

It made her feel nearly mad in her suppression and quietness. She formed a distinct plan of action, and coolly took extreme command, directing everything with the blood going back upon her heart and the currents of life flowing backwards to their source. For the first terrible interval she could not even wonder or doubt or question. She seemed to have known it all, to have felt the cold creeping to her heart, to thrill her with a shiver as of ice and snow, to have grown used and deadened to it. It was Du Chêne who was being borne away in Bras de Fer's strong arms, surrounded by anxious comrades and kindred, Du Chêne, whose eyes were pathetic with the silent protest of life against death, whose bright, boyish face wore that mysterious expression, sweeter, calmer than a smile that so often comes to those who look their last on life. She saw Louise drop down sobbing on the ground; heard Nanon's noisy grief; was conscious of the sorrow-stricken look on Le Ber's face. With the hush and awe of natural sympathy, friends and acquaintances gathered around, looking with an awful fellow-feeling upon the bereavement which might have, but had not, fallen on themselves. The town was overcast with mourning for the honest, kindly, genial young fellow, who had possessed the gift of friendliness and sympathy for his kind.

There was one Du Chêne sought; his wandering glances revealed that secret. All the force within Diane was torn two ways, so sorely torn as scarcely to leave her any strength for decisive action. Her own passion—jealous, restless, imperative, had claims that were irresistible. At such a moment who would remember the stranger's rights? Not Le Ber, who was absorbed in grief for the destruction of his hopes; not Madame de Monestrol, who despised the English captive's weakness; Pierre, who was absorbed in his prayers and penances; Madame de St. Rochs or Nanon, both of whom had conceived violent prejudices against the intruder. During all the years of her after life, Diane could never think of the anguish of that terrible temptation without a convulsion of the heart. She had not any choice, the steadfast spirit holding brave sovereignty over the body and its pangs, must triumph. In the heat of conflict there was a new tide in her veins, a new strength in her heart. It was she who must break the news of her bereavement to her rival; it must be her part to see that Du Chêne's desire was satisfied, that the English girl should take her rightful place at her lover's death-bed. Every trace of colour died out of Lydia's face as she listened; she turned on Diane a wild, appealing look.

"But it is not true; it can't be true. We were to have been so happy together," she insisted desperately, sobbing out the words in her fright.

In one of those brilliant impulses of generosity, courage and self-sacrifice which carry a noble soul on, heedless of the body to the performance of lofty deeds—acts of heroism, in which life goes for nothing, Diane supported the pretty, lovable, passionately frightened creature, who clung to her, panting and sobbing.

"You will come to him. You will try to be calm for his sake," the Demoiselle de Monestrol urged.

But Lydia was overwhelmed with fear; her terror under the shock rendered her helpless and hysterical; she had an instinctive repugnance to the sight of physical suffering, which she could not conceal; she was utterly unable to collect her scattered faculties. This agonized sufferer, with spectral eyes and pain distorted form, seemed to have no connection with her gay and gallant young lover. She could not look at him without whitening and shivering. Du Chêne would insist on being propped up on his bed, on being allowed to talk. The young Canadian was tender and considerate, even on his death bed. He was wondrously patient in his man's pity for his love's weakness and simplicity, his dying eyes followed her ceaselessly with the love that beautifies life and outlives death. Louise, outside the door, sobbed and cried out, launching furious, vehement invectives against the cruelty of Fate and Nanon, all glowing red, eyes lit up with indignation, her lips quivering with distress, stood by, with a gaze of horror, fury and disgust fixed on the stranger's face.

But Lydia was too much absorbed in her own fright and misery to be sensible to criticism, animosity or even evidences of tenderest affection, all her complacent little vanities had vanished, clinging to her friend with pretty, shaking hands, she gazed up vainly, with tear-dimmed eyes, as though hoping to obtain some inspiration from the desperate, eager bravery of Diane's face.

"Diane, be good to her. You are strong and tender and loyal, I can trust you, Diane," was his constant cry.

A consciousness came over the household that sad change and revolution hung over the family. Jean Le Ber Du Chêne was going away in the bloom of his days to that unknown darkness of which God alone knows the secrets. It was very quiet in the death-chamber where the young hero lay looking at the distant tapers, the one centre of light in the great gloomy chamber, giving a sigh to what might have been, and thinking, with perhaps an awakening thrill of anticipation, of what was soon to be. He lay as silent as if he slept, almost as silent as if he had been dead; the room was filled with wavering dusky shadows. On a *prie-dieu*, close at hand, knelt Diane. The torture of one who had fought a protracted battle to gain the hardly won victory over self was ended. In this solemn hour was felt the stirring of some larger, grander life within, and human eyes gazed appealingly across the darkness of present things, striving to see, no matter how indistinctly, the first faint glimmer of the brightness that glitters beyond the grave. Two nuns of the Congregation, Sister Marguerite Bourgeois, an aged *religious*, whose expression of beautiful serenity was like a benediction, and Sister Berrier, Superior of the Congregation, knelt in prayer. Something stirred softly at the sound of the measured, ill-assured movement, timid yet rushing, with a definite purpose underlying the desperate haste; even Diane raised her head, the nuns crossing themselves, drew close together. A wan, hollow-eyed form glided from among the shadows, stood for a moment gazing down upon the young man's peaceful face, and disappeared in utter silence. From the seclusion of years, the tie of kindred had drawn Jeanne Le Ber, and the spectators were awed by sight of a mortal soul cut off from all human hopes and interests, yet firmly bound to its inheritance of human woe. The dawn was breaking in the east. Sister Berrier rose, and crossing the room threw open the heavy wooden shutters. The fresh, cool air, moist and odorous, rushed in, a searching shaft of light, clear and terrible, fell like a radiance upon the beautiful, dead face.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

"Heart thou must learn to do without  
That is the riches of the poor;  
Their liberty is to endure.  
Wrap thou thine old cloak thee about  
And carol loud and carol stout."

