

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

THE FOREST TRAGEDY.

By W. H. W. (Niagara.)

As the sun was slowly sinking behind the Laurentian mountains at the close of a mid-summer day in the year 1690, an unwonted spectacle was witnessed on the beautiful strand, where now stands the village of Silvery, nestling at the base of the wooded height like a babe at its mother's feet. From the neighbouring town of Quebec wended slowly, dressed in sombre robes, with snowy wimples and with calm and placid faces, a little *cortège* of self-denying women who had left the comforts of civilized life beyond one sea, to teach to the savages of the New World the way of salvation. They had only that day arrived at Quebec after a long and stormy sea voyage, and as they landed from the little vessel that had been for weary weeks their floating home, with religious fervour they prostrated themselves on the earth and kissed the soil which was to be the scene of their pious labours. The little garrison made its best military parade, the cannon of the fort thundered forth their welcome, and the shouts of the Huron and Algonquin braves mingled with the exclamations of the inhabitants. After the celebration of a devout *Te Deum*, and enjoying the hospitable entertainment of the Governor, these pious ladies repaired to the scene of their future toil.

At the head of the procession walked a figure of noble presence, tall and commanding, with strongly marked yet still handsome features, although forty years of human sorrow and religious conflict had left their impress on her brow. In her dark eye burned the fire of enthusiasm, and Marie de l'Incarnation would be anywhere recognized as a spirit born to rule. At her side walked Madame de la Peltrie, of younger and less commanding form, although of inner organization and of gentler blood, the nominal though less real head of the gentle sisterhood. Marie de St. Bernard, a sweet young nun of facile and delicate beauty, and other religious ladies—six in all—made up the little community, moved by the love of Christ and love of souls to train the dusky forest maidens in the rudiments of civilization and the duties of religion.

They are accompanied by the once gallant knight and courtier, Noël Brûlart de Silvery, now a serge-clad priest who introduces these lowly handmaids of God to the humble mission he has founded in the wilderness with a purer pleasure than he ever felt amid halls of state in presenting bejewelled court-dames to his august sovereign, Marie de Medici.

Within a palisaded enclosure stood a cluster of log cabins, the homes of the Algonquin converts; also a homely wooden church, and a dwelling house for the Fathers of the Mission. Here the rude savage was taught to revere the symbol of salvation, the Christian altar was reared, the tinkling bell sent forth its call to prayer through the aisles of the forest, and the songs of Zion were chanted beside strange streams and in a strange tongue. The sacred bread which the coronated monarchs of Europe received from the hands of mitred bishops beneath the swelling minister's vault, while the mighty anthem pealed, was here broken amid the solitudes of the New World to the untutored songs of the wilderness. The touching tale of a Saviour's love, passing that of a mother, melted savage hearts; the vision of future glory and of endless bliss in fairer realms than the fabled hunting grounds of the spirit-land inflamed their zeal; and the dread revelations of endless fires of wrath for the impenitent curbed the passions of nature's little want to brook restraint.

With true womanly enthusiasm, all the maternal instincts of their nature, denied expansion in the sweet sanctities of domestic life, finding vent in the discharge of their motherly duties, the gentle nuns devote themselves with self-denying zeal to the care of the dusky-faced children of the Mission—many of them the orphaned children of parents slaughtered in the cruel Indian wars with the terrible Iroquois.

"The law of love and charity," says their biographer, "triumphed over every human consideration."

Among those youthful neophytes was an Indian girl of some seventeen summers, lithe and graceful as one of the mountain birches of her native land, and with eyes deep and dark as a forest lake. A subdued quiet, an almost pensive melancholy marked her air. Her gaze was often turned abstractedly to the far-eastern horizon on the shining river reach, or toward the setting sun, as though she beheld beyond the veil of sense the realities of the spirit world. The shadow of an early sorrow seemed ever to brood over her soul and the shuddering recollection of a mother tomahawked by a savage hand and bathed in her life-blood during an Iroquois invasion of her native village imparted an unyouthful gravity to her character. She had been rescued from massacre by the garrison of Quebec, and trained in the Christian religion by a pious lady in the household of Montmagny, the

commandant of the town. Her Indian designation, Red Pawn, was laid aside, and she was universally recognized by her beautiful Christian name given her in baptism; Marguerite des Anges—the Pearl of the Angels. Her father was still a pagan, and bitterly hostile to the intruding white race, which had usurped the heritage of his sires; and was especially the implacable foe of the Christian religion. His tribe being almost exterminated in the massacre in which his wife was slain, and his young daughter being unable to share his wandering forest life, he was fain to leave her under the protection of the French.

