

who created it, who herself was that happiness, roused me from it.

"What are you thinking?" she asked.

"I was thinking that a star has fallen, — that I may have a jewel beyond other men," I said.

"And a star has risen for me," she said, "that I may have a guide beyond other women."

"Then it is you who have raised it, Héléne." I was silent a moment, trying again to bring the matter within my grasp. "Do you mean that you love me, that you will marry me, that you will come back to Kentucky with me and will be content, — you, who have been the companion of a Queen?"

There came an archness into her look that inflamed me the more.

"I, who have been the companion of a Queen, love you, will marry you, will go back to Kentucky with you and be content," she repeated. "And yet not I, David, but another woman — a happy woman. You shall be my refuge, my strength, my guide. You will lead me over the mountains and through the wilderness by the paths you know. You will bring me to Polly Ann that I may thank her for the gift of you, — above all other gifts in the world."

I was silent again.

"Héléne," I said at last, "will you give me the miniature?"

"On one condition," she replied.

"Yes," I said, "yes. And again yes. What is it?"

"That you will obey me — sometimes."

"It is a privilege I long for," I answered.

"You did not begin with promise," she said.

I released her hand, and she drew the ivory from her gown and gave it me. I kissed it.

"I will go to Monsieur Isadore's and get the frame," I said.

"When I give you permission," said Héléne, gently.

I have written this story for her eyes.

CHAPTER XV

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF A MAN

OUT of the blood and ashes of France a Man had arisen who moved real kings and queens on his chess-board — which was a large part of the world. The Man was Napoleon Buonaparte, at present, for lack of a better name, First Consul of the French Republic. The Man's eye, sweeping the world for a new plaything, had rested upon one which had excited the fancy of lesser adventurers, of one John Law, for instance. It was a large, unwieldy plaything indeed, and remote. It was nothing less than that vast and mysterious country which lay beyond the monster yellow River of the Wilderness, the country bordered on the south by the Gulf swamps, on the north by no man knew what forests, — as dark as those the Romans found in Gaul, — on the west by a line which other generations might be left to settle.

This land was Louisiana.

A future king of France, while an *émigré*, had been to Louisiana. This is merely an interesting fact worth noting. It was not interesting to Napoleon.

Napoleon, by dint of certain screws which he tightened on his Catholic Majesty, King Charles of Spain, in the Treaty of San Ildefonso on the 1st of October, 1800, got his plaything. Louisiana was French again, — whatever French was in those days. The treaty was a profound secret. But secrets leak out, even the profoundest; and this was wafted across the English Channel to the ears of Mr. Rufus King, American Minister at London, who wrote of it to one Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States. Mr. Jefferson was interested, not to say alarmed.

Mr. Robert Livingston was about to depart on his mission from the little Republic of America to the great Republic of France. Mr. Livingston was told not to make himself disagreeable, but to protest. If Spain was to give up the plaything, the Youngest Child among the Nations ought to have it. It lay at her doors, it was necessary for her growth.

Mr. Livingston arrived in France to find that Louisiana was a mere pawn on the chess-board, the Republic he represented little more. He protested, and the great Talleyrand shrugged his shoulders. What was Monsieur talking about? A treaty. What treaty? A treaty with Spain ceding back Louisiana to France after forty years. Who said there was such a treaty? Did Monsieur take snuff? Would Monsieur call again when the Minister was less busy?

Monsieur did call again, taking care not to make himself disagreeable. He was offered snuff. He called again, pleasantly. He was offered snuff. He called again. The great Talleyrand laughed. He was always so happy to see Monsieur when he (Talleyrand) was not busy. He would give Monsieur a certificate of importunity. He had quite forgotten what Monsieur was talking about on former occasions. Oh, yes, a treaty. Well, suppose there was such a treaty, what then?

What then? Mr. Livingston, the agreeable but importunate, went home and wrote a memorial, and was presently assured that the inaccessible Man who was called First Consul had read it with interest—great interest. Mr. Livingston did not cease to indulge in his enjoyable visits to Talleyrand—not he. But in the intervals he sat down to think.

What did the inaccessible Man himself have in his mind?

