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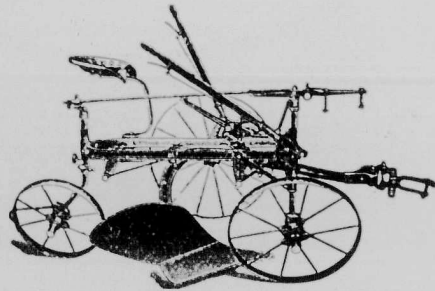
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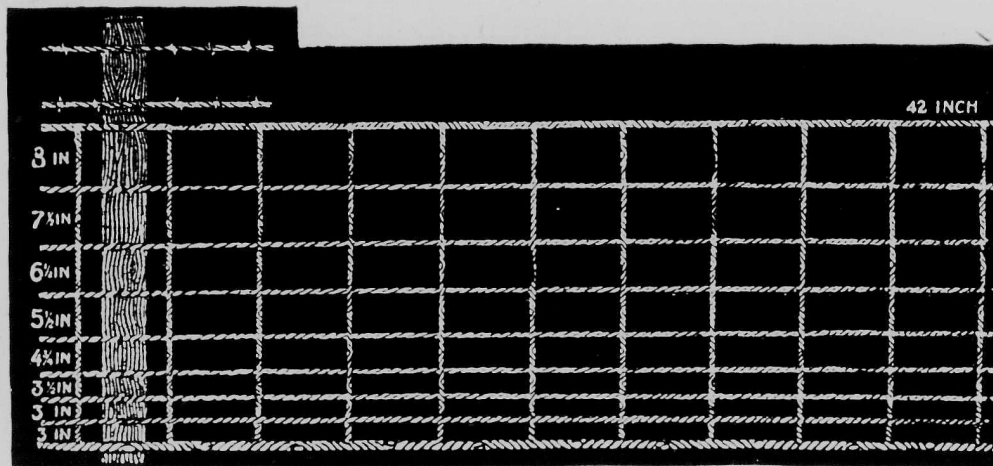
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Read Charge of the Buffalo—Page 179, Inside of Cover.

ners pleased and nattered the susceptible girl, not used to the seductions of the polished courtesies of the mother-land of France. She was of a joyous temper—gay, frank, and confiding. Her father, immersed in public affairs, left her much to herself, nor, had he known it, would he have disapproved of the gallant courtesies of the Chevalier Bigot. For the Baron had the soul of honor, and dreamt every gentleman as well as himself possessed it.

Bigot, to do him justice, felt as sincere a regard for this beautiful, amiable girl as his nature was capable of entertaining. In rank and fortune she was more than his equal, and left to himself, he would willingly have married her. Before he learned that this project of a marriage in the Colony was scouted at Court he had already offered his love to Caroline de St. Castin, and won easily the gentle heart that was but too well disposed to receive his homage.

Her trust went with her love. Earth was never so green, nor air so sweet, nor skies so bright and azure, as those of Caroline's wooing, on the shores of the beautiful Bay of Minas. She loved this man with a passion that filled with ecstasy her whole being. She trusted his promises as she would have trusted God's. She loved him better than she loved herself—better than she loved God, or God's law; and counted as a gain every loss she suffered for his sake, and for the affection she bore him.

After some months spent in her charming society, a change came over Bigot. He received formidable misgivings from his great patroness at Versailles, the Marquise de Pompadour, who had other matrimonial designs for him. Bigot was too slavish a courtier to resent her interference, nor was he honest enough to explain his position to his betrothed. He deferred his marriage. The exigencies of the war called him away. He had triumphed over a fond, confiding woman; but he had been trained among the dissolute spirits of the Regency too thoroughly to feel more than a passing regret for a woman whom, probably, he loved better than any other of the victims of his licentious life.

When he finally left Acadia a conquered province in the hands of the English, he also left behind him the one true, loving heart that believed in his honor and still prayed for his happiness.

The days of Caroline's disillusion soon came; she could not conceal from herself that she had been basely deceived and abandoned by the man she loved so ardently. She learned that Bigot had been elevated to the high office of Intendant of New France, but felt herself as utterly forgotten by him as the rose that had bloomed and withered in her garden two summers ago.

Her father had been summoned to France on the loss of the Colony; and fearing to face him on his return, Caroline suddenly left her home and sought refuge in the forest among her far-off kindred, the red Abenaguais.

The Indians welcomed her with joy and unbounded respect, recognizing her right to their devotion and obedience. They put upon her feet the moccasins of their tribe, and sent her, with a trusty escort, through the wilderness to Quebec, where she hoped to find the Intendant, not to reproach him for his perfidy,—her gentle heart was too much subdued for that,—but to claim his protection, and if refused, to die at his door.

It was under such circumstances that the beautiful, high-born Caroline de St. Castin became an inmate of Beaumanoir. She had passed the light of this wild debauch in a vigil of prayers, tears, and lamentations over her sad lot and over the degradation of Bigot by the life which she now knew he led. Sometimes her maddened fancy was ready to accuse Providence itself of cruelty and injustice; sometimes, magnifying her own sin, she was ready to think all earthly punishment upon herself as too light, and invoked death and judgment as alone adequate to her guilt. All night she had knelt before the altar, asking for mercy and forgiveness,—sometimes starting to her feet in terror, as a fresh burst of revelry came rushing from the great hall above, and shook the door of her secret chamber. But no one came to her help, no one looked in upon her desolation. She deemed herself utterly forgotten and forsaken of God and man.

Occasionally she fancied she could distinguish the voice of the Intendant amid the drunken uproar, and she shuddered at the infatuation which bound her very soul to this man; and yet when she questioned her heart, she knew that, base as he was, all she had done and suffered for him she would infallibly do again. Were her life to live over, she would repeat the fault of loving this false, ungrateful man. The promise of marriage had been equivalent to marriage in her trust of him and nothing but death could now divorce her from him.

Hour after hour passed by, each seeming an age of suffering. Her feelings were worked up to frenzy: she fancied she heard her father's angry voice calling her by name, or she heard accusing angels jeering at her fall. She sank prostrate at last, in the abandonment of despair, calling upon God to put an end to her miserable life.

Bigot raised her from the floor, with words of pity and sympathy. She turned on him a look of gratitude which, had he been of stone, he must have felt. But Bigot's words meant less than she fancied. He was still too intoxicated to reflect, or to feel shame of his present errand.

"Caroline!" said he, "what do you here? This is the time to make merry—not to pray! The honorable company in the great hall desires to pay their respects to the lady of Beaumanoir—come with me!"

He drew her hand through his arm with a courtly grace that seldom forsok him, even in his worst moments. Caroline looked at him in a dazed manner, not comprehending his request. "Go with you, Francois? You know I will, but where?"

"To the great hall," repeated he; "my worthy guests desire to see you, and to pay their respects to the fair lady of Beaumanoir."

It flashed upon her mind what he wanted. Her womanly pride was outraged as it had never been be-



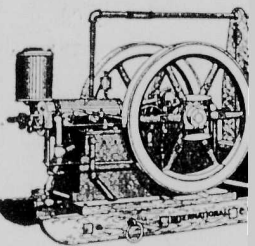
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