

FICTION

James Otis

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# Defending the Island

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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## DEFENDING THE ISLAND

A STORY OF BAR HARBOR IN 1758

BY

JAMES OTIS



Illustrated

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## Defending the island.

### CHAPTER I

#### THE ISLAND

In the year of grace 1758 there were two families living on that island which we of to-day call Mount Desert; but Champlain named Mons Deserts, because its thirteen high, rugged mountains could be seen from the seaward a distance of twenty leagues, making it the first landmark of the coast for seamen.

It is said, by those gentlemen who write down historical facts for us young people to study, that the "savages were much attached to the island; for in the mountains they hunted bears, wildcats, raccoons, foxes, and fowls; in the marshes and natural meadows, beaver, otter and musquash; and in the waters they took fin and shellfish."

Now in the proper kind of a story there should be nothing which savors of school-book study, and yet, before telling how the children of these two families defended the island in 1758, it seems much as if the reader would have a better idea of all that was done, if he or she knew just a few facts concerning those who lived on Mount Desert before Stephen Pemberton and Silas Harding took there their wives and children to build for themselves homes.

It is said, by those who busy themselves with finding out about such things, that in the year 1605 Champlain stopped at the island and named it; but not until four years later did any white people visit the place. Then two Jesuit missionaries, who had been living at Port Royal, under the protection of Monsieur Biencourt, went to Mount Desert with the hope of converting the Indians to Christianity.

How long these good men lived there, no one seems to know; but it is certain that they went back to Port Royal quite soon, because, in the year 1613, a Frenchman, by the name of La Suassaye, the agent of Madame de Guercheville, a very rich and religious lady, visited Port Royal, and persuaded the missionaries to return to Mount Desert, in company with several French colonists.

An Englishman by the name of Argall, who had come across the ocean to drive away the French people from North America, in order to take possession of the country in the name of his king, found the settlers while they were yet living in tents, not having had time to build

houses. He robbed them of all their goods, afterward sending them adrift in an open boat, to make certain they wouldn't encroach on the land to which he believed they had no claim.

The French people, after suffering severely, contrived to gain the mainland, however, and before many months had passed returned to Mount Desert, where they formed a settlement, which did not survive the encroachments of the Indians, as is known from the fact that when, in 1704, the great Indian fighter from Massachusetts, Major Benjamin Church, rendezvoused at Mount Desert, before attacking the Baron de Castine on Penobscot Bay, he found no person living there.

In 1746 Stephen Pemberton and Silas Harding, with their wives, who were sisters, and their children, emigrated from England to Acadia, in Nova Scotia, hoping there to make better homes for themselves and their little ones than could be had in their native land. Then came the quarrels between the French and English, until Acadia was not a very pleasant land in which to live, and these two settlers determined to find an abiding-place where they might not be literally overrun by the soldiers of two armies.

Therefore it was that they built a small vessel, in which they could carry all their household belongings, including two cows, three or four pigs, and a flock of chickens, and started on a voyage that did not come to an end until they were arrived at the island of Mount Desert, near the mouth of what is now known as Duck Brook, within a short distance of the present town of Bar Harbor.

There the men built two small houses of logs, enclosed by a palisade, which is a high fence formed by driving stakes into the ground, for protection against the Indians, whom they had every reason to fear.

Here the two families lived in peace and comparative comfort until the year 1758, and then there were children in plenty.

Stephen Pemberton had in his family Mark, who was fifteen years old; Luke, two years younger; Mary, aged eleven and John, a stout lad of eight years.

Silas Harding's children were Susan, who was fourteen years old; Mary, four years younger, and James, who had lived seven years on Mount Desert without having seen ten white people, save those belonging to his own and Uncle Stephen Pemberton's family.

Now after so many words which have not been strung together in a very entertaining fashion, it is time to begin the story of what was done by these children, with, as a matter of course, some assistance from their mothers.

Each summer, just before the work of harvesting should be begun, the two men went out in the boat which had brought them from Acadia, to catch fish enough for the winter's supply, and on this year they set off early in September, with never a thought that any danger might menace their dear ones after so many years of peace and comparative prosperity.

The children had work in plenty to keep them from idleness during the week of ten days their fathers might be absent, and no sooner had the little vessel sailed out of the harbor than they set about their several tasks in order that all the labor might be performed by the time the fishermen returned.

Mark and Luke were engaged in setting up the flakes, or framework, on which the fish were to be dried, and this labor was performed near the shore of the harbor quite beyond sight of the homesteads with the high palisade, which last hid from view all save the roofs of the buildings.

The *Future Hopes*, which was the name of the small vessel belonging to the settlers, had left her moorings when the first gray light of the coming day could be seen stealing over the waters, and while she was yet close in-shore the two lads set about building the flakes, counting on completing the task within three days, and to that end working so industriously as to give little or no heed to what might be passing around them.

Therefore it was that they failed to see a canoe, in which were five Indians, come swiftly up from the southward, past what is now known as Pulpit Rock, and sail straight for the island at the mouth of the harbor, which the people of to-day call Bar Island.

Here the frail craft was hidden from view of the boys, and when half an hour or more had gone by, another canoe, this one carrying six men, executed the same maneuver.

Five minutes later a third craft appeared, but just as she came in view past the rock, Luke stood erect to drive in one of the stakes, and, therefore, saw the strangers as they were evidently trying to steal by without being seen.

More than once since Luke could remember had Mount Desert been visited by red men of the Abenakis tribe; but the visitors had always approached boldly, like friends, and this skulking from rock to island seemed much like a show of enmity.

Certain it is that the lad was alarmed, but he understood, from what his father had said many times, that it was not wise to let the Indians know of his fear, and, continuing at the labor, he said, in a low tone, to Mark:

"Don't raise your head, nor look around. A canoe filled with Abenakis has sneaked in behind the harbor island; can it be mischief is intended?"

"They may be after rock-cod, and count on coming ashore later," Mark replied, continuing his work in such a fashion that he could look seaward without seeming to do so.

At this moment the occupants of the last canoe were moving around the point of the island, as if to gain a position where a full view of the buildings might be had, for there could be no possibility the visitors were engaged in fishing, of any other such peaceful pursuit.

"There's trouble of some kind, and it's for us to find out what," Mark said, in a whisper. "There must have been other canoes than the one you saw, for I have already counted eleven men on the island, and they could not all have come in a single boat."

The boys had had no experience, fortunately for them, in Indian warfare, but they had heard enough from their parents to be fully alive to the possibilities, and after a few moments, during which time fear had held them speechless, Mark said, in a low tone, although there was no chance the enemy could have heard him:

"We must get over to the house without seeming to be running away. You start first, and when you go through the gate, call out that mother wants to see me."

Luke obeyed leisurely, although his heart was beating so loudly and heavily that it seemed as if it could be heard a long distance away, and, arriving at the palisade, he summoned his brother, as had been proposed.

Then it was that Mark was at liberty to leave his work, and he answered the summons more quickly, perhaps, than ever before in his life.

Mistress Pemberton was busily engaged inside the house, and the other two children were in a small garden directly in the rear of the building, therefore the boys were able to impart the disagreeable tidings without alarming those who could be of little or no assistance.

"Indians skulking on the harbor island!" the good woman exclaimed, when Mark had hurriedly told his story and her face paled as the lads had never seen it before.

"And they have chanced to come on the very day our father went fishing!" Luke cried.

"It wasn't chance that brought them, my son. Unless coming for some evil purpose, they would have landed boldly, as they have done so many times. It must be that the painted wretches have been watching to learn when your father and uncle left the island! Ask your aunt and Susan to come over her; the other children need not be told until it is no longer possible to hold them in ignorance of what may be done."

Luke ran swiftly to the house, which stood hardly more than fifty feet away, and in a twinkling Mistress Harding and her daughter Susan were where they could hear what, to settlers in their situation, was the worst possible news.



Women who did their share in conquering the wilderness were not cowardly, even though they might turn pale with apprehension when the first note of danger was sounded, and there two, knowing it was useless to expect aid from the outside, lost no time in planning a defence.

The palisade was weak in many places; more than one of the timbers had decayed and fallen, for while the Indians from the near-by mainland were friendly disposed, there seemed to be no good reason why time and labor should be expended upon a means of defence which might never be needed, and at this moment both the women bethought themselves of such fact.

"There may be time in which to strengthen the fence," Mistress Harding suggested, and Mark, who considered himself as well-nigh being a man grown, took the part of leader by saying, stoutly:

"In can be done, aunt. Luke and I will get the timbers, and the other children shall drag them out of the woods, coming into the enclosure near the spring where the Indians cannot see them."

"But surely we can do something to help the work along," his mother said, quickly.

"So you shall. We must know what the Indians are about, and you two can take one of the small boys down near the shore. Stay there as if bent on pleasuring, and, without seeming to do so, keep a sharp watch on the harbor island. I will look after the rest."

Boys who lived on the frontier in 1758 were accustomed to doing the work of men, and very seldom was one found to be a coward.

Now that danger in its most frightful form menaced, Mark Pemberton understood that he must stand in the place of his father and uncle. And there was no disposition on his part to shirk the responsibility. He knew full well that there was no hope the fishermen would return for at least a full week, therefore he must work unaided, save as the women and other children might be able to help him.

The axes were near at hand; Mary Pemberton and Ellen Harding were summoned from the garden, and the two younger boys sent with their mothers to the shore.

As the five young people went into the thicket, which had been left standing in the rear of the dwellings that it might serve to break the force of the north winds in the winter, the younger girls learned of the painted peril on the harbor island, and Mark explained his plan of defence, so far as he had formed one.

The two boys set about their task feverishly, knowing that every moment was precious, for no one could say when the attack might be made; the only matter certain in the minds of all was that the Indians had come bent on mischief, otherwise there would have been no skulking on the island.

The palisade, as originally built, stood six feet above the surface of the land, and the posts were driven a good four feet into the ground, therefore large timbers were necessary, and perhaps Mark was the only member of the party who realized that when the work of driving the logs in place was begun, the enemy would have a very good idea of what was being done.

The skulkers on the island must, as a matter of course, know that they were discovered, and their purpose suspected, otherwise the defences would not be in process of strengthening when the boys should have been making ready for the curing of such fish as the fishermen might bring in. [1](#)

Then was the moment when, possibly, the attack would be made, and all preparations for resistance concluded before the first blow was struck on the palisade.

"There will be a moon to-night," Susan Harding said, quietly, and Mark knew she was thinking of what might be expected after the sun had set, therefore he replied, to encourage her:

"Ay, Sue, the painted villains can't come across without showing themselves for some time before gaining the beach, and Luke and I should be able to warm their hides a bit."

"I can shoot as well as you."

"So you can, Sue and the worst part of it is that you must do your share of the work."

"Will you watch on the shore for them to-night?"

"I think so. Luke and I can be there, while the rest of you are inside."

"I shall go with you," and the girl spoke as if demanding a part in some scheme of pleasure.

"Perhaps you can; we'll see what the plan shall be when night comes. The fence may not be in shape then, and I'm hoping the Indians will hold off for a darker night. That's about the only chance we've got to save ourselves from being killed, or carried prisoners to Canada."

"If they had landed on this island, they might have crept up without our suspecting anything," Susan suggested, and Mark literally trembled with fear, for thought came to his mind that possibly another body of savages was on Mount Desert, counting on coming up through the thicket when the attack was begun.

However, as he said to himself a moment later, after struggling manfully against this new fear which assailed him, that was a matter which could not be guarded against, other than as the general defences were strengthened, and it stood him in hand to think of work rather than all which might happen.

"Remember, I'm to take my place with you and Luke," Susan insisted, and the lad, knowing she could be depended upon to use a musket nearly as well as himself, replied:

"So you shall, Sue; I promise to call on you as I would on Luke. Here is the first timber," he added, as he struck the finishing blows to the sharpened end of the log. "Drag it inside to the weakest place in the fence, and take good care that you don't go where any one on the harbor



island can see you." [2](#)

Aided by Mary and Ellen, the stout-hearted girl set about the task of carrying the heavy log, since that would be the quickest method of getting it into place, and the boys plied their axes yet more vigorously in order to have another timber in readiness when the carriers returned.



"Take nothing smaller than six inches through the butt, and we'll drive the tapering end into the ground," Mark cried, cheerily, as he selected a second tree, and Luke had but just finished hewing his log when the girls came for another load.

"I ran down to talk with mother and aunt," Susan said, speaking with difficulty because of her heavy breathing. "They have seen only one Indian, who lies behind the big rock keeping watch, and he is Sewattis, who came here for potatoes last winter."

"And we gave him all he could carry away!" Mark exclaimed bitterly. "Now he has come to try and murder us because we have ever been his good friends."

"Is there any war on the mainland?" Susan asked.

"The captain of the last fishing-vessel father boarded told him that an attack had been made by the French and Indians on the fort at St. George last month, so I suppose England and France are still fighting. If the two kings could be in our places just now, I reckon there'd be an end of

the war before nightfall."

