

THE EXODUS.

BY FRANCIS W. GREY, LITT. D., AUTHOR OF "The Cure of St. Philippe," "Gilbert Franklin," "CHAPTER IX. A CONFERENCE OF THE POWERS."

Monsieur Zephirin St. Jacques, member for South Winnipeg and future joint-leader, as he believed and intended, of some thirty or forty members from a New Quebec in the Northwest, was not, it must be admitted, altogether pleased at learning from his labor correspondent that the Union had decided to take the case of policy to defer any action in the case of Messrs. Mills and Hammond "for the present." Being strongly of Senator Bilodeau's opinion that a strike, combined with agitation against "cheap foreign labor," was practically the sole means of bringing about the Exodus, as it had already come to be spoken of, he was naturally anxious to see the beginning of the movement. That the Federation of New England Factory Operatives—the Labor Union—should thus defer their attack on the greatest of the few independent firms remaining outside the Cotton Company, must, he felt, postpone the initiation of the plan devised by Senator Bilodeau almost indefinitely.

He said as much to his senior partner at one of their numerous discussions on the subject. "The time," he objected, "was surely as propitious as one could hope for. A panic in the States, money stringency, if not more do they want? he concluded querulously. The union it would seem had offered him a personal injury wholly unpardonable.

"I think I understand," returned Bilodeau, quietly. "See you, mon ami, we have three factors to reckon with in the actual situation; the Cotton Company, the Labor Union and our friends, Messieurs Mills and Hammond. Now, he proceeded, ticking off each point on his fingers, "the two last can stand against the first if they stand together, Mills and Hammond, our man tells us, will sell out to the Cotton Company, if the Union orders a strike. The Union therefore, must take its choice. Mills and Hammond, whom they can defeat, are ready to be beaten, but such a defeat leaves the Union face to face with the Cotton Company which is too strong for the Union. Yes," he concluded, with a certain amount of amusement, "it is a very effectual alliance."

"For us," he interjected St. Jacques, at a loss to account for the Senator's apparent amusement at a situation which, as he viewed it, was sufficiently serious. "Are you sure?" he asked. Bilodeau evidently was not at all worried at a delay which, as the member for South Winnipeg saw it, involved the postponement of their own plan. "Listen, mon ami," the Senator continued as quietly as ever, "the Cotton Company know that they cannot get the better of Mills and Hammond so long as the operatives stand by the latter. They know, also, that the Union is so afraid of them as to allow Mills and Hammond to refuse the increased wages asked for, to defy the Union practically. Obviously, then, we must talk the matter over with your friend, who shall remain anonymous, and with an acquaintance of mine, whom we will call, if you please, Monsieur Brown. Does that meet with your approval?" he enquired gently. At heart he was inclined to wonder how a man so easily discouraged should ever have planned—Bilodeau was good at reading his fellow-men—to succeed, or to supplant him, Alphonse Bilodeau. But he was none the less genial on that account. Rather more so, in fact, with the cordiality reserved for those from whom he looked for no possible rivalry; yet not quite that which he showed to Monsieur Demers or even to Pierre Martin.

Of this, however, the member for South Winnipeg, wholly satisfied with himself, was, of course, blissfully unaware. "Perfectly," he answered, almost condescendingly, in answer to the other's questioning, tone and manner affording that gentleman not a little quiet amusement. "Your conference," St. Jacques continued, still with a lofty assumption of inequality if not of superiority, "when do you propose that it shall take place?" "Well," was the answer, "Monsieur Brown has business in Ottawa next week . . . with the Government I believe; it is not my affair. But he stays at the Chateau Laurier, and I quite naturally call on him. You . . . Mr. Smith is it not?"—the other nodded "can he be in Ottawa . . . next Thursday?" At the Russell, shall we say?"

"I will write and ask him," returned St. Jacques; "on the other hand, a not very well known admirer of his colleague's skill in planning even such little details as these; details, he flattered himself, beneath so large a mind as his own. Again Bilodeau read or guessed at the unspoken thought. "He is the only man I can use," he reflected, discontentedly; adding mentally, "If Demers were only a layman, or young Martin twenty years older, I should give Monsieur le Député here a very brief course. In fact I should, I fear, forget myself so far as to tell him my real opinion. He would be flattered by it I doubt not!"

