

the day brisker; but Claire, having dismissed her first suitor, was left unnoticed in her corner, where she sat revolving plans for her escape.

If she had dared, she would have tried to slip away through the open door; but she feared to draw attention to herself by moving. She saw, with relief, that the girls still outnumbered the settlers, though the discrepancy was continually growing smaller; and she devoutly hoped that they might all find wives amongst her companions.

Barbe Michellon had vacated the seat at her side, and was now promenading the hall, leaning on Jean's arm and making his acquaintance, while they waited till their friends were also ready for the marriage ceremony. Barbe's seat was soon taken by a fair-haired, blue-eyed little orphan girl from Rouen, who looked nearly ready to cry in her timidity and nervousness. Her life had been a hard one, poor child. She had never had a home, or received anything worthy of the name of love; and Claire, by a few trifling words of kindness, had entirely won her heart. "What shall we do," she whispered, "if no one wishes to marry us, Claire?"

The tone of alarm and disappointment in which this was spoken was not to be mistaken. Claire looked at her with a mingling of surprise and contempt, but said consolingly: "Grieve not thyself, Lucine; there is no danger that we shall escape! Doubtless there are more of these settlers yet to come."

Lucine sat silent, in troubled effort to solve the difficulty she had suggested to Claire—now murmuring a prayer under her breath to her patron saint, and now looking with envy at the bolder, more dashing girls who had already secured their partners for life. Once she followed the direction of her companion's eyes, and looked out of the window. In the distance a long, birch-bark canoe was approaching. She watched it with a faint hope that it might contain the answer to her prayers. Nearer and nearer it came, till at last the dip of the paddles in the water sounded plainly, and she could see the faces of the crew. They were all white men but one, from the size of his figure and the redness of his hair, especially attracted her attention. They jumped on shore just opposite the window, and hurried up from the bank as if they feared that they might be late. Lucine watched the red-haired man, who stood head and shoulders above his fellows, still vaguely thinking of that prayer to Ste. Thérèse.

She turned to see the big man enter the room. Poor, little, friendless orphan! it would grand to have such a husband, so strong and so brave! The very sound of his sonorous voice, and hearty laughter, as he greeted his friends, and replied to their jests on his tardiness, did her good.

"Eh, bien, Thibaud Sommelier!" exclaimed Jean Porteur, "if thou art come to seek a wife, thou hadst best make haste, we are all waiting for thee, lad!"

"Patience, patience!" replied the giant, good naturedly. "I did not hear till this morning that the *Bonne Ste. Anne* was in. One cannot choose for a lifetime in a moment." So saying, he set out on his tour of inspection in a peculiarly leisurely fashion.

Lucine watched him anxiously. As he came near she unconsciously clutched Claire's arm, making her look round with a start. Lucine's pale face and mild blue eyes seemed colourless beside her companion's dark beauty. Thibaut paused opposite to them, looking from one to the other in odd bewilderment. Lucine dropped her eyes; but Claire, with ostentatious indifference, affected to be still interested in the prospect of the river. At last he moved away, and once more made the round of the room, studying the faces of the unengaged girls, with an air of perplexity pitiful to see; but returned again to his old station in front of Claire and Lucine.

In his own way, Thibaud Sommelier had an artistic admiration for beauty in any form; and the longer he looked at her, the more beautiful Claire de l'Echelle appeared; but he had also, like many a big, brave, rough fellow, a wonderful tenderness for anything weak and small; and Lucine was pathetically weak and small. Slowly he walked up and down before them, with his face drawn into queer knots and wrinkles, in the earnestness of his cogitations.

He fancied his little log-cabin glorified by the presence of this queenly, dark-eyed beauty, and then he thought of the poor, little, lonely girl among strangers, far from home. Which should he ask to be his wife? He turned towards them again; he looked long and pitifully at Lucine, but Claire's loveliness had cast a spell over him, and at last he spoke the words that crumbled Lucine's hopes to dust. "Mademoiselle, wilt thou be my wife?"

Claire dared not refuse a second time. Without speaking, she bowed her assent, and Thibaud took up a position beside her, with an air of proprietorship, that was less annoying for being silent.

Lucine still sat beside them, holding fast to Claire's hand. She felt sad and disappointed. It was clear now that Ste. Thérèse had not deigned to aid her, for no new suitors had appeared during the last half hour, and those in the room had at last come to a decision. Nothing now remained but to perform the marriage ceremony as quickly as possible, for the sun was already low in the west, and a heavy bank of clouds on the horizon suggested coming storms.