"It isn't three months since Master Peabody and his wife were killed on Arrowsick Island, and the six children carried into Canada," Luke suggested, grimly, and Mark cried, peremptorily:

"Don't be digging up every horrible thing you can remember, for it won't improve our courage, and we're like to need all we've got between now and sunset. Here's another timber, Sue. Before you come back again, get some idea of how many we're needing to put the fence in shape."

Luke would have talked of the murders which had been reported to the settlers of the island by the fishermen, who were spoken from time to time; but Mark bade him keep at his chopping, and in silence the two worked until Susan, after an unusually long absence, returned.

"There are seventeen logs missing," she reported, "and two more which are decayed so badly that they should be replaced. I walked slowly around the fence, and tried every one, to make certain it stood firm."

"We should be able to cut that number and get them in place before the afternoon is very old," Mark replied, as he swung his axe yet more vigorously. "Did you go down to the shore?"

"Yes, and everything there is as it was before. Your mother thinks it is a wicked waste of time for both to stay on guard, when it would be possible for them to do so much toward helping in getting out the timbers."

"The moment will soon come when she can lend a hand, but just now she is doing more good by staying where she is, for while those two are idle the Indians will not suspect that we are strengthening our defences. The other boys might help in dragging the logs down, Sue, for we've got five or six ready."

"Mary and I, with Ellen to steady them through the bushes, can soon catch up with you, and the boys would be more bother than good," Susan replied, as she raised one end of a heavy timber.

During the next hour the five young people worked as industriously as their elders could have done, and then Susan announced that her mother was intending to make ready the noonday meal, for it was in the highest degree necessary that those who were laboring so energetically, and who would be called upon, perhaps, to spend the night in watching, should have an ample supply of food.

The boys ate dinner as they worked, Ellen bringing it out to them, and, while Mistress Harding cooked for both families, Mistress Pemberton remained on guard.

During all that time very little had been learned regarding the savages. Now and then a painted face had been seen momentarily from behind one of the rocks on the harbor island; but nothing more, and the defenders of the stockade had no means of knowing when the attack might be expected.

It was about two hours past noon when the boys had cut the necessary number of timbers, and now was come the time when the enemy would get an inkling that the settlers were making ready to defend themselves.

"You can't help us very much, Sue, when we are driving the posts into place," Mark said. "Leave Ellen here, while you overhaul our muskets. See to it that each one is loaded, and where we can get at it readily. After that has been done, you had best stand by the gateway to give the work if any move is made by the villains."

Then the boys began the task of setting the timbers in place, fearing each instant to hear the word that the savages were crossing over from the small island.

When the third timber had been driven in place, Mark said, grimly, as he raised another stick to fit it into the palisade:

"If they come now, we shall be in a bad scrape; but in case they are foolish enough to wait until after dark, I reckon we can give a good account of ourselves."

In order to drive the logs sufficiently deep into the earth, to prevent the possibility of their being pulled out by the foe, it was necessary for one of the boys to stand on an up-ended cask, and while in such position a view of the tiny island at the mouth of the harbor could readily be had.

It was Mark who swung the heavy wooden maul, or mallet, and he strove to keep his eyes fixed upon that point of land behind which he knew the Indians lurked.

To his great relief, no change was apparent in the position of the enemy, although those in hiding must have known what was being done, and the boys worked unmolested.

After she had made ready the muskets for immediate use, Susan stationed herself at the gateway of the palisade, with a weapon leaning against the logs on the inside, watching intently, and after half an hour had passed Mark called to her:

"There's little chance now that they'll begin the mischief before dark, if the noise of our pounding hasn't started them. Mother and aunt may come back here and do some more cooking, for once the Abenakis begin work we shall need to have all hands on duty. You can keep an eye on the island from where you are."



This change was welcomed by the women, who came up from the shore quickly, stopping at the palisade to see how the lads were getting along, when Mistress Pemberton said to Mark:

"I have been thinking that we had better gather in one of the buildings which can be barricaded on the inside, instead of trying to occupy both."

"It's a good idea, mother dear, and while you're making the changes, see to it that we have plenty of water in the house."

"What about the cows?"

"We can't take the chances of going after them, for no one can say that there are not more Indians hidden in the woods. If the beasts come home, we'll have a mess of milk to help out on the supplies."

Now it was that every member of the two families was actively engaged, while Susan stood guard at the gateway.

The Harding house was stripped of everything which could be readily moved, and the rude furniture served admirably as a barricade for the windows and one door of the Pemberton dwelling.

The sun had not set when Mark had put the palisade into the best condition possible with the materials at his command, and then, after cautioning Susan to keep her eyes open very wide, the two boys began making loopholes in the house which was to shelter both families. This last was being done, as Mark explained to his mother, that they might have a final place of refuge in case the Indians succeeded in scaling the palisade.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST ASSAULT

Not until the shadows of night were beginning to lengthen was Susan relieved from guard duty, and then the gate had been closed and barred by Mark, who said to his cousin: [3](#)

"There is little chance an attack will be made until after night has come, when they count on finding us asleep, mayhap, although it would be queer people who could close their eyes in rest while a crowd of men was waiting for a good opportunity to kill them."

"Why am I to go off duty?" Susan asked. "Surely it can do us no harm to stand guard, and even though the savages do not make any move, we should act as if believing they might do so at any moment."

"You are right, Sue, and I warrant you won't have many idle minutes. Your mother and mine want all the children together while they pray for the good God to help us, and surely He is the only one to whom we can appeal now."

The girl made no further parley, but marched directly toward the Pemberton house, stopping very suddenly, however, as a low sound, not unlike the call of a human being, was heard from the woods in the rear of the dwellings.

"There are the cows, Mark, and surely they must be brought inside the enclosure if for no other reason than that we may need the milk before those murderers--"

Susan did not finish the sentence, for the thought had come that it was not unlikely those who

were skulking on the harbor island might succeed in their purpose, as they had done so many times before when setting forth to capture and to murder.

"I'll go after the beasts, and you shall stand here to keep watch over the harbor, for I am not minded to take the chances of being surprised, ever though we have good reason to believe no mischief will be attempted until late in the night."

To this Susan would not agree. She insisted that, having been charged with the care of the cows during so many years, they would follow her more readily than any other, and it might be possible something would happen to frighten them.

Mark, who feared there were Indians hidden in the thicket, would have prevented her from venturing out of the stockade; but she put an end to the controversy by slipping through the gate immediately he had opened it, and the lad could do no less than remain on guard while she was absent.

The animals followed the girl contentedly when she appeared before them, even though they were not accustomed to being brought within the enclosure during the warm season, and as they filed through the gate Mark felt decidedly more comfortable in mind, for now, in case they were able to hold the Indians in check, there was no possibility of a lack of food if the siege should be prolonged.

With the cows in the shed that served as stable during the winter months, where was a plentiful supply of hay which had been made during the summer, the children went into the house, which seemed strangely changed by the addition of Mistress Harding's belongings and preparations already made for defence.

Nearly all the rude furniture was piled against the two windows and one of the doors, and the beds had been spread on the floor where they would best be screened from any stray bullets. A supply of fuel was stacked up near the fireplace, to the end that it might be possible to prepare food without necessity of going out of doors, and, as Mark had suggested, every available vessel was filled with water.

When the three children, who had been doing such valiant work in strengthening the defences, entered the building, they found the women and smaller children gathered close beside each other as if such near companionship lessened the danger, and Mark said, gently:

"It is not well that we stay indoors many minutes, mother dear, for much remains to be done before night has fully come."

Then it was, and without delay, that Mistress Pemberton knelt amid the frightened brood, pouring forth her supplications for strength and guidance in this their time of peril, and the children listened to the petition as they had never done before. It was as if the prayer had a different meaning than ever before, for unless it should be answered then was the time of suffering or of death come very near.

Even the youngest children understood that this was the only appeal for help which could be made, and never a question was asked or a word spoken when Mark, Luke, and Susan, rising to their feet immediately the petition had been brought to a close went out-of-doors muskets in hand.

When they were in the open air once more Mark proposed that they make such platforms behind the palisade as was practical with the limited amount of material at hand, in order that, in event of an attack, it would be possible to use their weapons with good effect to prevent the enemy from scaling the barricade.

Two up-ended casks formed as many stations, while at other points the wash-benches, tubs, horses for wood-sawing, and household utensils were piled up or pushed unto position at such height as would afford a view of the harbor island and the intervening space.

When this work had been completed the children had eight improvised platforms whereon they



could stand while defending the stockade, and the night was fully come.



As Susan had said, the moon was in the third quarter, therefore it would be impossible for the Indians to paddle across the waters of the harbor without exposing themselves to the view of the island defenders.

It was a portion of Mark's plan that a guard should be stationed on the shore, in full sight of those who might approach, and, in event of an advance, the battle would be begun while the enemy was in the canoes.

This much he explained to his companions, as they stood by the gate ready to face the more immediate danger to the end that their loved ones might the better be protected, and he added, in conclusion:

"After all we've seen it would be foolish to pretend we do not know why the Abenakis have come, therefore when they put out from the island, I shall hail them once, warning all hands to

stay where they are until the sun has risen, after which we will open fire, trying to do the greatest possible amount of execution in order to show what may be expected. I've got four of five charges of ammunition, and if the rest of you have as much we shall be able to make quite a showing."

At that moment the noise of someone moving across the enclosure startled the children; but an instant later they saw that Mistress Harding was going toward the shed to milk the cows.

"Now come on," Mark said, opening the gate after learning the cause of his momentary alarm, and the children went boldly forth to do battle--two boys and a girl who counted on defending the island against fifteen or twenty savages.

It was not to be supposed that the Indians, seeing the sentinels, would come directly across from the island; but might be expected to dart swiftly toward one or the other headlands, and therefore it was that Mark divided his small force, sending Luke to patrol the northern point, while he paced to and fro on the southern side of the harbor where it was more reasonable to suppose a landing would be attempted. Susan was to walk back and forth on the shore between the two lads.

Once this division of forces had been made, the children began their vigil, on the alert for any suspicious noises either behind or in front of them, for there was yet a possibility that a force of Indians was already secreted near the stockade.

No sooner had he begun to pace his beat than Mark realized to what danger the occupants of the dwelling were exposed in case the savages had already landed on Mount Desert, for the gate of the palisade was unlocked and unguarded, and then Susan was sent back to warn her mother and aunt that the entrance must be secured.

When she returned to the shore it was with the report that the gate was barred on the inside, and Mary Pemberton standing close beside it in case the sentinels outside should be forced to beat a hasty retreat. [4](#)

Now indeed had the lad done all within his power to protect those whom he considered were entrusted to his charge, and it only remained to keep careful watch for the first show of mischief.

And this came in a manner wholly unexpected, although it seemed to the young leader as if he had taken into consideration every method which might be adopted by the savages.

During three hours or more the children had paced to and fro on the shore, each making certain meanwhile that the other two were on the alert, and then Mark saw a canoe put off from the harbor island, heading toward Pulpit Rock, as if to gain the shelter of that headland before coming to land.

Uttering a low cry to attract the attention of his companions, he would have hurried on to the point in order to fire at least one shot before the Indians could disembark; but at that moment an exclamation from Luke caused him to gaze across the harbor, when he saw a second canoe setting out toward the northward.

A moment later a third craft was paddled straight across the water, in the direction of Susan's post of duty.

It seemed certain that the Abenakis understood how small and weak was the force opposed to them, and therefore, counted on bringing their bloody work to a speedy conclusion regardless of their ordinary methods of warfare.



A landing would be made at three different places simultaneously, and the young defenders must perform give all their attention to one party, leaving the others to do as they pleased, or, by attempting to guard every point, place themselves in the greatest possible danger.

"Make ready to run for the house when I give the word," Mark cried to his companions. "Come this way, Sue, and Luke, do the best you can at peppering the canoe in front of us!"

Susan speedily joined her cousin on the southerly side of the harbor, while Luke stood his ground, but with the disagreeable knowledge that in a few moments the savages would probably be creeping up behind him.

Now Mark understood that he could not afford to spend many moments on this portion of the defence. It was necessary the three should be inside the stockade before those who were landing at either point of the harbor could come up within range, and he said to Susan:

"We must get in our work quickly, for I reckon these villains in front of us will take good care to move so slowly as to keep at a safe distance until the others are ready for work."

For reply the girl raised her musket on the crutch-like rest which was used in those days, took careful aim, and pulled the trigger.

It was possible to see the bullet as it struck the moonlit water, hardly more than three paces in advance of the canoe, with its freight of painted terrors, and instantly the Indians ceased paddling, thus proving that they had no intention of coming within range until their comrades from the other craft were in position to prosecute their murderous work. [5](#)

"There is little sense in our staying here," Mark said, bitterly. "Those scoundrels don't intend to give us any show at them, and we are foolish if we remain. Yonder canoe put off boldly only to keep us occupied until the others could make a landing."

