

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 forced into marriage with Commissaire Cassion, a Frenchman of Governor La Barre, who is plotting to oust La Salle and his garrison from the frontier Fort St. Louis, on the Illinois River. Adele had overheard the plotters say she had inherited a great fortune from her father and they had kept it from her. La Barre and Cassion learned of the girl's knowledge—hence the marriage and the hurried departure of Cassion and a company for Fort St. Louis. The bride refuses to share sleeping quarters with her husband. She has but one friend, young Rene d'Artigny, a guide. He is chary of helping her. Chevet, the girl's uncle, one of the party, is found murdered. A fierce storm sweeps and wrecks the boats. Adele is rescued by D'Artigny. They learn they had thought one another guilty of Chevet's murder. Adele loves her rescuer. They hide from a search party and with a new found friend, Barbeau, proceed overland toward Fort St. Louis. They find hostile Indians besieging the fort.

CHAPTER XVII.

We Attack the Savages.

It was already so dark that the soldier was almost upon us before I perceived his shadow, but it was evident enough from his first words that he had overheard none of our conversation.

"There are no Indians in the village," he said gruffly, leaning on his gun and staring at us. "I got across to a small island, along the trunk of a dead tree, and had good view of the whole bank yonder. The tepees stand, but not a squaw nor a dog is left."

"Were there any canoes in sight along the shore?"

"Only one, broken beyond repair."

"Then, as I read the story, the tribe fled down the stream, either to join the others on the Illinois, or the whites at the fort. They were evidently not attacked, but had news of the coming of the Iroquois, and escaped without waiting to give battle. 'Tis not likely the wolves will overlook this village long. Are we ready to go forward?"

He disappeared in the darkness, vanishing silently, and we stood motionless waiting our turn to advance. Neither spoke, Barbeau leaning forward, his gun extended, alert and ready. The intense darkness, the quiet night, the mystery lurking amid those shadows beyond, all combined to arouse within me a sense of danger. I could feel the swift pounding of my heart, and I clasped the sleeve of the soldier's jacket merely to assure myself of his actual presence. The pressure of my fingers caused him to glance about.

"Do not be frightened, madame," he whispered encouragingly. "There would be firing yonder if the Iroquois blocked our path."

"Fear not for me," I answered, surprised at the steadiness of my voice. "It is the lonely silence which makes me shrink; as soon as we advance I shall have my nerve again. Have we not waited long enough?"

"Ay, come; but be careful where you place your feet."

He led the way, walking with such slow caution, that, although I followed step by step, not a sound reached my ears. We circled about large rocks, and up a ravine, through which we found barely room for passage, the walls rising steep and high on either side. It was intensely dark down there, yet impossible for us to escape the trail, and at the end of that passage we emerged into an open space, inclosed with woods, and having a grit of sand underfoot. Here the trail seemed to disappear, but Barbeau struck straight across, and in the forest shade beyond we found D'Artigny waiting.

"Do not shoot," he whispered. "I was afraid you might misjudge the way here, as the sand leaves no clear trace. The rest of the passage is through the woods, and up a steep hill. You are not greatly wearied, madame?"

"Oh, no; I have made some false steps in the dark, but the pace has been slow. Do we approach the fort?"

"A half league beyond; a hundred yards more, and we begin the climb. There we will be in the zone of danger, although thus far I perceive no sign of Indian presence. Have you, Barbeau?"

"None except this feather of a war bonnet I picked up at the big rock below."

"A feather! Is it Iroquois?"

"It is cut square, and no Algonquin ever does that."

"Ay, let me see! You are right, Barbeau; 'twas dropped from a Tascarora war bonnet. Then the wolves have been this way."

We crossed the wood, and began to climb among loose stones, finally finding solid rock beneath our feet, the path skirting the edge of what seemed to be a deep gash in the earth, and winding about wherever it could find passage. The way grew steeper and steeper, and more difficult to traverse, although, as we thus rose above the tree limit, the shadows became less dense, and we were able dimly to per-

ceive objects a yard or two in advance. I strained my eyes over Barbeau's shoulder, but could gain no glimpse of D'Artigny. Then we rounded a sharp edge of rock, and met him blocking the narrow way.

