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FORT AMITY

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PREFACE

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More than once, attempting a story of high and passionate love—in this book, for example, and still more recklessly in my tale of *Sir John Constantine*—I have had to pause and ask myself the elementary question: Can such a story, if at once true and exemplary, conclude otherwise than in sorrow?

The great artists in poetry and prose fiction seem to consent that it cannot: and this, I think, not because—understanding love as they do, with all its wonder and wild desire—they would conduct it to life-long bliss if they could, but simply because they cannot fit it into this muddy vesture of decay. They may dismiss us in the end with peace and consolation:

> And calm of mind, all passion spent.

And we know or have known that of its impulse among us lesser folk it holifies and populates this world. But our own transience qualifies it. Only when love here claims to be above the world—"All for Love, and the World well Lost"—we feel that its exorbitance must wreck it here and now, however it may shine hereafter. That is why all the great legends of love—the tale of Tristan and Iseult, for instance—are unhappy legends: as that is why they still tease us.

I hope these remarks will not be deemed too pompous for the preface to a story in which true love is crossed by a soldier's sense of honour. The theme is a variant on a great

commonplace: and, following my habit, I let the incidents and characters have their own way without the author's comment or interference.

Q.

FORT AMITY.

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CHAPTER I.

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MALBROUCK S'EN VA-T'EN GUERRE.

"So adieu, Jack, until we meet in Quebec! You have the start of us, report says, and this may even find you drinking his Majesty's health in Fort Carillon. Why not? You carry Howe, and who carries Howe carries the eagles on his standards; or so you announce in your last. Well, but have we, on our part, no *vexillum?* Brother Romulus presents his compliments to Brother Remus, and begs leave to answer 'Wolfe!' 'Tis scarce forty-eight hours since Wry-necked Dick

> brought his ships into harbour with the Brigadier on board, and already I have seen him and—what is more—fallen in love. 'What like is he?' says you. 'Just a sandy-haired slip of a man,' says I, 'with a cock nose': but I love him, Jack, for he knows his business. We've a professional at last. No more Pall Mall promenaders—no more Braddocks. Loudons, Webbs! We live in the consulship of Pitt, my lad—*deprome Caecubum*—we'll tap a cask to it in Quebec. And if Abercromby's your Cæsar—"

Here a bugle sounded, and Ensign John à Cleeve of the 46th Regiment of Foot (Murray's) crushed his friend's letter into his pocket and sprang off the woodpile where he had seated himself with the regimental colours across his knees. He unfolded them from their staff, assured himself that they hung becomingly—gilt tassels and yellow silken folds—and stepped down to the lake-side where the bateaux waited.

The scene is known to-day for one of the fairest in the world. Populous cities lie near it and pour their holiday-makers upon it through the summer season. Trains whistle along the shore under its forests; pleasure-steamers, with music on their decks, shoot across bays churned of old by the paddles of war-canoes; from wildernesses where Indians lurked in ambush smile neat hotels, white-walled, with green shutters and deep verandas; and lovers, wandering among the hemlocks, happen on a clearing with a few turfed mounds, and seat themselves on these last ruins of an ancient fort, nor care to remember even its name. Behind them—behind the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains—

and pushed but a little way back in these hundred and fifty years, lies the primeval forest, trodden no longer now by the wasting redman, but untamed yet, almost unhandselled. And still, as the holidaymakers leave it, winter closes down on the lake-side and wraps it in silence, broken by the loon's cry or the crash of a snow-laden tree deep in the forest—the same sounds, the same aching silence, endured by French and English garrisons watching each other and the winter through in Fort Carillon or Fort William Henry.

"The world's great age begins anew."... It begins anew, and hourly, wherever hearts are high and youth sets out with bright eyes to meet his fate. It began anew for Ensign John à Cleeve on this morning of July 5, 1758; it was sounded up by bugles, shattering the forest silence; it breathed in the wind of the boat's speed shaking the silken flag above him. His was one of twelve hundred boats spreading like brilliant water-fowl across the lake which stretched for thirty miles ahead, gay with British uniforms, scarlet and gold, with Highland tartans, with the blue jackets of the Provincials; flash of oars, innumerable glints of steel, of epaulettes, of belt, cross-belt and badge; gilt knops and tassels and sheen of flags. Yonder went Blakeney's 27th Regiment, and yonder the Highlanders of the Black Watch; Abercromby's 44th, Howe's 55th with their idolised young commander, the 60th or Royal Americans in two battalions; Gage's Light Infantry, Bradstreet's axemen and bateau-men, Starke's rangers; a few friendly Indians—but the great Johnson was hurrying up with more, maybe with five hundred; in all fifteen thousand men and over. Never had

America seen such an armament; and it went to take a fort from three thousand Frenchmen.

