

tated for a while to accord his consent to an engagement, he yielded eventually when he saw that his daughter's heart was certainly given to the young officer. He knew he was himself to blame for giving the young man so many opportunities for seeing Marguerite, who would inherit only a very insignificant estate—he had been a little selfish in the matter, for he liked de Grandville, (who had the great merit of being a good listener) and had forgotten that Marguerite was no longer a child, but an impulsive, affectionate young woman.

The young officer was warmly received by the old Seigneur, and any one who noticed the greeting that Marguerite gave him would have easily detected the relations that existed between them. The three sat, for an hour or more, conversing on many subjects, and then they were disturbed by the arrival of two ladies, both of whom were joyfully welcomed by the Seigneur and his daughter. One of them was Mademoiselle Letellier, a half-sister of M. de Leoville, a maiden lady of at least forty-five, with a pleasant, genial expression in her dark blue eyes. She had been absent for some weeks in Montreal, and had now returned with an old friend, who had not visited Beauvoir for many years.

## CHAPTER II.

In the course of the afternoon the Seigneur told his daughter to accompany Madame Boucher—the visitor—through the Manor.

"Madame," he said, with his courtly air, while apologizing for his inability to accompany her—"you will find a great many changes in this old mansion. Time has not dealt more gently with Beauvoir than it has with me."

Marguerite and her new friend rambled through the house and at last found themselves in the drawing-room, where there were a few pieces of antique furniture, covered with blue and gold satin, much faded and defaced; but the most interesting relics were several pictures, chiefly portraits of the family, by the Vanloos, Le Brun and other French masters, all of which had been taken from the town house when it had been sold by the Seigneur. One of these portraits was that of the elder M. de Leoville, who was dressed in the brilliant costume demanded by the etiquette of the gay court of Louis Quinze, to which he had been introduced when a young man in Paris. He was what most women would call a very handsome man—the full lips and wide nose were perhaps not in symmetry with the other parts of his face.

"That, then," said the vivacious Frenchwoman, "is *le beau Leoville*. What a pity he had not thought less of his own pleasure, and more of those who came after him!"

The latter part of her remark was not heard by Marguerite, who had gone out into the passage to give some directions to a servant, but Charles, who had just entered and was standing close by, replied—

"Yet, they say, as you must know, Madame, for, if I mistake not, you are a connection of the de Leovilles, that the old Seigneur died really wealthy for a man in this country."

"Oh, you have heard that story," replied Madame Boucher, with a merry laugh. "The Seigneur was certainly a reckless gambler, and we all know that he lost large sums of money at play; but it is also said that he won all back and more from the Intendant, M. Bigot, and others who so often met in the green parlour. No one, however, has seen or heard of that treasure—the whole story is a myth, a mere fairy tale. You may be sure if the old Seigneur had any money in his possession, he lost little time in spending it in some shape or other."

"My father has often said," said Marguerite, who had rejoined her friend and heard the foregoing remarks, "that the only person who could tell the truth or falsity of the story was Nicolas Savre, who was a faithful servant of my grandfather, always with him and entrusted with all his secrets. When my grandfather died soon after the fight, both Savre and his wife were with him and heard his dying requests; my father himself, you must know, was at school in France at the time. A day or two later, Savre himself was killed in this very château, whilst attempting to defend it against a party of Scotch marauders. His wife, then a young delicate woman who had been married only a few months, lay ill for many weeks, after she saw her husband fall riddled with bullets, and when she had recovered it was found that her mind wandered, and that she had entirely forgotten the sad events which had brought her so a grave a sorrow."

"Poor Vevette," said Madame Boucher, "I remember her well; often has she dressed me and your dear mother, when we were girls; she had such fine soft hair of a dark auburn colour, and lovely dark blue eyes. Is she still alive?"

"Yes," replied Mademoiselle de Leoville, "she lives in a little whitewashed, red-roofed cottage, down in the glen, near Lake St. Charles, in the care of her only sister, Marie Nicolet. Of late years she has been much better, but her memory of the past still fails her, and she is still liable to strange, unaccountable fits of despondency, which come on at a moment's notice, and last for hours, during

which she seems lost to all that is going on about her, and does not even recognize her friends who may speak to her."

