

A TALE OF A MOUNTAIN VILLAGE.

BY ANNA T. SADDLER, IN THE AVE MARIA.

"WHAT!" cried Ma'am Bourgeois. "Fifty cents a bushel for those apples, the pick of the orchard, not a windfall among them; and twenty cents a gallon for my plums! Oh, if my husband were here and he be told that, you should see! Ah! sooner will I sell my orchard, as I did last year. The man from the North comes here this week."

Good Ma'am Bourgeois was a stout, dark woman, florid of aspect, shrewish of tongue, and inclined, as the neighbors said, to get two cents for her one whenever such a bargain seemed possible. City people who came to spend the summer at the mountain were her particular prey. Not that Ma'am Bourgeois was dishonest. She would have scrupulously returned, even at much inconvenience to herself, a penny too much in the change; she would not have given short measure by so much as a single plum. But business was business, and these rich folk who came a-summering should be made to help their poorer brethren of the country through the winter. "They expect to get the country products for less than the dust of their city streets," was a favorite expression of hers, the while she did what in her lay to make such aspiration of theirs very difficult of realization.

The woman had married late in life, and was not a little proud of her newly acquired title as well as the possession which it involved. Her husband was a lay figure used on a variety of occasions: a stalking-horse for threats, promises, and unfulfilled contracts. Her neighbors, who still described her as "the old maid," thus keeping in mind the catastrophe she had escaped, and who stood not a little in awe of her verbal capabilities, declared—*sub rosa*, of course,—that she had captured "handsome Joe" Bourgeois almost by main force.

In this, however, they did her a great injustice: for Joe, a sweet-tempered young man, of little force of character, had been attracted by her precisely opposite qualities. His kindness of heart and gentleness were proverbial; one glance at his face made void all the threats so freely uttered in his name. Ma'am, indeed, might take summary measures,—Joe never would. Joe's mother often declared that her son had been tempted Providence by marrying one clearly destined for the single state by her very inequalities of temper. Perhaps Joe had come to think so himself, but he never said it. One of his qualities was a wise reticence. Yet in this respect he had, as his neighbors quaintly put it, the defects of his qualities." He carried it to an extreme in dealing with his hot-tempered, passionate wife.

So, as they stood together that noonday in the orchard, after Ma'am Bourgeois had driven away the "thievish" city folk, Joe heard in silence the long narrative of the morning's events. The sun touched with a peculiar mellow richness the trees of the orchard; many bending low with ripe, red plums or apples, contrasting with the pale green of the later ripening fruit. It fell as warmly on branches bare of fruit or foliage, the wasted lives of the orchard colony. There was a bracing autumnal sharpness in the air. Poor Joe was more conscious of the biting properties of his wife's tongue.

"Yes, you stand there gaping at these fine folk and talking smooth to them, as if you didn't own the shoes you stand in!" Joe looked down reflectively at the articles mentioned. It was clearly a subterfuge, and failed to deceive his irate better half.

"No wonder, indeed, you can't meet my eyes," she continued, "with your lazy, incorrigible ways, and no standing up for your rights." "You are so much more capable of it," muttered Joe, in a forlorn hope of flattery.

"I—I who am capable of it! And who is to thank but the mercy of God for that? I who married you out of sheer pity." There might be truth in this; Joe did not know. She had been well on the shady side of thirty-five, so she must have known her own motives. Joe sighed, perhaps deploring so great an excess of altruism in her. The sigh was fuel to the flame. It touched the quick, sensitive pride and the deep seated devotion which lay concealed under the fire and tow of the woman's nature. She knew what he meant; he was regretting that he had married her; that he had not sought out a younger woman. Had she put his thought in words, she might have roused his slow nature into honest speech. But she chose the opposite tack.

"And to think that I am tied for life to a good-for-nothing—an idle, helpless vagabond! I wish I were dead! I wish I had never been born! I wish I had never laid eyes on you!"

