

ST. MARTIN'S SUMMER.

BY JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

Though flowers have perished at the touch
Of Frost, the early comer,
I hail the season loved so much,
The good St. Martin's summer.

O gracious morn, with rose-red dawn,
And thin moon curving o'er it!
The old year's darling, latest born,
More loved than all before it!

How famed the sunrise through the pines,
How stretched the birchen shadows,
Braiding in long, wind-wavered lines
The westward sloping meadows!

The sweet day, opening as a flower
Unfolds its petals tender,
Renews for us at noonday's hour
The summer's tempered splendour.

The birds are hushed; alone the wind,
That through the woodland searches,
The red oak's lingering leaves can find,
And yellow plumes of larches.

But still the balsam breathing pine
Invites no thought of sorrow,
No hint of loss from air like wine
The earth's content can borrow.

The summer and the winter here
Midway a truce are holding,
A soft, consenting atmosphere
Their tents of peace enfold.

The silent woods, the lonely hills
Rise solemn in their gladness;
The quiet that the valley fills
Is scarcely joy of sadness.

How strange! the autumn yesterday
In winter's grasp seemed dying;
On whirling winds from skies of gray
The early snow was flying.

And now, while over Nature's mood
There steals a soft relenting,
I will not mar the present good,
Forecasting or lamenting.

My autumn time and Nature's hold
A dreamy tryst together,
And, both grown old, about us fold
The golden-tinted weather.

I lean my heart against the day
To feel its bland caressing;
I will not let it pass away
Before it leaves its blessing.

God's angels come not as of old
The Syrian shepherds knew them;
In reddening dawns, in sunset gold,
And warm noon lights I view them.

Nor need there be, in times like this,
When heaven to earth draws nearer,
Of wing or song as witnesses
To make their presence clearer.

O stream of life, whose swifter flow
Is of the end forewarning,
Methinks thy sundown afterglow
Seems less of night than morning!

Old cares grow light; aside I lay
The doubts and fears that troubled;
The quiet of the happy day
Within my soul's doubled.

The clouds must veil this fair sunshine
Not less a joy I find it;
Not less our warm horizon line
That winter lurks behind it.

The mystery of the untold days
I close my eyes from reading;
His will be done whose darkest ways
To light and life are leading!

Less dear the winter night shall be,
If memory cheer and lighten
Its heavy hours with thoughts of thee,
Sweet summer of St. Martin!

THE MYSTERIOUS CABINET.

BY J. G. BOCKINOT.

I.

Very many years ago—I hope my friends will not require the exact date—I was living in the pleasant and picturesque city of Quebec, and among the acquaintances that I made soon after my arrival was the Abbé Letellier. He was connected with one of the educational institutions of the city, and was considered one of the best scholars in the country. To him I was indebted, not only for numerous facts respecting the early history of Lower Canada, but for many interesting details of the manners and customs of the French Canadians. Under his guidance Quebec and its suburbs became as familiar to me as the old town by the sea where I was born. Even now, whilst I write, I can see the tin-roofed, solid buildings fastened on the hill-sides, or nestling at the foot of that noble promontory, which overlooks the dark waters of the river that carries to the ocean, many hundred miles below, the tribute of the great lakes of the west. Again am I bathed by the mist of the lovely fall of Montmorenci, tumbling in one mighty leap from the rocks, nearly three hundred feet above, or am "coasting" down the sides of the immense ice-cones which are formed at the foot, and afford so much amusement to the pleasure-seekers of jovial Quebec during the many months that the frost king holds the land in his icy grasp.

But I must remember that I have not sat down to describe the social or natural characteristics of the old capital of Canada. I have a short story to tell, not connected immediately with Quebec, but with a pretty village which is situated a considerable distance from the city,

on the St. Lawrence. Soon after my introduction to the Abbé I stated that it was my intention, at the earliest opportunity, to visit some of the old French villages and see the *habitant* in his own home. Thereupon the Abbé very kindly offered to give me letters of introduction to some friends of his own at the village in question—which is called, like so many others in Canada, after one of the saints so numerous in the Roman Catholic calendar—and assured me at the same time that I would see the *habitant* very little altered from what he was last century when he came under the dominion of Great Britain. Before I had availed myself of this kindly offer the Abbé called on me at my lodgings and stated that it was his intention, two days later, to take a trip into the country, and that he would be very happy to have me as his companion. I gladly accepted the invitation and made all the arrangements necessary to accompany him at the time agreed upon.

