A CHRISTMAS HYMN.

BY JOHN C. FLEMING.

Happy Christmas! Merry Christmas! thou who comest without fail,
Annually with flowing treasures, royal festival all hail,
O'er the jingle of the sleigh bells, hark! the fluttering of thy wings
And thy breathing quick and frosty, harbinger of glorious things.

From the East thou comest hither over land and stormy seas,
Bringing news of joyous import, spreading Heaven's high decrees,
Lightening hearts with sadness laden, brightening eyes surcharged with sorrow,
Saying, "this one day be happy, you can weep once more to-morrow."

Solemn Christmas! Holy Christmas! thou wert witness at the birth
Of the King of men and angels—of the Lord of Heaven and earth;
Saw the sky ablaze with glory, heard the hosts celestial sing,
From their starry dome descending, salutation to the King.

Saw the Magi silent, searching for the mighty mystery
By the Lake of Gennesareth—by the shores of Galilee,
While the fated tribes were lying wrapped in dreary unbelief,
Waiting for a mail-clad Monarch—dreaming of a sword-blade chief.

Ever since, Oh welcome Christmas, when thou comest people sing,
Gloria in Excelsis Deo, and the bells responsive ring,
And the voices of the children loudly echo the refrain,
Joyous Christmas! cheerful Christmas! thou art with us once again.

Youth exultant, crowned with holly, says to thee, "O, Christmas dear,
Hasten, hasten, fast and faster, it is good when thou art here."
Then the yule log flames up bravely, sleigh bells ring and church bells chime,
And all nature seems to gladden for the merry Christmas time.

Age casts retrospective glances, with alternate smile and sigh,
Sympathizes with its offspring—grieves for those who shrouded lie;
In the chilly, chilly churchyard. "Say, my heart," it whispers, "say,
Those I fondly kissed last Christmas—those who loved me—where are they?"

Where are they? but I have wandered from the merry Christmas track;
And the joy bells and the laughter of the young folks call me back,
And the pleasant, ringing voices that salute me on the street,
And the radiant, happy faces of the people that I meet.

So I take a cup of liquor—it is generous port wine,
And I drink it indiscriminate to the friends and foes of mine,
Here are health and benediction to the peoples scattered wide.
Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! for the sake of CHRIST WHO DIED.

(Written for the Herald.)

TWO CHRISTMAS EVES.

BY JOHN C. FLEMING.

CHAPTER I.

