

Beyond the Frontier

By RANDALL PARRISH

A Romance of Early Days in the Middle West

CHAPTER XX—Continued.

"Thick as flies out there, monsieur," he answered, "and with a marksmen or two among them. Not ten minutes since Bewald got a ball in his head."

"And no orders to clear the devil out?"

"No, monsieur—only to watch that they do not form for a rush."

The commandant's office was built against the last stockade—a long but no more pretentious than the others. A sentry stood at each side of the closed door, but De Tonty ignored them and ushered me into the room. It was not large, and was already well filled, a table littered with papers occupying the central space. De Baugis and De la Durantaye seated beside it, while numerous other figures were standing pressed against the walls. I recognized the familiar faces of several of our party, but before I recovered from my first embarrassment De Baugis arose, and with much politeness offered me a chair.

De Tonty remained beside me, his hand resting on my chair back, as he coolly surveyed the scene. Cassion pushed past, and occupied a vacant chair, between the other officers, laying his sword on the table. My eyes swept about the circle of faces seeking D'Artigny, but he was not present. But for a slight shuffling of feet, the silence was oppressive. Cassion's unpleasant voice broke the stillness.

"M. de Tonty, there is a chair reserved for your use."

"I prefer remaining beside Madame Cassion," he answered calmly. "It would seem she has few friends in this company."

"We are all her friends," broke in De Baugis, his face flushing, "but we are here to do justice, and avenge a foul crime. 'Tis told us that Madame possesses certain knowledge which has not been revealed. Other witnesses have testified, and we would now listen to her word. Sergeant of the guard, bring in the prisoner."

He entered by way of the rear door, manacled, and with an armed soldier on either side. Cassion and I followed, he stood erect in the place assigned him, and as his eyes swept the faces, his stern look changed to a smile as his glance met mine. My eyes were still upon him, seeking eagerly for some message of guidance, when Cassion spoke.

"M. de Baugis will question the witness."

"The court will pardon me," said D'Artigny. "The witness to be heard is Madame?"

"Certainly, what means your interruption?"

"To spare the lady unnecessary embarrassment. She is my friend, and, no doubt, may find it difficult to testify against me. I merely venture to ask her to give this court the exact truth."

"Your words are impertinent."

"No, M. de Baugis," I broke in, understanding all that was meant. "Sieur d'Artigny has spoken in kindness, and has my thanks. I am ready now to

"Why did you make no report—was it to shield D'Artigny?"

I hesitated, yet the answer had to be made.

"The Sieur d'Artigny was my friend, monsieur. I did not believe him guilty, yet my evidence would have cast suspicion upon him. I felt it best to remain still and wait."

"You suspected another?"

"Not then, monsieur, but since."

Cassion sat silent, not overly pleased with my reply, but De Baugis smiled grimly.

"By my faith," he said, "the tale rather interests. You have grown to suspect another since, madame—dare you name the man?"

My eyes sought the face of De Tonty, and he nodded gravely.

"It can do no harm, madame," he muttered softly. "Put the paper in De Baugis' hand."

I drew it, crumpled, from out the bosom of my dress, rose to my feet, and held it forth to the captain of dragoons. He grasped it wonderingly.

"What is this, madame?"

"One prize from a letter of instruction. Read it, monsieur; you will recognize the handwriting."

CHAPTER XXI.

Condemned.

He opened the paper gravely, shuddering the page with one hand so that Cassion was prevented from seeing the words. He read slowly, a frown on his face.

"'Tis the writing of Governor La Barre, although unsigned," he said at last.

"Yes, monsieur."

"How came the page in your possession?"

"I removed it last night from a leather bag found beneath the sleeping bunk in the quarters assigned me."

"Do you know whose bag it was?"

"Certainly; it was in the canoe with me all the way from Quebec—M. Cassion's."

"Your husband?"

"Yes, monsieur."

De Baugis' eyes seemed to darken as he gazed at me; then his glance fell upon Cassion, who was leaning forward, his mouth open, his face ashen gray. He straightened up as he met De Baugis' eyes, and gave vent to an exulting laugh.