II.

Early in the morning of a fine September day, when the sun was just rising above the surrounding hills and lighting up the roofs of the city so that they fairly shone, I was seated in the Abbé's study, a cosy apartment well lined with the choice authors of English and French literature. We soon took our places in the old calèche, of which the Abbé was to act as driver, and were on the point of starting when a gentleman crossed the street quickly and handed my companion a letter, saying something at the same time in French, the purport of which did not reach me. I recognized him immediately as a young man who had assisted me on one occasion in copying some old historical documents which I had hunted up in the Legislative Library. He had been introduced to me by the venerable librarian, but I had quite forgotten his name. He was a first rate penman, and had not only copied but translated the paper in a most admirable manner. He was very young—not more than twenty to all appearances—and somehow or other it seemed to me, when I noticed his retiring, subdued manner, that he was oppressed by the sense of some recent misfortune. I had intended questioning the librarian respecting him, but something occurred to prevent me from carrying out my intention.

"I had given you up," said the Abbé. "A moment later you would have missed us. I will not fail to do what you wish, and trust ere long to have good news to tell you."

With these words the Abbé bade the young man adieu and touched up his horse gently with the whip. As he passed rapidly over the rough pavement towards the ancient gate leading to the country, my companion observed:

"That young man has friends at the place to which we are going. Indeed, he was, at one time, high in the favor of Monsieur de Guerecheville, but some differences have unfortunately occurred between them."

By this time we had passed through the gate and the Abbé's attention was directed to something else. We went through the pretty suburb of Beauport and caught a glimpse of Montmorenci sparkling in the morning sunlight. The country through which we drove was dotted by neat villas and churches with their tapering spires and quaint ornaments. We met many of the natives—the men in red shirts or blouses and the women in caps and stiff homespun dresses. The villages consisted of one-story, white-washed, red-roofed houses, most of them clustered round the church and the curé's residence. Now and then we could see a large, pretentious looking building of stone or wood, surrounded by tall Lombardy poplars, maples or elms, and giving the idea of substantial comfort and respectability. These generally belonged to the Seigneur, who so long exercised feudal rights over wide domains, and necessarily exercised a large influence throughout the rural districts, even when the seigniorial tenure was abolished.

It was nearly dark when we arrived at our destination, which was a large village prettily sequestered by the side of a small stream, just where it emptied into the St. Lawrence. The largest houses were low, rudely built structures of stone, some of which gave the evidence of considerable age—indeed the Abbé pointed out several erected immediately after the fall of Quebec. The chapel was a fine edifice of gray stone, with a lofty steeple surmounted by a cross, and ornamented by an old fashioned dial and some curiously carved images in niches on each side of the entrance. Only a few persons were moving about the roads, and we could see the farmers busy at their barns storing grain, or taking the cattle to water. As we drove along we could see the Château des Ormeaux, the pretentious name given to the residence of Seigneur de Guerecheville—a large, square building, with a square tower at one end, overshadowed by magnificent elms, which gave the place its distinctive name.

At my request the Abbé left me at the house of a *habitant* who took summer boarders, whilst he went on to the cottage of the curé—a pretty little building, almost covered by wild grape vines and Canadian ivy, and within a stone's throw of the church. A French woman of middle age, very stout and good humored looking received us with a courtesy, and promised the Abbé to do her best to make me comfortable. Then my kind friend left me with the understanding that he would see me early the next morning, as he had to go and visit a sick friend and might not be able to see me in the course of the evening.

III.

