to be drawn out of his veins, and his face fell in. Then it burned red hot, and instead of good friend and benefactor, I saw myself a convict. His big, staring blue eyes came out of a film like an owl's, and shot me through. I believe he saw everything I ever did in my life, and my intentions about Eagle most plainly of all. He bowed and wished me good-night, and took her out of the Tuileries."

"But you saw him again?"

"He never let me see him again, or her either. I am certain he forbade her to communicate with us. They did not go back to Mont Louis. They left their hotel in Paris. I wrote imploring him to hold the estates. My messages were returned. I don't know how he got money enough to emigrate. But emigrate he did; avoiding Castorland, where the Saint Michels, who brought her up, lived in comfort, and might have comforted her, and where I could have made her life easy. He probably dragged her through depths of poverty, before they joined a company bound for the Indian Territory, where the Pigeon Roost settlement was planted. I have seen old Saint Michel work at clearing, and can imagine the Marquis de Ferrier sweating weakly while he chopped trees. It is a satisfaction to know they had Ernestine with them. De Ferrier might have plowed with Eagle," said the Count, hotly. "He never hesitated to make use of her."

While I had been living a monk's studious, well-provided life, was she toiling in the fields? I groaned aloud.

De Chaumont dropped his head on his breast.

"It hurts me more than I care to let anybody but you know, Lazarre. If I hadn't received that letter I should have avoided you. I wish you had saved Paul. I would adopt him."

"I think not, my dear Count."

"Nonsense, boy! I wouldn't let you have him."

"You have a child."

"Her husband has her. But let us not pitch and toss words. No use quarreling over a dead boy. What right have you to Eagle's child?"

"Not your right of faithful, useful friendship. Only my own right."

"What's that?"

"Nothing that she ever admitted."

"I was afraid of you," said De Chaumont, "when you flowered out with old Du Plessy, like an heir lost in emigration and found again. You were a startling fellow, dropping on the Faubourg; and anything was possible under the empire. You know I never believed the dauphin nonsense, but a few who remembered said you looked like the king. You were the king to her; above mating with the best of the old nobility. She wouldn't have married you."

"Did she ever give you reason to think she would marry you?"

"She never gave me reason to think she would marry anybody. But what's the use of groaning? There's distraction abroad. I took the trails to see you, when I heard you were with the troops on Champlain. I shall be long in France. What can I do for you, my boy?"

"Nothing, Count. You have already done much."

"She had a foolish interest in you. The dauphin!—too good to sit at table with us, you raw savage!—had to be waited on by old Jean. And she would have had me serve you myself!"

He laughed, and so did I. We held hands, clinging in fellowship.

"I might not have refused your service, like Marquis de Ferrier."

The Count's face darkened.

"I'll not abuse him. He's dead."

"Are you sure he's dead this time, Count?"

"A Kickapoo is carrying his scalp. Trust my runners. They have traced him so much for me they know the hair on his stubborn head. I must go where I can have amusement, Lazarre. This country is a young man's country. I'm getting old. Adieu. You're one of the young men."

Some changes of light and darkness passed over me, and the great anguish of my wound increased until there was no rest. However, the next man who visited me stood forth at the side of the stretcher as Bellenger. I thought I dreamed him, being light headed with fever. He was unaccountably weazened, robbed of juices and powdering to dust on the surface. His mustache had grown again and he carried it over his ears in the ridiculous manner affected when I saw him in the fog.

"Where's your potter's wheel?" I inquired.

"In the woods by Lake George, sire."

"Do you still find clay that suits you?"

"Yes, sire."

"Have you made that vase yet?"

"No, sire. I succeed in nothing."

"You succeed in tracking me."

He swam before my eyes, and I pointed to the surgeon's camp chair.

"Not in your presence, sire."

"Have you lost your real dauphin?" I inquired.

"I have the honor of standing before the real dauphin."

"So you swore at Mittau."

"I perjured myself."

"Well, what are you doing now?"

"Sire, I am a man in failing health. Before the end I have come to tell you the truth."

"Do you think you can do it?"

"Sire—" said Bellenger.

"Your King is Louis XVIII," I reminded him.

"He is not my King."

"Taken your pension away, has he?"

"I no longer receive anything from that court."

"And your dauphin?"

"He was left in Europe."

"Look here, Bellenger! Why did you treat me so? Dauphin or no dauphin, what harm was I doing you?"

"I thought a strong party was behind you. And I knew there had been double dealing with me. You represented some invisible power tricking me. I was beside myself, and faced it out in Mittau. I have been used shamefully, and thrown aside when I am failing. Hiding out in the hills ruined my health."

"Let us get to facts, if you have facts. Do you know anything about me, Bellenger?"

"Yes, sire."

"Who am I?"

"Louis XVII of France."

"What proof can you give me?"

"First, sire, permit a man who has been made a wretched tool to implore forgiveness of his rightful sovereign, and a little help to reach a warmer climate before the rigors of a northern winter begin."