"The red devils are there," he said, his voice barely audible. "Beyond the curve in the bank. 'Twas God's mercy I had a glimpse in time, or I would have walked straight into their midst. A stone dropping into the ravine warned me, and I crept on all fours to where I could see."

"You counted them?"

"Hardly that in this darkness; yet 'tis no small party. 'Twould be my judgment there are twenty warriors there."

"And the fort?"

"Short rifle shot away. Once past this party, and the way is easy. Here is my thought, Barbeau. There is no firing, and this party of wolves are evidently hidden in ambush. They have found the trail, and expect some party from the fort to pass this way."

"Or else," said the other thoughtfully, "they lie in wait for an assault at daylight—that would be Indian war."

"True, such might be their purpose, but in either case one thing remains true—they anticipate no attack from below. All their vigilance is in the other direction. A swift attack, a surprise, will drive them into panic. 'Tis a grave risk I know, but there is no other passage to the fort."

"If we had arms, it might be done."

"We'll give them no time to discover what we have—a shot, a yell, a rush forward. 'Twill all be over with before a devil among them gets his second breath. Then 'tis not likely the garrison is asleep. If we once get by there will be help in plenty to hold back pursuit. Barbeau, creep forward about the bank; be a savage now, and make no noise until I give the word. You next, madame, and keep close enough to touch your leader. The instant I yell, and Barbeau fires, the two of you leap up and rush forward. Pay no heed to me."

"You would have us desert you, monsieur?"

"It will be everyone for himself," he answered shortly. "I take my chance, but shall not be far behind."

We clasped hands, and then, as Barbeau advanced to the corner, I followed, my only thought now to do all that was required of me. I did not glance backward, yet was aware that D'Artigny was close behind. Barbeau, lying low like a snake, crept cautiously forward, making not the slightest noise, and closely hugging the deeper shadow of the bank. I endeavored to imitate his every motion, almost dragging my body forward by gripping my fingers into the rock-strewn earth.

We advanced by inches, pausing now and then to listen breathlessly to the low murmur of the Indian voices, and endeavoring to note any change in the posture of the barely distinguishable figures. We were within a very few yards of them, so close, indeed, I could distinguish the individual forms, when Barbeau paused, and, with deliberate caution, rose on one knee. Re-living instantly that he was preparing for the desperate leap, I also lifted my body, and braced myself for the effort. D'Artigny touched me, and spoke, but his voice was so low it scarcely reached my ears.

"Do not hesitate; run swift and straight. Give Barbeau the signal."

What followed to me a delirium

of fever, and remains in memory indistinct and uncertain. I reached out, and touched Barbeau; I heard the sudden roar of D'Artigny's voice, the sharp report of the soldier's rifle. The flame cut the dark as though it were the blade of a knife, and, in the swift fed glare, I saw a savage throw up his arms and fall headlong. Then all was chaos, confusion, death. Nothing touched me, not even a gripping hand, but there were Indian shots, giving me glimpse of the hellish scene, of naked bodies, long, waving hair, eyes mad with terror, and red arms brandished, the rifles they bore shining in the red glare.

I saw Barbeau grip his gun by the barrel and strike as he ran. Again and again it fell crunching against flesh. A savage hand slashed at him with a gleaming knife, but I struck the red arm with my pistol butt, and the Indian fell flat, leaving the way open. We dashed through, but Barbeau grasped me, and thrust me ahead of him, and whirled about, with uplifted rifle to aid D'Artigny, who faced two warriors, naked knife in hand.

"Run, madame, for the fort," he shouted above the uproar. "To my help, Barbeau!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Within the Fort.

