



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XVIII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1867.

No. 16.

THE UNCLE AND NEPHEW; OR, A SAILOR'S STRATAGEM.

Translated from the French of Emile Souvestre, for the Metropolitan Record.

BY M. M.

'It is he, it is Tribert!' cried Madame Fourcard, as a traveller, followed by a porter carrying his baggage, passed up the street, and hastening to the door, she opened it before he had time to ring. With tears and exclamations of joy, Madame Fourcard embraced the old sailor, whom she had not seen for ten years, and with a kind of urquet curiosity she sought to discover what changes time had made in his appearance. His forehead was a little wrinkled, his hair was slightly blanched, but, take him all in all, the Captain—to use his own phrase—had only been a little damaged in the upper works; his timbers were all sound.

His eye was still bright, his complexion fresh and healthy, and the whole expression of his face frank and cheerful. His appearance was sufficient to gain him friends, for his was one of those faces that we welcome like the sun in winter, with a feeling of gladness and goodwill.

These ten years had told more on Madame Fourcard than on her brother. The sorrows of widowhood and the troubles of maternity had thrown a shade over the autumn of her life, and vainly would one have sought in those faded features for traces of that beauty which once had been so much admired. Trials and sorrows had made her prematurely old, but this she heeded not, the feelings of the woman were merged in those of the mother.

After the emotions excited by his long-looked-for return had subsided, Madame Fourcard had wished her brother to take some rest and repose, but the sailor spoke to her of her son, and the mother, attracted in spite of herself, entered into conversation.

That our readers may better understand what follows, we will make a short digression.

Madame Fourcard, having lost her husband by a sudden and violent fit of sickness, had centered all her earthly hopes and expectations in her only child, and found in her fulfilment of her duties as a mother the only consolation for the grief of the widow.

There is in the hearts of most women an underrunning of romance which gives a tone to all their aspirations and inclines them naturally to exaggerations. The young girl invests her future husband with all the attributes of impossible perfection, and the young mother in anticipation endows her child with all the virtues and talents which old stories tell us were bestowed by fairy god-mothers on their favorites. Madame Fourcard was no wiser than others, and she decided that her son, Augustus, should take his place among these great men who are scattered as sparrows amid the common herd as the stars are in the firmament; and in order to arrive more certainly at this result, this predestined child became the object of all her thoughts and actions. He was the centre of her world, and everything within it was arranged with a view to his pleasure or profit. Those who surrounded the widow contributed to keep up this idea, for the friend ship and esteem which they felt for the mother was exhibited by courtesy and kindness to the son. Loved by all, by right of inheritance he was accustomed to receive the most priceless gifts of life as worthless favors. Madame Fourcard, in her foolish infatuation, preceded him, and, as it were, removed from his path every little pebble that could incommode him, broke off with her own hands the thorns that lay in his path, bridged every chasm and precipice, and the young man, who did not even remark a deviation which had become a custom, kept on his way without suspecting all that had been done to render it smooth and pleasant. His mother had played the part of Providence to him, and was rewarded as Providence is, by indifference and neglect. Though she felt it keenly, she complained not, for the dishonor of the child is the disgrace of the mother. How could she accuse Augustus of this fault without convicting him of the crime of ingratitude. No one knew as she did the good qualities hidden under these faults; therefore to expose the latter would be to convey an unjust idea of his character, and when her brother questioned her concerning him she dwelt on his sterling good qualities. Pleased with the theme, and half persuaded that the character she drew was real, she forgot the traveller's fatigue until reminded of it by an involuntary yawn which he could not conceal.

'Well, well, how thoughtless to keep you here after two nights of sleeplessness and fatigue,' she said, rising; 'we will have time enough to speak of Augustus hereafter, since you are not gone to leave us again, and in any case, you will form your own opinion of him. Take a good sleep now, my dear brother. I hope your young student will have returned before you awake.'

