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Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse
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**Heralds of Empire Being the Story
of One Ramsay Stanhope,
Lieutenant to Pierre Radisson in
the Northern Fur Trade**

Agnes C. (Agnes Christina) Laut

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DEDICATED
TO
THE NEW WORLD NOBILITY

— — Now I learned how the man must have felt when he set about conquering the elements, subduing land and sea and savagery. And in that lies the Homeric greatness of this vast fresh New World of ours. Your Old World victor takes up the unfinished work left by generations of men. Your New World hero begins at the pristine task. I pray you, who are born to the nobility of the New World, forget not the glory of your heritage; for the place which God hath given you in the history of the race is one which men must hold in envy when Roman patrician and Norman conqueror and robber baron are as forgotten as the kingly lines of old Egypt. — —

CONTENTS

Chapter

Foreword

PART I

- I. What are King-Killers?
- II. I rescue and am rescued
- III. Touching Witchcraft
- IV. Rebecca and Jack Battle Conspire
- V. M. Radisson Again

PART II

- VI. The Roaring Forties
- VII. M. de Radisson Acts
- VIII. M. de Radisson Comes to his Own
- IX. Visitors
- X. The Cause of the Firing
- XI. More of M. Radisson's Rivals
- XII. M. Radisson begins the Game
- XIII. The White Darkness
- XIV. A Challenge
- XV. The Battle not to the Strong
- XVI. We seek the Inlanders
- XVII. A Bootless Sacrifice
- XVIII. Facing the End
- XIX. Afterward
- XX. Who the Pirates were
- XXI. How the Pirates came
- XXII. We leave the North Sea

PART III

- XXIII. A Change of Partners
- XXIV. Under the Aegis of the Court
- XXV. Jack Battle again
- XXVI. At Oxford
- XXVII. Home from the Bay
- XXVIII. Rebecca and I fall out
- XXIX. The King's Pleasure

ILLUSTRATION

Radisson's Map

HERALDS OF EMPIRE

FOREWORD

I see him yet—swarthy, straight as a lance, keen as steel, in his eyes the restless fire that leaps to red when sword cuts sword. I see him yet—beating about the high seas, a lone adventurer, tracking forest wastes where no man else dare go, pitting his wit against the intrigue of king and court and empire. Prince of pathfinders, prince of pioneers, prince of gamesters, he played the game for love of the game, caring never a rush for the gold which pawns other men's souls. How much of good was in his ill, how much of ill in his good, let his life declare! He played fast and loose with truth, I know, till all the world played fast and loose with him. He juggled with empires as with puppets, but he died not a groat the richer, which is better record than greater men can boast.

Of enemies, *Sieur Radisson* had a-plenty, for which, methinks, he had that lying tongue of his to thank. Old France and New France, Old England and New England, would have paid a price for his head; but *Pierre Radisson's* head held afar too much cunning for any hang-dog of an assassin to try "fall-back, fall-edge" on him. In spite of all the malice with which his enemies fouled him living and dead, *Sieur Radisson* was never the common buccaneer which your cheap pamphleteers have painted him; though, i' faith, buccaneers stood high enough in my day, when Prince Rupert himself turned robber and pirate of the high seas. *Pierre Radisson* held his title of nobility from the king; so did all those young noblemen who went with him to the north, as may be seen from *M. Colbert's* papers in the records *de la marine*. Nor was the disembarking of furs at *Isle Percée* an attempt to steal *M. de la Chesnaye's* cargo, as slanderers would have us believe, but a way of escape from those vampires sucking the life-blood of New France—the farmers of the revenue. Indeed, His Most Christian Majesty himself commanded those robber rulers of Quebec to desist from meddling with the northern adventurers. And if some gentleman who has never been farther from city cobblestones than to ride afield with the hounds or take

waters at foreign baths, should protest that no maid was ever in so desolate a case as Mistress Hortense, I answer there are to-day many in the same region keeping themselves pure as pond-lilies in a brackish pool, at the forts of their fathers and husbands in the fur-trading country. [1]

And as memory looks back to those far days, there is another—a poor, shambling, mean-spoken, mean-clad fellow, with the scars of convict gyves on his wrists and the dumb love of a faithful spaniel in his eyes. Compare these two as I may—Pierre Radisson, the explorer with fame like a meteor that drops in the dark; Jack Battle, the wharf-rat—for the life of me I cannot tell which memory grips the more.

