

erandah all around it, and extensive gardens enclosing it from the outlying fields. The family retained the old Acadian simplicity of manners, and though affable for all their neighbours, preferred the seclusion and freedom of their own domestic circle.

The Canadian mothers are proverbially prolific, and Madame Varny was no exception. She had given birth to seventeen children, even of whom still survived. The favourite among them, the pearl of the family, was Rosalba, the subject of our sketch.

Rosalba Varny was by no means a faultless beauty, but she had many of the charming traits of the unalloyed Canadian type. None of your thin diaphanous creatures whose life is a perpetual jerk and struggle after effect, but broad-shouldered, full-chested, and with just that amplitude of flesh which betokens vital development and gives fair play to the lines and curves of beauty, without dwindling into the grossly sensuous or grotesque. Her hair was a light brown and there was plenty of it—one of the cheeriest signs of female health and spirit. Her eyes were deep blue, large and sparkling with expression. She was full of activity, but her deportment was always graceful, free at once from the gawkishness of the country girl, and the prim affectation of the urban damsel. That she was a brave girl we have already seen. Indeed, in presence of that feat, we might have dispensed with any detailed description of her person, for a heroine is always loveable, even independently of her charms.

We have said that though the Varnys led rather a solitary life, they stood well with their neighbours. This had been the case in the past, but it was not strictly true at the present stage of our narrative. During the winter that had just elapsed, political excitement had been great throughout the province. The elements were stirring which were soon to break out in open insurrection. Not only the large centres, such as Montreal, Quebec, and Three Rivers were agitated with the shock of contending opinions, but even the quiet country places were successively catching up the rumour of discontent, and busying themselves therewith. Of course, Varennes, from its proximity to Montreal, was among the first to take part in the movement. The vast majority of its inhabitants sided with the popular cause, and the few who either held back or pronounced against them, were already the objects of a hidden, but not less decisive hostility. It was only natural that those who had a stake in the land, who had a reputation for peaceful and loyal citizenship to maintain, or who had aspirations towards rising with the legitimate future of the country, should think long and anxiously before compromising themselves by participation in a movement whose results were always, but especially in its initiatory steps, extremely problematical. Such men were, of course, objects of suspicion. It has been said that patriotism is the virtue of the common people, not of the higher or wealthy classes. On the other hand, prudence is distinctive of the latter, and is never found

among the former. But patriotism without prudence is nothing worth. This, in the opinion of many then and since, was the mistake with the rebellion of 1837. Waiving the question of its justifiability, many believed that it was unwisely planned, and foolishly conducted.

Long before the insurrection broke out *bureaucrat* was an odious term in the eyes of the patriots. Whoever received that designation was effectually tabooed in his parish. This partially happened to the father of Rosalba. Samuel Varny was suspected of being a bureaucrat. For months the suspicion had been spread, but it acquired some colour of consistency after the following little incident. Two farmers living in the neighbourhood had been discussing the political situation on their return from the Saturday village market. The bad rum which they had guzzled at the different taverns on the way had rather obscured their ideas, but it excited their passions.

"And Samuel? Do you believe it?" said one.

"Believe what?" asked the other.

"That he is a bureaucrat?"

"Samuel is my friend and a man of sense. I don't believe it."

"But Lorient the inn-keeper has assured me of it."

"Lorient has a spite against Varny because he always puts up at Alexis."

"I shouldn't wonder, however."

"How so?"

"Varny is rich and is apt to put on airs. Then there is his daughter, whom he has educated at a convent. She is no *habitant's* daughter, but a city lady, and they tell me he intends to send her up to Montreal to bargain for a marriage with some officer."

"An officer!" exclaimed the other, with an oath. "See here, this is too bad. It must be inquired into. We are going to pass before Varny's door. We will stop and speak to him. What do you say?"

The first speaker hesitated a little, for, belonging to the class of small farmers, he felt somewhat awed at the idea of entering the mansion of the Varnys with an accusation on his lips, he who had rarely entered it, and then only with a full sense of his inferiority. Curiosity, however, and perhaps the ignoble desire of being able to inculcate Varny among his fellow-farmers, if the odious charge were not denied, prevailed upon him, and he assented.

A few moments later, the two knocked unceremoniously at the back door of the Varny house, and, after the fashion of farmers, entered without waiting for an answer. They found Samuel Varny in his large kitchen, smoking his pipe after the evening meal. Each taking a seat, the more friendly of the two, bluntly, and without any oratorical precaution whatsoever, asked their host what he thought of the political state of things. Varny flared up at once and said:

"Did you come in here expressly to ask that question? Have you no other business?"