

LITTLE FRANCE

A ROMANCE OF THE DAYS WHEN "THE GREAT LORD HAWKE" WAS KING OF THE SEA

BY CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

Author of "Commodore Paul Jones," "Reuben James," "For the Freedom of the Sea," etc.

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CHAPTER XVII.

FALLS THE FLAG OF FRANCE.

DE RAMESAY stood in his private office in the shot-riddled chateau at St. Louis. From the English batteries at Point Levis the cannons were continually firing upon the already ruined lower town, and even upon the castle itself. From Townsend's intrenchments on the landward side the heavy siege guns which had been landed from the British ships were raining shot and shell upon the upper town and the citadel. Fiedmont, the French chief of artillery, was making what reply he could. The fleet of Admiral Saunders in the basin had been moving up toward the lower town during the past week, and as de Ramesay watched them, large boats full of troops were even then being landed on the meadows and flats at the mouth of the St. Charles river and were being drawn up in columns under cover of the ships' batteries, as if preparing to approach and storm the gate nearest the bridge.

De Ramesay had just come in from a tour of the walls. It was a hopeless outlook indeed before the governor. He had done his best, but the end was approaching. Sad indeed is the moment when we realize that our best is unavailing. The rations of all had been reduced and reduced until starvation stared them in the face. No part of the town was safe now from the English fire. The very chateau itself in which he stood was riddled with shells. There was a great gaping hole in the roof of his cabinet, through which the rain poured dismally.

The temper of the garrison had grown worse and worse. Nothing whatever had been heard from de Levis. De Ramesay felt that if an assault were delivered it could not be met. His garrison originally consisted of 150 troops of the line, some 400 or 500 colony troops, and the local militia, but had been much reduced by death, wounds and starvation, and was growing less every day. The colonial soldiers and militia had been deserting in hundreds.

Presently Capt. Rouvigny entered. "Monsieur," he said, saluting, "a body of merchants, headed by Monsieur Daine, are here to see you, and—

"Bids them attend me in the great hall of the chateau, captain," interrupted the governor gloomily, "and summon the officers of my staff. Let some one go for Monsieur Fiedmont, if he can be spared from the walls. We need his counsel."

"I omitted to state, monsieur," continued the young officer, "that the merchants are accompanied by the officers of the city militia."

"Let them all come together, I will see them all. I know what it means," said de Ramesay despondently.

A few moments after he entered the great hall of the bullet-ridden castle. Many of the portraits which adorned it had been destroyed by the fire of the enemy. Grim old Frontenac, the unconquerable, however, still kept watch and ward over the territory he had loved, now fast slipping into the hands of the hated English. Had he been in de Vaudreuil's place, thought de Ramesay, they might not now be in such a pass.

Through the broken window-panes the rain beat and the wind swept in mournful harmony with the thoughts of the people who crowded the room. At the lower end were congregated a body of the most influential citizens of the town. Their plain, but rich dress, comfortable cloaks, prosperous appearance, proclaimed that they were men of substance and condition. A little apart from them stood the officers of the colonial militia in bedraggled, weather-stained uniforms.

The merchants faced de Ramesay boldly. The eyes of the citizen soldiery sank to the ground, and they shifted uneasily under the stern glare of the veteran commander, while their hands played nervously with their sword-hilts. De Ramesay was attended by the officers of his staff, able soldiers all; some of them were drenched with rain and covered with marks of their exposure to the inclement weather, which showed they had just come from the ramparts. Among them were Rouvigny, St. Luc, Fiedmont, and Joannes the town major, and with them de Vitre, still under restraint by de Ramesay's order.

The governor stood at the great table with his officers grouped around him. The merchants and militia officers drifted together at the opposite side. A stranger would have instantly recognized that here were two parties to debate a serious proposition. Sadness was the predominant note in de Ramesay's face; haughty pride and contempt flashed from the eyes of the nobles and professional soldiers at his back; dogged determination was evidenced in every line in the portly figures of the merchants; and stubborn shame spoke from the drooped heads of the militia officers.

"Messieurs," said the governor quietly, "you have asked an audience for a purpose which I can but too well divine. Will you speak your mind and have done with it? The gentlemen of the counter first."

to break the silence. No one wished to assume the stigma of being the first to make the proposition in furtherance of which they had assembled.

"What, gentlemen!" continued de Ramesay sarcastically, "are your desires so base that none of you have even courage to mention them? Monsieur Daine, it was at your house, I am informed, that the gentlemen held their meeting this morning. Will you speak?"

"Monsieur le Chevalier," stammered Daine, flushing and paling by turns, "we are—we cannot—we do not—in short, we came to beg you to surrender the town."

"Ah!" said the governor, "and why should I give up a charge devolved upon me by my majesty the king?"

"We are starving, monsieur," answered Daine more boldly; "our dwellings, our shops, our warehouses are ruined. We can do no more. If the English break into the town, if they storm the walls, we have over 2,000 women and children here. Think of them, sir!"

"True," said de Ramesay, "but so long as we have arms in our hands the English will not break through the walls. Is it not so, gentlemen?"

"Vive la nouvelle France!"

"Let us die for the flag!"

"Vive le roi!"

"Death to the English!" broke in confused acclamations from the little group of officers behind the chevalier. The others were silent.

"How is it that I hear no response to my appeal from the officers of the militia?" continued the governor.

"Gentlemen, do you allow your brothers of the regular army to outdo you in patriotism?"

"By God, sir!" ripped out one of the leading officers of the militia, "we cannot fight any more, and there's an end to it! Our men are deserting by hundreds, and we are hungry! We have had nothing to eat since last night, nothing to drink either! 'Tis ill keeping guard and fighting on nothing!"

