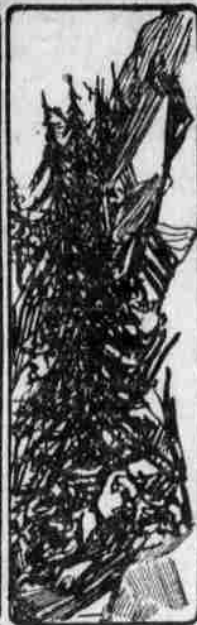


Beyond the Frontier

By RANDALL PARRISH

A Romance of Early Days in the Middle West

Author of "Keith of the Border," "My Lady of Doubt," "The Maid of the Forest," etc.



SYNOPSIS.

Adele la Chesnayne, a belle of New France, is among conspirators at her uncle's house. Cassion, the commissaire, has 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 dance. Cassion escorts Adele to the hall. She meets the governor, La Barre, and hears him warn the commissaire against D'Artigny. D'Artigny's ticket to the ball has been recalled, but he gains entrance through a 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 depending 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 heiress, and begins to suspect Cassion's motives. Adele refuses to permit her husband to share her sleeping quarters. Chevet agrees to help her. She talks secretly to D'Artigny, but he declines to give her active aid against her husband.

Bad luck frequently comes in bunches. Adele has been buffeted by fate for months, nay for several years. In this fight against Commissaire Cassion she needs direly every aid she can muster, yet one after another her sources of help fall away. This is a thrilling installment, which describes how she receives two serious shocks. One of them blackens her love affair. The other frightens her.

Cassion finds his wife alone on the hill and discovers a man's footprints. He accuses her angrily.

CHAPTER XI—Continued.

"The print is fresh, not ancient, and none of the men from my camp have come this way."

He strode forward across the narrow open space and disappeared into the fringe of trees bordering the edge of the bluff. It would have been easy for me to depart, to escape to the security of the tent below, but curiosity held me motionless. I knew what he would discover, and preferred to face the consequences where I was free to answer him face to face. I wished him to be suspicious, to feel that he had a rival; I would fan his jealousy to the very danger point. Nor had I long to wait. Forth from the shade of the trees he burst and came toward me, his face white, his eyes blazing.

"'Tis the fellow I thought," he burst forth, "and he went down the face of the bluff yonder. So you dared to have trust with him?"

"With whom, monsieur?"

"D'Artigny, the young fool! Do you think me blind? Did I not know you were together in Quebec? What are you laughing at?"

"I was not laughing, monsieur. Your ridiculous charge does not amuse me. I am a woman; you insult me; I am your wife; you charge me with indiscretion. If you think to win me with such cowardly insinuations you know little of my nature. I will not talk with you, nor discuss the matter. I return to the camp."

His hands clinched as though he had the throat of an enemy between them, but angry as he was, some vague doubt restrained him.

"Mon dieu! I'll fight the dog!"

"D'Artigny, you mean? 'Tis his trade, I hear, and he is good at it."

"Bah! a bungler of the woods. I doubt if he ever crossed blades with a swordsman. But mark you this, madame, the lad feels my steel if ever you so much as speak to him again."

There was contempt in my eyes, nor did I strive to disguise it.

"Am I your wife, monsieur, or your slave?"

"My wife, and I know how to hold you! Mon dieu! but you shall learn that lesson. I was a fool to ever give the brat place in the boats. La Barre warned me that he would make trouble. Now I tell you what will occur if you play false with me."

"You may spare your threats—they weigh nothing. The Sieur d'Artigny is my friend, and I shall address him when it pleases me. With whatever quarrel may arise between you I have no interest. Let that suffice, and now I bid you good night, monsieur."

He made no effort to halt me, nor to follow, and I made my way down the darkening path, without so much as turning my head to observe his movements. It was almost like a play to me, and I was reckless of the consequences, intent only on my purpose.

In the early dawn we broke camp as usual, except that chosen boatmen guided the emptied canoes through the rapids, while the others of the party made portage along the rough shore. In the smooth water above we all em-

of anger into the younger man's face, although he merely turned on his heel without reply.

We remained at St. Ignace three days, busily engaged in repairing our canoes and rendering them fit for the long voyage yet before us. From this point we were to venture on treacherous waters, as yet scarcely explored, the shores inhabited by savage, unknown tribes, with not a white man in all the long distance from Green Bay to the Chicago portage. Once I got out the map and traced the distance, feeling sick at heart as I thus realized more clearly the weary journey.