One played the game, the other paid the pawn. Both were misunderstood. One took no thought but of self; the other, no thought of self at all. But where the great man won glory that was a target for envy, the poor sailor lad garnered quiet happiness.

[1] In confirmation of which reference may be called to the daughter of Governor Norton in Prince of Wales Fort, north of Nelson. Hearne reports that the poor creature died from exposure about the time of her father's death, which was many years after Mr. Stanhope had written the last words of this record. — *Author*.

PART I

CHAPTER I

WHAT ARE KING-KILLERS?

My father—peace to his soul!—had been of those who thronged London streets with wine tubs to drink the restored king's health on bended knee; but he, poor gentleman, departed this life before his monarch could restore a wasted patrimony. For old Tibbie, the nurse, there was nothing left but to pawn the family plate and take me, a spoiled lad in his teens, out to Puritan kin of Boston Town.

On the night my father died he had spoken remorsefully of the past to the lord bishop at his bedside.

"Tush, man, have a heart," cries his lordship. "Thou'lt see pasch and yule yet forty year, Stanhope. Tush, man, 'tis thy liver, or a touch of the gout. Take here a smack of port. Sleep sound, man, sleep sound."

And my father slept so sound he never wakened more.

So I came to my Uncle Kirke, whose virtues were of the acid sort that curdles the milk of human kindness.

With him, goodness meant gloom. If the sweet joy of living ever sang to him in his youth, he shut his ears to the sound as to siren temptings, and sternly set himself to the fierce delight of being miserable.

For misery he had reason enough. Having writ a book in which he called King Charles "a man of blood and everlasting abomination"—whatever that might mean—Eli Kirke got himself star-chambered. When, in the language of those times, he was examined "before torture, in torture, between torture, and after torture"—the torture of the rack and the thumbkins and the boot—he added to his former testimony that the queen was a "Babylonish woman, a Potiphar, a Jezebel, a—"

There his mouth was gagged, head and heels roped to the rack, and a wrench given the pulleys at each end that nigh dismembered his poor, torn body. And what words, think you, came quick on top of his first sharp outcry?

"Wisdom is justified of her children! The wicked shall he pull down and the humble shall he exalt!"

And when you come to think of it, Charles Stuart lost his head on the block five years from that day.

When Eli Kirke left jail to take ship for Boston Town both ears had been cropped. On his forehead the letters S L—seditious libeler—were branded deep, though not so deep as the bitterness burned into his soul.

There comes before me a picture of my landing, showing as clearly as it were threescore years ago that soft, summer night, the harbour waters molten gold in a harvest moon, a waiting group of figures grim above the quay. No firing of muskets and drinking of flagons and ringing of bells to welcome us, for each ship brought out court minions to whip Boston into line with the Restoration—as hungry a lot of rascals as ever gathered to pick fresh bones.

Old Tibbie had pranked me out in brave finery: the close-cut, black-velvet waistcoat that young royalists then wore; a scarlet doublet, flaming enough to set the turkey yard afire; the silken hose and big shoe-buckles late introduced from France by the king; and a beaver hat with plumes a-nodding like my lady's fan. My curls, I mind, tumbled forward thicker than those foppish French perukes.

"There is thy Uncle Kirke," whispers Nurse Tibbie. "Pay thy best devoirs, Master Ramsay," and she pushes me to the fore of those crowding up the docks.