"Sacre, 'tis quite melodramatic," he exclaimed harshly. "But of little value else. I acknowledge the letter, M. de Baugis, but it bears no relation to this affair. Perchance it was an unhappy worded, so that this woman, eager to save her lover from punishment—"

De Tonty was on his feet, his sword half drawn.

"'Tis a foul lie," he thundered hotly. "I will not stand silent before such words."

"Messieurs," and De Baugis struck the table. "This is a court, not a messroom. Be seated, M. de Tonty; no one in my presence will be permitted to besmirch the honor of Captain de la Chesnayne's daughter. Yet I must agree with Major Cassion that this letter in no way proves that he resorted to violence, or was even urged to do so. The governor in all probability suggested other means. I could not be led to believe he countenanced the commission of crime, and shall ask to read the remainder of his letter before rendering decision. You found no other documents, madame?"

"None bearing on this case."

"The papers supposed to be taken from the dead body of Chevet?"

"No, monsieur."

"Then I cannot see that the status of the prisoner is changed, or that we have any reason to charge the crime to another. You are excused, madame, while we listen to such other witnesses as may be called."

Tears misted my eyes, so the faces about me were blurred, but, before I could find words in which to voice my indignation, De Tonty stood beside me, and grasped my arm.

"There is no use, madame," he said coldly enough, although his voice shook. "You only invite insult when you deal with such ears. They represent their master, and have made verdict already—let us go."

De Baugis, Cassion, De la Durantaye were upon their feet, but the dragon first found voice.

"Were those words addressed to me, M. de Tonty?"

"Ay, and why not! You are no more than La Barre's dog. Listen to me, all three of you. 'Twas Sieur de la Salle's orders that I open the gates of this fort to your entrance, and that I treat your courtously. I have done so, although you took my kindness to be sign of weakness, and have larded it mightily since you came. But this is the end; from now it is war between us, messieurs, and we will fight in the open. Conyvet Rene d'Artigny from the sea of these lifeless, and you pay the reckoning at the point of my sword. I make no threat, but this is

the pledged word of Henri de Tonty. Make passage there! Come, madame."

No one stopped us; no voice answered him. Almost before I realized the action, we were outside in the sunlight, and he was smiling into my face, his dark eyes full of cheer.

"It will make them pause and think—what I said," he exclaimed, "get will not change the result."

"They will convict?"

"Beyond doubt, madame. They are La Barre's men, and hold commission only at his pleasure. With M. de la Durantaye it is different, for he is soldier of Frontenac's, yet I have no hope he will dare stand out against the rest. We must find another way to save the lad, but when I leave you at the door I am out of it."

"You, monsieur! What can I hope to accomplish without your aid?"

"Far more than with it, especially if I furnish a good substitute. I shall be watched now, every step I take. 'Tis like enough De Baugis will send me challenge, though the danger that Cassion would do so is slight. It is the latter who will have me watched. No, madame, Boisrouder is the lad you must find a way out for the prisoner; they will never suspect him, and the boy will enjoy the trick. Tonight when the fort becomes quiet, he will find way to explain his plans. Have your room dark, and the window open."

"There is but one, monsieur, outward, above the precipice."

"That will be his choice; he can reach you thus unseen. 'Tis quite possible a guard may be placed at your door."

He left me, and walked straight across the parade to his own quarters, an erect, manly figure in the sun, his long black hair falling to his shoulders. I drew a chair beside the door, which I left partially open, so that I might view the scene without. I could see the door of the guardhouse, and, at last, those in attendance at the trial emerged, talking gravely, as they scattered in various directions. The three officers came forth together, proceeding directly across toward De Tonty's office, evidently with some purpose in view. No doubt, angered at his words, they sought satisfaction. I watched until they disappeared within the distant doorway. De Baugis the first to enter. A moment later one of the soldiers who had accompanied us from Quebec, a rather pleasant-faced lad, whose injured hand I had dressed at St. Ignace, approached where I sat, and lifted his hand in salute.

"A moment, Inles," I said swiftly. "You were at the trial?"

"Yes, madame."

"And the result?"

"The Sieur d'Artigny was held guilty, madame," he said regretfully, glancing about as though to assure himself alone. "The three officers agreed on the verdict, although I know some of the witnesses lied."

"You know—who?"