Those were dull, lonely days I passed in the desolate mission house, while the others were busy at their various tasks. Only at night time, or as they straggled in to their meals, did I see anyone but Pere Allouez, who was always close at hand, a silent shadow from whose presence I could not escape. I visited the priest's garden, climbed the rocks overlooking the water and even ventured into the dark forest, but he was ever beside me, suave but insistent on doing his master's will. The only glimpse I had of D'Artigny was at a distance, for not once did he approach the mission house. So I was glad enough when the canoes were ready, and all preparations made for departure.

Yet we were not destined to escape thus easily from St. Ignace. Of what occurred I must write as it happened to me then, and not as its full significance became later clear to my understanding. It was after nightfall when Cassion returned to the mission house. The lights were burning on the table, and the three priests were rather impatiently waiting their evening meal, occasionally exchanging brief sentences, or peering out through the open window toward the dark water.

Cassion came in alone, yet I observed nothing strange about his appearance, except that he failed to greet me with the usual attempt at gallantry, although his sharp eyes swept our faces as he closed the door, and stared about the room.

"What! not eaten yet?" he exclaimed. "I anticipated my fate to be a lonely meal, for the rascals worked like snails, and I would not leave them rest until all was finished. Faith, the odor is appetizing, and I am hungry as a bear."

The younger priest waved his hand to the servant yet asked softly: "Monsieur Chevet—he is delayed also?"

"He will sup with his men tonight," returned Cassion shortly, seating himself on the bench. "The sergeant keeps guard of the canoes, and Chevet will be useful with those off duty."

The man ate as though nearly famished, his ready tongue unusually silent, and at the conclusion of the meal, appeared so fatigued that I made early excuse to withdraw so he might rest in comfort, climbing the ladder in one corner to my own bed beneath the eaves. This apartment, whose only advantage was privacy, was no more than a narrow space between the sloping rafters of the roof, unfurnished, but with a small window in the end, closed by a wooden shutter. A partition of axe-hewn planks divided this attic into two compartments, thus composing the priests' sleeping chambers. While I was there they both occupied the one to the south, Cassion, Chevet and Pere Allouez resting in the main room below.

As I lowered the trap in the floor, shutting out the murmur of voices, I was conscious of no desire to sleep, my mind busily occupied with possibilities of the morrow. I opened the window and seated myself on the floor gazing out at the night. Below extended the priests' garden, and beyond the dark glow of forest depths.

The way of egress was easy—a mere step to the flat roof of the kitchen, the dovetailed logs of which afforded



The Way of Egress Was Easy.

a ladder to the ground. I had no object in such adventure, but a restless impulse urged me, and, almost before I realized my action, I was upon the ground. Avoiding the gleam of light which streamed from the open window of the room below, I crossed the garden and reached the path leading downward to the shore. From this point I could perceive the wide sweep of water, showing silvery in the dim moonlight, and detect the darker rim of the land. There was fire on the point below the huts, and its red glare

afforded glimpses of the canoes—mere blurred outlines—and occasionally the figure of a man, only recognizable as he moved.

I was still staring at this dim picture when some noise, other than the wind, startled me and I drew silently back behind a great stump to avoid discovery. My thought was that someone had left the mission house—Cassion perhaps with final orders to those on the beach—but a moment later I realized my mistake, yet only crouched lower in the shadow—a man was advancing from the black concealment of the woods and crossing the open space.

He moved cautiously, yet boldly enough, and his movements were not those of an Indian, although the low bushes between us and the house shadow, prevented my distinguishing more than his mere outline. It was only when he lifted his head into the gleam of light, and took hasty survey through the window of the scene within, that I recognized the face of D'Artigny. He lingered scarcely a moment, evidently satisfied with what he saw, and then drew silently back, hesitating a brief space, as though debating his next movement.

I waited breathless, wondering what his purpose could be, half inclined to intercept and question him. Was he seeking to serve my cause? to learn the truth of my relationship with Cassion? or did he have some other object, some personal feud in which he sought revenge? The first thought sent the warm blood leaping through my veins; the second left me shivering as if with sudden chill.

Even as I stood, hesitating, uncertain, he turned and retraced his steps along the same path of his approach, passing me not ten steps away and vanishing into the wood. I thought he paused at the edge and bent down, yet before I found voice or determination to stop him, he had disappeared. My courage returned, spurred by curiosity. Why should he take so roundabout a way to reach the shore? What was that black, shapeless thing he had paused to examine? I could see something there, dark and motionless, though to my eyes no more than a shadow.

