

THE MONTREAL "WITNESS" PRIZE POEM.

The following is the poem to which the prize recently offered by the Montreal Witness for the best Canadian Ballad has been awarded by the judges...

HOW CANADA WAS SAVED.

THESE POES BY GEORGE METCAL, B. A., OXON.

(Time: May, 1900.)

"It had the honor to give a coup de grace to the Montreal Witness's prize poem for the best Canadian Ballad...

Beside the dark Ottawa's stream, two hundred years ago...

A wooden fort of arms was wrought, which all the world should know...

It stood the blood, and fire, and death, as with a clarion's blast...

What though no blazoned coat, no ensign'd column's tall...

Where the stern heroes of my song, in death triumphant, fell...

All earth beneath the movement of men who nobly die...

A score of troublous years had passed, since on Montmorency's crest...

The patient Mississenois upheld the Cross devoutly blest...

And many of the misty Gauls that founded Ville-Marie...

With patriot pride had fought and died—determined to be free...

Fiercely the Iroquois had sworn to sweep, like grains of sand...

The Sons of France from off the face of their adopted land...

When like the steel that oft disarms the lightning of the power...

A far-flung fort their country saved in danger's darkest hour...

Denise, the Captain of the Fort—in manhood's fiery prime...

Had sworn by some immortal deed to make his name enduring...

And sixteen Gallies of the Cross, his comrades true and stout...

Had pledged their lives for life and death—all kneeling side by side...

And this their oath—on blood or field, to challenge face to face...

The ruthless hordes of Iroquois, the scourge of their race...

No quarter to those of grain—and vainly to the grave, to die like martyrs for the land they vainly tried to save...

Shrieked by the Priest within the Church where oft they had been wont...

With solemn fervor they received the supper of the Lord...

And now those self-devoted warriors from weeping friends have taken Marie's body...

Unkilled to start the trail across, or stem the rushing tide...

On through a virgin wilderness, or stream and lake they glide...

Till weary of the path's dip, they move their lark-like feet...

A herd of Uvasas flood—the turbulent Long Beach...

There where a grove of gloomy pines sloped gently to the shore...

A mossy green Palladian tower—a Fort in days of yore...

From by the circle they encamped, and on the listening air...

They heard the steady Crumblers sleep across the wide expanse...

And saw the wind-kissed waves and foam, and down with glass serene...

They watched their roofless hold a band of dark-skinned men...

Two stalwart chiefs and forty slaves—all swarmed to greet a boat...

In one great hall their lives against the common foe...

Soft was the breath of halcyon spring in that fair month of May...

The wild fowl whistled—the wild bird sang on many a laughing spray...

A tender blue was in the sky, on earth a tender green...

And Peace seemed brooding like a dove, o'er all the Western world...

And some from hurrying from the woods to old their comrades' aid...

And swift came, like foaming waves, the long canoe...

Manned by three hundred dusky forms—the long canoe...

They spring to land—a wide head back, their eyes gleam with light...

Dark plumes of eagles their children, and behind of deer-like feet...

The blood-red point that shall soon a bloodier red be dyed...

Dark to the death song that they chant—behind their spears...

With flashing eyes and vaulting tongues, defiantly stand...

Then, swifter than the wind they fly the barrier to invest...

Like horses swarms that hoarse hooves have started a track...

As Ours' tempest-driven waves dash forward on a rock...

And madly leap in maddening form, hurled backward by the shock...

No oceans dashed that surging, surging, so backward they hurled...

From the top of the Fort came hoarse and rage-courts...

Each bulge edged by bold Denise went crashing through the bounding heart of one who never stirred again...

Or pierced the bounding heart of one who never stirred again...

The trampled turf was drenched with blood—blood staining the passing way...

It seemed a carnival of death, the harvest of the grave...

The sun went down—the fight was over—left sleep was not for those...

Who, bent within that frail refuge, night vainly for repose...

The moon, as blood above their heads—the Mohawk's health cry...

Warned them that never more on earth should slumber and their eyes...

In that same hour their stout arms, overwhelmed by French steel...

Leaped o'er the parapet like deer, and traitorously fled...

And, when the darkness of the night had faded, like a ghost...

Twenty and two were left of all to have a mad and headlong flight...

Point for a time, the subtle foe has summoned to their aid...

Five hundred Mohawks from the lake, to storm the fort...

And passing for revenge, they speed, impatient for the fray...

Like birds of vengeance from their homes allured by hoarse cry...

With spears streaming in the breeze, they charge, but never get...

Five legends in the storm of light a bloodier welcome meet...

Then those dour warriors, as they faced the foe's charging ranks...

Of wide-shouldered muskets that poured hot out of their muzzles...

Eight days of varied horrors past, what boots it now to tell...

In the postscript of the Fort's history, tell of the day when the British and the French...

LA NEIGE.

(Written for the Herald.)

A SKETCH, BY MRS. BEATRICE MCGOURN.

"A penny for your thoughts, Gerald, or are they worth it?"

