

The MAD of the FOREST

By RANDALL PARRISH
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CHAPTER XXII—Continued.

He lowered himself into the stream, which was deep to the shore, as silently as a ghost. A dozen feet away I lost sight of him entirely amid the dim, dancing shadows. Then I followed with equal caution, my face turned up to the sky. It was a dark night, but with a few stars visible peeping down through rifts of cloud. The small river was not wide, nor the current particularly swift, and I had not been carried far down stream when the overhanging branches of the opposite bank gave shelter. I drew myself ashore, and sat there, shivering in my wet clothes, the night air chill, and stared anxiously about, and across to the shore we had just left.

I moved down the shore cautiously, keeping well below the concealing bank until I found Brady. He was crouched in the shadow of a great tree root, his whole attention riveted on the opposite side.

"There are no signs of pursuit!" "Not that I can see. I have watched here some minutes, but there has been no movement along the bank. We will move on down stream."

It was hard walking amid the tangled roots, and we made slow work of it. Brady, in advance, stumbled once or twice, and I noticed, held one hand pressed against his side as though from pain, breathing heavily. To our left, but some distance away, a voice called, and was answered by another. So, tolling on, we came to a sharp bend in the stream.

"It must be about opposite here, Hayward," he said stopping. "The girl told you the boat would be. What is that jumping shadow yonder? Your eyes are younger than mine."

I looked where he pointed, shading my eyes, and gradually focusing the outline until they assumed definite shape.

"It is a big tree bent down over the river; no doubt the one she meant."

"You see no movement?" "I strained my eyes, searching the dark shore inch by inch, but could perceive nothing; the lights of the fires were far away."

"It is still as death over there."

He shot a swift glance at me, as if the words pleased him little. In the dim starshine his face appeared ghastly white.

"Perhaps the days of miracles are not gone," he said doubtfully, "and Girty may have played fair. Anyhow there is nothing to be done now but test it. Come on, lad; we'll take to water again."

The cheerful note in his voice bolstered my own courage. We swam straight this time, with steady stroke, our eyes scanning the bank we were approaching. And the canoe was there, snuggled under the leaning tree, bow to bank, rendered shapeless by a covering of broken branches. We lay hold of the sides, standing waist deep in water, our eyes searching the high bank towering dark above us. There was no movement, no sound, and I lowered the branches one by one into the water, and permitted them to float silently down stream.

Concealed by the shade of the great tree I waded cautiously ashore and crept out into a mass of roots. The higher bank rose sheer before me. To the right there was an opening, as if a trail led down to the river, and revealed things against the upper sky, something moved. For an instant I could tell no more; then I recognized a human figure stealing cautiously toward me through the gloom. It moved silently as a spirit, and my heart beat furiously as I rose up and started. She was close upon me before I was sure.

"Here."

"Oh, a little catch in the quick whisper; then—then it is you; how—how did you come here?"

I drew her back into the deeper shadow, and told her the brief story in swift words, clinging to her hands, as I laid her down. I could not distinguish her face, but she listened, her soft breath on my cheek.

"Oh, I am so glad—so glad, monsieur, I did not know until after I gave the signal. I—I came down here to be extra—An to my good-by," she faltered, "and—"

"And—"

"And—"

"And—"

"And—"

"And—"

"And—"

"And—"

"Never mind that; will you go as I say?"

There was a silvery gleam of star on her upturned face, and I could see her eyes, startled, puzzled, half frightened, gazing up into mine. Then the long lashes drooped over them.

"Yes, monsieur," she said, her lips trembling. "I will go with you."

The dawn found me with the paddle, but Rene still wide awake. There was a thin, gray fog over the river, which turned to purple as the light strengthened, and we were at the apex of a great bend, the course of the stream ahead leading into the northwest. That was not our direction, and besides I felt if there was pursuit it would be safer far ashore. Just as the sun broke through the mist we came unexpectedly to the mouth of a small stream leading into the main river from the south. So thoroughly was it concealed by a thick growth of bushes, that we would have slipped by, had I not been skirting the shore closely, seeking some such opening. I headed the canoe straight in, pressing aside the branches to gain passage, and found beyond a narrow creek, up which we managed to paddle for several hundred yards. Then I stepped overboard, and dragged the light craft still higher, until I discovered a place of concealment behind a huge rotting log.

