

THE REFUGEES

By A. CONAN DOYLE,
Author of "The Return of Sherlock Holmes"

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(Continued from Wednesday.)

"What is it, father? What can we do for you?" cried Adele. "We are in America, and here is Amory and here am I, your children."

But the old man shook his head. "The Lord has brought me to the promised land, but he has not willed that I should enter into it," said he. "But at least I should wish, like Moses, to gaze upon it if I cannot set foot upon it."

A minute later the old merchant was on deck, and the two young men had seated him upon a coil of rope with his back against the mast, where he should be away from the crush. The soldiers were already crowding down into the boats, and all were so busy over their own affairs that they paid no heed to the little group of refugees who had gathered round the stricken man. He turned his head painfully from side to side, and his lids fell slowly over his eyes, which had been looking away out past Point Levi at the rolling woods and the faroff mountains. Adele gave a quick cry of despair and threw her arms round the old man's neck.

"He is dying, Amory; he is dying!" she cried.

A stern Franciscan friar who had been telling his beads within a few paces of them heard the cry.

"He is indeed dying," he said as he gazed down at the aching face. "Has the old man had the sacraments of the church?"

But the old Huguenot had opened his eyes, and with a last flicker of strength he pushed away the gray hooded figure which bent over him.

"I left all that I love rather than yield to you," he cried, "and think you that you can overcome me now?"

The Franciscan started back at the words, and his hard, suspicious eyes shot from De Catinat to the weeping girl.

"So!" said he. "You are Huguenots, then?"

"Hush! Do not wrangle before a man who is dying!" cried De Catinat in a voice as fierce as his own.

"Before a man who is dead," said Amos Green solemnly.

As he spoke the old man's face had relaxed, his thousand wrinkles had been smoothed suddenly out as though an invisible hand had passed over them, and his head fell back against the mast. Adele remained motionless, with her arms still clasped round his neck and her cheek pressed against his shoulder. She had fainted.

De Catinat raised his wife and bore her down to the cabin of one of the ladies who had already shown them some kindness. A brief order was given that the old merchant should be buried in the river that night, and then, save for a sailmaker who fastened the canvas round him, mankind had done its last for Theophile Catinat. With the survivors, however, it was different, and when the troops were all disembarked they were mustered in a little group upon the deck, and an officer of the governor's staff decided upon what should be done with them. He was a portly, good humored, ruddy checked man, but De Catinat saw with apprehension that the Franciscan friar walked by his side as he advanced along the deck and exchanged a few whispered remarks with him.

"It shall be seen to, good father; it shall be seen to," said the officer impatiently. "I am a zealous servant of the holy church."

"I trust that you are, M. de Bonneville. With so devout a governor as M. de Deonville it might be an ill thing for you in this world for the officer of his household to be lax."

The soldier glanced angrily at his companion.

"I would have you remember, father," said he, "that if faith is a virtue charity is no less so." Then, speaking in English, "Which is Captain Savage?"

"Ephraim Savage of Boston,"

"And Master Amos Green?"

"Amos Green of New York."

"And Master Tomlinson?"

"John Tomlinson of Salem."

"And Master Mariners Hiram Jefferson, Joseph Cooper, Seek-Grace Spaulding, Paul Cushing, all of Massachusetts Bay?"

"We are here."

"It is the governor's orders that all whom I have named shall be conveyed at once to the trading brig Hope, which is yonder ship with the white paint line. She sails within the hour for the English provinces."

A buzz of joy broke from the cast-away mariners at the prospect of being so speedily restored to their homes, and they hurried away to gather together the few possessions which they had saved from the wreck. The officer put his list in his pocket and stepped across to where De Catinat leaned moodily against the bulwarks.

"What is to be done with us?" asked De Catinat.

"You are to be confined to the ship until she sails, which will be in a week at the furthest."

"And then?"

"You are to be carried home in her and handed over to the governor of Rochelle, to be sent back to Paris. Those are M. de Deonville's orders."

De Bonneville left De Catinat with a few blunt words of sympathy, but the friar still paced the deck, with a steeple glance at him from time to

time, and two soldiers who were stationed upon the poop passed and repassed within a few yards of him. They had orders evidently to watch his movements. As he stood gazing his attention was drawn away by the swish of oars, and a large boat full of men passed immediately underneath where he stood.

It held the New Englanders, who were being conveyed to the ship which was to take them home. There were the four seamen huddled together, and there in the sheets were Captain Ephraim Savage and Amos Green conversing together and pointing to the shipping. The grizzled face of the old Puritan and the bold features of the woodsman were turned more than once in his direction, but no word of farewell and no kindly wave of the hand came back to the lonely exile. He stooped his face to his arms and burst in an instant into a passion of sobs. Before he raised his eyes again the brig had hoisted her anchor and was tacking under full canvas out of the Quebec basin. De Catinat's bunk was next to a porthole, and it was his custom to keep this open, as the caboose in which the cooking was done for the crew was close to him and the air was hot and heavy. That night he found it impossible to sleep, and he lay tossing under his blanket, thinking over every possible means by which they might be able to get away from this cursed ship. But even if they got away where could they go to then? All Canada was sealed to them. The woods to the south were full of ferocious Indians. The English settlements would, it was true, grant them freedom to use their own religion, but what could his wife and he do without a friend, strangers among folk who spoke another tongue? Had Amos Green remained true to them, then indeed all would have been well. But he had deserted them.

