

BEYOND the FRONTIER

A STORY OF EARLY DAYS

By RANDALL PARRISH

SYNOPSIS.

Adele la Chesnayne, a belle of New France, is among conspirators at her uncle's house. Cassion, the commissaire, is enlisted her Uncle Chevet's aid against La Salle. D'Artigny, La Salle's friend, offers his services as guide to Cassion's party on the journey to the wilderness. The uncle informs Adele that he has betrothed her to Cassion and forbids her to see D'Artigny again. In Quebec Adele visits her friend, Sister Celeste, who brings D'Artigny to her. She tells him her story and he vows to release her from the bargain with Cassion. D'Artigny leaves promising to see her at the house. Cassion escorts Adele to the hall, where he meets the governor, La Barre, and warns him of the commissaire's plans against D'Artigny. D'Artigny's ticket to the ball has been recalled, but he gains entrance to the window. Adele informs him of the governor's words to Cassion. For her eavesdropping at the ball Adele is ordered by the governor to marry Cassion at once and to accompany him to the Illinois country. He summons Chevet and directs that he attend them on the journey. They leave in the boats. Adele's future depends on the decision of D'Artigny whom she now knows she loves. Cassion and D'Artigny have words. Uncle Chevet for the first time hears that his niece is an actress, and begins to suspect Cassion's motives. Adele refuses to permit her husband to share her sleeping quarters. Chevet agrees to help her.

Madame Cassion, loathing the husband who got her by fraud and threat, feels certain that she has a true confederate—an ally ready to do her bidding—in Rene D'Artigny. But disappointment piles upon her. In a crisis she learns she must fight alone. How she resolves to win against all odds and get revenge is described in stirring manner in this installment.

CHAPTER IX—Continued.

Leaning far out, grasping a branch to keep from falling, I distinguished the canoe at the upper landing, and the Indians busily preparing camp. At first I saw nothing of any white man, but was gazing still when D'Artigny emerged from some shadow and stepped down beside the boat. I know not what instinct prompted him to turn and look up intently at the bluff towering above. I scarcely comprehended either what swift impulse led me to undo the neckerchief at my throat and hold it forth in signal. An instant he stared upward, shading his eyes with one hand.

I must have seemed a vision clinging there against the sky, yet all at once the truth burst upon him, and, with a wave of the arm, he sprang up the low bank and joined his Indians. I could not hear what he said, but with a single word he left them and disappeared among the trees at the foot of the bluff.

He must have scrambled straight up the steep face of the bluff, for it could have been scarcely more than a minute when I heard him crunching a passage through the bushes, and then saw him emerge above the edge. Clinging to a tree limb, his eyes sought eagerly to locate me, and when I stepped forward, he sprang erect and bowed, jerking his hat from his head. There was about his action the enthusiasm of a boy, and his face glowed with an eagerness and delight which instantly broke down every barrier between us.

"You waved to me?" he exclaimed. "You wished me to come?"

"Yes," I confessed, swept from my guard by his enthusiasm. "I have been anxious to confer with you, and his is my first opportunity."

"Why I thought you avoided me," he burst forth. "It is because I felt so that I have kept away."

"There was nothing else I could do but pretend," I exclaimed, gaining control over my voice as I spoke. "My every movement has been watched since we left Quebec; this is the first moment I have been left alone—if, indeed, I am now." And I glanced about doubtfully into the shadows of the forest.

"You imagine you may have been followed here? By whom? Cassion?"

"By himself or some emissary. Pere Allouez has been my jailer, but chances to be disabled at present. The commissaire permitted me to climb here alone, believing you to be safely camped above the rapids, yet his suspicions may easily revive."

"His suspicions!" the sieur laughed softly. "So that then is the trouble? It is to keep us apart that he bids me make separate camp each night; and assigns me to every spot of peril. I feel the honor, mademoiselle, yet why am I especially singled out for so great a distinction?"

"He suspects us of being friends. He knew I conferred with you at the convent, and even believes that you were with me hidden behind the curtain in the governor's office."

"Yet if all that be true," he questioned, his voice evidencing his surprise. "Why should our friendship arouse his antagonism to such a extent? I cannot understand what crime I have committed, mademoiselle."

