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OUR CENTENNIAL STORY.

THE BASTONNAIS :

A TALE OF THE AMERICAN INVASION OF CANADA IN 1775-76.

By JOHN LESPERANCE.

BOOK III.

THE BURSTING OF THE TEMPEST.

VII.

THE ATTACK OF THE MASKS.

The ball concluded, as was the invariable custom at the State balls of the time, with that most graceful and picturesque of all dances, the Menuet de la Cour, which, brought over from France during the reign of Louis XIII, had enjoyed great popularity throughout the Province until the Conquest, and was retained by the British Governors of Quebec until a comparatively recent period. The *pas marché*, the *assemblé*, the *pas grave*, the *pas bourré* and the *pirouette* were all executed with faultless precision and stately beauty by a double set of eight chosen from among the best dancers in the room. The rest of the company was ranged in groups around the walls, some watching the figures with eyes of critical inquiry, others observing the costumes of the dancers and their involved movements with a simple sense of enjoyment. The rhythmic swaying of handsome men and women in the mazes of a dance often produces on the bystanders a sensation of poetic dreaminess, quite independent of the accompanying music, and which may be traced directly to the magnetism of the human form.

It is only true to say that nobody in the Menuet elicited more sympathy and admiration than Pauline Belmont. The perfection of her dancing, the sweetness of her face, the modesty of her demeanor, and the childlike reliance which she seemed to place on the cooperation of her stalwart partner, Roderick Hardinge, were traits which could not pass unobserved, and more than once when she swung back into position after the culmination of a figure, she was greeted with murmurs of applause. Several gallant old Frenchmen, who looked on humming the music which they knew so well, signified their approval by words allied to their subdued chant. Finally, when the second strain was over, the peculiar nineteen bars had been played, the *Chaine Anglaise* had been made, and the honors performed by profound salutations to the distinguished company and to the respective partners, the executives retired from the floor and were immediately set upon by a mob of congratulating friends. Among them, the portly form of Carleton, with his white unshaven face, and large pleasant eyes, was prominent. He addressed his felicitations to several of the dancers, and thanked them for the splendid termination which they had given to the festival. Near him stood his friend Bouchette, who had been one of the lions of the evening, and who improved these last moments with a few words of lively conversation with Pauline.

"This has been a magnificent ball," said he, "worthy of our Governor and worthy of old Quebec, but what is a particular source of pride to me is that the belle of the evening has been a countrywoman of mine. You have shed glory on your race, manemioiselle. I will not fail to report this to my old friend, M. Belmont, and I am sure the delight he will experience will be a compensation for his absence."

Pauline blushed as she heard these compliments, and clung more closely to the arm of Hardinge. She faltered a few words of thanks, but her confusion was not relieved till the interview closed by the pressure of the crowds breaking up and making their way to the cloakrooms.

Shortly afterwards, the gay company had entirely dispersed, the lights in the Castle were extinguished one by one, and silence reigned where, only half an hour before, light feet beat time to the soft music of viol and bassoon, and the echoes of merry voices resounded through the halls.

One of the guests, who had tarried longer than all the others, issued alone and proceeded in the direction of Cathedral Square. Three o'clock pealed from the turret as he passed. The night was dark and of that dull, lustreless aspect which not even the white snow on roof and footpath could relieve. Not another soul was in the streets. The long square houses were wrapped in sleep. The solitary walker was of middle size and apparently in the prime of life. A fur coat was loosely thrown over his evening dress. His step was free and elastic, and he swung an ivory-headed cane in his right hand. He was evidently in the best of spirits, as a man should be who has dined well, danced to his heart's content, and spent an agreeable evening in the society of his superior, and the company of handsome women.

