

DISASTER  
BY  
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## **Chapter 1: A Tale Of Woe.**

The intrepidity of the officer in command, and the alertness and courage of the Rangers, had saved Fort William Henry from one threatened disaster.

When the French had fairly retreated, after having been forced to content themselves with the burning of the boats and the unfinished sloop and certain of the surrounding huts and buildings, the English found out from their prisoners how great their peril had been. For the French force sent against them had been a strong one, well equipped, and hopeful of surprising the place and carrying it by a coup de main.

Failing in this, they had made a show of hostility, but had not really attempted anything very serious. The season was against anything like a settled siege, and they had retreated quickly to their own quarters.

But this attack was only to be the prelude to one on a very different scale already being organized at headquarters. The English heard disquieting rumours from all quarters, and turned eager eyes towards England and their own colonies from whence help should come to them, for their numbers were terribly thinned by disease, and death in many forms had taken off pretty well a third of their number.

Rogers himself had been attacked by smallpox, and upon his recovery he and the large body of the Rangers betook themselves to the woods and elsewhere, preferring the free life of the forest, with its manifold adventures and perils, to the monotonous life in an unhealthy fort.

But Fritz remained behind. When Rogers left he was not fit to accompany him, having been suffering from fever, though he had escaped the scourge of smallpox. He had felt the death of Charles a good deal. He had become attached to the strange, half-crazed man who had been his special comrade for so long. It seemed like something wanting in his life when his care was no longer required by any one person. Indeed all the Rangers missed their white-headed, wild-eyed, sharp-eared recruit; and as the saying is, many a better man could better have been spared.

Stark went with Rogers, too much the true Ranger now to be left behind. Fritz intended to follow them as soon as he was well enough. Meantime he had formed a warm friendship with two young officers lately come to the fort with the new commander, Colonel Monro--one of them being Captain Pringle, and the other a young lieutenant of the name of Roche.

Colonel Monro was a Scotchman, a brave man and a fine soldier. Those under his command spoke of him in terms of warm and loving admiration. Fritz heard of some of his achievements from his new friends, and in his turn told them of his own adventures and of the life he had led during the past two years.

"We have heard of the Rangers many a time and oft," cried Roche. "We had thought of offering ourselves to Rogers as volunteers; but men are so sorely wanted for the regular army and the militia that our duty seemed to point that way. But I should like well to follow the fortunes of the hardy Rogers."

It was true indeed that men were sorely wanted at Fort William Henry. Colonel Monro looked grave and anxious as he examined its defences. It was an irregular bastioned square, built of gravel and earth, crowned by a rampart of heavy logs, and guarded by ditches on three sides, and by the lake on the north. But it was not strong enough to stand a very heavy assault, although it was provided with seventeen cannons, besides some mortars and swivels.

The garrison numbered at this time something over two thousand; but there were many sick amongst these, and sickness was inclined to spread, to the grave anxiety of the commander.

Fourteen miles away to the south lay Fort Edward, and General Webb was there with some fifteen hundred men. He had sent on as many men as he felt able to spare some short time before, in response to an appeal from Colonel Monro. Disquieting rumours of an advance from Ticonderoga were every day coming to their ears. Summer was at its height, and if a blow were to be struck, it would certainly be soon.

A scouting party was sent out under the command of a certain Colonel Parker, in order to learn the strength of the enemy and what they were about. Three days passed in anxious suspense, and as nothing was heard of the scouting party, Fritz begged leave to go forth with a handful of men to look for them, promising not to expose himself or them to danger. As he knew the forest so well, and was an experienced Ranger, leave was quickly obtained, and Pringle and Roche were permitted to be of the company.

They started with the first dawn of the summer's morning; but they had not gone far before they came upon traces of their companions. Fritz's quick eyes saw tracks in the forest which bespoke the near neighbourhood of Indians, and this made them all proceed with great caution. The tracks, however, were some days old, he thought, and led away to the westward. At one spot he pointed out to his companions certain indications which convinced him that a large number of Indians had lately been lying there.

"Pray Heaven it has not been an ambush sent to outwit and overpower our men!" he said. "What would those raw lads from New Jersey do if suddenly confronted by a crew of yelling Indians? I trust I am no coward myself, but the sound of that awful war whoop thrills me still with a kind of horror; it has been the forerunner of many a tragedy to the white man out in wildernesses such as this."

"I have heard it once," said Pringle, with an expressive gesture, "and I could well wish never to hear it again, did not duty to King and country drive me willingly forth to fight against these dusky savages, who make of these fair lands a veritable hell upon earth."

"Hark! what is that?"

It was like the sound of a faint cry not so very far away. They listened, and it was presently repeated. Fritz started forward at a run.

"That is no Indian voice," he exclaimed; "it is one of our men calling for aid. He has heard our voices."

Followed by the rest of the party, Fritz ran forward, and soon came out into a more open glade, commanded by the ridge where he had observed the signs of Indian occupation. As he did so he uttered a startled exclamation, which was repeated in all kinds of keys by those who came after. For in this glade lay the bodies of full fifty of their soldiers, for the most part stripped and scalped; and the place was so trodden and bloodstained as to show plainly that it had been the scene of a bloody conflict.

Crawling forth from a little sheltered gorge was a wan, dishevelled figure, bloodstained and ghastly. And Fritz, springing forward, caught the lad in his strong arms, whilst he fell to feeble sobbing in the plenitude of his thankfulness and relief.

When he was fed and heartened up he had a terrible tale to tell.

It had been as Fritz thought. A party of Indians had been crouching in the forest, and had fallen upon the company unawares. Colonel Parker had not been wise. He had divided his men into two companies. One had gone by boats, and one had skirted through the forest. What had happened to the boats the lad could not tell. He had been one of the very few survivors of the land party, and he owed his escape to his having fallen wounded and breathless into the little cleft in the rocks hidden by the thick undergrowth, so that the Indians did not find him when they made their search after scalps and accoutrements.

Crouching amongst the bushes, half fainting from terror, the lad had seen it all.

"They scalped them one by one, yelling and shouting and dancing. They cared not whether they were dead or not. Oh, it was horrible, horrible! They lighted a fire to burn some of the prisoners, and danced around it yelling and jeering as their victims died. Oh, I can never forget the sight! Every moment I thought they would find me. I thought of all the things I had heard that savages did to their prisoners. If I had had my sword, I would have run it through my heart. But I had nothing, and presently I suppose I fainted, for I can remember no more; and when I woke they had all gone, and only the bodies lay about beside me. They had taken off their own dead; but I durst not come out, lest they should come back and find me, and I did not know where I was.

"There was water in the brook, or I should have died; and I used to crawl out and drink, and go and hide myself again. And last of all I heard English voices, and called out; and that is all I can tell you."

They made a litter and carried the lad back to the fort, where he lay tossing in fever for many a long day to come. It was evil news that they had for their comrades; and it was not more cheering when stragglers from the scouting party came back by twos and threes, all with the same tale. The Indians were overrunning all the forests and lakes. They had mustered around the French camp by hundreds and thousands, and were scouring the woods everywhere, under no sort of discipline, excited, rebellious, rapacious, yet too useful as allies not to be humoured by those who had summoned them to their aid.

All had horrid tales to tell of cannibal feasts, and of the savage treatment of prisoners. Some declared they had seen French officers and ecclesiastics striving to interfere, but that the Indians paid no manner of heed to them.

"There was a young priest who saw them eating human flesh at their fire, and he came up and rebuked them. I was sitting by. I had a cord round my neck. Sweat was pouring from me, for I knew I should be the next victim. They looked at the priest, and one young Indian cried out in French, 'You have French taste, I have Indian; this is good meat for me. Taste it yourself, and see if you cannot learn to like it too!' Whereat all the rest laughed aloud. But the priest rebuked them again, and offered money if they would give me up; and presently they did, though rather against their will. They were sending some prisoners to Montreal, and I was to have gone there, too; but in the night I escaped, and as I knew something of the forest, I have got back safe and sound."

Tales like these came pouring in as the survivors struggled back to the fort. All were agreed that the Indians were very numerous and very fierce, and it was said by all that the muster of the French seemed to be very strong.

Anxiety and fear reigned throughout the fort. Fritz almost lived upon the lake in his boat, watching for the first signs of the enemy's approach. That a great part of it would come by water he did not doubt. And sometimes he would leave his boat in a creek, and climb some adjacent height, from whence he could scan the surface of the lake, and see what was stirring there.

Roche was his companion on those excursions; and the two had climbed together to a commanding height, when upon the dawn of a glorious midsummer morning they saw the long-expected flotilla covering the lake and making headway up it.

What a sight it was! The hearts of the onlookers seemed to stand still within them as they looked. And yet it was a magnificent spectacle. Myriads and myriads of Indian canoes like flocks of waterfowl seemed swarming everywhere, whilst from two to three hundred bateaux conveyed the French and Canadian soldiers. Then there were great platforms bearing the heavy guns, and rowed by huge sweeps, as well as being assisted by the bateaux; whilst the blaze of colour formed by the uniforms of the various battalions formed in itself a picture which had seldom been seen in these savage solitudes.

"We shall have our work cut out to face such odds!" cried Fritz, as he turned to dash down the hill and regain his canoe. But Roche laid a hand upon his arm, and pointed significantly in another direction.

Fritz looked, and a smothered exclamation, almost like a groan, broke from him.

Far away through the mazes of the forest, skirting round towards the doomed fort by a road parallel with the lake, was a large body of troops--how large the spectators could not guess, but they saw enough to tell them that it was a very considerable detachment. Such an army as the one now marching upon Fort William Henry had not been seen there before. To those who knew the weakness of the fort and of its garrison it seemed already as though the day were lost.

Moreover these men knew that the great Marquis de Montcalm himself was coming this time to take personal command, and his name inspired respect and a certain fear. He was known to be a general of considerable distinction; it was felt that there would be no blundering when he was at the head of the expedition.

To fly back to the fort with these ominous tidings was but the work of a few short hours. In a moment all was stir and bustle. The soldiers were not to be disheartened. They were ready

and almost eager for the battle, having become weary of inaction and suspense. But the face of Colonel Monro was grave and stern, and he called Fritz aside presently and conferred with him apart.

"I must send a messenger to Fort Edward to General Webb, to report to him our sorry plight. He has said that he can spare no more men; but this extremity of ours should be told him. Think you that you can take a letter safely to him? You Rangers are the best of messengers; and you have seen this great armament, and can speak with authority concerning it. Tell him how sore our need is. It may be that he can hurry up the reinforcements, or that they may be already on their way. Even a few hundreds would be better than none. At least he should know our need."