I doubt if I paused a second, yet that was enough to give me glimpse of the weird scene. I saw D'Artigny lunge with his knife, a huge savage reeling beneath the stroke, and Barbeau cleave passage to the rescue, the stock of his gun shattered as he struck fiercely at the red devils who blocked his path.

Outnumbered, helpless for long in that narrow space, their only hope lay in a sortie by the garrison, and it was my part to give the alarm. Even as I sprang forward, a savage leaped from the ruck, but I escaped his hand, and raced up the dark trail, the one thought urging me on. God knows how I made it—to me 'tis but a memory of falls over unseen obstacles, of reckless running; yet the distance could have been scarce more than a hundred yards, before my eyes saw the dark shadow of the stockade outlined against the sky.

Crying out with full strength of my voice, I burst into the little open space, then tripped and fell just as the gate swung wide, and I saw a dozen dark forms emerge. One leaped forward and grasped me, lifting me partly to my feet.

"Mon Dieu! a woman!" he exclaimed in startled voice. "What means this, in heaven's name?"

"Quick," I gasped, breaking away, able now to stand on my own feet. "They are fighting there—two white men—D'Artigny—"

"What, Rene! Ay, lads, to the rescue! Cartier, take the lady within. Come with me, you others."

They swept past me, the leader well in advance. I felt the rush as they passed, and had glimpse of vague figures ere they disappeared in the darkness. Then I was alone, except for the bearded soldier who grasped my arm.

"Who was that?" I asked, "the man who led?"

"Boisronnet, Francois de Boisronnet."

"An officer of La Salle's? You, then, are of his company?"

"I am," a bit proudly, "but most of the lads yonder belong with De Baugis. Now we fight a common foe, and forget our own quarrel. Did you say Rene d'Artigny was in the fighting yonder?"

"Yes; he and a soldier named Barbeau."

The fellow stood silent, shifting his feet.

"'Twas told us he was dead," he said finally, with effort. "Some more of La Barre's men arrived three days ago by boat, under a popinjay they call Cassion to recruit De Baugis' forces. De la Durantaye was with him from the portage, so that now they outnumber us three to one. You know this Cassion, madame?"

"Ay, I traveled with his party from Montreal."

"Ah, then you will know the truth, no doubt. De Tonty and Cassion were at swords' points over a charge the latter made against Rene d'Artigny—that he had murdered one of the party at St. Ignace."

"Hugo Chevet, the fur trader."

"Ay, that was the name. We of La Salle's company know it to be a lie. Sacre! I have served with that lad two years, and 'tis not in his nature to knife any man in the back. And so De Tonty said, and he gave Cassion the lie straight in his teeth. I heard their words, and but for De Baugis and De la Durantaye, Francois Cassion would have paid well for his false tongue. Now you can tell him the truth."

"I shall go that, but even my word, I fear, will not clear D'Artigny of the charge. I believe the man to be innocent; in my heart there is no doubt, yet there is so little to be proven."

"Cassion speaks bitterly; he is an enemy."

"Monsieur Cassion is my husband," I said regretfully.

"Your pardon, madame. Ah, I understand it all now. You were supposed to have been drowned in the great lake, but were saved by D'Artigny. 'Twill be a surprise for monsieur, but in this land, we witness strange things. Mon Dieu! see, they come yonder; 'tis Boisronnet and his men."

They approached in silence, mere shadowy figures, whose numbers I could not count, but those in advance bore a helpless body in their arms, and my heart seemed to stop its beating, until I heard D'Artigny's voice in cheerful greeting.

"What, still here, madame, and the gate beyond open!" He took my hand and lifted it to his lips. "My congratulations, your work was well done, and our lives thank you. Madame Cassion, this is my comrade, Francois Boisronnet, whose voice I was never more glad to hear than this night. I commend him to your mercy."

Boisronnet, a mere shadow in the night, swept the earth with his hat. "I mind me the time," he said courteously, "when Rene did me equal service."

"The savages have fled?"

"'Twas short and sweet, madame, and those who failed to fly are lying yonder."

