

open! And how far from *M. le docteur*! She ill, who had never had a day's sickness in her life! What did it mean? To die and meet old Le Verrier again. Hark! wasn't that he now under the poplars, gaunt and tall—over six feet was Le Verrier in his youth! But in his youth she had not known him. No, there was another figure under the poplars, shorter, fairer, ruddier, gayer: Achille Beausoleil, the young soldier of Québec. Another Achille, for whose name's sake she had taken the little outcast to her hearth. The widow screamed. Shadows, all of them, but how real! Imagination only, but how fearful! She screamed in the dark over and over again, as soon as her breath returned and her frame grew strong, but she couldn't wake Alphonse—Alphonse who lay at this moment in the long passage over her head, and was thinking in his sleep what a curious thing it would prove if Corinne, whom in his sleep he had just married, would have nineteen children too, like her mother. She couldn't wake Alphonse. But she did wake the boy Achille. He came to her room, and managed to light her candle for her; then stood at the foot of her bed and looked at her. She was grateful for this small help, and lay back in relief on her pillow.

"It is the heart. *Mon Dieu*, it is the heart!" muttered the poor woman. "It will come again, and once again; and the third time I shall go and be with old L'Verrier."

Achille stood very quietly regarding her, and made no effort to go to her or suggest anything for her suffering. His dark eyes seemed singularly wide awake and bright however, and he appeared to realize how ill she was. He did not summon Alphonse at first. After a long interval he spoke for the first time to her, and offered to waken Alphonse.

"No, no," muttered the widow. "Not Alphonse; he does not like me; I do not trust him. Alphonse, look you, *mon enfant*, Alphonse is a fool; and worse."

She stopped for breath a moment.

"Alphonse is, or would be if he could, worse. He would—rob me; *ouai*—rob me, me, the widow L'Verrier, who has done everything for him.

Achille's eyes were certainly very bright, very keen at this instant. He folded his arms in their loose red flannel sleeves on the foot of his mistress's bed and made no reply, though she chattered away in a semi-delirious volubility that lasted till dawn. Then she slept, a heavy, stupid, exhausted sleep; and Achille stole away to dress himself, and Alphonse never knew. Next morning the widow was apparently as straight and as vigorous as ever, and worked in her garden the whole long day; but she did not forget the warning of the midnight before, and was constantly revolving new schemes for Achille in her mind as she planted and hoed and pruned and dug.

She need not have so schemed. Three weeks from that day, Achille was no where to be found. Ah! what horror! Regard, the melancholy temperament, the moody brow, the quick Italian sensibilities! The poor child—he is drowned in the *Grand Trou*! But one explores the *Grand Trou*—he is not there. He was playing near the *Petit Ruisseau*—no he is not there. Alphonse is told, but only Alphonse, and he is made to swear that he will not tell Corinne just yet. The hours drag on, and Madame touches no food, only drinks cup after cup of strong green tea, and keeps her straw hat tightly tied down with a bit of Turkey-red cotton. Her face is grim and drawn—how one loves a child one has helped to rear—and her hands clutch nervously at her print working-gown. The hours drag on, but Alphonse returns without Achille. To be sure, he has not yet sought for him in the village; that will be the last place, since Madame dislikes the curiosity of the vulgar. But when four o'clock in the afternoon comes, then Madame is, indeed, in despair. Within a few hours all the valley will know of her loss. Madame Archambault, Corinne, and the sixteen children, and the Ducharmes, and *M. le notaire*, and the trades-people, down to old Delorme, the miser, her cousin Roubaud, at Three Rivers, and her old woman friend, Demoiselle Amande La Jeunesse, who dwells, a rich spinster, on the top of a neighbouring hill—all these people must soon hear of the affair, and come and be very sorry for her. All this was very sad, and the widow could hardly bear it. She rose, re-entered her own room, and went to a side *armoire*, in which she kept her letters, confidential documents, and presumably, money. She went there blindly, without quite knowing what she was going for, a forgotten address, an old paper, a book, a letter—something was vaguely in her mind, she knew not what. *Grand Dieu*! The door is closed, but not locked. Madame feels in her pocket for the key. It is not there. Now, by all the saints in all the calendars, the key. It is not there; then where is it? And the window, throwing wide the *armoire*, finds—that she is a rich widow no longer.

So, it is possible, even in the snug poplar-bordered and priest-guarded little hamlet of St. Eustache, to feel the sharp and fretted tooth of the swift wheel of change. Achille, of course, was the thief; and Madame mourned many a long hour over the sad moral obliquity of the handsome and ill-starred boy.