"Are we to go back?" Susan asked, striving to prevent a tremor of fear from being perceptible in her voice.

"Ay, it is high time. You start on ahead, and I'll call Luke."



"I shall walk by your side," the girl said, stoutly. "We will share the danger equally, as you promised."

"You are a good girl, Sue; just the kind that will do a full half of the work of defending the island," and Mark kissed her on the cheek more tenderly than he had ever done before, as one would who was whispering a final good-bye.

"Close in, Luke; we must get back to the house; there's no show of our being able to do anything here," Mark cried to his brother, as he set the example by leading Susan in the direction of the stockade. [6](#)

The canoe came forward more swiftly as the little party of children retreated; but it could be seen that its occupants did not count on approaching within range, and Mark hastened his brother's movements by shouting:

"Run for it, lad! We must be in position behind the fence when the brutes first come within view!"

Then the three went toward the place of refuge at full speed, and behind the gate, having been warned by the report of her cousin's musket, Mary Pemberton stood ready to let down the heavy bar when the little party was near at hand.

The retreat had been begun none too soon, as was seen when the children came within the enclosure, for while Mark was replacing the bar which locked the gate, his mother, standing on one of the improvised platforms, discharged a musket.

"What have you seen?" the lad cried, as, the gate having been fastened, he ran toward that portion of the stockade where was his mother.

"An Indian came out just beyond the dead tree, over there."

"Did you hit him?"

"I'm afraid not, Mark; I never could send a bullet straight, and am now blaming myself for not having practiced more often after your father insisted that the time might come when I would need to handle a musket deftly."

By this time Mark stood by his mother's side, peering cautiously out over the top of the palisade, which was not a simple matter, since he took the risk of presenting the enemy with a target.

He could see nothing suspicious, and was yet peering eagerly around, when the report of a musket rang out on the other side of the stockade.

It was Susan who fired the shot. At the same moment Mark clambered up beside his mother, the girl had taken her station on one of the casks at a point overlooking the thicket, and the result showed that she had arrived there none too soon.

"Did you see an Indian?" Luke asked, as he mounted one of the wash-benches near the gate.

"Ay, and hit him, too!" Susan replied, grimly, as she turned to recharge her weapon; but Mistress Harding took the empty musket from her hands, as she said:

"Your aunt and I cannot shoot as well as you children; but we may, at least, be of service in loading the guns."

From this moment there was little delay in making the assault. Contrary to their custom, the Abenakis pressed forward immediately after the first shot was fired, doubtless hoping to gain an advantage while the defenders were reloading the weapons, and each of the three children fired two shots as rapidly as the muskets could be handed to them.

Three times had a piercing scream followed the report of the weapon, thus telling that an equal number of bullets had hit the targets, and then the savages became more cautious.

Until this moment the Indians had not fired a shot; but now the bullets began to whistle over the heads of those who were exposed to view, as the Abenakis, themselves screened by the bushes, began the real attack.

"Be careful of yourselves!" Mark cried, forgetting to set his companions an example. "Keep down behind the posts as much as possible; we can count on their staying under cover while doing so much shooting!" Then, turning to his mother, he added, "There is no reason why all the children should be out-of-doors, where a stray bullet may find them. Why not order them into the house?"

This Mistress Pemberton did, and when the younger members of the company were in comparative safety, Mark looked anxiously around at his army of two.

Luke was crouching behind the palisade, where a wide crevice between two of the posts afforded him a view of the outside without his being obliged to expose himself, and Susan was leaning against the timbers, only partially sheltered, as she appeared to be tying something around her arm.

"What are you doing, Sue?" Mark cried, in alarm.

"Standing guard here; but just now I can't see anything that looks like an Indian."

"What is the matter with your arm?"

"It's only a scratch," the girl replied, in a matter-of-fact tone. "It bleeds a little, and I've wrapped a piece of my gown around it."

"You're wounded!" Mark cried, and he made as if to jump down from the platform, when Susan said, sharply:

"Stay where you are! Even though I was hurt badly, which I'm not, you have no right to leave the fence unguarded."

Mark stepped back with a certain sense of shame that it had been necessary for Susan to remind him of his duty, and then Mistress Harding went to her daughter's side.

"It is a slight wound on the left arm," the good woman said, after insisting on an examination of the injury. "I will take her to the house while I tie it up properly, and Ellen may stand here in her place."

"But Ellen can't use a musket as well as I, and we're needed here," Susan cried, more concerned lest she be forced to leave her station at the palisade than on account of the wound.

Mistress Harding might have insisted on her daughter's going into the building if at that moment the assault had not been renewed, and during the next ten minutes the defenders were actively employed.

The Indians, profiting by the teachings and example of the Frenchmen, whose allies they were, had divided the force, a portion remaining hidden in the thicket to fire at the children, while the remainder made a rush for the gate, as if believing it might be forced open.

Now it was that the defenders were obliged to move quickly, and it was impossible for them to remain under cover all the while.

"Pour all the fire into those fellows who are coming up with the log!" Mark cried, as half a dozen Abenakis, carrying a heavy tree-trunk, to be used as a battering-ram, made ready to advance at full speed.

This command was obeyed with such good effect that three of the savages fell, and their

fellows, dropping the timber, ran to cover with the greatest possible haste.

At the same moment the children fired, the Indians in hiding discharged their weapons, detonations being echoed and reechoed from mountain to mountain, until it sounded as if a severe engagement was in progress. [7](#)

"Any one hurt?" Mark cried, and Susan and Luke replied cheerily in the negative. [8](#)

One of the three Indians wounded while advancing with the tree-trunk succeeded in crawling off to the shelter of the underbrush; but the other two remained where they had fallen.

When, two or three minutes later, an Abenakis darted out from his place of concealment, Mark raised his weapon quickly; but Susan cried, warningly:

"Don't fire! It can do us no harm if they take away the wounded, and it's possible they'll go back to the harbor island, if the injured can be carried off!"

"I'm beginning to think it is you who should be in command here," Mark said, half to himself, as he lowered his weapon. "You've got more sound sense than Luke and I together." Then, raising his voice, he cried, loudly, "Listen, ye Abenakis, whom our fathers have fed when you were hungry, and sheltered when you were cold, but who would murder us now! Take away your wounded, if you are minded to go back to the harbor island, and no one shall harm you while so doing. The white men of Mount Desert have never broken faith with you, nor will we, their children."

Then was done that which proves how much stranger than fiction is truth. The Abenakis, although they had come there to kill or make prisoners the wives and children of those men who had ever been their friends, did not question the faith of the lad when he announced that they might bear off the wounded in safety, but boldly advanced within short range to the aid of their fellows.

"Why do you seek to kill us, who have never done you harm?" Mark cried, when four of the band stood in full view while lifting the wounded from the ground. "Do Indians kill their friends? Do they speak soft words only while the men of the family are at home, being too cowardly to make an attack until the fathers have gone away?"

There was no reply to this speech until the Indians were hidden once more by the bushes, and then a voice cried:

"Give us the cow and two boys. Then we will go away, telling the Frenchmen that all have been killed."

"You shall not have the smallest chicken inside this stockade!" Mark cried, angrily. "And I promise that there shall be few left to report to the cowardly Frenchmen, if you remain here very long. You shall be shot down like dogs, and from this out our squaws will not interfere to let you carry off those who have been crippled!"

While speaking, Mark had unconsciously raised himself to his full height, instead of being partially sheltered by remaining in a crouching position, as during the short fight, and the reply to his words came in the form of bullets, one of which grazed his cheek, raising a red ridge, as if he had been scored by a whip-lash.

Susan and Luke both fired in the direction from which had been seen the flash of the muskets, but no one could say if the missiles thus sent at random took effect.

Five minutes later, while the watchers still gazed through the crevices of the palisade, believing the enemy to be near at hand, a canoe was seen putting off from the shore, directly in front of the dwellings, and, after such delay as was necessary, in order to enable them to reach the other craft, all three divisions of the attacking force were headed for the harbor island.



The first assault had been made, and successfully resisted. It now remained to be seen whether the Abenakis were willing to accept this as defeat, or if new tactics were to be tried.

"They've gone!" Susan cried, joyfully. "We've beaten them!"

"Yes child," her mother said, despondently, "and if they had not been sent by Frenchmen, we might believe the worst was over."

"Do you think they'll come back, Mark?" the girl cried, as she leaped down from her post of duty.

"Ay, that I do, Susan, and for the very reason aunt has given. If we could only know what the next move would be! I have heard father say that once upon a time the English drove away from Mount Desert French settlers, and now those who are stirring the Indians up to this kind of business are trying to make things even. We can count on having peace during the rest of the night, I believe, and the sooner you go into the house, were that wound of yours can be looked after, the better I shall be pleased."

Indeed, there was no good reason why all the defenders, save one to stand guard behind the palisade, should not get such repose as might be had under the circumstances.

A sentinel, on one of the hastily constructed platforms, could keep the harbor island well in view, therefore the savages would not be able to leave it secretly, and Mark proposed that he remain on duty for a certain time, while the others slept.

"You shall have my place in a couple of hours, Luke." the lad said to his brother.

"And when do I take my turn?" Susan asked, showing that she was determined to do a full

share in the defence, regardless of her wound.

"You may stand guard when it is time for Luke to lie down," Mark replied, intending that she should not be awakened if he could prevent it.

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## CHAPTER III

### ADAY OF SUSPENSE

While Mark stood on guard, able to see the entire broad expanse of water, thanks to the light of the moon, he knew that so long as a careful watch was kept the Abenakis could not leave the harbor island secretly; but he also realized that if the clouds should gather, or a fog settle down over the waters, then, of a verity, would they be at the mercy of a foe from whom no mercy could be expected.

The fact that they had been able to resist the first assault did not give him encouragement for the future. The Indians had advanced foolishly, understanding that the white people knew full well what they were about, and after this first repulse it was reasonable to suppose the murderous scoundrels would bring all their cunning into play when the next attack was made.

There were six muskets in the stockade, and ammunition sufficient to last during an ordinary siege, provided none was wasted, yet but three persons--Susan, Luke, and himself--could be depended upon to man the walls. The others would have served faithfully, of that there was no question; but none of them were so expert with a musket as to be counted on for any great execution.

Although the lad would not have admitted as much to either of his companions, the fear in his heart that the enemy might succeed in accomplishing his purpose was very great.

"We can count on it that at the next attack they will succeed in getting inside the palisade," he said, unconsciously giving words to his thoughts, and he started almost in alarm as a familiar voice behind him asked, reproachfully:

"If you lose heart, how can the rest of us be expected to show courage?"

"What are you doing out here, Sue?" he asked, in turn, not minded to answer her question, if it could be avoided.

"I've come to take Luke's place. He is sleeping so soundly that it is a pity to awaken him, and the pain in my arm keeps my eyes open very wide."

"But I haven't been here two hours yet."

"Nearly half that time has passed since you came on duty, and there is no reason why you should remain awake when it's impossible for me to sleep. I can keep a sharp watch."

"So you can, Sue; but it is my place to take the biggest end, and I don't fancy the idea of letting a woman do my work."

"If I could go to sleep it would be different; but since I can't, I shall stay here, therefore you might as well take advantage of the opportunity."

Mark made no move toward leaving the platform, from which he could have a full view of the harbor, and, seeing that he was not disposed to act upon her suggestion, Susan clambered up beside him.

"Now tell me what you meant by saying that the next time they come the Indians will get inside the fence?"

"There's no sense in talking about that. I didn't count on speaking aloud."

"You did, however, and now it will be treating me no more than fairly if you tell me exactly what is in your mind."

Mark had no desire to discuss the situation just then, when it looked very dark to him, and, in order to avoid answering the question, he proposed to take advantage of Susan's proposition.

"Since you are determined to stay here, I may as well get what sleep I can. Call Luke when you are tired," He said, and before she could detain him he had slipped down from the improvised platform, walking rapidly toward the dwelling.

The girl could do guard duty as well as either of her cousins, and was eager to perform a full share of the labor devolving upon those who were striving to hold the savages in check. Perhaps she magnified the pain of her wound in order to be allowed to take Mark's place, and, if such was the case, the defence would be in no wise weakened through her.

Until the first faint light of a new day could be seen did Susan Harding stand on the narrow platform, watching eagerly for any signs of life from the harbor island, and unable to change her position, save by taking two or three paces to the right or left. Even then she would have remained on duty longer, but that Mark came hurriedly out of the house crying, angrily:

"It was not fair for you to stay on watch all night, Sue! You the same as promised to call Luke when you were tired."

"I didn't really agree, and I'm not tired yet. There's no need of your coming up here, for now that it is daylight, Ellen can be trusted to keep a lookout over the island."

"When she has eaten her breakfast I will let her take my place," Mark replied, as he literally forced the girl to descend, and a few moments later all the occupants of the stockade were astir.