I was soon at home in the snug, though certainly plainly furnished cottage of Jean François Marmontel, who also kept the post-office of the village—a sure evidence that he must have been a man of some political influence when he received the place. His knowledge of English was very meagre, and I found it more agreeable for both of us to fall back on my own stock of French, which had received large accessions since my arrival in Quebec. As the evening passed we were perfectly friendly with one another and I heard all the news in the village.

As we sat chatting, a bright eyed, rather pretty girl came in and the old man introduced her as his youngest child.

"Oh, father," she said, soon after entering, "do you know what I've heard at the Château? Marguerite and the other servants will have it that the building is haunted—music and strange sounds have been heard several times in a part of the house where nobody has been living for years."

"Old wives' fables, child."

"Stephanie and Marguerite both heard the music the other night—Thursday, I think."

"They're both silly girls," replied the old man, "for filling your ears with such nonsense."

The young girl, however, appeared still to have her opinion on the subject, and followed her mother to another part of the house, to tell her more about it in all probability. The old man then became very communicative, and told me many things concerning the Château and its inmates. M. de Guerecheville was evidently more feared than loved by the people of the district, who still looked up to him as their "great man." His only daughter, Estelle, on the other hand, was clearly a great favorite—to use the emphatic language of a people, naturally devout, she was "comme un ange," both for her personal beauty and her amiable qualities. Another favorite was one whom the *habitant* called Raoul, and from what he said I conjectured rightly that he was the young man I had seen that morning in Quebec.

"But what is the reason," I asked, "that Raoul never comes now to the old house?"

"Ah, sir, it is a strange story. He was, you must know, the son of a notary, who long managed the affairs of the old seigneurie. His mother died when he was only three or four years old, and as he grew up he was a great deal at the Château and was much loved by Madame, who was a kind, gentle lady—she died just eighteen months ago. Raoul and Estelle were playmates from an early age—just like a brother and sister, and when his father died he went to live altogether at the Château and was brought up as one of the family. He was educated by Monsieur le Curé, who is a great scholar, and then was sent, at his own request, to study law in the office of a lawyer at Quebec. Now it is said he got into bad habits, squandered a great deal of money, and so enraged M. de Guerecheville that he has denied him the house. Another story is that Estelle's father, who is a very proud man in his way, noticed that there was an attachment growing up between the young man and his daughter and so insulted Raoul that he left the Château and has never since come back. But it is not easy to get at the truth—notably over talks of Raoul at the Château. None of us believe he ever did anything wrong—he was a kind well behaved lad—and I don't think even the city could change his character as some will have it."

I had an idea as I listened to the old man that he knew more about the matter than he wished to tell. However, as it was already late, I returned to the pleasant room which the worthy hostess had got ready whilst I was listening to the gossip of her husband.

IV.

Next morning the Abbé called and told me that the old friend, whom he had come particularly to see—an old notary, who had been one of his college friends—was not expected to live many days, and that consequently he had been unable to see me the night before. About eleven he proposed to take me to the old manor house and I gladly consented. Whilst on the way I questioned him with respect to Raoul, in whom I began to feel somewhat interested—chiefly because there appeared to be some mystery connected with him.

"Ah, I see, my old friend and gossip, Marmontel, has been retelling to you all the news, replied my companion. "It is perfectly true the doors of the Château are closed against him. M. de Guerecheville believes he has been deeply wronged by one in whom he had placed every confidence. I am not free to state the circumstances, for it is M. de Guerecheville's wish that they should be kept secret. Raoul has also spoken to me on the subject, and positively declares he is entirely innocent of what he has been accused. It is true the young man was somewhat extravagant and got into debt, but I cannot believe he is what the old Seigneur (who is very obstinate in his opinions) declares him to be. The curé, who has known him from his childhood, is confident that the truth will come out sooner or later, and that it will be in favor of his pupil. The letter you saw the young man hand me when we were starting yesterday was for his old friend and tutor."

We had now reached the entrance to the Château, which was fronted by a high stone wall, and passed up an avenue of fine maples, beeches and elms. A well kept lawn lay directly in front of the house and a small conservatory at one side, facing the east. Over the door we saw

the date of the building—A.D. 1744—and some words in old character which I could not decipher, but which the Abbé said was the motto of the family:

"RETINENS VESTIGIA FAME."