"Bellenger, you are entrancing," I said. "Why did I ever take you seriously? Ste. Pelagie was a grim joke, and tipping in the river merely your playfulness. You had better take yourself off now, and keep on walking until you come to a warmer climte."

He wrung his hands with a gesture that touched my natural softness to my enemy.

"Talk, then. Talk, man. What have you to say?"

"This, first, sire. That was a splendid dash you made into France!"

"And what a splendid dash I made out of it again, with a gendarme at my coat-tails, and you behind the gendarme!"

"But it was the wrong time. If you were there now—the French people are so changeable——"

"I shall never be there again. His Majesty the eighteenth Louis is welcome. What the blood stirs in me to know is, have I a right to the throne?"

"Sire, the truth as I know it, I will tell you. You were the boy taken from the Temple prison."

"Who did it?"

"Agents of the royalist party whose names would mean nothing to you if I gave them."

"I was placed in your hands?"

"You were placed in my hands to be taken to America."

"I was with you in London, where two royalists who knew me recognized me?"

"The two De Ferriers."

"Did a woman named Madame Tank see me?"

Bellenger was startled.

"You were noticed on the ship by a court-lady of Holland; a very clever courtier. I had trouble in evading her. She suspected too much, and asked too many questions; and would have you to play with her baby on the deck, though at that time you noticed nothing."

"But where does the idiot come into my story?"

"Sire, you have been unfortunate, but I have been a victim. When we landed in New York I went directly and made myself known to the man who was to act as purveyor of your Majesty's pension. He astonished me by declaring that the dauphin was already there, and had claimed the pension for that year. The country and the language were unknown to me. The agent spoke French, it is true, but we hardly understood each other. I supposed I had nothing to do but present my credentials. Here was another idiot—I crave your Majesty's pardon—"

"Quite right—at the time, Bellenger."

—"drawing the annuity intended for the dauphin. I inquired into his rights. The agent showed me papers like my own. I asked who presented them. He knew no more of the man than he did of me. I demanded to face the man. No such person could be found. I demanded to see the idiot. He was shut in a room and fed by a hired keeper. I sat down and thought much. Clearly it was not the agent's affair. He followed instructions. Good! I would follow instructions also. Months would have been required to ask and receive explanations from the court of monsieur. He had assumed the title of Louis XVIII, for the good of the royalist cause, as if there were no Prince. I thought I saw what was expected of me."

"And what did you see, you unspeakable scoundrel?"

"I saw that there was a dauphin too many, hopelessly idiotic. But if he was the one to be guarded, I would guard him."

"Who was that idiot?"

"Some unknown pauper. No doubt of that."

"And what did you do with me?"

"A chief of the Iroquois Indians can tell you that."

"This is a clumsy story, Bellenger. Try again."

"Sire—"

"If you knew so little of the country, how did you find an Iroquois chief?"

"I met him in the woods when he was hunting. I offered to give you to him, pretending you had the annuity from Europe. Sire, I do not know why trickery was practiced on me, or who practiced it; why such pains were taken to mix the clews which led to the dauphin. But afterward the same agent had orders to give you two-thirds and me only one-third of the yearly sum. I thought the court was in straits—when both Russia and Spain supported it! I was nothing but a court painter. But when you went to France I blocked your way with all the ingenuity I could bring."

"I would like to ask you, Bellenger, what a man is called who attempts the life of his King?"

"Sire, the tricks of royalists pitted us against each other."

"That's enough, Bellenger. I don't believe a word you say, excepting that part of your story agreeing with Mme. de Ferrier's. Put your hand under my pillow and find my wallet. Now help yourself and never let me see you again."

He helped himself to everything except a few shillings, weeping because his necessities were so great. But I told him I was used to being robbed, and he had done me all the harm he could; so his turn to pluck me naturally followed.

Then I softened, as I always do toward the claimant of the other part, and added that we were on the same footing; I had been a pensioner myself.

"Sire, I thank you," said Bellenger, having shaken the wallet and poked his fingers into the lining where an unheard-of gold piece could have lodged.

"It tickles my vanity to be called sire."

"You are a true Prince," said Bellinger. "My life would be well spent if I could see you restored to your own."

"So I infer, from the valuable days you have spent trying to bring that result about."

"Your Majesty is sure of finding support in France."

"The last King tinkered with clocks. Perhaps I like to tinker with Indians."

"Sire, it is due to your birth——"

"Never mind my birth," I said. "I'm busy with my life."

He bowed himself out of my presence without turning. This tribute to royalty should have touched me. He took a handsome adieu and did not afterward seek further reward for his service. I heard in the course of years that he died in New Orleans, confessing much regarding myself to people who cared nothing about it, and thought him crazy. They doubtless had reason, so erratic was the wanderer whom I had first consciously seen through Lake George fog. His behavior was no more incredible than the behavior of other Frenchmen who put a hand to the earlier years of their Prince's life.

The third to appear at my tent door was Chief Williams himself. The surgeon told him outside the tent that it was a dangerous wound. He had little hope for me and I had indifferent hope myself, lying in torpor and finding it an effort to speak. But after several days of effort I did speak.