Aloud, however, he merely remarked casually, as St. Jacques rose to take his leave. "On Thursday, then, at eleven in the forenoon. Bon air, Monsieur le Député."

Mr. Brown was, it seemed, able to comply with Monsieur St. Jacques' invitation. On the following Thursday, therefore, the four powers met in Mr. Brown's private sitting-room at the Chateau Laurier, and got to business without unnecessary delay.

"It's this way, I take it," began Brown. "We want to buy out Mills and Hammond. That's the first point, if you gentlemen will excuse my saying so." The others nodded. "You," he continued, addressing the labor man, "are backing Mills and Hammond, because you think we are too strong for you, or should be if we bought them out."

"For the present, yes," rejoined Smith, with the air of one willing to make a concession for the sake of argument. "We'll let it go at that," returned the gentleman registered at the Chateau Laurier as 'W. Brown, of Hartford,

Conn., "the main point is you're backing Mills and Hammond as a matter of policy."

"Yes," Smith's assent was less merely necessary this time. "You," resumed Brown, addressing Senator Bilodeau, and bowing to the member for South Winnipeg, "want to get your people back to Canada. Well, candidly, we are not anxious to keep them. Oh, I know," he said, noting Smith's undisguised astonishment, "you thought we wanted more of them, to keep down wages, to 'whip' you fellows, in short, any old thing, so long as it was bad enough, on the principle that a Trust will always do the wrong thing. Well, as a matter of fact, and I don't care who knows it, we don't love 'cheap foreign labor'—begging the question of your pardon—a bit more than you do. So you can go ahead and order out your men whenever you like. And what's more," he added, "the Company will give you that ten per cent. increase the day the last French Canadian leaves Middlehampton. Is that a safe promise, Senator?" he asked, carelessly, turning to Bilodeau.

"Not very," was the answer, unless you are prepared to keep it. But it will suit our purposes," Monsieur Smith said to his friends, keep to their part of the bargain. Eh? Monsieur Smith?" he laughed.

"Well," returned that gentleman, "all I can say is that the ten per cent. increase is as good as ours. We shall have to put pressure on your folks though, Senator, you understand that, of course?"

"Of course," returned Bilodeau indifferently, "but not too much 'pressure,' if you please, Monsieur. Our people will not be difficult to persuade, Monsieur le Député"—to the member for South Winnipeg, "do you think so?"

"I am entirely of your opinion, Monsieur le Sénateur," replied St. Jacques, with a politeness which seemed to amuse the two Americans. "As you said, lately, a strike or a lock-out is all we need to set our people moving."

"A lock-out?" interjected the labor man sharply, catching at the latter word. "I don't think Mills and Hammond will go that far; do you Mr.—oh! yes! Brown?" he asked, somewhat uneasily. That the firm assailed should, so to speak, take the initiative, would not he felt be to the Union's credit. Hence a question which under other circumstances he might not perhaps have been quite so eager to ask. Which, indeed, he was careful not to admit that he had asked.

Brown smiled. "If you ask me," he said leisurely, "I should say that is just what they will do, if I know John Hammond as well as I think I do. You see, Smith," he went on airily, almost contemptuously, as stating a fact which should have been self-evident; it's a case of 'every man for himself.' John Hammond has nothing to thank you for and won't consider you a bit more than . . . well, than you would consider him."

That sentence," said Bilodeau to himself, should have ended differently. He meant to say: "any more than we should consider you." Ça marche," he reflected, satisfied as well he might be at the way matters were progressing. "Well, gentlemen," he said aloud, "strike or lock-out it is all the same to us. We want to get our people back; that, if you will excuse my saying so, is all we care about."

"Naturally," said Brown, ringing the bell. "Give it a name, gentleman, what will you take?"

"So that's settled," remarked St. Jacques, as he and Bilodeau crossed the footbridge between the hotel and the parliament buildings.

"Yes, I think so," answered the Senator, "me, I have not the honor of knowing Monsieur John Hammond," he added, "but seeing he has so far been too much for the Trust and the Labor Union, I am of opinion he will play them a turn yet."

Wherein, as will be seen, he showed no less than his usual insight, in so far, that is, as that John Hammond was to choose his own method of dealing with the Trust and incidentally with the Union. A subsequent portion of this chronicle, will moreover, be more easily understood, if the conference just recorded be borne in mind.

