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THE RULING PASSION

BY HENRY VAN DYKE.

THE REWARD OF VIRTUE.

I.

When the good priest of St. Gerôme christened Patrick Mullarkey, he lent himself unconsciously to an innocent deception. To look at the name, you would think, of course, it belonged to an Irishman; of the very appearance of it was equal to a certificate of membership in a Fenian society.

But in effect, from its turned-up boss of his *batteaux* to the ends of his black moustache, the proprietor of this name was a Frenchman—Canadian French, you understand, and therefore even more proud and tenacious of his race than if he had been born in Normandy. Somewhere in his family tree there must have been a graft from the Green Isle. A wandering lumberman from County Kerry had drifted upon the Saguenay river to the Lake St. John region, and married the daughter of a habitant, and settled down to forget his own country and his father's name. But every visible trace of this infusion of new blood had vanished long ago, except the name; and the name itself was transformed on the lips of the St. Gerômiens. If you had heard them speak it in their pleasant droning accents,—"Patrick Mullarkey,"—you would have supposed that it was made in France. To have a guide with such a name as that was as good as being abroad.

Even when they cut it short and called him "Pato," as they usually did, it had a very foreign sound. Everything about him was in harmony with it: he spoke and laughed and sang and thought and felt in French—the French of two hundred years ago, the French of Samuel de Champlain and the Sieur de Monts, touched with a strong woodland flavor. In short, my guide, philosopher, and friend, Pat, did not have a drop of Irish in him, unless, perhaps, it was a certain—well, you shall judge for yourself, when you have heard this story of his virtue and the way it was rewarded.

It was on the shore of the Lac à la Belle Rivière, fifteen miles back from St. Gerôme, that I came into the story, and found myself, as commonly happens in the real stories which life is always bringing out in periodical form, some where about the middle of the plot. But Patrick really made me acquainted with what had gone before. Indeed,

ing of the tale; and while we sat among the bags and boxes, and the sun settled gently down behind the sharp pointed fir across the lake, and the evening sky and the waveless lake glowed with a thousand tints of deepening rose and amber, Patrick put me in possession of the facts which had led to a moral revolution in his life.

"It was the Ma'm'selle Meclair, that young lady—not very young, but active like the youngest—the one that I counted down the Grande Décharge à Chicoutimi last year, after you had gone away. She said that she knew m'sieu' intimately. No doubt you have a good remembrance of her?"

I admitted an acquaintance with the lady. She was the president of several societies for ethical agitation—a long woman, with short hair and eye glasses and a great thirst for tea; not very good at a canoe, but always wanting to run the rapids and into the dangerous places, and talking all the time. Yes; that must have been the one. She was not a bosom friend of mine, to speak accurately, but I remembered her well.

"Well, then, m'sieu'," continued Patrick, "it was this demoiselle who changed my mind about the smoking. But not in a moment, you understand; it was a work of four days, and she spoke much."

"The first day it was at the Island House; we were trolling for ouaniche, and she was not pleased, for she lost many of the fish. I was smoking at the stern of the canoe, and she said that the tobacco was a filthy weed, that it grew in the devil's garden, and that it smelled bad, terribly bad, and that it made the air sick, and that even the pig would not eat it."

I could imagine Patrick's dismay as he listened to this dissertation; for in his way he was as sensitive as a woman, and he would rather have been upset in his canoe than have exposed himself to the reproach of offending any one of his patrons by unpleasant or unseemly conduct.

"What did you do then, Pat?" I asked.

"Certainly I put out the pipe—what could I do otherwise? But I thought that what the demoiselle Meclair had said was very strange, and not true—exactly; for I have often seen the tobacco grow, and it springs up out of the ground like the wheat or the beans, and it has beautiful leaves, broad and green, with sometimes a red flower at the top. Does the good God cause the filthy weeds to grow like that? Are they not all clean that He has made? The potato—it is not filthy. And the onion? It has a strong smell; but the demoiselle Meclair she ate much of the onion—when we were not at the Island House, but in the camp."

"And the smell of the tobacco—this is an affair of the taste. For me, I love it much; it is like a spice. When I come home at night to the camp fire, where the boys are smoking, the smell of the pipes runs far out into the woods to salute me. It says, 'Here we are, Patrique; come in near to the fire.' The smell of tobacco is more sweet than the smell of the fish. The pig loves it not, assuredly; but what then? I am not a pig. To me it is good, good, good. Don't you find it like that, m'sieu'?"