The chief sat beside me, concerned and silent.

"Father," I said.

The chief harkened near to my lips.

"Tell me," I begged, after resting, "who brought me to you?"

His dark, sullen face became tender. "It was a Frenchman," he answered. "I was hunting and met him on the lake with two boys. He offered to give you to me. We had just lost a son."

When I had rested again I asked:

"Do you know anything else about me?"

"No."

The subject was closed between us. And all subjects were closed betwixt the world and me, for my face turned the other way. The great void of which we know nothing, but which our faith teaches us to bridge, opened for me.

VI.

But the chief's and Skenedonk's nursing and Indian remedies brought me face earthward again, reviving the surgeon's hope.

When blood and life mounted and my torn side sewed up its gap in a healthy scar, adding another to my collection, autumn was upon us. From the hunting lodges on Lake George and the Williamses of Longmeadow I went to the scorched capital of Washington. In the end the Government helped me with my Indian plan, though when Skenedonk and I pushed out toward Illinois Territory we had only my pay and a grant of land. Peace was not formally made until December, but the war ended that summer.

Man's success in the world is proportioned to the number of forces he can draw around himself to work with him. I have been able to draw some forces, though in matters where most people protect themselves I have a quality of asinine patience which the French would not have tolerated.

The Oneidas were ready to follow wherever I led them. And so were many families of the Iroquois federation. But the Mohawk tribe held back. However, I felt confident of material for an Indian state when the foundation should be laid.

We started lightly equipped upon the horse paths. The long journey by water and shore brought us in October to the head of Green Bay. We had seen Lake Michigan, of a light transparent blueness, with fire ripples chasing from the sunset. And we had rested at noon in plum groves on the vast prairies, oases of fertile deserts, where pink and white fruit drops, so ripe that the sun preserves it in its juice. The freshness of the new world continually flowed around us. We shot deer. Wolves sneaked upon our trail. We slept with our heels to the campfire and our heads on our saddles. Sometimes we built a hunter's shed, open at front and sloping to ground at back. To find out how the wind blew we stuck a finger in our mouths and held it up. The side which became cold first was the side of the wind.

Physical life riots in the joy of its revival. I was so glad to be alive after touching death that I could think of Madame de Ferrier without pain, and say more confidently, "She is not dead," because resurrection was working in myself.

Green Bay (or La Baye, as the fur hunters called it) was a little post almost like a New England village among its elms—one street and a few outlying houses beside the Fox River. The open world had been our tavern, or any sod or log hut cast up like a burrow of human prairie dogs or moles. We did not expect to find a tavern in Green Bay. Yet such a place was pointed out to us near the Fur Company's block warehouse. It had no sign post, and the only visible stable was a pen of logs. Though negro slaves were owned in the Illinois Territory, we saw none when a red-headed man rushed forth shouting:

"Sam, you lazy nigger, come here and take the gentleman's horses! Where is that Sam? Light down, sir, with your Indian, and I will lead your beasts to the hostler myself."

In the same way our host provided a supper and bed with armies of invisible servants. Skenedonk climbed a ladder to the loft with our saddlebags.

"Where is that chambermaid?" cried the tavern-keeper.

"Yes, where is she?" said a man who lounged on a bench by the entrance. "I've heard of her so often I would like to see her myself."

The landlord, deaf to raillery, bustled about and spread our table in his public room.

"Cornbread, hominy, side meat, ven'zin," he shouted in the kitchen. "Stir yourself, you black rascal, and dish up the gentleman's supper."

Skenedonk walked boldly to the kitchen door and saw our landlord stewing and broiling, performing the offices of cook as he had performed those of stableman. He kept on scolding and harrying the people who should have been at his command—"Step around lively, Sam. Tell the gentleman the black bottle is in the fireplace cupboard if he wants to sharpen his appetite. Where is that little nigger that picks up chips? Bring me some more wood from the woodpile! I'll teach you to go to sleep behind the door!"

Our host served us himself, running with sleeves turned back to admonish an imaginary cook. His taproom was the fireplace cupboard, and it was visited while we ate our supper by men in elk-skin trousers, and caps and hooded capotes of blue cloth. These Canadians mixed their own drink and made a cross-mark on the inside of the cupboard door, using a system of bookkeeping evidently agreed upon between themselves and the landlord. He shouted for the lazy barkeeper, who answered nothing out of nothingness.

Nightfall was very clear and fair in this Northwestern Territory. A man felt nearer to the sunset. The region took hold upon me, particularly when one who was neither a warehouseman nor a Canadian fur hunter hurried in and took me by the hand.

"I am Pierre Grignon," he said.

Indeed, if he had held his fiddle and tuned it upon an arm not quite so stout I should have known without being told that he was the man who had played in the Saint Michel cabin while Annabel de Chaumont climbed the chimney.

We sat and talked until the light faded. The landlord brought a candle and yelled up the loft, where Skenedonk had already stretched himself in his blanket, as he loved to do:

"Chambermaid, light up!"

