

*Escape*  
A DRAMATIC EVASION OF A YOUNG CAPTIVE GIRL, FROM THE  
IROQUOIS TO HER OWN COUNTRY.

Her Journey Through The Woods.

A young maid of about 15 years of age, remarkable amongst all girls of her tribe for her so many endowments, was made a captive of war ~~when~~ still unbaptized. That very year 1648, in which she fell into the hands of the enemy, records many fights having taken place on the Huron Territory, namely the sudden invasion of the important Mission St. Joseph, by the Iroquois, in which the only survivors from the general massacre were those who ~~had~~ escaped by flight. *Among all those who perished, many* ~~the others~~ were transpierced by the sword or struck by the axe; a great number expired in the fire which had been set by the enemy to all the cabins of the village, including the church, where so many had gathered, and among whom a large percentage were consumed with the building enveloping in same holocaust their saintly Pastor, *Anthony Daniel* *(now a canonized saint)* whose body transfixes with arrows and after being hit by a bullet, was hurled into the sacred building transformed into a *huge blazing woodpile*....

*of this narrative* <sup>†</sup> The girl's episode of life from which is drawn the subject matter must have been one among those of her tribe who took to flight at the approach of the enemy, but happened to be caught and brought a captive to the Iroquois country. There she had her life spared but was condemned to serve as a slave in an Indian family. The condition <sup>of a</sup> slave was by no means enviable in those times among Indians, when such ones were exposed to all kinds of *harsh treatments*, even to being killed for the least offense or by a mere whim of their masters.

Before her captivity the girl had heard of religion, attending for a good while the instruction given to those who were preparing themselves <sup>in</sup> ~~in~~ view <sup>of</sup> ~~so~~ their approaching Baptism. She had

oftentimes assisted at divine ceremonies in the Mission Church; on this account her name was listed among those recognized as catechumens (Aspirants to Baptism). Some members of her family were already Christians, namely her mother and one sister of hers who were fervent and strong in their faith.

These two good souls most attached to the girl <sup>because</sup> ~~in reason~~ of their so close relationship were most disconsolate over the disappearance of the child so dear to their hearts.

These two nearest relatives had their sorrow and anxiety aggravated by the incertitude in which they were with respect to the girl's fate, and the incertitude as to whether she was alive or dead.

The mere possibility that the child might be still alive was enough to induce the Christian members of the family, especially her loving mother, to pray to God for her dear child with all the strength of her faith and the fervor of her soul. Her great worry was that the girl had not been baptized; it was ~~hence~~ ~~ward~~ ~~off~~ from her the misfortune of dying deprived of this sacrament of spiritual regeneration that made this good mother plead the harder with God.

She knew that God had many ways, ways sometimes unexpected and mysterious which He adopts with respect to some <sup>chosen ones</sup> ~~elects~~ whom He has determined to save.

In her simple and confident faith the woman <sup>would say</sup> to God: "Oh! God! look upon my poor child from above where thou dwellest--- my poor child whom Thou lovest still more than I do. Thou knowest where she is, whereas I do not... Bring her back to me or let me know where to go that I might find and get her. Thou wantest her saved still more than I do. Thou hast the power to save her, whereas I have none but my prayer. Thou knowest that she is unbaptized. Oh! permit

her not to die in thy disgrace. Send the Black-Robe on her path, or dispatch one of thy angels to pour the Water of Grace on her forehead that she may belong to Jesus and that Heaven maybe her everlasting home where I shall be able to meet her".

When the sorrowful mother was so solicitous at home of her ~~absent~~ <sup>missing</sup> daughter, calling heaven's attention <sup>to</sup> her, the girl on her part was not forgetful of her religious mother in her so irksome isolation, thinking of her almost continually. Of whom could she be thinking of, if not of her parents in her dreary captivity, where no one could be found whom she could love, <sup>and</sup> ~~where~~ there was nobody to love her.

It was an awful suffering for so a young and tender-hearted girl to be retained in such a distant country as that wherein she actually was. yes! to be at such a frightful distance as to hold all thought of return as purely fantastic. How could she possibly go back? No way by which to go alone, nobody whom she could go with. Her tyrannical masters are most watchful---Woe to her if they only discovered, or merely suspected any <sup>intention in her towards running</sup> away from them.