No need to cover so triumphant an advance in silence! Why should not the regimental bands strike up? For what else had we dragged them up the Hudson from Albany and across the fourteen-mile portage to the lake? Weary work with a big drum in so much brushwood! And play they did, as the flotilla pushed forth and spread and left the stockades far behind; stockades planted on the scene of last year's massacre. Though for weeks before our arrival Bradstreet and his men had been clearing and building, sights remained to nerve our arms and set our blood boiling to the cry "Remember Fort William Henry!" Its shores fade, and somewhere at the foot of the lake three thousand Frenchmen are waiting for us (if indeed they dare to wait). Let the bands play "Britons strike home!"

Play they did: drums tunding and bagpipes skirling as though Fort Carillon (or Ticonderoga, as the Indians called it) would succumb like another Jericho to their clamour. The Green Mountains tossed its echoes to the Adirondacks, and the Adirondacks flung it back; and under it, down the blue waterway toward the Narrows, went Ensign John à Cleeve, canopied by the golden flag of the 46th.

The lake smiled at all his expectations and surpassed them. He had imagined it a sepulchral sheet of water, sunk between cavernous woods. And lo! it lay high in the light of day, broad-rimmed, with the forests diminishing as they shelved down to its waters. The mountains rimmed it, amethystine, remote, delicate as carving, as vapours almost transparent; and within the rim it twinkled like a great cup

of champagne held high in a god's hand—so high that John à Cleeve, who had been climbing ever since his regiment left Albany, seemed lifted with all these flashing boats and uniforms upon a platform where men were heroes, and all great deeds possible, and the mere air laughed in the veins like wine.

Two heavy flat-boats ploughed alongside of his; deep in the bows and yawing their sterns ludicrously. They carried a gun apiece, and the artillerymen had laded them too far forward. To the 46th they were a sufficiently good joke to last for miles. "Look at them up-tailed ducks a-searching for worms! Guns? Who wants guns on this trip? Take 'em home before they sink and the General loses his temper." The crews grinned back and sweated and tugged, at every third drive drenching the bowmen with spray, although not a breath of wind rippled the lake's surface.

The boat ahead of John's carried Elliott the Senior Ensign of the 46th, with the King's colours—the flag of Union, drooping in stripes of scarlet, white, and blue. On his right strained a boat's crew of the New York regiment, with the great patroon, Philip Schuyler himself, erect in the stern sheets and steering, in blue uniform and three-cornered hat; too grand a gentleman to recognise our Ensign, although John had danced the night through in the Schuylers' famous white ball-room on the eve of marching from Albany, and had flung packets of sweetmeats into the nursery windows at dawn and awakened three night-gowned little girls to blow kisses after him as he took his way down the hill from the Schuyler mansion. That was a month ago. To John it seemed years since he had left Albany and its straight

sidewalks dappled with maple shade: but the patroon's face was the same, sedately cheerful now as then when he had moved among his guests with a gracious word for each and a brow unclouded by the morrow.

Men like Philip Schuyler do not suffer to-morrows to perturb them, since to them every morrow dawns big with duties, responsibilities, risks. John caught himself wondering to what that calm face looked forward, at the lake-end, where the forests slept upon their shadows and the mountains descended and closed like fairy gates! For John himself Fame waited beyond those gates. Although in the last three or four weeks he had endured more actual hardships than in all his life before, he had enjoyed them thoroughly and felt that they were hardening him into a man. He understood now why the tales he had read at school in his Homer and Ovid—tales of Ulysses, of Hercules and Perseus—were never sorrowful, however severe the heroes' labours. For were they not undergone in just such a shining atmosphere as this?

His mind ran on these ancient tales, and so, memory reverting to Douai and the seminary class-room in which he had first construed them, he began unconsciously to set the lines of an old repetition-lesson to the stroke of the oars.