It was Christmas Eve in the noble city of Montreal in the year of Grace 185—. The snow lay thick and crisp on the ground, as it should lie on the night of every well regulated Christmas Eve; the stars sparkled and scintillated in the clear, cold heavens above; the thermometer was so low that (taking cause for effect), there was no wind, and the night was bright enough, and the air was still enough to permit a full sight of the steam issuing from the nostrils of the horses as they moved swiftly, and save for the music of the sleigh bells, noiselessly over the ground. In our opinion nothing can be more pleasantly beautiful than a fine city well lighted on Christmas eve, when the snow is on the ground, when the mercury in the thermometer stands just five degrees below zero, and the stars are smiling serenely down on the world below. It is positively exhilarating to watch the scenes on the streets and in the brilliantly lighted stores. Everyone moves fast, everyone is in good humor, and everyone shakes hands with everyone else, and says, "Merry Christmas," "The same to you," and walks rapidly away on business or pleasure bent. And then listen to the sleigh rolling over the frozen snow, and the same snow crackling merrily under your own feet. But above all observe the people in the stores. What numbers of them there are, but evidently not half enough to buy up the piles of drums, and guns and dolls—of auburn or brunette—and picture-books, and bugles, and balls, and cornucopias and everything on this earth that children take delight in most, said children being now in bed and dreaming that dear old Santa Claus is rushing at a break-neck speed down the chimney to fill their foolish, gaping little stockings. Yes, such a genuine Christmas Eve as that we have attempted to describe with its jingle-jangle, its noise and bustle, and merry greetings excites an exuberance of spirits in the hearts of even the most gloomy of mortals. Some ascribe this exuberance to the ozone in the atmosphere when the thermometer is very low, and some to infection born of contact with an unusual flow of animal spirits in others. Nevertheless, there are conditions without which the ozone will be inoperative, and the spirits noninfectious. One must be conscious of having a balance at his banker's, in order to be happy even on such a cheerful night, or, at the very least, he should be able to jingle some of the current coin of the realm in his pocket. The ozone must be strong indeed which would make a man forget that he had no supper, or that he was thinly clad, or that he was not absolutely certain where he would lay his head that night while all within his view was bubbling over with joyous excitement begotten of a glorious Christmas Eve, so befitting the season that the most cross grained weather carper could positively ask no better. And yet there are numbers to be seen here and there in every great city ignorant of ozone, and lacking bed and board, if one would only look for them, hungry, shivering mortals who move along aimless and homeless, they care not where, they know not whither, upon whose hearts the ringing Christmas laughter falls as jarringly as La Marseillaise on the ear of a despot. Of the class on the night we speak of, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and blank, was one Paul Kavanagh, seventeen years of age, three months out from England, and now beginning life as a tramp, without home, and without a solitary cent to keep a certain well-known character out of his pockets. Paul appeared to disadvantage as he stood looking pensively in at the good things in a restaurant window on Craig street. He was neither ragged nor dirty, but he was decidedly so shabby that a policeman would have no scruples of conscience in ordering him to "move on out o' that." Nor would he pause to consider that in doing so he had hurt his feelings, for no one knows better than a policeman that dignity has no business where money is absent. Still, if a policeman was anything of a physiognomist he would really hesitate before driving Paul Kavanagh away from a store window. The boy had a noble countenance, even a child could tell that, as many a child who saw him tacitly acknowledged by smiling kindly in his face in passing. But it was a trifle pinched with hunger, for be it known to you, oh, reader, our hero was twenty four hours fasting as he stood at that window gazing with a kind of rapturous awe at the ham studded with cloves, and the turkey browned to absolute perfection. Indeed he would have gazed with the same sort of rapture at a stale loaf of bread, for when a stomach reaches a certain stage of hunger one description of food is as fascinating as another. While Paul Kavanagh thus stood gazing in hungry abstraction at the ham and the turkey alternately, undecided in his mind as to which of them he would begin operations upon if he were owner of a gold mine, we shall give a brief review of his history. His father was an Irishman, his mother a French woman, Paul himself was a native of Liverpool, and his parents were dead, his father many years and his mother not more than three months. Dr. Kavanagh was a clever man who neglected his profession to dream of metaphysical theories which were to ameliorate the condition of mankind. He married one of the daughters of a noble French house against the wishes of her father, who, however, allowed her a small annuity during her life. It ceased at her death and her beloved son was thrown on the world at the age of sixteen, half educated, without training for trade or profession, having a handsome face it is true, and promises of a fine physical development, but nothing useful, save it might be a sweet voice, and, for a boy, one of the most eloquent tongues given to a mortal. These are good social qualities, and by no means a bar to progress in the battle of life, but of small account at the age of sixteen to a boy whose mother has just been buried, and who has to commence the struggle for existence unaided and alone. When Mrs. Kavanagh's debts were paid and she had received a funeral befitting the widow of Dr. Kavanagh, Paul was handed the sum of ten guineas, and strongly advised by his uncle to go to his sister in Canada, living either in Quebec or Montreal, somewhere at all events, in a high state of affluence. Those Canadian cities have such names you know.'

'Find her out, my boy,' said the bluff, bull-headed relative, 'and your fortune is made. It is sometime since I received a letter from her, but she is certainly in Canada and in great opulence, I have no doubt. Her husband is one Johnstone—John Johnstone, a merchant—who knows, perhaps, a millionaire. God bless you, boy.'

Paul came to Canada but did not find his aunt, Mrs John Johnstone. There are so many towns and cities in Canada, and there are so many Johnstones, that searching for an uncle of that classic name is like looking for the needle in the proverbial bundle of straw. He went here and there, and his money was exhausted sooner even than his patience. Finally he gravitated towards Montreal, where we find him devouring part of a ham and part of a turkey in a restaurant window with his eyes—observe, with his eyes only.

'Now, then, what are you doin' around here? I've told you to move on five times to-night before!'

This assertion was not strictly true as the preserver of the peace had just seen the boy for the first time in his life. If Paul was sensible, however, he would not have argued the point. Perhaps he thought by setting the policeman right he would be allowed to remain and feast his eyes a little longer, and so he said:

'It must'nt have been me you saw, at least I don't remember you, sir.'

"Come, now, none o' yer impudence. I think I know what yer loafin' here for. Off you go, or I'll have you in the station before ten minutes.'

And Paul moved on. He had trudged about all day long, over the snow from street to street, and he was weary. He could almost lie down where he stood and sleep, so miserably tired was he. And he was cold too. He shivered from time to time, and his body contracted as if his ribs would crush against his heart and lungs. If, in his present position, three wishes were granted him he would undoubtedly ask first for rest, next warmth, and then food. So when he moved on it was into one of the dark streets that debouch on Craig, the darker the better, so that he might be lost to the eyes of policemen, 'for,' thought poor Paul, 'death any time before a police station.'

