

brought up in the belief that early marriages were blessings both to the contracting parties themselves and to the country at large. Then, as to ways and means, it was a very general thing for French Canadians to marry upon much less than Ralston had, and they were not at all looked upon for beginning in a small way, nor, if they were asked to dinner, by their friends in better circumstances, did they find the "cold shoulder" given them because they could not afford a hot joint themselves. I confess I have often been amazed at what we call the imprudence of many of the French Canadians. "Imprudence!" Madame Chartreuse would exclaim, "Eh my dear when I married your father he had but five hundred dollars a year, and yet Annette you always had enough to eat. "Le bon Dieu" who fed the ravens did not suffer my children to starve. We were poor but not unhappy for we had many kind friends—God always sends such to those who trust in Him."

By the way is it the rich marriages which always turn out the best, and does it not sometimes happen that the trust named by Madame Chartreuse proves a better investment than worldly wealth? Is poverty unendurable with loving hearts to ease the burden, and are riches an unmingled blessing? Let us remember the proverb about the dish of herbs and the stabled ox.

Nevertheless, a young fellow in love cannot go on for ever without letting the lady of his choice know his feelings regarding her, so when the spring came and Dugdale and Ralston received their orders to proceed to Algoma, in order to survey the projected line of rail thence to Saul Ste. Marie, Guy determined to declare himself before his departure, in which resolve he was backed up by his friend.

"Faint heart never won fair lady lad," said Dugdale, as he puffed his pipe. "If you don't speak, depend upon it some other else will."

"Oh but you can't suppose Annette would take the first man who offered himself! Hang it! if I thought that I should be miserable."

"Faith she is a petticoat and can be wooed and won," remarked Dugdale in a sneering tone. "If you want her go in sharp and don't give the other fellows a chance."

"Do you mean to say Dugdale that a girl—this girl of all others—is like a bunch of grapes waiting to be plucked? Great heavens!"

"Pluck away lad before another tries and turns the grapes sour," was the merciless rejoinder, and then he continued in a graver tone, "Look here Ralston, had I acted upon the advice I am giving you I should in all probability have been married a year ago, and never left India as

suddenly as I did. But I hung back from a ridiculous feeling that I had not rupees enough, or what you will. Anyhow some man with more courage, and only half my money, stepped in and carried off the only woman I ever—psahw! why do I tell you what I never told before? Because I like you Guy, and would spare you what I went through. I don't look much the worse you say. Perhaps not, but none the less did I lose an interest in life, everything seemed to have a bitter taste. Love I think sweetens even trials, therefore seize it and hold it fast. You need not, nay cannot perhaps, marry at once, but you will work all the harder, aye, and your labor will be sweetened if you know there is some dear one waiting for you."

"Thank you Dugdale," said Ralston gently, as his friend thus spoke, for the first and last time, of a former wound. "Thank you old fellow, I am sure you are right, and I will delay no longer. By Jove I will try my luck at once!"

So saying he pulled on his boots, and seizing his hat hurried off leaving Dugdale to smoke his solitary pipe. Arriving at St. Famille Street Guy found both Madame Chartreuse and her daughter at home, but Annette did not come into the room with her mother, and Ralston with his American bringing up hardly knew how to talk on the subject nearest his heart to the elderly lady, who, after the greetings, seated herself opposite to him. But what mother is at a loss on such an occasion? Had Ralston's suit been viewed in an unfavorable light, be sure Madame would quickly have frozen the young man out of the house, while as it was, she with many a little kindly artifice instantly put him at his ease, and before he was scarcely aware of it he found he had asked permission to pay his addresses to Annette, saying something about the smallness of his means and her youth, both of which drawbacks he slyly suggested time would rectify.

"Why not?" asked Madame cheerfully. "Be not cast down my friend, I was married at Annette's age, and M. Chartreuse was poorer than you are. Courage my child, God will provide. What does your proverb say? 'Kind hearts are more than coronets,' is it not so? You must ask Annette, and I go now to send her to you."

And Madame left the room, into which presently Annette came stealing, as though half afraid and yet with a blush and a smile which belied her tardy footsteps.

Ralston advanced to meet her, trembling a little as he watched the tender maid whom he was going to ask to entrust herself to him. "I am going away in a day or two Miss Chartreuse" he said taking her hand, and Annette gave

a kind of gasp at the formal greeting, but leading her gently to the sofa and seating himself beside her he continued, "Before I go however, I have something to say to you—Annette. (A faint sigh of pleasure escaped the girl as she heard herself thus called.) "I have not much to offer you, in the shape of worldly goods; indeed I am but of small account myself, but I love you with all my heart, and would do my best to make you happy. Can you wait for me, just a little while, till I return and ask you to be my wife?"

"Yes Guy" was the reply, in a very low but perfectly distinct voice, and Annette nestled herself close up to him and rested her pretty head upon his shoulder.

So the battle was fought and the victory won, although at first Ralston almost believed he was merely dreaming—it seemed too good to be true.

"I tell you I was positively afraid to speak," he said after the lapse of a few minutes, during which time we need not be particular into enquiring what took place. "Am I awake, and is this really my very own Annette?" Whereupon he straightway falls to stroking her hair, and performing divers other actions, by way of proving that Annette is not a mere phantom of his imagination.

"Without doubt I am your own Annette—and you need not ruffle my hair in that fashion sir—returns the lady. "Oh Guy how can you say you have not much to offer? You have everything and it is I who have nothing—and—and—oh how happy I am."

Of course she was happy, she was little more than a child, but I hope when those flaxen locks become silver she will still be able to make the same remark, and that Ralston will answer her as he did then, "Not happier than I am my dear."

Then in came Madame Chartreuse smiling too, and said that as dinner was ready Guy (calling him thus) must stay and have some. Ralston hesitated, but when a little hand sought his and a pair of plaintive eyes looked up at him he could not refuse.

Guy was immensely talkative at that and cracked his jokes about annexation in a way which made them all laugh, for we are easily amused when in good temper, whereas otherwise the most witty remarks with difficulty provoke our mirth.

When Ralston returned to his rooms he found Dugdale still over his lonely pipe, but on his relating his success, which his face told before he spoke the words, Dugdale grasped him by the hand exclaiming "Did I not tell thee lad! I am glad the grapes are not sour and as your dreams will be pleasanter than my company I am off to bed. Good night."

To be continued.