The Man had been considering the Anglo-Saxon race, and in particular that portion of it which inhabited the Western Hemisphere. He perceived that they were a quarrelsome people, which possessed the lust for land and conquest like the rest of their blood. He saw with

astonishment something that had happened, something that they had done. Unperceived by the world, in five and twenty years they had swept across a thousand miles of mountain and forest wilderness in ever increasing thousands, had beaten the fiercest of savage tribes before them, stolidly unmindful of their dead. They had come at length to the great yellow River, and finding it closed had cried aloud in their anger. What was beyond it to stop them? Spain, with a handful of subjects inherited from the France of Louis the Fifteenth.

Could Spain stop them? No. But he, the Man, would stop them. He would raise up in Louisiana as a monument to himself a daughter of France to curb their ambition. America should not be all Anglo-Saxon.

Already the Americans had compelled Spain to open the River. How long before they would overrun Louisiana itself, until a Frenchman or a Spaniard could scarce be found in the land?

Sadly, in accordance with the treaty which Monsieur Talleyrand had known nothing about, his Catholic Majesty instructed his Intendant at New Orleans to make ready to deliver Louisiana to the French Commission. That was in July, 1802. This was not exactly an order to close the River again—in fact, his Majesty said nothing about closing the River. Mark the reasoning of the Spanish mind. The Intendant closed the River as his plain duty. And Kentucky and Tennessee, wayward, belligerent infants who had outgrown their swaddling clothes, were heard from again. The Nation had learned to listen to them. The Nation was very angry. Mr. Hamilton and the Federalists and many others would have gone to war and seized the Floridas.

Mr. Jefferson said, "Wait and see what his Catholic Majesty has to say." Mr. Jefferson was a man of great wisdom, albeit he had mistaken Jacobinism for something else when he was younger. And he knew that Napoleon could not play chess in the wind. The wind was rising.

Mr. Livingston was a patriot, able, importunate, but getting on in years and a little hard of hearing. Impor-

tunity without an Army and a Navy behind it is not effective—especially when there is no wind. But Mr. Jefferson heard the wind rising, and he sent Mr. Monroe to Mr. Livingston's aid. Mr. Monroe was young, witty, lively, popular with people he met. He, too, heard the wind rising, and so now did Mr. Livingston.

The ships containing the advance guard of the colonists destined for the new Louisiana lay in the roads at Dunkirk, their anchors ready to weigh,—three thousand men, three thousand horses, for the Man did things on a large scale. The anchors were not weighed.

His Catholic Majesty sent word from Spain to Mr. Jefferson that he was sorry his Intendant had been so foolish. The River was opened again.

The Treaty of Amiens was a poor wind-shield. It blew down, and the chessmen began to totter. One George of England, noted for his frugal table and his quarrelsome disposition, who had previously fought with France, began to call the Man names. The Man called George names, and sat down to think quickly. George could not be said to be on the best of terms with his American relations, but the Anglo-Saxon is unsentimental, phlegmatic, setting money and trade and lands above ideals. George meant to go to war again. Napoleon also meant to go to war again. But George meant to go to war again right away, which was inconvenient and inconsiderate, for Napoleon had not finished his game of chess. The obvious outcome of the situation was that George with his Navy would get Louisiana, or else help his relations to get it. In either case Louisiana would become Anglo-Saxon.

This was the wind which Mr. Jefferson had heard.

The Man, being a genius who let go gracefully when he had to, decided between two bad bargains. He would sell Louisiana to the Americans as a favor; they would be very, very grateful, and they would go on hating George. Moreover, he would have all the more money with which to fight George.

The inaccessible Man suddenly became accessible. Nay, he became gracious, smiling, full of loving-kindness, chari-

table. Certain dickerings followed by a bargain passed between the American Minister and Monsieur Barbé-Marbois. Then Mr. Livingston and Mr. Monroe dined with the hitherto inaccessible. And the Man, after the manner of Continental Personages, asked questions. Frederick the Great has started this fashion, and many have imitated it.

Louisiana became American at last. Whether by destiny or chance, whether by the wisdom of Jefferson or the necessity of Napoleon, who can say? It seems to me, David Ritchie, writing many years after the closing words of the last chapter were penned, that it was ours inevitably. For I have seen and known and loved the people with all their crudities and faults, whose inheritance it was by right of toil and suffering and blood.