Deprived of all human means by which <sup>she might return</sup> ~~to~~ to her own country to rejoin her dear parents, she saw herself riveted forever to this soil of inclemency and of iniquity --- a tender lamb among wolves.

This sad prospect was plunging her afflicted soul in a sea of anguish which was causing her moments of <sup>deep depression</sup> accompanied with streams of tears flowing from ~~her~~ broken heart.

Happily the girl had learned enough of religion to know how to call on God in her trials and most distressing moments, and her

notions on the nature of Heaven she had acquired ~~was~~ <sup>awakened</sup> ~~awakening~~ at times in her heart keen desires of ~~being~~ <sup>becoming a</sup> partaker of its eternal felicity. But the ~~souvenir~~ <sup>realization</sup> of her condition of an unbaptized person presented itself in her mind to crush these hopeful aspirations which her heart had conceived, causing her ~~another "infernium" of~~ <sup>further and more bitter</sup> mental tortures.

It happened in one of her worst moments of grief and desolation that ~~picking up her spirits~~ <sup>recovering courage</sup> she ~~stopped sobbing on a sudden;~~ <sup>suddenly</sup> a ray of mysterious light had flashed through her mind tearing through the thick and gloomy cloud that overshadowed her soul... the thought of the fatherly goodness of God had produced that heavenly phenomenon. Oh! yes, all earthly ways out to my country are shut up on me, she murmured to herself--but could there not be any heavenly issue, at least, open out before me, with the help and power of Him by whom all things were made. Her faith was giving her an affirmative answer. Thereupon, raising her eyes heavenward still wet from tears she had just shed, she paused a moment---then gazing steadily as to a certain point in the sky, she began: "Oh! great God of Heaven, Master of life, the God of my mother and sister, who know thee better than I do, who serve thee so faithfully, have pity on me!

"Thou knowest that I am not baptized, it is what worries me so much. I wish above all to be made thy child by becoming a christian. Thou who hast given life to my body, to whom shall I go <sup>to give life to my soul</sup> but to Thee as there is no Black-Robe within my reach. I know that nothing is impossible to Thee even things above the power of man are easy to Thee. Oh! before my body falls a victim ~~to~~ the cruelty of my masters, give grace to my soul that I may live for you and go to Heaven".

This prayer in all its simplicity and directness must have taken its flight <sup>to</sup> ~~at~~ heaven as soon as breathed out and brought up by some angel to the throne.

How often she must have poured out her soul in such mystical utterances under the clear blue or starry sky <sup>at night</sup> reflecting in her spiritual sense the presence of the Great God of the Universe! Many times, no doubt, during the day, in the performance of her most arduous tasks imposed by her merciless masters, as for instance, in her trudging walks all alone through the woods, to bring over to the cabin, game left behind by the hunters far away in the bush. But especially in her most gloomy hours, as during those long and dreary moments of insomnia <sup>given</sup> to recalling the souvenirs of her dearest family ties, or in pondering over the depth <sup>of</sup> her actual miseries, prayer then, was doubtlessly the most substantial support afforded to her weakening heart.

Her faith, her love, her heavenward impulses...all such religious sentiments as these were meanwhile <sup>taking</sup> a more definite form in her soul that had an irradiating effect on her inner, even <sup>than</sup> more, on her exterior senses, with the consequent effect of a continuous increase of fervor in her colloquies with God <sup>which became still</sup> more frequent.

Meanwhile the time for her liberation from captivity was <sup>coming</sup> ~~becoming~~ <sup>closer</sup> ~~more~~ pressing from day <sup>by</sup> day.

Her piety, her abstention from all public idolatrous functions or gatherings favoring indecency or dishonest promiscuities like some of their dances in honor of their principal demon (Agris-koa) were <sup>a wave of unpopularity</sup> causing quite an <sup>the</sup> ~~eruption~~ of bile among the most fanatics against her! -- especially among the yopahs. <sup>there</sup> were talks among the latter to the effect of putting an end <sup>to her</sup> ~~to her~~ <sup>and to her</sup>

life. She knew it, but she would never consent in spite of all solicitations and threats to any act <sup>liable</sup> ~~able~~ to soil her soul.