"A sad history, indeed," replied Madame Boucher, "I must certainly see poor Vevette before I go away."

Then they left the drawing-room and returned to the Seigneur, who felt unusually gay that afternoon—the arrival of his sister and her friend had no doubt raised his spirits, somewhat low after his recent attack of illness—and he expressed a wish to go out to the garden and see Marguerite's flowers. With the help of Charles and Marguerite he walked down stairs and took a seat in a pleasant, shady spot, with his guest and Mdlle. Letellier alongside of him. Madame Boucher referred to the conversation they had in the *salon* respecting the legend of the Seigneur's hidden or stolen wealth.

"Well," said Madame Boucher, laughingly, when she found that M. de Leoville knew no more about it than she did herself, "I hope when you do come to your fortune you will not find it a bundle of waste paper. The card money of Canada bore the royal arms of France, and were signed by the Governor-General, the Intendant, and the Controller. They were of 1, 3, 6, 12, and 24 livres; some as low as 6 deniers and 1 centime. The Canadian historian, Garneau, says that the French King once was obliged to redeem the Colonial paper at three-eighths of its real value—a composition of 7s. 6d. on the £." in commercial language. Card money was never worth much, and certainly now-a-days it would not be readily exchanged for gold."

"No," said the Seigneur, assuming the lively tone of his guest; "I do not suppose that we would even now get ten francs to the sovereign from the King of England, who is doubtless a better paymaster than was his Most Gracious Majesty, Louis XV."

Meanwhile Marguerite and the young officer were walking up and down under the shade of the tall beeches and maples, watching the light, fleecy masses of clouds, which, touched by the rays of the setting sun, were assuming the most gorgeous colours.

"Five or six weeks hence," said the young man at length, "I may be called away; for the ship which is daily expected will probably bring our orders for the West Indies."

"Oh! dear Charles, I hope not—how much my father and myself would miss you. But you will soon get your company and then"—here the tender-hearted girl paused.

"Yes, then, I hope we may never leave each other," said the young officer, finishing the sentence for the blushing girl; "if I had the money now, I could soon buy my company, for I have a chance of a Captaincy in the—regiment, which will probably remain here."

"Would it not be pleasant to find that money of which such a strange story is told?"

"If we wait till then," replied the young officer, laughingly, "I am afraid that happy time of which we have been speaking will never come."

Then all the party returned indoors, as the shadows of evening crept through the trees, enveloping the château in the deepest gloom until it looked like some old keep of feudal times.

Several weeks passed by and nothing of interest occurred at the château; but at the little, low whitewashed cottage, in the glen, poor Vevette Savre had been ailing for some time, and it was very clear that she would soon close a life which to her had been fraught with little worldly joy. She was now confined to her bed, for previously she had always—except of course when her bad spells came on—taken an active share of the household work, and found much pleasure in attending a little kitchen garden during the summer. For some time previous to her taking to her bed, her mind had been more rational, and her old acquaintances noticed that she remembered many little things that had happened in her younger days. Once she asked to see the Seigneur, but when he came she relapsed into her usual stupor and hardly recognized him, but sat with her face—so thin and transparent as to show every delicate vein—laid low on her bosom.

"Poor Vevette, she seems very low," said the Seigneur, who, even in his most straitened circumstances, had never forgotten to give her that pittance which enabled her sister to keep her comfortably—"is she often this way now?"

"She remains thus for days," replied Marie; "yes and for weeks; she never talks much now."

It was on the day following this interview that Estelle came in to see her, and then she appeared better, and said to her sister before the young lady had left:

"Marie, you were here when M. de Leoville came to see me last. What did I tell him?" Then, when her sister told her, she shook her head despondently.

"No, no, my poor head is yet too weak—what dreadful weight is this upon it? What is it that I wish to say to M. Henri? Mon Dieu, I shall die soon—so they say—and yet I have never told him."

