Beyond the Frontier

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.

Copyright, A. C. McClurg & Co. CHAPTER XXIV-Continued.

-18-I cannot describe my feelings-joy,

sorrow, memory of the past overwhelming me. My eyes were wet with tears, and I could find no words. D'Artigny seemed to understand, yet he made no effort to speak, merely holding me close with his strong arm. So in silence, our minds upon the past and the future, we followed the savages through the black night along the dim trail. For the time I forgot where I was, my weird, ghastly surroundings, the purpose of our stealthy advance, and remembered only my father, and the scenes of childhood. He must have comprehended, for he made no attempt to interrupt my reverie, and his silence drew me closer—the steady pressure of his arm brought me peace.

Suddenly before us loomed the shadow of the great rock, which rose a mighty barrier across the trail, its crest outlined against the sky. The Indians had halted here, and we pressed forward through them, until we came to where the chief and La Forest waited. There was a growing tinge of light in the eastern sky, enabling us to perceive each other's faces. All was tense, expectant, the Indians scarcely venturing to breathe, the two white men conversing in whispers. Sequitah stood motionless as a statue, his lips tightly closed.

"Your scouts ventured no farther?"

questioned D'Artigny. "No; 'twas not safe; one man scaled the rock, and reports the Iroquois

just beyond."

"They hide in covert where I suspected them; but I would see with my own eyes. There is crevice here, as I remember, to give foothold. Ay, here it is, an easy passage enough. Come, La Forest, a glance ahead will make clear my plans."

The two clambered up noiselessly, and outstretched themselves on the flat surface above. The dawn brightened, almost imperceptibly, so I could distinguish the savage forms on either side, some standing, some squatting on the grass, all motionless but alert. their weapons gleaming, their cruel eyes glittering from excitement. La toward me.

"Madame, D'Artigny would have you join him."

Surprised at the request I rested my in the hollow of his arm beside Rene. He glanced aside into my face.

"Do not lift your head," he whispered. "Peer through this cleft in the stone."

Before us was a narrow opening. devoid of vegetation, a sterile patch of stone and sand, and beyond this a brush below so as to make good screen. but sufficiently thinned out above, so that, from our elevation, we could look through the interlaced branches across been chopped away to the palisades of the fort. The first space was filled were lying down, or upon their knees. naked bodies. watchfully peering through toward the fort gates, but a few were standing, or of command.

"you can never attack; there are too many."

"They appear more numerous than they are," he answered confidently. Tuscaroras either: there are Erles youder to the right, and a few renegade of that big tree, the fellow in war bonnet and deerskin shirt-what make you of him?"

"A white man in spite of his paint." "'Twas my guess also. I thought it likely they had a renegade with them, for this is not Indian strategy. La Forest was of the same opinion, although 'twas too dark when he was here for us to make sure."

"For what are they waiting and watching?"

"The gates to open, no doubt. If they suspect nothing within, they will send out a party soon to reconnoiter the trail, and reach the river below for water. It is the custom, and, no doubt, these devils know, and will wait their chance. They urge the laggards now."

Not a sound reached us, every movegesture of the hand. D'Artigny pressed

"Action will come soon," he contincan serve us best here, Adele; there have a bit of cloth-a handkerchlef?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Surely, monsieur; I am to remain the fort gates open."

"Ay, that is it; or if those savages "Yes, monsieur."

His lips touched mine, and I heard him whisper a word of endearment.

"You are a brave girl." "No, monsieur; I am frightened, terribly frightened, but-but I love you, and am a Frenchwoman."

He crept back silently, and I was left alone on the great rock, gazing out anxiously into the gray morning.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Charge of the Illini.

It seemed a long time, yet it could scarcely have exceeded a few moments, for the light of early dawn was still dim and spectral, making those savage figures below appear strange and inhuman, while, through the tree barrier, the more distant stockade was little more than a vague shadow. I could barely distinguish the sharppointed logs, and if any guard passed, his movements were indistinguishable

Had I not known where they were, even the position of the gates would have been a mystery. Yet I lay there, my eyes peering through the cleft in the rock, every nerve in my body throbbing. All had been intrusted to me; it was to be my signal which would send D'Artigny, La Forest, and their Indian allies forward. I must not fail them; I must do my part. Whatever the cost-even though it be his lifenothing could absolve me from this

The Iroquois were massing toward the center, directly in front of the closed gates. The change in formation was made with all the stealthiness of Indian cunning, the warriors creeping sliently behind the concealing bushes, and taking up their new positions according to motions of their chiefs. Those having rifles loaded their weapons, while others drew knives and tomahawks from their belts, and held them glittering in the gray light. The white leader remained beside the big tree. paying no apparent heed to anything excepting the stockade in front. The daylight brightened, but mist clouds overhung the valley, while floating wreaths of fog drifted between the great rock and the fort gates, occasionally even obscuring the Iroquois in vaporous folds. There was no sound, no sight, of those hidden below, waiting my word. I seemed utterly alone.

