



VIEW OF THE PIERCED ROCK, IN THE GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE, NEAR GASPE.
(From a print of 1760)

A TALE OF THE PEOPLE.

BY MAY AUSTIN.

FAR east, in one of the dingiest, dirtiest streets which all towns contain, and which Montreal is not exempt from, Moise Martel lived in a tiny tenement with his little daughter Therese. His wife had died at her baby's birth; had gone with a murmured blessing on the two most dear to her, into the shadowy land of death. Moise had been both fond and proud of his young wife. She had given up a high station to follow him in his lower walk of life; for Aline Laroque came from a distinguished family; one that had for very many years owned a dry goods house in one of the larger streets of the city, and Moise Martel was only a day labourer. Think of it—the gulf between a man who stands behind a counter and makes his living by measuring tapes and ribbons with clean hands, and one who walks forth every morning with the rising sun to begrime his hands with the soil! But Aline loved her plebian lord, and her life was busy keeping her little home bright, weaving the *cachaine* for the floors, making pretty patch work for the sofas, and wonderful woollen tidies of orange and red flowers, which art she had become proficient in at the convent. Besides this she scrubbed, and washed, and sewed, and their little rooms were the tidiest, brightest and most home like to be found anywhere.

Every night when Moise came back from his work Aline would be in the doorway watching for him, in a clean cotton frock and her hair in smooth light plaits about her head, as the *bonne seures* had taught her to wear it. And then Moise always said:

"Wait till I am washed, and I will kiss you." And so Aline would wait with the towel in her hand to hasten the happy greeting.

After the savoury supper Moise would read aloud from the evening papers, or pick out a tune or two upon the fiddle, for he was a bit of a musician, while Aline busied herself

with the sewing of some marvellous garments, over which she softly sang a *berceuse* in anticipation.

They were not given to spending many evenings out, for they had few friends, as is usually the case in unequal marriages; but so far they were all sufficient to each other.

Aline crossed herself before her crucifix by her bedside every night, and thanked the good God for giving her such a husband; while Moise, too, would bend devoutly and add his thanks to the Creator for the gift of such a loving wife.

And so things went on until the baby came and Aline went.

It was a sorry time, and for a week or so it seemed as though Moise could never pluck up courage to face life without her. But still he had something left to live for—his child. He went to the Cure and from him learnt of a respectable woman who would undertake the care of the babe, and then he worked the harder. He got extra jobs now and then. But what a different home coming was his now; no bright face to greet him; no comfortable home to receive him. He lived "in a muddle," as his neighbours said, until eight years went by, and one day a miniature Aline arrived, Therese, grown into a natty little maid.

She set herself to work at once to beautify the little home, for she was a handy little soul and had been well taught by the good nuns in all womanly work and occupation.

Moise came along the dingy street that night with tears in his eyes, for there was Therese in the doorway. He had talked much to her about her mother, and she meant to try and fill her place. After supper he told her of some extra employment he had secured, the lighting of the electric light in St. Catherine street.

But, much to his amazement, Therese burst into tears.

"Give it up," she cried. "It is my greatest fear, that big lighting thing which isn't alive. It will kill you, I know it will.

I used to call it 'the devil's delight,' for surely such hurtful things don't come from God, only one day the good Lady Superior heard me and gave me a penance."

But Moise quieted her with kisses.

He used to climb the pole to polish the glass globe for the electric light every morning. Passers by would hardly heed him, but at home a little heart would beat wearily with fear until his safe return.

"Mon pere," she would plead in pretty accents, "give up the fearful light and let us be poorer."

"Tien, pauvre petite, we must have butter for our bread," and so with a kiss he would send her away, and her fears would have a short reprieve.

One day while she was busy over the fricassee for her father's mid-day meal the peace of the narrow street was suddenly disturbed. There was the clear, quick cling, clang, cling of a bell and the ambulance dashed by with its white cover, its yellow sides, and the red cross, carrying its message of comfort; someone had been hurt, perhaps killed. Therese turned paler and paused in her knitting.

"Holy Mother of Jesu have mercy," she murmured, and went on with her work. But then a great fear fell upon her; the ambulance was returning at the slow pace that tells of the sufferer it bears. It stopped. Then the door was pushed widely open, wide enough to admit of two men with a ghastly burden.

A red cotton kerchief covered the dead man's face. It had been Therese's gift, and hers were the stitches which adorned it.

"Dead!—and without the Sacrament," cried the neighbours in holy horror.

But little Therese knelt by his bedside praying to the Saints, and surely they were satisfied with the sacrament of her tears.

It may interest a great many people to learn that Mr. Bartlett, who, thirty-six years ago, made his first "attempt at a collection" of familiar quotations, is about to issue a ninth and final edition of his well known book.