The subjoined conversation may also furnish clues to after happenings. "You think, then," said the member for South Winnipeg, with a deference that was not wholly assumed, "that neither Monsieur Smith nor Monsieur Brown was quite sincere in what he said?"

"I think," returned Bilodeau, with a certain grim emphasis, "that we can dispense with 'stage names' to begin with. Let me set the example by saying that my Monsieur Brown is actually M. Lyman C. Barker of Westfield, President of the New England Cotton Company. Your Monsieur Smith, if I mistake not, is more generally known as Alexander Greene, labor organizer, also of Westfield."

St. Jacques nodded, as the two sat down on a bench, overlooking the river. "Yes," he said, "and that answers my question as to their sincerity."

"Sincere?" was the rejoinder, "who is sincere, Barker's Company?" the Senator went on, in a more ordinary tone "is responsible for more cheap imported labor than all the factories in New England combined. But he will play into Greene's hands, none the less," he continued, "until he has Greene in his power. Then he will import more 'cheap foreign labor' but par Dieu!" he exclaimed, with a wholly unwonted solemnity, "he shall not import any from French Canada. And that," he concluded, "is where Monsieur John Hammond shall play him his turn."

"Doubtless," asserted the member for South Winnipeg, as who should say: "If you say so it must be," adding however, "though I don't see how."

"Nor I," rejoined Bilodeau, though I think I can guess. If not, I can at least suggest a way, and shall, in fact, make it my business to do so."

"May I ask what way?" still with a deference that was by now considerably more than half genuine.

"Well—don't you think he might 'raise them,' as they say in their poker game?" was the counter question.

"Or, more plainly," speaking in covered tones, "help us to move our people out of New England? He is a rich man," the Senator added, "a fighter, tenacious of his purpose as he has shown. If the Trust drives him too hard, or the Union, he will, so to speak, step out and leave them face to face. But he will never rest while a single Canadian remains in New England."

"C'est magnifique!" St. Jacques protested, with an admiration which was at last wholly sincere. Truly he had much to learn, even from Alphonse Bilodeau, as he was beginning to perceive, showing thereby that he was really beginning to learn. He should never, he admitted, have thought of all this. Perhaps, after all, it would be better he were content to be joint leader only, lieutenant, in fact, to this veteran campaigner, which was further proof that he was making satisfactory progress in his profitable studies.

"I think it will do," said Bilodeau, not ill-pleased at the other's evident tribute to his superior capacity. St. Jacques, he concluded, if he would continue as he now seemed to have begun might not after all prove seriously inferior to either Monsieur Demers or even Pierre Martin, neither of whom moreover, was available. The only agent possible was, however, showing signs of improvement which was matter to be thankful for. "Yes," he repeated "I think it will do."

John Hammond, as a consequence of the foregoing received during the next few days two visitors and a letter. Telling the last first, it may be said that it was signed Lyman C. Barker in that gentleman's capacity as President of the New England Cotton Company, and renewed the Company's former offer, on even more favorable terms. There was, however, a hint of pressure conveyed rather than expressed, which the old mill-owner was no less quick to perceive—and resent—than he was to read fear in the more advantageous offer.

"They're afraid," he said quietly to his friend and manager, Peter Meadowgate, to whom he had handed the letter to read.

"Seems like it," was the rejoinder. "Bluffing too," the manager added, almost indifferently, "trying to scare us I guess."

"That's so," agreed Hammond, "glad you see it as I do. Thought you would. Well," he added grimly, "I don't scare. Not so easy as that anyway, Mr. Lyman C. Barker."

"Then you'll still help young Martin with that scheme of his," pursued Meadowgate, interrogatively.

"Help him? You bet I will," said the mill-owner emphatically, "and in a fashion that'll astonish the Trust I guess. And the Union too, maybe," he concluded, turning to his desk.

Alexander Greene, therefore, who changed to be the first of his two visitors, found him, perhaps, abnormally suave—a suavity which would have been significant to Peter Meadowgate but not, on that account, inclined to be accommodating.

"Any change in the situation?" he enquired with no great show of interest. "I thought we agreed that things were to go on for the present."

"Yes . . . but," said Greene, alias Smith of the Ottawa interview, "our people are beginning to kick at cheap foreign labor."

"Canadian labor, in fact?" the mill owner had lost a little of his suavity and took his interlocutor up short.

"Well, yes, I guess so."