"You drive your slaves too hard, landlord," said Pierre Grignon.

"You'd think I hadn't any, Mr. Grignon; for they're never in the way when wanted."

"One industrious man you certainly have."

"Yes, Sam is a good fellow; but I'll have to go out and wake him up and make him rub the horses down."

"Never mind," said Pierre Grignon. "I'm going to take these travelers home with me."

"Now I know how a tavern ought to be kept," said the landlord. "But what's the use of keeping it if Pierre Grignon carries off all the guests?"

"He is my old friend," I told the landlord.

"He's old friend to everybody that comes to Green Bay. I'll never get so much as a sign painted to hang in front of the Palace Tavern."

I gave him twice his charges and he said:

"What a loss it was to enterprise in the Bay when Pierre Grignon came here and built for the whole United States!"

The Grignon house whether built for the whole United States or not, was the largest in Green Bay. Its lawn sloped down to the Fox River. It was a huge square of oak timbers, with a detached kitchen, sheltered by giant elms. To this day it stands defying time with its darkening frame like some massive rock, the fan windows in the gables keeping guard north and south.

A hall divided the house through the center, and here Madame Grignon welcomed me as if I were a long-expected guest, for this was her custom; and as soon as she clearly remembered me, led me into a drawing-room where a stately old lady sat making lace.

This was the grandmother of the house. Such a house would have been incomplete without a grandmother at the hearth.

The furniture of this hall or family room had been brought from Montreal; spindle chairs and a pier table of mahogany; a Turkish carpet, laid smoothly on the polished floor to be spurned aside by young dancers there; some impossible sea pictures, with patron saints in the clouds over mariners; an immense stuffed sofa, with an arm dividing it across the center; —the very place for those head-on conversations with young men which the girls of the house called 'twosing." It was, in fact, the favorite "twosing" spot of Green Bay.

Stools were there for children, and armchairs for old people were not lacking. The small yellow spinning wheel of Madame Ursule, as I found afterward Madame Grignon was commonly called, stood ready to revolve its golden disk wherever she sat.

The servants were Pawnee Indians, moving about their duties almost with stealth.

The little Grignon daughter who had stood lost in wonder at the dancing of Annabel de Chaumont was now a turner of heads herself, all flaxen white, and contrasting with the darkness of Katarina Tank. Katarina was taken home to the Grignons' after her mother's death. Both girls had been educated in Montreal.

The seigniorial state in which Pierre Grignon lived became at once evident. I found it was the custom during Advent for all the villagers to meet in his house and sing hymns. On Christmas day his tables were loaded for everybody who came. If any one died he was brought to Pierre Grignon's for prayers, and after his burial the mourners went back to Pierre Grignon's for supper. Pierre Grignon and his wife were godfather and godmother to most of the children born at La Baye. If a child was left without father and mother Pierre Grignon's house became its asylum until a home could be found for it. The few American officers stationed at the old stockade nearly every evening met the beauties of Green Bay at Pierre Grignon's, and if he did not fiddle for them he led madame in the dancing. The grandmother herself sometimes took her stick and stepped through a measure to please the young people. Laughter and the joy of life filled the house every waking hour of the twenty-four. Funerals were never horrible there. Instead they seemed the mystic beginning of better things.

"Poor Madame Tank! She would have been so much more comfortable in her death if she had relieved her mind," Madame Ursule said, the first evening, as we sat in a pause of the dancing. "She used to speak of you often, for seeing you made a great impression upon her, and she never let me forget you. I am sure she knew more about you than she ever told me. 'I have an important disclosure to make,' she says. 'Come around me, I want all of you to hear it!' Then she fell back and died without telling it."

A touch of mystery was not lacking to the house. Several times I saw the tail of a gray gown disappear through an open door. Some woman half entered and drew back.

"It's Madeleine Jordan," an inmate told me each time. "She avoids strangers."

I asked if Madeleine Jordan was a relative.

"Oh, no," Madame Ursule replied; "but the family who brought her here went back to Canada, and of course they left her with us."

Of course, Madeleine Jordan, or anybody else who lacked a roof, would be left with the Grignons; but in that house a hermit seemed out of place, and I said so to Madame Ursule.

"Poor child!" she responded. "I think she likes the bustle and noise. She is not a hermit. What difference can it make to her whether people are around her or not?"

The subject of Madeleine Jordan was no doubt beyond a man's handling. I had other matters to think about, and directly plunged into them. First the Menominees and Winnebagoes must be assembled in council. They held all the desirable land.

"We don't like your Indian scheme in Green Bay," said Pierre Grignon. "But if the tribes here are willing to sell their lands other settlers can't prevent it."

He went with me to meet the savages on the opposite side of the Fox near the stockade. There the talking and eating lasted two days. At the end of that time I had a footing for our Iroquois in the Wisconsin portion of the Illinois Territory; and the savages who granted it danced a war dance in our honor. Every brave shook over his head the scalps he had taken. I saw one cap of soft, long brown hair.

