

lay far in the distance, I soon settled to my work, and found the life an enjoyable one. To work beside Charley the most of the day, and go with him in the evening to some place of amusement, or to visit some of the men in chambers about us, was for the time a satisfactory mode of existence.

I soon told him the story of my little passage with Clara. During the narrative he looked uncomfortable and indeed troubled, but as soon as he found I had given up the affair, his countenance brightened.

"I'm very glad you've got over it so well," he said.

"I think I've had a good deliverance," I returned.

He made no reply. Neither did his face reveal his thoughts, for I could not read the confused expression it bore.

That he should not fall in with my judgment, would never have surprised me, for he always hung back from condemnation, partly, I presume, from being even morbidly conscious of his own imperfections, and partly that his prolific suggestion supplied endless possibilities to explain or else perplex everything. I had been often even annoyed by his use of the most refined invention to excuse, as I thought, behaviour the most palpably wrong. I believe now it was rather to account for it than to excuse it.

"Well, Charley," I would say in such case, "I am sure you would never have done such a thing."

"I cannot guarantee my own conduct for a moment," he would answer—or, taking the other tack, would reply:

"Just for that reason I cannot believe the man would have done it."

But the oddity in the present case was that he said nothing. I should, however, have forgotten all about it, but that after some time I began to observe that as often as I alluded to Clara—which was not often—he contrived to turn the remark aside, and always without saying a syllable about her. The conclusion I came to was that, while he shrunk from condemnation, he was at the same time unwilling to disturb the present serenity of my mind by defending her conduct.

Early in the spring an unpleasant event occurred, of which I might have foreseen the possibility. One morning I was alone, working busily, when the door opened.

"Why, Charley—back already!" I exclaimed, going on to finish my sentence.

Receiving no answer, I looked up from my paper, and started to my feet. Mr. Osborne stood before me, scrutinizing me with severe grey eyes. I think he knew me from the first, but I was sufficiently altered to make it doubtful.

"I beg your pardon," he said coldly—"I thought these were Charles Osborne's chambers." And he turned to leave the room.

"They are his chambers, Mr. Osborne," I replied, recovering myself with an effort, and looking him in the face.

"My son had not informed me that he shared them with another."

"We are very old friends, Mr. Osborne."

He made no answer, but stood regarding me fixedly.

"You do not remember me, sir," I said. "I am Wilfrid Cumberland."

"I have cause to remember you."

"Will you not sit down, sir? Charley will be home in less than an hour—I quite expect him."

Again he turned his back as if about to leave me.

"If my presence is disagreeable to you," I said, annoyed at his rudeness, "I will go."

"As you please," he answered.

I left my papers, caught up my hat, and went out of the room and the house. I said good morning, but he made no return.

Not until nearly eight o'clock did I re-enter. I had of course made up my mind that Charley and I must part. When I opened the door, I thought at first there was no one there; there were no lights, and the fire had burned low.

"Is that you, Wilfrid?" said Charley.

He was lying on the sofa.

"Yes, Charley," I returned.

"Come in, old fellow. The avenger of blood is not behind me," he said, in a mocking tone, as he rose and came to meet me. "I've been having such a dose of damnation—all for your sake!"

"I'm very sorry, Charley. But I think we are both to blame. Your father ought to have been told. You see day after day went by, and—somehow—"

"Tut, tut! never mind. What does it matter—except that it's a disgrace to be dependent on such a man? I wish I had the courage to starve."

"He's your father. Nothing can alter that."

"That's the misery of it. And then to tell people God is their father! If he's like mine, he's done us a mighty favour in creating us! I can't say I feel grateful for it. I must turn out to-morrow."

"No, Charley. The place has no attraction for me without you, and it was yours first. Besides I can't afford to pay so much. I will find another to-morrow. But we shall see each other often, and perhaps get through

more work apart. I hope he didn't insist on your never seeing me."