"Thought so," was the rejoinder. "Well, I guess the Cotton Company employs ten foreigners to our one. Why don't you begin with them?" This with a return to suavity. John Hammond, at all events, was enjoying himself thoroughly. Greene, as assuredly, was not.

"Well, you see . . . he began; and got no further, for the mill owner took him up more promptly than ever but no less suavely.

"No, don't," he said, "at least I do see that you Union is scared of the Trust, and thinks it can whip us. Well, go ahead, and begin; I guess you'll find us ready for you."

"Is that a threat?" truly enough, Greene was showing plainly that he had not expected such an attitude on John Hammond's part.

"No," answered Hammond, "a mere statement of fact. You'll excuse me, he continued, taking a letter off his desk, "but I'm very busy." And Greene, seeing there was no chance of further discussion, took the hint and his departure.

The second caller, two days later, was no less a personage than Senator Alphonse Bilodeau himself. The mill owner, on this occasion, was all genuine cordiality and politeness.

"I fancy I know what you have come to see me about, Senator," he said, after the exchange of customary civilities. "About your people, isn't it?"

"Yes," was the reply, "but how came you to guess it?"

"Well, you see," returned Hammond, "I've been talking to Pierre Martin and to Father Gagnon."

"Oh! And you think?"

"I think it can be managed, Senator," said the mill-owner, thoughtfully. "Of course," he continued, "your people must do their share, both here and in Canada, your Government especially."

"I think they will," rejoined Bilodeau; "there's no graft in it, I know."

"No practical politics, eh?" laughed Hammond.

Precisely. But I think," Bilodeau resumed, "that we shall be able to make them see reason. As for yourself, now, Monsieur Hammond," he added, "may we count on your assistance?"

"You may," was the prompt response, "and I'll tell you why." Whereupon, he proceeded to tell his visitor of Barker's letter and Greene's threat of a strike.

"Yes, they met at Ottawa," said Bilodeau, quietly, "and were very civil to each other. In fact, Barker promised Greene the 10 per cent. increase demanded by the union 'the day the last French-Canadian leaves Middlehampton.'"

"Oh he did, did he?" commented Hammond, grimly. "Didn't happen to say about the Canadians in the com-

pany's employ, by any chance, I suppose?"

"Not a word," answered the Senator smiling. "That, I fancy," he said, with quiet meaning, "did not come within the terms of their bargain."

"No, I guess not," with added grimness. "Well, Senator," in a kinder tone, "I don't say what I shall do—to the Trust, and maybe, to the Union. But you can count on me to help send your people back to Canada, if it costs me my last dollar. Is that good enough?" he asked, smiling now.

"Quite, and I thank you sincerely," said this visitor, whereupon they fell to talking of other and indifferent matters.

CHAPTER X. AN INTERLUDE.

Between the inception of an undertaking and its accomplishment there comes invariably and inevitably a period when we seem, at best, to be marking time, making at least no perceptible progress. Or to vary the simile, the stream on which we are launched runs at the first swiftly and strongly, destined, as we hope and trust, to bear us quickly to the end of our desired haven. Then, all at once, we find ourselves as it seems out of the main current, drifting into a back-water, lifeless and sluggish, if not wee'-grown and stagnant, and begin to fear lest after all we have missed that tide in our affairs which was to lead us on to fortune, and have become hopelessly lost amid the sand-bars and swallows.

In such cases we have need more than at any other time of faith, prayer and patience. If we have, in very deed or in seeming only, drifted out of the course we set ourselves, it is for us to remember that far as we may drift it can never be "beyond His love and care." Who has chartered all our voyage for us and seen the end from the beginning. It is then most of all, that we should realize that the hours, days, or months of waiting, of the state which we call inaction, or those in which we call inaction, are those in which the ripening of our appointed harvest, that harvest which only patience, want of faith on our part, can hinder us from reaping.

Some such experience as this, Pierre Martin recognized in after years, must have fallen to his lot after the event so far recorded. His dream of a Great Exodus for his people from the land of bondage, while laughed at by some, had met with an encouragement from others he had not dared to hope for. But in the weeks that followed, his dream seemed to grow more remote, less likely to be realized, and not even Father Gagnon's half-expressed belief that he, Pierre Martin a lad of twenty, a factory hand, was to be the Moses of this deliverance could lighten the load of his despondency. How should he lead it, he, a prétre manqué, who, as it now seemed to him, had put his hand to a call he had wrongly taken for that of duty.

