

already the face had vanished from sight.

"Did you not see it, mon ami?" he asked. Pierre laughed. "I am sure of it," he persisted as he flung open the door.

There was no one in sight, only the footprints to and from the window in the snow.

But the stranger, whoever he was, did not reappear that evening and when the evening had passed Jacques was about to bid his host farewell.

"C'este lettre," he exclaimed, "Mais oui, I had almost forgotten it," as he passed it to his host. Then, bidding the latter bon soir he passed out into the forest and was gone.

Turning again to his cabin, after the form of Jacques had vanished, Pierre studied the superscription of the letter.

M'sieur Pierre Gauvin,
Fort Du Oheyne.

Then apparently satisfied he broke the seal and read:

Mon Cher Pierre:

Somewhere in the great North Land this letter will reach you. You will then know that I have not forgotten you and that I would not choose to do so, mon fils. Nor am I alone. Pierre, what a bungler thou art. Hast thou forgotten Madeline, non, non—and she? Only to-day, when I asked her for news of you she blushed and quickly replied: "Why should I know, Father? He is nothing to me." The old story, mon fils. Rien, I asked. Pas du tout. Her blushes gave the lie twice over to her words. She seemed about to speak. I waited. She would ask a favor of me. She had worried much of late for Prosper had boasted of his deception and so I write. You should not have deceived her so. You were not her friend. But she begs your forgiveness and I tell her that maybe when you have become a wealthy trapper that you will come back to the old village of Ste. Anne Du Lac. You will find us still your friends.

Bien tout a vous,
Pere La Joie.

From the letter there fell the postscript, a little unmounted photograph of Madeline, taken in the orchard of her father, a sunbonnet dangling by its strings from her hand, her face pensive and sweet as the apple-tree in snow. "Pour toime," she had written underneath.

Then to Pierre, the big-souled hunter, came in the distant North Land, the great moment of loneliness, for he realized that his sacrifice had been in vain and that Madeline had not been made happy.

CHAPTER II.

"You do not know the new trapper in the Gulch?" Jacques asked, some evenings later, when he had stopped to smoke a pipe with Pierre at his cabin.

"Non, I thought mebbe he be your friend," he continued. "He ask so many question what like you look, how you talk, until I say b' gosh you ask more question than a woman—oui," concluding his speech with an emphatic

movement of his head as of one who has sounded all the vagaries of the opposite sex.

"And then?"

"And then he say he come out to see you."

"And he will come?" Pierre asked, glad to meet a friend of Jacques.

"If M'sieu' Pierre does not mind so plenty, he say, 'and he bow so low and look so solemn that I laugh.'"

But the visit of which Jacques had spoken was delayed for there followed a week of storm, of snow-flakes swirled into deep windrows until scarcely the tree tops looked forth upon the wastes of snow and the only access to the still world of whiteness was through the shuttered window, by which Pierre was glad to escape from his entombment.

"It is the trapper in the valley who will suffer most," Jacques remarked, relieved to find Pierre once more in communication with the outer world.

"And you think he will not be safe?" Pierre asked.

"He will most likely starve unless he have plenty to eat in the cabin. There is much snow in the Gulch and the cabin almost buried at any time is now under one beeg mountain of snow. He is new to the woods."

The danger of the new trapper of Devil's Gulch being thus a certainty, Pierre and Jacques set forth to relieve the interned man as speedily as possible. Secure in his woodsman's sense of locality Jacques succeeded in locating the cabin and the work of relief began without delay.

Little by little the Snow King gave ground and when the roof had been cleared and the outline of the cabin was disclosed they burrowed, with the diligence of beavers, for the entrance.

Their efforts were at last rewarded. The door swung open, admitting the light from above into the semi-darkness of the room.

From the bed of skins in the corner a very weak voice spoke.

"La Diable!" Ha! I thought he would come, but—M'sieu' Diable, I haf had so little to eat last week, so very little, I shall be a light burden to you. Ha! Ha! Do you not thank me?"

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Pierre advancing into the room. "It is Prosper—Prosper, my half-brother," gasping with astonishment.

"The new trapper thy brother?" Jacques said with incredulity.

But Jacques as he looked upon the face of the entombed trapper perceived that it was thin to emaciation and that the eyes were staring from their sockets with a weird, ghost-like stare.

The voice of Prosper was so weak that the words were hardly recognizable as his gaze rested upon Pierre.

"Ha! who is this? Le Diable himself—the image of Pierre—fool that he was."

His eyes roamed unseeing the walls of the room until fastening his gaze upon Jacques, he went on:

"I fool them all, the old priest, Madeline, only Pierre, he knew, he knew—an' he never tell. They were the simple folk, the infants-in-arms, I call them. I grow tired of them and I leave them all. Then I go to visit Pierre and send him back to the old priest, who say he will

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