Here we left it, Rene and I bearing with us the guns and our small store of provisions. I had cut a cane for Brady, and, with its help, he managed to get along slowly, although sight of his face made my heart ache. Thus in single file we waded up the tiny stream, until we attained a ledge of rocks where our feet would leave no trail. Over these we toiled, helping each other, until we came to the upland, into an open forest, carpeted with autumn leaves. By this time Brady was too exhausted to go further, sinking helplessly on the ground. Rene also looked worn and heavy-eyed, and I had no heart to urge them on. We ate sparingly of what food we had, but Brady barely touched his portion. I wrapped him in our only blanket, and the three of us slept.

It was the gray dawn when mademoiselle awoke me, shaking me soundly ere I could be aroused. That something was wrong I perceived instantly from the expression of her face, and sat up, glancing hastily about, expecting the approach of savages.

"What is it?"

"He is gone, monsieur! Monsieur Brady is gone."

"Gone! You mean left camp. Why that is impossible; he could barely walk."

"But he is not here, monsieur," she insisted. "See; it was there he lay. I will tell you all I know. I woke up in the night and thought of him, of how hard it was for so strong a man to be so weak and ill. Then I got up and went over quietly to be sure he was all right. But he was awake, monsieur, starting up at the sky with eyes wide open. He saw me, and said he was nervous and could not sleep. No, he told me he was not in pain, but complained of being cold. I spread more leaves over him, and he said that was better. Then—then he took my hand and kissed it, and begged me to go back and—"

"And he lay down. He was very nice and gentle, and smiled at me. So I went back, and crept into my leaves, and tried to sleep. He did not move, yet I lay there a long while thinking, I—think I cried a little, monsieur, for I felt so sorry. At last I slept again. It was just a little light when I awoke once more, and my first memory was of him. I went over there and—"

"And he was gone. I could see where he had rested in the leaves, and the blanket on the ground, but—but he was not there. I sought for him, but there was no trace—nothing. So I came and woke you."

"I was on my feet, a feeling of dread tugging at my heart. I—"

"I—"

"I—"

"I—"

"I—"

"I—"

"I—"

"I—"

"I—"

"I—"

"I—"

Monsieur Brady has—lost—killed himself?"

"He has given his life for others, my girl—for you and me, and those soldiers of St. Clair's."

She stood a moment silent, tears on her cheeks, looking blindly out at the water. Then she sank upon her knees, holding the crucifix against her face. I could see the movement of her lips, but heard nothing; only I knew that she prayed for his soul, and my own eyes were moist as I knelt beside her. Then I lifted her up by the hand, and we went back up the hill to the camp.

There was nothing to hope for in waiting, and all our duty lay beyond. Without the exchange of a word we packed what few things we had, and started, following the bank of the stream.

It was a raw November morning that we came unexpectedly upon St. Clair's outpost. The ground was covered with snow, and the little pools were skimmed over with thin ice. It had been too cold to rest, and we had walked much of the night, afraid to build a fire. Chilled to the marrow by the icy wind that swept through the trees and buffeted us, I had wrapped the girl in our only blanket, fastening it about her head and face, hurt as I did so by the dumb, patient, bewildered look in her eyes. She tried to protest, yet at my first stern word ceased and wrapped herself closely in the folds. I was in front, breaking the trail that she might have easier marching, when suddenly a man stepped out of a thicket, and with gun at my breast roughly commanded a halt. I paused instantly, uncertain as to which side the challenger was on, yet a glance at his face and dress reassured me.

"Who are you, an' what do yer want?" he asked suspiciously.

"I am an officer of the Fort Harmar garrison," I answered, "with news from the north. To what command do you belong?"

"The Kentucky militia," he acknowledged sullenly. "Colonel Oldham."

"Where is your colonel?"

"Back yonder on that rise o' ground; you kin go on, but I'll keep an eye on yer."

We left him, following the direction pointed out, hearing him call to some one in our rear, yet paying no heed.



"He Has Given His Life for Others, My Girl."

The very ease with which he had passed us on was evidence enough of lax discipline, and small conception of the danger of the command. There was a plain track through the snow, which led to a camp-fire blazing cheerily in a grove of trees, with maybe a dozen men clustered about it. No one appeared to notice us as we drew near.

"Which is Colonel Oldham?" I asked, glancing about the group. One stood up, a smooth-faced, ruddy-cheeked man of fifty, with iron-gray hair, and eyes that looked as if they laughed easily. I liked him at first glance.