I had to confess that in the affair of taste I sided with Patrick rather than with the pig. "Continue," I said—so happy that he would not let a man so happy that he would not let a man with a child in the house. It is the best thing that the good God gives to us; something to work for; something to play with. It makes a man more gentle and more strong. And a woman—her heart is like an empty nest, if she has not a child. It was the darkest day that ever came to Angélique and me when our little baby flew away, four years ago. But perhaps if we have not of our own, there is another somewhere, a little child of nobody, that belongs to us, for the sake of the love of children. Jean Boucher, my wife's cousin, at St. Joseph d'Alma, has taken two from the asylum. Two, m'sieu', I assure you; for as soon as one was twelve years old, he said he wanted a baby, and so he went back again and got another. That is what I should like to do."

"But, Pat," said I, "it is an expensive business, this raising of children. You should think twice about it."

"Pardon, m'sieu'," answered Patrick; "I think a hundred times and always the same way. It costs little more for three, or four, or five, in the house than for two. The only thing is the money for the journey to the city, the choice, the arrangement with the nuns. For one must save. And so I have three, away from the city, in a house. The money of the tobacco is for Quebec and for the little found child. I have already eighteen piastres and twenty sous in the old box of cigars on the chimney piece at the house. This year will bring more. The winter after the next, if we have the good chance, we go to the city, the goodwife and me, and we come home with the little boy—or maybe the little girl. Does m'sieu' approve?"

"You are a man of virtue," said I, "and since you will not take your share of the tobacco on this trip, it shall go to the other men; but you shall have the money instead, to put into your box on the mantel piece."

After supper that evening I watched him with some curiosity to see what he would do with the pipe. He seemed restless and uneasy. The other men sat around the fire, smoking; but Patrick was down at the landing, fussing over one of the canoes, which had been somewhat roughly handled on the road coming in. Then he began to tighten the tent-ropes, and hauled at them so vigorously that he loosened two of the stakes. Then he whittled the blade of his paddle for a while, and cut it an inch too short. Then he went into the men's tent, and in a few minutes the sound of snoring told that he had sought refuge in sleep at 8 o'clock, without telling a single caribou story, or making any plans for the next day's sport.

II.

For several days we lingered on the Lake of the Beautiful River, trying the

fish. We explored all the favorite meeting places of the trout, at the mouths of the streams and in the cool spring holes, but we did not have remarkable success. I am bound to say that Patrick was not at his best that year as a fisherman. He was as ready to work, as interested, as eager, as to work, as he had been in previous years; but he lacked steadiness, persistence, patience. Some tranquillizing influence seemed to have departed from him. That pleid confidence in the ultimate certainty of catching fish, which is one of the chief elements of good luck, was wanting. He did not appear to be able to sit still in the canoe. The mosquitoes troubled him, terribly. He was just as anxious as a man could be to have me take plenty of fish in a hurry. He even went so far as to say that he did not think I cast the fly as well as I did formerly, and that was too slow in striking when the fish rose. He was distinctly a weaker man without his pipe, but his virtuous resolve held firm.

There was one place in particular that required very cautious angling. It was a spring hole at the mouth of the Rivière du Millieu—an open space, about a hundred feet long and fifteen feet wide, in the midst of the lily pads, and surrounded on every side by clear, shallow water. Here the great trout assembled at certain hours of the day; but it was not easy to get them. You must come up delicately in the canoe, and make fast to a stake at the side of the pool, and wait a long time for the place to get quiet and the fish to recover from their fright and come out from under the lily-pads. I had been our custom to calm and soothe this expectant interval with incense of the Indian weed, friendly to meditation and a foe of "Raw haste, half sister to delay." But this year Patrick could not endure the waiting. After five minutes he would say:

"But the fishing is bad this season! There are none of the big ones here at all. Let us try another place. It will go better at the Rivière du Cheval, perhaps."

There was one thing that would really keep him quiet, and that was a conversation about Quebec. The glories of that wonderful city entranced his thoughts. He was already there, in imagination, with the vast throngs of people that filled its splendid streets, looking up at the stately houses and churches with their glittering roofs of tin, and staring his fill at the magnificent shop-windows, where all the luxuries of the world were displayed. He had heard that there were more than a hundred shops—separate shops for all kinds of separate things; some for groceries and some for shoes, and some for clothes, and some for guns, and many shops where they sold only jewels—gold rings and diamonds, and forks of pure silver. Was it not so?

He pictured himself, side by side with his good wife, the *salle à manger* of the Hotel Richelieu, ordering their dinner from a printed bill of fare. Side by side they were walking on the Duferrière Terrace, listening to the music of the military band. Side by side they were watching the wonders of the play at the Théâtre de l'Étoile du Nord. Side by side they were kneeling before the gorgeous altar of the cathedral. And then they were standing silent, side by side, in the asylum of the orphans, and looking at brown eyes and blue, at black hair and yellow curls, at fat legs and rosy cheeks and laughing mouths, while the Mother Superior showed off the little boys and girls for them to choose. This affair of the choice was always a delightful difficulty, and here his fancy loved to hang in suspense, vibrating between rival joys.

