

for it contained a large book-case, and a number of portraits, exhibiting costumes of different centuries—members of the De Villera family for many generations, as I afterwards learned. A narrow door, alongside the book-case, led down by a step into a small room, low-ceiled, and lighted by two narrow windows, one of which looked out on the river, and the other into the conservatory.

After making my toilet, I rejoined the ladies, and when supper was over, we took seats on the veranda, where we remained nearly the whole evening, chatting or listening to the sweet voice of Margaret de Villera who gave us several French airs to the music of a guitar which seemed to harmonize exquisitely with the tranquillity of the scene on that delightful summer evening.

II. THE PORTRAIT.

It was late before I retired to my room, but even when I had said good-night to my host at the door I felt little disposed to rest, but sat for some time by the open window, watching the fantastic gleams of light which the bright summer moon was throwing athwart the foliage, or across the bosom of the little river which swept, calm and noiseless, below the château. Feeling at last a little tired, I prepared myself for bed, and in doing so, for the first time I paid some attention to the appearance of my room. It was comfortably furnished, but what struck me peculiarly was a picture, the only one in the chamber, hanging in a recess on the side of an old-fashioned fire-place, filled at that time of the year with cedar and other aromatic branches. It was the picture of a young girl, dressed in the costume of another century, and displaying a face of remarkable beauty. Perhaps a very critical eye would find many faults with the picture, but still the artist, whoever he was, had succeeded in giving a very wonderful expression to the face. As you looked into her eyes, which were large and oval, like those of the Spanish women, you could not but be struck with the world of anguish which seemed depicted in their depths of liquid softness. As I caught the expression, I forgot all the features of the face except those wonderful eyes, and it was with difficulty I could remove myself from the spell which seemed to claim me from the moment I came within sight of this remarkable portrait. So much was I under its influence, that I could not divest myself of the impression that there was some sad incident connected with the life of the girl whose portrait the artist had so skillfully portrayed. So strong at last was the impression that it made upon me that I found myself more than once, whilst I lay awake in my bed, turning to look at the picture, and speculating on the meaning of the sad eyes, to which the fitful rays of the moon, now and then, as they struggled through the blinds, gave a very weird-like expression. Unable to sleep whilst it was before me, I rose for the purpose of turning it, but I was surprised to find that, by some strange freak of the artist, the canvass was firmly fixed to the wall, and what I imagined was the frame, was only a device of the painter to deceive the eye. So I covered the portrait carefully with my handkerchief, and then succeeded in dropping off to sleep.

How long I had been asleep, I can never recollect, but I can assuredly say that I awoke to a certain degree of consciousness some time in the course of the night. I know I had been dreaming; visions of the old days of the manor, of the days of the French regime, seemed to float across my mind with such rapidity that now I can hardly recall them. I can, however, remember one scene in what was apparently the salon which was then furnished in a very different style from the present. Officers in uniform were dancing a stately minuet with lovely women, and conspicuous among them all was the beautiful but most mournful face of the lady I had seen in the portrait. I was on the point of approaching her, and speaking, when she suddenly raised her eyes as if in warning, and I stopped in wonder at the intensity of her sorrowful expression. Then it was I appeared to awake, though it has never been easy for me to say when the vision ended, and my eyes really opened. At all events, I saw every object in my own room with perfect distinctness—the salon and its gay guests had all vanished with the dream—but what caused my pulse to stand still and my limbs to become rigid as if in death was the figure of some one—a misty, almost impalpable figure—passing across the room towards me. My eyes followed it, and as it drew close, I saw, as plainly as I see the sun on a bright summer morn, the face of the portrait, with the same expression of grief intensified, and her hands tightly clenched on her fair bosom as if she were in expressible pain.

More I cannot remember, for the face slowly faded into the air in the distance, and as I rose half-upright by a powerful exertion of my will I saw nothing except a faint gleam of moonlight struggling through the green venetians. Then, exhausted by the mental struggle through which I had passed in the course of a very few seconds, I fell back on my pillow and was immediately buried in a heavy sleep.