"It is all mystery, even why you should be here with us on this long journey. Surely you had no such thought when you started last?"

"I do not know what has happened," I answered in astonishment. "I told you."

"Told me! How? I have scarcely held speech with anyone but the Algonquin chief since we took to the water. Cassion has but given orders, and Chevet is mum as an oyster. I endeavored to find you in Montreal, but you were safely locked behind gray walls. That something was wrong I felt convinced, yet what it might be no one would tell me. I tried questioning the pere, but he only shook his head and left me unanswered. Tell me then, mademoiselle, by what right does this Cassion hold you as a captive?"

My lips trembled, and my eyes fell, yet I must answer.

"He is my husband, monsieur."

I caught glimpse of his face, picturing surprise, incredulity. He drew a sharp breath and I noted his hand close tightly on the hilt of his knife.

"Your husband! that cur! Surely you do not jest?"

"Would that I did," I exclaimed, losing all control in sudden wave of anger. "No, monsieur, it is true."

And I told him swiftly the story of my enforced marriage.

"And Hugo Chevet, your uncle? Did he remain silent? make no protest?" he asked.

I gave a gesture of despair.

"He! Never did he even conceive what occurred, until I told him later on the river. Even now I doubt if his sluggish brain has grasped the truth. To him the alliance was an honor, an opening to possible wealth in the fur trade through Cassion's influence with La Barre. He could perceive nothing else except his good luck in thus ridding himself of the care of a poor niece who had been a sorry burden."

"But you explained to him?"

"I tried to, but only to regret the effort. Giant as he is physically, his intellect is that of a big boy. All he can conceive of is revenge—a desire to crush with his hands. He hates Cassion, because the man has robbed him of the use of my father's money; but for my position he cares nothing. To his mind the wrong has all been done to him, and I fear he will brood over it until he seeks revenge. If he does he will ruin everything."

D'Artigny stood silent, evidently in thought, endeavoring to grasp the threads of my tale.

"How did you attain the summit of this bluff?" he questioned at last.

"Yonder; there is a deer trail leading down."

"And you fear Cassion may follow?"

"He will likely become suspicious if I am long absent, and either seek me himself or send one of his men. This is the first moment of freedom I have experienced since we left Quebec. I hardly know how to behave myself."

"And we must guard it from being the last," he exclaimed, a note of determination and leadership in his voice. "There are questions I must ask, so that we may work together in harmony, but Cassion can never be allowed to suspect that we have communication. Let us go forward to the end of the trail where you came up; from there we can keep watch below."

He still grasped my hand, and I had no thought of withdrawing it. To me he was a friend, loyal, trustworthy, the one alone to whom I could confide. Together we clambered over the rough rocks to where the narrow cleft led downward.

CHAPTER X.

On the Summit of the Bluff.

Securely screened from observation by the low growing bushes clinging to the edge of the bluff, and yet with a clear view of the cleft in the rocks half way to the river, D'Artigny found me a seat on a hummock of grass, but remained standing himself. The sun was sinking low, warning us that our time was short, for with the first coming of twilight I would certainly be sought, if I failed to return to the lower camp.

"You would question me, monsieur," I asked doubtfully. "It was for that I led me here?"

"Yes," instantly aroused by my voice, but with still scanning the trail. "There is no time to waste, if you are to start intelligently. You must speak before the sun sinks low, and the shadows close upon us."

"His suspicions!" the sieur laughed softly. "So that then is the trouble? It is to keep us apart that he bids me make separate camp each night; and assigns me to every spot of peril. I feel the honor, mademoiselle, yet why am I especially singled out for so great a distinction?"

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tioning of my honesty, and swift indignation brought the answering words to my lips.

"And why not pray! Must I not defend myself—and what other weapons are at hand? Do I owe him kindness; or tender consideration? The man married me as he would buy a slave."

"You may be justified," he admitted regretfully. "Yet how is this to be done?"

I arose to my feet and stood before him, my face uplifted, and, with one hand, thrust aside the shade of my hat.

"Monsieur, deem you that impossible?"