"He did try it on; but there I stuck fast, threatening to vanish, and scramble for my living as I best might. I told him you were a far better man than me, and did me nothing but good. But that only made the matter worse, proving your influence over me. Let's drop it. It's no use. Let's go to the Olympic."

The next day, I looked for a lodging in Camden Town, attracted by the probable cheapness, and by the grass of the Regent's Park; and having found a decent place, took my things away while Charley was out. I had not got them, few as they were, in order in my new quarters before he made his appearance; and as long as I was there few days passed on which we did not meet.

One evening he walked in, accompanied by a fine-looking young fellow, whom I thought I must know, and presently recognized as Home, our old school-fellow, with whom I had fought in Switzerland. We had become good friends before we parted, and Charley and he had met repeatedly since.

"What are you doing now, Home?" I asked him.

"I've just taken deacon's orders," he answered. "A friend of my father's has promised me a living. I've been hanging about quite long enough now. A fellow ought to do something for his existence."

"I can't think how a strong fellow like you can take to mumbling prayers and reading sermons," said Charley.

"It ain't nice," said Home, "but it's a very respectable profession. There are vicars in it, and lots of honourables."

"I daresay," returned Charley, with drought. "But a nerveless creature like me, who can't even hit straight from the shoulder, would be good enough for that. A giant like you, Home!"

"Ah! by the bye, Osborne," said Home, not in love with the prospect, and willing to turn the conversation, "I thought you were a church-calf yourself."

"Honestly, Home, I don't know whether it isn't the biggest of all big humbugs."

"Oh, but—Osborne!—it ain't the thing, you know, to talk like that of a profession adopted by so many great men fit to honour any profession," returned Home, who was not one of the brightest of mortals, and was jealous for the profession just in as much as it was destined for his own.

"Either the profession honours the men, or the men dishonour themselves," said Charley. "I believe it claims to have been founded by a man called Jesus Christ, if such a man ever existed except in the fancy of his priesthood."

"Well, really," expostulated Home, looking, I must say, considerably shocked, "I shouldn't have expected that from the son of a clergyman!"

"I couldn't help my father. I wasn't consulted," said Charley, with an uncomfortable grin. "But, at any rate, my father fancies he believes all the story. I fancy I don't."

"Then you're an infidel, Osborne."

"Perhaps. Do you think that so very horrible?"

"Yes. I do. Tom Paine, and all the rest of them, you know!"

"Well, Home, I'll tell you one thing I think worse than being an infidel."

"What is that?"

"Taking to the church for a living."

"I don't see that."

"Either the so-called truths it advocates are things to live and die for, or they are the veriest old wives' fables going. Do you know who was the first to do what you are about now?"

"No. I can't say. I'm not up in church history yet."

"It was Judas."

I am not sure that Charley was right, but that is what he said. I was taking no part in the conversation, but listening eagerly, with a strong suspicion that Charley had been leading Home to this very point.

"A man must live," said Home.

"That's precisely what I take it Judas said for my part I don't see it."

"Don't see what?"

"That a man must live. It would be a far more incontrovertible assertion that a man must die—and a more comfortable one too."

"Upon my word, I don't understand you, Osborne! You make a fellow feel deuced queer with your remarks."

"At all events, you will allow that the first of them—they call them apostles, don't they?—didn't take to preaching the gospel for the sake of a living. What a satire on the whole kit of them that word *living*, so constantly in all their mouths, is! It seems to me that Messrs. Peter and Paul and Matthew, and all the rest of them, forsook their livings for a good chance of something rather the contrary."

"Then it *was* true—what they said about you at Forest's?"

"I don't know what they said," returned Charley; "but, before I would pretend to believe what I didn't, —"

"But I do believe it, Osborne."

"May I ask on what grounds?"

"Why—everybody does."

(To be Continued.)

(REGISTERED in accordance with the Copyright Act of 1868.)

(Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.)

TALES OF THE LINKS OF LOVE.

