

A LEGEND OF SAULT AU RECOLLET.

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You know well the swift and dangerous rapids in the beautiful river of les Prairies. Dame! I speak to you of something that happened at the very commencement of the country, when a priest, a Recollet father lost his life in that very spot. Père Nicholas Viel, with a young novice, was drowned in 1625. The exact circumstances have never been known, but according to the account given by the Indians, three Hurons took part in the double murder. The missionary, accompanied by some savages, was coming down from the Huron country where he had been laboring to convert the heathen. There was a wicked wizard with the party, who, with all his heart, opposed the preaching of the blessed gospel but he took excellent care to conceal his sentiments. For they are crafty, you must know, these pagans, but crafty to a marvel, and for malice they equal the *héans* in the forest. Choosing a favorable moment when the canoes were in the midst of the seething rapids, the diabolical monster succeeded in drowning both the priest and his young companion. Now, I am going to tell you what happened many years later.

True, but yes, of the truest. This is no priest's tale. I heard it from my late grandfather who is dead, holy man. *Tenez*, take my word for it, he saw all that happened with his own eyes. And it was he who could tell it well. In the long winter evenings when we all sat around the fire at home and he related his adventures, we trembled like shivering creatures stricken by fever. Imagine to yourself how delightful it was to listen to him! Often we could not sleep at night for fear. It costs me something to relate the story, for I have no fine voice or beautiful accent as he had but I will do my best to please you. I am a poor story-teller, but as you say, truth needs no assistance from art. He loved to tell as much as we others liked to listen. And how wise he was, there was not much that he did not know. To hear him recount the tales of the saints, and for stories, there's no one could equal him: to hear him tell l'Oiseau Figuelnousse, and le Merle Blaue and la Mer Blue, and many others like them—that was a treat.

Then such wonderful things that he had seen, my late grandfather, one might suppose that the saints had blessed him with a dozen pair of eyes. In his time everybody made a voyage to the countries up above there it was the fashion and when a man had spent a few years there he had something to talk about for the remainder of his life. These are the countries of the great lakes, where the heathen Indians wander; and among the nations, the power of the devil, I assure you, is strong. Magie Lapellote! but I could tell you things that would cause the hair to stand erect. Certainly, this wilderness up above there must, without doubt, be of the most wonderful, because every man who ever went there experienced the most miraculous adventures but none I have heard spoken of were quite so amazing as those of my grandfather.

Then, as I tell you, one fine summer's day a large canoe, manned by *voyageurs* returning from the West, was coming down the River des Prairies. These men had been long absent, they had passed through many perils and hardships, they had the means of living for a while like milords, (and it was the *voyageurs* who could do that effectively) and above all, they were nearing

home. Is it any wonder that they sang and shouted like school boys and were gay as larks? At night they camped at the foot of the rapids. After they had finished supper and were sitting singing and telling tales, they perceived on the next point, only a few acres distant, a light that illuminated the whole landscape.

"Tiens" they said to each other "There are other voyageurs camping out as we are. Where can they come from? It would surely be only neighbourly on our part to visit them."

It was decided that three men, of whom my grandfather was one, should start on this expedition. Guided by the bright fire light which was reflected on the surface of the water, they soon arrived at their destination which was farther away than they had imagined it would be. There was no appearance of a camp; no echo of talk or laughter; the silence of the sombre forest was absolutely unbroken. To their astonishment, the visitors saw no canoes nor could they discover any trace of jovial comrades. The fire burned steadily, casting flickering shadows and ruddy gleams upon the trees.

"Ah! after all, the camp is not deserted" exclaimed one of our party.

Near the fire a tall savage was squatted on the earth, his elbows resting on his knees, his head on his hands. He never turned, did not appear to notice the new arrivals or pay the slightest attention to their movements any more than if they had not existed. They addressed him. He still sat motionless as though he did not hear. As they approached nearer, they perceived to their surprise that his long hair and his whole body were streaming with water and yet this moisture did not wet the sand or give rise to any steam.

"Tapristi! This is, indeed, droll. A curious farce, in truth" cried one of the men. "Do you remark, comrades, that this large fire throws forth no heat?"

My grandfather was as brave as the King's sword, the good man, so he snatched up a piece of bark and threw it into the flames; then as his comrades perceived that it was not consumed, they regarded each other with eyes bigger than their heads and acknowledged that here they had certainly found something of the most marvellous.

"This is not entertaining. Since this dumb savage appears not to desire our company, we may as well depart. The holy saints preserve us, I fancy an evil odor of brimstone lingers on the air," said Jules Boudreau.

As they were getting into their canoe, my grandfather cried,

"If we tell this tale to those others, they will mock and laugh at us, they will refuse to believe, they will call us cowards, and that is the poorest of all trades. Let us then carry away with us a brand from this diabolical fire as evidence of the truth of our story."

You can figure to yourself the astonishment of the voyageurs who were eagerly awaiting the return of their comrades as they listened to this marvellous recital. The piece of wood which still seemed to be burning and yet was never consumed was passed from hand to hand and carefully examined, everyone would look at and touch it. Suddenly a fearful noise, a veritable *saca kona* (an Indian word signifying terrible confusion, infernal orgie) was heard. At the same instant an enor-