

into the woods, and brought them back safe and sound at the end of the day. Not that they failed to be shocked sometimes, when, on her wild, Indian pony, Fleda swept through Manitou like a wind and out into the prairie, riding, as it were, to the end of the world. Try as they would, these grateful mothers of Manitou, they could not get as near to Fleda Druse as their children did, and they were vast distances from her father.

"There, there, look at him," said old Madame Thibadeau to her neighbour Christine Brisson—"look at him with his great grey-beard, and his eyes like black fires, and that head of hair like a bundle of burnt flax! He comes from the place no man ever saw, that's sure."

"Ah, surelee, men don't grow so tall in any Christian country," announced Christine Brisson, her head nodding sagely. "I've seen the pictures in the books, and there's nobody so tall and that looks like him—not anywhere since Adam."

"*Nom de pipe*, sometimes—trulee, sometimes, I look up there at where he lives, and I think I see a thousand men on horses ride out of the woods behind his house and down here to gobble us all up. That's the way I feel. It's fancy, but I can't help that." Dame Thibadeau rested her hands on her huge stomach as though the idea had its origin there.

"I've seen a lot of fancies come to pass," gloomily returned her friend. "It's a funny world. I don't know what to make of it sometimes."

"And that girl of his, the strangest creature, as proud as a peacock, but then as kind as kind to the children—of a good heart, surelee. They say she has plenty of gold rings and pearls and bracelets, and all like that. Babette Courton, she saw them when she went to sew. Why doesn't Ma'm'selle wear them?"

Christine looked wise and smoothed out her apron as though it was a parchment. "With such queer ones,