The cows were milked, but kept within the enclosure, the young boys feeding and watering them. The hens were allowed to stray here or there at will, and, save for the sentinels on the palisade, one might have thought that the scene presented there represented perfect peace and happiness.

When the morning meal had been prepared, Ellen Harding took Mark's station on the stockade, being enjoined by him to keep her eyes fixed constantly on the harbor island, without heeding what might be happening around her, as the little company gathered in the Pemberton house, where thanks were given for their preservation during the night.

While breakfast was in progress no reference was made to the danger which menaced; it seemed as if the women feared to alarm the younger children, and the three to whom the defence of the island had been committed were not desirous of starting a conversation which might lead up to the possibilities of the future.

Susan was forced to submit to a second treatment of her wound, as soon as the meal had had come to an end, and Mistress Harding peremptorily insisted on her going to bed, since she had not closed her eyes in slumber during the night just passed.

Mistress Pemberton set about melting lead for bullets, the store of missiles being smaller than that of powder, and Mark and Luke went out to make a more thorough examination of the palisade.

"It isn't very likely that the Abenakis will make any move during this day," the elder lad said, "and while Ellen is standing watch it would be wicked to lose any chance of making our position yet more secure."

Luke was ready to act upon his brother's suggestion, but appeared to have no desire for

conversation, and Mark did not urge him to talk, for the same reason that had caused him to hold his peace during the breakfast hour.

There was much that had been overlooked during the hurry and excitement of the previous day, which could be done to strengthen the palisade, as, for example, driving stakes at the foot of such posts as were not standing firmly, and securing the tops of others with braces on the inside.

In order to do a portion of this work, it was necessary the lads should go into the thicket for material; but while Ellen remained on watch to give the alarm, in case she saw any signs of life on the harbor island, they did not hesitate to leave the stockade.

It was while they were chopping down small trees in the rear of the dwellings, that the flock of fourteen sheep came in sight, and these Mark decided to drive into the enclosure.

It would be a serious blow to the settlers if these wool-growers should be killed by the enemy, for it might be a difficult task to replace them, and without the fleeces each summer the children would be destitute of materials for clothing.

By catching the leader of the flock, and dragging him along by the horns, the lads had little trouble in getting the animals within the stockade, and Mark announced his success by saying, in a tone of mild triumph:

"The family is all behind one fence now, and unless the Abenakis get inside, they can't do us a great deal of harm."

"But the sheep will pull heavily on our store of hay," Luke suggested, and his brother replied, cheerily:

"They can pick up a good bit around the place, and it won't do any very great harm to let them go hungry now and then. It's better than taking good chances of losing the whole drove."

There was no further discussion as to the advisability of bringing the sheep into the stockade, for at that moment a cry from Ellen caused both the boys to run, with all speed, to her side.

"Look! Look! A vessel! It must be that fishermen are coming here, and now the Indians will be driven away!"



To their great surprise and delight, the boys saw a small schooner, coming as if from the mainland on the northward, heading directly for the harbor island.

"We're saved, God be thanked!" Mark cried, in a tone so loud as to be heard by the inmates of the house, all of whom came swiftly toward him to learn the cause of the fervent exclamation.

"What is it, my son?" Mistress Pemberton asked, sharply, and Luke shouted, as he pointed seaward:

"A fishing-vessel, mother, and those on board must soon know that the Indians are besieging us!"

"But she appears to be going directly to the harbor island! The crew should be warned, lest the Abenakis make an attack upon them!"

This possibility had not entered Mark's mind; but while his mother was yet speaking he darted out of the stockade, running with all speed to the shore, waving his arms and shouting, to attract the attention of the newcomers.

He was followed by the two families, including Susan, who had been awakened by the joyful cries, and the little party ran swiftly along the beach until they were come to the nearest point of the island, which was the small bluff, or incline, on the westernmost end.

Here it was possible to have in view the schooner's deck, and that their signals had been seen seemed positive, although no attention was taken of them.

"Had you not better pull out in the small boat?" Mistress Pemberton asked of Mark, when the



strangers failed to pay any heed to the gestures of warning. "It would be dreadful if the men went on shore and were murdered!"

There seemed to be no reason why the lads should not visit the vessel, and, in fact, such an idea had entered Mark's mind before his mother spoke, but yet he hesitated to act upon her suggestion, although it would have been impossible for him to explain why he remained idle.

"The schooner carries a big crew for a fisherman," Susan said, thoughtfully. "There must be as many as twenty-five or thirty on her deck."

"She's no fisherman!" Mark cried, becoming perplexed as he observed the truth of what Susan had said. "So many people never could work on a craft of that size."

"But what else can she be?" Luke asked, curiously, "I don't know as it makes much difference to us, though, so long as she carries a crew of white people. Why don't we pull out to her, Mark? Look, she's coming to anchor, and if her crew lands without knowing of the Abenakis, they will all be killed!"

"There are the Indians!" Susan cried, as three canoes, filled with savages, were seen putting out from the shore.

"They are going to make an attack on the vessel, and we can do nothing to help the poor people!" Mistress Pemberton cried, in an agony of grief, while an expression of terror overspread Mark's face as he began to have an inkling of the true situation.

"Can't you boys do something to aid the men?" Mistress Harding asked, and Mark replied:

"It isn't likely they're needing any help. Those on the vessel outnumber the Abenakis three to one, and I'm afraid they won't have any trouble in taking care of themselves."

No one save Susan gave any particular heed to Mark's words, but watched with feverish interest as the canoes approached the vessel, and then, when the Indians clambered aboard without any attempt being made to prevent them, the expression of the face of the spectators changed from that of sympathy to perplexity.

"The Abenakis seem to know the fishermen," Mistress Pemberton said to herself, and Mark replied, bitterly:

"Ay, mother, that they do, and now, instead of being called upon to defend ourselves against Indians only, we shall have that crowd of Frenchmen against us!"

"God forbid that white people could attack women and children!" Mistress Harding cried fervently, and Mark added:

"He hasn't forbidden it so far, aunt. Don't you remember what father and uncle heard from those aboard of the last vessel they spoke with? They were told that when Master Peabody and his wife were murdered, there were ten French soldiers with the Indians." [9](#)

"Can it be that they have come to aid the savages against us?" and Mistress Harding's face grew pale.

"Ay, that is the way the French king fights us in this country, and if we are murdered it will be because his agents have decided upon it in revenge for that which was done here so many years ago to the missionaries!"

And now while the little party of besieged stands on the shore facing this new and unexpected peril, suppose we set down that which Mr. Williamson wrote in his "History of Maine."

"A communication was received at Boston in August, 1758, from Brigadier-General Monkton, stationed in Nova Scotia, which stated that a body of Frenchmen, in conjunction with the Indians of the rivers St. John, Penobscot, and probably Passamaquoddy, were meditating an attempt upon the fort at St. Georges, and the destruction of all the settlements on the coast."

"Immediately Governor Pownal collected such a military force as was at command, and embarked with them on board the King George, and the sloop Massachusetts. Arriving, he threw these auxiliaries with some warlike stores into the fort at a most fortunate juncture; for within thirty-six hours after the departure the fort was actually assailed by a body of four hundred French and Indians."

"But so well prepared was the garrison to receive them, that they were unable to make the least impression. Nor did any representations of their numbers, nor any threats, communicated to the fort by a captive woman, whom they purposely permitted to escape hither, occasion the least alarm. Hence, the besiegers gave vent to their resentments and rage by killing the neighboring cattle, about sixty of which they shot or butchered." [10](#)

It was well for the little families who were so sorely beset that they remained in ignorance of what the French assisted by the Indians of several tribes, were trying to do, otherwise their despair would have been even greater than it was as they watched the reception of the Abenakis by those on board the schooner.

It will never be known whether this attack on Mount Desert was made in revenge for what had been done by Argall to the French missionaries; but certain it was that all the settlements on the coast, large or small, had been marked for destruction under the guise of legitimate warfare.

During five minutes or more, while the besieged watched the movements on the deck of the schooner until there was no longer any question but that the number of their enemies had been largely increased, not a word was spoken, and then Mistress Harding broke the painful stillness by exclaiming:

"There is nothing left us to do but submit! With French soldiers at hand, it is not probable the savages will be allowed to murder their prisoners, and to surrender the island is better than being killed!"

"The French have never done anything toward preventing the Indians from working their will on the helpless captives. Do you remember the story father tells of Falmouth, when these same Frenchmen pledged their words of honor that no blood should be spilled, and yet many of those who surrendered were murdered in cold blood?"

"But what other can we do save give ourselves up?" Mistress Harding cried, helplessly, and Susan stepped proudly by the side of Mark, as he replied, stoutly:

"We can fight to the last, and die with muskets in our hands, instead of going willingly to meet the scalping-knife or the tomahawk. It may be that those on the mainland will learn what is being done here, and come to our relief."

"Do not put faith in such a possibility, my son. It is better to face the worst than build on hopes which must be dashed," and Mistress Pemberton laid her hand on Mark's shoulder as if in pride because of the courage he displayed. "We will do battle against these people, white and red, and when our best has been done, the end will be no worse than if we submitted tamely."

"That's the way to put it!" Mark cried, kissing his mother's hand. "We had planned to defend ourselves against the savages, and now let us see what shall be done since they have had such a large reinforcement. Certain it is that we must not stand here, for they may have muskets aboard the schooner which will carry a ball farther than ours."

Mistress Pemberton led the way back to the stockade, and there, in the open air near the gateway where a close watch might be kept over both the island and the vessel, she commended the little party to the care of Him who watches over even the sparrow's fall.

It was to the distressed company as if the entire situation had been suddenly changed; as if their means of defence were totally inadequate, leaving them to the mercy of the French and Indians, who were making the attack simply because the King of England and the King of France had sundry differences of opinion, which might be settled by spilling the blood of innocent people.

Susan, who had been the most courageous, seemed to have grown timorous when she asked, while she and Mark were where the words could not be overheard:

"What shall we do? Is there any hope we can hold back such a force as is being arrayed against us?"

"It doesn't seem possible, Sue, and yet we must fight to the last, rather than give over our mothers and you girls to what we know will follow if we show the white feather."

"I am not afraid of your ever doing anything of that kind, Mark," and the girl laid her hand on his shoulder with a loving gesture. "You will always be brave and true; but what I am asking is whether we may do anything which, as yet, has not been tried."

"I exhausted all my ideas in arranging for a defence against the Abenakis, and now we must stand up like images, fighting until we are destroyed. Anything is better than tame surrender, when we know by the terrible experiences of others what will follow."

"In that I am of your mind, Mark, dear; but I am asking if there isn't something else, which, as yet, we have neglected, that can be done. Our mothers depend on you, as do I, which is only natural, since you are the eldest, and should of right take your father's place."

"It is just that, Sue dear, which causes me to be afraid of my own ideas. If I make a mistake, it may be fatal to you all, for you will follow my advice."

"That is true, Mark, and yet you should not be timid because of it, for you are best fitted to act the part of leader, and we know full well you will only do that which seems safest."

"Are you agreed that we cannot surrender?" and Mark asked the question in an angry tone, as if expecting she would refuse to view the situation in the same light he did.

"Of course I am. Could I say otherwise after all the stories we have heard from the mainland?"

"Then we must fight?"

"Of course, and to the last. I would rather see mother and the children killed by musket-balls, than to have them fall unharmed into the hands of those who await us there," and she motioned toward the harbor island. "How long can we hold the stockade against such a force?"

"Four and twenty hours, it may be, and a much shorter time if you, or Luke, or I should be killed early in the fight."

"And we will hope that our fathers do not come back until all is over."

"Ay, Sue dear, that is what we must hope, unless we would have them come in time to meet their death. Two more men on the stockade would not greatly prolong the struggle, and I fail to see how they, without other aid, could help us very much."

"If it should be, Mark dear, that I am wounded again, will you see to it that the Indians do not take me prisoner?"

"Ay, Sue, though the moment will be a terrible one when I turn my musket against you; but it shall be done."

"And if you are left until the last you will see that the children are not taken alive?"

"If I am left, Sue dear, it shall be as the last of our families on the island, for I believe death is more pleasant than can be life in the hands of such as those who are counting soon to hold us in their power."

Then the two children kissed each other as if in a last farewell, and Mark, trying to assume a careless air, said, with a feeble attempt at a smile:

"Since you were the last to awaken, it is no more than fair you should be among the first on

duty. You, Luke, and I will stand guard alone until the attack is made, as we can count it will be this night, and then our mothers must charge the muskets. Remember, Sue dear, that I haven't yet despaired of holding the whole wicked crew in check. It doesn't seem possible that God would withhold His hand while we are being beaten."

"And yet it has been that many people in this country, whose cause was as just as ours, have been overcome by the same merciless foe who await us."

"Ay, Sue, and since we can only take what comes as stoutly as decent English people should, we'll seem to be brave, however timorous our hearts may become when the last moment is at hand."

Then these two children, striving to fill the places of their parents, began that vigil which both believed would be ended with their death.