As her maiden beauty unfolded, however, paternal pride, if not affection, was awakened, and he sought to induce her to share his hunter's lodge. More than one swarthy lover, too, attempted to pour the tale of passion—as native to the forest glade as to the gilded *salon*—into her unwilling ear. An intense aversion to the wandering life and savage manners of her tribe possessed her soul. Another tie to civilization had unconsciously wound its silken fetters round her heart. Among the members of the little court of Montmagny—a sort of miniature Versailles—but with loftier heroism and purer manners—there was none who for *de bon air* and gentle courtesy surpassed the gallant young D'Anvoisier, a scion of one of the best families of France. The pensive beauty of the forest-maiden, shrinking and tremulous as the mayflower of her native wilds, attracted the regards of the young soldier; and the manly courage, evinced in more than one conflict with the hereditary foe of her race, and still more his woman-like tenderness and faithful suit, won her responsive affection.

"Wilt thou return and share my lodge?" exclaimed her father, but a few days after our story opens, during a stealthy interview he had sought in the forest near the Mission, whither she had gone to gather flowers wherewith to deck the altar of the Virgin, her daily task. "Wilt thou leave those Christians?" he continued, seeing that she hesitated to reply. "These wily Black-robbers will also make thee a woman-worshipper like themselves," for he knew not that already the baptismal dew had besprinkled her brow.

"Nay, father, I like not the wild hunter's life," said the maiden, and devoutly crossing herself, she continued: "I have already vowed to live the handmaid of Christ and his blessed Mother, whom, O father, I beseech you blaspheme not."

"What a daughter of mine a sister of those pale-faced nuns! Why did I leave you among them! I might have known they would teach you to despise the gods of your father!"

"But those be no gods, father, but malignant spirits; nay, says the good priest, fiends from the pit beguiling the souls of men to perdition!"

"Good enough gods for your old father," he passionately exclaimed, "and good enough must they be for his stubborn child. And, what is more, know, girl, that I have promised that when the next snow comes thou shalt keep the lodge-fire of Black Snake, the bravest warrior of our tribe."

"Nay, father," exclaimed the girl with a shudder, "that can never be. I shrink when I see his glittering eye and gliding step as though he were indeed a poisonous snake."

"It shall be, girl!" he thundered. "Big Bear has said it, and the word of Big Bear was never broken."

"Father, it cannot be," said the undaunted girl, pressing her hands over her throbbing heart; "I will die first," and in the dimly compressed lip and glittering eye was seen the evidence of the unfaltering determination of her race.

"Then die thou shalt, if thou obey not my command," he hissed. "Perhaps some coward pale-face seeks to wed the forest princess? I'd rather cut thy heart out than see it given to one of the accursed race. What's that upon thy neck?" he exclaimed, snatching at the cross concealed in her bosom, and in a paroxysm of rage trampling it beneath his feet, amid a storm of execrations against the "Christian medicines," of which the pagan Indians have a superstitious dread.

"O father, insult not the sign of salvation!" cried the weeping girl, and turning from him she fled to the Mission.

Amid broken sobs Marguerite's tale of trouble was told to the good priest.

"Fear not, daughter," he said, "the Good Shepherd will not suffer one of his lambs to become the prey of the wolf; and certainly thy betrothed will never see thee become the bride of that traitorous Black Snake, who dangles at his waist more than one white scalp. Pray the Blessed Virgin, dear child, and she may even turn thy father's heart to the true faith. But go not from the Mission. I fear me thy sire and his tribe mean us ill. I will ask the Governor for a guard from the garrison at night, and D'Anvoisier will be the captain. Canst thou trust thyself to his protection, think'st thou?"

A glad smile banished the tears from her eyes, as the sunshine drives away the clouds; and murmuring her blushing thanks Marguerite went to her ministry of love in waiting on the little children of the Mission.

