him look at Helen and me. I well remember how his keen, snaky, gray eye was fastened upon me during that brief interval of time which he occupied in passing. I had a presentiment even then, that that man was my enemy. Time has proved the presentiment sooth. Pierre Moran, I ardently long for the

time when I can meet him face to face, and punish him for his sins."

The Rover uttered the concluding sentence in a voice of deep feeling.

"It was with the greatest difficulty that I could refrain from spurning him with my foot when he dared to stand up before me and offer me money to take the life of a fellow-man!" exclaimed Moran. "Had I known you and him as I now do, most bitterly should he have suffered for his insolence. The moment I saw you—when you hurled aside the savages, and scattered the blazing brands to the winds, I knew you; for the 'lying chief' had described you well—his only tribute to truth in a long time, probably. I will now step forward a little to get a glimpse of Monsieur Ridelle's house. If I see any of the towns-people stirring, I will tell you, and if all is quiet we can perhaps venture a little nearer."

Pierre Moran left the Rover sitting beneath the cypress, and advanced towards the town.

In a moment he called to his comrade, saying:

"I can see Monsieur Ridelle's. All is quiet; none of the towns-folks seem to be on the *qui vive*. They little think we are so near, I dare say."

"Villain! robber! seducer of innocence!" cried a deep, stern voice, "there is one who is on the *qui vive*—one who suspects you—one who knows you are near," and then Louis Ridelle, deadly pale, and fearfully excited, stepped forth from behind the trunk of a large sycamore.

"What!" exclaimed the bold hunter, astonished beyond measure.

"Well feigned astonishment! consummate hypocrisy!" continued Ridelle, with increasing vehemence. "Bring her back, restore her to me."

"Monsieur Ridelle," began Pierre, much embarrassed by his unaccountable conduct.

"Give me back my daughter, and throw off the mask at once, or I may forget that it is a crime to take the life of a human being," added Ridelle.

"I know nothing of your daughter, Monsieur Ridelle. Speak quickly, and tell me what has happened to Adelaide!" cried the hunter, convinced that his friend was laboring under some dreadful mistake.

"Did you ever see this note before?" said Ridelle, sarcastically, holding up the folded paper with Helen's name upon it.

"Never!" replied Pierre, more and more bewildered at what he heard and saw.

"Why should you add falsehood to the crime of robbing a parent of his child?" rejoined Louis.

"I had cherished a secret hope that you were innocent, and that all might yet be explained; but your own words just now undeceive my too credulous heart. Pierre Moran, this insult, this great wrong, can only be washed out in blood."

"Here is some fatal mistake," said the Rover, coming forward and standing between Ridelle and Moran.

"And you, probably, never saw this before?" added the former, holding up the note once more.

"I protest that I never did, to my knowledge," replied Henri, calmly.

"*Mon Dieu!*" groaned Louis. "What hardihood!"

"Monsieur Ridelle, will you permit me to look at that paper?" said Henri.

Ridelle threw it contemptuously at his feet, and watched the Rover's countenance as he read it.

"M. Ridelle," said our hero, handing the paper to Pierre, "I most solemnly assure you that I did not write a single letter of that note, and I call heaven and earth to witness to my words."

"Tell me what meaning I shall attach to the strange words of Pierre Moran which he uttered when he first stood upon that knoll and looked towards the cabin now robbed of its dearest inmate?"

"I meant that escaping from prison as I had so recently done by his assistance, that all our movements might be watched by those anxious to work my ruin. We approached the town with caution, for the purpose of looking upon the spot rendered dear to us by those we love. The remarks of our mutual friend, Moran, had relation only to the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed. Neither of us entertained the remotest idea that aught unfortunate had befallen Adelaide—the fair girl so highly esteemed by us all."

The bereaved forester sat down upon the earth and covered his face with his hands.

"I know not what to think," he said, sadly. "Perhaps I have been too hasty; if I have, you will forgive a heart-broken man when I tell you that Adelaide has been stolen from me; and that Helen Lerowe has shared the same fate."

The White Rover staggered beneath the terrible intelligence; while Pierre Moran stood as if transfixed to the earth, with pale cheek and staring eye.

"I forgive you, friend Ridelle," said Pierre, at length, in a mournful voice, "and now make haste to tell me all you know of this strange affair."

"Quick, quick, for I burn with impatience!" cried Henri, while the blood rushed back to his face again, and his eyes flashed with indignation.

The forester related all that he knew of the abduction from beginning to end, including his interview with the governor, and with Lesage.

"Can you not see," exclaimed the Rover, impatiently, "that this is the work of Lesage? Fools! fools! are ye all, not to perceive it. Where is the trail? Let us not waste time, but pursue the abductors to the death. Come, Ridelle, be a man; up and away. Now, Pierre, is the time to prove our claims to woodcraft."

"Right, brave boy, right. Shake hands with me, both of you, to assure me of your forgiveness!" exclaimed Ridelle.

"With all my heart and soul," said Pierre. "Here is a hand that never betrayed you, and never will."

"And here is another that will never be idle until your daughter is restored to your arms," added Henri.

"I thank you, my brave lad. I was mad to suspect you for a moment. And now I am ready for the trail. Here is where the dear girls sat beneath this tree, expecting your footsteps every moment, no doubt; and were expecting you when their captors sprang to their side and secured them. The trail starts here and winds off in that direction. I came here to follow it alone, determined never to return without my darling."

"I perceive that the party who stole the maidens were mounted," remarked Pierre, while he examined the ground attentively.

"And by the particular shape of the hoof, I learn that they were mounted upon horses young and strong," said the Rover.

"By the tracks here beneath the cypress," resumed Pierre, "I know that the active agents in this transaction were Indians; for here are footprints which toe in."

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"I have discovered tracks which do not toe in," returned the Rover, quickly.

"Sufficient evidence," rejoined Pierre, "that the enterprise was conducted by a white man."

"I am glad you have made these discoveries," said Louis. "I had already arrived at the same conclusions. I am fortunate indeed to have such assistants. There is one thing more to be considered; can you tell what tribe of Indians left this trail?"

"I think I shall be able to tell you after following the trail one hour," said Henri.

"The trail bends towards the Mississippi," returned Ridelle.

The little but determined party now moved slowly along the trail, noticing the faintest imprints left by horses' feet.

"As many as six horses have passed over this ground," observed the hunter.

"I was about to make the same remark," said Henri.

As the trail was very plain, the foresters now quickened their pace and in less than an hour reached the place where the party crossed the river.

There was now a consultation in regard to the manner in which they should reach the opposite shore. To construct a raft with their hatchets competent to secure them a safe passage across the Father of Waters, would not be an easy task; and so Ridelle volunteered to retrace his steps along the river's bank until he should meet with some boatman, or reach the town, where he could easily procure a canoe.

Without loss of time he hurried away to put his resolution in practice.

Pierre sat down on the bank of the river; but Henri was too impatient and restless to remain a moment at rest, and so he walked away by himself to indulge in his own melancholy thoughts without being seen by a human being. Scarcely conscious which way he went, he continued his walk for some time, and as it happened towards the town.

CHAPTER XV.

A SERIES OF UNEXPECTED INTERVIEWS.

Henri, at length, abated his pace, and finally sat down upon the trunk of a fallen birch. He had scarcely assumed that position when he was aware that he saw a human figure passing swiftly among the trees. The Rover sprang from his seat, and darting onward with the rapidity of a deer, stood full in the man's path.

"We have met at last, Captain Lesage," said the Rover, with a bitter smile. "I have ever believed that this happiness was in reserve for me."

"Chief Menteur" recoiled precipitately three or four paces. He did not speak, for he could not; his surprise and consternation were too great to allow him to call his vocal organs into action. He stood and gazed fixedly at Henri, with pale cheeks and tremulous limbs.

"I perceive, captain, that this meeting is unexpected to you, and takes you by surprise! You may well tremble to meet the man whose life you foully conspired against, and whom you perjured yourself to convict of a capital crime. Thus far, Heaven in its impartial justice has overturned many of your schemes, and I hope it will, in its mercy, baffle that one in which you are now engaged. Do not affect an astonishment you do not feel, captain, for with me it will avail nothing. I am well persuaded that the two missing maidens have been abducted by

your agency; but I do most solemnly assure you—and you may write it down in your memory as something certain—that you will never live to reap the reward which you earnestly hoped to when planning this new piece of villainy. Helen Lerowe scorns you with her whole soul, and were she a thousand miles from here in the very heart of a savage country, she would still spurn you from her with unutterable contempt."

"This insolence shall not be forgotten!" exclaimed Lesage, passion at length getting the better of his fears.

"Be careful that you tempt not my mood!" retorted Henri. "I may forget myself, and throw you into the waters of that darkly flowing river. Who could tell the tale of your death, if some days from hence your body should be found among the dank weeds many miles below here?"

"Remember, vain and impudent boaster, that I am armed," returned the captain, laying his hand upon his sword. "I know how to use this weapon," he added, with a show of courage which he did not really feel.

"I care not for your sword! To me it is but a feeble reed; for I have right and justice upon my side, and without these the best-tempered steel loses its keen edge. The polished blades

of Toledo are not formidable when wielded by men who pervert truth and trample honor under their feet, when matched with those who fight in defence of innocence and virtue."

"What does all this idle nonsense portend?" cried Lesage. "Out of my path, and let me pass!"

"Do not stir," returned the Rover, impressively, "do not stir as much as a single inch, until I have done with you."

"This unparalleled effrontery surpasses all my powers of endurance!" exclaimed the captain.

"Who but contemptible cowards would hire a man to slay a fellow-creature in cool blood. Think of it, captain, and tear those badges which tell your rank, from your shoulders. I shall live to expose your villainy yet."

"But you will never live to wed Helen Lerowe!" retorted Lesage, whose courage was momentarily rising as he saw no absolute hostile demonstrations on the part of Henri.

"Speak not of her, Lesage. Do not repeat often the name of Helen Lerowe. She is too pure for lips like yours to speak of."

"Please yourself with that delusive idea, if you will; but know, insolent adventurer, that she loves me."

"Loves you!" exclaimed Henri, disdainfully.

"Ay, son of nobody, I had it from her own lips," returned Lesage, with a sneer.

"I believe you utter a falsehood. You might reiterate that a thousand times, and I would not credit the tale," replied Henri.

The captain was now thoroughly aroused.

"The governor's ward would not link her destiny with a condemned felon, without name and without parentage. Perhaps you never thought of this, but she has, and so has the governor. No! no!" continued the captain, with a mocking laugh, "Helen Lerowe, the fairest maiden in Louisiana, will never wed the son of nobody."

The nerves of the Rover could bear no more. Before the captain had anticipated the movement enough to draw his sword, he had sprung towards him and struck him down with his clenched hand, and spurned him with his foot. Stung to madness by the punishment, Lesage recovered his feet as quickly as possible, and made furious passes at Henri with his sword; but the latter parried them with his tomahawk, which he wielded with a dexterity only acquired by long association with the Indians. In a moment the captain's weapon was broken at the hilt.

"I will not cheat the hangman," said Henri, as Lesage stood disarmed before him, and at his mercy. "I will leave you to a punishment far greater than any I can now inflict; for it is not impious to believe, that Heaven has already marked you for a fearful doom. Go, and remember that I shall ever be upon your track, to detect your villainies and expose your wickedness."

With these words Henri walked away. He had gone but a few paces when he heard the report of a pistol, and a ball whistled by his head. He turned quickly towards the spot where he had left Lesage, and saw him running as fast as he was able. The Rover levelled his rifle, but changed his mind, and did not fire.

"Not now," he said to himself, "not now. Let me wait till my innocence is established, and then I shall see him sinking to his proper place."

"It would be a waste of powder and ball," said a voice. Henri looked towards the speaker and beheld a man in the prime of life, and wearing the garb of a forester.

"You have done well to spare him, young man!" he added. "The measure of his wickedness is not yet full. Let him go on for a short time longer, and his career of crime will be consummated."

"You know Lesage, then?" said Henri, astonished at what he heard.

"I know him well. I have observed him long, and when other eyes failed to detect his villainies. The day of his triumph is well nigh spent; the night of his disgrace and ignominy approaches. I have heard of the abduction of the maidens. I am well assured that you had no agency in it; neither had Pierre Moran."

"It would seem that you know me also?" replied the Rover.

"Believe me, Monsieur Delcroix, that there are but few I do not know in the French colony," answered the stranger, whom the reader will recognize as Boisbriant, the secret agent of de Bienville.

"Should I be deemed impertinent were I to ask with whom I am conversing?" asked our hero, much interested in the stranger.

"I am one who fits silently from place to place; one who is known by many names, and familiar with many disguises; one who sees much, and is little seen, and who knows much and is little known," replied Boisbriant.

"You are the secret agent of de Bienville," said Henri, with a smile.

"How knew you, young man, that he had a secret agent?" asked Boisbriant.

"By the merest accident I have arrived at that knowledge; but from a source that never did and never will betray you or your plans," returned the Rover.

"I have seen de Bienville, and I have read the writing you sent him. You stated the truth and nothing more," added Boisbriant.

"I thank you for your good opinion. It produces a thrill of unspeakable pleasure to hear one, who has had an opportunity of knowing the truth, speak in my favor!" exclaimed Henri, in a gratified tone.

