

The features of the chief were slightly corrugated with those fine lines of diplomatic thought, and even at this distance he muttered the last word he had spoken to the corporal as he swiftly got away from him — "Ingliss!" he said again. "All Ingliss!"

As Odalie turned, the interior of the fort was before her; the broad parade, the lines of barracks, the heavy, looming block-houses, the great red-clay wall encircling all, and the high, strong palisades that even surmounted the rampart. It gave her momentarily the sensation, as she stood in its shadow, of being down in a populous and very secure well. There was a pervasive sentiment of good cheer; here and there the flicker of firelight fluctuated from an open door. Supper was either in progress or just over, and savory odors gushed out into the air. The champing of horses and now and then a glad whinny betokened that the corn-bin was open in the stables somewhere in the dusk. She felt as if the wilderness was a dream, for surely all this cordial scene of warmth, and light, and cheer, and activity, could not have existed while she wandered yonder, so forlorn, and desolate, and endangered; in pity of it, — surely it was a dream! Now and again groups of fresh-faced soldiers passed, most of them in full uniform, for there had been a great dress parade during the afternoon, perhaps to impress the Indians with

the resources and military strength of the fort; perhaps to attach them by affording that spectacular display, so new to all their experience, so imposing and splendid. Some of the savage visitors lingered, wistful, loath to depart, and were being hustled carefully out of the place by a very vigilant guard, who had kept them under surveillance as a special charge all the afternoon. A few soldiers of the post coming in laden with game wore the buckskin leggings, shirt, and coonskin cap usual among the settlers, for it had been bitterly demonstrated that the thorns of the trackless wilderness had no sort of reverence for the texture of the king's red coat.

Even the cat realized the transition to the demesne of civilization and in some sort the wonted domestic atmosphere. She suddenly gave an able-bodied wriggle in the basket on Josephine's back where she had journeyed, pappoose-wise, sprang alertly out, and scampered, tail up and waving aloft, across the parade. Josephine's shriek of despair rang shrilly on the air, and Captain Demeré himself made a lunge at the animal, as she sped swiftly past, with a seductive cry of "Puss! puss!" A young soldier hard by faced about alertly and gave nimble chase; the cry of "Puss! puss!" going up on all sides brought out half a dozen supple young runners from every direction, but Kitty, having lost none of the elasticity of her muscles during her late

inaction, darted hither and thither amongst her military pursuers, eluded them all, and scampering up the rampart, thence scaled the stockade and there began to walk coolly along the pointed eminence of this lofty structure as if it were a back-yard fence, while the soldier boys cheered her from below. In this jovial demonstration poor Josephine's wailing whimper of despair and desertion was overborne, and with that juvenile disposition to force the recognition and a share of her woe on her elders she forthwith lost the use of her feet, and was half dragged, rather than led, by poor Odalie, who surely was not calculated to support any added burden. She herself, with halting step, followed Captain Demeré across the parade to a salient angle of the enclosure, wherein stood one of the block-houses, very secure of aspect, the formidable, beetling upper story jutting out above the open door, from which flowed into the dusky parade a great gush of golden light. Josephine's whimper was suddenly strangled in her throat and the tears stood still on her cheeks, for as Captain Demeré stepped aside at the door with a recollection of polite society, yielding precedence to the ladies, which formality Odalie marveled to find surviving in these rude times so far on the frontier, Josephine seemed resolved into a stare of dumb amazement, for she had never seen a room half so fine.

Be it remembered she was born in the back-woods and had no faint recollection of such refinement and elegances as the colonial civilization had attained on the Carolina coast, and which her father and mother had relinquished to follow their fortunes to the West. And in truth the officers' mess-hall presented a brave barbaric effect that had a sort of splendor all its own. It was a large room, entered through the gorge of the bastion, and its deep chimney-place, in the recesses of which a great fire burned with a searchingly illuminating flare, was ample enough to afford a substantial settee on either hand without impinging on the roomy hearth of flagstones that joined the puncheons of the floor. Around the log walls the suffusion of light revealed a projecting line of deer antlers and the horns of buffalo and elk, partly intended as decoration and trophies of the chase, and partly for utilitarian purposes. Here and there a firelock lay from one to another, or a powder-horn or brace of pistols swung. A glittering knife and now and again a tomahawk caught the reflection of the fire and bespoke trophies of less peaceful pursuit. Over the mantel-shelf a spreading pair of gigantic antlers held suspended a memento evidently more highly cherished, — a sword in its sheath, but showing a richly chased hilt, which Odalie divined was a presentation in

