



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XIX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 13, 1869.

No. 53.

THE TREASURE.

Translated from the French of Emile Souvestre for the Banner of the South. By R. D. T., of South Carolina.

In an attic chamber of a poor looking mansion sat a young girl and an old soldier. The furniture of their modest apartment, while it bore witness to the poverty of the occupants, testified also to the self-respect which sustained them under its trials. Order, taste, and neatness gave an air almost of elegance to the simple arrangement of the few articles of comfort that still surrounded them. Everything was just in its right place; the fire burnt brightly in the nicely swept hearth, the carpet, though faded, was stainless and free of dust, while the snowy muslin curtain which shaded the little garret window, seemed almost embroidered by the numberless darts that kept it together. Some few jars of simple flowers ornamented the half-raised window, scattering their sweet perfume through the little chamber. The sun was just setting. One lingering ray still illumined the lowly dwelling, giving an added charm to the glowing cheek of the young girl, and seeming to revel in the long silvery locks of the old veteran. He was half reclining in an old arm-chair, which the thoughtful love of his young nurse had made most comfortable to him by the many soft cushions she had manufactured, and covered with patch-work of bright colored chintz. An old footstool had been converted into a resting place for his wounded foot, and the only arm left to him by the fortunes of war, rested on a small round table on which stood his meershaun and the little tobacco bag embroidered with pearls. The old soldier had a strongly marked and deeply furrowed face. But the harsh outlines were softened by an expression of perfect candor, and most winning frankness. An immense grey moustache hid the half smile which played about his lips, as his gaze rested almost unconsciously on the young girl. While he is looking at her, we will try and see her as he did. She was about twenty years of age—a perfect brunette, with tender and expressive features, whose every emotion revealed itself in rapid and sudden changes. To look into her full dark eyes was like gazing into the depths of some clear limpid stream, whose beautiful treasures are seen at a glance. She held a paper in her hand, and was reading aloud to the invalid. Suddenly she stooped and seemed to listen eagerly. 'What is the matter?' asked the old man. 'Nothing,' she replied and her countenance expressed her disappointment. 'You thought you heard Charles?' asked the soldier. 'Yes, it was that,' replied the young reader, 'his day's work must now be over, and it is about his usual hour for coming in.'

Charles, who had listened with growing interest and attention, could no longer repress an exclamation. 'Two million!' he repeated in a tone of amazement. 'That would do to buy him a false arm and a glass eye!' said the old soldier ironically. 'Ah what good luck!' said the young man with enthusiasm, not seeming to have heard the sarcastic remark of his Uncle. 'Yes, great good luck,' continued the soldier, 'and it cost him so little! Only eighteen years of his life, and an eye, and an arm!' 'Eighteen years of unheard of fatigue and disappointment,' repeated Lucille slowly, dwelling upon and emphasizing the words of the journal. 'Who would mind that!' exclaimed Charles, 'to gain such a fortune at last. The difficulty does not lie in entering upon an unknown and fatiguing journey, nor even in bearing all the inconveniences of the route. But the real trial is to march steadily on, without some sure prospect at the end of it.'

Charles, who had listened with growing interest and attention, could no longer repress an exclamation. 'Two million!' he repeated in a tone of amazement. 'That would do to buy him a false arm and a glass eye!' said the old soldier ironically. 'Ah what good luck!' said the young man with enthusiasm, not seeming to have heard the sarcastic remark of his Uncle. 'Yes, great good luck,' continued the soldier, 'and it cost him so little! Only eighteen years of his life, and an eye, and an arm!' 'Eighteen years of unheard of fatigue and disappointment,' repeated Lucille slowly, dwelling upon and emphasizing the words of the journal. 'Who would mind that!' exclaimed Charles, 'to gain such a fortune at last. The difficulty does not lie in entering upon an unknown and fatiguing journey, nor even in bearing all the inconveniences of the route. But the real trial is to march steadily on, without some sure prospect at the end of it.'