He wandered on and upwards towards Sherbrooke street, not knowing where he was going, but feeling he was escaping from the life and light and bustle of the exuberant city. Everyone who has been in Montreal knows that Sherbrooke street slopes almost parallel with the base of Mount Royal, and that it is lined with noble cut-stone mansions, palaces rather, occupied by some of the most commercially solid men in America; retired millionaires and wholesale merchants, whose counting-houses are on St. Paul and St. Sacrament streets.

When Paul found himself on Sherbrooke street he saw one of those mansions looming up before him, grand and solemn in the darkness, as a castle of mediæval architecture. The architecture did not bother him however, just then. What he was concerned at was that a sleigh drawn by two horses, in which were four well befurred, and bemuffled persons, dashed through the gate, and passed our wayfarer, down St. Charles Borrommeo street to the city. The occupants of the sleigh spoke French, and from what little he heard Paul concluded they were to make a few calls and then go to midnight Mass. But what interested him most of all was that the driver left the gate open behind them. A chance of sleep presented itself, there must be a stable where there were horses, and there must also be hay, and hay is a splendid thing to sleep in. When he lived at home and his father kept a horse, he often heard complaints of tramps sleeping in the hay. Well, he was a tramp now and would sleep in the hay; he would, in fact, sleep on the edge of a razor, or coiled up in a blacking box, anywhere provided he could obtain blessed warmth, or thrice blessed rest. He went boldly in, traversed the long avenue, defied the barking of a huge mastiff, gained the stables, and was soon up to his chin in the hay and fast asleep.

And he dreamed. He dreamed he was seated in a restaurant and that at least a dozen waiters were around him, each having a dish in his hands, bearing something good to eat. There were fried potatoes, beefsteak, ham and eggs, pudding, oysters, everything savoury, but towering aloft among them a beautiful brown turkey, and a delicious looking cooked ham, all thorny with cloves and fragrant with sweet odors. The great trouble with him was that he was in a state of indecision as to what dish he would begin with, and when he was about making up his mind the waiters, instead of serving him, clashed their dishes together as if they were cymbals, and so fought with one another for the honor of being first, that he thought of the poor donkey he read of in Esop's Fables, which died of hunger between two haystacks on account of it's inability to decide with which he would begin.

How long Paul Kavanagh slept he knew not, when he was awakened by a sharp pain in the side. He was about to cry out but was restrained by the sound of voices from men in the hay quite close to him, and he concluded that the pain he experienced came from the boot of one of them who, in climbing, had brought it in contact with his side. The men spoke in French, a language Paul had acquired from his mother, as, indeed, he had most of the limited knowledge he possessed.

'What in the fiend's name kept you?' said one of the men, 'it is rather late now to do such a job. The boys will be home from midnight Mass at any moment.'

'Don't be such an idiot, Leblanc,' said the other, 'it is not more than half past twelve o'clock yet, and we have a full hour to operate. I have'nt gone to all this trouble for nothing, and there will be a big blaze here to-night or my name is not Jacques Duhamel.'

'That's all very fine, Jacques, but you're in no danger. You have nothing to do but make yourself scarce, while if anything happens I'm on the ground.'

'Come, come, don't get faint hearted at the last moment. After all you'll have one third of the profit, and remember 'tis you, yourself proposed the job.'

There was a pause. It was evident the man called Leblanc was hesitating, and it was also evident that a crime of some nature was contemplated by the pair. After a minute or so Leblanc spoke.

'Have you got the nags with you?'

'They are hitched in a yard I found open on St. Famille street. I knew you would listen to reason, just think of your pocketing half of two hundred dollars in ready cash, though if you take my advice you will burn the whole establishment and clear everything out before hand.'

'It is now too late for that,' said Leblanc, 'come, be off and bring the horses. There is no time to lose.'

CHAPTER II.

Paul was possessed of a brave heart and a clear intellect, but being ignorant what crime was about to be committed he knew not how to act. He therefore decided to await developments. He was determined he would prevent wrong even at the risk of his life, and it never struck him that he was himself in a very delicate, and a very false position. While waiting he managed to peer somewhat through the darkness and take a hazy view of the situation. Both men, (there were only two) had got down from the hay; the fellow calling himself Jacques Duhamel had gone out, while Leblanc was engaged taking what appeared two magnificent horses from their stalls to the door, where he waited in expectant attitude, with their reins grasped in his hand. Duhamel returned in about ten minutes, also with two horses, sorrowful looking nags, however, as far as our hero could make out.

'Now, then,' whispered Duhamel, 'here they are; shall I tie them up in the stalls?'

'Yes, and be quick about it; and recollect the minute it is done I want my share of the money.'

'What, even before the job is a safe one?'

'Even so, a bargain is a bargain. Fork over two hundred dollars. You'll have eight hundred profit, and more. They are one of the best pair in Montreal.'