"I have declared your innocence in the presence of the governor; but I fear the abduction of the maidens, and the fact that a note purporting to be from you was found, has seriously shaken his faith in your integrity," added the agent.

"Alas, my friend, I seem destined to be continually misunderstood," rejoined Henri.

"You now propose, doubtless, to go on the trail and rescue the maidens. I will not attempt to dissuade you from the undertaking, for it is praiseworthy and right. But you may safely reckon me among your friends. While you are gone, I shall not be idle. While I serve my king and country, I will also serve you. Lesage will be closely watched. Let him do what he may, there will be eyes ever upon him. No matter if I am far away, there will still be those near ever observant of his actions. I have some power, young man, and it shall be used in your favor when opportunity offers. The slave added to in your missive shall be arrested, together with several others. This step, I am in hopes, will hold the rebellion among the blacks in check, and dampen the ardor of Red-Shoe."

"The Chickasaws and Choctaws will soon be involved in a sanguinary war," replied Henri. "At least, judging from present appearances, such must be the result, which will defer any hostile movement on the part of the Chickasaws for some time, and this will be favorable to the safety of the colony."

"You are right, and you will have ample time to rescue the maidens, or at least to learn what their fate may have been, before the blow is struck. The colony will then need the aid of your arm and influence, and I doubt not it will have both."

"It shall, and if my life is needed to seal my love for my country, it shall be freely given," said Henri, earnestly.

"We must part now," added Boisbriant, "but we shall meet again; yea, more than once, and in places and under circumstances when least expected, perhaps. Bear up under adversity like a man; keep a bold heart in your bosom, and present a bold front to your enemies. Perseverance and virtue must triumph at last over all obstacles."

"Before we part," said the Rover, earnestly, "may I ask if we have often met before; if ever, where, and when?"

"All in good time; it matters not now. Linger no longer here. Remember that your Helen is in captivity, and torn from you by the arts of a villain. Follow her captors like a tireless hound. Pursue them with the cunning of a serpent, and a perseverance no toil can discourage, and no danger appal."

With these words Boisbriant waved his hand and walked away, and in a few seconds was out of sight.

The Rover hastened back to the spot where he had left Pierre. When he reached the margin of the river, he saw a canoe containing four persons approaching from the direction of New Orleans. Before it touched the shore, Henri recognized Madame Mablois, La Glorieuse, Ette Actal, and Ridelle.

"I am indeed happy to see you, Madame Mablois!" exclaimed the Rover, warmly embracing the Frenchwoman. "And you, also, fair daughter of the Sun," he added, extending his hand to the princess.

"My dear Henri," said Madame Mablois, "I have suffered much on your account: but I thank Heaven that I see you at liberty, and out of immediate danger."

"And I must not forget to thank you and the princess for the liberty I enjoy. It is to you that I am indebted for my freedom, as well as to the two gallant hearts who were the direct agents in my escape."

Madame Mablois took Henri by the arm and drew him gently from his companions.

"You have known me from your childhood, Henri," she said with feeling, "and you know that I cherish for you a mother's regard. I know whither you are now going. For my sake be careful of your own safety. Do not expose yourself to unnecessary danger."

"And why should I cling to life with such tenacity?" he answered. "Has existence been so precious to me hitherto that I should wish to preserve it so carefully. Were I like many oth-

ers, it might be different. Remember, dear Madame Mablois—you who have supplied the place of a mother to me with such fidelity—that I am a nameless youth. I am called Henri Delcroix; but why I was thus named, I know not. Upon this subject I am daily growing more sensitive. It gives me pain to reflect upon what I may possibly be. Is it not in your power, my more than friend, to clear up this mystery? I feel that it is; and I do most earnestly entreat of you to tell me the worst. Anything is better than this uncertainty; even an humiliating truth is preferable to suspense so painful."

"Wait yet a little longer, Henri. If I know aught of your parentage, rest assured that I keep it from you for the best of reasons. You know me too well to imagine that I would withhold any intelligence which would be for your interest. Try and feel that I am acting like a reasonable and discreet friend, and anxious to make you happy, and better your condition in life. This much I will say; you need not be ashamed of the blood that circulates in your veins; it would not disgrace a prince. Have faith in Heaven's justice, and in me. The night of your sorrow is passing, and the sun of your prosperity and happiness is already rising; even now it trembles on the eastern verge."

Mablois paused. Her bosom swelled with pride. She grasped the Rover's arm, and spoke with thrilling earnestness.

"Henri, you are not what you may have thought yourself to be. No, no! You will yet be ranked with the best blood of the land. Your proud and lofty spirit will yet rise to its proper place. As the sun of Lesage goes down, yours will go up towards the zenith. Be not desponding. In your attempts to save the fair and beloved Helen from the fate to which a villain has doomed her, I again repeat be careful of your own life; for you must live to triumph over all your enemies. Yes, you must, and I feel and know that you will."

"Your words, dearest madame, inspire me with a new hope. My pulses beat with a new life, my blood flows with a more genial warmth. Henceforth I will struggle manfully with my fate. I will try to be all that you can wish. Fear not for me. All will be well."

"Nobly spoken, my brave boy. Now my heart beats more lightly than your own. Let us return to our friends; they wait for us."

While Mablois was speaking, the sound of horses' feet were heard, and in a moment twelve mounted warriors made their appearance.

Henri and Pierre grasped their weapons, but relinquished them again when they perceived that the new comers were a party of Natchez warriors.

"What means this, La Glorieuse?" asked the Rover.

"Those are some of our bravest warriors that I sent for two days ago. If the White Rover wants them, they are ready to go on the trail, and fight his enemies," replied the princess.

"This is kind, noble, generous La Glorieuse. I am indeed grateful. I will consult with my friends in regard to the matter."

After some consultation with Pierre and Ridelle, it was agreed that they should set forward without the Indians; and if nothing were heard from them at the expiration of several days, the warriors might take the trail and follow. In this way, being well mounted, they might overtake them in season to be of much use. Matters being thus arranged to the satisfaction of all parties, they took leave of their kind friends; the renegade set them across the river in the birchen canoe, and they started on the trail with a determined zeal which no obstacles could daunt.

"It is as I had expected," observed the Rover; "the trail tends towards the Sabine river, and the country of the far-famed Camanches. I perceive that there is much danger and hardship before us. Not only shall we be obliged to contend with the subtle devices of Lesage, but to dare the vengeance of the most formidable of the red nations."

"I am willing to dare dangers ten times as imminent," returned Moran, firmly. "I am resolved to penetrate to the very heart of the enemies' country in defence of innocence and beauty. I shudder to think of the sufferings of the poor girls. I cannot well restrain my impatience."

"Here is something," said Louis Ridelle to Henri, "which I found beneath the cypress; but I forgot to mention it before. It has been worn upon the dainty arm of one whose name I need not pronounce."

"Helen's bracelet!" exclaimed the Rover. "Give it to me, friend Ridelle. I will wear it next my heart until she is again restored to liberty."

Henri pressed the golden band to his lips, and then placed it carefully in his bosom.

"And here is something," observed Pierre, picking a small glove from the ground, "which

you will recognize, Monsieur Ridelle. It has been worn upon the dear hand of Adelaide, and I solemnly protest that it shall never leave my possession until I restore it unto its rightful owner."

"With allies like you, I can scarcely fail to recover my lost darling," said Louis, with emotion.

The trail being fresh, the foresters had little or no difficulty in following it. When the shadows of night fell again, they were many miles from New Orleans, in the boundless wilderness, known but little, save to Indian feet.

"I am an old forester," remarked the father of Adelaide, "and my better judgment tells me that we must halt and rest. If we exert ourselves too much to-day, we shall be less able to discharge the duties of the morrow. We must not forget that a long journey is before us, and that ours is a task that cannot be accomplished in twenty-four hours."

"You are right," replied Pierre, "though I feel as if my limbs would never tire, and my strength never fail. But reason admonishes me that we must act like men, and not like children. I will go and shoot a deer while you kindle a fire."

The Rover and Ridelle had soon gathered a pile of dry fagots. The former drew the ball from one barrel of his rifle, and ignited the combustible material by burning some powder in the lock. The pile was soon in a blaze, and the bright flames went hissing and darting up into the skies. At that time game abounded in that part of the country, for the flowing stream of civiliza-

tion had not then turned its powerful current in that direction.

Before the expiration of half an hour, the hunter had returned with the most delicate portions of a fat buck upon his shoulders. It was roasted at the roaring fire, and eaten in silence—as a duty, and not as a pleasure.

"Being the oldest of the party," said Ridelle, "though perhaps not the wisest and most experienced, I hope to be pardoned for making a few suggestions for the general safety, and for the success of our undertaking. I think it advisable that one of us should ever be on the watch, while the other two sleep. It seems to me that we should commit a great and fatal error if we all slept at once."

"Your advice is timely, excellent," replied the Rover. "I feel that we must indeed exercise a ceaseless vigilance—a sleepless watchfulness, in thus penetrating to the heart of an enemy's country."

After some further conversation upon the subject, it was unanimously resolved that they should watch by turns, during the night, until their undertaking was brought to a successful or an unsuccessful close. Henri and Pierre insisted upon discharging this necessary duty unassisted; but to this proposition Ridelle would by no means agree.

These preliminaries being satisfactorily arranged, Ridelle and Pierre laid down in their blankets. The White Rover, withdrawing a few paces from the fire, with his rifle in his hand kept tireless watch over his companions.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE UNKNOWN DISINTERESTED HERO'S OFFER OF ASSISTANCE.

WITH the consent of the gentle reader, we will now follow the fortunes of the captive maidens.

It was the night of the third day of their weary pilgrimage towards the country of the Camanches. The mesdemoiselles were alone in a small lodge, which had been prepared for them nightly, while the Indians kept watch without.

"It seems strange to me," said Helen, "that we have been treated with so little rigor during our captivity. The savages are not wont to exhibit so much humanity. We have been permitted to rest for the greater portion of two nights. A lodge has been erected for us, and we have had the satisfaction of being entirely alone during the time allowed us for sleep. Now there is certainly something unaccountable in all this."

"I have thought of the subject more than once," replied Adelaide, "and it still remains unexplained."

"Would it be unreasonable to suppose that Lesage had something to do with this transaction?" asked Helen, seriously.

"You reiterate my own thoughts, Helen," returned Adelaide. "Perhaps I wrong the captain, but it does seem to me that my suspicions are not without foundation. It is very certain

that Henri and Pierre have had no agency in our misfortunes."

"I have not thought ill of them for a moment," responded Helen.

"Our treatment is far too gentle," resumed Adelaide, "to correspond with my ideas of Indian character. I fear that they are but the agents of other minds."

"Then may we shudder at the fate before us," said Mademoiselle Helen. "Savages are sometimes moved to mercy, but there are those who show none."

Both of the mesdemoiselles paused, and were occupied with their own gloomy thoughts.

Some deerskins, sewed together with thongs, hung up before the entrance to the lodge. They were put gently aside at that moment, and a painted visage became visible. While with his left hand the intruder held aside the skins, he motioned them to silence with his right. The girls drew back in alarm. The intruder stepped into the lodge, and the skins fell back again.

"Do not be alarmed," he said, in a whisper, and in the purest French. "I am your friend—I have come to save you, or perish in the attempt."

"If you have indeed come to save us, we owe you a deep debt of gratitude," said Helen.

"Hush, mademoiselle!" continued the stran-

ger. "A single word spoken above a whisper may cost me my life. The red fiends are sleeping on all sides of us. I have literally stepped over their bodies for the purpose of speaking a single word to you. Be discreet, mesdemoiselles, I entreat of you."

The interior of the lodge was quite dark. The stranger's face could not be distinctly seen, and it was with difficulty that his low-whispered words could be heard and understood. But when he spoke of the danger he had incurred for their sakes, and expressed a determination to save them, they began to feel that a ray of light had at length fallen upon their darkened way.

The stranger drew nearer, and laid his finger gently, yet warningly, upon Adelaide's arm, and resumed, in the same suppressed whispers:

"I have hovered near you for two days—witnessed your sufferings—your danger—your heroic fortitude, and have sworn to save you. But your savage captors are continually on the alert. I have watched daily and nightly for an opportunity to speak to you—to bid you not despair—but to bear up yet a little longer under your sufferings, while I can plan and effect your escape. To-night—in this disguise, in order not to excite immediate suspicions, providing I should be seen—I have braved all the peril of the step, for the purpose of breathing to you, dear mesdemoiselle, a word of hope. I have watched until your captors slept, and have stepped over their sleeping forms to enter this lodge."

A thousand heartfelt thanks," said Helen. "And let me ask if you can tell us the object which the Indians have in view, and what our fate is likely to be, providing we do not escape?"

The stranger sighed.

"Do not ask me, fair maidens. My soul turns instinctively and with horror from the contemplation of that subject."

"If you know or can form any reasonable conjectures upon the subject, I implore you to speak unreservedly," replied Helen.