Charles, who had listened with growing interest and attention, could no longer repress an exclamation. 'Two million!' he repeated in a tone of amazement. 'That would do to buy him a false arm and a glass eye!' said the old soldier ironically. 'Ah what good luck!' said the young man with enthusiasm, not seeming to have heard the sarcastic remark of his Uncle. 'Yes, great good luck,' continued the soldier, 'and it cost him so little! Only eighteen years of his life, and an eye, and an arm!' 'Eighteen years of unheard of fatigue and disappointment,' repeated Lucille slowly, dwelling upon and emphasizing the words of the journal. 'Who would mind that!' exclaimed Charles, 'to gain such a fortune at last. The difficulty does not lie in entering upon an unknown and fatiguing journey, nor even in bearing all the inconveniences of the route. But the real trial is to march steadily on, without some sure prospect at the end of it.'

ing new that he held his fortune in his own keeping now, and the young man went to bed, firmly resolving that no effort should be wanting on his part to secure it. But the conversation with his Uncle had completely banished sleep. He passed the entire night in feverish calculations as to the sum requisite for realizing his hopes, and dreaming all manners of bright dreams as to his future. When Lucille came down the next morning, he had already gone off to his work. Vincent enjoyed the surprise of the young girl, but merely smiled and shook his head saying nothing. He intended keeping Charles' secret, and before speaking of it, wanted to see if he could keep his newly found resolutions. The first months were the most trying. The young book-binder—for such was his trade and occupation—had formed habits of life and companionship which he at first tried in vain to break through, and perseverance in his work seemed to him often insupportable. It was absolutely essential to overcome that capriciousness which had hitherto regulated his actions, and that he should resist all temptations to return to his old life at the instance of his companions. This was a most difficult undertaking. His courage often failed, and he was frequently on the point of yielding to these temptations, but the importance of the aim proposed, gave him strength to resist and overcome them all. His increased industry, and attention to work, brought an increase in his salary; and in taking the money each week to his Uncle he felt that he was advancing one step nearer the promised goal. Each day these efforts became more and more easy. Man resembles a vessel whose passions are the sails. Give them up to be the sport of every passing wind, and he is swept along with every current. But let them be only once properly trimmed and regulated and the navigation becomes less and less dangerous. Let the anchor finally be cast in some secure haven, and there is nothing more to be feared for man or ship. Such was precisely the condition of our young artisan. In proportion as his life became more regulated, his taste became more elevated. His close and hard work during the day made his evening's rest most grateful to him whilst giving up the feverish and exciting amusements of his young companions, gave a greater charm to the society of his Uncle and cousin. Lucille had resumed all her former winning manner in her intercourse with him. Entirely and solely occupied with thoughts of Vincent and Charles, she added each day some fresh enjoyments to their simple life, by some little surprise, some unexpected attention, which won more and more their affectionate appreciation. Charles was surprised to discover in his cousin attractions and graces which he had never before taken the trouble to notice. She became insensibly perfectly indispensable to his happiness, and before he was aware of it, the great aim and hope of his life was entirely changed. The desire of securing the treasure promised by Vincent was no longer the sole aim of his ambition. His thoughts now constantly dwell on the noble qualities of Lucille. She became the motive power of all his actions, and he only cared to win her approval and esteem. 'The human mind is a kind of moral daguerreotype. Surround it by objects of love and order, or beauty and devotion; then illuminate it by the warm sunshine of tenderness, and every image will stamp itself indelibly, and remain impressed there forever. The life that Charles was leading cooled off by degrees his ardent desire to amass wealth. He now recognized and yearned for a happiness more in his reach. His Paradise was no longer a fairy-land conjured from the 'Arabian Nights,' but was to be found in one small room, kept warm and glowing by purest household joys.—And this great change in his feeling had been most unconsciously effected. The element of happiness introduced into his life had softened everything else to him. The 'millions,' once the object of his most ardent desire, instead of being now his principal aim and end, had become secondary to his more and dearer hopes, and conscious of his growing love for Lucille, he became restless now to know if his affection met with a return. One evening he walked up and down the room, while his Uncle and cousin sat near the stove. They were both speaking of Charles' late employer, who after thirty years of honesty and industry had realized a competence and was about retiring to the enjoyment of a country life, with wife and aged and good wife. 'Ah, there is a fine old couple, who have truly made for themselves a Paradise in this world!—Always united, always contented, always industrious and charitable,' said Vincent. 'Yes,' replied Lucille earnestly. 'The wealthiest on earth might envy them their simple lot!' Charles stopped suddenly before the young girl.