Fritz was ready in a moment to take the message, but he had small hope of any result, and he saw that the brave Colonel had little either. General Webb was a man upon whose courage and generalship several aspersions had already been cast. If ever he was to regain confidence and show these aspersions to be untrue, this was the time to show himself in his true colours. But it was with no confidence that Fritz set forth upon his errand.

Not long ago General Webb had visited the fort, and had given certain orders and had spoken brave words about coming to command in person should need arise; but he had returned to Fort Edward the following day, and had then sent the reinforcements which were all he was able to spare. It remained to be seen whether he would fulfil his promise when he knew that the attack of the enemy might be expected every hour.

Fritz rode in hot haste to the fort and asked for the General. He brought news of urgency, he told them, and was instantly shown to the General's quarters. He stood in silence whilst the letter which Fritz brought was opened and read; then he abruptly asked the tall young Ranger what it was he had seen.

Fritz told his tale in simple, graphic words, the General marching up and down the room meantime, evidently in some perturbation of spirit; but all he said at the close was:

"Go back and tell Colonel Monro that I have no troops here which I can safely withdraw, but that I have sent, and will send, expresses to the provinces for help."



Fritz was too much the soldier to make reply. He bowed and retired, well knowing that no express sent to New England could be of the smallest service now. It was with a bitter sense of failure that he took the fresh horse provided for him and made all speed back to the camp.

The road was still clear, but how long it would remain so there was no knowing. Swarms of Indians were drawing around them. If succour did not come quickly, it would arrive too late.

Monro received the message in silence, and continued to strengthen his own defences as best he might. The next day brought the enemy full in view, and the numbers of the hostile host astonished though they did not dismay the brave little garrison.

Once more Monro sent forth Fritz with a letter to the General.

"The French are upon us," he wrote, "both by land and water. They are well supplied with artillery, which will make sad havoc of our defences, for these, you have seen for yourself, are none of the strongest. Nevertheless the garrison are all in good spirits, and eager to do their duty. I make no doubt that you will send us a reinforcement, for we are very certain that a part of the enemy will soon get possession of the road, and in that case our condition would become very serious."

Again Fritz was entrusted with this letter; again he made the rapid night journey over the familiar road.

This time he was not admitted to the General's presence, and after he had remained at Fort Edward about an hour and had been refreshed, a message came to say that General Webb had received the letter and considered it, but could make no other reply than he had done the previous day.

"Then God help us," said the Scotch veteran when this message was brought him, "for vain is the help of man!"

And although he went about the fort with as calm and cheerful a mien as before, he was certain in his own heart that Fort William Henry was now doomed.

"They are surrounding us on all sides," cried Roche, as soon as Fritz appeared upon the ramparts with his disheartening message, which, however, he kept for the moment to himself. "See, they are working their way through the forest to the rear, just beyond our range. Soon we shall be hemmed in, and they will bring up their guns. We have done what we can for these poor walls; but they will not long stand the cannonade of all those guns we see lying yonder on the platoons upon the lake."

"We must hope that the militia from the provinces will come up before their preparations are complete," said Fritz. "They should be on their way by now. But delay and procrastination have ever marked our methods through this war. Nevertheless the men are in good spirits; they are eager for the fight to begin. I marvel at their courage, seeing how great are the odds. But even the sick seemed fired by martial ardour!"

It was so. The long inaction of the winter and spring had been wearisome and disheartening. It was impossible for the soldiers to doubt that they would receive help from without now that it was known that the enemy was actually upon them. Moreover, they all knew, and some remembered, how the assault of a few months back had been repulsed; and not realizing the different scale upon which this one was to be conducted, were full of hopeful confidence and emulation.

Before hostilities actually commenced, Colonel Monro summoned his officers about him. Great excitement prevailed in the fort, for it was known that a messenger had been admitted under a flag of truce, and that he brought a letter from the Marquis de Montcalm. It was to the reading of this letter that Monro invited his officers.

"We have to deal with an honourable foe, gentlemen," said the veteran, looking at those about him, "as you will know when I read to you his words. 'I owe it to humanity,' so writes M. de Montcalm, 'to summon you to surrender. At present I can restrain the savages, and make them observe the terms of a capitulation, as I might not have power to do under other circumstances; and the most obstinate defence on your part can only retard the capture of the place a few days, and endanger an unfortunate garrison which cannot be

relieved, in consequence of the dispositions I have made. I demand a decisive answer within an hour.' That, gentlemen, is the message brought to us. What answer shall we return to our high-minded adversary?"

There was only one word in the mouths of all.

"No surrender! no surrender!" they called aloud, waving their swords in the air; and the cry was taken up by those without, and reached the soldiers upon the ramparts, and the welkin rang with the enthusiastic shout:

"No surrender! no surrender!"

By this time the Indians were swarming about close outside the ramparts, and hearing this cry and knowing its meaning, they looked up and gesticulated fiercely.

"You won't surrender, eh?" bawled in broken French an old Indian chief. "Fire away then and fight your best; for if we catch you after this, you shall get no quarter!"

The response to this threat was the heavy boom of the cannon as Fort William Henry discharged its first round of artillery.

For a moment it produced immense effect amongst the swarms of painted savages, who scuttled away yelling with fear; for though well used to the sound of musketry, and having considerable skill with firearms themselves, they had never heard the roar of big guns before, and the screaming of the shells as they whistled overhead filled them with terror and amaze.

They were intensely eager for the French guns to be got into position, and were a perfect nuisance to the regular soldiers, as they worked with intrepid industry at their trenches and mounds. But before long even the Indians were satisfied with the prolonged roar of artillery, which lasted day after day, day after day; whilst within their walls the brave but diminished

garrison looked vainly for succour, and examined with a sinking heart their diminished store of ammunition and their cracked and overheated guns.

"It cannot go on long like this," the officers said one to the other. "What is the General doing over yonder? He must hear by the heavy firing what straits we are in. He knows the condition of the fort. He should risk and dare everything to come to our aid. If this fort is lost, then our western frontier has lost its only point of defence against the inroads of Indians and the encroachments of France."

A few days later and a cry went up from the walls, "A white flag! a white flag!" and for a moment a wild hope surged up in the hearts of the soldiers that the enemy had grown tired of the game of war, and had some proposal to make.

The messenger brought a letter. It was not from the French commander himself, though it was delivered with a courteous message from him. It had been found upon the body of a white man slain by the Indians a few days before, and brought to the French camp. The Marquis de Montcalm had read it, and sent it now to the person for whom it was intended.

"Give my thanks," said Monro, "to the Marquis for his courtesy, and tell him that it is a joy to me to have to do with so generous a foe."

But the letter thus received was one of evil omen to the hapless garrison. It came from General Webb, and repeated that, until reinforced from the provinces, he could do nothing for the garrison of Fort William Henry; and advised Colonel Monro to make the best terms that he could with the enemy, who were plainly too strong for him to withstand.

It was time indeed for the gallant little garrison to think of surrender. Men and officers stood in knots together gloomily surveying the scene.

"We have done what men can do," said Captain Pringle to his friends Fritz and Roche; "but where are we now? A third of our men are sick and wounded. Almost all our big guns are burst. The enemy's trenches are being pushed nearer and nearer, and there are still more of their guns to be brought to bear. Our wall is breached; I marvel they have not already made

an assault. There is nothing for it but surrender, if we can obtain honourable terms of capitulation."

"Nay, rather let us die sword in hand and face to foe!" cried Roche, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm. "Let us make a last desperate sortie, and see if we cannot drive the enemy from their position. Anything is better than dying here like rats in a hole! A forlorn hope is better than none. Why should we not at least cut our way out to the free forest, if we cannot rout the enemy and drive them back whence they came?"

"The life of the free forest would mean death to those raw lads who have come out from England or from the provinces," said Fritz gravely. "It would be hardly more than a choice of deaths; and yet I would sooner die sword in hand, hewing my way to freedom, than cooped up between walls where every shot begins to tell, and where the dead can scarce be buried for the peril to the living."

And indeed the position of affairs was so deplorable that a council was held by Monroe; and it was agreed that if any desired to make this last sortie, either for life and liberty for themselves, or in the last forlorn hope of driving the enemy from their position, it might be attempted; but if it failed, there was nothing for it but capitulation, if honourable terms could be had, or if not to die at their posts, fighting to the very last.

A cheer went up from the men when they heard these words. If they had well nigh lost hope, their courage was not quenched, and a large band volunteered for the sortie. Fritz and Roche were amongst these, but Pringle remained behind in the fort.

"I will stand by the Colonel and the sinking ship," he said. "It is but a choice of evils. I doubt if any of us will see the light of many more days. I prefer the chances of war to the unknown horrors of the forest filled with savages."

He laid a hand upon Roche's arm and looked affectionately into the boyish brave young face. Then he turned to Fritz.

"If you should get through, take care of the lad. You are a Ranger; you know the forest well. If any can escape safely thither, it will be you and such as you. But don't forsake the boy--don't let him fall alive into the hands of the Indians; kill him yourself sooner. And now fare well, and God bless you both: for I think that on this earth we shall meet no more."

"Nay, why think that?" cried Roche eagerly; "stranger things have happened before now than that we should all live to tell the tale of these days."

Pringle shook his head; whilst Fritz wrung his hand and said:

"At least remember this: if you should wish to have news of us, ask it of Rogers' Rangers, who are always to be heard of in these parts. If we escape, it is to Rogers we shall find our way. He will be glad enough to welcome us, and from any of his Rangers you will hear news of us if we ever reach his ranks."

There was no sleep for the fort that night. Indeed the hot summer nights were all too short for any enterprise to be undertaken then. The glow in the western sky had scarcely paled before there might have been seen creeping forth through the battered gateway file after file of soldiers, as well equipped as their circumstances allowed--silent, stealthy, eager for the signal which should launch them against the intrenched foe so close at hand.

But alas for them, they had foes wily, watchful, lynx-eyed, ever on the watch for some such movement. Hardly had they got clear of their protecting walls and ditches, when, with a horrid yell, hundreds and thousands of dusky Indians leaped up from the ground and rushed frantically towards them. The next moment the boom of guns overhead told that the French camp had been alarmed. The regular soldiers would be upon them in a few minutes, driving them back to the fort, killing and wounding, and leaving the Indians to butcher and scalp at their leisure. The fearful war whoop was ringing in their ears. The line wavered--broke; the men made a frantic rush backwards towards their lines.

"Don't fly!" cried Roche suddenly to Fritz, at whose side he marched; "let us cut our way through, or die doing it. It is death whichever way we turn. Let us die like men, with our faces and not our backs to the foe!"