I ventured toward it, creeping behind the bushes bordering the path, conscious of an odd fear as I drew closer. Yet it was not until I emerged from the fringe of shrubbery that even the faintest conception of what the object was I saw occurred to me. Then I stopped, frozen by horror, for I confronted a dead body.

For an instant I could not utter a sound or move a muscle of my body. My hands clung convulsively to a nearby branch, thus supporting me erect in spite of trembling limbs and I stared at the gruesome object, black and almost shapeless in the moonlight. Only part of the trunk was revealed, the lower portion concealed by bushes, yet I could no longer doubt it was a man's body—a large, heavily built man, his hat still crushed on his head, but with face turned away.

What courage overcame my horror and urged me forward I cannot tell; I seemed impelled by some power not my own, a vague fear of recognition tugging at my heart. I crept nearer, almost inch by inch, trembling at every noise, dreading to discover the truth. At last I could perceive the ghastly features—the dead man was Hugo Chevet.

I nerved myself to the effort, and turned the body sufficiently to enable me to discover the wound—he had been pierced by a knife from behind; had fallen, no doubt, without uttering a cry, dead ere he struck the ground. Then it was murder, foul murder, a blow in the back. Why had the deed been done? What spirit of revenge, of hatred, of fear, could have led to such an act? I got again to my feet, staring about through the weird moonlight, every nerve throbbing, as I thought to grip the fact and find its cause. Slowly I drew back, shrinking in growing terror from the corpse, until I was safely in the priest's garden. There I paused irresolute, my dazed, benumbed brain beginning to grasp the situation and assert itself.

CHAPTER XII.

The Murder of Chevet

Who had killed him? What should I do? These were the two questions haunting my mind, and becoming more and more insistent. The light still burned in the mission house, and I could picture the scene within—the three priests reading, or talking softly to each other, and Cassion asleep on his bench in the corner, wearied with the day.

I could not understand, could not imagine a cause, and yet the assassin must have been D'Artigny. How else could I account for his presence there in the night, his efforts at concealment, his bending over the dead body, and then hurrying away without sounding an alarm. The evidence against the man seemed conclusive, and yet I would not condemn. There might be other reasons for his silence, for his secret presence, and if I rushed into the house, proclaiming my discovery and confessing what I had seen, he would be left without defense.

Shrinking, shuddering at every shadow, at every sound, my nerves throbbing with agony, I managed to drag my body up the logs, and in through the window. I was safe there, but there was no banishing from memory what I had seen—what I knew lay yonder in the wood shadow. I sank to the floor, clutching the sill, my eyes staring through the moonlight. Once I thought I saw a man's indistinct figure move across an open space, and once I heard voices far away.

I do not know that I was called, yet when I awoke a faint light proclaimed the dawn was in the sky, and sounds of activity reached my ears from the room below. I felt tired and cramped from my unnatural position, but hastened to join the others. The morning meal was already on the table, and we ate as usual, no one mentioning Chevet, thus proving the body had not been discovered. I could scarcely choke the food down, anticipating every instant the sounding of an alarm. Cassion hurried, excited, no doubt, by the prospect of getting away on our journey, but seemed in excellent humor. Pushing back the box on which he sat he buckled his pistol belt, seized his hat and strode to the door.

"We depart at once," he proclaimed briefly. "So I will leave you here to bring the lady."

Pere Allouez, still busily engaged, murmured some indistinct reply and Cassion's eyes met mine.

"You look pale and weary this morning," he said. "Not fear of the voyage, I hope?"

"No, monsieur," I managed to answer quietly. "I slept ill, but shall be better presently—shall I bear my blankets to the boats?"

"The servant will see to that, only let there be as little delay as possible. Ah! here comes a messenger from below—what is it, my man?"

The fellow, one of the soldiers whose face I did not recall, halted in the open door, gasping for breath, his eyes roving about the room.

"He is dead—the big man," he stammered. "He is there by the woods."

"The big man—dead?" Cassion drew back, as though struck a blow. "What big man? Whom do you mean?"

"The one in the second canoe, monsieur; the one who roared."

"Chevet? Hugo Chevet? What has happened to him? Come, speak up, or I'll slit your tongue!"

The man gulped, gripping the door with one hand, the other pointing outward.

He is there, monsieur, beyond the trail, at the edge of the wood. I saw him with his face turned up—Mon dieu! so white; I dare not touch him, but there was blood where a knife had entered his back."

