

cess which so many never reach. In writing to Rodolphe he had assured the latter in speaking of Armand, that rarely had he seen such mental gifts combined with so much steady energy and such irreproachable uprightness of character.

It was not wonderful then that Durand, after having passed a most successful and brilliant examination, was offered by Mr. Duchesne a share in his extensive practise. Gratefully, promptly the offer was accepted, and Armand now found himself in a position singularly fortunate for one of his years, as well as for one who had labored for a time under such great disadvantages.

Time passed on, and again bright smiles were lavished on the clever, handsome young lawyer, and invitations plentifully sent him, but within the portals of the gay or fashionable world, Armand was never seen. A time came however when he was obliged to depart at least for once from his usual rule, and that was on the occasion of his friend Belfond's wedding. The latter, notwithstanding his frequent vigorous tirades against matrimony and the fair sex, had suddenly made up his mind, after an acquaintance of three weeks, and a courtship of one, to lead to the altar a young damsel of sixteen, just out of conventual blue, the color then worn by the pupils of Notre-Dame, and who, to counterbalance her extreme youth, possessed a pretty face and gentle, lovable disposition.

Quebec gossip had decided that the bride elect was Gertrude de Beauvoir, and Durand felt angry with himself for the strange dull pain, the dreary sense of world weariness the news gave him. It was with a preoccupied look which he vainly strove to render cordial, that he saw Belfond enter his comfortable rooms one morning and inform him with a smiling though somewhat confused countenance, that he had called to give Armand a chance of wishing him joy.

This our hero did with as good a grace as he could assume, adding, perhaps a little cynically, that "he and his *fiancée* were sufficiently long acquainted to have a fair knowledge of each other's tastes and sympathies."

At the end of this speech, Belfond turned fiery red and angrily exclaimed: "None of your chaffing, Armand! Had another fellow told me that I would have knocked him over instead of inviting him to my wedding. Little Louise and I will be all the happier for having some occupation after matrimony in the way of studying each other's good points, for of course we will try to remain blind to all the bad ones."

"Louise!" repeated Armand, bewildered.

"Yes, Louise D'Aulnay; but you need not open your eyes so wide, you do not know

her. She only left the Convent last summer."

"Ah!" rejoined Durand, feeling immensely relieved, "I thought it was Miss de Beauvoir."

"Tut! No danger of that! I told you years ago she was not to my taste, nor probably am I to hers, nor anybody else indeed, for the matter of that. She has refused offers right and left, and some of them better than she had any right to expect; but, for one thing I will always respect and revere her—she rejected point blank that conceited fop, de Montenay. I suppose her vocation, as my little Louise would phrase it, is to be an old maid. Probably the report concerning us originated in the circumstance that she is coming down here to be Louise's bridesmaid. The two families, are on the friendliest terms, always visiting or reciprocating civilities. But what a difference between the two! Ah, Gertrude is far too clever and stand-off for so blunt and prosaic a fellow as myself. She would suit you much better!"

Luckily Belfond whilst he spoke was busily employed, according to a habit of his, in kicking at a lion's claw, aggressively supporting the table, it being the nearest object suitable for the exercise, so the deep quick flush that his last speech had called to his companion's face escaped his notice.

"And now, Armand," he continued: "would you like to be groomsman?"

"By no means, my dear friend!" was the hasty response. "You know how averse I am to all such offices. Snail-like, I wish to remain within my shell."

"I thought as much; so I gave Arthur D'Aulnay, my future brother-in-law, a conditional promise that if you refused, he should be held eligible for the post. His anxiety to obtain it arises from the fact that he is deeply smitten with Miss de Beauvoir, and as he is only eighteen years of age, you may imagine what his chances are. Now, I must be off, for I want to choose a set of pearls for my own pearl of great price; but, one word of warning to you, Durand, before we part. As you value my friendship, never try to chaff me about my short acquaintance with Louise D'Aulnay; or, to hint, as a fellow did this morning, whom I intend cutting from this out, that had I waited another week, I would probably have changed my mind, as I had so often done before. *Au revoir!* Do not fail to be on hand, in time, on the happy morning!"

With mingled feelings Armand donned the irreproachable attire in which he was to assist at the nuptial feast, one moment desiring, the next shrinking from the approaching meeting with the one woman whom he now felt had been his first as she had been his only love, the woman whose generous courage had saved him from