

have lain for generations the old time bridal dress of some ancestral bride and the wedding dress of him who was joined to her so many years ago, worn by their children's children for generations, quite regardless of the fit! Only on very grand occasions indeed are the friends, young and old, who drop in on winter evenings, invited to the parlour bed-room. And when you see a youth and maiden perched together on the "*Coffre bleu*,"—that seat of honour and betrothal,—you may make your own conclusions in company with the friendly audience sitting around the room, nudging each other and winking, as they listen approvingly to every word of the interesting pair, but saying very little besides "*A-hem!*" It was hard for little Belline to climb up there; but when she did manage it, it was not very hard to see that "*Rémi was satisfied*," and Rémi's satisfaction was Belline's paramount object in life.

Just as she was thinking of this, dusting away at the "*Coffre Bleu*," there came a loud rap at the door. Who could it be, she wondered; Rémi was away in the fields with her father, and besides he never knocked when he happened to run down for something at noon. Surely it was not a girl friend. No girl could thump like that. "Surely it was not that horrid Eucharist Sanschagrin," she said, going over to the window, as the possibility struck her, and peering through the thick glass. Yes! it was Eucharist, and he was lifting the latch to come in.

Now, this Eucharist Sanschagrin was not at all a pleasant fellow; very seldom, indeed, was he seen quite sober, despite the fact that tap-rooms are quite unknown in the French-Canadian villages, and to Belline he seemed particularly unpleasant, for he had been so foolish as to fall desperately in love with the fiancée of "*Le beau Rémi*." He was an unscrupulous and quarrelsome fellow, and so assured of his personal charms that he felt quite positive he would win little Belline in the end, and be the means what they might he was determined to win her. Little Belline was alone in the house,—as she had been every day since her mother died, eight years before; she knew all about Eucharist's ideas, but although she was so small and so gentle, she was not afraid to face the big rowdy, and she went into the kitchen at once. There stood Eucharist, leaning unsteadily against the kitchen-table, with a leer on his sottish

face, holding in his hand a cornucopia of white birch-bark.

"Look, my little Belline," he said, "all the nice chewing gum I've got for you here; it took me the whole morning in the woods picking it off the spruce-trees with my knife."

"You are very kind," answered Belline, "but you must not call me what you did any more, and I must hurry you away now, for I am *so* busy to-day."

She spoke very gently, for she saw that he was even in a worse condition than usual, and she hoped by this to get him away quietly.

"Very well," he answered, "I'll go, since you are so busy; but on condition that you let me come and sit with you on the "*Coffre bleu*" some time when you are alone. I swore I should some day, so it might as well be soon!" with a weak laugh at what he considered his joke.

Little Belline's eyes blazed, but she said nothing; indeed for the moment she could not speak, for though few knew it, a terrible temper smouldered under her calm exterior.

Eucharist, in his stupid state, mistook her silence for assent; he had no very high opinion of anything, but he was certainly surprised and overjoyed to see that Belline was so kind to him during the absence of Rémi.

"Good little Belline," he said, "it is only that great bully Rémi, who makes you unkind sometimes,—give me a kiss, and I'll be off at once!"

He staggered over to her, and before she could realize his intention he had put his arm round her waist and was kissing her on the hair, again and again. Almost paralyzed with the rage that possessed her, Belline could not even struggle, and Eucharist Sanschagrin threw back his head with a hoarse laugh at his victory (as he thought) over Rémi. He was standing opposite the window, and the laugh had not died away when his face paled, his arm dropped heavily from Belline's waist, and with two strides he reached the door and was gone. This is what he had seen: a haggard, horror-stricken young face, glaring at them through the window, so changed that it was hard to believe that it was Rémi's. The whole thing had taken but a moment to happen. Belline had neither seen nor understood; and for more than an hour she could do nothing but sob with the impotent rage that seemed to stifle her, as she sat twisting the plain little gold