The priest, in spite of the lateness of the hour, and the unusual circumstances of the case, was determined that "all things should be done decently and in order," and he spent much time and patience in arranging the twenty-five or thirty couples to his liking. The notary, seated at

a little table with pen and ink before him, was growing impatient; but the good father still delayed, instructing brides and bridegrooms as to their parts in the ceremony.

At length he returned to his station at the end of the room, and was concluding his preliminary exhortation, when a sudden shriek rang through the building, followed by wild whoops, and distant cries of "To arms! to arms!"

Forgetful of bride, priest, and the religious ceremony in which he was to bear a part, Thibaud Sommelier uttered a loud answering shout, and, drawing his weapon, pushed his way through the crowd behind him, and rushed out to seek the scene of conflict, followed by most of the settlers present.

Thus deserted, the trembling maidens clung to each other and the priest, and wept, and wrung their hands at this inauspicious beginning of their new life.

Claire, still aloof from the rest, remained a moment where she had been left; then, with a sudden hope, passed quickly through the crowded entrance and ran towards the town. The priest, who was a deliberate, slow thinking man, roused himself from his amazement, and, hurrying to the door, cried out to her to stop.

She did not turn or heed him, and after one or two vain efforts to gain her attention, he devoted his energies to barricading door and windows with the benches from round the walls, muttering: "Her blood be upon her own head!"

Meanwhile, Claire had fled towards the nearest building, under a wild impulse to escape at all hazards from her distasteful lot. It was an utterly foolish thing to do, and if she had known more about the savage Iroquois, she would not have dared to risk falling into their hands. As it was, she did not much care whether she lived or died, if only she could avoid marrying poor Thibaud.

Puffs of smoke and a constant and most horrible outcry showed her that the combatants could not be far away. She paused a moment behind the storehouse towards which she had fled. Alas, there was no chance of hiding herself within it, for doors and windows were all fast barred. For an instant she thought of returning, but, happening to look towards the river, she was horrified to find her retreat cut off by a number of Indian braves, who were landing from a large canoe. Hastily drawing back, she crept cautiously forward towards the further corner of the building, from which she saw a sight that made her almost forget her own danger. Between the river and the houses a fearful struggle was going on. The redmen and the settlers were fighting hand to hand. Conspicuous among them, towered the huge form of Thibaud Sommelier, as he rushed hither and thither among the half-naked Indians, hideous in their war-paint and feathers, and dealt blows under which they sank down like children. But, even while she looked, the giant suddenly staggered and fell, shot by a bullet from an unseen hand.

A howl of triumph rose from the throats of the savages, but their joy was shortlived. Down the hill from the castle came a little band of soldiers, well armed and disciplined, though few in number. With a cheer that echoed from the heights, they charged upon their foes. The Iroquois did not await their coming, but scattered to right and left, leaving the dead and wounded on the field; but firing now and then, with terrible effect, from their lurking places among the trees and buildings.

The Frenchmen followed by twos and threes, striving to force them into the open ground again, but only partially succeeded. Their leader was a young gentleman, in the handsome though somewhat effeminate style of dress affected by the gallants of the period. His curled hair, lace and velvet, however, did not prevent his doing some very rough and ghastly work that day, for wherever the fray was hottest there gleamed his unerring sword. Claire watched while she could, then sank on her knees, bowed her head and tried to pray.

Suddenly she looked up over her shoulder. To her dying day the agony of that moment was never forgotten. Behind her, slowly crawling with noiseless step along the wall, was a being so foul and hideous that Claire first thought it to be an apparition from the nether world. The feathered head, claw necklace, streaks of paint, and, worse than all, the horrible scalp fringes, and fresh smears of blood, looked demoniacal indeed!

Shrieking "Léon! Léon! save me!" she sprang up, and rushed towards the young officer. Startled beyond measure, Léon St. Arnaud looked up. The face, the voice were well remembered still, but it was no time to give or receive explanations. "Fear not, Claire," was all he said, "I will save you."

He led her to a house close at hand, and leaving one or two men to guard her and the wounded, he pursued the wily Indians from one shelter to another, killing some and taking many prisoners, till at last they drew off to their canoes, and made the best of their way up the river.

The rudely interrupted marriage ceremony was not celebrated that evening; for, of the expectant bridegrooms, several were wounded, one was dead, and another, brave Thibaud Sommelier, lay at the point of death. The terrified brides were conducted from their uncomfortable prison-house by a torchlight procession of the townsfolk, to the convent of the Hospital nuns, where they could rest in safety for the night.

