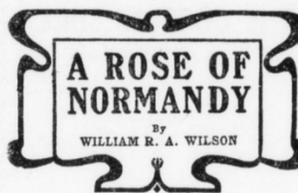




HOME-COMING.

How beautiful it is to come. To the dear home once more. When all the loved ones have returned. Their long vacations o'er. How happy the reunion is. How glad to meet, and greet; How thankful all are safely back. The circle still complete.



CHAPTER XX.—CONTINUED.

The two men retired to the other end of the lodge and conversed in low tones concerning their future disposition. Tontz was inclined to consider that the arrival of the head chief would result in their being set at liberty and a safe conduct being furnished as far as Fort Niagara. Akiesko took a more gloomy view of their situation. The recent attack on the white settlements along the St. Lawrence by the Iroquois and their repulse, would probably make them at least unfriendly toward the French, while the fact of their being at continual warfare with his own tribe would render them apt to seek revenge for former hostilities on the person of the captured warrior. Tontz assured him that he would demand his safety and release as strongly as his own, and felt that the offer of the reward he would make would overcome any feeling of enmity they might have against his nation.

Toward night the noise of the returning braves was heard and the hum of many voices telling of their success came to the ears of the waiting French. The sound approached the lodge where they were, and soon the doorway was darkened by human forms as a group of men entered. Tontz stepped forward to meet the famous chief whose terrible name had reached his ears when he had stopped at Fort Niagara, as he heard a voice inquiring in guttural Iroquois for his prisoners. One of the Indians threw a quantity of light fuel on the fire, causing it to blaze up suddenly and illuminate fully the gloomy interior. Tontz was somewhat surprised at seeing the small stature of the renowned chief, as well as the light tint of his skin. As he took a further stride, Tontz started back in astonishment, as he recognized the painted features of the man. "Mille tonnerres! Le Comte de Mizon!" he cried.

The warrior, too, made a sudden spasmodic movement of surprise as he stared at him. He speedily repressed this emotion and bowed gravely with a ferocious gleam in his eye, while the outlines of a branded fleur-de-lis on his cheek seemed to glow through the paint, as he replied in French, "M. le Capitaine Tontz, I believe." His glance chanced to wander toward the other end of the room, where Renee, awakened from slumber by the noise outside, had pulled aside her curtain and stood with white face and pupils dilating with horror. He made an eager step forward in ready recognition. Then turning to his Indian companions, he dismissed them by a gesture and the three whites were alone, save for Akiesko, who retreated to the darkest corner.

"Well, friends," he said with a demure smile, "we are well met. You, monsieur, who thought me dead 2,000 leagues away, and you, mademoiselle, who had forgotten me and who are more beautiful than ever even in your convent garb, indeed do me honor," he continued in a mocking tone, "to have come so many weary miles in order to visit me in my savage lodge. It must have been a difficult journey that you have made, you two together—alone." Here Tontz, who had recovered in a great measure from his surprise, flushed red and involuntarily felt at his side for his sword. "Nay, curb your reative spirit," was the taunting reply to his gesture. "It is not seemly for guests to seek a quarrel with their host. Besides, you have not the means of defense you had that cursed day, when you nearly snuffed out my lamp of life with your steel blade. For shame, a lady present, too, to see such a display of your angry passions!"

"Have done with your insolence," replied Tontz, haughtily, "and send us on our way to Fort Niagara with all possible speed." "Ma foi!" cried the comte in mock surprise, as he turned toward Renee, "did ever you see such indecent haste in a visitor to leave his entertainer? 'Tis monstrous! Why, he has scarce arrived and yet he talks of his departure. Nay, nay, my gallant friend, it would be scant grace for me to serve a guest so. For my guest you are and I can promise you rare entertainment," he continued, as a baleful glare of mingled hate and triumphant revenge darted from his eye. "Such as you, monsieur, have never before experi-

enced, and which I believe will convey a lasting impression to your mind, while mademoiselle will be so delighted that I fear she will be loath to leave."

"Coward!" hissed Tontz, beside himself with rage, as he advanced with shaking fist upon his enemy. "How dare you insult Mademoiselle d'Outre-raise and myself with your veiled threats and cursed insinuations! Whelp of the devil's breed! Were I but crossing swords with you again I should make surer work than I did before."

The Comte de Miron now threw aside his mask of courtesy, and, white and trembling, faced his foe. "We are not in France nor shall we fight with swords. Frenchman no longer, I am an Indian now, and with savage weapons shall I strike. At Paris you won; the dice are changed and now 'tis my throw. There you had friends and we were equal in power. Here you have none, and my will is law. Am I not the head chieftain of the mighty clan of the wolf? A thousand wait to do my bidding. You are indeed in my power, and you shall feel the exercise of it."

