

while looking around her for the object of her search, her boat began to shift with the current, and thus exposing its broad side to the action of the floating ice, was rocking very rapidly. A moment later, and some sudden shock would have capsized it. But at that supreme moment her keen eye descried a dark object a few feet on her left, and she fancied she heard a subdued moan. Grasping her oar with both hands, she dashed it into the water with a nervous stroke and, turning the front of the boat, shot right up to the object. It was the form of a man doubled up on a cake of ice, about two feet square. The hands and feet were nearly fastened together, the head was down, so that the forehead touched the ice. A low groan escaped from the struggling chest. The brave girl understood the situation at one glance. The poor exhausted victim was falling asleep upon the ice. It was the prelude of his death. There was no time to be lost. He must be awakened. But how? She might strike him with her oar, and thus arouse him, but the shock would so startle him as to make him lose his already unsteady balance. She might draw up her boat beside him, but besides that she had not the strength to lift such a dead weight, the very effort to do so would certainly overturn her little craft. Alas! what was to be done? Some ten rods below she thought she noticed that there was a large and solid bank of ice which was probably held by a series of frozen grapnels to the thicker shore ice. If she could reach that and propel the prostrate figure with her, she would there find a fulcrum wherewith to raise it into her boat. With the heroism of despair, she tried the manoeuvre and succeeded. Placing the fragile lump of ice to the larboard, she drifted rapidly to the temporary haven of safety. Then only did she venture to arouse the sufferer. He started up as if stung by a galvanic shock. He stood on his feet and his eyes glared wildly around him. Where was he? What was he doing? He heard a sweet, silvery voice saying: "Courage! Step out on the ice-bank and you are saved." Saved! That word was like a draught of cordial streaming to his heart. Summoning all his strength, he made a bound upon the bank. The slender cake that had supported him sank into the water like a stone, brushed under the bottom of the boat, then spun out into the middle of the river. The man was wild with excitement: he threw his arms aloft; and turned in narrow circuits, stamping his feet. He seemed not to see his deliverer, as she stood up in the prow of her boat. His one delirious sensation was to have a firm support under him. The girl spoke again: "The ice will soon break. Get into my boat and let us make for the shore."

The man trembled and murmured a few unintelligible words. His overwrought energies suddenly collapsed, as was to be expected, and making a few mechanical strides forward, he fell full on his face in the bottom of the boat. It was a syncope. The girl turned her prow and started rapidly for shore. The return voyage was far more dangerous, for she had to drift with the current, and might be

jammed in by blocks of floating ice. But Providence, that had enabled her to save the life of a fellow creature, was not to abandon her in the most perilous part of her adventure. As she looked to the shore, in order to shape her course, she saw the light of many torches on the water's edge and heard the echo of many voices.

"It is my father and my brothers!" thought she. And she was right. The father and his sons had returned to their home from the village of Varennes with the good news that less damage than was feared had been done by the ice and overflow. But the pleasure of their return was soon marred by the young girl's absence. Where was she? She was gone from the fence. They tracked her footsteps to the brink of the embankment. Could she have ventured down these steps? They descended. They ran out on the platform. Thence back to the boat-house. The boat was gone! In a few minutes the whole neighbourhood was aroused, and soon the bank was bright with torches. The excitement was at its highest when the thud of a boat was heard, and, full in the circle of light, stood the upright figure of the girl pilot. It was Dante's Beatrice ferrying her burden on the waters of Lethe! A moment more, and the prow grated on the bank. The delighted father snatched up his daughter in his arms.

"My dear, my dear, what does this mean?"

She smiled for all answer.

"Are you not frozen? Are you not exhausted?"

But the poor delicate child had already fainted on his breast.

Meantime, four men had picked up the prone figure in the boat, and the procession ascended the hill to the farm-house.

The reader may be anxious to know the heroine's name.

She was called Rosalba Varny.

CHAPTER III.

THE BUREAUCRAT.

THE Varnys were among the most ancient of Canadian families. They ranked with the first settlers of Varennes. Their genealogy need not be traced to France, for it was essentially plebeian, and whatever prestige the name may have possessed was derived exclusively from virtues practised in the new world. It is one of the amiable delusions of French Canadian families to claim aristocratic origins, which the student of history laughs at, because he knows that only one or two really noble families settled in Canada. This people would be wiser to take pride in the sterling democracy which is the best feature of their country.

Samuel Varny, the head of the house, had, unlike the majority of his fellow-pioneers, acquired considerable wealth in real estate. His residence, though built after the uniform pattern of all Canadian farm-houses, betokened more ease and comfort than the generality of them. It was a large stone structure with a