Should such a beautiful soul ever be deprived of the Grace of God and of the means of arriving at the Baptismal Fountain where water of Divine Regeneration might flow on her forehead onto purification? No! No!

One day during which the poor captive girl was out in a small field secluded from the view of the village by an intercepting curtain of green foliage, working at planting corn for her masters, her ears were struck and gently rejoiced by a strain of a beautiful choral rendered as though by voices from above.

She recognized some of the hymns she had heard in the little church of her village during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. At the conclusion of this mysterious singing she found herself on her knees as one praying with fervor before the Blessed Sacrament. She fancied in her bewilderment she would actually see the priest in surplice and stole, with acolytes each side of him---she looked up but failed to see anybody.

A great comfort was produced into her soul as an effect of this blessed <sup>sound</sup> ~~audition~~. Her hope of being delivered from her captivity was singularly augmented, although she could not think of any means of escape, humanly speaking.

Some days later in like circumstance of place, the same heavenly chanting was heard again, with same effect of joy and comfort to her soul, joining in with her prayers the singing as she did the first time.

It became more significant to her when the signal favor was repeated again, the same chant being heard a third time. Then praying the longer, and feeling her faith and confidence in God

redoubled, her fearless courage overcoming all hesitation, she risked her frail person into the most hazardous flight one can ever think of for a young maid such as her.

She leaped as by an impulsion stronger than her own self into immense tracts of land covered with woods, urging her course farther and farther into the depth of unexplored forests, through serried trees casting overhead sombre shadows impenetrable to the rays of the sun, keeping her speed up over hill-tops and down through deep valleys, without relenting, without daring even to turn her head behind for fear that she might see some one set to her pursuit under the command of her actually irritated masters over her very evasion.

Shall this unprotected girl be ever able to reach her native country situated at a distance of some three hundred miles from the place of her captivity.

Three hundred miles of dense forest intercepted by rivers, by lakes...across mountains, marshes and hundreds of difficult passages, without food, without road, without anything to indicate to her the right direction; without any protective arms against wild and ferocious <sup>beasts</sup> ~~beats~~, and the impossibility of counting on anything such as game eventually killed on the way for her very subsistence, deprived as she was of all articles <sup>required</sup> demanded to make hunting possible...

A three-hundred mile journey in such unwarrantable condition, was it not for that girl to run fatally to her own destruction? In all truth the risk was such that it will be a miracle if ever she succeeds in going throughout that stupendous adventure alive.

How could she be induced to take such a decision? There was in her head an idea of supernatural order and in her soul an inspiration by which she was governed and made to despise all human challenges from following her star.

She had already been going for three days in her fugitive course without accident or incident, hastening her progression without interruption, except now for the first time taking a little rest on the shore of a small river that she had just crossed on foot; the water of which she drank to <sup>quench</sup> ~~stench~~ her thirst and refresh her body supposedly tired and hungry to death. But such was not the case although she had taken no food for more than three days, in spite of her strenuous and continued walk added to her fast, she was not feeling hungry nor experiencing the least exhaustion.

Before arising from her resting place for a new start, she saw herself approached suddenly by four Indian men.

It is hard to say who were the most astonished at seeing each other. These men must have been more surprised <sup>for it is unusual for a</sup> ~~at seeing a~~ young girl <sup>like</sup> alone in such an advanced place into an untrodden forest, <sup>being superstitious</sup> then she was afraid at first in perceiving the men. Their amazement <sup>must</sup> ~~might~~ have been such as to make them raise the question <sup>as to</sup> whether she had, or not, dropped right down from the sky. Thereupon they asked her where she might have come from. She told them her story. Hearing of her origin, <sup>and</sup> not being from above, of course, but from the Huron Nation and that she was running away from the Iroquois to her country. This candid and honest disclosure of her nationality and social condition constituted by itself an indiscretion of the worst consequence, involving a potential woe, the worst ~~she~~ which she had ever been subjected to. For two of these travellers being Iroquois Indians, and therefore bitterest enemies of the Hurons, wanted to make her a victim of their national hatred. In their estimation, she was a criminal, <sup>running</sup> ~~having run~~ away from her <sup>Iroquois</sup> masters, which crime must be expiated with the pain of death, accompanied with tortures according to the Iroquois' criminal code. This is the impending woe which she can but expect now to befall her from the fortuitous encounter of these ominous travellers.