"Eh!" said Pierre Grignon, sitting beside me. "Their dirty trophies make you ghastly! Do your Eastern tribes never dance war dances?"

After the land was secured its boundaries had to be set. Then my own grant demanded attention; and last, I was anxious to put my castle on it before snow flew. Many of those late autumn nights Skenedonk and I spent camping. The outdoor life was a joy to me. Our land lay up the Fox River and away from the bay. But more than one stormy evening, when we came back to the bay for supplies, I plunged into the rolling water and swam breasting the waves. It is good to be hardy, and sane, and to take part in the visible world, whether you are great and have your heart's desire or not.

When we had laid the foundation of the Indian settlement, I built my house with the help of skilled men. It was a spacious one of hewn logs, chinked with cat-and-clay plaster, showing its white ribs on the hill above the Fox. In time I meant to cover the ribs with perennial vines. There was a spring near the porches. The woods banked me on the rear, and an elm spread its colossal umbrella over the roof. Fertile fields stretched at my left, and on my right a deep ravine lined with white birches carried a stream to the Fox.

From my stronghold to the river was a long descent. The broadening and narrowing channel could be seen for miles. A bushy island, beloved of wild ducks, parted the water, lying as Moses hid in osiers, amidst tall growths of wild oats. Beyond were rolling banks, and beyond those, wooded hills rising terrace over terrace to the dawn. Many a sunrise was to come to me over those hills. Oaks and pines and sumach gathered to my doorway.

In my mind I saw the garden we afterward created; with many fruit trees, beds, and winding walks, trellised seats, squares of flaming tulips, phlox, hollyhocks, roses. It should reach down into the ravine, where humid ferns and rocks met plants that love darkling ground. Yet it should not be too dark. I would lop boughs rather than have a growing thing spindle as if rooted in Ste. Pelagie! —and no man who loves trees can do that without feeling the knife at his heart. What is long developing is precious like the immortal part of us.

The stoicism that comes of endurance has something of death in it. I prepared a home without thought of putting any wife therein. I had grown used to being alone, with the exception of Skenedonk's taciturn company. The house was for castle and resting place after labor. I took satisfaction in the rude furniture we made for it. In after years it became filled with rich gifts from the other side of the world, and books that have gladdened my heart. Yet in its virginhood, before pain or joy or achievement had entered there, before spade struck the ground which was to send up food, my holding on the earth's surface made me feel prince of a principality.

The men hewed a slab settle, and stationed it before the hearth, a thing of beauty in its rough and lichen-tinted barks, though you may not believe it. My floors I would have smooth and neatly joined, of hard woods which give forth a shining for wear and polish. Stools I had, easily made, and one large round of a tree for my table, like an Eastern tabouret.

Before the river closed and winter shut in, Skenedonk and I went back to Green Bay. I did not know how to form my household, and had it in mind to consult Madame Ursule. Pawnees could be had, and many French landholders in the Territory owned black slaves. Pierre Grignon himself kept one little negro like a monkey among the stately Indians.

Dealing with acres, and with people wild as flocks, would have been worth while if nothing had resulted except our welcome back to Pierre Grignon's open house. The grandmother hobbled on her stick across the floor to give me her hand. Madame Ursule reproached me with delaying, and Pierre said it was high time to seek winter quarters. The girls recounted harvest reels and even weddings, with dances following, which I had lost while away from the center of festivity.

The little negro carried my saddlebags to the guest room. Skenedonk was to sleep on the floor. Abundant preparations for the evening meal were going forward in the kitchen. As I mounted the stairway at Madame Ursule's direction, I heard a tinkle of china, her very best, which adorned racks and dressers. It was being set forth on the mahogany board.

The upper floor of Pierre Grignon's house was divided by a hall similar to the one below. I ran upstairs and halted.

Standing with her back to the fading light which came through one fan window at the hall end, was a woman's figure in a gray dress. I gripped the rail.

My first thought was: "How shall I tell her about Paul?" My next was: "What is the matter with her?"

She rippled from head to foot in the shiver of rapture peculiar to her, and stretched her arms to me crying:

"Paul! Paul!"

VII.

"Oh, madame!" I said, bewildered and sick as from a stab. It was no comfort that the high lady who scarcely allowed me to kiss her hand before we parted clung around my neck. She trembled against me.

"Have you come back to your mother, Paul?"

"Eagle," I pleaded, "don't you know me? You surely know Lazarre!"

She kissed me, pulling my head down in her arms, the velvet mouth like a baby's, and looked straight into my eyes.

"Madame, try to understand! I am Louis! If you forget Lazarre, try to remember Louis!"

She heard with attention and smiled. The pressure of my arms spoke to her. A man's passion addressed itself to a little child. All other barriers which had stood between us were nothing to this. I held her, and she could never be mine. She was not ill in body; the contours of her upturned face were round and softened with much smiling. But mind-sickness robbed me of her in the moment of finding her.

"She can't be insane!" I said aloud. "O God, anything but that! She was not a woman that could be so wrecked."

Like a fool, I questioned and tried to get some explanation.