His lips parted in a quick smile, revealing the white teeth, and he bowed low, flinging his hat to the ground and standing bareheaded.

"Mon dieu! No! Monsieur Cassion is to be congratulated. Yet it was my thought you said yonder that you despised the man."

"I do; what reason have I to feel otherwise? Yet there lies my strength in this battle. He laughs at women, plays with them, breaks their hearts. It is his pride and boast, and his success in the past has ministered to his self-conceit. He thought me of the same kind, but has already had his lesson. Do you not know what that means to a man like him? More than ever he will desire my favor. A week back he cared nothing; I was but a plaything, awaiting his pleasure; his wife to be treated as he pleased. He knows better now, and already his eyes follow me as though he were my dog."

"And that then is why you send for me—that I may play my part in the game?"

I shrugged my shoulders, yet there was doubt in my eyes as I faced him. "Is there harm in such play, monsieur," I asked innocently, "with so important an end in view? 'Tis not that I seek amusement, but I must find out where this king's pardon is hidden, who concealed it, and obtain proof of the fraud which compelled my marriage. My only hope of release lies in compelling Francois Cassion to confess all he knows of this foul conspiracy. I must possess the facts before we return to Quebec."

"But of what use?" he insisted. "You will still remain his wife, and your property will be in his control. The church will hold you to the marriage contract."

"Not if I can establish the truth that I was deceived, defrauded and married by force. Once I have the proofs in my hands I will appeal to Louis—to the pope for relief. These

men thought me a helpless girl, friendless and alone, ignorant of law, a mere waif of the frontier. Perhaps I was, but this experience has made of me a woman. In Montreal I talked with the mother superior and she told me of a marriage in France where the pere officiated under threat, and the pope dissolved the ties. If it can be done for others it shall be done for me. I will not remain the wife of a man who would make him love me as a slave."

"I did not answer; I could not, because of the choking in my throat, yet I let him grasp my hand. Once I raised my eyes to his, but lowered them instantly in strange confusion. Here was a man I did not understand, whose real motives I could not fathom. His protest had not yet penetrated my soul, and I felt toward him an odd mixture of respect and anger. He released my hand and turned away, and I stood motionless as he crossed the open space between the trees. At the edge of the bluff he paused and glanced about, lifting his hat in greet-

ing of farewell. I do not think I moved or made response, and an instant later he was gone.

I know not how long I stood there staring into vacancy, haunted by regret, tortured by fear and humiliation. Slowly all else crystallized into indignation, with a fierce resolve to fight on alone. The sun sank, and all about me clung the purple twilight, yet I did not move. He had been unjust, unfair; his simple code of the woods could not be made to apply to such a situation as this of mine.

I heard no sound of warning, yet as I turned to retrace my way to the camp below I became suddenly aware of the presence of Cassion.

CHAPTER XI.

We Reach the Lake.

He was between me and the deer trail, and enough of daylight yet remained to enable me to perceive the

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PETER'S DENIAL

By REV. L. W. GOSNELL
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TEXT—And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him: Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.—Luke 22:61, 62.

Peter never forgot his denial. Speaking to the Jews he says, "Ye

denied the holy one and the just," and in his second epistle he refers to those who denied the Lord that bought them. At the point where he was supposed to be strongest, he failed. He is noted as the confessor of Christ, yet became his denier. He was the brave man who undertook to defend Christ in the garden, yet he covered before the servants in the high priest's palace. He was not in danger of being killed if he had confessed Christ, but denied him to save himself from being taunted. And all this occurred on the same night in which he had received the bread and wine from the hands of his master, and had submitted to having his feet washed by him! We are only kept from chiding him because we are reminded of our own failures and our denials of Christ.

The Sin of Profanity. Added to the sin of denial was that of profanity, for we are told that he began to curse and to swear, saying he knew not the man. The sin of profanity clings to a man, and the tendency sometimes appears even after conversion. Many have failed at this point, although delivered from other sins. An old writer has pointed out the folly of it in these words: "The devil tempts men through their ambition, their cupidity, or their appetite, until he comes to the profane swearer, whom he clutches without any reward." There is a melancholy comfort in the fact that Peter seemed to feel they would not suspect him of being a disciple if they should hear him use profane language; the world expects things of Christians.