"It would seem," whispered the stranger, "that some of the French settlers at Natchitoches have stolen two Indian maidens of uncommon beauty, and treated them with great indignity. I will not shock your ears with the details of the brutal outrages; but suffice it that when after the lapse of a few weeks, one of the girls escaped, and presented herself, shamed and degraded, before her people, and related the story of her humiliation, the Camanches vowed vengeance upon the French. After knowing these

facts, you may justly suppose that your capture is an act of retaliation."

"The saints preserve us from such a fate!" exclaimed Helen, with a shudder of horror.

"Most fervently I respond to the prayer," continued the intrepid stranger. "As far as I am concerned, I need no further incentive to action than that inspired by your sufferings, your youth, beauty, and heroism."

"But could you not aid us more effectually by returning to New Orleans? You would have only to repeat the story of our captivity in order to raise the means of our deliverance. The governor would put you at the head of five hundred men, if need be, to follow us into the Indian country; men who would fight bravely, nor fear hardship."

"You forget, fair mademoiselle," rejoined the unknown, "that the Camanches are as numerous as the leaves upon the trees. They can bring five thousand warriors into the field, yea, more than that number. What then would a few soldiers, unacquainted with wood-craft, do in the centre of such a powerful nation? Reflect, mademoiselle."

"There is much reason in your statements, I confess, monsieur," replied Helen.

"Your only hope of rescue," resumed the unknown, "must be placed in the daring and cunning of some practised woodsman, who can follow a trail, and is perfectly conversant with Indian habits. Cunning can effect more for you than strength; yes, more than the governor's whole army. One thing more I must speak of in connection with this subject. To-night I saw the Indians preparing buffalo skins to wrap about the horses' feet to render the trail imperceptible, and baffle pursuit. With the precautions which they will undoubtedly take, it will defy the ingenuity of the keenest woodsman to trace you further. Were I to go back to New Orleans, even I, experienced as I am in Indian arts, might fail to follow you further than here. Remember that daily and nightly, during your weary pilgrimage, there is one friendly heart near you, laying plans for your deliverance. I shall follow you untiringly, and rely upon it, I will leave a trail that others can follow, and that your friends will not fail to discover. So you see, mesdemoiselles, that I shall be able to serve you in some way. But I tarry too long. I will attempt to visit you to-morrow night in this manner, when we will try and devise some means for your escape. Hark! I thought I heard an

Indian stirring without. This interview has already been protracted to a dangerous length. Adieu—fair captive—adieu."

Helen followed him mechanically to the door of the lodge, raised the skins and looked out after him, and saw him glide along with breathless silence. The unconscious figures of several Camanches were asleep upon the ground in front of the lodge. She saw him pause, look cautiously around upon the sleepers, and then actually step over their bodies and walk silently and swiftly away. His person was soon hidden from view by the trees. Helen still gazed after him, while her heart was agitated by various emotions; but she saw only the wild-wood scenery, the long, sombre shadows of the trees, the pale moon, the twinkling stars, the blue skies, and the sleeping figures.

She let the skins fall back to their place, and stole back to the side of Adelaide, who had not moved from her seat.

"What are you thinking of? Why so gloomy and silent?" asked Helen, embracing her companion, tenderly.

"I am thinking of many, many things, sweet friend, and I scarcely know what makes me so sad. Have you forgotten the stranger's story of the Indian maidens?" said Adelaide, in reply.

Helen was silent, but her fair person was convulsed with horror; and her companion was conscious of the nervous tremors that shook her frame at the mention of the Indian girls.

"Adelaide," she said, recovering herself, "why is not this the hour of escape! The savages are sleeping soundly. No watchful eyes save our Heavenly Father's are upon us. Why can we not leave this lodge and glide cautiously away in the deep, wild, forest, even as that stranger has done? What more favorable opportunity than this?"

"Your words are reasonable. Let us fly," replied Adelaide, arising hastily.

"A singular thought occurs to me, Adelaide! Why did not this generous, self-sacrificing, and fearless stranger urge us to fly with him immediately, and not have waited for a more favorable opportunity? Does this not strike you as being very extraordinary?"

"It does; but perhaps he waits for some friends to join him, or has some more safe and feasible plan of escape in his mind," answered Mademoiselle Adelaide.

"The explanation you offer is plausible, but does not wholly satisfy me. Dear friend, shall

we indeed attempt to escape, while our captors are sleeping?" said Helen.

Adelaide put aside the deerskins and looked anxiously forth. The red men were still locked in slumber.

"I think we might venture to try," she replied, stepping back to the side of Helen. "We can but fail, and I know we cannot render our condition more deplorable. My mind is full of vague and fearful suspicions, also, that I have not yet expressed. I feel more than ever anxious to escape from these savage beings, if it be only to perish in the wilderness, of hunger, and thirst, and weariness. Is not any death preferable to that fate which is in reserve for us. They may follow us, it is true, but we are light of foot, and we can along without scarcely bending down the grass, or disturbing the leaves. And then we can take precautions that will defy them to trace a trail so faint as that we will leave, in our flight. We will seek out the most impassable places. We will pursue our way along the ranges of hills, where the soil is hard and unyielding to steps like ours. We will not break a twig from the smallest bush; we will not roll a stone from its place; we will not displace the moss upon the knolls, nor the sticks that lie on the ground. In flying from a fate so dreadful, we shall leave a way as trackless as the flight of the birds through the air."

"Even so, Adelaide. God will not abandon us in the hour of trial," responded Helen. "He will strengthen our limbs when they falter. He will fortify our hearts with courage when about to despair. He will feed us when we are hungry, and give us water when we are sinking with thirst. He clothes the lilies; He cares for the birds; He watches over the innocent. I am ready. Let us walk forth softly as shadows, and if they wake not, there remains for us a chance for liberty."

"How I tremble," said Adelaide. "My heart beats like a bird trying to escape from his cage. Stop an instant—let me recover myself a little. Now I am calm. Lift the skins once more. Are they sleeping yet?"

"One has partly arisen," whispered Helen, trembling with excitement. "He yawns and sinks back again. The blessed virgin be praised! He relapses into sleep. Let me collect myself a little. Come, my dear Adelaide—step softly—breathe gently—be courageous—bear yourself firmly—now—now!"

Helen had lifted the deerskins that covered

the lodge door, and made one timid step forward, when one of the Camanche warriors turned over, moaned, uttered some incoherent words, arose upon his elbow, and finally to a sitting posture. The captives retreated precipitately into the lodge, and fell weeping into each other's arms, with emotions of bitter disappointment no pen can describe. In a short time Adelaide looked cautiously forth again. The savage had not resumed the recumbent position, but was still sitting upright.

"We must abandon the attempt for to-night," said our heroine, with a sigh. "It were not best to make an abortive trial, for the consequences would be that we should be more closely watched, and perhaps bound at night; a precaution which would preclude the possibility of a future attempt."

When the first keen pangs of disappointment had passed (for the pangs of baffled hope are indeed poignant), Helen strove by every effort in her power to appear outwardly calm, in order to revive the sinking spirits of her companion. She wiped away her tears, and tried to speak cheerfully of the future, adding, in conclusion, that the intrepid stranger who had visited them at the risk of his life, might ultimately effect their liberation.

"I do not wish," replied Mademoiselle Adelaide, "to give you needless cause of fear, but I will tell you that I have little confidence in this

stranger. Possibly it is an act of cruelty to make such a statement, but I am compelled by my anxiety to speak my thoughts freely. Had I full confidence in this unknown, I should not have been so eager to escape from our thralldom. He spoke in whispers, yet I am well assured that I have heard his voice somewhere, but where, I cannot now remember."

"Let us not wrong him, my friend, but observe him well, if another opportunity should present. There were times while he was speaking when his voice seemed familiar, even to me. I shall try to think of him as a friend, for he certainly spoke feelingly, and with apparent sincerity," answered our heroine.

"But there are several things to be explained in relation to him," resumed Adelaide. "How did he arrive at a knowledge of our misfortunes? Why does he feel such an interest in unknown maidens, that he should expose his life to save them? A lover, a father, or a brother might have ventured among the savages to rescue a beloved object; but, believe me, very few strangers would do so. I doubt whether this has not all been preconcerted, and this hero comes by previous agreement."

"O, Adelaide!" exclaimed Helen. "I am not willing to believe that such depravity exists. Let us not think of it. Try and sleep, that we may be ready for any opportunity that may be presented for escape."

CHAPTER XVII.

JOURNEY RESUMED—THE UNKNOWN ONCE MORE, NOW BETTER KNOWN.

THE captives laid their weary limbs upon the rude couch prepared for them by their captors, and strove to compose their minds to sleep. Just as they had sunk into an unquiet slumber, they were aroused by the movements of the Camanches preparing to resume their wanderings. The most delicate portions of the buffalo, very well roasted, were set before them, of which they partook sparingly.

"The Indians seem to be very busy. What are they doing?" asked Helen.

"They are wrapping portions of buffalo skin upon the horses' feet, in the manner predicted by the unknown," returned Adelaide.

"An ingenious device. Let us exert ourselves more than ever to leave some signs to indicate whither our wanderings tend. I will tear my handkerchief into small pieces, and watch for opportunities to drop them as we ride forward," said Helen.

The maidens were soon ordered to mount. The party moved on, but in a different order—in single file—the captives occupying the centre of the cavalcade. Both watched with much interest to observe the effect of the new precaution which had been taken, viz: that of wrapping the horses' hoofs in buffalo skins. They remarked with much sorrow that the experiment subserved well the purpose of their captors, as they now

travelled over the firmest ground they could find, and left but faint traces to mark the way they had passed over.

Helen succeeded in dropping several pieces of her handkerchief without being noticed. At length the quick eyes of one of the Camanches detected the design. With true Indian address, he slid down nearly under his horse's flanks, and picked up the piece which Helen had dropped, without dismounting. He shook his head sternly, and threatened her with death if she repeated the offence.

Whether this menace was seriously made, or not, it terrified the maidens not a little, and they desisted from any further attempts of that kind at that time.

They did not journey so rapidly as on the previous days, on account of the extraordinary precautions which they were continually observing to baffle pursuit. On one occasion, they travelled several miles in the bed of a brook, the bottom of which was covered with small stones, where, of course, no trace of a horse track could be left. The hearts of the unfortunate girls grew hopeless and despairing when they beheld such unusual caution. They gazed into each other's faces in mute and wordless grief. It was some relief to find themselves alone again when they had encamped for the night. Though

both felt the need of rest, neither could sleep. Innumerable wild conjectures and undefinable fears kept them wakeful. Did they lose their consciousness for a single instant, some dreadful phantom suddenly arose before them and broke the momentary spell. Though they were in doubt concerning the stranger, they could not banish the frightful tale he had told them concerning the Indian maidens.

If that unpleasant subject left their minds, it was to give place to others quite as dreadful. Would the stranger visit them again that night? they asked over and over again.

The eyes of both were turned towards the entrance of the lodge; the deerskins were thrust aside gently as on the previous night; and the face of the unknown was revealed. The moon shone brightly, and her silver beams fell full upon his features. During the moment of hesitation which followed, both the captives scanned his face with intense eagerness, and recognized the features of Hubert, the king's commissary.

But this strange discovery produced different emotions in the bosoms of the mesdemoiselles. Adelaide could with difficulty repress a cry of horror, while Helen experienced equal difficulty in repressing a cry of joy.

"If you have recognized him," whispered Adelaide, "keep the secret to yourself."

The king's commissary was in the lodge.

"Mesdemoiselles," he whispered, "gentle mesdemoiselles, awake; up, and let us away; there is not a moment to be lost!"

Helen arose quickly from the recumbent position; but Adelaide with less alacrity.

"What do you say?" asked our heroine.

"The moment of escape has come—up—hurry; let us fly."

"But, how?" asked Adelaide, in a faint and almost inaudible whisper.

"The Camanches are buried in deepest slumbers. We will glide from the lodge like spectres of the night—silently, cautiously, breathlessly, and, thank God, *hopefully*!" replied Hubert.

"No! no! let us stay!" whispered Adelaide in Helen's ear; but Helen was too much excited by the prospect of immediate escape to fully comprehend her meaning; nor did she understand her when she bade her not divulge the secret, if she had recognized the stranger.

She had seen the commissary many times with his excellency, the governor; but she knew nothing of his character, and now regarded him as the generous friend which he professed to be.

"We are ready to go," said Helen. "Come Adelaide, give me your hand—don't tremble so—be firm, and the danger will soon be passed."

"Silently, silently, mesdemoiselles; follow me—step lightly," said Hubert, opening the door of the lodge.

Helen had grasped Adelaide's hand and now drew her along after the commissary.

"Back, girls! back!" whispered the latter, retreating with alarming precipitation to the extreme part of the lodge.

"Go and look cautiously out," said the commissary to Helen, apparently much agitated.

Our fair heroine obeyed, and perceived to her horror that one of the savages had arisen from the ground, and was heaping together the decaying brands of the fire. She repeated the unwelcome intelligence to Hubert, who seemed the picture of dismay.

"Discovery, to me, would be certain death," he said; "but the consciousness that I should perish in the cause of youth and beauty, would serve to soften down the last moments of life, and shed a sweet and heavenly light on the opening scenes of the world to come. Be good enough to look again, mademoiselle."

