

XII

THE WARRIOR'S LOVE.

A Legend of Bois Blanc.

THE admirable site of Bois Blanc on the Canadian side of the mouth of the Detroit River, commanding the main channel, attracted in the early days of the colony, the eye of the experienced soldier. It was for a long time a mooted question whether Fort Pontchartrain would remain at Detroit or be removed to this island. It received its name from a superb forest of white wood, but it was shorn of its crown of glory by an act of vandalism during that brief panic of patriotism in 1837, called by the self-styled "patriots" The Patriot War. They felled these glorious giant trees for purposes of military observation. Here Tecumseh and his warriors in 1813 awaited the

issue of the Battle of Lake Erie, and as soon as the fatal import to the English was known, the chief crossed over to Malden, then garrisoned by Proctor. To his amazement he found the British commander making hurried preparations to evacuate without the faintest show of resistance. Forced to passive obedience by circumstances he could not crush and despising the cowardice of the act, Tecumseh begged Proctor to leave him arms and ammunition, that he and his braves might defend the fort against the victorious Americans. The British general's refusal to do so called forth the stinging and contemptuous remark from the outraged savage, "that he (Proctor) was like a fat cur sneaking away with his tail between his legs, after making a great show of courage."

After Charlevoix's visit in 1722 to these regions, a Huron mission was established on this island under the direction of Fathers Potier and de la Richardie. Several hundred of the tribe came, and soon their tents blossomed like wild flowers through the woods. The joyous laughter of children sent its warm, exhilarating tones over the waters. The sweet sound of the bell from the rude, birchen chapel bade the echoes of the forest awake and respond gladly to the message of redemption. But the English with their

eager desire to extend their trade to the West, sowed seeds of dissension among the Indians and poisoned their hearts against the French. In 1747 a general uprising of all the tribes took place, and Bois Blanc became the theatre of a conspiracy to massacre the French at Fort Pontchartrain. It was betrayed to De Longueuil, the Commandant, who used wise and precautionary measures which not only stemmed the tide of savage mutiny, but restored peace and order. Still it was considered more prudent to remove the Huron mission nearer the fort. Bois Blanc was abandoned, and the settlement located at Sandwich, the present church there being the successor of the one built by Father Potier.

One incident of early days invests this island with romantic interest, where the noble heart of a Huron chief became the sacrifice of a glorious self-devotion. Many years have passed since that act, but it is still handed down from generation to generation. White Fawn was the daughter of a celebrated Huron brave who had accompanied DeBellestre to Montreal to see the Governor, and whilst there had died. Her mother who belonged to the pale-face, had faded away many years before. The maiden was the pride of the tribe, and her admirers, as numerous as the leaves of the forest, endeavored to woo her

by their peculiar mode of courtship. They would whittle tiny sticks and throw them at her. If the girl picked them up the Indian's suit was favored, but if she heeded them not he carefully collected and buried them with his unrequited affection. White Fawn had shyly hesitated over the love tokens of a distinguished warrior, thereby conveying that she needed more time.

One day he returned from the forest, bringing a wounded hunter, whom he had accidentally shot. The medicine men worked their charms over the stranger, and the maiden nursed him tenderly, for she knew that if the pale-face died there would be a shadow on the heart of the warrior. But soon a mist came over her eyes, and the voice of the brave which had been as the summer wind, to which she bent like the reed, no longer whispered its sweet song. The traditions of her mother's race found their way to her heart; the words of the pale-face became stars and the heart of the maiden the lake whereon they rested, and as he looked down he saw no other light reflected there. The warrior soon noticing the change, upbraided the maiden, who bowed her head in silence. The bright knife of the Indian gleamed a second in his uplifted hand, but the next instant it was whirled far out

into the river and burying its keen edge in the peaceful waters. "No," said the Indian, "the arm of Kenen is stronger than his voice and his anger like the mighty tempest that sweeps over the forest, but he is not strong enough to strike the heart of the White Fawn."

Shortly afterward the tribe removed to their winter hunting grounds, and the Iroquois, the hereditary foes of the Hurons, becoming annoyed at some act, warred against them. Among the prisoners that they captured was the pale-face, whom they brought to Bois Blanc. Here, where everything spoke to him of his former happiness, was he to take his last farewell of life, with no friendly voices, or kind, comforting words to soothe his agony. A hush fell on the assembled Indians gathered around to see the pale-face die. A haughty warrior advanced, and despite the usual decorum of the council, the name of *Kenen* ran in sounding tones around the circle. "Have the Iroquois heard the name of Kenen?" he asked. "There is no greater in his nation," was the reply. The dark eye of the Huron flashed proudly. "Let the pale-face be free," he said, "a Huron chief will take his place." The cords were severed which bound the white man, and the Huron whispered to him: "There is sorrow in the heart of the White Fawn, and the eyes of

Kenen cannot look upon it. When he is gone the White Fawn will be happy in the shelter she loves." So quickly was all done that the pale-face had not time to remonstrate. He was borne along to a canoe, and soon swift oars wafted him from the fatal spot. When the bright moon rose, the spirit of the warrior rested on the bosom of his fathers.