Duhamel tied up the horses, and counted over two hundred dollars to Leblanc in the semi-darkness. Light was beginning to dawn upon the mind of Paul, but the full illumination had not come yet.

'When I have cleared the corner of St. Urbain street with the horses,' said Duhamel, 'strike your match and light the hay. Then steal into the house, and don't be the first to awake. *Comprends tu?*'

'Go on, man, go on, leave the rest to me.'

Paul now understood the whole plot. The stables were to be set on fire, the skeletons of two horses would be found, and there would be no more about the affair except, perhaps, that Leblanc would fall in for some blame for negligence, blame he might bear with a light heart, considering the night's work placed two hundred dollars, in his pocket, that is to say, more money than he had ever possessed in his life before.

We have said Paul had a brave heart, and he proved it now. When he fully realized the situation he sprang from the hay loft to the floor without reckoning the consequences of the act, and shouted 'fire,' and 'murder' loud as he could in his weak state, making for the stable door all the time. Leblanc was startled at first but being no fool he also realized the consequences to him if matters were revealed at this stage. He therefore rushed upon Paul, and using all his force, (quite unnecessarily though) pinned him to the earth, put one hand on the boy's throat and stifled his cries, and with the other drew a match from his pocket, and set fire to the hay in half a dozen different places. He next drew a circle of the blazing material around the horses, knowing they would never try to pass the flames, and then, still keeping his hand on Paul's throat, dragged him by sheer force round to the back of the stables, and waited there until the fire was well underway, when he cried out 'fire, fire, fire,' with all his might.

'Here, Dansereau, here,' shouted Leblanc, as a half-dressed servant appeared in the light of the fire, 'I've caught the incendiary in the act. Go to the corner of St. Famille and Sherbrooke streets and give the alarm, but hark, there it is. Here, help me to take out the horses, or hold this devil, and I'll do it.'

We may imagine what great exertions Leblanc put forth to extricate the poor horses from the burning building, and how the people who were aroused by the cry of fire, ran here and there with their pitiful little buckets of water, and the fire flamed up bravely and illumed the sky above with its glare. The fire engines arrived just in time to prevent the house from catching, and then went away.

Paul was dragged into the kitchen of the mansion, and tied with ropes, first his hands and then his body to a bolt in the wall as if he had been a veritable Jack Sheppard. The nurse and the kitchen maid gazed upon him with an admixture of fear, awe, and admiration. An incendiary, perhaps a murderer, and still quite a child, was not a sight to be seen every Christmas Eve night. A policeman next put in an appearance, and while the servants were debating as to whether they would let the monster go to the station at once or wait till Mr. Lemaitre arrived, the family sleigh was heard pulling up outside, and in a minute later Mr. Lemaitre appeared upon the scene.

Mr. Lemaitre was one of Montreal's merchant princes, as had been his father and grandfather before him. He was fortunate in business, and though it was rumored he speculated rashly, he had never been known to fail, and grew wealthier year by year until he gained the reputation of being a millionaire. He was remarkable for his benevolence to the poor, for the offhandedness of his business dealings, his generosity to his debtors, and for his choleric disposition. Of late years he had almost retired from Change and the marts of commerce, leaving his business to be managed by partners, of whom his nephew was one. At the age of fifty he thought it was about time to enjoy his wealth without working himself hard, and he consequently surrounded himself with the luxuries of refinement. He had, perhaps, the best furnished house in Montreal, whether as regards taste or wealth, and kept four splendid horses. He had a son at Laval College whom he had expected home that Christmas Eve for his holidays, but who for some reason or other had not come, and he had a daughter twelve years of age, a bright, charming creature whom he idolized. Madame Lemaitre was an invalid who never went out save to church, and even to there not often, as she was afflicted with a painful disease of the spine.

It was Mr. Lemaitre who now stood before Paul Kavanagh. He had heard Leblanc's plausible story, and of course believed it.

'Well, my boy,' he demanded, 'why did you burn my two fine horses?'

By this time Paul was almost exhausted and it was with a faint voice he denied the charge. He told his story in a rambling, incoherent manner, which did not impress Mr. Lemaitre with its truth.

'It is really too bad,' he said, 'the boy does'nt look at all like a criminal but then appearances are deceptive.'

Paul made no remonstrance; he was in a sort of stupor, and he surrendered himself to the inevitable. When all the fates were conspiring against him resistance was useless.

While still scrutinizing, a servant entered and said the mistress wanted to see him. She had received a telegram from her son, said the servant, who was detained at St. Jerome by a snow storm. Mr. Lemaitre turned to go.

'What is to be done with the reprobate, sir?' enquired Leblanc, 'the policeman is waiting up stairs.'