A thin, pale man with a scarred face silently permitted me to salute four limp fingers. His eyes swept me with chill disapproval. My hat clapped on a deal faster than it had come off, for you must know we unhatted in those days with a grand, slow bow.

"Thy Aunt Ruth," says Tibbie, nudging me; for had I stood from that day to this, I was bound that cold man should speak first.

To my aunt the beaver came off in its grandest flourish. The pressure of a dutiful kiss touched my forehead, and I minded the passion kisses of a dead mother.

Those errant curls blew out in the wind.

"Ramsay Stanhope," begins my uncle sourly, "what do you with uncropped hair and the foolish trappings of vanity?"

As I live, those were the first words he uttered to me.

"I perceive silken garters," says he, clearing his throat and lowering his glance down my person. "Many a good man hath exchanged silk for hemp, my fine gentleman!"

"An the hemp hold like silk, 'twere a fair exchange, sir," I returned; though I knew very well he referred to those men who had died for the cause.

"Ramsay," says he, pointing one lank fore-finger at me, "Ramsay, draw your neck out of that collar; for the vanities of the wicked are a yoke leading captive the foolish!"

Now, my collar was *point-de-vice* of prime quality over black velvet. My uncle's welcome was more than a vain lad could stomach; and what youth of his first teens hath not a vanity hidden about him somewhere?

"Thou shalt not put the horse and the ass under the same yoke, sir," said I, drawing myself up far as ever high heels would lift.

He looked dazed for a minute. Then he told me that he spake concerning my spiritual blindness, his compassions being moved to show me the error of my way.

At that, old nurse must needs take fire.

"Lord save a lad from the likes o' sich compassions! Sure, sir, an the good Lord makes pretty hair grow, 'twere casting pearls before swine to shave his head like a cannon-ball" — this with a look at my uncle's crown — "or to dress a proper little gentleman like a ragged flibbergibbet."

"Tibbie, hold your tongue!" I order.

"Silence were fitter for fools and children," says Eli Kirke loftily.

There comes a time when every life must choose whether to laugh or weep over trivial pains, and when a cut may be broken on the foil of that glancing mirth which the good Creator gave mankind to keep our race from going mad. It came to me on the night of my arrival on the wharves of Boston Town.

We lumbered up through the straggling village in one of those clumsy coaches that had late become the terror of foot-passengers in London crowds. My aunt pointed with a pride that was colonial to the fine light which the towns-people had erected on Beacon Hill; and told me pretty legends of Rattlesnake Hill that fired the desire to explore those inland dangers. I noticed that the rubble-faced houses showed lanterns in iron clamps above most of the doorways. My kinsman's house stood on the verge of the wilds-rough stone below, timbered plaster above, with a circle of bay windows midway, like an umbrella. High windows were safer in case of attack from savages, Aunt Ruth explained; and I mentally set to scaling rope ladders in and out of those windows.

We drew up before the front garden and entered by a turnstile with flying arms. Many a ride have little Rebecca Stocking, of the court-house, and Ben Gillam, the captain's son, and Jack Battle, the sailor lad, had, perched on that turnstile, while I ran pushing and jumping on, as the arms flew creaking round.

The home-coming was not auspicious. Yet I thought no resentment against my uncle. I realized too well how the bloody revenge of the royalists was turning the hearts of England to stone. One morning I recall, when my poor father lay a-bed of the gout and there came a roar through London streets as of a burst ocean dike. Before Tibbie could say no, I had snatched up a cap and was off.

God spare me another such sight! In all my wild wanderings have I never seen savages do worse.

Through the streets of London before the shoutings of a rabble rout was whipped an old, white-haired man. In front of him rumbled a cart; in the cart, the axeman, laving wet hands; at the axeman's feet, the head of a regicide—all to intimidate that old, white-haired man, fearlessly erect, singing a psalm. When they reached the shambles, know you what they did? Go read the old court records and learn what that sentence meant when a man's body was