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OUR CENTENNIAL STORY.

THE BASTONNAIS:

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

By JOHN LESPERANCE.

BOOK II.

THE THICKENING OF THE CLOUDS.

I.

ZULMA SARPY.

It was a damp bleak morning and the snow was falling fast. Zulma Sarpy sat in her bedroom, indolently stretched upon a rocking chair before a glowing fire. She was attired in a white morning dress or *peignoir* slightly unbuttoned at the collar, and revealing the glories of a snowy columnar neck, while the hem, negligently raised, displayed two beautiful slippered feet half buried in the plush of a scarlet cushion. Her abundant yellow hair, thrown back in banks of gold over the forehead and behind the rosy ears, was gathered in immense careless coils behind her head and kept in position by a towering comb of pearl. Her two arms were raised to the level of her head and the two hands held on languidly to the ivory knobs at the top of the chair. On the second finger of the left hand was a diamond ring that flashed like a star. The whole position of the lovely loungers brought out her grand bust into full relief.

Beside her stood a little round table supported on three carved feet of exquisite workmanship, and covered by a beautiful netting of crimson lace. On the table was an open book and several trinkets of female toilet. The table gave the key to the rest of the furniture of the apartment, which was massive, highly wrought and of deep rich colors. The tapestries of the wall were umber and gold; the hangings of the bed and windows were a modulated purple. The room had evidently been arranged with artistic design, and just such a one would be employed to exhibit a statue of white marble to the best effect. Zulma Sarpy was this living, breathing model, fair as a filament of summer gorse and statuesque in all her poses.

She had been educated in France, according to the custom of many of the wealthy families of the Colony. Although confined for five years—from the age of fourteen to that of nineteen—in the rigid and aristocratic convent of Picpus, she had been enabled to see much of Paris life, during the waning epoch of Louis XVI's reign and the times of morbid fashionable excitement immediately preceding the great Revolution. Her natural disposition and the curiosity incident to her previous Colonial training led her to mingle with keen interest in all the forms of French existence, and her character was so deeply impressed by it that when she returned to her Canadian home, a few months before our introduction to her, she was looked upon very much in the light of an exotic. Yet was the heart of Zulma really unspoiled. Her instincts and principles were true. She by no means regarded herself as out of place in her native country, but on the contrary felt that she had a mission to fill in it, and, having had more than one opportunity of honorable alliance in France, preferred returning to Canada and spending her days among her own people.

But she had to be taken as she was. If the good simple people around her did not understand her ways, she could afford to leave them in their wonderment without apology or explanation. The standing of her family was so high, and her own spirit so independent that she felt she could trace out her own course, without yielding to the narrow and antiquated notions of those whose horizon for generations had never extended beyond the blue line of the St. Lawrence.

Was she thinking of these very things this morning, as she lounged before the fire? Perhaps so. But if she did, the thoughts had no palpable effect upon her. Rather, we fancy, were her thoughts straying upon the incident of three days before, when she had that rattling ride with the handsome British Lieutenant and distanced him out of sight. That glance in her great blue eyes was a reflection of the one which she cast upon the youthful horseman through the little window squares of the farmer's house. That tap of the slippered foot, on the edge of the shining fender, was the gentle stimulant she administered to her pony's flank as he leaped forward to win the race. That smothered, saucy laugh which bubbled on her red, ripe lips was an echo of the peal which greeted Hardinge when he pronounced the name of "Zulma," at the road gate. And as she rolled her fine head slowly to and fro on the velvet bosses of the back of her chair, was she not meditating some further design on the heart of the loyal soldier? Conspiracies deeper than that, designs of love that have rocked kingdoms to their foundation have been formed by languid beauties, recumbent in the soft recesses of their easy chairs.