Again embracing him, she left the room, and

the sailor flinging himself, dressed as he was, upon the couch, was soon fast asleep.

When he awoke the day was closing, and the rays of the setting sun streamed in through the window, and diffused a pleasant glow throughout the apartment. Refreshed by sleep, but still under the spell of that dreamy voluptuousness that attends awaking, Tribert looked around him, and took an observation of the chamber intended for his use. In everything around him the attentive tenderness of Madame Fourcard was evinced. The furniture had formerly belonged to his father, and it brought vividly before the old sailor his happy boyish days. A bookcase contained the old volumes he had bought long ago; on the charts and maps that covered the walls were marked out the seas he had traversed; a tiny ship, the evidence of his youthful skill, and eloquent proof of his vocation for a seafaring life, was suspended from the ceiling, and even above his bed was erected a stand full of rare and curious arms, which he had collected in his wanderings and sent home to M. Fourcard. He was examining all these evidences of his sister's thoughtful kindness, when he heard her voice in an adjoining room, at times interrupted by a younger and louder voice, which Tribert had no difficulty in recognizing as his nephew's. The mother was evidently remonstrating with him, and he was replying with the assurance of one accustomed to consult only his own wishes.

'I will not go,' he repeated with an obstinacy too common in children spoiled by a mother's over-indulgence.

'You cannot mean it, Augustus,' replied Madame Fourcard earnestly. 'Mlle. Lorin counts upon you to escort her there this evening. But for your uncle's arrival I would have spared you this trouble; but you know I cannot leave him at home the first day.'

'Well, don't I also wish to see him?' retorted Augustus. 'Let Mlle. Lorin's cousin accompany her.'

'You know well that he is absent.'

'Then let her stay at home.'

'That is a very unfeeling remark, Augustus. You know that Mlle. Lorin is an excellent person, and these little parties afford her great pleasure, and at her age a habit become a necessity.'

'What is that to me?' said Augustus, carelessly. 'Am I under any obligation to Mlle. Lorin?'

'But I am,' said Mlle. Fourcard, sharply. 'She has taught me the little I know, she has aided me in every difficulty by her advice and assistance; to me she was like an elder sister, almost like a mother. You know this Augustus; you ought to help me to pay my debt of gratitude.'

'I believe you take pleasure in making duties for yourself,' replied her son. 'It is a matter with some women to put their necks under the yoke, and to fetter their limbs with chains that others must help them to carry.'

'You forget, my son, that the heaviest have not been imposed on me by Mlle. Lorin,' said the deeply wounded mother.

'That's as much as to say that they have been by me,' exclaimed Augustus, bitterly.

'You force me to remind you that no duty has ever seemed painful to me when your interest was concerned.'

'And the better to prove it, you reproach me with what you have done.'

'Augustus,' said Madame Fourcard, impatiently, 'there is neither sense nor justice in what you say.'

'Then let our conversation end,' replied he, preparing to leave the room.

'You are going to Mlle. Lorin?'

'No.'

'Remember that I desire it, that I insist upon it.'

'I will not go,' exclaimed the student, with angry obstinacy, and violently slamming the door of the apartment, he dashed up stairs, singing at the top of his voice, as if to show his indifference.

Trembling, Madame Fourcard dropped in a chair, and uncle Tribert, peeping through the keyhole, saw that she wept. The scene of which he had been the invisible witness revealed to him more than all the letters his sister had written to him during the last ten years. He knew now the result of Madame Fourcard's blind devotion to her son; he saw that Augustus, accustomed to have his slightest wish gratified, had become exacting; the voluntary slavery of the mother had given rise to the disrespectful tyranny of the son.

The first impulse of the captain was in accordance with his naval habits. He was just on the point of following his nephew, and leading him by the ear back to his mother to beg her pardon, when, fortunately, reflection came to his aid, and he paused. Having followed the sea since he was fifteen, uncle Tribert's education could not be very profound, but the experience of life and

the meditations of his lonely watch had given him a deep insight into the human heart. He knew that evil habits are contrary winds which we can subdue only by tacking; therefore, repressing his first indignant feeling, he reflected upon the best course to steer; and before leaving his chamber he had his course marked out, and all his sails trimmed, to navigate it successfully.