—A THREEFOLD CORD.

"My daughter, when the earthly hope that lights existence has faded and we find it impossible to lay down our lives to perish in the grave beside it, when we can neither endure our anguish nor be reconciled to it, we can only disengage ourselves and leave it behind us, dead and buried. The true and genuine portion of our sorrow lives, the baser regrets we must cast from us, there is no companionship between the living and the dead," Dollier de Casson had assured Diane.

The annual ship was departing for France and that was always an event of the deepest importance for Quebec. There was the wildest stir and bustle and confusion. The Sieur d'Ardieux had by the death of his uncle become Duc de Rouceval, triumphed over his enemies and entered upon his inheritance of wealth and rank. He was now returning with his bride to France. Curled, powdered and decorated, he stormed at his obsequious lacqueys, and gesticulated wildly as he jested with his friends. The bride was pale and composed bearing herself as her friends remarked with satisfaction "with an air of the very highest distinction." A little speechless and desolate group as those to whom this leave-taking might mean parting for ever, had gathered about her, with a certain sadness which was yet relieved by gleams of humor which were wonderful to see. Jacques Le Ber col-

lected and composed though he had aged and the stern lines of his face had all deepened, Madame de Monestrol, older, frailer, but always bearing her infirmities with unflinching endurance and a kind *saue* dignity. Nanon, her honest face swollen with tears which she made no effort to restrain.

"My marmotte, the sunshine of my life goes with thee."

"It is your desire that I should serve you at the Court, my uncle."

"My little one, could I but accompany thee" then Madame la Marquise added brightly "But I can pray for thee." I can think of thee as occupying thy rightful place in the world and I can praise the good God that the desire of my heart has been realized. The duty lies before thee, my daughter, let no thought of a feeble old woman whose stormy life has almost ended, weaken thine heart."

As the good ship *Rénommée* disappeared below the horizon, Nanon lifted up her voice and wept with boisterous vehemence.

"Like the face of an angel was that of my demoiselle when I looked my last upon her. My little one, that I cradled in my arms. I am of the people, if my heart is broke no need have I to look like a stone as those others." "It is thy place to stay with madame as it is mine to leave her. Let neither of us forget our obligations, but fulfil them nobly and faithfully, good and loving Nanon." She says oh! so gently. I wanted to see her set high above all the world and behold, the most noble her Grace Madame la Duchesse de Rouceval is taken from my sight. Oh, my noble brave and beautiful demoiselle, how can I live without her. I could weep my heart out. What can the blessed saints be thinking of, up in Heaven there? Behold, that blonde English sheep, heartless and cold-blooded as a snake, the happy wife of M. de Gallifleur—a peer of France.

At the court of Louis the Magnificent, a beautiful, brilliant woman, Diane de Rouceval bravely lived out her existence. Brave, with an inspiration of faith and hope, it was her task to identify herself with the needs and claims of others to shed peace and joy around her, to make the rough places smooth with an earnest and simple contriving of gentle charities. All egotism had been annihilated by the hot, fierce sweep of a spiritual flame before which all unworthy desires or ambitions had perished—the living vivifying breath of an utterly unselfish affection. If she were conscious of a wound which throbbed and bled daily whichever way she turned herself, she contrived to carry her cross in such a fashion that though the way might be marked by blood drops instead of tears, no other heart should be saddened, no joy shadowed, that none but herself might suffer. In the midst of a corrupt society, she preserved a lofty and noble ideal. The world was ruder and brighter for one woman's strength and faith and courage.

[THE END.]

#### Personal and Literary Notes.

In the notes of the New York *Critic* we notice: "Mr. Douglas Sladen has taken up his residence till May at 20 East 32nd street, New York; and, having despatched the last proofs of "Younger American Poets," he is collecting materials for a book on "Literary New York," which will embrace not only the well known authors but the literary clubs, salons, libraries, principal magazines and the great newspapers, with their publishers, editors, leader writers, critics, etc. The work, which is to be published both in London and New York, will be embellished with portraits of the principal personages, and will contain an historical chapter."

In a week or two Cassell & Company will be bringing out in New York, and Griffith, Funan & Co. in England and Australia, Mr. Sladen's "Younger American Poets," which has an appendix of younger Canadian poets, containing such names as John Reade, Bliss Carman, Professor Roberts, Archibald Lampman, W. W. Campbell, Rev. F. G. Scott, Barry Dave, Agnes Marle Machar, Rev. Arthur Wentworth Hamilton Eaton, C. P. Mulvaney, Charles Mair, John Hunter Duvar. The limit of age, unfortunately, excluded George Martin and George Murray.