When our heroine looked forth again, the fire, once more revived by the addition of fresh fuel, was sending up a bright flame. The Indian produced his pipe, refilled it slowly, lit it, and commenced smoking. Helen watched his movements with a feeling of anxiety and impatience to be appreciated only by those in a similar situation.

The commissary grasped the trembling hand of Adelaide, and assured her that all might yet be well—that he possibly might yet be spared to be instrumental in their liberation. But Adelaide withdrew her hand and trembled more violently.

Helen maintained her position near the door. The Camanche, reclining upon his elbow, with his feet thrust to the fire, watched the stars, and smoked his pipe calmly. His fixed and meditative gaze seemed to indicate that he was thinking of the happy hunting grounds and the shadowy people who live there and pursue shadowy game.

The night was beautifully serene. The moon never appeared to move more softly through the pathless skies, or to look more placidly down upon the earth. The stars had caught the same delightful mood, and shed their quiet beauty upon the night. No winds set the verdant leaves

in motion, or sighed through the branches of the pine and sycamore.

"How sweet to be at liberty, and with Henri, at such an hour as this," thought Helen. The reflection was but natural, yet by contrast it served to heighten her present dreariness.

Most anxiously did she watch the savage, fearing lest he should possibly arise, approach the lodge and look in, when the life of the commissary would instantly be sacrificed. She apprehended also, that others might awaken and follow his example, and so cut off all hope of Hubert and escape. For three quarters of an hour the Camanche enjoyed his pipe, which seemed an age to Helen. At length he threw out the puffs of smoke with less frequency, and with decreasing interest. The fire died away in the bowl of his pipe, and finally went quite out; the savage closed his eyes, began to nod—roused up—nodded again—the pipe dropped from his mouth, and he fell back upon the earth completely overpowered by sleep.

Helen breathed more freely—watched him a moment longer, and then reported to the commissary.

"The favorable hour has passed," sighed Hubert. "Indians never sleep soundly after this time. I am forced, by dire necessity, to leave you till a more propitious moment. I doubt even, whether I can depart without raising an alarm. And if I should never see you again—that is, should aught unfortunate befall me this night—remember that I have done my best to save you; I ask no more than this. Once more, sweet mesdemoiselles, adieu."

The commissary looked cautiously out into the open air—waved his hand, and the next moment the captives were alone.

Suddenly there was a deafening cry without. Helen sprang to the entrance of the lodge and looked after the commissary. She saw him running swiftly, pursued by two tall savages; then she heard the report of fire-arms, saw Hubert fall, recover his feet and disappear in the forest, still followed by the Camanches.

"O, Adelaide!" shrieked Helen, "he is wounded—he is down—no, he is up again—he rises, is lost to view in the woods!"

"Give yourself no uneasiness on his account," cried Adelaide, drawing Helen into the lodge.

"What if he should be slain in attempting to save us!" exclaimed Helen.

"Be calm, dear Helen. Monsieur Hubert is a villain," said Adelaide, indignantly.

"No!" said Helen, gazing into the pale face of her friend in unutterable astonishment.

"He is the friend and companion of Lesage—the cause of all our misfortunes," replied Adelaide.

"O, this is cruel, Adelaide!" exclaimed Helen.

"Cruel indeed! My sufferings for the last hour you cannot imagine. Disgust, indignation and fear have held me in their power by turns during his stay. I thought that time had ceased to go onward, and that he would never leave us," added Adelaide.

"Has he ever spoken to you, Adelaide?" asked Helen, much perplexed.

"Often, often! He has praised my beauty—affirmed that he loved me—that he could not exist without me."

"And you—"

"Rejected him with contempt, for I read his purpose well."

"What then, Adelaide?"

"He had the meanness and audacity to threaten."

"The friend of Lesage! Just Heaven! can this be true?" exclaimed Helen.

"True as inspiration itself," replied Adelaide, firmly. "I warned you, Helen, while he was here."

"I know you did, and I could not well comprehend your meaning. But the Indians fired at him; how is that?" asked our heroine.

"All preconcerted, no doubt, Helen. The Indians are evidently in his employ, and he did not intend that we should escape. He wishes to play the daring and generous hero, in order to make an impression in his favor."

"Perhaps you are right," responded Helen.

"I now remember of having seen him with Lesage on several occasions; and in fact on the day of our abduction. The truth dawns upon me, Adelaide; I see the black villainy of the whole plot."

After some further conversation in relation to their unhappy situation, the captives completely exhausted, both in body and mind, sank into a profound sleep, and obtained the most refreshing rest they experienced during their captivity. They resumed their journey on the following day in the same manner, and with the same precautions that had marked the preceding one. But Hubert did not make his appearance on the ensuing night; neither did he on the night after; which circumstance surprised the captives not a little, and was by no means regretted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRAIL.

For three days the foresters followed the trail without much difficulty; but on the fourth they found themselves baffled.

"A lodge was evidently erected here," remarked the Rover. "By scraping away the leaves carefully, with my hand, I find where the lodge poles were driven down."

"It is a singular instance of humanity in the Camanches to allow them the favor of a lodge," said Pierre.

"I think the trail tends in this direction," observed Ridelle, as he inspected the ground closely. "I find here some grass bent down, and the ground slightly indented by horses' feet. Here it goes."

"Where?" asked Pierre.

"I have lost it again," answered Ridelle.

"They have covered the horses' feet with skins," said the Rover.

Each of the party, with his face close to the ground, and sometimes upon their knees, applied themselves earnestly to the task of finding the trail. For two hours they were at fault. They at length agreed to separate and go forward in such directions as they felt disposed to take, only following the general course towards the country of the Camanches. When one, more fortunate than his companions, found the trail, he was to immediately make the fact known to

the others, as they were not to put a great distance between each other. Having come to this mutual understanding, they proceeded to act in accordance with the same.

In a few minutes our hero was alone. Well acquainted with Indian stratagems and habits, he directed his footsteps towards a long ridge of low hills on his right. He had gone forward but a short time after reaching the highlands, when to his joy he discovered a small object fluttering upon the ground. He stooped and secured it. It proved, as the reader has already anticipated, a portion of Helen's handkerchief, which she had dropped to guide the steps of those who might attempt her rescue. It was of the finest muslin, and the Rover would have easily recognized it perhaps, even had he not seen the initials of the owner's name upon it.

We hope the indulgent reader will not be disposed to smile, when we assert that Henri pressed the precious fragment to his lips; for it was indeed precious to him, not only on account of its having been in the possession of the maiden dearest to his heart, but because it would serve to direct his footsteps towards her.

While the Rover stood gazing at the bit of stuff, he heard a sound near him, and upon looking up, beheld, greatly to his astonishment, Red-Shoe, the Chickasaw chief.

"Do my eyes deceive me?" exclaimed Henri.

"You see me, my white brother," said Red-Shoe, laconically.

"And why have you followed us?" asked the Rover.

"I saw the daughter of the Sun," replied the chief. "She told me what had happened to the pale maidens, and how the White Rover was in trouble, by means of Chef Menteur. I tightened my belt, took my rifle, and followed the trail."

"Generous chieftain! you are indeed my friend. I feel that I can never repay this noble disinterestedness," exclaimed Henri. "And what of the war with the Choctaws?" he added, immediately.

"There will be no fighting with them at present. We shall be able to punish Chef Menteur before war breaks out with the Choctaws," replied Red-Shoe.

Henri now called loudly to his companions. They soon found him, much pleased to learn that their party had been strengthened by the addition of such a noble ally. By the aid of Red-Shoe they went forward much more rapidly, for he was very acute in discerning Indian signs. They were enabled to discover the precise spot where they took to the bed of the brook, and the place where they left it; and several fragments of the handkerchief which had been dropped by the captives, were also found.

The day passed without any further incident worthy of note. At night they encamped as usual. Not feeling inclined to sleep, Henri left his comrades, and walking some fifty rods from the encampment, seated himself upon the trunk of a fallen tree, upon the summit of a small hill. With so many things to think of, he was soon lost in the mazes of his own thoughts. We need not tell the reader of what he thought, for he will arrive at that by a natural inference. It may well be supposed that at that time, the beauties of starlight, and moonlight, had but few attractions for the Rover.

The sound of horses' feet approaching at a leisure pace caused him to look anxiously around. A single horseman was advancing; but whether he was a savage or a white man, Henri at first was at a loss to know; nor was he fully satisfied on this point until he was addressed.

"A timely meeting," said the horseman.

"We have met before, and recently, if I remember rightly," replied Henri, much more surprised when he had been joined by Red-Shoe.

"Yes," answered Boisbriant, dismounting. "I am the same you refer to, doubtless. You are on the trail, I perceive. What luck?"

"We have followed the trail but too literally—done nothing else—found nothing else," replied the Rover.

"Ah, well—keep up good courage. Perseverance accomplishes wonders, sometimes," said Boisbriant.

"I am greatly astonished at this meeting," returned Henri. "May I ask what brings you here?"

"Certainly—my horse brought me," rejoined Boisbriant.

"Very true," said the Rover, with a smile. "May I presume to ask your object in allowing yourself to be brought here by your horse?"

"A good, a commendable one, I hope, Monsieur Delcroix," rejoined the secret agent. "I feel an interest in the fate of these maidens. Not only do I confess a deep solicitude in regard to the fate of the captives, but also a strong desire to unmask as great a villain as ever walked upon the face of the wide earth. There are many other men that Lesage might deceive and evade, but me he can neither deceive nor evade. I sympathize with you, young man, in your sufferings."

"I am very, very grateful," replied the Rover, impressively.

"You perceive, Delcroix, that the freshness of youth and the fire of early manhood with me have passed; from these I have glided by gradations into the maturity of life. My hairs are not yet plentifully sprinkled with gray, but they should be, for I have suffered. Look at me, Henri. I have also felt the happiness of reciprocated love. But many years have elapsed since I last heard the voice of Irene."

"You were disappointed, then?" asked Henri, earnestly.

"Cruelly, sadly disappointed!" exclaimed Boisbriant.

"She was forced to wed another, I suppose," remarked the Rover, much interested.

"No; it was not that. Irene became my wife—loving and beloved. Let me sit down here beside you, and I will tell you something about it; for the calm beauties of this night seem to recall it all to memory. Yes, I wedded the maiden of my choice—a fair, a noble, and sweet tempered girl. That was twenty years ago, and I was twenty years old on the day of our marriage. I

was not at that period rich, but possessed of a competence. It was expensive living in Paris in the style I wished. In an evil moment I accepted an office in the infant colony on the banks of the Mississippi, pleased with the thought that I should acquire a fortune for my wife and child.

"A thousand idle tales were then afloat in regard to the facility of amassing riches in this country, not one of which could be considered true, or ought to have been thus considered. Like a silly fish I swallowed the gilded bait. Irene was delighted at the idea of visiting a new country, whose breezes were balm; whose sunshine was glory; whose forests were orange trees; whose stones were gold; whose sands were diamonds; whose springs were fountains of immortal youth. We planned cottages, mansions, summer-houses, arbors, grounds, gardens, and I know not what, to grace our imaginary paradise.

"My little daughter was a year old when we left the shores of France. After a short and pleasant passage we reached the New World. I saw the gaping mouth of a muddy river, whose banks were overgrown with dank weeds, in which lay hidden frightful monsters, who delighted to swallow men and women at a mouthful. They told me it was the Mississippi river, that watered the Eden I was seeking. I stared at the captain like one awakening from some pleasant dream; he stroked his beard and smiled.

"It's a sweet place," said the captain.

"Have you been here often?" I asked.

"Twice before," he answered.

"What kind of monsters are those rolling so lazily among those dank weeds in the mud yonder?"

"Why, bless your heart, sir, they are nothing but alligators!"

"What do they subsist upon?" I asked.

"They used to live upon Indians, but now they feed principally upon Frenchmen. They are not at all hard to suit. They'll take anything that comes along—pick up a little boy or girl now, and then, or a full grown woman of any color; or seize upon men while bathing. One large sized man makes just two bites."

"Indeed!"

"Just as I tell you, monsieur."

"Thank you."

"Perfectly welcome."

"By further conversation with the captain, I learned that the Indians were also greatly to be feared, as shocking murders were frequent in the

colony. The spell of my delightful dream was broken. I felt sad at heart, and one of those horrible presentiments of coming evil crept through every fibre of my brain, and made me stagger with the dread of something that I knew nothing about.

"De Iberville's brother of the governor, and an old acquaintance, met me at Biloxi. He strove to infuse new life and courage into my heart, but it was easy to see that he felt sad himself. Something was evidently weighing heavily upon his spirits. Iberville was a noble fellow; brave, generous, and high-souled; but there was some singular mystery connected with his stay in the colony. It was some love affair, which I could never fully fathom. I entered upon my duties with what zeal I could, under the circumstances.

"Irene bore up finely under the shock which we had both received in relation to the new country. She even affected to be pleased with her condition; but I knew better. One morning I left my new home with Iberville, to visit a small party of emigrants, who had settled upon the Mississippi river. I kissed Irene and my little daughter gaily, telling them I should soon return. I observed that Irene looked paler than usual, and held my hand longer in hers than she was wont, when she said adieu."

Boisbriant paused at this stage of his narrative, overcome by his emotions.