> Angustam amice pauperiem pati
> robustus acri militia puer
> condiscat et Parthos feroces
> vexet eques metuendus hasta:
>
> Vitamque sub divo et trepidis agat
> in rebus...

—And so on, with halts and breaks where memory failed him. *Parthos*—these would be the Indians—Abenakis, Algonquins, Hurons, whomsoever Montcalm might have gathered yonder in the woods with him. *Dulce et decorum est*—yes, to be sure; in a little while he would be facing death for his country; but he did not feel in the least like dying. A sight of Philip Schuyler's face sent him sliding into the next ode—*Justum et tenacem*... *non voltus instantis tyranni*.... John à Cleeve would have started had the future opened for an instant and revealed the face of the tyrant Philip Schuyler was soon to defy: and Schuyler would have started too.

Then John remembered his cousin's letter, and pulled it from his pocket again....

> "And if Abercromby's your Cæsar—which is as much as I'll risk saying in a letter which may be opened before it reaches you— why, you have Howe to clip his parade wig as he's already docked the men's coat-tails. So here's five pounds on it, and let it be a match—Wolfe against Howe, and shall J à C. or R. M. be first in Quebec? And another five pounds, if you will, on our epaulettes: for I repeat to you, this is Pitt's consulship, and promotion henceforth comes to men as they deserve it. Look at Wolfe, sir—a man barely thirty-two—and the ball but just set rolling! Wherefore I too am resolved to enter Quebec a Brigadier-General, who now go carrying the colours of the 17th to Louisbourg. We but wait Genl. Amherst, who is expected

> daily, and then yeo-heave-ho for the nor'ard! Farewell, dearest Jack! Given in this our camp at Halifax, the twelfth of May, 1758, in the middle of a plaguy fog, by your affect. cousin— R. Montgomery."

John smiled as he folded up the letter, so characteristic of Dick. Dick was always in perfect spirits, always confident in himself. It was characteristic of Dick, too, to call himself Romulus and his friend Remus, meaning no slight, simply because he always took himself for granted as the leading spirit. It had always been so even in the days when they had gone birds'-nesting or rook-shooting together in the woods around John's Devonshire home. Always John had yielded the lead to this freckled Irish cousin (the kinship was, in fact, a remote one and lay on their mother's side through the Ranelagh family); and years had but seemed to widen the three months' gap in their ages.

Dick's parents were Protestant; and Dick had gone to Trinity College, Dublin, passing thence to an ensigncy in the 17th (Forbes') Regiment. The à Cleeves, on the other hand, had always been Roman Catholics, and by consequence had lived for generations somewhat isolated among the Devon gentry, their neighbours. When John looked back on his boyhood, his prevailing impressions were of a large house set low in a valley, belted with sombre dripping elms and haunted by Roman Catholic priests—some fat and rosy—some lean and cadaverous—but all soft-footed; of an insufficiency of light in the rooms; and of a sad lack of fellow-creatures willing to play with him. His parents were old, and he had been born late to them—twelve years after

Philip, his only brother and the heir. From the first his mother had destined him for the priesthood, and a succession of priests had been his tutors: but—What instinct is there in the sacerdotal mind which warns it off some cases as hopeless from the first? Here was a child, docile, affectionate, moody at times, but eager to please and glad to be rewarded by a smile; bred among priests and designed to be a priest; yet amid a thousand admonishments, chastisements, encouragements, blandishments, the child—with a child's sure instinct for sincerity—could not remember having been spoken to sincerely, with heart open to heart. Years later, when in the seminary at Douai the little worm of scepticism began to stir in his brain and grow, feeding on the books of M. Voltaire and other forbidden writings, he wondered if his many tutors had been, one and all, unconsciously prescient. But he was an honest lad. He threw up the seminary, returned to Cleeve Court, and announced with tears to his mother (his father had died two years before) that he could not be a priest. She told him, stonily, that he had disappointed her dearest hopes and broken her heart. His brother—the Squire now, and a prig from his cradle—took him out for a long walk, argued with him as with a fractious child, and, without attending to his answers, finally gave him up as a bad job. So an ensigncy was procured, and John à Cleeve shipped from Cork to Halifax, to fight the French in America. At Cork he had met and renewed acquaintance with his Irish cousin, Dick Montgomery. They had met again in Halifax, which they reached in separate transports, and had passed the winter there in company. Dick clapped his cousin on the back and