When he reached the large stockade erected where Prescott Gate was afterwards built, he paused a moment in front of the guard who seemed to recognise him and opened the wicket without the exchange of a pass word. He then began the descent of the steep and tortuous Mountain Hill, walking briskly indeed, but with hardly a perceptible acceleration of the pace which he had held previously. It was not long before he attained the foot of the Hill, and he was about turning the very dark corner which

led into Peter street, where he resided, when his step was suddenly arrested by a shrill whistle on his left. He looked around, and listened, tightening his great coat over his breast, and grasping his cane with a firmer hand. He stood thus for several seconds, but hearing nothing more except the flow of the St. Lawrence, a few yards ahead of him, he attributed the sound to some sailor's craft in the harbor, and confidently resumed his march. He had not proceeded more than a few feet, however, when five men, muffled and masked, issued from a lane in the rear, threw themselves upon him and dragged him to the ground. Resistance was vain. The kidnappers gagged him, wrenched his cane from his hand, and covered his face with a cloak. They were about to drag him away, when a sixth figure bounded upon the scene.

"Halt!" was his single cry in French.

The men stopped.

"Release your prisoner."

They obeyed instantly and without a remonstrance.

"Ungag him."

They ungagged him.

"Restore him his cane."

The cane was immediately returned.

As soon as the prisoner felt himself free, and in possession of a weapon, he leaped out into the middle of the street and faced his enemies like the brave man that he was. He chafed, and fumed, and brandished his cane.

"What does this mean?" he cried.

No answer.

"Who are you?"

Still no reply.

"Do you know who I am?"

"Yes," said the chief, in a low cold voice, "You are Joseph Bouchette. We know you well. But go. You are free. You owe your liberty to an intervention superior to the hatred and vengeance of all your enemies. Thank God for it."

Bouchette, for it was indeed he, was dumb-founded and did not stir.

The chief repeated his order of dismissal in a tone that could not admit of denial, and the doughty sailor, without uttering another word, turned on his heel and walked leisurely to his home.

The masked men stood in a group looking at each other and at their chief.

"You have astounded us," said Barbin to the latter.

"Possibly," was the quiet reply. "But this is no time for explanations. Hurry out of the town and seek your hiding places in the forest. The morning is far advanced and it will soon be day. As for me, I have had no rest these two days and nights. I will creep into some hole and sleep."

"Goodnight then," they all said as they slunk into the shadow.

"Goodnight."

In the dreams of the tired Batoche, that night, was blended the sweetest music of the waterfalls, and it seemed to him that there hovered over his couch the white spirit of Clara thanking him for the deed of mercy which he had brought.

VIII.

UNCONSCIOUS GREATNESS.

It was more than a deed of mercy. It was politic as well. After Bouchette returned home, he was so agitated that he could not sleep. His chief concern was to know why he had been attacked and who were the men who attacked him. It was clear that the assault was the result of a deliberate plot. There was the rallying whistle. There was the disguise of the men. There was the gag all ready to hand. And his rescuer? Who could he be, and especially what could mean the strange words which he had uttered?

Gradually, as he became calmer, he was enabled to grasp all the elements of the situation, and at length the truth dawned upon him. He had been singled out for revenge by some of his discontented countrymen because of the service he had rendered the Governor General. When he had satisfied himself of this, his first impulse was to rush to the Castle, announce the outrage to Carleton himself, and head a terrible crusade against all the rebel French. But, with a moment's reflection, his better nature prevailed.

"Never," he exclaimed as he paced his room. "Never. I am a Frenchman before all. Loyalty to England does not require treason to my own countrymen. The personal insult and injury I can forgive. Besides, was I not rescued by an act of chivalry? If I have enemies among my own people, is it not evident that I have friends as well? No. I will not allow a word concerning this affair to escape my lips. If it becomes public it shall be through no fault of mine."

Having relieved his mind by this act of magnanimity, he threw himself upon a lounge and soon fell asleep. The sun was already high in the heavens, and it streamed into the room, but did not disturb the slumbers of the mariner who reposed as calmly as if he had not passed through a struggle for his life and liberty. It was noon

when he awoke. Sitting up on the edge of his bed, some seconds elapsed before his recollection went back to this event, and when it did, he simply said:

"I will now go and see my friend Belmont."

Meantime, at M. Belmont's the matter had advanced a stage or two. Batoche had found his way there after dismissing his associates, and, without disturbing the inmates, had entered by means of a private key given by his friend. He had gone to sleep at once and it was eleven o'clock in the forenoon before he awoke. His first step was to seek the presence of M. Belmont. To him he recounted the conversation he had had with Sieur Sarpy and the singular part which Zulma had taken in it. M. Belmont listened with mingled surprise and concern. When Batoche continued and described the adventure of the preceding night, he became quite alarmed.