Madame Fourcard had almost recovered from the emotion caused by the disobedience of her son, from which he concluded that it was nothing very unusual. The anger of Augustus was not so short-lived; for dissatisfied with himself, he gave evidence of his repentance, as all such characters do, by ill humor. He entered the room to embrace and welcome his uncle in a stiff and embarrassed manner, and after the usual interchange of question and answer customary at a first interview, he threw himself on a sofa, and began industriously biting his nails.

Madame Fourcard, fearing the impression such conduct would make on his uncle, endeavored to soften the morose humor of the boy by some pleasant remarks; but, as it generally happens in such cases, her forbearance only exasperated him the more. A pardon that we have not merited by repentance is almost an insult; for in addition to the consciousness of doing wrong, we are weighed down by a generosity that we can neither endure nor shake off.

Thus the indulgence of his mother only irritated Augustus the more, and in place of replying he took up a journal and with a yawn, glanced carelessly over it.

Madame Fourcard, whose patience was at last exhausted by this rudeness, dryly remarked that her parlor was not a reading room.

'I thought the paper was there for use,' replied the young man, haughtily.

'But we are also here,' replied his mother, 'and I flatter myself that our company is preferable to a paper.'

Augustus bowed ironically and said— 'I was not aware until now that one must be alone before he is free to choose his own amusements.'

'You are wanting in respect to your uncle, sir!' retorted Madame Fourcard, angrily.

Augustus was for a moment disconcerted, but recovering himself, he said: 'My uncle does not wish us, I am certain, to live here slaves to etiquette as they do at court; he is a sailor, and values independence too highly himself to trammel others.'

'Partien! you understand me well, my lad,' cried Tribert, who had listened to the whole discussion with a careless smile. 'Let every one live according to his own fancy, and let the disconcerted go to the devil—that's my social creed. Read, sing, dance, speak, or be silent, it is your own business; and I care as little about it as I do about the Great Mogul. Do whatever you please as long as you allow me the same liberty.'

'Oh! as to that you need not fear,' said Augustus, casting a look of triumph at his mother. 'I am not one of those who wish to make the whole world walk in my steps. Let every one eat with his own spoon, say I.'

'Come then to dinner,' interrupted the captain; 'travelling has made me as hungry as a shark,' and seizing his nephew by the shoulder they entered the dining room together.

Madame Fourcard followed, surprised and mortified by her brother's conduct. His manners and principles were so different from what she remembered them to have been, that all her preconceived ideas were overturned. But it was even worse at table, for he helped himself to the choicest morsels without attending to any one, interrupted his sister when she spoke and heard her without replying, ordered the servants about, criticized the arrangements of the table, and in one word gave the reins to every caprice.— When they returned to the parlor he picked out the most luxurious *fauteuil*, stretched his dirty boots on the velvet covered footstool and deliberately lit his pipe. Madame Fourcard disliked the smell of tobacco so much that she was obliged to leave the room.

At first Augustus was amused by his uncle's manners, and laughed at all his whims, but his undisguised selfishness in a short time annoyed and provoked him. He was determined to let the old sailor know that though his manners might suit the cabin of a vessel well enough, yet they were not exactly in accordance with the usages of a well-ordered and elegant household. But his eloquence was thrown away, for when he hoped that he had made some impression on the captain, a loud and sonorous snore dispelled the illusion.

Thoroughly disenchanted with Uncle Tribert and his free and easy manners, Augustus sought his chamber.

The next morning when he awoke, the sound of loud and angry voices struck upon his ear, and, hurrying down stairs, he found the sailor quarrelling with the old servant, Rose, for having neglected to brush his shoes. The angry cap-

tain poured forth such a storm of maledictions that the confounded domestic raised her hands in wonder, and uttered an exclamation of distress.