Mark made the announcement to his mother and aunt, after the gate had been shut and closely barred, that they and the children should remain in the dwelling until the moment came when they could be of assistance in loading the weapons, and in the meanwhile the task of guarding the stockade would devolve upon his brother, cousin, and himself.

"We are not so much worse off than before, except that many more will come against us," he said, as the women and children went toward the Pemberton house. "We shall fight until the last, and, if God is kind, it may be we can hold the villains in check four and twenty hours, if no more. Get what rest you can, and remember that tears are of no avail when bullets are needed."

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## **CHAPTER IV.**

### **AN ATTACK**

When the women and smaller children were inside the dwelling, Mark said to his companions:

"It is better to have something in the way of work on hand than remain idle, and it has come into my mind that we might improve our condition if we raised the top of the stockade so that we could stand on the platforms without being seen by those outside."

"How would you set about it?" Luke asked, with mild curiosity.

"A heavy timber might be made fast to the top of the palisade, and, by making loopholes between the upper ends of the logs, we would be hidden from view, and at the same time be able to keep watch."

"Do you count that we should go after logs, taking the chances that the enemy will make a landing right away?"

"I intend to go alone, while you and Susan stand guard. Shout if you see a single boat putting off from the harbor island, and then I can get inside the enclosure before the enemy will be able to paddle over here."

Mark did not wait to learn if his companions had any criticism to make on his proposition, but set off in search of the axe without delay, and the others had no choice but to mount guard.



When the lad went through the gate he directed that it be barred behind him, lest there might be Indians in the thicket, and a few moments later it was possible to hear the sound of his sturdy blows as he felled the trees.

In less than half an hour he returned with a heavy log that had been squared on one side, and, after having been given admittance, he laid this on the posts above the platform on which Susan was stationed. By chopping either side of the uprights, close to the top, he made V-shaped apertures of sufficient size to admit of a musket-barrel being thrust through, thus forming five or six loopholes for the sentinel.

Therefore it was one could remain on the platform without being exposed to view of the enemy directly in front, and such shelter would be of great value to the defenders while the attacking party was a short distance away.

By means of wooden pins Mark secured the log in place, although not very firmly, and the three children who were to defend the stockade believed their position had been decidedly strengthened by such a device.

Another hour was spent in felling trees, fitting the timbers, and putting them in place. Then Mark occupied himself with making a careful examination of every portion of the palisade, after which, he said, with a long-drawn sigh:

"I can think of nothing else that is likely to improve the defences, and it only remains to wait until the enemy is ready to begin operations. What has been done aboard the schooner?"

"Many of the men have gone ashore on the harbor island," Luke replied. "The sails are furled,

and everything snugged down as if for a long stay."

"Have you seen the Abenakis?"

"Two or three of them yet remain aboard the schooner; but the larger number are on shore."

Then Mark clambered up on one of the platforms, straining his eyes to learn what the strangers were doing with the hope of being able to make some guess as to when another attack would be made; but in this last he was unsuccessful. The men were lounging on the vessel, or ashore, as if their only purpose was to pass the time pleasantly, and utterly heedless as to whether they were seen by those inside the stockade.

"Whoever is in command of the Frenchmen will direct the next assault," Mark said, sufficiently loud to be heard by his companions at their several posts of duty. "It is known that we count on defending ourselves, and we may expect to see the entire force before us within the coming ten or twelve hours."

"What about the powder?" Luke asked.

"We have none too much; but enough, I believe, if we are careful in making every shot count, to last us during two assaults. After that, if we're alive, there'll be a short allowance."

"A boat is putting off from the schooner, and heading this way," Susan announced, and the boys gave no further heed as to speculations regarding the future, for it seemed as if the enemy was about to begin operations.

In a very short time, however, it could be understood that there was no danger of an immediate attack, for the craft coming shoreward from the vessel was a canoe in which were but three men.

The sentinels were unable to understand the meaning of this movement. It did not seem probable the enemy counted on boldly reconnoitering the island, nor was it reasonable to suppose any attack was to be made with so small a force, and Mark said, in perplexity:

"I can't make out why they are coming; but we'll be ready for whatever turn affairs may take."

"Shall we fire on them if they get too near?" Susan asked.

"Unless they claim to be friends, which isn't likely, we'll treat them exactly as we would the Abenakis, if they were bold enough to land in broad day," Mark replied, and, as assurance of his intentions, he made certain his musket was ready for immediate use.

The strangers paddled directly toward the spot where were kept the boats of the settlers, beached the canoe, and straightway approached the stockade, as friends might have done.

The three children on guard watched the newcomers curiously, until they were within fifty or sixty paces of the gate, and then Mark hailed:

"It will be safer to halt where you are until we understand the reason for this visit," he cried, showing himself above the palisade, with musket in hand.

"Are you in command of the stockade?" one of the visitors asked, as all three came to a full stop.

"Ay, for the time being."

"How many have you in garrison?" one of the newcomers asked, as he advanced a single pace, to show that he was authorized to act as spokesman for his party.

"That is for you to find out," Mark replied, with a smile. "You must take us for simples, if it is in your mind that we will give all the information demanded."

"I did not ask to gain information, for we know exactly the number of women and children here.

I desired that you yourself should state it in order to the better understand how entirely you are at our mercy," The man said, and his manner of speech told that he was French.

"I do not need to repeat it, having seen your force, and knowing my own full well."

"Then you can understand that when I offer good quarter if you surrender without resistance, it should do away with any necessity for a conflict."

"Are you ready to give the same quarter your people promised at Falmouth, when the defenceless prisoners were murdered by you Frenchmen?" Mark cried, angrily.

"I give you my word of honor as a soldier, than no one shall be harmed if you surrender this place immediately," the officer replied, sharply.

"If I have heard rightly, the Baron de Castine gave the same pledge at Falmouth, and afterward excused himself by saying that he could not restrain the Indian allies," Mark said, stoutly.

"Since then it is difficult to believe that French officers have any too much honor; otherwise, perhaps, they would not fight side by side with savages."

"Do you refuse to surrender?" the visitor asked, angrily.



"Ay, that I do, and all here are of the same mind with me. It is better to die fighting than be put to the torture by your allies, whom, mayhap, you could not restrain."

"My force is so large that you will be crushed in a twinkling, and, if you resist, no mercy may be expected. I have come in the effort to save your lives."

"Why should it be necessary?" Mark asked. "What have we done that you strive to take possession of our homes?"

"That is not a question to be discussed," the officer replied, impatiently. "It is my intention to clear this island of settlers, and I hope at such time to aid you."

"It is a brave piece of business to wait until our fathers have gone away, and then come here to fight women and children!" Susan cried, sharply. "Are all French officers so valiant?"

It was impossible for the visitor to see the speaker; but he knew from the voice that the words were uttered by a girl, and his face reddened, as he bit his lip to hold back a retort.

"I offer you good quarter, and to that pledge my word, if you submit at once," he said, after a brief pause. "In case you are so foolish as to dream of holding out against us, much loss of blood must ensue."

"That is bound to come," Mark replied, gravely. "We are resolved to hold this stockade as long as there is one left alive to fire a musket, and when you succeed in the noble work of murdering women and children, there will be none left alive for the savages, your very good friends, to torture."

"And that is your last word?" the officer asked, half-turning on his heel.

"The last," Mark replied.

The Frenchman stood irresolutely while one might have counted ten, and then, wheeling about, he marched toward the shore, looking back from time to time as if believing the young defenders might repent of having given such an answer.

"We have shut off all chance of making a bargain with them," Luke said, half to himself, and Susan replied, stoutly:

"It would have shamed me had Mark treated with them! Why should they offer us quarter? We have done nothing to warrant their making an attack upon us, and it is well they should hear the truth--that it is nothing less than murder. People don't make war in such a fashion as this!"

Mark gave no heed to what his companions were saying. His eyes were fixed on the canoe, in which the three men had embarked, and it was in his mind that when they regained the schooner there would be a decided change in the position of affairs.

And in this he was not mistaken; within half an hour the boats belonging to the schooner, and the canoes of the Indians, were engaged in transporting the men to the shore of Mount Desert, half a mile or more north of the stockade.

"There's one satisfaction to be had in arousing the Frenchman's temper," Mark said, grimly, when the work of disembarkation was well under way. "We won't need to expect a night attack, and hang around in suspense waiting for it, because the assault is to be begun some time before sunset. We had best get out our supply of ammunition, and warn the others that they will soon be needed."

It was Susan who went to summon her mother and aunt, and when she returned, carrying a heavy burden of powder and bullets, it was to report:

"The children are to be kept in the house, under charge of Ellen. The others will be here in a minute or two."

"They can't come any too soon," Luke said, nervously. "The Frenchmen are already marching along the shore, with the Abenakis trailing on behind."

Susan was at her post of duty in a twinkling, and, looking out through the rough loopholes, she saw no less than twenty white men, ten of whom were armed with muskets, and the others carrying pikes, the head of which glittered in the sun, marching in soldierly array down the beach. In their rear slouched nine Indians, and it was safe to assume that the remainder of the red-skinned party had been disabled during the first assault.

It was a positive relief to Mark when he saw that the enemy was intending to march directly upon the stockade, most likely counting on carrying the place by the first assault. If the force had been divided, so that a portion might attack from the rear at the same time the others were



in front, the task of holding them in check would have been well-nigh hopeless.

Even as it was, with everything in the children's favor, it did not seem possible they could defend themselves against such a force; but Mark said, as if believing the chances for success were very good:

"Remember that we can't afford to waste any bullets. If each of us could hit the target three times in succession, I warrant you those valiant Frenchmen would be eager to gain the shelter of their vessel. Both of you can strike four squirrels out of five at fifty paces, and surely you should be able to do as well when the mark is so much larger and moving slowly. Don't shoot until you are certain of hitting your man, and we'll soon see those fellow's backs."

Mistress Pemberton and Mistress Harding had come to do their share in the one-sided battle. Both the women looked pale and distressed, as was but natural under the desperate circumstances; but a single glance at their faces would have told that they believed the only course to be a stout resistance, even though it should cost the lives of all.

At the shore, directly in front of the stockade, the Indians forced a halt of the white men, by seemingly insisting that some other method of procedure be adopted, and during two or three minutes it appeared as if they would carry their point.

Mark drew a long breath of relief, however, when the officer who had demanded the surrender pushed his way past the savages with a threatening gesture, as he ordered the men forward again.

"They are coming straight on in a body," he said, in a low tone. "When you are certain of hitting the mark, shoot, and have the second musket where it can be got at quickly. If we could get in six fair shots at the start, it would be a big advantage."

Each of the children on the platforms had two muskets loaded, and the women stood ready to take every weapon as soon as it was empty. The ammunition, divided into three portions, was near the sharpshooters, and nothing remained to be done save take part in the life or death struggle so near at hand.

Steadily the French marched toward the stockade, evidently intending to begin the attack near the gate, and it was Susan who fired the first shot.

As the report of her musket rang out, one of the foremost men plunged forward to the ground, and five seconds later Mark brought another of the enemy down.

Luke fired, but failed of doing execution. He seized the second musket hurriedly, however, and crippled his foe, thus doing half as much as Mark had required.

"Three down in four shots isn't so bad!" the leader cried, encouragingly, and the words were hardly more than spoken before both he and Susan fired the second time, each of the bullets finding its billet.

Now it was that the Frenchmen halted without the word of command, and opened fire.

During three or four minutes it was as if a perfect hail-storm of lead raged around the stockade, but the stout logs afforded good protection. Never a missile found its way inside, and the spirits of the besieged rose rapidly.

Acting under Mark's orders, neither Susan nor Luke had attempted to make reply to the furious shooting, lest a bullet accidentally come through one of the loopholes, and when, because their weapons were empty, the soldiers ceased the aimless firing, the children's muskets had been recharged.

"If we can do as well as we did before, those fellows will soon show their backs!" Mark cried, cheerily, himself setting the example by wounding the officer.

Now the bullets came thick and fast during a full minute, and then the foremost of the

assailants began to fall back, carrying the officer with them, and an instant later the entire party was in full and disorderly retreat.

Three children had actually beaten back twenty white men and nine Indians, without having received a scratch!

Not until the faint-hearted men were at the water's edge, beyond range of those in the stockade, was a halt made, and then it appeared as if they were holding a council of war.



The officer was laid in one of the boats, and the soldiers gathered around him, the able-bodied gesticulating furiously, and the wounded seated on the sand attending to their injuries. None had been killed outright, but the majority of those who had been hit would not be likely to take part in another attack, unless it was delayed for a considerable time.

It seemed as if the white men gave but little attention to what the Indians said during this council, for the savages were shouldered aside with scant ceremony, and after a few moments all the Abenakis, for none had been wounded, stalked gravely southward, where they were soon lost to view amid the bushes.