A moment more and she will be into their hands forced to go back to her masters now in an actual state of fury against her because of her secret <sup>escape</sup> evasion.

Had these two awful creatures been instantly changed into a pair of ferocious bears or voracious wolves to <sup>devour</sup> devour her right there, it would have been--she thought, a fortune to her; such was her horror to go back to her captivity that even her being eaten alive by wild beasts was considered by her a good fortune compared with her predicament in the present hour.

---Why should these men come across my path as if it had been arranged by some inimical fatality working under the power of some spirit of evil---she mused within herself. But her faith in God and her confidence into His divine keeping shall not be frustrated.

She undertook the journey through an inspiration not of her own, but from above; she was perfectly conscious of that. She knew positively that the God whom she seeks so heroically will not fail her in her despairing situation. God had seen the awful plight of the supplicating girl and did work also in consequence of it by the medium of the other two Indians who fulfilled the role of guardian angels toward her. These two good Indians belonging to the <sup>Neutral</sup> ~~Neutre~~ Nation being deeply moved to compassion for the runaway captive, would save her by all means. They pleaded like skilled advocates with the two Iroquois men giving for principle <sup>al</sup> argument that the girl having already crossed the boundary of the hunting area of the Iroquois Nation ~~or~~ that of the <sup>al</sup> Neutre Nation by crossing the river nearby the Iroquois have no longer any right over her, therefore their claim is warranted; convinced by the soundness of the argument, the two

Iroquois ~~men~~ gave up contending and abandoned the girl to her liberty.

What a relief succeeded into her soul when passing from the stifling atmosphere of fear to <sup>the</sup> serene and <sup>open</sup> dilatating air of real <sup>freedom</sup> liberation. She was not slow in her gratitude to give God full credit for the happy issue of this dreadful encounter. She gave Him promptly a full tribute of heartfelt thanks.

Her two defenders before departing gave her something to break her fast and sustain her strenght <sup>th</sup> a few days. Comforted materially by the nourishment she took and morally by the new proof of God's assistance, she started again with a new courage and lighter steps on her adventurous journey. She was going like one led by a special star lighted by God in the heavens for her safe guidance through the immense stretch of trackless forests, where possibilities of getting lost, for one like her, without the least experience of the woods, are counted by the thousands, besides a hundred chances of succumbing under the hardships encountered during the way.

In spite of the absence of all human means she accomplished her wondrous perigrination, <sup>and arrived safely</sup> in a safe arrival into her country. This feat is worthy of a heroine and more than enough to make her name pass to posterity as such.

The first thought of the girl on reaching her country was not for going directly home to embrace her mother and the rest of the family, according to natural feelings, but to go first to St. Mary's Mission (Forte Ste Marie) to call at the priest's house and implore the grace of Baptism: this in spite of the fact that the Mission being located <sup>far</sup> beyond her home, she walked over regardless of her own fatigue and exhaustion which her long perigrination <sup>pil-</sup> should have cost her.

She obtained at last what she had desired so ardently. Her wishes were at last accomplished, her fear suppressed, her joy full, when she arose from the Sacrament of Life. Then she started to her village proclaiming to everybody the mercies of God in her regard. The name of that elect of God has not been given us by Father Ragueneau who, most likely, baptiz~~ed~~<sup>ed</sup> her and ~~she~~ gave the account of her <sup>escape</sup> secret evasion.

With respect to the rest of her life we have no detail except the testimony of its being worthy of her <sup>previous career</sup> anterior life from the same Missionary when he wrote of her: "Ever since her Baptism <sup>she is</sup> her fervor has been increasing and indefatigable in recounting to people the great mercies of God towards her".

We have the right to surmise how far in the arduous and steep road up the mountain of Christian perfection she must have gone after having travelled a so long and so hard a road to arrive at the Baptismal fountain in order to be made a Christian. Her progress in spiritual ways must have been the more speedy as she was not called to live long after her baptism--most likely she was involved in the general massacre of her nation in the following year (1649).

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