"When I returned," he resumed, "I had no wife, no child, no home. I found my darling wife near the river's bank, foully murdered by the Indians—and scalped—robbed of her long, beautiful hair, of which I had been so proud. The body of my daughter could not be found; but some of its clothes were discovered in the river, lodged among the weeds. Its fate was but too evident; it had been thrown into the water! My frantic grief I will not dwell upon. The cruelty of this blow I will leave wholly to your imagination. I felt like a crushed and broken-hearted man, and resolved to return to France. I shall not soon forget an incident which transpired previous to my putting this resolve into execution. It was a light, placid night like this. Iberville and myself were walking together.

"Did you ever have a presentiment?" he asked, with a smile.

"I replied that I had one when I first saw the mouth of the Mississippi river.

"I have a presentiment now," said Iberville.

"And what is it?" I asked.

"Death!" he replied softly, and with an earnestness I shall never forget.

"I have observed that something unpleasant has been preying upon your mind for a long time," I added.

"It is so, my friend. My sorrow is a secret which must perish with me," he replied, mournfully.

"It is a love-secret, I presume," I replied.

"I acknowledge it; I will tell you this much and no more: I have a wife and child," he said, earnestly.

"Where?" I exclaimed.

"That I may not tell you. There are many and powerful reasons why they are not with me; but it was my destiny that this should be, and I have submitted. Keep my secret, Boisbriant," I promised to do this.

"She's a lovely girl, and is content to be my wife under any circumstances; for she loves me," added Iberville.

"And does de Bienville, your brother, know aught of this?" I asked.

"Nothing definitely. He only knows that my affections are placed upon some object; but who she is, and where she is, he does not know, and has too much delicacy to ask what he is quite sure I do not wish him to know."

"I can conceive of no reasons sufficiently powerful to induce you to keep the facts you have communicated a secret," I remarked.

"My dear Boisbriant, there might possibly be many reasons for pursuing such a course. It might even be done to secure a fortune—a vast fortune—to make my child the inheritor of wealth, and a name, perhaps. Can you not conceive of something of that kind?"

"Certainly," I replied; "such things have happened more than once or twice. But a noble name your child will assuredly have, if it bear the name of Iberville."

"But a noble name without fortune is nothing worth, and serves only to bring its owner into contempt."

"Iberville paused, and with folded arms gazed at the waters of the Mississippi. I heard the twang of a bow-string, and a low groan from Iberville. I looked towards him, and saw an Indian shaft deep buried in his bosom. He fell back into my arms—looked pleasantly into my face, despite the torture of his wound, smiled sweetly, and expired. And thus passed the noblest spirit that ever exerted an influence upon the fortunes of Louisiana. The news of his

death cast a gloom over the colony, for his manly conduct from first to last had endeared him to every one. I can even now recall the form of de Bienville, kneeling by that smiling corpse. I have seen many a stout heart shake with grief; many a daring eye wet with tears; but I never saw grief like his, for they had loved like David and Jonathan, until the twain had become as the soul of one man."

Boisbriant ceased.

"Speak on! speak on!" exclaimed Henri.

"I went back to Paris, and after the lapse of a few years returned again to the colony, drawn back to the scene of my sufferings by some strange impulse; perchance I wished to be near the grave of Irene. I have done," added Boisbriant, sadly.

"Your relation has interested me deeply," said Henri.

"No doubt; true hearts always feel an interest in the unfortunate. And now, my brave lad, you shall hear something still more interesting; for I perceive that your mind is in a calmer state than usual, and you can hear me less impatiently."

"Go on, if you please," said the Rover.

"What I have to communicate concerns the captive maidens, and Hubert, the king's commissary."

"The commissary!" exclaimed Henri.

"I have discovered the important fact that he is even now with the captives."

"Impossible!" cried the Rover.

"Not at all. I will explain. The commissary is the accomplice of Lesage. The motives which actuate him refer wholly to Adelaide; while those which stimulate Lesage have reference to Helen. The Camanches are employed by both the scoundrels. Hubert follows them for the purpose of playing the hero. He has formed the noble resolution to aid the mesdemoiselles to escape from the Indians, and thus acquire their confidence. He imagines that by taking this course, with Adelaide under his protection, filled with the idea that he is a daring and generous benefactor, he shall be able to make an impression on her heart, and thus ultimately effect his base purpose."

"The villain!" said Henri.

"I have followed the party on horseback, and being well acquainted with the country of the Camanches, I overtook them on the second day of their journey, and have dogged them ever since. The commissary, dressed and mounted like an Indian, follows them at a safe distance,

sometimes taking long detours to mislead those whom he has good reason to suppose will attempt to follow. At night he has interviews with his Indian allies, and instructs them in the part they are to act. He has twice stolen into the tent during the night time, in the character of a friend and deliverer, ready to sell his life to save the fair captives.

"I have watched all these proceedings with feelings of indignation scarcely to be repressed and kept within bounds. Having learned all that could be of any avail, and being unable to cope with six Camanches and a white man, I have ridden back with hot haste to find you. When I found you here apparently so calm and thoughtful, it carried me back to other days. You made me think of Iberville on the night of his death, and I could not refrain from speaking to you of the past, before relating these matters. Nay, do not fret and fume so. Be patient. We are on the high road to success. We can scarcely fail to effect the object we so ardently desire to attain."

"Do you not suppose," asked Henri, as they arose to seek Pierre and Ridelle, "that Lesage is already on the way to join Hubert?"

"I do. The fogues have met by this time; but we will surprise them, my lad—surprise them!"

"And punish such high-handed villany as it deserves. Let us not lose an instant, monsieur, but follow the scoundrels immediately. I cannot rest while such a scheme of consummate villany is being enacted. I desire nothing more earnestly than to stand face to face with that commissary. Hero indeed! If my hands were once upon him, he would never wish to play the heroic benefactor again during his life."

Boisbriant and Pierre Moran met like old friends. The strange news which the former had communicated to Henri, was now repeated. The hunter and Ridelle listened with fierce and scowling brows.

"Lead the way," said Moran, huskily, "lead the way, and we'll follow."

"It is well spoken," added Ridelle. "Let us press forward to thwart this atrocious wickedness."

"Forward—forward—upon the trail—no rest—no sleep, until the maidens are free!" cried Henri.

"I am ready, good friends. This is the way, and may Heaven speed us!" said Boisbriant.

With dark and threatening visages, and minds firmly fixed upon vengeance, the foresters followed Boisbriant.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MEETING—THE ESCAPE.

SEVERAL days had elapsed since the disappearance of the mesdemoiselles. The night had already set in. Two persons were sitting upon the west bank of the Sabine River.

"You have followed sooner than I had expected, captain," said one.

"I found it was necessary no time should be lost, Monsieur Hubert," replied the captain. "The affair is creating quite an excitement at New Orleans; for the girls are highly esteemed there. 'I am suspected, notwithstanding all our cunning. In fact I met that fire-eater, my evil genius, and he accused me of the abduction of the maidens, without stopping to mince matters. I owe him another debt, and I will be sure to pay him.'"

"Did he do you any personal violence?" asked Hubert.

"I barely escaped with my life."

"Why did you not run him through with your sword, captain?"

"*Mon Dieu!*" I attempted to, but he was more than a match for me with his tomahawk. He broke my sword at the hilt, and then benevolently spared my life for a greater punishment than that of being genteelly tomahawked!"

"For which you thanked him."

"For which I fired my pistol at his head, Monsieur Hubert."

"Did you hit him?"

"Hit him? no! he was not born to be hit, but to live to be my ruin. The fates protect him, I believe. Now tell me how you speed with Adelaide. Have you played the hero with success?"

"Admirably, admirably, my boy! I have risked my precious life twice for the sweet mesdemoiselles—visited them by moonlight—bade them hope—swore to save them, or die in the attempt—hinted at the danger I incurred for their pretty sakes—and of dying in a very happy and contented frame of mind while conscious of such a high purpose. We attempted to fly—the Indians did n't rest well—one got up—smoked pipe—looked at the stars and moon—frightened us—girls trembled—gave myself up for lost—favorable hour passed—left them with melancholy forebodings—Indians were aroused—pursued me—fired guns—fell—was supposed to be wounded—up and ran—and here I am alive yet."

"Capital! grand! sublime! go on, Hubert."

"To-night I have fixed on as the happy period of their escape from Indian thralldom. The Camanches will sleep soundly as death itself—nothing but the last trumpet can wake them—I shall pray earnestly that Heaven will protect youth, innocence and beauty—grasp my short sword—be pale, but firm—lead the fair tremblers

forth—walk over the savages as though they were logs of wood—gain the forest—breathe more freely—the girls pant with excitement—you are near—take Helen—I take Adelaide—all right—nobody's business—sweet mesdemoiselles—Ah! Lesage!"

"Fair, but proud Helen, you shall yet be won!" exclaimed the captain, triumphantly. "You scorned me once, yea, twice; but now, haughty beauty, the power is mine. And I shall crush and humiliate, both in one—the peerless Helen, the fire-eating Rover *Sacre Dieu!* but will it not crush his proud spirit?"

Lesage rubbed his hands and chuckled over his prospective triumph. In his diabolical malice, he resembled a fiend from the bottomless pit, more than a man.

"We will pay back the scorn they have heaped upon us at different times," added Hubert. "Dearest Adelaide—sweet charmer—I come, I come—a dainty piece indeed! But I am wild with impatience," continued the commissary, with a theatrical air. "'T is time, captain. The moon rides high in the heavens—the hour has come. Now shall we reap our reward for all our dangers—and—and—*rascalities!*" resumed Hubert. "Await me here. In half an hour I will rejoin you with the charming mesdemoiselles."

The commissary waited for no further reply but hurried away. Hubert walked rapidly, and his black heart throbbed with wild and unhalloved joy.

* * * * *

Helen and Adelaide stood beside the entrance of the lodge.

"Do you think they are really sleeping?" asked Helen.

"I certainly do. Their respiration is deep and regular, and they lie very quietly," answered the other.

"Are you still firm—shall we try?" continued Helen.

"I am firm, and we will try," said Adelaide.

"Give me your hand, Adelaide—I am ready—let us both pass out at the same moment—softly—softly."

The two girls, tightly grasping each other's hands, stole from the lodge. They stepped lightly among the sleeping braves, scarcely daring to breathe, and trembling excessively. In a moment they had passed the dangerous vicinity, and their fair figures were moving rapidly through the forest.

"We are out of sight of the lodge—we shall soon be far away," said Helen.

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Adelaide. "Let me recover my breath a little. How my heart palpitates. Now we will run."

"This is indeed fortunate—blessed—providential!" cried a voice. The maidens looked at each other in mute despair; for it was the commissary who had spoken.

"It shall be my proud and happy privilege to conduct you to your friends, unfortunate maidens," he added. "There are horses near at hand. Others of your good friends have joined me; and two of them I think you will not be displeased to see. This way—a few rods down towards the valley—hurry, mesdemoiselles—no time to lose—Indians don't sleep sound—may wake up—follow—kill us all!"

Taking Adelaide by the arm he gently urged her onward, and Helen followed, holding her by the hand she had not relinquished since she left the lodge. For a few moments the commissary hurried them along. They did not speak, nor struggle, nor complain, nor acknowledge that they suspected that all was not right: they had no power to do so; they were bewildered and astounded by the sudden overturning of their hopes.

Hubert at length ceased to urge the captives onward. He stopped, and a man joined him instantly. The commissary pointed to Helen with a significant smile.

"Sweet Mademoiselle Helen!" exclaimed Lesage, seizing the hand of our heroine. Helen shrieked with horror, and drew it from him immediately.

"Imagine, if you can," added Lesage, "the joy that I feel in knowing that I have assisted in your escape from a thralldom so dreadful—so cruel—so hopeless, so—"

"Cease to dissemble longer," replied Helen, recovering her self-possession somewhat. "Lay off the mask, and show yourself the despicable villain that you are. And you, sir," turning to the commissary, "can follow his example. We know you for a vile hypocrite—a smooth-tongued ruffian—a mean-spirited coward—a double-dealing knave—a wretched impostor, unfit to breathe the air of heaven."

"A fair beginning, truly," said Hubert, abashed in spite of all his effrontery.

"Fair, indeed!" rejoined Lesage, contemptuously. "Helen Lerowe," he added, with a wicked smile of triumph upon his lips, "the time when you could scorn and insult me is past. I am no longer a suitor, to kneel and use honeyed words.

No! no! that period is gone by. It is now your turn to sue and supplicate. There are many, many rough, dismal miles of wilderness between you and your home. No friend can start up from the ground to save you; no hand can wrest you from my grasp. I will, and do, throw off the mask. Know that you are in my power, and can expect no mercy. You love the man I hate with intense hatred. Were it no more than to punish, crush, humiliate him, you should not be pitted or saved."

"Imagine, Mademoiselle Adelaide, that I have said the same words to you," exclaimed the commissary.

"Do not touch me!" cried Adelaide, terrified at what she had heard, as Hubert endeavored to grasp her arm. "There is poison in the foul contact!"

"Offer me no indignity," said Helen, retreating from Lesage. "Remember that you may feel his vengeance."

"Whose?" exclaimed Lesage, disdainfully.

"You know who," answered Helen.