"This is terrible, Batoche," he said.

The old man did what was very unusual with him. He smiled.

"There is nothing terrible about it, sir. Even if Bouchette had been captured, there would have been nothing terrible. Bouchette is not such a very important personage, and our men have no fears of retribution. They are quite able to take care of themselves. But I had promised Zulma that the man would not be disturbed, and I simply kept my promise. I was near being too late. It was far past midnight when I reached the town, after a weary tramp from Pointe-aux-Trembles. I knew all about the ball and that, of course, Bouchette would be there. We had planned to seize him on his way home from the Castle. Everything turned out as had been anticipated. Our men did their work to perfection. They acted with bravery and intelligence. It was a pity to spoil their success."

"Did you not arrive upon the scene in advance?"

"Yes, a few moments before the assault."

"Then why did you not prevent it altogether?"

"I hadn't the heart to do it. I wanted to give my men and myself that much satisfaction. I wanted to see how my companions would do their duty. Besides, although I had promised not to kidnap Bouchette, I did not promise that I would not give him a good scare."

"Scare?" interrupted M. Belmont contemptuously, "Bouchette is as brave a man as lives."

"Right enough," said Batoche with a giggle. "He showed fight and brandished his cane like a man. So far as scaring went, the attack was a failure."

"The whole thing was a failure, Batoche. It will ruin us. It will drive me out of the town. I suppose the garrison is in an uproar about it by this time."

"The assailants are not known and cannot be discovered."

"Exactly, and therefore the innocent will be suspected. Your great mistake was in doing the thing by halves. A real abduction would not have been so bad, for then the victim would not have been there to tell his story. As it is, he has no doubt told it to every body, and there is no foreseeing what the consequences will be."

Batoche did not reply, but there was something in his manner which showed that he felt very little repentance for what he had done.

At this point of the colloquy the servant came to the door and announced Captain Bouchette.

M. Belmont was thunderstruck. Batoche remained perfectly impassive.

"Show him up," at length faltered M. Belmont.

Batoche made a movement to rise, but his companion stopped him abruptly.

"Do not stir," he said. "Your presence may be useful."

Bouchette came striding in boisterously and in the fullest good humor. He embraced his old friend with effusion and accepted the introduction to Batoche in a genial, off-hand fashion. Of course, this conduct put a new aspect on affairs and M. Belmont was set quite at ease. Bouchette opened at once with an account of the great ball. He said that he had come purposely for that. He described all its phases in his own unconventional way and especially dilated on the share that Pauline had taken in it. He grew eloquent on this particular theme. He assured M. Belmont that he ought to be proud of his daughter, as she had made the most favorable impression on all the guests and particularly on the Governor.

There is no exaggeration in saying that this was positively delightful to the anxious father and that, under the circumstances, it went far towards restoring his peace of mind. It was, therefore, no wonder that the conversation, thus initiated, flowed on in a continuous channel of gaiety, in which even Batoche joined at intervals, and after his own peculiar manner. He said very little indeed, perhaps not over a dozen words, but he chuckled now and again, rolled about in his seat and gave other tokens of satisfaction at the turn which things were taking. This, however, did not prevent him, from the comparative obscurity of the corner which he occupied, closely watching the features of the visitor, and studying all his movements.

At length, at a convenient turn of the conversation, M. Belmont inquired of his friend what the news of the day might be.

"Oh, nothing that I know of," replied Bouchette promptly, and quite unconcernedly. "I have just got out of my bed and came here directly."

If a mountain had been taken from the shoulders of poor M. Belmont, he could not have felt more relief than he did on hearing these few words. He simply could not contain

his joy. Leaping up from his seat, he slapped his friend on the shoulder, and exclaimed:

"Well, Bouchette, we shall have a glass of wine, some of my best old Burgundy. Your visit has done me a world of good."