"Yet some among you are hurt?"

"Barbeau hath an ugly wound—ay, bear him along, lads, and have the cut looked to—but as for the rest of us, there is no serious harm done."

I was gazing at D'Artigny, and marked how he held one hand to his side.

"And you, monsieur; you are unscathed?"

"Except for a small wound here, and a head which rings yet from savage blows—no more than a night's



"Mon Dieu! a Woman!"

rest will remedy. Come, madame, 'tis time we were within, and the gates closed."

"Is there still danger, then? Surely now that we are under protection there will be no attack?"

"Not from those we have passed, but 'tis told me there are more than a thousand Iroquois warriors in the valley, and the garrison has less than fifty men, all told. It was luck we got through so easily. Ay, Boisronnet, we are ready."

That was my first glimpse of the interior of a frontier fort, and, although I saw only the little open space lighted by a few waving torches, the memory abides with distinctness. A body of men met us at the gate, dim, indistinct figures, a few among them evidently soldiers from their dress, but the majority clothed in the ordinary garb of the wilderness. Save for one Indian squaw, not a woman was visible, nor did I recognize a familiar face, as the fellows, each man bearing a rifle, surged about us in noisy welcome, eagerly questioning those who had gone forth to our rescue. Yet we were scarcely within, and the gates closed, when a man pressed his way forward through the throng, in voice of authority bidding them stand aside. A blazing torch cast its red light over him, revealing a slender figure attired in frontier garb, a dark face, made alive by a pair of dense brown eyes, which met mine in a stare of surprise.

"Back safe, Boisronnet," he exclaimed sharply. "And have brought in a woman. 'Tis a strange sight in this land. Were any of our lads hurt?"

"None worth reporting, monsieur. The man they carried was a soldier of M. de la Durantaye. He was struck down before we reached the party. There is an old comrade here."

"An old comrade! Lift the torch, Jacques. Faith, there are so few left I would not miss the sight of such a face."

He stared about at us, for an instant uncertain; then took a quick step forward, his hand outstretched.

"Rene d'Artigny!" he cried, his joy finding expression in his face. "Ay, an old comrade, indeed, and only less welcome than M. de la Salle himself. 'Twas a bold trick you played tonight, but not unlike many another I have seen you venture. You bring me message from monsieur?"

"Only that he has sailed safely for France to have audience with Louis. I saw him aboard ship, and was bidden to tell you to bide here in patience and seek no quarrel with De Baugis."

"Easy enough to say; but in all truth I need not seek quarrel—it comes my way without seeking. De Baugis was not so bad—a bit high strung, perhaps, and boastful of his rank, yet not so ill a comrade—but there is a newcomer here, a popinjay named Cassion, with whom I cannot abide. Ah, but you know the best, for you journeyed west in his company. Sacre! the man charged you with murder, and I gave him the lie to his teeth. Not two hours ago we had our swords out, but now you can answer for yourself."

D'Artigny hesitated, his eyes meeting mine.

"I fear, Monsieur de Tonty," he said finally, "the answer may not be so easily made. If it were point of sword, now, I could laugh at the man,

but he possesses some ugly facts difficult to explain."

"Yet 'twas not your hand which did the deed?"

"I pledge you my word to that. Yet this is no time to talk of the matter. I have wounds to be looked to, and would learn first how Barbeau fares. You know not the lady; but of course not, or your tongue would never have spoken so freely—Monsieur de Tonty, Madame Cassion."

He straightened up, his eyes on my face. For an instant he stood motionless; then swept the hat from his head, and bent low.

"Your pardon, madame; we of the wilderness become rough of speech. I should have known, for a rumor had reached me of your accident. You owe life, no doubt, to Sieur d'Artigny."

"Yes, monsieur; he has been my kind friend."

"He would not be the one I love else. We know men on this frontier, madame, and this lad hath seen years of service by my side." His hand rested on D'Artigny's shoulder.

