

men," said Bigot, with a look of intense satisfaction.

"When shall it be done—to-day?" Le Gardeur seemed ready to pluck the moon from the sky in his present state of ecstasy.

"Why, no, not to-day; not before the pear is ripe will we pluck it! Your word of honor will keep till then?"

Bigot was in great glee over the success of his stratagem to entrap De Repentigny.

"It will keep a thousand years!" replied Le Gardeur, amid a fresh outburst of merriment round the board, which culminated in a shameless song, fit only for a revel of satyrs.

The Sieur Cadet lolled lazily in his chair, his eyes blinking with a sleepy leer. "We are getting stupidly drunk, Bigot," said he; we want something new to rouse us all to fresh life. Will you let me offer a toast?"

"Go on, Cadet! offer what toast you please. There is nothing in heaven, hell, or upon earth that I won't drink to for your sake."

"I want you to drink it on your knees, Bigot! pledge me that, and fill your biggest cup."

"We will drink it on all fours if you like! come, out with your toast, Cadet; you are as long over it as Father Glapion's sermon in Lent! and it will be as interesting, I dare say!"

"Well, Chevalier, the Grand Company, after toasting all the beauties of Quebec, desire to drink the health of the fair mistress of Beaumanoir, and in her presence, too!" said Cadet, with owlish gravity.

Bigot started; drunk and reckless as he was, he did not like his secret to be divulged. He was angry with Cadet for referring to it in the presence of so many who knew not that a strange lady was residing at Beaumanoir. He was too thoroughly a libertine of the period to feel any moral compunction for any excess he committed. He was habitually more ready to glory over his conquests than to deny or extenuate them. But in this case he had, to the surprise of Cadet, been very reticent, and shy of speaking of this lady even to him.

"They say she is a miracle of beauty, Bigot!" continued Cadet, "and that you are so jealous of the charms of your belle Gabrielle that you are afraid to show her to your best friends."

"My belle Gabrielle is at liberty to go where she pleases, Cadet!" Bigot saw the absurdity of anger, but he felt it, nevertheless. "She chooses not to leave her bower, to look even on you, Cadet! I warrant you she has not slept all night, listening to your infernal din."

"Then I hope you will allow us to go and beg pardon on our knees for disturbing her rest. What say the good company?"

"Agreed, agreed!" was the general response, and all pressed the Intendant vociferously to allow them to see the fair mistress of Beaumanoir.

Varin, however, proposed that she should be brought into the hall. "Send her to us, O King," cried he; "we are nobles of Persia, and this is Shushan the palace, where we carouse according to the law of the Medes, seven days at a stretch. Let the King bring in Queen Vashti, to show her beauty to the princes and nobles of his court!"

Bigot, too full of wine to weigh scruples, yielded to the wish of his boon companions. He rose from his chair, which in his absence was taken by Cadet. "Mind," said he, "if I bring her in, you shall show her every respect."

"We will kiss the dust of her feet," answered Cadet, "and consider you the greatest king of a feast in New France or Old."

Bigot, without further parley, passed out of the hall, traversed a long corridor, and entered an ante-room, where he found Dame Tremblay the old housekeeper, dozing on her chair. He roused her up, and

bade her go to the inner chamber to summon her mistress.

The housekeeper rose in a moment at the voice of the Intendant. She was a comely dame, with a ruddy cheek, and an eye in her head that looked inquisitively at her master as she arranged her cap and threw back her rather gay ribbons.

"I want your mistress up in the great hall! Go summon her at once," repeated the Intendant.

The housekeeper courtesied, but pressed her lips together as if to prevent them from speaking in remonstrance. She went at once on her ungracious errand.

CHAPTER VIII.

Caroline de St. Castin.

Dame Tremblay entered the suite of apartments and returned in a few moments, saying that her lady was not there, but had gone down to the secret chamber, to be, she supposed, more out of hearing of the noise, which had disturbed her so much.

"I will go find her, then," replied the Intendant; "you may return to your own room, dame."

He walked across the drawing-room to one of the gorgeous panels that decorated the wall, and touched a hidden spring. A door flew open, disclosing a stair heavily carpeted that led down to the huge, vaulted foundations of the Chateau.

He descended the stair with hasty though unsteady steps. It led to a spacious room, lighted with a gorgeous lamp that hung pendant in silver chains from the frescoed ceiling. The walls were richly tapestried with products of the looms of the Gobelins, representing the plains of Italy filled with sunshine, where groves, temples, and colonnades were pictured in endless vistas of beauty. The furniture of the chamber was of regal magnificence. Nothing that luxury could desire, or art furnish, had been spared in its adornment. On a sofa lay a guitar, and beside it a scarf and a dainty glove fit for the hand of the fairy queen.

The Intendant looked eagerly round as he entered this bright chamber of his fancy, but saw not its expected occupant. A recess in the deep wall at the farthest side of the room contained an oratory with an altar and a crucifix upon it. The recess was partly in the shade. But the eyes of the Intendant discerned clearly enough the kneeling, or rather the prostrate, figure of Caroline de St. Castin. Her hands were clasped beneath her head, which was bowed to the ground. Her long, black hair lay dishevelled over her back, as she lay in her white robe, like the Angel of Sorrow, weeping and crying from the depths of her broken heart, "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me!" She was so absorbed in her grief that she did not notice the entrance of the Intendant.

Bigot stood still for a moment, stricken with awe at the spectacle of this lovely woman weeping by herself in the secret chamber. A look of something like pity stole into his eyes; he called her by name, ran to her, assisted her to rise, which she did, slowly turning towards him that weeping, Madonna-like face which haunts the ruins of Beaumanoir to this day.

She was of medium stature, slender and lissome, looking taller than she really was. Her features were chiselled with exquisite delicacy; her hair of a raven blackness, and eyes of that dark lustre which reappears for generations in the descendants of Europeans who have mingled their blood with that of the aborigines of the forest. The Indian eye is preserved as an heirloom, long after all memory of the red stain has vanished from the traditions of the family. Her complexion was pale, naturally of a rich olive, but now, through sorrow, of a wan and bloodless hue—still very beautiful, and more appealing than the rosiest complexion.

Caroline de St. Castin was an Acadienne of ancient and noble

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family, whose head and founder, the Baron de St. Castin, had married the beautiful daughter of the high chief of the Abenaguais.

Her father's house, one of the most considerable in the Colony, had been the resort of the royal officers, civil and military, serving in Acadia. Caroline, the only daughter of the noble house, had been reared in all the refinements and luxuries of the period, as became her rank and position both in France and her native Province.

In an evil hour for her happiness this beautiful and accomplished girl met the Chevalier Bigot, who, as Chief Commissary of the Army, was one of the foremost of the royal officers in Acadia.

His ready wit and graceful manners pleased and flattered the susceptible girl, not used to the seductions of the polished courtesies of the motherland of France. She was of a joyous temper—gay, frank and confiding. Her father, immersed in public affairs, left her much to herself, nor, had he known it, would he have disapproved of the gallant courtesies of the Chevalier Bigot. For the Baron had the soul of honor, and dreamt every gentleman as well as himself possessed it.

(To be continued.)

Tommy—Pa, what is an equinox. Pa—Why, er—it is—ahem! For goodness sake, Tommy, don't you know anything about mythology at all? An equinox was a fabled animal, half horse, half cow. Its name is derived from the words "equine" and "ox." It does seem as if these public schools don't teach children anything nowadays!

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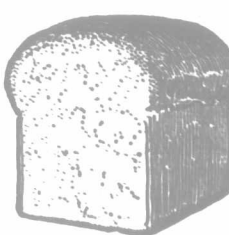
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