Zulma had reached the culminating point of her reveries and was gradually gliding down the quiet declivities of reaction, when she was aroused

by a great uproar in the lower part of the house. She did not at first pay much attention to it, but as the sound grew louder and she recognized the voice of her father, speaking in loud tones of alarm, she sat up in her chair and listened with concern. Presently some one rushed up the stair and precipitated himself into the apartment, without so much as rapping at the door. It was her brother, a youth of about her age, who was at school at the Seminary of Quebec. He evidently had just arrived, being still wrapped up in blue flannel coat, trimmed with red cloth, hood of the same material, buckskin leggings and rough hide boots. He gave himself a vigorous shake, like a Newfoundland just emerged from the water, and stamped upon the floor to throw off the particles of snow adhering to his feet.

"What means all this disturbance, Eugene?" asked Zulma, holding out one hand and turning her head over the side of the chair, till her face looked up to the ceiling.

"Oh, nothing, except that the rebels have come!" was the rejoinder, as the youth walked up to his sister and dropped globules of snow from his gloves into her eyes.

"The what have come?"

"Why, the rebels."

"You mean the Americans."

"Americans or rebels—what is the difference?"

"A world of difference. The Americans are not rebels. They are freemen battling for their rights."

"We have been taught at the Seminary to call them rebels."

"Then you have been taught wrong."

Zulma had risen out of her chair and stood up in front of the fire with a glow of enthusiasm on her cheek. She would doubtless have continued to deliver her ideas on the subject, but her young brother evidently took no particular interest in it, and this circumstance, which did not escape her quick eye, suddenly brought her back to more practical questions.

"Where have the Americans arrived?"

"At Point Levis."

"When did they arrive?"

"This morning early."

"Have you seen them?"

"They are quite visible on the heights moving to and fro, and making all kind of signs towards the city. The whole of Quebec turned out to look at them, the scholars of the Seminary along with the rest. After I had seen the fellows, the Superior of the Seminary called me aside, and directed me to take a sleigh and come at once to notify you."

"Notify me?" said Zulma, arching her brows. "M. Le Supérieur is very amiable."

"Well, not you exactly," said Eugene laughing, "but our family."

"Oh!" exclaimed she. "That is different. I never saw your Superior in my life and I do not know that he is aware of my humble existence."

"There you are mistaken. Our Superior knows all about you, your tricks, your oddities, your French notions and he often speaks to me of you. He is especially aware that you are a rebel and is much grieved thereat."

"Rebel! There is that hateful word again."

"I thought you liked it when applied to yourself. You told me as much the last time."

Zulma laughed and seemed propitiated, but she said no more. Her brother then told her that their father was considerably agitated at the news. He was particularly alarmed lest his son should be exposed by remaining in the city and thought of withdrawing him from the Seminary during the impending siege. What did Zulma think of it?

"When do you return to Quebec?" was the abrupt query.

"I will return at once and father is going with me."

"I will go too. I want to see these Americans for myself and then I will tell you what I think of your staying at the Seminary or the reverse. Go down stairs, while I make ready."

When Zulma was alone, it did not take her long to prepare herself for the journey. All her languor had departed. The idle fooling in which she had indulged during the previous hours was replaced by an earnest activity in moving about her room. Her fingers were skilful and rapid in the arrangement of her dress. In less than a quarter of an hour she walked up to the mirror for the last indispensable feminine glance. And what a magnificent picture she was. In her sky-blue robe of velvet, with pelisse of immaculate ermine, and hood of the same stuff quilted with azure silk, her beautiful face and queenly proportions were brought out with ravishing effect. Encasing her hands in her gauntlets, she went down to meet her father and brother, and a moment later, the three rode away at a brisk pace in the direction of Quebec.

(To be continued.)

REMINISCENCE OF DICKENS.