He even used the phrase one day about this time to Father Gagnon, who took him up kindly but sharply. There was danger, the priest knew, in such a mood as this.

"Losing patience, Pierre?" he asked, looking at him keenly.

"I am afraid so, mon père," was the answer. "What good can I hope to do, the lad went on, hopelessly, "if I am a prétre manqué?" Which, in the Irish phrase, "a spoiled priest," and indicates a failure not easily to be estimated in its effects on the individual concerned.

"Manqué, did you say?" It was then that the Curé spoke with a certain kindly severity as to one needing a moral tonic, "how do you know?"

"Listen, mon ami," he continued, more gently, "the priest-hood is the highest calling that a man may aspire to, yet believe me, you may do more, as you now are, as you may still be, than many priests could ever do."

"In what way, mon père?" There was less of despondency and more of healthful curiosity in the young voice now, as in the young face the priest had learned to read so easily and so sympathetically.

"Well," was the answer, "suppose we put it in this way. I have power, you say to bind and loose—those who come to me, to set them free, in God's name, from the bondage of their sins. And here," sadly, "I must say, of many as our Lord said of the Jews, that they will not come. It might be so, it is so, in their own land, I know, but not so here, dear God! not as it is here!"

"And I?" Pierre asked, reverently, awed at the priest's unwonted emotion.

"You? You are to set them free from this land of bondage," returned Father Gagnon earnestly, almost it seemed to the lad's overwrought sensibilities propheticly; "from the temptations to drink to vice, to apostasy. Oh! I know," the Curé proceeded, speaking more quietly, now, "there is drink on the farms, and there is sin, but Dieu merci! no apostasy; no fear of ridicule, no 'freedom' to keep them from making their peace with God. Truly, as the English poet said: 'God made the country, and man made the town.' Me, I think the devil made the factories! At least he was the first taskmaster, as he was the first to preach 'freedom and the rights of man.' Patience, mon cher, patience, patience!" he concluded, smiling; "you don't know, as I told you once before, that you will see to-morrow."

"That's true, Monsieur Curé," Pierre returned, feeling ashamed of his late impatience, yet comforted by the good priest's encouragement. To be the deliverer of his people from their bondage, as Father Gagnon seemed to believe he should be, that surely was worth waiting for. Then, taking his courage in both hands, driven thereto as it seemed against his own volition, he faltered. . . . "But, Monsieur le Curé, you don't know all. . . . This waiting," he could get no further for the moment.

Father Gagnon it may be imagined guessed what was in the lad's mind, as indeed he had so often guessed, or rather read it before, with a skill in that difficult art acquired by long years of dealing with men and women in the confessional; men and women, that is, unwearying and honest, for the nonce, with themselves and with their Maker.

"Yes," he said, with an added gentleness, "this waiting? It brings doubts, does it not? Temptations may be. Is that what you would say?"

"Oui, Monsieur le Curé!" Then, slowly and with difficulty, in response to the priest's kindly, encouraging, "Tell me," Pierre went on to speak of one with whom he had been brought into contact, at his brother's house, Francoise Gosselin, daughter of that Amable Gosselin who had been among the first adherents to Pierre's plan of an Exodus. Pierre had gone often, he continued, to Amable Gosselin's house, convinced, at first, that his sole motive in going was to "talk things over," glad, honestly and naturally of a sympathy and encouragement which were all too rare in his own experience; then trying to persuade himself that his motive was still the same, finally, brought face to face with the truth, compelled to be honest with himself; realizing that it was love for Francoise Gosselin that took him evening after evening to her father's house.

Father Gagnon listened but said nothing till the tale was finished. Then he asked a question. "And the girl?" he said. "Does she care for you?"

"I don't know, Monsieur le Curé," answered Pierre. "In truth, he did not know; nor, indeed, had it ever occurred to him that she could care. What had he to do with woman's love, however pure and innocent? Then he waited to be questioned further."

"And you love her?" This with a sympathy of tone and manner Pierre had not dared to look for. To him this love was something to be owned with shame if not as actually sinful. His: "Yes, Monsieur le Curé," was, therefore still more falteringly uttered hardly above a whisper. What place had love in his life? Had he not given it to God and to Holy Church?"

