

The Warmth of a Word.

BY MARGARET J. PRESTON.

'Twas a day in the dead of winter,
And the echo of hurried feet
Struck sharp from the icy pavement
Of the pitiless city street.

Each passer was loath to linger,
Though wrapped in a fur-clad fold;
For the air was a-tingle with frost-flakes,
And the sky was benumbed with cold.

The cimetar wind, in its fury,
Bore down like a sleeping foe;
The tempest was waiting the onset,
And abroad were its scouts of snow.

Yes, midst it all, with his tatters
A-flap in the whirling blast,
A child who seemed born of the winter—
A creature of penury—passed.

So tremulous were his accents,
As he shivered and crouched and sang,
That the names of the mumbled papers
Seemed frozen upon his tongue.

He paused for a bitter moment,
As a wondrously genial face
Arrested his voice and held him
With a pity that warmed the place.

"Have a paper?" The kind eye glistened
As the stranger took the sheet,
And glanced at the stiffened fingers,
And thought of the icy feet.

Then dropped in his hand the value
Of his fifty papers sold;
"Ah, poor little friend!" he faltered,
"Don't you shiver and ache with cold?"

The boy, with a gulp of gladness,
Sobbed out as he raised his eye
To the warmth of the face above him:
"I did, sir—till you passed by!"

before Baptiste's thick voice would be heard calling out:

"Francois, Francois! Ver is yer? Some more wood, k'vick!" And with a groan, poor Frank would have to put away the rifle or book and return to the wood pile.

"I suppose I'm what the Bible calls a hewer of wood and a drawer of water," he would say to himself, for hardly less onerous than the task of keeping the fire in fuel was that of keeping well filled the two water barrels that stood on either side of the door, one for the thirsty shantymen, the other for Baptiste's culinary needs.

The season's work once well started, it went forward with commendable steadiness and vigour under foreman Johnston's strict and energetic management. He was admirably suited for his difficult position. His grave, reserved manner rendered impossible that familiarity which is so apt to breed contempt, while his thorough mastery of all the secrets of woodcraft, his great physical strength, and his absolute fearlessness in the face of any peril, combined to make him a fit master for the strangely-assorted half-hundred of men now under his sole control. Frank held him in profound respect, and would have endured almost anything rather than seem unmanly or unheeding in his eyes. To win a word of commendation from those firm-set lips that said so little was the desire of his heart, and, feeling sure that it would come time enough, he stuck to his work bravely, quite winning good-natured Baptiste's heart by his prompt obedience to orders.

"You are a *bon garcon*, Francois," he would say, patting his shoulder with his plump palm. "Too good to be chore-boy; but not for long: eh, Francois? You be chopper *bientot*, and then—" with an expressive wave of his hand to indicate the rapid flight of time—"you'll be foreman, like M'sieur Johnston, while Baptiste,"—and the broad shoulders would rise in that meaning shrug which only Frenchmen can achieve,— "poor Baptiste will be cook still."

Beginning with Johnston and Baptiste, Frank was rapidly making friends among his companions, and as he was soon to learn, much to his surprise and sorrow, some enemies too, or, rather, to be more correct, he was making the friends, but the enemies were making themselves; for he was to blame in small part, if at all, for their rising against him. There were all sorts and conditions of men, so far at least as character and disposition went, among the gang, and the evil element was fitly represented by a small group of inhabitants who recognized one Damase Deschenaux as their leader. This Damase made rather a striking figure. Although he scorned the suggestion as hotly as would a Southern planter the charge that negro blood darkened his veins, there was no doubt that some generations back the dusky wife of a *courier du bois* had mingled the Indian nature with the French. Unhappily for Damase, the result of his ancestral error was manifest in him; for, while bearing but little outward resemblance to his savage progenitor, he was at heart a veritable Indian.

Greedy, selfish, jealous, treacherous, quick to take offence and slow to forgive or forget, his presence in the Johnston gang was explained by his wonderful knowledge of the forest, his sure judgment in selecting good bunches of timber to be cut, and his intimate acquaintance with the course of the stream down which the logs would be floated in the spring.

Johnston had no liking for Damase, but found him too valuable to dispense with. This year, by chance, or possibly by his own management, Damase had among the gang a number of companions much after his own pattern, and it was clearly his intention to take the lead in the shanty so far as he dared venture. When first he saw Frank, and learned that he was to be with Johnston also, he tried after his own fashion to make friends with him. But as might be expected, neither the man himself nor his overtures of friendship impressed Frank favourably. He wanted

neither a pull from his pocket flask nor a chew from his plug of "Navy," nor to handle his greasy cards; and although he declined the offer of all these uncongenial things as politely as possible, the veritable suspicious, sensitive, French-Indian nature took offence, which deepened day after day, as he could not help seeing that Frank was careful to give himself and companions as wide a berth as he could without being pointedly rude or offensive.

When one is seeking to gratify evil feelings toward another with whom he has daily contact, the opportunity is apt to be not long in coming, and Damase conceived that he had his chance of venting his spite on Frank by seizing upon this habit of Bible reading and prayer which the lad had as scrupulously observed in the shanty as if he had been at home. As might be imagined, he was altogether alone in this good custom, and at first the very novelty of it had secured him immunity from pointed notice or comment. But when Damase, thinking he saw in his daily devotion an opening for his malicious purposes, drew attention to them by jeering remarks and taunting insinuations, the others, yielding to that natural tendency to be incensed with anyone who seems to assert superior goodness, were inclined to side with him, or at all events to make no attempt to interfere.

