

So he came nearer to her, and took the small, floury hands in his, half roughly.

"But stolen bread, Arsene!" he said, still angrily; "stolen bread—"

"Oh! pah! fine words will not nourish the bird; and stolen bread—if you call it stolen!—will. And look there, Aime."

The turn of her head pointed him to the other side of the hearth, where the two arm-chairs stood side by side.

The old woman stirred a little. She had opened her eyes. They passed quite unobservantly over her grandson and fixed themselves on Arsene.

"Bread!" she said, in a glow of pleasure. "Bread, petite—isn't it bread I smell baking?"

Arsene jerked her hands from Aime's grasp, and went down on her knees by the old woman's side, and buried her hot face in the folds of that big white apron.

"*C'est ça, Marraïne*, bread—bread that your little Arsene has stolen for you—stolen!"

"Stolen! *O ça, c'est beau!*" cried the old woman, ironically. "Somebody else may have stolen; not my good little Arsene."

Her dim old eyes were resting upon Aime.

She stretched out her withered hand, pointing at him in the firelight as he leaned on the barrel.

"There is the thief!" she cried, in her shrill quaver; "the robber! Ah! *voilà!* I call on the best saints to hear me—"

The door was opening; but hardly for the saints on whom she called.

The doorway was full of rugged faces. Foremost, that of the constable from New Carlisle.

As he stepped into the room:

"I thought as much," he said, sternly. "I knew when the Trehan piebald was seen in the thick of the riot, Aime Trehan must have got home. You'll come with us, quietly, my man; for the sake of the old people."

"For the sake of the old people; yes."

It was the very briefest pause, Aime had made in his sentence! and at its close, he turned his eyes meaningly upon Arsene.

"For the sake of the old people," he said, again looking full at her.

She stared past him, like some wild creature fascinated, at the gleaming handcuffs the constable fancied he was holding out of sight behind him.

The leaping firelight caught at them, striking a spark from the metal surface.

Arsene covered her eyes with her two trembling hands.

There was a slight stir at the door.

So slight that when she looked up presently, it took her very breath away to find those men were gone.

And Aime Trehan with them.

"Aime—"

She would have struggled to her feet, with that hoarse cry.

But Aime's grandmere was clinging to her, with both hands, eagerly.

"Bread, Arsene!" she was crying: "bread!"

And then, with a sly laugh:

"She'd put herself in the kneading-trough, would our Arsene, rather than we should not have bread and to spare. They said it was a boy, *mon viert homme*: but thou seest it is a girl. *Moi*, I always wanted a girl; I always said a daughter was worth more than a son—"

Arsene tore herself free from the grasping hands, and away from that grating chuckle of a laugh that jarred on her. She had swung the door open, standing outside the storm-house threshold, in the snow.

Too late. Already the big sleigh, with its indistinguishable burden of black forms blended together in one mass, was speeding far away, up the white road.

She looked wildly after it.

Is she shut out in the cold, away from him, forever? It seems to her that golden gates are opening and shutting yonder; a crimson glory shooting down from the zenith dazzles her.

It is only the northern lights.

She came back to herself at a shrill cry from within:

"Arsene!" *O ça m'a peur!*—Arsene!"

At the terrified voice, the girl hurried within-doors, as she might to comfort a frightened child trembling at being left alone.

"Nay, then, nothing shall frighten thee, manaine," she said soothingly. "Yes, yes, thou shalt have bread, bread and to spare: I will not have done this wicked thing for nothing."

But when the bread came out of the oven, crusty and fragrant, Arsene put no crumb of it between her own lips.

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From the Queen's Road to-day the scene is hardly the same as that on which last winter's sun shone down.

The checker-boards of fields are there; the cliffs; the bay with its faintest line of the New Brunswick coast opposite.

But the houses on the checker-board have the white bloom of the low cherry trees about them; the fields are green with summer's promise; the blue Chaleurs is glancing and sparkling, and the fishing boats are out. And Robins, down yonder on the Barachois, has taken new lease of life, like the budding year; the "fish flakes," the drying lattices, are shingled with cod, and the drying beaches are astir with men pacing back and forth, turning the fish upon their pebbled beds.

At the turn of the Beach lane, Arsene has paused, for just a moment, looking down upon it all. The summer gladness has not bloomed out in her small, wan face, and about her dress there is the touch of blue, the traditional Breton mourning, which hints that her old people are gone away beyond the blue heavens.

The girl's heart is beating heavily as she stands there; there is a mist before her eyes, in which she sees the tumult of that winter day of which she was herself a part.

Those hoarse cries are still in her ears; the shouts, the jeers. No wonder she is deaf to a step that comes briskly along the Queen's Road: then stops suddenly, behind her.

"Arsene—"

She starts: turning round with so violent a gesture that the bundle she carries knotted in a big red cotton handkerchief falls in the road between them.

He stoops for it, lifting himself just in time to stop her precipitate flight past him.

He has caught both her hands, letting the bundle fall between them again.

"What does it mean, Arsene?" he demands sharply, looking from it to her white, startled face. "You were going away—where?"

She droops her head, shrinking from his eyes.

"You'll not believe me—I don't deserve you should believe