laughed impartially at his doubts and the family distress. Dick had no doubts; always saw clearly and made up his mind at once; was, moreover, very little concerned with religion (beyond damning the Pope), and a great deal concerned with soldiering. He fascinated John, as the practical man usually fascinates the speculative. So Remus listened to Romulus and began to be less contrite in his home-letters. To the smallest love at home (of the kind that understands, or tries to understand) he would have responded religiously; but he had found such nowhere save in Dick—who, besides, was a gallant young gentleman, and scrupulous on all points of honour. He took fire from Dick; almost worshipped him; and wished now, as the flotilla swept on and the bands woke louder echoes from the narrowing shore, that Dick were here to see how the last few weeks had tanned and hardened him.

The troops came to land before nightfall at Sabbath Day Point, twenty-five miles down the lake; stretched themselves to doze for a while in the dry undergrowth; re-embarked under the stars and, rowing on through the dawn, reached the lake-end at ten in the morning. Here they found the first trace of the enemy—a bridge broken in two over the river which drains into Lake Champlain. A small French rear-guard loitered here; but two companies of riflemen were landed and drove it back into the woods, without loss. The boats discharged the British unopposed, who now set forward afoot through the forest to follow the left bank of the stream, which, leaving the lake tranquilly, is broken presently by stony rapids and grows smooth again only as it nears its new reservoir. Smooth, rapid, and smooth again, it

sweeps round a long bend; and this bend the British prepared to follow, leaving a force to guard the boats.

Howe led, feeling forward with his light infantry; and the army followed in much the same disposition they had held down the lake; regulars in the centre, provincials on either flank; a long scarlet body creeping with broad blue wings—or so it might have appeared to a bird with sight able to pierce the overlacing boughs. To John à Cleeve, warily testing the thickets with the butt of his staff and pulling the thorns aside lest they should rip its precious silken folds, the advance, after the first ten minutes, seemed to keep no more order than a gang of children pressing after blackberries. Somewhere on his right the rapids murmured; men struggled beside him—now a dozen redcoats, now a few knowing Provincials who had lost their regiments, but were cocksure of the right path. And always— before, behind and all around him—sounded the calls of the parade-ground:—"Sub-divisions—left front—mark time! Left, half turn! Three files on the left—left turn—wheel!—files to the front!" Singular instructions for men grappling with a virgin forest!

If the standing trees were bad, the fallen ones—and there seemed to be a diabolical number of them—were ten times worse. John was straddling the trunk of one and cursing vehemently when a sound struck on his ears, more intelligible than any parade-call. It came back to him from the front: the sharp sound of musketry—two volleys.

The parade-calls ceased suddenly all around him. He listened, still sitting astride the trunk. One or two redcoats leaped it, shouting as they leaped, and followed the sound,

which crackled now as though the whole green forest were on fire. By and by, as he listened, a mustachioed man in a short jacket—one of Gage's light infantry—came bursting through the undergrowth, capless, shouting for a surgeon.

"What's wrong in front?" asked John, as the man—scarcely regarding him—laid his hands on the trunk to vault it.

"Faith, and I don't know, redcoat; except that they've killed him. Whereabouts is the General?"

"Who's killed?"

"The best man amongst us: Lord Howe!"

A second runner, following, shouted the same news; and the two passed on together in search of the General. But already the tidings had spread along the front of the main body, as though wafted by a sudden wind through the undergrowth. Already, as John sat astride his log endeavouring to measure up the loss, to right and left of him bugles were sounding the halt. It seemed that as yet the mass of troops scarcely took in the meaning of the rumour, but awoke under the shock only to find themselves astray and without bearings.