"We're going to have trouble from those fellows, and it won't be long coming," Mark said, as he leaped down from the platform, and ran toward that portion of the stockade immediately in the rear of the dwellings. "Keep a sharp watch over the Frenchmen, and let me know what they are doing!"

Then he began putting up a platform at that point where he could overlook the thicket, which last had been allowed to grow dangerously near the buildings, and had hardly mounted for the purpose of making a hasty survey, when a bullet imbedded itself in one of the posts against which he leaned.

"What is the matter?" Susan cried.

"The Abenakis have sneaked around here, where they can shoot while remaining under cover. Let mother come to load my muskets!"

The report of Mark's weapon followed the words, and from the thicket two or three muskets were discharged, thus showing that the entire force of Indians was lurking amid the underbrush.

Susan came running toward her cousin, carrying a weapon in each hand, and the latter asked,

sharply:

"Why have you left your post? The Abenakis won't kick up much of a row until after dark."

"There is nothing to be done at the other side," Susan replied, as she set about dragging two or three lobster-pots toward the palisade. "The Frenchmen are paddling back to the schooner, not leaving one behind, and Luke is watching to see when they leave the vessel again."

Another bullet from the Thicket whistled uncomfortably near Mark's head, and he understood that the most dangerous portion of the attack was now to be met, for it was impossible to see a single foe. The swaying of the branches or the tiny curls of smoke, were the only tokens of an enemy, save when a weapon was discharged.

"Keep down under cover!" Mark cried, when Susan would have mounted the collection of lobster-pots. "They are shooting close, and if you should be disabled we would be in even worse trouble than we are now."

"But you are showing them a target."

"Some one must be here to hold them back." [11](#)

"Then I have the same right as you," and the courageous girl clambered up on the shaky platform until it was possible for her to look over the palisade.

It was a most dangerous position, and, fearing lest she should be killed, Mark left his station to chop away the ends of the posts to make loopholes.

"Now you can have a view of the woods without showing yourself," he said, and would have gone back to his previous position, exposed though it was, but that she stopped him by asking:

"Will you do the same at your end of the fence as you have here?"

"There isn't so much need for me to keep under cover."

"There is ten times more reason why you should be careful than for me to skulk behind the posts. Unless you hew the timbers at your station as you have these, I shall change places with you."

Mistress Pemberton added her commands to Susan's entreaties, with the result that Mark was forced to protect himself so far as possible, but while he chopped at the posts half a dozen bullets struck close around the axe, showing that the Indians were on the alert.

When half an hour had passed neither Mark nor Susan had seen one of their enemies. Several times they fired at the places where the branches were waving as if some person was walking beneath them; but no cry of pain was heard to tell that the bullet had taken effect.

During this time Luke had reported more than once that the Frenchmen yet remained on board their vessel, and when the sun was sinking behind the hills Mark said to his cousin:

"We're wasting too much powder and lead, Sue. I don't believe one of our bullets has gone home, and we have sent far too many at random. The Frenchmen are not beaten yet, and we must have plenty of ammunition when they come again."

"What, then, are we to do?"

"I will stay here, keeping guard lest the Abenakis attempt to scale the fence. You and our mothers shall attend to the household duties, holding yourselves in readiness to come whenever I shout."

"But there is nothing for me to do in the house."

"Then take advantage of the opportunity to get a little rest, for it is certain that we shall have

our hands full during all this night. Get supper, if nothing more, and then bring me something to drink."

"I'll do that first, and then look after myself," Susan said, as she went toward the house, and a moment later Mark heard from her a cry of distress.

"What's the matter?" he shouted, wildly, fearing, for the instant, that some of the savages had gained entrance to the dwelling despite his careful watch.

"The water! The water!" Susan cried, mournfully, and then came a hum of voices raised high in excitement and fear, amid which the sentinel could distinguish no words.

"Come here, Susan!" Mark shouted, peremptorily, and as the girl appeared he demanded, "Now tell me what has gone wrong?"

"The children have spilled all the water we took into the house, and there's not a drop to be had!"

"But they couldn't have carried the spring away," Mark replied, with a laugh, able to make merry even amid the terrible surroundings, so great was his relief at learning that nothing more serious had caused the cry which startled him.

"The sheep have gathered there, until the entire place is a mass of filthy mud."

"Well, well, don't let that distress you so sorely. We'll soon be able to clear it out, for I reckon these beggarly Abenakis won't keep me busy more than twelve hours."

"But if the Frenchmen should come in the meantime?"

"We'll take our chances of that, and get along without water a little while."

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## CHAPTER V.

### FIRE

Mark was disposed to make light of that which distressed Susan, and thus did he make his first mistake in the defence.

To his mind there was nothing very serious in the loss of the water which had been carried into the dwelling, because the spring was within the stockade, and however much mischief the sheep had done, it would be the work of but few moments to put everything in proper order once more.

The chief thought in his mind was regarding the possible trouble which the Abenakis might make while hidden in the thicket back of the palisade, and, after this, the fear that the ablest of his assistants might become disabled because of her wound, which had not received the attention such an injury required.

Therefore it was he said to Susan speaking almost sharply to the end that she might feel forced to obey without argument:

"The first thing for you to look after is that wound. Have your mother dress it once more while you can be spared from the palisade." Then, seeing that she hesitated, he added, "It is necessary for the safety of all that you look after yourself, because if you were disabled, we would be in most serious plight, you being the best marksman among us."

Susan hesitated no longer; but went toward the house, even though she did not believe it necessary to give very much attention to her arm, which was not so badly injured but that she could use it with comparative ease.

When she had disappeared within the dwelling, Mark, watching through the loophole for a target, cried to his brother:

"How is everything over your way, Luke?"

"There has been no change. The Frenchmen are sticking close to their vessel."

"I reckon it would be safe for you to come here a few minutes. I'll send Mary to take your place."

The lad obeyed promptly, and, after cautioning him not to expose himself to the aim of the enemy, although it was essential he keep close lookout over the thicket, Mark went toward the spring.

The damage done by the sheep was greater than he had supposed. The earth in the immediate vicinity had been ploughed up by the feet of the animals until the spring was nearly choked, and Mark realized that a full hour's work would be required to repair the mischief.

"We can't spend much time at it while the Abenakis are in the woods," he said to himself. "Later in the night, perhaps, I shall have a chance to do the job."

Then he went to where Mary was taking Luke's place as sentinel near the gate, instructing her to raise an alarm immediately she saw any movement on the part of the Frenchmen.

"Keep your eyes open wide," he said, "and, while watching the schooner, give some attention to what may be going on close at hand. I don't believe the Indians will come out of the thicket to show themselves where no shelter can be found. But, at the same time, it is possible. Remember that all our lives might pay the forfeit of your carelessness."

"You can trust me as you do Susan, although I can't shoot so well; but my eyes are as good as hers."

"True for you, sister mine, and between now and morning I'm counting on your doing a full share of standing guard."

Then Mark ascended the platform for one look at the vessel, which remained at her moorings with but few men showing on deck, after which he went into the dwelling, where his mother was preparing supper.

Susan's arm was being rebandaged, after having been bound up with simples which had been gathered in the woods against just such an emergency, and the smaller children were huddled in one corner like frightened sheep.

"I have left Luke in my place," the lad said, in reply to his mother's question. "The Abenakis are taking good care to keep out of sight, and it is only a waste of ammunition to fire at a waving bush or curl of smoke. I'll get something to eat, now that I'm here, and then go on duty again."

Susan declared she would stand watch near the gate, in order that Mary might take care of the children, and to that end ate supper with Mark, after which the two went out to their weary, dangerous vigil once more, with the disheartening knowledge that there was no probability of receiving aid from any quarter.



"We won't talk about it, Sue," Mark said, when his cousin bewailed the fact that even though a fishing-vessel should pass near at hand, her crew would not come ashore when it was seen that the *Future Hopes* had left her anchorage. "We can't afford to look on the dark side of affairs, lest we grow faint-hearted, for you know that, once our courage is gone, we are the same as beaten."

Susan did not reply, as she might have done with truth, that they were then very nearly in that deplorable condition; but shut her teeth tightly as if to prevent the escape of a single word, while she walked rapidly toward the gate to take her station as sentinel.

Mary begged to stand guard an hour or two longer; but Susan insisted that she was needed in the house, and reluctantly the girl descended from the platform.

Then Mark relieved Luke from duty, instructing him to first get his supper, and then, if the Indians remained inactive, to set about cleaning out the spring.

By this time the night had fully come, and Mark noted with apprehension that clouds were gathering in the sky. While the moon shone brightly it was as easy to guard against surprise as at noonday; but once that light was obscured, the enemy might creep up at a dozen places on the palisade without being detected.

"Two hours of blackness, and we are done for," Mark said to himself, with a sigh, and then, remembering what he had told Susan, he added, "We've got to take whatever comes, and the only manly way is to make the best of it. In case it is very dark to-night, Mary and Ellen must both stand watch with the rest of us."

The report of a musket interrupted his train of gloomy thoughts, and involuntarily he ducked his head when a bullet came singing over the fence so near that he felt the "wind" of it.

"You can't tempt me to shoot till I see something to fire at," he said, grimly, watching through the loophole at the underbrush which was merged by the shadows into one single mass of gloom, amid which not even a movement among the branches could be distinguished.

Two more shots, which caused him to wonder why the Abenakis were growing so active, and

then he caught a glimpse of a faint spark in the thicket, which at first sight appeared to him like the glow from an Indian's pipe.

He had raised his musket, intending to fire at the bright spot, when it suddenly increased in size, and, while he stood speculating as to what it could be, a long tongue of flame leaped upward from branch to branch.

No need for speculation now, nor was it well that he stand very much longer on guard, for the terrible truth was all too plain.

The Abenakis had fired the woods, counting on burning the palisade, and thus giving them free entrance for the bloody business upon which they had come.

His first thought was to run for water, and then, even before he could make a movement toward the spring, came the realization that it was impossible to effect anything by such a course.

He would not be able to throw water upon the fire in the thicket, even though he exposed himself to full view over the top of the palisade, and this was probably exactly what the Indians hoped he might do.

"It begins to look as if we had about come to an end of the defence, and that nothing remains but to sell our lives as dearly as possible," he said, gloomily, to himself. "Everything around here is as dry as it well can be, and once the fire gains headway, even the houses must go."

Mark descended doggedly from the platform, and as he did so Susan cried, from her post of duty near the gate:

"What is on fire?"

"The Abenakis have started a blaze in the woods."

"Will the fence burn, think you?"

"Ay, when the fire is well under way."

"Can't we do anything toward putting out the blaze?"

"Nothing, unless we want the Indians to shoot us down before we can fire a shot."

"Then what is to be done?" and in her distress Susan leaped down from the platform to approach her cousin.

"Better stay where you are!" the lad cried, warningly. "I don't suppose it will make any great difference to us, and yet we should know if the Frenchmen come ashore after seeing the fire."

The girl returned immediately to her station, and even though he was at a considerable distance from her, Mark could hear the choking sob which escaped her lips.

"Keep up a stout heart, Sue; we can make a last stand inside the house."

"Ay, Mark; but it will be the last!"

The lad made no reply; he stood at some distance from the palisade as if trying to decide upon a course of action, and while he thus remained irresolute his mother came from the house.

There was no need that she ask for information; the blaze was so bright by this time that it must have been seen by those on the vessel, and Mistress Pemberton inquired in a low tone, but with no tremor in her voice:

"Are the logs dry?"

"Ay, mother; but it will be some time before the flames can eat in very deeply. We've got fifteen or twenty minutes yet."

"What is to be done?"

"We'll take refuge in the house, and shoot down as many as possible before the fire drives us out."

"If there is nothing more before us, why not come inside now? The Indians can climb up on the posts on either side and shoot you down while you stand here in the light."

"The Frenchmen are coming ashore!" Susan cried. "One boat-load has pushed off already!"

"We are going into the house," Mark said, hesitatingly, as if, even now, when prudence demanded that they should seek shelter as soon as possible, he was questioning whether he might effect something by remaining in the open.

"But if we don't stand guard the Indians will soon be over the fence," the girl cried, nervously.

"Ay, and if you stand there in the glow of the fire they can creep up under cover of the shadows to one side or the other, and shoot you down. We've done all we can here, Sue, and the remainder of our fight must be made from the house."

The report of a musket from the southern side of the stockade, and the humming of a bullet close beside Susan's head, gave emphasis to the lad's words, causing the sentinel to obey without further parley.

Once inside the dwelling, with the door strongly barred, the older members of the little party strove to appear unconcerned, each hoping to cheer the other, and at no time since the island was besieged did they display more courage than now, when there seemed no ray of hope remaining.

Through the crevices of the logs and the window-shutters could be seen the glow of the flames, which were increasing each instant, fanned as they were by short, furious gusts of wind which came from the gathering clouds.

"We must get under the roof, where I made the loopholes," Mark said to Susan and Luke. "There's no question but that the Indians will make a try at coming over the stockade before the fire has destroyed it, else they have changed their natures completely, and we won't give them full swing, even though we are cooped up here like rats in a trap."