Then turning to Renee he continued vindictively: "Your lover shall be the sport to make an Indian holiday. You shall see those lips that have murmured soft of love pierced by the savage needle; those arms that have clasped you close shall shrivel up in the hot flame; those eyes that have cast upon you their amorous glance shall be torn out and thrown to dogs to lick. While you," the man continued, raising his voice and foaming at the mouth, "you, the delicious morsel



"YES, BUT I LIED."

I have so long waited and yearned for, the ripening fruit that I have watched from afar, shall be mine, mine, and you shall learn that it is better to be the squaw of an Iroquois chief than the lover, mistress, or wife of the bravest swashbuckler or roisterer on earth."

A snarl as of some maddened animal goaded beyond endurance escaped from Tontz, and with a spring he had clutched his adversary by the throat with one hand, while with his upraised iron member he was about to deal a blow that no human frame could resist, when he was quickly seized and torn away by two warriors, who, hearing the excited tones of their chieftain, had entered in time to save him. The comte stood gasping, feeling his throat where the imprint of Tontz's fingers were visible.

Tontz's breast heaved from the sudden fierce exertion, and as he stood held by each out-stretched arm, his figure tense from the effort to free himself, he flung defiance at his adversary:

"Hell-hound! fiend! renegade! do you seek to terrify me with your menacing words? Am I a child to be frightened by the sight of your ugly face? What care I for the horde of painted devils at your back, surrounded by those who obey your call? Here, defenseless, in the midst of your allies and friends, I say do your worst, torture me if you will, but I shall still defy you. Know this as well, that all your plans shall be for naught; that I shall conquer yet, and escaping, shall return to wreak my vengeance."

The comte had now regained his power of speech. "Silence, vain braggart! Escape? Thanks for the word; it reminds me that I must separate you lest you kill one another and I shall find you cold in each other's arms. I will fetch my squaw and she will lead my lady onward to a fairer bower." And motioning to the two men who held Tontz to release him, he strode through the door with them at his heels.

Renee, who throughout the interview had remained motionless, now ran lightly to Tontz. "Ah! M. Tontz," she exclaimed in an alarmed tone, "what shall we do? Why have you a second time provoked this man and roused the hatred of one who cannot stoop too low to gain his ends? Had you been calm he might have been prevailed upon to allow you to go unmolested. Now he will never be satisfied until he kills you. It was brave; it was noble; it was magnificent; but was it wise?"

"Ah! mademoiselle," said Tontz with a shade of reproach in his voice, "how could I remain calm beneath his insults to you? You, whose honor I would defend with my last drop of blood, whose safety is my one thought, for whom I would face a hundred savages rather than that one hair of your head should be injured— He suddenly ceased speaking as though struck dumb, for as he gazed at the girl who stood with one hand involuntarily stretched toward him, wide-eyed and motionless, he saw as by a lightning flash within her glance that which stopped his heart and sent a strange chill through his frame, for in that instant he saw deep into her very soul and read the secret that she had guard-

ed so well. It was but an instant, for he quickly passed his hand before his eyes and recovered himself. "Nay, it is not strange, mademoiselle," he resumed, "that I should speak thus, for I love La Salle, and he loves you, and I am pledged by all the claims of friendship and loyalty, to bring you safe to your journey's end."

Before Renee could reply the comte entered, followed by a squaw. Hardly had she seen the prisoners before she uttered a cry, and Tontz stared in bewilderment into the face of Madame Bizard. It was indeed she, but how changed! The roses had left her cheeks and lines of care and suffering were strongly marked about her eyes. Clad in the slatternly dress of an Iroquois squaw, she had lost the trimness of figure that had been her chief attraction formerly. No longer were the lashes drooped in coquettish glances, but a hunted look had taken their place. The comte stood watching them, smiling grimly. "So it seems that you two are acquainted."

Madame Bizard then seeing Renee for the first time, rushed to her and clasped her arms about her, weeping violently. This action displeased her lord, for he advanced and, grasping her roughly by the shoulder, pulled her away, giving her a rude shove that sent her rolling on the floor. He then seized her by the hair and pulled her up into a sitting posture, crying brutally, "Get up or you will fare worse." The poor woman did not seem to think this treatment at all unusual and meekly did his bidding. "Take mademoiselle to her lodge and serve her wants," was the next demand; so, beckoning Renee to follow her, she led her out.