BY ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE.

The Whistler at the Plough.

LILLYMERE.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN SIGHT OF THE END OF THE STORY. BEGINNING OF THE LIFE OF THE REAL.

The time is a week after the Donna arrived at Quebec. Two in the afternoon. The sky a clear, cold, grey blue; temperature down to zero, nearly. No wind stirring. The sun low in the south-west; ungenial as a friend you once knew, not friendly now; will hardly stay to look on you. A brilliant prime minister weary of serving the unsatisfied.

Groups of people gather on the terrace beside the Governor's residence, site of the historic castle of St. Louis. They walk smartly to sustain warmth. A few looking down southerly into the chimneys of the streets two hundred feet below; and to the river of travelling ice. Or westerly up the slopes of snow; up the rock and citadel walls, to the one visible great gun, standing on its platform out against the light. A bulldog muzzled, but to bark on occasions.

The people pace at quick time for warmth; the men wearing caps, collars, cuffs, gauntlets of fur; the ladies swansdowns, and furs; with the cloud of fleecy white on the head ever becoming, ever convenient.

Two, a man and woman, look occasionally for signals, two miles across to the bold slopes where the town of Levis sits in snow on the crown of the ridge, on the sides of the hill, and along the low level by the frozen river. DePeri, the detective, and the Donna Eurynia.

From easterly, at the elbow of Levis Point, three miles down, the central stream of blue water comes round and into view, carrying platforms of ice set with castles, temples, pinacles, batteries, monuments; fairyland illusions, glistening like floral bowers. All flashing out on the sun's eye and yours in stars and streams prismatic. It is a navy coming in from the ocean, with broken rainbows for a lading; the beauty and the glory too abundant to be all concealed though broken.

With the sun obscured, and the tide running out, the procession is a funeral. Grim dead giants going to be buried in the ocean. White elephants drawing grey coaches. Plumes and spectres on the barges; mortuary chapels with broken spires.

Should the bergs at high water meet other ice, nine miles up at a bend of the river, and be immovably wedged, and intense frost set in, this at low ebb, being clear of drift, may freeze and "take." Like a smooth board it will then rise and fall with the tides, and remain a bridge till April. Battalions of infantry exercising on its miles of even surface. Fleets of ice-boats in full sail gliding on the glacial levels; tacking in the wind, each with a crew and complement of merry passengers. Sleighs, sledges, carioles to fast trotting horses, mingling with the sailing ice-boat squadrons.

But the river has not "taken" for a bridge yet. And the floating islands are too many and dense for passage of the ferry steamers, or were on the day I tell of.

Canoes, carrying one or two or three passengers, each with a crew of several bold Canadian boatmen, occupy the ferries. The men bring up the canoe and seat the passengers at level of the wharf. Then put it in motion; run by its side, gliding down the incline; launching it in the channel cut for its passage. Then they leap aboard, and rowing reach the first eddying, rapid current.

They paddle or pull over that. They disembark on the first long ice island which may not permit of the canoe rounding its capes, or threading the narrow straits. They haul up the craft and passengers; traverse the travelling island, around pinnacles, through gulleys in its surface; sensible that every minute it carries them astray. They drag the canoe and passengers; bridging chasms with the oars laid for tramways; shouting and giving courage by noise and merry words of humour.

At next open water they launch and embark again; pulling with a vigour, the very excess of athletic prowess, to make up for the true course lost on the floating island.

Again they leap to ice, climbing the piled-up strait; stepping from point to point with precision; bridging crevasses with the oars; hauling the canoe along; extricating one another; shouting courage cheerily.

They work with a measure of heroic toil, perseverance, and success, such as the country at a distance wots not of. They are French Canadians earning what fares they may, while the uncertain season of the floating ice continues; but in addition to fares, making a

good name, which if known to the height of their daring, would be renowned the world over; excelling anything done in the sport of wager races.

