

The repetition seemed to cross the opportunity for delay.

Farnsworth was on his guard in a twinkling. He set his jaw and uttered an ugly oath; then quick as lightning he struck sideways at the pistol with his blade. It was a move which might have taken a less alert person than Alice unaware, but her training in sword play was ready in her wrist and hand. An involuntary turn, the slightest imaginable, set the heavy barrel of her weapon strongly against the blow, partly stopping it, and then the gaping muzzle spat its load of balls and slugs with a yell that awoke the drowsy old village.

Farnsworth staggered backward, letting fall his sword. There was a rent in the clothing of his left shoulder. He reeled, the blood spun out, but he did not fall, although he grew white.

Father Beret sprang nimbly to sustain Farnsworth, snatching up the pistol as he passed around Alice.

"You are hurt, my son," he gently said. "Let me help you." He passed his arm firmly under that of Farnsworth, seeing that the captain was unsteady on his feet.

"Lean upon me. Come with me, Alice, my child, and I will take him into the house."

Alice picked up the captain's sword and led the way.

It was all done so quickly that Farnsworth, in his half dazed condition, scarcely realized what was going on until he found himself on a couch in the Roussillon house, his wound (a jagged furrow plowed out by slugs that the sword's blade had first intercepted) neatly dressed and bandaged, while Alice and the priest hovered over him, busy with their clerical ministrations.

Hamilton and Helm were, as usual, playing cards at the former's quarters when a guard announced that Miss Roussillon wished an audience with the governor.

"Bring the girl in," said Hamilton, throwing down his cards and scowling darkly.

"Now you'd better be wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove," remarked Helm. "There is something up, and that gunshot we heard awhile ago may have a good deal to do with it. At any rate, you'll find kindness your best card to play with Alice Roussillon just at the present stage of the game."

Of course they knew nothing of what had happened to Farnsworth, but they had been discussing the strained rela-



"Drop that sword!"

tions between the garrison and the French inhabitants when the roar of Alice's big mouthed pistol startled them. Helm was slyly beating about to make Hamilton lose sight of the danger from Clark's direction. To do this he artfully magnified the insidious work that might be done by the French and their Indian friends should they be driven to desperation by oppressive or exasperating action on the part of the English.

Hamilton felt the dangerous uncertainty upon which the situation rested, but like many another vigorously self-willed man, he could not subordinate his passions to the dictates of policy. When Alice was conducted into his presence he instantly swelled with anger. It was her father who had struck him and escaped; it was she who had carried off the rebel flag at the moment of victory.

"Well, miss, to what do I owe the honor of this visit?" he demanded, with a supercilious air, bending a card between his thumb and finger on the side table.

"I have come, monsieur, to tell you that I have hurt Captain Farnsworth. He was about to kill Father Beret, and shot him. He is in our house and all cared for. I don't think his wound bad. And—here she hesitated at it and let her gaze fall—"two here I am." Then she lifted her eyes again and made an imitable French gesture to her shoulders and arms. "You'll do as you please, monsieur. I am your mercy."

Hamilton was astounded. Helm sitting phlegmatically. Meantime Beverly entered the room and stopped, hat band, behind Alice. He was flushed & evidently excited. In fact, he had heard of the trouble with Farnsworth. Seeing Alice enter the door of Hamilton's quarters, he followed her his heart stirred by no slight emotion. He met the governor's glare and tried it with one of equal haughtiness. The veins on his forehead swelled & turned dark. He was in a mood to whatever desperate act should suggest itself.

Then Hamilton fairly comprehended the message so graphically presented by her rose from his seat by the fire. "What's this you tell me?" he blurted. "You say you've shot Captain Farnsworth?"

"Oui, monsieur."

He stared a moment, then his features beamed with hate.

"And I'll have you shot for it, miss, as sure as you stand there in your silly impudence—ogling me so brazenly!"

He leaned toward her as he spoke and sent with the words a shock of coarse, passionate energy from which she recoiled as if expecting a blow to follow it.

An irresistible impulse swept Beverly to Alice's side, and his attitude was that of a protector. Helm sprang up.