"Stuff, nonsense, foolery! I care not for Delcroix. He is a renegade, a felon, and a—"

"Nay; he is none of those you have named. I deny the charge," retorted Helen.

"O, that Pierre Moran were here!" said Adelaide, half frantic with fear.

"Cease to vex yourself about him. He is not needed. I am the hero of this occasion," said the commissary.

"You see that it is of no use to struggle with destiny," resumed Lesage. "You have lost in this game; I have won; submit gracefully. It were folly to attempt to elude me now. Shudder, if you will; look around you, expecting some strange rescue; or call on Heaven, as all forlorn damsels do. How very singular that Heaven never hears such prayers!"

"It does not hear them often, unfeeling and blasphemous monster!" cried Helen.

"Be merciful—spare us—take us back to our friends!" exclaimed Adelaide, falling upon her knees.

"You look beautifully in that charming attitude," said the commissary.

"If it would avail aught, I would most earnestly join in the petition; but alas, what prayers or tears could move such beings to the exercise of common humanity!" said Helen; and then turning to the commissary, she exclaimed, in tones of touching entreaty: "Have you no feeling of honor, no remains of goodness to make

you yet a man—no finer sensibilities to be awakened—no relentings—no tender pity—no soft remembrance of a mother's or a sister's love?"

"He is guilty of nothing of the kind!" said Lesage. "You but waste words—you do not, cannot move us; and Heaven is not propitious."

"Heaven is propitious!" exclaimed a voice, which made the flushed cheeks of Lesage grow deadly pale. "Heaven is propitious."

Before the captain had recovered from the first stupor of astonishment, the breech of the Rover's rifle had fallen upon his head, and beaten him to the ground.

"That is for you!" cried Pierre Moran, dealing the commissary a blow which laid him senseless beside his companion in guilt.

Helen's eyes fell upon Henri; she clasped her hands, looked up to heaven, and the next moment lay insensible in the arms of the Rover; while Adelaide, embraced alternately by Pierre and her father, was weeping in the excess of her joy.

During this time Boisbriant and Red-Shoe secured Lesage and the commissary, having bound their hands firmly behind them. The captain was the first to recover from the effects of his punishment.

"What means this violence?" he exclaimed, calling all his effrontery to his aid, and resolving to put the best face upon the matter to the last.

"It means," said Boisbriant, sternly, "that you have been caught in your villany, and that your career in Louisiana is brought to a close."

"That your sun is setting, and your night coming on, as I told you," added the Rover.

"A thousand bitter maledictions upon your head!" exclaimed Lesage, literally gnashing his teeth until his mouth was white with foam. "If my own fiat could hurl you down to the deepest depths of the pit, you would soon be writhing beneath the tortures of the quenchless flame, and the worm that dieth not. You have baffled me; always baffled me; and now you live to rejoice in your luck, and exult over my downfall!"

The captain paused to gather calmness enough to proceed, and then went on with increasing energy. "But I am not dead yet. I may live many years, and perhaps I may walk over your grave—and perchance I may yet help to lay you there. Fool that I was, not to have taken better aim, and sent you out of my way forever!"

"Do not say too much," replied Henri, "for the bad blood in my heart is stirred up enough already. Soon I shall not be able to control my

actions. I can scarcely keep my hands from doing what should be done by the public executioner. But that which most lashes me to madness, and almost makes me a maniac in my thirst for vengeance, is the wrong that you have heaped upon these defenceless maidens. If there is anything under the canopy of heaven that I ever desired, it is to slay you outright, and without mercy. Pierre Moran, take hold of me, or I shall commit a murder."

"May I die by inches, if I so much as lift a finger to restrain you from sinking your tomahawk into his head!" cried Pierre, stoutly bestowing a hearty kick upon the commissary, by way of emphasis.

"Ask me," he continued, "to hold him while you scalp him alive, and curse me if I don't do it!"

"I protest against this ruffianism!" cried Hubert, furiously.

"So these dear girls protested against yours, and you were deaf to their moving appeals, which would have moved the heart of a brute," added Moran, fiercely.

"They pleaded your mercy on bended knees, and you, in the redundancy of your diabolical cruelty, laughed them to scorn. Protest, if you will—keep on protesting, and see what it will avail. By all that is sacred and holy, if Boisbriant will consent, I will hang you to the nearest tree—you and your accomplice in guilt."

Hubert grew deadly pale, and trembled, as he lay upon the ground. He looked beseechingly at Boisbriant.

"I appeal to you for protection," he said, abjectly.

"You do not deserve it," replied Boisbriant.

"Then you consent?" exclaimed Pierre.

"We will have them trussed up in thirty seconds!"

"Mercy! mercy!" shrieked the commissary.

"I have been led into crime by this villain beside me. Punish him, and spare me."

"It is well for you to turn against me!" cried

Lesage. "It is excellently well for you to call me a villain. O, it is manly—it is noble—it is the part of a friend," sneered Lesage.

"I curse you most bitterly," continued Hubert, in the agony of his fear. "I curse you for an unmitigated scoundrel—the author of my ruin!"

"Craven-hearted traitor!" returned the captain. "You have been as ready, as eager and designing in these matters as myself, and now, in the hour of our downfall, you turn and curse me. O, but I will remember it, Hubert. I will expose you. I will tell all your plottings against de Bienville, and of the letters you have written, and of the lies you have told to the ministry—I'll tell it all, and we will see who is the greater villain of the two. Ha! ha! you wished to be appointed governor, did you? A fine governor! an excellent governor! a brave governor! a moral governor!"

"And you wished to kill Henri Delcroix because he stood in your way. You perjured yourself, and made others to perjure themselves. You bought up the negroes, and you produced a piece of bark, containing characters made merely to beguile time, and which you well knew proved nothing; and you turned those harmless diagrams into damning evidences of guilt. You hired an assassin, also, to accomplish what your treachery had failed to do. What do you say to this, Chef Menteur?" rejoined the commissary.

"If we set them at liberty, they will soon be ready to kill each other," said Pierre.

"Wicked men, when exposed, find much of their punishment in mutual recriminations," observed Boisbriant.

"Chef Menteur," said Red-Shoe, who had until this time been a silent and attentive listener, "you have been a very bad man—a snake in the grass—and your heart is not so big as a woman's. You are not fit to live, and you will die like a squaw. The happy grounds will not be open to you, and there will be no canoe to carry you across to the land of bright shadows."

CHAPTER XX.

THE GRAND DENOUEMENT.

We scarcely need pause to explain the sudden appearance of the foresters. The kind reader will, by a natural and easy deduction, arrive at the truth of the matter. Led on by Boisbriant, they had reached the vicinity of the encampment in time to witness a portion of the scene which had ensued between the captain, the commissary, and the maidens. Boisbriant, Ridelle, and Red-Shoe had stayed near Lesage, while the Rover and Pierre had followed the commissary. They had seen the mesdemoiselles fall unconsciously into his hands—and the whole party had silently closed up around the villains and their intended victims, when the events transpired just related.

"This is a pleasant spot; let us encamp for the night," said Boisbriant.

All parties gladly acquiesced in the proposal. A large pile of wood was shortly collected—a cheerful blaze soon cast its ruddy light upon the surrounding forest. Many green boughs were cut and laid upon the ground, and blankets spread upon those, until an air of comfort seemed to breathe around them all. During these preparations there was much talking, and much happiness experienced by the lovers and the rescued maidens. The fierce, vindictive looks of the two prisoners alone marred the general feeling of pleasure.

"I hear the sound of horses' feet," said Red-

Shoe, putting his ear close to the earth. The mesdemoiselles glanced at their lovers in alarm.

"It is true," said the Rover. "I can hear them myself, and there are many of them."

"I will go and reconnoitre," said Onalaska, and immediately left them. The other foresters cocked their rifles, and awaited with much anxiety the result. Presently the footsteps grew more distinct, and the sound of voices was plainly heard.

"They are Frenchmen!" exclaimed Boisbriant.

The agreeable surprise of the foresters it is no easy matter to describe, when they perceived a large cavalcade advancing, composed of the following characters, viz., de Bienville, Father Davion, Madame Mablois and La Glorieuse; while the rear was brought up by twenty well mounted Frenchmen, and thirteen Natchez warriors, the renegade included in the number. The governor was engaged in earnest conversation with Red-Shoe, as he advanced, and was prepared for what he now beheld.

"This is indeed a surprise," exclaimed Ridelle.

"Yes," replied the governor, smiling, "it is a double surprise; for I am quite as much or more surprised, than you are. Henri, my brave boy, step forward, and let me speak to you."

The governor's voice shook with emotion as he spoke.

Henri advanced a step, and de Bienville hastily dismounted.

"*Sacre Dieu!*" exclaimed the governor, gazing earnestly at the White Rover. "The very face—the very form—the very expression—Henri, Henri, behold your father's brother. I am your uncle, and your father's name was Iberville—the noble—the fearless—the generous—the self-sacrificing Iberville, who was as dear to me as my own life."

De Bienville ceased, overcome by his feelings. Large tears coursed down his cheeks.

Henri stood like one astounded. He neither moved nor spoke; surprise kept him dumb.

"Yes, you are an Iberville, every inch an Iberville," continued the governor, proudly embracing Henri. "I might have known it by your noble figure and lofty bearing; by your fearless spirit, and by the strong resemblance."

"*Mon Dieu!* I am bewildered," exclaimed our hero, at last. "This cannot be true."

"It is true as holy writ," said Madame Mablois, taking Henri's hand.

"And you are—" began our hero.

"Your mother, Henri!"

The Rover could no longer govern his emotions. Kneeling at the feet of Madame Mablois, he wept like a child.

"Since you give me the assurance, I can no longer doubt," he articulated, at length.

"My good friends," said the governor, wiping his eyes, and laying his hand upon the Rover's head, "it is necessary that I should explain this mystery. It was probably never known to one of you, that Iberville, my gallant brother, brought with him a fair wife to the shores of Louisiana. I knew it; he told me so with his own lips," interrupted Boisbriant.

"So much the better," continued de Bienville, "but I did not know it. You will naturally ask why the fact of his marriage was kept a secret. Madame Mablois will tell you all."

"Listen, and the whole is soon made plain," said Madame Mablois. "I was born in Paris. My father, the Chevalier de Henriville, was immensely rich. I was his only child. He was a man of eccentric habits and strong prejudices. It was a part of his character that when he had once formed an opinion upon a particular subject, he never changed it. One of his favorite ideas was that of marrying me to the son of a wealthy nobleman; a gentleman of dissolute habits and no fixed principles, and extremely ugly in person. Of all the young noblemen I

knew, he was the one I held in the least esteem or to speak more to the point, I utterly despised him. This person professed to love me as ardently as I hated him. My father wished me to wed him without delay. I refused, and he vowed to disown and disinherit me. I had already met de Iberville, and loved him, and listened with pleasure to his vows of unceasing constancy, although I was at that time aware that a hopeless feud existed between the father of Iberville and my own. To influence my mind, my father showed me a will, drawn up in due form, by which I was to be disinherited, if I married against his wishes. Upon the evening of that very day, I was secretly married to Iberville. A few months after taking this step, to escape from the tyranny of my father, and the importunities of the man he had selected for my husband, I left Paris forever, and set sail for the new colony with my beloved Iberville. On the passage he exacted from me a solemn promise to keep the fact of our marriage a secret until after the decease of my father, the chevalier.

"I shall never touch a franc of his long-hoarded wealth," said my husband; 'but the helpless being that will shortly demand your care, may one day feel the need of riches. I have long felt—an imperfect organization has pressed home the conviction with prophetic truth—that I shall not live to see my child arrive at maturity. Let us then, my dear wife, keep our marriage a secret known only to ourselves and a few friends in the new country to which we are going. Your father may relent, and leave the bulk of his vast wealth to you, which he will never do if he learns that you have linked your fortunes to one of my father's family, as you are aware that a deadly feud exists between the heads of the two families—a quarrel which leaves us nothing to hope in the way of a reconciliation.'

"Knowing the noble motives which influenced my husband, I made a solemn agreement with him never to divulge the fact of our marriage in any manner, so that it could reach the ears of my father. Iberville was greatly beloved by the Natchez. A beautiful cottage was reared for me in one of their pleasant villages. My husband passed much of his time with me, and I was happy. I was a mother also; and Iberville idolized our Henri. He was a year old when his father died. I confided a small part of my secret to Father Davion—enough to secure his aid, and my boy was taught many things by him which I could not have learned him. I

gave him the name of Henri Delcroix, by which he has ever since been known, and studiously concealing from him the fact that I was his mother.

"You all know how much interest I have ever manifested in this youth, and truly I have kept my promise to Iberville. Four days ago I received the intelligence that my father had deceased at an advanced age, leaving all his wealth to me; for I had informed him in various ways and at different times, that I was still living. Henri is now rich, and no stain rests upon his name. The nearest that I ever came abandoning my purpose of keeping our marriage from the governor, was when my boy was in prison. But happily everything was ordered for the best. I was instrumental in his escape, and was not obliged to divulge the secret of his birth at that time.

"When I received news that my father was no more, there was no longer any need that I should observe secrecy. I explained all to his excellency, and burning with impatience to embrace his nephew, he set out at once—took the trail, and has happily found him."