Suddenly I started, lifting myself slightly on one arm, so as to see more clearly. Ay, the gates were opening, slowly at first, as though the great wooden hinges made resistance; then the two leaves parted, and I had a glimpse within. Two soldiers pushed Forest descended cautiously and turned against the heavy logs, and, as they opened wider, a dozen or more men were revealed, leaning carelessly on their rifles. Boisrondet, bearing gun stenned for foot in his hand, and crept forward ward into the opening, and gazed along the smooth surface until I lay carelessly about over the gray, mistshrouded scene.

> The arm of the white renegade shot into the air, and behind him the massed Iroquois arose to their feet, crouching behind their cover ready to spring. I reached over the rock edge, and dropped the handkerchief.

I must have seen what followed, yet fringe of trees, matted with under- I do not know; the incidents seem burned on my memory, yet are so confused I can place them in no order. The white renegade seemed waiting. his arm upraised. Ere it fell in signal the cleared space where the timber had | to dispatch his wild crew to the slaughter, there was a crash of rifles all about me, the red flare leaping into with warriors, crouching behind the the gray mist-a savage yell from a change expression; slowly he opened cover of underbrush. Most of these hundred throats, and a wild rush of the papers, and glanced at their con-

I saw warriors of the Iroquois fling and lifted his eyes to our faces. up their arms and fall: I saw them moving cautiously about bearing word shrink and shrivel, break ranks and ply, "I am again in command of Fort run. Surprised, stricken, terrified by St. Louis." "Monsieur." I whispered timidly, the warwhoops of the maddened Illini, between enemies, their one and only thought was escape. Two of their chiefs were down, and the white rene-"but it will be a stiff fight. Not all gade, stumbling and falling as though also hurt, dived into the underbrush.

Before they could rally, or even comprehend what had occurred, their as-sailants were upon them. Leaping he said loudly, "I was about to call Mohawks with them. Look, by the foot | prehend what had occurred, their asacross the open, over rock and sand, yelling like fiends, weapons gleaming gates. 'Tis hardly safe to have them stored by royal order. This order in the dull light, the frenzied Illini, en- left thus with all these strange Indians reached Quebec, but was never re- plies were all aboard, several took flamed with revenge, maddened with about." hate, flung themselves straight at them. Rifles flashed in their faces, tomahawks whirled in the air, but nothing stopped that rush. Warriors | mind; bid M. de la Durantaye come tain la Chesnayne's daughter against I could tell La Forest-looked up at naked bodies. I saw D'Artigny, me, seeing us first as he stepped for plished the lost order was placed on gesture of farewell. I watched until stripped to his shirt, and that in rags through, his rifle barrel gripped, a yard | strode forward, sword in hand, in front of them all. I saw La Forest. bare headed, and Sequitah, his Indian here again, you bastard wood ranger?

stolcism forgotten in mad blood lust. the fierce maelstrom of struggle, strik- be. Here, Durantage, bring your men: We lay and watched them, his hand ing, falling, red hands gripping at red | we have a prisoner here to stretch clasping mine. Those warriors who throats, rifle butts flung high, toma- rope, De Testy. I command you in this damning charge. It was his voice had been lying prone rose to their hawks dealing the death blow, knives knees, and, weapons in hand, crouched gleaming as sinewy arms drove them for a spring; the chiefs scattered, care- home. I could not longer distinguish | tigny's breast, but the younger man ful to keep concealed behind cover, enemy from friend; they were inter- stood metionless, his lips smiling, his Barrel locked, struggling like mad dogs, fight- eyes on the other's face. ment noiseless, the orders conveyed by ing as devils might, a wild, tangled