They passed to the adjoining house, which had been hastily prepared for its new occupant. Some attempts had been made at cleaning the place, a large number of skins and rugs having been spread about. Renee's companion was silent until they had entered. After casting a backward glance to see that they were not followed, she fell on her knees and burst into tears. Renee, who pitied her forlorn condition and remembered her kindness to her when she first arrived at Quebec, strove to soothe her, and the kindly, womanly sympathy thus displayed had its effect, for soon the tear-stained face was raised and a sad smile lighted up her features.

"Ah! mademoiselle," she murmured, "you are so good to pity an unfortunate castaway like myself. I have sinned deeply, but I have been cruelly punished. Since seeing you I have had time to reflect and realize how great a wrong-doer I have been. Many a night have I lain awake in my misery, and thought of all the happiness I might have had, but which I thrust aside. You can see the misery of my fate without telling you. However, it is your future that troubles me, for rather than see you in his power I would bury a knife in his hateful breast. But tell me how you happen to be here?"

Renee then rapidly sketched the events that had led up to their journey and the adventures encountered since then. As she told of Tontz's efforts at the time of their shipwreck, Madame Bizard's eyes glowed and a faint tinge of color returned to her cheeks.

"How brave he is, and how noble! My love told me that he was good and worthy—"

"Your love!" exclaimed Renee. "Yes, my love, for I will confess it to you, mademoiselle—I loved him. It was my insane love that drove me to tempt him to the very act to which the comte yielded. But he was strong, and rebuked me, shaming me for the thought."

"But you told me—"

"Yes, but I lied. My heart was full of bitterness at finding him so much better than I; for his teaching me that a man's honor was even stronger than a woman's. It was the desperate memory of his refusal of my suggestion to fly with me that drove me mad, and made the society of my husband, yourself, and all who were good and pure a torment, and was the goad that urged me to the step I took. But my repentance has been bitter."

"And his wife and child abandoned in Paris?" eagerly asked Renee, as she clutched the woman by the arm, her breath waiting on her reply.

"More lies. I could find nothing bad enough to say about him. I hated him for the deep humiliation he had caused me, and loved him all the time for his nobility of heart. He spoke of one in France whom he adored. I would have given my right arm to have heard him speak of me with that same feeling and reverence in his tones. Now all is done, and it is too late for repentance. A weary life of servitude amongst these savages is my portion. I can do nothing to retrieve the past, unless indeed I could effect your escape. That would I gladly do were I to pay for it with my life. Have courage, mademoiselle, I shall accomplish whatever I can for you."

But Renee heard not the wail of regret nor the woman's determination to redeem her wrong. Her eyes streamed with a strange peaceful light of happiness. In her mind stood forth her lover as he had first believed him, worthy, after all, in spite of the calumnies of his enemies. Nay, worthier, for had she not now proof of temptation resisted, his love for her constant and enduring? The gold had been tried and had come forth from the furnace unstained and with a brighter luster than before. Her heart was filled with joy at the glad discovery, and she found it possible to forgive his detractor, and imprint a kiss of forgiveness, sympathy and pity upon her cheek.

That night a solemn council of all the chief men of the tribe was held in one of the largest houses, to decide as to the disposition of the prisoners. Before this assembly the Comte de Miron arose in all the insignia of his official position and spoke thus:

"My brothers, it is not many moons since we captured these two prisoners the French. We returned, but with how many less than when we set out let the fatherless children and the weeping squaws tell. One of our prisoners is a Mohegan dog; he is ours to torture. But as to this white chief, hear me. Some have accused me of being still a Frenchman; learn this, then: I know this man. He is a friend of the great Onontio at Quebec whose soldiers drove your braves back and shot them as they fled. His death would be a greater blow to Onontio than the capture of a dozen settlements. He it is who built the house beside the Great Falls, who sent men there to steal your skins and murder your braves when they resisted. Here is your revenge. I am your brother; I am no longer white; let this prisoner die. Take him, I give him to you; the white woman, however, belongs to me."

A murmur of assent went round. The prisoner's fate was sealed. [To Be Continued.]

Pure Food.

Mayor Baum of Saginaw was talking about pure food. "We are getting pure food now, thanks to good legislation," he said. "The market isn't glutted, as it used to be, with adulterations of every description. A boy who once attended a Sunday school picnic of mine is a young man to-day, but if he were a boy again, and at another picnic, I don't believe he would make the same remark he made before."

"In the course of that picnic of long ago, you see, refreshments were passed about. A young lady gave the boy a piece of bread and butter, and then she took out a pot of jam."