Thus, on that day before the powerful Grand Trunk Railway ferry steamers of this day came into service, the passage was made by ten, fifteen, twenty or more canoes. All, after one another, or abreast, traversing a succession of floating islands, and launching alternately in the running eddying tidal currents.

People promenaded on the terrace, and two looked across to Levis town for signals. Others walked sharply for warmth between the terrace and the centre of high fashion and attraction, the St. Louis Hotel, the Music Hall, and Military Staff quarters.

In the St. Louis Hotel, famed on all the continent as the resort of American summer travellers in seasons of happy concord, and at the Russell House on Palace street, and in a private mansion, the Donna Essel Bell Eurynia with portions of her retinue had taken residence.

Parliament was about to assemble, and the lady assumed to have business with public functionaries. But I have not ascertained she had any affairs of concern in Quebec, other than to enfold within the nets laid all around the domain of her love for Lillymere, the hunted bird Agnes Schoolar. To hold Agnes for weal or woe as fortune, in the winter of contrarieties then, might determine when the spring time came with blossoms.

As events might interpret destiny, when the splendour of Eurynia's reason should stand or be overthrown in the passion of a superior mental nature convulsed.

"I perceive the signals, my lady," said De Peri, addressing the Donna. "One up by the church on the hill, one down by the wharf. They are now embarking and have divided in three canoes."

"That is as you designed they should?"

"As I designed they should, my lady."

"We may now descend to the wharf," the Donna remarked, when, like De Peri, she had surveyed with the telescope.

And so they went, and awaited the coming of the three, around and over the floating icebergs.

It was not uncommon that three canoes, starting from the same point, and traversing narrow rapids and eddies among the floating icebergs, should separate and arrive at different landing-places, one before the other two. On this occasion it may have been designed.

The first contained two women, and a man who guarded them. The ladies were severely conducted ashore, over fissures in the ice, by persons standing near, whom nobody interfered with to prevent. And the man was directed to remain in his seat until the canoe was drawn around a berg, when he and the luggage could be landed together. That piece of ice was in motion, and half an hour elapsed before they got to shore.

This person, Adam Schoolar, the tormentor of Agnes, and tyrant of her father and mother, was particular about seeing his luggage safe; and saw it safe. Meanwhile, one of the ladies was driven away by one clothed in furs, who said:

"Best for your safety, Miss Schoolar, to come with me; I'm a friend."

The Donna did not interfere, but followed in another sleigh up Mountain Hill, and out to her hired mansion on St. Foy Road. De Peri, who stood aloof, not speaking to any, remained at the Champlain wharf observing. When all the party arrived, they were directed by some one the nearest way to the asylum for the insane. Agnes was not there.

After search and inquiry, a report was accepted as true that the insane girl had escaped and gone to Montreal; from thence over the line. Another report went around as a whisper that she had drowned herself.

After two nights and days of repose in the St. Foy mansion, during which Agnes was visited by lady members of Eurynia's retinue, who assured her of protection, the Donna in person entered the young lady's chamber.

At entrance she paused, looking mysteriously in the timid young face half a minute; then advanced and embraced, saying:

"Insane? Yes, insane indeed. Mad and beautiful."

To which this response in tones of plaintive entreaty:

"Pardon, dear lady, if I plead for your good opinion; I am not insane."

"Indeed you are. What possesses you to go mad, crazy-headed, lovely girl?"

"You are merry with me, dear lady. I know you have cause to be unkind; but I entreat you be not unkind."

"What would you I did?"

"Protect me from my persecutor, Adam."

"You are protected, Agnes. Yesterday I paid him the amount of the old mortgage on Ogleburn Castle, which has descended to you as a heritage. For which fortune he has so pertinaciously pursued you. He pursues no longer, but has taken the money and signed a deed not to disturb you more."

"Noble Donna! Ever generous and considerate. I thank you; thank you. The inheritance of the mortgage was all my poor fortune, but a thousand times I thank you for