The gentle nuns devoted themselves with ardour to the spiritual instruction of the

youthful catechumens. The Pearl of the Angels unfolded in new beauty day by day under the transforming power of happy love. A file of half a dozen soldiers from the little garrison at Quebec mounted guard within the stockaded enclosure; and D'Anvoisier, as may be imagined, did not neglect to press his suit with Marguerite and to urge the appointment of an early day when he might become of fullest right the protector of her happiness and age. The menaced danger—a sort of felt yet unseen presence, a brooding shadow of fear like the oppressive hush before a thunder storm—seconded his suit, and a day in early autumn, when the scanty acres of the little Mission were reaped of their meagre harvest, was named for the rustic wedding.

Marguerite, so good, so pure, so gentle, was the pet of the Mission. Any lingering worldliness in the bosoms of the holy sisterhood found vent in the preparation of a bridal *trousseau* such as New France had never seen, for their youthful *protégée*. The Indian women of the Mission embroidered brightest and softest moccasins, and even the little children made garlands of the mountain-ash to decorate the cottage erected for the youthful pair.

The eve of the eventful day had come. The guard from the garrison had been discontinued, as the feeling of danger by long immunity was lulled into security. D'Anvoisier had wended his way along the quiet strand, now a busy street, to pay his last visit as a lover, where he was soon to claim a husband's right of permanent abode. The golden glory of the autumn burned on the billowy masses of forest foliage, clothing the hilly back-ground of the Mission. The maples, oaks and elms flung all their leafy banners out as if in bridal pageantry. The wild grape vines climbed from tree to tree, and glowing clusters hung translucent in the sunlight. Gay clumps of native flowers, with not a few brought from La Belle France, bloomed in the garden of the Mission, and breathed forth their souls in fragrance on the bosom of the evening air. A tender crescent moon hung low in the sky, near Hesper, tender star of hope, as the youthful lovers sat hand in hand gazing alternately on the wake of glory on the sheeny bosom of the St. Lawrence and on the lengthening shadows of the cliff creeping stealthily toward them, like the brooding wing of fate.

"I know not, dearest, why it is," whispers Marguerite, nestling closer to her lover, "but I seem to feel a sinking of the soul, like that of the strange plant which sister Marie de l'Incarnation brought with her from beyond the sea."

"Nonsense, *myonne*," he replies, folding her fondly in his arms, "thou'st ought to fear, the angels safely guard their Pearl, and the blessed Mother of our Lord has thee beneath her especial care; and to-morrow, darling, gives thee to my arms to cherish and protect till death."

"Ah! but, Pierre," she murmurs, "thou knowest not the malice of the dreadful Black Snake, and I fear the anger of my father."

"But, *ma chère*," he replies, tenderly caressing her head, which nestles, dove-like, in his bosom, "they have given us no trouble for weeks. Your fierce lover has not dogged your steps as he used to."

"That is what makes me fear that he means something secret and terrible," says the maiden.

"N'importe," her lover gaily replies, "they have given up hope of thy returning to their wild wood-life. My savage rival has abandoned the contest for thy love; I gave him credit for more courage," and he laughed disdainfully.

"Nay; but, dearest, thou dost not know of what terrible revenge the hot blood of my race is capable when it is maddened into frenzy," she shudderingly exclaimed. "I fear for thee, love, not for myself. O be careful as thou returnest by that lonely river road; watch every shadow; list to every sound; the children brought a report to-day of some one prowling stealthily in the forest where they were gathering flowers with which to deck our marriage altar to-morrow."

"Fear not for me, love; to quiet thy fears I will tear myself away before the moon go down, that I may have light on the way to town," and as he tenderly folded her in a lover's fond embrace the stars looked as if in sympathy, and the night wind murmured through the pines, as if it breathed a benediction on the happy pair.

"Hush! what sound is that?" Marguerite suddenly exclaimed, starting from his embrace. "See that stealthy form crawling through the grass, and there are others crouching among the trees. O my beloved, fly! Me they will harm not! for my sake, fly!"

"Never, darling! if this be danger I must share it, else I were unworthy of thee, and would despise myself. O *mon Dieu*! I am slain," he exclaimed, as the swift whirl of an arrow hustled through the air, and the sharp sting of the shaft pierced his breast.