One by one the big guns that ringed the city ceased to pour their shot upon the town, as the English saw the flag come down. Although the heavy smoke still hung low in the sodden air, a silence ominous and gloomy for the Frenchmen succeeded the roar of the cannonade.

The ships in the harbor were soon black with men. From the meadows on the Plains of Abraham the sound of cheering could be heard faintly, and down by the St. Charles gate, where the columns of the English were massed, came back an echo of the joyful sound. It was the death-knell of the province.

Maj. Joannes, reluctantly complying, while bitterly protesting, was dispatched with a white flag to Gen. Townsend's headquarters. With the cessation of the bombardment the townspeople, regardless of the rain, poured into the streets. The plateau in front of the chateau was soon filled with people shouting, gesticulating, laughing, crying, sobbing like mad. The gamol old governor, with the officers about him, stood at the foot of the flagstaff looking over that marvelous prospect which should never again belong to France. Presently Joannes returned.

"The terms, major!" cried the governor.

"The garrison to march out with the honors of war, with their arms, two pieces of cannon, and 20 rounds; afterward to be transported to France with such of the townspeople as choose to go with them. The free exercise of our religion permitted and the rights and property of the people respected."

"And the alternative, monsieur?"

"Immediate attack."

"Have you the paper?"

"Within my breast, sir," answered Joannes.

"Let us go to the chateau; we will sign it."

Presently the two reappeared on the terrace.

"Say to the English that the people are starving, and ask them in the name of the women and children to send us something to eat at once," said the governor.

Joannes saluted, turned away, and was gone. The people watched him disappear in silence.

"to what straits we are reduced! My children cry for bread!"

"My wife suffers with hunger; we are ruined!" cried another.

"My soldiers starve!" exclaimed a third.

"Gentlemen," said the unfortunate chevalier, turning to the militia, "you have some influence with your men surely! Return to them, beg them to fight one more day! Monsieur de Levis will surely succor us. Upon us depends the fortune of New France. When we strike the flag we give up a province, an empire! For God's sake, messieurs, for the king, for your own lands, once more to the walls! Vive la nouvelle France!"

The militia officers stood in gloomy silence in the face of this appeal. The feeble acclamations of the loyal officers of the line were drowned by a dreadful crashing sound, followed by a detonating explosion, which hurled the people in the room in every direction. A shell from the batteries burst in the hall.

"Sauve qui peut!" cried one in the smoke.

"We have no safety anywhere!"

"Strike the flag!"

"Fly, fly, messieurs!"

The room was filled with men, dead, wounded and stunned. Groans, curses, shrieks resounded. Scarcely knowing what had happened, the governor, de Vitre, and the rest, blinded, dazed, and choking, found themselves swept out of the chateau to the terrace in front of it overlooking the river. From the tall staff above them floated the white flag of France. There was an excited group of men around it. Two or three eager hands clutched at the halliards. Slowly, as if with reluctance, the proud banner came drooping down to the earth.

De Vitre, Rouvigny, Joannes, Fiedmont and two or three others with drawn swords ran into the midst of the mob, driving back the townspeople and the officers. With eager hands they strove to hoist the flag, but the halliards had been cut and they could only lift it in their hands a little space above the sodden ground. As they realized the effort, their antagonists swept down upon them again. The governor's spirit was unabated, but his resolution at this gave way. He succumbed to the inevitable.

"Let be!" he cried, breaking his sword and throwing the pieces far from him. "The flag is down. Be it remembered that it was not my hand that struck it! You cowards, you have your way! It is the end of New France."

He stood, with the tears trickling down his rugged old face, a picture of shame and sorrow.

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TO BE CONTINUED.

MARVELOUS CORN CROP.—Our corn crop of this year, if massed together, would cover sixty acres of ground to the depth of nearly sixteen hundred feet. The stalks were strongly rooted and over a third of a mile high. If divided equally among the population of the earth it would give each person nearly two bushels. One practical result of the enormous corn crop ought to be a material reduction in the price of beef for home consumption, since it is the crop on which beef cattle are chiefly fed. In many parts of the west the harvest has been abundant, but in Oklahoma, especially, farmers this year are boastful of their corn crop. Favorable climatic conditions produced a record-breaking yield. In many instances the ears and stalks are of such unusual size as to be veritable curiosities. In a field owned by Walter Matthews, a farmer near the town of Mulhall, in Logan county, an eleven-year-old boy, weighing eighty pounds, climbed a stalk to a height of four feet without its bending down. The stalk was strongly rooted and about sixteen feet high. While the growth in Oklahoma was exceptional, no traveler through the west is not impressed with the vastness of the corn area and the immensity of the crop.—Lealie's Weekly.

Miscellaneous Reading.

LONG RANGE FORECASTS.

Section Director Bauer Says They Are Impracticable.

COLUMBIA, November 15.—The slow and laborious progress of all the sciences, from the earliest dawn of civilization, has been hampered and burdened by the actions of men incapable of mastering the principles involved in the study of science, yet with the keenness to be alive to the possibilities of science for the public good. These men were unscrupulous enough to assume the title of false garb of knowledge, and in that false garb pose as apostles of the science, for personal gain and utterly regardless of the good of humanity. In their false guise, it is true, these impostors were but the laughing stock of men of science and of the honest public. It is now, however, in the study of science, yet with the keenness to be alive to the possibilities of science for the public good. These men were unscrupulous enough to assume the title of false garb of knowledge, and in that false garb pose as apostles of the science, for personal gain and utterly regardless of the good of humanity. 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