

de fire, an' tell him he have no more "Maman."

He open de eye wide an' look at me as I say:

"You is my lil' boy now, an' you mus' never say de name you has been call by—hush! I don' not want hear it. Now you is Antoine—you hear, lil' one?—Antoine."

She was call Antoinette, an' I t'ink firs' of de name I has love.

De lil' boy, he put hees arm 'round my neck an' he sob: "I want my Maman! I want my Maman!"

Well, for make him t'ink of somet'ing else I begin ask him question, an' he tell me dis lil' story:

"Mon pere, he have gone hunt, an' he ain' never come home. Maman, she cry an' look ever t'rough de window. To-day when she make some galettes I hear her say: 'Dis is de las' of de flour, an' we have not'ing else for eat in de house. Oh why have we come so far from de neighbors?' and she cry more hard."

"Me, I is great big man now, mon pere he tell me so some day, an' I t'ink I mus' take my bow an' arrows, 'cause papa have de gun, an' go kill de deer an' de bird. I laugh when I t'ink how glad will be Maman when I bring dem to her."

"Well, soon Maman she mus' get some wood for de fire an' dere is none split. When I see her take de axe outside I climb to de shelf over de stove an' take down dose fine moccasins papa have bring me from de Injun. You see, M'sieur, how beautiful wit bead. Ever dey has been on dat shelf for ornament where we can look at dem. When I reach on de wall for my bow an' arrow, an' outside de door I tie on de snow-shoe. M'sieur mus' see how I can run on dem; papa say mos' as fas' as he can. Den I go outside where de fores' is all 'round our house, like yours, M'sieur."

"Well, I t'ink I see de track in de snow, an' I follow it, oh, so ver' far, an' den I was get col' an' hunger, an' I don' never see dose deer, nor some bird. Den I t'ink I go home an' get warm, an' I can come 'gain for hunt, but I can't see my house an' I call Maman, Maman!"

Jus' as he cry dose words so strong an' loud as he can, de door was t'row open an' a woman stagger in. She snatch dat lil' child to her bres', oh, I can't never tell you how she pant an' de wil' word of love she sob.

"I know all de time I was follow thy lil' snowshoe track dat de good God would let me find thee," she cry. "I knew even when I fall in de deep snow an' can scarce walk more I was so out of breath dat I would have strength to go to thee. When I sink to de waist in de snow drift I say: 'Oh, Sainte Vierge, thou wilt help me in this drefful fores' wherever I am so 'fraid. Thou wilt not again tear from my heart its hap'ness.' An' I beg her to save thee, an' to give me strength to take thee once more in my arm. Ah, lil' one, let us togadder thank de holy modder w'at save thee," an' she fall on her knees."

"But, chere Maman," say dat lil' boy, "it was not de Sainte Vierge w'at save me, it was de good M'sieur, voila," an' he run to me."

For de firs' time de woman's great black eye turn on me, an' she gave, oh, such sharp cry: "Baptiste, Baptiste," an' sink on de floor."

Ah! only den I know who was de modder of dis lil' child—it was 'Toinnette."

My heart was ver' hard, for widout pity I look down on dat womans, on de tin white face an' de hair all hang over it, an' I t'ink: "Now is de hour of my revenge. God bless dese peoples into my han's!"

But when de boy t'row heeself by hees modder, de cry 'cause she lie so

still an' don' speak to him, my heart don' feel hard no more.

"M'sieur, oh, good M'sieur," he cry as he run to me an' pull my han'. "You has saved me from de bad bears in de fores', now come make Maman, ma chere Maman, talk to her lil' boy."

Ah, w'at power lie in de sweet voice of a lil' child! De mos' savage mans have de love of Heaven in de heart, an' de chil'rens is on'y angel wit fat legs an' dirty lil' face, eh, M'sieur? Well, 'gain I snatch dat lil' boy in my arm, an' kiss many times 'Toinnette's son—an' I ain' shamed to say it—I was cry more hard dan was he."

After dat I was do all I can for dat poor girl w'at look so starve an' sad an' still. De devil dat have live in me so long was exorcise by dat baby kiss."

Soon 'Toinnette, she open dose big eyes, an' look at me ver' much 'fraid."

"Is you de real Baptiste?" she say, an' de voice shiver a lil'."

"Yes, 'Toinnette, I is Baptiste who you t'ought was drown."

"Ah," she sigh, "I t'ought I was dream, 'cause in de daylight no ghost are."

Well, M'sieur, I is never forget be hospitale, an' I see how weak was she an' tire, an' soon dat ragout was ready an' we all try eat. Den the lil' boy fall 'sleep on my knee, an' 'Toinnette she talk to me jus' as we be ever frien'."

She tol' me how Gregoire was ever restless after dey was marry, an' move,



"I Came on Dat Lil' Chil' Lie Dere in de Snow."

move. He was drunk an' fight wit ever one, but he try be ver' kind to her an' hees lil' child. At las' he get in so much trouble in ever' settlement where dey have gone dat he tell her one day dat he was comin' here, an' take up some free land, where he be far from de drink an' companion wit whom he ever get in trouble."

Den she tell me 'bout deir lil' cabin in dis fores' on'y few miles from me—I mus' t'ink as she say dis:

"God have guide me here so close to dis Gregoire w'at have try to be my murderer. I has live to punish him, an' now de time have come," an' my heart near burst wit joy."

"I is goin' in de fores'," say I, "while you lie by you' boy on dose skin an' get rest. You is all exhaust, 'Toinnette," an' I reach for my gun on de wall."

De tear was shine in her eye, as she take my han' an' say wit de voice dat was sob:

"Promise me, Baptiste, dat never will you try hurt dat poor Gregoire if you see him. God have punish him an' make him suffer even more dan you have suffer."

Ah, dat was hard t'ing to ask of me who have all dese year t'ink in day an' in night of de joy an' de vengeance of such meeting. Who have come here all dese mile from de Nort' jus' 'cause I has hear dat false frien' was some-



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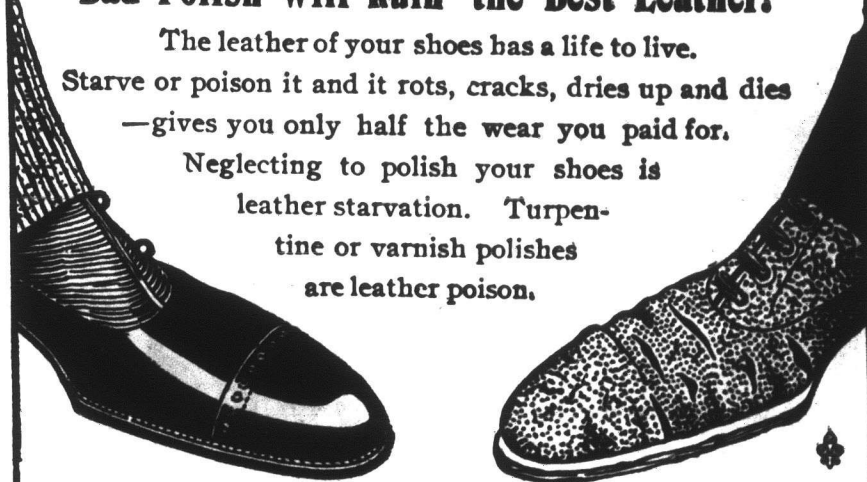
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