Joe, who might have reminded her that he had sought her out in preference to all others, and had loved her for the very strength she was now using as a whip to lash him, was simply speechless in presence of a disaster which met him so unexpectedly. That Malvina had her "ways" he knew; that she had to be "managed" was also true; but that she repented of having married him and felt so deeply unhappy as this was quite another matter. There was no way out of it. It would have to go on, until death, heralded by the ringing of the curé's bell, should come to their gate. Divorce, separation—all those greater evils by which in the world outside people seek to overcome the loss were unknown to the philosophy of life which faith had made the rule of this mountain village. Joe's slow nature being aroused, was capable of definite revolve.

"I will keep out of her way as much as I can," he thought; but aloud he simply remarked: "It grows late,—I must go." Ma'am Bourgeois looked after her husband curiously as he strode away, over the grass-grown paths of the orchard, in

the full blaze of the noon sun. Perhaps she noticed the strange tone in his voice, the decision in his manner, as well as the fact that he left her there alone, and without one backward glance, pursued his way to the barn. Possibly she had a realization that a new era had dawned; that she had stepped over one of those boundary lines traced out in every life. She walked slowly down and watched Joe ride away on a load of hay, with a sense she could not have expressed of widening distance between them. She saw the wagon reach the turn in the road where stood the red house, precluding further observation; and noted the wisps of hay fallen from the wagon, tossed about by the autumn wind.

She went slowly in and set herself resolutely to ironing the linen which Joe, in deference to village etiquette, wore on Sundays at High Mass. Her vigorous hand straightened out each crease and fold, and brought a glossy smoothness to the whole. She could not guess that Joe would not wear that linen upon the Sunday following or for many Sundays to come. It was then Tuesday, and by Thursday he had announced to her that he meant to go "siantying." A cold chill struck Malvina at the word. Many men did this as a means of support during the winter; but Joe had never done so, nor did their present circumstances require it. Besides, was it not too early in the season? She saw presently that Joe had his mind made up; that here was a case where argument was useless. The same feeling came upon her that had been so strong when she watched him pass the red house on the load of hay. She prepared what he needed, however, in unwonted silence; and laid the linen she had ironed upon that memorable afternoon deep down in an under drawer of the bureau.

After Joe had gone Ma'am Bourgeois' outbreaks of temper were perhaps less noticeable, but her voice was harsher and her brow more lowering. There was a fierce and bitter resentment in her breast, she knew not against what or whom, with almost intolerable pain at her heart. Joe repeated his marriage; her presence had become irksome to him; whereas Joe had gone away with the simple desire to relieve her by his absence.

The neighbors, who had no inkling of the cause, gossiped, of course, about the event. Many declared that their predictions had been verified, as was natural; and that Joe had made the mistake of his life in marrying "the old maid." "He should have left her to comb St. Catherine's tresses," remarked Ma'am Goulet, spitefully; but, then, as everybody knew Ma'am Goulet had three marriageable daughters, any one of whom would have smiled upon "handsome Joe."

Malvina, who was a capital housewife, had the stone house, where she and her husband had taken up their dwelling, always in apple pie order; and Joe, out in the shanties through that long winter following, thought often of the warm kitchen, with its great double stove, and Malvina spinning in the corner. She was never idle. Joe had often admired her ceaseless, restless activity, which went so well with her glowing health and fine physical developments.

Malvina, during Joe's absence, made no confidantes, but went her own way solemnly. Joe's mother, who had never liked the match, and who stood in awe of her dark-browed daughter-in-law, waning her hands and rocked to and fro, as he bewailed to a few intimates how sad a mistake had been her son's marriage.

"It is a mistake which can not be red ified now," the Curé had said, sharply in answer to this remark; "but it may grow worse with talking about it. Let other people keep out of it, and the cloud must wear itself away. They have the *grace d'Etat* which came with the Sacrament, and that must make all right."