"Come then!" cried Fritz, upon whom had fallen one of those strange bursts of desperate fury which give a man whilst it lasts the strength of ten.

With a wild bound he sprang forward, bursting through the ranks of Indians like the track of a whirlwind, scattering them right and left, hewing, hacking, cutting! Roche was just behind or at his side; the two seemed invulnerable, irresistible, possessed of some supernatural strength. The Indians in amaze gave way right and left, and turned their attention to the flying men, who were easier to deal with than this strange couple.

A shout went up that the devil was abroad, and the Indian, ever superstitious, shrank away from these stalwart figures, believing them to be denizens from some other world; whilst the French soldiers, who might have felt very differently, had not yet so far equipped themselves as to be ready to come out from their lines.

Fritz had marked his line with care. Only upon one small section between lake and forest was there any possible passage without peril from the French lines, and that was by skirting the head of the lake just where their own intrenched camp, now almost in ruins, gave them shelter.

The woodsman's and the Ranger's instinct kept true within him even in the confusion and darkness. He never deflected from his line.

"This way! this way!" he called to Roche in smothered tones, as they heard the sound of the fight growing fainter behind them. He took the lad's hand, and plunged into the marshy hollow. He knew that none would follow them there; the ground was too treacherous. But there was a path known to himself which he could find blindfold by day or night.

He pulled his comrade along with a fierce, wild haste, till at a certain point he paused. There was a little cavernous shelter in the midst of the morass, and here the pair sank down breathless and exhausted.

"We are saved!" gasped Roche, clasping his comrade by the hand.

"For the moment--yes," answered Fritz; "but what of afterwards?"

## **Chapter 2: Escape.**

Young Roche lay face downwards upon the rocky floor of the little cavern, great sobs breaking from him which he was unable to restrain. Fritz, with a stern, set face, sat beside another prostrate figure--that of a man who looked more dead than alive, and whose head and arm were wrapped in linen bandages soaked through and through with blood.

It was Captain Pringle, their friend and comrade in Fort William Henry, who had elected to remain with the garrison when the other two took part in a sortie and cut themselves a path to the forest. Had he remained with them, he might have fared better; he would at least have been spared the horrors of a scene which would now be branded forever upon his memory in characters of fire.

What had happened to that ill-fated fort Fritz and Roche knew little as yet. They had heard the tremendous firing which had followed whilst they remained in hiding during the day the dawn of which had seen the last desperate sortie. They had at night seen flames which spoke of Indian campfires all round the place, and from the complete cessation of firing after two they concluded that terms of surrender had been made. They had meant to wander deeper and deeper into the forest, out of reach of possible peril from prowling Indians; but they had been unable to tear themselves away without learning more of the fate of the hapless fort and its garrison.

At daybreak--or rather with the, first grey of dawn-- they had crept through the brushwood as stealthily as Indians themselves, only to be made aware shortly that something horrible and terrible was going on. Yells and war whoops and the screech of Indian voices rose and clamoured through the silence of the forest, mingled with the shrieks of victims brutally massacred, and the shouts and entreaties of the French officers, who ran hither and thither seeking to restrain the brutal and savage treachery of their unworthy allies.



Roche had lost his head, and would have rushed madly upon the scene of bloodshed and confusion; and Fritz must needs have followed, for he was not one to let a comrade go to his death alone: but before they had proceeded far, they met their comrade Pringle dashing through the forest, covered with wounds, and pursued by half a dozen screeching Indians, and in a moment they had sprung to his rescue.

With a yell as fierce in its way as that of the Indians themselves they sprang upon the painted savages, and taking them unawares, they killed every one before the dusky and drunken sons of the forest had recovered from their surprise at being thus met and opposed.

But plainly there was no time to lose. The forest was ringing with the awful war whoop. Their comrade was in no state for further fighting; he was almost too far gone even for flight.

They seized him one by each arm; they dashed along through the tangled forest by an unfrequented track known to Fritz, half leading, half carrying him the while. The din and the horrid clamour grew fainter in their ears. No pursuing footsteps gave them cause to pause to defend themselves. The centre of excitement round the fort drew the human wolves, as carrion draws vultures. The forest was dim and silent and deserted as the fugitives pursued their way through it.

From time to time the wounded man dropped some words full of horror and despair. Young Roche, new to these fearful border wars, was almost overcome by this broken narrative, realizing the fearful fate which had overtaken so many of his brave comrades of the past weeks.

When at last they reached the little cave for which Fritz was heading, and where they felt that for the moment at least they were safe, he could only throw himself along the ground in an agony of grief and physical exhaustion: whilst the hardier Fritz bathed the wounds of their unfortunate comrade, binding them up with no small skill, and refreshing him with draughts of water from the pool hard by, which was all the sick man desired at this moment.

All three comrades were exhausted to the uttermost, and for a long while nothing broke the silence of the dim place save the long-drawn, gasping sobs of the lad. Gradually these died away into silence, and Fritz saw that both his companions slept--the fitful sleep of overwrought nature. Yet he was thankful even for that. Moving softly about he lighted a fire, and having captured one of the wild turkeys which were plentiful in the forest at that season, he proceeded to prepare a meal for them when they should awake.

Roche slept on and on, as the young will do when nature has been tried to her extreme limits; but Pringle presently opened his eyes, and looked feebly about him.

Fritz had a little weak broth to offer him by that time, and after drinking it the Captain looked a little less wan and ghastly.

"Where are we?" he asked, in a weak voice; "and how many are there of us?"

"We have only Roche with us. We have been in the forest since the sortie when we cut our way out. We met you the next day with half a dozen Indians at your heels. We know nothing save what you have spoken of treachery and massacre. Can it be true that the French permitted such abominations? The forest was ringing with the Indian war whoops and the screams of their wretched victims!"

A shudder ran through Pringle's frame.

"It is too true," he said; "it is horrible--unspeakably horrible! Yet we must not blame the French too much. They did what they could to prevent it. Indeed, I heard the Marquis de Montcalm himself bidding the Indians kill him, but spare the English garrison, which had surrendered, and had been promised all the honours of war and a safe escort to Fort Edward."

"If men will stoop to use fiends to do their work," said Fritz sternly, "they must expect to be disgraced and defied by these fiends, over whom they have no sort of influence. If men will use unworthy instruments, they must take the consequences."

"Yes; but the consequences have been the massacre of our hapless sick and wounded, and scenes of horror at thought of which my blood curdles. They have fallen upon us, not upon them."

"For the moment, yes," said Fritz, still in the same stern tone; "but, Pringle, there is a God above us who looks down upon these things, and who will not suffer such deeds to pass unavenged. We are His children; we bear His name. We look to Him in the dark moments of despair and overthrow. I am sure that He will hear and answer. He will not suffer these crimes against humanity and civilization to go unpunished. He will provide the instrument for the overthrow of the power which can deal thus treacherously, even though the treachery may be that of their allies, and not their own. It is they who employ such unworthy tools. They must bear the responsibility when these things happen."

There was a long silence between the two men then, after which Pringle said:

"If they had only sent us reinforcements! I know that we shall hear later on that the reserves were on their way. Why do we do everything a month or more too late? It has been the ruin of our western frontier from first to last. We are never ready!"

"No; that has been the mistake so far, but I think it will not always be so. There is an able man in England now whose hands are on the helm; and though full power is not his as yet, he can and will do much, they say. Even the more astute of the French begin to dread the name of Pitt. I think that the tide will turn presently, and we shall see our victorious foes flying before us like chaff before the wind."

"You think that?"

"I do. I have seen and heard much of the methods of France in the south--her ambition, her presumption, her weakness. Here in the north she has a firmer grip, and Canada is her stronghold. But if once we can shake her power there, all will be gone. They say that Pitt knows this, and that his eyes are upon the Western world. France has her hands full at home. A great war is raging in Europe. A few well-planted blows, ably directed from beyond

the sea by England herself, might do untold harm to her western provinces. I hope to live to see the day when those blows will be given."

Young Roche began to stir in his sleep, and presently sat up, bewildered and perplexed; but soon recollection swept over him, and he stumbled to his feet, and joined the other two by the fire.

"Tell us all," he said, as they began to think of supper; for he and Fritz had scarcely broken their fast all day, and nature was now asserting her needs. "I would learn all, horrible though it is. Tell us--did Fort William Henry surrender?"

"Yes; there was nothing else for it. New batteries opened upon us, as well as the old ones. There was a great breach in the wall which could have been carried by assault at any moment, and our guns were all burst, save a few of the smaller ones. They gave us lenient terms. We were to march out with the honours of war, and keep one of our guns; they were to give us safe escort to Fort Edward; we were to take our baggage with us. The Marquis showed himself a generous foe--of him we have reason to think well; but the Indians, and even the Canadians--well. I will come to that in its turn. Thank Heaven, I did not see too much; what I did see will haunt me to my dying day!"

The lad's eyes dilated. It was terrible; but he wanted to hear all.

"All was arranged. The French soldiers marched in and took possession. We marched out to the intrenched camp to join our comrades there, who, of course, had been included in the capitulation. In the charge of the French we left our sick, who could not march. Hardly had we gone before the Indians swarmed in in search of plunder, and finding little--for, as you know, there was little to find--they instantly began to murder the sick, rushing hither and thither, yelling wildly, waving scalps in their hands!"

"And the French allowed it!" exclaimed Roche, setting his teeth hard; for he had friends and comrades lying sick at the fort when he left it.

"It was done so quickly they might not have known. One missionary was there, and rushed hither and thither seeking to stay them; but he might as well have spoken to the wild waves of the sea in a storm. But that was not all. In an hour or so they were clamouring and swarming all round the camp, and the French soldiers told off for our protection either could not or would not keep them out. Montcalm, in great anxiety, came over himself seeking to restore order; but the Indians were drunk with blood, and would not listen to him. He begged us to stave in our rum barrels, which was instantly done; but the act provoked the savages, and they pounced upon our baggage, which had been reserved to us by the terms of the treaty. We appealed to the Marquis; but he advised us to give it up.

"I am doing all I can,' he said to Colonel Monro; 'but I shall be only too happy if I can prevent a massacre!'"

"Horrible!" ejaculated the young lieutenant. "Oh, better, far better, to have held the fort and perished in open fight than to be set upon in cold blood by those fiends!"

"Yes," quoth Pringle sternly; "that is what we felt and said. But it was too late then. The Indians were all amongst us. They were here, there, and everywhere. They got hold of the long hair of the women and the terrified children, and drew their scalping knives and menaced them till they shrieked and cried aloud in abject terror--"

Pringle paused; a spasm of horror shook him. After a brief pause he recommenced in more rapid tones:

"Why prolong the tale? it has lasted already too long. No proper guard was provided for us. Why I cannot tell, for the Marquis was truly horrified at what was going on. Perhaps he thought the steps he had taken were sufficient, or that the rage of the Indians was appeased; but be that as it might, when we marched out towards Fort Edward, we had no efficient protection, and the Indians were all round us, snatching at caps and coats, and forcing the soldiers to give them rum from their canteens, every drop of which seemed to add fuel to the fire."