And yet the Curé, so far from rebuking him, as he felt he deserved, had spoken, and was still speaking, gently, sympathetically, as one who understood, which was doubtless, precisely what he did. What did it mean? Did the Christ understand and pity? Did He Christ understand and pity? infinitely more lovingly, with an immeasurable comprehension, an immeasurable pity? It was, in some sense, a new thought to Pierre, yet he began even then dimly and gropingly to understand the mysteries of a love that was both divine and human, began, also to realize in what measure and degree this "other Christ" was like his Master and Original.

"But, mon père," he broke out at last, "I was to be a priest. . . . I vowed."

"Once more he stopped, unable as it seemed to him to find words wherewith to express his thoughts.

"I know you did," the priest spoke very quietly, very gravely. "And so, he went on, "you feel that you are prétre manqué because human love has come into your life. Is that what you mean?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Curé," Pierre, at this stage, found that assent was as much as he could utter.

"Listen, then," Father Gagnon still spoke gravely and quietly, yet kindly, sympathetically—Christy, Pierre would have said—as ever. "There are two safeguards in a young man's life; the grace of God, and a pure love for a good woman, whether mother, sister, or one not of his kindred. They are both from God, and each has its due place, most of all, I think, in those ante-chambers of hell, which men call cities. There is always grace enough to keep us—if we will ask for it. But . . . well, we don't always ask, for there are times when God seems very far away, and human love is something nearer, something we can better understand. Me," he added, musingly, "I think le Bon Dieu meant it to be so, to teach us our need of each other—and of Him. Could you look in this girl's eyes, mon ami," he continued, "if you had done anything you were ashamed to tell her?"

"No, Monsieur le Curé," Once more, Pierre found it easier to confine himself to a few words as possible. Nor did he yet understand whither the priest wished to lead him, though he began to catch some inkling of his intention.

"Then you really love her. Listen yet again," Father Gagnon's tone grew reverent, thrilling, as it seemed to Pierre, with love unutterable, a love of which he could form but the faintest conception. "Think you I could look upon the Lord, at Holy Mass, if I had done anything I should be ashamed to tell Him?"

"No, Monsieur le Curé." This time, it was the only answer that to Pierre appeared fit to be given.

"Why?" the priest asked, still in that tone of loving reverence which, to the listener, conveyed clearly and unmistakably its own answer.

"Because you love Him."

"Then love, you see, is the most powerful help to goodness, the best motive a man can have; I would almost say, the only motive worthy of a man. And all pure love begins with God, and ends in Him, consciously or unconsciously, since God is love. There are temptations here in Middlehampton, mon cher," the priest went on, "I think, thank God, you know nothing of as yet, which, if it please Him, you shall never know. But He wants to guard you, to make sure of you, because you are going to Him of your own choice, your own being and so He sends you not only grace, but love as well."

"This love?" Pierre was too utterly astonished now to say more.

"Yes, this love." The reply came without delay, without hesitation. "You love God, I know," Father Gagnon continued, "or you would not have wished to be a priest, but God, all reverence, as I said just now, and you cannot see Him, hear Him, speak to Him as you can speak to me. Moreover, your place here in Middlehampton, in the factory, not in the seminary—though that has its own temptations, God knows—fit just so long as le Bon Dieu sees fit. And so He sends you this pure love, love for a good innocent girl. What for, do you think? To keep you safe, yes; but for more than that—to teach you by this human love what it means to love Him. What would you do for this girl, or rather, what would you not do? Would you die rather than offend

her, by so much as an unworthy thought rather than let harm come to her?"

"Of course I would!" There could be no doubt of the lad's sincerity. Father Gagnon certainly had none at all.

"That is what love of God means," he resumed, "to die rather than offend by so much as an unworthy thought a willful doubt of his love for you. To die rather than suffer any one to do Him injury; that is love. That is what this love will do for you. You will learn what love really means."

"But my priesthood, mon père?" It was the same cry that the call of duty had wrung from his inmost soul when in Monsieur Demers' study, he had shown Madeleine's letter, asking him to come home. This time, asking him of duty but of love was immeasurably incalculably stronger, and all his sense of what his vocation meant was opposed to it, fighting against it, against himself. And Father Gagnon had just told him that this love came from God!

"Leave that to God," was the answer, word for word with that given him by Monsieur Demers. "No love that comes from Him will come between you and the lot He has chosen for you. But it must be His choice, not yours."