Eagle smoothed my arm, nested her hand in my neck.

"My little boy. He has grown to be a man—while his mother has grown down to be a child. Do you know what I am now, Paul?"

I choked a sob in my throat and told her I did not.

"I am your cloud-mother. I live in a cloud. Do you love me while I am in the cloud?"

I told her I loved her with all my strength, in the cloud or out of it.

"Will you take care of me as I used to take care of you?"

I swore to the Almighty that she should be my future care.

"I need you so! I have watched for you in the woods and on the water, Paul. You have been long coming back to me."

I heard Madame Ursule mounting the stairs to see if my room was in order.

Who could understand the relation in which Eagle and I now stood and the claim she made upon me? She clung to my arm when I took it away. I led her by the hand. Even this sight caused Madame Ursule a shock at the head of the stairs.

"M's'r Williams!"

My hostess paused and looked at us.

"Did she come to you of her own accord?"

"Yes, madame."

"I never knew her to notice a stranger before."

"Madame, do you know who this is?"

"Madeleine Jordan."

"It is the Marquise de Ferrier."

"The Marquise de Ferrier?"

"Yes, madame."

"Did you know her?"

"I have known her ever since I can remember."

"The Marquise de Ferrier! But, M's'r Williams, did she know you?"

"She knows me," I asserted. "But not as myself. I am sure she knows me! But she confuses me with the child she lost! I cannot explain to you, madame, how positive I am that she recognizes me; any more than I can explain why she will call me Paul. I think I ought to tell you, so you will see the position in which I am placed, that this lady is the lady I once hoped to marry."

"Saints have pity, M's'r Williams!"

"I want to ask you some questions."

"Bring her down to the fire. Come, dear child," said Mme. Ursule, coaxing Eagle. "Nobody is there. The bedrooms can never be so warm as the log fire, and this is a bitter evening."

The family room was unlighted by candles, as often happened. For such an illumination in the chimney must have quenched any paler glare. We had a few moments of brief privacy from the swarming life which constantly passed in and out.

I placed Eagle by the fire and she sat there obediently, while I talked to Mme. Ursule apart.

"Was her mind in this state when she came to you?"

"She was even a little wilder than she is now. The girls have been a benefit to her."

"They were not afraid of her?"

"Who could be afraid of the dear child? She is a lady—that's plain. Ah, M's'r Williams, what she must have gone through!"

"Yet see how happy she looks!"

"She always seemed happy enough. She would come to this house. So when the Jordans went to Canada, Pierre and I both said, 'Let her stay.'"

"Who were the Jordans?"

"The only family that escaped with their lives from the massacre when she lost her family. Mme. Jordan told me the whole story. They had friends among the Winnebagoes who protected them."

"Did they give her their name?"

"No, the people in La Baye did that. We knew she had another name. But I think it very likely her title was not used in the settlement where they lived. Titles are no help in pioneering."

"Did they call her Madeleine?"

"She calls herself Madeleine."

"How long has she been with your family?"

"Nearly a year."

"Did the Jordans tell you when this change came over her?"

"Yes. It was during the attack when her child was taken from her. She saw other children killed. The Indians were afraid of her. They respect demented people; not a bit of harm was done to her. They let her alone, and the Jordans took care of her."

The daughter and adopted daughter of the house came in with a rush of outdoor air, and seeing Eagle first ran to kiss her on the cheek, one after the other.

"Madeleine has come down!" said Marie.

"I thought we should coax her in here some time," said Katarina.

Between them, standing slim and tall, their equal in height, she was yet like a little sister. Though their faces were unlined, hers held a divine youth.

To see her stricken with mind-sickness, and the two girls who had done neither good nor evil existing like plants in sunshine, healthy and sound, seemed an iniquitous contrast.

If ever woman was made for living and dying in one ancestral home she was that woman. Yet she stood on the border of civilization, without a foothold to call her own. If ever woman was made for one knightly love, which would set her in high places, she was that woman. Yet here she stood, her very name lost, no man so humble as to do her reverence.

"Paul has come," Eagle told Katarina and Marie. Holding their hands, she walked between them toward me and bade them notice my height. "I am his cloud-mother," she said. "How droll it is that parents grow down little while their children grow up big!"

Madame Ursule shook her head pitifully. But the girls really saw the droll side and laughed with my cloud-mother.

Separated from me by an impassable barrier, she touched me more deeply than when I sued her most. The undulating ripple, which was her peculiar expression of joy, was more than I could bear. I left the room and was flinging myself from the house to walk in the chill wind; but she caught me.

"I will be good!" pleaded my cloud-mother, her face in my breast.

Her son, who had grown up big while she grew down little, went back to the family room with her.

My cloud-mother sat beside me at table, and insisted upon cutting up my food for me. While I tried to eat she asked Marie and Katarina and Pierre Grignon and Madame Ursule to notice how well I behaved. The tender-hearted host wiped his eyes.