But what was that? Above the gentle lapping of the river he had suddenly heard a sharp, clear "Hut!" Perhaps it was some passing boatman or Indian. Then it came again—that eager, urgent summons. He sat up and stared about him. It certainly must have come from the open porthole. Something fell upon his chest with a little tap and, rolling off, rattled along the boards. He sprang up, caught a lantern from a hook and flashed it upon the floor. There was the missile which had struck him—a little golden brooch. As he lifted it up and looked closer at it a thrill passed through him. It had been his own, and he had given it to Amos Green upon the second day that he had met him.

This was a signal, then, and Amos Green had not deserted them, after all. He dressed himself, all in a tremble with excitement, and went upon deck. It was pitch dark, and he could see no one, but the sound of regular footfalls somewhere in the fore part of the ship showed that the sentinels were still there.

The guardsman walked over to the side and peered down into the darkness. He could see the loom of a boat. "Who is there?" he whispered.

"Is that you, De Catinat?"

"Yes."

"We have come for you."

"God bless you, Amos!"

"Is your wife there?"

"No, but I can rouse her."

"Good! But first catch this cord. Now pull up the ladder."

De Catinat gripped the line which was thrown to him and on drawing it up found that it was attached to a rope ladder furnished at the top with two steel hooks to catch on to the bulwarks. He placed them in position and then made his way very softly to the cabin amidships in the ladies' quarter, which had been allotted to his wife. In ten minutes Adele had dressed and, with her valuables in a little bundle, had slipped out from her cabin. Together they made their way upon deck once more and went aft under the

shadow of the bulwarks. They were almost there when De Catinat stopped suddenly and ground out an oath through his clenched teeth. Between them and the rope ladder there was standing in a dim patch of murky light the grim figure of a Franciscan friar.

But De Catinat was not a man with whom it was safe to trifle. His life had been one of quick resolve and prompt action. Was this vindictive friar at the last moment to stand between him and freedom? It was a dangerous position to take. The guardsman pulled Adele into the shadow of the mast, and then, as the monk advanced, he sprang out upon him and seized him by the gown. As he did so the other's cowl was pushed back, and instead of the harsh features of the ecclesiastic De Catinat saw with amazement the shrewd gray eyes and strong, stern face of Ephraim Savage. At the same instant another figure appeared over the side, and the warm hearted Frenchman threw himself into the arms of Amos Green.

"It's all right," said the young hunter, disengaging himself with some embarrassment from the other's embrace. "We've got him in the boat, with a buckskin glove jammed into his gullet."

"Who, then?"

"The man whose cloak Captain Ephraim there has put round him. He came on us when you were away rousing your lady. Is the lady there?"

"Here she is."

"As quick as you can, then, for some one may come."

Adele was helped over the side and seated in the stern of a birch bark canoe. The three men unhooked the ladder and swung themselves down by a rope, while two Indians who held the paddles pushed silently off from the ship's side and shot swiftly up the stream. A minute later a dim loom behind them and the glimmer of two yellow lights were all that they could see of the St. Christophe.

"Take a paddle, Amos, and I'll take one," said Captain Savage, stripping off his monk's gown. "I felt safer in this on the deck of your ship, but it don't help in a boat."

"I hope, madame, that all is well with you," said Amos.

"Nay, I can hardly understand what has happened or where we are."

"Nor can I, Amos."

"Did you not expect us to come back for you, then?"

"I did not know what to expect."

"Well, now, surely you could not think that we would leave you without a word."

"I confess that I was cut to the heart by it."

"I feared that you were when I looked at you with the tail of my eye and saw you staring so blackly over the bulwarks at us. But if we had been seen talking or planning they would have been upon our trail at once."

"And what did you do?"

"We left the brig last night, got ashore on the Beupre side, arranged for this canoe and lay dark all day. Then tonight we got alongside and I roused you easily, for I knew where you slept. The friar nearly spewed all when you were below, but we gagged him and passed him over the side."

"Ah, it is glorious to be free once more! And where are we going?"

"Ah, there you have me. It is this way or none, for we can't get down to the sea. We must make our way overland as best we can, and we must leave a good stretch between Quebec and us before the day breaks, for, from what I hear, they would rather have a Huguenot prisoner than an Iroquois saganore. By the eternal, I cannot see why they should make such a fuss over how a man chooses to save his own soul."

All night they toiled up the great river, straining every nerve to place themselves beyond the reach of pursuit. By keeping well into the southern bank and so avoiding the force of the current they sped swiftly along, for both Amos and De Catinat were practiced hands with the paddle, and the two Indians worked as though they were wire and whipcord instead of flesh and blood. When at last morning broke and the black shaded imperceptibly into gray they were far out of sight of the citadel and of all trace of man's handiwork. Virgin woods in their wonderful many colored autumn dress flowed right down to the river's edge on either side, and in the center was a little island.

"I've passed here before," said De Catinat. "I remember marking that great maple with the blaze on its trunk when last I went with the governor to Montreal. That was in Frontenac's day, when the king was first and the bishop second."

The redskins, who had sat like terra cotta figures, without a trace of expression upon their set, hard faces, pricked up their ears at the sound of that name.

"My brother has spoken of the great Onontio," said one of them, glancing round. "We have listened to the whistling of evil birds who tell us that he will never come back."

"He is with the great white father," answered De Catinat. "I have myself seen him in his council, and he will assuredly come across the great water if his people have need of him."

The Indian shook his shaven head. "The rutting month is past, my brother," said he, speaking in broken French, "but ere the month of the bird laying has come there will be no white man upon this river save only behind stone walls."

The Indian waved his hand along the whole southern and western horizon. "Where are they not? The woods are rustling with them. They are like a fire among dry grass, so swift and so fearless."

(To Be Continued.)

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