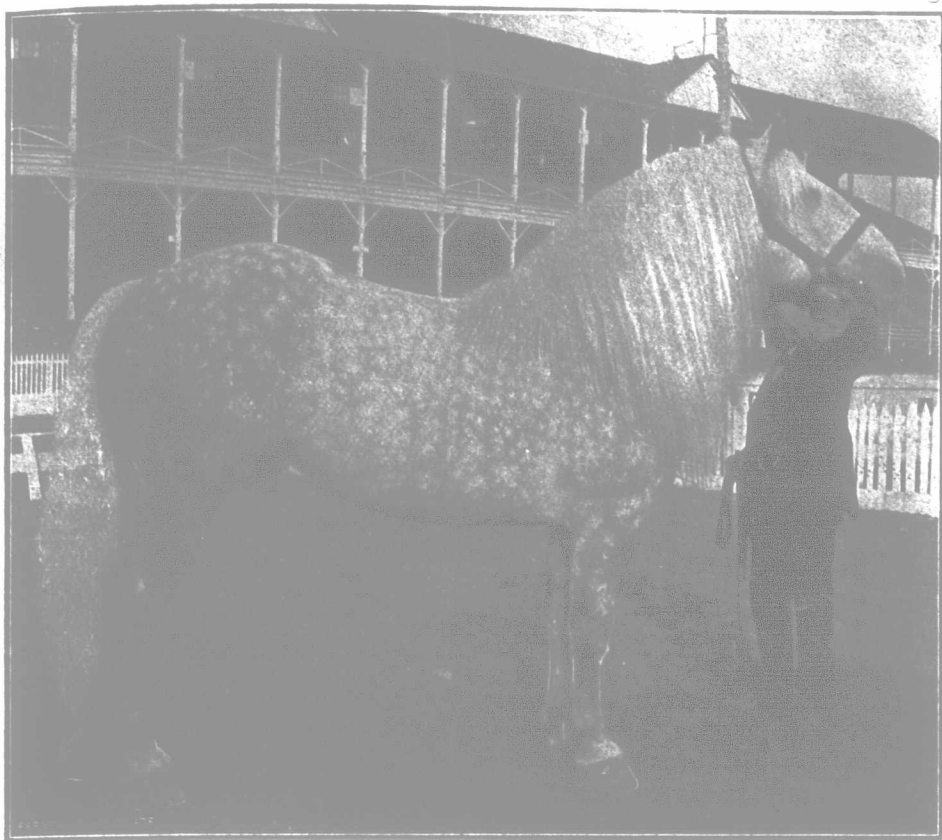




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for you, as to keep up the family. As well be married without a ring! Without a dowry, indeed!"

"Or without a contract written by a notary, signed, sealed, and delivered!" chimed in Master Pothier.

"Yes, Master Pothier, and I have promised Zoe a three-days' wedding, which will make her the envy of all the parish of Charlebourg. The seigneur has consented to give her away in place of her poor defunct father; and when he does that, he is sure to stand godfather for all the children, with a present for every one of them! I shall invite you, too, Master Pothier!"

Zoe affected not to hear her mother's remark, although she knew it all by heart, for it had been dinned into her ears twenty times a day for weeks, and, sooth to say, she liked to hear it, and fully appreciated the honors to come from the patronage of the seigneur.

Master Pothier pricked up his ears till they fairly raised his wig, at the prospect of a three-days' wedding at the Crown of France. He began an elaborate reply, when a horse's tramp broke in upon them, and Colonel Philibert wheeled up to the door of the hostelry.

Master Pothier, seeing an officer in the King's uniform, rose on the instant and saluted him with a profound bow, while Dame Bedard and Zoe, standing side by side, dropped their lowest courtesy to the handsome gentleman, as, with woman's glance, they saw in a moment he was.

Philibert returned their solute courteously, as he halted his horse in front of Dame Bedard. "Madame," said he, "I thought I knew all roads about Charlebourg, but I have either forgotten or they have changed the road through the forest to Beaumanoir. It is surely altered from what it was."

"Your Honor is right," answered Dame Bedard, "the Intendant has opened a new road through the forest." Zoe took the opportunity, while the officer looked at her mother, to examine his features, dress, and equipments, from head to foot, and thought him the handsomest officer she had ever seen.

