

mouthful pass his lips until I had sped away with a steaming portion to find the Colonel. By this time the men had broken into the storehouse, and the open place was dotted with their breakfast fires. Clark was standing alone by the flagstaff, his face careworn. But he smiled as he saw me coming.

"What's this?" says he.

"Your breakfast, sir," I answered. I set down the plate and the pot before him and pressed the pewter spoon into his hand.

"Davy," said he.

"Sir?" said I.

"What did you have for your breakfast?"

My lip trembled, for I was very hungry, and the rich steam from the hominy was as much as I could stand. Then the Colonel took me by the arms, as gently as a woman might, set me down on the ground beside him, and taking a spoonful of the hominy forced it between my lips. I was near to fainting at the taste of it. Then he took a bit himself, and divided the buffalo steak with his own hands. And when from the camp-fires they perceived the Colonel and the drummer boy eating together in plain sight of all, they gave a rousing cheer.

"Swein Poulsson helped get your breakfast, sir, and would eat nothing either," I ventured.

"Davy," said Colonel Clark, gravely, "I hope you will be younger when you are twenty."

"I hope I shall be bigger, sir," I answered gravely.

## CHAPTER XIV

### HOW THE KASKASKIANS WERE MADE CITIZENS

NEVER before had such a day dawned upon Kaskaskia. With July fierceness the sun beat down upon the village, but man nor woman nor child stirred from the darkened houses. What they awaited at the hands of the Long Knives they knew not,—captivity, torture, death perhaps. Through the deserted streets stalked a squad of backwoodsmen headed by John Duff and two American traders found in the town, who were bestirring themselves in our behalf, knocking now at this door and anon at that.

"The Colonel bids you come to the fort," he said, and was gone.

The church bell rang with slow, ominous strokes, far different from its gentle vesper peal of yesterday. Two companies were drawn up in the sun before the old Jesuit house, and presently through the gate a procession came, grave and mournful. The tone of it was sombre in the white glare, for men had donned their best (as they thought) for the last time,—cloth of camlet and Cadiz and Limbourg, white cotton stockings, and brass-buckled shoes. They came like captives led to execution. But at their head a figure held our eye,—a figure that spoke of dignity and courage, of trials borne for others. It was the village priest in his robes. He had a receding forehead and a strong, pointed chin; but benevolence was in the curve of his great nose. I have many times since seen his type of face in the French prints. He and his flock halted before our young Colonel, even as the citizens of Calais in a bygone century must have stood before the English king.

The scene comes back to me. On the one side, not the warriors of a nation that has made its mark in war,

but peaceful peasants who had sought this place for its remoteness from persecution, to live and die in harmony with all mankind. On the other, the sinewy advance guard of a race that knows not peace, whose goddess of liberty carries in her hand a sword. The plough might have been graven on our arms, but always the rifle.

The silence of the trackless wilds reigned while Clark gazed at them sternly. And when he spoke it was with the voice of a conqueror, and they listened as the conquered listen, with heads bowed — all save the priest.

Clark told them first that they had been given a false and a wicked notion of the American cause, and he spoke of the tyranny of the English king, which had become past endurance to a free people. As for ourselves, the Long Knives, we came in truth to conquer, and because of their hasty judgment the Kaskaskians were at our mercy. The British had told them that the Kentuckians were a barbarous people, and they had believed.

He paused that John Duff might translate and the gist of what he had said sink in. But suddenly the priest had stepped out from the ranks, faced his people, and was himself translating in a strong voice. When he had finished a tremor shook the group. But he turned calmly and faced Clark once more.

"Citizens of Kaskaskia," Colonel Clark went on, "the king whom you renounced when the English conquered you, the great King of France, has judged for you and the French people. Knowing that the American cause is just, he is sending his fleets and regiments to fight for it against the British King, who until now has been your sovereign."

Again he paused, and when the priest had told them this, a murmur of astonishment came from the boldest.

"Citizens of Kaskaskia, know you that the Long Knives come not to massacre, as you foolishly believed, but to release from bondage. We are come not against you, who have been deceived, but against those soldiers of the British King who have bribed the savages to slaughter our wives and children. You have but to take the oath of allegiance to the Continental Congress to become free,

even as we are, to enjoy the blessings of that American government under which we live and for which we fight."

The face of the good priest kindled as he glanced at Clark. He turned once more, and though we could not understand his words, the thrill of his eloquence moved us. And when he had finished there was a moment's hush of inarticulate joy among his flock, and then such transports as moved strangely the sternest men in our ranks. The simple people fell to embracing each other and praising God, the tears running on their cheeks. Out of the group came an old man. A skullcap rested on his silvered hair, and he felt the ground uncertainly with his gold-headed stick.