John's first sense was of a day made dark at a stroke. If this thing had happened, then the glory had gone out of the campaign. The army would by and by be marching on, and would march again to-morrow; the drill cries would begin again, the dull wrestle through swamps and thickets; and in due time the men would press down upon the French forts and take them. But where would be the morning's cheerfulness, the spirit of youth which had carried the boats down the lake amid laughter and challenges to race, and at

the landing-place set the men romping like schoolboys? The longer John considered, the more he marvelled at the hopes he and all the army had been building on this young soldier—and not the army only, but every colony. Messengers even now would be heading up the lake as fast as paddles could drive them, to take horse and gallop smoking to the Hudson, to bear the tidings to Albany, and from Albany ride south with it to New York, to Philadelphia, to Richmond. "Lord Howe killed!" From that long track of dismay John called his thoughts back to himself and the army. Howe—dead? He, that up to an hour ago had been the pivot of so many activities, the centre on which veterans rested their confidence, and from which young soldiers drew their high spirits, the one commander whom the Provincials trusted and liked because he understood them; for whom and for their faith in him the regulars would march till their legs failed them! Wonderful how youth and looks and gallantry and brains together will grip hold of men and sway their imaginations! But how rare the alliance, and on how brittle a hazard resting! An unaimed bullet—a stop in the heart's pulsation—and the star we followed has gone out, God knows whither. The hope of fifteen thousand men lies broken and sightless, dead of purpose, far from home. They assure us that nothing in this world perishes, nor in the firmament above it: but we look up at the black space where a star has been quenched and know that something has failed us which to-morrow will not bring again.

It was learnt afterwards that he had been killed by the first shot in the campaign. Montcalm had thrown out three hundred rangers overnight under Langy to feel the British

advance: but so dense was the tangle that even these experienced woodmen went astray during the night and, in hunting for tracks, blundered upon Howe's light infantry at unawares. In the moment of surprise each side let fly with a volley, and Howe fell instantly, shot through the heart.

The British bivouacked in the woods that night. Toward dawn John à Cleeve stretched himself, felt for his arms, and lay for a while staring up at a solitary star visible through the overhanging boughs. He was wondering what had awakened him, when his ears grew aware of a voice in the distance, singing—either deep in the forest or on some hillside to the northward: a clear tenor voice shaken out on the still air with a *tremolo* such as the Provençals love. It sang to the army and to him:—

> Malbrouck s'en-va-t'en guerre:
> Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!
> Malbrouck s'en va-t'en guerre:
> —Ne sais quand reviendra!

CHAPTER II.

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A BIVOUAC IN THE FOREST.

Through the night, meanwhile, Montcalm and his men had been working like demons.

The stone fort of Ticonderoga stood far out on a bluff at the head of Lake Champlain, its base descending on the one hand into the still lake-water, on the other swept by the river which the British had been trying to follow, and which here, its rapids passed, disembogues in a smooth strong flood. It stood high, too, over these meeting waters; but as a military position was next to worthless, being dominated, across the river on the south, by a loftier hill called Rattlesnake Mountain.

Such was Ticonderoga; and hither Montcalm had hurried up the Richelieu River from the north to find Bourlamaque, that good fighter, posted with the regiments of La Reine, Béarn, and Guienne, and a few Canadian regulars and militia. He himself had brought the battalions of La Sarre and De Berry—a picked force, if ever there was one, but scarcely above three thousand strong.

A couple of miles above the fort and just below the rapids, a bridge spanned the river. A saw-mill stood beside it: and here Montcalm had crossed and taken up his quarters, pushing forward Bourlamaque to guard the upper end of the rapids, and holding Langy ready with three hundred rangers to patrol the woods on the outer side of the river's loop.

But when his scouts and Indians came in with the news of the British embarking on the upper shore, and with reports of their multitude, Montcalm perceived that the river could not be held; and, having recalled Bourlamaque and broken down the bridges above and below the rapids, withdrew his force again to Ticonderoga, leaving only

Langy's rangers in the farther woods to feel the enemy's approach.

Next he had to ask himself, Could the fort be defended? All agreed that it could not, with Rattlesnake Mountain overtopping it: and the most were for evacuating it and retiring up Lake Champlain to the stronger French fort on Crown Point. But Montcalm was expecting Lévis at any moment with reinforcements; and studying the ridge at the extreme end of which the fort stood, he decided that the position ought not to be abandoned. This ridge ran inland, its slope narrowed on either side between the river and the lake by swamps, and approachable only from landward over the *col*, where it broadened and dipped to the foothills. Here, at the entrance to the ridge, and half a mile from his fort, he commanded his men to throw up an entrenchment and cut down trees; and while the sappers fell to work he traced out the lines of a rude star-fort, with curtains and jutting angles from which the curtains could be enfiladed. Through the dawn, while the British slept in the woods, the Frenchmen laboured, hacking and felling. Scores of trees they left to lie and encumber the ground: others they dragged, unlopped, to the entrenchment, and piled them before it, trunks inward and radiating from its angles; lacing their boughs together or roughly pointing them with a few strokes of the axe.