"However, the Curé, who was a shrewd man and well versed in human nature, made up his mind as to the state of affairs, and determined to have a talk with Ma'am Bourgeois. He drove up to the door one snowy day; and Malvina, though not much pleased to see him, sent the boy to take round the Curé's home and sleigh. She assisted him herself to remove his shaggy coat of buffalo skin, with merely a staid— "Bon jour, Monsieur le Curé!" "Bon jour, mon enfant,—bon jour!" Her rubbed his hands as he came into the genial warmth of the kitchen. "You are well here, my child,—very well," he said.

"Oh, yes, Monsieur le Curé!" Malvina responded, indifferently.

"And our good Joe—how goes it with him? 'Tis a pity he should be away from such a home."

Malvina made no reply. Her face, set hard, had no expression in it. She beat with her right hand upon the table as the Curé continued:

"An excellent boy, that Joe; and it is I, who have known him since childhood, that says so."

There was a slight change in the poor woman's face, and the Curé noted it.

"A true heart," he went on, quickly. "His mother and his wife, that is all."

"His mother, so it," Malvina burst out; "but his wife,—oh, pour ça!"

"You jest, my child," replied the Curé, in grave tones; "and it is not well. You know when Christians, Catholics—des bons Catholiques aussi—are married, that is serious. They do not jest so."

"That is the worst thing, Monsieur le Curé; with us it is forever."

The Curé arose and stood looking at her solemnly. "My poor child!" he said,—"my poor, poor child!"

Had it been one of the neighbors in conversation with Ma'am Bourgeois, her remark would have been held as scandalous, and had been repeated to the four winds. But the Curé looked deeper. It was the bitterness, he knew, of a suffering human heart. The sympathy of his look and words had indeed a marvellous effect. Malvina laid her head upon the table and sobbed aloud. The Curé let be alone for a few moments, then he said gently:

"When I came to this parish you were but a little child. It was I who gave you your First Communion. Tell me what is this grief? I have guessed that all is not well between Joe and you. Instead of seeking help where it was to be found,

you have stayed away from Church and from the Sacraments when you most needed both."

Malvina had nothing to say. Her head remained bent upon the table, though the storm of grief had passed.

"Malvina," the Curé continued, "I will not talk to you of duty, or of what has been wrong in your conduct."

"Wrong, Monsieur le Curé!" cried Malvina, raising her head. "I, who have done my duty,—who have worked early and late; who have kept this house as you see it; who have spun and sewed and washed and tended the cattle—"

"And have had always, which is the more important," interposed the Curé, "a smile and a kind word for poor Joe?"

Malvina ignored the remark, though the blood mounted hotly to her face.

"And Joe, who wanders here and there," she went on passionately "because he has married an old maid and is tired of his bargain!"

"Malvina," said the Curé sternly, "do you dare to speak like that when God has been so good to you? Why, it was but this very summer Joe said to me: 'I am a happy man; I have my mother spared to me and a good wife. I want no more.'"

Malvina listened with curiously varied emotions. No one in the parish would have dared to broach the subject to her; no one but the Curé could have done it effectually. The habit of a life is not easily set aside, and respect for Monsieur le Curé had grown with her growth. His word in the village was always the word of wisdom, an authority without appeal. And Joe had spoken thus to the Curé, Joe, whom she had driven away by her harsh words!

"Malvina," continued the Curé solemnly, "what if some day a messenger were to come to you, as I come now, to say: 'Joe is dying; Joe is dead?'"

The pallor in Ma'am Bourgeois' face also frightened the Curé. She sprang to her feet, one hand clasped to her breast, the other extended as if in appeal. She saw not what was before her, but the shanties, as she had seen them once in her girlhood—the rude figures,—and Joe upon a miserable pallet dying, or worse. At last she spoke, and her voice sounded hoarse and unnatural.

"For love of the good God, Monsieur le Curé, speak! Is it this you have come to tell me?"

The Curé was silent for a moment—partly from surprise, partly because he wanted to be careful of his words.