We went through a large hall, with oak stained walls and a stone floor, decorated with wolf and bear skins, and found ourselves in the library—a handsome, airy room. M. de Guerecheville received us with much courtesy and introduced me to his daughter, an exceedingly charming girl, with dark blue eyes and very regular features. Her smile was remarkably sweet, and she wore her hair in coils twisted round her shapely head. The old Seigneur himself was a small, wiry looking man, with keen eyes, which were deeply set in his head, and with a chin and mouth indicating a strong will. He at once pressed me very strongly to come and stay at the Château.

"Sir," he said, "if you knew the gratification you would give us by remaining, you would not continue to refuse. We lead a quiet life in this old house and are always glad to see the Abbé and his friends. As I understand you take an interest in old Canadian times, I shall be most happy to show you some rare works and manuscripts which may interest you."

I was well satisfied with the quiet quarters I had found at Marmontel's cottage, but when I saw that the old Seigneur would be annoyed if I did not accept his hospitable offer, I allowed him to send for my portmanteau.

V.

I was soon at home in the Château, which possessed a capital library, including such treasures as M. de Guerecheville had spoken of. The Seigneur himself was of an old French family, which had come into the country at the end of the seventeenth century. As his name showed, he was descended from a branch of that family, of which the celebrated Marquis, who withstood the blandishments of Henry IV., was the most distinguished member.

"She it was, you perhaps remember," said the old Seigneur, when the conversation had turned on his family, as we were looking over some portraits, "who repulsed the gay monarch with the naughty retort, 'Sire, my rank perhaps is not high enough to permit me to be your wife, and my heart is too high to permit me to be your mistress.'"

The Seigneur's brother, a doctor by profession, though he rarely practised then, joined us in the course of the day. When I learned that he had a son, now at college, I wondered if he had anything to do with the disgrace into which Raoul had fallen. He seemed an off-handed, pleasant gentleman—much more a man of the world than his brother, and I soon dismissed the suspicion that had flashed across my mind that he was perhaps jealous of the favour which had been shown to Raoul.

I accompanied M. de Guerecheville and his brother over his principal farm, which covered several hundred acres, although it was only a portion of his possessions, which reached to the hills away beyond. One of the most interesting objects we saw was a large stone building, once used as a saw-mill, but now as a granary. The mill was always an important feature on the estate of a Seigneur, for under the old feudal tenure, the *seigneurs*, or holders of land, were bound to grind their corn at the *moulin banal*, or lord's mill, where one-fourteenth part of it was taken for his use as toll. The *habitants* we saw on the estate were just the same class of people, in their faces and manners, that one sees at the present day in some old Breton village.

The evening at the Château passed away pleasantly. Mademoiselle de Guerecheville was a charming musician, and sang simple Canadian airs, which are favorites among the *habitants*, many of whose fathers and grandfathers had been *voyageurs* and *coureurs des bois*. The Seigneur and doctor told anecdotes illustrative of the life of the simple-minded, old-fashioned natives, and then we all parted for the night.

VI.

I sat for awhile in my bedroom—a large, comfortable apartment overlooking the river—smoking a cigar and enjoying the pleasant fire of maple splinters, which blazed on the hearth, with its quaint brass andirons. The night was chilly, as is generally the case in the month of September in Canada, and the room had not been occupied for some time. So I sat for an hour at least watching the sparks flying up the spacious chimney, and then the clock in the lower hall struck one and sent me to bed. I had been asleep for some time in the old canopied French bedstead, which probably held many generations since it was first put up, when I awoke with a start, imagining that somebody was stirring in the room. I listened for a moment or two and soon laughed at my foolish fancy. The moonlight was streaming into the apartment and playing some strange freaks with some old wood engravings hanging on the walls, so that the French men and women who were delineated with a Rembrandt-like fidelity, seemed almost to laugh at me as I sat up and peered out of the curtains. I heard nothing, however, for some minutes except the tick of my watch, which I had placed on the dressing-table. I was arranging myself once more comfortably under the bed-clothes when I heard a