"My own mate, for one—George Descentes; he swore to seeing D'Artigny follow Chevet from the boats, and that was not true, for we were together all that day. I would have said so, but the court bade me be still."

"Ay, they were not seeking such testimony. No matter what you said, Jules, D'Artigny would have been condemned—it was La Barre's orders."

"Yes, madame, so I thought."

"Did the Sieur d'Artigny speak?"

"A few words, madame, until M. Cassion ordered him to remain still. Then M. de Baugis pronounced sentence—it was that he be shot tomorrow."

"The hour?"

"I heard none mentioned, madame."

"And a purpose in that also to my mind. This gives them twenty-four hours in which to consummate murder. They fear De Tonty and his men may attempt rescue; 'tis to find out the three have gone now to his quarters. That is all, Jules; you had best not be seen talking here with me."

I closed the door, and dropped the bar securely into place. I knew the worst now, and felt sick and faint. Tears would not come to relieve, yet it seemed as though my brain ceased working, as if I had lost all physical and mental power. I know not how long I sat there, dazed, incompetent to even express the vague thoughts which flashed through my brain. A rapping on the door aroused me. The noise the instant raps awoke me as from sleep.

"Who wishes entrance?"

"—Cassion; I demand speech with you."

"For what purpose, monsieur?"

"Man Dieu! Does a man have to give excuse for desiring to speak with his own wife? Open the door, or I'll have it broken in. Have you not yet learned I am master here?"

I drew the bar, no longer with any sense of fear, but impelled by a desire to hear the man's message. I stepped

back, taking refuge behind the table, as the door opened, and he strode in, glancing first at me, then suspiciously about the apartment.

"You are alone?"

"Assuredly, monsieur; did you suspect others to be present?"

"How did I know; you have time enough to spare for others, although I have had no word with you since you came. I come now only to tell you the news."

"If it be the condemnation of Sieur d'Artigny, you may spare your words."

"You know that! Who brought you the message?"

"What difference, monsieur? I would know the result without messenger. You have done your master's will. What said De Tonty when you told him?"

Cassion laughed, as though the memory was pleasant.

"Faith, madame, if you base your hopes there on rescue you'll scarce meet with great result. De Tonty is all bark. Mon Dieu! I went in to

I acknowledge him as husband. Right or wrong, whatever the church might do, or the world might say, I had come to the parting of the ways; here and now I must choose my own life, obey the dictates of my own conscience. I had been wedded by fraud to a man I despised; my hatred had grown until now I knew that I would rather be dead than live in his presence.

If this state of mind was sin, it was beyond my power to rid myself of the curse; if I was already condemned of holy church because of failure to abide by her decree, then there was naught left but for me to seek my own happiness, and the happiness of the man I loved.

I lifted my head, strengthened by the very thought, the red blood tingling again through my veins. The truth was mine; I felt no inclination to obscure it. The time had come for rejoicing, and action. I loved Rene d'Artigny, and although he had never spoken the word, I knew he loved me. Tomorrow he would be in exile, a wanderer of the woods, an escaped prisoner, under condemnation of death, never again safe within reach of French authority. Ay, but he should not go alone; in the depths of those forests, beyond the arm of the law, beyond even the grasp of the church, we should go together. In our own hearts love would justify. Without a quail of conscience, without even a lingering doubt, I made the choice, the final decision.

I know not how long it took me to think this all out, until I had accepted fate; but I do know the decision brought happiness and courage. Food was brought me by a strange Indian, apparently unable to speak French; nor would he even enter the room, stealthily handing me the platter through the open door. Two sentries stood just without—soldiers of De Baugis, I guessed, as their features were unfamiliar. They gazed at me curiously, as I stood in the doorway, but without changing their attitudes. Plainly I was held prisoner also; M. Cassion's threat was being put into execution. This knowledge merely served to strengthen my decision, and I closed and barred the door again, smiling as I did so.

It grew dusk while I made almost vain effort to eat, and, at last, pushing the pewter plate away, I crossed over, and cautiously opened the wooden shutter of the window. The red light of the sunset still illumined the western sky, and found glorious reflection along the surface of the river. It was a dizzy drop to the bed of the stream below, but Indians were on the opposite bank, behind rifle shot. In considerable force, a half-dozen canoes drawn up on the sandy shore, and several fires burning. They were too far away for me to judge their tribe, yet a number among them sported war bonnets, and I had no doubt they were Iroquois.

