

stand until it was too late for aught but repentance.

De Pean pondered long upon a few words he had one day heard drop from the lips of Bigot, which meant more, much more, than they seemed to imply, and they flitted along through his memory like bats in a room seeking an outlet into the night, ominous of some deed of darkness.

De Pean imagined that he had found a way to revenge himself on Le Gardeur and Amelie—each for thwarting him in a scheme of love or fortune. He brooded long and malignantly how to hatch the plot, which he fancied was his own, but which had really been conceived in the deeper brain of Bigot, whose few seemingly harmless words had dropped into the ear of De Pean, casually, as it were, but which Bigot knew would take root and grow in the congenial soul of his secretary, and one day bring forth terrible fruit.

The next day was wet and autumnal, with a sweeping east wind which blew raw and gustily over the dark grass and drooping trees that edged the muddy lane of the village of Tilly.

At the few houses in the village everything was quiet, except at the old-fashioned inn, with its low, covered gallery and swinging sign of the Tilly Arms.

There, flitting round the door, or occasionally peering through the windows of the tap-room, with pipes in their mouths and perchance a tankard in their hands, were seen the elders of the village, boatmen, and habitans, making use, or good excuse, of a rainy day for a social gathering in the dry, snug chimney-corner of the Tilly Arms.

In the warmest corner of all, his face aglow with firelight and good liquor, sat Master Pothier dit Robin, with his gown tucked up to his waist as he toasted his legs and old gamses in the genial warmth of a bright fire.

He leaned back his head and twirled his thumbs for a few minutes without speaking or listening to the babble around him, which had now turned upon the war and the latest sweep of the royal commissaries for corn and cattle. "Did you say, Jean La Marche," said he, "that Le Gardeur de Repentigny was playing dice and drinking hot wine with the Chevalier de Pean and two big dogs of the Friponne?"

"I did," Jean spoke with a choking sensation. "Our young Seigneur has broken out again wilder than ever, and is neither to hold nor bind any longer."

"Ay!" replied Master Pothier, reflectively, "the best bond I could draw would not bind him more than a spider's thread! They are stiff-necked as hulls, those De Repentignys, and will bear no yoke but what they put on themselves! Poor lad! Do they know at the Manor House that he is here drinking and dicing with the Chevalier de Pean?"

"No! Else all the rain in heaven would not have prevented his being looked after by Madeiroiselle Amelie and my Lady," answered Jean. "His friend, Pierre Philibert, who is now a great officer of the King, went last night to Bastian on some matter of the Army, as his groom told me. Had he been here, Le Gardeur would not have spent the day at the Tilly Arms, as we poor habitans do when it is washing-day at home."

"Pierre Philibert!" Master Pothier rubbed his hands at this reminder, "I remember him, Jean! A hero like St. Denis! It was he who walked into the Chateau of the Intendant and brought off young De Repentigny as a cat does her kitten."

"What, in his mouth, Master Pothier?" "None of your quins, Jean: keep cool!" Master Pothier's own face grew red. "Never ring the coin that is a gift, and do not stretch my comparisons like your own wit to a bare thread. If I had said in his mouth, what then? It was by word of mouth, I warrant you, that he carried him away from Beaumanoir."

Pity he is not here to take him away from the Tilly Arms!"

The sound of voices, the rattle and clash of the dice-box in the distant parlor, reached his ear amidst the laughter and gabble of the common room. The night was a hard one in the little inn.

In proportion as the common room of the inn grew quiet by the departure of its guests, the parlor occupied by the gentlemen became more noisy and distinct in its confusion. The song, the laugh, the jest, and jingle of glasses mingled with the perpetual rattle of dice or the thumps which accompanied the play of successful cards.

Paul Gaillard, the host, a timid little fellow not used to such high, imperious guests, only ventured to look into the parlor when summoned for more wine. He was a born censitaire of the House of Tilly, and felt shame and pity as he beheld the dishevelled figure of his young Seigneur shaking the dice-box and defying one and all to another cast for love, liquor, or whole handfuls of uncounted coin.