A lieutenant came in and respectfully, with evident overhaute, reported that Captain Farnsworth had been shot and was at Roussillon place in care of the surgeon.

"Take this girl into custody. Confine her and put a strong guard over her."

In giving the order Hamilton jerked his thumb contemptuously toward Alice and at the same time gave Beverly a look of supreme defiance and hatred. When Helm began to speak he turned fiercely upon him and stopped him with:

"None of your advice, sir. I have had all I want of it. Keep your place or I'll make you."

Then to Beverly:

"Retire, sir. When I wish to see you I'll send for you. At present you are not needed here."

The English lieutenant saluted his commander, bowed respectfully to Alice and said:

"Come with me, miss, please."

Helm and Beverly exchanged a look of helplessness and inquiring rage. It was as if they had said: "What can we do? Must we bear it?" Certainly they could do nothing. Any interference of their part would be sure to increase Alice's danger and at the same time add to the weight of their own humiliation.

Alice silently followed the officer out of the room. She did not even glance toward Beverly, who moved as if to interfere and was promptly motioned back by the guard. His better judgment, returning, held him from a rash and futile act until Hamilton spoke again, saying loudly as Alice passed through the door:

"I'll see who's master of this town if I have to shoot every French hoiden in it!"

"Women and children may well fear you, Colonel Hamilton," said Beverly. "That young lady is your superior."

"You say that to me, sir?"

"It is the best I could possibly say of you."

"I will send you along with the wench if you do not guard your language. A prisoner on parole has no license to be a blackguard."

"I return you my parole, sir. I shall no longer regard it as binding," said Beverly, by a great effort holding back a blow. "I will not keep faith with a scoundrel who does not know how to be decent in the presence of a young girl. You had better have me arrested and confined. I will escape at the first opportunity and bring a force here to reckon with you for your villainy. And if you dare hurt Alice Roussillon I will have you hanged like a dog!"

Hamilton looked at him scornfully.

"I thought I ordered you to leave this room," he said, with an air and tone of lofty superiority, "and I certainly mean to be obeyed. Go, sir, and if you attempt to escape or in any way break your parole I'll have you shot."

"I have already broken it. From this moment I shall not regard it. You have heard my statement. I shall not repeat it. Govern yourself accordingly."

With these words Beverly turned and strode out of the house quite beside himself, his whole frame quivering.

Hamilton laughed derisively, then looked at Helm and said:

"Helm, I like you, I don't wish to be unkind to you, but positively you must quit breaking in upon my affairs with your ready-made advice. I've given you and Lieutenant Beverly too much latitude, perhaps. If that young fool doesn't look sharp he'll get himself into a beastly lot of trouble. You'd better give him a talk. He's in a way to need it just now."

"I think so myself," said Helm, glad to get back upon fair footing with the irascible governor. "I'll wait until he cools off somewhat, and then I can manage him. Leave him to me."

"Well, come walk with me to see what has really happened to Farnsworth. He's probably not much hurt and deserves what he's got. That girl has turned his head. I think I understand the whole affair—a little love, a little wine, some foolishness, and the wench shot him."

Helm genially assented, but they were delayed for some time by an officer who came in to consult with Hamilton on some pressing Indian affairs. When they reached Roussillon place they met Beverly coming out, but he did not look at them. He was sorely aware of them. A little way outside the gate, on going in, he had picked up Alice's locket and broken chain, which he mechanically put in his pocket. It was all like a dream to him, and yet he had a clear purpose. He was going away from Vincennes, or at least he would try to go, and woe be to Hamilton on his coming back. It was so easy for an excited young mind to plan great things and to expect success under apparently impossible conditions. Beverly gave Jean a note for Alice. It was this that took him to Roussillon place, and no sooner fell the night than he shouldered a gun furnished him by Mme. Godere and, guided by the woodsman's fine craft, stole away southward, thinking to swim the icy Wabash some miles below and then strike across the plains of Illinois to Kaskaskia.

(To be Continued.)

A POPULAR WOMAN

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