When Alphonse returned from his fruitless investigations that same evening, she bade him lock the door—there was a queer arrangement of worn-out padlock and knotted string that did duty as a lock—and, telling him the truth, made him swear an awful vow never to reveal it. Alphonse trembled in every limb. He was terribly afraid of his mistress at all times, and this night she appeared to him in the guise of an all-powerful, all-avenging domestic deity, with the sanguinary red cotton tied round her

head, and her commanding figure drawn up to the full height.

"*Mais*, Madame, the money?" he gasped out.

"Bah, the money! Who cares for the money?" And the widow struck her breast. "Bah, the money!" She bared her arms with a quick gesture, not ashamed of her honest retainer, whom she had once suspected. "Why did you not run away with it, you fool? Eh? Because you are a fool, and he—he was clever. But I can work. I am well, I am strong; look, my arms are worth six of yours. I will put back every piece of the money. I will not let anyone know in the village—nay, I will not even tell Amande La Jeunesse."

And she kept her word, and Alphonse kept his vow. The next day but one, it had somehow leaked out "in the village" what had befallen Madame Marie-Françoise-Joséphine-Reine Hertel-Duplessis Jonquière Le Verrier. The news, certainly, came not from the loyal Alphonse, and there was no one else to bring it; yet it was brought all the same. Corinne, who still held Alphonse on, had seen the meditative Achille pass through the chief, long street, very early in the morning, with a bundle on his shoulder, but thought little of it at the time. He was going to fish in the Baie des Anses, or have an early plunge in its cool, fresh waters, perhaps; for Achille was passionately fond of the water. Then, during that day he was heard from further down the valley, where Père Couture had seen him standing motionless on a large gray boulder, with his red sash round his waist; and his feet innocent of shoes and stockings. The good father spoke to the boy, but Achille only stared at him in his fixed and moody way, then turned, and was lost in the wood behind him in a moment.

But Madame Marie-Françoise-Joséphine-Reine Hertel-Duplessis Jonquière Le Verrier was a woman of many resources. She first of all, as we know, put Alphonse on his oath not to reveal the slightest hint of what he knew, and then invited inspection by driving down into the valley, one bright morning, to dispose of her fine and early scarlet crab-apples, and a barrel of the choicest harvest Fameuse—not the penitential little snow-apple, commonly known by that name, but a large, generous, and garnet-coloured variety, often called by the peasantry the *Vin d'Or*, or *Vindorre*, fetching in the Montreal market as much as four dollars a barrel. She was prepared for all the epithets with which Maman Archambault, that fat, little, brainless dumpling, wished to favour her protégé.

"Accursed of infants, to run away from the finest farm within the village. *Scélérat* boy! Look you, Madame Le Verrier, the child had a bad look; his eyes were of the devil himself, and little Pierre here has seen catch a butterfly—*ouai*—a beautiful one, all black and gold with a spot of blue on its wings—and crush it—so—in his hand. My children are not cruel. No. One does not say that of any of mine—poor little things that they are too—would do that. No, no. To harm a pretty living thing that makes the dusty road beautiful is a bad thing, sure.

Then *M. le notaire* had his say, and Père Ducharme his, and old Delorme—*vieux monstre*—his, and the people at the hotel theirs, for it was to the hotel at Chateau Richer that the widow sold her fruit. Well, it seemed as if all the world knew it, just as she knew it would.

Thereupon Madame listened with an air of the most courteous and a smile of the most engaging as she flicked flies off the huge beast, Baptiste, who carried his mistress oftenest through the valley, in preference to the little mare Annette—too small an animal for so daring a dame as Marie-Françoise-Joséphine-Reine Hertel-Duplessis Jonquière Le Verrier.

"*Mais mes amis*," said she, "how does it arrive that you do not know the truth? True it is, that the child is gone. True it is that I let him go alone. That is because he is a silent, sensible lad, as you know, and will not come to harm like your Pierre and your Henri, and your André and those. True I let him go. Oh! *ouai*, I knew he was going. So did Alphonse. I am right, Alphonse?"

Yes, Madame was always right; Achille, that is Madame Le Verrier's boy, had often told him he could not stay forever. There would be people expecting him at Three Rivers, *sans doute*.

"No, no, stupid," said the widow with a contraction of the mouth that was ominous to Alphonse. At Québec; at Québec. His friends will be there. He is tired of this place. Look you, a lad, handsome as a dream, clever with the fiddle, he is not made to stay in the valley of St. Eustache all his life. No, indeed; he will be for a great musician and will go back to the countries from whence he came. He had lost his way when he came here; therefore was it I took him in. *Tiens! mes amis*; but you did not understand. You thought he had grown tired, ran away, left me, perhaps," and Madame showed her fine white teeth and laughed. "Perhaps you thought he had taken something with him. *Eh, bien*, so he did—the clothes I bought for him—nothing more. They were my gift, and he was welcome to them."