'You are too ready with your policemen, Leblanc; tell him to go away and come again in the morning. I must question the boy further.' And so saying he went down stairs.

Leblanc followed him, and Paul was alone. His position was irksome in the extreme, but the place was warm and he slept, or rather dozed.

'*Pauvre Garcon*,' it is a great shame to have him tied in that manner.'

Paul opened his eyes and looked. Right in front of him, and gazing into his own, with large grey orbs moist with infinite compassion, stood what the captive surely thought must be an angel. But no, it was only a girl of twelve or thirteen years of age, dressed in the richest of blue velvet, that set off her golden hair and creamy complexion to great advantage.

'I am dreaming,' he muttered, 'and see a beautiful vision, just as I saw the cooked ham and roast turkey when I slept in the manger.'

'No, you are not, I am Monsieur Lemaitre's little daughter. Surely it isn't true. You did not burn down the stables. No, no, surely not.'

'Upon my honor I did not,' said Paul solemnly.

He had heard his father say this, and in saying it himself the word had a dignified sound, and a gentlemanly? coming from one so young.

'I believe you. Oh, I wish I could release you. Can I do anything for you?'

'Yes, please give me a drink of water.' She went to the tap and drew him a glass of fresh, sparkling water.

'Oh, your hands are tied. How cruel,' and she held the water to his parched lips, and her eyes sparkled with pleasure as she observed with what avidity he drank it.

'God bless you, Madamoiselle.'

'Are you hungry?'

'I am starving.'

The girl had a pile of bread and butter on a plate in less than a minute, and, as the saying goes, it was just as good as a play to see her feeding the prisoner accused of burning her father's horses with mouthful after mouthful until it had disappared for ever—every slice of it.

'Perhaps you would like some more?' she asked hesitatingly, thinking that he had really eaten a good deal. 'But of course you would if you were starving. I cannot make a cup of tea as the fire is going out and the girls all away, but if you would like some ham——'

'It would be too much trouble.'

'Not at all; I am delighted,' and she fed him with the same pleasure as before, but with more intense curiosity at so fierce an appetite. Poor child! she had never fasted thirty-three hours.

Paul's appetite was something phenomenal. As the pangs of hunger vanished one by one, some of his naturally buoyant spirits returned and he was somewhat amused to watch the spasms of curiosity passing over the ingenuous countenance of his beautiful little provider at the quantity of provisions he disposed of. At length he grew ashamed and said:

'I have enough, thank you, for the present. You see, I had tasted nothing since the night before last, and was famishing.'

'*Pauvre Garcon*. Where did you learn to speak such good French?'

'In England, but my mother was a French woman.'

'And are you long in Canada?'

'About three months.' As Paul said this his face showed signs of pain, for truly the cords were cutting into his arms.

The girl's eyes were filled with tears. She seized the knife with which she had cut the bread, and without a moment's hesitation she severed the rope that confined our young hero, and gave him his liberty.

'There,' she said, 'you are free. Perhaps I have done wrong; but you can go if you like. Papa will forgive me I know.'

Paul was overpowered by this noble generosity, and could have knelt and kissed the feet of the child.

'Thank you,' he said simply, 'I am innocent, and I shall stay. Running away would be a confession of guilt.'

Ringing of bells, and opening and shutting of doors were now heard overhead, and Pauline, (a remarkable coincidence in names by the way), said she would go and see what was the matter. The fact is she was half afraid of Paul now that he was free, and half regretful for her rash act, and she wished to reveal the situation to her father.

This is what took place upstairs. A police-sergeant rang the bell and wanted to see Mr. Lemaitre. Mr. Lemaitre came into the hall rather impatiently, for if the truth must be told, he had received news of his son which did not have a soothing effect upon his temper.

'Well,' he said, 'what is the matter now? Are my two other horses destroyed?'

'I trust not sir. We have arrested the man you see here with a span of horses which we think is yours. One of our men found him about taking them over to Longueuil in a scow, and suspecting all was not right detained them until he had reported at the Central Station.'

Mr. Lemaitre was astounded. He looked at the horses and then at the prisoner.

'Why, they are mine, without the slightest doubt. But, then, what about the charred remains of those found in the stables. Good heaven! Perhaps the boy is right after all. Of course he is. Sergeant, follow me, and arrest a man whom I shall point out to you.'

The sergeant followed, accompanied by one of his men, but Leblanc was nowhere to be found. He had vanished.

'That boy is innocent, after all,' soliloquized Mr. Lemaitre, when he came down stairs. 'I might have known it. What! Pauline, not in bed yet?'

'Oh dear papa, I was feeding that poor boy down stairs, he was almost starved. And do you know I cut his cords.'