"The boys want water," Ellen, who had been attending to the younger children, said, at this moment, and the elders of the party looked at each other in dismay.

The new danger which confronted them had driven, for the time being, everything else from their minds; but now all realized that, even though they might not be permitted to remain long in that frail refuge, they would suffer severely from thirst before the end came.

"Get into the loft, one on each side, and shoot with good aim if you see a painted face over the fence!" Mark cried, as he took up one of the buckets and went swiftly toward the door.

"You must not go out!" his mother said, as she barred the way. "It is certain by this time that the Abenakis are where they can have a view of the enclosure, and you will be shot down. Better that the children should suffer from thirst."

"We will all soon be needing something to drink, for it's bound to be hot inside here when the palisade catches fire. One bucketful of water will save us a good deal of suffering, and I'm bound to take the chances."

Then, before his mother could prevent him, Mark opened the door, running at full speed to the spring, which was not more than twenty feet distant.

That the Abenakis were on the alert could be told when half a dozen shots were fired in rapid succession; but, fortunately for the defenders of the island, not a bullet took effect, owing to Mark's rapid movements.



To those who were watching him in agonizing suspense from the house, it seemed as if the lad no more than wheeled about when he gained the spring, and then came toward the building in a zigzag course, well calculated to confuse the most skilful marksman.



He reentered the house with a bucket two-thirds full of muddy water, and, while barring the door, once more said, in a tone of triumph: [12](#)

"I reckoned it might be done if a fellow used his legs well. That stuff doesn't look fit to drink; but after the mud has settled a bit it will be better than nothing. I am to blame for not cleaning the spring out when I first knew that the children had wasted the supply."

"You have nothing with which to reproach yourself, Mark," his aunt said as she laid her hand affectionately on his shoulder. "You have taken the place of both your father and uncle, and there is not a man grown who could have done more, or better, work."

The lad's face flushed with pleasure at this praise, but he affected to give no heed to the words as he clambered into the loft, musket in hand, calling out when he was on the timbers above:

"Give us the ammunition up here, and we'll load our own guns until the enemy comes too fast."

Mistress Pemberton handed him only a portion of the powder and bullets, after which she stood on the top of a table ready to take the empty weapons when the sharpshooters required her services.

Mark was the first to discharge his musket, and a cry of pain followed the report, telling that the ammunition had not been wasted.

"What did you see?" his mother asked, anxiously.

"An Indian's head over the top of the fence near the gate. There's one villain the less to trouble us!"

At this moment Susan and Luke both fired, the reports coming so near together as to sound like one, and the girl cried, triumphantly:

"I've hit another! What did you do, Luke?"

"I don't know; he went backward at the flash, like a loon; but it seems as if I must have struck him, for I had a fair aim."

Mistress Pemberton now had work to perform, for those in the loft soon learned that it would be impossible to recharge the weapons and at the same time keep close watch on what might be happening outside.

Seven shots had been fired from the dwelling, three of which were known to have found their targets, when a heavy pounding at the gate told of additional danger.

"What is it?" Mistress Harding cried, and Mark replied, quietly, as if it was of no especial consequence:

"The Frenchmen have come, and are battering down the gate."

"How long will it take them to do it?" Susan asked, her voice quivering despite all efforts to render it steady.

"It will be a good half-hour's job, with what timber they can pick up near at hand. If they should cut down a stout tree, the work might be done in half that time. Keep your eyes on the top of the fence, for if one fellow gets inside he might succeed in pulling out the bars before we could stop him."

Twice more the children fired, and then it was as if the Abenakis had tired of a game at which they were rapidly being worsted without an opportunity to inflict any injury.

"They've made up their minds to wait till the gate is down," Mark said, grimly. "We must have all the muskets ready when the rush comes, and shoot with good aim, for it will be our last fair chance."

All this while the flames had been increasing in volume, and the heat inside the dwelling, filled with the smoke of burning powder as it was, seemed stifling.

The younger children had drank of the muddy water eagerly, giving no heed to its disagreeable appearance, and the older members of the little company were already suffering with thirst; but never one of them ventured to claim a portion of the scanty supply.

"The fence is on fire," Mark said as he left his station at the front of the loft to survey the scene in the rear. "The wind is getting up in great shape, and coming from the east, otherwise these houses would be on fire by this time."

"There goes the upper part of the gate!" Luke cried. "Two or three more fair blows, and the whole will be down!"

Mark came back to where he could overlook the scene of what he believed would be the final struggle, and the three children crouched, muskets in hand, ready to empty the six weapons before the enemy could approach the house sufficiently near to find shelter under its walls.

The two women were standing on a table, where they could reach the weapons when they were empty. In one corner of the room, seated on a bed which was laid on the floor behind the barricade of the door, were the other children, some crying for water, and others weeping with fear.

The powder smoke hung heavily in the small apartment, which was illumined by the glow of the flames, now not more than thirty feet distant, and the heat was almost overpowering.

The bucket in which Mark had brought the muddy water from the spring, was empty, and the

throats of the three children in the loft were literally parched with a thirst that could not be allayed.

They were beset by danger on every hand, and the supreme moment seemed very near, for once the gate was demolished, however desperately they might fight, the end was come.

"We are not to leave here alive," Susan whispered softly in Mark's ear, and he replied, pressing her hand:

"That part of it sha'n't be forgotten, Sue dear."

A cry from Luke; the crashing and splintering of wood; a shock which could be felt by the refugees as the heavy timbers fell inward, and the passage was open to the foe.

"Take good aim!" Mark shouted. "Shoot at the foremost, and work quickly!"

While one might have counted ten the enemy hung back as if fearing that a party of women and children might have planned an ambush, and then with a yell of triumph, the opening in the palisade was filled with armed men.

The defenders in the loft fired at almost the same instant; then, delaying only sufficiently long to fling back the empty weapons and take up those that were loaded, three more reports rang out.

The Frenchmen halted irresolutely for an instant, as four of their number fell to the ground, and had the children been able to fire one more volley immediately, it is quite certain the entire party would have beaten a retreat even at the moment of victory.

As the men, recovering courage, dashed forward, a heavy peal of thunder seemed to shake the very earth, and on the moment rain fell in torrents, coming as suddenly and in such volume as if having been poured from some immense reservoir. [13](#)

The enemy recoiled as if confronted by an overwhelming force, and as they wavered the children in the loft discharged three muskets, each bullet seemingly taking effect.

Then, suddenly, it was as if a black mantel had been dropped over the terrible scene. A certain portion of the enormous downpour of water was converted into clouds of steam by the flames, which were literally beaten down, and those who had struggled so bravely to defend the island could distinguish nothing.



"What is the matter?" Ellen cried in alarm at thus being suddenly plunged into profound darkness, and the younger children screamed with terror.

A deafening peal of thunder seemingly came in answer to the question followed a second later by a vivid, blinding flash of lightning which illumined the interior of the loft through the few crevices between the logs, until the defenders could see each other's faces gleaming ghastly pale.

The water trickling through the roof restored them to their senses somewhat, and Mark said, speaking as if with an effort:

"The storm has been gathering since afternoon. Now, while we are cooped up here in the darkness, the enemy can work his will!"

Again the crashing of thunder drowned all other sounds; once more the jagged rifts of unearthly fire, breaking through the clouds, illumined the scene, and Susan cried, as if unable to believe her own statement:

"The men are running away! They are running away!"

Mark and Luke sprang to her side, waiting for another flash of lightning, and when it came, preceded by crashing thunder which caused the house of logs to tremble, the enclosure was deserted.

"It's true that some of them have gone; perhaps all," Mark announced; "but the whole crew will come back when the storm is over, and there will be nothing save our muskets to prevent them from marching in at their pleasure."

"Let us give thanks for the mercies which have already been bestowed upon us," Mistress Pemberton said, devoutly. "The fire is extinguished, and we need no longer fear being burned to death."

"That might not be the worst that will befall us," Mark thought, recalling to mind the fate of those settlers of Maine who had been put to death by torture.

Because of the fury of the tempest, it seemed as if its force must be quickly spent, and the besieged waited in painful suspense, fearing that the downpour of water would speedily cease; but the moments went by amid the flashing of lightning and crashing of thunder, without any abatement of the tempest, save as the wind lulled for a few seconds to come in yet more spiteful gusts.

When half an hour had passed, Mistress Pemberton insisted that the three children should come down from the loft in order that they might all be together during this respite from the cruel foe, and when they were in the room below, freed from the fear of immediate death, thanks were given to Him who "ruleth the tempest" for this new lease of life, brief though it might prove to be.

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## CHAPTER VI. THE WRECK

Hope once more sprang up in the hearts of those who had been so sorely tried, when the storm continued with great fury. The electrical portion of the tempest appeared to have passed away, leaving the raging wind and pelting rain to guard the settlers who of a verity had descended into the very valley of the shadow of death. [14](#)

When it was understood that that which was at first supposed to be a summer gale had developed into a furious northeast storm, giving no token of subsiding, Mark said as he rose to his feet:

"When the rain first came it seemed as if my throat was parched dry with thirst, and now that water is to be had in abundance, all hands of us appear to have forgotten that we wanted a drink."

"We might catch some of the water that is finding its way through the roof," Mistress Pemberton said as if such a possibility had never occurred to her before.

"We can do better than that, mother dear. I'll go to the spring for a full bucket, and when it has been strained we shall have what will be an improvement on rainwater."

"But possibly some of the enemy may be lurking outside," Mistress Harding said, becoming timorous once more, now that the imminent danger had passed.

"Whoever has been out in the storm all this while will be harmless, aunt, for his musket would be filled with something other than powder," Mark replied with a laugh, and then he unbarred the door, surprised to find that it was only with difficulty he could make headway against the furious blasts.

So powerful was the wind that it became necessary for Susan and Luke to unite their strength in order to close the door while Mark was absent, and when he returned with a brimming bucket of discolored water, the three had no little difficulty in putting the bars into place again.

"It is the fiercest storm I ever saw!" Mark exclaimed as he dashed the rain-drops from his face.

"We'll pray that the *Future Hopes* is in a snug harbor, otherwise she will have to scud, for I don't believe they could heave her to."

"Do you think there is any probability your father and uncle may be out in this tempest?" Mistress Pemberton asked, more anxious now for the safety of the absent ones than she previously had been concerning herself.

"They are too good sailors, mother dear, to take many chances, and we had fair warning of this storm. If we hadn't been in such sore straits, there's no question but that we would have been prepared for it. I noticed the clouds gathering, but at the time thought only that it would be our misfortune, since we could not keep watch of the Indians. Close-reefed, and with plenty of sea-room, the *Future Hopes* will ride out this gale without doing more harm to herself than the straining of a seam, perhaps."

"The Frenchmen could not have had time to get their vessel under way," Mistress Pemberton said as if thinking aloud, and Mark sprang to his feet in excitement.

"Of course they couldn't, and it is well for them if they didn't succeed in getting on board, for the craft never had been built that can ride at anchor to the eastward of the brook while the wind is so heavy. It would have been impossible to get under way, for she'd be on the rocks before her nose could be brought around into the wind!"

"Do you suppose they are yet on the island?"

"I think, unless all hands are good sailors, that they'd try to get on board, and that could have been done because the sea wouldn't grow heavy in an instant."

Further speculation as to the fate of their foes was checked very suddenly by what sounded like the groaning of a human being in deepest distress, coming from one corner of the room in which they were seated.

Instinctively the inmates of the dwelling clutched each other, for it was impossible to see anything in that profound darkness, and during many seconds no one spoke.

Then the dismal sound could be heard once more, and Mark, forcing himself to beat down the fear which assailed him, said, with an effort:

"Can you find one of the candles, mother? Some one here must be dying. Where are the children?" [15](#)

"Johnny and Jimmie are with me," Ellen said, and Mary added:

"I'm here with Luke."

"No one could have got inside without our knowing it," Mistress Pemberton said, as she groped around for the scanty store of candles, which were reserved for use on especial occasions.

Mark did not reply until his mother succeeded, after many fruitless efforts, in striking a spark from the steel and flint on the tinder, and as the feeble flame of the candle flickered and flared in the wind which made its way through the crevices, the lad began to tear away the barricade of household goods which had been thrown up to screen the window.

"It is useless to search there," Mistress Pemberton said, quickly, as if a sudden thought had come to her. "One of those whom you wounded is lying outside, and we hear his moans because he is close beside the building."

Mark was at the door in an instant, forgetting that he was hastening to the succor of one who, a short hour previous, was bent on killing him, and Susan seized the lad by the arm, as she said in a tone of caution:

"It may be some trick to get you outside. Be careful what you do; we have heard that the

Indians often make use of such means to get a victim in their clutches."

"I'll warrant there is no Indian living who could stay out in this storm an hour or more, and then be able to do very much mischief," Mark replied as he unfastened the bar, waiting only long enough for Luke and Susan to get hold of the door, lest it should be torn from its hinges by the wind, before he darted out into the blackness.