Miss Kate Field, in a lecture not long since, at Newcastle, England, related this little anecdote of Charles Dickens:—It was worth while receiving a compliment from Dickens, it was turned with such art. I know of one note in America so felicitous in expression as to deserve publicity. It was addressed to a New York girl, who had been a constant attendant at his readings. Going up the stairs to Steinway Hall on the occasion of Dickens' reading on New Year's eve, this young lady was met by a friend, who stopped her, saying: "I've a message for you from the chief." Dickens was always called "the chief" by his intimate friends. "I asked him if he saw you in the audience. 'Saw her?' replied Dickens; 'yes, God bless her! She's the best audience I ever had!'" And I've a message for Mr. Dickens," retorted the delighted girl. Whereupon she drew forth a basket of violets that graced Dickens' desk during the reading, and elicited the following response:—"I entreat you to accept my most heartfelt thanks for your most charming New Year's present. If you could know what pleasure it yielded me you would be repaid even for your delicate and sympathetic kindness. But, I must confess, that nothing in the pretty basket of flowers was quite so interesting to me as a certain bright, fresh face I had seen at my readings, which I am told you may see, too, when you look in the glass." Not long after, on being introduced to Dickens, the same New York girl exclaimed: "Ah, Mr. Dickens, I owe you so heavy a debt of gratitude that I shall never be able to pay the interest on it." "You shall have a receipt in full," was Dickens' quick retort; whereupon beneath a ferocious engraving of himself, he wrote: "Received of —, all the thanks she owes me, and many more, with whom I am better pleased than I appear to be in the above gloomy presentment of my state of mind." That New York girl would not part with these autographs for the Presidency of the United States.

[For the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.]

RANDOM SKETCHES ON THE ROAD.

BY A CANADIAN COMMERCIAL.

Whether the word "blow" employed in the sense of "brag" is indigenous to Canada, I am not prepared to say, but it is universal in use, and although perhaps slang, I doubt if any other word used in the same sense would be as immensely expressive. We hear it used either as noun or verb at the discretion of the speaker—"he's an awful blow"—"pshaw, he's only blowing" are expressions that might appear enigmatical to the unaccustomed ear, but replete with meaning to those from whose lips they fall.

Conceding this meaning of the word, there is certainly no class of men to whom the same temptations are offered to "blow," and to become confirmed "blows" as—Commercial Travellers. As a consequence the ranks of the craft are full of gentlemen of the blowing type. The various ways in which this weakness displays itself in them are multifarious, numerous in fact as the lines of trade to which "the craft" devote themselves. The consideration of the manifold manifestations of the blowing propensity in the so called "Commercial Fraternity" may not be uninteresting, nor (say it in a whisper) inapplicable to other classes of this heterogeneous Canadian community—in fact, "blowing" seems to be a verbal plant that can grow, blossom and "blow" to luxuriant perfection only in this Western Hemisphere.

Happening to number among that unhappy class of society, who are regularly and periodically stigmatised as "blows," I will in my own poor way attempt to portray a few of the better known varieties of the genus "blow," and in so doing would say in a discreet "aside" that the different types described are not unfrequently found outside the pale of our fraternity, although if the tendency in any man be as yet but imperfectly developed, an introduction into the ranks of the brotherhood will certainly and speedily accomplish that sometimes very undesirable end.

Every one is familiar with some notable specimen of the commonest and grossest variety of the blow. It requires absolutely no intuition to recognize this obtrusive animal. He it is who "travels for the best house in the country"—who "has lines", to use his expressive phraseology, "that no other man on the road can touch"—who "gets the biggest salary of any man that travels," whose house says to him emphatically "blast the expense, so long as you sell the goods" and so on *ad infinitum*.

He is a most insufferable bore as a travelling companion, and Heaven help the unfortunate man of quiet and retiring disposition, who has this ogre thrust into his society for a whole Sunday. When he lays his weary head upon the pillow that night, he will feel that a miserable failure he is as a traveller, and despise himself and his talents as a salesman, when he thinks of the meagre measure of success that has so ill rewarded his most conscientious efforts in the past, as contrasted with the magnificent and unheard of triumphs achieved by our friend the Out-and-out Blow, and so glowingly described by him that day. In his vivid imagination (a shorter and less charitable word would be both more pithy and more pointed) and by the aid of his multiplying tongue, one sale in a town has swelled into three, dozens have grown into grosses, and amounts that could readily be reckoned by hundreds have, in his fertile mind, been subjected

to a process of mental multiplication and magnified into thousands of dollars. Shop, Shop, Shop is his unvarying theme but such a shop and such a tradesman! Why the richness of its wares and the volumes of its trade could only be done justice to by some Oriental story-teller, or the author of Don Quixote or, better still, he who praised Baron Munchausen!