'Faith you are a decisive little jade. Well, 'pauline, I am glad of it; he is innocent. I shall go down and see him directly. What I want to know now is, how he came to be in the stables.'

While her father was seeing the horses comfortably housed in another stable, and instructing the police, (and perhaps giving them something for their trouble) Pauline flew down stairs to announce the joyful tidings of his release to her new-found protege.

Oh, she cried, with sparkling eyes, 'you are free—I am so glad. The horses have been brought back, and that bad man Leblanc has escaped.'

'Thank God,' cried Paul, 'and you too, Madamoiselle. I wish I could show you how grateful I am.'

Pauline put her hand in her pocket and drew out a purse, from which she extracted a ten dollar gold piece.

'Here,' she said, 'I got this from papa to buy a meerschaum pipe for my brother Camille as a New Year's Gift, but I shall give it to you. You want it more.'

Paul turned away his face, he was just enough of a boy to melt at such kindness, and of a man to feel ashamed of it.

'Oh, Madamoiselle, I can't—I can't.'

'*Pourquoi?* I like you very much, and shall feel pained if you don't accept it.'

Paul resisted, but she forced the money into his hand.

'Madamoiselle will you let me kiss your hand?'

'What is your name?'

'Paul Kavanagh.'

'I shall let you kiss my cheek if you promise to go to Mass in the morning, and be a good boy. And let me tell you you should be thankful this blessed night for having been permitted to imitate our Saviour by sleeping in a manger. But pardon me. I'm sure you're far better than I.'

She presented her cheek, and Paul bestowed upon it as pure and as innocent a kiss as did ever her own mother.

Pauline ran up stairs lightly as a gazelle, to hurry her father down.

'Come, papa, Paul is waiting for you.'

'*Sapristi!* but you are becoming acquainted very fast, *ma fille*.'

They went down together. They looked around but Paul was nowhere to be seen. He had also vanished.

'It is a night of surprises,' said Mr. Lemaitre, 'or rather a morning. Come, child, go to bed if you want to go to Mass at nine o'clock.'

If this were a story of fiction it would be our duty to have made Mr. Lemaitre take Paul into his office as junior clerk, whence he would rise until he became a partner in the firm and then married his daughter. As it is not, however, but an o'er true tale we have, perforce, to chronicle events as they occurred.

CHAPTER III.

It was Christmas Eve ten years later in the proud city of Baltimore. There are no joyous ringing of sleigh bells, no ozone, no rushing hither and thither, for the people of that clime are more languid than their cousins further north; but the stars sparkled in the clear sky above, all the same, the air was frosty, and any one could tell it was Christmas Eve. It was in the atmosphere, as it is wherever the English language is spoken, or, as Matthew Arnold idiotically has it, wherever the Anglo-Saxon race predominates. In far Australia, where the burning sun shines down on the 25th December, the Royal Festival is celebrated with all the honors, even to the extent of piling on yule logs, though it is ninety degrees in the shade under the tree outside the door.

But we were speaking of Baltimore. It was about six o'clock in the evening, and the weather was fine, but a trifle frosty, as a party of young gentlemen stood outside the most aristocratic club house of the city, smoking their cigars and conversing in animated tones.

The subject of conversation was the Franco-Prussian war, then raging furiously, and various were the prophecies indulged in of final success or defeat to either party, the prophecies being suggested by the sympathies of the disputants. Von Moltke was girding Paris with a circle of steel, and the Crown Prince was forcing back the raw but heroic legion of Chanzy behind the Loire. Nevertheless few despaired of France who were acquainted with her glorious history, and the military prowess of her armies.

'France was in a worse plight in '93,' said a blonde young man, 'but put forth one of her majestic efforts and flung her foes off her chest just as a strong man does a nightmare.'

'Yes,' said another, 'and her enemies were the same as they are now—the Teutons.'

'The Germans will pulverize the French into democratic dust this time,' put in a third, 'and the beggars deserve it. They are a disturbing element in the world's affairs.'

'The French are the greatest people have ever tramped over this grovelling world,' said a fourth, 'our France is the only generous nation recorded in history. If the war lasts another month until my affairs are settled, my poor services shall be at her disposal.'

'Why, Kavanagh, you are an enthusiast, but I have heard your mother was French.'

The gentleman addressed as Kavanagh was strikingly handsome. He was tall and slight, but sinewy, and though his face was dark almost to swarthiness, the features were beautiful—classic in their contour. He had eyes of that steel-grey which betokens strong will and steadiness of character, and his long dark moustache was not heavy enough to conceal his white teeth when he spoke, nor to take from the charm of his mouth when he smiled.

