

as anything might be. Of course he could come with the canoes next season. Indeed, if Providence allowed, that was the one thing certain which the future held. But what might not happen in the mean time? Many and many a mile lay between his home in Canada and hers on the banks of the Red River. Ah, how almost happy he felt he could be despite that distance, were he but sure she would think of him and await his return. But how could he hope it? Ah, well, strange things have been, and might not this? Himself had known many girls, as fair, he had often thought, as fair could be, and yet had never loved, till here, where he had come without ever a thought of such a thing. Was not that strange enough? Rousing himself from thoughts like these he said suddenly enough to confuse a maiden less used to such speeches.

"Mademoiselle Levecque, until I set foot on that shore which I shall be leaving in a few moments, I did not know what love was; but I saw you then and loved you, and will always love you. Can you?—Ah, no! Do not run away! I will be leaving you soon enough. Tell me, Mademoiselle, will you go to Canada with me? Will you?"

"Ah, no! no! Monsieur Gaspard, do not ask me. My father—"

"Pardonnez moi, Mademoiselle, I do not mean to—I—"

"Holla! mon Gaspard! Monsieur is at the batteau. Parbleu! but he will bless us for making him wait."

It was Pierre who broke in on them with this as he came up on the double. He shook the hand of the confused Marie, and taking Gaspard by the arm, he dashed along in the direction of the canoe. In less time than it takes to tell, they had cleared the fringe of willows that skirted the bank, and were in their places, Pierre

in the stern and Gaspard in the bow of the canoe.

The voyage song rose on the air, the paddles dipped, and they were away. And Marie stood watching them descend the stream; but they vanished in a mist that was not on the river. Then she turned homeward, and took up the burden of life again.

CHAPTER II.

On the closing day of that same year, in a fort lately erected by an agent of the Hudson's Bay Company on the east bank of the Red River, a little above the forks, two men were seated at a table, on which stood a number of bottles and glasses. One was Mr. Dwight, the master of the place, the other Mr. Williams, who had charge of a similar establishment some twenty-five miles down the river. Both were Englishmen, and both had seen much of life in the fur-trading business on Hudson's Bay. Their conversation was in this strain:—

"Tut! fill your glass, man, and be cheerful. It is the easiest thing in the world to leave your pemican for the present and take the lady along. Why, with this fall of snow, the hunters will not be in for days yet, so you have the very best opportunity for the immediate consummation of your happiness."

"Take her along! That sounds easy enough. But what if she wont go?"

"Wont go! Why, man, you know how to make her go. If I were in your place she should go, if it cost me the best pair of blankets I have, or rather if it costs the Company that."

"Well, I should think it would be a good pair of blankets, and no mistake, that could get this girl. All