In the growing daylight the *chevaux-de-frise* began to look formidable; but Bourlamaque, watching it with Montcalm, shook his head, hunched his shoulders, and jerked a thumb toward a spur of Rattlesnake Mountain, by which their defences were glaringly commanded.

Montcalm said, "We will risk it. Those English Generals are inconceivable."

"But a cannon or two—"

"If he think of them! Believe me, who have tried: you never know what an English General will do—or what his soldiers won't. Pile the trees higher, my braves—more than breast-high— mountain-high if time serves! But this Abercromby comes from a land where the bees fly tail-foremost by rule."

"With all submission, I would still recommend Crown Point."

"Should he, by chance, think of planting a gun yonder, I feel sure that notion will exclude all others. We shall open the door and retreat on Crown Point unmolested."

Bourlamaque drew in a long breath and emitted it in a mighty *pouf*!

"I am not conducting his campaign for him," said his superior calmly. "God forbid! I once imagined myself in his predecessor's place, the Earl of Loudon's, and within twenty minutes France had lost Canada. I shudder at it still!"

Bourlamaque laughed. Montcalm had said it with a whimsical smile, and it passed him unheeded that the smile ended in a contracting of the brows and a bitter little sigh. The fighter judged war by its victories; the strategist by their effects. Montcalm could win victories; even now, by putting himself into what might pass for his adversary's mind, he hoped to snatch a success against odds. But what avails it to administer drubbings which but leave your foe the more stubbornly aggressive? British Generals blundered; but always the British armies came on. War had been

declared three years ago; actually it had lasted for four; and the sum of its results was that France, with her chain of forts planted for aggression from the St. Lawrence to the Ohio, had turned to defending them. His countrymen might throw up their caps over splendid repulses of the foe, and hail such for triumphs; but Montcalm looked beneath the laurels.

The British, having slept the night in the woods, were mustered at dawn and marched back to the landing-place. Their General, falling back upon common sense after the loss of a precious day, was now resolved to try the short and beaten path by which Montcalm had retreated. It formed a four-mile chord, with the loop of the river for arc, and presented no real difficulty except the broken bridge, which Bradstreet was sent forward to repair.

But though beaten and easy to follow, the road was rough; and Abercromby—in a sweating hurry now—determined to leave his guns behind. John à Cleeve, passing forward with his regiment, took note of them as they lay unlimbered amid the brushwood by the landing-stage, and thought little of it. He had his drill-book by heart, relied for orders on his senior officers, and took pride in obeying them smartly. This seemed to him the way for a young soldier to learn his calling; for the rest, war was a game of valour and would give him his opportunity. Theoretically he knew the uses of artillery, but he was not an artilleryman; nor had he ever felt the temptation to teach his grandmother to suck eggs. His cousin Dick's free comments upon white-headed Generals of division and brigade he let pass with a laugh. To Dick, the Earl of Loudon was "a mournful thickhead," Webb "a mighty handsome figure for a poltroon," Sackville "a

discreet footman for a ladies' drum," and the ancestors of Abercromby had all been hanged for fools. Dick, very much at his ease in Sion, would have court-martialled and cashiered the lot out of hand. But John's priestly tutors had schooled him in diffidence, if in nothing else.

His men to-day were in no pleasant humour, and a few of them— veterans too—grumbled viciously as they passed the guns. "Silence in the ranks!" shouted the captain of his company; and the familiar words soothed him, and he wondered what had provoked the grumbling. A minute later he had forgotten it. The column crawled forward sulkily. The shadow of Howe's loss lay heavy on it, and a sense that his life had been flung away. They had been marched into a jungle and marched back again, with nothing to show for it but twenty-four wasted hours. On they crawled beneath the sweltering July heat; and coming to the bridge, found more delays.