"You mean, mon père? Pierre in fact did not understand exactly what this last warning, for such he deemed it, really did mean. As was his wont, at all times, he made use of the briefest form of question possible, in order to elicit from the Curé the explanation he felt sure of receiving.

"Nor was it long in coming. 'I mean,' said Father Gagnon, gravely, "that if God wishes you to be a priest, my son, this love will not hinder you from being one. In a sense, of course, nothing you might do would alter God's designs concerning you, but that is not what I want you to understand. Try, rather, to realize this—that love is of God; that it is one of His best gifts, since it makes us most like to Him; that man must love something, some one, even the brutes have their measure of natural affection, 'the priest went on,' but man's love differs from theirs in this, above all else, that it can be and often is unselfish; that a pure human love, as I have said, leads on to love of God, merges in it, becomes one with it. I did not mean to preach you such a sermon, mon cher," he concluded, in a lighter tone, "but you seemed so distressed about it that I had to put you right."

And now, his human love came to aid him. "I am glad, after a momentary pause in which his mind travelled over space hitherto as he had believed, forbidden to him, or unknown at least, and on which he had, therefore, feared to venture.

"To all, no," was the answer "but to many. To some, God gives Himself, alone to love, others, He leads, as He is leading you, by human love to heights of Divine Love which you might, otherwise, never attain to. It is not the easiest path, mon ami, rest assured, nor the lowest calling. Rather, I think, it is His chosen ones, for the most part, whom He bids walk in it." The priest paused again, and both, it may be fancied, thought deeply of what had just passed between them.

It was Pierre who broke the silence. "But," he said, with a humility that touched Father Gagnon to the quick, "I am not of the chosen ones."

"How do you know," said the priest quietly, "it is from the very dunghill, mon cher," he continued, "as David tells us, that He lifts up the needy—those wanting, in their own eyes, and in the eyes of men, in all the qualities of leadership—that He may set them with the princes of His people. Worthy?" he added, "who is worthy of this favor He is showing you or of any other? No man on earth, yet God greater than men, and men have ever greater need of them. Trust Him, mon fils, He knows more for you, whatever it may be."

"But this love, mon père," the lad persisted, determined, one might think, to have the matter out with God, the Curé and himself once for all. "If I become a priest, I must give it up." It was the first time that he had really faced the issue bravely, squarely. Hitherto he had shrunk from the contemplation of his love as a possible barrier between him and the lot to which he felt God had called him, but now he had come to the drinking of his Lord's cup—or to a refusal. It must be, he still convinced, be either love or God; he could not, for all that had been said, bring himself to believe — or was it to hope? — that it could be both.

"I told you," was the answer, "that it was no easy path whereby human love leads to love of God. It means that if God calls you to the priest-hood, you will willfully and empty-handed to His altar, but will have a gift worth offering: 'let him deny himself.' What does that mean to many of us, far too many? Only the giving up of that of which we know little or nothing, of which we do not know the value, which cost little at the most. But you!" he exclaimed, laying his hand on the lad's shoulder and looking into the brave young eyes; "it will have love to give in return for love. . . . Give it up, did you say? Not so, but you will lay it at His feet, for Him to give it back to you changed, yet the same, made eternal, purged of all dross in the furnace of His Heart, made one with His for you and for her. Is that nothing? Is it too much to give?"

"No, mon père." Just three short words, but the priest was satisfied. And Pierre as he made his way went through the quiet, moonlit streets, and prayed, doubtless, for strength to do the duty God should choose for him to do that which he might wish to choose for himself.

One thing Father Gagnon had added ere he said good-night. "Don't speak to her," he said, "if you can help it. Go, just as usual to the house, be your self as long as you are to be seen, in so long as you are to be seen in this, any case to know your own mind in this, or men would say so. But . . . don't speak to her, wait, until Pierre had promised that he would, a promise which the priest felt sure he would keep faithfully and manfully.

As for himself, when far into the night he paced up and down his room, his

MAY 20, 1906. OFFER SAID IN HIS INNOVATION. PIERRE, WHAT WAS HIS POINT OF VIEW? HE HAD CHOSEN OF HIS OWN WHOLE WILLINGNESS TO BECOME A PRIEST. THE LAD'S BORN SELF-REVERENTLY AND AGONY. THAT BEING SPOKEN OF, PIERRE, HE HAD CHO