Next morning when I rose, the sun was streaming into my room, and the air was alive with the hum of insects and the twittering of the robins, as they flitted joyfully among the maples, and seemed tame enough to invade my chamber. When I was dressed I removed the covering from the portrait, and though the impression it made was not as vivid now in the brightness of morning as it had been in the silence and gloom of the previous night, yet the expression of the eyes struck me as forcibly as ever.

It is probable my attention sometimes wandered during the breakfast, for there were moments when the portrait came vividly before me. At all events Miss de Villera said: "Confess now, you saw something last night that disturbed you—you remember that I warned you we had our haunted room, just as well as the old mansions of your English people."

"Our friend, Margaret," said M. de Villera, "will think little of our courtesy if you talk that way; but the fact is, my dear friend, my daughter, like some other persons, will have it that there is something strange about a picture which you probably noticed in your room."

"Now you know, papa," said Margaret, "that there are few strangers who are not impressed with the portrait—I am sure from the manner of our guest, that he has noticed it."

"It is certainly a curious portrait, and any one knowing its history would not wonder that the artist should have tinged it with a spirit of melancholy. As for myself, familiarity with it has long divested it of any strangeness; otherwise, I would hardly have laid myself open to the suspicion of playing an experiment upon a guest."

"I am right, then, in supposing that there is really a history connected with the portrait?" I inquired when I had related my experience of the past night.

"I am sorry," replied M. de Villera, "that I have not taken the precaution of showing you the portrait, and warning you against the impression which, my daughter has told you, it makes upon strangers. Margaret, you should have told our guest."

"I was on the point of doing so," replied Mademoiselle with a smile in my direction. "but he only laughed, and then I determined he should find out the mystery for himself."

"Well, then, the only way we can make up for our neglect," said my host, "is to tell him the history of the portrait. Come now to my study, and when we have lit our cigars," he added addressing me, "I will tell you an incident connected with the past career of the old manor."

III. THE ARTIST.

"In the early days of the Manoir of Clermont," said M. de Villera when we were seated in the library, "there occurred a horrible tragedy, around which so much mystery has in the course of years been thrown that it has now almost become a legend, very mythical in the opinion of persons who have not access to the records of the family."

"This tragedy is not one on which the De Villeras—I mean the elder branch—care to dwell, for it long enveloped Clermont in wretchedness and gloom. Go back in memory nearly two centuries ago, when Clermont had just been completed by the first De Villera who held the Seigneurie of Clermont—according to tradition, a cold, haughty man, who had served with much distinction under Turanne, and came to Canada to pass his declining years on a large estate devoted to him by the king as a reward for his military services. Among the frequent visitors to the château was a very handsome girl, a sort of companion to the Seigneur's daughters, who had been left an orphan at an early age, and was now living with some friends of her father at Charlesbourg."

"Marie Cavellier was tall and lithe in figure, with dazzling black eyes and a dark complexion which showed her Indian origin; for she was the child of a French Canadian, who had been famous among the Western rangers, and had married the daughter of one of the chiefs of the Ottawas, whose camps could then be seen on the banks of the upper lakes. Marie, in the course of her visits to the château, met with René de Villera, a gay young officer, and soon learned to love him with all the passionate ardour of her nature; and René, a careless, thoughtless soldier, only intent on his pleasure, taught her to believe that he returned her love."

"But she soon learned that she had been deceived, and that the young soldier's faith was pledged to one his equal in rank, to Estelle de Montmagny, the daughter of a neighbouring Seigneur. The story goes on to say that Marie warned René that she would take a terrible revenge, should he break his word to her, and marry Estelle; but he only laughed at her threats, and hurried the preparations for the wedding. Better far for him had he fallen on some battle-field, like many a De Villera had done before him, before he had awoke the resentment of the passionate Indian nature of Marie Cavellier."

"The story goes that Marie also had a terrible interview with Estelle, but the latter, a proud, haughty girl, laughed her to scorn and paid no attention to her words. From that moment there is no doubt, both René and Estelle were hated by Marie—the sequel proved it too well."