Once, at the Rivière du Millieu, after considerable discouragement upon Quebec, there was an interval of silence, during which I succeeded in hooking and playing a larger trout than usual. As the fish came up to the side of the canoe, Patrick netted him deftly, exclaiming with an abstracted air, "It is a boy, after all. I like that best."

Our camp was shifted, the second week to the Grand Lac des Cèdres; and there we had extraordinary fortune with the trout; partly, I conjecture, because there was only one place to fish, and so Patrick's uneasy zeal could find no excuse for keeping me in constant motion all around the lake. But in the matter of weather we were not so happy. There is always a conflict in the angler's mind about the weather—a struggle between his desires as a man and his desires as a fisherman. This time our prayers for a good fishing season were granted at the expense of our suffering human nature. There was a conjunction in the zodiac of the signs of Aquarius and Pisces. It rained as easily, as suddenly, as penetratingly, as Miss Miller talked; but in between the showers the trout were very hungry.

One day, when we were paddling home to our tents among the birch trees, one of these unexpected storms came up; and Patrick, thoughtful of my comfort as ever, insisted on giving me his coat to put around my dripping shoulders. The paddling would serve instead of a coat for him, he said; it would keep him warm to his bones. As I slipped the garment over my back, something hard fell from one of the pockets into the bottom of the canoe. "It was a briar-wood pipe," he said. "Aha! Pat," I cried; "what is this? You said you had thrown all your pipes away. How does this come in your pocket?"

"But, m'sieu'," he answered "this is different. This is not the pipe pure and simple. It is a souvenir. It is the one you gave me two years ago on the Metébotouan, when we got the big caribou. I could not reject this, I keep it always for the remembrance."

At this moment my hand fell upon a small, square object in the other pocket of the coat. I pulled it out. It was a cake of Virginia leaf. Without a word, I held it up, and looked at Patrick. He began to explain eagerly: "Yes, certainly, it is the tobacco, m'sieu'; but it is not for the smoke, as you suppose. It is for the virtue, for the self-victory, I call this my little

piece of temptation. See; the edges are not cut. I smell it only; and when I think how it is good, then I speak to myself, 'But the little found child will be better.' It will last a long time this little piece of temptation; perhaps until we have the boy at our house—or maybe the girl."

The conflict between the virtues of Virginia leaf and Patrick's vices must have been severe during the last ten days of our expedition; for we went down the Rivière des Escores, and that is a tough trip, and full of occasions when consolation is needed. After a long, hard day's work cutting out an abandoned portage through the woods, or tramping miles over the incredibly shaggy hills to some outlying pond for a caribou, and lugging the saddle and hind quarters back to the camp, the evening pipe, after supper, seemed to comfort the men unexpectably. If their tempers had grown a little shorter under stress of fatigue and hunger, now they became cheerful and good-natured again. They sat on logs before the camp fire, their stockinged feet stretched out to the blaze, and the puffs of smoke rose from their lips like tiny salutes to the comfortable flames or like incense burned upon the altar of gratitude and contentment.

Patrick, I noticed about this time, liked to get on the leeward side of as many pipes as possible, and as near as he could to the smokers. He said that this kept away the mosquitoes. There he would sit, with the smoke drifting full in his face, both hands in his pockets, talking about Quebec, and debating the comparative merits of a boy or a girl as an addition to his household.

But the great trial of his virtue was yet to come. The main object of our trip down the River of Barks—the terminus ad quem of the expedition, so to speak—was a bear. Now the bear as an object of the chase, at least in Canada, is one of the most illusory of phantasms. The manner of hunting is simple. It consists in walking along through the woods, or paddling along a stream, until you meet a bear; then you try to shoot him. This would seem to be, as the Rev. Mr. Leslie called his book against the desires of the eighteenth century, "A Short and Easy Method." But in point of fact there are two principal difficulties. The first is that you never find the bear when and where you are looking for him. The second is that the bear sometimes finds you when—but you shall see how it happened to us.

We had hunted the whole length of the River of Barks with the utmost pains and caution, never going out, even to pick blueberries, without having the rifle at hand, loaded for the expected encounter. Not one bear had we met. It seemed as if the whole ursine tribe must have emigrated to Labrador.

