

prosperity to the little farm. Jean was now a big boy of seven; Josette was four. Baptiste had sold a piece of land at a good price to a railway company, and was going to town to pay off the last instalment on the mortgage. *Hop, la Grise!* he would see if there was anything left to buy Louise and the little ones something to put in their stockings. *Hop, la Grise!*

His first visit is to Monsieur le Notaire

The *notaire* (notary) in French Canada, is the custodian of all family papers. Marriage contracts, wills, deeds of all kinds are passed before him, and his signature is necessary to legalize them. He therefore knows everybody's affairs, but is almost as much bound to secrecy as the priest who hears confession.

"*Bonjour, Monsieur le Notaire, I have come to pay the balance of what I owe on the mortgage,—two hundred and twenty-five dollars.*"

The notary, who is a good soul, adjusts his spectacles, and with a twinkle in his eye, says: "I wish you joy, Baptiste. Remember this is *la veille de Noël*, and on that day the good Saviour has said: 'Peace to men of good-will.' You are an honest fellow, you have had your share of ill luck, but you stuck to your duty and your work like a man. *Monsieur le Seigneur* (landlord), who has a kind heart and wishes to reward honesty and good-will, has instructed me to give a few Christmas presents to his tenants and debtors. Two hundred dollars is the principal and twenty-five dollars the interest. Here is a receipt for the whole amount, but he remits you the interest, so that you may enjoy a happy Christmas day, that you thoroughly well deserve, with your good wife and children."

"By gum," replies Baptiste, a lump in his throat, 'le seigneur is a *vrai monsieur* (true gentleman). Louise will have her pelisso and muff, Jean shall have a sleigh and harness for his dog Carlo, and little Josette a fine big talking doll."

"And what for yourself," says the good notary.

"Oh, never mind me, I will be so glad to see my wife and little ones all happy that I shall need no other Christmas present. *Merci, Monsieur le notaire*, please give Mon-

*sieur le seigneur* my warmest thanks and tell him he has made us all very happy," and with a suspicious moisture in his eye, he is off.

*Hop, la Grise.* We will now go to our friend Joe Lalonde. You shall have a rest in a good warm stable while I go to the shops.

*Bonjour Joe, bonjour tout le monde,*" (everybody) says Baptiste, as he enters the small hotel where farmers usually assemble on market days. A fire of big logs is burning brightly in the immense fire-place, and a dozen men are sitting around it chatting gayly. "Come on, everybody, I am very happy to-day, you must drink my health and the health of *Monsieur le seigneur.*" He then relates what happened at the notary's, and they all join him in a hearty cheer for the *seigneur*. "Now, boys, I must hurry off, as I want to buy Louise and the little ones some Christmas presents and get home early."

They all lift their glasses, except one man, sitting in a corner of the room, looking very miserable. He had, however, listened closely when Baptiste had spoken of the seigneur's generosity. "*Hola, my friend, come and join us, everybody must be happy.*" The man gets up reluctantly and drinks with the others, but goes back to his seat in the corner of the room.

They soon forget him, however, but Baptiste, as he takes leave of his friends, notices that the stranger has disappeared. On his way to the store, he thinks he recognizes him walking in the direction he is to take himself on his way home.

But as he enters the store the incident goes out of his mind.

He buys Louise a soft, warm pelisse, with a muff and cap, then a sleigh and harness and a pair of *raquettes* (snowshoes) for Jean, and the big doll saying *papa, maman*, for Josette.

He looks at his watch. "By gum, 8 o'clock,—I am late, but the little mare is all right.

*Hop, la Grise,* and he starts for home singing: "*En roulant ma boule.*"

The road, as it leaves the last house, runs through a thicket of pines; the night is dark, and Baptiste pictures to himself the