Madame Fourcard, drawn thither also by the noise of the quarrel, endeavored in vain to appease Tribert, he continued his nautical blarney with grumblings and gesticulations that at first surprised and then irritated Augustus.

Finding Rose obstinately determined to explain, Augustus took her by the arm and gently forced her into the kitchen. When he returned to the room his mother was excusing her old servant; spoke of her zeal, her honesty, and the many services she rendered the family.

'Well, what of all that,' cried Tribert, 'has she rendered these services to me? What care I for the good qualities she may have had? The swiftest sailer in the fleet is broken up when she gets old. Our domestics are to render service, not to receive gratitude.'

'You would not think of putting out on the streets one who knew my mother when she was a child, and who reared me, Uncle, would you?' inquired Augustus with impatience.

'If you don't like to turn her into the street, put her in the hospital,' replied Tribert, harshly.

'The mother and son could not suppress their surprise.

'Send her to the devil, then,' cried the captain in a fury, 'or where you will, but she shan't be here, where a head and hands are wanting.— I see that my sister has not lost her old mania for discovering duties where she ought only to see rights; but all that must be changed, or, tounder! I shall know the reason why.'

To this burst Augustus replied by observing in an under tone that each person had a right to regulate their household according to their own fancy. But Uncle Tribert appeared to take this as an approval of his conduct, and he applauded it loudly, and said that he knew how to manage matters, and ended by ordering breakfast to be served immediately. While Rose was hurrying breakfast he lit his pipe, and paced up and down the apartment spitting on every side. With despairing look, Madame Fourcard watched his every step, and saw the order and neatness in which she delighted disappear before him. Augustus, who saw how deeply his mother was mortified, could scarcely hold his indignation. There was silence for some moments, when the captain stopped before a picture, which occupied a most conspicuous position in the apartment.

'Is that a portrait of Fourcard,' he said stopping and leisurely puffing towards it a dense volume of smoke.

His sister replied in the affirmative.

Tribert took another long look at the picture. 'Well,' he said composedly. 'It must be confessed that good brother in law of mine was not much of a beauty.'

Madame Fourcard and Augustus trembled with indignation and wounded feeling. Accustomed to regard the memory of the dead with loving veneration, they were struck to the heart by the coarse and unfeeling remark of the sailor.

'This is the first time I have heard my father's appearance criticized in such a manner,' said Augustus, indignantly, 'and I am astonished that it should come from you, who knew him well enough to recognize the beauty of his soul in his countenance.'

'Yes, yes,' replied the captain carelessly, 'he was after all a pretty good fellow, and it was not his fault if the Lord did make him a fool.'

'Sir,' cried Augustus, starting to his feet pale with anger.

'Come, my son,' said Madame Fourcard with mournful dignity, 'since others do not comprehend the respect due to the dead, let us not forget what we owe to ourselves,' and, without giving the captain an opportunity to reply, she left the room, taking Augustus with her.

Tribert breakfasted alone; but on returning to his chamber he found his nephew there waiting for him with a graved but, at the same time, a resolute look.

'Ah! ah! you're there,' said the captain gaily; 'so you've got over your anger?'

'Speak lower, I beg,' said Augustus with emotion; 'I do not wish my mother to hear us.'

'Oh! then it is a secret,' said the captain.

'It is a duty,' replied Augustus seriously, 'one which your relationship and my age makes very difficult; but my mother's peace of mind must be my first consideration.'

'Has she, then, reason to complain of any one,' asked Tribert.

'She has to complain of—you,' replied his nephew, his voice trembling with deep feeling, 'of you, who have outraged all her feelings and affections.'

'I'll explain the captain; 'how so?'