"Will you have some jam on your bread, Johnnie?" she asked him. "He wrinkled up his nose and answered: 'Not me, miss. I work where they makes it.'"—Philadelphia Bulletin.

Suppressing a Talkative Bore.

No class of men are annoyed by bores more persistently than physicians. One of them picked out Dr. Walter G. Gilday for his victim and insisted on a consultation, although the doctor bluntly informed his would-be patient that the disease he complained of attacks only fools, fops, fanatics and old women of both sexes.

"But I wish also to consult you upon a little project I have formed," persisted the bore. "I have an idea in my head."

"Have you?" interposed the doctor, with a look of surprise. "Then you shall have my opinion at once. Keep it there. It may be some time before you can get another, and nature abhors a vacuum. Your health demands that you keep silent."—N. Y. Herald.

Got an Invitation.

Philadelphia miss—Who was your grandfather?

Denver miss—James Jims, Esq., P. P. U.

Philadelphia miss (dazed)—We should be delighted to have you visit us. Please don't neglect us if you ever come to our city. Goodbye!

Denver miss (shortly afterward)—Well, Mr. Interrogation Point, what do you want to know?

Little brother—What do the letters P. P. U. stand for?

Denver miss—Professional perambulating propeller of bicycles.

Little Brother—Woo! What does that mean?

Denver miss—It means a man who pushes a wheelbarrow for a dollar a day.—N. Y. Weekly.

Trying the Bride's Temper.

On the day of a Chinese marriage uninvited friends and neighbors, or even perfect strangers, are allowed to come in and see the bride, and they may make any remark about her, or to her, they please. Sometimes things horribly rude, and disgusting are said. To try her temper a man will say: "Fetch your husband a cup of tea." If she does so, all will say jeeringly: "What an obedient wife you are!" If she sulks and does not do as she is told, they remark: "That is a pretty vixen with which to begin married life. We cannot congratulate you on that tartar," and other words to a similar effect. Then the poor thing is made to stand upon an inverted cup to show how small are her feet.—The Boudoir.

Not So Far Out of the Way.

During Gov. Rollin's administration a representative to the legislature of New Hampshire from one of the rural districts in the northern section of the state was presented to the governor for the first time. Being somewhat unfamiliar with "state house etiquette," he addressed his Excellency as "most high."

The governor informed the gentleman from the rural district that there was but one "Most High." "He who had made everything from nothing."

"Well, governor," replied the country legislator, "I'll give you credit for making a justice of the peace out of a man up in my town that is about as near to nothing as ever walked on two legs."—Boston Herald.

He Was Not Satisfied.

In a certain clothing store in this city it has been the custom for the employes to treat customers with more courtesy than is usually the case in large stores. A suave salesman is stationed at the door with instructions not to allow a customer to depart without ascertaining if the purchase has been satisfactory. The other day a gruff and dyspeptic man started to go out the door, when he was stopped by the query from the polite salesman: "Did you get suited, sir?" "No," answered the man in a surly manner. "I didn't get suited; I got battered and sliced."—Philadelphia Press.

AWFUL NEURALGIA Mr. Porter Thought He Should Go Mad But Dr. Williams' Pink Pills Cured Him. "It seems like a miracle that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills should have cured my neuralgia," said Mr. Porter. "They are certainly a marvelous medicine and I am always glad to recommend them. "For two years," he continued, "I had suffered almost unendurable pains in my head. They would start over my eyes and shoot upward most frequently, but they often spread over my face, and at times every part of my head and face would be full of agony. Sometimes the pains were so intense that I actually feared they would drive me mad. "My eyes ached constantly and there was always a burning sensation over my forehead, but the other pains varied, sometimes they were acute, and again they were dull and lingering. I could not sleep. My temper was irritable and I got no pleasure out of life. "I tried remedy after remedy, but finding no help in any of them, I became a despairing man. Even when I began to take Dr. Williams' Pink Pills I had no great hope of a cure. "That was in December of 1903. To my surprise, a change in my condition took place right away. The pains grew less intense and the acute attacks were further apart, as I kept on using Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. The improvement began with the first box, and when I had used six boxes I stopped. My cure was complete and has lasted ever since. "Mr. Charles H. Porter lives at Raymond, N. H. He is one of many grateful people who have found that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills will cure diseases of the nerves that have stubbornly resisted every other remedy tried. Not only neuralgia, but sciatica, partial paralysis and locomotor ataxia yield to them. They are sold by all druggists, or may be obtained directly from the Dr. Williams Medicine Co., Schenectady, N. Y.

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