I understood why she had kept such hold upon me through years of separation. A nameless personal charm, which must be a gift of the spirit, survived all wreck and change. It drew me, and must draw me forever, whether she knew me again or not. One meets and wakes you to vivid life in an immortal hour. Thousands could not do it through eternity.

The river piled hillocks of water in a strong north wind and no officer crossed from the stockade. Neither did any neighbor leave his own fire. It seldom happened that the Grignons were left with inmates alone. Eagle sat by me and watched the blaze streaming up the chimney.

If she was not a unit in the family group and had no part there, they were most kind to her.

"Take care!" the grandmother cried with swift forethought when Marie and Katarina marshaled in a hopping object from the kitchen. "It might frighten Madeleine."

Pierre Grignon stopped in the middle of a bear hunt. Eagle was not frightened. She clapped her hands.

"This is a pouched turkey!" Marie announced, leaning against the wall, while Katarina chased the fowl. It was the little negro, his arms and feet thrust into the legs of a pair of Pierre Grignon's trousers, and the capacious open top fastened upon his back. Doubled over, he waddled and hopped as well as he could. A feather duster was stuck in for a tail and his woolly head gave him the uncanny look of a black harpy. To see him was to shed tears of laughter. The pouched turkey enjoyed being a pouched turkey. He strutted and gobbled and ran at the girls; tried to pick up corn from the floor with his thick lips, tumbling down and rolling over in the effort; for a pouched turkey has no wings with which to balance himself. So much hilarity in the family room drew the Pawnee servants. I saw their small, dark eyes in a mere line of open door, gazing solemnly.

When the turkey was relieved from his pouching and sent to bed, Pierre Grignon took his violin. The girls answered with jigs that ended in a reel, when couples left the general figure to jig it off.

When Eagle had watched them awhile she started up, spread her skirts in a sweeping courtesy and began to dance a gavotte. The fiddler changed his tune and the girls pranced and watched her. Alternately swift and languid, with the changes of the movement, she saluted backward to the floor or spun on the tips of rapid feet. I had seen her dance many times, but never with such abandon of joy.

Our singular relationship was established in the house, where hospitality made room and apology for all human weakness.

Nobody of that region, except the infirm, stayed indoors to shiver by a fire. Eagle and the girls in their warm capotes breasted with me the coldest winter days. She was as happy as they were; her cheeks tingled as pink as theirs. Sometimes I thought her eyes must answer me with her old self-command; their bright grayness was so natural.

I believed if her delusions were humored, they would unwind from her like the cloud which she felt them to be. The family had long fallen into the habit of treating her as a child, playing some imaginary character. She seemed less demented than walking in a dream, her faculties asleep. It was somnambulism rather than madness. She had not the expression of insane people, the shifty eyes, the cunning and perverseness, the animal and torpid presence.

If I called her Madame de Ferrier instead of my cloud-mother, a strained and puzzled look replaced her usual satisfaction. I did not often use the name, nor did I try to make her repeat my own. It was my daily effort to fall in with her happiness, for if she saw any anxiety she was quick to plead:

"Don't you like me any more, Paul? Are you tired of me, because I am a cloud-mother?"

"No," I would answer. "Lazarre will never be tired of you."

"Do you think I am growing smaller? Will you love me if I shrink to a baby?"

"I will love you."

"I used to love you when you were so tiny, Paul, before you knew how to love me back. If I forget how"—she clutched the lapels of my coat—"will you leave me then?"

"Eagle, say this: 'Lazarre cannot leave me.'"

"Lazarre cannot leave me."

I heard her repeating this at her sewing. She boasted to Marie Grignon—"Lazarre cannot leave me! Paul taught me that."

My cloud-mother asked me to tell her the stories she used to tell me. She had forgotten them.

"I am the child now," she would say. "Tell me the stories."

I repeated mythical tribe legends, gathered from Skenedonk on our long rides, making them as eloquent as I could. She listened, holding her breath, or sighing with contentment.

If any one in the household smiled when she led me about by the hand, there was a tear behind the smile.

She kept herself in perfection, bestowing unceasing care upon her dress, which was always gray.

"I have to wear gray; I am in a cloud," she had said to the family.

"We have used fine gray stuff brought from Holland, and wools that Mother Ursule got from Montreal," Katarina told me. "The Pawnees dye with vegetable colors. But they cannot make the pale gray she loves."

Eagle watched me with maternal care. If a hair dropped on my collar she brushed it away, and smoothed and settled my cravat. The touch of my cloud-mother, familiar and tender, like the touch of a wife, charged through me with torture, because she was herself so unconscious of it.

Before I had been in the house a week she made a little pair of trousers a span long, and gave them to me. Marie and Katarina turned their faces to laugh. My cloud-mother held the garment up for their inspection, and was not at all sensitive to the giggles it provoked.

"I made over an old pair of his father's," she said.

The discarded breeches used by the pouched turkey had been devoted to her whim. Every stitch was neatly set. I praised her beautiful needlework, and she said she would make me a coat.