And I, David Ritchie, saw the flags of three nations waving over it in the space of two days. And it came to pass in this wise.

Rumors of these things which I have told above had filled Kentucky from time to time, and in November of 1803 there came across the mountains the news that the Senate of the United States had ratified the treaty between our ministers and Napoleon.

I will not mention here what my life had become, what my fortune, save to say that both had been far beyond my expectations. In worldly goods and honors, in the respect and esteem of my fellow-men, I had been happy indeed. But I had been blessed above other men by one whose power it was to lift me above the mean and sordid things of this world.

Many times in the pursuit of my affairs I journeyed over that country which I had known when it belonged to the Indian and the deer and the elk and the wolf and the buffalo. Often did she ride by my side, making light of the hardships which, indeed, were no hardships to her, wondering at the settlements which had sprung up like magic in the wilderness, which were the heralds of the greatness of the Republic,—her country now.

So, in the bright and boisterous March weather of the

years 1804, we found ourselves riding together along the way made memorable by the footsteps of Clark and his backwoodsman. For he had an errand in St. Louis with Colonel Chouteau. A subtle change had come upon Kaskaskia with the new blood which was flowing into it; we passed Cahokia, full of memories to the drummer boy whom she loved. There was the church, the garden, the stream, and the little house where my Colonel and I had lived together. She must see them all, she must hear the story from my lips again, and the telling of it to her gave it a new fire and a new life. At evening, when the March wind had torn the cotton clouds to shreds, we stood on the Mississippi's bank, gazing at the western shore, late Louisiana. The low, forest-clad hills made a black band against the sky, and above the band hung the sun, a red ball. He was setting, and man might look upon his face without fear. The sight of the waters of that river stirred me to think of many things. What had God in store for the vast land but of which the waters flowed? Had He, indeed, saved it for a People? People to be drawn from all nations, from all classes? Was the principle of the Republic to prevail and spread and change the complexion of the world? Or were the lusts of greed and power to increase until in the end they had swallowed the heaven? Who could say? What man of those who, soberly, had put his hand to the Paper which declared the opportunities of generations to come, could measure the forces which he had helped to set in motion.

We crossed the river to the village where I had been so kindly received many years ago. The place was little changed. The wind was stilled, the blue wood smoke curled lazily from the wide stone chimneys of the houses, nestling against the hill. The afterglow was fading into night; lights twinkled in the windows. Billowed by gaily-servants we climbed the bank. Here and I, and walked the quiet streets bordered by palings. The evening was chill. We passed a bright cabaret from which came the sound of many voices; in the blacksmith's

shop another group was gathered, and we saw faces eager in the red light. They were talking of the Cession.

We passed that place where Nick had stopped Suzanne in the cart, and laughed at the remembrance. We came to Monsieur Gratiot's, for he had bidden us to stay with him. And with Madame he gave us a welcome to warm our hearts after our journey.

"David," he said, "I have seen many strange things happen in my life, but the strangest of all is that Clark's drummer boy should have married a Vicomtesse of the old regime."

And she was even Madame la Vicomtesse to our good friends in St. Louis, for she was a woman to whom a title came as by nature's right.

"And you are about to behold another strange thing, David," Monsieur Gratiot continued. "To-day you are on French territory."

"French territory!" I exclaimed.

"To-day Upper Louisiana is French," he answered.

"Tomorrow it will be American forever. This morning Captain Stoddard of the United States Army, empowered to act as a Commissioner of the French Republic, arrived with Captain Lewis and a guard of American troops."

Today, upon the flag of Spain was lowered from the staff at the headquarters. To-night a guard of honor watches with the French Tricolor, and we are French for the last time. Tomorrow we shall be Americans."

I saw that simple ceremony. The little company of soldiers was drawn up before the low stone headquarters; the villagers with heads uncovered gathered round about.

I saw the Stars and Stripes rising, the Tricolor setting; they met midway on the staff, hung together for a space, and a salute to the two nations echoed among the hills across the waters of the great River that rolled in past.

Would the Constitution, made to meet the needs of the little confederacy of the seaboard, stretch over a Continent and an Empire?