

The Faith of Paul Duchaine

A Canadian Romance of Earlier Times

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

Illustrated by M. McLAREN



DOWN the declivity that leads from the citadel toward Quebec's most famous hotel, a toboggan sped swiftly; it ploughed through the snow and stopped. A girl and a man emerged laughing, and began to pull the sled up the ascent again. The girl was typical of Quebec, with dark hair and eyes, red cheeks, and that beauty for which the Citadel Town is of repute. Other toboggans followed, and the slope was black with the two lines of travelers.

"Eh, Monsieur, youth never changes," croaked the old man who stood watching the pastime. "For more than seventy years I have seen the same sight each winter, and the same faces. It was thus when the Château St. Louis stood where this hotel stands; so in the days of Carleton, and of Frontenac as well, no doubt. My father used to tell me stories . . ."

"Still, Quebec is not what it was in my grandfather's time," he continued presently. "You must picture it in the thirties, or earlier, in the splendid twenties, or even earlier yet, in the days of the first *émigrés*. We were smaller then, it is true, but not less gay. And, after all, the soul of Quebec dwells inside her walls, and not in the new city beyond them. So we had everything, even in my grandfather's time, when the equipages choked Louis Street, every afternoon—I love to think of my grandfather's days, Monsieur."

"My father used to tell me of the carnival. I remember when I was a little lad they spoke of Mademoiselle Marguerite Thibault, who is now, I have no doubt, forgotten, though I could point out to you her house on Louis Street. She was Queen of the Carnival that night when Paul Duchaine went gliding past her throne with cap undoffed. The skaters spun over the frozen river—mock soldiers and hooped ladies; beaux in frills and ruffles of the period, while women in masks picked out their partners for the rout, and being unknown to them, made merry at their expense. Flambeaux on high stands flared all the way between the ramparts of Quebec and Levis, on the south shore, for there had been no snow, and the St. Lawrence was smooth as glass."

"In the midst of the throng, seated languidly upon her tinsel throne, with drooped eyelashes and discontented mouth, Mademoiselle Thibault, the 'Queen,' surrounded by her courtiers, watched the skaters."

"He skates well. Who is he?" she asked, somewhat intrigued, as a young man in a plain dress went by without saluting her, though he passed within a few feet of where she sat."

"Monsieur Auguste Dion salaamed to her with mock courtesy."

"I will find out and bring him into your presence, Mademoiselle," he said, and glided out among the crowd. He soon found the unknown and touched him on the arm."

"Monsieur," he lisped. "Will you have the goodness to give me your name—or, rather, to appear before her Majesty and announce yourself?"

"The young man stared at his interrogator."

"I am Paul Duchaine," he answered in a French provincial accent. "But I had thought," he continued, smiling, "that we had left Majesties behind us when we left France."

"I shall inform Her Majesty of your words," replied Monsieur Dion, and brought the young man before the throne."

"I have executed Your Majesty's command," the dandy lisped, bringing his skate-heels together with a click. "This gentleman is Paul Duchaine, without the prefix, and he thought he had left Your Majesty behind him when he left France."

"There was a great roar of laughter from those around the throne, but Mademoiselle Marguerite, being wearied of her courtiers, had the caprice to smile kindly on the young man."

"Why have you not saluted me as you went by, Monsieur?" she asked. "Doubtless you have but lately landed and are ignorant of the polite ceremonies of our carnival, for I can hardly think you to be one of those wicked atheists who first denied Our Lord and then murdered His Majesty of martyred memory."

"A Republican!" shouted Monsieur Dion, making a mock thrust with his sword. "Treason! A Napoleonist! Say but the word, Mademoiselle, and I shall lay his head at your feet as a love offering!"

"Auguste, thou art always a chatter-box," answered Mademoiselle Marguerite. "Well, Monsieur have you no tongue?" she continued, addressing the young man again.

MR. ROUSSEAU'S stories of old Quebec have awakened enthusiasm everywhere. Since we published "The Curé's Love Story" in the September issue of Everywoman's World, requests have come in for more from Mr. Rousseau's pen.

Especially have our neighbors to the South welcomed these romances of old French Canada. They shed for them—and indeed, for us—a brighter light on the chivalry of earlier Canadian days.

"The Faith of Paul Duchaine" is pleasingly characteristic of the Christmas spirit that has not passed with the days that were.

—The Editors.

"Yes, Mademoiselle, I have a tongue," he answered hotly. "As you have said, I landed in Quebec but lately and was ignorant of the polite ceremonies of your carnival. I have been here but one week, in fact, and I reside in the Rue Fleurie with my brother, Jean Duchaine, the furrier."