The little grey eyes of Batoche were fixed like gimlets on the wall opposite, at the line where it touched the ceiling. There was a glassy light in them. He had gone off suddenly into one of his absent moods. But it was only for a moment. Recovering himself, he too rose abruptly from his seat, bringing his right arm down with a bang upon his thigh, and muttering a few inarticulate words.

The wine was quaffed with pledges and *bons mots*. A second round of glasses was indulged in, and when the interview closed at length, Bouchette thundered out of the house as heartily as he had entered it.

"Well!" exclaimed M. Belmont, closing the door and confronting Batoche in the hall.

"Well!" replied the other quietly.

"What do you say?"

"What do I say? I say that this man will never speak a word of what has happened. So you may rest easy."

"And what do you think of himself?"

"He is a great man."

"And a good one."

"A true Knight of St. Louis."

"A friend of his countrymen."

"Yes. I admire his generosity and magnanimity, and I admire the wonderful instinct of Zulma Sarpy who gauged him so well that she wrung his liberation from me."

When Pauline descended from her private apartments after a long day's rest, and was made acquainted with so much of the sailor's visit as concerned herself, she was deeply moved, and the more that she observed her father's intense gratification. The whole episode imparted a happiness to that house such as it had not enjoyed for many days previous, and such as it was not destined to enjoy later.

(To be continued.)

OUR PICTURES.

Those of our numerous illustrations not separately described, are the launch of the Italian ironclad steamer *Diulius*, an account of which appeared in one of our late numbers; views of the recent floods near Ottawa and at Hawkesbury; the Grand Trunk Railway bridge at St. Anne's, near Montreal, and a sketch of the difficulty between the contractors of the old Northern Colonization Railway and the Harbor Commissioners of this city, the latter of whom positively refused the former the privilege of passing their cars and engines over their ground *en route* to the new rails. There are also views illustrative of the late revolution at Constantinople.

THE PRINCIPAL ENGLISH CYCLOPEDIAS.

The most voluminous cyclopædia in the English language is that of Abraham Rees (1803-1819), republished, with some additions, at Philadelphia (1810-1824) in forty-one large quarto volumes, besides six volumes of maps and engravings. This was one of the most costly enterprises ever undertaken by any American publisher; and, considering the comparatively small number of book-buyers at that period, it is not strange that it was ruinous to those who undertook it and that it was finally disposed of by lottery. Recent cyclopædists wisely restrict themselves within much narrower limits. The following is an approximation to the quantity of matter contained in the principal cyclopædias in English which are now before the public:

Rees's Cyclopædia	41 vols.	4to.	40,000,000 words
Knight's English Cyclopædia	24 vols.	4to.	26,000,000 words
Encyclopædia Metropolitana	25 vols.	4to.	25,000,000 words
Encyclopædia Britannica	21 vols.	4to.	21,000,000 words
Appleton's American Cyclopædia	16 vols.	8vo.	13,000,000 words
Johnson's New Universal Cyclopædia	4 vols.	8vo.	12,000,000 words
Chambers's Cyclopædia	10 vols.	8vo.	10,000,000 words
Zell's Popular Cyclopædia	2 vols.	4to.	7,000,000 word

A DIRTY PIECE OF PAPER.

A story is told, relates Mr. Smiles, in his new book, *Thrift*, of a poor soldier having one day called at the shop of a hair-dresser, who was busy with his customers, and asked relief, stating that he had stayed beyond his leave of absence, and unless he could get a lift on the coach, fatigue and severe punishment awaited him. The hair-dresser listened to his story respectfully, and gave him a guinea. "God bless you, sir," exclaimed the soldier, astonished at the amount—"how can I repay you? I have nothing in the world but this"—pulling out a dirty piece of paper from his pocket; "it is a recipe for making blacking. It is the best that ever was seen; many a half-guinea I have had for it from the officers, and many bottles have I sold. May you be able to get something for it to repay you for your kindness to a poor soldier!" Oddly enough, that dirty piece of paper proved worth half-a-million of money to the hair-dresser. It was no less than the recipe for the famous Day and Martin's blacking—the hairdresser being the late wealthy Mr. Day, whose manufactory is one of the notabilities of the metropolis.