Skenedonk was not often in the house. He took to the winter hunting and snowshoeing with vigor. Whenever he came indoors I used to see him watching Madame de Ferrier with saturnine wistfulness. She paid no attention to him. He would stand gazing at her while she sewed; being privileged as an educated Indian and my attendant, to enter the family room where the Pawnees came only to serve. They had the ample kitchen and its log fire to themselves. I wondered what was working in Skenedonk's mind, and if he repented calling one so buffeted a sorceress.

Kindly ridicule excited by the incongruous things she did passed over without touching her. She was enveloped in a cloud, a thick case guarding overtaxed mind and body, and shutting them in its pellucid chrysalis. The Almighty arms were resting her on a mountain of vision. She had forgot how to weep. She was remembering how to laugh.

The more I thought about it the less endurable it became to have her dependent upon the Grignons. My business affairs with Pierre Grignon made it possible to transfer her obligations to my account. The hospitable man and his wife objected, but when they saw how I took it to heart gave me my way. I told them I wished her to be regarded as my wife, for I should never have another; and while it might remain impossible for her to marry me, on my part I was bound to her.

"You are young, M's'r Williams," said Madame Ursule. "You have a long life before you. A man wants comfort in his house. And if he makes wealth, he needs a hand that knows how to distribute and how to save. She could never go to your home as she is."

"I know it, madame."

"You will change your mind about a wife."

"Madame, I have not changed my mind since I first wanted her. It is not a mind that changes."

"Well, that's unusual. Young men are often fickle. You never made proposals for her?"

"I did, madame, after her husband died."

"But she was still a wife—the wife of an old man—in the Pigeon Roost settlement."

"Her father married her to a cousin nearly as old as himself, when she was a child. Her husband was reported dead while he was in hiding. She herself thought, and so did her friends, that he was dead."

"I see. Eh! these girls married to old men! Madame Jordan told me Madeleine's husband was very fretful. He kept himself like silk, and scarcely let the wind blow upon him for fear of injuring his health. When other men were out toiling at the clearings, he sat in his house to avoid getting chills and fever in the sun. It was well for her that she had a faithful servant. Madeleine and the servant kept the family with their garden and corn field. They never tasted wild meat unless the other settlers brought them venison. Madame Jordan said they always returned a present of herbs and vegetables from their garden. It grew for them better than any other garden in the settlement. Once the old man did go out with a hunting party, and got lost. The men searched for him three days, and found him curled up in a hollow tree, waiting to be brought in. They carried him home on a litter and he popped his head into the door and said: 'Here I am, child! You can't kill me!'"

"What did Madame de Ferrier say?"

"Nothing. She made a child of him, as if he were her son. He was in his second childhood, no doubt. And Madame Jordan said she appeared to hold herself accountable for the losses and crosses that made him so fretful. The children of the emigration were brought up to hardship, and accepted everything as elders could not do."

"I thought the Marquis de Ferrier a courteous gentleman."

"Did you ever see him?"

"Twice only."

"He used to tell his wife he intended to live a hundred years. And I suppose he would have done it if he had not been tomahawked and scalped. 'You'll never get De Chaumont,' he used to say to her. 'I'll see that he never gets you!' I remember the name very well, because it was the name of that pretty creature who danced for us in the cabin on Lake George."

"De Chaumont was her father," I said. "He would have married Madame de Ferrier and restored her to her estate if she had accepted him and the Marquis had not come back."

"Saints have pity!" said Madame Ursule. "And the poor old man must make everybody and himself so uncomfortable!"

"But how could he help living?"

"True enough. God's times are not ours. But see what he has made of her!"

I thought of my Cloud-Mother walking inclosed from the world upon a height of changeless youth. She could not feel another shock. She was past both ambition and poverty. If she had ever felt the sweet anguish of love—Oh! she must have understood when she kissed me and said: "I will come to you some time!"—the anguish—the hoping, waiting, expecting, receiving nothing, all were gone by. Even mother cares no longer touched her. Paul was grown. She could not be made anything that was base. Unseen forces had worked with her and would work with her still.

"You told me," I said to Madame Ursule, "the Indians were afraid of her when they burned the settlement. Was the change so sudden?"

"Madame Jordan's story was like this: It happened in broad daylight. Two men went into the woods hunting bee trees. The Indians caught and killed them within two miles of the clearing—some of those very Winnebagoes you treated with for your land. It was a sunshiny day in September. You could hear the poultry crowing, and the children playing in the dooryards. Madeleine's little Paul was never far away from her. The Indians rushed in with yells and finished the settlement in a few minutes. Madame Jordan and her family were protected, but she saw children dashed against trees, and her neighbors struck down and scalped before she could plead for them. And little good pleading would have done. An Indian seized Paul. His father and the old servant lay dead across the doorstep. His mother would not let him go. The Indian dragged her on her knees and struck her on the head. Madame Jordan ran out at the risk of being scalped herself, and got the poor girl into her cabin. The Indian came back for Madeleine's scalp. Madeleine did not see him. She stood up quivering the whole length of her body and laughed in his face. It was dreadful to hear her above the cries of the children. The Indian went away like a scared hound. And