Paul Gaillard had ventured once to whisper something to Le Gardeur about sending his caleche to the Manor House, hoping that his youthful master would consent to be driven home. But his proposal was met by a wild laugh from Le Gardeur and a good-humored expulsion from the room.

He dare not again interfere, but contented himself with waiting until break of day to send a message to the Lady de Tilly, informing her of the sad plight of his young master.

De Pean, with a great object in view, had summoned Le Mercier and Emeric de Lantagnac from the city—potent toppers and hard players—to assist him in his desperate game for the soul, body and fortune of Le Gardeur de Repentigny.

They came willingly. The Intendant had laughingly wished them bon voyage and a speedy return with his friend Le Gardeur, giving them no other intimation of his wishes; nor could they surmise that he had any other object in view than the pleasure of again meeting a pleasant companion of his table and a sharer of their pleasures.

De Pean had no difficulty in enticing Le Gardeur down to the village inn, where he had arranged that he should meet, by mere accident, as it were, his old city friends.

The bold, generous nature of Le Gardeur, who neither suspected nor feared any evil, greeted them with warmth. They were jovial fellows, he knew, who would be affronted if he refused to drink a cup of wine with them. They talked of the gossip of the city, its coteries and pleasant scandals, and of the beauty and splendor of the queen of society, Angeliqne des Meloises.

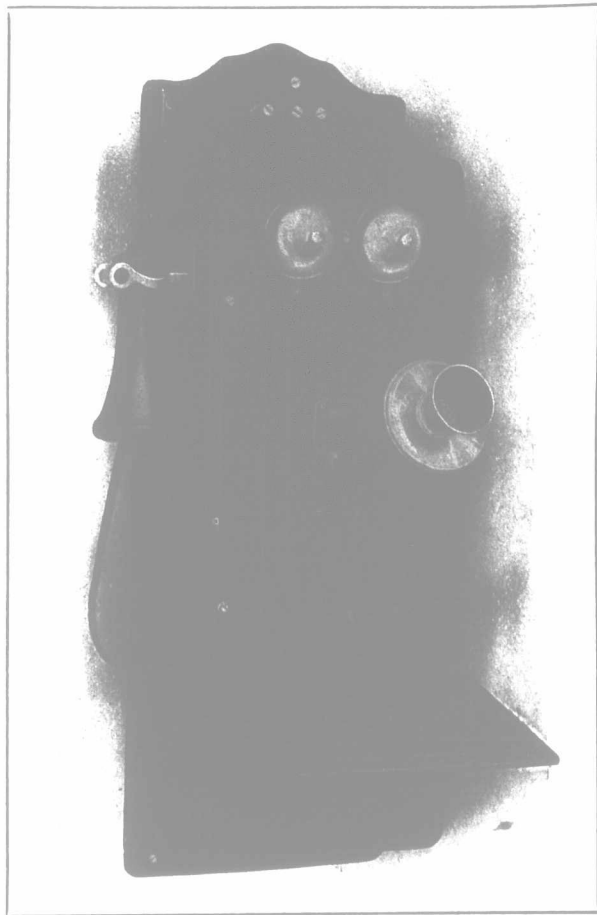
Le Gardeur, with a painful sense of his last interview with Angeliqne, and never for a moment forgetting her reiterated words, "I love you, Le Gardeur, but I will not marry you," kept silent whenever she was named, but talked with an air of cheerfulness on every other topic.

His one glass of wine was soon followed by another. He was pressed with such cordiality that he could not refuse. The fire was rekindled, at first with a faint glow upon his cheek and a sparkle in his eye; but the table soon overflowed with wine, mirth, and laughter. He drank without reflection, and soon spoke with warmth and looseness from all restraint.

De Pean, resolved to excite Le Gardeur to the utmost, would not cease alluding to Angeliqne. He recurred again and again to the splendor of her charms and the fascination of her ways. He watched the effect of his speech upon the countenance of Le Gardeur, keenly observant of every expression of interest excited by the mention of her.

"We will drink to her bright eyes," exclaimed De Pean, filling his glass until it ran over. "First in beauty, and worthy to be first in place in New France—yea, or Old

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