"That is my name," he said shortly. "What is it? St. Denis, man!" as his glance swept over me, "you look as if you had been far from the settlements and had a hard trip."

"I have, sir; I come from the Maumee. I am an officer of regulars with news of importance for St. Clair."

"Every eye was on me now and Oldham took a step nearer."

"The Maumee!" he exclaimed. "Ay, that is a journey. News for St. Clair, you say—what news? There was a rumor down below that the Indians of the northwest were mustering. Know you anything of that?"

"They have already mustered, sir; I was at their rendezvous. Even now they are at my heels—the whole of them, Shawnees, Miami, Delaware, Wyandots and for all I know, as many more. There are white rangers with them, and English officers I suspect. I saw Hamilton myself on the Maumee, and he evidently was managing affairs."

There was a muttering of voices, and Oldham let out an oath.

"Well, sir, I believe it, but I'll be hanged if you can make St. Clair. The sergeant old man may listen to you, but I don't think that. He thinks this is a pleasure party we are on. What do you think he did a week ago?"

I looked at him, uncomprehending, amazed by such glib words and open mockery.

"Look back a while—regiment of regulars on a wild-goose chase after the Indians, and we within fifty miles of the Maumee."

I glanced back at her, standing almost behind me, the blanket drawn over her head and face.

"Take it off, Rene," I said quietly. "Yes, monsieur."

Her hands obediently threw the wrapping aside, permitting it to drape over her shoulders. She lifted her head, and stood facing them, with eyes centering upon Oldham. He gasped, and jerked the hat from off his head.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered. "A white woman?"

"A French girl, sir, whom I found with the Wyandots. Can you send us back to St. Clair?"

He stared at her so long, hat still in hand, that I thought he did not hear. An officer touched him on the shoulder and spoke a word.

"Ah, yes, certainly—St. Clair. At once, sir, but I don't envy you your reception. By Jove, I lost my wits seeing such a woman as that here in this hole. Someone send Masters here."

He came quickly, a youngish lad, with white hair and eyebrows, but intelligent face, who never took his eyes off Rene. Oldham spoke brusquely:

"Take this officer and the—"

"General St. Clair at once. Tell Butler I say it is important, that he be given immediate interview. Here, wait! get the lady a horse somewhere. Captain, can he take yours?"

"With pleasure, sir; I will fetch the animal."

They watched us depart until we had crossed the ridge, Masters and I trudging through the snow at the horse's head. Rene had drawn up her blanket, but I could see her eyes watching me, when I glanced around at her. It was not long, however, until we came out of the forest, into a bit of lowland near the river, where a dozen tents, grimy and dirty looking, stood on the bank. There were soldiers everywhere, gathered about the camp fires, with a few guards patrolling beats along the forest edge. Masters led the way through the motley crowd up to the central tent. There was delay there, Rene sitting motionless in the saddle, and I waiting impatiently beside her. At last Masters came back.

"He will see you, sir."

"Very well; are there any women in camp?"

"A few, sir; non-com' wives mostly, washerwomen and cooks; they are in those two tents there—the officers' kitchens."

"Take the lady over there, and leave her in good hands, Rene."

She looked down at me.

"Yes, monsieur."

"This soldier will take you to some women who will take care of you until I come. You will wait for me."

"Yes, monsieur."

I waited until they started, and then advanced to the tent. A tall, slender man, in a colonel's uniform, pointed the way within, and I stepped through the narrow opening. The interior was plain—a bearskin stretched on the ground, two officers on campstools against the canvas; a sentry beside the open flap standing motionless; a rude table of one unplanned board, and behind it seated, St. Clair. He was a spare man, with broad shoulders and prominent nose, wearing a long queue of thick, gray hair, which was plainly visible below his three-cornered hat. He was attired in blanket coat, with hood hanging down his back. I had met him once, but it was clear he retained no recollection of me, as he surveyed me coldly across the table.

"Well, sir," he snapped, "Colonel Oldham says you bring news. Who are you?"

"Ensign Hayward of Fort Harmar," I answered, bringing my hand up in salute. "I was sent with a message to the Wyandots."

The stern line of his face broke into a grim smile.

"Ah, yes, I recall that. One of Harmar's fool notions. Told him as much when I got back. Well, your peace offering didn't do much good, did it? I hear there is hell brewing in those north woods."

"It is already brewed, sir. The tribes have got together to crush you. They rendezvoused on the Maumee."