A fierce cry, a swift rush of painted savages, a wild and ringing war-whoop told the fearful tale of peril. Valiantly fighting against overwhelming odds, faint with bleeding, and agonized with direct apprehension for her whose safety was tenfold dearer than his own, D'Anvoisier fell by the gleaming tomahawk

of his rival, Black Snake, who 'was stung to madness by the words that he had overheard' and more than all by the tender parting of the lovers. Claspings the silver crucifix she wore, the terror-stricken girl implored for her lover the aid of the Virgin and the mercy of his foe. Her infuriate father, maddened with rage, raising his flashing knife, exclaimed—

"Thou lovest that cursed sign of the cross, dost thou? Receive it, then, upon thy very heart!" and with frenzied strokes he gashed the sacred sign upon the tender bosom of his child in gaping wounds, from which her life-blood swiftly flowed.

"In death not divided, O my beloved!" she faltered as she fell upon the body of her slaughtered lover.

According to their wont the pagan Indians fired the cabins of the Mission, slaying youth and age and tender infancy in their blind and cruel thirst for blood. The Christian Indians hastily rallied and held their savage foes at bay till most of the women and the nuns escaped. A detachment from the garrison, alarmed by the glare of fire in the heavens, arrived, too late, it is true, to prevent the tragic deed, but not too late to punish the miscreant wretches by whom it was wrought. In the morning the lovers were found lying folded in a last embrace, and were committed to a single grave, thus to keep for ever the loving tryst of death, the bridal of the tomb.

Undaunted by perils past, the pious band reared again the Mission walls from its blackened embers, and for many a year on summer eves, beside the simple cross which marked the lovers' grave, other lovers told the fearful story of "The Forest Tragedy," and whispered vows of affection, old as humanity, yet ever new.

All trace of the Mission has long since passed away save that written in the imperishable record of the skies, and in the fragmentary *Relations* of the Jesuit Fathers of the time. But the little village with its storied memories of thrilling interest still stands; and the venerable ash tree is shown beneath which Marie de l'Incarnation, in a noble gospel revenge, taught the way of life to the children of those who wrought this deed of death.

ART AND LITERATURE.

At a recent sale of autograph manuscript, of distinguished composers in London, several manuscripts of Mozart brought from £7 to 10 each; a cantata by Handel, £35; a wedding service by Bach, £24, and the B flat piano concerto by Beethoven, £16. Autograph letters by Erasmus, Queen Victoria, George Washington, and Mary Stuart were also sold.

Mr. Murray's forthcoming works include "Personal Monograph," by Lord Houghton; "The Expression of the Emotions in Man and the Lower Animals," by Charles Darwin; "History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery," by Captain Francis Duncan; "The Geography of India," by Colonel Yule; "The Geological Evidence of the Antiquity of Man," by Sir Charles Lyell; Sir Gilbert Scott's lectures delivered at the Royal Academy on the "Rise and Development of Mediaeval Architecture."

A series of works is announced by Messrs. Longman, to be called "The School of Shakespeare," being reprints of scarce publications of which Shakespeare was cognisant, and which may be useful in making us live more completely in the world of ideas by which he was surrounded. The editor of these reprints is Mr. R. Simpson, who proposes to reprint, with introductions and notes, some of the more prominent plays that may be regarded as belonging to Shakespeare's school. The first of these, now nearly ready, is "A Larum for London, or the Siege of Antwerp," which, according to the prospectus, will be accompanied by the "proof that it is referred to by a contemporary writer, founded on a pamphlet by Gascoyne, and written chiefly by Marston, under the direction of Shakespeare." Works of a similar kind, such as the "Life and Death of Captain Stukeley," "Mucedorus," "Fair Em," "Histriomastix," and "The Prodigal Child," will, it is announced, be included in the series.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE IN THE VIENNA EXHIBITION. —Francis Langer, a sculptor of Kaaden, but born at Weipert, began to cut the model of Solomon's Temple out of lime tree wood according to the details given by the historian, Josephus Flavius. For thirty years he worked unceasingly at this laborious work, and at length died in 1850 at the age of seventy-two. His son continued the unfinished work until his death in 1858. Two citizens of Kaaden then took the matter in hand, and partly by working at it themselves, and partly by getting others to follow the plans and details left behind by Langer, succeeded in perfecting it. The completed work takes up a space of 325 square feet. The present owners applied to the directors of the Vienna Exhibition as to whether they might exhibit it, and, after some little delay, received a reply that space would be reserved for it. This result of their labour during so many years requires twenty-eight chests to pack it in, and will now be forwarded to the Exhibition at Vienna.

* La loi d'amour et de charité l'emportait par dessus toutes les considérations humaines. Relations des Jésuites, 1639-8.