Several elements enter into the story of Peter's denial. First of all, we notice his self-confidence. "If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended." His failure doubtless revealed to him his weakness, and was used of God in bringing him to a better mind. By such testings we learn our own helplessness and are driven to the strong one for strength. In his epistle, Peter emphasizes the value of meekness and godly fear.

No Business With the Flunkies.

Another secret of Peter's failure is found in the society he kept. He had followed his Lord afar off, and when he came into the palace, sat down with the high priest's servants. As an old Scotch woman said, "he had no business with the flunkies." It is difficult to maintain a Christian profession even when we must be among the ungodly, but there is great danger when we choose them for our companions. Again, the element of surprise has to be reckoned with. Peter would have been brave in the garden in open conflict with Christ's enemies, but he did not expect to be assailed as he sat by the fire that night. Earnest Christians learn to dread temptations which approach with the stealth of a serpent. The writer recalls the occasion when he first saw a "sensitive plant," and remembers his surprise when its leaves withered at the approach of his hand. If we are to escape better than Peter did, our souls must be so tender that the very approach of temptation will cause them to shrink in dread and hide themselves in Christ.

Yet this man was restored even after such a failure. There were four steps in his restoration.

Steps Back to Christ.

First, there was the look of Christ. After the crowing of the cock, we are told the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. What a look of wounded love that must have been! Yet we should not forget that the same sad, piercing gaze is turned upon us when we grieve Christ.

Secondly, the Lord sent a special message to Peter on the morning of the resurrection (Mark 16:7).

Thirdly, he had a private interview with this apostle on the day he arose (Luke 24:34; I Cor. 15:5).

Finally, when he appeared to the seven on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he reinstated Peter most fully. The story is told in John 21, and is worthy of careful perusal. Three times the Lord asked him if he loved him, and the apostle had thrice denied, so he was allowed to confess him three times. Poor Peter might have thought he would never again be entrusted with responsibility, but three times the Lord bade him feed his flock. As a climax, this man who had said he would follow Christ to death, but had failed so shamefully, was told he would, after all, have the privilege of dying for his Lord. What comfort here for the backslider! With what new meaning may we sing, "He restoreth my soul."

I Became Suddenly Aware of the Presence of Cassion.

man clearly. How long he may have been there observing me I could not know, but when I first saw him he was bent forward, apparently deeply interested in some sudden discovery upon the ground at his feet.

"You thought me long in returning, monsieur?" I asked carelessly, and taking a step toward him. "It was cooler up here, and the view from the bluff yonder beautiful. You may gain some conception of it still, if you care."

He lifted his head with a jerk and stared into my face.

"Ay! no doubt," he said harshly, "yet I hardly think it was the view which held you here so long. Whose boot print is this, madame? not yours, surely."

I glanced where he pointed, my heart leaping, yet not altogether with regret. The young sieur had left his trail behind, and it would serve me whether by his will or no.

"Certainly not mine," and I laughed. "I trust, monsieur, your powers of observation are better than that—'tis hardly a compliment."

"Nor is this time for any lightness of speech, my lady," he retorted, his anger fanned by my indifference. "Whose is it then, I ask you? What man has been your companion here?"

"You jump at conclusions, monsieur," I returned coldly. "The stray imprint of a man's boot on the turf is scarcely evidence that I have had a companion. Kindly stand aside and permit me to descend."

"Mon dieu! I will not!" and he blocked my passage. "I have stood enough of your tantrums already in the boat. Now we are alone and I will have my say. You shall remain here until I learn the truth."

His rage rather amused me, and I felt not the slightest emotion of fear, although there was threat in his words and in the gesture accompanying them. I do not think the smile even deserted my lips, as I sought a comfortable seat on a fallen tree trunk, fully conscious that nothing would so infuriate the man as studied indifference.

"Very well, monsieur, I await your investigation with pleasure," I said sweetly. "No doubt it will prove interesting. You honor me with the suspicion that I had an appointment here with one of your men?"

"Of course not; you treat me with marked consideration. Perchance others have camped here, and explored these bluffs."

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