"And you had no escort?"

"None of any efficacy. Monro, our gallant Colonel, went back to the French camp to protest and petition; but while he was gone the spark kindled.

"It was the Anenaki chief who first raised the war whoop, and the effect was instantaneous. They sprang upon us like fiends. They seized the shrieking women and children and bore them off to the woods, killing and scalping them as they ran. We had guns, but no ammunition, and were almost exhausted with what we had been through.

"In a moment all was a scene of indescribable horror and confusion. I can only speak of what I saw myself. I was set upon by the savages; but I could give blow for blow. They sprang after others less able to defend themselves. I saw a little lad rush screaming through the wood. I at once ran after him, and knocked down his pursuer. He clung about me, begging me to save him. I took his hand, and we dashed into the forest together.

"As we did so, I was aware that some French officers, with the Marquis de Montcalm, were rushing up to try to appease the tumult; but I doubt me if their words produced any effect. The boy and I ran on together. Then out dashed a dozen or more warriors upon us, with scalps in their hands--a sight horrible to behold. I set the boy against a tree, and stood before him; but they were all round us. I felt his despairing, clutching hands torn from round my waist whilst I was hacking and hewing down the men in front. I heard the shriek of agony and the gurgling cry as the tomahawk descended upon his head.

"I knew that he was dead, and the rage which filled me drove me on and on with the strength of madness. I had lost the sense of direction. I only knew that I had burst through the ring of my assailants, and that I was running my headlong course with the whole pack of them yelling at my heels. Now and again a cry from right or left would divert one or another of my pursuers, but some of them held resolutely on, and I knew that my strength must eventually give out, and that only a horrible death awaited me.

"Then it was that I heard shouts in the English tongue, and knew that some person or persons had come to my rescue. But my eyes were full of blood, and my senses were well nigh failing. It was only by degrees I came to know who had saved my life. I shall never forget it, though I cannot say what is in my heart."

He held out his hand first to one and then to the other of his comrades, and they grasped it warmly. Roche lifted his right hand and shook it upwards.

"May Heaven give me the chance to revenge this day's work upon the foes of England! May the time come when France shall drink deep of that cup of suffering and humiliation which she has caused us to drink withal; and may I be there to see!"

And yet, before many months had passed, Roche and his companions had reason to know that their foes could be chivalrous and generous to an enemy in distress.

The comrades lay in close hiding for many days, until the work of demolishing the hapless fort had been accomplished, and the French, together with their savage allies, had withdrawn back to their own lines at Ticonderoga.

There was no dash made upon Fort Edward, as might well have been the case. Satisfied with what he had accomplished, and under orders to permit the Canadian troops to return home in time to gather in the harvest, the Marquis de Montcalm withdrew his forces when his task was finished. Possibly he felt that victory was too dearly purchased at the cost of such horrors as had followed the capture of Fort William Henry.

Pringle recovered from his wounds, which, though numerous, were none of them severe. The spell of rest was welcome to all after the fatigues and privations of the siege. Fritz was an expert huntsman, and kept their larder well stocked; and when they were ready to travel, he was able to lead them safely through the forest, towards the haunts where Rogers and his Rangers were likely to be met with.

It was upon a clear September afternoon that they first met white men, or indeed human beings of any kind; for they had sedulously avoided falling in with Indians, and the loneliness of the forest had become a little oppressive to Pringle and Roche, although they were eager to learn the arts of woodcraft, and were proving apt pupils. They were both going to volunteer to join Rogers' bold band of Rangers, for they had grown almost disheartened at the regular army service, where one blunder and disaster was invariably capped by another;

and the life of the Rangers did at least give scope for personal daring and adventure, and might enable them to strike a blow now and again at the enemy who had wrought them such woe.

They heard themselves hailed one day out of the heart of the forest by a cheery English voice.

"What ho! who goes there?"

"Friend to Rogers and his Rangers!" called back Fritz, in the formula of the forest, and the next minute a bronzed and bright-faced, handsome man had sprung lightly out of the thicket, and stood before them.

He was a stranger to Fritz, but something in his dress and general aspect proclaimed him to be a Ranger, and he grasped Fritz by the hand warmly.

"You come in good time to give us news. We have been far afield--almost as far as Niagara itself. We hear rumours of disaster and treachery; but hitherto we have had no certain tidings. Is it true that Fort William Henry has fallen?"

The tale was told once again, other Rangers crowding round to hear. Pringle was naturally the spokesman, and Fritz, singling out from the group a man whom he had known before, asked him who the gallant-looking stranger was who seemed like the leader of a band.

"That is Lord Howe," was the answer. "He came out from England to fight the French; but the expedition to Louisbourg came to nothing through delay and mismanagement. He landed, and whilst waiting for further orders from home he has joined the Rangers, in order to learn their methods of fighting. Never was hardier or braver man, or one more cheerful and blithe. Even the stern Rogers himself unbends when he is near. He has been the very life of our party since he has joined us."



Fritz soon found that this was no exaggeration. Howe was a splendid comrade and Ranger, full of courage, the hardiest of the hardy, never failing in spirits whatever were the hardships of the life, and showing such aptitude for generalship and command that already he had made his mark amongst the hardy Rangers, and was entrusted with enterprises of difficulty and danger.

It was not much that could be done against the foe with the inclement winter season approaching. The snow fell early. The Canadians and regulars had gone into winter quarters; but there was still a garrison in Ticonderoga, and to harass and despoil that garrison was the pastime of the Rangers. They stole beneath the walls upon the frozen lake. They carried off cattle, and made banquets off their carcasses. If they could not do with all the meat themselves, they would leave the carcasses at the foot of the walls, sometimes with mocking letters attached to the horns.

Thus, after a more than usually successful raid, when they had taken two prisoners and driven off a number of head of cattle, they tied to the horns of one of the slain beasts the following words, written large for all to read.

"I am obliged to you, sir, for the rest you have allowed me to take, and for the fresh meat you have supplied me with. I shall take good care of my prisoners. My compliments to the Marquis de Montcalm.

"--(Signed)

"ROGERS."

But in spite of these successful raids, a misfortune was in store for the gallant Rangers in the early spring which broke up and scattered their band for that season, and spread throughout the district the false report of Rogers' death.

Captain Hebecourt was commanding the French at Ticonderoga, and in March he received large reinforcements of Canadians and Indians, and the latter instantly detected recent marks of snowshoes in the vicinity betraying the neighbourhood of white men. An attack

was therefore organized to try to rid the place of the pestilent Rangers, as the French called them; whilst, as it so happened, the Rangers had no knowledge of the reinforcements which had come in to the fort.

Rogers' fault was ever a daring rashness, and when one day he and his little band saw the advance of a party of Indians, he drew his men under cover and greeted them with a hot and fatal fire.

But this was only the advance guard. Unknown and unguessed at by Rogers, the large body behind was approaching, and the next moment the whole place was echoing with triumphant yells, as the pursuing Rangers were met by a compact force outnumbering them by four to one, who sprang furiously upon them, trying to hack them to pieces.

Rogers, gallantly backed by Lord Howe, who had all the instinct of the true general, recalled them hastily and formed them up on the slope of a hill, where they made a gallant stand, and drove back the enemy again and again. But outnumbered as they were, it was a terrible struggle, and Ranger after Ranger dropped at his post; whilst at last the cry was raised that the foe had surrounded them upon the rear, and nothing was left them but to take to the forest in flight.

"To the woods, men, to the woods!" shouted Rogers. "Leave me, and every man for himself!"

Indeed it was soon impossible for any party to keep together. It was just one dash from tree to tree for bare life, seeking to evade the wily foe, and seeing brave comrades drop at every turn.

Rogers, Howe, and about twenty fine fellows were making a running fight for it along the crest of the ridge. Pringle, Roche, and Fritz were separated from these, but kept together, and by the use of all their strength and sagacity succeeded in eluding the Indians and hiding themselves in the snow-covered forest.

All was desolation around them. A heavy snowstorm gathered and burst. They were hopelessly separated from their comrades, and Fritz, who was their guide in woodcraft, was wounded in the head, and in a strangely dazed condition.

"I can take you to Rogers' camp, nevertheless," he kept repeating. "We must not lie down, or we shall die. But I can find the road--I can find the road. I know the forest in all its aspects; I shall not lose the way."

It was a terrible night. They had no food but a little ginger which Pringle chanced to have in his pocket, and a bit of a sausage that Roche had secreted about him. The snow drifted in their faces. They were wearied to death, yet dared not lie down; and though always hoping to reach the spot where Fritz declared that Rogers was certain to be found, they discovered, when the grey light of morning came, that they had only fetched a circle, and were at the place they had started from, in perilous proximity to the French fort.

Yet as they gazed at one another in mute despair a more terrible thing happened. The Indian war whoop sounded loud in their ears, and a band of savages dashed out upon them. Before they could attempt resistance in their numbed state, they were surrounded and carried off captive.

"We can die like men; that is all that is left to us!" said Pringle, pressing up to Roche to whisper in his ear. "Heaven grant they kill us quickly; it is the only grace we can hope for now."

Dizzy and faint and exhausted, they were hurried along by their captors they knew not whither. They had come out from the forest, and the sun was beginning to shine round them, when they suddenly heard a voice shouting out something the meaning of which they could not catch; and the next moment a body of white men came running up wearing the familiar uniform of French soldiers and officers.

"Uncle!" cried a lad's clear voice, speaking in French, a language perfectly intelligible to Fritz, "that tall man there is the one who saved Corinne and me in the forest that day when we were surrounded and nearly taken by the Rangers. Get him away from the Indians; they shall not have him! He saved us from peril once; we must save him now."

"Assuredly, my son," came the response, in a full, sonorous voice; and Fritz, rallying his failing powers, shook off for a moment the mists which seemed to enwrap him, and saw that a fine-looking man of benevolent aspect, wearing the habit of an ecclesiastic, was speaking earnestly to the Indians who had them in their hands, whilst several French officers and soldiers had formed up round them.

There was some quick and rather excited talk between the Abbe and the dusky savages; but he appeared to prevail with them at length, and Fritz heard the order given:

"Take these men into the fort, and give them every care and attention. I shall come later to see how my orders have been carried out."

The men saluted. They cut the cords which bound the prisoners. They led them away kindly enough.