This was the last occasion when any of the inmates of the château saw the poor woman; for when Marguerite and Madame Boucher called at the cottage, they were told that

Vevette was too excitable to see any one, and that they had better wait till she was calmer. No message, however, ever came to Beauvoir from Marie that her sister was in a condition to see Marguerite or the other inmates, and at last they heard one morning that she had died suddenly during the night. When they saw her again, her hands were folded on her bosom, in the same attitude that they had assumed when her spirit quietly passed away, while her poor, thin face wore a peaceful, resigned expression which it had never shown in the course of her unhappy life.

"Poor Vevette," said M. de Leoville when he heard of the death of his dependent; "it was a happy release for her."

"If you saw her face now," said Mdlle. Letellier, "you would indeed say so."

"I wonder what it was she wanted to say to me that day she sent for me," continued the Seigneur.

"Perhaps," suggested Marguerite, "she remembered at last how good you had always been to her, and wished to express her gratitude, but her poor weak memory failed her when the opportunity offered."

"It may be you are right," replied the old man, "but whatever it was it must be buried with her in the grave."

(To be continued.)

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## HILDA; OR, THE MERCHANT'S SECRET.

BY MRS. J. V. NOLAN.

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[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

MARK BERKELEY.

About a week after the scene described in the last chapter, as the bells in the City of Montreal were ringing for the hour of noon, Blanche Osburne might be seen crossing the Champ de Mars from the entrance near the Court House. She was hurrying homeward to her early dinner, having been engaged during the last two hours in the pleasing business of shopping. At the same moment a dashing young officer, in the uniform of the Canadian Rifles, was descending the steps near St. Gabriel Street, with the evident intention of joining the young music teacher.

Blanche was aware of his approach, for her quick eye had caught sight of his figure strolling leisurely along the terraced walk of the Champ de Mars, and she cast more than one admiring though furtive glance towards him, which glances he returned with interest, for Blanche was looking very charming this morning in her neat print morning dress and coquettish little hat.

The reader will hardly recognize Mark Berkeley in that dashing son of Mars. Three years have given manlier proportions to his figure, and the incipient moustache has grown visibly, though still of a light hue. Altogether Mark's appearance was much improved and he had quite a military air. His uniform was becoming; he wore it now as he had been on duty that morning. Mark has been cherishing a penchant for Blanche Osburne now for sometime. Her delicate girlish beauty had caught his boyish fancy some four years before, when the Osburnes first came to live in Montreal, and he had continued wonderfully constant considering the well-known inconstancy of such juvenile adorers. The admiration of Lieutenant Berkeley was very flattering to Blanche. Like many girls she particularly admired the military, and she quite enjoyed a flirtation with the young officer whenever an opportunity for one offered. These flirtations had occurred rather frequently this summer, since Mark discovered that on certain mornings Blanche was in the habit of crossing the Champ de Mars at twelve o'clock. He generally contrived to be in that locality as soon as the bell of the Cathedral of Notre Dame rung out its first peal. The distance from the Champ de Mars to Mrs. Osburne's cottage in Rue Dominique was considerable, but it seemed particularly short to Blanche on those days when Mark Berkeley accompanied her home.

"Was not that a capital joke I played Osburne some days since?" he asked, laughing merrily, shortly after he joined her and they were strolling leisurely up St. Dominique Street, the heat of the summer day, of course, obliging them to walk very slowly.

"Practical jokes are not always pleasant," remarked Blanche, coldly, for she remembered the anxiety she and her aunt had suffered in consequence of this one which seemed to afford Mark such amusement.

"Osburne did not like it, though! it gave him too great a fright!"

"And caused me great anxiety too! I assure you," said Blanche, gravely.

"It did, eh! I am sorry for that. But it really was capital fun—the governor was in such a rage!" and the young officer again broke into a merry laugh in which Blanche soon joined. The gaiety of her companion was catching.