So far as I could perceive elsewhere, there was no movement, as my eyes traveled the half-circle, over a wide vista of hill and dale, green valley and dark woods, although to the left I could occasionally hear the sharp report of a rifle. In evidence that besieging savages were still watchful of the fort entrance. I could not lean out far enough to see in that direction, yet as the night grew darker the vicious spits of fire became visible. Above me the solid log walls arose but a few feet—a tall man might stand upon the window ledge, and find grip of the roof; but below was the sheer drop to the river—perchance two hundred feet beneath. Already darkness shrouded the water, as the broad valley faded into the gloom of the night.

There was naught for me to do but sit and wait. The guard which M. Cassion had stationed at the door prevented my leaving the room, but its more probable purpose was to keep others from communicating with me. De Tonty had evidently resorted to diplomacy, and instead of quarrelling with the three officers when they approached him, had greeted them all so gently as to leave the impression that he was disposed to permit matters to take their natural course. He might be watched of course, yet was no longer suspected as likely to help rescue the prisoner. All their fear now was centered upon me, and my possible influence.

If I could be kept from any further communication with either D'Artigny or De Tonty, it was scarcely probable that any of the garrison would make serious effort to interfere with their plans. De Tonty's apparent indifference, and his sudden friendliness with De Baugis and Cassion, did not worry me greatly. I realized his purpose in thus diverting suspicion. His pledge of assistance had been given me, and his was the word of a soldier and gentleman. In some manner, and soon—before midnight certainly—I would receive message from Boisrouder.

Yet my heart failed me more than once as I waited. How long the time seemed, and how deadly silent was the night. Crouched close beside the door, I could barely hear the muttered conversation of the soldiers on guard; and when I crossed to the open window I looked out upon a black void, utterly soundless.

Not even the distant crack of a rifle now broke the solemn stillness, and the only spot of color visible was the dull red glow of a campfire on the opposite bank of the river. I had no way of computing time, and the lagging hours seemed centuries long, as terrifying doubts assailed me.

Every new thought became an agon, of suspense. Had the plans failed? Had Boisrouder discovered the prisoner so closely guarded as to make rescue impossible? Had his nerve, his daring, vanished before the real danger of the venture? Had D'Artigny refused to accept the chance? What had happened; what was happening out there in the mystery?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"I—Cassion, I Demand Speech With You."

hold him to account for his insult, and the fellow met us with such gracious speech, that the four of us drank together like old comrades. The others were there yet, but I had a proposition to make you—so I left them."

"A proposition, monsieur?"

"Ay, a declaration of peace, if you will. Listen, Adele, for this is the last time I speak you thus fairly. You are my wife by law of Holy Church. Never have you loved me, yet I can pass that by, if you recognize my authority. This D'Artigny has come between us, and now his life is in my hands. I know not that you love the brat, yet you have that interest in him which would prevent forgiveness of me if I show no mercy. So now I come and offer you his life if you consent to be my wife in truth. Is that fair?"

"It may so sound," I answered calmly, "yet the sacrifice is all mine. How would you save the man?"

"By affording him opportunity to escape during the night; first accepting his pledge never to see you again."

"Think you he would give such a pledge?"

Cassion laughed sarcastically.

"Bah, what man would not save his life! It is for you to speak the word."

"Monsieur," I said firmly, "I understand your proposition, and refuse it. I will make no pledge."

"You leave him to die?"

"If it be God's will. I cannot dishonor myself, even to save life. You have my answer. I bid you go."

Never did I see such look of heastly rage in the face of any man. He had lost power of speech, but his fingers clutched as though he had my throat in their grip. Frightened, I stepped back, and Chevet's pistol gleamed in my hand.

"You hear me, monsieur—go!"

He backed the door, growling and threatening. I caught little of what he said, nor did I in the least care. All I asked, or desired, was to be let alone, to be free of his presence. I swung the door in his very face, and fastened the bar. Through the thick wood his voice penetrated in words of hatred. Then it ceased, and I was alone in the silence, sinking down nerveless beside the table, my face buried in my hands.