Bradstreet and his men had worked like heroes, but the bridge would not be ready to carry troops before the early morning. A wooden saw-mill stood beside it, melancholy and deserted; and here the General took up his quarters, while the army cooked its supper and disposed itself for the night in the trampled clearing around the mill and in the forest beyond. The 46th lay close alongside the river, and the noise of Bradstreet's hammers on the bridge kept John for a long while awake and staring up at the high eastern ridges, black as ink against the radiance of a climbing moon. In the intervals of hammering, the swirl of the river kept tune in his ears with the whir-r-r of a saw in the rear of the mill, slicing up the last planks for the bridge. There was a mill in

the valley at home, and he had heard it a hundred times making just such music with the stream that ran down from Dartmoor and past Cleeve Court. His thoughts went back to Devonshire, but not to linger there; only to wonder how much love his mother would put into her prayers could she be reached by a vision of him stretched here with his first battle waiting for him on the morrow. He wondered, not bitterly, if her chief reflection would be that he had brought the unpleasant experience on himself when he might have been safe in a priest's cassock. He laughed. How little she understood him, or had ever understood!

His heart went out to salute the morrow—and yet soberly. Outside of his simple duties of routine he was just an unshaped subaltern, with eyes sealed as yet to war's practical teachings. To him, albeit he would have been puzzled had anyone told him so, war existed as yet only as a spiritual conflict in which men proved themselves heroes or cowards: and he meant to be a hero. For him everything lay in the will to dare or to endure. He recalled tales of old knights keeping vigil by their arms in solitary chapels, and he questioned the far hill-tops and the stars—What substitute for faith supported *him*? Did he believe in God? Yes, after a fashion—in some tremendous and overruling Power, at any rate. A Power that had made the mountains yonder? Yes, he supposed so. A loving Power—an intimate counsellor—a Father attending all his steps? Well, perhaps; and if so, a Father to be answered with all a man's love: but, before answering, he honestly needed more assurance. As for another world and a continuing life there, should he happen to fall to-morrow, John searched his heart and

decided that he asked for nothing of the sort. Such promises struck him as unworthy bribes, belittling the sacrifice he came prepared to make. He despised men who bargained with them. Here was he, young, abounding in life, ready to risk extinction. Why? For a cause (some might say), and that cause his country's. Maybe: he had never thought this out. To be sure he was proud to carry the regimental colours, and had rather belong to the 46th than to any other regiment. The honour of the 46th was dear to him now as his own. But why, again? Pure accident had assigned him to the 46th: as for love of his country, he could not remember that it had played any conspicuous part in sending him to join the army. The hammering on the bridge had ceased without his noting it, and also the whirr of the great hands-driven saw. Only the river sang to him now: and to the swirl of it he dropped off into a dreamless, healthy sleep.

CHAPTER III.

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TICONDEROGA.

At the alarm-post next morning the men were in high spirits again. Everyone seemed to be posted in the day's work ahead. The French had thrown up an outwork on the landward end of the ridge; an engineer had climbed Rattlesnake Mountain at daybreak and conned it through his glass, and had brought down his report two hours ago. The

white-coats had been working like niggers, helped by some reinforcements which had come in overnight—Lévis with the Royal Roussillon, the scouts said: but the thing was a rough-and-ready affair of logs and the troops were to carry it with the bayonet. John asked in what direction it lay, and thumbs were jerked towards the screening forest across the river. The distance (some said) was not two miles. Colonel Beaver, returning from a visit to the saw-mill, confirmed the rumour. The 46th would march in a couple of hours or less.

At breakfast Howe's death seemed to be forgotten, and John found no time for solemn thoughts. Bets were laid that the French would not wait for the assault, but slip away to their boats; even with Lévis they could scarcely be four thousand strong. Bradstreet, having finished his bridge, had started back for the landing-stage to haul a dozen of the lighter bateaux across the portage and float them down to Lake Champlain filled with riflemen. Bradstreet was a glutton for work—but would he be in time? That old fox Montcalm would never let his earths be stopped so easily, and to pile defences on the ridge was simply to build himself into a trap. A good half of the officers maintained that there would be no fighting.

Well, fighting or no, some business was in hand. Here was the battalion in motion; and, to leave the enemy in no doubt of our martial ardour, here were the drums playing away like mad. The echo of John's feet on the wooden bridge awoke him from these vain shows and rattlings of war to its real meaning, and his thoughts again kept him solemn company as he breasted the slope beyond and began the tedious climb to the right through the woods.