The lad who had first spoken pressed up to the side of Fritz.

"I will take care of you, and my uncle will heal your wound. You remember how Corinne promised some day to return the good favour that you did us. You are our guests; you are not prisoners. My uncle, the Abbe, has said so, and no one will dare to dispute his word. He is the Abbe de Messonnier, whom all the world loves and reveres."

### **Chapter 3: Albany.**

"You are not our prisoner," said Colin; "you and your friends are our guests, welcome to stay or go as you will. Only we hope and desire that you will not go forth into the forest again until the snow has melted, and you are sound and whole once more."

The bright-faced boy was seated beside the bed whereon lay Fritz, who felt like a man awakening from a long, strange, and rather frightful dream. He had become unconscious

almost immediately after their rescue three days before, and had only now recovered the use of his faculties and the memory of recent events.

"You had a bad wound on the side of your head when we found you," explained Colin. "My uncle, the Abbe, says that had it been left much longer untended you must have died. He is an excellent surgeon himself, having learned much as to the treatment of wounds and bruises and sicknesses of all kinds. He is well pleased with its appearance now, and with your state of health. He says that you Rangers are marvellous tough customers, whether as soldiers or as patients. You take a great deal of killing!"

Fritz smiled in response to the boy's bright look, but there was anxiety in his face too.

"Can you tell me aught of the Rangers?" he said. "You, doubtless, know how we were set upon and dispersed a few days back."

"Yes; and our Captain of the fort is right glad at it," said the boy, "for Rogers led him a dog's life with his raids and robberies. But all is fair in love and war, and it is not for us to complain of what we ourselves have provoked and should do in like circumstances. Nevertheless there is rejoicing at Ticonderoga that the Rangers are dispersed and broken for the present. We were beginning to fear lest they should take away from us all our provision and cut off our supplies."

"Do you know how many were slain?"

"No; but it must have been a considerable number. I am sorry myself. I delight in all brave deeds of daring, and it is the Rangers who have shown themselves the heroes of this campaign. At first they said Rogers himself had been killed, but that has since been contradicted. For myself I do not believe it. The dead were carefully examined by one who knew Rogers well, and he declares there is no corpse that in any way resembles him; and others declare that he was seen escaping to the forest, fighting every inch of the way, with a resolute little band around him whom none cared to follow."

"I myself saw something of that," answered Fritz; "but it all seems like a dream of long ago. Tell me now of those who were with me--Captain Pringle and the lad Roche. Are they here, and unhurt of the Indians?"

"They are sound and well, and though sorely exhausted by cold and hunger and fatigue when they were brought in, are fully recovered now. Captain Pringle is quite a hero with us, for he has told us all the story of that disgraceful and dishonourable day of August last when the laurels of France were sorely tarnished by the treacherous villainy of her Indian allies! Believe me, friend Fritz, we men of France deplore that massacre, and cry shame upon ourselves and our countrymen for not taking sterner measures to repress it. For that reason alone, as mine uncle says, we owe to you and to your companions every honour and courtesy which we can show. If we have sometimes to blush for the conduct of our allies, we can show that we are capable of better things ourselves; and if we can make reparation ever so little, you will not find us backward in doing it."

This indeed seemed to be the feeling of those within the fort. Although these men were Rangers, part of the band which had harassed them so sorely through the winter months, the garrison received them with open arms, ministered to their wants, and vied with one another in making them at home.

The influence of the venerable Abbe might have had something to do with this; but it was greatly due to the chivalry of the French nature, and to the eager desire to show kindness to those who had witnessed and suffered from that awful tragedy which had followed upon the surrender of Fort William Henry, which they felt to be a lasting disgrace to their cause.

Those of the officers who had been there averred that they could never forget the horror of those two days; and the French surgeon who had taken over the English sick and wounded, and yet saw them butchered before his eyes ere he could even call for help, had never been the same man since.

So when Fritz was able to rise from his bed and join his companions, he found himself in pleasant enough quarters, surrounded by friendly faces, and made much of by all in the fort. He, being able to speak French fluently, made himself a great favorite with the men, and he enjoyed many long conversations with the Abbe, who was a man of much acumen and

discernment, and saw more clearly the course which events were likely to take than did those amongst whom he lived.

From him Fritz learned that affairs in Canada were looking very grave. There were constant difficulties arising between the various officials there, and the most gross corruption existed in financial affairs, so that there was a rottenness that was eating like a canker into the heart of the colony, despite its outward aspect of prosperity. France was burdened by foreign wars and could do little for her dependencies beyond the sea; whilst England was beginning to awake from her apathy, and she had at her helm now a man who understood as no statesman there had done before him the value to her of these lands beyond the sea.

"I have always maintained," the Abbe would say, "that in spite of all her blunders, which blunders and tardinesses are still continuing, there is a spirit in your English colonies which will one day rise triumphant, and make you a foe to be feared and dreaded. You move with the times; we stand still. You teach and learn independence and self government; we depend wholly upon a King who cares little for us and a country that is engrossed in other matters, and has little thought to spend upon our perils and our troubles. You are growing, and, like a young horse or bullock, you do not know yet how to use your strength. You are unbroken to yoke and halter; you waste your energy in plunging and butting when you should be utilizing it to some good end. Yet mark my words, the day is coming when you will learn to answer to the rein; when you will use your strength reasonably and for a great end and then shall we have cause to tremble before you!"

Fritz listened and partly understood, and could admire the man who spoke so boldly even when he depreciated the power of his own people. He grew to love and revere the Abbe not a little, and when the day came for them to say farewell, it was with real sorrow he spoke his adieu.

"You have been very good to us, my father," he said. "I hope the day may come when we may be able to show our gratitude."

"Like enough it will, my son," answered the Abbe gently; "I have little doubt that it will. If not to me, yet to my children and countrymen. For the moment the laurels of victory remain in our hands; but the tide may some day turn. If so, then remember to be merciful and gentle to those who will be in your power. I think that the English have ever shown

themselves generous foes; I think they will continue to show themselves such in the hour of victory."

It was with hearts much cheered and strengthened that the comrades went forth from Ticonderoga. Colin and a few French soldiers accompanied them for some distance.

They did not propose to try to seek Rogers or his scattered Rangers; there was no knowing where they would now be found. Fritz had decided to push back to Fort Edward, and so to Albany, the quaint Dutch settlement which had been the basis of recent operations, being the town nearest to the western frontier at this point. There they would be certain to get news of what was going on in the country, and for a short time it would be pleasant to dwell amid the haunts of men, instead of in these remote fastnesses of the forest.

"I hope we shall meet again," said Colin, as he held Fritz's hand in a last clasp. "I am not altogether French. I find that I can love the English well. Quebec will be my home before long. Corinne is there already, and my uncle and I will return there shortly. It is a fine city, such as you have hardly seen in your wanderings so far. I would I could show it you. Some say the English have an eye upon it, as the key to Canada. In sooth I think they would find it a hard nut to crack. We of the city call it impregnable. But come you in peace there, and I will show it you with joy."

They parted with a smile and a warm clasp, little guessing how they would meet next.

The journey to Albany was uneventful. The travellers met with no misadventures, and upon a sunny April evening drew near to the pleasant little town, smiling in the soft sunshine of a remarkably warm evening.

It presented a singularly peaceful appearance. The fort was on the hill behind, and seemed to stand sentinel for the little township it was there to protect. The wide grassy road ran down towards the river, its row of quaint Dutch houses broken by a group of finer and more imposing buildings, including the market, the guard house, the town hall, and two churches.



The houses were not built in rows, but each stood in its own garden, possessing its well, its green paddock, and its own overshadowing tree or trees. They were quaintly built, with timbered fronts, and great projecting porches where the inhabitants gathered at the close of the day, to discuss the news and to gossip over local or provincial affairs.

As the travellers entered the long, wide street, their eyes looked upon a pleasant, homely scene--the cows straying homeward, making music with their bells, stopping each at her own gate to be milked; the children hanging around, porringer in hand, waiting for the evening meal; matrons and the elder men gathered in groups round the doors and in the porches; young men wrestling or arguing in eager groups; and the girls gathered together chatting and laughing, throwing smiling glances towards their brothers and lovers as they strove for victory in some feat of skill or strength.

It was difficult to believe that so peaceful a scene could exist in a country harassed by war, or that these settlers could carry on their lives in so serene and untroubled a fashion with the dread war cloud hovering in the sky above.

There was one house which stood a little apart from the others, and wore a rather more imposing aspect, although, like all the rest, it was of a quaint and home-like appearance. It stood a little back from the main streets and its porch was wider and larger, whilst the garden in front was laid out with a taste and care which bespoke both skill and a love for nature's products.

The travellers were slowly wending their way past this house, debating within themselves where to stop for the night, and just beginning to attract the attention of the inhabitants, when a voice hailed them eagerly from the wide porch.

"Fritz Neville, or I'm a Dutchman myself! And Pringle and Roche as well! Why, man, we thought we had left you dead in the forest. We saw you cut off from us and surrounded. We never had a hope of seeing you alive again. This is a happy meeting, in truth!"

Fritz started at the sound of his name, and the next minute had made a quick forward bound, his face shining all over.

It was Lord Howe who had hailed him--the bold, joyous young Viscount beloved by all who knew him. The comrades shook hands again and again as they eagerly exchanged greetings.

"Oh, we got away to the forest, Rogers and Stark and I, and a score or more. Other stragglers kept dropping in and joining us, and many more, as we found later, had made their way back to Fort Edward. But nowhere could we learn news of you. Come in, come in; you will be welcomed warmly by my kind hostess, Mrs. Schuyler. She has been the friend and mother of all English fugitives in their destitution and need. I have a home with her here for the present, till the army from England and the levies from the provinces arrive. Come in, good comrades, and do not fear; there will be a warm welcome here for you."

They followed Howe to the house, and found that he had not deceived them as to the welcome they would receive. Colonel Schuyler was a great man in Albany, and his wife was deservedly respected and beloved. Just now the Colonel was absent on duties connected with the coming campaign, in which Albany was becoming keenly interested. The neighbouring provinces, particularly that of Massachusetts, had awakened at last from lethargy, and the inhabitants were bestirring themselves with zeal, if not always with discretion. The Colonel, who had warmly embraced the English cause, was doing what he could there to raise arms and men, and his wife at home was playing her part in caring for the fugitives who kept passing through on their way from the forest, both after the massacre at Fort William Henry, and after the rout of the Rangers.