"I thought it must be so," replied Philibert; "you are the landlady of the Crown of France, I presume?" Dame Bedard carried it on her face as plainly marked as the royal emblem on the sign over her head.

"Yes, your Honor, I am Widow Bedard, at your service, and, I hope, keep as good a hostelry as your Honor will find in the Colony. Will your Honor alight and take a cup of wine, such as I keep for guests of quality?"

"Thanks, Madame Bedard, I am in haste; I must find the way to Beaumanoir. Can you not furnish me a guide, for I like not to lose time by missing my way?"

"A guide, sir! The men are all in the city on the King's corvée; Zoe could show you the way easily enough." Zoe twitched her mother's arm nervously, as a hint not to say too much. She felt flattered, and fluttered, too, at the thought of guiding the strange, handsome gentleman through the forest, and already the question shot through her fancy, "What might come of it? Such things have happened in stories!" Poor Zoe! she was for a few seconds unfaithful to the memory of Antoine La Chance. But Dame Bedard settled all surmises by turning to Master Pothier, who stood stiff and upright as became a limb of the law. "Here is Master Pothier, your Honor, who knows every highway and byway in ten seigniories. He will guide your Honor to Beaumanoir."

"As easy as take a fee or enter a process, your Honor," remarked Master Pothier, whose odd figure had several times drawn the criticizing eye of Colonel Philibert.

"A fee! ah! you belong to the law, then, my good friend? I have known many advocates," but Phil-

foot? It will hold her as fast as a snapping-turtle does a frog. In proof of it, see what Ricard says, page 970; here is the book." Master Pothier opened his tattered volume, and held it up to the dame. She shook her head.

"Thanks, I have mislaid my glasses. Do you read, please!"

"Most cheerfully, good dame! A notary must have eyes for everybody—eyes like a cat's, to see in the dark, and power to draw them in like a turtle, so that he may see nothing that he does not want to see."

"Oh, bless the eyes of the notary!" Dame Bedard grew impatient. "Tell me what the book says about gifts revocable—that is what concerns me and Zoe."

"Well, here it is, dame: 'Donations stipulated revocable at the pleasure of the donor are null. But this condition does not apply to donations by contract of marriage.' Bourdon also says—"

"A fig for Bourdon, and all such drones! I want my gift made revocable, and Dame La Chance's not! I know by long experience with my dear feu Bedard how necessary it is to hold the reins tight over the men. Antoine is a good boy, but he will be all the better for a careful mother-in-law's supervision."

Master Pothier rubbed the top of his wig with his forefinger.

"Are you sure, dame, that Antoine La Chance will wear the bridle easily?"

"Assuredly! I should like to see son-in-law of mine who would not! Besides, Antoine is in the humor just now to refuse nothing for the sake of Zoe. Have you mentioned the children, Master Pothier? I do not intend to let Dame La Chance control the children any more than Zoe and Antoine."

"I have made you tutrice perpetuelle, as we say in the court, and here it is," said he, placing the tip of his finger on a certain line in the document.

Zoe looked down and blushed to her finger-ends. She presently rallied, and said with some spirit: "Never mind them, Master Pothier! Don't put them in the contract! Let Antoine have something to say about them. He would take me without a dowry, I know, and time enough to remind him about children when they come."

"Take you without dowry! Zoe Bedard! you must be mad!" exclaimed the dame, in great heat. "No girl in New France can marry without a dowry, if it be only a pot and a bedstead! You forget, too, that the dowry is given, not so much

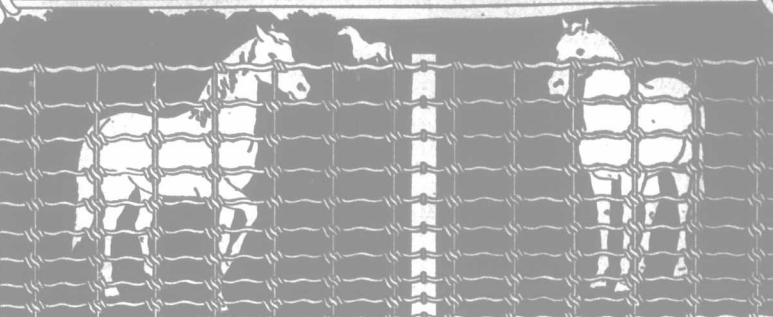
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