'In behaving as though you were on the deck of a pirate ship,' replied Augustus, impetuously; 'in abusing an old and faithful servant that we all love; in insulting the memory of my father! Since yesterday you have shown your heart, your mind, and your character in such a light

that it is impossible for my mother to endure your presence any longer.'

Uncle Tribert, who had been walking up and down the room, stopped short, and, looking his nephew full in the face, said:

'So you come to tell me that I must shift my quarters.'

Augustus' silence answered eloquently in the affirmative.

'All in good time,' said Tribert seriously; 'but since home truths are the order of the day, I have a few words to say to you. But tell me first: how my manners could possibly shock a person who welcomed me as you did yesterday, a person who entertains his guest by reading a paper, and who applauded the maxim that every one should act as he pleases without troubling himself about others?'

Augustus attempted to stammer out an excuse.

'You complain of my conduct to your old servant,' continued the seaman, raising his voice, 'but how have you acted to your mother's teacher? Did you not yesterday refuse to do her a simple act of kindness? Did you not protest against paying any one's debt of gratitude? Why consider me under more obligations to Rose, than you are to Mademoiselle Lorn?'

Augustus again endeavored to interrupt him.

'Hear me out,' said Tribert, with deep seriousness; 'you accuse me of disrespect to your dead father, have you been more respectful to your living mother? Besides, which of us, tell me, was bound to show most tenderness, respect, and affection? My manners have exasperated you, but what do you think of your own? I have been rude with my equals, but you with your superiors; I have been in a passion with a servant who neglected her duty, you with a mother who reminded you of yours; I failed in respect to my sister's husband, you to her who gave you life! Which of us, think you, has exhibited his mind, his character, and his heart in the most favorable light?'

While the captain was speaking, the dissatisfaction and anger of Augustus gradually gave way to embarrassment and confusion. The lecture he came to administer was turned upon himself in a manner so unforeseen, so unexpected, that he was completely stunned. His conscience, too, endorsed every word uttered by Tribert, and, suddenly comprehending the motive of his uncle's conduct, his eyes sought the ground, and he stood overpowered by the consciousness of his errors.

The old sailor understood what was passing in that loving but undisciplined soul, and grasping him by the hand he said kindly:

'You see that we have reciprocally need of indulgence; let us then, forget the past, save to profit by it for the future. Throughout this whole affair your mother has been the only real sufferer, and we must ask her to pardon both.'

'No! no!' said Augustus, deeply affected, 'I alone have need of pardon. I see it all now; you wished to correct me—by example, and my mother and I have only reason to be grateful to you for the lesson.'

'Be grateful to Lyncurgus rather,' said Uncle Tribert, 'for the method which I have adopted is his. To disgust the young Sparans with the immoderate use of wine, he exhibited the slaves before them in all the degradation of drunkenness. I have merely imitated him by showing you in another fault that I wished you to loathe and avoid.'

A REMARKABLE DOG.

BY EMERSON BENNETT

In the fall of 1843 I made a journey from central New York down through the eastern part of Pennsylvania to the city of Philadelphia, in a lumbering old stage coach. To make matters as disagreeable as possible, it chanced that early one evening I was roused from a sort of crash and jar, and the settling down of the front part of the vehicle. The fore part of the axle-tree had broken close to the fore wheel, and until it could be repaired we could not proceed any further.

'There's a small village back here about three miles,' said the driver, 'to which I'm going to take the horses, and you may either come with me, or get lodgings at a farm house close by.'

As I was the only passenger, I preferred the nearest lodgings; and getting the driver to assist me in removing my luggage hither, I asked entertainment of the farmer, who, seated in a cordial manner, and in less than an hour I was seated at the table, and doing ample justice to the good cheer before me.

The family of Mr. Mansfield,—for such was the name of the worthy farmer—consisted of himself, wife, a pretty daughter of fourteen, and a large English mastiff. I have included the dog, because his wonderful sagacity entitled him to a rank much higher than an ordinary beast.

Before I knew anything of the remarkable qualities of this animal, I was peculiarly attracted