A moment later it was possible to hear his voice, as if he spoke to someone, and then all was still, save for the raging of the tempest, until he cried from the outside:

"Open the door, youngsters. I've got a Frenchman here, who must be very near death!"

Then, as Luke and Susan gave him admittance, he came staggering into the room with an apparently lifeless body in his arms, while Mistress Pemberton shielded the candle as best she might, lest the wind extinguish the feeble flame.

Mark laid his burden on the bed, heeding not the fact that the water was running from every angle of the stranger's garments.

Like Mark, the two women forgot that a bitter enemy was before them; but with gentle care set about ministering to his wants, if, indeed he would have any more in this world.

Now all the occupants of the dwelling were too much engrossed with the work of saving the life which had so nearly been taken by one of their number to be able to tell whether the storm was yet raging, or if the morning had come.

In a very short time it was learned that the man lived, although how he survived after being exposed to the fury of the tempest so long, could not be understood. He had an ugly-looking wound in the thigh, and another in the left breast; but Mistress Pemberton gave it as her opinion that he was not mortally hurt.

"With good nursing, I doubt not but that he will live," she said, as she dressed the wounds to the best of her ability. "But if he does, what shall we do with him?"

"There is no need to answer that question now, mother dear," Mark said, gently. "We'll try to pull him through, even if we have already done our best to kill him, and then he'll know what it is to have coals of fire heaped on his head; that is," he added, after a brief pause, "if his comrades allow us to live long enough to do the job."

A fire was built, tea of herbs made and administered to the sufferer, and before morning came it was possible for him to speak.

He was sufficiently acquainted with the English language to make them understand him, and his first words were expressive of surprise.

"Save when you attack us without cause, we have no desire for your death," Mistress Pemberton replied. "Now you are no longer a soldier, striving to do us grievous injury, but a suffering fellow creature, and so long as it is in our power we will do whatsoever we may toward giving you aid."

The wounded man turned his face away, as if ashamed to look the good woman in the face, and after a time Mark questioned him as to how he chanced to be so near the house.

From his story, told little by little because of the difficulty experienced in talking, the facts were soon known.

He had been among the first to burst through the gate, and was not wounded until when the last shot was fired. Then instinct prompted him to gain a shelter under the wall of the building, where it would not be possible for those on the inside to see him, immediately after which he lost consciousness. During a long while he remained as if dead, and it is probable that the deluge of rain served to revive him after a time; but he was ignorant of having made any outcry. He remembered of realizing that he was alone, exposed to the storm, and the next knowledge



was that the women were striving to nurse him back to life.



It was morning before the inmates of the dwelling gave much heed to anything save the wounded soldier; and then Mark, after cautioning the remainder of the family to stay inside the dwelling unless they heard his cry for help, ventured out into the tempest, which continued with but little decrease of violence.

The sun had not yet risen, and in the gray light of early dawn it was not possible to distinguish objects at any great distance. He had, in the immediate vicinity of the stockade, however, good proof of the violence with which the storm raged.

A portion of the palisade itself had been overthrown, leaving an opening through which the entire force of the enemy might have marched shoulder to shoulder. Trees were uprooted; the small boat, which had been drawn beyond reach of the tide, was now within ten feet of the battered gate, having been carried there by the wind.

That the buildings within the stockade remained un-injured was due, doubtless, to the thicket in the rear which served to shield them from the full fury of the elements.

Turn where he might, the same scene of devastation met his gaze, and he understood that if any of the Frenchmen remained on the island they would be powerless to depart, for their vessel could not have outlived the night.

The wind was yet so violent that only with difficulty could he make his way from one point to another, and the rain beat upon his face until it became necessary to shield his eyes in order to see anything twenty paces distant; but he struggled against the elements, making his way along the shore toward the place where the Frenchmen's schooner had been moored.

The vessel no longer remained at her anchorage, nor did he expect to see her there; but he was not quite prepared for that which met his gaze when he was where a view of the most northerly point of the harbor island could be had.

Between where he stood and the opposite shore was the hull of the schooner, keel uppermost, tossing on the short waves, now completely submerged, and again rising high in the air until the greater portion of the planking could be seen. Clinging to this restless wreck were six or eight human beings, and on the beach at his feet lay the bodies of two men who had been beaten down to death during the conflict of the elements.

After watching for several moments the plunging, rolling remnant of what had been a seagoing vessel, fitted to withstand almost any buffeting of wave or wind, Mark became convinced that the wreck was moored in some fashion, and then it was possible to guess very nearly how the disaster had occurred.

It seemed probable that when the first of the Frenchmen gained the schooner's deck, after the fury of the tempest had forced them to retreat from the stockade, the wild tossing of the craft as the waves were beginning to rise induced them to let go every anchor on board, under the belief that she could be held at moorings until the storm had subsided sufficiently to admit of her clawing away from the shore.



When the tempest was at its height, and after the attacking party had succeeded in getting on board, the little craft must have been literally blown down, until the water, rushing into the open hatches, had caused her to completely upset.

The wounded, and all others who were in the cabin, must have been drowned offhand, and that some of those who tried to save themselves by clinging to the hulk had suffered a like fate could be told by the lifeless bodies at Mark's feet.

Aid had come to the defenders of the island on the wings of the tempest; and at the very time when it seemed as if all hope of succor was vain, the enemy had been overcome by "Him who holdeth the waters in the hollow of His hand."

As he gazed at the struggling wretches on the bottom of the wreck, some of whom waved their hands feebly, as if nearly exhausted and imploring him to help them, Mark forgot that but a few hours previous these same men had been thirsting for his blood, and thought only that they were in sore need of his assistance.

He ran with all speed to the stockade, shouting as he approached, and when the women and children hastened outside, believing him to be in distress, he hurriedly told of what he had seen.

"Of all those who made the attack, I am satisfied that only the men on the hulk remain alive. It is for us to help them if we can. There should be enough of us here to drag our boat to the water, and Luke and I will see what can be done in the way of life-saving."

Sorely beset though they had been, no one thought at that moment of the suffering which had been endured because of these men who were now so near death; but all, even the youngest children, laid hold of the boat to launch her.

It was no slight task to drag the craft, small though she was, over the sand to the water's edge; but the task was finally accomplished, and then many moments were spent trying to find the oars, which had been blown out of the boat during such time as the tempest forced her upon the shore.

A full half-hour must have elapsed from the moment Mark discovered the wreck until he and his brother were ready to set off on their mission of mercy, and then it was an open question as to whether they would succeed in the battle against the boisterous waves.

The members of both families stood near the water's edge, regardless of the furious storm which was raging, as they watched with anxious eyes the efforts of the lads. They had set out to save lives; but very many times did it seem as if their own must of a certainty be sacrificed.

Fortunately they were partially sheltered from the wind by the harbor island, otherwise the task could never have been accomplished, and not until both the lads were well-nigh exhausted did they arrive at the plunging hulk.

Now it was that the most dangerous portion of the work must be performed. Only at imminent risk of swamping the small boat could she be taken sufficiently near the wreck to permit of a rescue, and then it was necessary to handle her with the utmost skill, otherwise she would have been stove to kindling against the side of the hulk. [16](#)

When the boat came close at hand, all the Frenchmen gathered at one point, as if counting on leaping aboard at the same moment, and Mark shouted, peremptorily:

"You'll swamp us if more than one comes at a time. Lay back there you fellows who are the strongest, and help the weakest first!"

Then they quarreled among themselves, each insisting that he was in the greatest need of help, and Mark, finally becoming impatient, cried, sternly:

"If you can't come aboard like decent people, we'll leave the whole boiling of you to get along as may be possible."

"There is not one of us who can cling to this wreck half an hour longer," a man cried, piteously. "Already five have been washed away and drowned."

"Two of you take hold and send aboard that fellow who is lying across the keel. He seems to be in the worst shape. Stand back!" the lad added, as four men made ready to seize the small boat at the first opportunity. "If you come in other order than I give the word, I'll leave all hands."

By dint of scolding, pulling the boat forward or back as the waves threatened, and otherwise handling his small craft in a sailorly fashion, Mark succeeded in getting four of the men aboard, leaving three to be rescued later.

The boat would carry no more of a load than she then had, while the storm was so furious, and the lads pulled shoreward, aided greatly, when going in this direction, by the wind.

The members of both families gathered on the beach near about where a landing would be made, and when the shipwrecked men had been set ashore they were helped toward the stockade by the women and children, for the Frenchmen were so nearly exhausted that it was impossible to walk unaided.

Then Mark and Luke started on the second journey, battling quite as desperately as before, and the day was fully half-spent when they brought the last of the survivors ashore.

It was not until the seven Frenchmen were being cared for in the apartment of the Pemberton house where the wounded soldier lay, that the lad began to realize the possible danger. These

eight men, after having recovered, might easily take possession of the stockade, and Mark was inclined to believe that people who were willing to make war on women and children, could not be trusted to play a manly part even toward those who had saved them from death.

"What shall we do with them all?" Susan asked, as she came out of the house, which had much the appearance of a hospital, to where Mark stood studying the matter seriously.

"It has just come into my mind that we might herd them in your father's house. The greater portion of the things have been taken from there, and we can arrange it to bar the doors and shutters on the outside."

"Are you counting on holding them as prisoners?" Susan asked, in surprise.

"That is the only way we may be certain of a crew like that. After all that has happened, I wouldn't believe in any promises that might be made, and they shall be guarded like so many wildcats."

"Every one of whom appears to be grateful."

"Ay, I suppose they are now, before having recovered; but it may be a different matter, once they're in good shape."

"Do you believe there can be any on the harbor island?"

"I'm satisfied there are no others alive out of all the crew of French and Indians. Luke and I counted on burying the bodies which have been washed ashore, and while we are at that work you had better gather up all the muskets and ammunition, hiding the lot in the stable until we have the men secured."

Then, calling his brother, Mark set off toward the beach to perform the last rites over those who had lost their lives while trying to commit murder most foul, and, that having been done, the two lads began transforming the Harding house into a prison, which last was done by fastening all the shutters and one of the doors on the outside. The other door was to be barred in such a manner that it could be readily opened by those who were charged with the care of the Frenchmen.

These tasks were not completed until nightfall, and then Mark told the rescued party exactly what it was his purpose to do, explaining that he was not ready to believe in any protestations they might make.

"You must be held prisoners until our fathers return, and it is to be remembered that if we find one of you attempting to leave the building, which will be given over to your use, we shall shoot him down without the slightest feeling of pity or remorse."

The men swore most solemnly that they would obey every command which might be given by those who had saved them from death, and Mark, armed with a loaded musket, lost no time in escorting them to the Harding house.

It was his intention to have them closely guarded during every hour of the day and night, and to such end Luke was stationed at the front of the building, where, through a crevice which had been made between the logs by Mark, he could keep his charges in view.

Mistress Pemberton would not consent to having the wounded man removed with the others. He was given a bed in one corner of the room, after the furniture piled up as a barricade had been put in place, and Mary and Ellen were instructed to watch him, not with the idea that he might try to escape, but because his condition was such, owing to the wounds and subsequent exposure, that the most careful nursing and attention was needed.

The storm subsided at sunset; the clouds disappeared, and the first night after the besieged were turned jailers was as calm and peaceful as if the harmony of nature had never been disturbed by the clash of arms.

Luke remained on duty until about ten o'clock in the evening, when Susan took his place, and shortly after midnight Mark took his turn at guarding the prisoners.

The Frenchmen had shown no signs of a disposition to do other than as they were commanded; but Mark would not put faith in them, and kept his watch as if knowing they had already formed a plan for capturing those who succored them.

The lad paced to and fro in front of the dwelling, looking in upon the men every five minutes, until a new day had come, and then as he gazed across the waters watching for the sun to rise, he saw the dingy canvas of the *Future Hopes*, glistening like silver in the early light.

The fresh breeze was bearing the little vessel swiftly on, and before any inmate of the Pemberton house was astir, she swung to her anchor close inside the harbor, while the two men listened to the story which Mark had to tell.

The fishermen had not been able to gain a shelter when the storm burst upon them, therefore the *Future Hopes* scudded before the wind during the four and twenty hours, which explained why she had arrived so much sooner than had been expected.

It would be a labor of love to follow the fortunes of these two families who, in 1758, defended the Island of Mount Desert so bravely against the combined attacks of French and Indians; but historians make no further mention of them, after setting forth in the fewest possible words their deeds, therefore this tale must perforce come to an end.

We do know, however, from the records of Pemaquid, that Masters Pemberton and Harding carried to the fort eight Frenchmen as prisoners, and that the authorities of Massachusetts took them in charge several weeks later.

It is also known that in 1769 one Mark Pemberton, with his wife Susan, settled on Penobscot Bay near where the town of Camden now stands, and it is reasonable to infer that this man was the same who, aided by Susan Harding, so bravely defended the island.

THE END.