recognition of special service. Other and humbler gifts were suggested in the long Indian pipes, with bowls of deftly wrought stone; and tobacco-bags and shot-pouches beaded with intricate patterns; and belts of wampum and gorgeous moccasins; and bows and arrows with finely chiseled flint-heads winged with gayly colored feathers — all hanging from antlers on either side, which, though smaller than the central pair, were still large enough to have stretched with surprise more sophisticated eyes than Fife's. The variegated tints of the stained quills and shells with which a splendid curious scarlet quiver was embroidered, caught Odalie's attention, and reminded her of what she had heard in Carolina of the great influence which this Captain Stuart had acquired among the Indians, and the extraordinary admiration that they entertained for him. These tokens of Aboriginal art were all, she doubted not, little offerings of the chieftains to attest good-will, for if they had been merely bought with money they would not have been so proudly displayed.

There was a continual fluttering movement in the draught from the loop-holes and open door, and lifting her eyes she noted the swaying folds of several banners against the wall, carrying the flare of color to the ceiling, which was formed only by the rude floor of the room above.

But in all the medley her feminine eye did not

fail to perceive high up and withdrawn from ordinary notice, a lady's silk riding-mask such as was used in sophisticated regions at the period to protect the complexion on a journey, — dainty, fresh, of a garnet hue with a black lace frill, evidently treasured, yet expressively null. And this was doubtless all that was left of some spent romance, a mere memory in the rude military life on the far frontier, barely suggesting a fair and distant face and eyes that looked forth on scenes more suave.

With a sentiment of deep respect Odalie observed the six or eight arm-chairs of a rude and untoward manufacture, which were ranged about the hearth, draped, however, to real luxury by wolfskins, for the early settlers chiefly affected rough stools or billets of wood as seats, or benches made of puncheons with a couple of auger-holes at each end, through which four stout sticks were adjusted for legs, which were indeed often of unequal length and gave the unquiet juvenile pioneer of that day a peculiarly acceptable opportunity for cheerily jouncing to and fro. There were several of these benches, too, but placed back against the walls, for the purpose she supposed of affording seats when the festive board was spread at length. An absolute board, this figurative expression implied, for the stern fact set forth a half dozen puncheons secured together with cleats and laid across trestles when in use, but at other

times placed against the wall beside the ladder which gave access to the room above. The table was now in the center of the floor, spread with some hasty refreshments, of which Captain Demeré invited the forlorn travelers to partake. At the other end lay a draughtsman's board, a Gunter's scale, a pair of dividers and other materials, where he had been trying to reduce to paper and topographical decorum for transference to an official report a map of the region which Rayetaeh, a chief from Toquoe, who had visited the fort that afternoon, had drawn on the sand of the parade ground with a flint-headed arrow. The officer had found this no slight task, for Rayetaeh was prone to measure distance by the time required to traverse it — "two warriors, a canoe, and one moon" very definitely meaning a month's journey by water-course, but requiring some actively minute calculation to bring the space in question to the proportional scale. Rayetaeh might be considered the earliest cartographer of this region, and some of his maps, copied from the sand, are extant to this day. Captain Demeré laid the papers of this unfinished task carefully aside, and by way of giving his hospitality more grace took the head of the table himself.

But Odalie could not eat, and wept steadily on as if for the purpose of salting her food with tears, and Fifine's hunger seemed appeased by the feast of her eyes. Now and again her head in its little white

mob-cap turned actively about, and she seemed as if she might have entered upon a series of questions save for the multiplicity of objects that enthralled her attention at once. Captain Demeré desisted from insistence after one or two well-meant efforts, and the man who had served the table waited in doubt and indecision.

"It's a hard life for women on the frontier," the officer observed as if in polite excuse for Odalie's ill-mannered tears that she could not control.