"Monsieur," he said tremulously "you will pardon an old man if he show feeling. I am born seventy year ago in Gascon. I inhabit this country thirty year, and last night I think I not live any longer. Last night we make our peace with the good God, and come here to-day to die. But we know you not," he cried, with a sudden and surprising vigor; "ha, we know you not! They told us lies, and we were humble and believed. But now we are *Américains*," he cried, his voice pitched high, as he pointed with a trembling arm to the stars and stripes above him. "*Mes enfants, vive les Bostonnais! Vive les Américains! Vive Monsieur le Colonel Clark, sauveur de Kaskaskia!*"

The listening village heard the shout and wondered. And when it had died down Colonel Clark took the old Gascon by the hand, and not a man of his but saw that this was a master-stroke of his genius.

"My friends," he said simply, "I thank you. I would not force you, and you will have some days to think over the oath of allegiance to the Republic. Go now to your homes, and tell those who are awaiting you what I have said. And if any man of French birth wish to leave this place, he may go of his own free will, save only three whom I suspect are not our friends."

They turned, and in an ecstasy of joy quite pitiful to see went trooping out of the gate. But scarce could they have reached the street and we have broken ranks, when we

saw them coming back again, the priest leading them as before. They drew near to the spot where Clark stood, talking to the captains, and halted expectantly.

"What is it, my friends?" asked the Colonel.

The priest came forward and bowed gravely.

"I am Père Gibault, sir," he said, "curé of Kaskaskia."

He paused, surveying our commander with a clear eye.

"There is something that still troubles the good citizens."

"And what is that, sir?" said Clark.

The priest hesitated.

"If your Excellency will only allow the church to be opened—" he ventured.

The group stood wistful, fearful that their boldness had displeased, expectant of reprimand.

"My good Father," said Colonel Clark, "an American commander has but one relation to any church. And that is" (he added with force) "to protect it. For all religions are equal before the Republic."

The priest gazed at him intently.

"By that answer," said he, "your Excellency has made for your government loyal citizens in Kaskaskia."

Then the Colonel stepped up to the priest and took him likewise by the hand.

"I have arranged for a house in town," said he. "Monsieur Rocheblave has refused to dine with me there. Will you do me that honor, Father?"

"With all my heart, your Excellency," said Father Gibault. And turning to the people, he translated what the Colonel had said. Then their cup of happiness was indeed full, and some ran to Clark and would have thrown their arms about him had he been a man to embrace. Hurrying out of the gate, they spread the news like wildfire, and presently the church bell clanged in tones of unmistakable joy.

"Sure, Davy dear, it puts me in mind of the Saints' day at home," said Terence, as he stood leaning against a picket fence that bordered the street, "savin' the presence of the naygurs and thim red divils wid blankets an' scowls as wud turn the milk sour in the pail."

He had stopped beside two Kaskaskia warriors in scarlet blankets who stood at the corner, watching with silent contempt the antics of the French inhabitants. Now and again one or the other gave a grunt and wrapped his blanket more tightly about him.

"Umrrhh!" said Terence. "Faith, I talk that langwidge mesilf when I have throuble." The warriors stared at him with what might be called a stoical surprise. "Umrrh! Does the holy father praych to ye wid thim wurds, ye haythens? Begorra, 'tis a wondher ye wuddent wash yereselves," he added, making a face, "wid muddy wather to be had for the askin'."

We moved on, through such a scene as I have seldom beheld. The village had donned its best: women in cap and gown were hurrying hither and thither, some laughing and some weeping; grown men embraced each other; children of all colors flung themselves against Terence's legs,—dark-haired Creoles, little negroes with woolly pates, and naked Indian lads with bow and arrow. Terence dashed at them now and then, and they fled screaming into dooryards to come out again and mimic him when he had passed, while mothers and fathers and grandfathers smiled at the good nature in his Irish face. Presently he looked down at me comically.

"Why wuddent ye be doin' the like, Davy?" he asked. "Amusha! 'tis mesilf that wants to run and hop and skip wid the childher. Ye put me in mind of a wizened old man that sat all day makin' shoes in Killarney,—all savin' the fringe he had on his chin."

"A soldier must be dignified," I answered.

"The saints bar that wurrd from hiven," said Terence, trying to pronounce it. "Come, we'll go to mass, or me mother will be visitin' me this night."

We crossed the square and went into the darkened church, where the candles were burning. It was the first church I had ever entered, and I heard with awe the voice of the priest and the fervent responses, but I understood not a word of what was said. Afterwards Father Gibault mounted to the pulpit and stood for a moment with his

hand raised above his flock, and then began to speak. What he told them I have learned since. And this I know, that when they came out again into the sunlit square they were Americans. It matters not when they took the oath.

As we walked back towards the fort we came to a little house with a flower garden in front of it, and there stood Colonel Clark himself by the gate. He stopped us with a motion of his hand.

"Davy," said he, "we are to live here for a while, you and I. What do you think of our headquarters?" He did not wait for me to reply, but continued, "Can you suggest any improvement?"

"You will be needing a soldier to be on guard in front, sir," said I.

"Ah," said the Colonel, "McChesney is too valuable a man. I am sending him with Captain Bowman to take Cahokia."