"It is, then, true, my God,—it is true!" And she sank upon her knees, with a low, shuddering cry.

"Malvina, my poor child," said the Curé, "what are you doing? There is nothing wrong with Joe. I only wanted you to know how you would feel if such a thing were to happen."

The relief in the woman's face was so great, though her tears flowed in streams, that the Curé was deeply moved.

"So it ever is," said he. "We are not thankful to God for His gifts till He withdraws them. Think, therefore, of what I have said. Joe is not dead nor dying. But act now as you would wish to have done if such were to happen."

The Curé drove away, unmindful of the miles of bad road over which he had to pass, in a snow-storm which had grown to a blizzard. He had probed the wound in this woman's heart, which might have grown to a cancer, and he grudged not the cost to himself. For was it not part of his work, this taking to himself of the sorrows and perplexities and difficulties of his scattered flock? The Good Shepherd goeth after His sheep.

Malvina left alone in the gathering darkness, set herself to write a letter. She was not as expert with the pen as with her household implements. She trimmed and lighted the lamp, and hunted up a pen that was half rusty from disuse, a bottle of pale ink, and a sheet of paper.

The letter—what pains it cost her, and how unconscious she was that it was ill-spelled and worse written! And how she counted the days after it was gone! It would be two weeks, at least, before Joe could return; but how would she have felt if, instead of weeks, it had been never!

At last she received a message brought by a priest who had come from the Northwest to visit the Curé. Joe would be with her on Saturday. What a Saturday it was! The final polish to floor and table, the cooking of choice viands; a roast of pork, as if it had been New Year's Day, and gateaux! Malvina took from the drawer the linen which she had ironed so carefully months before. She fancied at first it had grown yellow; but no,—it was white still. She laid it upon a chair, examining it for any possible crease, and remembered how foolishly angry she had been as the iron had gone over and over its smooth surface.

A quarter before noon she was out at the gate; but the quarter of an hour seemed to her so long she felt certain that the train must have been delayed or had gone off the track. Perhaps, after all, Joe might never come back. She grew positively feverish as she watched the red house, from the shadow of which Joe must emerge. She remembered, with strange distinctness, that day when he had ridden off upon the load of hay. That was the real going away, though he had been at home for a month after. And this was the real coming back—more real, perhaps, than when he had first come with her to take up his abode in the stone house.

It was five minutes after twelve precisely when Ma'am Bourgeois saw a figure come round the curve in the road Joe—yes, her Joe,—handsomer than ever, browner, manlier, walking with more decided step. Malvina's heart beat high. She was there in her best gown—a dark red cashmere,—and she had a flower in her hair. "Such foolishness at her age!" remarked one of the neighbors. But Malvina, even if she had heard, would not have cared.

The meeting between the husband and wife was awkward. Their natural village rusticity asserted itself; and, by way of explanation, Malvina was half-ashamed of the letter, written from her heart, which she had sent to Joe, and Joe too shy to refer to it. So she merely said:

"I thought that you repented of having married an old maid."

"And it is I who thought you were sorry for having chosen a good-for-nothing."

"We were both wrong, Joe. Is it not so?"

"Yes, we were both wrong, Malvina."

The neighbors, who had been busy with prophesies, and the Curé, who had been otherwise busy, had nothing to say hereafter. For though Malvina still continued to drive hard bargains when she could, and to quarrel with the city folk over the price of apples, she never again said a harsh word to Joe; while he was more than ever convinced that he got the best wife in the parish when he changed Malvina's title from that of the "old maid" to Ma'am Bourgeois.

CANADIAN BUTTER.

BRITISHERS INCLINED TO REVOLT AGAINST THE TUB.