blazing eyes, of uplifted steel. The iroquois had railled from their ued, his lips at my ear, "and I must first shock; already they realized the be ready below to take the lead. You small number of the attackers. Those of La Salle's spawn?" who had fied were turning back; those is no safer spot if you lie low. You on either flank were running toward head bleeding, pressed down the swordthe scene of fight. I saw the white blade, renegade burst from the press, urging "Then watch the fort gates, and if these laggards forward. Scarcely had said bluntly enough, "and just now hurled aside by insone strength, reel-

into each other's eyes. The rifle in D'Artigny's hand was here and watch; then signal you when but a twisted bar of iron; the renegade's only weapon was a murderous kuife, its point reddened with blood. advance into the open-they may not What word was said, I know not, but king's own word to M. la Barre. "Tis I saw D'Artigny fling his bar aside. and draw the knife at his belt. Mon hither to restore Henri de Tonty to his Dieu! I could not look; I know not rightful command of Fort St. Louis." how they fought; I hid my eyes and prayed. When I glanced up again both were gone, the fighting mass was hellish trick." surging over the spit-but the Iroquois were in flight, seeking only some means of escape, while out through the fort gates the soldiers of the garrison were coming on a run, pouring volleys of lead into the fleeing savages. I saw De Tonty, De Baugis, De la Duran- de Tonty, show the man the papers." taye-ay! and there was M. Cassion. back among the stragglers, waving his sword gallantly in the air. It was all over with so quickly I could but sit if he ever saw clearly the printed and and stare; tifey ran past me in pursuit, wild yells echoing through the woods, but all I thought of then was La Barre's signature. M. d'Artigny. I scrambled down the rock, falling heavily in my haste, yet once upon my feet again, rushed forth, reckless of danger. The ground was Look at the paper." strewn with dead and wounded, the victorious Illini already scattered in mercfless, headlong pursuit. Only a group of soldiers remained at the edge of the forest. Among these were De Tenty and La Forest. Neither noticed my approach until I faced them.

"What, madame," exclaimed De Tonty, "you here also?" he paused as though in doubt, "and the Sieur d'Artigny-had he part in this feat of arms?"

"A very important part, monsieur," returned La Forest, stanching a wound on his forehead, yet bowing gallantly to me. "Twas indeed his plan. and I permitted him command as he knows these Illini Indians better than

"But does he live, monsieur?" I broke in anxiously.

"Live! ay, very much alive-see, he omes yonder now. Faith, he fought Jules Lescalles knife to knife, and ended the career of that renegade. Is that not a recommendation, M. de Tonty?

The other did not answer; he was watching D'Artigny approach, his eyes filled with doubt. I stepped forward to greet him, with hands outstretched. He was rags from head to foot, spattered with blood, an ugly wound showing on one cheek, yet his lips and eyes smiled. "'Twas good work, well done," he

aid cheerily. "'Twill be a while before the Iroquois besiege this fort again. Is that not your thought, M. de Tonty?" "I appreciate the service rendered,"

eplied the other gravely. "But you are in peril here. M. Cassion is youder, and still in command." D'Artigny glanced inquiringly at La

Forest, and the latter stepped forward. leather-bound packet in his hands. "Your pardon, M. de Tonty," he said. "I had forgotten my true mission here. I bear orders from the king of France.' "From Louis? La Salle has reached the king's ear?"

"Ay, good results. These are for you, monsieur."

De Tonty took them, yet his thought was not upon their contents but with his absent chief.

"You saw Sieur de la Salle in France? You left him well?"

"More than well-triumphant over all his enemies. He sails for the mouth of the great river with a French col ony; Louis authorized the expedition.' "And is that all?"

"All, except it was rumored at the court that La Barre would not for long remain governor of New France."

The face of the Italian did not tents; then folded them once more, "By grace of the king," he said sim-

We made our way slowly through ords? What does it mean?" realizing only that they were caught the fringe of woods, and across the open space before the fort gates, which still stoud open. Cassion had disappeared; indeed, there was not so much | Cassion, charged Captain la Chesnayne | dogs playing before the tepees. as a single guard at the gate when we enterd, yet we were greeted instantly by his voice.

those soldiers yonder, and close the of injustice, and the estates were re- these were grouped a little party of

"They are Illini, monsieur-our al-Hes."

fell, but the others stumbled over the hither." He stared at D'Artigny and her will. The day this was accomward. A moment he gasped, his voice from the bushes he had plunged failing; then anger conquered, and he

"Mon Dien! What is this? You I had hopes I was rid of you, even at stamped as received the day Cassion hand closed softly over mine. Then they struck and were lost in the cost of a wife. Well, I soon will the name of France!