But it is not with this doughty knight who has won his spurs so often as to hold them cheap, that we have to deal. Our province lies mainly with subtler types of the order Blow.

Notable among them is the Blow who blows by implication; this is a specimen not recognizable at first sight, and by some, often by his closest acquaintance, never recognized at all, but to the man in search of him as a rare specimen, his shallow disguise is easily penetrated. Nothing pleases him; he will characterise a comfortable country hotel, where good fortune has left him for the night, as a "wretched stable," a "beastly hole," while his room, warm and furnished with all the requisite that any ordinary mortal would require, is stigmatised as a "pig-pen." He takes particular delight in insulting his host, bullying the hostler and hurting the feelings of the clean, spruce housewifely hostess, who has till now taken an honest pride in the domestic arrangements for the comfort of her guests. But his indignation and wrath reach their climax at meal times; no words are too strong to express his contempt for the well-cooked, though very likely homely food, that is placed before him. "Dirty rubbish," "not fit for a dog," "disgusting" are only a few of the choice epithets applied to what, withal, he eats—yes, and eats heartily, despite his pretended loathing. But this he does not consider. During the progress of his thankless meal, he keeps the landlady, probably busy serving a whole table-full of hungry mortals, in a constant flurry by the incessant grumblings proceeding from his lips between each mouthful. He exasperates the landlord, who has taken the greatest pains in carving for him, by sending back the cut two or three times, and finally sends the table girl away in tears by some ill-natured, not to say brutal remark. I had the pleasure of seeing one of these would be autocrats most beautifully sold the other day at a hotel in the town of St. Thomas. He was, I must confess, "a commercial man," and being at dinner at the same table as myself, he ordered "roast beef," and received in return a most unexceptionable cut. Not so, however, thought our exceedingly particular friend; pushing the plate aside with a gesture of contempt, he growled out "take it away, it's raw—not fit for a pig to eat, much less a Christian." Mine host happened to be carving and over-hearing the remark, he determined to play a harmless little trick on the malcontent, so after simply turning over the slice with his carving fork, and pouring a little brown gravy over it, he sent it back to him when it was at once accepted, and gourmandised with all the appearance of absorbing gust that characterizes all such thoroughly selfish individuals at their meals. "Put a beggar on horseback etc.—the proverb is familiar and the inference is equally plain. If we took the trouble to enquire, it would be found in nine cases out of ten, that these *unfailing* grumblers are accustomed to but poor accommodation and perhaps the meagrest of meagre fare at home, but their high mightinesses wish to give less unpretentious people about them to understand that they are accustomed to much better things, and that they emphatically know "what's what." This a fair sample of "blowing by implication," but its manifestations often take other and far different forms and the consideration of these, and also of other distinctive specimens in this curious menagerie of blows, will furnish ample material for another paper.

WAYFARER.

WOMAN'S LOGIC.

The other afternoon a sharp-featured woman, nearly six feet high, came into the city on the Grand River road with about three-eighths of a cord of red oak stove-wood piled on a one-horse wagon. The wood was so green that the sap exuded and froze to ice, and those in search of wood gave her load looks of contempt and scorn. She halted near the Cass Market, and waited there more than an hour. She seemed to be getting discouraged, when along came a little resident of the Cass farm and asked her the price of wood. She said she'd take \$3.

"Three dollars for less'n half a cord of green oak wood?" he exclaimed.

"Is this green wood?" she asked, as she threw the blanket off her feet.

"Green as water," he replied.

"It is your opinion that I lie about this wood, is it?" she asked as she let herself down to the ground.

"I don't say that," he answered, as he looked up at her, "but I do say—"

"You do say that this is green wood, do you?" she interrupted, letting the old bed-quilt drop from her shoulder.

"I say, madam, that—that—"

"You say what?"

She was a head the tallest. She didn't look harmonious out of her eyes. Fifty years of battling with the world might have rendered her desperate. The little man thought of all these things as a crowd began to gather, and he softly replied:

"Madam, I am no judge of wood. My people for three generations past have used nothing but coal, and I thought this was a load of anthracite or I wouldn't have stopped!"