At last we came to the mouth of the river, where it empties into Lake Kenogami, in a comparatively civilized country, with several farm houses in full view of the opposite bank. It was not a promising place for the chase; but the river ran down with a little fall and a lively, cheerful rapid into the lake, and it was a capital spot for fishing. So we left the rifle in the case, and took a canoe and a rod, and went down, on the last afternoon, to stand on the point of rocks at the foot of the rapid, and cast the fly.

We caught half a dozen good trout; but the sun was still hot, and we concluded to wait awhile for the evening fishing. So we turned the canoe bottom up among the bushes on the shore, stored the trout away in the shade beneath it, and sat down in a convenient place among the stones to have another chat about Quebec. We had just passed the jewelry-shops, and were preparing to go to the asylum of orphans, when Patrick put his hand on my shoulder with a convulsive grip, and pointed up the stream.

There was a huge bear, like a very big, wicked, black sheep with a pointed nose, making his way down the shore. He shambled along lazily and unconcernedly, as if his bones were loosely tied together in a bag of fur. It was the most indifferent and disconnected gait that I ever saw. Nearer and nearer he sauntered, while we sat as still as if we had been paralyzed. And the gun was in its case at the tent!

How the bear knew this I cannot tell; but know it he certainly did, for he kept on until he reached the canoe, sniffed at it suspiciously, thrust his sharp nose under it, and turned it over with a crash that knocked two holes in the bottom, and the fish, hooked his chops, stared at us for a few moments without the slightest appearance of gratitude, made up his mind to go, and did not like our new appearance and then looked leisurely up the mountain side. We could hear him cracking the underbrush long after he was lost to sight.

Patrick looked at me and sighed. I said nothing. The French language was as far as I knew it, seemed trifling and inadequate. It was a moment when nothing could do any good except the consolations of philosophy, or a pipe. Patrick pulled the briar-wood pipe from his pocket; then he took out the cake of Virginia leaf, looked at it, smelled it, shook his head, and put it back again. His face was as long as his arm. He stuck the cold pipe into his mouth, and pulled away at it for awhile in silence. Then his countenance began to clear, his mouth relaxed, he broke into a laugh.

"Sacred bear!" he cried, slapping his knee, "sacred beast of the world! What a day of good chance for her, he! But she was glad, I suppose. Perhaps she has some cubs, he? Bijette!"

III.

This was the end of our hunting and fishing for that year. We spent the next two days in voyaging through a half dozen small lakes and streams, in a farming country, on our way home. I found that Patrick kept his souvenir pipe between his lips a good deal of the time, and puffed at vacancy. It seemed to soothe him. In his conversation he dwelt with peculiar satisfaction on the thought of the money in the cigar-box on the mantel-piece at St. Gerôme. Eighteen piastres and twenty sous

already! And what made from the tobing more than twenty-ill safe in the eiga-bank at Chicoution seemed to fill fragrance. It was but the fumes of their invisible vision, enchanting glitters walls, regiments laughing eyes of a little girl?

When we came La Belle Rivière, expanse of Lake s, calm and brig the sinking sun, left, eight miles sioner steeply a little girl. Goro. A thic rose from some hose. "It is on themselves to for a bonfire." danced lightly fo and came nearest evident that the village itself. but not a genera too scattered as a fire to spread Perhaps the bla the bakery, pen down barn of the was not a large. But where was i

The question more anxious, y arrived at the boys, eager to had the story to "Patrique! I in English, to as great as s "Come 'ome; k burn!"

"Watt!" cried out, and ran t village as if he men allowed his boy to unclasp them up on the would not chafe. This took so helped me w need to "urry, me; 'dat' onse ce hall burn' 'ing let' bot d up into the p tents, and he a steadiest of the the village and Mullarkey.

It had vanis of squared leg curved roof l with the morn up beside it E nothing rema day even at t a heap of smon Patrick sat stone that ha corner of the close to Angé locked almost his arm arou came up. I had calmed t he held the h right a k delicate slive he rolled to motion betw pulled his bow filled the bow

"What a m pretty house Patrick. An the mantel p fear—all terrible mist pen?"

"I cannot slowly. 'It has left me m'sieu', you pile of ashes, of charred w end—"you g given me" "pipe again!"

The frag pouring out enwrapped cloud aroun mountain a his face was ineffable co

"My faith so cheerfu! you come to Quebec, a little orphas up so easily

"Well," from his m around the feel that i "well, then suppose, to then, for t new one to help. And without th as regards you frankly his seat up himself wit beside his fidence. An pare a part yone. Ye not for an

It was l when I car The golden bloom a as I walk s right o to glory square h rapture of fragrant w A yellow clump of "Santed" bells. "Su sive!"

There farther by one; d of ash with mari