All were on their feet, their faces picturing the sudden horror, yet Cassion was first to recover his wits, and lead the way without. Grasping the soldier's arm and bidding him show where the body lay, he thrust him through the door. I lingered behind shrinking from being again compelled to view the sight of the dead man, yet unable to keep entirely away. Cassion stopped, looking down at the object on the grass, but made no effort to touch it with his hands. The soldier bent and rolled the body over, and one of the priests felt in the pockets of the jacket, bringing forth a paper or two. Cassion took these, gripping them in his fingers, his face appearing gray in the early light.

"Mon dieu! the man has been murdered," he exclaimed, "a dastard blow in the back. Look about and see if you find a knife. Had he quarrel with anyone, Moulin?"

The soldier straightened up.

"No, monsieur; I heard of none, though he was often rough and harsh of tongue to the men. Ah! now I recall, he had words with Sieur d'Artigny on the beach at dusk. I know not the cause, yet the younger man left him angrily and passed by where I stood, with his hands clinched."

"D'Artigny, hey?" Cassion's voice had a ring of pleasure in it. "Ay! he is a theodid. Know you where the young cock is now?"

"He, with the chief, left an hour ago. Was it not your order, monsieur?"

Cassion made a swift gesture, but what it might signify I could not determine, as his face was turned away. A moment there was silence, as he shaded his eyes and peered out across the water.

Virtues of Faithfulness

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TEXT—Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.—Heb. 3:1, 2

Man may lack nearly all the virtues that are ordinarily prized, but if he retains just the virtue of faithfulness he cannot be overlooked. If he add to the other virtues that of faithfulness he at once goes to the front.

We may not think the faithfulness of Jesus Christ had something in view every moment—the commission of him who had appointed him. He had come to do the father's will and he never for a moment let that drop out of sight until he was ready to say, "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do."

Every man has his appointed work and ordinarily he knows what it is and if he keeps that in view, especially if he keeps in view the one who gave him the appointment, he will not fail. Jesus Christ realized every moment that he was an apostle, that is a "sent one," and he carried out his work as sent to be the high priest for his people, viz.: to make a reconciliation of men to God, in short to make their redemption complete.

This faithfulness of Jesus Christ was compared with the faithfulness of Moses who was declared to be "faithful in all his house." Nothing omitted as far as human scrutiny could go. But the faithfulness of Jesus Christ was greater—not so much in the quality of it—but in that he was faithful as the son over his own house, whose house we are. Here, as in other qualities of the high priest, Jesus was better than man or the best of men.

It is in this faithfulness of Jesus Christ that the believer has the guarantee of his ultimate salvation. While man must not forget that he must hold fast to the "confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end," yet emphasis must always be placed on the fidelity of the Redeemer. Paul was confident that he that had begun a good work in him would perform it, or perfect it, until the day of Jesus Christ. To him Jesus was looked upon as taking hold of a man and guaranteeing his salvation. It is not presumption to look upon Jesus as undertaking the redemption of a man and believing that he will complete the work.

It is very rarely that you find a Christian man or woman who is instrumental in bringing a man to the Lord who is thus faithful, and the believer might from two standpoints do well to think of Jesus as faithful to him. Sometimes when he is in the way of temptation and Jesus is having a hard time to hold him; sometimes when a man is really doing his best with tremendous opposition, Jesus is near at hand keeping him from falling.

This faithfulness of Jesus is something in which we may all share. As we look upon men we find many of them possessing the talents that we do not possess. They have splendid physiques, fine personalities, good voices, high intellectual attainments, suavity and many other qualities, and as we look at ourselves we find ourselves to be utterly lacking, and such as we have are very inferior, and so we despair of making a mark in connection with them.

There is another thing about the faithfulness of Jesus that completes our confidence; his faithfulness is coupled with transcendent ability. Paul again comes to us and says: "For I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." There was a day when Paul committed his eternal salvation to Jesus Christ. He left it all in the hands of Jesus; he trusted him as faithful. At that time Paul did not know much about the ability of Jesus, but now, near the end of his life, after the lapse indeed of many years, we know that he has tested Jesus and his testimony is that not only was he faithful but that he was able. We cannot doubt that that Paul had many hard battles, and as he was passing through some of them it would seem that he must fall, but just as he was going down Jesus held out his strong hand and delivered him. "That day" was not far distant to Paul although it has not arrived yet, but Paul knew that his eternal interests were safe in Jesus because he had tested him for so long. Paul knew that God was rich in glory and could supply all his needs, as he wrote to the Philippian Christians.

To every man that has a serious thought about the salvation of his own soul Jesus Christ is presented as a mediator between God and man, in the position of the high priest, and he has three qualities that are absolutely necessary to the completion of that work. First, he has the ability to do it; secondly, he has the willingness to do it; thirdly, he has the faithfulness to do it.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