"And for men," she sobbed, thinking of Alexander and marveling if the Indians would carry him on without resistance to Choté, — for he could not know she had found lodgement in the fort, — or further still and enslave him — many captives had lived for years in Indian tribes — she had heard of this even in Carolina; or would they murder him in some trifling quarrel or on the discovery of his nationality or to make easier the robbery of the packhorses. Ah, why had she brought so much; why had she hampered their flight and risked their lives for these paltry belongings, treasures to the Indians, worth the shedding of much blood? How could she have sacrificed to these bits of household gear even her own comfort! She remembered, with an infinite yet futile wish to recall the moment, how eagerly Sandy had urged the abandonment of these poor possessions, that she might herself

mount the horse and ease her bleeding and torn feet. Is every woman an idolater at heart, Odalie wondered. Do they all bow down, in the verity of their inner worship, to a few fibers of woven stuff and some poor fashioning of potter's clay, and make these feeble, trivial things their gods? It seemed so to her. She had bled for the things she had brought through the wilderness. She had wept for others that she had left. And if for such gear Sandy had come to grief—"I wonder—I wonder if I could find a pretext to care for them still!"

But she only said aloud, with a strong effort to control her attention, "And for men, too."

"Men must needs follow when duty leads the way," said Captain Demeré, a trifle priggishly.

Odalie, trying to seem interested, demanded, lifting her eyes, "And what do women follow?"

If Captain Demeré had said what he truly thought, he would have answered:—

"Folly! their own and that of their husbands!"

He had had close observation of the fact that the pioneers gave heavy hostages to fate in their wives and children, and a terrible advantage to a savage foe, and the very bravery of so many of these noble helpmeets only proved the value of all they risked. He could not elaborate, however, any scheme by

which a new country should be entered first by the settlers aided by a strong occupancy of soldiery, and only when the lands should be cleared and the savages expelled the women and children venture forth. So he said:—

"They follow their destiny."

He had a smile in his eyes as if appealing to her clemency not to tax him with ascribing a humbler motive to the women than to the men, as he was only making talk and spoke from a natural depreciation of dangers to non-combatants who of right should be exempt from peril. His eyes, which were large, were of a color between gray and brown—darker than the one and lighter than the other. His hair was brown and smooth; he was slender and tall; his aquiline nose and finely cut lips gave a certain cast of distinction to his face, although the temples were slightly sunken and the thinness of his cheek revealed the outline of the jaw and chin which showed determination and force, despite his mild expression at present. Josephine fixed an amazed stare upon his polished shoes as he crossed his legs, never having seen any men's foot-gear save a buskin of deer hide.

"The men have a natural interest in warfare," suggested Odalie, forlornly, seeking to be responsive to his conversational efforts.

"Warfare!" exclaimed Captain Demeré, with

sudden animation. "Contention with savages is not warfare! It cannot be conducted on a single recognized military principle." He went on to say that all military tactics counted for naught; the merely mechanical methods of moving bodies of troops were unavailable. Discipline, the dexterities of strategy, an enlightened courage, and the tremendous force of *esprit de corps* were alike nullified.

The problem of Indian fighting in America was then far greater than it has been since the scene has shifted to the plains, the densely wooded character of the tangled wilderness affording peculiar advantage to the skulking individual methods of the savage and embarrassing inconceivably the more cumbrous evolutions of organized bodies. But long before Captain Demeré's time, and often since, the futility of opposing regular scientific tactics to the alert wiles of the savage native in his own difficult country has been commented upon by observers of military methods, and doubtless recognized in the hard knocks of experience by those whose fate it has been to try again the experiment.<sup>6</sup>

"As to military ethics," he added, "to induce the Indian to accept and abide by the principles governing civilized warfare seems an impossibility. He cannot be constrained for a pledge of honor to forego an advantage. He will not respect his

parole. He continually violates and sets at naught the provisions of his solemn treaty."

Odalie would not ask if the white man never broke faith with the red—if the Indian had not been taught by example near at hand of what brittle stuff a treaty was made. It was not worth while to reason logically with a mere man, she said to herself, with a little secret sentiment of derision, which served to lighten a trifle the gloom of her mental atmosphere, and since she could not eat and little backwoods Fifine's eyes had absorbed her appetite, it was just as well that Hamish, who had been greatly interested in being shown over the fort by the jolly Corporal O'Flynn, appeared at the door with the intelligence that their quarters were assigned them. The courteous Captain Demeré handed her to the door, and she stepped out from the bizarre decorated mess-hall into the dark night, with the stars showing a chill scintillation as of the approach of winter in their white glitter high in the sky, and the looming bastion close at hand. The barracks were silent; "tattoo" had just sounded; the great gates were closed, and the high walls shut off the world from the deserted parade.