The minds surrounding her were of the truly rustic type, and she had long been acknowledged as their superior in every respect. To Maman Archambault she was a condescending patroness who took a long time to pay? To the tradesmen of the one straggling street she was the incarnation of fair dealing, of punctuality, and of close dividends. To the Ducharmes, and the notary and a few *cultivateurs* in the valley she was an esteemed acquaintance, a revered landmark, a reliant and vigorous, though eccentric and original woman of the world, but to no one but the withered spinster, Demoiselle La Jeunesse, was she an intimate

friend, and not even the La Jeunesse herself could boast of being her confidante. So they believed her. Each and all believed her; and the good widow never heard another dubious remark concerning the sudden and suspicious flight of her restless and perverse Achille—the truant bird she lodged so tenderly in her nest. Her conscience—well, Père Couture knows all about that; and all about Alphonse's little rag of a conscience, too, that has been washed and hung out to dry, and ironed, and then washed again, and so on for nearly twenty-five years now.

So Madame took up her lonely life again in just the same way, although she fretted terribly in secret over the loss of her little friend and the greater loss of her money; not even Alphonse guessed at her periods of discontent and disgust. But what will you? the farm must be cultivated and the *pataches* brought on, and the wool spun, even if one's back gets stiff after the spinning; and Alphonse, if he is a fool, must yet have his meals decently served, and so life goes on and philosophy prevails even in St. Eustache. The orioles still loved the wall with the yellow lichen, and the strangers still admired the tall hollyhocks and the white raspberries, and the merry French peasants still slid down the slippery frozen Cone; and Corinne married not Alphonse, but Françoise-Xavier-René-Ovide, eldest son of the neighbouring *fromager*; and Madame Marie-Françoise-Joséphine-Reine Hertel-Duplessis Jonquière Le Verrier toiled on in her narrow but dignified way, until one night she had a second attack of the heart. She rallied and got to work again after an illness of three days, but expects to have a third seizure every minute and go to—old Le Verrier. There is money enough to bury her, she says; and that is a great consideration in the Valley of St. Eustache. S. FRANCES HARRISON.

LAKE ONTARIO.

I ASK not rolling prairies when I view thy wide expanse
Nor beetling crags, nor cataracts through which the sun-
beams glance,
Nor snow-clad peaks from whose far heights the aval-
anches roar,
When I hear thy foam-tipped breakers making music on
thy shore,
For thou art fairer, grander than those fair, grand scenes
to me,
Both in thyself and in the thoughts thou bringest of
the sea.

The eye may roam in freedom o'er thy broad and heaving
broad,
Nor find except, perchance, a sail, aught else whereon
to rest.
Till thou art wedded to the sky in the horizon blue,
Where boundless wave and boundless air together bound
the view;
In this thy space-embracing surge, so limitless and free,
Thou bringest memories of the far, the half-forgotten sea.

And when the breeze is rippling thy waters calm and
bright,
O, then thou seemest unto me a most suggestive sight,
Thy billows bursting into bloom, their foamy petals fling,
Thy wilderness of waves seems turned to meadows
blossoming,
In this thy turmoil and thy rage, when winds are fretting
thee,
Thou bringest to my mind dim dreams, and visions of
the sea.

O vast, majestic King of Lakes, thy presence has a power
To drive away the sordid thoughts belonging to the hour,
For dark the soul, and dull the mind, and dead the heart
must be

Of him who thinks of self or self while gazing upon thee,
Who grudges even to render thee the tribute all thine own,
The bringing to thy shore a heart from which base cares
are flown.

WM. MCGILL.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"MORE PROSE WANTED."

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—Having a deep and hopeful regard for the possibilities of literature in Canada, may I offer a few remarks on the subject, "More Prose Wanted," recently proposed by Erol Gervase in your columns?

Mr. G. Mercer Adam has shown very clearly the unfairness of estimating the proportion of prose to verse on such a basis as the bibliography attached to an arbitrary collection of Canadian poems.

"S. A. C." has also easily blown to the winds the soap-bubble statement that "it is so much easier to write poetry" than prose, although its own airiness is its own destruction, and also properly pointed out the singular cast of judgment that cannot find a charm in "Le Chien d'Or."

The apotheosis of Wilfred Chateaulair and his eccentric genius gives us little assistance in a matter requiring only common sense. These extraneous matters eliminated, what have we left to deal with? Erol Gervase has politely inserted a literary advertisement of a very general character to this effect:—

"Wanted—More Prose.—Writers of fiction, philosophy, art, nature, history, hygiene, and social, moral, religious