"Would you have Terence, sir?" I ventured, while Terence grinned. Whereupon Colonel Clark sent him to report to his captain that he was detailed for orderly duty to the commanding officer. And within half an hour he was standing guard in the flower garden, making grimaces at the children in the street. Colonel Clark sat at a table in the little front room, and while two of Monsieur Rocheblave's negroes cooked his dinner, he was busy with a score of visitors, organizing, advising, planning, and commanding. There were disputes to settle now that alarm had subsided, and at noon three excitable gentlemen came in to inform against a certain Monsieur Cerre, merchant and trader, then absent at St. Louis. When at length the Colonel had succeeded in bringing their denunciations to an end and they had departed, he looked at me comically as I stood in the doorway.

"Davy," said he, "all I ask of the good Lord is that He will frighten me incontinently for a month before I die."

"I think He would find that difficult, sir," I answered.

"Then there's no hope for me," he answered, laughing, "for I have observed that fright alone brings a man into

a fit spiritual state to enter heaven. What would you say of those slanderers of Monsieur Cerre?"

Not expecting an answer, he dipped his quill into the ink-pot and turned to his papers.

"I should say that they owed Monsieur Cerre money," I replied.

The Colonel dropped his quill and stared. As for me, I was puzzled to know why.

"Egad," said Colonel Clark, "most of us get by hard knocks what you seem to have been born with." He fell to musing, a worried look coming on his face that was no stranger to me later, and his hand fell heavily on the loose pile of paper before him. "Davy," says he, "I need a commissary-general."

"What would that be, sir," I asked.

"A John Law, who will make something out of nothing, who will make money out of this blank paper, who will wheedle the Creole traders into believing they are doing us a favor and making their everlasting fortune by advancing us flour and bacon."

"And doesn't Congress make money, sir?" I asked.

"That they do, Davy, by the ton," he replied, "and so must we, as the rulers of a great province. For mark me, though the men are happy to-day, in four days they will be grumbling and trying to desert in dozens."

We were interrupted by a knock at the door, and there stood Terence McCann.

"His riverence!" he announced, and bowed low as the priest came into the room.

I was bid by Colonel Clark to sit down and dine with them on the good things which Monsieur Rocheblave's cook had prepared. After dinner they went into the little orchard behind the house and sat drinking (in the French fashion) the commandant's precious coffee which had been sent to him from far-away New Orleans. Colonel Clark plied the priest with questions of the French towns under English rule: and Father Gibault, speaking for his simple people, said that the English had led them easily to believe that the Kentuckians were cutthroats.

"Ah, monsieur," he said, "if they but knew you! If they but knew the principles of that government for which you fight, they would renounce the English allegiance, and the whole of this territory would be yours. I know them, from Quebec to Detroit and Michilimackinac and Saint Vincennes. Listen, monsieur," he cried, his homely face alight; "I myself will go to Saint Vincennes for you. I will tell them the truth, and you shall have the post for the asking."

"You will go to Vincennes!" exclaimed Clark; "a hard and dangerous journey of a hundred leagues!"

"Monsieur," answered the priest, simply, "the journey is nothing. For a century the missionaries of the Church have walked this wilderness alone with God. Often they have suffered, and often died in tortures — but gladly."

Colonel Clark regarded the man intently.

"The cause of liberty, both religious and civil, is our cause," Father Gibault continued. "Men have died for it, and will die for it, and it will prosper. Furthermore, Monsieur, my life has not known many wants. I have saved something to keep my old age, with which to buy a little house and an orchard in this peaceful place. The sum I have is at your service. The good Congress will repay me. And you need the money."

Colonel Clark was not an impulsive man, but he felt none the less deeply, as I know well. His reply to this generous offer was almost brusque, but it did not deceive the priest.

"Nay, monsieur," he said, "it is for mankind I give it, in remembrance of Him who gave everything. And though I receive nothing in return, I shall have my reward an hundred fold."

In due time, I know not how, the talk swung round again to lightness, for the Colonel loved a good story, and the priest had many which he told with wit in his quaint French accent. As he was rising to take his leave, Père Gibault put his hand on my head.

"I saw your Excellency's son in the church this morning," he said.

Colonel Clark laughed and gave me a pinch.

"My dear sir," he said, "the boy is old enough to be my father."

The priest looked down at me with a puzzled expression in his brown eyes.

"I would I had him for my son," said Colonel Clark, kindly; "but the lad is eleven, and I shall not be twenty-six until next November."

"Your Excellency not twenty-six!" cried Father Gibault, in astonishment. "What will you be when you are thirty?"

The young Colonel's face clouded.

"God knows!" he said.

Father Gibault dropped his eyes and turned to me with native tact.

"What would you like best to do, my son?" he asked.

"I should like to learn to speak French," said I, for I had been much irritated at not understanding what was said in the streets.

"And so you shall," said Father Gibault; "I myself will teach you. You must come to my house to-day."

"And Davy will teach me," said the Colonel.