Helen wept plentifully during this recital, and Boisbriant was observed to gaze steadily at her.

"Father Davion," he said, at length, in an excited manner, "can you tell me anything in relation to the history of this young lady?"

"Alas! I know no more of her history than that she was left in my cabin during my absence, about sixteen years ago. She was then about two years of age, and I should judge, had been living among the Indians for some time. She had upon her neck a small locket, containing a miniature," replied Father Davion.

"Where is the miniature?" asked Boisbriant, still more excited.

"Here," said Helen, drawing a locket from her bosom. "I have worn it ever since I can remember."

"It is she—my Irene! Helen, you are my child!" and Boisbriant caught Helen to his heart and held her in a long and loving embrace.

"I am too happy," murmured Helen. "It is joy indeed to feel a father's love at last."

Boisbriant made a significant motion to de Bienville. The latter took Henri's hand and led him towards Helen, and then Boisbriant joined the hands of the two. Madame Mablois smilingly brought forward Father Davion, and left him directly in front of the parties.

"Stop one moment, if you please," said Ri-

delle. "There is more to be done in that way."

Saying these words, he proceeded to place Adelaide and Pierre Moran in the same order.

Obedient to the order of de Bienville, the soldiers and warriors closed up around the parties. Father Davion wiped his eyes for the hundredth time, and was about to say something, when Madame Mablois stopped him with:

"Stop another moment, good father. Something more can be done, I believe. Red-Shoe," she added, in a whisper, approaching the chief softly, and smiling, "would you not like to wed the princess?"

"Does the sun love to kiss the clouds, or the stars to look down upon the earth at night? Does the grass love the gentle rains, or do the flowers turn toward the light?" he asked.

"La Glorieuse," continued Soft-Voice, "the great war-chief loves you better than the grass loves the gentle rain, or the flowers love the light. Come and wed him, that all may be happy, and not a single virtuous heart beat sadly here to-night."

La Glorieuse extended her hand to Red-Shoe. Soft-Voice formed them into a line with the others, and Father Davion wiped his eyes again. Boisbriant turned to the French and Indians.

"My fine fellows, open your mouths and shout as loud as you can. Now—go it again—louder—louder—twice as loud. That'll do; very good."

Such shouts as went up from the forest at that time were never heard before, or since.

"Wait a little longer, Father Davion, and you may go ahead with full speed," added Boisbriant. "Sergeant Dumont and Corporal Rion, clap your hands upon those two rascals, lying on the ground there, and bring them up here so they can see well," he added.

"Come up here, my beauties," said the sergeant. "Take hold of his feet, Corporal—tug him along. Don't kick, captain; it makes it harder for us, and it's a wedding you're going to."

In half a minute the captain and the commissary were placed in front of the persons to be wedded.

"I wish I was dead and covered up in the ground," muttered the captain, fiercely grinding his teeth with rage.

"I wish you were," returned the commissary, with an oath.

Father Davion wiped his eyes yet again, and essayed to speak; but the sounds died away in his throat.

"It can't be done," he managed to articulate, at length.

"But it must be done!" exclaimed Pierre Moran, impatiently, looking at the blushing Adelaide.

"Of course it must," added Boisbriant, "and a fine affair it seems to be, if I'm any judge. Boys, hurrah again, while the old gentleman clears his throat; he's got an extraordinary cold!"

The old woods shook once more to the hearty cheers of the soldiers, and the triumphant yells of the warriors.

By this time Father Davion had succeeded in getting his pipes tolerably clear, and didn't break down but once or twice during the whole ceremony.

Mutual embraces and congratulations followed, and not one of the happy party slept a wink that night.

The next day they set out on their return to New Orleans; and though they were more than two days on the way, they all considered it a pleasant journey.

Hubert was sent home to France by order of

the governor, where he was deprived of his office, and otherwise disgraced. He never showed his face in the colony again.

Lesage was first cashiered, and then imprisoned for a few months. He was afterwards shot by Ette-Actal, the renegade. Several of the Banbara negroes were arrested and executed. The White Rover visited the different Indian tribes, and made peace among them by distributing presents, and making some concessions which they had insisted upon. The innocence of Henri was of course fully established.

The renegade left off many of his vicious habits; and finally, by the influence of La Glorieuse, was again taken into favor by his people.

We can add but little more. We take leave of our characters, leaving them happy and contented. We feel that it would be useless to dwell longer upon the fortunes of Helen, and Adelaide, when united to such noble and generous hearts.

Truly grateful to the gentle readers who have followed us thus far, we sincerely hope they have been interested in the fortunes of the WHITE ROVER, and the fair maidens of Louisiana.

THE END.

[FROM GLEASON'S PICTORIAL DRAWING-ROOM COMPANION.]

THE UNFINISHED WILL.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

SOLOMON VANWICK was an old man—a man who had weathered the storms and frosts of four-score years. His frame had become weakened, his health impaired, and his mind nervous and irritable; but yet the same iron will that had marked his disposition in the prime of his manhood, was not bent beneath the weight of age. The old man had had but one child—a son. That son had died, leaving an only daughter, so that Solomon Vanwick had but one living descendant, from himself, the fair Isabella, his grandchild. Vanwick was wealthy and proud, and among the branch relations of his house, who hung about him in hopes of golden remembrance in his will, was Victor Waldamear, the son of the old nabob's sister.

Old Vanwick was sitting in his large arm-chair; near him stood Isabella, while at one of the high gothic windows stood Victor Waldamear. Isabella, though her eyes were tearless, had yet been weeping at the heart, but she trembled not, nor did she shrink before the stern gaze that was bent upon her.

"Isabella," said the old man, while a meaning frown darkened his wrinkled face, "this Alfred Norcross is not the man for your husband. Do you understand me?"

"I understand what you say, grandfather, but I think you can know little of the man of

whom you speak. If you did, you would honor him for his virtues."

"When I say that Norcross is not the man for your husband, I mean it!" said the old man; "so from henceforth you will see him no more."

"No, no, my dear grandfather," exclaimed Isabella, with an imploring look and tone, "you will not persist in that. You will not thus crush me beneath your displeasure."

"Not if you obey me."

"But Alfred is the son of my father's dearest friend."

"Yes," returned Vanwick, with bitterness, "and your father's friend was my enemy."

"And will you, because there was an unhappy difference between yourself and the elder Norcross, now keep that enmity alive against the unoffending son?"

"Silence, girl! Let me hear no more of this. What I have said is said, and it shall never be recalled."

"Sir," said Isabella, while an inward struggle to keep down her rising emotions gave a peculiar tremulousness to her tone, "you are an old man, and your days on earth are short; but little joy of this life is left for you, while I am young, and all of active life is before me. The steps which I take now will give color to my future, and be that future long or short, it must

be made happy or miserable according as my steps are turned. My heart I have given to Alfred Norcross; in his keeping have I placed my purest affections, and I know that he is worthy of the trust. This union of our young hearts is the basis of all our joy in the future, and I cannot feel that even you have the right to rend it in sunder."

"Child, do you prate to me of *right*?" uttered the old man. "Young Norcross shall never touch one farthing of my money. You shall not marry him, and if he dares again—"

"Hold!" interrupted Isabella, while a strong calmness seemed to support her, "whatever you have to say against me, I am ready to hear; but speak not against Alfred Norcross, for *he is my husband*!"

"Your husband!" reiterated old Vanwick, grasping the arms of his chair with his bony hands. "Isabella, speak that word again!"

"Alfred Norcross is my husband!" pronounced the fair girl, in a firm tone.

"Then," returned the old man, as his face grew livid and his teeth grated together, "go and live with your husband. From henceforth you are nothing to me. I have forgotten you—your image is wrenched from my heart. Cross not my threshold again. Go! you are discarded, and forever!"

"But, my grandfather—"

"Silence, miscreant! Out of my house, and never let me set eyes upon you again!"

"Then farewell, and may Heaven yet pour the balm of forgiveness o'er your soul," said Isabella, as she half turned away; but ere she went, she gazed once more into his passion-wrought face, and with a starting tear she continued:

"Your money, grandfather, I never coveted, but your love I would fain retain. Your property may go to those who hang about you for its possession, but your old heart's affections will find no better resting-place than in the bosom of your grandchild, for there, at least, they will be reciprocated."

Old Solomon Vanwick made no reply, but while yet he gazed at the light form of his grandchild, she passed out from the room. As the door closed behind her, a look of almost fiend-like exultation rested upon the face of Victor Waldamear, and he turned his eyes away from his uncle, lest his real feelings might be seen. Ten minutes passed away, during which time the old man sat with his hands grasped firmly

upon the arms of his chair, while a fierce rage seemed rankling in his bosom; but at length his feelings settled to a sort of cold, iron determination, and turning towards his nephew, he said:

"Victor, I think she's been ungrateful to me."

"Most ungrateful," returned Victor, in a fawning, pharisaic tone. "Her ingratitude to one so kind and generous as yourself, was to me as unexpected as it was bewildering. But, my dear uncle, you may yet somewhat relent towards her, for though young Norcross is unworthy of your esteem, yet Isabella may have been deceived."

"Deceived!" exclaimed the old man, again bursting into a passion. "It's me that's been deceived! Most grossly has she deceived me. No, no, Victor, you cannot palliate her offence. I have discarded her—disavowed her. Not a penny of my property shall she ever touch."

Again Victor Waldamear turned away to hide the glow of exultation that suffused his countenance.

"Dear uncle," he said, at length, in a tone so studied and hypocritical that any but a rage-blinded old man might have seen it, "let me advise you to wait awhile ere you *alter your will*; for though Isabella has disgraced you by her marriage, as well as forfeited your kindness by her reckless disregard of all your desires—and even though she has virtually cast herself off by ruthlessly trampling on your love and solicitude, yet—"

"Peace, peace, Victor!" interrupted the old man, with increased emotion. "Nothing, nothing shall turn me. I know you would plead for her, but even with your pleading, you cannot lose sight of her utter unworthiness. My decision is made. Here, take this key and unlock the left department of that old cabinet."

Victor Waldamear stepped to the old man's side, and with a trembling hand he took the key. It was placed in the lock, and the quaintly carved door was opened.

"Do you see that deep drawer, with a small key in its lock?" asked the old man.

"Yes, sir," returned the nephew.

"Open it. Within you will see a parchment tied with a blue ribbon, and bearing a heavy seal. Bring it to me."

Victor found the document, and he handed it to his uncle; then, at an order from the old man, he rang for a servant, who, when he appeared, was requested to bring a lighted taper

Ere long the taper was brought, and after the servant had withdrawn, Vanwick tore off the seal and ribbon from the roll he held, and as he opened it, Victor's eyes rested upon his uncle's *will*! With features again set in their firm, iron mould, the old man raised the parchment to the blaze of the taper. The compact vellum began to hiss and crackle in the flame, and as it crisped and rolled in the heat, it fell in charred masses upon the table. Slowly it burned, but yet line after line of its inky import became annihilated, and at length the work of destruction was complete. Old Vanwick's will was no more.

Thus far had Victor Waldamear triumphed. He had succeeded in poisoning the old man's mind against his grandchild, by the most subtle arts. He had not dared to directly attack the name of Isabella, but he had most basely traduced the fair fame of Alfred Norcross, and by a continuous siege of petty thrusts and stabs at the cords of affection that bound the old man to his son's daughter, he had at length seen the estrangement complete. But the game was not yet won, for without a will, Isabella was the direct lineal heir. A *new will* must be made, and to this end, and that he might be the heir, Victor Waldamear determined to set himself at work. He was now Vanwick's sole confidant, and he held no doubts of his success. Already the broad lands and the bright gold of his uncle seemed his own, and not a pang of remorse reached his heart, as he thought of the poor, innocent being whom he had so foully wronged out of her birthright.

Isabella was not entirely happy when she turned her steps towards the dwelling which her husband had procured, nor was she really sad. The knowledge that she had been utterly discarded by her grandfather was a source of sorrow, for she had loved the old man well; but the thought that she had a husband who loved her cheered her on, and when at length she found herself clasped to that husband's bosom, the clouds were all rolled away, and she smiled in joy.

"Alfred," said she, "here in this humble cot we must make our home, for my grandfather has forbidden me ever to enter his dwelling again."

"Then he has disinherited you?"

"Yes, and he disowns me."

"Then," said Alfred, while his fine features

were lighted up by a noble pride, and he clasped his young wife more closely to his bosom, "we will show him how independent we can be. I am sorry that he still clings to his dislike of me, but if I live he shall yet see that I bear him no malice in return. When my father urged your father into that unfortunate speculation by which they both were ruined, he thought to do him a pecuniary benefit, but God ruled it otherwise. Now, if Mr. Vanwick will still hunt me down for the result of my father's doings, then he is at liberty so to do; and for my poverty, too, I suppose he hates me; but look up, dearest Isabella; with my pencil I can yet carve out a fortune, or at least a comfortable means of sustenance. You do not mourn for the loss of your grandfather's estate, Isabella?"

"No, no, Alfred, I coveted it not; nor do I miss a thing I never possessed. One source of regret alone is mine—I have loved my grandfather, and I am sorry that he appreciates it not."