"However, I shall not try that fun again. It would not do a second time to cause the governor and others, you especially, such anxiety," Mark said, emphasizing the *you* as he bent his head to look very lovingly into Blanche Osburne's lovely face. "Osburne, I know, suspected me of stealing the money," Mark resumed, more gravely.

"Yes; he said no one else could have taken it."

"I thank him for his good opinion," broke from Mark, haughtily. "Did you believe him, Blanche?"

"No," she answered promptly. "I could not think you capable of stealing."

"Osburne owes me a grudge; he is jealous, *n'est-ce pas, mignonne?*" and Mark, who was still fond of using French phrases, twirled his light moustache with a self-satisfied air.

"He has no reason to be jealous of you," Blanche curtly remarked, the spirit of coquetry prompting the girl to tease her young admirer.

The bright expression faded from Mark's face, and the pair walked on in silence for some minutes.

"Did you not tell me, Blanche?" he resumed, with hesitation, "that you did not care for your cousin?"

"I do care for him," she answered, decidedly.

"Not as a lover, surely, Blanche?" he asked, in tender appealing accents.

"No, not as a lover," and the blue eyes glanced coquettishly at the Lieutenant.

The expression of those beautiful eyes thrilled his heart with renewed hope.

"Ah, Blanche! you know your power over me! How can you love to tease me so?"

Blanche's only reply was a silvery laugh.

"Are you going to the Horticultural Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, to-night?" Mark asked, after a brief silence.

"Yes. Stephen promised to take me there."

"Why not allow me to call for you?"

"Thank you! but that would never do, as I said I would go with Stephen."

"It would rouse his jealousy, I suppose," said Mark, with a pleased smile. "Well! he cannot prevent our meeting there. I shall watch for you at the entrance opening on St. Catherine Street. Be sure you come in by that door, or we might find it difficult to meet in such a crowd. The show of fruits and flowers this year will be fine, the weather has been so favourable. The music, too, will be well worth hearing. How I shall enjoy an evening spent in your society, dearest Blanche! Stephen's cursed jealousy, you know, prevents my going to your house," Mark added, angrily.

"And here comes Stephen following us up the street!" said Blanche, laughing, as she happened to look back.

"Now, you will catch it for being seen with me!" Mark remarked, with much annoyance.

"It is really too bad, this confounded nonsense of Stephen's, as if his cousin had not a right to love whom she pleased!"

They had now reached Mrs. Osburne's cottage. Bidding Blanche a tender adieu Mark Berkeley walked on towards Sherbrooke street, thus avoiding a meeting with his rival, while Blanche hastened into the house and retired to her own room to think over this pleasant interview with her military admirer, whom she certainly did regard with greater preference than any of her other beaux, and these numbered not a few, for Blanche Osburne was quite the *belle* among a certain set.

Her cousin's attachment to her was a deeper feeling than that experienced by young Berkeley, for Stephen Osburne was ten years his senior, and he loved his pretty cousin with the strong passion of a man. Unfortunately Blanche did not return this love; she felt for him only the affection of a sister. The character of Mark was more like her own; both possessed the same gay temperament, the same rather frivolous nature; therefore, Blanche preferred the foppish, trifling officer to her plainer-looking and more sedate cousin.

A cloud was on Stephen Osburne's brow when Blanche joined him and her aunt at dinner. He was silent as well as gloomy, and although she made some attempts at conversation her remarks only elicited curt replies. Mrs. Osburne, fearing that something had again gone wrong at the counting-house, inquired anxiously what was the matter.

"Nothing!" he replied moodily.

Then Mrs. Osburne, conjecturing that something unpleasant had occurred between him and Blanche, wisely held her tongue. She was used to these sullen fits of Stephen when he was angry with his cousin. The good lady was not aware of her niece's frequent meetings with Lieutenant Berkeley, which unpleasant news had that morning been communicated to Stephen by a fellow clerk who had often seen the lovers in the Champ de Mars together.

When dinner was over Stephen seated himself on the verandah to smoke a cigar, as was his usual custom. Blanche took up her work