At first Damase confined himself to making as much noise as possible while Frank was reading his Bible or saying his prayers, keeping up a constant fire of remarks that were aimed directly at the much-tried boy, and which were sometimes clever or impertinent enough to call forth a hearty laugh from his comrades. But, finding that Frank was not to be overcome by this, he resorted to more active

to his sides as though he dare not trust them elsewhere, and, looking straight into Damase's eyes, he exclaimed:

"Aren't you ashamed to do such an unmanly thing? You, who are twice my size and age! I have done nothing to you. Why should you torment me? And just when I want most to be quiet too!"

Then, turning to the other men with a gesture of appeal that was irresistible, he cried:

"Do you think it's fair, fellows, for that man to plague me so when I've done him no harm? Why don't you stop him? You can do it easy enough. He's nothing but a big coward."

Frank's anger had risen as he spoke, and this last sentence slipped out before he had time to stop it. No sooner was it uttered than he regretted it; but the bolt had been shot and it went straight to its mark. While Frank had been speaking, Damase was too keen of sight and sense not to notice that the manly speech and fine self-control of the boy were causing a quick revulsion of feeling in his hearers, and that unless diverted they would soon be altogether on his side, and the taunt he had just flung out awoke a deep murmur of applause which was all that was needed to inflame his passion to the highest pitch. The Frenchman looked the very incarnation of fury as, springing toward Frank with uplifted fist, he hissed, rather cried, through his gleaming teeth:

"Coward! I teach you call me coward."

Stepping back a little, Frank threw up his arms in a posture of defence; for he was not without knowledge of what is so oddly termed "the noble art." But before the blow fell, an unlooked-for intervention relieved him from the danger that threatened.

The foreman, when the shanty was being built, had the farther right-hand corner partitioned off so as to form a sort of cabin just big enough to contain his bunk, his chest, and a small rude table on which lay the books in which he kept his accounts and made memoranda, and some half-dozen volumes that constituted his library. In this nook, shut off from the observation of society of the others, yet able to overhear and, if he chose to open the door, to oversee also all that went on in the larger room, Johnston spent his evenings poring over his books by the light of a tallow candle, the only other light in the room being that given forth by the ever-blazing fire.

Owing to this separation from the others, Johnston had been unaware of the manner in which Frank had been tormented, as it was borne so uncomplainingly. But this time Frank's indignant speech, followed so fast by Damase's angry retort, told him plainly that there was need of his interference. He emerged from his corner just at the moment when Damase was ready to strike. One glance at the state of affairs was enough. Damase's back was turned toward him. With a swift spring, that startled the others as if he had fallen through the roof, he darted forward, and ere the French-Canadian's fist could reach its mark a resistless grasp was laid upon his collar, and, swung clear off his feet, he was flung staggering across the room as though he had been a mere child.

"You ruffian!" growled Johnston, in his fiercest tones. "What are you about? Don't let me catch you tormenting that boy again?"

(To be continued.)

OUR LIMITED WISDOM.

ALL the family were reading in the library one evening. Mr. May had the evening paper, which he put down once to look at a reference in the encyclopedia. Mrs. May had a French art book and consulted her lexicon frequently. George asked his mother the meaning of several words in the story book over which he was poring. Eva, aged five, sat with George's *Companion* upon her lap.

"Reading, too, Puss?" said her father.

"Yes, sir."

"Why, Eva May, you can't read," said her brother.

"Yes, I can. I can read 'dog' and 'cat' and 'boy,' and lots of words when I find them. I read the words I do know, and that's all that any of you are doing," returned the observant little woman.

The Chore-boy of Camp Kippewa.

A Canadian Story.

BY J. MACDONALD OXLEY.

CHAPTER V.

STANDING FIRE.

THE shanty finished, a huge mass of wood cut into convenient lengths and piled near the door, a smooth road made down to the river bank, the storehouse filled with barrels of pork and flour and beans and chests of tea, the stable for the score of horses, put up after much the same architectural design as the shanty, and then the lumber camp was complete, and the men were free to address themselves to the business that had brought them so far.

As Frank looked around him at the magnificent forests into whose heart they had penetrated, and tried with his eyes to measure the height of the splendid trees that towered above his head on every side, he found himself touched with a feeling of sympathy for them—as if it seemed a shame to humble the pride of those sylvan monarchs by bringing them crashing to the earth. And then this feeling gave way to another, and as he watched the expert choppers swinging their bright axes in steady rhythm, and adding wound to wound in the gaping trunk so skilfully that the defenceless monster fell just where they wished, his heart thrilled with pride at man's easy victory over nature, and he longed to seize an ax himself and attack the forest on his own account.

He had plenty of ax work as it was, but of a much more prosaic kind. An important part of his duty consisted in keeping up the great fire that roared and crackled unceasingly in the caboose. The appetite of this fire seemed unappeasable, and many a time did his arms and legs grow weary in ministering to its wants. Sometimes, when all his other work was done, he would go out to the wood pile, and, selecting the thickest and toughest-looking logs, arrange them upon the hearth so that they might take as long as possible to burn, and then, congratulating himself that he had secured some respite from toil, get out his rifle for a little practice at a mark, or would open one of the few books he had brought with him. But it seemed to him he would hardly have more than one shot at the mark, or get through half a dozen pages,



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