"One noteworthy feature of the Canadian butter trade with the United Kingdom is the revolt against the old-fashioned tub," says the Canadian Gazette. "Merchants one after the other in England and Scotland have objected to the tub, with its waste and uncomely look, and have welcomed the 56 lb boxes in which the creamery butter is now coming to hand. The butter from Australia and New Zealand comes in 56-lb square boxes, and it would be well if all Canadian producers followed suit. 'We are convinced,' writes one large West of England firm, 'that Canadian butter all round would realize from one to two cents per pound packed in boxes; and we say this as the largest importers of Canadian butter in Great Britain, and after extensive inquiries during the past two years.' 'The sooner the old tubs are finally abolished the better,' says a Glasgow merchant; 'during the scarcity choicest Canadian creamery 56 lb boxes fetched as high as 14s per 112 lbs.'"

The position which Canada takes in British butter markets is capable of great improvement, as these figures show.

Table with 4 columns: Country, 1893, 1894, 1895. Rows include Denmark, France, Sweden, Australia, Germany, Holland, United States, Canada, and Other countries.

THE CHEESE SUPPLY.

ESTIMATES OF CANADA'S PRESENT STOCK ARE FAIRLY CLOSE.

As a general thing estimates on Canada's and even Montreal's cheese supply are pretty wide apart. At present, however, shippers pretty well agree in their ideas. In fact, as supplies are really in such very small compass they could not well be otherwise.

This is how a leading shipper figures the stock on 'Change.

Table with 2 columns: Location, Boxes. Rows include In Montreal, Between Toronto and Montreal, and West of Toronto.

Of this total the estimates that 10,000 boxes are white and 42,000 boxes colored. Also that there are about three holders with cheese for sale in the west and about 170 in Montreal.

The Montreal Trade Bulletin makes the following estimates, based on the enquiries of several of our best posted men in the trade, some of whom have no money interest in the matter, having sold out:

Table with 2 columns: Location, Boxes. Rows include West of Toronto, Between Toronto and Montreal, Montreal, and In Montreal.

"Last year," says the Bulletin, "it is a well known fact that about fifty or sixty thousand boxes of old cheese were shipped out of Canada, after the opening of navigation, which will not be the case this year."

HIGH PRICES FOR HAY.

THEY WILL PROBABLY LAST IN THE STATES ALL SEASON.

An investigation made by a reliable authority on the other side of the line reveals the fact that unless unforeseen circumstances occur, prices for hay will continue relatively high throughout the season.

From east to west, with very few exceptions, all reports point to a shortage in last season's crop. The most important point at this time, however, is the uniform report of small reserves yet to come forward from first hands. In many instances reports indicate that 75 to 90 per cent. of the 1895 crop has been marketed. This high percentage is not unusual, however, a few countries in New York, Michigan, and New England showing, perhaps, half the old hay still on hand. Quality is nearly everywhere fair to good, with some poor sections in the west.

Owing to the prices, farmers are in most instances disposed to close out what hay they still hold. Such eastern markets as New York and Boston are getting large quantities from Canada, one New York concern estimating that 75 per cent. of the supply for that city has come across the borders.

TORONTO MARKETS.

TORONTO, April 16.—The market is quiet. Flour, straight rollers quoted at \$3.55 to \$3.50, Toronto rights. Bran dull, cars quoted at \$10.50 to \$11 west. Wheat quiet, feeling continues firm; white quoted on Northern at 75c to 76c, and red at 75c; No. 1 Manitoba hard offers at 75c North Bay, and at 73c Midland; No. 2 hard 75c to 76c North Bay. Barley dull, prices steady; No. 1 quoted outside at 40c; No. 2 quoted outside at 38c and No. 3 extra at 31c. Feed barley offers at 29c outside. Oats quiet; prices unchanged; white sold at 22c outside, and mixed at 21c outside. Peas unchanged, cars worth 48c to 49c north and west. Oatmeal quiet, prices nominal at \$2.81 to \$2.85 on track. Corn steady; mixed quoted at 31c to 31c outside, and yellow at 31c to 32c. Rye dull, quotations nominal at 43c to 44c outside.