Rogers himself was too restless a being to remain in the haunts of civilization. He and a few picked men were again off to the forest. But Stark, who had been wounded, and Lord Howe, who was awaiting orders from England as to his position in command during the approaching campaign, remained as guests with Mrs. Schuyler; and she at once begged that Fritz and his companions would do the same, since her house was roomy, and she desired to do all in her power for those who were about to risk their lives in the endeavour to suppress the terrible Indian raids, and to crush the aggressions of those who used these raids as a means of obtaining their own aggrandizement.

It was a pleasant house to stay in, and Mrs. Schuyler was like a mother to them all. For Lord Howe she entertained a warm affection, which he requited with a kindred feeling.

All was excitement in Albany now. General Abercromby was on the way to take the command of the forces; but Lord Howe was to have a position of considerable importance, and it was whispered by those who knew what went on behind the scenes that it was to his skill and courage and military prowess that Pitt really looked. He received private dispatches by special messengers, and his bright young face was full of purpose and lofty courage.

The Massachusetts levies began to assemble, and Howe took the raw lads in hand, and began to drill them with a wonderful success. But it was no play work to be under such a commander. They had come for once rather well provided with clothing and baggage; but Howe laughed aloud at the thought of soldiers encumbering themselves with more impedimenta than was actually needful.

The long, heavy-skirted coats which the soldiers wore, both regulars and provincials, excited his ridicule, as did also the long hair plaited into a queue behind and tied with ribbons.

His own hair he had long since cut short to his head-- a fashion speedily imitated by officers and men alike, who all adored him. He suggested that skirtless coats would be more easy to march in than the heavy ones in vogue, and forthwith all the skirts were cut off, and the coats became short jackets, scarcely reaching the waist.

The men laughed at their droll appearance, but felt the freedom and increased marching power; and as Lord Howe wore just such a coat himself, who could complain? He wore leggings of leather, such as were absolutely needful to forest journeys, and soon his men did the same. No women were to be allowed to follow his contingent; and as for washing of clothes, why, Lord Howe was seen going down to the river side to wash his own, and the fashion thus set was followed enthusiastically by his men.

If their baggage was cut down to a minimum, they were each ordered to carry thirty pounds of meal in a bag; so that it was soon seen that Lord Rowe's contingent could not only walk further and faster in march than any other, but that it would be independent of the supply trains for pretty nearly a month. They carried their own bread material, and the forest would always supply meat.

Fritz was ever forward to carry out the wishes and act as the right hand of the hardy Brigadier; for that was Lord Howe's military rank. Pringle and Roche served under him, too, and there was a warm bond growing up betwixt officers and men, and a feeling of enthusiasm which seemed to them like an augury of victory to come.

"Our business is to fight the foe--to do our duty whether we live or die," Howe would say to his men. "We have failed before; we may fail again. Never mind; we shall conquer at last. With results the soldier has nothing to do. Remember that. He does his duty. He sticks to his post. He obeys his commands. Do that, men; and whether we conquer or die, we shall have done our duty, and that is all our country asks of us."

And now the long days of June had come, and all were eager for the opening campaign. Ticonderoga was to be attacked. To wrest from the French some of their strong holds on the western English border--to break their power in the sight of the Indians--was a thing that was absolutely necessary to the life of the New England colonies and the other provinces under English rule. Fort Edward still remained to her, though Oswego and William Henry had fallen and were demolished. The capture of Ticonderoga would be a blow to France which would weaken her immensely, and lower her prestige with the Indians, which was now a source of great danger to the English colonists.

The story of the massacre after the surrender of Fort William Henry had made a profound impression throughout the English-speaking provinces, and had awakened a longing after vengeance which in itself had seemed almost like an earnest of victory. And now the regular troops began to muster and pour in, and Albany was all excitement and enthusiasm; for the Dutch had by that time come to have a thorough distrust of France, and to desire the victory of the English arms only less ardently than the English themselves.

Mrs. Schuyler, as usual, opened her doors wide to receive as many of the officers as she was able whilst the final preparations were being made. And upon a soft midsummer evening Lord Howe appeared in the supper room, bringing with him two fine-looking officers--one grey headed, the other young and ardent--and introducing them to his hostess and those assembled round the table as Major Duncan Campbell, the Laird of Inverawe, in Scotland; with his son Alexander, a Lieutenant of the Highland force.

Young Alexander was seated next to Fritz at table, and began an eager conversation with him. Talk surged to and fro that night. Excitement prevailed everywhere. But Fritz observed that Major Campbell sat very grave and silent, and that even Lord Howe's efforts to draw him into conversation proved unavailing.

Mrs. Schuyler also tried, but with little success, to make the veteran talk. He answered with grave courtesy all remarks made to him, but immediately lapsed into a sombre abstraction, from which it seemed difficult to rouse him.

At the end of the supper Lord Howe rose to his feet, made a dashing little speech to the company, full of fire and enthusiasm, and proposed the toast:

"Success to the expedition against Ticonderoga!"

Fritz happened to be looking at the grave, still face of Major Campbell, and as these words were spoken he saw a sudden spasm pass across it. The soldier rose suddenly to his feet, took up his glass for a moment, put it down untasted, and with a bow to his hostess pushed aside his chair, and strode from the room in an access of visible emotion.

Lord Howe looked after him a moment, and draining his glass, seemed about to go after the guest; but young Alexander, from the other side of the table, made him a sign, and he sat down again.

The incident, however, seemed to act like the breaking up of the supper party, and the guests rose and left the table, dispersing quickly to look after bag or baggage or some last duty, till only Mrs. Schuyler, Lord Howe, Fritz, and Lieutenant Campbell were left in the supper room.

It was then that young Alexander looked round and said, "It was the name you spoke which affected my father so strangely--the fatal name of Ticonderoga!"

"Fatal! how fatal?" asked Lord Howe quickly.

"You have not heard the strange story, then?"

"No; what story?"

"It concerns my father; it is the cause of his melancholy. When you have heard it you will not perhaps wonder, though to you the incident may seem incredible."

"I have learned that there are many things in this world which are wonderful and mysterious, yet which it is folly to disbelieve," answered Howe. "Let us hear your story, Campbell. I would not have spoken words to hurt your father could I have known."

"I am sure you would not; but hear the tale, and you will know why that name sounds in his ears like a death knell.

"Long years ago it must have been when I was but a little child--my father was sitting alone over the fire in our home at Inverawe; a wild, strange place that I love as I love no other spot on earth. He was in the great hall, and, suddenly there came a knocking at the door, loud and imperative. He opened, and there stood a man without, wild and dishevelled, who told how he had slain a man in a fray, and was flying from his pursuers.

"'Give me help and shelter!' he implored; and my father drew him in and closed the door, and promised to hide him. 'Swear on your dirk not to give me up!' he implored; and my father swore, though with him his word was ever his bond. He hid the fugitive in a secret place, and hardly had he done so before there was another loud knocking at the door.

"This time it was the pursuers, hot on the track of the murderer. 'He has slain your cousin Donald,' they told him. 'He cannot be far away. We are hunting for him. Can you help us?' My father was in a great strait; but he remembered his oath, and though he sent out servants to help in the search, he would not give up to justice the man who had trusted him."

"And he was right," said Lord Howe quickly; "I honour and respect him for that."

"It may be so, yet it is against the traditions of our house and race," answered Alexander gravely; "and that night my father woke suddenly from a troubled dream to see the ghost of his murdered kinsman standing at his bedside. The spectre spoke to him in urgent tones:

"'Inverawe, Inverawe, blood has been shed; shield not the murderer!'

"Unable to sleep, my father rose, and went to the fugitive and told him he could not shelter him longer. 'You swore on your dirk!' replied the miserable man; and my father, admitting the oath not to betray him, led him away in the darkness and hid him in a mountain cave known to hardly any save himself.

"That night once more the spectre came and spoke the same words, 'Inverawe, Inverawe, blood has been shed; shield not the murderer!' The vision troubled my father greatly. At daybreak he went once more to the cave; but the man was gone--whither he never knew. He went home, and again upon the third night the ghostly figure stood beside him; but this time he was less stern of voice and aspect.

"He spoke these words, 'Farewell, Inverawe; farewell, till we meet at Ticonderoga.' Then it vanished, and he has never seen it since."

"Ticonderoga!" repeated Lord Howe, and looked steadily at Alexander, who proceeded:

"That was the word. My father had never heard it before. The sound of it was so strange that he wrote it down; and when I was a youth of perhaps seventeen summers, and had become a companion to him, he told me the whole story, and we pondered together as to what and where Ticonderoga could be. Years had passed since he saw the vision, and he had never heard the name from that day. I had not heard it either--then."

The faces of the listeners were full of grave interest. The strangeness of the coincidence struck them all.

"And then?" queried Howe, after a silence.

"Then came the news of this war, and some Highland regiments were ordered off. My father and I were amongst those to go. We were long in hearing what our destination was to be. We had landed upon these shores before we heard that the expedition to which we were attached was bound for Ticonderoga."

Again there was silence, which Mrs. Schuyler broke by asking gently:

"And your father thinks that there is some doom connected with that name?"

"He is convinced that he will meet his death there," replied Alexander, "and I confess I fear the same myself."

Nobody spoke for a minute, and then Mrs. Schuyler said softly:

"It is a strange, weird story; yet it cannot but be true. No man could guess at such a name. Ticonderoga, Ticonderoga. I wonder what will be the end of that day!"

"And what matters the end if we do our duty to the last?" spoke Lord Howe, lifting his bright young face and throwing back his head with a gesture that his friends knew well. "A man can but die once. For my part, I only ask to die sword in hand and face to the foe, doing my duty to my country, my heart at peace with God. That is the spirit with which we soldiers must go into battle. We are sent there by our country; we fight for her. If need be we die for her. Can we ask a nobler death? For myself I do not. Let it come to me at Ticonderoga, or wherever Providence wills, I will not shrink or fear. Give me only the power to die doing my duty, and I ask no more."

There was a beautiful light in his great hazel eyes, a sweet smile hovered round his lips. Fritz, looking at him, seemed to see something in his face which he had scarcely noted



before--a depth, a serenity, a beauty quite apart from the dashing gallantry of look and bearing which was his most salient characteristic.

Into the eyes of Mrs. Schuyler there had sprung sudden tears. She went over to the young man and laid a hand upon his head.

"Thank God that our soldiers still go into battle in that spirit; that they make their peace with Him before they draw sword upon their fellow men. A soldier's life is a strange paradox; yet God, who is the God of battles as well as Prince of Peace, knows and understands. He will bless the righteous cause, though He may call to rest many a gallant soldier, and still in death many an ardent young heart. But however mysteriously He works, we are instruments in His hands. Let us strive to be worthy of that honour, and then we shall know that we are helping to bring nearer His kingdom upon earth, which, when once set up, shall bring in a reign of peace, where war shall be no more."