"Estelle de Montmagny prepared for her wedding which was to come off in the early summer; but only two nights before she was to stand before the altar, she was found on her bed—she was on a visit to the château—in the embrace of death. Buried in her heart was an ornamental dagger, which was immediately recognized as having been a gift from René to Marie when she was a constant visitor to the manor."

"When René was summoned into the presence of the murdered girl, the shock was more than he could bear, for he fell on the floor in a deep swoon; and from that hour he lost his reason for many years. In the course of time, however, the whole story of his treachery came to light, and there was no difficulty in tracing the crime to Marie who had thus cruelly revenged herself on René; but the unhappy girl was never more seen at Charlesbourg, and the habitants always believed that she had fled to her mother's tribe, far in the forests of the West."

"René continued insane for years and gradually his existence was almost forgotten, except by the inmates of the château, over whose lives this tragedy threw a gloom which forbade all gaiety and social intercourse, except with the Curé and a few very intimate friends. René was quiet and easily managed, and spent all his more rational hours painting portraits of the unhappy girl, to whom he was betrothed; for from his boyhood he had been a clever artist. These portraits he would destroy almost as soon as finished, as failing to realize the conception of his diseased brain. With only one of them was he ever satisfied, and it was that which he fixed, with his own hand, to a panel of his room, and to which he succeeded in giving an expression of unutterable woe, which well illustrated the depth of his own misery."

"I have passed hurriedly over the story of this tragedy in the history of the De Villeras. So deeply did these incidents affect the health and spirits of the first Seigneur, that after the death of his unfortunate son, who paid so terrible a penalty for his indiscretions, he shut up the manor, and went to reside in France for a number of years. For some nine or ten years Clermont had no tenants, except the crows which built their nests in the roof, and the whole place got so bad a reputation among the superstitious habitants that none of them would approach it after nightfall. The story of the murdered girl was never forgotten, and there were those ready to aver that they had seen her more than once, wandering in the woods around the château, dressed as for her bridal, but with her eyes full of unutterable grief; for the story of the portrait, and its wonderful expression, had now entered into the details of the tragedy as it was told by the habitants."

"From the day Estelle de Montmagny died, nothing seemed to go well with the De Villeras. For several generations that succeeded the first Seigneur of the name, more than one died a violent death; but what is stranger than all, insanity or a melancholy akin to madness hung over the family, and claimed one of the sons for its victim, until at last the elder branch of the De Villeras disappeared altogether, and the manor was allowed to fall into decay. My family who inherited it never occupied it, as my father had a comfortable seigneurie of his own, in which my elder brother is now living."

"The most curious part of the legend is that which connects the appearance of the lady of the portrait at distant intervals with the occurrence of some misfortune to the inmates of the château. Similar stories are told among the superstitious inhabitants of Ireland and Bretagne,—relies in doubt of the days of the Celts—but to me they have only afforded amusement until now."

"Since I came into possession of the manor—not more than a year ago—as my share of my father's inheritance, I have made very many alterations in the old building. The wing in which you slept last night is almost entirely new, with the exception of the room where the unfortunate maniac passed his life and where you still see the portrait which he painted with his own hand. Although there were never any very warm relations between the old De Villera and my own family, I have always known the story connected with the manor; but living as I have among practical, business men, I have thought little about it, and certainly have never paid much heed to the tales of the superstitious habitants who would invest the portrait with such tragic interest. You are the first guest who has slept in the room for many years, and now I regret, I repeat, that I had not told you of the ghost-like attributes which cling to the portrait."

"I wonder," added the Seigneur with some gravity after a pause, "if the legend of the past is again to prove true and some misfortune is to follow the appearance of the lady of the portrait."

I occupied another room during the remain-

der of my visit to the château, and left with much regret and many promises to return at the earliest opportunity.

"I shall let you know," said my host as I was bidding him good-bye at the outlet of the avenue, "if the heroine of the picture again disturbs the rest of any of the inmates of the château."