I had done right; I knew I had done right, yet the reaction left me weak and pulseless. I saw now clearly what must be done. Never could I live with this Cassion; never again could

Naturally Surprised.

An old German furniture dealer had a woman customer who was a great talker. Nobody could get away from her when she started in. One day he sent a clerk to the lady's house to try to collect a bill. When the clerk returned empty handed, the old German said:

"Well! Vat did de lady say?"

"She did not say anything, sir. She was mute," replied the clerk.

"Vat!" exclaimed the surprised German; "vas she dead?"

Saving Money.

"A dollar box of candy for me, hubby? Really, I must curb such extravagance."

"I bought you one frequently before we were married."

"But things are different now. Instead of a dollar box of candy it would have been better to have gotten me a ten-cent box, and a sports coat, and that parcel I want so much.



Cassion Stared at Me Across the Table, His Face Dark With Passion.

hear witness frankly. What is it you desire me to tell, monsieur?"

"The story of your midnight visit to the Mission garden at St. Ignace, the night Hugo Chevet was killed. Tell it in your own words, madame."

As I began my voice trembled, and I was obliged to grip the arms of the chair to keep myself firm. I read sympathy in De Baugis' eyes, and addressed him alone. Twice he asked me questions, in so kindly a manner as to win instant reply, and once he checked Cassion when he attempted to interrupt, his voice stern with authority. I told the story simply, plainly, and with no attempt at equivoque, and when I ceased speaking the room was as silent as a tomb. De Baugis sat motionless, but Cassion stared at me across the table, his face dark with passion.

"Well," he cried as though thinking me about to rise. "There are questions yet."

"Monsieur," said De Baugis coldly. "If there are questions it is my place to ask them."

"Ay," angrily beating his hand on the board, "but it is plain to be seen the woman has bewitched you. No, I will not be denied; I am commandant here, and with force enough behind me to make my will law. Sew! If you will, but here is La Barre's commission, and I dare you ignore it. So answer me, madame—you saw D'Artigny bend over the body of Chevet—was your uncle then dead?"

"I know not, monsieur; but there was no movement."

LEARN LATIN IN SEVEN DAYS

Two Oregon Girls Perform Remarkable Educational Feat Under New System of Training.

Betty Schnor, thirteen, and Jane Campbell, fourteen, translated a few days ago a 200-word composition into Latin after only seven days' instruction. Doctor Berie, national educator of Cambridge, Mass., is employing the services of the two girls to show the pedagogical classes at the university the time that can be saved in teaching.

Seven days before neither girl had ever studied any Latin. In the encyclopedia submitted there was not a mislake in vocabulary or position and other errors were very few. The translation called for the use of the "first and second declension."

"The secret lies in teaching the pupils to associate," Doctor Berie said. "I started Jane and Betty by having

them learn the vocabularies through looking up ever English derivative. When we came to the word 'magnanimous' they went to the dictionary and found 'magnanimous,' 'magnificent,' 'magnificently,' and so on. Those girls will never forget that 'magnus' means 'great.'"

"As a result these girls know their vocabularies. The trouble with the average person is that they cannot collect together what they already know. Every subject studied should be made to co-ordinate with what one is studying in other lines."

Finding Fault.

"The prisoners here seem to be a contented lot."

"Yes. They have little to complain of. However, I have discovered one inmate who is discontented."

"What is it about?"

"He says the intramural literary clubs don't devote as much attention as they ought to the study of Resolving."

Learning to Swim.

"I have just learned to swim."

"That is fine. How did you learn?"

"I was in the water for an hour and I learned to swim."

"That is fine. How did you learn?"

"I was in the water for an hour and I learned to swim."

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What Might Happen.

"What would happen," said a summer boarder who is always trying to entertain the company, "if an irresistible force were to meet with an immovable body?"

"I reckon, maybe," replied Farmer Cornsnoted, "there won't be nigh so many of us left to ask fool questions."

His Position.

Peckem—My wife referred to me as the head of the house today.

Meeks—How did that happen?

Peckem—She was talking to a man who called to collect a bill.

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