"Amen, with all my heart!" quoth Lord Howe, and there was a light in his eyes which bespoke that, soldier though he was to his fingertips, he was no stranger to the hope of the eternal peace which the Lord alone can give.

Mrs. Schuyler was not a demonstrative woman in daily life; but when her guest rose to say goodnight upon this last evening, she kissed him as a mother might, and he kissed her back with words of tender gratitude and affection.

And so the night fell upon the town of Albany--the night before the march to Ticonderoga.

#### **Chapter 4: Ticonderoga.**

A joyous farewell to friends at Albany, with anticipation of a speedy and victorious return thither; a rapid and well-arranged march to Fort Edward and Lake George, where they were gladdened by the sight of the hardy Rogers and the remnant of his gallant band, embarked in whaleboats, and ready to lead the van or perform any daring service asked of them; a cheerful embarking upon the lake in the great multitude of boats and bateaux; bright sunshine overhead, the sound of military music in their ears, flags waving, men cheering and shouting--what expedition could have started under happier and more joyous auspices?

There were regulars from England--the foremost being the Fifty-fifth, commanded by Lord Howe. There were American and Highland regiments, and the provincials from numbers of the provinces, each in its own uniform and colours. The lake was alive with above one thousand craft for the transport of this great army with its heavy artillery, and Rogers declared that Ticonderoga was as good as their own: for it had only provision to last eight or nine days; and if not at once battered down by the enemy's guns, it could easily be starved out by a judicious disposition of the troops.

One night was spent camped halfway down the lake. Lord Howe, with Stark and Rogers and Fritz for companions, lay upon his bearskin overlooking Fritz's diagrams of the fort, taken in past days, listening to what all the three men had to tell of the fortress, both inside and out, and making many plans for the attack upon the morrow.

General Abercromby was with the army; yet it was well known that Lord Howe was the leading spirit, and to him it was that all the men instinctively looked. It was he who upon the morrow, when they had reached and passed the Narrows and were drawing near to the fort, reconnoitred the landing place in whaleboats, drove off a small party of French soldiers who were watching them, but were unable to oppose them, and superintended the landing of the whole army.

The lake here had narrowed down to the dimensions of a river, and it made a considerable bend something like a horseshoe. If the bridge had not been broken down, they could have marched to a point much nearer to Ticonderoga upon a well-trodden road; but the bridge being gone, it was necessary to march the army along the west bank of this river-like waterway which connected Lake George with Lake Champlain, for there were too many dangerous rapids for navigation to be possible; and upon the tongue of land jutting out into Lake Champlain, and washed by the waters of this river on its other side, stood the fortress of Ticonderoga, their goal.

Rogers was their leader. He knew the forest well; yet even he found it a somewhat difficult matter to pick his way through the dense summer foliage. The columns following found the forest tracks extraordinarily difficult to follow. They were many of them unused to such rough walking, and fell into inevitable confusion.

Rogers, together with Lord Howe and some of his hardier soldiers and the Rangers, pushed boldly on. Whilst they walked they talked of what lay before them. Rogers told how Montcalm himself was within the fort, and that his presence there inspired the soldiers with great courage and confidence; because he was a fine soldier, a very gallant gentleman, and had had considerable success in arms ever since he arrived in Canada.

As the forest tracks grew more densely overgrown, Lord Howe paused in his rapid walk beside Rogers.

"My men are growing puzzled by the forest," he said, "and indeed it is small wonder, seeing that we ourselves scarce know where we are. Go you on with the Rangers, Rogers, and I will return a short distance and get my men into better order. I do not anticipate an ambush; but there may be enemies lurking in the woods. We must not be taken unawares. Push you on, and I will follow with my company at a short distance."

"I will take a handful of men with me," answered Rogers, "and push on to reconnoitre. Let the rest remain with you. They will encourage and hearten up the regulars, who are new to this sort of thing; and when I know more clearly our exact position, I will fall back and report."

Fritz remained with Howe, whose men came marching up in a rather confused and straggling fashion, but were only perplexed, not in any wise disheartened, by the roughness of the road. When the column had regained something like marching order, the word was given to start, and Lord Howe with a bodyguard of Rangers marched at the head.

They had proceeded like this for perhaps a mile or more, when there was a quick stir in the thicket. Next moment the challenge rang out:

"Qui vive?"

"Francais!" shouted back a Ranger, who had learned Rogers' trick of puzzling his opponents by the use of French words.

But this time they were not deceived. A stern word of command was given. A crack of rifles sounded out from the bushes; puffs of smoke and flashes of fire were seen.

"Steady, men; load and fire!"

The command was given by Lord Howe. It was the last he ever spoke. The wood rang with the crossfire of the foes who could not see each other. Fritz had discharged his piece, and was loading again when he saw Lord Howe suddenly throw up his hands and fall helplessly forward.

He sprang to his side with a cry of dismay. He strove to hold him up and support him to some place of safety, but could only lay him down beneath a tree hard by, where a ring of Rangers instantly formed around him, whilst the skirmish in the forest was hotly maintained on both sides.

"He is shot through the heart!" cried Stark, in a lamentable voice, as he hastily examined the wound; and indeed the shadow of death had fallen upon the brave, bright, noble face of the young officer.

Just once the heavy lids lifted themselves. Lord Howe looked into the faces of the two men bending over him, and a faint smile curved his lips.

"Keep them steady," he just managed to whisper, and the next moment his head fell back against Fritz's shoulder. He had passed into the unknown land where the clamour of battle is no more heard.

It was a terrible blow, and consternation spread through the ranks as it became known. Indeed, but for the Rangers, a panic and flight would probably have followed. But Rogers, Stark, and Fritz were of sterner stuff than the levies, and more seasoned than the bulk of regular soldiers.

Rogers had returned instantly upon hearing the firing, and had discharged a brisk volley upon the French as he dashed through their ranks to regain his companions. Caught between two fires, they were in no small peril, and made a dash for the riverbed; the Rangers standing steady and driving them to their destruction, whilst the ranks had time to recover themselves and maintain their ground.

The rout of this body of French soldiers was complete, whilst the English loss was small numerically; but the loss of Howe was irreparable, and all heart and hope seemed taken out of the gallant army which had started forth so full of hope. There was nothing now to be done but to fall back upon the main army, with the sorrowful tidings of their leader's death, and await the order of General Abercromby as to the next move.

This was done, and the men were kept under arms all night, waiting for orders which never came. Indecision and procrastination again prevailed, and were again the undoing of the English enterprise.

Still there was no question but that the fort must be attacked, and as the Rangers came in with the news that the French had broken up and deserted a camp they had hitherto held at some sawmills on the river, a little way from the fort, a detachment of soldiers was sent to take possession of this place. This having been done, and a bridge thrown over the river by an able officer of the name of Bradstreet, the army was moved up, and encamped at this place prior to the assault of the fort. Rogers and his Rangers had reconnoitred the whole place, and were eager to tell their tale.

Fort Ticonderoga occupied a triangular promontory, washed upon two sides by the waters of Lake Champlain and the river-like extremity of Lake George. The landward approach was guarded by a strong rampart of felled trees, which the soldiers had formed into a breastwork and abattis which might almost be called musket-proof. So at least Rogers and his men had judged. They had watched the French at their task, and had good reason to know the solid protection given to the men behind by a rampart of this sort.

He was therefore all eagerness for the cannon to be brought up from the lake.

"The artillery will make short work of it, General," he said, in his bluff, abrupt fashion. "It will come rattling about their heads, and they must take to the walls behind, and these will soon give way before a steady cannonade. Or if we take the cannon up to yonder heights of Rattlesnake Hill, we can fling our round shot within their breastwork from end to end, and drive the men back like rabbits to their burrow; or we can plant a battery at the narrow mouth of Lake Champlain, and cut off their supplies. With the big guns we can beat them in half a dozen ways; but let our first act be to bring them up, for muskets and rifles are of little use against such a rampart as they have made, bristling with spikes and living twigs and branches, which baffle assault as you might scarce believe without a trial."

Rogers spoke with the assurance and freedom of a man used to command and certain of his subject. He and Lord Howe had been on terms of most friendly intimacy, and the young Brigadier had learned much from the veteran Ranger, whose services had been of so much value to the English. He would never have taken umbrage at advice given by a subordinate. But General Abercromby was of a different order, and he little liked Rogers' assured manner and brusque, independent tone. He heard him to the end, but gave an evasive reply, and sent out an engineer on his own account to survey the French position, and bring him word what was his opinion.

This worthy made his survey, and came back full of confidence.

"The rampart is but a hastily-constructed breastwork of felled trees; it should be easily carried by assault," he reported, full of careless confidence. "A good bayonet charge, resolutely conducted, is all that is needed, and we shall be in the fort before night."

The soldiers cheered aloud when they heard the news. They were filled with valour and eagerness, in spite of the death of their beloved leader. It seemed as though his spirit inspired them with ardent desire to show what they could do; although generalship, alas! had perished with the young Brigadier, who had fallen at such an untimely moment.

The Rangers looked at one another with grim faces. They would not speak a word to dishearten the troops; but they knew, far better than the raw levies or the English regulars could do, the nature of the obstruction to be encountered.

"A bayonet charge by soldiers full of valour is no light thing," said Pringle to the Ranger, as they stood in the evening light talking together. "Resolute men have done wonders before now in such a charge, and why not we tomorrow?"

"Have you seen the abattis?" asked Rogers, in his grim and brusque fashion.

"No," answered Pringle; "I have only heard it described by those who have."

"Come, then, and look at it before it be dark," was Rogers' reply; and he, together with Stark, led Fritz and Pringle and Roche along a narrow forest pathway which the Rangers were engaged in widening and improving, ready for the morrow's march, until he was able to show them, from a knoll of rising ground, the nature of the fortification they were to attack upon the morrow.

The French had shown no small skill in the building of this breastwork, which ran along a ridge of high ground behind the fort itself, and commanded the approach towards it from the land side. The whole forest in the immediate vicinity had been felled. It bore the appearance of a tract of ground through which a cyclone has whirled its way. Great numbers of the trees had been dragged up to form the rampart, but there were hundreds of others, as well as innumerable roots and stumps, lugs and heads, lying in confusion all around; and Rogers, pointing towards the encumbered tract just beneath and around the rampart, looked at Pringle and said:

"How do you think a bayonet charge is to be rushed over such ground as that? And what good will our musketry fire be against those tough wooden walls, directed upon a foe we cannot see, but who can pick us off in security from behind their breastwork? For let me tell you that there is great skill shown in its construction. On the inside, I doubt not, they can approach close to their loopholes, which you can detect all along, and take easy aim at us; but on this side it is bristling with pointed stakes, twisted boughs, and treetops so arranged as to baffle and hinder any attempt at assault. As I told your General, his cannon could shatter it in a few hours, if he would but bring them to bear. But a rampart like that is practically bayonet and musket proof. It will prove impregnable to assault."