'If Kavanagh knew it was a German had his watch,' said a youth who had not yet spoken, 'he would be still more French in feeling.'

'Why, Gabriel,' cried Kavanagh, 'do you really know anything about my stolen watch?'

'I could swear I saw it this forenoon in the pawn office of Schultz, No. 27 Washington street. I wore it at the regatta, you know, and remarked the face of it well. I would go with you and shew you the place, were it not that I have to catch the down train for Cashville, but if you wait till after Christmas——'

'Oh, as for that, dear child, I would not keep you from Cashville and your lady-love for all the watches in the world, nevertheless I shall go this very instant to my uncle Schultz and if he have it—why he'll have to give it up, that's all, and away Kavanagh walked in the direction of the German pawn-broker.

Paul Kavanagh had come to Baltimore ten years ago, and after a month or two entered a law office as copying clerk. He wrote a beautiful hand, he was industrious, prepossessing, had a fine silvery voice, was found to be possessed of extraordinaay talent—genius in fact—was articled after six months, and in three years was a full-fledged lawyer. He rose to eminence by leap and bound, he distinguished himself in a celebrated case the first year, he delivered one of the best lectures on Roman Law ever heard in Baltimore in the second, in his third year an Irish relative died and left him twenty thousand pounds, was successful in everything he undertook, everything he touched turned into gold—or greenbacks rather—and he became a veritable nine days wonder, when all of a sudden he renounced the legal profession and became a doctor after passing a series of brilliant examinations. Everyone said Kavanagh had made a grand mistake, that he was but a talented fool, but everyone was mistaken, for he effected a few cures the year he is introduced to the reader, that brought him still more fame as a doctor than he had achieved as a lawyer. All the ladies of Baltimore—and they are very beautiful and very particular—were in love with Paul Kavanagh—the handsome young Irish aristocrat, you know—but he was cold, a regular woman-hater, and therefore grew more beloved as he grew more eccentric.

He strode into the pawn-office without ceremony. As he entered a young woman lifted her eyes to his for a moment, and blushed to the temples. She thrust something under her thin dress and went forth.

'Good heaven,' thought Kavanagh, 'what a seraphic countenance, how spiritual but how attenuated. God pardon me, but I believe she is hungry, and I—I know what hunger means.'

Here he struck his forehead with his hand.

'Can it be? No, it is an impossible absurdity, and yet it is to such perfection that child's countenance would have grown. I shall follow her. Perhaps I may be able to render assistance.'

Indeed he was following her all the time. She turned a corner, he did the same, and he never lost sight of her until she came to an obscure house in an obscure part of the city. She was about to enter when an old gentleman emerged.

'Doctor,' she said, 'how is my father?'

'He is weak, child, but we must hope, we must hope.'

Kavanagh pounced upon the Doctor in a moment. He was a poor old mediocrity who never cured anyone even by accident, and was constantly wrangling about fees. Still he was not a bad man, though he could not afford to be very good, that is to say, benevolent.

'Dr. Kingsley,' cried Kavanagh, 'will you pardon me for asking you a few questions?'

'A thousand, my dear Kavanagh.'

'What is the name of your patient?'

'Marcellus Lemaitre.'

'I thought so,' cried Kavanagh, rather excitedly for him. 'What is the matter with him?'

'Nothing that I know of, except that he is a man who is very poor, but was once very rich, that he is uneasy about his daughter, and thathe lacks nourishment.'

Dr. Kingsley,' cried Kavanagh, 'will you do me a favor?'

'With pleasure, more especially as I know you will not ask impossibilities.'

'Take me back to that house, introduce me to your patients and leave their case in my hands. I am indebeted to them for favors long past, but my memory is good. Be sure your bill is generously settled.'

Dr. Kingsly took Kavanagh's arm and led him back to the humble dwelling he had just left.

Miss Lemaitre, (what a bound Kavanagh's heart gave) this is my colleague Dr. Kavanagh. He is one of the most skilful physicians in the South. You are in safe hands, do what he orders.'

Dr. Kingsley left and Kavanagh and Pauline Lemaitre were alone.

'Do you know me?' he said, with little or no silver in his voice, for it was husky.

Pauline clasped her hands together and pondered. After a half a moment she looked up, a large diamond in the corner of each of those beautiful eyes, 'You are Paul Kavanagh the boy.' Without saying a word, Kavanagh drew a gold coin attached to a small hair chain from his vest pocket.

'You gave me this ten years ago. You did more, you saved me from despair and perhaps from unbelief, for I was beginning to doubt in God. Now you may easily perceive that all the money in the world cannot repay you. I shall cure your father. He must be removed from here this very night."

'God has heard my voice,' cried Pauline, 'and sent you to our aid, it would therefore be impiety to refuse your offer. But can he be removed without danger?'