"Your grandfather has not come to this conclusion without some assistance from another quarter," said Alfred, with a spice of bitterness in his manner. "Victor Waldamear has had a hand in it all. His eyes have long been opened to the possession of old Vanwick's property, and thus has his grasping ambition begun to reach its object."

"You speak truly, Alfred. But let us think no more about it. We can make our home happy without my grandfather's money, and if Victor succeeds in gaining the estate, I shall not envy him his possession."

Within the apartment where the young couple stood, there was an easel, upon which was an unfinished landscape; but yet enough had been placed upon the canvass to show that the hand that had done it, carried a bold and easy pencil. The coloring was true to nature, and the soft blending of the lights and shades betrayed an artistic taste and skill. Albert Norcross was a fair painter, and already had he engaged work enough to more than support him through the year, and he was sure of his money as fast as he could turn off his pictures. As Isabella last spoke, her husband clasped her once more to his bosom, and then imprinting a kiss upon her fair brow, he seated himself at his easel.

Poor Isabella! As she stood and gazed upon her husband as he now plied his brush, she dreamed not that the sweet flowers she had culled could be armed with thorns. In the in-

nocence of her love, she had not thought of the future, or if she had, 'twas only as that love had pictured it. Alfred, too, looked only through the eyes of love, and he never once thought of the sterner realities that sometimes go to make up the counts of life.

At the end of a week the young artist had finished his picture, and, according to promise, he prepared to set forth for the dwelling of its purchaser. The man for whom he had painted it, lived some ten miles distant, and having kissed his pretty wife, he took the product of his labor under his arm and started off. The forenoon was well advanced when he left his dwelling, but he promised to be back before dark, and Isabella smiled as she bade him God speed.

Isabella sang and played the hours away, till the afternoon drew towards its close, and then she seated herself in the small flower-garden to watch for the return of her husband. An hour passed away, and she arose from her seat and walked around the garden,—then she went out into the road and looked off in the direction from which her husband would come; but she saw him not, and once more she resumed her seat. Half an hour more passed, and a heavy, black cloud, which Isabella had not before noticed, came lowering about her, and ere long the heavy rain-drops began to fall. The young wife reluctantly left her seat in the garden, and sought refuge in the house; but hardly had she gained it ere the rain began to fall faster, and fitful gusts swept up from the cloud-laden horizon. The dust and dry leaves danced in the air, the wind whistled louder, and a curtain of almost impenetrable blackness was drawn over the earth. Isabella peered forth into the darkness, and when she could no longer see even the trees that surrounded her dwelling, she shrank back from the window and sank upon a stool near her husband's easel.

Slowly and heavily wore away another hour. Isabella arose from her stool and went to the window. The rain was falling in torrents, and the vivid lightning had begun to dance in the heavens. Peal after peal of thunder roared along the lightning-tracked space, and at every shock the poor young wife's heart sank lower and lower in her bosom. Once she opened the door, and would have rushed forth into the darkness, but she quailed before the raging storm-giant, and shrank trembling back.

Already had the disconsolate woman's mind

begun to waver beneath its load of fearful doubt, when she thought she detected the sound of a heavy footfall without. She sprang towards the door, threw it open, and in a moment more her husband caught her in his arms; she did not rest her weight upon him, however, for in a moment she realized that he trembled with weakness, and taking him fondly by the arm, she led him to a seat.

Alfred was wet to the skin, and his limbs were cold and shivering, and though he smiled in answer to his wife's earnest inquiries, yet his smiles were weak and sickly, and they dwelt only for a moment upon the surface of his countenance, and then faded away before the power of pain and almost utter exhaustion.

He explained to his wife that he had been obliged to wait some time for his patron, and that in half an hour after he started on his way home, he was overtaken by the storm. The utter darkness enveloped the path with an impenetrable pall, and he had been obliged almost literally to feel out his course. Often had he fallen over the undistinguishable obstacles that lay in the road, and had the distance been many rods further, he could not have dragged his exhausted limbs to his home.

With fearful forebodings, Isabella assisted her husband to his bed, for his face was already flushed with a burning glow, his breath was hot, and his pulse beat with a feverish quickness. She watched by his side all night, and on the next morning a raging fever had set in. One of the neighbor's children was sent for a physician, and when he arrived, he pronounced Alfred to be under the influence of a most malignant fever; at the same time assuring Isabella that the case of her husband was one of extreme doubt. He ministered, however, for the relief of the patient, and promised to call again on the morrow.

A month passed away, and Alfred had not yet left his sick bed, though the fearful crisis had passed and he was fast recovering. The physician had discontinued his daily visits, having left orders for the patient's diet, with some simple restoratives, and the young painter had begun to hope again. Isabella was sitting by the side of her husband's bed, and a tear which she could not repress, stole down her pale cheek.

"Isabella," faintly articulated the sick man, "what means that tear?"

"'Tis nothing, Albert."

"'Tis *something*, Isabella, for that sad look which accompanies it, speaks to me of something more than fatigue. Come, keep no secrets from me. What has happened?"

"Albert," returned the fond wife, in a tremulous tone, "I know not why I should keep it from you, for you must soon know it. But you will not suffer it to prey upon your mind, my husband?"

"Speak, Isabella. Tell me all, and if you can bear up under it, I shall not fall beneath its knowledge."

"Then, Albert, we are—are—"

"Go on, my wife."

"We are penniless! no food, no fuel, and no means of procuring them!"

"Penniless!" murmured the young man, gazing half vacantly into the face of his wife. "I had thought not of that. Penniless, and, alas! how debt, too, must have crept upon us!"

"No, no, Alfred; thank God, we are not in debt."

"Not in debt, Isabella? What can have sustained us thus far? Surely, my little stock of money could not have gone so far."

"I have paid it all, my husband, but I can pay no more."

"You told me not that you had money, Isabella."

"I had jewelry, Albert."

"O, God! and has it come to this?" bitterly cried the poor man, as he placed his emaciated hand upon his throbbing brow. "Would to heaven that I might have suffered this alone; but that you, you, Isabella, should be thus dragged into misery with me, is insupportable. O, why did you become my wife?"

"Alfred," uttered the wife, while the tears coursed faster down her cheeks, "do not add to what we already suffer. I can bear up under all but such unkindness, for 'tis unkind thus to speak of our united love. But, my husband, there is one more source of hope."

"And that—"

"Is to seek my grandfather."

"O, Isabella, my proud heart shrinks from such a course. You would only be spurned from his door, and treated with cold-hearted indignity and reproach. This would make our misery greater."

"Then let him spurn me. I will at least see him and tell him how we suffer. He was my father's father, and he will—he *must*, have some compassion."

"Then he would have shown it ere this."

"He may not have known our situation."

"He must have heard of my sickness."

"Ay, but he cannot know how we now suffer. Yes, Alfred, I will go to him, and if he spurns me, we can but suffer on."

The sick man gazed into the face of his wife, but he spoke no further. The thought that his Isabella must go to beg for him harrowed up his soul with an anguish more painful than the disease under which he had suffered.

Since Isabella had been banished from his house, old Solomon Vanwick had been growing moody and morose. He had entertained no thought of recalling her, nor had he swerved one grain from his resolution of utterly disinheriting her; but yet he missed her sweet smile and her merry song, and no art of Victor Wadamear's could make him glad. The old man, however, would not own, even to himself, that 'twas Isabella's absence that made him sad; he rather persuaded himself that 'twas the sin of ingratitude she had committed, and in this opinion Victor endeavored to strengthen him. Vanwick's health was evidently failing, and his scheming nephew began to fear that he would die without making another will; but at length the old man was brought to the point and a notary was sent for. He spoke of his granddaughter, but Victor kept strict watch that the poison failed not in its work upon his mind; and whenever some spark of paternal kindness would for a moment struggle to throw its beams over his bosom, the nephew would dash it out with a cold stream of insinuating slander.

Within the old man's library sat Victor Wadamear and the notary. Vanwick was there, and he dictated to the official while the *new will* was being made. With the exception of a few hundreds, which were bequeathed to some of the old servants, the whole vast estate was made over to Victor. The young man's eyes sparkled as he heard the orders given which were to make him the sole heir, and he dared not hold up his head lest his too palpable emotions should be seen.

"That is all," said the old man, as he gave the last clause of the will.

"And have you nothing for your grandchild, the gentle Isabella?" asked the notary, with considerable surprise.

"Isabella, sir, has, by her ungrateful conduct, alienated herself," returned Victor, quickly, lest, if time were given, his uncle might relent.

"Mr. Vanwick," continued the notary, seeming to take little notice of what the nephew had said, "by law, without a will, Isabella is your sole heir—the daughter—the only child of your own only son. Is it your firm intent that she be thus cut off?"

"I tell thee yes, old man," said Victor.

The notary noticed not the young speaker, but he kept his eyes riveted upon the face of Solomon Vanwick.

"It is, it is," at length murmured the old man, in a slightly faltering voice. "She has been very unkind, very ungrateful to me, and I—"

Vanwick hesitated, and for a moment Victor trembled, but his assurance came quickly to his aid, and he said:

"My uncle would not thus have cut her off, but that young Norcross stood ready to grasp his money. Into his hands Vanwick desires not that his property should fall; but, if at any time Isabella needs assistance, or when I can see signs of her repentance, I shall assist her, though I trust that long years will yet pass ere this last testament of my dear uncle's will need to be administered, and he himself may yet see what the girl deserves."

Young Waldamear spoke this with the most hypocritical sycophancy; but it seemed to revive the drooping purposes of the old man, for with a quick, nervous movement, he put forth his hand, saying, as he did so:

"The will is as I wish it. Give it to me, sir, and let me sign it. I said it,—I gave her warning, and I told her she was discarded forever. 'Twas her own fault."

Old Vanwick spread the parchment out before him, and after running his eyes over it, he seized the pen and dipped it into the inkstand. There was a nervous twitching about the muscles of his face, and a strange, lustrous fire shot forth from his eyes. The pen had not yet touched the document.

"Sign! sign!" whispered Victor, as he sprang to the old man's side. "Here—here is the place!"

"Yes, I will sign it," murmured Vanwick. "She is not worthy; she shall not touch a penny of it. I said it, and I must not swerve."

"Then sign! sign!"

"Hark! hark! Did I not hear a voice?" uttered the old man, still grasping the pen, and raising his hand. "'Twas her voice! 'Twas Isabella's!"

"No, no, she has forgotten you, my dear uncle," urged Victor, while the sweat began to stand upon his brow. "Sign the will! Sign!"

At that moment the door of the apartment was thrown open, and Isabella, all pale and trembling, entered the room. Her eyes caught the scene before her, but she dwelt upon none save her grandfather, and towards him she cast a look of imploring, tearful agony. A moment the old man gazed upon the form of his grandchild, then his lips trembled; the fire of his eye changed to a still stranger glow, a tear started forth upon his long gray eyelashes, and slightly raising his hands towards where she stood, he murmured:

"Isabella—my child—forgive your poor old grandfather. I forgot the warm love of your young heart; but let all be forgotten—forgiven. You have come back to—you are—you are—Isabella. Victor—take away this black curtain—it shuts her out. Take it away—it makes all dark!"

"The will! Sign it! sign it!" gasped the nephew, as he laid his touch upon the hand that still held the inked pen.

That hand rested upon the table, and it moved not. It still clutched the pen, but it made no motion towards the unfinished will. The old man's eyes were still fixed upon his grandchild, but their fire was gone, and they looked cold and glassy. The notary stepped forward and raised Vanwick's hand from the table, but it fell back with a dull, leaden motion, and the unused pen fell from its grasp. Solomon Vanwick was dead!

Victor Waldamear shrank back pale and trembling from the scene; he dared not speak, for in the presence of the dead, his conscience shook off its slazy folds and stung him. Isabella sprang forward and threw her arms about the neck of her grandfather's corpse. She kissed the marble brow, she bathed the pale face with her tears, and then turning her eyes towards the notary, she murmured:

"He forgave me! He forgave me ere he died! You heard him, sir, did you not? He loved me—he loved me—I ask no more."

* * * * *

"Mr. Waldamear," said the old notary, after the party had withdrawn from the study, "henceforth you must regard Isabella as the ruler of this place. Whatever may have been your aims, or what schemes you may have used to attain them, you yourself best know; but you must now be aware that there is nothing here for your ambition to feed upon further. That will which was to have robbed a child of her birthright is yet *unfinished*, and he who alone could have done it is now no more on earth. A wise Hand held him back from the fatal deed, and even his own hand shrank from it. And now," the old man continued, turning to Isabella, "let the servants see that nothing is troubled till my friends arrive to settle the estate. The funeral may, if you choose, be at your own arrangement, or I will take its charge upon myself."

I need not tell how the servants sneered at Victor Waldamear, when he went disappointed and disgraced away from the dwelling where his schemings had failed, nor need I tell how the servants laughed and cried by turns when they knew that their young mistress was restored to them. Isabella mourned for her grand-sire, but yet the smiles of joy began soon to bloom around her. Her dear husband was restored to health—the wealth of her father's house was hers, and the deadly shafts of the traducer had fallen powerless and harmless about her. They had, indeed, caused her some hours of anguish, but now they had fallen back upon the evil man who had sent them forth, and they stung him, and the poison he had intended for others, fell to his own portion.

THE END.

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