"Huh! that is a ways away. No great danger from that source till we're ready. What tribes were there, do you know?"

OUT-OF-ORDINARY PEOPLE

SAYS CREOLES ARE NOW UP TO DATE



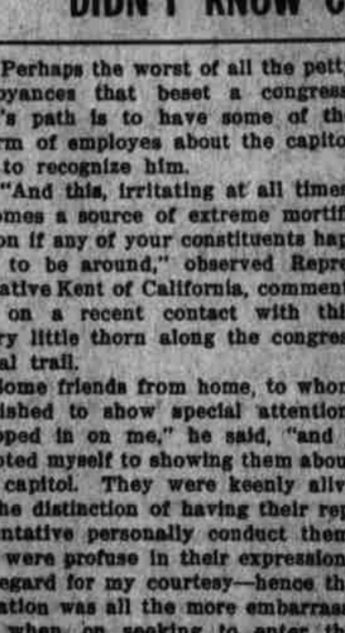
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"Within the last thirty years there has been widespread adoption of what may be called up-to-date American ways of thinking by the Creoles. There are those still left, however, who adhere to the old traditions of the blood, for we are all proud of our French and Spanish ancestry."

"Not so very long ago I had occasion to go into the new residential district of New Orleans. I took with me in my car a relative who was a native and resident of New Orleans—a Creole, like myself. Now, although he was well along in years, he was as much a stranger and exhibited as much novel interest in that quarter of the city as though he had been fresh from a foreign land. He knew New Orleans well; but it was the New Orleans of old, the New Orleans of the Creoles who have lived all their lives there into old age who have never been north of Canal street, the main thoroughfare."

DIDN'T KNOW CONGRESSMAN KENT



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"And this, irritating at all times, becomes a source of extreme mortification if any of your constituents happen to be around," observed Representative Kent of California, commenting on a recent contact with this briery little thorn along the congressional trail.

"Some friends from home, to whom I wished to show special attention, dropped in on me," he said, "and I devoted myself to showing them about the capitol. They were keenly alive to the distinction of having their representative personally conduct them, and were profuse in their expressions of regard for my courtesy—hence the situation was all the more embarrassing when, on seeking to enter the members' gallery, I was incidentally halted by a raw and ignorant assistant—something-or-other and curtly forbidden to enter."

"Of course, it was all straightened out and the fellow apologized. But the damage had been done. After that miserable little episode things were different in that party. The paint had come off the doll and I could feel that they felt I must be small potatoes if an insignificant little whifflet like that didn't know who I was. You see, they couldn't get out of their back-home way of looking at a congressman. Back there, everybody knows him; even the boy who brings the groceries knows him by sight—and to find some one right here under the very dome who does not!

"And the worst of it all is you cannot explain to them that there are 400 of us right here; explaining would only magnify it.

"So, you just have to let them take home the memory of you—with the sawdust leaking out!"

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CONGRESSMAN HENRY'S WITNESSES



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It happened that a terrific blizzard struck the capital that very morning. As the committee members, witnesses, reporters and others gathered the blast rattled fiercely at the casements and the swirling snow and sleet drifted high against the window panes. When some remark was made about certain witnesses not appearing on account of the weather Representative Henry of Texas, who is an ardent advocate for a change of date, seized the opportunity.

"Witnesses!" he exclaimed dramatically. "Witnesses! There are our witnesses!" and pointed out through the windows. "Hear them testify! Boreas, the north wind, and snow and sleet and driving storm and biting cold. They are testifying to their presence here at this season."

BRILLIANT MME. POINCARÉ



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Mme. Poincaré's position is, of course, as delicate as brilliant. One of the republic's dogmas is that France requires no queen. For instance, heretofore when a French president drove in state to Longchamps, honoring commerce, sport and fashion in the culmination of the season, nobody noticed if his wife was present with him.

But Mme. Poincaré is different. And Poincaré is very different. His wife must take her place. It is his principle; it is his joy. And Paris admires. He is pretty sure to be attacked for it. In the general attack which is preparing against him, but Paris admires a man who will fight. Certainly he fought for his wife before the royal visit.

Mme. Poincaré rode beside Queen Alexandra. She had King George's arm in public ceremonies. She was photographed standing as dignified as an empress, very young and striking, by King George's side. She was the president's wife, as he admitted in the royal proclamation before the queen's arrival.