Naught was audible in all the night save the measured tread of a sentry walking his beat, and further away, seeming an echo, the step of another

sentinel, while out in the wilderness the scream of a wildcat came shrilly on the wind from the darkness where Alexander roamed with savage beasts and still more savage men far from the sweet security so trebly protected here.

Not even the flare of another big homelike fire in the cabin assigned to her could efface the impression of the bleak and dark loneliness outside the walls of the fort, and when the three were together, untrammelled by the presence of others, they were free to indulge their grief and their awful terror for husband and brother and father. They could not speak of it, but they sat down on a buffalo rug spread before the fire, and all three wept for the unuttered thought. The suspense, the separation of the little party, seemed unbearable. They felt that they might better have endured anything had they been together. Perhaps it was well for the elder two that their attention was diverted now and again by the effort to console Fifine in a minor distress, for with the ill-adjusted sense of proportion peculiar to childhood she had begun to clamor loudly too for her cat — her *mignonne*, her *douce fillette* that she had brought so far in her arms or on her back.

Alas, poor Fifine! to learn thus early how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child! For indeed Kitty might have

seemed to lie under the imputation of having merely "played baby" in order to secure free transportation. At all events, she was a cat now, the only one in the fort, and for all she knew in the settlement. The *douce mignonne* was in high elation, now walking the palisades, now peeping in at a loop-hole in the upper story of one of the block-houses where a sentinel was regularly on guard, being able to scan from the jutting outlook not only the exterior of the fort on two sides, but a vast extent of darkling country. In his measured tramp to and fro in the shadowy apartment lighted only by the glimmer of the night without, he suddenly saw a flicker at the loop-hole he was approaching, caught a transient glimpse of a face, the gleam of a fiery eye, and he nearly dropped his loaded firelock in amazement.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "I thought that was a blarsted cat!"

He had not seen one since he left Charlestown a year before.

He walked to the loop-hole and looked far down from the projecting wall and along the parapet of the curtain and the scarp to the opposite bastion with its tower-like block-house.

Nothing — all quiet as the grave or the desert. He could hear the river sing; he could see in the light of the stars, and a mere flinder of a moon,

the clods of earth on the ground below, — naught else. For the *douce mignonne*, with her back all handsomely humped, had suddenly sprung aside and fled down the interior slope of the rampart into the parade and over to the cook's quarters neighboring the kitchen. She nosed gleefully about among pots and kettles, feeling very much at home and civilized to the verge of luxury; she pried stealthily, every inch a cat, into the arrangements for to-morrow's breakfast, with a noiseless step and a breathless purr, until suddenly a tin pan containing beans was tumultuously overturned, being within the line of an active spring. For the *douce fillette* had caught a mouse, which few sweet little girls are capable of doing; — a regular domestic fireside mouse, a thing which the *douce fillette* had not seen in many weeks.

The stir in the neighboring cabin did not affright Kitty, and when the officers' cook, a veritable African negro, suddenly appeared with an ebony face and the rolling whites of astonished eyes, she exhibited her capture and was rewarded by a word of commendation which she quite understood, although it was as outlandish as the gutturals of Willinawaugh.

When the night was nearly spent, a great star, splendidly blazing in the sorceries of a roseate haze, seemed to conjure into the blackness a cold glimmer of gray light above the high, bleak, ser-

rated summit line of the mountains of the eastern horizon, showing here and there white blank intervals, that presently were revealed as stark snowy domes rising into the wintry silence of a new day. The resonant bugle suddenly sounded the reveillé along the far winding curves of the river, rousing greetings of morning from many a mountain crag, and before the responsive echoes of the forest were once more mute the parade was full of the commotion elicited by the beating of the drums; shadowy military figures were falling in line, and the brisk authoritative ringing voice of the first sergeant was calling the roll in each company.

And on the doorstep of Odalie's cabin, when Josephine opened the door, sat the *douce mignonne* with her most babified expression on her face, now and again mewling noiselessly, going through the motions of grief, and cuddling down in infantile style when with wild babbling cries of endearment the little girl swooped up maternally the renegade cat.