The point of his sword was at D'Ar-

"Perchance, monsieur," he said quimass of bodies, of waving hair, of etly, "It might be best for you first to speak with this friend of mine." "What friend? Sacre! What is the

fellow to me? Who is he-mother one La Forest, still bareheaded, his fore-

the edge of the rock there in signal, tigny fought his way forth also, tear- cols de la Forest, monsieur, one-time struck me to my knees. The next in- liver and onlons?"

Dieu! you look it. Come, man, what

mummery is this?" "No mummery, monsieur. I left France two months since, bearing the with his indorsement I journeyed

"You He!" Cassion cried hotly, eyes blazing batred and anger, "'tis some

"Monsieur, never before did man say that to me, and live. Were you not felon and thief. I would strike you where you stand. Ay, I mean the words-now listen; lift that sword point, and I shoot you dead. Monsieur

Cassion took them as though in a daze, his hand trembling, his eyes burning with malignant rage. I doubt written words of the document, but he seemed to grasp vaguely the face of

"A forgery," he gasped. "Ah, De Baugis, see here: these damned curs of La Salle would play a trick on me.

The dragoon took it, and smoothed it out in his hands. His face was grave, as his eyes searched the printed

"'Tis the great seal of France," he said soberly, looking about at the faces surrounding him, "and the signature of the governor. How came it here?" "By my hand," returned La Forest proudly. "You know me-Monsieur

Francois la Forest." "Av. I know you, ever a follower of La Salle, and friend of Frontenac. Twas through his influence you got this. 'Tis little use for us to quarrel, M. Cassion-the order is genuine."

"Mon Dieu, I care not for such an rder; it does not supersede my commission; I outrank this De Tonty." "Hush, do not play the fool."

"Better the fool than the coward." "Wait," said La Forest sharply, "the natter is not ended. You are Francois Cassion of Quebec?"

"Major of infantry, commissaire of the Governor La Barre."

"So the titles read in this document I arrest you by king's order for trea-



Cassion Leaped Forward and Drove Sword Point Into D'Artigny.

son to France, and mutilation of official records. Here is the warrant, M. de Baugis, and your orders to convey the prisoner to Quebec for trial."

Cassion's face went white, and he struggled madly for breath. De Baugis grasped the paper, so startled at this new development as to be incapable of comprehension.

"Under arrest? For what, monsieur? Treason, and mutilation of official rec-

"This-the man knows, and will not deny the charge. False testimony sworn to, and signed by this Francois with cowardice and treason. In consequence the latter was broken of his command, and his estates forfeited to slowly, their backs supporting heavy the crown. Later, through the efforts burdens, which they bore to two ca-"I was about to call of Frontenac, the king was convinced corded. This Cassion was then private secretary to the governor, and the pa- off into the stream. per came into his hands. Later, to "Pah! an Indian is an Indian to my bush up the scandal, he married Cap-

"You saw it?"

"Yes, I had the files searched secretly. The order was dispatched from France five years ago, but was departed from Quebec.

My eyes were upon the speaker, and I failed to note how the accused met which drew my attention - highmitched harsh, unnatural, "Mon Dieu! 'twas not I-'twas La

Tell that in Quebec; though little good 'twill do you. M. de Baugis, in king's name I order this man's

I saw De Baugis step forward, his hand our stretched; then all was confusion and struggle. With the hoarse beast, Cassian leaned for snarl of a ward, struck La Forest with his shoulder, and drove sword point into D'Ar-"The company is a good one," he tigny. De Tonyty gripped him, but was you see them open drop the cloth over he attained the outer edge, when D'Ar- well worth belonging to. I am Fran- ing back so that the weight of his body it be too much to ask you to have

I will wait just below, but from where ing the mass asunder with sweep of commandant at Detroit; at present stant, his sword point dripping blood. we are we can see nothing. You un- rifle. They stood face to face, glaring messenger from the king of France." the runner was beyond reach, speeding "King's messenger - you! Mon for the open gate. What followed I know from word of others, and no view I had of it.

D'Artigny had fallen, huddled in a heap on the grass, and I dragged myself to him on my knees. I heard oaths. a shuffling of feet, a rush of bodies, a voice I did not recognize shouting some order-then the sharp crack of a rifle, and silence. I cared not what had occurred; I had D'Artigny's head in my arms, and his eyes opened and smiled up at me full of courage.