Claire de l'Echelle was not among them; but, when the fighting was over, was escorted by St. Arnaud to the Castle of St. Louis, there to be petted, and made much of by the Governor's lady, who admired her beauty as much as she was interested in her story.

On the morrow St. Arnaud begged for an interview with her, declaring that he had never ceased to love her, but that his friends alone were to blame for their long separation. "They told me you were wedded, Claire," he said, "and how could I but believe it when you never replied to any of my letters?"

"I never received them, Monsieur; but, though not wedded then, I am promised in marriage now!"—and she told him about Sommelier.

St. Arnaud frowned and talked of his earlier claim, but Claire was firm.

Meanwhile, Thibaud, struggling between life and death under the care of the kind nuns, forgot his fiancée, but thought often of Lucine, for he sometimes saw her little figure flitting about among the patients as she helped the nuns in their onerous task of nursing the many sick and wounded: and when, after weeks of illness, he prepared to return to his neglected farm, he asked Lucine to accompany him as his wife. The light came into her blue eyes but faded instantly. How could he have forgotten that he was betrothed already? When she reminded him, he went at once to the Castle to see Mademoiselle de l'Echelle. St. Arnaud had just left her in grief and anger, and she met Thibaud with a face of misery.

The great, rough, backwoodsman stumbled woefully over his errand, and yet Claire understood him, and sent him away happy. Lucine became his wife on the morrow, and of all the brides of that disastrous day, none was more fully contented with her lot than the timid little orphan.

A week latter, the chapel of the Jesuits was decked for high mass; and the Governor, and his wife, and all their glittering train, clad in costumes that mocked the autumn woods for splendour, attended to do honour to the wedding of Claire de l'Echelle.

EMILY WEAVER.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MODERN CRITICISM.

LITERATURE is an art, and therefore submits itself to the law of beauty which supplies the test of art; but it is also a revelation of the spirit of man, and there is to be found in it something more than the perfect felicity and unbroken serenity of the most finely tempered souls. The buoyancy of Homer is one of our great possessions, but there is something to be learned also from the despondency of Leopardi; the mastery of Shakespeare over all the materials of his work is inspiring, but there is something significant also in the turbulence of Byron; the amplitude of culture opens the heart of the modern world in Goethe, but the provincial sincerity of Mistral has something to teach us; Dante's majestic strength makes us feel the identity of great living and great art; but there is something for us in the pathetic felicity of De Musset and the often unavailing beauty of Shelley. In each writer of any force and genius there is not only the element which makes him amenable to the highest law of criticism; there is also something which appeals to our individual consciousness and is distinctly personal, something which is the impress of the inheritance and larger circumstance of the time, and is therefore historic, and something which lets us into the soul of a generation of men, or of a period of time, or a deep movement of faith and thought. A great piece of literature may be studied from each of these points of view, and to get to the bottom of its meaning it must be so studied. Every enduring literary work not only affords material for, but demands, this comprehensive study—a study which is at once critical, historic, and personal.

Now the study of literature in these larger relations, these multifarious aspects, has never been so earnestly pursued as during the present century. Never before has such a vast amount of material been accumulated; never before have there been such opportunities of using on a great scale the comparative method. This pursuit has become a passion with many of the most sensitive minds, and we have as a result a body of literary interpretation and philosophy in the form of criticism so great in mass and so important in substance as to constitute one of the chief distinctively modern contributions to the art of letters. For this study of books and the men who made them is not the pastime of professional Dryadusts; it is the original and in a large measure the creative work of those who, in other literary periods and under other intellectual and social influences, would have illustrated their genius through the epic, the drama, or the lyric. Lessing, Herder, Goethe, Coleridge, Carlyle, Sainte-Beuve, Arnold, Amiel, Emerson, have not been students of the work of other men simply from force of the scholarly impulse; they have been irresistibly attracted to the study of literature because literature has disclosed to them the soul and the laws of life and art. Each literature in turn is yielding its secrets of race inheritance, temperament, genius; each related group of literatures is disclosing the common characteristics of the family of races behind it; each literary epoch is revealing the spiritual, moral and social forces which dominated it; each great literary form is discovering its intimate and necessary relation with some fact of life, some stage or process of experience. All this we owe to the modern critical movement—a movement not so much of study and comparison for the purposes of judgment by fixed standards, as of investigation for the purpose of laying bare the common laws of life and art; of making it clear to us that literature is always the vital utterance of insight and experience.