"Ah, bon soir, Monsieur le Fourreur!" shouted Monsieur Dion, making a mocking bow.

"Instantly the crowd took up the cry. 'Bon soir, Monsieur le Fourreur!' they shouted, circling around the young man with mock salutations. 'A toi, Monsieur le Fourreur!'"

"Paul Duchaine's face flushed, and he breathed hard through his nostrils. But Mademoiselle, seeing the turn things were taking, and being still capricious, rose out of her throne."

"Monsieur Duchaine shall escort me home," she said. "Auguste, you will resign your privilege for this night?"



Mademoiselle rose from her throne. "Monsieur Duchaine shall escort me home," she said.

"Ah oui Mademoiselle" muttered Auguste with a grimace.

"It was truly a difficult situation for the beaux who followed unhappily in the train of Mademoiselle. Marguerite Thibault was one of those beauties who have made our city famous ever since Nelson lost his heart to one and nearly ruined his career for her. Twenty-two, tall, statuesque, with a wealth of

dark hair, and gray eyes which could deal tenderness and flash hauteur with equal facility, of one of the rich old families of the aristocracy, it was no wonder that she held all the idle young men captive in her train. Many a one had fancied that some day this beauty would smile for him alone, only to be sent home sadly, with ruffled plumage. For Mademoiselle was not kind to those whom she disdained, and they included all her mob of servitors."

"It was, then, a difficult situation for the gentlemen trailing up Louis Street behind her, while she enacted this strange whim of walking back with the newcomer. It was especially hard for Monsieur Auguste Dion, whose wealth and insinuation had given him status as Mademoiselle's favorite. Still, he had met difficult situations before, only—not when his enemy was a common furrier from the Lower Town of shopkeepers."

"At the door of her house Mademoiselle extended her hand. 'Adieu, Monsieur Duchaine. Or, rather, au revoir,' she said. 'Remember, friendships made lightly often endure long.'"

"Paul Duchaine shook the hand of Mademoiselle instead of kissing it, to the amusement of the outcast courtiers. They grinned at him in angry spite as he passed between their ranks and down the street, but there was something in his face which forbade even Monsieur Auguste to speak to him."

"As for Monsieur Duchaine, you may believe that he seemed to walk on air. Only six short weeks before he had left his father's roof at Arles, to join his elder brother Jean, whose fur trade was already proving prosperous; and here he was, the envied, the hated, of all Quebec!"

ON the next night, while Jean Duchaine pored over his books of accounts, Paul, frilled and ruffled like the best, stole out of the shop, skates in hand, and hurried toward the river. It was the second day of the carnival, and the last. Mademoiselle Thibault, weary, and in no enviable mood, yet, woman-like, disdaining to yield her place to some lesser toast, sat languidly upon her throne, dealing out sharp words to those who cringed for her favors."

"Gliding across the ice toward her, Paul Duchaine halted before the throne and doffed his cap. 'Bon soir, Mademoiselle Votre Majesté!' he exclaimed, rejoiced to see Monsieur Auguste's teeth set angrily as he stood beside the throne."

"Mademoiselle Marguerite looked blankly at the newcomer. 'Who is this gentleman?' she asked of Auguste Dion."

"Ah, Mademoiselle, do you not remember that you threw him the condescension of your glance last night?" inquired Auguste. "Doubtless he has come back for more."

"Ah, oui, the furrier," said Mademoiselle. "Well, Monsieur le Fourreur, I have no need for furs, being well supplied, so move aside and do not obstruct my view."

"Move, Monsieur le Fourreur!" snarled Auguste Dion, and once more the crowd took up the cry. Some one seized a cake of ice and hurled it at him; they danced round him in their tardy triumph. As for Mademoiselle Thibault, as though this meant nothing to her, she sat pensively upon her throne."

"For a moment Paul could not understand. Then he knew, and, ignoring the mimicking crowd, he advanced two steps and planted himself before Mademoiselle."

"I see you are a mockery, as others have seen and told," he said in low, penetrating tones of intense anger. The blood flamed in his cheeks. "You are all a mockery," he cried. "Your throne of tinsel, your hollow crowd of followers, and you yourself, who play with the hearts of honest men, are a mockery in God's eyes, you wanton!"

"Paul Duchaine stepped out of the throng—who, paralyzed with dismay, and cowering in the presence of Paul's genuine wrath, shuffled their skates uneasily and cast furtive glances toward Mademoiselle. As for her, at Paul's first words she had started up in her chair with an imperious gesture, her own cheeks redder than his; but when he had ended she crouched limply down, with a blanched face, indrawing shuddering sobs."

"When she looked up again, Paul was far away (CONTINUED ON PAGE 23)