Months passed away before I received any news of M. de Villera, and then it came in the following letter which startled me not a little:

"My dear friend,—Ill-luck seems still to hover around Clermont. Last night the château was burned down, and we only escaped with a few articles of wearing apparel. Curious to say, however, the portrait passed almost scatheless through the flames which were arrested just on the threshold of that particular wing. I have ordered it to be cut out—for I cannot yet make up my mind to destroy it—and placed in a chest with other heirlooms. Perhaps the ghost of the murdered girl is at last appeased, with the destruction of the manor where she met her untimely death. As for me, I shall never allow the portrait to be seen again by relatives of mine whilst I am in life. So superstition, you see, has asserted its dominion even over a matter-of-fact man of the world as I have always claimed to be. *Au revoir.*"

The prosaic reader may smile at my story and say I dreamed it all that night of which I have been writing; but I must reply that even now, after the lapse of years, I can see as plainly the pale, mournful face of the portrait as when I saw it through the curtains of my bed in the old manor. No explanation that the matter-of-fact world may give will ever obliterate from my mind the impression made upon it by the brush of the maniac artist of the Château of Clermont.

Varieties.

John Knox travelled all the way from Dubuque to jump over Niagara Falls, but got into a fight with a hackman and forgot all about jumping.

When a wife in Turkey forgets to keep the suspender buttons sewed on her husband's trousers, she is patted on the back for having a heart with a pine board an inch thick.

The death of John Stuart Mill brings up the question of the Philadelphia publisher, who advertised certain new books as follows:—"Mill on Political Economy,"—"Bacon on the Floss."

Modern Industry.—A Vienna journal contains the following announcement:—"Anna Agrikel, sick nurse, washes dead bodies, repairs straw chairs, applies leeches, and makes pastry, desserts, and delicacies."—*London Medical Review.*

We know of nothing so susceptible of perversion as the efforts of a young man to kill a mosquito on a young lady's cheek. A conscientious world would never forgive him for trying to seize it with his teeth when any less extraordinary method would do just as well.

Sabern, the actor, doesn't like to have his dog form new acquaintances, so he fastens two very sharp needles to his nose, leaving the ends projecting about an inch. When a strange dog rushes up to shake noses with him, he gets a thrust that sends him off howling, and the effect is such that Sabern's dog can't get within gunshot of any other that knows how the thing works.

We never have a deeper conviction of the fact that the newspapers are the great observers of the beauty of the English language than when we read such tender and pure and melodious sentences as this. It is from the persuasive pen of a western reporter who is describing wedding. He says: "The mayor galloped up the church aisle, swaying and gyrating like a Chinese Joss with the junc-jams."

An enamoured young gentleman recently bought a gold-mounted cut-glass bottle, filled it with rose-water, and tied a love-sick pink ribbon round it, to present to a young lady; but on reaching the house he felt a little embarrassed, for fear there were members of the family present, and so left the beautiful gift on the marble slab outside the drawing-room door. The movement was perceived by a graceful brother of the young lady, who appropriated the rose-water for his own use, and refilled the bottle with strong mustard. In a little while the young man slipped out, and, securing the splendid gift, slipped back again, when, with a few appropriate words, he pressed it upon the blushing girl. Like the good and faithful daughter that she was, she at once hurried into the presence of her mother, and the old lady was charmed. She drew out the stopper, laid the beautiful petals of her nostrils over the aperture, and fetched a pull at the contents that fairly made them bubble. Then she hid the bottle down, and the only thing she could say with tears rolling down her eyes was, "Where is that miserable brat?" He, all unconscious of what had happened, was in front of a mirror adjusting his necktie and smiling at himself. Here she found him, and said to him, "Oh, you are laughing at the trick on an old woman, are you?" "Mumam, I hardly thought," exclaimed the terrified youth, "when I mustered up—mustard up! this is indeed insolence." Fortunately, the tragic scene ended by an explanation on the part of the young brother, who was told he was a naughty spoiled boy, and patted on the head.