"'Twas only natural, then, that I should resent M. Cassion's charge of murder."

"I share your faith in the innocence of M. d'Artigny," I answered firmly enough, "but beyond this assertion I can say nothing."

"Naturally not, madame. Yet we must move along. You can walk, Rene?"

"Ay, my hurts are mostly bruises."

The torches led the way, the dancing flames lighting up the scene. There was hard, packed earth under our feet, nor did I realize yet that this Fort St. Louis occupied the summit of a great rock, protected on three sides by precipices, towering high above the river. Sharpened palisades of logs surrounded us on every side, with low log houses built against them, on the roofs of which riflemen could stand in safety to guard the valley below.

The central space was open except for two small buildings, one from its shape a chapel, and the other, as I learned later, the guardhouse. A fire blazed at the farther end of the inclosure, with a number of men lounging about it, and illumined the front of a more pretentious building, which apparently extended across that entire end. This building, having the appearance of a barrack, exhibited numerous doors and windows, with a narrow porch in front, on which I perceived a group of men.

As we approached more closely, De Tonty walking between D'Artigny and myself, a soldier ran up the steps, and made some report. Instantly the group broke, and two men strode past the fire, and met us. One was a tall, imposing figure in dragoon uniform, a sword at his thigh, his face full bearded; the other, whom I recognized instantly with a quick intake of breath, was Monsieur Cassion. He was a stride in advance, his eyes searching me out in the dim light, his face flushed from excitement.

"Mon Dieu! what is this I hear?" he exclaimed, staring at the three of us as though doubting the evidence of his own eyes. "My wife alive? Ay, by my faith, it is indeed Adele." He grasped me by the arm, but even at that instant his glance fell upon D'Artigny, and his manner changed.

"Saint Anne! and what means this! So 'tis with this rogue you have been wandering in the wilderness!"

He tugged at his sword, but the dragoon caught his arm.

"Nay, wait, Cassion. 'Twill be best to learn the truth before resorting to blows. Perchance Monsieur Tonty can explain clearly what has happened."

"It is explained already," answered the Italian, and he took a step forward, as though to protect us. "These two, with a soldier of M. de la Durantaye, endeavored to reach the fort, and were attacked by Iroquois. We dispatched men to their rescue, and have all now safe within the palisades. What more would you learn, messieurs?"

Cassion pressed forward, and fronted him, angered beyond control.

"We know all that," he roared savagely. "But I would learn why they hid themselves from me, Ay, madame, but I will make you talk when once we are alone! But now I denounce this man as the murderer of Hugo Chevet, and order him under arrest. Here, lads, seize the fellow."

CHAPTER XIX.

In De Baugis' Quarters.

De Tonty never gave way an inch as a dozen soldiers advanced at Cassion's order.

"Wait, men!" he said sternly. "'Tis no time, with Iroquois about, to start a quarrel, yet if a hand be laid on this lad here in anger, we, who are of La Salle's company, will protect him with our lives—"

"You defend a murderer?"

"No; a comrade. Listen to me, Cassion, and you, De Baugis. I have held quiet to your dictation, but no injustice shall be done to comrade of mine save by force of arms. I know naught of your quarrel, or your charges of crime against D'Artigny, but the lad is going to have fair play. He is no courier du bois, to be killed for your vengeance, but an officer under Sieur de la Salle, entitled to trial and judgment."

"He was my guide; I have authority."

"Not now, monsieur. 'Tis true he served you, and was your employee on the voyage hither. But even in that service, he obeyed the orders of La Salle. Now, within these palisades, he is an officer of this garrison, and subject only to me."

De Baugis spoke, his voice cold, contemptuous.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



I Saw Barbeau Grip His Gun by the Barrel and Strike.

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Acting Director of the Sunday School Course of the Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.)
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LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 10

THE ARREST OF PAUL.

LESSON TEXT—Acts 21:17-40.
GOLDEN TEXT—Thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.—Acts 22:15.