LIVE STOCK MARKETS.

MONTREAL, April 6.—There were no new features in live stock circles to-day. Cable advices from abroad were dull and of a discouraging nature, prices showing no improvement over a week ago. There has been nothing done in ocean freight for May shipment, and the indications are that little contracting will be done this season on account of the ruinous prices abroad for cattle. There has also been little, if any, buying of cattle in the country for shipment in May and June, and on the whole the prospects for the cattle trade this season, at the present time, are very poor.

At the East End Abattoir market there were only 150 cattle and 40 calves offered. The attendance of buyers was very small, and trade on the whole was dull, owing to the fact that butchers had ample supplies on hand after the active buying of last week. The demand was slow, and only a few sales were made, at prices ranging from 2c to 3c per lb., live weight. Calves sold at \$1 to \$6 each, as to size and quality.

CHICAGO, April 6.—Cattle—Receipts, 11,500; firm and higher; common to extra steers, \$3.30 to \$4.60; stockers and feeders, \$2.70 to \$3.85; cows and bulls, \$1.50 to \$3.25. Calves, \$3.00 to \$5.20; Texana, \$2.25 to \$3.95. Hogs—Receipts, 22,000; easy; heavy packing and shipping lots, \$3.65 to \$3.75; common to choice mixed, \$3.65 to \$3.85; choice assorted, \$3.80 to \$3.90; light, \$3.70 to \$3.95; pigs, \$3.00 to \$3.90. Sheep—Receipts, 12,000; firm and higher; inferior to choice, \$2.80 to \$3.90; lambs: \$3.80 to \$4.75.

CLYDESDALES FOR CANADA.

James Horton, of Lumley, Ontario, has, the North British Agriculturist says, purchased on behalf of a syndicate of Canadian breeders, from Mr. James Picken, Torrs, Kirkcubright, his noted breeding and prize horse, Craigie Stamp, 7613, which, as a three-year old, won the Cupar and North of Fife premium at Glasgow, and, as a four-year-old, won the Brampton and Carlisle district of Cumberland during these last four seasons, breeding these big, broad-legged colts and fillies with which Cumberland

has long been identified. The Messrs. Picken have also shipped, to the order of the Colquhoun Brothers, of Mitchell, Ont., a nice stamp of a three-year-old in the Britannia.



Wonderful Effect. St. Louis, Mo., June, 1893. I was treated by the best doctors of this and other cities without any relief for ten years' suffering, but since I took Pastor Koenig's Nerve Tonic I have not had a single nervous attack; its effect was wonderful. CAROLINE FARRELLY.

Finished His Studies. BRIDGEPORT, CONN., August, 1893. It is about three years since I had the first attack of epilepsy, for which several physicians treated me unsuccessfully, but advised me to discontinue my theological studies. I was not disappointed by Pastor Koenig's Nerve Tonic, as after using it I finished my studies and am now an assistant. I know also that a member of my congregation was cured by it. TH. WIEBEL, Pastor, 37 Central Av.

FREE A Valuable Book on Nervous Diseases and a sample bottle to any one who draws four patients also the need. This remedy has been prepared by the Rev. Father Koenig, of Fort Wayne, Ind., since 1850, and is now under his direction by the

KC NING MED. CO., Chicago, Ill. 40 S. Franklin Street. Sold by Druggists at 25c per Bot. O. for 55. Write to No. 3177, 4 Postoffice for 25c. For sale in Montreal by LAVIOLETTE & N° 1500, 1205 Notre Dame Street, and by B. E. McGALE, 2125 Notre Dame Street.

MONTREAL City and District Savings Bank

The Annual General Meeting of the Stockholders of this bank will be held at its office, St. James Street, TUESDAY, 5th MAY NEXT, AT ONE O'CLOCK P.M., for the reception of the Annual Report and statements, and the election of Directors. By order of the Board, H. Y. BARBEAU, Manager. Montreal, 2nd April, 1896.

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