"Scarcely," he answers, dryly; "I was thinking how unlimited is a woman's passion for flattery."

"Granted, mon ami, but she also has a liking for the truth, and there must really be a little ground for that flattery."

"That is the last essential in most cases," he answers; "and when it cannot actually be considered at all, a lack of common sense must balance accounts pretty fairly, I think."

La Neige laughs merrily.

"Then I am glad that only a few weeks ago you called me a sensible girl, don't you remember?" she asks, laying her hands upon his arm.

"The day we first started; and as I am honest enough to admit that in my own opinion, I am not positively ugly, I mean to claim all compliments as legitimate property. Can't you think of something pretty, just now, Gerald?" she adds, looking up at him in the starlight.

"No," he answers, with a laugh, whose strangeness Rose does not notice, as you know it is not in my province. Such things only come natural to fellows like Hammond."

"She knows it too, and in her pure, brave heart, despises anything of the kind, and to herself is most inordinately proud of Captain Aylmer's thorough uprightness in not, even for her, sacrificing his principles of truth. After a little while—during which nothing has happened—she asks, softly laying her face upon the hands which clasp his arm.

"Gerald, is Cyril Hammond a good man?"

"It depends upon your own particular conception of a good man," he tells her, shortly.

"I mean is he a religious man? Does he—does he believe as we believe?"

"I have never heard him express anything to the contrary, and I told you my opinion of him sometime ago, if I remember."

"When?" she asks, wonderingly.

"There must be a strange fascination about him to make you so soon forget it, Ma belle Rose."

"What do you mean?" and the dark eyes look up into his face. "Perhaps I do not understand you."

"Why should you not?" he says, impatiently, unconsciously clasping her hands so hard that she had almost to cry with the pain.

"If you are going to be my wife, La Neige, you must at once give up all claim to the society of such men as Cyril Hammond."

"But why?" she asks, innocently.

"The mere fact of my talking to him will not hurt me, and assuredly I do not recognize him as a friend. Are you going to play the grand Turk, Gerald, and shut me up where no one can see me but yourself. It would be such a pity for I am afraid that you would be the first to tire of the novel experiment, and even Lieutenant Hammond can be entertaining sometimes."

"I am not going to shut you up, I would not do that if the mere closing of a door would keep you for me forever. No, Rose, such love as mine can never stoop to the slightest coercion. But my wife—like Caesar's—must be beyond even the faintest breath of conventional criticism. No woman calling herself by my name can ever count Cyril Hammond among her friends."

Gerald Aylmer is a thorough Saxon, warm-hearted, and equally warm-tempered, and he fancies just now that he has more than sufficient justification to indulge the latter in an unlimited proportion.

Unfortunately he does not stop to think that the girl to whom he is speaking may be blessed with a like endowment.

Had he but asked her kindly, however unreasonable she might feel the request to be, she would have yielded without a word. As it is she snatches her hands away from him—and there is that in her face which—too late—warns him that he may have made a serious mistake.

"You exercise your authority early," she says.

"I know you love me, but you have never understood me if you think that, for one moment, I could listen to such an absurd proposition as that. When I promised to marry you I did not necessarily promise to relinquish all my claims upon society. I am certainly competent to use my own discretion in the selection of my friends."

"You are not," he answers, passionately; "no woman knows a man as well as men do."

"I can certainly appreciate a gentleman. You will be calmer to-morrow and then you will perceive how impossible it would be for you and I to marry, if you had not better turn in to-night."

She has gradually moved further away while she has been speaking now, she turns with the last word to leave him.

"La Neige," he says, through his teeth, and catching hold of her dress: "Good heavens, I never doubted your love for me. What do you mean? You are not in earnest?"

He had been thinking in his warmth whether it would be possible for him to forgive her, whether she will ever give him the chance, and the thought of all that—that only man causes him to bitterly repent his mad rashness. "Gerald," she says, very much in earnest, "I am, I am very, very, very truly yours."

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in her voice. "And I mean that the man who is to be my husband must never set towards me like this. To me—first of all—he must be a gentleman."

They are hard words, and bitterly they come back to her in the after years when only the memory of this time is left to her.

He lets her go then. The Aylmers are all passionate but they are proud, and what she has said is far too plain to be misunderstood. It is equivalent to her doubting his right to that title which should be synonymous with that of an English officer.

"By heaven it's all over now," he mutters, striding off; "were she the queen herself I could not be the first to see after that."

Three hours afterwards when the breeze that has been blowing freshly all day and evening suddenly calms down, and the Aylmer, like the trunk of some mighty tree, lay motionless upon the waveless waters, La Neige—wrapped closely in a dark, blue waterproof—comes on to the now almost deserted deck. Her face—even by the dim light of the stars—is unusually pale, as she throws back the hood of her cloak to obtain more air.

"I was wrong," she says, clasping her hands in a trick she has when anything troubles her—La Neige! So little of trouble has ever come near her, hitherto, that she is not used to it.