No study of the book of Acts is complete unless the teacher impresses upon his pupils the opportunities for living the Christian life in the normal environment of the home or school, at work or play. Deep interest attaches to every detail leading up to Paul's visit to Rome. Therefore let the teacher trace Paul's journey from Mileta to Jerusalem, which occupied about four weeks, and took place in the early part of the year A. D. 57.

I. The Arrival (vv. 17-26). The Spirit revealed to the disciples and to prophets that if Paul went to this city he would be in great danger, and the Spirit was not forbidding but only teaching him for he knew Paul had a great work to do in Jerusalem, and that he only could do it. Everywhere Paul went he "searched for" (v. 7) disciples, with whom he tarried and whom he enlightened in the way of truth. Arriving in Jerusalem, he appears to have made his home with Mnason, outside of the crowded city, thus being less exposed to danger and finding a place of rest. At a public reception (v. 18) Paul reports of his work, and no doubt he laid his strongest emphasis on what God had wrought through him, among the churches of Asia. The leaders of the Jerusalem church received the gifts Paul brought from the Gentile churches, glorified God for what he had accomplished, but saw clearly that, to accomplish his statesmanlike purpose, something must be done to make clear that the false reports as to Paul's teaching were discredited (vv. 20-22). They therefore resorted to diplomacy (vv. 23-26). To the many thousands of Jews gathered on this festival occasion in the city, some of whom were zealous for the law, they declared first that Paul taught all the Jews which were among the Gentiles not to forsake Moses; second, that he had not taught them not to walk after the customs of Moses. The facts were Paul obeyed the Jewish ceremonial laws personally, as a matter of race, not as a condition of salvation.

II. The Arrest (vv. 27-36). Paul's attempt at conciliation resulted not in peace but in more discord. Every true servant of God is sure to be misrepresented, and it will not do always to attempt to set straight all the lies that are told about him. God will take care of the lies and of our reputations. Most of the charges that men, even Christians, bring against one another are based upon "supposition" (v. 29). It was not a new experience for Paul to be mobbed. As the maddened Jews dragged him out of the temple he must have recalled the treatment of Stephen in which he, himself, had had a hand (7:57, 58). How frequent it is that we, ourselves, are in due time treated in the same way in which we have treated others (Gal. 6:7). It was the intention of the Jews to kill Paul at once without a trial (26:9, 10). They fancied they were doing God's service (John 16:2). This lesson is a striking example of the utter folly and wickedness of mob law. Paul's time had not yet come, and all the mobs on earth could not kill him until God permitted it.

III. The Arraignment (vv. 37-40). Tidings of the riot came to the chief captain, equivalent to our colonel (Acts 23:26). Paul was bound with two chains, one from each of his arms to a soldier, secured, yet left free to walk with his garrisons, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Agabus (v. 21). Mobs usually have great respect for soldiers, for they are inwardly cowardly. No sooner was Paul on the stairs which led to the top of the fortress than the mob, afraid that they were about to be balked of their vengeance, made a mad rush at him, with cries of "Kill him; kill him!" and Paul, unable in his fettered condition to steady himself, was carried off his feet and hurried off in the same path his Master had trod (John 19:15) and he was again to hear that cry. (Ch. 22:22). During all this tumult Paul had but one thought, how he might witness for his Master, and bring some of his blinded accusers to a saving knowledge of Christ. Thus it was that he asked for the privilege of speaking, and most courteously did he make his request. He spoke to the captain in the Greek tongue, not in Hebrew, and great was the surprise of the captain.

Practical Application. When we are attacked, no matter for what cause, if we confidently look for deliverance and exercise self-control, God will take care of us.

Such conduct is disconcerting to our enemies.

Diplomacy is often dangerous and misunderstood.

Circumstantial evidence is never of great value.

There is, however, a desirable form of diplomacy as when Paul addressed the soldiers in his native tongue.

Paul's principle was in essentials, firmness; in non-essentials, liberty.