Pringle and Roche exchanged glances. They had seen something of fighting before this, but never warfare so strange.

"Would that Lord Howe were living!" exclaimed the younger officer. "He would have heard reason; he would have been advised. But the General--"

He paused, and a meaning gesture concluded the sentence. It was not for them to speak against their commander; but he inspired no confidence in his men, and it was plainly seen that he was about to take a very ill-judged step.

It is the soldier's fate that he must not rebel or remonstrate or argue; his duty is to obey orders and leave the rest. But that night, as the army slept in the camp round the deserted sawmills, there were many whose eyes never closed in slumber. Fritz saw the veteran Campbell sitting in the moonlight, looking straight before him with wide, unseeing eyes; and when the grey light of day broke over the forest, his face was shadowed, as it seemed, by the approach of death.

"I shall never see another sunrise," he said to Fritz, as the latter walked up to him; "my span of life will be cut through here at Ticonderoga."

Fritz made no reply. It seemed to him that many lives would be cut short upon this fateful day. He wondered whether he should live to see the shades of evening fall. He had no thought of quailing or drawing back. He had cast in his lot with the army, and he meant to fight his very best that day; but he realized the hopelessness of the contest before them, and although, if the General could only be aroused in time to a sense of his own blunder, and would at the eleventh hour order up the cannon, and take those steps which might ensure success, the tide of battle might soon be turned. Yet no man felt any confidence in him as a leader, and it was only the ignorant soldiers, unaware of what lay before them, who rose to greet the coming day with hope and confidence in their hearts.

But it was something that they should start forth with so high a courage. Even if they were going to their death, it was better they should believe that they were marching forth to victory. They cheered lustily as they received the order, which was to carry the breastwork



by a bayonet charge; and only the Rangers saw the grim smile which crossed the face of Rogers as he heard that word given.

Yet he and his gallant band of Rangers were in the van. They did not shrink from the task before them, although they knew better than others the perils and difficulties by which it was beset. They had widened the path; they led the way. There was no more confusion in the line of march.

The General remained behind at the sawmills, to direct the operations of the whole army, as there were other slighter enterprises to be undertaken upon the same day, though the assault of the protecting rampart was the chief one. News was to be brought to him at short intervals of the course the fight was taking. It was Rogers' great hope that he would soon be made aware of the impossibility of the task he had set his soldiers, and would send instant and urgent orders for the cannon to be brought up to the aid of his foot soldiers.

Full of hope and confidence the columns pressed forward, till shortly after midday they emerged from the shelter of the forest, and saw before them the broken space of open ground, with its encumbering mass of stumps and fallen timber, and behind that the grim rampart, where all looked still as death. They formed into line quickly and without confusion and then, with an enthusiastic cheer, made a dash for the barrier.

The Rangers and light infantry in front began to fire as they advanced; but the main body of soldiers held their bayonets in position, and strove after an orderly advance. But over such ground order was impossible. They had to clamber, to scramble, to cut their way as best they could. The twigs and branches blinded them; they fell over the knotted roots; they became disordered and scattered, though their confidence remained unshaken.

Then suddenly, when they were half across the open space, came the long crack and blaze from end to end of the rampart; smoke seemed to gush and flash out from one extremity to the other. Sharp cries of agony and dismay, shouts and curses, filled the air. The English fell in dozens amid the fallen trees, and those behind rushed forward over the bodies of their doomed companions.

It was in vain to try to carry the rampart by the bayonet. The soldiers drew up and fired all along their line; but of what avail was it to fire upon an enemy they could not see, whilst they themselves were a target for the grapeshot and musketballs which swept in a deadly cross fire through their ranks? But they would not fall back. Headed by the Rangers, who made rapid way over the rough and encumbered ground, they pressed on, undaunted by the hail of iron about them, and inflamed to fury by the fall of their comrades around them.

It was an awful scene. It was branded upon the memory of the survivors in characters of fire.

Fritz kept in the foremost rank, unable to understand why he was not shot down. He reached the rampart, and was halfway up, when he was clutched by the hands of a man in front, who in his death agony knew not what he did, and the two rolled into the ditch together.

For a moment all was suffocation and horror. Unwounded, but buried and battered, with his musket torn from his grasp, Fritz struggled out through the writhing heap of humanity, and saw that the head of the column had fallen back for a breathing space, though with the evident intention of re-forming and dashing again to the charge.

The firing from the rampart still continued; but Fritz made a successful dash back to the lines, and reached them in safety. He was known by this time as an experienced Ranger, and was taken aside by Bradstreet, the officer in command of the light infantry that with the Rangers headed the charge.

The gallant officer was wounded and breathless, and was seated upon a fallen trunk.

"Neville," he said, "I know that you are fleet of foot and stout of heart. I would have you return to the camp on the instant, with a message for the General. Tell him how things are here, and that this rampart is to the utmost as impregnable as Rogers warned us. Our men are falling thick and fast, and although full of courage, cannot do the impossible. Beg him to order the guns to be brought up, for without them we are helpless against the enemy."

Fritz knew this right well, and took the message.

"We shall make another charge immediately," Bradstreet said in conclusion. "We shall not fail to carry out our orders; but I have little hope of success. We can do almost nothing against the French, whilst they mow us down by hundreds. No men can hold on at such odds for long. Go quickly, and bring us word again, for we are like to be cut to pieces.

"You are not wounded yourself?"

"No; I have escaped as by a miracle. I will run the whole distance and take the message. Would that the General had listened to counsel before!"

Bradstreet made a gesture of assent, but said nothing. Fritz sped through the forest, hot and breathless, yet straining every nerve to reach his goal.

It was a blazing day where the shade of the forest was not found, and this made the fighting all the harder. Fritz's heart was heavy within him for the lives thrown away so needlessly. When he reached the tent of the General, and was ushered into his presence, burning words rushed to his lips, and it was only with an effort that he commanded himself to speak calmly of the fight and deliver the message with which he was charged.

General Abercromby listened and frowned, and looked about him as though to take counsel with his officers. But the best of these were away at the fight, and those with him were few and insignificant and inexperienced.

"Surely a little resolution and vigour would suffice to carry an insignificant breastwork, hastily thrown up only a few days ago," he said, unwilling to confess himself in the wrong. "I will order up the Highland regiments to your aid. With their assistance you can make another charge, and it will be strange if you cannot carry all before you."

Fritz compressed his lips, and his heart sank.

"I will give you a line to Colonel Bradstreet. Tell him that reinforcements are coming, and that another concerted attack must be made. It will be time enough to talk of sending for the artillery when we see the result of that."

A few lines were penned by the General and entrusted to Fritz, who dashed back with burning heart to where the fight still raged so fiercely. He heard the bagpipes of the Highlanders skirling behind as he reached the opening in the forest. He knew that these brave men could fight like tigers; but to what avail, he thought, were so many gallant soldiers to be sent to their death?

The fighting in his absence had been hot and furious, but nothing had been done to change the aspect of affairs. Intrepid men had assaulted the rampart, and even leaped upon and over it, only to meet their death upon the other side.

Once a white flag had been seen waving over the rampart, and for a moment hope had sprung up that the enemy was about to surrender. The firing for that brief space had been suspended, the English raising their muskets over their heads and crying "Quarter!"--meaning that they would show mercy to the foe; the French thinking that they were coming to give themselves up as prisoners of war. The signal had merely been waved by a young captain in defiance to the foe. He had tied his handkerchief to his musket in his excitement, without any intention to deceive. But the incident aroused a bitter feeling. The English shouted out that the French were seeking to betray them, and the fight was resumed with such fury that for a brief while the rampart was in real danger of being taken, and the French General was in considerable anxiety.

But the odds were too great. The gallant assailants were driven back, and when Fritz arrived with his news there was again a slight cessation in the vehemence of the attack.

Bradstreet eagerly snatched at the letter and opened it. Fritz's face had told him something; the written words made assurance doubly sure.

He tore the paper across, and set his foot upon it.

"We can die but once," he said briefly; "but it goes to my heart to see these brave fellows led like sheep to the slaughter. England will want to know the reason why when this story is told at home."

The Highlanders were soon upon the scene of action filled to the brim with the stubborn fury with which they were wont to fight. At their head marched their Major, the dark-faced Inverawe, his son only a little behind.

The arrival of reinforcements put new heart into the gallant but exhausted regiments which had led the attack; and now the Highlanders were swarming about the foot of the rampart, seeking to scale its bristling sides, often gaining the top, by using the bodies of their slain countrymen as ladders, but only to be cut down upon the other side.

The Major cheered on his men. The shadow was gone from his face now. In the heat of the battle he had no thought left for himself. His kinsmen and clansmen were about him. He was ever in the van. One young chieftain with some twenty followers was on the top of the rampart, hacking and hewing at those behind, as if possessed of superhuman strength. The Highlanders, with their strange cries and yells, pressed ever on and on. But the raking fire from behind the abattis swept their ranks, mowed them down, and strewed the ground with dying and dead.

Like a rock stood Campbell of Inverawe, his eyes everywhere, directing, encouraging, cheering on his men, who needed not his words to inspire them with unquenchable fury.

Suddenly his tall figure swayed forward. Without so much as a cry he fell. There was a rush towards him of his own clansmen. They lifted him, and bore him from the scene of action. It was the end of the assault. The Highlanders who had scaled the rampart had all been bayoneted within. Nearly two thousand men, wounded or dead, lay in that terrible clearing. It was hopeless to fight longer. All that man could do had been done. The recall was sounded, and the brave troops, given over to death and disaster by the incompetence of one man, were led back to the camp exhausted and despairing; the Rangers still doing good service in carrying off the wounded, and keeping up a steady fire whilst this task was being proceeded with.

General Abercromby's terror at the result of the day's work was as pitiful as his mismanagement had been. There was no talk now of retrieving past blunders; there was nothing but a general rout--a retreat upon Fort Edward as fast as boats could take them. One blunder was capped by another. Ticonderoga was left to the French, when it might have been an easy prey to the English. The day of disaster was not yet ended, though away in the east the star of hope was rising.

It was at Fort Edward that the wounded laird of Inverawe breathed his last. His wound had been mortal, and he was barely living when they landed him on the banks of Lake George.

"Donald, you are avenged!" he said once, a few minutes before his death. "We have met at Ticonderoga!"

**Free**editorial 