"You are badly hurt?" "No, I think not; the thrust was too high. Lift me, and I breathe better The man must have been mad."

"Surely yes, monsieur; think you he had hope of escape?" "'Tis likely he thought only of revenge. Ah, you are here also, De

"Yes, lad; there is small use for me yonder. You are not seriously struck?" "I bleed freely, but the thrust was in the shoulder. I could stand, I think.

with your aid." On his feet he leaned heavily on us both, yet would not be led away, until La Forest joined us. He held in his hand some papers, yet neither of us

questioned him.

"Monsieur de Tonty." he said, "I vould have private word with you." "When I help D'Artigny to his bed. and have look at his wound. Yet is it not matter of interest to these as

well?" "I take it so." "Then speak your message-M. Cas-

sion is dead?" "The sentry's bullet found his heart, monsieur."

"I saw him fall. Those papers were upon him-are they of value?"

"That I know not: they possess no meaning to me, but they were addressed to the man killed at St. Ignace."

"Hugo Chevet?" I exclaimed. "My uncle; may I not see them, monsieur?" De Tonty placed them in my handsletter from a lawyer in Quebec, with form of petition to the king, and a report of his search of the archives of New France. The other document was the sworn affidavit of Jules Beaubaou, a clerk of records, that he had seen and read a paper purporting to be a restoration from the king to the heirs of Captain la Chesnayne. It was signed and sealed. I looked up at the faces surrounding me: startled and frightened at this witness from the dead.

"They are papers belonging to Cheet?" asked De Tonty.

"Yes, monsieur-see. He must have known, suspected the truth before our departure, yet had no thought such villainy was the work of M. Cassion. In Use for Over 30 Years. He sought evidence."

"That is the whole story, no doubt. La Barre learned of his search, for he would have spies in plenty, and wrote his letter of warning to Cassion. The latter, fearing the worst, and desperate, did not even besitate at murder to gain possession of these documents. Fate served him well, and gave him D'Artigny as a victim. I wonder only the same brand of cigarettes for the that he did not long ago destroy the past seven years." papers."

"There is always some weakness in crime." commented La Forest, "and the man has paid penalty for his. It would be my guess he desired to place chill Tonic is equally valuable as a Genthem in La Barre's hands in proof of eral Tonic because it contains the well his loyalty. But, messieurs, D'Artigny needs to have his wound dressed. We can discuss all this later."

. It was two days later, and the bright sunshine rested on Fort St. Louis, flecking the sides of the great rock with gold, and bridging the broad valley below. D'Artigny, yet too weak to rise unaided, sat in a chair Barbeau had made beside the open window, and to his call I joined him, my arm on his shoulder as I also gazed down upon the scene below. It was one of peace now, the silvery Illinois winding hither and you among its green islands, the shadowy woods darkening one bank, and the vast meadows stretching northward from the other. Below the bend an Indian village, al ready rebuilt and occupied, slept in the sun, and I could see children and

Down the sharp trail from the fort a line of Indian packers were toiling noes resting against the bank. About white men, and when at last the suntheir places at the paddles, and pushed

There was waving of hands, and one among them—even at that distance our window, and raised his hat in they rounded the rock and disappeared on their long journey to Quebec, until the others-exiles of the wildernessturned away and began to climb upward to the fort gates. D'Artigny's

"You are sad, sweetheart: you long. too for New France?"

"No, dear one," I answered, and he read the truth in my eyes. "Wherever you are is my home. On this rock in the great valley we will serve each other-and France.

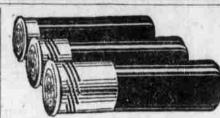
THE END.

Something New, Please. "Can you bear it if I tell you somehing serious?" ventured the young usband.

"Yes; don't keep anything from ne," gasped the bride. "Remember, this does not mean that

"Don't break my heart. What Is It?" "Well, my dear, I'm getting tired of angel food every day for dinner. Would

ny love for you is growing less."



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The Bluff That Failed. "No," said the fair, but frigid maid, "I wouldn't marry any man on-

earth. "I get you," replied the practical youth. "My trusty aeroplane is anchored to the trusty lightning rod, and a friend of mine who is a sky pilot, will gladly tie the knot above the

clouds. And seeing that her bluff was called the fair one struck a match to the iceberg pedestal on which she was posing, and fell into his waiting arms.

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