

THE INTERRUPTED WEDDING.

BY HURKARU.

CHAPTER I.—THE RESCUE.

SOME few years ago my friend Tom Birtle returned to Montreal after a lengthened visit to the Old Country, where he had been making arrangements for a more extended trade than had previously existed between himself and a number of Scotch houses. As it divers events,—apart from business—had happened to Tom during his sojourn on the other side. He had married a daughter of a Glasgow wholesale drug merchant, somewhat hastily, and of which act he certainly soon repented at leisure. The marriage was a most unhappy one, for not only had his wife a vile and ungovernable temper, but to his horror he discovered very shortly that she was addicted to the use of chemical stimulants, when she would lose all control over herself, and become for the time being like one demented. I can think of nothing more disheartening, than for a young man being saddled with such a burden, and a few months added years to Tom's life in those days. Perhaps an older man would have endeavored to piece together the idol which had fallen from its pedestal, but Tom felt too wretched to make the attempt, and he was only slightly roused from his lethargy, when one day he discovered his wife had eloped with her cousin, an



idle young fellow, who had lately come into a small property. An action for divorce was begun, but was discontinued owing to the news of Mrs. Birtle's death in Paris, and Tom with a feeling of relief turned over that page of his history and pasted it down, resolving never to re-open or refer to it again.

It was nearly a year after his release that Tom found himself once more under the shadow of Mount Royal, and as you watch him shooting the rapids in his canoe down the Back River at Sault-au-Recollet, one Saturday afternoon in the beginning of August, you will see a well put together muscular man of eight and twenty, with a sunburnt handsome face on which there is a smile of placid enjoyment. Sorrow and trouble, like winter, do not last for ever; flowers bloom once more and the dip of the paddle tells us there are still pleasures left in life. Time heals most wounds, especially when we are young and look ahead instead of behind us. Age and memory come soon enough, meanwhile youth and hope turn with zest to pastures new, and Tom Birtle, as his canoe danced over the waves could sing "The Canadian Boatman Song" with a light heart.

He had left the railway bridge astern, and was steering towards comparatively smooth water near the island shore when a pretty picture presented itself to his gaze. On a rock jutting out into the stream stood a girl of some eighteen summers, rod in hand, and whipping the water under the direction of an elderly gentleman, seated under a tree at a short distance in the rear, evidently adjusting his line for a fresh

cast. The girl was of a tall slim figure, dressed in a tight fitting costume, with a neat straw hat upon her head, sufficiently small to disclose the dark braided hair and finely chiseled features, which latter were rendered more beautiful by the flush of expectancy stamped upon them, as the lithe arm threw out the line and drew back the feathery fly. Of course all this was taken in by Tom as instantaneously as it would have been by a Kodak, and in spite of his late treatment by one of the sex, he was still under thirty years of age, and could not help inwardly acknowledging that Edith Vavasour (though he did not then know her name) was very fair to look upon. He could not see her eyes, but he was sure they must be beautiful, and, being a bit of an artist, the grace of the girl's movements quite charmed him. You see he had not required the cynicism, which is mingled with gray hairs, and because one woman had deceived him, he did not therefore illogically condemn all the rest.

Suddenly there was a leap and a splash, a large black bass having taken the fly, and his rapid dive below the surface, strained both line and rod, for, as anglers know, the black bass has heaps of pluck, and will fight with the strength and vim of a fish twice his weight. "Give him line, Edith, give him line!" shouted Mr. Vavasour in an excited voice, but rising from his seat with the deliberation of mature years.

"Oh Papa, the reel has caught," Edith answered; then as the fish gave a tremendous jerk her foot slipped, and before her father could reach her she fell into the water, the current instantly bearing her several feet from the shore.

"My God!" exclaimed Mr. Vavasour, rushing forward as though to plunge in after his child, though he could not swim a stroke.

"Hold hard sir!" roared Tom Birtle, who was now at no great distance, "I'll get her all right," and his canoe glided alongside of the rapidly sinking girl.

Tom was a powerful man, but it requires great skill, as well as strength, to lift a drowning person into a light canoe. If you desire to try the experiment, let me advise you to make the first attempt in calm water, as even then you will find it no easy matter to keep your craft from swamping, but a current renders the affair ten times more difficult. Luckily however, Tom knew well what he was about; he had turned the head of his canoe up stream, and leaning almost all his weight upon his right hand paddle, he thrust out another with his left hand to Edith, who clutched it with the energy of despair. There was a tremor in the canoe, as Tom resting still further on the opposite side, slowly but surely began to raise the girl out of the water. "Steady!" he cried encouragingly, as at length she caught hold of the canoe, when dashing down the extra paddle, he seized her arm, and with his assistance she finally struggled over the side and sank exhausted immediately in front of him. Hardly had this taken place, when the current against which Tom had been fighting literally single handed, whizzed round the head of the canoe, and sent it with its occupants flying out into the stream as though enraged at having been resisted so long.

"I'll land down below, and bring her to the Hotel," Tom shouted back to Mr. Vavasour.

CHAPTER II.—THE PLAY.

In a short story like the present, events have to be barely touched upon, or entirely left to the reader's imagination. Let us pass over the next month or two, during which you will not be much astonished to hear that Tom Birtle became intimate with the Vavasours, and when a goodlooking well-to-do young man of eight-and-twenty is made welcome at the house of one whose daughter is in the first blush of womanhood, you can probably guess what will happen. Those who prate about the inconstancy and shallowness of affection, or sneer at the tender passion, forget the merciful effect of time upon sorrow and trouble.

Tom's nature was such, that his having made a mistake, did not preclude him from repairing the same. Since he had rescued Edith, he had spent many pleasant evenings at her father's house on Sherbrooke Street, and the influence of the bright girl's companionship affected him, as I trust it may affect all my young male readers, while as for Edith, after that canoe incident, Tom had been to her a perfect hero, "like Paris, handsome, and like Hector, brave."