

the shops to clothe and feed their employes. To feed—and yet no bread!

That muttering, surging wave of men swept all the street.

The gay general shop, with its windows glittering temptingly in the sunshine, was passed by; it was the flour store-house which was flung open. Evangeline's mild Father Felician found it easier to rule his Acadians to patience; this his successor to a more mixed flock, as he stood on the threshold to bar them out, found himself put aside firmly, albeit not irreverently; and now a rolling of flour-barrels mingled with the shouts and cheers and orders in high-pitched French voices.

Bread—bread—

How the barrels thundered and crashed down from the upper floors, and out by the lower: fast and faster, through the great rear doors to which the sleighs drove up in succession.

All sorts and conditions of sledges and sleighs and boxes on runners; a few drawn by horses a jingle with bells; more than a few yoked to steer or ox, and creaking under their loads as they filed in line with the procession passing back, along the Barachois.

In one of the rudest of these a lithe young figure stood muffled in a man's ulster, a fur cap pulled down low on a brow about which the sea-wind was blowing curling rings of sunny hair. A mannish head-gear; but the pretty young creature need not care to disguise her sex; for there was more than one woman here, rolling and heaving the barrels with the stoutest *gars* beside her.

The others, however, were for the most part dark and heavy-browed: one or two of them showing a hint of Indian blood. These joined in laugh and cheer and jest that showed the mob was waxing good-natured over getting its own way.

But Arsene did not laugh. Her lips were set in a passionate tension, her cheeks were blazing, her brown eyes glowing with smothered fire. With tug and strain she pitched her share of the booty, her one barrel, on the sled, lashed out almost savagely at the old piebald horse, and jostled through the throng, and up the Beach lane. Almost before the busy people could tell that she was among them she was gone, a dark spot in the blaze of sunshine on the Queen's Road.

The Queen's Road—faced on either side with farm-houses set in a checker-board of farm-yards and snow-fields, marked out by lines of wriggling worm-fence—the Queen's Road was quite silent and deserted, far as the eye could follow its sweep above the red-sandstone cliffs and the white, glittering bay. The bay itself is still more silent and deserted, when once the winter has fairly set in. And set in it had; fairly indeed, with sparkle of ice-floes, and amethyst flash of sea-water in the open spaces; and upon the blue horizon the far New Brunswick coast-line rising like a mere frost-breath exhaled.

Along the Queen's Road Arsene fled as fast as the piebald could carry her and her booty; while at her back the wintry sun sank to his early rest behind the mountain-crests that head the bay.

The northern lights, as ruddy as the sunset, succeeded to it, as the hours wore on, tinting the snow-fields, when a man tramped across them to the lonely Trehan cottage and flung open the storm-house door into the kitchen.

"Arsene!"

She turned swiftly round from the wide hearth where she was standing.

The leaping flames behind her threw flickering glances

about the room, with its flowering screen of fuschias and geraniums in the window; the big loom, gaunt and mysterious in the dusk, in yonder corner: Arsene's spinning-wheel pushed aside from the hearth to make room for the new flour-barrel; and in the opposite chimney-corner, in two big split rocking-chairs, set side by side, two shrunken old, old people, who might have posed for Smallweed and his wife, asleep. Only this Smallweed was always, as it were, asleep in the stillness of paralysis; and it was the deaf and half-blind wife who in her waking hours would handle the cushion—only to shake it into comfortable shape for the old spouse, instead of pelting with it after the Smallweed fashion.

Both the old people were asleep now; as the grandson saw in that swift instant when his glance ranged from them to the girl.

How pretty she is! prettier every time he comes home from a voyage: and more unmanageable.

He was angry enough to-night, almost enough to crush her in those two strong hands of his, clenched at his sides as he stood looking across at her. Angrier than ever before with grandmere's stray little protegee, who has turned now into protector.

How pretty! The glow of the firelight showed the slight figure clear against a shining background: the short, striped woolen skirt, the scarlet kerchief knotted about the throat, the sleeves rolled up from the round arms that lightly poised the loaf she was in the act of putting into the oven scooped out in the side of the chimney, when he stopped her with that sharp:

"Arsene!"

"Plait-il?" she answered, after that instant's pause: as carelessly as if she had seen Aime Trehan only yesterday.

After that instant's pause. But in it she shook like a leaf, and the blood flew to her head dizzily.

She recovered herself so quickly that Aime guessed nothing of her agitation.

"It does *not* please me at all, Arsene," he said, striding in wrathfully, letting the door swing to behind him. "When a man has been long months away, struggling to make bread for the family: to come home and find—"

"The bread all made and ready for the baking," broke in the girl, flippantly.

With a deft turn of her wrist, she tossed the loaf into the glowing oven, from which she had already raked the coals that heated it. Now, she planted her empty hands upon her hips, and turned round on the young man defiantly.

"Eh ben! what are you going to do about it, Messire Aime?"

"I shall fling it in the fire!" he cried, passionately. "After which I shall roll that barrel out and empty it in the snow, over the edge of the cliff."

With a slight swing of her supple body, Arsene perched herself on the edge of the barrel in the chimney-corner.

"Ca!"

She might as well say that she and the flour-barrel go over the cliff together; he understood her perfectly.

For the moment he was checked by the beauty of that mutinous face, the soft lips set rebelliously, the proud blood burning in the cheeks, the brown eyes flashing out on him, from under the shining aureole of hair which her work over the hot fire had made to curl in a wavy cloud about her low, clear brow. And then he saw that as the angry color faded, her cheeks were a little thin and pale.