'I shall be responsible. I have a house in Washington Avenue kept by an old couple who act as care takers. You and Mr. Lemaitre will go there to-night. He wants change of air, warmth and good living. With these he will rapidly recover.'

'Heaven bless you. That's all I can say.'

He took her hand in silence and left. In half an hour a handsome covered carriage drew up in front of the door and in an hour later Mr. Lemaitre and Pauline were installed in a mansion which reminded them of old times.

Kavanagh was right. Mr. Lemaitre recovered rapidly under the new treatment, and was soon convalescent. His history since we saw him ten years ago, one of the merchant princes of Montreal, is briefly as follows:—His son Camille went to the dogs and broke his mother's heart. Mr. Lemaitre and Pauline went to Europe, one to regain health, and both to forget their troubles. During their absence in Europe a financial crisis visited Canada, and the various enterprises Mr. Lemaitre was concerned with went down with a crash one after the other. Worse still, his partners proved dishonest and incapable. They grabbed up all they could from the ruins and left Mr. Lemaitre all the responsibility. When he arrived home he found all his princely fortune gone. He sold his houses and effects, horses, everything, and gave the proceeds to his creditors. After this he left Montreal, ostensibly for a continuation of his health trip through the United States, but in reality to make an effort to commence life afresh in a place where he would be unknown, and where the ghost of his former splendor would not haunt him.

All this was told Kavanagh by Mademoiselle Pauline when they were alone one day, and when Mr. Lemaitre was taking a quiet walk in the garden.

'For myself, Dr. Kavanagh,' said Pauline, 'the change from opulence to penury has not crushed my spirit. If my father were well in health I would be content to live and labor on in poverty, giving lessons in music and French here in a strange land, and trying to perform the duties a good God has imposed upon me. But I have good news for father when he comes in, and for you too, I'm sure, who have been such a benefactor.'

'Please don't say that; it is you who are the benefactor.'

'No, no.' 'Well a friend then.' 'I have a letter from our lawyer in Montreal to-day, which says matters are beginning to brighten. It appears that father bought a lot of land in the Northwest, long ago, in a locality which is now of immense value, and that somehow or other the creditors could not touch it, and also that my mother's dower of $100,000 will come to me after all. Mr. L'admirault, our lawyer, says that even if father be Quixotic enough to sell the land for the benefit of the creditors we shall have a very large sum of money left. So you may congratulate me.'

'Which I do sincerely, although I wish you did not get that letter, all the same—at least not until to-morrow.'

'Till to-morrow, and why?'

'Because I came here this morning with the intention of asking you to be my wife, while now——'

'While now——'

'I am half afraid of your great riches. But Pauline never mind the miserable money, let your father keep it all, provided you marry me.'

This abrupt and original speech covered Pauline with blushes.

'I have always loved you,' continued Kavanagh, 'you need not smile, a boy of sixteen can love I tell you—your image has never faded from my mind, and often have I been tempted to go to Montreal and seek you out. And remember, I preserved your gold piece under very trying circumstances."

'After such a proof I would be an infidel to doubt your word. Here is my hand, and if papa is agreeable——'

'But are you sure it is not out of gratitude you have accepted me?'

'If it were I suppose you would not have me?'

'I would wait until I had made you love me.'

'Selfish Paul Kavanagh. Well, you need not wait. I love you,' and she hid her face in his breast. At this stage Mr. Lemaitre came in and was more astonished than displeased at the tableau.

'Mr. Lemaitre I have been making love to your beautiful daughter, and she says if you are agreeable——'

'I am agreeable. I know of no man more worthy of her, and I have met princes in my time, and have a high opinion of Pauline Lemaitre. God bless you both.'

Mr. Lemaitre left the room much affected, and the lovers were alone once more.

'Now, Pauline, I am very impatient, because very much in love. Will you not name the day?'

'Pray, don't ask me so soon. It is so unusual, you know.'

'Not at all, everyone marries.'

'But I mean with me. I think six months hence would be soon enough.'

'Six centuries! six ages! six cycles. I have a plan. You shall name the day and I shall name the month.'

'Well, if you really insist on it I consent.'

'Very well, Pauline, I name the month of May.'

'What, May? Why this is May.

'So it is, but that is no fault of mine. It is only the 25th and you have ample time to be called three times in church, if you are married on the 26th.'

'I shall do as you say, Paul, in everything when we are married; why not commence now. The 26th then let it be.'

The bells of St. Francis Xavier's Church, Baltimore, rang out a joyous peal on the 26th of May, and a few days later some of the belles of Montreal were calling to pay their respects and offer their congratulations to their old friend Mrs. Kavanagh, nee Lemaitre.

THE END.